

10-1-2002

Kid's Klub--A New Approach to School-Age Child Care

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Recommended Citation

Novak, M., & Klemme, M. (2002). Kid's Klub--A New Approach to School-Age Child Care. *The Journal of Extension*, 40(5), Article 19. <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/joe/vol40/iss5/19>

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October 2002 // Volume 40 // Number 5 // Ideas at Work // 5IAW5



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Kid's Klub--A New Approach to School-Age Child Care

Abstract

The Kid's Klub is a new approach to curriculum for school-age child care in summer that focuses on building developmental assets. This project integrates 4-H adult and youth leaders, Master Gardeners, and UW-Extension Staff in presenting projects each week during the summer to first-through fourth-grade children. Public Adventures, a 4-H community service curriculum, was conducted. Fact sheets on building assets were written for parents. All parents reported that their children continued developing empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. Nearly three-fourths of the parents reported that their children gained in the following three areas: community values youth, youth as resources, and creative activities.

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Introduction

Today more than 28 million school age children have parents who work outside the home. Up to 15 million children return to an empty home after school (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2000). In response to this concern, after-school and summer programs are being offered more than ever before.

The University of Wisconsin-Extension has been responsive to the need for school-age care by contributing toward assessments, consultation, training, and materials (Riley, 1994). 4-H clubs and activities are conducted after school in an effort to address societal changes.

Situation

Kewaunee County is a rural county of approximately 20,000 people. Summer child care for older children was identified as a high priority in the "Child Care Needs of Kewaunee County Families" survey (Novak, 2000). In addition, the Kewaunee County Families FIRST Steering Committee chose asset building as a preventive approach to strengthening families in September 1998. Families FIRST is an organization of agency and community people who conducted a study of the needs of families in Kewaunee County.

Child-care providers wanted to offer a wide array of enriching activities for children, but keeping programs affordable for parents can be challenging. This prompted two Extension agents and a child-care provider to develop the Kid's Klub. The two previously mentioned needs assessments served as a foundation for planning.

Kid's Klub

What makes the Kid's Klub unique is that it focuses on building developmental assets in children. Developmental assets are building blocks that assist young people to grow up healthy, caring and responsible (Scales & Leffert, 1999).

The eight developmental assets selected for this project were:

- Cultural Competence,
- Interpersonal Competence,
- Planning and Decision-making,
- Creative Activities,
- Service to Others,
- Youth as Resources,
- Community Values Youth, and
- Positive Family Communication.

Three key individuals contributed to the collaborative effort, a UW-Extension Family Living Educator, a UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Agent, and the Holy Rosary Child Care Director. Participants were 25 first- through fourth-grade children.

The following strategies were used to promote the selected developmental assets.

1. 4-H adult and youth leaders, Master Gardeners, and UW-Extension staff presented projects each week during the summer.
2. 4-H Youth Development Agent conducted a modified version of *Public Adventures* (Bass, 1999), a 4-H community service curriculum.
3. Family Living Educator wrote the *Kid's Klub Connection* fact sheets for parents that focused on asset building and teachable moments.

Implementation - Inputs & Outputs

Planning was a cornerstone to the success of the Kid's Klub. The director of the child-care center conducted the promotion of the Kid's Klub through school newsletters and newspapers during the last month of school. The director oriented the teachers toward the program and provided the day-to-day organization that was essential to volunteer management.

The 4-H Youth Development Agent in Kewaunee County organized 12 adult and youth leaders, Master Gardeners, and four county Extension agents to conduct programs at the Kid's Klub. Activities included:

- Planting a garden,
- Visiting a dairy farm,
- Learning about small and microscopic life in a lake,
- Cake decorating,
- Leather crafting,
- Learning about small animals,
- Learning about poultry,
- Learning about rocketry,
- Learning fun camp songs, and
- Playing the vegetable jeopardy game.

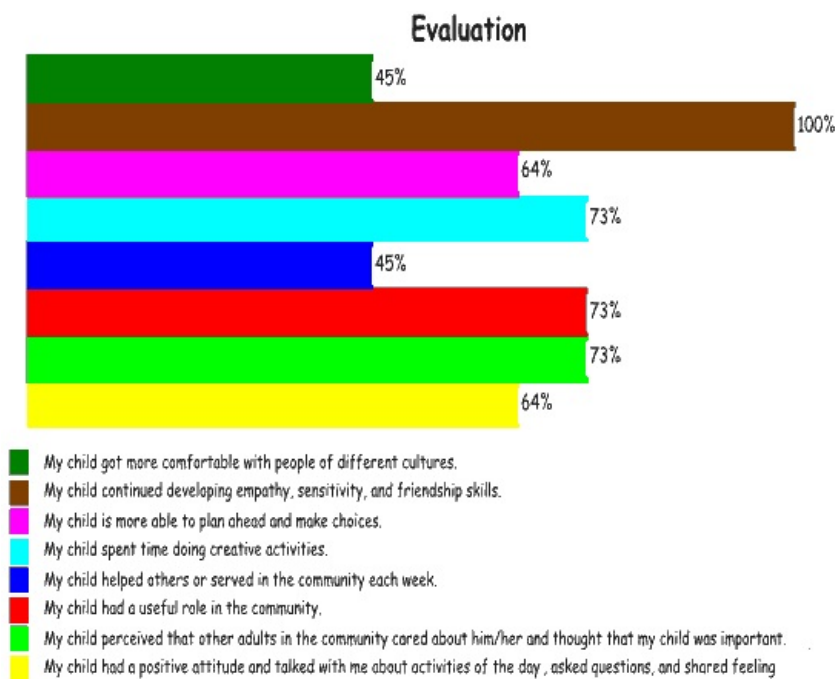
Another positive experience was a 5-week program called *Public Adventures*. The Kid's Klub children, under the guidance of the 4-H Youth Development Agent, planned, implemented, and processed age-appropriate community service projects once a week.

The Family Living Agent wrote the *Kid's Klub Connection*, a series of five fact sheets for parents. The fact sheets were given biweekly to parents when they picked up their children.

Outcomes

At the beginning of the 2001 summer, parents learned about and then endorsed the eight assets that would be promoted in the Kid's Klub. At the end of the summer, parents participating in the program were asked to rate the extent that their children increased in the eight assets. Parents used a one to five (5=highest) rating scale to answer eight statements related to the assets emphasized in the program.

Fifteen families representing 25 children participated in the program. Eleven families completed the evaluation, a 73% response rate (n=11). The graph shows the percentage of respondents that rated each statement with a 4 or 5.



The majority of the parents in the program perceived that Kid's Klub provided positive impacts on their children. This is important because child care is often perceived as "babysitting" and limited to providing a safe place for children.

The *Public Adventures* project was evaluated on two levels. First, the children drew neighborhood pictures at the first and last sessions. This was to measure the children's perception of living in a community of people. The human factor in their pictures increased by 350% from four to 14 people in their drawings. Second, a reflective discussion was held at the last session. Children said that, "We helped the community by making the park nicer" in response to the question "What difference did you make?" Eighty-six percent of the children indicated a positive response to the question, "How many of you think you will do community service again?"

Implications for Extension Programming

The Kid's Klub model, focusing on the quality component of child care, can be replicated by others. Bringing the asset-building approach into the child-care arena provides a forum for child care providers, parents, and community members to promote the same assets with children.

An implication for 4-H leaders and other Extension programs is that they can reach out to new audiences in non-traditional ways. In addition to bringing children to 4-H clubs, we can also operate in the opposite way, taking our Extension programs to where children are already gathered together in after-school programs. This is a general principle of community education: go to where the learner is.

An implication for 4-H Youth Development is that children of any age can plan and implement a valued community service. Children at a young age can participate with age-appropriate facilitation.

The potential of this model in a small rural community is quite great. It capitalizes on the human resources of community members, and it nets a quality benefit (an increase in assets) to children in child care, without an increased monetary cost to the provider.

While asset building is a relatively new approach to prevention, it is a brand-new approach when utilized in child care in northeastern Wisconsin. Child-care providers, parents, and community members together building assets in children is a true partnership that provides positive gains for children while generating a respect for the quality of child care.

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