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Retention in an Urban Extended Day Program: A Process-Based Assessment

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Evaluations of extended day programs in underserved communities have shown that participants usually drop out by the time they are 11–12 years old. Most of these programs, especially those that focus on physical activity, do not promote broadly developmental and empowerment-based processes and outcomes advocated by the emerging field of youth development. This article investigates both the retention issue and youth development processes and outcomes for two sequential physical activity extended day programs in an underserved community. Retention data and participant program evaluations were collected over a nine-year period, and these data together with a selective review of related studies are analyzed to determine the extent of linkage between the promotion of positive youth development and retention beyond 11–12 years old.

Key Words: after-school programs, at-risk youth, underserved youth, youth development

In the wake of numerous reports on the “surge of social pathology” (Czikszentmihalyi & McCormick, 1986, p. 417) among youth in the United States and in other countries—especially in relation to the seven million children and youth without guidance during the after-school hours and the escalation of violence, sex, and drug activities during those hours—advocacy for more extended day programs continues to grow. Last year, five billion dollars from both public and private sources were earmarked to fund such programs (Lewis, 2000).

Extended day programs can keep “kids off the street,” but only if they show up. Evidence suggests that most participating youth drop out of these programs by the time they are 11 or 12 years old (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992; McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 1994). The emerging field of youth development is based on the conviction that these programs need to do more than provide a safe place to go (DeWitt Wallace Readers Digest, 1996; Hudson, 1997; Hughes & Curman, 2000; Lakes, 1996). They need to become broadly developmental and empowerment-based, led by caring adults, and structured to serve a

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small number of participants over a long period of time (Hellison & Cutforth, 1997; McLaughlin, 2000). When programs reflect these values and are structured in these ways, data show that participants achieve more, have higher self-efficacy, want to give back to the community, and, in later years, are responsible parents, workers, and community members (McLaughlin, 2000).

Purpose

It seems clear from the existing research on extended day programs for underserved youth that retention past ages 11–12 depends on adoption of broadly developmental empowerment-oriented youth development principles (Carnegie Council for Adolescent Development, 1992; McLaughlin, 2000; McLaughlin, Irby, & Langman, 1994). Unfortunately, studies of physical activity extended day programs for underserved youth have not reported retention data, and those that have been studied do not appear to contain youth development processes and outcomes (Kahne, Nagaoka, Brown, O'Brien, Quinn, & Thiede, 2001; Larson, 1994; Spady, 1970). Recently, however, physical activity programs for underserved youth such as Midnight Basketball, Soccer in the Streets, the Revival of Inner-City Baseball, and Inner City Games have attempted to adopt more of a youth development emphasis, mostly by creating add-ons to the sport experience such as videos on teen pregnancy, literacy lessons, and self-esteem discussions. Universities have also begun to offer youth development-based programs with a physical activity component to underserved youth in their communities (Hellison, Cutforth, Kallusky, Martinek, Parker, & Stiehl, 2000). Data from the few studies that have been conducted on these youth development programs are somewhat promising (e.g., Dezerotes, 1995; Watson, Poczwardowski, & Eisenman, 2000), but to date the retention issue has not been addressed.

If retention can be facilitated by youth development-based physical activity programs in underserved communities, these principles and processes need to be integrated into programs. The purpose of this study is to explore this issue, first by analyzing retention data in two sequential programs over a nine year period, and second, by analyzing self-report data over this time period to determine the extent to which youth development processes were being implemented.

Two sequential programs, the coaching club which operates before school in a low income community characterized by high incidence of drugs and violence and the apprentice teacher program, which offers advanced cross-age leadership experiences to coaching club members at a nearby university, served as the focus of this investigation. Students age 10–14 attend the coaching club, whereas in the apprentice teacher program participants are 14–21 years old. These two programs were chosen because conserved records provided a longitudinal data base. Moreover, previous studies have indicated that both of these programs are effective in promoting youth development (Cutforth & Puckett, 1999; Kahne et al., 2001; Mulaudzi, 1995).

Program Descriptions

Both the coaching club and the apprentice teacher program are based on the personal-social responsibility model (Hellison, 1995), but they have been modified to address problems (e.g., violence, drugs, sex) during after-school hours in

underserved communities as well as to reflect principles and processes (Hellison & Cutforth, 1997) and summer programs modeled after the coaching program have been conducted over the past decade (Hellison et al., 2000).

The coaching club is located in an inner-city area with high drug activity and for its high homicide rate. The club is vice-principal based on their discipline problem. The appeal of basketball entices most to be a member. The principal of the kindergarten through eighth grade school that, despite the fact that the club only serves a small number of students, 600 and meets once a week, club members' positive attitude is the culture of her school (Hellison, 1999). The coaching club members to take responsibility for their own behavior, helping, and providing leadership for others. Club members are also encouraged to be leaders outside the sport setting. In the apprentice teacher program, the coaching club spend five weeks of their time in a summer camp teaching 8- and 9-year-olds what they have learned (Hellison et al., 2000, for an extended descriptive program model).

Kahne and his associates (2001) directly compared retention processes in the coaching club by quantitatively and qualitatively (interviews) comparing youth retention in the coaching club to those of other extended day sport programs. Kahne found that the coaching club scored higher than sport programs in six of the nine retention factors and scored higher than all the non-sport programs (see also Walsh, 1999).

Cutforth and Puckett's (1999) ethnographic study of the coaching club program also investigated youth development processes. The triangulated evidence for development of positive attitudes, concern for others, interpersonal skills, self-direction, analytical skills, moral acuity, and social responsibility were documented student perceptions of a very caring and supportive environment.

Several studies of programs modeled after the coaching club program also provided evidence of a positive impact on findings clustered around practices in the program and perceptions of the program leader. In the apprentice teacher program, there was an increase in self-control, self-worth, self-direction, and interpersonal relations (Cutforth, 1997; DeBorja, Geordiadis, 1990; Hellison & Geordiadis, 1997; Lifka, 1990; Puckett, 2000; Walsh, 1995; Wright, 2001). Evidence for transfer outside the program included self-control, reduction of disciplinary reprimands and making better decisions in the classroom (Cutforth, 1997; Galvan, 2000; Kallusky, 1991; Martin, Mulaudzi, 1995); dropout prevention (Cummins, 1995); violence prevention outside the program (Eddy,

a long period of time (Hellison & Cutforth, 1995). Programs reflect these values and are structured so that participants achieve more, have higher self-efficacy, and, in later years, are responsible parents (McLaughlin, 2000).

Purpose

Existing research on extended day programs for youth ages 11–12 depends on adoption of broadly defined youth development principles (Carnegie Foundation, 1992; McLaughlin, 2000; McLaughlin, Irby, & Irby, 2000). Studies of physical activity extended day programs have reported retention data, and those that have examined youth development processes and outcomes (Quinn, & Thiede, 2001; Larson, 1994; Spady, 1999). Activity programs for underserved youth such as *Streets*, the *Revival of Inner-City Baseball*, and *Adopt a Street* have adopted more of a youth development emphasis on the sport experience such as videos on teen self-esteem discussions. Universities have also implemented programs with a physical activity component in underserved communities (Hellison, Cutforth, Kallusky, & Puckett, 2000). Data from the few studies that have been conducted on extended day programs are somewhat promising (e.g., Puckett, & Eisenman, 2000), but to date the data are limited.

The purpose of this study is to explore this issue, first by examining youth development-based physical activity programs, these principles and processes need to be examined. The goal of this study is to explore this issue, first by examining youth development-based physical activity programs, these principles and processes need to be examined. The goal of this study is to explore this issue, first by examining youth development-based physical activity programs, these principles and processes need to be examined.

The coaching club which operates before school in an inner city community known for its gang activity and drug activity and for its high homicide rate. Club members are selected by the principal based on their discipline problems, and although the club is voluntary, the appeal of basketball entices most to become members. In an interview, the principal of the kindergarten through eighth grade school that houses the club said that, despite the fact that the club only serves about 15 kids at a time in a school of 600 and meets once a week, club members' positive leadership in school has changed the culture of her school (Hellison, 1999). The club uses basketball as a vehicle for teaching club members to take responsibility for coaching themselves and for coaching, helping, and providing leadership for other club members and for the club itself. Club members are also encouraged to become leaders and role models outside the sport setting. In the apprentice teacher program, past and present members of the coaching club spend five weeks of their summer in a daily summer sports camp teaching 8- and 9-year-olds what they learned in the coaching club (see Hellison et al., 2000, for an extended description of both programs and the underlying program model).

Descriptions

The apprentice teacher program are based on the Hellison (1995), but they have been modified to address issues such as violence, drugs, sex) during after-school hours in

underserved communities as well as to reflect current youth development principles and processes (Hellison & Cutforth, 1997). A number of other extended day programs modeled after the coaching club and apprentice teacher program have been conducted over the past decade (Hellison, 1995, 2000; Hellison et al., 2000).

The coaching club is located in an inner city community known for its gang activity and drug activity and for its high homicide rate. Club members are selected by the principal based on their discipline problems, and although the club is voluntary, the appeal of basketball entices most to become members. In an interview, the principal of the kindergarten through eighth grade school that houses the club said that, despite the fact that the club only serves about 15 kids at a time in a school of 600 and meets once a week, club members' positive leadership in school has changed the culture of her school (Hellison, 1999). The club uses basketball as a vehicle for teaching club members to take responsibility for coaching themselves and for coaching, helping, and providing leadership for other club members and for the club itself. Club members are also encouraged to become leaders and role models outside the sport setting. In the apprentice teacher program, past and present members of the coaching club spend five weeks of their summer in a daily summer sports camp teaching 8- and 9-year-olds what they learned in the coaching club (see Hellison et al., 2000, for an extended description of both programs and the underlying program model).

Kahne and his associates (2001) directly tested the extent of youth development processes in the coaching club by quantitatively (Likert type questionnaire) and qualitatively (interviews) comparing youth development processes in the coaching club to those of other extended day sport and non-sport programs. Kahne's team found that the coaching club scored higher on youth development components than sport programs in six of the nine tested youth development processes and scored higher than all the non-sport programs in four of the nine components (see also Walsh, 1999).

Cutforth and Puckett's (1999) ethnographic study of the apprentice teacher program also investigated youth development principles and processes. They found triangulated evidence for development of participants' problem-solving ability, concern for others, interpersonal skills, self-reflection, autonomy, and "learning analytical skills, moral acuity, and social sensitivity" (p. 166). They also documented student perceptions of a very caring program leader.

Several studies of programs modeled after the coaching club or apprentice teacher program also provided evidence of a youth development influence. Their findings clustered around practices in the program, transfer outside the program, and perceptions of the program leader. In the program, studies identified improvement in self-control, self-worth, self-direction, helping others, cooperation, and interpersonal relations (Cutforth, 1997; DeBusk & Hellison, 1989; Galvan, 2000; Geordiadis, 1990; Hellison & Georgiadis, 1992; Herbel & Parker, 1997; Kallusky, 1997; Lifka, 1990; Puckett, 2000; Walsh, 1999; Williamson & Georgiadis, 1992; Wright, 2001). Evidence for transfer outside the program was found for self-control, reduction of disciplinary reprimands and referrals, motivation, self-esteem, and making better decisions in the classroom (Cutforth, 1997; DeBusk & Hellison, 1989; Galvan, 2000; Kallusky, 1991; Martinek, McLaughlin, & Schilling, 1999; Mulaudzi, 1995); dropout prevention (Cummings, 1998); and the potential of violence prevention outside the program (Eddy, 1998; Wright, 1998). The presence of

a caring adult as program leader was also documented (Kallusky, 1997; Lifka, 1989; Walsh, 1999).

Methods

Emphasis on program outcomes is one of the latest trends in youth work, and, although the national focus on school test scores is the most obvious example, extended day programs are now expected to provide quantitative evidence of reduction in at-risk behaviors such as teen pregnancy, delinquency, and school dropout. The emphasis on outcomes in extended day programs for underserved youth has underestimated the importance of youth development principles and processes (McLaughlin, 2000; McLaughlin & Heath, 1993). McLaughlin (2000) explained it this way:

Meaningful measures acknowledge that many outcomes, important for youth to achieve—confidence, agency, leadership, responsibility—are difficult to assess, especially in the short run. “Process is product” in a quality youth organization. Meaningful measures gauge the environment for youth development—to what extent is youth-centered? . . . Does the organization embody a respectful, affirming community of adults and youth? (p. 24)

In the current study, the following two process-based criteria were established to gauge coaching club and apprentice teacher program effectiveness: Examination of retention data over a nine year period for voluntary participants who begin the program at 10–12 years old, and examination of the link between retention and the extent of youth development principles and processes that reflect a broadly developmental, youth-centered, empowerment-based program led by respectful, affirming adults serving small numbers of students.

Retention data for this study are provided by attendance records from nine consecutive years of the coaching club and six years of the apprentice teacher program operating during the latter part of the same time period in the summer months and periodically during the school year. Transfers and expulsions as well as visits by participants who had dropped out of the programs during this period participation were also examined. Throughout the history of these programs, anonymous program evaluations were administered for the purpose of feedback to the program leader. This body of self-report data from participants was analyzed to evaluate the degree to which youth development principles and processes were implemented. Responses to particular items were chosen for analysis based on their relevance to this topic.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze retention data and self-report data that were readily categorized and quantified. Qualitative content analysis was used to inspect responses to open-ended questions in the program evaluations. This approach involved careful reading of all responses, inductive development of initial themes, feedback looping to refine themes, and the generation of clear definitions to be used in the final assessment.

The trustworthiness and credibility of this study were established in a variety of ways. Previous studies on these programs provided a source of external comparison to validate the results reported here. The insider status of the first author, who was a teacher/observer throughout the history of these programs, provided another form of validation. That author's field notes and perceptions were in

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agreement with the results of this investigation. also conducted by an individual with extensive development. This individual has been a participant in the programs being studied. Finally, the design of this investigation and the use of multiple data sources.

Retention Results

Aggregated raw retention data are shown in Table 1. The total number of participants for nine years was 78. Twelve of the Thirty-three of the total number of participants, though two are still involved (having participated for at least two years).

As Table 1 clearly shows, a precipitous dropout occurred only after attending for one year but after three years 10 participants were 14 years old. The dropout after eighth grade graduation coupled with choosing to participate in the apprentice teacher program addressed the issue of retaining participants past ages 11–12, and 10 students participated for at least three years, and 10 years old by then.

A total of 12 youth participated for four years (10 participants), and four current club members were expected to be back next year. In relation to the 10 ages 11–12, about one quarter participated for a second year at their fourth year at the time of this study), and 10 years old.

Table 1 Coaching Club Participant Retention

# of years	# of participants who only participated for this # of years	Visited
1	33	1
2	14	1
3	19	0
4	6	1 + 3*
5	1	1
6	1	0
7	2	0
8	1	0
9	1	0
Totals	78	4 + 3*

*Participant(s) making more than 1 visit.

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Methods

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agreement with the results of this investigation. A peer review of this study was also conducted by an individual with extensive experience in the field of youth development. This individual has been a participant/observer in both of the programs being studied. Finally, the design of this study included investigator triangulation and the use of multiple data sources.

Retention Results

Aggregated raw retention data are shown in Table 1. The total number of participants for nine years was 78. Twelve of the 78 transferred or were expelled. Thirty-three of the total number of participants, or 42%, lasted only one year, although two are still involved (having participated last year). Fifty-eight percent attended for at least two years.

As Table 1 clearly shows, a precipitous drop off in participation occurred not only after attending for one year but after three years as well, when almost all the participants were 14 years old. The dropout after three years is primarily due to eighth grade graduation coupled with choosing, for a variety of reasons, not to participate in the apprentice teacher program at the university. In relation to the issue of retaining participants past ages 11–12, about 47% of the total number of students participated for at least three years, and most of these participants were 14 years old by then.

A total of 12 youth participated for four or more years (18% of the total participants), and four current club members with three years experience are expected to be back next year. In relation to the issue of retaining participants past ages 11–12, about one quarter participated for at least four years (or were starting their fourth year at the time of this study), and most of these students were 14–15 years old.

Table 1 Coaching Club Participant Retention

# of years	# of participants who only participated for this # of years	Visited	Transferred or expelled	# still in the program
1	33	1	7	2
2	14	1	4	1
3	19	0	1	4
4	6	1 + 3 ^a	0	0
5	1	1	0	0
6	1	0	0	1
7	2	0	0	1
8	1	0	0	1
9	1	0	0	1
Totals	78	4 + 3 ^a	12	11

^aParticipant(s) making more than 1 visit.

