
Overview for Program Managers

If you're a program manager at a YSOs, a school administrator, or someone who works with youth in another managerial or administrative capacity, you may be interested in Media-Smart Youth, but you might not be the one facilitating the program. This section of the *Introduction and Overview* is designed to answer any questions you may have about the curriculum and how to do the planning that's necessary to bring Media-Smart Youth to your organization.

This curriculum is—first and foremost—flexible! It is easily adaptable for use with young people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and with those who have special needs or interests. It can be used in a wide variety of community settings—such as after-school programs and summer camps—and by many types of YSOs.

Understanding the Components of the Curriculum

Media-Smart Youth brings together a mix of learning formats—including brainstorming, small and large group discussions, games, and creative productions to encourage discussion, problem solving, and critical thinking. The curriculum includes 10 structured lessons with activities that explore media, nutrition, and physical activity topics. The program then concludes with a *Big Production*—an opportunity for youth to put what they've learned into practice.

The Facilitator's Guide includes these components of the curriculum:

- 10 structured lessons, each with:
 - A *Snack Break*—a simple, nutritious treat that illustrates different nutrition concepts
 - An *Action Break*—an activity that gives the youth a chance to get active and energized

- *Take Home a New Idea!*—a handout that encourages the youth to share what they learned in that lesson with family and friends, and that provides the recipe from that lesson’s *Snack Break*
- *Tips for Media-Smart Parents*—a handout that summarizes what the youth learned in the lesson and provides tips for how to put this learning into action at home with the whole family
- Appendices with supplemental materials and resources:
 - Educational Content Standards Linked to Lesson Activities (*Appendix A*)
 - Additional *Action Break* Options (*Appendix B*)
 - Additional *Snack Break* Options (*Appendix C*)
 - Sample Permission Forms (*Appendix D*)
 - Promotion Kit (*Appendix E*)
 - Resources to Support Planning and Implementation (*Appendix F*)
 - Doing the *Big Production* (*Appendix G*)
 - The *Big Production* Toolbox (*Appendix H*)
 - Glossary (*Appendix I*)
 - Media, Nutrition, and Physical Activity Resources (*Appendix J*)
 - Media-Smart Youth Certificate of Completion (*Appendix K*)
 - The DVD At-A-Glance (*Appendix L*)
- An accompanying DVD with segments for facilitators and for youth:
 - The segments for facilitators offer an orientation to the program and tips on implementing the curriculum from facilitators who have used it.
 - The segments for youth aim to reinforce program concepts in an engaging media format.
 - Use of the DVD is entirely optional. *Choosing not to use the DVD will not affect your ability to carry out the program.*

Once through the curriculum, youth focus on their *Big Production*—a media product they create to motivate other young people to take action for better nutrition or increased physical activity. The *Big Production* allows youth to incorporate all they learned in the lessons—nutrition, physical activity, production, teamwork, and creativity—in something they can share with others.

Now that you are familiar with the components of the curriculum and the program, the following sections outline some key things to think about before you get started.

Determining the Length of the Lessons

The suggested time for each lesson is 90 minutes: 70 minutes for activities, 10 minutes for the *Snack Break*, and 10 minutes for the *Action Break*.

If you decide to do the *Tell Us What You Think* pre-curriculum and *Tell Us What You Think Now* post-curriculum activities, you'll also need to allow 20 additional minutes for each activity before *Lesson 1* and after *Lesson 10*. *Lesson 10* also includes an extra optional activity of making t-shirts for the *Big Production*. If you choose to do this extra activity, you'll need an extra 30 minutes to complete it.

Suggested times also are provided for each activity within the lessons. The size, age, and gender mix of your group will affect how much time you will actually need for the lessons, so keep these features in mind when you establish the schedule and timing for your program. Sites that have conducted the curriculum have varied in the time needed to get through the lessons. You may want to build more time into the lessons when you set up the schedule to give you added flexibility.

Scheduling the Lessons

The Media-Smart Youth program has no set schedule, meaning you decide how often to meet and how to conduct the lessons in a way that works best for you and your participants. Sites that have conducted the program have used a variety of formats and schedules.

Possible options include:

- One lesson at a time, once or twice a week, after school or on a weekend day
- One lesson at a time, on consecutive days
- One lesson at a time, once a month

- Multiple lessons in a day, over several days or weeks (this option might work best for a camp program when youth are together for a concentrated period of time)

In addition to the overall scheduling of the program, you should carefully consider when to conduct lessons. Ask yourself these questions:

- Do most youth in your group have regular school, social, or family commitments on a particular day or at a specific time?
- Are there cultural or religious considerations for selecting or avoiding particular days?
- When are facilities most readily available?

The answers can help you decide when to hold the program and how to schedule the activities.

When planning how you will schedule Media-Smart Youth, don't forget about the *Big Production*. Youth will work on the *Big Production* only after they complete all 10 lessons. Planning and carrying out the *Big Production* could take 1 day to a few weeks or months to complete—it all depends on the project the youth choose.

Choosing the Right Location for the Lessons

Every aspect of Media-Smart Youth is designed to help young people learn by doing. For example, some of the activities require the youth to work in groups, to move around in a space, or to work on large pieces of paper with markers and other supplies. Your location will need to be large enough to accommodate these activities.

Also, consider the size of the room. Each lesson will get the youth up and moving. All of the physical activities can be done indoors and require little, if any, equipment. Be sure to review the lesson activities and *Action Breaks* and the additional *Action Break* ideas in *Appendix B* before you choose a location for the program so you know what kind of space is needed.

Recruitment Ideas At-A-Glance

- Send a postcard or e-mail message to young people who regularly participate in your activities.
- Make simple posters or flyers to put on bulletin boards in schools, at libraries, and in local stores.
- Contact parents and guardians who have enrolled their children in other programs sponsored by your organization.
- Encourage young people to enroll for two—themselves and a friend.
- Put a notice in your organization's newsletter.
- Send an announcement to your community newspaper for inclusion in its event listings.
- Post about Media-Smart Youth on your organization's website, blog, or social networking site.
- Get a Media-Smart Youth advocate (a parent or program manager who has already done the program) to help out with recruitment and promotion efforts.
- Your ideas here!

Before you choose your location, you should also take a quick look at the *Snack Breaks* for all lessons and the additional snack ideas in *Appendix C* so you will know what to expect for these sessions. Most of the suggested snacks are simple and easy to prepare, but a few require refrigeration and most require some setting up. A nearby sink for hand washing and cleanup will help make *Snack Breaks* easier.

Selecting the Participant Group

Media-Smart Youth is designed to stimulate discussion and critical thinking. These actions can happen only through the active participation of all the youth. To help you get everyone involved, we suggest that you limit the size of your group to 15 or fewer participants. This group size will allow you to maximize opportunities for each youth to become fully involved. For the purpose of group work and valuable discussion, we also suggest a minimum of eight youth.

Recruiting Youth Participants

You should consider a variety of approaches for spreading the word about your program. Think about past recruitment efforts that have worked for your organization, or try something new that you think will be successful.

For example, consider hosting a pre-registration event that features media demonstrations, fun activities, and nutritious snacks. You might want to play the Media-Smart Youth DVD Segment #10: *Big Production Montage*, which shows *Big Productions* created by youth who participated in the pilot phase of the program. Or you could host an orientation before lessons begin to help youth and their parents become excited and better informed about the program. Ask others throughout your community to help with your enlistment efforts, too—the more people you have involved, the farther news about the program can spread.

Keeping Youth Involved

With thoughtful recruitment efforts, you should have many eager young people ready to learn how to be media-smart. Keeping them engaged so they gain the full benefits of the program can sometimes be difficult, though. For some, the excitement of creating their own *Big Production* may be enough to keep them coming back. Others may need more or different reasons to stay involved.

Consider awarding a small item in each lesson, such as small toys that promote physical activity, such as a ball or Frisbee™, to those who volunteer answers or are particularly helpful. Or offer a small prize to the participants who follow through with each lesson's *Take Home a New Idea!* activity.

There are many ways to keep young people engaged. Consult with other activity leaders to get their suggestions. Ask the youth themselves for ideas that will keep them coming back.

Engaging Parents and Guardians

Getting parents and guardians involved in Media-Smart Youth is great for everyone—for you, for the youth, and for the families. Sending a simple letter or e-mail before the first lesson of the program can start the process of getting parents and guardians involved. Tell them about the program, ask them to support their children's active participation, and encourage them to get involved in the take-home activities included with the lessons. This new edition of Media-Smart Youth includes handouts designed for parents that youth will bring home after each lesson. The content in the parent handouts complements the youths' own take-home activities. The ideas and tips in these handouts are for parents, guardians, and anyone engaged in parenting young people.

Engaging parents and guardians also means getting permission for their children to participate. If your organization's policy is to require parental permission for youth to participate in your other programs, you will want to do the same for the entire Media-Smart Youth curriculum and, separately, for the field trip in *Lesson 6*. Keep in mind that if you plan to put any youth's voice or image on any Media-Smart Youth products during the program, you should also get written parental consent to do so. You can find sample permission forms in *Appendix D*. In addition to covering

If You Have Extra Time, Consider a Field Trip to a Media Outlet

Whether or not you work with a media partner, you may want to give the youth some real-world exposure by taking them on a field trip to a newspaper office, TV or radio station, or graphic design firm. Field trips are wonderful opportunities for the youth to see the concepts they are exploring in the program. If you choose to add this option, think about doing it early in the program. You also will need to do some advance planning; the planning suggestions and sample permission form for *Lesson 6* (the grocery store field trip) will help you organize a media outlet trip.

If you aren't able to visit a media outlet, take a virtual tour of a production studio as you begin planning your *Big Production*. The *Lesson 10* Media-Smart Youth DVD Segments #11, #12, and #13, *On the Air! Roll the Presses!* provide a behind-the-scenes look at the action at a TV studio, a radio studio, and a newspaper.

the usual permission-related information, these sample forms also ask parents and guardians to report any allergies or special needs their child may have. This knowledge will be particularly important for planning *Snack Breaks*.

You also might want to go beyond just getting permission from parents and guardians and really make them part of the program. Ask for volunteers to join you during the lessons and to come along for the *Lesson 6* field trip to a grocery store. Invite parents and guardians to come and watch the *Big Production*. These opportunities are great ways for the youth to show off their newly acquired knowledge and critical thinking skills to parents and guardians!

Deciding Whether To Use a Media Partner

You can conduct the Media-Smart Youth lessons and carry out the *Big Production* using your own organization's current staff, expertise, and resources. Or you might want to get someone with a little more media expertise to help you, especially when it comes to planning and executing the *Big Production*. A media partner can be an individual or several representatives from one or more media-related organizations.

Think broadly when you consider your options for a media partner. Your partner could be "in the business," such as a TV producer, advertising executive, or Web designer. Or your partner could be someone who works more peripherally with media, such as the local high school photography teacher or your neighborhood librarian or someone who maintains a popular blog.

A media partner's involvement is limited only by your collective imaginations. Here are some options:

- Enroll a media partner to assist you in conducting the entire Media-Smart Youth curriculum.
- Invite a media partner to guide you through the *Big Production*.

- Conduct the curriculum and *Big Production* on your own, but ask a media partner to help promote and distribute your group’s *Big Production* media product when it’s completed.

A media partner can add special value to the group’s experience. Embarking on such a partnership also can present challenges. Consider the benefits and challenges, such as those listed below, and decide what might work best for you.

Working with a Media Partner	
Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adds professional perspective ■ Provides “real-life” reinforcement of content ■ Adds expert insight, guidance, and support ■ Can provide or contribute to facilities, supplies, or equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adds extra layer of coordination and planning ■ May have a different approach to interacting with youth ■ Might not subscribe to all the program messages

Finding a Media Partner

If you are not sure about whether to seek out a media partner, or how to go about finding one, these ideas may inspire you:

- People at a media organization in your community—perhaps a theater, newspaper, TV station, production company, digital media company, or Web or graphic design studio
- Media facilities and faculty media experts at a local high school or college
- Students majoring in media at local colleges who are interested in internships
- Media professionals among the parents or guardians of program participants
- Local businesses that have production facilities
- Local cable access TV station

If you are having trouble finding a media partner or decide to do the *Big Production* on your own but still need media equipment, contact local high schools, colleges, or trade schools. Many schools have production facilities in their buildings. Ask whether these schools offer classes on using the production equipment or on other media-related skills, and determine if any of the students would like to help you with your *Big Production*.

Involving Your Media Partner

Here are some other tips for deciding how to involve a media partner:

- Be specific about the role you want the media partner to play. Which lessons do you want the partner to attend or facilitate?
 - Throughout the lessons, we have included an icon in places where it might be useful to involve a media partner in a discussion or activity.
 - If you have enrolled your media partner to help with the entire curriculum, you may want him or her to lead:
 - Each lesson's *Mini-Production (Activity C)*
 - *Lesson 9*, in which the youth select their media format and the action they will promote
 - *Lesson 10*, in which the youth learn about the main phases of media production
 - *Big Production sessions*
 - If your media partner is going to assist only with creating the *Big Production*, invite him or her to take part in *Lesson 9* and *Lesson 10*, and to lead the *Big Production sessions*.
 - If your media partner is helping only to promote your finished *Big Production*, negotiate a specific plan for the partner's involvement, such as:
 - Linking to your *Big Production* on the partner's website and social networking sites
 - Specifying the number of times your *Big Production* will air on the partner's cable TV station
 - Negotiating the number of times your *Big Production* ad will appear in the partner's newspaper
- Talk with your media partner to ensure that you understand each other's facilitation styles, recognize different approaches to discipline

issues, and agree on a mutually acceptable approach. Facilitation may not be your media partner's area of expertise, so do what you can to help him or her feel comfortable around young people and to participate fully in the program.

- Determine whether your budget will allow you to pay a small fee to your media partner. If so, you may want to pay for the partner's time or for the use of the organization's facilities or equipment.

Getting Your Community Involved

The value of the Media-Smart Youth program extends far beyond what goes on in the lessons. Involving members of your community can benefit your program now, while also nurturing relationships for the future. Try some of these ideas:

- Ask high schools to post flyers asking for participants or enlisting teenage volunteers to help with lessons or the *Big Production*.
- Ask community organizations to publicize Media-Smart Youth on their websites. Posting the *Big Production* will be great publicity for the program.
- Invite local personal trainers, nutritionists, TV news announcers, or other people with media experience to serve as guest facilitators.
- Contact your local library about hosting one or more lessons. Libraries often have rooms available for community members to use. They also provide access to research and media sources that may be useful.
- Ask a local print or copy center to donate poster-sized versions of print advertisements for the lessons.
- Approach a local grocer to donate food or ingredients for your *Snack Breaks*.
- Approach your local newspaper office or radio or TV station to see whether it wants to do a story on your Media-Smart Youth program.
- Approach local media outlets to air or promote your *Big Production* product.

You will be surprised to learn how many people want to get involved and to discover all the creative ways they can take part. Look for every opportunity to make your program a well-known community endeavor. *Appendix E* contains some tools that you can use to publicize and promote your Media-Smart Youth program.