



# R.U.S.H.

## RESEARCH YOU SHOULD HAVE

**RESEARCH YOU SHOULD HAVE . . .** provides concise summaries of current research relevant to youth development practice. It is designed to help youth development professionals keep up-to-date with contemporary research.

- Jones, K., & Perkins, D. (2006). **Youth and adult perceptions of their relationships within community-based youth programs.** *Youth & Society, 38*(1), 90-109.

Youth-adult partnerships happen when young people and adults become engaged together in their communities; they are relationships between youth and adults where there is mutuality in teaching, learning, and action. According to the authors, youth benefit from partnerships with adults when they are seen as individuals who are competent and able to contribute to important decisions that impact their communities. Yet, there are barriers to forming these meaningful relationships such as preconceived ideas, negative stereotypes, and the tendency of adults to view the lives of young people based on the experiences they had as a youth. Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory is cited as a framework to understand how youth and adults can benefit from ingroup/outgroup exposure. According to Allport, the gap between youth and adults is due to limited experience in working as partners. Whereas most youth programs today fit into a traditional program structure – where youth are receivers and adults are the providers. Perpetuating the impression of adult authority, overlooking the identity-seeking adolescent and in turn demotivating youth. According to Allport, real partnership requires equal status, common goals, intergroup cooperation of skills and shared values. The major research question addressed by this study was, What are the

perceptions of youth and adults toward their involvement and interaction with one another when working together on community projects? Involvement and interaction rating scales were completed by 108 participants involved in community groups from 12 communities in 10 states. The rating scale measured three constructs: youth involvement, adult involvement, and youth adult interaction. Significant gender differences in participants' perceptions were found on all three constructs, with females being more positive. Rural participants were found to be significantly more positive than urban participants on the construct of youth involvement. Significant differences were found between all participants within categories of the youth-adult relationship continuum. Participants in youth-led collaborations were significantly more positive toward youth involvement than participants in adult-led collaborations. Moreover, adults in youth-adult partnerships were significantly more positive toward youth involvement and youth-adult interaction than those adults in adult-led collaborations.

- Fleming, M., Greentree, S. Elisa, K., Muller, D., & Morrison, S. (2006). **Safety in cyberspace: Adolescents' safety and exposure online.** *Youth & Society, 38*(2), 135-154.

The adolescents of today are the first to be raised in a wired world. Today more than ever young people are using the Internet, with research suggesting that teens are even heavier users than adults.

In the U.S., approximately 21 million young people between the ages of 12 and 17 use the Internet. Young people use the Internet for a variety of reasons including email, homework, to play games,

download and listen to music, to get information about world events, sports, entertainment, to get medical and health information, and to shop. While the Internet can be a critical tool for teaching and learning, it also has the potential to be misused as a weapon that harms youth. Exposure to violence, misinformation, hate, exploitation and sexual predators can be to the detriment of a young person. Some parents have taken the step of installing blocking or filtering software to try to limit their youth's exposure to graphic materials. The research survey was conducted among 692 Australian youth (ages 13 to 16) to examine aspects of their Internet use and, in particular, their exposure to inappropriate material and behaviors online and their online safety practices. Significant differences were found in the amount

of exposure to inappropriate material or behaviors online according to sex and frequency of usage, with males and more frequent Internet users showing greater exposure. And while this may sound like a normal finding the researchers point to several studies that show that pornography and other sexual media have been found to predict attitudes about sexual aggression, and lead to attitudes supporting sexual aggression. Significant differences in online safety practices were also found, with younger participants (13-14 year-olds) and those participants whose parents had not discussed Internet safety with them being less safety conscious. The author provides several discussion points to consider when discussing Internet safety with young people.

- Marczak, M., Dworkin, J., Skuza, J. & Beyer, J., (2006). **What's up? What young teens and parents want from your program.** *New Directions for Youth Development*, 112, 45-56.

Afterschool programs have become essential supports for working parents and a key part of life for many American children. These programs offer safe havens for young people, as well as academic and development opportunities that many youth need. But despite a growth in after-school programs nationwide, many communities struggle to finance and sustain quality programs. The main goal of this study was to provide practitioners and community leaders with a better understanding of key issues and needs of youth in terms of out-of-school time opportunities. The authors of this qualitative study interviewed fifty-seven youth ages 10 to 15 years (twenty-four girls and thirty-three boys) and twenty-six parents (twenty-three mothers and three fathers). Several commonalities emerged from the interviews: 1) availability and accessibility were the least of parents worries. Parents reported being worried about two central issues: were their young people doing well in school, and did they have good friends.

2) Youth and parents were content with how they were spending non-school hours, and saw little concern for involvement in any particular structured afterschool program. 3) Those youth involved in structured afterschool programs have typically been involved since as early age and, the window of time to involve youth in new opportunities appears to be narrow markedly by the middle school years. 4) Teens reported that they would be more likely to participate if the opportunities were flexible, less structured, more leisure based, and where they could spend more time with friends. Additional findings reported that the "structure" in structured program may be a barrier to uninvolved youth participation. The authors suggest that organizations pay particular attention to identifying and recruiting adults with special interest or hobbies and have the ability to connect with youth.

- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2007). **Annual dropout event report for the school year 2005-2006.** Available from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/newsroom/news/2006-07/20070131-01>

According to the Department of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education more than 22,000 students dropped out of North Carolina's high schools in the 2005-06 school year. The number of dropouts increased from the 2004-05-school year and is the largest number of dropouts in a single year since 1999-2000. The dropout rate was 5.04 percent, an increase from the 4.74 percent rate

posted in 2004-05. minority students were over-represented in the 2005-06 dropout rates. African-American students had a drop out rate of 5.63 percent, Hispanic students had a rate of 8.69 percent and American Indian students had a rate of 8.37 percent. The large number of dropouts, and especially the increasing number of dropouts who are opting to leave high school to enroll in a

community college program, further underscores that far too many high school students are disengaged and unmotivated in school; many of those students are choosing other paths to get their education. The number of students who stated they were dropping out of high school to enroll in a community college program has almost doubled over the past two years. Twelve percent of dropouts in 2005–06 said they were intending to enroll in a community college program, the largest specific reason dropouts cited for leaving high school (behind attendance).

Almost sixty (60%) percent of all dropouts in 2005–06 were males. This is the highest proportion of male dropouts ever recorded and the largest one-year increase ever recorded. The report notes that North Carolina must continue the work of redesigning our schools so that all students graduate and graduate ready for college, work and citizenship in the 21st century.

- American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness and Council on School Health. (2006). **Active healthy living: Prevention of childhood obesity through increased physical activity.** *Pediatrics*, 117(5), 1834-1842.

Between five and 25% of children and teens in the United States are obese. Obesity is defined as an excessive accumulation of body fat. Obesity is present when total body weight is more than twenty-five percent fat in boys and more than thirty-two percent fat in girls. Obesity in children and adolescents is a serious issue with many health and social consequences that often continue into adulthood. Many parents are rightly concerned about their child's weight and how it affects them. They look for specific answers for prevention and treatment options. Estimates on heritability of obesity suggest that genetics may play a significant role in 25 to 85 % of cases. The average American child spends several hours each day watching television, time that in previous years might have been devoted to physical pursuits. Obesity is greater among children and adolescents who frequently watch television not only because little energy is expended while viewing but also because of concurrent consumption of high-calorie snacks. Only about eight percent of elementary children have daily physical education and less than

one-fifth have extracurricular physical activity programs at their schools. The simplest and most cost effective way to improve physical activity in youth is through their schools. California schools are developing wellness policies and plans; every school receiving funding for free and reduced price lunches must develop a wellness policy for the 2006-2007 school year. Yet, some research indicates that increasing physical activity within school programs may be negatively associated with activity outside of school. The policy statement recommends that at all ages, the emphasis be on pleasurable activities that engage friends and family. For youth ages 6-9, free play should be encouraged while organized sports may be initiated, but a strong focus on enjoyment rather than competition. At ages 10-12, emphasis on skill development is essential. For adolescents, identifying activities that are fun and include peers is likely to have positive results in long-term participation.

- Annunziata, D., Houge, A., Faw, L., & Liddle, H. (2006). **Family functioning and school success in at-risk, inner-city adolescents.** *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 35(1), 105-113.

One area of research that has important implications for improving the education of students at risk of academic failure is concerned with "resilient" students, or those students who succeed in school despite the presence of adverse conditions. In both formal and nonformal education, conceptual and empirical work on resilience has gained recognition as a framework for examining why some students are successful in school, while others from the same socially and economically

disadvantaged backgrounds and communities are not. Research has shown that school success predicts long-term positive outcomes such as positive self-concept, continuing higher education, better job opportunities, while school failure is linked with several high-risk behaviors and negative outcomes. This study examined how family factors work to protect at-risk youth by promoting the prosocial outcome of school success. Family functioning did not however, predict school

performance. The study involved 211 youth in 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades (97% of the sample was African American) in a large Northeastern inner city. The study operationalized school performance by surveying the youth about school engagement and school records of GPA's. Parental monitoring practices included discipline effectiveness, discipline avoidance, the extent of parental involvement in the youth's life and parenting practices. Both youth and parents answered surveys on family cohesion and parental monitoring. The results suggest that within at-risk African American families, family cohesion has a beneficial effect on school engagement.

For girls, the family cohesion and parental monitoring seem to be independently important, while for boys, these areas appear to interact for protective effects. The authors suggest that the creating a baseline for setting limits and supporting autonomy could be quite different when parenting boys and girls. Girls from cohesive homes with active parental monitoring were more likely to be engaged in school. In families with moderate to low monitoring, school engagement was lower, regardless of level of family cohesion. This study adds to the growing research base on resilient students and school success.

- National Institute on Out-of-School Time. (2006). **Making the case: A fact sheet on children and youth in out-of-school time.** Available from <http://www.niost.org/>

For nearly 30 years, the National Institute on Out-of-School Time at Wellesley College has moved the afterschool field forward through its research, education and training, consultation, and profession building. Much of NIOST's work has encompassed projects of national scope and influence, several representing "firsts" for the field and many

focusing on building out-of-school time systems. The *2006 Fact Sheet: Making the Case: A Fact Sheet on Children and Youth in Out-of-School Time* gives practitioners and community leaders talking points to generate discussion and support for community-based afterschool programs.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Collins, J. (2001). **Good to great.** New York, NY: HaperCollins Publishers Inc. ISBN: 13: 978-0-06-662099-2

**I. Leadership: Good-to-Great** leaders are modest about their achievements, attributing their successes to external factors, sometimes even citing luck. They set high standards for themselves and others. They motivate others not with great visions and charisma, but by demanding excellence and living up to their own standards. Although they point to others when they talk about success, they take responsibility for the organization's failures by pointing to their own mistakes.

**II. First, Get the Right People on the Bus:** The first priority of Good-to-Great leaders, before they develop a vision or plan for the organization, is to get the right leadership team on board. Collins presents three practical disciplines for being rigorous in managing your staff.

- When in doubt, don't hire—keep looking.
- When you know you need to make a people change, act.
- Put your best people on your biggest opportunities, not your biggest problems.

### III. Seek the Truth

**Good-to-Great** organizations do not cover up bad news. On the contrary, they seek out the truth about themselves, so that they can learn and improve. Collins offers some suggestions on how to create a climate of truth seeking in your organization.

- Lead with questions, not answers.
- Engage in dialogue and debate, not coercion.
- Conduct autopsies, without blame.
- Build "red flag" mechanisms.

The intent is to insure that activities are judged, not only based on whether they pay for themselves, but also on whether they contribute to the organization's mission. Thus, measurement in nonprofits is becoming increasingly complex.

### V. Culture of Discipline

**Good-to-Great** organizations have disciplined

people, disciplined thinking, and disciplined action. People take responsibility for their performance, and for the performance of the whole organization. They are focused, committed, and they follow through. **Good-to-Great** organizations also have "stop doing" lists. This is part of the process they go through as they try things, learn from mistakes, and gain a clearer understanding of where they are going.

Nonprofit organizations have become engaged in measuring "outcomes" (e.g. the impact a program has on participants, as opposed to the number of people attending the program.)

Lewis, M. (2006) **The Blind side: Evolution of a game**. New York, NY: W.W. Norton Publishing. ISBN: 13: 978-0393061239

In the spring of 2004, someone sent a videotape to high school football scout Matt Lemmings. The image quality was poor, but he knew immediately he had to see this kid. The kid's name, Michael Oher, and as Lewis reveals in this eye-opening book, size and speed were not the only singular things about him. For starters, the fact that Oher was in school at all was a miracle. Oher, a native of "Hurt Village," a housing project in the "third poorest ZIP code in the United States, possessed an IQ of 80 and a cumulative grade-point average of 0.6. His social skills were even worse, with a shyness that proved almost a disability. But the football coach at Briarcrest Academy in Memphis took one look at the 16-year-old's 6-foot, 5-inch height and 344-pound bulk and decided to move heaven and earth to have him admitted. So 2004, Oher was admitted to Briarcrest Christian Academy -- one of a handful of black students in an overwhelmingly wealthy and white private school. Finally one Thanksgiving Day a wealthy volunteer assistant coach and his wife see him at a bus stop in his usual shorts and recognize that in addition to no money for food, he is traveling to the gym to watch practice just to be in a heated room. Through incredible acts of kindness and caring this young man is taken in by this wealthy Christian family who attempt to socialize and educate him for the future. Lewis chronicles Oher's life as a foster child, then a homeless street kid. Lewis refers to lingering effects of the racial past -- which no one individual's rise, however startling and incredible, can ever erase or make good -- by showing us the community that surrounded Oher in Hurt Village. Most of its members are not gifted athletes, so they are left behind to face the daily squalor and lack of opportunity with no possibility of relief. In light of such details, it

#### IV. Hedgehog Concept

Collins asserts that **Good-to-Great** organizations are like hedgehogs: they are very good at doing one big thing. They are able to simplify a complex business into a single organizing concept that guides everything. This does not mean that the businesses themselves are uncomplicated. However, the **Good-to-Great** leaders are able to see through the complexity and discern the fundamental economic driver of the business.

becomes clear in the end that the true "Blind Side" Lewis has been chronicling -- and his book attains majesty in doing so -- is not that which exists in a game played on a 120- by 53.5-yard field, but rather that which exists in the nation at large. By including such a raw, unfiltered look at race and poverty, Lewis has written one of the most effective books yet on "America's most intractable social problem.

**Book Reviews . . .** on issues relevant to youth development will be published periodically. We encourage submissions for future editions. Reviews should be sent to Mitzi Downing ([mitzi\\_downing@ncsu.edu](mailto:mitzi_downing@ncsu.edu)).

