Y.E.S. Skills Development Program Research:

Helping children complete their schooling through after school support

Overview

Youth Empowerment through School (Y.E.S.), through June Orsmond, submitted a research request to the UCT Knowledge Co-op at the beginning of 2013 regarding high drop-out rates at Lavender Hill High School. Two student volunteers, Michaella Allen and Patricia Chirwa, with support from Teresa Perez and Bey Schmidt, researched after-school programmes that were implemented to encourage scholars to remain in school. Useful examples are provided below:

The UCT Knowledge Co-op facilitated this collaborative project through its Rapid Research internship programme.

1. The After-School Program Handbook for School Site Leaders

Examples of Activities Found in Effective After-School Programs

*These activities are conducted in facilities that are clean, well maintained, and safe.

1. **Transition Time:** Period before programme and time at the end of the day when students are waiting to get picked up. Students may choose their preferred activity to unwind after normal school-day. Activities include:

    - *LAPS -- participating in physical activity*
    - *SNACKS -- having something to eat and drink*
    - *RAPS -- socializing with friends and staff members*
    - *NAPS -- relaxing and enjoying quiet time*

    End of the day activities should be low-key activities that can be left till the next day for completion, like painting.

2. **Intensive academic support:** One-to-one tutorial, small group instruction, group learning games, and other activities that complement instruction provided during the regular school day.

    - *Students that finish homework early can spend quiet time reading. The point is to not have students enjoying fun activities whilst others are still busy.*

    - *After-school also gives opportunity to engage in **STEM** (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) learning disciplines. Students can practice these in a more relaxed, less time-constrained environment. They include:*

        - *Teaching by staff or volunteers with particular expertise in the STEM disciplines. This includes scientists, engineers, health-care professionals, and others engaged in STEM professions.*

        - *Engaging, hands-on experiences that enable students to apply, reinforce, and extend skills and concepts taught in the school-day curriculum.*

        - *Problem-based activities that engage students in the design, construction, investigation, sense-making, and communication of science, technology, and engineering projects.*

        - *Activities that foster communication, problems solving, and teamwork—critical skills for success in the STEM disciplines.*

        - *Incorporation of community resources such as museums, gardens, science centers, parks, and libraries into the after-school STEM curriculum.*

3. **Engaging enrichment activities**: (for example) inquiry-based science, digital media arts projects, foreign language instruction, nutrition education, and fine arts instruction (including instrumental music, choral singing, dance, and performing and visual arts).

    - *This can also be done in rotating activity-stations, so as not to have an overload of one activity.*
    - *A variety choice such as clubs based on the student and staff interests like journalism or photography that meet once or twice a week.*

4. **Organized athletic programs** that include age-appropriate sports and games and also offer activities that promote physical fitness such as aerobics, martial arts, and

multicultural games and dances.

5. **Innovative nutrition programs** that teach healthy eating habits and provide nutritious snacks from a variety of different cultures.

   - *Rather than scheduling one snack time, set up a snack area where after activities or short breaks students help themselves when hungry. Students, who might not have dinner provided at home, may opt to eat later in the day.*

6. **Intentional social-emotional activities** that stress positive communication skills, improved peer relationships, conflict resolution, and confidence-building skills.

7. **Positive parent-staff interaction** that includes clear and consistent communication between school/program staff and parents.

NOTE
- Strong partnerships with community organizations that serve the needs of youth.
- While most research findings demonstrate a positive relationship between effective after-school programming and beneficial outcomes for youth, not all programs studied showed this result.

2. Successful Skill-Development Models

2.1. LA's BEST After-School Enrichment Program (Better Educated students for Tomorrow)

- Created in 1988 under the financial sponsorship of the Los Angeles Mayor Office, the LA BEST program is a skills development program that the aims to provide a safe haven for at-risk youth and an escape from boredom of empty houses that tend to attract risky behaviour by students.
- Targets group: 5-12 year old disadvantaged youth from low-income areas around L.A;
- In addition to state funding, receives substantial donations from private donors and investors.
- Operate from 3-6pm in which students sign into the program each day
- Classes are separated by age/grade with a one-to-twenty children-educator ratio.

Typical daily program:

2:30 – 3:00 p.m.: Registration, Snack, Information Distribution

3:00 – 4:00 p.m.: Homework Lab, Tutoring

4:00 – 4:45 p.m.: Activity I (Computers, Cooking, Sports)

4:45 – 5:30 p.m.: Activity II (Art, Drama, Science)

5:30 – 6:00 p.m.: Recreation, Parent Interaction, Dismissal

a) *Application: Program Activities:*
1. To allow students to unwind after school, half an hour is allocated before the start of the program to enjoy a **nutritional snack** and relax.
2. **Mandatory Homework period**- includes homework assistance by qualified tutors and trained staffed members, a quite study period, tutoring in math, science reading and

social science. If students finish their homework in less than an hour, or have none, age/grade appropriate educational exercises are given to the student that directly links to the lessons taught in school.

3. **Non-academic enrichment activities-** activities that change every two weeks by age group, are chosen by students. These include computer literacy such as touch-typing, software application and internet skills. Further programs include arts, crafts, music instruction and community service.

4. **Recreational Activity-** team sports and athletics, general fitness and aerobic programs indoors and outdoors, and board games.

5. **Interpersonal skills & self-esteem development-** workshops on problem-solving skills and creative activities from "choral reading to theatre productions."

b)   *Additional Information- Staff:*
- Teachers are recruited from schools and the community with pre-existing teaching credentials and experience. Volunteers are typically teacher's assistants, college students, community members and high school students from outside higher-income schools.
- Staff trained for the different activities provided and paid a stipend minimum wage.

c)   *Researchers' Note:*
- Although this program was created with a focus on children younger than 14-15years old, this program can be applied to high schools simply by altering the course content and the flexibility of the program.
- If applied to Lavender High School as the target population, the program recommends that students must be given the choice of days to participate given time constraints such as student after-school jobs.
- Additionally, activities such as board games may have to be replaced by multimedia entertainment to suit the needs of teenagers.
- This further implies that activities and content tutored would need to be altered to the appropriate academic level of students eg. Teaching web and graphic design on the computer, or statistics on excel rather than scavenger hunt games on the computer.

2.2. Content: Citizen Schools:

- Established in 1998 in Boston, it is a skills- development program that seeks to lengthen the school day from 3-6pm, and mobilize a team of volunteers to close the achievement gap through enrichment opportunities.
- Partnering with schools, the program tracks the academic progress of at-risk and low-income students from elementary and middle schools.
- Although operates at respective schools, the program acquires its resources predominately through government aid and community/private investors.

Typical daily program:

Monday:

3 p.m – 6 p.m: Transitional period from school classes to the program
    Nutritional Snack
    A.I.M
    Academic League

Tuesday:

3 p.m – 6 p.m: Transitional period from school classes to the program
        Nutritional Snack
        A.I.M
        Apprenticeships

Wednesday:

3 p.m – 6 p.m: Transitional period from school classes to the program
        Nutritional Snack
        A.I.M
        Academic League
        Explore

Thursday:

3 p.m – 6 p.m: Transitional period from school classes to the program
        Nutritional Snack
        A.I.M
        Apprenticeship

Friday: Staff development

a)   ***Application-*** *Program Activities:*
- **A.I.M** – Forming part of academic support, "Aspire Invest Make the grade," is a structured homework assistance time in which students meet for one-to-one tutoring sessions.
- **Academic League**- hands on classes in math, literacy or science that are standardised to the level of teaching in the classroom.
- As part of its "21st Century Skills" project, students are able to **apprentice** community members called "citizen leaders" in a way to link school skills with those needed in the real world such as "communication, collaboration, data analysis, advanced literacy, global awareness, effective reasoning, problem solving, innovation and technology."
- **Explore** – allows time for team building exercises and field trips to higher education institutions and businesses to stimulate an interest in their future.

b)   ***Additional Information-****Successful Outcomes:*
- Through a two year evaluation of the program, it was found that participants outperformed nonparticipants in terms "school attendance, promotion rates, lower suspension rates, and some measures of grades and test scores."

c)   ***Researchers Note:***
- Since this model relies on a strong partnership with the school and the community, if applied, constant, if not weekly correspondents between Y.E.S. and teachers regarding lesson content must be achieved.
- Program leaders must be aware of the academic needs of at-risk students, and track any progress made.
- For apprenticeships, local business owners should be approached for job shadowing rather than apprenticeships as this may require a greater level of commitment than the student or business is able to secure. Businesses approached should include local restaurants and trades i.e jobs that where a matric certificate is needed.
- However, given that this program can be instituted at the school with computers and multimedia as an option, school partnership and the availability of their resources would be key to the success of the program.

2.3. The Communiversity of South Africa

- As a self-proclaimed "university on wheels," this is a program which provides matriculants and high school leavers within the community the opportunity to attend classes which provide vocational training and higher education courses.
- Currently operating at its first campus in Vrygrond, this program aims to "bridge the gap" between poor education and employment.
- This gap is bridged by the first phase of adults choosing which field they would like to enter into. A second phase follows a 12 course program specific to the individual chosen career path such computer skills and culinary & hospitality skills.
- Following the completion of the course, the program further acts as a recruiter for employers to aid students in acquiring employment.
- Since this program caters specifically to young adults and matriculants, as opposed to grade 8-9 students, this program is not suitable for Lavender Hill High School..

3. Summary

This report draws on three examples of after-school programmes that can be implemented at Lavender Hill High School. The first example names seven aspects that should be included in an after-school curriculum. It suggests that transition times be accounted for, since scholars need resting time before participating in after-school activities. An effective after-school programme should provide a platform for academic support, socio-emotional support, innovative and creative activities, physical fitness and positive parent-staff interaction opportunities.

The second programme (LA's after-school enrichment programme) comprises of a fixed daily schedule. Scholars are allowed a relaxation period to eat a nutritional snack and relax before partaking in a mandatory homework session. Thereafter scholars participate in non-academic enrichment activities, such as computer literacy or community service. In addition, the programme offers recreational activities and a session for interpersonal skills and self-esteem development workshops. The LA after-school programme is based on a variety of scheduled activities.

A third programme is included in this report, although it is not directly suitable to students at Lavender Hill High School. However, the Communiversity programme offered at Vrygrond points to two important points: (a) offering enrichment activities, such as computer skills, can make scholars more employable upon completion of high school and (b) after-school programmes may provide opportunities for scholars to think about tertiary education and career aspirations.

4. References:

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