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Feature Articles

Public Opinions of Youth Development Programs [Article 0603FA001]

Scheer, Scott D.; Donnermeyer, Joseph F.

A state-wide survey was conducted in a Midwestern state with randomly selected adults (n=1229) to determine their perceptions of youth program importance, effectiveness, and activity structure (competitive and/or cooperative). Public opinion was overwhelmingly supportive in describing youth programs as "very important" (64.5%) for promoting youth development. However, indications of program effectiveness for preventing adolescent problem behaviors (55.5% "somewhat effective") were not as strong. In addition, cooperative-structured activities (74.8%) were preferred over competitive-oriented activities (16.7%) as having more positive results for youth development. Implications for practitioners, policy makers, and social scientists are discussed.

Components of Camp Experiences for Positive Youth Development
[Article 0603FA002]

Henderson, Karla A.; Bialeschki, M. Deborah; Scanlin, Margery M.; Thurber, Christopher; Whitaker, Leslie Schueler; Marsh, Paul E.

Youth development specialists advocate that well designed, implemented, and staffed youth centered programs result in positive outcomes for young people. Youth organizations have provided opportunities for young people to participate in camping experiences for over a century. The purpose of this paper is to describe what program components were related to camp environments and positive youth development. We describe these program components related to positive youth development based on a large scale national study of ACA (American Camp Association) accredited camps that included independent, religiously affiliated, government, and not-for-profit organizations. Based on the responses given by camp directors, contact and leadership from trained staff and the supportive relationships they provided were essential elements of camp. Other aspects leading to positive youth development in camps were program mission and structure along with elements of accountability, assessment of outcomes, and opportunities for skill building.

Evaluation of Youth Leadership Training Programs [Article 0603FA003]

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

Results of a two-year evaluation of youth leadership programs offered within community youth development programs in Connecticut are presented. Youth involved in leadership activities were contrasted with a comparison group of youth who were not involved in leadership programming. Participants in the leadership programs reported an improved sense of support from their local communities. Leadership training also appeared to offer an added benefit to males who reported significant improvements in their social self-efficacy in contrast to females

engaged in leadership programs or youth comprising the comparison group. Youth who participated in the leadership programs appeared to be a uniquely talented group of individuals, initially scoring higher than the comparison group on a variety of youth outcome measures. However, a subgroup of youth who began the leadership program at a lower level of overall functioning were more likely than youth who began the program at a higher level of functioning to report positive changes.

Adolescents' Negative Experiences in Organized Youth Activities [Article 0603FA006]

Dworkin, Jodi; Larson, Reed

Research indicates that organized youth activities are most often a context of positive development. However, there is a smaller body of evidence suggesting that these activities are sometimes a context of negative experiences that may impede learning or lead to dropping out. To better understand negative experiences in youth activities, we conducted ten focus groups with adolescents. Youths' descriptions provide an overview of the range of types of negative experiences they encountered, as well as how they responded to them. The most frequent types of negative experiences involved peers and peer group dynamics and aversive behavior attributed to the adult leaders of the activities. The youth described two types of responses to their negative experiences - a passive response of feeling negative emotions, and active coping, which sometimes led to learning.

Program Articles

Effectiveness and Successful Program Elements of SOAR's Afterschool Programs [Article 0603PA001]

Johnson, Janet L.; Van Vleck, Philip; Peach, Jennifer S.; Lewis, Rita G.

Project SOAR provided after-school programs that afforded expanded learning opportunities to help students succeed in local public schools and to contribute to the general welfare of the community. Program components focused on building students' academic skills and positive attitudes, aided by teachers, mentors, parent education, and local agencies. Instructional programs were conducted to help reduce drug use and violence. Activities included academic assistance, technology training, mentoring, service learning projects, and education in life skills and the arts. Parent involvement was encouraged. Behavioral and academic outcomes—especially at the high school level—were analyzed to determine program effectiveness regarding academic achievement, dropout rates, and rates and frequency of suspensions. Successful program elements and strategies are noted.

Encouraging Positive Youth Development with Youth Leadership Summits [Article 0603PA003]

Schmitt-McQuitty, Lynn; Subramaniam, Aarti; Stanley, Sally M.

This article describes the California 4-H Youth Development Program's (4-H YDP) creation of a Youth Leadership Summit (YLS), as well as information gained from three summits held in the summers of 1999 through 2001. Previous studies (Camino, 2000; Lerner, 2000; Zeldin, 2000) suggested that youth-adult collaborations along with meaningful activities could have a positive impact on youth. Therefore, the summits emphasized the positive youth development model, employed youth-adult collaborations, and encouraged youth to become involved in their communities. In this article, we share the YLS procedures, the roles of youth and adults and the engagement of youth on community issues. The YLS model developed by the California 4-H YDP impacted the individuals and communities involved in important and positive ways and might be a useful model to follow in the establishment of similar youth programs developed by youth professionals.

Youth and Families with Promise: A Multi-Component Youth Development Program [Article 0603PA004]

Higginbotham, Brian J.; Harris, Victor W.; Lee, Thomas R.; Marshall, James P.

Integrating mentoring into existing youth programs has been suggested as a promising approach to youth development. This article discusses a theoretical rationale underlying the integration of one-on-one mentoring into established youth development programs. From an ecological perspective, the addition of mentoring into traditional programs should theoretically enhance the youth development experience. Mentoring, in addition to programs like 4-H, enriches the context in which developing youth are supported and encouraged by non-parental adults to develop competencies, to take on leadership responsibilities, and to integrate into positive peer groups (i.e., 4-H clubs). A multi-component program that involves at-risk youth in both mentoring and 4-H activities is highlighted. Results from at-risk youth and their parents indicate that Utah's *4-H/ Mentoring: Youth and Families with Promise* program strengthens the protective factors of academic achievement, social competence, and family bonds.

The Respite and Recreation: An Innovative Recreation Service to Adopted Children with Special Needs [Article 0603PA006]

Yang, Heewon; Howard, Jennifer M.

Often, youth in the foster care system have traumatic experiences associated with abuse and separation from their biological family. These experiences may lead to emotional, psychological, and behavioral problems that challenge the new adoptive family dynamic. This article introduces the Respite and Recreation (R & R) program in a Midwestern area. R & R combines faculty, staff, and graduate students from a local University, local community resources, and staff from a local adoption agency to provide recreation, respite, and professional support services for children with special needs and their adoptive parents. The R & R program provides the adopted children with structured recreation programs for their growth, the parents with a break from stress, and volunteer students with opportunities to incorporate their academic learning into real life situations. Service learning programs such as the R & R also provide university faculty with excellent opportunities to conduct action research.

Research and Evaluation Strategies

What Counts in After School? Findings from the Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study (MARS) [Article 0603RS001]

Miller, Beth M.; Hall, Georgia

This article discusses the Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study (MARS). Conducted during 2003-2005, MARS took an in-depth look at program structure and quality in 78 varied programs across Massachusetts, using data sources that included interviews with program directors, afterschool program site observations, school district student data, attendance data, and surveys with afterschool program staff, day school teachers, and afterschool program youth. The MARS study offers many useful insights into what afterschool programs look like, approaches to providing high quality experiences for youth, and the connections between high quality and improved outcomes for the young people attending these programs. The results may be useful to programs, policy makers, and others in the field by deepening our understanding of how youth participation leads to a variety of youth outcomes.

Resource Reviews

Review of the CDC's "Choose Respect" Dating Violence Prevention Materials [Article 0603RR001]

Hertzog, Jodie

An overview of resources developed for the Center for Disease Control's national "Choose Respect" initiative targeting youth ages 11-14 is provided. The initiative's goal is to prevent teen dating violence by promoting healthy relationship development. Resources include a community action kit, downloadable video, television and radio advertisements as well as educational posters.

Resource Review: *Youth and Adult Leaders for Program Excellence: A Practical Guide for Program Assessment and Action Planning* [Article 0603RR002]

Hobson, Hartley

The Youth and Adult Leaders for Program Excellence (YALPE Resource Kit) was developed to assist groups working to promote positive youth development. The Kit includes a variety of assessment tools and templates for data analysis and report writing. The tools are grounded in research on youth development and are user-friendly for adults and youth.