



# *Resiliency and Thriving in Families and Youth*

December 2000

Volume 1, Number 4

Hola!

This is the fourth newsletter entitled *Resiliency and Thriving in Families and Youth*. This newsletter marks the completion of volume one of this newsletter series. For reporting purposes, I would like to hear how people are using the information in this newsletter. Therefore, I have enclosed a feedback form for you to complete and mail back to me. I would appreciate it if you took the time to do so — thanks.

The New Year will mark the beginning of my second year on the job here at PSU. I have been able to meet many of you by traveling to several counties and to all the regions. I have really enjoyed the opportunity to learn about what you are doing in the counties. I think that you are truly making a difference in the lives of the children, youth, and families you serve. I look forward to working with you during this upcoming year. Thanks for your continued support and may your New Year be full of joy and success! Best regards.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins  
Associate Professor



## **... What's Inside ...**

**Family Activity**

**Research Briefs**

**Web Resources**

**Possible Funding Sources**

## **FAMILY ACTIVITY**

Create a family meal together by having every member of the family work together to make the meal. Spend an hour on a Saturday afternoon making soup. Soup is one meal that everyone can help create. Then while eating the soup, parents can tell their children about the kinds of meals they would eat when they were growing up. From this discussion, maybe the idea for the next family meal will emerge.

## RESEARCH BRIEFS

### How Do Certain Factors Influence Fathers' Involvement With Their Children?

Socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural differences among fathers may affect their roles and involvement with their children. Differences in family structure may also affect fathers' roles and involvement with their children. Research shows that fathers with higher levels of education and higher degrees of economic stability tend to be more engaged with and nurturing of their children. Fathers who are unemployed or experiencing economic difficulties tend to be less involved with their families, perhaps due to the high societal value placed on fathers as economic providers; some men may feel that they cannot be involved with their families if they cannot provide for them financially. Economic difficulties within a family can also lead to a stressful and more hostile environment. However, financial difficulties can also lead fathers to seek alternative ways to be involved parents. For example, a group of extremely low-income African-American fathers saw their main contribution to their children as emotional rather than financial.

Type of father involvement has been shown to vary across cultures. For example, African-American fathers have been found to be more likely to play with their children than white fathers are, but less likely to read to them. However, certain fathering roles seem to cross cultures, including fathers as economic providers, protectors, caregivers, and teachers. Fathers' involvement has also been shown to vary with family structure. Fathers who live apart from their children tend to be much less involved with their children than fathers who reside with them. Stepfathers tend to be more involved with their stepchildren if the children are young and if they live with both their stepchildren and biological children. Although single-father families are still rare, their numbers have increased rapidly over the past 20 years. Fathers who have actively sought out custody of their children tend to adjust more

easily to the single parenting role, and fathers who are able to better balance work and parenting responsibilities also adjust better.

Found in: Halle, T., & Menestrel, L. M. (2000). How do social, economic, and cultural factors influence fathers' involvement with their children. *Child Trends Research Brief*. Washington, DC: Child Trends. Available online at: <http://www.childtrends.org/>

### Community Factors That Promote Positive Youth Development

This study explored youth professionals' perspectives on how communities can promote positive youth development. After identifying the characteristics of supportive communities from the literature, the authors surveyed 49 professionals involved in youth programs. Several community elements emerged as being critical to the advancement of creating an atmosphere that promotes positive youth development; the most frequently identified were: opportunities related to education and employment; connecting youth to family, school, and community; opportunities for education and participation in positive after-school programs; and positive community norms and values. In addition, youth professionals identified the need for communities to build youth's potential by engaging young people as resources rather than viewing them as problems. According to those surveyed, promoting youth development requires the coordinated efforts of parents, school personnel, and others in the community.

Found in: Denner, J., Kirby, D., & Coyle, K. (2000). How Communities Can Promote Positive Youth Development: Responses from 49 Professionals. *CYD Journal*, 1(3), 31-35.

*Whatever it is you want from young people, you must give them like respect.*

*-- An Anonymous Alaskan*



## Important Factors for Creating an After-School Program

A variety of studies in the past several years have identified early school failure as a predominant indicator of risk-taking behaviors in children. Other factors influencing risk behaviors include social isolation, poverty, neighborhood influences, and the absence of adult role models. School success, on the other hand, promotes self-esteem, motivation, and aspiration. After-school programs have also been identified as reducing risk behaviors and improving the social and emotional development of children.

Examining a successful after-school program entitled Manchester Youth Development Center's (MYDC) after-school program, this study employed data from interviews and observations to identify key program characteristics. In 1996 and 1997, 100% of the participants in the MYDC program graduated from high school, compared to an approximately 19% drop out rate of non-participating students. Students in this program also demonstrated higher levels of academic achievement than students who did not participate in this program.

MYDC is a highly structured program where children and youth (K through 12th grade) rotate through activities at 45-minute intervals. The types of the activities include: academic, music, art, gym activities, and sewing activities. Six factors were identified as contributing to the success of this program. They included: a balance between structured and self-directed activity, academic support, sensitivity to various cultural backgrounds, committed authoritative adults, leadership focused on activities that build children's skills and knowledge, and being identified as a safe place.

This study demonstrates the importance of taking a holistic approach to program development and implementation in order to be an effective after-school program. In addition, new programs are more likely to attract potential participants if they address the major needs of the community and provide concrete activities that support those needs. Focusing

on a variety of community needs will help to create diversity in programming and prevent boredom in children participating in programs. This also makes programs relevant to a greater number of children.

Found in: Beck, E. L. (1999). Prevention and intervention programming: lessons from an after-school program. *The Urban Review*, 31(1), 107-124.



## Educational Values of 4-H Activities

A recent study used researcher-designed surveys to determine the perceived educational values of 4-H activities. A total of 91 Louisiana 4-H agents completed surveys during a Cooperative Extension Conference. The researchers found that 92% of 4-H activities are perceived to be highly or moderately educational. In addition, agents report spending more time on the activities that they perceive as more educational than on activities they perceive to be of little educational value. The survey also identified agent overload as a major threat to 4-H programming.

These findings provide direction for research to further assess the educational value of local 4-H programming and its outcomes on the youth that participate. Currently, programs identified as having low educational value by agents can be revised or eliminated and tested in a scientific investigation. Furthermore, new programs that better meet client needs should be pilot tested before they are implemented on a large scale.

Source: Burnett, M., F., Johnson, E., C., & Herbert, L. (2000). The educational value of 4-H activities as perceived by Louisiana 4-H agents. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 41(1), 49-59.

*A related note: In a recent meeting with the SE Region 4H Youth development educators, Claudia Mincemoyer and Daniel Perkins employed the tool entitled "Getting ahead by letting go." This tool was used to facilitate a discussion about future directions for their regional programming." Please contact Claudia to receive the tool.*

# WEB RESOURCES

## Extension Information

[www.e-answers.org](http://www.e-answers.org)

This site provides research and information on extension and outreach. Specific topics addressed on this site include: agriculture, forestry, family/consumer issues, child development, 4-H and youth, environment, public policy, economics, communities, and water quality. Users can navigate this site by entering keyword searches or searching by region. Links are also available to all Institutions participating in the e-answers site.

## What Grown-Ups Understand about Child Development

<http://www.connectforkids.org>

Zero to Three surveyed 3,000 adults--many of them parents--on their knowledge about child development and specific policies affecting children and families. Though most respondents had a grasp of the basics, there is some room to grow. Many do not understand that even very young infants have long-term memory, are affected by witnessing violence, and can become depressed. Read the summary or full study on [zerotothree.org](http://zerotothree.org).

## Hispanic Education Resources

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/Hispanic/rr/>

This website is sponsored by the White House Initiative on Education Excellence for Hispanic Americans. It contains numerous reports about Latinos. For example, one resource entitled *What Works for Latino Youth* is a directory of culturally and linguistically appropriate programs recommended by the Department of Education. *Latinos in Education* is another resource, which provides a snapshot of Latinos in the U.S. education system from early childhood through graduate education.

## Outcome Evaluation

<http://www.unitedway.org/outcomes/>

This website provides an online resource library, which contains excerpts from its manual, *Measuring Program Outcomes: A Practical Approach*, the full text of selected papers and newsletter articles, and links to other resources on the Web, subdivided by category. This site is sponsored by the United Way of America.

## Health Statistics by County

<http://www.communityhealth.hrsa.gov>

This website provides information about a county's health status. Information on the site includes: causes of deaths, infectious diseases, teen mothers, environmental illness, and vulnerable populations. In addition, other health indicators from existing national data sets are also available. The site is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

## Out-of-School Time Programming

<http://www.savethechildren.org/wosokit/index.html>

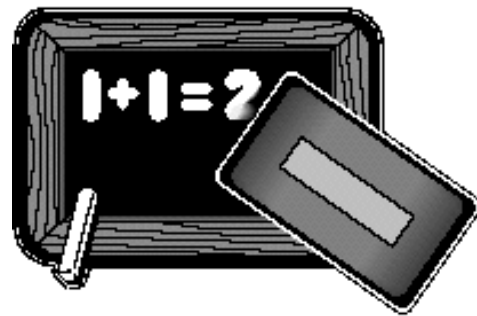
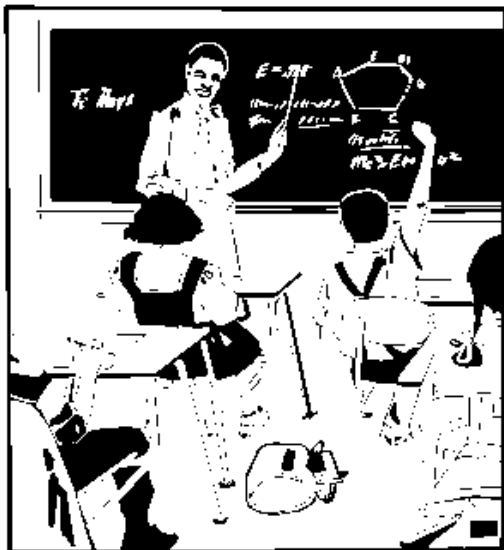
Save the Children has published a guidebook to share some of the lessons learned by working with grassroots organizations to implement quality out-of-school time programs. This is a hands-on tool to help plan, implement, and evaluate after-school activities. It offers a blueprint for taking the Web of Support model to communities of all sizes, geographic settings, and ethnic compositions in both urban and rural environments. It features easy to read bulleted lists, sample forms, stories, and help to make the most of community resources.

**National Back to School Survey**  
[www.horatioalger.com/pubmat/surpro.htm](http://www.horatioalger.com/pubmat/surpro.htm)

In September, the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans conducted a back to school survey of students. Their survey summarizes what 14 to 19-year-olds have to say about their schools, classes, family, friends, social and political issues, and their goals for the future. The Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans is dedicated to honoring the accomplishments and achievements of outstanding individuals in our society who have succeeded in the face of adversity, and to encouraging young people to pursue their dreams with determination and perseverance. Please share this site with your collaborators at the local high school.

**Science and Mathematics Curriculum**  
<http://www.ael.org/eric/voices/science.htm>

This website provides the curriculum entitled *Uncommon Knowledge: Projects that help Middle-School-Aged Youth Discover the Science and Mathematics in Everyday Life*. The curriculum uses hands-on projects in math and science. The entire project guide is available on-line with detailed instructions. This publication was prepared with funding from the National Science Foundation and from the U.S. Department of Education. It may be a good curriculum to use in after-school programming.



**Math for Families with Middle School Children**

<http://www.figurethis.org>

The *Figure This! Mathematics Challenges for Families* website provides interesting math challenges that middle-school students can do at home with their families. Three-to-four challenges are posted on this site each month. Cartoon characters named Polygon, Tessellation, Exponent, Tangent, and Axis illustrate the challenge features. To help families support their children's math studies, *Figure This!* has family support materials (in the family corner section) including:

- sample questions to ask teachers and administrators about the school setting
- information on how to prepare students for continuing education
- suggestions to help with math homework
- information on the changes in mathematics education examples of math in literature.

**Youth about Internet Education**

<http://citizensincyberspace.umn.edu>

Citizens in Cyberspace is a safe Internet based tutorial from the University of Minnesota Extension Service and the Fund for Rural America. This fun interactive site is designed for 8 to 16-year-olds, but contains valuable information for all ages. Youth are issued an electronic passport and complete sections on Netiquette, Ethics, Safety, Maze of Copyright, Web Evaluation, Issues, and Communication, earning a passport stamp at the end of each section. When they have collected all the stamps, they will be able to print out a certificate proclaiming them an official Citizen of Cyberspace.

## POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

### **\$ Verizon Foundation Grant Opportunity** <http://foundation.verizon.com/>

The Verizon Foundation concentrates its philanthropy in several distinct priority funding areas. The proposal must focus on technology applications and programs in one or more of the following areas: literacy, digital divide, women and economic development, people with disabilities, math/science education and scholarships, community development, benefit the customers, and employees and communities in the areas served within the U.S. The Verizon Foundation reviews proposals on a continuous basis from January 1 through November 30 each calendar year. The Verizon Foundation only accepts electronic proposals through its Apply Online process. Any proposals submitted online receive a notification of receipt from your local community relations manager within 72 hours of their submission.

### **\$ After-School Government Resource Center** <http://www.afterschool.gov/>

This website includes in-depth information on funding for after-school programs. It also has community success stories, government guides, reports, research, and links. There is also information about food, health and safety, learning, recreation, research, technology, transportation, and volunteers. In addition, there are links to safe, fun, and educational web sites for kids and teens.

### **\$ Food for Afterschool Programs** [www.pde.psu.edu/grants/asp.html](http://www.pde.psu.edu/grants/asp.html)

This site provides information about grants for after-school snack programs. Program eligibility requirements, funding guidelines, and application information are available on this page.

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

---

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

---

The Pennsylvania State University is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to programs, facilities, admission, and employment without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. The Pennsylvania State University does not discriminate against any person because of age, ancestry, color, disability or handicap, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to the Affirmative Action Director, The Pennsylvania State University, 201 Willard Building, University Park, PA 16802-2801; Tel. 814-865-4700/V; 814-863-1150/TTY.