Program Development and Evaluation - Education / Program Design

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EVALUATION MADE EASY - DESIGNING INSTRUMENTS TO MEASURE PROGRAM IMPACT

Susan Barkman* and Janet Fox

ABSTRACT:
Being able to measure the impact of an educational program is becoming a necessary skill for Extension professionals. The problem is that most Extension professionals have limited or no formal education in program evaluation. So presenters of this seminar have developed a "Field Guide for Designing Quantitative Instruments" especially for county Extension staff and specialists. The field guide focuses on outcome-based evaluation and ties into the Logic Model process utilized in most states. The guide describes easy-to-follow steps for developing tests, surveys/ questionnaires, and observation checklists to measure the impact of educational programs. It includes tips on such things as writing effective writing questions, choosing the appropriate response choices and/or scaling, and selecting methodology for administering the instrument. Also included are quick "field" methods to help improve instruments and increase the reliability and validity of the data gathered. Presenters will utilize a combination of computer presentation and interactive discussion throughout the seminar. Program participants will break into small groups throughout the program to get hands-on experiences on various steps. This seminar will help participants "exceed the expectations of community stakeholders" by learning how to collected valuable information about the impact of Extension programs. Participants will learn how to design quantitative instruments to measure knowledge gain, attitudinal change, behavior change, or skill development. Participants will learn through a step-by step process including: writing initial questions for an item pool, pilot-testing the instrument, determining reliability and validity analyzing and reporting data.

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MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR AUDIENCE: CHILD-CARE CONNECTIONS

Cassandra S. Corridon* and Dr. Susan K. Walker

ABSTRACT:
Child-care providers are an important audience for Maryland Cooperative Extension. Spearheaded by the enthusiasm and direction of our State Specialist, Maryland Extension Educators have met the needs of this audience. These training modules address areas essential for child-care credentialing and professional development and have been used with the full range of child-care professionals. They were developed by extension educators throughout the state to reflect workshop topics most frequently requested by the target audience. The teaching packets are complete with press releases, PowerPoint presentations, pre- and post-tests, teaching outlines and teacher notes and handouts. These training sessions have helped child-care professionals in Maryland maintain a high level of competencies in order to meet the state requirements for licensing and certification. This session will offer an overview of the content and variety of the curriculum packets. A dozen topics will be highlighted from guidance and discipline to humor and stress management, from parent-provider relationships to record keeping, from food safety in child care to retirement planning for child care providers. With the leadership of our state Specialist, Maryland Family and Consumer Science Educators have made connections that benefit and support the life of the child care professional and are pleased with the opportunity to share!

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ASSESSING ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY IN A 4-H PROGRAM

Jerry Culen Ph.D.*

ABSTRACT:
The purpose of these studies was to obtain baseline data on the level of environmental literacy among Florida 4-H youth participating in non-formal environmental education activities. This research is primarily descriptive in nature and utilized a modified form of the Middle School Environmental Literacy Instrument (MSELI). This instrument was developed as an attempt to standardize the method of assessment of environmental literacy and has been used for assessing formal classroom programs as well. The MSELI has been tested for validity and reliability. Environmental literacy in this instrument is defined by variables, which have been shown to be precursors to responsible environmental behavior / citizenship action. These variables include (1) knowledge of ecological concepts; (2) environmental issue awareness; (3) knowledge and skill in the use of environmental action strategies; and (4) evaluation of environmental issues. The examination of data related to the above described variables and the self-reported history of taking environmental actions presents a view of the effectiveness 4-H environmental education programs have in the development of responsible environmental behavior. This type of evaluation is considered nontraditional or as currently referred "authentic assessment" relative to environmental behavior changes. This effort, to assess environmental literacy in non-formal programs, assists in the need to conduct meaningful program evaluations that can help guide curriculum development efforts and to identify those programs/activities that are most effective at promoting responsible environmental behavior.

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ABSTRACT:
County Extension professionals are often hired for their subject-matter expertise and educational and experiential qualifications. Professional development activities often focus on improving technical skills. Once employed, however, the skills which agents need often focus on developing volunteers, assessing local needs, building teams and relationships and identifying ways to involve and serve their community. Professional development activities often consist of a single day of classroom instruction, in which agents receive technical information. In order to increase the level of competence of agents in working with volunteers and volunteer programs, the Volunteer Administration Academy (VAA) was developed. The VAA is a 13-month staff development experience designed to equip agents with tools, resources and knowledge necessary to assess current volunteer programs, envision opportunities, garner stakeholder support and develop resources necessary to achieve community goals. Eight agents each completed the VAA during 2001 and 2002. Documented 2001 benefits include (1) all agents reported paradigm shifts; (2) all counties created action plans; (3) recruited 15 new 4-H Council members; (4) introduced 47 new leader-led 4-H clubs; (5) recruited 18 new middle-managers; (6) revitalized 6 4-H councils; (7) Documented 2002 benefits include (1) all counties developed a County Action Plan; (2) recruited 10 new Council members; (3) revitalized 8 councils; (4) recruited 84 new volunteers; (5) introduced 5 new leader-led clubs; (6) five counties initiated new volunteer-led activities; (7) five agents developed their own Volunteer Administration model; (8) seventeen new volunteer-led programs were introduced; (9) ten agents reported increased confidence; (10) six agents submitted workshop proposals for a national meeting. Instructional techniques include panel discussion, PowerPoint, and Question-and-Answer.

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MISSISSIPPI’S GOAL OF IMPROVING QUALITY CHILDCARE IN UNLICENSED SETTINGS

Louise E. Davis Ph.D.* and Angel Fason M.S.

ABSTRACT:
With many children being cared for in unlicensed settings, it is increasingly important to provide educational information to these caregivers. Research also clearly suggests that training of child caregivers is a key factor in the provision of quality childcare for young children. Mississippi State University Extension Service delivers the Nurturing Homes Initiative, a program that provides training to family home providers through technical assistance and web-based technology. This program is funded through the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Office for Children and Youth. The Nurturing Homes Initiative is currently in its third year of funding. The project utilizes the Family Day Care Rating Scale (Harms, T. and Clifford, R., 1989) and the Caregiver Interaction Scale (Arnett, 1989) to assess the quality of the family home environments. Following a pre-assessment, the providers receive intensive technical assistance lessons through one-on-one demonstrations, lessons via the World Wide Web, and a notebook of lessons. At the end of the program, a post-assessment is completed on each provider to determine where improvements were made. Data collected thus far indicates statistically significant improvements. The findings of the NURTURING HOMES INITIATIVE project clearly suggest the continuing need for educational support and training for family home providers. This session will discuss the importance of providing quality childcare for children in unlicensed settings and ways to implement such programs, inform participants of the types of training provided to the family home providers, and share the results of the program and implications for further research and training.

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HOURS OF OPPORTUNITY OR HOURS OF RISK: WHAT ARE EARLY ADOLESCENTS DOING WITH THEIR OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW?

Theresa M. Ferrari*, Dawn Anderson-Butcher and Karen Jackson

ABSTRACT:
Increasing public attention has focused on the needs of youth during out-of-school hours. There is a growing awareness that where youth spend their time, what they do, and with whom they do it are important to their overall development. To provide information for youth program planners, a statewide survey was conducted. The purposes were to determine: (1) how middle school youth spend their out-of-school time; (2) motivations for participation in activities; (3) how they would like to spend this time; and (4) perceived barriers to participation in out-of-school activities. A total of 4,601 early adolescent youth in 5th through 8th grades, representing rural, suburban, and urban areas around the state, completed the survey. The sample was ethnically and economically diverse. Descriptive statistics were computed. Two main themes emerged from the data analysis: Theme #1: Unstructured activities predominate. Therefore, many adolescents in the state were not engaged in structured activities that protect them from increasing risks associated with adolescence. Theme #2: Adolescents want a voice and a choice. They reported a strong desire for more opportunities in their communities and they want to be involved in their development and implementation. Information gleaned from this survey is useful to staff of youth organizations, and has been shared through a variety of means. Adolescents have much to gain from participation in after-school programs, youth clubs, extracurricular activities, and other structured out-of-school time activities. Because attracting and keeping youth in these programs are continuing challenges, understanding motivations and barriers is essential.

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DOES A WEEK LONG 4-H CAMP DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS AND LEADERSHIP ABILITIES?

Martha S. Garton*, Julie Ferry, Kelly Hicks, Helen Graves, Jane Jopling, Judy Matlick, Margaret Miltenberger and Craig Yohn

ABSTRACT:
A comprehensive report on research findings, Positive Youth Development in the United States (1998) concluded, "a wide range of positive youth development approaches can result in positive youth behavior outcomes and the prevention of youth problem behaviors." A Pennsylvania study found that 4-H activities are major factors in promoting life skill development (1989). These studies and others supported the holistic child-education approach used in West Virginia camping over the past 75 years; but the question still remained "are we making a difference?" The study was designed to assess the impact of 4-H camp with youths' life skills and leadership development. It built upon the Targeted Life Skills Model from Iowa State University, which is a holistic youth development approach (Pittman, 2002; Barkman & Machtmes, 2002; Cyfar Philosophy, Scales, 1996). The survey was given to 1,302 youth ages 6 to 20 who participated in 4-H camping programs in eight West Virginia counties. There were four areas measured (1) overall camp experience; (2) targeted Life Skills, (3) retrospective pre-testing of leadership skills; and (4) camper demographics. This study concluded that 4-H camps' experiential learning activities positively affect campers' life skills. Among older campers, on a four-point Likert scale, over 60 percent said they "always" learned life skills in Citizenship, Communication, Accepting Differences, Leadership, Marketable Skills and Healthy Life-styles. Using a three-point scale, over 70 percent of younger campers said "Yes" they learned life skills in Citizenship, Communication, Accepting Differences, Leadership, and Healthy Life-styles. Paired sample t-tests revealed significant positive differences in five of the seven leadership and teamwork skills measured for both age groups. Results should be used to guide the future measurement of 4-H camp impact and to strengthen camping curriculums. Follow-up studies to measure 4-H camp impact over time are recommended.

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THE DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF IDAHO’S BEEF QUALITY ASSURANCE (BQA) CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT:
In 2002, University of Idaho Extension completed a Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) curriculum to be used in the training of certified BQA producers in Idaho. The purpose of BQA certification is to ensure that beef utilized by the consuming public comes from cattle that are raised in accordance with National Cattlemen’s Beef Association’s (NCBA) BQA guidelines. The objective of these guidelines is the production of a safe, wholesome, high-quality, and consistent beef product. During the development of Idaho's BQA curriculum, input from beef producers, veterinarians, allied industry representatives, brand board representatives, cattle association representatives, and University of Idaho Extension faculty (Specialists and Extension Educators) was solicited and incorporated. Results of this effort include a reference manual and training materials. The three-hour training session identifies beef quality challenges and outlines management techniques needed to solve the problems. Issues identified in NCBA’s beef industry audits and addressed in the curriculum include consumer needs, food safety, animal health, product quality, and the incorporation of best management practices. Certification is achieved through a multi-level process that involves classroom instruction and testing (Level I) and ranch audits (Level II). Currently, eight training sessions have been offered and approximately 125 beef producers have participated. Evaluation of the training sessions included pre-training and post-training tests. Fifty-three percent (53%) of participants passed the pre-tests and ninety-five percent (95%) of participants passed the post-tests. This evaluation indicates that participants’ knowledge of BQA was increased during the training sessions.

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COWBOY OBSTETRICS--A CALVING PRIMER

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ABSTRACT:
Dystocia or difficult births continues to plague cattle producers in central Idaho. Replacement heifers account for the majority of the difficult births, but older cows are not immune. The death of the calf at birth costs dollars that are easy to measure. Difficult births that delay the time to parturition are "hidden" costs that we cannot see. Difficult births produce calves with a lower immune system response making them more susceptible to disease. Sick calves cost dollars in medical costs, losses in productivity, and may even die. In addition, the cow is slower to return to estrus, the chances for uterine infections are higher, conception rates can be reduced, or the cow can be open. Five calving schools were held. The schools were designed to achieve the following goals: (1) reduce the stress of birth such that a live, viable calf is born, and (2) demonstrate skills and management principles that enhance the survival of all calves, born naturally or with assistance. Over 300 people, representing approximately 175 ranches, attended the one-day schools. Pre- and post-tests showed a 47 to 58% increase in attendees' knowledge about dystocia and dystocia management practices as a result of attending the calving schools. Follow-up telephone surveys conducted nine months later indicated attendees retained at least a portion of the information taught, and saved an average of 1.6 calves per ranch and potentially generated an additional $171,780 from these calves.

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EDEN: SUPPORTING EXTENSION EDUCATORS IN DISASTER

Edwin Jones* and Abigail Borron

ABSTRACT:
Since 1994, the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) has been a nationwide resource for county educators/agents. Through the network, Land Grant and Sea Grant professionals provide educational programming on natural and manmade disasters. EDEN’s role is to link various Extension professionals from across the United States so they can share resources to reduce the impact of disasters. EDEN received funds from the USDA in July 2002 to provide educational leadership in homeland security. Since the completion of an educational needs assessment project in the fall of 2002, the network has progressed considerably in two ways: (1) program and material identification and development and (2) educational program and material delivery. Both areas continually are enhanced and maintained as experts from a multitude of areas provide very worthy educational materials from their own resources. As this material identification across issues continues, one of EDEN’s primary projects is plant biosecurity. The navigation structure of the online EDEN database is easy to use. As the general public is welcome to search for topics of interest, the Website is highly functional for Extension professionals in all areas and expertise. In addition, EDEN continually works at disseminating information out to the county-level, through the state point of contact (POC). In turn, the POC acts as an important informational link from the counties back to EDEN.

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USING THE LOGIC MODEL TO DEVELOP A STATE FSNEP PROGRAM: THE OHIO EXPERIENCE

Mary E. Kershaw Ph.D.* and Joyce R. McDowell

ABSTRACT:
The poster will provide an overview of how the logic model and FSNEP objectives were used in Ohio: to evaluate and select curricula, design teaching resources, frame professional development trainings, and develop appropriate evaluation instruments. It includes the county needs assessment process that prioritizes county project goals, target audiences, teaching interventions, and development of evaluation instruments used to collect outcome data for impact reported to funders and local and state stakeholders. Ohio's FSNEP Program has been designed using the logic model (http://www.uwex.edu/ces/wnep/); Information from the Journal of Nutrition Education, Volume 33, Supplement, 2002; current FSNEP Guidance; input from Ohio Job and Family Services; and county needs assessments. This process has strengthened the project by (1) The project has moved from reporting outputs to reporting outcomes; (2) It has been an effective method for implementing a consistent curricula with the flexibility to meet needs of the target audience; (3) It has allowed for demonstrating nutrition behavior change; (4) It has decreased the number of single interventions and increased the number of multiple (series) interventions; and (5) It has helped Ohio develop the total program based upon needs of the target audience--from selecting the curricula and teaching resources to evaluating and reporting program impacts. The model serves as a focal point for integration of science and educational theory. It serves as a means for keeping the program focused upon the project’s goals and objectives. Additional information can be found at http://fnp.osu.edu/.

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STEPS (STEPS TO EMPLOYEMENT AND PERSONAL SUCCESS): A UNIVERSITY-BASED WELFARE TO WORK PROGRAM

Connie Kratzer Ph.D.*, Ann Vail, Ph.D., Merrilyn Cummings, Ph.D. and Vickie Galindo, B.S.

ABSTRACT:
New Mexico State University Departments of Extension and Home Economics collaborates with New Mexico Works, a program to assist individuals in moving from welfare to work, and implements STEPS. Experiences are provided that increase the capacity of participants for full-time employment, strong family life, and future educational endeavors. The curriculum, developed in consultation with the case managers, is based on Extension curriculum and includes: personal development, communication, job search, success on the job, safety issues, money and benefit matters, balancing work, family and community commitments, and planning for the future. In addition, the Nurturing Parenting and I CAN nutrition curricula also are used. The STEPS program has a rolling admittance policy that allows participants to enter any time. Classes meet from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with individual time for resume and letter writing, service learning, computer use, and other skill development. A graduation ceremony is held at the end of each four-week session. Graduates are participants who have completed at least 75% of the required 140 hours. Criteria such as placement of individuals, success stories relayed by participants, and interviews with participants, are used to evaluate the success of the program. Of the 204 individuals who have been referred to STEPS since July 2001, 70 have completed the program and graduated, 62 were assigned to another placement, 50 obtained employment prior to graduation. Only 22 never began the program, which is much lower than the national compliance rate for programs of this type.

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EXPLORING THE GREAT SELF MYSTERY

Frances Lewis*, Marsha Curtis, Mindy Bird, Alisha Gowen, Velina Nhuy, Melissa Southam, Susan Talley PhD. and Sharon Weyland M.S.

ABSTRACT:
The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of an intervention program designed to help adolescents identify their individual strengths and focus on developing those strengths. A group of seven adolescents is receiving a twelve-week intervention called the "Great Self-Mystery." The program is using undergraduate students enrolled at Utah State University as advocates. Each advocate serves as a "supporter" for one youth, championing on their behalf and assisting the youth to gain an understanding of themselves and to learn what their own talents are. It is anticipated that through the intervention the adolescents will gain sense of their own ability to behave in a socially positive way, recognizing the feelings of others and using their talents to serve others. Pretest/posttest data will be analyzed to establish impact of the intervention program.

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UNDERSTANDING WHERE THE RESEARCH HAS BEEN AND WHERE IT IS HEADED

Patricia Mulkeen*, Barry Garst and Virginia Bourdeau

ABSTRACT:
Research and evaluation regarding the impacts and outcomes of 4-H camping is increasing, and these evaluation efforts are successfully documenting how participation in 4-H camping programs positively impacts youth. Camping impacts range from the development of specific content-related knowledge, skills, and abilities to the enhancement of life skills in the areas of social skills and leadership. However, much of this research is neither published in journals nor disseminated widely, so awareness of it by the Extension community is limited. Research by Virginia 4-H has shown that the parents of 4-H campers reported gains in their child’s independent living skills and initiative-taking, while youth campers reported development of their social skills related to making friends (Garst & Bruce, 2001). Through surveys, West Virginia 4-H campers have reported increased skills in teamwork and understanding others (Miltenberger, 2000). Overall leadership skills were found to be greater among West Virginia campers having held leadership positions in camp (Duncan & Mulkeen, 2001). Awareness of current Extension research related to youth camping is critical in developing a research agenda for better understanding the impacts and outcomes of 4-H camping programs on youth, teens, volunteers, and staff. Participants in this seminar will learn the methods, results and implications of current research on the impact of 4-H camping programs. Samples of evaluation tools and results of studies will be shared. Participants will also learn about the National 4-H Camping Research Consortium and will discuss future directions for research and evaluation of 4-H camping programs.

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WHERE HAVE ALL THE TEENS GONE? AN EXPLORATION OF 4-H ENROLLMENT PATTERNS

Stephen T. Russell* and Katherine Heck

ABSTRACT:
Many 4-H Youth Development professionals are concerned about youth leaving 4-H in their early teens. The theory of dropouts in the early teen years would suggest a threshold effect: total time spent in 4-H would be longer for those joining in elementary school and shorter for those joining in middle school. We conducted an analysis of enrollment patterns among a longitudinal cohort of 217,881 individual youth enrollees in the California 4-H program from 1992 to 2002. We found that the average youth was enrolled in 4-H for 2.6 years. The mean length of time spent in the 4-H program increased among children joining from age 6 to age 10 (from 2.4 years among those joining at 6 to 2.8 years among those joining at 10) and then was flat until age 15. The late elementary and middle school ages were the most common time to join 4-H. About 43 percent of 4-H youth joined the program at ages 10 to 12; new enrollment declined at subsequent ages. Since the typical youth was in the program for two to three years, the peak in enrollment at 10 to 12 led to an apparent drop in participation between 13 and 15. However, the data provided no evidence of a threshold effect causing youth to leave 4-H in the early teen years. The lower enrollment of high school students appears to be a result of fewer new enrollees over age 12 rather than of a sudden drop in participation specific to young teens.

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GIVING YOUR BODY THE BEST

Paula Scott* and Kay Evans

ABSTRACT:
While overweight and obesity are now at record high levels, this country needs to be far better educated about the nutritional values and benefits of all that we eat and drink. In addition, the poorer health experienced by lower socioeconomic groups, particularly in terms of chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes, can be positively impacted by improvements in dietary choices. In an effort to reverse alarming and escalating trends of obesity and overweight; and to encourage limited income audiences to acquire knowledge of the link between diet and health, we have developed an EFNEP/FNP teaching curriculum. The curriculum is a series of flip-charts designed to correspond with other nutrition teaching tools providing dietary guidance based on research. Given that the nutrient intakes of limited income individuals are more likely to be inadequate compared with those of higher incomes, limited income groups stand to gain the most from nutrition education. This curriculum is a comprehensive and easy-to-use guide on food and nutrition helping people understand that food is not the problem, but the solution.

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INTEGRATING OUTCOMES BASED EVALUATION/LOGIC MODELING INTO THE EXTENSION ORGANIZATION - THE MARYLAND EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT:
After attending the Outcomes Based Evaluation training at the University of Wisconsin in 2001, the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension (MCE) decided to move the organization to the Outcomes Based Evaluation (OBE) and Logic Modeling (LM) process for program planning and evaluation. A team of Extension field faculty was given the responsibility of developing and implementing an instructional effort to train county, regional and campus based Extension faculty in OBE/LM approaches. Moving to OBE/LM for program planning and evaluation is considered a paradigm shift for MCE and impacts on many aspects of its operation. This session will examine this training endeavor and its results. In addition, MCE’s work to mainstream OBE/LM into all aspects of MCE organizational and program planning efforts including the development of its new Strategic Plan and Plan of Work will be reviewed. The session will also examine the impact that OBE/LM approach is having on scholarship issues, promotion and tenure and reporting methods within MCE.

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