
Effective Youth Development Programming

5.4 Intentional and Engaging Youth Activities

Objective: Participants will identify and reflect on best practice strategies in youth programming

Material: Slides: Program Atmosphere and Activities
Handout: 5.4.A Reflecting on Youth Programming
5.4.B Best Practice Strategies in Youth Development Programming
5.1.B In the Door and Coming Back for More!

Time: 50 minutes

Audience: Service providers, schools, after school care

Lesson Plan

Many of you work with young people in programs that have been around for a while. Some of you might have been involved in the planning and development of program activities. How often do you think about if the program is still effective, or if it is still reaching the young people that it was developed for? Or, how engaging are the activities we are offering young people?

Step 1 > Brief small group discussion (10 min)

To engage and interest young people we have to be intentional and knowledgeable. Let's start by reflecting briefly about our program purpose. Do you know what the program goals and objectives are? What are the desired outcomes? Think about that for a minute. Talk to your neighbor. Share your program goals and outcomes.

Process briefly.

Being intentional about program goals and desired outcomes is one dimension of program planning. Other aspects to consider are the atmosphere/climate and the selection of activities.

Step 2 > Small group activity (30 min)

Urie Bronfenbrenner, father of the ecological perspective of human development, states that development is generally promoted by activities that are regular, enduring and challenging in the sense that they increase in complexity such as playing piano or soccer or chess. Often they involve relationships with others, adults, peers or younger children. Those are most beneficial if they are enduring, regular and reciprocal.

Distribute handout: 5.4.A Reflecting on Youth Programming. Form small groups.

This handout provides you with a list of questions you might want to ask about your youth programs. Look at this as an opportunity to reflect on your programs; this is not a 'pass or fail' evaluation. Take a couple of minutes to answer the questions, then discuss the findings with your group. Which areas are you doing well in? Which areas would you like to improve on? What surprised you?

Ask participants to volunteer their findings and observations. What did they do well? What areas need improvement? Were there any surprises?

Step 3 > Brief lecturette (10 min)

A study done by Jodie Roth and Jeanne Brokks-Gunn at Columbia University in 2003 reviewed best practice programs and looked at what some of the effective elements were. They looked at the program atmosphere, the overall way the program was delivered:

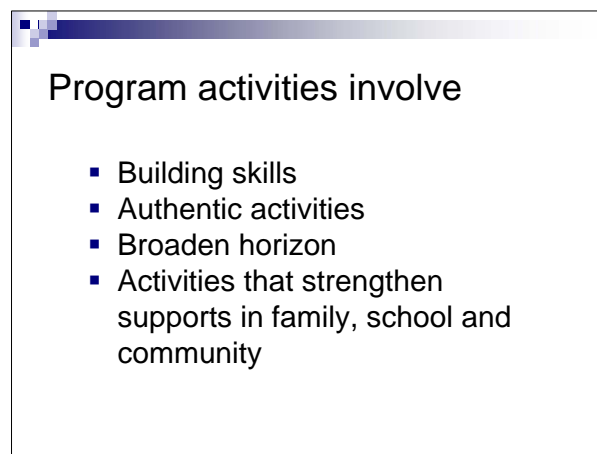
Review slide using information from handout: 5.4.B Best Practice Strategies in Youth Development Settings

Slide – Program Atmosphere



And they looked at what type activities were being offered. *Review slide.*

Slide – Type of activity



Distribute handout 5.4.B. Ask for comments and questions. Brief discussion: How can you use this information in your workplace? What do you take home from this exercise?

Additional handout on after school programs: Handout 5.1.B In the Door and Coming Back for More!

For those interested in a more formal evaluation of their youth program, refer to the Youth and Adult Leader for Program Excellence Manual (YALPE).

Facilitator Tips

1. The activity can be a lead in activity to talk more about different learning styles (activity 5.5) or experiential learning (5.6).
2. This activity could also be combined with activities from other sections:
 - Section 2: Positive Youth Outcomes – e.g., activity 2.3. Positive Youth Outcomes to make the connection between desired youth outcomes and programming;
 - Section 3: Youth Involvement – e.g., activity 3.1. Meaningful Roles for Young People to link youth involvement with program evaluation and development.
3. Additional readings: a) Public/Private Venture report: Getting it right. Strategies for After-School Success, www.ppv.org/ppv/publications/assets/190_publication.pdf, b) National Collaboration for Youth report: Making a Difference in the lives of Youth, www.nassembly.org/nydic/programming/newideas/MakingaDifferenceintheLivesofYouth.htm