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Feature Articles

Investing in Professional Development: Building and Sustaining a Viable 4-H Youth Workforce for the Future [Article 080302FA001]

Astroth, Kirk A.; Lindstrom, James

Positive youth development outcomes are influenced by a competent, highly trained work force that enjoys their work with young people. The youth work field has struggled with how to keep and motivate front line youth workers given the heavy workloads, low pay, lack of recognition and irregular time demands to compete with family responsibilities. Professional development is a key strategy for retaining and motivating youth workers. A model of professional development called the Western 4-H Institute has been developed and held now for two sessions. Results from participants indicate that this strategy can have a positive influence on job satisfaction, competencies, and retention. In fact, only 10 percent of participants had left during the intervening 5 years, and job satisfaction had increased significantly over time. Organizational loyalty among participants is not high, but with early career professionals, they may still be trying to find their niche. A regional training model has shown itself to be effective in supporting 4-H youth professionals and is building a sustainable workforce for the future.

A Process and Outcome Evaluation of Police Working with Youth Programs [Article 080302FA002]

Anderson, Stephen A.; Sabatelli, Ronald M.; Trachtenberg, Jennifer

A process and outcome evaluation of 10 Police Working with Youth Programs was conducted. Process results indicated that the core components of the programs were consistent with those identified in previous literature as characteristic of quality youth development programs. Outcome results indicated that youth participants reported significantly improved attitudes toward police and social support received from significant, non-familial adults. Two subgroups of youth, most notably minority youth and younger participants in lower grade levels, reported positive changes in their capacity to resist peer pressures. Minority youth reported positive changes in their sense of mastery over stressful life situations. Relationships between core program components and youth outcomes also were examined. Implications of the findings and future process and outcome evaluations of youth programs are discussed.

An Examination of Youth Voice via Quasi-Experimental Methodology [Article 080302FA003]

Cater, Melissa; Machtmes, Krisanna; Fox, Janet E.

The purpose of the study discussed was to determine if youth voice affects the ownership and engagement of youth in a county 4-H program. A youth-led approach was used with the treatment group to facilitate youth and adults sharing decision-making power. The comparison group utilized an adult-centered approach where decisions about the club programming were made strictly by the adults. A pre- and post-measurement design was used. Analysis of

covariance was employed to determine if differences existed between youth participating in the treatment group and comparison groups and if differences existed between youth based on race. Findings indicated statistically significant differences between the treatment and comparison groups on all three constructs and statistically significant differences between Caucasian and non-Caucasian youth on the constructs of ownership and relationship with adults. It was concluded that, in programs incorporating voice, youth experience more ownership and engagement and have a more positive relationship with adults.

Employers Can Do Youth Development Too [Article 080302FA004]

Vogel, Eric

Professionals and volunteers who care about the welfare of young people know the importance of caring adults. The field has worked with all types of adults, including parents, teachers, and youth workers to enhance their understanding of youth development philosophy, approaches and practices. However, we've virtually ignored an entire sector of adults who play a major role in the lives of young people—employers. Given the large number of youth in the workforce, and understanding the critical role of caring adults, the question becomes, "how do we focus attention on preparing employers and other workplace adults to be more thoughtful and intentional about their interactions with young people?" The objective of this paper is to lay out the relevant issues and to begin the dialogue about building the capacity of employers to better support the development of our young people.

Community Interactive Processes and Rural Adolescents' Educational Achievement: Investigating the Mediating Effects of Delinquency and Self-Esteem [Article 080302FA005]

Adedokun, Omolola A.; Balschweid, Mark A.

The study reported in this paper examines the effects of community interactive processes on rural adolescents' educational achievement. Specifically, the paper explored the direct effects of community interactive processes on rural adolescents' educational achievement and the indirect effects via self-esteem and delinquency. The method of structural equation modeling was used to analyze data from a nationally representative panel study of rural adolescent boys and girls in 10th grade through 12th grade. The results make a compelling case that communities are conduits for boosting self-esteem, facilitating normative behaviors and academic performance in rural adolescents.

Working With Female Juvenile Delinquents: What Youth Practitioners Need to Know [Article 080302FA006]

Patton, Joy D.

This article is organized in a way to help youth practitioners recognize the most pertinent issues faced by female juveniles and to provide help in guiding professional interactions, communication and decision-making. The guidelines discussed are suggestions for practice based on an empirical review of the literature. Recent research has identified ten characteristics of female juvenile offenders to consider when working with this population. These areas include: (a) impaired cognitive functioning, (b) low academic achievement, (c) weak language skills, (d) peer relationships, (e) onset of menarche, (f) early sexual experiences, (g) mental illness, (h) victimization (i) low self-esteem and (j) race.

Program Articles

Engaging Adolescents as Community Organizers [Article 080302PA001]

Tetloff, Meredith; Griffith, Matt

VOX Teen Communications, a non-profit youth development organization in Atlanta, GA, positions adolescents as leaders in their community. Empowerment theory and a participatory approach are tools often utilized to achieve youth leadership. Teens participated in a community organizing project to create a "for-teens", "by-teens" resource guide Web site (www.teenresourceatl.org). This guide evaluates agencies, Web sites and hotlines on their "teen-friendliness" when providing services to youth in need. The empowerment-based program allowed the teens to take ownership of the project, resulting in a high level of commitment. Anticipated successes of the program include better access to help for teens in need; positioning teens as both users of the guide and leaders of the project; increased confidence and skill-level of the teen participants; and better informed service providers in the community.

4-H "Survivor" Camp: A Real-to-Life Experience in Living on Your Own

[Article 080302PA002]

Smith, Carole; Cowan, Janice; Schreiber, Debera

In recent years many school district budgets have been reduced. Essential life skill classes, such as home economics and personal finance, have been eliminated leaving youth unprepared to live on their own. 4-H Survivor Camp was developed to meet this need. Survivor Camp provides the opportunity for youth to learn and practice basic life skills needed to make a successful transition from high school to young adulthood. The camp is based on seven core lessons: Living on a Budget, Renting an Apartment, Living with a Roommate, Food Preparation, Career Preparation, Self Awareness and Personal Reflection. Evaluation results show that youth who have participated in the program feel more prepared to face the realities of living on their own. The value of this curriculum is that it is adaptable for youth anywhere and in a variety of settings. This article discusses the real-to-life experiences taught at the camp and the related life skills reinforced.

The Youth Empowered for Success Program: A Multi-faceted Approach to Youth Leadership Development and School Culture Change in Southern Arizona

[Article 080302PA003]

Parrish, Pam; Willhelm, Mari; Florez-Urcadez, Yvette; Jeffrey, Daniel A.; Roebuck, James; Burnett, Bill B.

Arizona's first Teen Institute (TI) program, Youth Empowered for Success, began in July 2004. It is the first TI-based project to focus on nurturing resilience via Health Realization (Pransky, 2007). The YES program's design to "create conditions for success" in high schools is discussed. YES utilizes a strengths-based, multi-faceted approach of (1) teaching participants how to access their innate resilience and common sense (Health Realization), (2) training them in community development for school culture change and (3) helping them develop meaningful partnerships with adults. YES also expands upon the TI model by providing staff support for community development throughout the academic year. It is hypothesized that these efforts ultimately will increase overall well-being and reduce the incidence of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use (ATOD) as well as depression and suicide among youth.

Covering our Bases: A Military 4-H Youth Development Program

[Article 080302PA004]

Roueche, Joanne; Jones, Debra A.

Land-grant universities, through the 4-H program, have offered support and partnership to the military since World War I. More recently, the U. S. Army, Air Force, and 4-H have partnered to provide military installation youth programs involving over 7,000 youth in 4-H clubs in the United States and abroad. Military youth and families, not affiliated with Base or Post installations, were extended similar support as an aftermath of September 11, 2001. All youth

involved through military outreach are enrolled as 4-H members through their respective counties integrating them into local, state, regional, and national 4-H activities and events. Authors share their experience developing relationships with their Air Force partner in implementing positive youth development programs, and explain how these actions resulted in successful funding for increased outreach.

Research and Evaluation Strategies

Evaluating an Initiative to Increase Youth Participation in School and Community Gardening Activities [Article 080302RS001]

Lekies, Kristi S.; Eames-Sheavly, Marcia

Across the country, youth gardening opportunities are rapidly increasing, as is the need for documentation on successful strategies for working with young people. This paper describes the evaluation of the Greener Voices project, a three-year initiative created to increase youth participation in gardening activities through consultation, resources, and information provided to adult leaders at six sites across New York and Pennsylvania. The evaluation is highlighted to encourage others to think about ways to incorporate evaluation into gardening programs. Useful strategies include starting early with evaluation planning, using an underlying program theory or logic model, collecting data through multiple methods, coordinating evaluation and program planning, building theory into evaluation, and publicizing findings. Documenting lessons learned can contribute to the knowledge base in the youth gardening field.

Latino Youth Participation in Community Programs [Article 080302RS002]

Skogrand, Linda; Riggs, Kathleen; Huffaker, Stacey

Twelve Latino parents were interviewed regarding what attracted their children to community activities and ways to increase participation of Latino youth in activities. According to the parents interviewed, children participated in activities which they enjoyed, activities that made them productive and kept them out of trouble, helped them gain skills that would benefit their future, and activities that involved the entire family. Implications for programming for Latino youth are provided.

Resource Review

Learn to Live: Simple and Practical Activities to Promote Health, Nutrition and Physical Fitness in the K-8 Curriculum [Article 080302RR001]

Dirga, Ali Ann Y.; Stavrianeas, Stasinou

Current health education and physical fitness programs have failed to prevent the youth obesity epidemic. The diminishing emphasis placed on such programs due to curricular and budgetary constraints results in few opportunities to promote students' active participation in regular physical activity and health education programs. Findings indicate that a successful program to promote healthy nutrition, an active lifestyle, and regular physical exercise requires that the information is easily accessible, and presented in a clear and concise format. Readers are introduced to a comprehensive program, easily adjustable throughout the K-8 curriculum. It is designed to complement regular classroom activities by introducing a series of stand-alone lessons and activities to educate students on the benefits of regular exercise and healthy lifestyle. This program can be used in any community and can offer the youth population the information they need to create healthy habits that will last a lifetime.