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Making an Impact: The Process of Planning and Organizing an After-School Program in a Small Community

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Abstract

To be their best, people need relationships. Social support systems are at the base of what makes a successful individual. Whether that be through sports teams, clubs, or any other facet, social support is the driving force for a healthy lifestyle. After-school programs offer students another opportunity to receive mentorship and build relationships that can impact the trajectory of their lives. This paper highlights Impact 180 – an after-school program located in Orange City, Iowa. The involved researchers used and discussed different community organizing methods and techniques to advocate for and raise funds for the durability, sustainability, and flourishing of an after-school program that reaches and impacts students who most need it.

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Literature Review

After-school programs are not uncommon throughout the United States. However, how many of them are targeted toward minorities? How many look to include diversity, equity, and inclusion? What about in a county in Iowa where nearly 31,000 of roughly 36,000 residents are white? According to USA Facts, the Latino population in Sioux County, Iowa is the fastest growing population, from 3,306 in 2010 to 4,184 in 2021. As related to age, kids aged 5-19 grew from 8,033 in 2010 to 8,834 in 2021. This leads to the question: how is the Orange City community meeting the demands of these growing areas of both school-aged kids and the Latino population?

After-school programs provide a safe space for students where they can be in an environment with positive role models and where they can engage in structured social interactions. In fact, according to a meta-analysis by David J. Shernoff (2016), access to quality after-school programs have a significant direct correlation with academic success. Shernoff wrote in his report *Engagement in After-School Programs as a Predictor of Social Competence and Academic Performance* (2016), "Results suggest that the quality of experiences in after-school programs may be a more important factor than quantity of experiences (i.e., dosage) in predicting positive academic outcomes." Far too often the systems in place are failing. The children in this community deserve a program that has a foundation of quality. Barton J. Hirsch et al in their article *More Than Attendance: The Importance of After-School Program Quality* (2010) wrote,

> "Part of the impetus behind the development of after-school programs has been the mediocrity of many of our schools. In scaling up after-school programming, and in many instances striving toward universal access by all students, we should take great care not to build another mediocre system"

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This is important to note because while building an after-school program, the program quality must have the highest priority.

Not only do quality after-school programs predict academic success, but they are also an indicator of delinquent behavior. In a randomized experiment completed in Baltimore, Maryland in 2009 entitled *An experimental evaluation of after school program participation on problem behavior outcomes: Does pre-existing risk moderate the effects of program participation,* results showed that there was a direct correlation between behavior and attendance of the after-school program. Kids who regularly attended the program showed lesser delinquent behavior while the kids who did not attend the program as often showed higher signs of delinquent behavior (Cross, 2009). Overall, the quality of the program and the participation of children – which directly correlates to student success – go hand-in-hand. As community organizers, our goal should be to develop a *quality* program that prioritizes the growing need for diversity, equity, and inclusion so that today's young students become tomorrow's next great thinkers and community organizers.

Description and analysis of the designated community

The community in which we will organize is located in Sioux County, a rural Midwest county with a population of 35,893 (United States Census Bureau). The county's land area is 767.91 square miles, and the population per square mile is about 46.7 people. The mean travel time to work is 13.4 minutes.

The population targeted in this organizing effort is local middle and high school students, typically adolescents ages 11-19. Most of the target population attend school in the MOC-Floyd Valley Community School District. This school district contains 1 preschool, 2 elementary schools, 1 middle school, and 1 high school. 1,529 students attend

one of the schools. Minority enrollment in the school district is about 20%, and around

16.5% of students are economically disadvantaged (U.S. News).

Demographic Data

According to Census Reporter, the area covered by the MOC-Floyd Valley School

District has a total population of 11,112. The median age of this district is 35.5. Around

22% of the population is under the age of 18. The district is 51% female, 49% male, 92%

White, 5% Hispanic or Latino, 1% Black or African American, 1% Asian, and 2% that

identify as two or more races. The median household income is $72,346, which is about

the same as the median household income of Sioux County ($73,260), and around 20%

higher than the median household income of Iowa ($61,836). 64% of the population is

married, and 36% is currently single. 96.8% of the area's residents have a high school

education, and 30% have a bachelor's degree or higher. 3.3% of the population were not

born in the United States. Of this 3.3%, 59% were born in Latin America, 15% in Asia,

11% in Europe, 9% in North America, and 6% in Africa.

Characteristics and Common Issues

Erikson's research informs on several key developmental tasks that take place during

adolescence, with one of these main tasks being identity formation. During this stage,

adolescents begin to question their identification with the values of their parents and begin the

search for their own values and commitments (Becht et al, 2017). Before making strong

commitments regarding who they want to be, adolescents often explore alternative options.

This period of identity formation is a crucial part of development. While the majority of

adolescents are able to successfully resolve this "crisis", those who do not may experience

what Erikson refers to as *severe identity confusion*. According to Erikson, someone

experiencing severe identity confusion encounters increased isolation and difficulty feeling a sense of accomplishment (Ja & Jose, 2017).

This population faces numerous barriers and common issues, including loneliness and mental health struggles. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of technology and social media, these issues have become increasingly prevalent. Research done during the COVID-19 pandemic shows that periods of social isolation are associated with loneliness in children and young people. Furthermore, this study also found that feelings of loneliness are associated with mental health struggles such as depression and anxiety. (Hards, et al 2021). The first nationally representative study of high school students done by the CDC during the COVID-19 pandemic states that 37% of high school students reported poor mental health during the pandemic, and 44% reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless. Additionally, 55% reported experiencing emotional abuse by a parent or other adult in their home, 11% reported physical abuse, and 29% reported that a parent or other adult in their home was facing unemployment. (CDC).

Data also indicates that many adolescents have experienced trauma and loss over the past several years. The Annie E. Casey Foundation asserts that as of July 2022, more than 1 million people in the United States had died from COVID-19, and more than 200,000 children and teenagers have lost a parent or primary caregiver. (AECF).

Further research has pointed to an association between social media and loneliness and anxiety. Social media has shown to lead to increased levels of anxiety and depression, with increased levels of social discomfort and loneliness as the mediator (Anxiety in Adolescence, 2021). Similarly, research conducted in Turkey found that binge watching television can lead to increased conduct problems, emotional issues, cognitive issues, and inattention (Özkent, 2022).

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A key factor affecting the development and functioning of adolescents is social connectedness. In recent years, more research has been conducted on loneliness and its impact on the lives and health of people of all ages. Loneliness has been associated with increasingly negative mental health symptoms, especially for young people. A rapid systematic review showed that loneliness is associated with more severe mental health symptoms for adolescents with underlying mental health struggles. The majority of young people have experienced increased levels of loneliness in the past few years, which has been largely attributed to the pandemic (Hards et al., 2022). Because of the pandemic and lockdowns, adolescents have spent more time at home, on the computer, and isolated from their peers. Feelings of loneliness can have a significant negative impact on pre-existing mental health conditions, and it is necessary to promote interventions aimed at improving and increasing social support for the growing number of children and adolescents experiencing both loneliness and pre-existing mental health struggles.

Due to the prevalence of loneliness and mental health struggles among the younger generation, it is necessary to implement effective interventions to provide adequate resources and opportunities for social connectedness. After-school programs provide students with opportunities to form relationships with mentors and role models and make positive connections with peers.

Risk Factors

One significant risk factor for this population is susceptibility to participating in risky behaviors. Although some risk-taking behaviors could be considered within the realm of normal adolescent growth, others can have severe consequences that outweigh potential positive outcomes. According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information [NCBI]

(2019), One of these serious risky behaviors is alcohol abuse, which is associated with numerous adverse health outcomes such as substance use disorders, academic and social problems, sexual assault, arrest, and death. Another common risky behavior for adolescents is tobacco use, most commonly in the form of electronic vapor products. A third major risky behavior commonly engaged in by adolescents is unprotected sexual activity, which is associated with higher rates of STIs and unintended pregnancy (NCBI, 2019).

Additionally, youth typically experience a variety of self-esteem-related issues during adolescent years as another potential factor in the lives of adolescent students (Iwahori et al., 2022). The amount of social support individuals receive from role models such as parents, teachers, or other trusted adults is shown to boost their overall self-esteem levels (Iwahori et al., 2022). Students without a strong social support system tend to possess lower self-esteem levels, which could lead to involvement in risky and delinquent behaviors (Hurd et al., 2009).

One major concern for this population at hand is a lack of positive role models. Without adults or even peers who provide safe, positive relationships, these adolescents lack guidance from others in a world that provides significant challenges. Adolescents who lack positive role models are more likely to participate in at-risk behaviors, including substance abuse, compared to adolescents who identified positive people they could look up to (Hurd et al., 2009).

In Sioux County and the Orange City area specifically, it is important to acknowledge concern about the lack of role models that physically *look* like many students that are in need of a quality after-school program. The vast need for programs that promote the diversity, equity, and inclusion of *all* people should be of utmost importance. By pouring into today's youth, it can be ensured that in the future, minority students can look across their community and see people that look like them in leadership roles in the community.

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Engagement

Research has shown that engagement is a crucial part of development for young people. Research done on after-school programs has shown that attendance is not enough, but engagement actually predicts positive outcomes from these programs. Many of these programs and many studies done on these programs tend to focus solely on the attendance, but research shows that it needs to go beyond this and focus on the type of engagement as well. According to a study done in 2010 "Engagement is not only a component of program participation but also an important feature to be considered as an assessment," (Hirsch, 2010). The point here is that programs need to be assessing the engagement they have in programs, so that they can determine how successful the program is rather than just focusing on the number of students in attendance. Further research found that although after-school program attendance was related to social outcomes this relationship was mediated by engagement. Increased attendance was a predictor of more engagement and in turn participants had more social competence. Positive outcomes were also found with an increase in engagement when attendance was not increased, including increases in academic performance in both math and reading (Hirsch, 2010).

Further research on engagement, done in 2020 found several positive outcomes from adult engagement with adolescents. When adults engage with young people from the beginning of a decision making process until the end it has been shown to improve self-esteem, hope and belonging, in the young people. Not only are these interactions good for young people but it also allows adults to better understand the strengths, desires and needs of young people. Not only does engagement of adults with young people help them directly but it also helps them indirectly by allowing adults to better understand them, and research even shows that it helps

improve policy in the areas where this engagement is taking place because decision makers are more informed of the youth in their communities (Poirier, et al 2020). This data goes to show that adult engagement with youth is beneficial in a multitude of ways and it is important that programs focus on creating authentic engagement and not only attendance.

Terminology & Current Events

Several variables and terminology in relation to working with at-risk youth have been identified. One variable, social-emotional competence, aims to reduce risk in the lives of youth. Social-emotional competence is vital for the flourishing of youth susceptible to at-risk behaviors. (Domitrovich et at., 2017). Social-emotional learning programs are used to develop skills and techniques for fostering healthy relationships, managing emotions, and applying interpersonal knowledge. Many adolescents who are considered to be "at-risk" do not necessarily have a safe environment to go home to, and may be more likely to participate in unhealthy behaviors such as drug or alcohol abuse.

Adolescents all around the country are affected by a number of factors increasing susceptibility to risky behaviors. Because of this, after-school programs are being implemented and expanded to support thousands of at-risk adolescents. Examples of these programs can be found in Knoxville, Tennessee, where more intentional after-school programs that cater to students' specific needs are being implemented. (Ogbe, 2022). After-school programs allow for growth outside of the classroom as students foster relationships with positive adult influences in their neighborhoods and communities.

In July 2022, President Biden announced that schools would receive more funding to support after-school programs that support students' academic and emotional needs. This initiative

encourages school districts to become more involved in the lives of students outside of the classroom. ("Department of Education").

Frameworks

When working with adolescents, all actions should be informed by systems theory and the students' social environment. The behavior of individuals and groups cannot be understood without examining their context. Marian University explains, "By considering the various relationships and communities that a person has (e.g., school, family, church, etc.), social workers gain an understanding of how the person and his or her environments affect each other through their interactions." (Marian University, 2018). An individual's environment can have both positive and negative effects on them. If a student is surrounded by positive role models and peers who are making healthy and beneficial choices, the student may find it easier to make those same decisions. However, if a student is constantly in the presence of individuals making poor decisions, they may find themselves falling into an unhealthy, or even dangerous, lifestyle. It is also critical to consider how a student's home environment may impact their daily behaviors and decisions.

An individual's social environment will inevitably influence their behavior and decisions. Previous studies have shown that role models have an important role in the lives of adolescents. Strasser-Burke & Symonds (2020) asserted that "accessible role models" - individuals who influence adolescents through regular, direct interaction - have an impact on their ability to overcome challenging situations and be successful. Additionally, adolescents with accessible role models in their lives reported higher levels of self-esteem. According to empirical evidence, role models have a significant impact on students that are socially disadvantaged. These socially disadvantaged students, as well as students experiencing

constant familial instability, may have a more difficult time overcoming adversity. By intervening early and ensuring that these students have stable role models and safe adults to turn to, their chances of achieving success and better outcomes may be positively impacted.

According to Bowers, Rosch, & Collier (2016), strong relational ties to positive role models allows for adolescents to improve leadership skills in environments that are empowering and uplifting. They state, "positional role models inspired youth to actively pursue opportunities that enhanced their leadership growth." (Bowers, Rosch, & Collier, 2016). Environments such as after-school programs and mentorship opportunities that foster creativity and allow adolescents to build on their natural strengths could empower students that may not be able to develop these abilities otherwise. By growing in leadership skills and forming strong connections with mentors and peers, potential leaders in the next generation can be empowered to achieve their own goals, solve problems, and better the lives of those they interact with.

High-quality after-school programs can also lead to higher levels of social and emotional learning (SEL). SEL can lead to significantly improved social and emotional competencies. These competencies include prosocial behavior, a higher sense of self-worth, and improved concentration (youth.gov, n.d.). Through SEL, adolescents learn to apply knowledge and skills they acquire to develop healthy identities, regulate their emotions, and successfully achieve goals.

Methods

The *development* of Impact 180 was conducted by a planning council, in which members of the community created a board of directors to oversee the implementation of the after-school program. The *sustainability* of the program was sought through neighborhood organizing. For

this project and methods section, the main focus was on neighborhood organizing.

Many residents of Orange City find meaning in community involvement, and take pride in their ability to collaborate to help their neighbors. People want to feel as if they have a voice and can make a tangible impact on the community's quality of life. A major way that people have fulfilled this desire is through involvement with congregations and respective churches. Researchers sought to reach out to local churches by conducting face-to-face meetings and ask for support of the after-school program.

As community organizers, the researchers acknowledged the importance of building relationships with prospective donors. These relationships create a sense of purpose and camaraderie for community organizing. A 2011 study by Brian D. Christens and Paul W. Speer entitled reports,

> "Findings from this study provide the first empirical support for the premise that these meetings designed to build interpersonal relationships are significant predictors of future attendance at group meetings…Face-to-face meetings in relational organizing models are thus reinforced as tools for maintaining and deepening participation among members…"

By building positive relationships with members of the community, those involved develop a deeper sense of purpose. Genuine relationships with community residents can increase empathy towards the cause and understanding of why the program is necessary.

A critical need and challenge for many students involved in Impact 180 is the need for positive role models. Some students attending the after-school program have participated in disruptive behaviors at school, or have not attended school regularly. Existing literature has suggested that the presence of one or more positive role models in a student's life significantly decreases the likelihood of these disruptive behaviors. An intervention goal for Impact 180 was

to connect students with mentors and role models that consistently encourage students to make positive decisions.

Immediately after becoming involved, researchers met with community leaders to gain insight into the needs and dynamics of the program and to develop a method of engagement. According to Kilmer & McLeigh (2019), a comprehensive approach to problem-solving and social change efforts is necessary. Engaging leaders in organizing efforts allows the outcome of social change efforts to be amplified. Together, community organizers and community leaders sought to use creative problem-solving to engage marginalized groups and address the community's most prevalent issues.

After meeting with community leaders to discuss an effective course of action, researchers decided to focus on organizing the day-to-day details of organizing the after-school program first. Most of these tasks involved finding volunteers to provide food and engage with students on the Tuesdays and Fridays when the program was held. After managing these pressing concerns, researchers met with local church leaders to increase awareness of Impact 180 and raise funds for the 501(c)(3) paperwork needed for the program to gain nonprofit status. In these meetings, researchers presented what Impact 180 is, how it operates, why the program is necessary, and how donated funds would be allocated for the program. Additionally, researchers and church leaders discussed numerous ways church members could become involved with the program and provide support in various ways.

Most of the information used to plan the method of engagement was received from a board of individuals already involved in the founding and advancement of Impact 180. Throughout the process, changes were made based on data collected each week by a member of the board.

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Existing literature suggests that non-profit organizations require a pool of funding for general operating, as well as reserve funds to augment an annual budget. In order to obtain these funds, it is beneficial for organizations such as Impact 180 to have consistent, regular donors. It is estimated that "between 20 and 30 percent of first-time donors make a second gift, and about 65 to 75 percent of regular donors continue to give" (Klein, 2016, p. 55). Organizing efforts must aim to expand the number of donors and involve many individuals and groups throughout the community in fundraising efforts.

The immediate need for volunteers was met by students attending Northwestern College, a local Christian liberal arts institution. Volunteers were primarily recruited from the college's education and social work departments. Later on, volunteer recruitment expanded to the departments of youth ministry and criminal justice. Students in these particular programs were specifically recruited because of their future vocational roles serving children, youth, and at-risk populations. Additionally, students in these departments are required to fulfill volunteer hours for their majors. All volunteers engaging with students, including college student volunteers, were required to pass a background check. After background checks were completed, student volunteers were given access to an organizing spreadsheet to sign up for specific program dates.

As college students began to fulfill their volunteer hours and class loads increased towards the end of the semester the number of volunteers began to decrease. Our team then extended volunteer recruitment to local churches. Researchers hoped that this action would lead to gaining consistent volunteers of a variety of ages.

Volunteers at weekly programs engaged with middle and high school students in various activities, including video games, board games, volleyball and more. This informal engagement of youth aligned with recent literature, which found that non-parental adults engaging with youth

can expand educational accomplishment, improve self-esteem, increase amounts of physical

activity, and raise the likelihood of completing high school and attending college, and decrease

undesirable outcomes such as gang involvement and risk taking-behavior (Bowers, et al.).

The day-to-day organizing of Impact 180 included organization of volunteers to provide

food and engage with students. As stated previously, the research team contacted local

community leaders to identify individuals, organizations, and businesses that could help meet

these needs. The second category of organization was focused on long-term goals such as

fundraising and beginning the process of gaining non-profit status. Impact 180 was held in the

basement of the city hall, and although this is an effective temporary space, it does not allow

much space for growth and restricts options for activities. A main goal set by the board of Impact

180 was to obtain a permanent location for the program to take place. Applying for 501(c)(3)

status would allow Impact 180 to obtain insurance, which would be necessary if the program

desires to function at a local church or obtain an independent location. Applying for 501(c)(3)

status comes with additional advantages, such as exemptions from federal income tax and the

ability to receive tax-deductible charitable contributions (Internal Revenue Service).

To begin the process of obtaining 501(c)(3) status, the Impact 180 board contacted a local

attorney who informed them that the cost to complete the paperwork would be between $1000

and $1500. The research team engaged with local church leaders, and explained the vision of

Impact 180 in order to raise these funds.

Understanding the dynamics and backgrounds of the populations involved is a crucial

part of engaging with community constituencies. When informing churches, businesses, and

community members of the purpose and goals of Impact 180, seeking insight into the

atmosphere of the larger community and existing beliefs of community members was helpful.

With these underlying beliefs and attitudes in mind, researchers and volunteers can raise awareness and fundraise in a more effective manner.

Researchers found that when engaging with students, volunteers needed to be aware of the possibility of trauma. Bulanda & Johnson (2015) explain how adolescents experience "socially toxic" environments, where they may be exposed to trauma. The authors explain, "Youth who have been exposed to such events and environments are at risk for developing trauma related symptoms and feelings of vulnerability and disempowerment. These events can often impact youths' identity of self and optimal development and impedes their sense of agency" (Wilson & So-Kum Tang, 2007). (Bulanda & Johnson, 2015). Knowledge of the possibility of trauma will allow volunteers to engage with students in an effective and appropriate manner. Additionally, being informed on these matters allow for those involved to educate others in the importance of appropriate intervention.

The effectiveness of engagement was assessed throughout the course of several months. Student attendance and volunteer consistency were assessed, as well as the community's awareness of the existence and purpose of the program. Changes were made to the approach and method of engagement as needed.

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Results

Quantitative Results

Student Engagement Volunteers:

The number of volunteers that engaged with students on the days Impact 180 was held varied greatly. Most volunteers were college students, and their own complicated schedules significantly affected their ability to volunteer consistently.

Date	Number of Volunteers
September 20	11
September 23	1
September 27	9
September 30	2

- Average: 5.75 volunteers

Date	Number of Volunteers
October 4	7
October 7	2
October 11	3
October 14	1
October 18	2
October 21	4
October 25	7

- Average: 3.71 volunteers

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Date	Number of Volunteers
November 1	4
November 8	4
November 11	3
November 29	6

- Average: 4.25 volunteers

Student Attendance September 20 - October 14

Student attendance was very low at the beginning of the semester, due to a lack of communication about the program's start date and location. As communication improved, attendance began to pick up. Student attendees were mostly male, with female student attendance slowly increasing as the semester progressed.

Date	Male Attendance	Female Attendance	Total Attendance
September 20	4	0	4
September 23	4	1	5
September 27	11	1	12
September 30	10	0	10
October 4	12	1	13
October 7	13	3	16
October 11	14	0	14
October 14	18	4	22

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Additional Data

In addition to volunteers engaging with students, a total of 9 individuals/organizations provided food and drinks for students at the program. Two local churches donated money to the program, with one giving $600 and the second giving $800. Researchers attended one board meeting on Wednesday, October 26.

Qualitative Results

Qualitatively, the researchers found that the results were as expected. The main driving force behind Impact 180 is the response and support of the people who are the boots on the ground and then the response and support of the Orange City community. The researchers were overwhelmed with the positive support that they received from local churches and organizations that poured their time and resources into hearing what Impact 180 was about and how they could help move the program forward. In addition, Impact 180's volunteer board of directors were a stronghold support and continued to provide guidance and resources towards the program's success.

Finally, researchers found that student attendance increased as the semester went on. The first week, there were only a handful of students who participated. However, as the word spread, the number of students who attended the program grew at a steady rate. One negative finding, however, was that as the middle school students increased, the amount of high school students decreased. This is hypothesized by the researchers to be because the vast difference in the stages of life between middle and high school students discouraged older students from attending. This has provided further reasoning that as Impact 180 grows, separating middle and high school students would likely cause an increase in attendance.

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Integrated Knowledge

The results make sense in light of human behavior and the social environment and person-in-environment frameworks. According to Hayes, Chapple, & Ramirez (2014), after-school programs often face obstacles such as low attendance and poor retention rates. Several environmental factors affect these barriers, and programs lack the ability to become sustainable and truly effective when leadership is not organized and diverse.

Researchers found that Impact 180 would benefit by having a diverse leadership team with a variety of skills. The literature states, "A multidisciplinary team that is inclusive and consists of program and evaluation specialists, administration, external evaluators, organizational leadership, and frontline staff helps to assure that program monitoring along with lessons learned are taken into account with reference to overall program goals and objectives." (Hayes et. al, 2014). Having individuals with varied perspectives and skills ensures that all aspects of the program receive attention, and solutions for possible future problems can be thought of in advance. A coordinated and organized approach to planning and executing program objectives allows for efficient actions and problem-solving to take place.

Additionally, communication is a key factor in the success of after-school programming, especially considering the environment function in each day. Students often have competing interests in the hours after school is dismissed. Even if a student is not involved in extracurricular activities at their school, they may not ask about the program if it is not advertised or they are not personally asked to attend. If the time and location of the program is not communicated effectively, turnout will be negatively affected. Previous research asserts, "A well-structured communication system, in place across teams, was imperative in order to be ready for unexpected problems." (Hayes et. al, 2014). Due to the countless factors and activities that

consume students' free time, thorough communication is crucial. The researchers' experience

reflected this conclusion, as turnout increased greatly when students were made aware of where

the program was and when it began.

Methods of Evaluation

The researchers had three primary goals when working with Impact 180. After evaluating

the results, the researchers found that there were varying levels of success in each of the primary

goals. The goals included:

1) *Raise funds for the sustainability of the program, as well as begin to fundraise for the*

process of becoming a 501(c)(3)

The researchers worked toward this goal by utilizing local resources and networking.

This goal was met by varying donations towards Impact 180, highlighted by an $800 donation

from First Reformed Church located in Orange City, Iowa.

2) *Create a pool of volunteers to be involved within the program, including Northwestern*

college students as well as people within the community

To work towards this goal, the researchers created a Google spreadsheet and shared the

document with Northwestern college students to sign up to volunteer with the program. (e.g. see

Picture A). This has created a network of students that can volunteer at any time. The researchers

have also asked local churches to spread the word to their congregation about the opportunity to

volunteer as little or much as they feel called to.

Picture A

3) Create a pool of volunteers to bring and/or donate food for the program

To meet this goal, researchers created a document to organize the list of volunteers that either donated money to Impact 180 to buy food or for those who donated pizza, snack bags, and other goods towards the program. (e.g. see Picture B). The researchers compiled the list through word of mouth – asking people to donate, as well as through local churches.

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Picture B

The strategies and tactics employed for fundraising were extremely effective in both

raising money for the program as well as raising awareness of Impact 180's mission. It was

discovered that several churches were willing to donate money when the researchers visited in

person and explained what Impact 180 is and specifically for what the money would be used.

Also proving to be effective was the researchers' use of educating community members and

churches on the importance of an after-school program for local at-risk youth.

To raise funds, the researchers asked local churches to donate money to support Impact

180. This strategy proved to be very effective. After explaining the mission and purpose of the

Impact 180 program, several churches were generous and willing to donate money to support

Impact's overall functioning as well as money to file paperwork for nonprofit status. In terms of

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locating volunteers for the program and volunteers to provide food, the researchers found that numerous community members were eager to participate. College volunteers signed themselves up via a shared spreadsheet. Once a significant pool of college volunteers was assembled, things ran smoothly. The researchers located several adults in the community willing to provide pizza or snacks for the participants. In general, community members were eager to support this program.

In terms of the actual program, the researchers found that communication with students was lacking in the beginning. The first meeting of Impact 180 for the school year did not have as large of a turnout as hoped or expected. This was due to the fact that communication with the students about Impact's start date was not clear. Once students were informed that the program had begun, student participation increased significantly.

Measures of Success

Three main goals were established by the researchers, before research began, including: (1) Raise a pool of funds to establish and sustain the program; (2) Establishing a set of students and community members who are willing and able to volunteer for bi-weekly Impact 180 events; (3) Find willing volunteers to donate food for bi-weekly Impact 180 events. These goals were established after several meetings and extensive conversation between the researchers and two highly involved board members. In these meetings the researchers were able to gain an understanding of Impact 180's vision, as well as the obstacles that needed to be overcome to obtain that vision. After doing this the researchers were able to establish these three goals, and use them to guide involvement with Impact 180, and to measure success after research was complete.

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Community Organizing Takeaways

According to Brueggemann (2014), the social cultural premise model understands that society is a conscious, planned construct in which people can intentionally give meaning to structures and laws. Within this model, social workers strive to change the premises on which "decisions are made, employing the means of social activism and mass social movements" (Brueggemann, 2014, p. 97). The researchers applied this model with the goal of educating community members of the impact that Impact 180 has on local youth, with a desire that the community would become sensitized to this issue. There is also a desire to shift people's thinking and address any misconceptions about this specific population.

One problem-solving approach that may be useful is the interactivist approach. This approach is not meant to resolve or solve problems, but rather to dissolve problems through changing the culture or system in which the issue lies. Interactivists look ahead to the future to see what is possible and to shape the internal culture of their community (Brueggemann, 2014). This approach would be beneficial for the researchers to use as Impact 180 seeks to restructure community systems and foster holistic relationships.

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Future Community Impact Plan

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Community Action Intervention Plan

In the short-term future, several things will be needed to maintain the program. Although enough money was raised to pay an attorney to complete the 501(c)(3) paperwork, additional fundraising must be done to attain enough money to afford insurance.

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The organizers were generally able to recruit enough student engagement volunteers to help each week. However, the number of volunteers was rather inconsistent. At times, there were not enough volunteers to adequately supervise the number of students in attendance. If this continues to happen, it could become a safety hazard and liability issue. In the near future, it will be necessary to recruit volunteers that can engage with students consistently, and have the time and ability to make Impact 180 a part of their regular schedule.

In addition to this, the recruitment of future volunteers should be aimed toward individuals of various ages, not just college students. Adult volunteers from the local community have valuable knowledge, experience, and resources to contribute to the program, and may have available time to commit to the program. Some students may find it easier to connect with an older adult volunteer, and having a range of ages on the volunteer team would benefit the program.

Moving forward, Impact 180 is in need of a volunteer to take on organizational responsibilities. It would be helpful if this individual attended the program on the Tuesdays and Fridays it is held. This way, they can have accurate insight into the program's atmosphere and effectively address its day-to-day needs.

Intervention strategies

In order for Impact 180 to continue functioning effectively, individuals in the community are encouraged to become actively involved in the operations of this program and continuing to spread information about Impact 180. Outside of volunteering during the bi-weekly program, community members can otherwise get involved through donating snack bags, purchasing pizza,

or even through donating money that may be used to sustain the program or to pay for future

insurance costs.

Now that our researchers are no longer able to volunteer for Impact 180, one of the next

steps is finding a volunteer or group of volunteers to take over in the organization of Impact 180.

This position would include finding volunteers both to be at Impact 180 events and volunteers to

donate food for events. This position would also entail looking to the future of Impact 180 and

organizing meetings and raising funds for Impact 180 to grow into the organization it is

becoming.

Next steps for finding a more diverse group of volunteers would include reaching out to

churches and local organizations. This work has already been started by the team of researchers

but thus far there have been no volunteers outside of college students. By getting the word out to

different congregations and putting up advertisements in various places the volunteer pool could

expand greatly. Getting more volunteers could also happen through the video that the researchers

made. If this video was shared around the community it could gain a lot of awareness for the

organization and allow for a more diverse group of volunteers as well. In expanding this group of

volunteers, it is important that the new organizer or group of organizers gets background checks

with each new volunteer. This next step could create a new environment in Impact 180, that

allows more kids to be seen, heard and valued.

The most important thing moving forward is for the board to be attentive to the needs of

Impact 180 and the kids that are participating in it. Although the needs listed above are the needs

currently seen moving forward this will continue to change. It is important that the new

organizers and the members of the board stay adaptable as Impact 180 grows and changes.

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