



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

EXTENSION

Making Quality Matter: Our Shift From Research To Action



Presenter:

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Key Points

- Afterschool programs are providing needed benefits to youth
- Key lessons from the research landscape – quality is at the center
- Solid, statewide action around assuring quality is already underway in many aspects of the field
- Reflections: Because of the advances in research, how can we use quality as a catalyzing force to increase the benefits for youth?

The Benefits of Afterschool Programs

Afterschool Programs have a positive effect on:

- School performance (tests, grades, attendance)
- Social Behaviors (social skills, problem behaviors, risk behaviors)
- Beliefs and Attitudes (bonding to school, self esteem)

Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Little, 2007; Vandell, 2007



Handy YD Research Evidence

- **Defining** Youth Development Programs
(Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak & Hawkins, 1999; Eccles & Gootman, 2002)
- **The Effects of** Youth Development Programs
(Durlak, 2007; Little 2007; Vandell 2007)
- **Describing High Quality** programs
(Catalano, 1999; Sambrano, 2005; Vandell, 2007)
- **Linking Quality to Youth Outcomes**
(Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray & Foster, 1998 ; Vandell, 1999, 2005 & 2007; Eccles & Gootman, 2002).
- **Assessing the Quality** of Youth Development Programs
(Halpern, 1999; Vandell, Shurnow & Posner, 1999)

Youth Program Quality: Across the Research Landscape

What Research is Telling us:

- It matters
- We don't have enough of it
- We know how to define and measure it
- We can improve it



It (Quality) Matters?

- Empirical evidence linking quality with positive impact (Durlak, 2007; Vandell, 2007; Vandell, 2005; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray & Foster, 1998; Vandell, 1999).
- Negative consequences of poor quality programs (Belle, 1999).

How much quality is there?

While programs have a mixture of strengths and weaknesses, **2 out of every 3 programs were rated as fair to poor** on attributes of quality

(Halpern, 1999) and (Vandell, Shurenow, Posner, 1999)

Defining Program Quality

Features of Positive Developmental Settings

Physical and Psychological Safety

Appropriate Structures

Supportive Relationships

Opportunities to Belong

Positive Social Norms

Support for Efficacy and Matterering

Opportunities for Skill Building

Integration of Family, School and

Community Efforts

National Research Council (2002)



Excerpts of Results from Catalano

	Program Types	
	Effective	Ineffective
Cross-Domains - Connected Family, School, Community	68%	47%
Minimum of 5 Youth Development Constructs Addressed	100%	-
Reduction in Problem Behaviors	96%	-
Opportunities to Practice Pro-Social Behavior	88%	49%
Recognition for Positive Behavior	88%	41%
Promoted Social Bonding	76%	55%
Existence of a Curriculum or Intentional Program Activities	96%	50%
Program Lasted 9 Months or More	80%	43%
Consistently Attended to Quality	96%	70%

Excerpts from the study by Sambrano et al.

When considering all program delivery strategies,
only 5 showed any effects on their own:

1. Focus on a range of life skills
2. Focus on connection building
3. Cohesive, coherent structure
4. Introspective learning delivery
5. Intensity of contact (more than 3.3 hours/week)

Results from the study by Sambrano et al.

- Effect was greatest when employing at least 4 of the 5 delivery strategies.
- Programs using 4 out of 5 strategies significantly reduced risk behavior and increased positive outcomes for both males and females relative to comparison youth.

Solid, statewide action underway...

- Key convening efforts: YCC work groups, Center for Youth Development Statewide Initiative
- Shared research agenda: YPQI, CYFAR Study, Cost Study, Workforce Study
- Connecting training and assessment support: YWI, MNSACA, YIPA, Mentoring Partnership
- Uniting systems and policy action: State appropriation, Governor's Summit, legislative youth caucus, funders convening

How practitioners and programs are responding to quality

- Practitioner demand for learning, assessing and improving quality has dramatically increased

Example: 2006 – the YWI filled 6 regional forums, today we fill an average of 45 classes (or 2,200 participants annually) on quality topics

- Since, 2007, 200+ youth programs enrolled in 1-3 years of YWI support to improve quality

Example: Key Org's making investments in quality in 2010

Minneapolis Community Ed, YWCA, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Campfire USA, City of St. Paul, 21st Century, Beacons, Campfire, Parks and Rec and some greater MN org's and networks (4H, Campfire Northern Star, Duluth YWCA, PACT 4)



Questions to Ponder...

- How do we align efforts from practice to policy?
- How does the quality research inform new ideas for program accountability?
- Is there a quality threshold?

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