

Peer Networking Meeting
May 20, 2009

Introductions

Announcements

- Mazzoni's **Ally Safe School Program** offers free staff development on working with LGTBQ youth. They also provide Technical Assistance for schools. Contact Allison Buehler (abuehler@mazzoni.org) for more information.
- The **OSTRC Newsletter** is distributed on the first business day of the month. If you have an OST Job, Event, or Publication to advertise email it to Katie Derickson, kder@sp2.upenn.edu, at least 5 days before the last of the month.
- Naomi Faszczyk from Lutheran Settlement House announced that they will be expanding the S.T.A.R. (Students Talking About Relationships) afterschool program. The program started at Parkway Northwest H.S. for Peace and Social Justice. They recently received a grant to expand to two new high schools, or one high school and a middle school. Lutheran will be offering the following services this summer:
 - training for professionals on domestic violence on June 18th
 - 45 min traveling presentations on dating violence for teens
 - The Listen Up summer program: a coalition project with the Mural Arts Program & Art. The Gallery presentation will be open to public.
 - Contact Naomi at nfaszcyk@lutheransettlement.org for more information
- Joanna Diaz-Davis from the Center for After School Education provided information for the Arcadia summer weekend institute for Out-of-School Time. You can receive 3 college credits (for both undergraduate or graduate degrees) for the weekend and follow up. Contact jdiaz@foundationsinc.org for more information.
- Jane Nelson from the UPenn Museum announced their summer programs, Summer Wonders, which occurs every Wednesday morning at 10:30 AM June to August. The program offers multicultural education, in which every week is different. Programs include:
 - Loan box program – borrow items for programs for up to a month
 - 8 week summer camp – 1 to 8 weeks, scholarships are available
 - New exhibits – Lenape, native tribe of area
 - Contact Jane at nelsonjf@sas.upenn.edu for more information
- Brandon Brown talked about Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia. They will be holding a Community Day on Thursday, May 28th.
 - There is also an opportunity for free night of overnight camp for youth ages 9 – 13. Applications available from Brandon at bbrown@nusigma.org.
- Busted Anti-Tobacco programs are hiring young people to give one hour workshops on tobacco prevention. Youth can come to your site to give these presentations. Contact Denisse Rojas, denisse.rojas@elconcilio.net, for more information.
- **After School Activities Partnerships** will be coordinating the **School District Summer Enrichment Program**, an after summer-school program for any child that wants to come in from 12 PM to 2 PM. There will be arts activities, literacy, dance, etc. It will be held in several schools, July 1 – July 30 on Tues, Weds, Thurs. Contact info@phillyasap.org for more information.

Panel Discussion

“Youth Competition”

The topic for this meeting came from Youth Sports discussion at the February Peer Networking meeting. The OSTRC wanted to follow up on the specific focus on competition, and broad the areas in which students compete.

Our first speaker was **Maria Walker**, the Executive Director from **After School Activities Partnerships**. ASAP is located at 15th and Locust. It provides after school enrichment clubs to keep kids safe after school. Their initiatives include chess, scrabble, dance, yoga, and debate. Most activities have an element of competition. Maria advised her peers to listen to what kids want to do and start clubs for one hour a week in neighborhood and school locations. She noted that kids are more likely to not be absent on days the after school clubs happen. She believes that ASAP has a healthy approach to competition and self esteem. Here are some of her points on competition:

- Children often ask for the element of competition to stay engaged. Towards the end of the semester of chess clubs, kids get bored playing each other. They asked for monthly tournaments to be instituted, and kids participate in voluntary tournaments on Saturdays.
- Not everybody wants to play physical sports. Chess and scrabble provide mental athletics.
- Healthy competition promotes positive relationships between kids and between kids and adults
- Competition is more meaningful and positive in formal settings. Competition allows students to go to colleges and cultural institutions with a purpose and provides necessary exposure.
- Research shows healthy competition is motivating and positive – increases maturity levels
- Maria provided a handout with information on ASAP – directory listing after school programs in daily news published in the fall

The next speaker was **Brandon Brown** from **Nu Sigma Services**. Nu Sigma Youth Services is an organization established in 1992 that has a host of programs focusing on young people and families. The organization focuses on gender and age specific enrichment and mentoring programs. There is a Leadership academy for young men ages 8 to 12, a Ladies First program for girls 13 – 18, and a Young Ladies Junior for girls ages 8 – 12. Brandon shared his perspective on youth competition:

- The way that competition is introduced into most youth programs ends up being detrimental. Young people feel that they are better than each other which creates behavior problems.
- Brandon sees the challenge as the manner that competition is introduced to young people. There is no explanation of the value or benefits of losing as a learning opportunity. Youth feel they have two choices, win or don't participate at all.
- Everything can be learning and teaching moment. In competitive games, take care of how things are introduced and explained. Think about the structure of your programs, even in informal settings and manner related to competition.

Lance Lee spoke about his experience at **Arthur Ashe Youth Tennis and Education**. He is a strong supporter of competition. For Lance, he sees tennis as the hook to teach youth other skills. Arthur Ashe includes education programs and teaches over 500 kids in their indoor program and provides summer programs located outdoors all over the city. Here are some key points from Lance's talk:

- Competition keeps kids involved. Kids feel that they are working towards something and maintain a drive

- Coaches should be asking, “How did you play? What do you need to work on? Rather than, “Did you win, or did you lose?”
- Coaches should be using assessment and evaluation too to monitor ways that youth can improve instead of only monitoring wins and losses.
- Staff should highlight a student’s achievements and tell kids the positive aspects of their performance.
- Kids learn more about life through competition. There are winners and losers in life. The lesson must involve how to deal with loss, how to manage losing, how to start over, work harder, and get better.
- Staff is a critical in the teaching of healthy competition.

Discussion

Question (Nancy): How do you manage competition when a kid is devastated by a loss?

Lance: Coaches helping kids learn to deal with losing – get themselves together and handle it like young men and women.

Maria: Coaches are so important. They hold trainings on how to lead afterschool programs, how to work with young children, and on their topic areas. The mentoring aspect is crucial and important to children’s development.

Question: How do you manage when kids are not competing well?

Lance: Coaches at Arthur Ashe will not take kids back to tournaments if they cause scenes. Coaches remove kids who are misbehaving before the referee will.

Brandon: We should destroy the way kids think about winning and losing. It is a fact that not everybody can win. How do we introduce the topic of winning and losing to kids? There are games that can be rewired that would be more about the competition than the outcome. Observe the way that competition is valued, discussed, emphasized (participation and process over outcome). Notice that some children will choose *not* to participate out of fear of losing.

Question: How do you deal with families?

Maria: Parents are excited and often rally around teams, helping with fundraising, etc. There are different levels of mentoring needed for competition: kids, parents, coaches, etc. All are important people in the process.

Lance: Parents are the biggest cause of kids quitting sports. Closed practices are the most attended practices at Arthur Ashe. Parents add pressure to something that is supposed to be fun.

Question (Naomi): We often play some games in the beginning of our program. How so I create healthy competition in a more process oriented, discussion based environment?

Lance: If I have an initial activity with my students, we often allow the winning team to choose activities and/or discussion for the rest of the group. Allow winners to choose snacks or go to bathroom first. As long as kids think it’s a big deal, it will be.

Brandon: Make prizes part of the leadership development component. Allow the winning team lead something for others so that whoever does well gets to be the leader / teacher, etc. Check out the “Just for Fun” website (<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/oxfordtours/games/> for competitive games and makes them less competitive and more for the fun of it. Kids with low sense of self worth and self esteem – create ways to make them feel comfortable, remove some negative elements of competition.

Question (Phil): As a parent of kids in sports, you find out fast which parents need to be watched, etc. Parents should take more responsibility for the behavior of their peers, instead of sitting back and allowing that person to take the lead. Coaches should meet with parents and set goals and guidelines for parent behavior and participation. Kids can be quick to give up when success is not quickly achieved. Rewarding incremental progress is also important. What are other tips or techniques to remove frustration and giving up?

Brandon: My daughter wanted to join basketball team. I went all out buying supplies, etc. She quit two days later. Young people want success so you should find out why they want it so quickly. The concept of *delayed gratification* is good skill for everyone to learn. Kids want to try something, but shouldn't give up on those activities they really like. Find out what they like, and why they like it. How can they be supported in increments? Emphasize the importance of participating in the process.

Lance: Parents have to take some of the responsibility for their child's commitment. It is another life lesson that if you say you are going to do something, you have to at least give it a fair try. Bring up something positive about the experience with your child such as maybe meeting new friends and remaining active, even if they don't like the activity. Getting kids to participate in things is a success in itself. Be sure to reward participation as well as achievements.

Maria: Peers talk to kids too. Sometimes kids listen better to each other than to coaches or teachers. Peers can provide important encouragement.

Question (Denise) How do you differentiate between boys and girls in competitive environments?

Maria: For chess, the national trend is for girls to drop out after 4th grade. We made a special program for girls and it is successful because of the peer component and less intimidation. Be sure to have female mentors and role models. For example, we have a female national chess champion direct the program. This makes a huge difference.

Question (Denise): How do you negotiate helping children to reach personal best and external goals?

Lance: At Arthur Ashe, each person receives written individual development plans. It is made up by the student, coach, and parents – short and long term goals from each person's perspective. There must be collaboration in planning and achievement. Success is relative for each participant. Individualized plans help kids to see incremental achievements.

Question (Katie): kids want to be number one – how do you balance between everyone winning, and the reality that there can only be one real winner?

Maria: Chess is good because it has different levels, you don't even have to compete if you don't want to. There is individual competition and team competition. Providing different levels of competition is important.

Brandon: Gently remind kids to realize their place in sports. Use the pyramid diagram: more kids participate in sports in middle school, fewer in high school, fewer in college, and fewest professionally. Not everyone is going to make it to the top. If you really want to get there, ask your kids, "how do you get there?" and guide them through that process.

Lance: In sports, those that are winning are working the hardest. Ask your students why they thought they lost and what they can do to improve.