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# The Development of an After-School Program for Youth Placed At-Risk: A Collaborative Approach


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# The Development of an After-School Program for Youth Placed At-Risk: A Collaborative Approach

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# Presentation Outline

- Program overview and structure
- Preservice teacher education and involvement
- Parent engagement and social worker training
- Successes, struggles, and lessons learned
- Ongoing research with preservice teachers
- Questions for discussion

# Overview of the Partnership

- Local Elementary School
  - 95% Free and Reduced Lunch
  - 86% minority enrollment (66% Black, 19% Hispanic)
- Community Partner Organization
  - Not-for-Profit Organization that provides afterschool programming in Tuscaloosa County
- University of Alabama
  - College of Education – Physical Education Teacher Education
  - School of Social Work – Social Work Education Program

# Partnership Development

- Focused on a) youth development through an afterschool program and b) family and community well-being through collective parent engagement program
- School was selected because of the minority population and percent of students on free and reduced lunch
- The community partner was invited to participate because they were already programming at the school
- Early negotiations were promising and school personnel seemed particularly excited about youth development

# Afterschool Program Structure

- Afterschool program offered five days a week from 3-5 PM
- Serves approximately 70 children in grades 1-5
- Snack offered five days per week
- Academic enrichment five days per week
- Sport-based youth development through TPSR on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays
- Other enrichment activities on Tuesdays and Thursdays

# Philosophy of the Program

“Classroom management helps run an effective classroom, but does not solve social problems” (Don Hellison)

Goal is to help children develop into better people and make good decisions because they know it is the personally and socially responsible thing to do, not because someone is watching over them.

# Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility

- Hellison developed TPSR “hoping to make his students ‘better people’ who could withstand some of the social inequities in their world” (Metzler, 2011, p. 393).
  - **Respect** the rights and feelings of others
  - Participate and put forth **effort**
  - Be **self directed**
  - Be sensitive and responsive to the wellbeing of others (**Caring**)
  - **Transfer** what they learn about being responsible outside the gym



# Components of a TPSR Lesson

- **Relational Time** - Informal student-teacher interactions at the start of the lesson
- **Awareness Talk** - Teacher covers plan for the day, invites input from students, and discusses the responsibility focus
- **Lesson Focus** - the majority of the lesson; involves physical activities that are integrated with the responsibility focus
- **Group Meeting** - Students share opinions about the lesson, make suggestions, and comment on group performance
- **Reflection Time** - Students are asked to reflect on their own attitudes and behaviors during the lesson

# Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility

## Face Behavioral Issues with Student Empowerment

- Self-Reflection
- Developing a list of “if’s” and “then’s”
  - “If” a child throws a ball at someone else, “then” the child will be asked to sit out and think about what they did, then come back in when they feel they are able to be safe.
- Progressions for sit-outs
- Make a plan and revise when needed
- Conflict Resolution: Sport Court, self-officiating, talking bench
- Provide choice: teacher/self directed, five clean days

# Skill Themes Approach

- Promotes competence in a variety of locomotor, non-locomotor, and manipulative skills
- Skill themes are modified using movement concepts
- Lays the foundation by building skills and movement concepts in elementary school
- Application of skills in a variety of contexts

# Preservice Teacher Training

- Preservice teachers work in the program for an entire year
  - Learn content on campus and then apply it in the afterschool program
- Group 1 (3:00-4:00 PM):
  - 3<sup>RD</sup>/4<sup>TH</sup>/5<sup>TH</sup> graders
  - 3 groups of 15, partner teaching
- Group 2 (4:00-5:00 PM):
  - 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> grade
  - 3 groups of 10, partner teaching
- Teach lessons focused on the Skill Themes Approach and TPSR
- Supervision and feedback provided each session

# Family and Community Engagement

- A strengths-based conceptual framework that is well aligned and consistent with TPSR the program philosophy
- Coordinated by two school social work interns placed at the school for 32 hours per week
- Once trained, parents implement programmatic solutions to school, home and community needs.
- Student referrals from after-school program staff to school social workers have priority over other school referrals.

# Collective Parent Engagement

- Engage hard to reach parents by strengthening capacities to address barriers to children's learning through the creation of parent-led programs
- Increase parents' self-esteem and confidence to the point where they feel comfortable meeting in a group
  - Door-to-door outreach to school families
  - Individual work with family members to identify strengths
  - Link families to human and social services agencies

# Collective Parent Engagement

- Create cohorts of school parents that work together, cohesively and with a common goal
  - Identify barriers to learning and family/community well-being
  - Facilitate parent meetings to discuss potential solutions
- Train engaged parents in outreach, recruitment, and engagement techniques to begin the transfer of skills from social workers to parents
  - Six 40-hour Outreach Training courses to groups of 10 parents
  - Recruit service providers to give presentations to parents

# Collective Parent Engagement

- Create a school environment where students feel safe, parents feel welcome, and teachers feel supported
  - Encourage teachers to refer challenging students to the school social workers
  - Provide timely feedback to teachers once contact with the family has been made and a treatment plan has been developed
  - Provide training to teachers on the effects of toxic stress and traumatic childhood experiences
  - Discuss potential impacts child stress has on the classroom and teachers themselves (secondary traumatic stress)



# Successes: Relationships and Responsibility

- Building trust and relationships with youth through open dialogue, compassion, and care
- Establishing a common language focused around the TPSR responsibility goals
- Developing and reinforcing program norms and expectations for personal and social responsibility
- Spending more time in activity and less on in management

# Struggles: Negotiating Relationships

- Challenges navigating incongruences between program and school goals for student behavior
- School and community partner personnel have become intrusive and directly contradict program structures
- Covert subversion of school and community partner norms
- Ability to transfer lessons learned through the program is limited by contradictory program-school missions
- Reinforcement of gender roles and learned helplessness

# Lessons Learned: Investment and Dedication

- Afterschool programming is emotionally and physically exhausting work that takes time and dedication
- Success is not linear, so progress may not always be overtly obvious, but you can see the difference over time
- The interests of partners may not always converge; sometimes you have to negotiate and pick your battles
- Despite the challenges, working with the youth and receiving their validation make it all worthwhile!

# Learning to See the Forest through the Trees

- School, community partner, and program have similar goals related to developing responsibility, but different means
- Recognize that these youth live in multiple worlds that do not always align (e.g., meaning of respect)
- Developing greater congruence among these systems will make lessons learned in one setting transferrable to others
- Development of *cultural congruence* in youth to adapt to differing systems through resilience and grit

# Ongoing Research with Preservice Teachers

- Understand participation in the program as a socializing experience during teacher education
- Data collection strategies
  - Interviews with preservice teachers
  - Participatory observations during program and class meetings
  - Preservice teacher survey (value orientations inventory, social justice beliefs scale, public affairs scale)
  - Autobiographic essays
  - Critical incidents and reflective essays

# Preliminary Research Findings

- **Initial Resistance** - The responsibility focus challenged preservice teachers' preconceived understandings of physical education.
- **Embracing Model Focus**- Over time they embraced the model and valued the affective domain focus.
- **Cognitive Growth** - Shifted from blaming the students to understanding how appropriate management and instruction can prevent disturbances while learning effective pedagogies.
- **Navigating Incongruence** - The incompatibility of TPSR with teacher-centered pedagogies embraced by school personnel

# Questions for Discussion

- How can you connect with and involve parents without threatening the school structures?
- How can you effectively navigate incongruences between school and program missions?
- How can you balance TPSR program goals with the need to maintain order in the gymnasium?
- What are the implications of involving preservice physical education teachers in afterschool time field experiences?

**Thank You!**  
**Questions or Comment?**

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