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Feature Articles

Hilliard, Lacey J.; Hershberg, Rachel M.; Wang, Jun; Bowers, Edmond P.; Chase, Paul A.; Champine, Robey B.; Buckingham, Mary H.; Warren, Daniel J.A.; Ferris, Kaitlyn A.; Lerner, Richard M.

Youth development programs seek to promote positive development through mentoring and engaging youth in opportunities for individual growth and community connectedness. We present findings from the initial phase of a mixed-methods, longitudinal study aimed at assessing the impact of one such program, Cub Scouts, on character development. We assessed if Scouting, and a recent innovation in Scouting focused on program quality, are associated with the development of character and other positive youth outcomes. Participants were 1,083 Scouts and non-Scouts, aged 5-12 years. At the start of the study, there was no difference in indicators of character between Scouts and non-Scouts, once matched through propensity score analyses. Through content analyses of interviews and short-answer questionnaires administered to leaders, we found that leaders' views of character and of their roles corresponded to those envisioned by Cub Scouts. Implications for character development, and for the role of program components in character development, are discussed.

Ergüner-Tekinalp, Bengü; Crabtree-Groff, Kris

Studies that examine character development programs are scarce. This study examines the effect of a week-long character education program in a range of life skills and civic efficacy. Thirty adolescents participated in the training. A no-control, quasi-experimental design incorporated baseline measures and a six-month follow-up. A Life Effectiveness Questionnaire and Civic Efficacy Survey were administered and open-ended questions further explored how participants incorporated program outcomes into their daily lives. The t-test comparison of baseline and pretest measures yielded no significant differences, but t-test comparison of pre-post- test analysis elicited statistically significant positive results. Findings indicate the program can provide a model for character education that fosters adolescents' sense of agency as leaders and citizens.

Training Staff to Create Caring Communities: Promises and Challenges

Browne, Laurie P.; Sibthorp, Jim

Caring communities support the healthy growth of young people by fostering caring youth-staff relationships as well as a sense of connectedness to the people and norms within that setting. Out-of-school-time (OST) programs may be uniquely situated to serve as caring communities, particularly if staff are trained to facilitate caring activities and employ an ethic of care when interacting with youth. These processes can also be described as program design and staff implementation. Program design, which refers to the structured aspects of a program, differs from implementation, or the ways staff interacts with youth throughout the program, because design factors are typically robust to differences in individual staff members' style. Implementation, on the other hand, varies with respect to the individual staff member. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of a two-part staff training intervention focusing on program design and staff implementation on youths' sense of caring community. Findings from this study and their implications for managers of OST programs are discussed.

Afterschool Sustainability

Joyce, Hilary D.; Wade-Mdivanian, Rebecca; Anderson-Butcher, Dawn; Gibson, Allison

Youth participation in quality extended learning opportunities (ELOs) results in positive academic, physical, mental health, and social/emotional outcomes. Funding is essential to implementing and sustaining quality ELOs; however multiple funding barriers and challenges exist. Understanding the types of funds available for ELOs and the factors that influence sustainability is critical. Through surveys and telephone interviews of ELO providers, this descriptive study identified and examined ELO funding streams, the ways ELO providers use these funding streams, and the barriers and challenges to sustainability. ELO programs often relied on one major funding stream coupled with nutrition supports as well as in-kind resources. Barriers to sustainability included year-to-year funding, transportation costs, reducing community partnerships, and difficulty in diversifying funds. Recommendations to enhance ELO sustainability are offered, particularly in relation to overcoming the challenges to diversification of funding resources and establishing mutually supportive partnerships and collaboration.

Program Articles

Evidence of Self-Directed Learning on a High School Robotics Team

Dolenc, Nathan R.; Tai, Robert H.; Mitchell, Claire

Self-directed learning is described as an individual taking the initiative to engage in a learning experience while assuming responsibility to follow through to its conclusion. Robotics competitions are examples of informal environments that can facilitate self-directed learning. This study examined how mentor involvement, student behavior, and physical workspace contributed to self-directed learning on one robotics competition team. How did mentors transfer responsibility to students? How did students respond to managing a team? Are the physical attributes of a workspace important? The mentor, student, and workplace factors captured in the research showed mentors wanting students to do the work, students assuming leadership roles, and the limited workspace having a positive effect on student productivity.

Horses and At-Risk Youth: An Equine Facilitated Learning Program Focusing on Authentic Leadership Skill Development

Adams-Pope, Brittany L.; Stedman, Nicole L.P.

Interesting and innovative youth development programs are important to further youth education. Programs focused on developing leadership skills in youth, specifically at-risk youth, are important when thinking of the future of our communities. The primary purpose of the study was to determine the impact of an equine facilitated, authentic leadership program on at-risk youth. Youth participated in a three-day equine facilitated learning program based on authentic leadership with focus groups conducted three days before and three days after the program. In this article, we describe the development and methodology of the program and specific implications for practice.

Research and Evaluation Strategies

Feelings and Emotions in Youth's Purpose

Arantes, Valeria Amorim; Pinheiro, Viviane Potenze Guimarães; Araujo, Ulisses Ferreira

This article summarizes research that aimed to identify and analyze the Organizing Models of Thought - with its affective and cognitive dimensions - underlying the purpose of young Brazilians, and identifies possible relationships between values, feelings, emotions and purpose of 200 Brazilian High School students. Upon analyzing all the protocols, seven different ways of organizing thoughts were found when answering an open-ended questionnaire about purpose in life. It was observed that emotions and feelings play an important role in the construction of purpose for young people, exerting influence in organizing their thoughts and subsidizing their decisions, plans and justification for the actions.

Resource Review

Resource Review: *Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics*

Dawson, Patricia

"*Why So Few? Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics*" (Hill, C., Corbett, C., Rose, A., 2010) reports on an extensive study of women's underrepresentation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics professions. Funded by the National Science Foundation, the project was conducted by American Association of University Women. The resource includes findings from eight research studies which examined social and environmental factors which contribute to women's underrepresentation in STEM fields as well as helpful tables, charts and bibliography resources. The 110 page resource will be particularly helpful for scholars working in program design to advance STEM opportunities for women.