

PENNSTATE



Resiliency and Thriving in Families and Youth

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Good Day All:

The events of September 11 have had a tremendous impact on us and the children, youth and families we serve. I hope the crisis link on the Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy web page has been useful. As information from research about the impact of this crisis as well as the war becomes available, I will be sure to keep you informed. I think the quote from Edmund Burke provides us with some useful wisdom to follow: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men [and women] do nothing." Meaning that the tragedies of September 11 require us to act. For me that action involved spending more time reflecting and more time helping out my neighbor. In this holiday season, I would strongly encourage all of us to make more time for family and friends. I believe this is the best way to honor those who died in the tragedy of September 11.

I want to thank all of you who completed the PA CYFAR Organizational Change Survey. The results from that survey can be found on the PA CYFAR web page at <http://agexted.cas.psu.edu/cyfar/>

Sincerely,

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FAMILY ACTIVITY

Start the holiday tradition of passing on family stories to your children. Set aside time this holiday to share a favorite story with your children - it can be a true story from your own childhood or a favorite story that someone used to tell you. While listening, children can draw pictures of the story. Stories can be written down and combined with your children's pictures to create a lasting family legacy. This is a great activity in which to involve extended family members. Ask grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins to share their stories as well.

RESEARCH BRIEFS



Premarital Education

In our society approximately 40% of new marriages end in divorce, resulting in a huge cost both to the individuals involved and to our society, since current evidence shows that marital distress has a negative effect on physical health, mental well-being, and work productivity. The high divorce rate has led to an increase in efforts to understand what can be done to help strengthen marriages.

One movement that has come out of the widespread public concern is a call for couples to undergo premarital education. Although some argue that before such education can be widely encouraged we need to know more about marital distress, this article argues that the need to strengthen marriages is so great that premarital education programs should be implemented at once. This article states that premarital training has four plausible benefits: it can (1) slow couples down to foster deliberation; (2) send a message that marriage matters; (3) make couples aware of where to go for help if they need it later; and (4) lower the risk for marital distress or termination in some couples. The author states that premarital education efforts should focus more on risk factors that can be changed, such as how couples interact when in conflict, and less on factors that are more static, such as personality tendencies.

The Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program, or PREP, is based on an empirical analysis of risk factors and is designed to decrease marital distress and divorce. The following are some key points gleaned from studies on PREP:

- Couples can be taught to communicate more positively and less negatively, and there is some evidence to show that these communication skills remain with couples up to five years or longer.
- When compared to control couples who were either not taking a program or were enrolled in a different program, PREP couples were less likely to break up or divorce up to five years after the training.
- PREP may help lower the likelihood of relationship aggression.

- High-risk couples who have taken the PREP course had significantly higher levels of marital satisfaction than high-risk control couples. These results did not hold for low-risk couples.

- Couples who were enrolled in the PREP course tended to be more satisfied with their premarital education than couples enrolled in other courses.

Some studies have highlighted methodological concerns about PREP and other research concerning premarital education:

- One major limitation of research on premarital training is that many studies use short-term designs for assessing the long-term goal of preventing marital distress and divorce.
- Only studies that use objective coding of videotaped interaction show differences in positive and negative interaction.
- Since control couples are more likely to break up or drop out of the studies, couples left in the control groups become more positive looking over time.
- Little is known about the degree of program fidelity maintained when premarital programs are widely disseminated.

Preliminary findings from a long-term study of PREP show that couples receiving PREP training are communicating significantly more positively after training, while couples receiving other kinds of premarital training actually are interacting more negatively. Although there is much research to be done on premarital education, there is enough evidence to suggest that programs like PREP can be of value and should be encouraged.

Found in: Stanley, S. M. (2001). Making a case for premarital education. *Family Relations*, 50, 272-280. To learn more about the PREP program go to: <http://www.prepinc.com/>



4-H Curriculum Development

Although states developed their own 4-H project materials for over 80 years, in recent years scarcity of resources made this both too costly and too inefficient. As a result, national criteria for 4-H curricula were developed in 1995. In addition, in the early 1990s, the 13 North Central states worked together to develop new animal science materials. Both the new National Criteria and the new animal science materials emphasized life skills and experiential learning. However, many 4-H project leaders and 4-H agents felt uncomfortable with the new materials, believing that they placed too much emphasis on life skills and not enough on subject matter (e.g., information on how to feed and show animals).

As a result, at the March 1998 Wisconsin 4-H Curriculum Team meeting a decision was made to have the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory conduct a telephone survey of parents whose children participated in 1997-98 4-H projects. The purpose of the survey was to answer five questions: (1) Did parents and kids receive the new materials? If so, did they use them?; (2) How did parents rate the new materials?; (3) What training and support did parents need?; (4) What were parents willing to pay for literature?; and (5) How important was it that their child gain life skills as compared to subject matter knowledge and showing at the county fair?

The results of the survey showed that only 65% of the families surveyed had received the 4-H literature. However, most of the families (84%) who received the literature used it. Thus, more attention needs to be paid to making sure that all children receive the literature. Overall, parents seemed happy with the quality of the literature, with 87% rating the overall quality as either excellent or good. Forty-three percent of parents reported that their child did not have contact with a project leader. This indicates that more efforts should be made to recruit and train project leaders.

Almost a third of parents felt they needed more training and support, and the vast majority (90%) indicated they would participate in local project meetings and seek advice from local project leaders. Fewer parents felt they would be willing to seek help on a county or state level. Thus, efforts to train and support parents should focus on the community-based level. Of the families

surveyed, 68% had access to the Internet, and of those with Internet access, 94%

said they would be likely to use the Internet as a source for project information. Therefore, more 4-H project information and support should be made available via the



Internet. If costs continue to rise and county support continues to decline, 79% of parents said they would be willing to pay the real cost of \$2.75 per booklet. However, special funds should be found to support families who cannot afford to pay for the literature.

Although some of the 4-H agents and project leaders felt that the new materials over emphasized life skills at the cost of teaching subject matter, the results of the survey indicate that most parents did not share this view. Seventy percent of the parents indicated that they thought teaching life skills was more important than teaching subject matter knowledge. In addition, 84% of the parents could clearly describe situations in which their children had applied the life skills they had learned in 4-H projects. According to the results of this study, the new curriculum materials are providing the lessons that parents want their children to learn from involvement in 4-H and are having a positive impact on the development of participating youth.

Found in: Vos, K. E., Baum, J., Esipova, N., & Brabender, W. (2000). *Wisconsin's 4-H project literature use survey: Research to support practice*. A research paper presented at National Association of Extension 4-H Youth Development in Denver, Colorado.



OTHER RESOURCES



Reading Wizards On-line

The *Reading Wizards* bulletins are online for parents. The original series of *Reading Wizards: Parents and Children Reading Together* was designed for parents of children ages 5-12. These bulletins included tips on how to make the most of reading time with your children, as well as activities based on the Harry Potter books. The second series of bulletins, A-D, are designed for parents of children as young as two years old and include activities based on Dr. Seuss books. I created this second series in response to educators' requests for reading materials for resource-stressed families. Thus, these bulletins are written at a fourth grade reading level. I want to thank Mary Ehret from Luzerne County for reviewing this bulletin series.

In addition there is a secure website for you to download the templates of the bulletins, as well as several other resources. Go to the Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy web page at <http://agexted.cas.psu.edu/fcs/dp/fyyp.html>; click on the Reading Wizards button; then click on the Extension Educators Resources button at the bottom of the screen. At the login prompt type "Harry" and at the password prompt type "Potter." The login and the password are sensitive to capital letters so be sure to capitalize the first letter of each word.



The bulletins are in template format so you can put your name and county on the last panel. Also included is a resource sheet that provides ideas for distribution of the program. Three types of news releases are provided, along with a PowerPoint slide presentation. The presentation was designed for a meeting of the PTA/PTO; however, you can adapt it to meet your needs. The presentation addresses the importance of reading and describes the *Reading Wizards* program. A parent's letter template is also provided, as well as a website handout. Finally, you can promote the *Reading Wizards* website at <http://agexted.cas.psu.edu/fcs/dp/Wizard.html>. It is designed for parents and professionals. However, I would ask that you not share with parents or other professionals the password for the secure site, as it is designed for extension educators. More resources will be added to the website (e.g., evaluation tools).

Reading Wizards posters are printed; however, there is a limited supply. Therefore, EMAIL ME TO RECEIVE THE POSTER AND TO INFORM ME HOW YOU ARE USING OR PLANNING TO USE THE READING WIZARDS PROGRAM IN YOUR COUNTY!

Power of an Untapped Resource

This booklet was created by Alaskan youth as a guide for boards interested in expanding their membership to include youth. Boards benefit from having youth's creative thinking and different points of view, and youth gain in leadership skills and are empowered to make a difference in their communities. However, youth, like any other members of a board, need training and mentoring to become fully effective board members. Before including youth members, a board should make sure they are ready to work effectively with youth. They need to be willing to be flexible about meeting times in order to accommodate youth's school schedules, and willing to take time for youth to become comfortable with the culture of the board and the use of Robert's Rules of Order. They must also be willing to change their attitude from doing things for youth to working with youth.

Once your board has made the decision to have youth representation, you must recruit youth who have the talent, time, and commitment to serve. You might: make a list of youth that you personally know and invite other board members to do the same; ask the heads of youth-serving organizations to recommend individual youth. Once you have selected youth to serve, consider giving them responsibilities such as being co-chair of the board and/or members of subcommittees. Remember, the youth should not be there to merely "rubber stamp" the actions of the board, or even simply respond to the proposals of the adults. The goal should be shared decisions by youth and adults, where the board is so comfortable with the ideas of the youth that the entire board works to equally implement youth and adult ideas.

Found in: Bernard, H. (2001). *The power of an untapped resource: Exploring youth representation on your board or committee*. Juneau, AK: Association of Alaska School Boards. Available at: http://www.aasb.org/PDFs/HansB_bklt.pdf

WEB RESOURCES



WWW NSACA Standards for Out-of-School Programs

http://www.nsaca.org/standards_glance.htm

The National School Age Care Alliance (NSACA) and the National Institute on Out of School Time (NIOST) have developed a compendium of best practices in out-of-school programs for kids between the ages of 5 and 14. An overview of these best practices and standards is available online.



WWW Eleven Keys to Effective Youth Development

<http://www.waveinc.org/download.htm>

This article for program directors called “Applying the Principles of Youth Development to Youth Opportunity Grants, WIA Formula Funded Programs and Community-Based Youth Programs” was developed by the WAVE organization. The article includes thoughtful explanations of eleven key elements of successful youth programs. Go to the website and click on “New! Youth Development Principles for YO and WIA Programs”.

WWW Home Schooling in the United States: Trends and Characteristics

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0053.ht>

Released by the U.S. Census Bureau, this working paper uses the October 1994 Current Population Survey (CPS) and the 1996 and 1999 National Household Education Survey to estimate how many children are home-schooled in the United States and predict future growth. The report gives demographic characteristics of those who home school. Six tables, provided in Excel, pdf, and ASCII formats, cover topics including Estimates of the Number of U.S. Children Schooled at Home (a figure that has more than doubled in five years), Reasons Given by Parents for Choosing Home Schooling, and Logistic Regression of Home-school Status on Background and Family Characteristics.



WWW Enrichment Activities

<http://www.teachervision.com/lesson-plans/lesson-6768.html?hgs>

A collection of 20 tried and true after-school activities, each offered in a one-page, printable format. The activities are excerpted from the book “Ready-to-Use Activities for Before and After School Programs” and include arts and crafts, games, science and nature lessons, and songs and finger games. [TeacherVision]

WWW Preventing Lead Poisoning: Spanish and English Fact sheets

Fact sheet provides tips to use around the home to prevent lead poisoning. This resource is also available in Spanish as “Evite el envenenamiento con plomo

English: <http://texaserc.tamu.edu/pubs/scal/ledpsn2s.pdf>

Spanish: <http://agpublications.tamu.edu/pubs/ecal/ledpsn1e.pdf>

An additional fact sheet discusses where lead may be found that can cause lead poisoning. This resource is also available in Spanish as “El envenenamiento con plomo”

English: <http://texaserc.tamu.edu/pubs/scal/ledpsn2s.pdf>

Spanish: <http://texaserc.tamu.edu/pubs/ecal/ledpsn2e.pdf>

WWW Working with Latino Youth and Community

http://osu.orst.edu/extension/4h/oregonoutreach/successful_practices/index.html

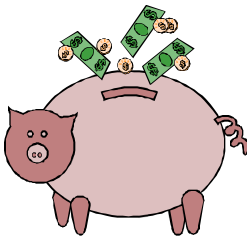
Thoughtful articles on increasing the participation of Latino youth and families can be found on the Oregon Outreach website, a project of the state’s 4-H program. Articles offer successful practices for building partnerships and relationships with the Latino community, developing culturally appropriate programs for Latino youth, and staffing factors to consider when working with Latino audiences.



PO\$\$IBLE FUNDING \$OURCES\$

\$ Basic Principles for Grant Seekers
<http://www.jcdowning.org/resources/generalguide.htm>

The J.C. Downing Foundation has created some very useful information for nonprofits seeking foundation support for new and ongoing projects. In addition to its own funding process, the Web site includes a comprehensive "General Guidance" section.



\$ Rosie's For All Kids Foundation
<http://rosieo.warnerbros.com/rosieo/allkids/grant.htm>

TV personality Rosie O'Donnell's foundation supports the intellectual, social and cultural development of disadvantaged children throughout the United States. The foundation's main focus is child care, and first priority is given to established programs serving low-income, urban areas, where many families struggle to find affordable, quality child care for their children. There is no deadline for applications. Contact Michael E. Smith, 201-934-5567.



*Please check out new links for strengths-based programs
on the FYRP Website:
<http://AgExtEd.cas.psu.edu/fcs/dp/fyrp.html>*



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