



**Volume 8, Number 1
Spring 2013**

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Feature Articles

Measuring Science Inquiry Skills in Youth Development Programs: The Science Process Skills Inventory [Article 130801FA001]Page

Arnold, Mary E.; Bourdeau, Virginia D.; Nott, Brooke D.

In recent years there has been an increased emphasis on science learning in 4-H and other youth development programs. In an effort to increase science capacity in youth, it is easy to focus only on developing the concrete skills and knowledge that a trained scientist must possess. However, when science learning is presented in a youth-development setting, the context of the program also matters. This paper reports the development and testing of the Science Process Skills Inventory (SPSI) and its usefulness for measuring science inquiry skill development in youth development science programs. The results of the psychometric testing of the SPSI indicated the instrument is reliable and measures a cohesive construct called science process skills, as reflected in the 11 items that make up this group of skills. The 11 items themselves are based on the cycle of science inquiry, and represent the important steps of the complete inquiry process.

Positive Youth Development in the 21st Century: Exploring Online Environments

[Article 130801FA002]Page

Light, Mark; Falkenthal, Jessica

The manner that young people and adults are communicating with each other is rapidly changing in society that is, in part, driven by the latest technology. As a youth-driven program, we must engage in new strategies and methods by which we communicate with youth members, volunteers, families, and the community at large. Social and mobile media are a growing and popular venue for much of our target audience and youth development practitioners must learn how to leverage these networks to create positive youth development in online environments.

If we ignore and don't engage in the opportunity to be connected to youth online, then youth are left to make their own paths online and set the online norms. As youth organizations, we also must seize the opportunity to be online mentors and use the resources that are available and being used by our target populations.

The Effects of Non-Academic Mentoring on School-Related Cognitions: A Pilot Study

[Article 130801FA003]Page

MacArthur, Stacey S.; Higginbotham, Brian J.; Ho, Edward

Mentoring has been shown to positively influence various youth outcomes and developmental assets. The 4-H Mentoring: Youth and Families with Promise (4-H YFP) program is a multi-component program designed to enhance individual, familial, and social assets of at-risk youth. This pilot study examines the effects of participation in the 4-H YFP program on school-related cognitions. Data were collected on 20 mentored at-risk youth and 18 waiting list youth. RMANOVA analyses identified significant differences on one scale and expected trends on five additional scales. Ecological systems theory is used to inform the interpretation of results.

Parental Discussion about Personal Finances: Does it Make a Difference in the Amount of Debt Incurred? [Article 130801FA004]Page

Deringer, Nancy C.

Higher education costs have increased substantially over the past two decades and, therefore, student loan debt has increased as well. Studies have shown that one earns more money over one’s lifetime if he/she has a four-year college degree. In fact, it is often substantially more depending upon one’s profession. However, for some individuals, the costs of funding higher education may be confusing and often times overwhelming. A study was completed at a university in the pacific northwest (n=778) which asked college students about their financial behaviors, credit card debt, student loan debt, discussions with parents, and in what topics or workshops they would like more information. Based on this data, faculty and graduate students from the school of family and consumer sciences and staff from the student financial aid office are creating workshops and curriculum to assist students in managing their debt and finances.

“...and my World:” Perceptions of County Educators and Volunteers toward International 4-H Programs [Article 130801FA005].....Page

Sallee, Jeff; Lancaster, Sarah

The phrase “...and my world” was added to the 4-H pledge in 1973, forever solidifying 4-H’s commitment to international programming and global citizenship. In 2008, Oklahoma 4-H began to consider revitalizing its international outreach. After researching the barriers to International 4-H projects, Oklahoma 4-H educators and volunteers were surveyed to discover their interests in this area with the intent of beginning a renewed International 4-H program with educator and volunteer support. The survey results indicate that 4-H volunteers and youth educators prefer short term International educational programs that focus on cultural awareness and service-learning for older youth.

Program Articles

Promoting Healthy Development among Adolescent Girls: A Mixed-Methods Evaluation of the HERstory Program [Article 130801PA001].....Page

MacFarlane, Emily; Chauveron, Lisa M.; Thompkins, Amanda C.

The Leadership Program’s HERstory is a school-based, universal, preventative intervention designed to promote healthy youth development among adolescent girls by increasing their connections to pro-social peers and to school and community while developing social-emotional skills that serve as protective factors. In this school-year-long program, a facilitator implements three program phases: group development activities in Community Building, self-reflective Writing Workshop exercises, and a final Creative Output project, an ethnographic theater production or literary journal developed from participants’ Writing Workshop responses. The current mixed-methods study presents early evidence of program effectiveness based on focus groups and school record data review at two NYC public schools during the 2010-2011 school year. Participants reported improvements in key areas targeted by HERstory, including peer connectedness, academic achievement, and a range of protective factors including future orientation and goal setting. Results suggest this program approach may be suitable promoting healthy adolescent development for girls.

The Value of Relevant, Project-Based Learning to Youth Development [Article 130801PA002]Page

Schwartz, Kerry; Tessman, Darcy; McDonald, Daniel

Project Based Learning models present authentic learning opportunities with real-life situations, enabling students to set their own learning goals and forge their own relationships (Barab, et al.,

2001). The autonomy inherent in this model allows youth to bring their skills and experiences to real situations and to be seen as valued community members. This article describes a project-based learning model involving “externs,” who developed and implemented sustainability projects in their communities. Externs worked with Cooperative Extension professionals on locally relevant community projects during the summer of 2011 in three Arizona counties. The project based learning experience had a positive impact on the lives of our three externs.

Utilizing 4-H in Afterschool Settings: Two Approaches for Integration

[Article 130801PA003]Page

Rudd, Rachel; Brower, Naomi

As our communities grow and change, afterschool programs represent an avenue to bring resources to populations which would otherwise not be available to them. Combining 4-H with the afterschool environment can be beneficial in supporting and raising the quality of afterschool programs being offered. This article explores the benefits and challenges of two approaches of implementing 4-H programming in afterschool settings: the 4-H managed program that is created and run solely by 4-H faculty and staff and the 4-H afterschool partnerships which are facilitated in partnership with existing afterschool programs. Regardless of the approach, combining 4-H with afterschool programs can strengthen well established programs and can enhance the quality of all afterschool programs.

Research and Evaluation Strategies

Self-Esteem and Feelings of Community Connectedness of At-Risk Adolescents

Attending Community-Based Afterschool Programs [Article 130801RS001]Page

Loughlin, Tina; Barnett, Rosemary V.; Culen, Gerald R.; Stedman, Nicole L.P.; Payne-Purvis, Caroline

This research investigated the relationship between adolescent afterschool program attendance, self-esteem and feelings of community connectedness. Thirty-nine of the 61 at-risk adolescents enrolled in two federally funded, community based afterschool programs participated in the study. Participants completed a 10-item self-esteem questionnaire and a 5-item section of the Youth Involved in Community Issues Survey (YICI) to measure perceptions of community connectedness. Attendance records were also collected from the sites. Data were analyzed using Pearson Correlations.

Results indicated that there was not a significant relationship between the total variables. The individual item analysis, however, did find a significant relationship between adolescent community connectedness and self esteem items. Findings suggest that there is a relationship to be explored and strengthened through means of community outreach for adolescents.

Conclusions from this study have important implications for youth practice. Specifically, program leaders need to help adolescents get involved in the community as contributing members.

Resource Review

The 8th Habit (2004) [Article 130801RR001]Page

Arnett, Nate

Youth development professionals are on the leading front in helping to prepare our youth and volunteers for success in the information or knowledge worker age. As such, these professionals are being subjected to tremendous changes in their individual and professional lives amidst the current economic challenges. *The 8th Habit* (2004) by Covey is a resource that youth development professionals can use to improve themselves as “whole persons” and help inspire those they serve to reach their potential, thus enhancing our communities and organizations