



Centre for Urban Education

Engaging in Democracy: Young people take the Lead

Who we are

The Engaging Communities Foundation¹, an inter-generational learning group *led by young people*, recognised the importance of enabling young people to engage with leadership in their communities. Over several years their experience has included developing leadership capacity in children and young people through engagement in action research and community planning. By working in an inclusive, democratic and consultative way, the project has exposed young people and members of the different communities to ways of working which offer positive opportunities for the young people to take a lead on issues of importance to them.

What we do

Our goal is to engage young people in democracy by creating the conditions for successive groups of young people to experience and exercise leadership in the communities they recognise and relate to.

Our approach is designed to engage a wide range of people from the schools and the wider community to share and explore their experience of leading, living and learning in specific communities served by the schools with whom we are working. We use a combination of collaborative action research approaches both in large and small group settings.

The young people are supported to take a lead in two key action research approaches:

1. A “community conversation” where a broad cross section of stakeholders are invited to be involved in a structured dialogue around a key issue that really matters to people
2. Learner Action Teams where small groups of young people and adults work together as action research teams to focus on issues of importance to all

It is the combination of these approaches which enables real progress to be made. The learning engages young people in real decision-making and action and takes them beyond the classroom to work on issues valued by learners themselves and by the broader community. Young people and adults collaborate and co-construct solutions to problems and plan for their collective futures. Their learning and know-how is made available to all for future use and becomes a core resource in developing future projects in future years, in other schools in the area or more widely with other communities.

¹ The ecf Young Leaders programme is supported by the Centre for Urban Education