



Dear BLOCStars:

Many of you have adapted your traditional in-person sessions to a virtual format. While this is a great option, we want to encourage you to continue using positive youth development skills.

These few tips from YDEKC can go a long way as you continue to provide high program quality during this time: ⁱ¹

- **Team-building:** Introductions and icebreaker questions are good places to start. Many young people are feeling very disconnected right now and intentionally creating opportunities for them to get to know each other and form bonds will help combat those feelings of isolation.
- **Asking open-ended questions and Reflection:** Continue to provide people with opportunities to ask questions or share thoughts throughout online sessions, and to reflect at the end.
- **Small groups are still possible:** Make the effort to build community online. Just as our in-person sessions incorporate community-building activities. Zoom and other platforms allow you to break youth up into small groups during the session.
- **Allow for youth voice:** One advantage of the online environment is that it gives people the chance to engage in different ways. People who are comfortable speaking in a group have that option; others can contribute by using the chat feature that most platforms offer. Either way, collecting feedback from youth and using to make positive changes will give them some control over their life during a time when they have very little of that.

What platform to use: Incorporate whatever interactivity the technology permits. There are several different online learning platforms that offer a variety of capabilities and features. Think about how you can use these features to incorporate different kinds of interactive experiences. Does your platform support **polling**? Maybe you could use a poll in place of a “four corners” activity that you might do in person. Some platforms have whiteboard features that allow **multiple contributors at once**; some **enable breakout groups**; others allow participants **to share their screens** - which is a great way to encourage collaboration as all youth work on a single product together. Even if your platform is basic, prompting participants to use the **chat space** or giving each person structured opportunities to speak can help to increase engagement.

Building leadership skills: Is it possible for participants to lead parts of the session? If you haven’t thought of this, you may want to consider “passing the mic” and allowing youth to sign up for roles in leading the whole group, a small group, or even just pairing up to help each other.

Practicing skills: Provide useful tools and allow time to practice applying them. Online and in-person, all youth learn better if they have the opportunity to practice. In addition to providing focused, relevant content and practical tools, consider whether you can build in opportunities to apply new skills. Sometimes a short break from the conferencing can allow participants to complete a task offline and then reconvene to reflect.

If you're looking for additional ways to incorporate positive youth development in your virtual sessions with youth, don't hesitate to reach out to us. We are here to help you! You may also find additional tips on the Youth Development Executives of Kings County website.

The BLOCS team

"Thoughts on Virtual Facilitation" Youth Development Executives of King County, last modified April 13, 2020,
<https://ydekc.org/news/thoughts-on-virtual-facilitation/>
