

EVALUATION FOR LEARNING

News for an Evaluating Community

Winter 2002

INTRODUCTION TO MEASURING PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Need help evaluating how a direct service program benefits participants? Sign up for Measuring Program Outcomes, a thorough, hands-on workshop that covers terminology, measurement, analysis and reporting. The next sequence of sessions will meet on Thursdays in May, 8:30am-12:30pm, May 2, 9, 16 and 23 in the Greater Kalamazoo United Way Board Room (709 S. Westnedge Ave., Kalamazoo). Cost is \$15/person; any community member is welcome. For a registration form, contact Elaine Griffin at 616/343-2524 (ph) or e_griffin@gkuw.org.

INVOLVING YOUTH IN EVALUATION

Quality programming for youth incorporates activities that meet their developmental needs. Involving youth participants in the evaluation process can help meet those developmental and leadership needs of the youth while strengthening evaluation of the program. The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation has identified seven developmental needs of adolescents. Below are ways in which participating in evaluation can address those needs.

1. Creative Expression

Tapping into the creativity of youth in developing new perspectives of the evaluation processes may result in getting closer to capturing valid expressions of what is to be measured in youth programming. Promoting free expression of youth by encouraging input in their own evaluations can also be a creative outlet that results in exploration of new interests and creates new talents for creative expression.

2. Self-exploration & Definition

Involving youth participants encourages creative thinking about their own circumstances, as well as serious consideration of personal values and needs. A deeper level of understanding of themselves and their relationships may evolve from the process of developing evaluation methods.

3. Meaningful Participation

Feelings of shared power may result from being asked to participate on a meaningful level in the creation and implementation of evaluation. Encouraging youth to utilize their talents and skills while promoting responsibility gives participants control over their own learning and may lead to discussions of the value and purpose of evaluation.

4. Positive Interactions with Peers and Adults

Youth who participate in evaluation may see the process as promoting a level of fairness and respect that helps them feel safe in sharing ideas and developing partnerships with peers, as well as adults. Including youth in the creation of evaluation methods may also help avoid feelings that evaluation is in some way a punitive measure.

5. Physical Activity

Youth are more apt to see their input as valuable if they are given opportunities to be **active** participants in the process. Providing hands-on evaluation experiences that get young people physically moving may be an important element in maintaining interest in creating and participating in evaluation.

ASKING GOOD
QUESTIONS

COLLECTING AND
SHARING USEFUL
INFORMATION

USING THE
INFORMATION FOR:
➤ IMPROVEMENT
➤ ACCOUNTABILITY

CONTINUING
TO REPEAT
THE CYCLE

EVALUATION FOR LEARNING
NEWSLETTER IS A PRODUCT OF THE
GREATER KALAMAZOO EVALUATION
PROJECT WITH SUPPORT FROM THE
GREATER KALAMAZOO UNITED WAY,
THE IRVING S. GILMORE FOUNDATION,
AND THE KALAMAZOO COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

THE GREATER KALAMAZOO EVALUATION PROJECT PUBLISHES THIS NEWSLETTER TO FOSTER EVALUATION THROUGHOUT THE KALAMAZOO AREA.

Send your ideas and examples to: Denise Hartsough
Greater Kalamazoo United Way PH: (616)343-2524
709 S. Westnedge Avenue FAX: (616)344-7250

CONT'D

6. Competence and Achievement

Giving young people significant responsibilities in creating and implementing evaluation can lead to increased competence and a sense of achievement. Having youths' ideas and suggestions seriously considered as input in the final evaluation process(es) allows youths to feel personal success and provides an opportunity to see their contributions affect others.

7. Structure and Clear Limits

In order to participate meaningfully in the processes of creating and implementing evaluation, young people need to be taught the meaning and purpose of evaluation as well as the boundaries that exist in terms of resources, regulations and the specific project at hand.

TIPS & TOOLS

The New Girls' Movement: New Assessment Tools for Youth Programs (Ms. Foundation for Women 2000) offers four strategies for developing youth as peer researchers in evaluation:

- Keep it Real – demystify evaluation by making it understandable and concrete.
- Make a Case – make evaluation relevant to girls' [youths'] everyday lives by applying the rules and skills to real-life challenges.
- Take it to the Street – combine real-life practice with skills building for youth to feel comfortable doing evaluation.
- Tools of the Trade – engage girls [youths] in critical thinking and decision-making about research questions and data collection methods, and what to do with the information they collect.

NOTEWORTHY RESOURCES

Advocates for Youth (2001). Youth Involvement in Prevention Programming.

<http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/iag/involvement.htm>

High/Scope Educational Research Foundation

<http://www.highscope.org>

Ms. Foundation for Women (2000). The New Girls' Movement: New Assessment Tools for Youth Programs.

For a FREE copy, visit <http://www.ms.foundation.org/publications.html>

Rennekamp, Roger A. Hear it From the Board (2001). Youth as Partners in Program Evaluation.

http://danr.ucop.edu/eee-aea/AEA_HearItFromTheBoardOctober2001.pdf

EVALUATION FOR LEARNING IS:

- EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY
- CONTINUALLY ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS, GETTING ANSWERS, AND TAKING ACTION BASED ON THOSE ANSWERS
- INTEGRATED INTO THE DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS OF THE ORGANIZATION
- A DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS
- COLLABORATIVE AND DEPENDENT ON INFORMATION SHARING
- TIME WELL SPENT
- GOING TO ENSURE THE ORGANIZATION'S HEALTH AND VIABILITY IN THE LONG RUN IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

GREATER KALAMAZOO EVALUATION PROJECT
c/o Greater Kalamazoo United Way
709 S. Westnedge Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49007-5099

Non-profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Kalamazoo, MI
Permit No. 720