HIVE RESEARCH LAB

How Can Out-of-School Organizations Use Brokering to Support Youth Interest-Driven Learning Pathways?

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To download a copy of the Hive community-developed white paper, visit **http://bit.ly/brokering**

Being a Learning Broker supports youth pathways because it:

- **CONNECTS YOUTH TO MEANINGFUL FUTURE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES** including events, programs, internships, individuals, and institutions that will support youth in continuing their interest-driven learning.

- **ENRICHES THEIR SOCIAL NETWORKS** with adults, peers, and institutions that are connected to/have knowledge of future learning opportunities.

Basics of Brokering: People, Practices, and Learning Opportunities

Brokering is about helping a young person make that crucial connection to a next learning opportunity.

People who broker

Things that get brokered

BROKERING

Common Practices
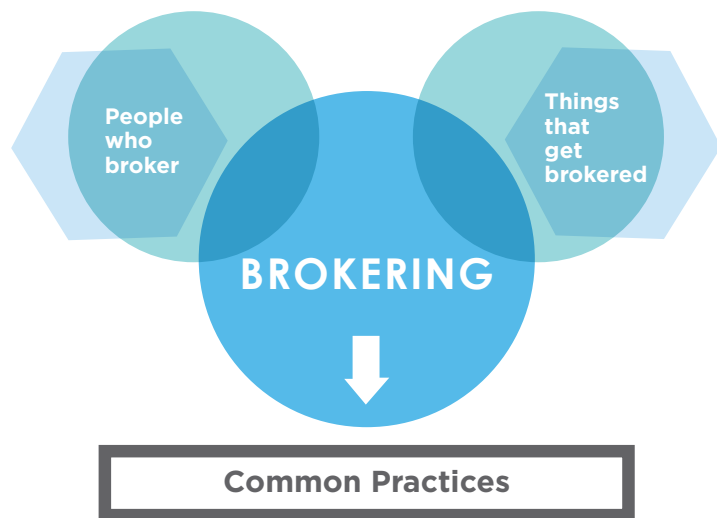
- **PEOPLE WHO BROKER:** Brokers are everywhere in a young person's life. They include **family members** (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles); **non-family adults** (educators, teaching artists, mentors); and **peers** (friends, significant others, students at school).

- **THINGS THAT GET BROKERED:** Learning opportunities are the building blocks of pathways. They might include **experiences** (programs, one-day events, classes, internships, fellowships); **social connections** (mentors, institutional gatekeepers, collaborative peers); **institutions** (colleges, companies, organizations); and **information sources** (websites, books, how-to guides).

- **COMMON PRACTICES:** Hive NYC community members have surfaced a range of brokering practices that can happen across the life cycle of a program (see page 3).

Hive Research Lab is a project of

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

Conceptual Model of Social Capital Development Through Brokering

We propose a conceptual model for how brokering relates to social capital development leading to valued youth personal, academic, professional, and civic outcomes.
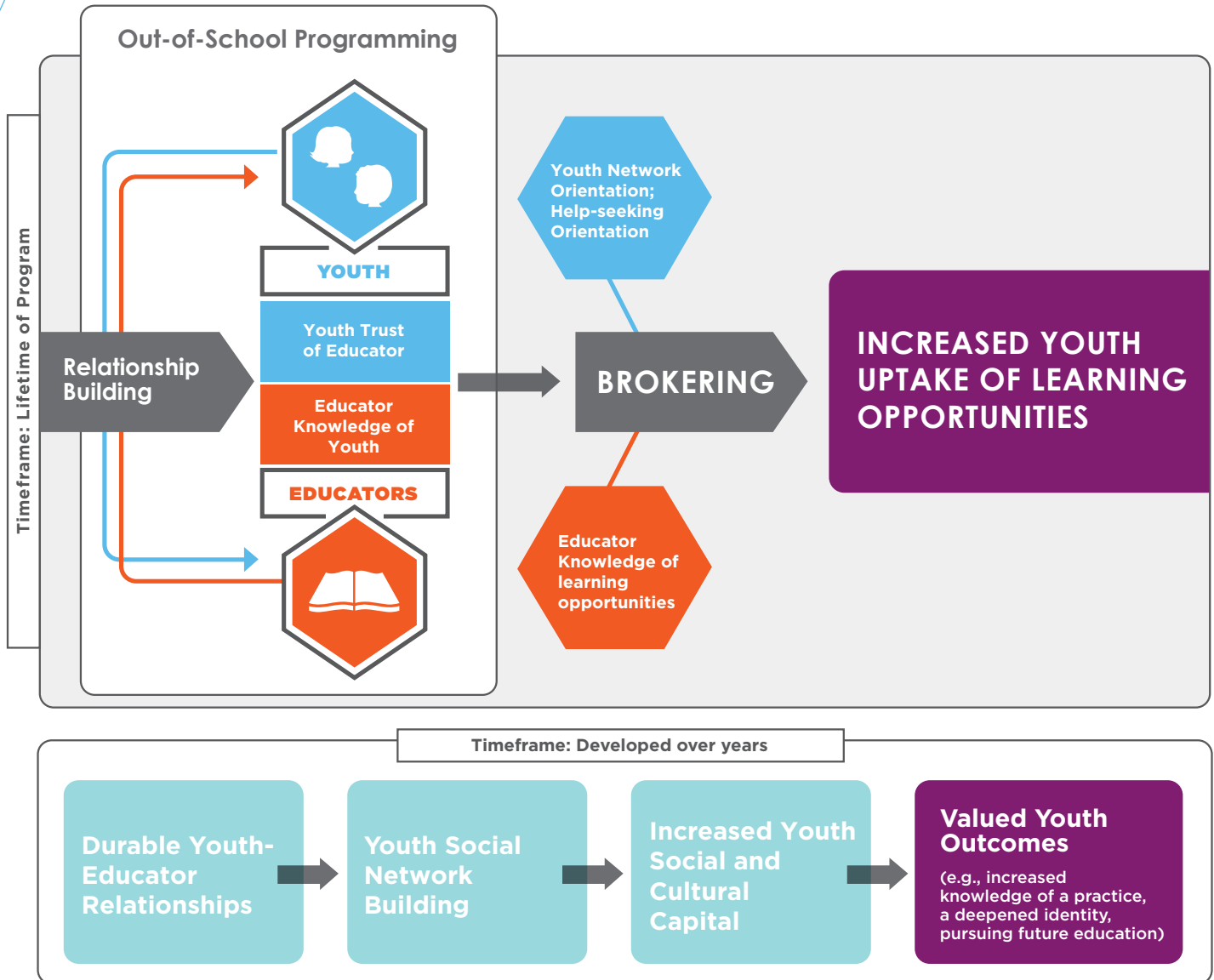
This model highlights an important route to supporting **increased youth uptake of learning opportunities**. Key to this process is the **relationship building** that occurs between educators and youth typically in the context of informal learning after school programs. We postulate that the environment afforded by these programs provides a promising context for two important outcomes necessary for effective brokering: the development of trusting, caring relationships between youth and educators (i.e, **youth trust of educator**) and a better understanding by educators of youths' interests, needs, etc. (i.e., **educator knowledge of youth**). As mentioned

earlier, when educators know their youth and have close relationships with them, it is more likely that youth will take up future learning opportunities that these educators recommend. This allows for successful enactment of various **brokering** practices leading to increased youth engagement in learning opportunities.

There are two important supporting components that play critical roles in the brokering process. The first is how a young person's **network orientation** or **help-seeking orientation** may positively or negatively affect their ability to take up and navigate the opportunities brokered by high resource individuals. Secondly, educators' ability to effectively broker relevant opportunities for youth is contingent on their **knowledge of learning opportunities**.

Brokering Practices across the Life Cycle of a Program

This table represents key strategies—and when they might be implemented—that may enhance the "brokering potential" of a program. These practices work through narrowing the gap—of knowledge, of accessibility, of experience—for young people. For example, field trips might open doors for youth to meet new people, be exposed to new ways of thinking, and increase their understanding of the resources in a particular neighborhood.

BEFORE	DURING		AFTER
During the planning process...	*At any time...*	*Towards the end...*	*At any time...*
• Discuss resources to **plan field trips** to various related sites • Discuss any formal or informal **"ladders of opportunities"** that can be articulated within your organization. • Think about ways to set up ways to **update other supporters at home and school** (i.e., family members, teachers, guidance counselors). • **Identify future learning opportunities** related to youths' interests. Discuss how to share this information. • Have a conversation about what would be **appropriate next steps** for youth.	• **Organize field trips** to new settings to meet new people and institutions. • **Share information about program topic-related events** (conferences, lectures, etc.). • **Discuss how engagement in the program's activity** can be connected to school activities, or career or school goals. • **Provide speaking opportunities** for youth to present/share their projects. Help youth find an engaging way to describe their projects that also employs the use of technical language. • If you still have space early in the program, **consider engaging in another round of recruitment**. your contacts at school and the program peers know. • Help youth develop **tools for mentoring** (e.g., see initiatives around "youth-initiated mentoring").	• **Develop an "exit plan"** to help youth identify what they'd like to do next. • **Help youth apply or register** for an opportunity. • Ensure youth know how to **stay in contact with your organization.** • **Offer "leveling-up" opportunities** to youth (e.g., co-teach the program, become a "student resident," etc.). Possibly base this on passion in addition to (or instead of) skill level. • Be specific about the **likelihood that your program will be offered again.** • **Write a short "parting words" blurb** to share with youth and other supporters that highlights youth's accomplishments, strengths, and any recommendations for future growth. • Ask youth if they would like to **recommend any peers to this program.**	• **Check in with former youth** participants periodically. Let them know you're interested in their activities. • **Keep youth in mind** for speaking opportunities to present, apply for scholarships, etc. • **Schedule "reunions"** with all youth who participated at a particular program. • **Share 'program stuff'** (i.e., photos, videos, program code, instructional handouts, etc.) with participants. • **Post photos and videos of student work/program activity** to an 'online gallery.'