

PENNSTATE



Resiliency and Thriving in Families and Youth

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Good Morning:

Well spring has sprung! Yet, somehow, I get the feeling that many of us who work for Extension are not so sure we can take time to smell the flowers. The budget concerns and potential and real shortfalls loom over our heads like a gray cloud. But like a storm cloud, this too shall pass. Of course, Extension is changing to meet the new context it finds itself in and I am hopeful that we emerge stronger. Extension people are by their very nature resilient; so too, then, is the organization they represent.

I want to highlight the research briefs section of newsletter as I think you will find the briefs interesting and informative. Basically, the briefs present some interesting research about adult-youth relationships. I also want to send a friendly reminder to those of you utilizing the *Reading Wizard* materials that posters are still available.

Hang in there and take time to smell the flowers of spring.

Sincerely,

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FAMILY ACTIVITY

It's spring! Take your family and head for the outdoors. Whether in the city, suburb, or country, spend a day playing sidewalk games as a family. Teach your kids games that you played as a child (such as jacks, jump rope, double dutch, or stickball). Or try some of these games--all you need is some chalk, a rope, and a ball.

Four Square: to play, draw a five-foot square on the ground and divide it into four even squares. Have a person stand in each square and bounce the ball back and forth without letting it touch a line or bounce more than once in each square. A player is out if the ball touches a line. If less than four players are available play in two or three squares instead. If more than four players are available rotate players when one is eliminated.

Jump the Trap: Tie a shoe to one end of a rope (5-6 feet long). One player should slowly spin the rope in a circle, holding the end that is not tied to the shoe. All other players should jump over the rope. Players touched by the rope or the shoe are eliminated. The last player to remain is the winner.

RESEARCH BRIEFS

Adults Know They Are Needed But Are Not Answering the Call

In the early 1990's research was conducted to determine the developmental assets important for fostering healthy, responsible, and productive children and youth. This research culminated in the identification of 40key developmental assets. Children and youth who possess a high number of these identified assets are more likely to thrive.

Building upon this research, the Lutheran Brotherhood and Search Institute recently conducted a survey of adults to identify their thoughts about fostering developmental assets in children and youth. While the majority of adults surveyed (1,475) agree that all adults should work to foster the development of youth, a significantly lower number actually act to encourage asset building. Several key factors were identified to be hindrances of asset building, including: inconsistent or inexistent social norms and the influence of culture and community.

According to many adults, clear social norms regarding adult-child relationships do not exist. Even for parents, expectations are varied and at times unclear. If there is no clear consensus on the role of a parent, the more ambiguous relationship between an unrelated adult and child becomes even more difficult to define. Many adults, therefore, fear the potential for negative consequences, such as offending a parent, and do not form such relationships.



Another hindrance of adult asset building is the influence of culture and community. It is common to find a diversity of cultures and beliefs within a community or neighborhood. Often this increased diversity perpetuates a decreased sense of similarity of experience or circumstance that help adults relate to one another and form relationships. The lack of relationships in community results in social fragmentation. Social fragmentation occurs when individuals are less likely to identify themselves as a member of a group (e.g., neighborhood) and are more likely to identify with

individual groups such as a particular family or ethnic group. Social fragmentation leads to feelings of less investment in the community, and therefore adults are less likely to invest in the children and youth of the community.

Despite the lack of asset building actions occurring between adults and children, a significant majority of adults agreed on the importance of 9 of the 40developmental assets, including: encouraging success in school and respect for adults; expecting parents to set boundaries for children; teach shared values and respect for cultural diversity; guidance in decision-making and giving financial guidance; having personal values and meaningful conversations. Because of such overwhelming agreement on some assets, researchers suggest that adults should be able to foster these values and beliefs without fear of negative consequences.

In order to more actively engage in asset building, adults should begin to develop relationships within their communities and neighborhoods. Block parties, open houses, and other social events can provide opportunities to build relationships among adults and families and minimize social fragmentation. As comfort levels increase, adults can then actively engage in relationship with children and youth in the community. To increase the level of understanding of what adults expect from one another when it comes to asset building, parents should also initiate dialogue about the values they view as important.

Found in: Scales, P.C., Benson, P.L., Roehlkepartain, E.C., Hintz, N.R., Sullivan, T.K., & Mannes, M. (2001). The role of neighborhood and community development assets for children and youth: A national study of social norms among American adults. *Journal of Community Psychology, 29*, 703-727.



The Impact of Physical Discipline

The majority of American parents endorse some form of corporal punishment, ranging from spanking without inflicting physical injury to beatings and other forms of physical violence, as a method for disciplining children. However, several studies have shown physical discipline can lead to increases in a child's problem behavior as well as psychological problems. This study assesses the relationship between maternal use of physical discipline and changes in the child's behavior over time, examines whether the relationship between physical discipline and behavior problems is affected by the degree of maternal emotional support, and the moderating effects of maternal support across the subgroups of African American, European American, and Hispanic families, after controlling for variables such as gender and income-to-needs ratios. Data were drawn from a subset of children of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth in 4 waves: in 1988, 1990, 1992, and 1994, and children in the study were between age 4 and 5 when the first wave of data was drawn. At each wave, mothers reported how often they resorted to physical punishment and rated the level of their children's behavior problems. The degree of maternal support was determined through interviewer observations.



The researchers found that, regardless of demographic variables (e.g., gender and relative poverty) spanking predicted increases in the level of a child's behavior problems over time for all races. African American children were more likely to be spanked and were spanked more often than their European American or Hispanic counterparts. However, the results also showed that the *effects of spanking on a child's behavior depended on the context in which the spanking was administered*. If the child was spanked in a context of high maternal emotional support, the child's behavior did not appear to be negatively affected by the spanking. This finding may be because children would be less likely to view spanking as harsh and unjust when it is

meted out in a context of warm, positive parent-child relations. However, the results of this study generally suggest that parents should be discouraged from resorting to physical punishment, since, physical punishment typically leads to anger and emotional distress in children.

Found in: McLoyd, V. C., & Smith, J. (2002). Physical discipline and behavior problems in African American, European American, and Hispanic Children: Emotional support as a moderator. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64, 40-53.

How the News Media Report Five Key Children's Issues

A study commissioned by the Casey Journalism Center examined the depth of media coverage on child abuse and neglect, child care, child health insurance, teen childbearing, and youth crime and violence.



Over a 3-month period, stories about the five topics were analyzed for frequency, frame (i.e., was the issue characterized as "breaking news" or a "trend"), thoroughness of coverage (defined as key information in each of the topics that would provide the public with a deeper understanding of the issue), and other indicators. More than 90 percent of newspaper and TV coverage of children focused on two of the five topics: youth crime and violence, and child abuse and neglect. Furthermore, less than one in twenty of those stories provided thoroughness of coverage. In contrast, 75 percent of stories on two topics, child care and teen childbearing provided important contextual messages, however, these stories were rarely reported.

Found in: Kunkel D. (2002). Coverage in context: How thoroughly the news media report 5 key children's issues. Available at: <http://casey.umd.edu/home.nsf>

POLICY POINT



Pennsylvania Department of Education submitted a consolidated state application for the No Child Left Behind Act on June 3, 2002. The application includes funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative (CCLC). Soon after the Pennsylvania Department of Education receives approval of its application it will develop and release the RFP for the 21st CCLC. It is anticipated this will be in late June or July with a probable submission date of October.

WEB RESOURCES



Defining, Assessing, and Improving Youth Program Quality

<http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/youthprogramquality.htm>

This site contains highlights of a working meeting held to focus on improving the quality of youth programming and program assessment tools. Meeting participants included the Forum for Youth Investment, High/Scope Educational Research Foundation and Youth Development Strategies, Inc. The meeting goals and outcomes, information on participants, assessment tools, and pre-meeting interviews can be viewed on this page.



Marriage and Children's Well-Being: What the Research Tells Us

<http://www.childtrends.org/PDF/marr&child.pdf>

This fact sheet from *Child Trend's* highlights current research on marriage and child well-being. Research confirms that children develop best in families formed by both biological parents in a low-conflict marriage but more research is necessary to assure strong, stable marriages. This fact sheet is available in pdf format. For more information on *Child Trend's* visit: www.childtrends.org.



Helping Children Resist Bias and Hate

<http://www.partnersagainsthate.org/publications>

This new activity guide is designed to provide background information on bias-motivated behavior and youth-initiated hate crimes. It also provides tools and strategies to help adults engage in meaningful discussions and activities so that they can learn about the causes and effects of prejudice and bias-motivated behavior.



Adult Literacy

<http://www.pbs.org/literacy>

PBS LiteracyLink offers a catalogue of peer-reviewed instructional websites. State-of-the-art materials can be searched by instructional area. Users can also find a bimonthly question and answer forum, adult education and literacy success stories, and other video and online resources can help adult students advance their GED and workplace skills. LiteracyLink is funded by the United States Department of Education's Star Schools Program.

WWW **Community Alliances Resource Handbook**
http://www5.myflorida.com/cf_web/myflorida2/healthhuman/cbc/handbook.html

or by going to <http://www5.myflorida.com> then clicking first on the health & family link then the community-based care link found under the Human Services title.

In recent years much attention has been focused on human service programs at national, state, and local levels. Many programs, including welfare, mental health, and children, youth and family service programs, have been scrutinized and overhauled in an attempt to provide more effective services to individuals and families. Nationally, attention has focused on the benefits of community and culturally specific outcome-driven service models as providing the most positive long-term outcomes for children and families. In light of such findings, the state of Florida recently passed legislation to create partnerships between community groups in each county and its Department of Children and Families. These Community Alliances are composed of community leaders, stakeholders, service providers, and service funders. Responsibilities of the alliance include:

- To become informed of specific community needs and current programming,
- To determine desired outcomes for the community,
- To improve efficiency of services and fill any gaps in service,
- To listen to the needs and wants of families and children in the community,
- To coordinate funding across all service agencies in the community.

In order to facilitate the organization of Community Alliances, a Community Alliance Resource Handbook has been created. The handbook identifies four stages of Alliance development including, (1) vision, mission, membership, and by-laws, (2) assessment of existing resources and outcomes, (3) community based system of care plan, and (4) business partnerships and shared responsibility. Each stage is outlined and includes a goal, scope, and tools and examples to achieve benchmarks. After Stage one is completed,

activities in the remaining stages need not occur sequentially but may simultaneously. Though this handbook was created for a specific initiative in the state of Florida, the materials in it can be used for the development of alliances or partnerships in any community.

WWW **Moving an Out-Of-School Agenda**
<http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/resspeech.htm#moving>

The Greater Resources for After-School Programming (GRASP) Project partnered with four cities to evaluate current out-of-school time offerings and discuss challenges programs face. The resulting documents, *Moving an Out-of-School Agenda: Lessons and Challenges Across Cities*, describe the commonalities found among the cities and the issues they face. The report is accompanied by ten short "Task Briefs" that summarize the common challenges cities face as they attempt to saturate their neighborhoods with high-quality supports and opportunities for learning and development.



WWW **Education Resources**
<http://www.nwrel.org/sky/>

The mission of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) is to improve educational results for children, youth, and adults by providing research and development assistance in delivering equitable, high quality educational programs. A private, nonprofit corporation, NWREL provides research and development assistance to education, government, community agencies, business and labor. NWREL affirms the belief that strong public schools, strong communities, strong families, and strong children make a strong nation. NWREL's "Library in the Sky," contains over 15,000 links to some of the Internet's best educational resources for students, parents, librarians, and community members.

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

\$ <http://www.nydic.org/nydic/fundsearch.html>
The National Youth Development Information Center offers this web resource for grant seekers. Users can search for funding by funding source name, category, geographical location, or keyword. The site also includes links to national and community foundations, scholarships and awards, corporate giving programs, federally funded programs, and staff assistance resources.

\$ <http://www.npguides.org/>
This site is a valuable resource for non-profit organizations interested in outside funding. The site includes tips for writing grant proposals (both preliminary and full funding proposals), samples of letters, budgets, and applications. Users can also find links to additional funding sources and other grant writing resources.



*Please check out new links for strengths-based programs
on the FYRP Website:*

<http://AgExtEd.cas.psu.edu/fcs/dp/fyfp.html>

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