

## **ROOTS PROGRAM: GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

### **SELECTING STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE**

1. **Select and work with students who are influential among their peers.** Influential students are best able to set the tone for student climate in the school. Many different types of students may be influential, and those who are influential, may not initially be influential in a positive way. It is important to include students who may be influential among smaller social groups at the school in addition to students who many acknowledge to be influential in setting the tone for the school. Including both boys and girls, and students from different grades ensures that all students at the school have someone who is similar to them in the Roots Program.

### **CONTENT OF THE ROOTS PROGRAM**

2. **Students identify the issues:** Roots meetings are safe spaces where students can speak openly and honestly without fear of reporting to other students or adults. Roots students identify areas for improvement that are important and noticeable to them about how students treat each other in the school. Students think about particular scenarios that happen in their school to learn how to observe things they see going on and connect those observations to opportunities for change. Students are reminded that they are the experts in their school.
  - a. **Example Activities:** Make Change, Xtranormal
3. **Students generate possible solutions:** Roots students generate suggestions for addressing areas for improvement in how students treat each other, starting with how to treat friends. They are guided to think through specifics of something they might do when they see certain things, and what they might encourage their friends to do. Students are encouraged to select behaviors that are comfortable and natural for them. Students are encouraged to feel influential and able to affect what happens at their school.
  - a. **Example Activities:** Bank of Behaviors, Flowchart, Role-play
4. **Provide opportunities for student action:** Activities are set up to provide students with specific actions to take in response to something they see happening in their school among students, or to start a change. They are in charge of creating the materials that are part of their activities. Students feel ownership of their school and the climate at their school as they take on the Roots identity and form relationships with other students in the program.
  - a. **Example Activities:** Weekly challenges, Pay it Forward, Hashtag posters, Orange wristbands
5. **Make student initiatives visible to others:** It is very important to demonstrate to the rest of the school the activities of the Roots students so

that the Roots students and their actions are visible to others. Enable students to describe what the group is about, and what they themselves are doing to make change. Help students practice explaining what the group is about to others so other students understand.

- a. **Example Activities:** Roots Day, morning announcements, posters at the school, Make Change box, Taboo game

6. **Students use online platforms and techniques to collaborate and reach others:** Much of student initiative, creativity, and connection occur online. This program can use how students actually interact to help students reflect on what happens at their school, and to use social media to publicize their activities and viewpoints. Students are interested in learning about how to use new online platforms to create messages. They like to be able to make something that “looks good,” or “professional,” in a way that might not be as easy offline. But they want to know who they are spreading messages to – this helps them feel in control of connecting on platforms they already use and have certain identities and reputations on.

- a. **Example Activities:** Roots website, students take pictures of their work to post to their Instagram accounts or Facebook, hashtag posters (connection to online activities), making videos to post