Positive Youth Development in Action

Evaluating Afterschool Programs from a Strengths-Based Perspective

Tiffany Berry, Ph.D.
Claremont Evaluation Center
Claremont Graduate University
Defining PYD

Afterschool Programs as a Context for PYD

Overview

Evaluating from a Strengths-Based Perspective

Using Evaluation to Promote PYD in Research and Practice
DEFINING POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
“Positive youth development is an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive.”

www.youth.gov
Developmental Assets
5 C’s
Relational Systems Theories
Resiliency
Stage-Environment Fit
Ecological Theories
Self-Determination Theory
AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS AS A CONTEXT FOR PYD
Typically offer academic, recreation/enrichment

Great variability

Funded federally at $1 billion

10.2 & 11.3 million

18 million parents
PYD

Goals

• Crime reduction
• Community violence
• Problem behavior
• Risky behavior

Whole child approach
• Social-emotional learning
• Positive school behaviors
Structure

- Keeping them safe
- Academic prioritization
- Staff-directed
- Youth as recipients

- Building critical skills
- Improving life skills
- Student-led
- Youth as active partners
Did you attend or not?

- Participation
- Quality
- Relationships
EVALUATING FROM A STRENGTHS-BASED PERSPECTIVE
“Determining the merit, worth, or significance of an evaluand.”

“Evaluation is the systematic assessment of the operation and/or the outcomes of a program or policy, compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards, as a means of contributing to the improvement of the program or policy.”
Strengths-based

- Catch what staff and kids are doing right
- Measure cumulative assets and experiences
- Examine longitudinal trajectories of growth
- Incorporate the whole child
- Evaluate the characteristics of the system that promote positive growth
• Are environments structured around students’ needs?
• Are the materials and resources sufficient?
• Are staff prepared to offer optimal environments?

• What type of experiences do youth need?
  • How much do youth need?
  • How much do youth get?
  • Is the quality good enough to warrant positive changes in youth outcomes??

• Are youth forming strong connections with positive adults?
• Are they connecting with other youth?
• Are they connecting with other teachers?
High Quality Programming Offered + Relationships = PYD

Structure, Resources, and Training

Positive Youth Development

Social-Emotional Learning and Academic Growth
Partnering with Youth Development Programs
LESSONS LEARNED
1 Structure of Environments

- Importance of intentionality, planning, the presence of organizational supports that afford high-quality programming, organizational leadership
- Activities designed around youth interests
- Professional development needs to be embedded and continuous; a focus on skill-building is key
Experiences

• Consistent attendance is required to move youth outcomes; need multiple measurements of attendance (depth, breadth, duration, intensity, cumulative days)

• High quality can be achieved, but takes extensive commitment to it across the organization

• Program quality is consistently related to better PYD outcomes; choice and voice is central

• Formative feedback and internal observations are a powerful tool for promoting continuous learning and development

• Relationships with staff are a critical mechanism for cultivating positive outcomes
• Academics and social-emotional learning are inter-related
• Frameworks for SEL numerous, need to link specific program activities to specific outcomes
• Measure both proximal and long-term outcomes
• Outcomes regularly moderated by age, gender, school type, & reason for joining
Popular SEL Models

**Gil Noam (PEAR)**
- Assertiveness
- Belonging
- Reflection
- Active engagement

**Developmental Assets (Search Institute)**
- Commitment to learning
- Positive identity
- Positive values
- Social competencies

**Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning**
- Self-management
- Self-awareness
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making

**University of Chicago CCSR Non-Cognitive Factors**
- Academic mindsets
- Social skills
- Academic perseverance
- Academic behaviors
- Learning Strategies

**SCE & Weikart Center**
- Emotion management
- Empathy
- Teamwork
- Responsibility
- Initiative
- Problem-solving
Positive Youth Development

• Academics and social-emotional learning are inter-related
• Frameworks for SEL numerous, need to link specific program activities to specific outcomes
• Measure both proximal and long-term outcomes
• Outcomes regularly moderated by age, gender, school type, & reason for joining
USING EVALUATION TO PROMOTE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE IN PYD
Evaluation
“We can, through the application of our science to serve our world’s citizens, actualize the idea that there is nothing of greater value to society than a science devoted to using its scholarship to improve the life chances of all people.”

Richard Lerner, p. 57