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Contents

Feature Articles

Cacophony and Change in Youth After School Activities: Findings from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development

[Article 0601FA001]

Theokas, Christina; Lerner, Jacqueline V.; Phelps, Erin; Lerner, Richard M.

This paper describes the configuration and changes in young adolescents' participation in structured after school activities. Using data from the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development the 983 youth studied in both the first and the second waves of this research (fifth and sixth grade, respectively) were found to engage in structured after school activities at high levels. Fewer than 12% did not participate in any activities. Participation in multiple activities was the norm for these youth and the configuration of activities changed between grades. The breadth of participation in structured after school activities suggests, first, that it would be ideal to have broad community collaboration in regard to youth programming to ensure that youth receive excellent programming, no matter where they turn; and, second, that youth development researchers and practitioners need to consider new approaches to conceptualizing and evaluating the possible role of any one after-school program in promoting exemplary development.

Summer Programming: What Do Children Say?

[Article 0601FA003]

Cobb, Nila; Harper, Stacey; McCormick, Kerri; McNeil, Kimary; Miltenberger, Margaret; Phillips, Ruthellen; Schneider, Ruth; Taylor, Gina; Wilkins, Shirley

Studies document that low-income children lose academic skills over the summer. Six years of reading achievement data collected by Energy Express, a nationally recognized summer reading and nutrition program in West Virginia, has established the efficacy of the intervention. The purpose of this study was to examine characteristics of a voluntary summer program that foster participation. Interview data indicates that children attend because they perceive the program as fun; large creative art (for example, full-body portraits, appliance box castles, wall murals) seems particularly important. Energy Express gives children both the fun they want and the enrichment they need in the summer.

Demographic Differences in Patterns of Youth Out-of-School Time Activity Participation

[Article 0601FA004]

Bouffard, Suzanne M.; Wimer, Christopher; Caronongan, Pia; Little, Priscilla M.D.; Dearing, Eric; Simpkins, Sandra D.

Participation in structured out-of-school time (OST) activities is of growing interest to families, youth practitioners, and policymakers. OST activities benefit youth socially, emotionally, and academically, especially at-risk youth. Yet, little research has explored the characteristics of youth participants. This

study examines whether demographic differences exist merely in getting youth “in the door” of activities, or whether differences persist when examining the number of activities and the amount of time youth spend in activities once they are there. Results from two nationally representative datasets showed that disadvantaged youth were less likely to participate in a variety of activities than their peers, and participated in fewer numbers of activities. Among youth who did participate, Blacks and Hispanics participated less frequently in some activities, although Blacks participated more frequently in community-based youth programs. Implications for recruitment and retention are discussed, including the need for activity leaders to enhance efforts to attract and sustain disadvantaged and ethnic minority youth.

Potential Protective Effect of the Community Involvement Asset on Adolescent Risk Behaviors

[Article 0601FA005]

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

The potential of Community Involvement as a protective factor (youth asset) for eight adolescent risk behaviors was examined in this study. Cross-sectional data were collected from a randomly-selected population using in-home, in-person interviews in racially diverse inner-city neighborhoods of two Midwestern cities. Research participants were teenagers (n=1,278) and parents of the teenagers (n=1,278). Data included demographic variables; eight adolescent risk behaviors, including sexual activity, violence and the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs. This study found youth with the Community Involvement asset were significantly ($p < .05$) more likely to: never have had sexual intercourse; not use tobacco or drugs; not use alcohol if living in a one-parent family; not carry a weapon, or never have been arrested. Involvement in community volunteer experiences may hold potential for strengthening youth development and prevention programs focused on reducing youth risk-taking behaviors.

Program Articles

A National Professional Development System for Youth Workers

[Article 0601PA001]

Stone, Barbara; Garza, Pam; Borden, Lynne

A persistent challenge in the youth development field is the lack of a systemic approach to attracting, developing and sustaining its workforce, particularly direct service workers. While serious efforts to address workforce development have dotted the youth work landscape, especially over the last 15 years, much of this progress has been organization-specific rather than across the field or systemic (Quinn, 2004). In 2004, 30 individuals who were knowledgeable about the issues came together to address the challenge of attracting, developing and retaining youth workers. They represented diverse sectors of the field, including direct service workers, national youth-serving agencies, local and national intermediary organizations, federal agencies and corporate and foundation philanthropies. They took the bold step of designing an initial framework and strategy for a coordinated national professional development system for youth workers. They also agreed to pursue the next steps to collectively create the system (Stone, Garza, & Borden, 2005).

National Youth Service Day: A Youth Development Strategy

[Article 0601PA002]

Golombek, Silvia Blitzer

A growing number of studies show connections between youth participation in service and service-learning opportunities and positive behavior outcomes. Building on this data, the article presents

National Youth Service Day (NYSD) as a program that can be incorporated into ongoing activities to enhance youth development goals. The paper describes the program's components— building a network of support organizations, offering project planning grants, providing service-learning materials, and developing a media and advocacy campaign. Examples of NYSD projects show how project planners are using the program to learn and practice academic and non-academic skills. A review of evaluations to date indicates the program is annually increasing its output measures. Participants' responses show that the program is also contributing to positive behavioral changes, in particular related to young people's increasing awareness about specific community issues and their own competency in addressing them.

Fostering Youth Engagement on Community Teams

[Article 0601PA003]

Scheve, Julie A.; Perkins, Daniel F.; Mincemoyer, Claudia C.

Within the youth development field a growing movement exists to establish youth member positions on community teams (e.g. organizational boards and planning committees). The involvement of youth on decision-making teams is commonly referred to as youth engagement. As a relatively new approach to youth and community development, the existing research shows the potential positive impacts youth engagement efforts may produce and encourages youth practitioners to incorporate such efforts into their programs and organizations. In doing so, successful youth engagement efforts may be sustained within teams that best adapt their organizational structure, policies, and practices to complement the developmental needs of youth. Such adaptations begin with the four team characteristics presented in this paper: adult support, a youth-friendly environment, opportunities to complete meaningful tasks, and opportunities to learn and use new skills. When these practices are woven through the work of the team, youth engagement may flourish.

4-H Afterschool – Making an Impact

[Article 0601PA004]

Bunnell, JoLene; Pate, Robert

4-H Afterschool is making a positive impact on youth, families, and their communities. Utah State University Extension has implemented a 4-H Afterschool club at four elementary schools in low-income neighborhoods. At each of the sites, 4-H offers sixteen different project clubs. Survey results indicate that the 4-H Afterschool program is building positive social skills in the youth, providing positive alternatives to idleness and antisocial behavior, and supporting parents in the primary role of care giving. The Afterschool clubs incorporate project activities, a service learning component, and a final showcase for the parents. Youth development professionals, using the experiential learning model of 4-H, can affect positive change within their communities by implementing a 4-H Afterschool program.

Research and Evaluation Strategies

Online Surveys: Increasing Your Research and Evaluation Capacity

[Article 0601RS001]

Borden, Lynne M.; Perkins, Daniel F.; Stone, Margaret

Online surveys are increasingly viewed as a method to expand research and evaluation capacity. This article focuses on a case study utilizing online surveys for data collection conducted by researchers at the Pennsylvania State University and the University of Arizona. The *National Youth Participation Study* makes use of computer technology and the interest youth have in such technology. Online methods, survey design, techniques when surveying youth and lessons learned in developing the online study are shared by the authors.

The SCANS Skills and Competencies Checklist: An Assessment Tool for Youth Work Readiness Programs

[Article 0601RS002]

Blalock, Lydia B.; Strieter, Linda; Hughes, Luanne

The *SCANS Report for America, 2000* (1992) identified the skills youth need to compete in the workplace. The not-for-profit sector responded by implementing programs designed to give at-risk youth opportunities to learn the skills and competencies required to be work ready. Program evaluators, however, are challenged with the need to assess behavioral changes, which at best are difficult to document. In addition, at-risk youth often do not perform well with traditional paper and pencil assessments (for a variety of reasons). Improvements in SCANS attributes must be captured while the youth are engaged in learning and practicing the desired skills and behaviors. The *SCANS Skills & Competencies Checklist*, developed by evaluators of the RCRE Youth Farmstand Program, is a tool that can be customized easily for use with youth work readiness programs that include an experiential learning component.

Resource Reviews

A Resource Review: *Reflect and Improve: A Tool Kit for Engaging Youth and Adults as Partners in Program Evaluation*

[Article 0601RR001]

Powers, Jane L.

Highlights of a new evaluation resource "*Reflect and Improve: A Tool Kit for Engaging Youth and Adults as Partners in Program Evaluation*" are shared by the author. The *Tool Kit* is designed to help youth serving agencies strengthen program planning and evaluation through youth/adult partnerships.