

Guide to Youth Bids

Reclaiming involves restructuring power relations so youth shape social and physical STEM spaces. It means youth ‘taking back’ power to claim who belongs and what it means to engage in STEM by shifting how materials and relationships are allowed to be structured. This centers youth lived lives and their pasts, presents and hoped-for futures with and in STEM.

What are youth bids? Youth take actions to prompt and seek attention from educators and peers. When youth make a reclaiming bid, they seek to critique, reimagine, and change the social and physical spaces of STEM.

This guide provides:

- One example of how to enact the Core Equitable Practice (CEP) of Reclaiming, as described in the Reclaiming Insights 2.4 document.
- Examples of how youth may seek to reclaim STEM, drawing on our partner educators’ implementation of informal STEM programs.
- Ways to notice these bids and readily respond to them in ways that value youth for who they are and what they bring to the learning environment.

Questions for Group Discussion

- How have youth had **opportunities to reclaim STEM** in my/our program because of who they are, what they have experienced and/or what they know? How have youth been **denied that opportunity**?
- How have I/we **responded to such bids**? Which **new learning outcomes**, if any, emerged from my/our response to bids for reclaiming

Things to Keep In Mind

- Youth bids can require multiple responses at once. For example, youth bids to reclaim social space and physical space in STEM can also require the core equitable practice of sharing authority.
- This tool can be used alongside the Equity Compass tool to enhance discussions on youth bids goals and outcomes.

Why do youth make bids? Youth often actively seek to do the following:

- To **disrupt** the ways in which everyday knowledge and practice of STEM and schooling position students as deficient, or without power and authority.
- To **amplify** their already-present brilliant and agentic acts of everyday knowing and practice and to have their transformative potential made visible.
- To be **rightfully present** and legitimately belong as fully human in ISL.

Examples of Youth Bids

Disrupting: Asking to create new activities disrupting normalized boundaries

During the YAC session of a science center, in which youths were asked to brainstorm how they would like to redesign and reorganize the makerspace, Megan stated that **“we want to see activities that are not traditionally feminine or masculine or that split us up.”**

Megan Added, “Whether we are making paper circuits to make a card for a friend, to make a nightlight or designing something to change the world like a jacket to prevent bullying, **we want to be supported in having our concerns matter**, and in being able **to take action** on those concerns.”

The lead educator, Olga **recognized the critical message** of Megan and asked her and other youths to further unpack her ideas and examples. Then Olga **drew from these ideas to further plan and design** new maker activities with YAC youth.

Bid: Asking to ensure gender parity in programs

Response: Noticing the bid and following through with commitment

Reclaiming: Youth supported in taking on coalition spokesperson role to support equity for peers

Amplifying: Wanting to create a space that honors youth projects in-process

During the YAC session of a science center, in which youths were asked to brainstorm how they would like to redesign and reorganize the makerspace, Fall stated, **“kids need to know that nothing is perfect.** Nothing is done. So, let’s create this space to display kids’ projects in-process. Kids’ ideas and projects matter, the process matters and is valuable enough to be shared.”

As lead educator, **Olga brought Fall’s idea into the science center’s staff meeting** to build a display shelf to showcase youths’ in-the-making artifacts in the makerspace. Olga followed up with Fall on the shelf design first-drafted by adult staff, **asking which revision Fall may recommend** to the design staff. Finally, this shelf was placed in the new makerspace.

Bid: Sharing ideas for changing space

Response: Noticing bid, valuing and facilitating voicing youth ideas to people in power

Reclaim: Youth envisions physical change and is supported in realizing it

Rightfully Present: Wanting to create a space to support youth need to be who they are

During the YAC session of a science center, in which youths were asked to brainstorm how they would like to redesign and reorganize the makerspace, Ivy stated, **we want “activities that can let us be who we are.** I want to do things that let me be me. In school sometimes it’s hard to be me.”

The educator revoiced Ivy’s idea of ‘letting us be who we are.’ **She asked youths to unpack the idea and develop summary statements** that would help publicly represent the space to let others know this would be a space that supports youth identities and self-expressed authenticity. Based on the statements youths proposed, the educator worked with the science center staff to make a wooden panel sign as a **permanent public representation of their manifesto** to present and support the core summary statements/visions for the space.

Bid: Sharing a desire for acceptance and celebration of identity

Response: Listening, taking time to discuss as a group, representing youth ideas externally

Authority Sharing: Youth ideas held up as legitimate and valuable to the broader public

Reflecting:

- Which example of youth bids resonates with your experience?
- Share and add youth bids for reclaiming that you have experienced.
- How might you respond to youth bids for reclaiming in your space?