



2010

RELATIONSHIPS THAT
MATTER TO AMERICA'S
TEENS

TEEN VOICE

OVERVIEW

Too many teens are growing up without the supports and opportunities they need. These are clear messages in *Teen Voice 2010*, which details the findings of a new national study of 1,860 15-year-olds in three cities across the United States. This new report, conducted by Search Institute and sponsored by Best Buy, both reinforces the 2009 inaugural *Teen Voice* study findings and strengthens a growing body of research that documents a persistent gap between what teens need and what we as a nation actually offer them.

Teen Voice is part of Best Buy @15, a program to connect with teens, listen to what they have to say about the world, give voice to their perspectives and invest Best Buy's resources to support teen efforts to lead social change.

Key Findings

Teen Voice 2010 focuses on three key strengths that make a big difference in teens' lives:

- ▶ **Teens' SPARKS, or their deepest passions and interests;**
- ▶ **Teens' VOICE, or their confidence, skills and opportunities to influence things that matter to them; and**
- ▶ **The RELATIONSHIPS teens need to support their growth.**

Teens with high levels of sparks, voice and relationships do better on every academic, psychological, social-emotional and behavioral outcome, signaling that youth with all three strengths are already on the path to success in school, work and life. Yet more than one-third of 15-year-olds surveyed did not score high on any of the strengths, and only 7 percent experience high levels of all three strengths.

The study also finds that teens need positive, sustained and meaningful relationships with extended family members, teachers, mentors, grandparents, neighbors and other caring adults. The survey found that only 19 percent of 15-year-olds scored high on an index measuring adult-youth relationships beyond the family, indicating that there is significant room for improvement when it comes to strengthening positive relationships between teens and adults.



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Other findings:

- **THIRTY-EIGHT PERCENT** of 15-year-olds did not score high on any of the three strength areas;
- Overall, just **TWENTY-TWO PERCENT** scored high on the voice index, indicating that few teens feel as though they have the confidence, skills and opportunities to voice their opinion and influence the things that matter to most to them; and
- **EIGHTY PERCENT** of 15-year-olds have at least one “spark,” a passionate interest that gives them meaning, focus, energy and joy, but only **FIFTY-ONE** percent of teens feel they are fully engaged with the issues they care about most.

What are the implications?

Teen Voice 2010 captures what the nation's 15-year-olds need in order to thrive. Like all generations, today's teens face important challenges in growing up. And each generation must face these challenges with the perspectives and resources that are available to it. Most teenagers have a clear sense of their own sparks—things about them that can make a difference in the world. Most teens also have strong and supportive parents who invest tremendously in helping them grow up well, often against the odds.

Adults other than parents can also play powerful roles in young people's lives. Teens who form relationships with other adults who “get” them, listen to them and are role models for them—as friends and informal mentors—have important advantages in facing challenges. And that's a role that virtually every caring and responsible adult can play in helping millions of today's teens stay—or get—on a path to a hopeful future for themselves, their families and their communities.

For more information and to view the full *Teen Voice 2010 Report* please visit <http://www.at15.com>.

