

Youth Retention and Engagement

Presented By: Jeremy D. Butler



1

Intro

CURRENT ROLES:

- Director of Community Initiatives, ICAN
 - Teacher, Madison Oneida BOCES
 - Event Specialist, Grand Dynamics International
 - Experiential/Adventure Based Learning Facilitator
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- 22 years experience working in human services (RTF, Therapeutic Foster Care, CPO of School Based Non Profit, to today)
 - 20+ years as a Lead Trainer and Facilitator
 - 15+ years as a Ropes/Challenge Course Instructor



2



- Opening Activity
- Dimensions of Engagement
- Family Engagement
- Keys to Retention
- Questions and Answers



3



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4

Reasons for Non-Engagement

- Perception of "Better" Options
- Older youth require less supervision
- Competing Priorities
 - Child Care responsibilities
 - Jobs
 - Family responsibilities
 - Other



5

Dimensions of Engagement

6

4 Principles of Transformative Family Engagement



Source: NYS PTA

7

Family Engagement

- 70% of parents agree that Out of School Programs should provide workforce skills such as teamwork, leadership, and critical thinking
- 50% of Parents say the STEM Learning opportunities are important in selecting Out of School programs
- 80% of parents agree that afterschool programs can help children develop social skills through interaction with their peers
- 8 out of 10 Parents say OST programs give them "peace of mind" to help them keep their jobs

8

TABLE 2.5
Parent Engagement Activities

PARENT ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES	High-retention Program Usage Rates
Average number of ways (out of 9) program tries to engage parents	7.6
Send information about program to parents	100%
Hold events for parents	95%
Hold individual meetings with parents	85%
Send newsletters with community resources	83%
Get parent input through surveys/ group meetings	80%
Provide courses for parents	52%

Source: Harvard Family Research Project and The Wallace Foundation, 2010
 Note: High-retention programs are those that retain 50% or more of their youth for 12 months or more. Only practices that were significantly correlated with retention are presented here.

9

Keys to High Levels of Retention

1. Providing leadership opportunities to youth
2. Have staff keep informed about youth outside of program
3. Create a Culture
4. Build a high level of organizational capacity
5. Invest in your staff



10

Providing Leadership Opportunities

TABLE 2.2
Leadership Opportunities in High-retention Programs

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES	High-retention Program Usage Rates
Average number of leadership opportunities (out of 9)	5.6
Peer mentor opportunities	82%
Community service activities	81%
Opportunities to design/lead activities for peers or younger youth	78%
Youth council/Decision-making groups	67%
Peer interaction through leadership bodies (e.g., youth councils)	64%
Paid staff positions	58%
Opportunities to serve in official "officer" roles	28%

Source: Program surveys. Source: Harvard Family Research Project and The Wallace Foundation, 2010
 Note: High-retention programs are defined as those that retain 50% or more of their youth for 12 months or more. Only practices that were significantly correlated with retention are presented here.

11

Staff keeping informed about youth outside of program

TABLE 2.3
Strategies to Keep Informed About Youth

STRATEGIES TO KEEP INFORMED ABOUT YOUTH	High-retention Program Usage Rates
Average number of ways (out of 5) that staff members stay informed about youth	3.4
Collect report cards	77%
Meet regularly with youth one-on-one	72%
Contact parents regularly	66%
Publicly recognize youth accomplishments outside of program	62%
Make school visits if needed	59%

Source: Program surveys. Source: Harvard Family Research Project and The Wallace Foundation, 2010
 Note: High-retention programs are those that retain 50% or more of their youth for 12 months or more. Only practices that were significantly correlated with retention are presented here.

12

Creating Culture

Engage youth voice and choice in:

- Activity selection and design
- Incentives
- The overall "feel" of the program
- Leadership roles
- Family engagement



Utilize Peers and staff as Recruiters

Make grants/funding sources fit your kids, not make your kids fit grants/funding

With Older Youth, Buy in and Commitment matters more than hours



13

Building High Level of Organizational Capacity



- Have Program Managers/Directors connected to schools daily
- No mission no money, no money no mission
- Community Connections are Key
- Build your program to allow Program Managers/Directors to wait for it...wait for it....

Manage and/or Direct



14

Staff Retention is Key



Why is it so critical?

- Longer Relationships =Improved Social Emotional Improvement
 - Turnover has direct link to lack of youth trust of adults
 - Youth relationship with 1 adult (outside of family leads to improvements in:
 - Overcoming Adversity
 - Desire to learn new things
 - Stronger Communication Skills
- (Murphey et al, 2013)

How do we do it?

- More staff meetings
- More Professional Development
- Make the financial investment
- Connect PT Staff to schools
- Build intention in building relationships
- Celebrations/rituals to say "goodbye"
- Give youth a voice in selecting staff



15



16



17

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18
