

YELLS Common Language

Foundational Concepts to Instill

Power of YELLing: This concept asks youth to think about what it means to live the YELLS Values. What is the difference between talking and yelling? YELLing is louder, grabs your attention, and evokes emotion. It requires you to stretch yourself. This is what we do in YELLS. The community should be able to see the difference that is made because we are here, the same way someone notices when a person goes from talking to yelling.

Going “All In”: Going All In is something we talk about a lot at YELLS, especially as we begin a new year or take on a new project. We challenge youth to fully commit, make themselves vulnerable, be fully present, and do the hard work it takes to make change. Making change isn't a “half-way” endeavor. Often, we model this through “initiation” activities where youth have to do something a little risky to show their commitment to fully diving into YELLS and their role within it. This could be sticking their hand in a bucket of mystery guck, walking through a messy path, doing a high ropes course, covering their feet in paint and leaving their mark, or anything that may be a challenge at first.

Reframing: Bigs and Littles should learn how to take “negative” situations or challenges and turn them around into opportunities. We will practice reframing needs to find beauty and possibility. This will be foundational in all that we do, from the way we view our community, our everyday challenges, and the attitude and atmosphere we build at YELLS. Youth are also taught the power of positive self-talk and how to train our brains to reinforce healthy self-talk.

Being “On”: This means that you are fully present, YELLing, and there to serve. If we are in a program session, a workshop, working in groups, or at a community event, we should remember that we are there as servant-leaders and should bring our full selves. This may mean asking how we can help if we don't have a task already, modeling for others what we expect, seeking out those who are not included, or bringing your positive energy to whatever is happening. YELLS youth should remember to practice our values at all times.

YELLS Brand & Integrity: YELLS youth should learn the importance of integrity and modeling our YELLS Values in all that they do, whether or not anyone is watching. We should stand by our convictions and what we know is right, even if others are not. In fact, we should be the ones that motivate others to do what is right and model our values in action. There should be consistency between our actions, our beliefs, and our values. There should also be consistency in our actions in all environments. While we may adapt to different places, we should always maintain our integrity, since wherever we go we represent ourselves, our families, and YELLS. As mentors and community leaders, YELLS youth make a commitment to be their best selves and a role model for their Littles (or others) at all times. Through our actions and words, we tell our mentees and those around us who we are and what we stand for.

YELLS Pride: YELLS pride is the privilege, honor, and expectations that come with being a part of the YELLS Family. YELLS youth should be proud to represent! Through our activities and the environment we create, we should nurture a sense of belonging, team spirit, and camaraderie with those committed to living our YELLS Values. This can be nurtured through special chants, shared rituals, earning YELLS swag, and even a positive initiation experience where youth show they are fully committed.

Leaving Your Mark / How Will We Know You Were Here?: As YELLS youth participate in programs, they are learning to grow as leaders and change makers, and they are challenged to stretch themselves as they contribute to our community. Youth should be challenged to think about the legacy they are leaving behind through their actions, their initiatives, and the way they make others feel. This should guide the work they do within their interactions with the community, each and every day within programs, and through their service initiatives.

Creating the Environment: Youth should learn that they have power to create the environment we feel at YELLS, each day, and beyond. They set the tone for each other with the energy, attitude, and values they bring to each moment. It should be clear in all our actions that YELLS is a safe place that is positive, welcoming, radiates warmth, and feels different and special. It should be free of negativity, complaining, arguing, gossiping, fear of mean comments, teasing, and sarcasm.

Energy: Energy is contagious! Teach youth how you build it, how you spread it, and how you infect yourself and others with positivity. Practice strategies for building momentum and positivity.

Community Connections: Our call is to harness the “people power” of Franklin Gateway so our community can benefit from the support network, resource sharing, and social capital of their neighbors. We want to strengthen the power of the YELLS Family & extend this to all of Franklin Gateway by building strong, powerful networks. We want to focus on fostering strong relationships and community connections between our youth and families, but also within Franklin Gateway. We should teach our youth to strategically foster these relationships, and this will be a medium for developing our students’ servant-leadership and soft skills as they lead the building of a powerful, connected community. This should be a central goal of our youth’s service initiatives.

Community Champions: Community Champions are leaders, inspirers, and doers within our Franklin Gateway neighborhood. They are the internal assets within our community that have powerful strengths and gifts to share with their neighbors. Community Champions support other families, show up when needed, raise their voices, and mobilize others to get engaged. As well-connected, passionate community members, they can be incredible partners in our work to both help us understand the assets and needs of Franklin Gateway and spread the word to others about YELLS initiatives. Community Champions are natural potential supporters and volunteers as youth plan their service initiatives.

Personal and YELLS Pitch: YELLS youth are poised and prepared to share their passions and their purpose. They know their personal brand and have their elevator pitch ready to go. YELLS youth are also well versed in their work within the community, any upcoming service initiatives and why it matters to them, and how this will impact their Franklin Gateway neighborhood. They will introduce themselves with their role in YELLS (Big, Little, ASP youth, Apprenticeship Team title, etc.), share about their program and any service initiatives, discuss their most important YELLS Values, and demonstrate a deep understanding of how and why they are servant-leaders within their community. Each youth should know what events are coming up next and how they can encourage whoever they meet to get involved in their movement for community empowerment. Youth should also feel motivated to share how YELLS has made a difference in their own lives and be able to articulate the skills they have gained through their experiences with YELLS.

Networking Skill Development: YELLS youth are elevated into powerful positions as connectors, change agents, and voices for their community. Youth must be prepared with a warm welcoming message, a handshake, a pitch, and the ability to connect others. Foundational workshops and ongoing reinforcement must be provided to help youth develop the professional skills needed to build meaningful relationships. This includes body language, eye contact, handshakes, open ended questions, exchanging business cards, entering and leaving a conversation, keeping a conversation going, pushing past small talk, and developing mutually beneficial relationships. Additionally, youth must learn the skills to maintain these relationships through professional emails, handwritten letters, honoring commitments, and being present and involved at important community meetings.

Building Relationships: YELLS youth should build strong relationships with their whole YELLS Family, within Franklin Gateway, and the broader community. We must teach youth the power of relationships and the skills and strategies for building and nurturing them. We should set a precedent for reaching outside their circle and provide teambuilding opportunities for youth to work together with those they may not know as well. Youth should be taught specific strategies and engaged in experiences that allow them to practice the skills needed to build strong relationships.

Making Others Feel Valued: This can be both an art and a science. It is incredibly powerful when you practice the skills and techniques that make others feel good (valued, appreciated, or like they matter). Youth can be taught and practice these skills, for example: asking others about themselves, really taking interest in what others have to say, looking directly in people's eyes, showing genuine care, etc.). Youth should learn how to make a memorable connection with someone and they should have opportunities to practice ways to bring a smile to someone else.

Professionalism: Professionalism is a necessary piece of Servant Leadership and ensures that youth are taken seriously as community change makers and stakeholders. Aspects of professionalism can be addressed throughout the curriculum and can include professional dress, email etiquette and writing skills, regular email communication, introductions and pitches, writing formal proposal letters, body language, posture, eye contact, taking notes and asking questions, general etiquette, timeliness and communication, keeping commitments, accountability, appropriate online presence, and much more.

Creating a Movement: YELLS truly is a movement – we're doing big things, and each person plays a role in it reaching its full impact and bringing community members along with us. Engaging Franklin Gateway, mobilizing neighbors in community change, and building community connections is a vital part of our movement. YELLS youth should learn that each person matters when it comes to building and sustaining a movement. Movements have life and energy, and they must be fueled, or they will flame out. Youth should learn to use their passions to lead movements in their community and develop tools and practice kindling a movement to keep it going strong. They must also receive and give to others the motivation to keep their commitment and passion strong to sustain momentum. One way to help them visualize this is to practice leading small movements like passing an item (a YELLS Swag item or something meaningful that represents YELLS pride) along from person to person during the school day and seeing if it makes it through everyone and back to YELLS, and then discussing the strategies and barriers that impacted the "movement."

Sacred Space: The heart, values, and gifts we bring to the YELLS building make it something more than just a space, something SACRED. Here, we can shape the community we want for

ourselves and our neighbors. Together, we must continuously work to create this powerful space for the community that is positive, uplifting, transformative, and revolutionary. We must honor this with our words and actions and commitment to nurture an environment that welcomes all and catalyzes change.

YELLS Family: This term is used a lot, and it's something that we must actively nurture. Every member of YELLS should feel welcomed, valued, uplifted, and connected. This includes youth, parents, siblings, staff, interns, volunteers, donors, partners, neighbors, and everyone who enters our sphere. That requires each of us to intentionally build relationships and go out of our way to spread warmth and kindness.

High Expectations: We set the expectation that our youth can achieve anything because we believe in them and their greatness. At YELLS, youth experience full ownership and accountability for their community work so that they can feel true success. Youth don't just complete assigned tasks, but dream ideas and learn the skills to implement them. We know they can be poised and professional, build relationships with stakeholders, speak so that their voices are heard, and make a real difference for themselves and others.

Growth Mindset: Central to our strategy for promoting youth and community achievement is fostering a growth mindset and sense of agency. Our holistic approach to youth development equips youth with the growth mindset and efficacy needed to see setbacks as temporary and believe in their ability to grow and improve. YELLS youth receive direct instruction in strategies for overcoming challenges and seizing opportunities to achieve and experience success. All programming is designed to challenge youth, while building their efficacy as they discover their sparks and see the impact they make within their community. By giving youth who often struggle an opportunity to feel success, we help nurture a growth mindset that can also be applied to their academic work.

Self-Efficacy through Service: At YELLS, youth have authentic opportunities to lead community action. The community of Franklin Gateway presents so much internal strength and resiliency, and YELLS leverages this to allow youth and families to build their own internal assets as they work together to build and strengthen assets within their neighborhood. YELLS programs, events, and service initiatives become a vehicle for youth to learn and practice skills for their future and skills for making a difference. At the same time, this helps them grow personally and develop a sense of efficacy and connection to their community. As youth apply their skills to give back to their community, they find purpose and restore self-efficacy, making them more motivated to strive for their own personal goals and academic success.

Asset Based Community Development: Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is a methodology for the sustainable development of communities based on their strengths and potentials. It focuses on, elevates, and harnesses the assets and strengths of a community, rather than focusing on its weaknesses. Asset Based Community Development's premise is that communities can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing, but often unrecognized assets. ABCD centers the people in a community as solutions to challenges, builds on the assets that are found within the community, and mobilizes individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to realize and develop their strengths. YELLS ascribes to this model as we activate the leaders within our neighborhood, empower youth to lead grassroots community projects that build on the assets of Franklin Gateway, and celebrate its strengths and achievements.

(See www.nurturedevelopment.org/asset-based-community-development)