NEWSLETTER for Youth Program Coordinators

~ Positive Youth Development Programs in Community Settings ~

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What is a positive youth development program?

Positive youth development programs are programs for youth that are designed to provide opportunities and support for youth to prepare themselves to meet challenges in the future through achieving one or more of the following goals:

- ➢ Promote bonding
- ➢ Foster resiliency
- ➢ Promote social competence
- ➢ Promote emotional competence
- ➢ Promote cognitive competence
- ➢ Promote behavioural competence
- ➢ Promote moral competence
- ➢ Foster self-determination
- ➢ Foster spirituality
- ➢ Foster self-efficacy
- ➢ Foster a clear and positive identity
- ➢ Foster belief in the future
- ➢ Provide recognition for positive behaviour
- ➢ Provide opportunities for pro-social involvement
- ➢ Foster prosocial norms

(Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 1999)

How does positive youth development see youth?

The concept of positive youth development sees every youth as a resource to be developed, with the potential and capacity for positive development and to be successful. Positive youth development programs are not only focused on preventing and reducing risk behaviours but also promoting youth long term development and preparing them for the future.

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Eccles, J. S. & Templeton, J. (2002). Extracurricular and other after-school activities for youth. *Review of Research in Education, 26,* 113-80.

STRATEGIES
For Effective Positive Youth Development in Community Settings

Indicators for Positive Youth Development Program Outcomes

In order to evaluate effective positive youth development programs, the following characteristics can be used to measure youth outcomes after joining a program:

- **Competence**: Positive view of one's actions in domain specific areas including social (interpersonal skills), academic (school outcomes), cognitive (cognitive abilities), and vocational (work habits and career choice exploration) abilities.
- **Confidence**: An internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy.

- **Connection**: Positive bonds reflected in bidirectional exchanges between the individual and peers, family, school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship.
- **Character**: Respect for societal and cultural rules and standards, a sense of right and wrong (morality).
- **Caring and Compassion**: A sense of empathy and sympathy.

For a few decades, strategies and features in programs that are likely to support positive youth development have been analyzed through non experimental studies and evaluated intervention studies. Some of the strategies and features are:

- Provide intentional learning experience and opportunities to learn skills such as decision making and self-management skills, coping skills, refusal-resistance skills, and cognitive skills necessary to be successful in life.
- Equip with developmentally appropriate levels of structure, proper adult supervision, or appropriate curriculum implementation.
- Provide appropriate provisions for psychological and physical safety.
- Operate the program with adequate frequency, intensity, and duration.
- Create an environment that fosters supportive and respectful relationships with adults and among peers.
- Create inclusive social networks and opportunities to develop a sense of belonging.
- Demonstrate strong and clear positive social norms for behaviours.
- Provide opportunities and motivational practices to experience mastery.
- Provide opportunities to take leadership to make positive contributions and make a real difference in and for the community.

Lerner, R. M., Lerner, J. V., Almerigi, J. B., Theokas, C., Gestsdottir, S., Naudeau, S., et al. (2005). **Positive youth development, participation in community youth development programs, and community contributions of fifth grade adolescents: Findings from the first wave of the 4-H study of positive youth development.** *Journal of Early Adolescence, 25,* 17-71.

Hollister, R. (2003). *The growth in after-school programs and their impact.* Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.