



After-school Programs and Parental/Guardian Impact on Literacy

Rebecca A. Olinsky
Advisor: Molly Schaller, Ph.D.



Adventure Central Background

Adventure Central is a community-based, positive youth development program funded by a partnership with 4-H, Ohio State University Extension, and Five Rivers MetroParks. Adventure Central serves at-risk children and their parents in West Dayton. Staff work with families in life-changing activities utilizing nature, build life skills, and assist youth in exploring life's possibilities and opportunities.

Why focus on literacy?

Adventure Central focuses on positive youth development and preparing youth for the future. This includes having a strong literacy background.

Unfortunately...

- Low-income youth fall more behind in reading between first and fourth grades, regardless of their initial reading skills (Spielberger, J. & Halpern, R. 2002).
- By age 4, children from professional families hear 45 million words; children from working class parents hear 26 million words; and children with parents on welfare hear 13 million words (Perry, 2012).
- Only 2% of African-American students in most of the states within the United States meet college readiness scores (Perry, 2012).

"I want her to do what she wants to do in life....I want her to focus on her interests. She wants to be a veterinarian. I know that she knows she wants to be something important. That is what matters." - Ms. Herringshaw*

Purpose of the Study

To examine and gain insight from parents on how a high quality after-school program can positively influence at-risk youth, especially with literacy development.

Methodology

Participants

- Parents/guardians with children in Activity Night
- Recruited participants week prior to focus group

Data Collection/Analysis

- Two focus groups
- Completed qualitative analysis for themes

Topics Covered / Discussion Questions

- What does your child(ren) do at home to interact with other children?
- What could Adventure Central do to help enhance literacy growth and development?
- What are some of your children's favorite books / authors?

Results

Parents / guardians cited three main factors that they feel influence literacy growth of their children:

- **Role model**
Parents acknowledge that their children actively observe them. Being positive role models by showing their children that they read is essential.
- **Family makeup**
Several of the youth are only children; this impacts interaction with others and can enhance creativity and independence.
- **Times have evolved**
A challenge parents have is keeping up with vocabulary and resources / services available (i.e. technology, print media).



Implications and Recommendations

- Plan family engagement programs with an emphasis on literacy
- Incorporate literacy / reading into daily lesson plans
- Read to youth daily

* Names have been changed to protect participants. Special thanks goes to Adventure Central, Nate Arnett, and Dr. Molly Schaller, 2012