

Building Effective Teen Programs:
Lessons Learned from Successful Programs and Conversations with Teens
A Report for the Boys and Girls Club of East Palo Alto

Andrew Davis, Abby Rubin, Claiborne Taylor, Jessica Yu
Stanford University School of Education
ED 179/279: Urban Youth and Their Institutions
Professor Milbrey McLaughlin
December 10, 2007

Executive Summary

Since its opening in 2000, the Boys and Girls Club Moldaw-Zaffaroni Clubhouse has served many important functions for East Palo Alto children and teens. Each afternoon, the Club opens its doors to youth ages 6 to 18 from the surrounding community, providing a safe space, positive adult role models, and a number of engaging programs including academic tutoring, physical education, and visual and performing arts. True to its motto, “We prepare youth to do life,” the Club prides itself on offering a youth-centric environment – one in which children and adolescents are surrounded by compassionate and skilled youth development professionals who aspire to both challenge and collaborate with club members and encourage them to succeed in school, develop healthy attitudes and behaviors, and gain life skills.

While the Boys and Girls Club Program’s popularity continues to increase with elementary school-aged kids, the Moldaw-Zaffaroni Clubhouse has witnessed a drop-off in its middle and high school student membership. Several steps have already been taken to reverse this drop-off. Firstly, the Club recently renovated its interior to appear more youth-friendly. In addition, the Club has instituted Friday Teen Nights, giving its teen cohort exclusive use of the Clubhouse on Friday evenings. However, adolescent participation in the Club remains low, prompting the Boys and Girls Club Program (BGCP) staff to ask the following questions:

- (1) What are possible explanations for teen drop-off?
- (2) How can the Boys and Girls Club Program (BGCP) build a successful program that engages teens and results in the positive outcomes BGCP seeks for all youth?

To answer these questions, we spent two months reviewing the existing literature on teen programs; interviewing staff and specialists at successful local and national teen programs; and conducting focus groups with current BGCP members and non-members. We discuss our

findings using the following framework: program offerings, recruitment and retention, adult roles, and connections to the community while providing insight from all three research methods and offering our thoughts on BGCP's opportunities for growth.

Program Offerings. Teens value choice. Although the adolescents we spoke to come from the same neighborhood and similar socioeconomic backgrounds, they have a diversity of interests and want BGCP's teen program to recognize their desires. These concerns constitute a mix of structured and unstructured activities, from a coffee shop atmosphere to career mentoring and apprenticeships. What is important to note is that whatever the activity, teens will be most engaged when they feel a strong sense of purpose and relevance.

Recruitment and Retention. Word-of-mouth is a powerful tool to recruit teens to BGCP. As adolescents are largely concerned with socialization and peer group influences, word-of-mouth has the ability to produce a cascade effect in which one teen recruits another teen who recruits another teen and so on. When teens hesitate to join BGCP despite having friends who are part of the program, it is often due to the signaling effects of BGCP location and names. The name "Boys and Girls Club" invokes a sense of immaturity and innocence that teens wish to avoid; furthermore, the fact that several BGCP locations are within middle schools causes teens to associate the program with middle school students. Once teens are in the BGCP door (often lured with extrinsic rewards such as a paid youth staff position or food), it is important to offer teens motivation to stay through intrinsic rewards, such as the ability to build personal relationships with staff members. Furthermore, it is beneficial to give teens a sense of ownership over the program. Programs should try to change over time as teens continue their development and therefore the interests, needs, and satisfaction levels of BGCP members must be regularly surveyed.

Adult roles. Youth value relationships with adults who are not their parents. Often, their motivation for attending a program is the ability to spend time with one particular staff member. This finding serves as an opportunity to engage youth in two ways. First, it is likely that youth will remain part of BGCP so long as their favorite staff member is present; therefore, it is advantageous to curb staff turnover. Second, involving youth in adult hiring ensures that teens feel they can build relationships with staff members and gives teens a sense of ownership over the program.

Connections to the community. Other organizations -- both under the Boys and Girls Club umbrella and outside of its scope -- are a source of best practices that BGCP can draw upon. Understanding the appeal of local alternatives that attract teens may provide program design suggestions. Then, connecting to families and schools can help recruit teens and provide insight into their needs.

In this report, we first offer a literature review of readings focused on adolescence and the role of teen-focused programs. We then discuss the methods employed in our research. We move on to provide insights into the best practices of successful teen programs and offer thoughts and suggestions from youth themselves. Finally, we discuss the real-world implications of our research and ways in which the Boys and Girls Club may use our findings to create a program that engages teens and results in positive outcomes.

A Review of Existing Literature

Adolescence and the Role of Teen-Focused Programs

Throughout the literature on Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and effective teen-focused programs, there is a recognition of the importance of adolescence. Loosely defined as

the years between puberty's onset and the entrance into adult-society, approximately ages 12-20, adolescence is a critical focus of youth development. Costello, Toles, Spielberger, and Wynn [1999] write, "We view adolescence as both a development process and a critical period of preparation that precedes the transition to adulthood" (189). Costello's words point to a uniquely challenging feature of adolescence: change. Since each young person is experiencing tremendous change during this time, youth organizations must reach out to adolescents because this period is when essential skills and dispositions are created or oftentimes squandered.

Two chapters of the *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* [Eccles and Gootman, 2002] describe the important role of after school programs in meeting the unique needs of adolescents. In Chapter Two the authors outline five developmental risks that adolescents face. They then posit that: "the participation in constructive and supportive programs during out-of-school hours both encourages positive development in many areas and reduces the likelihood of engagement in problematic behaviors" (49). In Chapter 3 the authors outline four personal and social assets for positive youth development. In summary they call for "continued exposure to positive experiences, settings, and people as well as abundant opportunities to gain and refine their life skills in order to support the acquisition and growth of these assets" (85). Effective teen programs, such as the one the BGCP strives to create, must attempt to provide these much needed positive experiences, settings and people.

The importance of healthy development during adolescence resounds throughout the literature on teen-focused programs. While some authors point to the overall need for effective teen programs, others cite specific impacts that such programming has. According to Hansen, Reed, and Dworkin [2003], youth experience higher rates of leaning in the domain of initiative development—goal setting, problem solving and time management—when participating in

organized activities that a teen-focused program provides than when in an academic setting or socializing with friends. Youth also report higher rates of learning pro-social norms.

Furthermore, Larson et al. [2004] posit that after school programs offer a chance for teens to develop and practice initiative as well as gain responsibility. Csikszentmihalyi [2000] argues that youth programs can offer experiences that teens experience as both “work and play.” He believes that such experiences lead to a state of “flow,” discussed later in this review. These psychological experiences are critical for success in adulthood. Finally, Villarruel, Montero-Sieburth, Dunbar, and Outley [2005] write that culturally sensitive programming can aid cultural and historical identity formation that leads to healthy development for adolescents of color.

An Introduction to Key Success Factors of Teen Programming

The literature not only recognizes the importance of adolescence and the great potential for positive impact that teen-focused programs can have but also points to key factors for creating a successful teen program. These factors are organized in five main categories: program offerings, recruitment, retention, adult roles, and connections to the community. Many of the elements of successful programs could be placed in several of these categories. They are described under the most relevant heading but also referred to again in other sections.

Program Offerings—Voice and Choice, Mixture of Activities, Challenge, Culture

Much of the literature on successful teen programming focuses on program offerings. One common theme throughout these writings is the importance of teen voice and choice. Costello et al [1999] write of the importance of developing youth voice: “Among the critical components of the youth development perspective is the development of youth voice” (190).

Further, they write, “If the goal in promoting youth development is to prepare youth for the future...young people’s ideas must be heard and respected” (192). Ashley, [Samaniego, and Cheun \[1997\]](#) also argue that teens should have a direct voice in programming decisions. Writing about the ability of programs to retain teens, Larson et al [\[2004\]](#) argue that successful programs give teens choices about which activities they want to pursue. Again, Costello et al [\[1999\]](#) support the importance of giving youth choice: “Activities that seem to do this best are those that offer opportunities for the exercise of choice and increase the participant’s sense of efficacy and control” (207).

While voice and choice are critical, continuous change is at the heart of the adolescent experience and [need to](#) be reflected in the program offerings. As teens develop, it is important that youth development programs have program offerings to meet their changing needs. For this reason alone, successful programs need a mixture of activities. Roth and Brooks-Gunn [\[2003\]](#) posit that successful youth development programs offer a mix of both formal and informal activities. Mercier, [Piat, Peladeau, and Dagenais \[2000\]](#) support this stance suggesting that unstructured events and programs are helpful for recruitment while more structured programs aid in retaining teens in the program. Csikszentmihalyi believes that a successful transition to adulthood relies upon an entire support system rather than just a single program. Acknowledging this need for a support system, comprehensive programs, such as the BGCP, offer a diverse range of programs and adult mentors to provide the requisite support network. Csikszentmihalyi also makes it clear that the mix of activities must be derived from youth culture and trends; the mixture of programs must meet adolescent interests.

[_____](#) Challenge is another critical element of successful youth development programs. In his *Becoming Adult*, Csikszentmihalyi [\[2000\]](#) argues that adolescents need to experience activities

they consider to be both work and play. In such activities, adolescents enter into a state that he terms “flow.” This is a state in which a high level of challenge is met with a high level of requisite skill. Pearce [and Larson \[2006\]](#) point to Csikszentmihalyi’s “flow” as critical in the process of teens transitioning from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation, a key factor for retaining teens in youth development programs. Though the report does not use Csikszentmihalyi’s specific language, the Harvard Family Research Project [\[2004\]](#) stresses the importance of offering activities that require unique skills echoes the significance of challenge. Several other authors recognize this emphasis on challenge. Costello et al [\[1999\]](#) write that youth need to take on “near-adult roles” (192). Roth and Brooks-Gunn [\[2003\]](#) state, “Regardless of the specific activity, the emphasis lies in providing real challenges” (172). Whether stated as “flow” or “near-adult roles”, successful teen development programs challenge adolescents in a supportive environment.

Finally, effective program offerings must be culturally sensitive and responsive.

Villarruel et al [\[2005\]](#) argue that cultural identity formation is critical for the healthy development of adolescents of color. Being “rooted” in ethnic communities and teen programs help adolescents of color combat unhealthy stereotypes. For this to happen, teen programs, such as the BGCP, [have found it beneficial to](#) incorporate elements of the surrounding community. Teen programs should [try not to](#) remain exclusively focused on the racial and ethnic communities of the youth they serve. Instead, teen programs [need to](#) strive to develop civic-minded adults in both their local communities and larger society. Villarruel et al [\[2005\]](#) describe this support of both local and [mainstream](#) context as working “in the hyphen.” Chapter Three of the *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* [\[Eccles and Gootman, 2002\]](#) supports Villarruel’s argument: “We agreed that there are some universals at the most abstract

consideration...On the other hand...one must take the local cultural context into account as programs are designed and evaluated” (68).

Teen Recruitment—Barriers to Entry, Appealing Programs, Understanding the Customer

Throughout the literature there are several references to best practices for recruiting teens into youth programs. One of the most common themes in this literature is removing some of the obvious barriers to entry. In their analysis of Boys and Girls Clubs in Boston and New York, Herrera and Arbreton [2003] found that the club hours were one of the greatest barriers to entry for teens. Simply keeping the club open later increased teen participation. Mercier et al [2000] suggest that unstructured activities and a drop in format allow for an easier point of entry. The American Youth Policy Forum [2006] found that having current participants explain program offerings and develop sources of recruits helps mitigate a recruit’s feeling that this place is not for teens “like me.”

Personal safety and a desire to “stay off the street” is a very common reason for teens to enter youth development programs [Perkins et al, 2007]. Despite this desire to be off the street, teen programs must also make themselves an attractive place to be. Herrera and Arbreton’s [2003] study showed that a lack of interesting and age-appropriate activities was the most common reason for teens not participating in Boys and Girls Club activities. They also found that strong orientation activities can help prospective members see the program’s benefits. Attractive program offerings must be coupled with an appealing adult staff who can develop genuine, meaningful connections with youth [Harvard Family Research Project, 2004].

A final common theme of successful recruitment is to see beyond the teen recruit and to understand her cultural and family context. Perkins et al [2007] showed that the needs of teen

recruits vary by race and gender. While some teens are best approached on their own, some adolescents, such as Latinas, more often need the support of their family in the decision to join a youth development program such as BGCP. Whenever possible, recruitment is made easier when parents are involved so that they can understand the value and goals of the program.

Understanding the context that recruits live in also means directly reaching out to at-risk teens through schools and other programs [Harvard Family Research Project, 2004].

Teen Retention—Developing Programs Teens Don't Want to Leave

The most common theme in retention is developing programming that teens find intrinsically rewarding [Larson et al, 2004; Pearce et al, 2006]. Pearce et al [2006] use Csikszentmihalyi's language of "flow" arguing that students who participate in flow-inducing activities are less likely to leave a teen program. Similar to recruitment, retention also requires programming that is relevant and fun. In Arbreton, Sheldon, and Herra's [2005] *Beyond Safe Havens*, they argue that programs that are tailored to the "interests and needs" of youth and are "fun" are best able to retain participants over time (20). Having regular structured events and special events is one final retention best practice [Mercier et al, 2000].

Adult Staff—Importance, A Challenging Role, Management

It is easy to argue that a teen program's adult staff is its most valuable asset. The importance of a supportive staff is one of the most common themes throughout the literature on youth development programs. A successful staff helps in recruiting and retaining teens and is central to effective programming. Larson et al [2004] argue that staff members are another means for youth to develop social capital. The Harvard Family Research Project [2004] points to

the importance of providing older teens opportunities to imitate successful adults through leadership programs. Such a program needs successful adults on which teens can model their behavior. The fundamental importance of a strong staff is also seen in the numerous references to the damage that staff turnover has on youth programs. Teen development hinges on supportive relationships in which trust is developed; high staff turnover makes building these relationships much more difficult.

Effective staff members in youth development programs have a very challenging role. Every day they are asked to wear the hat of role model, confidant, and information resource [Mercier et al, 2000]. Beyond wearing multiple hats, staff members must also balance youth agency and adult direction. They must allow the teens to feel an ownership of the program, have voice and choice, while also providing enough direction that teens feel challenged and have the requisite skills to meet the challenge. A successful staff member learns that the process of any program offering, deciding what to do and how to do it, is more important than the product [Herrera and Arbreton, 2003]; for example, a film editing instructor should try not to overly focus on the professionalism of the final cut but rather be more concerned with the process of deciding what story the film should tell and which students are going to fill which roles. Finally, staff members have to find a way to balance the need to create engaging curriculum with the need to dedicate time to positive one to one relationships [Herrera and Arbreton, 2003].

The success of the adult staff also rests on the shoulders of program management. Herrera and Arbreton [2003] pointed to the importance of being mindful of the stress on staff as a youth development program grows. Especially with successful youth development programs, the management find it beneficial to fight the temptation to grow the student population without increasing the number of staff. The management should always consider the student to staff ratio

and ensure sufficient time for staff members to both develop programming as well as mentor teens. Good management goes beyond giving staff enough time. Costello et al [1999] write of the importance of involving staff in the organization's decision making: "Staff are unlikely to engage youth in their zone of proximal development unless the organization itself provides opportunities for staff to contribute to the decisions of the organization" (192). As with all professions, management need to strive to provide staff with professional opportunities for growth. Staff training must be an integral component of any youth development program.

Hansen et al [2003], after citing the impact of negative adult interactions, stress the importance of providing staff with training specifically targeted at avoiding such deleterious interactions.

Management needs to try and always remember that program staff are their most valuable asset and try to treat them accordingly.

Connections to the Community

We have already seen how reaching out to the surrounding community is important to program offerings and student recruitment. Programming "in the hyphen" requires stepping out beyond the walls of the program to the surrounding community. The American Youth Policy Forum [2006] posits that a critical element of youth development programs is preparing teens for their post-high school lives, oftentimes achieved through job training and interaction with the surrounding community. Similarly, the Harvard Family Research Project [2004] found that internship brokering is an important role that teen programs can fill. Finally, the positive youth adjustment that teen programs strive to provide is often made stronger through connections to parents [Anderson, Sabatelli, and Kosutic, 2007]. Outstanding teen programs have both a solid foundation within their walls and the skills and confidence to help their youth develop in the

surrounding community.

Research Methods

Three research methods were employed to answer BGCP's questions. First, we conducted a thorough review of the existing literature on adolescent development and teen-based programs. These readings included those regarding the nature of adolescence, factors contributing to positive youth development, and the importance of youth programs and organized youth activities, providing insight into what makes a successful teen program and what are the needs of adolescents.

Next, we examined the best practices of BGCP's peer organizations. By utilizing personal contacts and advice from BGCP staff, we interviewed program staff and board members at five organizations celebrated for the success in recruiting and retaining teens. These organizations were: the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Florida and Woburn, Massachusetts, BUILD, Citizen Schools, and Huckleberry Youth Programs.

Finally, we conducted two focus groups. The first focus group consisted of seven teens between the ages of 14 and 18 that currently attend BGCP's Moldaw-Zaffaroni Clubhouse. This group provided insight into the aspects of BGCP most enjoyable to teens and improvements that could be made to engage a larger teen cohort. The second group consisted of 11 students from East Palo Alto Academy that were not members of BGCP. This group offered insight into community perceptions of BGCP and the ways in which BGCP can use these notions to reverse its teen drop-off.

Results

Findings from Successful Local and National Teen Programs

Our research has also sought to understand the complex realm of after-school adolescent programs. Therefore we have focused on two successful Boys and Girls Club Teen programs as well as two local and one national program for teens.¹ Through in-person and phone interviews, we have collected information to determine what about each program appeals to teens, what are their key factors to success, and any problems they have encountered and how they overcame them.² While there is no magic bullet to successful teen programs, we have found many common elements that contribute to each of these programs' exceptional performance. All five teen programs understand the "storm and stress" nature of adolescence, but they go beyond G. Stanley Hall's somewhat bleak prognosis seeing adolescence as a time of great opportunity to develop life skills and independence. All five programs seek to give teens the type of personal relationships and development that schools too often cannot provide.

Program Offerings

All the programs we studied offer a rich and diverse array of teen programming that support the broad goals of character, leadership, and skill development. To better isolate many of the key features of successful programming, the following section has been divided into four parts: initial design and scheduling issues, program atmosphere, general programming strategies, and specific programming examples.

Initial design and scheduling issues. When initially designing programming, many

1 See Appendix A for a detailed description of all five teen programs.

2 See Appendix B for interview protocol.

important factors must be considered to ensure the best possibility of success. Programs must understand the active and ever-changing lifestyles of teenagers and adapt their programming accordingly. For example, many teens can only come one or two days a week due to extra-curricular activities at school and/or after-school jobs (BCG of Woburn). Another important aspect to consider is the time of day that is most convenient or most important to have teens involved. The BGC of Central Florida have teen-only hours from 6-9pm each night both to separate younger club members from those much older but also to have adolescents involved in activities during higher risk times of the day (BGC of Central Florida). Schedules should also be posted around the Club and be organized by age group and not activities so that teens can easily and consistently see all the program offerings available for their age group (BCG of Woburn).

And overall, a high level of flexibility is important to all club programming to ensure that the clubs' main clients, youth members, have their needs met and are able to attend as much club programming as possible (BGC of Woburn).

Along with scheduling concerns, the initial program development stage must involve consultation with local community leaders, school officials, and the youth themselves to ensure that all new programming is non-duplicative and useful to community teens. The Boys and Girls Club of Woburn also employed a strategy of initially capping the number of teens allowed in new programs to ensure a level of quality and program reputation from the outset (BGC of Woburn). While such a strategy risks turning away interested new participants, it can also help the new program develop an aura of selectivity that could assist in attracting more new members once program capacity and quality have improved.

Program atmosphere. While program atmosphere is hard to measure, it is integral to program success and must be constantly developed, improved, and monitored. Programs should

strive to create an atmosphere where youth feel welcome and have multiple, meaningful opportunities to get involved (Huckleberry). Youth members of the Boys and Girls Club of Woburn are empowered to create a welcoming environment by decorating the club space in a way that displays members' artistic talents as well as designing the overall layout of program equipment and furniture (BGC of Woburn).

The Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Florida also stress the importance of having staff communicate with members on a daily basis. Staff can then alter any programming or deal with other issues of concern accordingly (BGC of Central Florida). A policy of constant and responsive interaction shows Club youth their voice is valued and that the Club is the product of their ideas and feedback. Club activities need to try to display a sense of purpose and meaning that ensures that the youth's time is never wasted or considered "stupid" in members' eyes (BGC of Woburn). Clubs such as those of Woburn and Central Florida create meaningful activities and environments by listening to what their teen members' want, researching what programming their community needs, and having staff that can effectively sell and alter programming to respond to members' feedback.

Programming Strategies. Successful after-school programming is responsive to community and youth needs. Some of the organizations we spoke with acknowledged how community demographics had changed since their program's inception, and the resulting need to change their program's focus and mission (BUILD). In the end, after school programs must remember that their ultimate goal should be to serve community youth; therefore, they might try to have a level of community and youth awareness as well as flexibility to be able to change program goals accordingly.

The Boys and Girls Club of Woburn employed progressive programming as a key

strategy to retaining older members. Gail Norris, the teen director of the Boys and Girls Club of Woburn, explained the progressive programming strategy using the example of the Boys and Girls Club national Money Matters curriculum that stresses skills of money management and financial independence. Norris explained how 6-12 year old members might study how much money they would save in a year if they did not buy a soda every day at lunch, while 13-15 year olds would learn about and open a savings account, while 16-18 year olds would study credit cards and open checking accounts. Designing the Money Matters curriculum in this progressive sense encourages gradual skill development while also sending the message to young Club members that staying involved with the Club as they grow older ensures they will learn important skills that build off of what they are presently learning (BGC of Woburn). With careful planning and a little imagination, numerous programming options could be progressively administered to ensure on-going skill development and help convince members that staying connected to the Boys and Girls Club has definite benefits.

All of the successful programs we examined also provided opportunities for leadership, personal, and professional development. Some of the programs give youth opportunities to mentor younger program participants oftentimes for a small salary (Huckleberry). Other programs connect adolescents to local businesses to work on projects or receive mentoring from businesspeople (Citizen Schools, BUILD). The Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Florida also mentioned the importance of utilizing the Keystone Clubs, the Youth of the Year Program, and the Torch Club to foster youth leadership and provide opportunities for public speaking and to work cooperatively (BGC of Central Florida).

Transportation and food are two other important elements of the BGC of Central Florida's successful teen programming. The BGC of Central Florida found that many teens

wanted to come to the club but were unable due to transportation issues. The transportation issue also involved the fact that their teen program met in the evenings (6-9pm) while their 6-12 year olds met in the afternoon meaning that family members were reluctant to have to make multiple trips to the club in any given day to pick up siblings or extended family or friends. For this reason, BGC of Central Florida purchased a van to help solve the transportation dilemma. The staff of BGC of Central Florida credits the van for greatly increasing their teen membership and is representative of their overarching goal of always striving to better serve their teens (BGC of Central Florida).

The BGC of Central Florida has also used food as an important leverage point to keep teen membership high. Because teens often were at the club over dinnertime (6-9pm), BGC of Central Florida wanted to ensure their members had access to dinner or at least a snack both for reasons of health and increased attendance. Therefore some clubs have used part of their funds to either have snacks or dinner available while others have created partnerships with local restaurants and still others have used on-site kitchens to allow the teens to plan and prepare their own snacks/dinner. Supporting the teen members in deciding upon and cooking their own meals increases their sense of ownership in the club, helps them develop marketable job skills if properly trained, and provides another way to add structure and meaning to their after-school experience at the club (BGC of Central Florida).

One other important general aspect of successful teen programming involves the utilization of incentives and goals. Too often adults or after-school program staff members believe that teens are too old to be interested in incentives such as a small party or field trip. But time and again, the program staff we interviewed conveyed how incentives and specific goal-oriented tasks kept their adolescent members focused, brought a great feeling of accomplishment

once they had achieved their goal, and again created a more long-term structure within which local youth would be enticed to continually attend club programming (BGC of Woburn and Central Florida).

Exceptional Programming Examples. Both the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Florida and Woburn, MA have many excellent programs to encourage teen membership. Both clubs employ the “bait and switch” technique in that they most often initially attract teens to the clubs with their array of fun activities but find ways to eventually switch the teens’ focus to more skill building activities (BGC of Central Florida).³

- *Baiting activities*

Both clubs continually focused on the importance of asking for and listening to the teens’ suggestions for activities that they would want to attend. Some of the clubs' most popular activities include Monday night flag football, X-Box tournaments, dodge ball, arena hockey, trivia night, and dances. Some of the more detailed and unique activities included fashion week, creating a club radio station, a digital arts program, and having different theme weeks again planned according to the teens’ input (BGC of Central Florida and Woburn).

- *The switch*

To paraphrase a staff member from the BGC of Central Florida, teens do not initially come to the club for character development but once you have their attention and trust it is much easier to “sell” more career, educational, and skill oriented activities. For example, after Monday night flag-football, the BGC of Central Florida has all the participants stay for dinner to create a level of interaction and familiarity that goes beyond the playing field (BGC of Central Florida). Other more skill or career oriented activities included college tours, a job-training program at an on-site café, quiz league, American Red Cross water safety and lifeguard training, and the

3 BGC of Central Florida has also created a Top Ten List for successful programming. See Appendix C for details.

national Money Matters curriculum. Effective programming also found ways to attempt to integrate both fun and skill-building activities to ensure that teens learned important lessons such as fair play and sportsmanship during activities such as an X-box tournament or pick up basketball.

Teen Recruitment and Retention

After-school teen programming need to try and have a steady flow of dedicated youth for their programs to succeed. For this reason, all five teen programs we studied had important and deliberate recruitment and retention strategies. The Boys and Girls Club of Woburn constantly stresses having their recruitment efforts keep the psychological and social needs of teenagers in mind. Therefore their programming attempts to foster the development of independence through money management and career development skills while employing marketing techniques that also acknowledge the great social need of teenagers simply to hang out with friends (BGC of Woburn). The BGC of Central Florida also encourages a policy of taking your “feet to the street” when it comes to recruitment. BGC of Central Florida sees their recruitment efforts as ongoing rather than a one-time event, and understands that they must find where youth hang out and seek them out. Rarely will youth seek out the club themselves (BGC of Central Florida).

Both the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Florida and Woburn understood that a large part of their recruitment effort for teen programming involves keeping their younger members happy and responding to their needs. BGC of Central Florida stressed the fact that younger members will be their future teen participants, so they acknowledged that these relationships must be continually developed. The BGC of Woburn also uses numerous pre- and post- surveys to get member feedback and alter programming accordingly. Once again, this sends the message

that the Club serves and listens to members' needs and desires. Employing a client-focused strategy reminds youth that the Club is there to serve their needs and will respond with new programming as youth's needs and interests change.

The Boys and Girls Club of Central Florida also acknowledged the need to obtain family support and buy-in to the clubs' mission. BGC of Central Florida often had family nights in order to explain teen programming, create excitement, and listen to concerns and needs of community families (BGC of Central Florida). Ultimately, families are an important resource to have on Clubs' side to encourage youth's ongoing attendance, to support activities and goals of the Club, and to provide another avenue for advice and feedback.

Adult Staff

Effective and well-trained staff members are integral to club success. Issues of high turnover, balancing administrative and programming duties, and low pay often make it hard to find and/or keep good staff members. Because of these challenges, all five organizations strive to support their staff and create a meaningful personal and professional experience. Prior experience with youth is a big predictor of staff's probability for success (Citizen Schools). The Boys and Girls Club of Woburn have also found that having past club participants as staff also improves their chances of success and level of acceptance from current members (BGC of Woburn). The BGC of Woburn also involves current members in staff selection to ensure that all new hires are approved by the youth and start with their support (BGC of Woburn).

Once staff is hired, successful programs incorporate ongoing evaluations and feedback for staff to support their continual professional development (Citizen Schools). Successful programs understand the fluid and ever-changing nature of their business and the communities

and youth they serve, thus they must train their staff to recognize and respond to these variable conditions. Professional development opportunities and possibilities for career advancement might be provided whenever possible to both show staff that they are valued and that their job is difficult as well as to educate them to the newest techniques and research available in after-school programming.

Connections to the Community

Successful after school programs find ways to connect with community and national resources to continually improve their content and quality. Incorporating the community whenever possible both increases programming options as well as helps programs gain legitimacy in the community. Citizen Schools regularly studies best practices of members of their national network and communicates within their network to share effective strategies and guidance (Citizen Schools). Within a network as large as the Boys and Girls Clubs, it is essential that individual clubs find allies, mentors, and advisees to continue the process of professional development and ongoing improvement.

Programs must also be cognizant of their image and reputation within the community and find ways to enhance it (Huckleberry). Local Boys and Girls Clubs should use their strong name/brand recognition to encourage local businesses to support their efforts both monetarily and through programming assistance (i.e. partnering with local banks for the Money Matters program). Clubs can encourage local businesses to advertise their connection with the Boys and Girls Club and inform their community of the partnership to encourage patronage. Clubs need to also create opportunities for youth to share the skills they have learned in formal ceremonies for families and community members and partners (Citizen Schools). Such a practice not only is

meaningful and goal-oriented for program youth, but it also demonstrates program progress to community members and provides further justification for financial or relational partnerships.

One of the most important yet often overlooked connections for after-school programming is schools. For whatever reason, schools and after-school programs often fail to communicate or may even blame one another for youth's problems. After-school programs might consider taking the lead on this issue to ensure that schools are important partners who understand the program's mission and communicate with program staff concerning individual youth progress and problems. Citizen Schools focuses on the importance of selling their program's benefits for youth (organization, character development, overall focus) and overall professionalism to partner schools. This process involves building a meaningful relationship with the school principal, presenting at initial school staff meetings, and having an informational speech and/or booth at parent/teacher conference days or nights (Citizen Schools). Such an approach not only recruits new members but also shows school personnel the level of commitment and professionalism with which the after-school program operates.

Findings from BGCP Member and Non-Member Focus Groups

To better understand the ways in which the Boys and Girls Club Moldaw-Zaffaroni Clubhouse can build upon its existing youth program to implement a successful teen program, we supplemented our findings from local and national programs with data from two focus groups.⁴ The first focus group consisted of seven teens, ages 14 to 18, who currently attend BGCP. Three of these teens had been BGCP members for two years, while two others had been members for seven years, and one had been a member for eight years. One focus group participant never had an official BGCP membership, but regularly frequented the Clubhouse to

4 See Appendices D and E for focus group protocols.

spend time with peers who were official members. The second group included 11 high school students from East Palo Alto Academy who were not members of BGCP. In this section, we will refer to the first group as "members" and to the second group as "non-members". Members provided important commentary on what led them to and kept them involved in BGCP, and on what changes would renew their interest in the program. Non-members provided necessary and unique insight into some of the factors that may deter youth from joining BGCP.

While all the youth we interviewed had many different and unique ideas, several key themes emerged from our discussions with both members and non-members. Firstly, we need to consider adolescence as a unique stage of life in which teens need to feel a sense of both acknowledgment and independence. This could occur in a number of ways, whether by providing teens more attention or more space.

Secondly, it is beneficial to remember the importance of teen input and choice—two phenomena that cannot be discussed without reference to the other. Adolescents have a diversity of interests, and their ability to choose from a range of activities serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, it offers teens a sense of autonomy and voice. On the other hand, different activities enhance various areas of adolescents' personal and interpersonal development [Hansen, Larson, Dworkin, 2003]. Therefore, if BGCP wants to prepare its teens to "do life," it would be beneficial to offer them a fuller and richer developmental experience through enhanced input as well as choice.

Thirdly, it is advantageous to give teens a sense of relevance and purpose in the activities in which they choose to participate. Parallel to our findings from external research, adolescents want to learn and develop both social and practical skills and therefore need a forum in which to do so.

Current Program Offerings

Currently, the single most teen-centric program the Boys and Girls Club Moldav-Zaffaroi Clubhouse offers is Teen Night. Running on Friday evenings from 7:00 to 9:00 PM, Teen Night offers East Palo Alto youth a safe space in which to engage with peers. The time is highly unstructured, offering teens the ability to relax at the end of the school week and the flexibility to engage in activities as they desire. On any particular Friday evening, Teen Night attendees can choose to organize a game of basketball, play pool, listen to and create music, play or work on the computer, or sit on the couches and chat with friends. Teens are appreciative of the space and time, noting that Teen Night keeps them from sitting bored at home or participating in destructive activities that have troubled their acquaintances and former friends (BGCP Focus Group). However, they are also quick to state that the lack of structure can be disappointing. Those who regularly attend Teen Night see the Clubhouse only as a place to pass the time, where there exists very little for teens to do besides complete their schoolwork and play basketball. As one current member pointedly asked, "How is this Teen Night if all there is is a bunch of sweaty guys playing basketball?"

Further, members of BGCP who regularly attend Teen Night want to see more emphasis placed on the word "teen". Although BGCP staff does offer teens exclusive time in the Club on Friday nights, our focus group participants do not see the space as being teen-aware outside of Teen Night. According to several members, the Club's main priority seems to be little kids. One member reminisced about the opportunities available to BGCP kids; as a young child, this member attended museum trips and football games and was even given the chance to visit Disneyland. While it is possible that BGCP lacks the funding to continue these trips, another

member seemed to think that the little kids still take field trips to art museums and sports games.

Additionally, there exists an overwhelming perception that the Boys and Girls Club operates exactly as it sounds—as a space for boys and girls, not young men and women. Non-members believe that BGCP operates as "a daycare for parents" and "a place for little kids to hang out." A few non-members once held memberships at BGCP. Reflecting upon their experiences, they sustain the notion that the Club is only for little kids. One non-member stated, "I used to go there [BGCP] a long time ago, when I was *little*." Another member cited his reason for discontinuing his Club membership as the feeling that the Clubhouse was mostly for little kids.

While our focus group participants made no mention of the availability of structured programming, they did speak fondly about the various equipment and games offered. Current members spend their weekday afternoons at the Clubhouse taking advantage of its computer room, playing pool in the common area, using the gym for basketball games, or spending time on the fields outside playing Wiffleball. Both member and non-member teens make special note of the Music Room/Recording Studio, where teens can perform and record their own music. Many see the studio as the only incentive to attend BGCP (BGC Focus Group). For example, one member stated, "I like the music room. I like to sing, and all my friends and my brother rap. They come here to do it." It is important to note, though, that the presence of little kids seems to permeate even this favorite aspect of the Club; non-members who had visited the Clubhouse stated that they often saw more little kids than teens spending their time in the studio (EPA Focus Group).

Suggested Program Offerings

Prior to conducting our focus groups, we believed that an ideal teen program would provide a space in which teens could exert their independence and engage in free time with their friends. Our hypothesis was that teens desired something unstructured—something in stark contrast from the hours they spend each day in school, doing homework, and participating in extracurricular activities. We discovered instead, through both our member and non-member focus groups, that Csikszentmihalyi offers a valid argument when he states that youth programs have the ability to offer teens both “work and play,” and that such experiences promote a sense of flow in teens’ lives.

The following is a summary of steps BGCP [might](#) take to offer a more comprehensive teen program that appeals to a wider adolescent audience. This section is divided into three broad categories that draw upon the most frequent suggestions given by our focus group participants: space, academics/tutoring, and specific skills.

Space. Teens desire a space that is first aesthetically appealing and [that also provides a comprehensive range of services](#). The order of this desire is important when determining how to recruit teens to BGCP. From our focus groups, we found that what gets kids in the door does not necessarily keep them inside. Teens are initially enticed by tangible rewards such as free food and more relevantly, an area that appears as if it were designed for them exclusively. This requires collaborating with teens and getting into their mindset to provide vibrantly colored walls, bright floor lamps, plentiful couches and lounge chairs, and wall space to display their creative artwork (BGCP, EPA Focus Groups).

Once teens feel comfortable with their space, they will be more inclined to return. This leads us to explore the comprehensive services the space can offer. Building upon the idea of choice, teens desire a space that provides a wealth of opportunity. Our focus group participants

made several recommendations that focused on the idea of a shared space that gives them the flexibility to do their homework, hang out, exercise, and play games.

When asked, “what would the ideal teen program look like if there were no limitations?”, teens had a long list of ideas. For example, they said that the homework area should be an enclosed room that includes a library of textbooks, research materials, and recreational books and magazines. Two separate areas should exist as hang out space; one area should be a multimedia area with couches, televisions, and sound equipment, while the other should be a quieter space that allows teens to sit and converse with one another. A fully-equipped exercise room should exist in addition to any areas already designated for sports, and the game area should include pool tables, table tennis, and video games. Additionally, teens would like to see a concession stand or cafe (BGCP, EPA Focus Groups).

Academics/tutoring. As school consumes over 70 percent of an adolescent's week, it makes sense that academics and tutoring became a lengthy discussion within our focus groups. And while current members see the Clubhouse as a point of transition between school and home—as a safe space and a place to spend a few hours with friends—they also view it as a place to complete their homework. As a result, our focus group teens suggest that BGCP recruit subject tutors to assist students in completing their homework and studying for exams (EPA Focus Group).

Relatedly, teens also suggest expanding the library to include more computers. Not only would this benefit teens who must type writing assignments and conduct web-based research, but it would also offer teens a forum to relax. According to our focus group participants, teens like spending time at the library, primarily because they enjoy playing computer games, surfing the internet, and being in the same space with one another (EPA Focus Group).

Thirdly, the oldest teens suggest offering college application assistance. Our teens note that many high school students in the area who are thinking about college lack the necessary information and help to complete their applications (EPA Focus Group). BGCP could be the place teens go to for college admissions advice and counseling, whether by offering a series of classes, informational sessions, or initiating mentoring relationships with area college students.

Specific skills. As the conversation regarding program growth continued, youth in both focus groups became more and more animated. It was clear that all youth--both member and non-member—saw BGCP as having the ability to engage adolescents, especially if it could expand its current program offerings to include structured activities that promoted life skills. Recalling the notion that teen programs should give its members a sense of relevance and purpose, our focus group participants suggested initiating activities that would encourage teens to think about their futures and careers. These include classes that teach domestic skills such as cooking, financial literacy, and sewing. One member teen was especially interested in pursuing a college and career counseling program and suggested college trips as well as a motivational speaker series (BGCP Focus Group).

Outside of the realm of life skills, focus group participants were also excited about the possibility of learning unique skills not taught in school or at other after school organizations. Thinking about the Clubhouse's Music Room/Recording Studio, one teen was interested in learning how to DJ and mix music. Other teens were also interested in multimedia education; one teen was curious about videography, while another wanted to learn web design and HTML coding (EPA Focus Group).

The teens also seemed to have a strong inclination to see BGCP as a true club and to therefore suggest activities that would increase Club pride. Several female participants suggested

that BGCP encourage the formation of dance crews and step groups that could compete with other local groups (BGCP Focus Group).

Recruitment and Retention

After speaking to our focus group teens, it is evident that location, transportation, and cultural sensitivity are three key factors in recruiting and retaining teen members. In terms of location, non-members admit that they often forget about BGC because it is not located in a central area (EPA Focus Group). While it would be difficult to move the Moldaw-Zaffaroni Clubhouse to a new location in East Palo Alto, BGCP might consider advertising its existence to the community by initiating a grassroots campaign of community flyers and school announcements.

Furthermore, teens note that they might be more enticed to attending BGC if it provided a means of transportation. According to one non-member who attends the program College Track, a shuttle is available to transport students to and from home, school, and College Track tutoring. BGCP might consider offering its own shuttle, especially for students who must travel long distances from their schools to the Club's East Palo Alto location.

Most importantly, BGCP's Club demographics should reflect that of the East Palo Alto community. The East Palo Alto community is largely comprised of African Americans and Hispanics, yet one teen noted that the Moldaw-Zaffaroni Clubhouse attracted "only African Americans; there are no Mexicans here" (EPA Focus Group). To address this problem, BGC could initiate a Spanish language recruitment campaign and hire more Spanish-speaking staff members. The BGC should also be prepared to stage difficult yet important conversations about cultural sensitivity and diversity to its members to ensure that both Hispanics and African-

Americans feel welcome and mix with one another.

Adult Roles and Connections to Community

As prior research on youth development programs demonstrates, interactions with adults often define whether a youth's experience in an organization is positive or negative [Dworkin and Larson, 2006]. Our focus group participants found the current staff to be approachable and friendly, but did desire a more diverse adult group. When providing suggestions for their ideal staff, teens stated that they want to see younger staff members who have the ability to communicate, interact, and build stronger bonds with them. They want these staff to be open-minded, liberal, and excited about getting to know teens. Further, teens insist that some of the staff be hired from the East Palo Alto community, as they want to be assured that their staff understand their background and are familiar with the community in which they live (EPA Focus Group).

And finally, perhaps the most important point to make is that teens want to be able to trust their staff and the program. Whatever staff is hired and whatever program changes are made, teens need to know that they can trust BGCP to uphold its promises. One member offered a rather moving anecdote about a dance BGCP advertised a few years back. This member's little sister was so excited to take part in a "grown-up" dance and waited for weeks and weeks as the party continued to be postponed. Ultimately, the dance was canceled, and the member's sister was so disappointed. What this member stated was true -- "You can't lie to us like that" (BGCP Focus Group).

Real World Implications: Concluding Thoughts and Opportunities for Growth

While adolescence is often a time of great confusion and increased risk factors, there is also great opportunity for personal growth and important skill development that can last a lifetime. While the East Palo Alto Boys and Girls Club undoubtedly understands this set of circumstances, it would be advantageous to continue to find opportunities to engage more local teens and help address and develop their personal, academic, and social needs and strengths. Effectively serving, retaining, and recruiting teen members is challenging and different than working with younger youth, but we have found that there are a few key elements that contribute to success. At the heart of successful teen programs is a personal commitment to and deep understanding of teens' needs, concerns, and ideas. Teens want programs with purpose and relevance, strong and meaningful relationships with adults, chances to help develop and refine programming, and sufficient choice within a range of structured and unstructured activities.

Our first conclusion is that there is a need for a stronger teen program through the BGC. While there are some teen programming options in East Palo Alto, we found from our focus groups that many teens feel as though they have no place to go and are stuck between doing very little at home or hanging out on the streets. Secondly, we concluded that all strong teen programs understand and always strive to better serve their youth participants. Therefore, BGC might need to find ways to survey and examine the needs, concerns, and strengths of local teens and design new programming options accordingly. And lastly, we surmised that new programming options should try to be purposeful and relevant and find ways to pull teens in with extrinsic rewards but keep them engaged and continually coming back through intrinsic means such as strong relationships with staff and overall skill development.

In conclusion, we found that the East Palo Alto Boys and Girls Club is an excellent organization that effectively serves the needs of many area youth. Therefore, we hope the Club

adapts the many skills and successes they have developed in working with kids and continue to evolve to better serve the local teen population whose needs remain largely unmet.



Bibliography

- American Youth Policy Forum *Helping Youth Succeed Through Out-of-School Time Programs* January, 2006: <http://www.aypf.org/publications/HelpingYouthOST2006.pdf>
- Anderson, Stephen A., Sabatelli, Ronald M., Kosutic, Iva (2007). "Families, Urban Neighborhood Youth Centers, and Peers as Contexts for Development." *Family Relations*, 56, 346-357.
- Arbreton, Amy, Jessica Sheldon & Carla Herra. (2005) *Beyond Safe Havens: A synthesis of 20 years of research on the Boys and Girls Clubs*.
- Ashley, Jermaine; Samaniego, Dawn; Cheun, Lian. "How Oakland Turns its Back on Teens: A Youth Perspective" *Social Justice*. San Francisco: Fall 1997. Vol. 24, Iss. 3; 170-176.
- Chapter 2 *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* (2002). National Academy of Sciences (2002)
- Chapter 3 *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development* (2002). National Academy of Sciences (2002)
- Costello, Joan, Mark Toles, Julie Spielberger & Joan Wynn. (1999). "History, Ideology and Structure Shape the Organizations that Shape Youth." In *Youth Development: Issues, Challenges, Directions*. Public/Private Ventures. Pp. 186-231.
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly & Barbara Schneider. *Becoming Adult: How Teenagers Prepare for the World of Work*. New York: Basic Books, 2000
- Hansen, David M., Reed W. Larson, and Jodi B. Dworkin. (2003). "What Adolescents Learn in Organized Youth Activities: A Survey of Self-Reported Developmental Experiences." *Journal of Research on Adolescence*. 13(1): 25-55.
- Harvard Family Research Project. "Moving Beyond the Barriers: Attracting and Sustaining Youth Participation in Out-of-School time Programs" Issue 6: July 2004.
- Herrera, Carla, Amy Arbreton. *Increasing Opportunities for Youth in After-School Programs: A Report on the Experiences of Boys and Girls Clubs in Boston and New York City*. Public Private Ventures, 2003.
- Larson, Reed; Jarrett, Robin; Hansen, David; Pearce, Nikki; Sullivan, Patrick; Walker, Kathrin; Watkins, Natasha; Wood, Dustin (2004). "Organized Youth Activities as Contexts for Positive Development." In *Positive Psychology in Practice*, 33, pp. 540-560.
- Mercier, Céline; Piat, Myra; Peladeau, Normand; Dagenais, Christian (2000). "An Application of

- Theory-Driven Evaluation to a Drop-in Youth Center.” In *Evaluation Review*. Vol 24(1), pp. 73-91.
- Pearce, Nickki J.; Larson, Reed W. “How Teens Become Engaged in Youth Development Programs: The Process of Motivational Change in a Civic Activism Organization.” *Applied Developmental Science*. 2006. Vol. 10, No. 3, 121–131.
- Perkins, Daniel F., Bordne, Lynne M., Villarruel, Francisco A., Carlton-Hug, Annelise, Stone, Margaret R., Keith, Joanne G. (2007). "Participation in Structured Youth Programs Why Ethnic Minority Urban Youth Choose to Participate—or Not to Participate." *Youth & Society*, 38, 420-442.
- Roth, Jodie & Jeannie Brooks-Gunn. (2003). “Youth development programs: Risk, prevention and policy.” *Journal of Adolescent Health*. 32:170-182.
- Villarruel, Francisco A, Martha Montero-Sieburth, Christopher Dunbar, and Corliss Wilson Outley. “Dorothy, There is No Yellow Brick Road: the Paradox of Community Youth Development Approaches for Latino and African American Urban Youth”. Chapter from: *Organized Activities as Contexts of Development*. 2005.
- Yohalem, N., Wilson-Ahlstrom, A., with Fischer, S., & Shinn, M. (2007, March) *Measuring Youth Program Quality: A Guide to Assessment Tools*. Washington, D.C.: The Forum for Youth Investment, Impact Strategies, Inc.

APPENDIX A: Successful Local and National Teen Programs

Boys and Girls Club of Woburn, MA

1 Charles Gardner Lane
Woburn, MA 01801
Phone: (781) 935-3777
Fax: (781) 935-5826

<http://www.positive-place.org/>

Contact: Gail Norris, Teen Director
Email: g.norris@positive-place.org

The Boys and Girls Club of Woburn, Massachusetts was founded in November of 1964 and has been an important part of the Woburn community ever since. The club's award-winning teen program began in 1997 and has abundant programming including art classes, a dodge ball league, and X-box tournaments just to name a few. Through listening to members and effectively redesigning an existing small space, club staff, working with local architects, recently constructed a new teen center that includes a theater and 1950's style functioning café.

Boys and Girls Club of Central Florida

2510 N Thacker Ave.
Kissimmee, FL
Phone: (407) 841-6855

<http://www.bgccf.org/index.php>

Contact: J. Mack Reid, Osceola Area Director
Email: mreid@bgccf.org

Since 1944, Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida have been committed to positively impacting the lives of its members. Throughout Central Florida, BGCCF operates out of 17 Club sites and 14 middle school locations and serves 11,000 children. The club's success with teen programming has led to the development of a best practices guide (included in the appendix of this report). BGCCF is currently wrapping up a capital campaign that will result in the construction of a new facility that will double its existing space and include a separate teen center.

BUILD

1600 Adams Drive
Menlo Park, CA 94025
Phone: 650.688.5840
<http://www.build.org>

Contact: Jennifer Sigler—Chief Operating Officer
Email: jsigler@build.org

BUILD's mission is "to provide real-world entrepreneurial experience that empowers youth from under-resourced communities to excel in education, lead in their communities, and succeed professionally." BUILD, founded in East Palo Alto in 1999, now serves 320 students in eight Bay Area schools including four schools in Oakland.

Entrepreneurship is at the heart of the BUILD program. In a 9th through 12th grade, in-school elective students:

- Learn the basics of entrepreneurship while improving academic skills
- Develop a business plan
- Secure seed capital through a pitch to a venture capitalist
- Run their own businesses
- Concentrate on going to college

BUILD is the largest youth business incubator in the nation.

The BUILD program also prepares students for college with academic supports, SAT placements and college guidance services including essay writing and interviewing skills. 100% of BUILD students are accepted into colleges and 95% of students remain in college.

Citizen Schools

c/o McKinley Institute of Technology
Room 125
400 Duane Street
Redwood City, CA 94062
Phone: (650) 363-2720

Contact: Vincent Gay, Recruitment
Email: vincentlgay@gmail.com

<http://www.citizenschools.org/california/>

At Citizen Schools, volunteers from throughout the community work with middle school students on real-world projects in an after-school setting. Students in California learn about engineering from Google, samba from a community dance group, and financial investments from Smith Barney and Goldman Sachs employees. Working side by side with adult experts, young people learn real-world skills that help put them on a pathway to success in school and in life.

Currently serving over 450 students in San Jose, Campbell, Daly City and Redwood City, Citizen Schools plans to operate 10 to 12 sites in California in the next five years. With the partnership of innovative schools, organizational and individual supporters, and our affiliate organization, the YMCA, Citizen Schools engages more California communities in education every year.

Huckleberry Youth Programs

3310 Geary Blvd.
San Francisco, CA 94118
Phone: (415) 668-2622
Fax: (415) 668-0631

Contact: Amy Lightbody, Young Professionals Board
Email: amy.lightbody@stanford.edu

<http://www.huckleberryyouth.org>

Huckleberry Youth Programs (HYP), founded in 1967, seeks to engage homeless, runaway, and other at-risk youth from San Francisco and Marin County in comprehensive services that address health promotion, crisis intervention, and social stabilization. These services cover a wide range of topics, including alcohol and drug use, family relations, mental health challenges, teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted disorders, physical and sexual abuse, and socioeconomic inequities. HYP also offers assistance to teens navigating the social welfare, education, and juvenile justice systems.

To achieve its mission, HYP has created seven distinct but interrelated programs:

1. *Huckleberry House* provides 24-hour crisis intervention and resolution services for runaway and homeless youth.
2. *Nine Grove Lane* provides services similar to Huckleberry House and also serves as Marin County's shelter for abused and neglected adolescents.
3. *Cole Street Clinic* is a collaborative effort of HYP, the San Francisco Department of Public Health, and the University of California at San Francisco's Division of Adolescent Medicine. The Clinic offers age-appropriate and culturally sensitive adolescent health services, which includes HIV-prevention education, peer counseling, and violence prevention.
4. The *Teen Health Program* is a comprehensive health promotion and youth development program in Marin County. The Teen Health Program features a drop-in clinic offering free health services, such as pregnancy testing, STD testing, male and female exams, short-term counseling, and case management. In addition, the Teen Health Program facilitates the Youth Leaders in Progress group.
5. *Youth Leaders in Progress* trains youth to fight pregnancy and STDs in Marin County by conducting research and becoming Peer Health Educators in their communities.
6. The *Community Assessment and Referral Center (CARC)* serves youth ages 11-17 that have been arrested. The program is a partnership between juvenile probation staff, public health officials, the sheriff's and police departments, and community-based organizations to address and case manage youth who are arrested for a variety of misdemeanors and felonies.
7. The *Violence is Preventable (VIP) Girls Project* provides young women, ages 11-18, with assistance in combating violence in their lives. VIP provides counseling, case management, therapy, mentoring, personal development, employment, shelter, family mediation, and parenting classes.

APPENDIX B: Interview Protocol

Part 1: Review organization's website to become familiar with organization's mission, purpose, and program

Part 2: In-person/On-phone Interview. Begin with introduction and purpose of interview.

Part 3: Questions

- From looking at your website I have summarized the major elements of your teen program as "XXX." Are there elements I am missing?
- What do you see as the most successful elements of your program?
- What has allowed you to be successful in those areas?
- What difficulties, if any, has your program had in attracting teens to your program? What have you done in response to those difficulties?
- What difficulties have you had in retaining teens in this program? What have you done in response to those difficulties?

APPENDIX C: Teen "Best Practices" Guide from the BGC of Central Florida

The information that follows is being presented as possible ideas/suggestions for starting/improving teen programs in your Boys & Girls Club. This information was compiled after speaking with Boys & Girls Club staff that are dedicated and committed to effectively serving teens.

TOP TEN LIST

1.) *COMMIT!!!*- There must be a total commitment from the organization/Club to want to serve more teens. This must be prevalent from the Board of Directors to the administrative level down to the part-time staff members that work in the Clubs directly with our teenage members. Teen hours (weekdays including Friday nights until 9:00pm and possibly even on Saturdays), dedicated space (a place the teens can call their own with their own supplies), and funding (money raised to specifically serve our teen population) is paramount to setting the right “culture” in a Club that says, “WE LOVE TO WORK WITH TEENS!”

2.) *Staff is the key!*- When possible, show your commitment to teens by having a full-time staff member devoted to serving teens. Diversity on your staff team is important also, having a nice mixture of different genders and ethnicities for the teens to identify with. Some absolute critical components to remember when working with teens: communicate often (speak with your members daily and *listen* to what they are telling you), be proactive (if you have noticed that a teen has stopped coming to the Club, pick up the phone and see what is going on/why they have stopped coming to the Club), teens need discipline too (most teens will test the boundaries of what they can get away with but maintain consistent and fair discipline policies with them), and incentives make things fun (sometimes staff will forget that the older members also enjoy working for those special incentives in the Club). No matter what the Club’s facilities, amenities, and programs look like, if the staff at the Club do not show a complete willingness to work with the teens, that Club will probably not be as successful at retaining teenagers. Staff must be patient, flexible, consistent and understanding when dealing with the teens and realize that they will know if we, as staff, truly want to work with them or not.

3.) *Character and Leadership Development Programs*- Several common threads run through those Boys & Girls Clubs that are currently effectively serving teens and one of those threads is having an active Torch Club, Keystone Club and Youth of the Year program. These are the hallmark programs for teenage Boys & Girls Club members. These programs provide many members with their first taste of leadership and also teach the importance of positive civic involvement. The benefits of running these programs in your Club are many: members learn about the democratic process, they improve public speaking skills, they learn how to work together to achieve goals, they learn how to work with people from various backgrounds, etc. One of the consistent themes that arose when speaking with staff about their programs was that teens loved to work on “projects”. Not meet every week just to sit and meet but to actually get out and do things either for the benefit of their Club or their community. Another was to try to get the Keystone members to a Keystone conference so they can experience travel, meet teens

from across the nation and truly see their hard work pay off. Usually, the staff's experience is if you can get enough of your members to attend a conference once, that first time provides enough of an impact and momentum to encourage continued participation in programs at the Club.

4.) *Transportation*- One of the major hurdles we have found hindering teens from attending the Club more often is transportation. When possible, provide transportation *to* and *from* the Club. For those Clubs that have vehicles, arrange your after school pick-ups to include local middle and high schools. Often, parents will not make the extra effort to ensure their teenagers are in a positive after school environment because they are "old enough" to take care of themselves or themselves and their younger siblings. Obviously, we as staff know this is a recipe for disaster as the teens will often be tempted to follow others and will quickly find themselves making negative choices and suffering the negative consequences. Also, when possible for those Clubs with transportation, offer to take members home at the conclusion of teen hours. The members will be more likely to stay at the Club and be involved in more programming if they know they can have a safe, dependable way to get home each evening. For those Clubs that do not have regular, consistent transportation try to think of other ways to secure transportation for the teens even if it is only occasionally (partnering with organizations that do have transportation like churches, PAL, etc.).

5.) *Food*- We, as staff, want our teen members to make a commitment to stay at the Club and be active during teen hours. So as a result, we need to try and have food available to feed the members during this time (6:00pm – 9:00pm). Obviously, the members would normally be eating dinner at home (hopefully, although not always) during these times so it is important (and popular by the way) to be able to provide something for them. Clubs come in different shapes and sizes with equally different budget shapes and sizes. Even if it is not possible to serve food daily because of lack of proper equipment or funding, try to make it a priority to at least provide a meal/snack for the teens whenever possible. Some Clubs have instituted Cooking Clubs where a modest kitchen is used by staff and members to plan and cook their nightly meals/snacks. This keeps the members involved and allows them to have a say in what happens at the Club. It also helps them to develop an additional skill. Also, don't forget we have many local and national restaurant partners that may be willing to help either consistently or on an occasional basis.

6.) *"Bait and Switch"*- More times than not, teens will be attracted or "baited" to the Club because of things like game rooms, computers, and gymnasiums. This is to be expected as teens are generally not out looking to have their character built and their leadership skills enhanced. Once the staff members begin to build positive relationships and develop a trust factor with the members, they can be "switched" over to the specific programs that your Club offers. The key for staff members is to stay focused on and not forget about the "switch" part. It should be the goal to have all teen members active in all five core program areas within the Club. Also important is to understand the difference between interest and needs-based programming. As an example, you might have a member that is attracted to the Club for the sole purpose of their *interest* in playing basketball. Once you have gotten to know that member, you see that their *need* is some money management education/training. In this example, the member would be encouraged to attend the Money Matters program and you would have successfully balanced their interests vs. their needs.

7.) *Special Events/Field Trips*- Conducting field trips and/or special events in your Club will make things fun, interesting and exciting for the teen members. Answer the following question: What is the most used phrase/statement/complaint by any teen Club member at your Club? Probably something to the effect of, "I'm bored" or "There is nothing to do here". Special events and field trips will give the teens something to work/shoot for, will give them something to look forward to and will help to break up the monotony of their day. Use the teens to help the staff plan and organize the events/trips because we may think we know what the teens want to do and where they want to go but why guess when we can use their ideas and suggestions to plan together. Another strategy to get teens involved in other areas of the Club is to make their participation in these special activities based on their attitude, participation, attendance, and school achievement. In other words, create an incentive program to reward the teens with these special events and field trips. Remember, it takes a total commitment to serve teens. They are most likely going to want to do special events at the Club Friday evenings and will want to go on field trips on Saturdays. If at all possible, try to set your staffing patterns to allow for these accommodations to be made.

8.) *Be CREATIVE!*- The programming your Club offers for your teens MUST be fun and creative. It is easier to keep the interests of the younger members just by displaying energy and enthusiasm, but you will need that and more when it comes to working with the teens. Character and leadership development programming is crucial to the overall health and success of your teen program but there will need to be more offered to keep the teens interested and active. Some examples Clubs have used include the following: Monday Night Flag Football (members participate in a flag football tournament on Mondays and then have dinner together), Fashion Club (members learn how to sew and make their own fashion designs using different fabrics), Point League Basketball (instead of just playing ball, statistics are kept and players are ranked and try to finish the month in the top five), "theme" weeks/events, college tours, dances, etc. Use your creativity in planning the program choices but don't forget to listen as well because the teens will tell you what they are interested in.

9.) *Don't forget about the parents*- Often we forget that the parents also need to know what the Club offers for the teens and what the benefits of consistently attending the program can be. Hosting some sort of orientation process is a great way to communicate to the parents what the Club has to offer for their children. New parents to the program generally do not know about all the choices, opportunities and programs that the Club can offer. Once these benefits are communicated, the parents will usually be on board and supportive of their children attending the Club on a regular basis.

10.) *Recruit, recruit, recruit*- A general message continued to surface when talking with staff that have been successful building and sustaining their teen programs: "Do not accept mediocrity!" If your teen program is not attracting the number of teens that you know it should, then put the "feet to the street" and start recruiting. You will have to go where the teens are in order to inform them of what is going on in the Club. Once established, your teen program should pretty much recruit on its own through word of mouth. In other words, use the teens you have to get other teens into the Club. Also, don't forget that your future teens are now in elementary school so begin to cultivate those relationships and talk to them about what they want to do at the Club when they become teens. Another successful strategy that some Clubs use is allowing teens that

have court ordered community service hours to complete their requirements at the Club (as long as the offense is not sexual or violent in nature). Often, the teens come in with the attitude that once they complete their hours they will leave the Club. As staff, we work to show them they can stay active at the Club even after their hours have been completed and most of the time, that is exactly what happens. As a matter of fact, several Club staff have stated that some of their most active Club members have come to the Club via the community service hours route.

APPENDIX D: BGCP Focus Group Protocol

Part 1: Introduction and Names

Part 2: Questions

- How long have you been coming to the Boys & Girls Club?
- What brought you here today?
- Are your friends here? If not, where are they instead?
- Think about your friends who don't come to the Clubhouse after school. Where do they go instead?
- What is your favorite thing to do at the Clubhouse?
- What is your least favorite thing to do at the Clubhouse?
- Imagine you could create the perfect program for you. What kinds of things would you like in your "ideal" program? What would you NOT include?

APPENDIX E: EPA Focus Group Protocol

Part 1: Introduction and Names

Part 2: Questions

- Tell me what you like to do after school.
- Where did you hang out after school yesterday?
- What do you think about the Boys and Girls Club? Is that a place you'd consider going? Why or why not?
- If you wouldn't consider going to the BGC, what would make you consider it (either an activity or a program they had)?
- What would you like to do after you graduate from high school?