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Feature Articles

Preparing Teens for Success: Building 21st Century Skills through a 4-H Work-Based Learning Program [Article 080301FA001]

Ferrari, Theresa M.; Arnett, Nate; Cochran, Graham

There is widespread concern that youth lack the skills essential for job success and are entering the workplace unprepared. To address issues of workforce preparation, Extension educators at an urban 4-H education center created the Job Experience and Training (JET) program, a work-based learning program for teens. JET is conducted over a six-month period, culminating in an eight-week summer work experience in collaboration with a local park district. Supervisors and teens completed a performance appraisal measure based on SCANS workforce skills at two points during the program. Both teens and supervisors provided written comments addressing teens' strengths and areas for growth, as well as comments on their satisfaction with the program itself. Overall, the experience appears to have produced improvements in teens' workforce skills, as evidenced by their own self-assessment and that of their supervisors. We conclude with implications for conducting work-based learning programs.

Measuring Positive Youth Development: The Development of a State Benchmark [Article 080301FA002]

Nystrom, Robert J.; Prata, Adriana; Ramowski, Sarah

Public health benchmarks are indicators for well-being and health status that help inform program planning and policy development. In Oregon, recent efforts by a group of state agencies and community partners led to the adoption of a Positive Youth Development (PYD) benchmark by the Oregon Progress Board in 2006. In this paper, we describe the process of creating the state benchmark and present research evidence showing strong relationships that link high levels of PYD to reduced levels of risk behaviors and increased levels of positive, healthy behaviors among Oregon youth. The creation of this benchmark allows better planning, development and monitoring of PYD programs by state agencies, schools and community partners. In addition, results reinforce the finding that the promotion of programs that boost one or more elements of PYD may help reduce risky behaviors and improve positive, healthy behaviors among adolescents.

Engaging Street Youth in an Evaluation of a Community-Based Arts Program [Article 080301FA003]

Wright, Robin; John, Lindsay; Sheel, Julia; Spinner, David

Data from the Edmonton Arts & Youth Feasibility Study (EAYFS) was used to ascertain the feasibility of engaging street youth in a structured community-based arts program and an outcome-based evaluation. The study engaged 23 street youth in a ten-week multi-media arts

program focused on developing prosocial communication, team-building, and problem-solving skills. Results have shown that street youth are highly interested in artistic endeavors; will participate to the best of their circumstances; and will provide reliable data. The youth and staff reported improved art skills, problem-solving capacity, and prosocial communication as well as a decrease in drug use, depression, loneliness, and a greater sense of enjoyment about life. Strengths of the program included the arts media, the non-judgmental environment, and the support from staff. The study suggests that community-based arts programs for street youth could be subjected to a rigorous outcome-based evaluation.

Youth Assets and Sexual Activity Among Hispanic Youth [Article 080301FA004]

Rodine, Sharon; Marshall, La Donna; Oman, Roy F.; Tolma, Eleni; Aspy, Cheryl B.; Vesely, Sara K.; Fluhr, Janene

Hispanic females, ages 15-19, experienced the highest birth rates and smallest decline in birth rates over the past decade compared to youth of other racial/ethnic groups. This study's purpose was to investigate relationships among a series of protective factors, or youth assets, and sexual activity in the Hispanic/Latino youth population. Data were collected from Hispanic youth and their parents (N=232 youth/parent pairs) in randomly selected households using in-person, in-home interview methods. Independent variables were nine youth assets; "never had sexual intercourse" was the dependent variable. Data were analyzed using logistic regression analysis. Three assets were found to be significantly associated with whether or not Hispanic/Latino youth ever had sexual intercourse. Odds of never having had sexual intercourse were at least three times higher for youth with the Peer Role Models, Use of Time (religion), or Responsible Choices assets, compared to youth without these assets. Further Hispanic youth asset/risk behavior research is merited.

A Case of a Partnership Academy Small Learning Community Model on Student Outcomes [Article 080301FA005]

Folan, Sheila; Trexler, Cary J.

Many students are experiencing disconnect from their large, seemingly impersonal high schools. This case study research explored a post-high school class cohort's perceptions of an academy environment. The study examined the nature of its connection to academic, behavioral and post-secondary effects by utilizing a treatment group of academy students and a comparison group of non-academy students. The study found that students within academies experienced a greater sense of high school community than non-academy students. Differences were also found in post-secondary endeavors including greater participation by academy students in college, the workforce and career/technical areas.

Program Articles

Overnights Encourage Girls' Interest in Science-Related Careers

[Article 080301PA001]

Christman, Kimberly A.; Hankemeier, Sara; Hunter, Jennifer; Jennings, Johnna; Moser, Debbie; Stiles, Sandy

With sell-out crowds and phenomenal research results, Science Siesta and Advanced Science Siesta are programs designed to change the traditional perceptions that girls have about science and science-related careers. Through hands-on science activities (in and out of the lab), and through working with local female scientists, girls who range from fourth to eighth grade are provided valuable opportunities to combat the stereotype that "girls can't do science." This article addresses the need to engage girls in science and explains "how-to" meet that need through the Science Siesta programs.

Model Youth Programs: A Key Strategy for Developing Community-University Partnerships Using a Community Youth Development Approach [Article 080301PA002]

Anyon, Yolanda; Fernández, María

Universities across the nation face the charge of enhancing their intellectual capital as a learning institution while also contributing to the greater social good. While there is great potential for university-community partnerships to generate lessons for youth workers and policy makers, create powerful new knowledge for the academic field, and provide transformative experiences for community members, partnerships often fail to produce such meaningful results. In the San Francisco Bay Area, community residents who have been involved in such unsuccessful initiatives frequently perceived that university partners spent insufficient time learning about the community context, prioritized research objectives over community needs and did not make long-term commitments. Despite these challenges, community-university partnerships can be useful strategies for advancing the field of youth development by strengthening research and practice in local contexts.

This paper presents how the design and implementation of model youth programs served as an effective strategy in developing a partnership between a university-based center and two local communities over a 5-year period. It also describes essential lessons that other communities, research institutions or universities may use to launch, implement, expand and sustain their own successful partnerships to build local capacity to implement youth development practices, promote positive outcomes for young people, and generate knowledge about the impact of youth development approaches.

Applying the Framework: Positive Youth Development and Restorative Practices [Article 080301PA003]

Riestenberg, Nancy

This article compares the framework of positive youth development and school connectedness with the practices of restorative measures applied to harm and rule violations in schools. Formal school discipline practices of in- and out-of-school suspension have the unintended outcomes of increases in maladaptive behaviors, with drawl or avoidance of school staff, stigma among peers and poor academic achievement, among others. Restorative practices provide accountability for harm, as well as the opportunity to guide youth in their development, regardless of their experience as an offender, victim or bystander. Stories illustrate the strengths of this approach. Recommendations for school and youth programs regarding restorative measures will include suggestions for future research and evaluation.

Research and Evaluation Strategies

Process Evaluation and Continuous Improvement in Community Youth Programs [Article 080301RS001]

Trachtenberg, Jennifer V.; Kosutic, Iva; Sanderson, Jessica A.; Anderson, Stephen A.; Sabatelli, Ronald M.

A method of using process evaluation to provide improvement plans in order to promote community youth programs is described. The core elements of this method include the following: (1) collection and analysis of baseline data, (2) feedback provided to programs describing their strengths and limitations, (3) programs provided with assistance in preparing improvement plans in regard to their baseline data, and (4) follow-up evaluation assessed program changes based on their improvement plans and baseline data. A case study of an inner-city neighborhood youth center is used to demonstrate this method.

Evidence to Support the Use of the Retrospective Pretest Method to Measure Dietary and Physical Activity Behavior and Self-Efficacy in Adolescents

[Article 080301RS002]

Shilts, Mical Kay; Smith, Dorothy; Ontai, Lenna; Townsend, Marilyn S.

This study compared the retrospective pretest-posttest method to the traditional prospective pretest-posttest method assessing adolescents' dietary and physical activity, self-efficacy and behaviors. Participants were 7th and 8th grade students at a rural K-8th grade elementary school in Northern California (n=188). All participants completed an evaluation instrument (traditional pretest), followed by a 9-lesson dietary and physical activity intervention. Upon completion of the intervention, participants completed a second and identical evaluation instrument which served as a traditional posttest. The following day, participants completed another evaluation tool, this time formatted as a retrospective pretest. Analysis included sample *t* tests comparing the means of each method. Participants (n = 154) with a mean age of 13 ± .7 years old were included in the analyses (52% female). Paired sample *t* tests reported non-significant differences between the two methods for dietary behavior and dietary self-efficacy, yet significant differences were found for physical activity behavior ($p < .05$) and physical activity self-efficacy ($p < .01$). We conclude that the retrospective pretest-posttest method was as good a measure of dietary self-efficacy and behavior as the traditional prospective pretest-posttest method and may be better at attenuating response-shift bias when assessing physical activity self-efficacy and behavior.

Measuring the Influences of Youth Participation in Ohio 4-H Camps

[Article 080301RS003]

Homan, Greg; Hedrick, Jason; Dick, Jeff

Findings from a multi-component 4-H camp marketing and enrollment study of Ohio 4-H camps are highlighted. Significant influencers on the camp enrollment decision (parents, other adults, peers, siblings, and the respective camper) are evaluated as well as the effectiveness of various marketing techniques. The data found in this study indicates that the decision to enroll in camp is most influenced by the respective 4-H camper; however parents are also a strong factor in the choice to participate in 4-H camps. Alumni parents report significantly higher influence in the camp enrollment decision than those parents who are not alumni of 4-H. Personal methods of promoting camps were rated the most effective in reaching potential camp audiences.