Building Relationships in After-School Settings

TASE Conference

Albany, NY

May 27, 2009

Mission Statement

PASE is a child-focused organization that promotes and supports quality after school programs, particularly those serving young people from underserved communities.

What PASE Does

PASE is the lead agency of a network of 1,600 NYC–based agencies providing afterschool services. Members rely on PASE to….

- Lead this network of individuals and organizations committed to afterschool excellence

- Be a recognized leader and expert in the field of afterschool education

- Provide training and technical assistance to the network and beyond

- Consult with organizations to build their capacity and sustainability

Program Philosophy

PASE's program philosophy rests on the theories and practices of youth development. Through our work with afterschool programs and staff we promote and teach the concepts of resiliency, using an assets-based approach to working with young people, and building competencies in young people to prepare them to manage the many challenges that will come before them in life.

The Importance of Relationships

- We know from our own experience and from other "helping professions" that relationships are critical to program results (e.g. social work).

- We know from current research that participants and their families feel very connected with program staff but we are not sure what specific relationship skills staff possess that are helpful to program attendees or whether these are innate or learned.
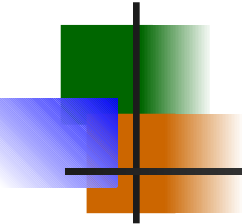
Thanks to our research team…

- We are grateful to the team at Action Research Institute for collaborating with us in examining this phenomenon and attempting to describe what the specific qualities are that create these relationships.

Why are we interested in this topic?

- As an emerging profession we are eager to know what aspects of our programming work

- We need to know how to prepare our staff for the work we expect them to do

How will we use this information?

- Developing trainings and technical assistance offerings for afterschool staff

- Informing the profession about the essential nature of these relationships

A Thought Experiment

- Who that you know is really an expert at building relationships with middle-school age kids and what kinds of interactions have you observed that make him/her successful?

- What is his/her educational level?

- Does he/she have any special qualities?

Introducing the Research

Background

- "We all know that" staff who can "build relationships with youth" is key to after-school success

- What does it take for staff to build relationships? Is it "charisma"? "Non-judgmental"?

Objectives

- For middle-school aged youth in OST settings

- What behaviors exemplify "building relationships"?

- Are there behaviors that are "innate" vs. "learned"?

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First, we used our lifeline

Lots of sensible information, but widely varying in focus.

Expert In-depth Interviews

- Publishers/Editors, Trainers, Researchers, PASEsetters

- Range of views from "It's all intuitive, stop trying to measure it!" to "There's agreement in the field about what it takes to be a successful."

- Generally: Hire people who want to work with youth.

- Individual & organizational factors are necessary

- If there's a common theme, it's respect for a young person as an individual, willingness to accept his/her point of view, patience to listen to what's on his/her mind.

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What's published in guidebooks?

Publications, Guidebooks

- One example: Public Private Ventures, April 2007: Supportive adults most important for MS. Key factors: "adopting big sister/brother role," "learning about youth culture," "time to talk," "interject fun" and "time commitment to instruction."

- Others are similar

Focus on NYSAN Quality Self Assessment (QSA)

- "Relationships" is 1 of 10 elements for after-school success

- Within "Relationships" there are 9 "quality indicators"

- Indicator #3 is singled out for elaboration. What is #3?

A Small Sample &
A Statistical Secret

Surveyed 19 PASE setters, drawn from 10 years of awards, 5 winners / year, nominated by their peers. For this survey, must work with middle-school aged youth.

How do you test significance with only 19 respondents? The I.O.T.T!

As always, confirm in practice.

Single Most Important to Building Relationships

3. Treats participants with respect and listens to what they say	57%
Have a passion for something in the work of the organization	16%
Accessible between scheduled times, after dismissal, etc	11%
Staff respect & communicate with each other, positive role models	11%
Shares the power. Youth learn to make responsible decisions. Everyone contributes.	5%
Teaches participants positive interactions with each other	0%
Sensitive in culture & language of the young person	0%

Even on a small sample, the result is clear. Among the 7 elements in the NYSAN QSA, one clearly merits attention.

Q4: Which of the following would you say is the single most important to BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS?

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It's all very clear, right?
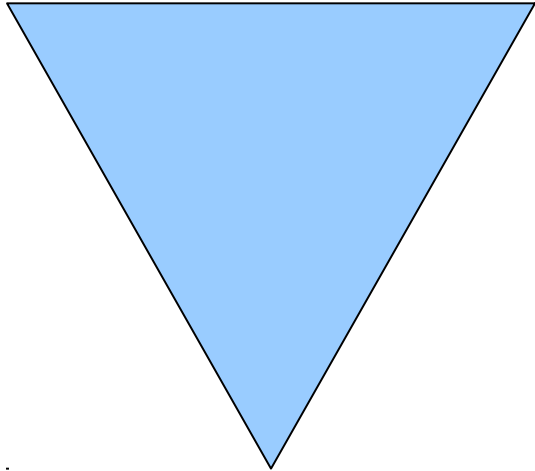
General: "Building Relationships"

"Treats participants with respect & listens to what they say"

Specific behaviors

Knows their names a few important facts about them (their favorite class, music, friends, family, etc).

Giving each youth some undivided attention throughout the day.

Eye contact. When speaking with someone, give them your complete attention, do not allow yourself to be distracted.

Saying hello as they come in, find out how was their day

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Nature vs Nurture

	Need to have it from the start	Can be taught, learned, coached
Treats participants with respect and listens to what they say	74%	26%
Teaches participants positive interactions with each other	21%	79%

These two items are clearly differentiated. This will be the next topic, where we need your help.

Q6: Which of the following are mainly things people need to have before they start youth work, and which can be taught or coached?

Exercises

#1 <u>Interviewing</u> for *Treats participants with respect and listens to what they say*

#2 <u>Observation</u> for *Treats participants with respect and listens to what they say*

#3 <u>Professional Development Skills</u> *Teaches participants positive interactions with each other*

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What is a Rubric?

- A rubric is a grading tool that lays out performance elements or assignment expectations on a grid.

- Most use a scale ranging from developing or novice to expert or exemplary.

How can Rubrics assist?

• Rubrics spell out explicit expectations for individual tasks or assignments.

• Rubrics delineate both the strongest and weakest ways that participants perform within given skill areas.

• Rubrics foster equitable performance evaluation (or grading practices when used in a school setting.)

• Rubrics facilitate communication when providing feedback and can provide comparative information when assessing multiple participants.

Sample Rubric:
Teamwork & Leadership

Objectives	Basic	Proficient	Exemplary
Individual Leadership Assessment	Works independently. Does not listen to others.	Works well with others. Listens to team members' opinions.	Encourages, motivates, and works well with others. Seeks and respects team members' opinions.
Teamwork Assessment	Work is lacking in cooperation and communication. Unequal contributions by members.	Work unequally divided. Each member contributes some work.	Work is evenly divided. High level of cooperation, communication, and compromise.

In Summary

- What have we learned from this study?

- What are the implications for the field of afterschool?