Youth Development Research Briefs

2014

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Youth Development Research Briefs is a collaborative project among 4-H youth development faculty and educators at Oregon State University. The goal of the project is to provide concise summaries of current research relative to 4-H youth development program in:

- **Creating and Sustaining Youth-Adult Partnerships**
- **Youth Development Practice**
- **Youth Engagement**
- **Youth Development Profession**

Collaborators participate in the project by reviewing one current article, presenting a summary of the review at the 4-H professional development conference in the spring, and preparing a written review following a proscribed review outline. Each written review contains:

- **Topic area that is covered**
- **A verbatim article abstract**
- **A complete article citation**
- **A research brief that covers the article's contribution to theory and implication for promoting high quality youth development programs and practice**
- **Selected references for additional reading**

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Examining Youth and Program Predictors of Engagement in Out-of-School Time Programs

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Topic Area(s)

- Youth Programs
- Out-of-School time
- Organized Activities
- Transition to adulthood

Abstract

Prior research suggests that youths' engagement in out-of-school time programs may be a crucial factor linking participation to positive outcomes during adolescence. Guided by the theoretical concept of flow and by stage-engagement fit theory, the present study explored correlates of engagement in youth programs. Engagement was conceptualized as the extent to which youth found the program activities enjoyable, interesting, and challenging. The current study examined how program content, monetary incentives, and youth demographic characteristics were linked to youth engagement among a sample of primarily low-income middle and high school youth attending 30 out-of-school programs (n=435, 51% female). Results from multilevel models suggested that program content and staff quality were strongly associated with youth engagement. Youth who reported learning new skills, learning about college, and learning about jobs through activities in the program were more engaged, as were youth who found the staff caring and competent. Results demonstrated that the link between learning content for the future and engagement was stronger for older youth than younger youth. In addition, there was a trend suggesting that providing a monetary incentive was associated negatively with youth engagement. Taken as a whole, these findings have important implications for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers interested in understanding the characteristics of out-of-school time programs that engage older youth.

Article Citation

Greene, K., Lee, B., Constance, N. (2012). Examining Youth and Program Predictors of Engagement in Out-of-School Time Programs. *Journal of Adolescence* 42 (2013) 1557-15572

Research suggests that high-quality out-of-school programs can be fun and challenging for youth. We also know that these programs often struggle to recruit and retain adolescents, one of the main reasons being that adolescents quit because they find the content boring. There is little research to tell us what types of programs are interesting, enjoyable and challenging for youth. This article presents a study that starts examining how different kinds of program factors relate to youth engagement. Throughout the article the authors look at research that has already been conducted around out-of-school adolescent programming and youth attendance; specifically looking at staff characteristics, program content, program incentives, and youth demographic characteristics. The authors then compare previous research with data from 435 adolescents attending 30 out-of-school programs to better understand youth engagement.

Contribution to Theory
This study looks at four know contributors to youth attendance and tries to identify if they also have an impact on youth engagement.

Staff Characteristics
When we have caring and competent staff, adolescents will have higher attendance. We need to have positive staff to youth relationships to create a safe and welcoming environment where youth can focus on learning and make mistakes. The study found that staff quality also emerged as a significant predictor of youth engagement.

Program Content
Programs that offer opportunities that youth may not otherwise get in the community and career-related are more likely to have higher attendance versus those that do not. Research also suggests that enrichment activities that pursue a purpose such as sports or art may be more engaging for youth versus homework club or social gatherings. In the study, program content also emerged as an important predictor of youth engagement. The study specifically identified that for youth in 8th-12th grade learning about college was significantly associated with youth engagement and learning job skills was significantly associated with youth engagement for 10th-12th grade as well as learning about jobs for 9th-12th grade. Learning about jobs, skills and college was linked more strongly to engagement for older youth than younger youth.

Program Incentives
Program incentives including snacks, transportation, gift certificates, field trips and monetary incentives are often used to get youth involved in a program. Research suggests that youth enjoy these incentives and that incentives are an effective strategy for getting youth attendance. Little is known about how incentives relate to youth engagement. This is one of the first studies that looked at financial incentives in relation to youth engagement. The study

actually found that incentives were negatively associated with engagement. As this is one of the first studies to look at this relationship it is too early to make clear linkages between incentives, attendance and engagement.

Youth Demographic Characteristics
Research suggests that age, gender, race and immigration status have all been linked to program attendance. Female participation is noted as being higher than male for organized activities with exception being sport teams. This study looked at how youth demographics may be linked to engagement and found that age, gender and race are not significantly linked to youth engagement. The study did find that youth who lived in an immigrant family scored higher on engagement than nonimmigrant youth.

Contribution to Practice
Staff characteristics, program content, program incentives and youth demographics are all things that adolescent out-of-school programmers need to take into consideration because they are linked to youth attendance and in many ways linked to youth engagement. When we are thinking about youth engagement we need to consider the age of the youth and design program content that will challenge them. Specifically, when working with older adolescents it is important to think about job skills and college.

Implication for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice
As 4-H Youth development Professionals who spend the majority of our time working with youth in the out-of-school setting, we need to make sure that we are incorporating this research into our program planning for adolescents. It is critical that we create a safe and welcoming environment and build a relationship with the youth involved. When we are planning a program we should consider how it could be linked to careers, job skills or college. One adolescent program that many 4-H professionals are involved in is camp counselor training. One way to increase the engagement level may be to connect the experience to careers, job skills or college. Putting youth through an interview process, writing job descriptions, and having applications are all skills that these adolescents will need and are often looking for.

<u>Selected References for Additional Reading</u>

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Kort-Butler, L. A. & Hagewen, K. J. (2011). School-based extracurricular activity involvement and adolescent self-esteem: A growth curve analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 40, 568-581.

Pearce, N. J. & Larson R. W. (2006). How teens become engaged in youth development programs: The process of motivational change in a civic activism organization. *Applied Developmental Science*, 10, 121-131.

From Youth Worker Professional Development to Organizational Change

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Topic Area(s)

- Youth Development Profession

Abstract *Note: The article did not contain an abstract, so I prepared the following*

This paper presents a case study of an intensive professional development collaboration that took place between the University of Minnesota Youth Studies (UMYS) program, and front-line youth workers from the city of St. Paul, Minnesota Parks and Recreation (PR) program. The PR program serves a large component of the city's youth population, yet front-line staff lacked professional preparation in the area of youth work. Instead of focusing on the work of youth development, they saw their work as managing a recreation center, delivering programs, and monitoring youth behavior. The workers were not trained in youth work principles and practices, and the professional development training they did receive was usually short term, and focused on management (such as how to answer the phone, administer CPR, and use the computer). The collaboration between UMYS and PR provided the opportunity for PR workers to receive ongoing, sustained, professional development that was participant driven. Over the course of six years, UMYS facilitators met regularly with PR workers allowing the agenda of the meeting to emerge based on the needs of the PR workers. The outcome of this endeavor led to change at three levels within the PR program: professional, personal, and organizational.

Article Citation

Rana, S., Baumgardner, B., Germanic, O., Graff, R., Korum, K., Mueller, M., Randall, S., Simmons, T., Stokes, G. Xiong, W., & Peterson K. K. (2013). From youth development professional development to organizational change. *New Directions for Youth Development, 139*, 27-57. On-line: Wiley Online Library. DOI:10.1002/yd.20068

Research Brief

This paper presents a case study of an intensive professional development collaboration that took place between the University of Minnesota Youth Studies (UMYS) program, and front-line youth workers from the city of St. Paul, Minnesota Parks and Recreation (PR) program. The PR program serves a large component of the city's youth population, yet front-line staff lacked professional preparation in the area of youth work. Instead of focusing on the work of youth development, they saw their work as managing a recreation center, delivering programs, and

monitoring youth behavior. The workers were not trained in youth work principles and practices, and the professional development training they did receive was usually short term, and focused on management (such as how to answer the phone, administer CPR, and use the computer). The collaboration between UMYS and PR provided the opportunity for PR workers to receive ongoing, sustained, professional development that was participant driven. Over the course of six years, UMYS facilitators met regularly with PR workers allowing the agenda of the meeting to emerge based on the needs of the PR workers. The outcome of this endeavor led to change at three levels within the PR program: professional, personal, and organizational.

Contribution to Theory
The professional development collaboration was built on several youth worker principles that were important to the success of the project. Facilitators embodied and modeled the following principles in the collaboration:

1. **Building and sustaining meaningful relationships with young people.** The facilitators emphasized mutually respectful relationships among the program participants. The participants came from different levels of the PR program, had different levels of youth worker knowledge, and were from various ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, but because of the modeling of this principle, all came together as peers in the group.

2. **Co-creating a space for learning and change**. Everyone in the group was seen as a teacher and a learner. There was no set curriculum; instead the content of the group was developed based on participant-defined direction. Youth worker skills and knowledge were validated and participants were invited to teach others. This approach empowered participants, and made learning more relevant to their professional lives.

3. **Reflective practice**. Practitioners were encouraged to reflect on their professional experience and how they were applying what they were discovering in their work settings. Doing so helped participants recognize how they were putting the things they were learning into practice. The facilitators asked questions of how practitioners handled situations; what they said, how they felt, and what their body language was at the time.

4. **Community organizing was facilitated**. The program emphasized the possibility of changing the conditions and contexts of the practitioners' work settings. Differences in power and privilege were brought to the table, and the political aspect of their work setting was explored. In this way the meetings presented a way for practitioners to share their concerns and plan actions to address them.

In sum, the facilitators modeled the program using youth development principles and created an experience that was "practical, experiential, academic, therapeutic, and action oriented."

Contribution to Practice

The authors proposed several phases of professional development that are critical to the success of professional development programs designed to develop individual professionals and lead to organizational change. These phases elucidate that professional development is more than mere training, and that intentionally including these phases as part of professional development efforts is key to creating change and enhancing organizational development and change.

1. **Diagnostic Phase:** In this phase participants are asked to identify what they are good at, what they can teach, what they want to do, what they would like to change in their work, and how the professional development program can help them. These questions encouraged dialog, collaboration, and helped identify common and unique concerns among participants. In addition, this phase allowed pent-up frustrations to be aired, and provided an opportunity for the initial exploration of potential actions to create change.

2. **Enhancing Youth Program Skills:** Once a common experience was developed among the participants, the training turned to the development of youth program skills, particularly focusing on how to develop, implement and evaluate youth programs. Strategies included mentoring groups on program development, case studies of programs, readings on youth development programs, and site visits of innovative programs.

3. **Organizing and Social Action:** The final phase was focused on organizational development and infusing youth professional practice throughout the organization. Strategies included developing clear position descriptions that contain the skills and abilities necessary for effective youth work, developing organizational strategies and policies that support effective youth work, diffusing youth development practices throughout the organization, engaging youth as key stakeholders in decisions regarding the programs that serve them, and developing ongoing professional development opportunities for practitioners.

Implications for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice: The Individual

The impact of the professional development program was manifested in several key ways. First, participants developed both professional *and* personally, and many of the participants transitioned to thinking and feeling about themselves as "youth workers." Participants became more knowledgeable and skilled in working with young people, and became more cognizant of how they interacted with young people. They also became more confident and skilled in

managing difficult situations, such as negotiating conflict among youth, or working with angry parents.

Participants also grew in their participation within their communities, becoming more involved, and building relationships. They learned who lived in the neighborhood they served, and made a point to greet neighbors and offer services. They also grew in their ability to work across cultures and ethnic groups, and began to see this skill as essential for understanding the youth with whom they work.

Participants gained skill in working with youth, and modeled what they had learned with other staff. Participants also taught their colleagues about youth work, and facilitated youth training with other agencies. Because of the emphasis on youth work, the PR centers became safe places for youth from different backgrounds and cultures. Youth were empowered to help share in the responsibility for creating a safe and welcoming environment, and fewer youth were asked to leave the centers because of behavior problems.

Organizationally, participants played key leadership roles to help change practices within their organizations. This was particularly notable in the transformation of the PR department from a very hierarchical organization to a flatter structure, where front-line staff had more direct access to upper-level management. Participants developed understanding of the political aspects of organizations, and became skilled at navigating the political landscape in order to diffuse youth work practices across the organization. The hiring of new front-line staff focused on youth worker competence, and more people, including youth, had input into hiring decisions. In addition, higher standards for youth work were seen across the organization, with an increased number of youth attending the programs.

Finally, engaging in the professional development collaboration reduced stress and burn out for the participants. They shared their frustrations, built networks of support, and developed problem solving strategies together.

Implications for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice: The Organization
Providing professional development opportunities for 4-H youth development professionals is essential for creating and sustaining a strong 4-H organization. This article provides several implications for how professional development programs can be enhanced to facilitate not just individual, but also organizational development. Key among these implications is:

1. **The need for professional development opportunities to be authentic, sustained over time, and collaborative in nature**. This article demonstrates how useful it can be to allow participants to define what is needed in terms of professional development. While the facilitators can lay the stage in terms of providing a professional development

framework, the participants will be most invested in the training if the topics are genuine to their own experiences. As such, facilitators need to provide space for the expertise and needs of the group to be identified and to emerge. A curriculum should not be imposed; rather participants should co-create their own authentic learning agenda with the facilitator. The facilitator then plays a key role in providing resources to support professional development in the areas identified by the participants.

2. Although the training agenda should be co-created, **trained facilitators play a big role in modeling the practices, principles, and philosophies of youth development practice**. Creating and sustaining mutually respectful relationships, level power differentials among participants, providing opportunities for skill development and mastery, providing support for participant empowerment and action, and helping participants enter a trajectory of professional optimization are all youth development principles that can be modeled and incorporated into professional development programs.

3. Professional development should **create a "community of practice"** where participants engage by learning as doing, becoming, experiencing, and belonging. Key to this is the opportunity to explore ways to improve practice and set higher standards for organizational expectations for youth work practice.

4. Professional development should **focus on personal, professional, and organizational development**. Facilitators play a key bridge role in connecting front-line workers to upper-level management, and helping participants develop political understanding and skills needed for effective community organizing.

5. **Race and ethnic differences need to be recognized and discussed.** In this study, the participants' race and ethnicity impacted how they were seen by others, and how they saw themselves as youth workers. This was particularly salient because the facilitators were coming from a university, and much of the research related to youth work comes from (often) white, middle-class, university perspectives. Attending to this power differential, whether in terms of race and ethnicity, or differences in education level or position within the 4-H organization is a critical aspect of successful professional development endeavors. Doing so can further assist participants to create safe and inclusive environments for youth.

6. **Leaders for organizational change need to be developed at all levels of the organization**; this is crucial for the diffusion of professional knowledge and skill across the organization.

7. **Change leaders need support and guidance in navigating organizational structures and politics.** This is critical when the diffusion of new knowledge is to be disseminated throughout the organization, as resistance, hostility and other barriers are likely whenever something new is embraced.

Summary

The authors present a nice case study of a long-term professional development collaboration between university youth worker educators, and front-line staff at a large-scale parks and recreation program. The authors recognize that the program they describe is not formulaic, and they are uncertain whether such an approach is replicable in other settings. What they do offer, however, are insights into effective processes for the professional development of youth workers, how those processes come to bear fruit in the personal and professional lives of youth works, and how youth-serving organizations can be changed and improved by the investment in and of youth workers within organizations. The lessons presented in this case study have clear implications for professional development strategies within the 4-H youth development system.

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**Youth Development Practitioners and Their Relationships
in Schools and After-School Programs**
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Topic Area(s)

- Youth Development Practice
- Out-of-School-Time Programs

Abstract

This article examines the kinds of relationships that non-teacher educators, especially youth development practitioners working in after-school settings, have with students. It addresses the fact that these adults in schools have an explicit youth-oriented and relational approach, find out many productive and anxiety-provoking facts about their students, and often do not have sufficient training and supervision to deal with the problems that emerge. It also examines the issue that the roles of these practitioners are varied and differ from the often very defined roles of other school personnel. The article divides the typical functions of the youth development practitioner into three main domains: educator, mentor, and connector.

Article Citation

Noam, G.G., & Bernstein-Yamashiro, B. (2013). Youth development practitioners and their relationships in schools and after-school program. *New Directions for Youth Development,* 2013(137), 57-68.

Research Brief

Though originally viewed as child care, out-of-school time (OST) opportunities including after-school, extended day, expanded opportunities, and summer learning programs have proven themselves as viable partners for formal education. Many aspects of these programs have been evaluated leading to a list of best practices, however one area of research has been lacking; the relationship between adults and students. In addition, very little research has been conducted that addresses topics such as what constitutes a healthy non-teacher relationship, what boundary issues should be explored in these less formal and less hierarchical settings, and what role and relationship differences there are between a teacher and a youth development practitioner. This article explores the relationship between formal teachers and students vs. the one between out-of-school-time youth development practitioners and how these differences

relate to opportunities for mentoring. It also defines the role of a youth development practitioner and expresses concern regarding a critical lack of education in an area needed for optimum mentoring.

Contribution to Theory

Of the eight essential elements of positive youth development, a positive relationship with a caring adult rises to the top in importance. Due to the amount of time youth spend in school, one would think teachers would be able to fill this need, however, this article points to time restraints, mere numbers of students, and the need to keep a more professional relationship with students as a reason most formal educators are not able to give the mentoring and support their students need. According to the authors, reform-minded educational systems want to create a climate of concern and care, see the need for involving more adults in the school system, and embrace quality out-of-school-time programs' different teaching/learning style that enhance formal education. They have found that in general, out-of-school-time providers' relationships with students tend to be warmer, more positive, and less formal compared to teacher-student relationships. Therefore, youth development practitioners who run these programs can serve as adults who form meaningful relationships with students while helping them find the activities they are especially good at or interested in whilst taking a more relaxed, fun approach to learning.

It is noted that due to the climate of out-of-school-time programs coupled with the high-risk students who tend to participate in them, the opportunity to make a significant impact with young people through strong mentoring is immense. According to the authors "This is an essential part of what youth development practitioners are taught to do and what defines their identity. While teachers can mentor, youth practitioners must do so. Youth development is mentoring, and strong, committed relationships are at the core of the enterprise." The authors admit to the challenge in defining roles for youth practitioners as it can be difficult when dealing with formal education's tight role definitions. Having a generalist youth development practitioner with a focus on the personal lives of youth, their families, and their learning provides flexibility for the school but also a new, less defined role with boundary issues that can cause concern.

The authors settled on three roles for youth development practitioners: 1. They serve as educators who focus on life skills and student-interest led learning,   2. They also serve as connectors by making sure students benefit from the small group learning, feel engaged in their learning, and have opportunities to feel connection with their community, and 3. They serve as mentors through a strong youth/adult relationship.

When considering this role definition, the authors found the focus of youth development practitioner training is to enhance their knowledge and skill base in order to advance student academic success and on defining and teaching life skills. Yet when reviewing the core of youth

development (a philosophy and a practice that is highly relational with strong connections between adults and youth) a glaring lack of training is noted. Training focused on helping youth development practitioners know how to create safe, productive, and developmentally appropriate relationships with their students is deficient. Vulnerable students who carry a great deal of trauma are often participants in out-of-school-time programs and the fact that most youth development practitioners have not been trained to deal with these complex and destructive situations their students are experiencing is quite serious. The authors are also concerned about the vulnerability in the relationships that students form and the possible boundary issues that could occur. The authors call for a great deal of thinking and training regarding boundaries and point to strong training, coaching and other supports for the youth practitioner.

Contribution to Practice

The authors define the core functions of youth development practitioners as educator, connector, and mentor. It is believed most youth workers receive training on teaching styles for informal education and are well prepared to help capture students' interest and guide their learning in a fun and engaging manner while connecting the learning to formal education and the life skills needed to become contributing adults. In addition, youth development practitioners are generally well connected with the community and the school system and use these connections to ensure their students are supported in their area of interest and need. However, youth development professionals are not as well prepared in the area of mentoring. The authors believe that having an understanding of resiliency and psychopathology would provide youth practitioners with important tools for dealing with the traumas and social problems their students have experienced. In short, youth development practitioners need counselor training.

Implications for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice

The role of mentor is at the core of positive youth development's youth/adult relationships. As 4-H reaches beyond its traditional audience and focuses on additional out-of-school-time programming, the opportunity for mentoring of members from the more vulnerable population is increased. To be successful and make a real difference in the lives of these youth people, youth development practitioners need more understanding of the possible 'baggage" that comes with the student. Increased education in areas that have not traditionally been part of the 4-H youth development professional's training is needed. Counselor training is appropriate and is, indeed, critical if we are to be successful in our outreach and engagement efforts.

Selected References for Additional Reading

Malti, T., & Naom, G.G. (Eds.). (2008). Where youth development meets mental health and education: The RALLY approach. *New Directions for Youth Development, 120.*

Developmental Assets and Ethnic Identity as Predictors of Thriving in Hispanic Adolescents

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Topic Area(s)

• Positive Youth Development
• Hispanic adolescents
• Developmental assets

Abstract

This study examined the confluence of developmental assets, ethnic identity, and acculturative stress in the prediction of thriving among Hispanic adolescents. Thriving is used to encompass youth who are not only doing well now, but who are also on the trajectory toward overall success. Study participants included 130 self-reported Hispanic middle and high school students participating in a leadership program specifically geared towards at-risk students. The results indicated that ethnic identity and developmental assets positively predict adolescents thriving. As expected, the correlations between developmental assets scores (context and category) and composite thriving were all significant and positive. Specifically, internal assets and ethnic identity were the main predictors of thriving according to regression analysis. Implications for professionals working with Hispanic youth are discussed.

Article Citation

Alvarado, M., & Ricard, R. (2013). Developmental Assets and Ethnic Identity as Predictors of Thriving in Hispanic Adolescents. Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Science, 35(4), 510-523.

Research Brief

Hispanics make up 16% of the total U.S. population and 23% of this population is under the age of 18 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The authors acknowledge that research has not kept up with the trends to identify the lack of contemporary evidence-based information related to normative Hispanic youth. Historically, research looked at and was evaluated by efforts that measure and predict problem behaviors such as substance abuse, academic failure, and teenage pregnancy. Alvarado and Ricard take a different approach to Hispanic adolescent research. This study makes a shift and attempts to look at youth through a lens of "what are

they doing right." Cultural variables and their relation to developmental assets and thriving were examined which expands previous research of this audience. This study used a strength-based approached and addressed the rareness of research around normative patterns of the development of Hispanic youth.

The study looked at the predictors that influence thriving among Hispanic adolescents; specifically, developmental assets, ethnic identity, and acculturative stress of Hispanic youth attending an urban public school in south Texas. The authors of this study define Thriving to encompass youth who are not only doing well but who are on the trajectory toward overall successes.

•   Developmental assets are sources of internal and external support for development that serve as protective factors (Bernard, 1991; Benson & Lerner, 2003). It includes such items as opportunities, skills, relationships, values, and self-perception (Benson & Lerner, 2003; Lerner, 1998). Research shows that the higher the developmental score/level, the less likely the adolescent is to engage in problem behavior and more likely to engage in positive behaviors that result in positive outcomes (Scales& Leffert, 2004).

•   Ethnic Identity is the personal identity one relates to. It is also essential that one be aware of ethnic identity which is an individual's personal identity, feelings of belonging, commitment, and affirmation of life satisfaction with a specific group and its membership (Phinney & Ong, 2007). In this study ethnic identity is identified as a protective factor for Hispanic adolescents (Castro et al, 2007).

•   Acculturative stress often accompanies psychosocial adaptation efforts (acculturation) made by members of one culture as a result of contact with another culture (Burnam, Telles, Karno, & Escobar, 1987). This may involve learning a new language, values, attitudes, resources, unspecified social rules, and functioning in compliance with the environment to be socially competent.

In the study, internal assets and ethnic identity alone accounted for 46% of the variance of thriving.

Contribution to Practice
There is an urgent need for evidence based research related to Hispanic audiences due to the growth in this population. Additionally, the study shows that internal assets directly impact thriving among Hispanic adolescents. Positive identification is another factor that impacts how well this audience thrives. The findings in this study were consistent with the research literature on developmental assets and how they contribute to thriving. Therefore, it is imperative that youth development professionals be aware of the factors that influence the ability to thrive and design programs that include opportunities for this to occur.

According to the results of the study, the main predictors of thriving are ethnic identity and internal assets.

- In order for youth to thrive, the authors of this study stress the importance of positive identification with the ethnic group. According to research ethnic identity has a significant positive relationship with thriving.
- The authors explain that developmental assets such as relationships, opportunities, skills, values, and self-perceptions all have a significant impact on young people's lives. Internal assets are values or competencies that youth have internalized such as achievement, motivation, honesty, integrity, and self-esteem. Internal assets are especially predictive of thriving among Hispanic adolescents and serve as a protective barrier to negative behaviors. There is a direct correlation between development assets and thriving and the two are predictive of each other. The greater the developmental assets one experiences, the more likely they are to avoid the deviant behaviors.

Implication for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice

From the research, the authors make recommendations for the promotion of asset development interventions in the promotion of wellness among youth. Youth development professionals should continue to utilize a positive youth development (PYD) approach and capitalize on one's strengths. This approach is beneficial in the combat of decreasing negative outcomes in youth.

In addition, 4-H youth development professionals need to be aware of the ethnic identity and developmental assets of all audiences when designing and implementing programs, because research shows they directly impact their ability to thrive. Developmental assets have a significant impact on young people's lives. Therefore, it is critical to allow opportunities for youth to grow and develop in this area. This study finds the significant relationship ethnic identity has with developmental assets and thriving behaviors.

Furthermore, ethnic identity should be looked at as an internal asset to be cultivated.

The authors' findings recommend that as youth development professionals, we should continue to design programs that provide positive potential for growth and change in human development and avoid problem-focused dialogue and descriptions centering on Hispanics as an "at-risk" population.

When working with partners, it is important to incorporate the PYD approach because of the impact it has on strengthening developmental assets to promote thriving and combat problem behaviors.

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Journal of Early Adolescence, 9, 34-49.

Professionalization in Youth Work? Opening and Deepening Circles of Inquiry

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Topic Area(s)

- **Youth Development Profession**

Abstract

In this article, the authors examine the claims of professionalization in youth work as both a process and outcome that aims to ultimately improve the lives of young people. The topic of professionalization is then approached through three circles of inquiry that reframe the issue(s) through the historical and sociocultural situatedness of professional movements; the contemporary sociopolitical and sociolegal context; and those self-referential questions that deal with the practice of youth work itself.

Article Citation

Fusco, D., Baizerman, M. (2013). Professionalization in Youth Work? Opening and Deepening Circles of   Inquiry. Child and Youth Services, 34:89-99.

Research Brief

The terms youth development specialist, frontline youth worker, youth development educator, youth development professional, or youth developer can be synonymous titles given to a cadre of different positions that are associated with the ambiguous field of youth work. The article *Professionalization in Youth Work? Opening and Deepening Circles of Inquiry* (2013) provides a basis of understanding and a lens by which to question the legitimacy and potential for the professionalization of this sometimes obscure profession. The authors make note of the importance of the work conducted in this profession and therefore why they consider many in the field are leaning towards the notion (out of necessity) of professionalizing the field of youth work.

As explained in the article, the issue of "claiming occupational space" is at the core of the movement to professionalize the field. The underlying notion being that without professional recognition, similar to other fields recognized like healthcare, law or business, the field of youth work lacks legitimacy making it difficult for those in the field to lobby for increased wages, better working conditions, and celebrated program practices; essentially looking at

"professionalization" as a cure to the aforementioned needs of youth workers. Fusco and Baizerman do not necessarily make a case for the need to professionalize the field, but rather take an inquiry approach to further the conversation between those in the field and those whom could legitimize the profession.

Contribution to Theory & Practice
The importance of this article to professionals in the field of youth work lies in the ongoing conversations about the potential impacts "professionalizing" the field will have. Despite the interest in professionalizing the field, it is the increased opportunities for young people (thought to be an outcome of professionalization) coupled with enhanced working conditions that peaks the attention of youth workers (Fusco & Baizerman, 2013). The conversation thickens and becomes obscure when the question of expectations for outcomes as a result of professionalization is brought forth.

Expectation for outcomes goes hand-in-hand with the need for advanced training or education specific (i.e. credentials) to the field. Fusco and Baizerman (2013) clearly articulate several issues in relation to credentialing that those in the field need to consider as they progress through the conversation; a primary point being that "professionalization requires standardized structures to select, monitor, and evaluate all aspects of the profession, the process created however, may run counter to the essence of youth work as an inclusive, democratic and participatory practice."

The authors perspectives of professionalization in this article are not centered on creating a cure to the existing crisis based around the lack of legitimacy of the profession, but rather in adding to the conversation in such a manner that drives answers to the "crisis" based questions. Approaching the topic of professionalization through a set of questions within the following three circles of inquiry:

- Outer circle: historical and cultural context
- Middle circle: sociopolitical and socio-legal context
- Inner circle: families of youth work practice

The circles of inquiry pose questions to the different layers of the process and to those whom the process does or should involve. There is a sense of caution expressed by the authors in relation to professionalization of the field, as actions taken now, without full understanding of the field, potentially hold major impact for the future. Professionalization possibly puts youth work in a box which may eliminate potential outcomes and/or future understanding of positive youth development practice.

Implications for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice
Implications for 4-H professionals rests in our ability to answer like questions of our own in relation to the work we do specifically within the realm of 4-H and how that fits into the global

movement of professionalization of youth work. Unlike many other youth organizations, 4-H programs both in Oregon and nationally articulate program outcomes in such a manner that gives credence to the work of 4-H professionals. Leaving us out of the "crisis" or search for the "cure" within the context of "why" now is the time for professionalization.

Our organization's current understanding of research based positive youth development practices and connectedness to the Land Grant University system coupled with our hiring practices and defined "credentials" needed to carryout out specific job functions sets us ahead of many other youth serving organizations (see "PRKC" in reference section). When considering Fusco's and Baizerman's circles of inquiry, the 4-H organization is primed to answer with reasonable validity many of the questions posed. Further implications for 4-H professionals as it relates to this article therefore rests in how we define the work we do and how that work fits within the broad "family" of the youth work field.

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A Community Development Approach to Service-Learning:
Building Social Capital Between Rural Youths and Adults

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Topic Area(s)

- Service-Learning

Abstract

Social capital brings something new to youth and community development perspectives that have not yet been explained by other approaches. Social capital can help explain why some youth are more likely to get by or get ahead, why some adults are more effective within leadership roles or professions, and why some communities are better able to address poverty, bounce back from natural disasters, or seize new economic opportunities. The 4-H and FFA case studies presented in this study illustrate the characteristics of a community development approach to service learning that moves beyond one-shot projects to building and sustaining youth-adult partnerships to do collective work with high public value. Programmatic structures like 4-H and FFA offer lenses for how this can play out in schools and communities. When practitioners are as attentive to nurturing relationships between youth and adults as they are to the activities carried out, the relationships that are built and the tangibles of service are products that carry forward for rural communities. This phenomenon has implications for practitioners, whether concerned with narrowing the relational gap between generations due to technology, reversing brain drain, or revitalizing rural communities. Communities with greater cohesion between the generations will be healthier, more viable, and better prepared to tackle tough issues in a complex, changing world. Seeing youth programs as builders of social capital can assist 4-H youth and community development extension professionals, educators, and other practitioners in fashioning programs that boost rural community viability. From this perspective, stakeholders can develop stocks of social capital available to rural communities while strengthening the value that communities and society place on rural youth.

Article Citation

Henness, S, Ball, A. and Moncheski, A. (2013). A community development approach to service-learning: Building social capital between rural youths and adults. *New Directions for Youth Development*, Wiley Periodicals: Number 138, Summer 2013.

Research Brief

Both 4-H and FFA have long standing programmatic traditions rich in involving youth in community service and community development projects. Service is grounded in the 4-H Positive youth development model and even in the 4-H Pledge, " . . . and my hands for larger service."

Community service learning has become instrumental in forging school-community partnerships and brokering youth service for community development. Involving youth in collaboration service learning has shown value in making headway on some of the toughest issues facing rural youth and their communities. The rural context of community service-learning has been largely overlooked within the youth and community development research fields. Lately, however, the rural context of community-service learning has caught the eye of researchers who identify unique attributes of small-own life and rural areas. Rural communities characterized by geographical remoteness, sparse populations, and a limited resources based, yet rich in informal associations, cultural traditions, and an ethic of hard work and self-reliance, make the effects and impact on service learning more observable.

Methods and Design

The Hennes, Ball, Moncheski research is based on case study findings from two studies: one in a rural Missouri community participating in the USDA Rural Youth Development Program through 4-H and the other from a sample of key school-based agriculture programs (FFA) in rural Missouri. The goal of this research was to build understanding of how bonding social capital is built between rural 4-H and FFA youth and adults through their involvement in service-learning or civic engagement activities.

The 4-H case study included qualitative interviews consisting of two focus groups with five adults and four youth and two individual interviews with one adult and one youth. The FFA case study included hour-long face-to-face, semi structured interviews of all participants; in-depth site observations at each of the three schools; and a reflective questionnaire sent to all of the students regarding their feelings about participation in FFA civic engagement activities.

Contribution to Practice

Both case studies illuminate five programmatic elements that facilitate the building of bonding social capital between rural youth and adults. These elements more broadly make up a community development approach to service-learning that youth practitioners and policymakers may apply toward the goal of building community social capital. These five elements are:

1. ***Youth and adult leader engagement throughout the process:*** It is important from the outset that adult leaders demonstrate a level of respect and trust in youth members and an understanding that a shared sense of ownership is critical for any subsequent actions the

group would take. As a result of gaining buy-in from youth, the case study teams maintained a high level of youth participation throughout the process. Involving many different types of civic leaders received a strong response and support from youth as well. In these successful case studies the role of the adult leader was to guide, encourage and support the youth. Likewise, youth highly valued the qualities that adults brought to the team which included: 1) knowledge of the community, the workforce and the real world; 2) positive resources with real experiences and responsibilities; and 3) insights on the importance of professionalism, team work, time management and decision making.

2. ***Broad community participation through youth led forums:*** These case studies demonstrated that community issues forums and other participatory mechanisms take youth outside the classroom and allow them to connect with and work with community members. It is through these forums that ties between generations can be formed and strengthened.

3. ***Shared leadership for projects with high public value:*** Public value, or the degree to which projects benefit nonparticipants, has the potential for raising the stakes on interactions between youth and adults. When the whole community is the recipient of the project, there is greater bonding between youth and adults. The opportunities for these high public value projects can be higher in a rural community. Projects such as a downtown park beautification are visible to the entire community and it is clear that the entire community benefits.

4. ***Sustained focus on results and impacts over time***: Staying focused on one issue, like poverty, youth continue to work on projects, often with the same cadre of adult leaders, which supports growing deeper connections. Participants in the study reported authentic and transformational learning when community service projects were yearlong efforts. Students also reported a new awareness of their community and the needs of people in the community.

5. ***Community celebration and recognition of roles and contributions of youth:*** Communities must recognize youth formally and informally for service learning to contribute to rural community vitality. Informal recognition occurs when negative or indifferent adults gradually become more positive about young people by their statements and actions. Media coverage is another informal way of recognizing youth. Youth can be recognized formally through a variety of ways such as scholarships, awards, conference trips and other travel opportunities or even involving youth in public decision making. Adult recognition is important as well. Adults who were recognized felt an increased sense of community pride and bonding with other adults with whom they had collaborated.

Implications for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice
The results from the Henness, Ball and Moncheski study concur with other case studies that have shown that community service-learning can lead to the building of social capital, which can then lead to the building of more social capital. Through these civic engagement activities,

youth and adults form deeper connections, the community's level of civic engagement increases, and the community members' perceptions of youth improved. Furthermore, youth reported that these experiences were transformative and authentic learning experiences, which helped them change their perceptions about themselves, others, and their role in the community in ways superior to traditional classroom experiences.

The authors highlight several important recommendations for the 4-H youth development field.

1. Prepare youth and adults to work together in partnership through service-learning.
2. Move beyond one-shot projects involving one community partner organization and one service activity.
3. Engage students in identifying the community issue to address, selecting the strategy, and designing the service-learning projects they will carry out.
4. Choose projects that involve students in service with high public value.
5. Ensure that service-learning projects involve ongoing contact and interaction among youth and elected officials.
6. Support youth-led community forums or town hall meetings that connect youth with the broader community.
7. Recognize youth who are involved in improving community vitality with awards, scholarships conference trips and other forms of public recognition.
8. Organize school or community-based youth leadership development programs that immerse youth in the community.

The authors suggest more research is needed to better understand the benefits of a community development approach to service-learning on other forms of social capital (such as bridging and linking), as well as to quantify what aspects of service learning most determine the formation of social capital.

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Next Steps for Research and Practice in Career Programming

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Topic(s)

- Career programming
- Workforce Development

Abstract

The articles in this volume of New Directions for Youth Development highlight the broad research base relevant to career programming from which policy and practice can draw. This concluding article integrates these findings to highlight next steps for research and practice related to career programming.

Research Brief

This article was a summary article of all papers included in the issue, so a reference list was not provided. References are provided at the end of this review for all articles referred to in the summary article.

Contribution to Theory and Practice

Career programming is best thought of as a framework rather than a passing trend. Youth need to acquire social and academic skills to serve as the foundation for them to be successful in the work environment as well as establish healthy relationships and strong families. Perry and Wallace refer to these as transferrable skills, such as professionalism and punctuality, effective written and verbal communication, teamwork and collaboration, and the ability to understand and apply information to solve problems. These skills can be learned in a variety of ways, but to achieve the best outcomes youth need to be engaged in high quality learning experiences.

A high quality learning experience should be engaging youth in real world experiences, allowing youth to gain exposure to the adult world, while discovering the connections between learning and careers (such as the connection between wanting to be a banker and needing to do well in math class). Career programming also needs to provide links to the next steps for youth. Ways to address this need, based on a variety of different authors, included: better explanations to youth of how the skills they are learning through their learning experience would be marketable; better job placement services after a program ended; and better understanding of what additional steps or paths for youth to take to build their knowledge and skills further.

Hynes suggest next steps for research and practice related to career programming. Evaluation research of career assessment tools to determine which ones, if any, engage youth, improve their motivation and help them make good decisions about their time. A suggested efficiency of mentoring youth is the need for youth to have an advisor that works with youth over time, listens to what they discover through their learning experiences, help them update their career goals, and help them select new learning experiences. Porfeli and Lee suggest using development theory and assessments to determine where youth currently sit on the career developmental spectrum and then help them select appropriate experiences for moving forward. Learning about what experiences are available for youth in their community might require some mapping and networking databases and if done in an intentional way could reduce redundancy efforts within a community. Efforts to streamline efficiencies in systems also often help identify gaps in services as well as organizations available to fulfill needs.

Implications for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice

The Hynes article and this entire issue of *New Directions for Youth Development* stimulate both thought and action for the 4-H Youth Development program. Career programming should be considered as an integral part of our youth development framework, rather than a set of programs we do for youth. The 4-H program should take inventory of our current systems, structures and programs and analyze what we can do to better prepare and connect youth to careers. We can provide better documentation and process – through perhaps a competency assessment given to youth before the leave 4-H – of all of the transferrable skills they have gained in 4-H which would transfer well from one work environment to another. We can provide better training to our 4-H volunteers to more intentionally serve as the *advisors*, referred to by Hynes, who can assist youth in engaging in the next step of their career journey. 4-H can also work to ensure that we offer high quality opportunities for youth to explore their interests and develop higher-level skills, making connections with or integrating real world experiences into the learning activities. Finally, 4-H can be a partner in the mapping or sharing at the local level the opportunities for youth to get connected with further activities for their career development.

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The Psychology and Practice of Youth-Adult Partnership:
Bridging Generations for Youth Development and Community Change

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Topic Areas

- Youth Adult Partnerships
- Positive Youth Development
- Civic Engagement

Abstract

Youth-adult partnership (Y-AP) has become a phenomenon of interest to scholars and practitioners. Despite the potential of Y-AP to promote positive youth development, increase civic engagement and support community change, the practice remains unfamiliar to many. Although research has increased over the past decade, the construct remains vague with an insufficient grounding in developmental theory and community practice. This article seeks to address these gaps by synthesizing data and insights from the historical foundations of Y-AP, community based research, and case study. We propose Y-AP as a unifying concept, distinct from other forms of youth-adult relationships, with four core elements: authentic decision making, natural mentors, reciprocity, and community connectedness. We conclude that Y-AP functions as an active ingredient and fundamental practice for positive youth development and civic engagement. Directions for future research are offered.

Article Citation

Zeldin, S., Christens, B. D. & Powers, J. L. (2013). The Psychology and Practice of Youth-Adult Partnership: Bridging Generations for Youth Development and Community Change. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 51*, 385-397. doi: 10.1007/s10464-012-95558-y.

Research Brief

Youth-adult partnership (Y-AP) is currently a popular practice in positive youth development and civic engagement. Beginning in the early 1970's, a growing body of research indicates that Y-AP promotes positive youth development, increases civic engagement and strengthens communities. Despite numerous benefits, Y-AP is equally challenging for policy makers,

researchers and practitioners. The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive literature review, clearly define the concept and identify the core elements of Y-AP.

Contributions to Theory

Youth-Adult Partnership (Y-AP) can be conceptualized as both a developmental process and a community practice. There are numerous benefits of Y-AP including bringing together community members from across generations; working together to address common concerns; emphasizing mutual respect, shared leading and learning; challenging all group members to bring their own perspectives, experiences and networks to the partnership; promoting community change through critical discourse, skill development, participatory inquiry and collective action; and shared control between youth and adults providing an ideal environment for positive youth and community development.

The context for Y-AP in the United States is generally a society of age segregation. Even though citizen voice is the cornerstone of democracy, adults in our society tend to isolate children from "the real world" in an effort to protect them. Several unintended consequences result including an increased lack of understanding (and communication) between younger and older generations, a reinforced "outsider" status of youth, suppression of youth voice, an increased delay in youth taking on "adult" responsibilities, youth who lack the skills to do so, and community functions that are dominated by adults. Youth-adult partnerships in the area of civic engagement counteract the societal trend.

This article reviews federal reports and policies that have shaped youth-adult partnership (Y-AP) from its roots of youth activism in the 1960's to its wide-spread use and popularity in recent years. Youth-Adult Partnership was first described as a way for young people to gain civic and political knowledge and skills and encourage future democratic action. Through the 1970's the concept evolved and young people were viewed as community resources. Others saw Y-AP as a way for youth to develop personal identity and voice. Growth of Y-AP slowed during the 1980's, when national educational policies pushed for increased classroom time, conventional instruction and testing of basic skills. In the 1993, Y-AP saw another boost when Congress authorized the Corporation for National and Community Service to promoted civic responsibility and created incentives for Y-AP. Private foundations such as the W.K. Kellogg, Surdna and the National 4-H Foundation launched demonstration projects that developed community infrastructure to support Y-AP. As Y-AP became more visible throughout the 1990's, youth were more frequently included in community development efforts.

Three themes are identified from current literature on Youth-Adult Partnership (Y-AP). The first is that youth engagement is fostered by the collaboration. Youth and adults share common work, norms and values in the partnership, which in turn motivates youth to stay involved. The second theme relates to social justice and the way in which youth and adults alike must learn

how to participate together to make changes in their communities. The third theme was characteristics of successful Y-APs, which include joint work, common values, shared power and a focus on collective issues.

The authors propose the following working definition of Y-AP: *"Youth-adult partnership is the practice of: (a) multiple youth and multiple adults deliberating and acting together, (b) in a collective [democratic] fashion, (c) over a sustained period of time, (d) through shared work, (e) intended to promote social justice, strengthen an organization and/or affirmatively address a community issue."* This definition will allow people to differentiate Y-AP from other types of youth-adult interactions, such as the traditional one-on-one mentoring model. "Shared work" is meant to underscore the assignment of roles and division of labor is not determined by age, but instead is based on the specific motivation, skill, and network that each individual brings to the endeavor. Through this approach, groups can construct shared purpose. Y-APs are designed to support youth and adults as agents of their own development.

Contributions to Practice
This article identifies four core elements of Y-AP: authentic decision making, natural mentors, reciprocal activity and community connectedness. Authentic decision making allows for development of youth voice, especially through recognition by powerful others and by inclusion in consequential deliberations. Youth participating in group decision making fosters mastery, confidence, identity exploration, initiative and emotional well-being.

"Natural mentors" describe adults who are instrumental, respectful, and willing to work collaboratively – adult "partners" or "allies." Youth appreciate adults who are non-judgmental, passionate, well-organized and active listeners. Natural mentors serve as positive role models and provide unconditional support and professional and social networking. They sometimes help youth focus on their future and overcome adversity.

Reciprocal activity often takes the form of co-learning in Y-AP. Studies of community development have identified the importance of free and deliberate spaces where individuals are encouraged to share information, question assumptions, solve problems and build social networks. The key to successful Y-AP is understanding partnership. Adults and youth must work "shoulder to shoulder" sharing ideas and expertise, creating a mutual agenda and sharing ownership of the outcome. The process needs to be collaborative and reflective.

Community connectedness refers to the opportunities available through community networks. Being a part of such networks helps youth feel connected to adults and public institutions, which are strong predictors of civic engagement, adolescent health, social trust and school achievement. Youth who experience voice and power in intergenerational networks of program

decision making have been found to have stronger psychological sense of community. Adults also experience positive changes in perceptions of youth.

This article suggests that as youth development practitioners, it is our responsibility to provide successful Y-AP opportunities for youth and adults in our communities. Making sure that all four of core elements are present in our Y-APs is critical. This requires frequent and on-going communication with the youth and adults involved in the partnership. We also need to be advocates for Y-AP in our communities, marketing the numerous benefits.

Implications for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice
We have a distinct advantage in the 4-H program when it comes to fostering Youth-Adult Partnerships (Y-AP). We have a network of trained 4-H volunteers who enjoy partnering with youth and have skills for being effective adult partners. Our 4-H program committees present the perfect "internal" opportunity to utilize Y-AP and our 4-H network throughout the community allows for additional "external" Y-AP opportunities. The life skills that youth develop through Y-AP are consistent with the life skills that we build in 4-H.

As 4-H professionals, we can utilize the Y-AP definition presented in this article, as well as the four core elements to guide our Y-AP work and make sure that we are being consistent in our application and implementation of the technique. As the authors suggest, we will have the best results by making certain that each partnership is truly a Y-AP as defined in this article and that all four core elements are present.

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Architects, Captains, and Dreamers:
Creating Advisor Roles that Foster Youth-Adult Partnerships

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Topic Area(s)

- Student Voice
- Youth-adult Partnerships
- Civic Engagement
- Leadership
- Partnership

Abstract

"While research has document the many ways in which student voice can enable educational change, the process of how adults can help to enable student voice is less clear. This article examines how adults new to working as advisors of student voice initiatives begin to develop partnerships with young people. Using a Youth-Adult Partnership continuum as a framework, three cases represent a range of beliefs of student leadership. Using the archetypes of Captain, Dreamer, and Architect, the cases indicate how the adults began their work with youth with adult-centered, a student-centered, and an equilibrium approach, respectively. While the article highlights that adults must learn how to scaffold youth participation to help them to develop the leadership skills necessary to share in the work of the partnership, little training and materials exist for adults to learn how to scaffold learning.   Part of this training includes the willingness for adults to recognize that they themselves need to change as well in order to facilitate youth leadership."

Article Citation

Research Brief

Civic engagement is the interaction between individuals and the improvement of the common good of their community. Student voice is sometimes used to describe civic engagement in the most basic sense. Student voice activities can be a catalyst for positive change. One of the greatest struggles is the role of adults in these interactions. This research looks at adults new

to working with youth learn how to enable student voice initiatives in multiple school settings. Research indicates that enabling youth to share leadership requires a scaffolding approach. Adults foster the development of meaningful, but not equal roles, foster the development of a common vision, share responsibility for decisions and accountability for outcomes.

This paper used a multiple case study design. Adults new to Youth-Adult Partnerships (YAPs) and demonstrated a range in the YAP process were selected. Extensive observations, focus groups, interviews, and baseline surveys contributed to the data. Adult relationships with youth were categorized as Architect: an Equilibrium approach, The Captain: An adult-centered approach, and The Dreamer: A student-centered approach. Each of the adults crafted the experience of the group with their vision of the partnership.

The Architect – an adult who learns from previous mistakes and plans carefully for success. To improve the team, students are identified that can work together and have a positive reputation. Communication between adults, youth, and administrators is used to ensure support and success. Careful planning, a vision, and a balance between allowing youth to develop on their own and being aware when guidance is needed are skills of an Architect.

The Captain – an adult centered YAP. The adult works with the youth, but remains in charge. Shared decision-making is a challenge, often due to the adult-youth interaction. The adult often demands participation and organization. The adult will leave, forcing the youth to participate. This absence of the adult creates a vacuum of leadership rather than a transfer of power.

The Dreamer – an adult with a strong commitment, a vision, and a passion for youth driven leadership and collaboration. These adults believe youth should be in charge of deciding what to do, how to do, and then doing it.

All of these adults need to increase adult structure, changes in relationships and the perception of these relationships between adults and youth. Adults need to have a realistic understanding of their capacity and vision, a realistic understanding of youth capacity and interest, and structures that can connect the two perspectives. Growth occurs and is often not linear but a process influenced by individual beliefs, interaction and the broader community.

Contribution to Theory
Research suggests that activities fostering youth participation can lead to civic engagement and increase the student's' belief that they can make a difference.

Student voice describes the most basic level of youth sharing their opinion of problems and potential solutions; to young people collaborating with adults to address the problems in their schools; to youth taking the lead on seeking change. This research helps to identify how adults

develop the skills to be successful advisors and how to encourage inclusive innovative partnerships.

Contribution to Practice

Opportunities for youth to participate in civic engagement can shape their lives and the lives of their peers. It increases their belief that they can make a difference. Youth – Adult Partnerships (YAP) are defined as relationships in which both youth and adults have the potential to contribute to decision-making processes, to learn from one another, and to promote change. The most successful YAPs have adults scaffold youth through the process. Adults provide active support of youth involvement, establish norms of respect and equality and provide encouragement. Clear articulation of youth and adult expectations clarify the messiness of YAP formation. Confidence in YAP provides a positive contribution to the group structure and process.

Implications for 4-H Youth Development Professional Practice

Youth- adult partnerships are great opportunities for youth leadership and civic engagement. Youth need to assume greater leadership in the partnerships, but adults need to sometimes change in order to foster a strong partnership. This type of research could assist adult advisors/leaders with knowing how to begin and sustain youth activities and how to gain support for their work from administrators.

Selected References for Additional Reading

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