

The Developmental Needs of Younger Adolescents

Opportunities for Self-Definition

- opportunities to better understand, define and accept who they are
- opportunities to explore their widening social world and to reflect upon the meaning of new experiences, so that they can consider themselves participants in society
- opportunities for young adolescents of ethnic cultures to achieve a positive orientation toward their own culture and American culture; to affirm their ethnicity through observation of ceremonies, retention of native language, reinforcement of specific attitudes, beliefs and practices

Competence and Achievement

- opportunities to find out what they are good at doing and to know what they do is valued by others whom they respect
- opportunities that encourage the practice of new skill, public performance and recognition, and reflection on personal and group accomplishments

Positive Social Interaction with Adults and Peers

- opportunities to develop interpersonal skills and form positive peer relationships and support, especially through programming.
- opportunities to learn how to develop a relationship with their parents that is reflective of their growing autonomy and utilizes new patterns of communication
- opportunities for caring relationships with adults who like and respect them, who share their own experiences, values, and feelings and who serve as role models and advisors

Meaningful Participation in Families, Schools, Churches and Community

- opportunities to participate in making decisions about activities that shape their lives *and* to contribute to the success of those activities as leaders or participants.
- opportunities to participate as valued members and leaders in the church's life and ministries
- opportunities for exposure to situations in which they can use their skills to solve real life problems and affect the world around them, such as community service programs

Physical Activity

- opportunities to utilize their energy and growing bodies through activities that require physical movement or expression

Creative Expression

- opportunities to express to the external world who they are on the inside (feelings, interests, abilities, thoughts) through a variety of activities

Personal Religious Experience

- opportunities to explore "the big questions" in life, questions whose answers can only be comprehended within the context of faith and religion
- opportunities for a deeper and more personal relationship with God

Structure and Clear Limits

- provision of structure and guidance for young adolescents that 1) helps them make decisions about their behavior, 2) that helps them feel safe in their activities, 3) which can empower them to live with joy and confidence