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## **Project H.O.P.E.:** **Effective University Engagement with** **Community Afterschool Programs**

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## **Project H.O.P.E.: Effective University Engagement with Community Afterschool Programs**

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**Abstract:** Implemented in 2002 by the Duke-Durham Neighborhood Partnership, Project H.O.P.E. has improved the quantity and quality of afterschool programs for the youth of Durham, NC. Project H.O.P.E. provides tutoring programs, enrichment resources, and evaluation support to non-profit community partner organizations located in the low income Durham neighborhoods surrounding Duke University. Duke University undergraduates who provide tutoring services to the Durham youth in the afterschool programs gain from valuable reciprocal service learning experiences. Project H.O.P.E. is an effective model of the mutual benefits that can be gained from effective university and community engagement in the service of at-risk students.

### **Introduction**

Afterschool programs can provide a critical supporting role as an intermediary space between schools and the home communities of predominantly minority youth. In addition, afterschool programs provide significant support to low-income minority youth. Minority youth, however, often live in communities where access to quality afterschool programs is appreciably more limited than for students living in more prosperous communities (Halpern, 1999; Hirsch, 2005; Noam, Miller, & Barry, 2002; Vandell & Shumow, 1999). Quality afterschool programs provide adult supervision and constructive activities from 3-6 PM, which are the peak hours for crimes committed by juveniles (Newman, Fox, Flynn, & Christeson, 2000). Afterschool programs are also a source for the structure needed to focus on academic and social skills improvement for at-risk youth (Chung & Hillsman, 2005; Halpern, 1999).

In 2000, the Durham Youth Coordinating Board and the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University prepared "The State of Durham's Children" report which noted the high dropout

rates and high crime rates of Durham's youth. In 1998-99, Durham's high school dropout rate was 5.7%, which was 24% higher than the North Carolina state average of 4.6%. The African-American teen dropout rates were 3 times higher than their white counterparts. Similarly, Durham's juvenile custody rate was 53% higher than the North Carolina state average (Reiter-Lavery, Rabiner, & Dodge, 2000).

As a result of this assessment, the Duke-Durham Neighborhood Partnership initiated Project H.O.P.E. (Holistic Opportunities Plan for Enrichment) to improve the academic and social outcomes for Durham's at-risk youth. Project H.O.P.E. collaborates with six community non-profit organizations to sponsor after-school programs for predominantly low income, African-American and Hispanic students, grades K-12. The project has three main objectives:

- to improve the academic and social outcomes of Durham's youth
- to improve and increase university and community engagement
- to build an evaluative culture that promotes a formative learning environment for university and community partners

### **Program Description**

Project H.O.P.E.'s six community partners are nonprofit organizations who independently operate their after-school programs. They maintain operational control of their sites including administration of their staff, program and financial arrangements. Project H.O.P.E. staff manage the extensive tutoring program with undergraduates drawn from courses taught in Duke University's education program. Duke University's Program in Education provides the structure for the integrated education coursework and tutor service-learning experiences of Duke undergraduates. Education professors, through class readings, discussion, and reflective assignments integrate academic theories with experiential service-learning practices. Tutors frequently take multiple education courses while at Duke, allowing them to continue tutoring, apply for teacher licensure programs, or complete an education studies concentration. H.O.P.E. staff recruits, trains, and monitors the tutors from as many as seven or eight service-learning courses each semester.

Community partners and H.O.P.E. staff collaborate in the management of after-school resources and enrichment activities. Significant Duke University resources contribute to the after-school program success. During 2005-06, Duke University faculty and staff provided services to Project H.O.P.E. after-school program that included:

- health clinics and health education classes
- arts enrichment activities
- outdoor recreation activities
- infrastructure support (building repairs, landscaping and construction)
- participation in on-campus events for Durham students

Through program tutoring and resource activities, Project H.O.P.E. has strengthened community and university linkages between Duke University and the Durham community. Community partners and Duke students have established strong reciprocal learning cultures, which support academic outcomes for Durham's children. Although there are operational differences among the afterschool programs, the basic components of the tutoring programs are consistent across the six Project H.O.P.E. sites. Duke tutors are assigned to the programs at the beginning of the semester. Each tutor provides two hours of academic support for an

individual or small group of students every week for the duration of the semester. Additional time in the afterschool program is structured with a wide variety of enrichment activities. Project H.O.P.E. staff continuously alert afterschool program staff to free or low cost community events such as athletic events, theatre tickets, and museum tickets throughout the year.

Project H.O.P.E. staff have also worked closely with community partners to establish consistent program documentation procedures. Templates for attendance, grade and activity documentation have contributed to effective monitoring of Project H.O.P.E. programs. Community partners work with project staff to maintain program records. Project staff also collaborates with local schools to collect regular report card and testing data. Three external evaluators monitor documentation activities, conduct regular site visits, interviews and prepare quarterly reports. Regular meetings with community partners provide a continuous feedback loop that sustains the formative evaluation process. As a result of this continuous evaluative feedback, the programs have become operationally consistent and steadily improved their service delivery practices.

### Program Results

Project H.O.P.E. and its community partners have developed an after-school program model that reinforces the strengths of university and community partners. Through its documentation and monitoring processes, the university and community partners are able to work together to solve emerging problems and to build upon program successes. The chart below indicates significant program changes over the program's four years:

#### Program Changes from 2002-2006

	<b>2002-03</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-06</b>
Number of sites	3	5	6	6
Number of students	102	155	157	161
Student return rate	N/A	51%	54%	53%
Average program attendance	62%	74%	81%	80%
Report card collection	44%	60%	84%	96%
Students with C or higher	72%	80%	74%	70%
Number of tutors	138	176	164	136
End of Grade Test pass rate	55%	70%	75%	82% *
Tutor return rate	N/A	19%	27%	36%
Staff return rate	67%	69%	77%	43%
	4/6	9/13	10/13	6/14

\*Reading End of Grade test only; Math End of Grade test scores were not available until October 2006.

Slight decrease in 05-06 staff. (There are always shifts in program staffing and as may be noted from the broader trends, just a year where there were more staff shifts than usual).

Program surveys indicate high levels of student engagement and satisfaction rates. Project H.O.P.E. elementary students were given a Fall Student Survey in September-October, 2005. A total of 53 elementary students, grades K-5, completed the survey with the following results:

- 94% of students reported that they look forward to going to school
- 85% of students reported that they study hard for tests

- 96% of students reported that they feel safer after school
- 92% of students reported that their parents talk to them about school or homework

Project H.O.P.E. elementary students were given the Spring Student Survey in April-May, 2006. Sixty-seven (67) students in grades K-5 completed the survey with the following results:

- 89% of students reported looking forward to attending this program
- 96% of students reported feeling comfortable talking to program staff
- 99% of students reported that they could get help with their homework
- 93% of students reported that they think the program helped them in school

Project H.O.P.E. secondary students were given a Fall Survey in September-October, 2005. Thirteen (13) Secondary Students, grades 6-12, responded to the survey with the following results:

- 100% thought that they were good students and were doing well in school.
- 100% reported that doing well in school was important to them
- 100% agreed that finishing school was important to getting a good job.
- 93% thought what they were learning would be useful later in life.
- 93% thought what they were learning would be important later in life
- 92% reported it was important to do well in school
- 77% reported that they expected to graduate from college with 23% expecting to graduate from high school.

A follow-up Spring Secondary Survey was administered to 14 Project H.O.P.E. students, grades 6-12 from April-May 2006. In this survey, students reported frequent engagement with academic activities through Project H.O.P.E. programming.

<b>Program Activities</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Never</b>
Homework help/tutoring	71%	21%	0%
Reading activities	29%	50%	14%
Math or science activities	29%	36%	21%
Arts activities	36%	29%	43%
Sports and games	50%	14%	36%
Career activities	7%	43%	50%
College activities	14%	43%	43%

Fifty-one (51) teachers completed a Teacher Evaluation Survey in May 2006. The majority of teachers indicated that H.O.P.E. students maintained or improved their academic record during the 2005-06 school year.

<b>Development Area</b>	<b>Maintain or Improve #</b>	<b>Maintain or Improve %</b>	<b>Improve %</b>
Reading	33/50	66%	34%
Math	28/44	64%	27%
Organization Skills	30/50	60%	26%
Homework/Time	34/49	69%	29%
HW Accuracy	37/51	73%	27%
70% or better on quizzes	32/49	65%	29%
Classroom behavior skills			
Classroom Participation	45/51	88%	45%
Attentive in Class	32/50	64%	28%
Completes Classroom work	42/52	81%	33%
Study Skills	33/50	66%	22%
Overall Academic Performance	37/51	73%	39%

Surveys were conducted with Duke undergraduates who took Education courses and provided tutoring to Project H.O.P.E. students in Year 4. The fall survey was completed by 30 students and the spring survey was completed by 57 students. Students reported that their tutoring experiences had the greatest impact on:

- Developing a deeper understanding of educational issues
- Developing more empathy for children who have difficulty in school
- Developing moral reasoning skills
- Deep satisfaction by helping others

### **Program Implications**

Project H.O.P.E. confirms the value of universities working to establish strong community-university linkages to improve the academic outcomes of at-risk community youth. Project H.O.P.E. has been able to:

- Improve the quality and quantity of community after-school programs
- Promote the academic achievement of at-risk students in Durham's community.
- Provide reciprocal learning opportunities for Durham students and Duke university students
- Strengthen community-university partnerships.

As Duke students, faculty and community partners increase the quality and quantity of hours spent providing direct services and evaluating afterschool program impacts, lessons are learned everyday about communities working together. The lessons can be clustered into three specific areas:

- university and community program administration;
- service-learning in community-based afterschool programs, and
- building a culture of evaluation in community settings.

The program's blend of resource structure and program administrative flexibility is one that has been replicated regionally and presented nationally as a demonstrated success model. The collaborative structure provides a workable framework for individual communities to organize available resources to meet the needs of the community's students. Final thoughts on the program's success, however, belongs to its participants, using comments in the student's own words from their program satisfaction surveys:

"My turtor helps me out what I'm having trouble with sometime I need help and that is why she is here to help me what I'm having trouble with. That why I got a turtor to help in some thing that I could Really Smart out something.

"I am doing better than I used before I had a tutor. I am doing better in school."

and from a Duke tutor:

"I have learned lessons about life that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. I have realized the importance of patience in my time working with my tutee. This was a character trait that was lacking before my experience at EK Powe. I have also learned that tutor's impacts on their students can be profound and truly meaningful. Working with him has once again opened my heart and eyes up to just how special young children are and the responsibility that adults must accept to educate these invaluable individuals."

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