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Feature Articles

Out-of-School Technology Programs: Creating Brighter Futures for Youth

[Article 090402FA001]

MacCarthy, Maureen; Hanson, Kari

Findings from a new, comprehensive evaluation sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation confirm that out-of-school technology programs create brighter futures for youth. Results indicate with high reliability, that these programs can improve academic achievement, build positive self-esteem, and prepare youth for the 21st century workplace. Individual organizations have drawn these conclusions since they began offering youth technology programs; however, the lack of independent multi-year, multi-program evaluations have made it difficult for the field to make concerted programmatic and funding decisions. Findings from this evaluation decisively show that youth technology programs yield significant benefits both, in the short and long-term. This paper offers insights and information relevant to both providers and funders of individual programs, as well as to the advancement of the youth technology field as a whole.

Consistency of Developmental Outcomes of 4-H Camp Experiences Over Time and Across Sites [Article 090402FA002]

Baughman, Sarah; Garst, Barry A.; Fuhrman, Nicholas E.

The purpose of the reported trend study was to examine consistency in youth life skill outcomes following exposure to 4-H camp. Parents of campers ages 9 to 13 were randomly sampled in 2001, 2004, and 2007 and asked to report changes in their child's behavior following camp. Statistical analysis indicates an overall consistency in parent reports of youth life skill development over time. Life skills that showed consistent gains over seven years and across six 4-H educational centers included an enhanced ability for youth to take care of their own things and to share work responsibilities. Multivariate statistics revealed that a standardized instrument used with parents over time can produce valid and reliable results concerning the impact of experiential learning on youth.

Aggressors, Victims and Bystanders: Preventing Bullying in the Middle School Environment [Article 090402FA003]

Barnett, Rosemary V.; Brennan, M.A.

The research presented in this article examines the effects of implementing a prevention program for bullying and aggressive behaviors to sixth graders in 14 Florida middle schools. The evaluation was conducted as a control/experimental design. The primary goals of this manuscript are to determine: (a) the change from baseline student habits of thought related to violence prevention, (b) student habits of thought related to attitudes and physical behaviors related to violence, and (c) teacher perceptions of student attitudes and behaviors related to violence.

Equally important, this study adds to our understanding of bullying prevention programs by examining the impact of an Aggressors, Victims' and Bystanders' program in terms of three dimensions: (1) teacher perceptions of student thoughts and behaviors related to their ability to solve conflict, (2) middle school student habits of thought about violence prevention, and (3) middle school student attitudes about behaviors associated with the prevention of violence, including aggressor behaviors and actions and bystander behaviors and actions.

Investigating the Effects of Brain Respiration on Children's Behavior

[Article 090402FA004]

Leigh, Geoffrey K.; Robinson, Cynthia; Hollingsworth, Steven Bernard

Building on the increasing number of programs designed to enhance brain development, a program developed in Korea, Brain Respiration, was adapted to a school in Nevada. Classes were offered twice weekly to a class of fourth and fifth grade students with control group classes assessed in the same school. Self-report surveys, teacher observations, and standardized reading and math scores were used to determine effects of the program on the students. Some differences were found in the pretest for the survey and the observation, with control groups scoring higher. There were differences in some post-test scores, with treatment group children scoring higher when differences did occur. There also were differences in the reading and math scores, with control groups scoring higher than the overall treatment group, but not higher when compared to those actively participating in the program. Such differences are discussed as well as other issues possibly influencing the effects.

Assessing the Civic Attitudes and Participation of Urban Elementary Students

[Article 090402FA005]

Weiss, Christopher; Baker-Smith, E. Christine

Presented is a report of a study conducted to examine Common Cents' Penny Harvest program in New York City public elementary schools. Penny Harvest is a service learning program designed to promote positive social and civic values among youth. The goal of this paper is to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the research design in an effort to contribute new insight into effective and appropriate ways to measure civic-service-program success. Additionally, this work provides program results for the program evaluated. Our findings indicate that students in New York City public schools are highly involved in service projects – both in-school and outside of school. We present additional evidence on how such participation is related to a host of social and civic attitudes. Finally, we critique the research design used in this study and offer improvements to be made in future studies.

Program Articles

Expanding 4-H Horizons Livestock Leader Guides [Article 090402PA001]

Hart, Doug; Lamm, Alexa; Cecil, Connie; Wilson, Jim; Kaysen, Brett

What does a 4-H volunteer do when a child asks to start a project they don't know anything about? The *Expanding 4-H Horizons Swine Leader Guide* offers information and activities that can be used by anyone in a club or clinic setting. A team of western regional extension professionals have created and piloted a user friendly tool that can be utilized by 4-H leaders and state/county extension staff. The swine specific manual is the first of four being created that will eventually offer information and activities for the beef, sheep and goat projects. This series of leaders guides are being created to serve as a useful tool that can be utilized across a variety of counties and states by supplementing already existing member manuals. With this curriculum, adults will be able to conduct highly effective activities that emphasize project skills, life skill learning, the experiential learning model and 4-H SET.

Youth Views of Experiences and Benefits of Public Speaking [Article 090402PA002]

Silliman, Ben

Ninety-eight youth participants, ages 9-17, involved in a public speaking event reported that preparation and presentation of a 5-12 minute demonstration or illustrated talk improved confidence, knowledge of a selected topic and skills in communicating, goal setting, organizing, working with others, and doing research. Positive benefits were reported from first-year as well as multi-year participants. Most youth surveyed indicated that they participated by choice and received adequate assistance in preparation for speaking. Similar results were found for a smaller group (N = 20) involved in a non-competitive performing arts event. A randomly-selected group (N = 37) interviewed about the extended effects of public speaking revealed that the experience helped them in school presentations, community leadership, and more in-depth involvement in specific topic areas. Implications of results for youth programming and engaging wider audiences of youth are discussed.

Assessing Service-Learning in a College-Level Adolescent Development Course [Article 090402PA003]

Lee, Cheryl L.

Service-learning is an instructional method in which students learn course content by actively participating in thoughtfully organized service experiences related to the content. Effectively linking service-learning to course content not only offers students a powerful opportunity to maximize academic learning, but also promotes their personal growth and instills a commitment to lifelong, civic engagement.

Service-learning was integrated into an upper level Family and Consumer Sciences Adolescent Development course. In addition to completing the traditional course work, students also completed a service-learning experience at a community agency that served adolescents. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the service-learning component, students were surveyed at the end of the semester about their service-learning experiences. All agreed they had learned more about course concepts as a result of their SL experience, and the majority felt their service-learning activity provided a needed service to the agency and community.

Research and Evaluation Strategies

Mapping Out Your Success: Using Mind Maps to Evaluate Youth Development Programs [Article 090402RS001]

Wells, Mary Sara; Arthur-Banning, Skye G.

A primary component of any youth program is documenting and promoting the results through evaluation. Frequently, however, administrators in youth development programs struggle to find meaningful ways of evaluating the impacts they have on the lives of youth. It is often difficult to capture the unique benefits these programs offer to participants, especially when traditional methods such as focus groups and interviews may be too time consuming and questionnaires may yield poor response rates. This article presents a creative form of evaluation targeted at demonstrating the success of programs in outcomes that are historically more difficult to measure. A "mind map" is designed to be a pictorial representation of the impact of programs in areas such as connections to community organization and adult role models. Employing this technique can enable administrators in youth development programs to demonstrate to stakeholders the benefits they provide in a non-traditional, but highly effective, way.

New Designs for Participatory Research: Modified Photoethnography and the Personal Resource Systems Management (PRSM) Model [Article 090402RS002]

Beacham, Cindy; McFall, Barbara

Learning environments significantly influence student behaviors, academic success, school attendance and participation, all of which are problematic today. Less than half of high school students surveyed in 2005 would select the same high school again if given the opportunity, and only 38% agreed that the support they get at school encourages them to learn more. Pursuing increased educational effectiveness, this paper discusses a study that gathered and evaluated middle and high school students' concepts of ideal student-centered learning environments in selected classrooms. This multi-method, participatory approach put cameras in student hands and ask them to photograph elements desired in their ideal classroom, "things that help you learn." Interviews were conducted to explore the meaning behind each photo. Analysis was performed using the Personal Resource Systems Model (PRSM). Findings clearly indicate existing physical and emotional needs, left un-addressed by *No Child Left Behind*, that might be met by improving the material and social classroom environment.