Introduction to Youth Development

CONNECTICUT NETWORK
FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

CONNECTICUT AFTER SCHOOL NETWORK

SEL4CT

Connecticut Children's Collective

Purpose of Session

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To cover the fundamentals of youth development theory and practice and identify the connection to working with youth in out-of-school time programs.

Handouts:

1. Developmental Theories
2. Connecticut After School Network Quality Self-Assessment Tool (CT-QSAT)
3. Search Institute Developmental Relationships Framework
4. Filling in the Gaps (Canzano, Anthony, & Scott, 2016)

Welcome/Housekeeping:

Perform introductions, state the session topic, how long it will last, when/if refreshments will be served, and the location of restrooms. Thank the host.

Trainer Tips:

Welcomes set the stage for training. Be sure to thank the host agency for providing meeting space and/or refreshments. Sharing housekeeping details such as the location of restrooms and the schedule of activities prevents interruptions during your session.

Letting people know when food will be served helps participants to stay focused. Introduce any new participants or guests so all feel comfortable.

Opening Activity

Worksheets

1. Tell the participants that for this opening activity you will be the afterschool program leader and they will be the children and youth in the program.
2. Distribute the attached handouts (use one or both) for "Math is Fun"
   a. Tell them that this is our fun activity for the afternoon.
   b. Take a look!
   c. Allow a minute for participants to review the content of the handout.
   d. Say "Finish your snack quickly so we will have plenty of time for fun."
   e. Show great enthusiasm for the activity by saying, "I can't wait to have fun with math!"

Trainer Tips:

Ice breakers are part of a good presenter's toolkit. Ice breakers can be used for introducing a topic, team building, or tension reducing activities. Be selective when choosing an icebreaker activity. Make sure you include a debriefing time so participants understand the purpose of the activity.

Debrief (1st Activity):

1. Ask participants:
   a. Are you excited to do these sheets?
   b. How do you think the children and youth in your programs feel about these activities?
   c. Many afterschool programs are required to include an academic component in their program. How can we do this while incorporating youth development principles and responding to youth voice?
   d. And, how can we do this so that youth are engaged in the program?
2. This workshop will look at ways we can foster positive youth development and respect youth voice in the activities we implement.

Opening Activity

Trainer Tips:

Trainers should wait for replies to open ended questions. Some participants need to think about their reply for an extra few seconds. New trainers sometimes find it difficult to wait (seconds seem like hours!) and will supply the answers for participants.

It is sometimes helpful to practice counting silently to ten while waiting for a reply.

CT-QSAT (Section 1: Relationships - Interactions and Engagement)
(See Handout)

6. Children/youth are empowered to request, design, and/or select activities that follow emerging interests.
   1. Look at the "Zooming In" Handout from the CT-QSAT
   2. Programs that support the expression of youth voice and foster leadership are examples of high quality programs.
   3. This workshop will help us to explore ways that we can foster youth development and leadership in our afterschool program.

Lecture Part 1:

1. **Recognizing youth as leaders**
   a. Research:
      i. Research shows that when children can make choices and take leadership roles they become empowered, become more engaged in the activities of the program and feel more "ownership" of the afterschool program
      ii. Research shows that there are academic benefits from youth engagement in leadership activities.
      iii. Programs that are recognized as high quality foster youth voice and participation
   b. What does a youth leader look like?
      i. Children and youth come into our programs with many different types of personalities – which type is most likely to exhibit leadership characteristics?
      ii. All children and youth have potential to be a leader
      iii. We will use a "lens" designed to help identify the seeds of leadership
      iv. The key is empowering each youth by nurturing those seeds
      v. The Lens- Leadership potential begins with recognizing where the potential is located.

1. **Leadership theory**
   a. Bass (1990)Theory of Leadership
      i. Trait Theory
      ii. Some personality traits may lead people into leadership roles
   b. Great Events Theory
      i. A crisis or important event may cause a person to rise to the occasion.
   c. Transformational Leadership Theory: "Leaders are made not born.
      i. People can choose to become leaders
      ii. People can learn leadership skills
      iii. Transformational leadership theory is the most commonly accepted one.

Group Activity 2:

Discussion Question

Break into pairs or small groups and discuss the three theories.

1. Which one do you believe? What have been your experiences? (both personally and in working with children)
2. Each group will summarize and share their thoughts for the larger group.
3. Allow 5 minutes for this discussion.
4. (If using the accompanying PowerPoint, ask participants if they can determine which of the two children in the photo has leadership potential. The point is that it is impossible to tell so each child must be nurtured to develop their potential to the fullest extent.)

Trainer Tips:

Listen for the noise level as the participants discuss the questions. A decrease in the volume level will indicate that participants are ready for the next step. This is a good time to ask if groups are ready to share or if they need a few extra minutes.

Lecture Part 2:

1. **Start with clear expectations**
   a. Sometimes we as adults have expectations of the children we work with that do not match where they are developmentally.
      i. Understanding key developmental milestones helps us be more intentional about the programming we offer. This is also true for behavior and classroom management.
      ii. Think of how you would address an issue with a first or second grader versus a middle school youth.
      iii. In understanding these milestones, programs are able to provide opportunities that are developmentally appropriate.
      iv. This includes youth leadership, mentoring (older to younger children) that promotes social, emotional, and academic skill building.

1. **Understand the connection to developmental theory in your work**
   a. One of the handouts for this module is the Journal of Expanded Learning Opportunities (JELO) article by Canzano, Anthony, and Scott (2016) that provides illustrations on how to link developmental theory to program practices.
   b. Erikson's 8 stages of development begins as infants and ends as seniors. Each stage involves crises that shape the development of the individual (being resolved or unresolved).
      i. Thinking specifically with a school-age population, the crisis for ages 6-12 is industry vs. inferiority.
      ii. How we provide opportunities for industrious exploration in our programs allows youth to feel a sense of pride and accomplishment, even when the experiment fails teachable moments are present in reflecting with the group on why the result went the way it did?

Lecture Part 2:

1. Piaget presents 4 developmental stages, with ages 7 to 11 years in the Concrete Operational stage.
   a. Similar to Erikson's industry vs. inferiority, Piaget suggests that logical thinking, the concept of conservation in numbers, mass, and weight are recognized, and objects can be classified by several features and children can place them in order.
2. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory states that the individual is impacted by the environment around them starting with the family, peers, school, health services, and church (microsystem), coupled to this in another concentric circle is the mesosystem and exosystem (neighbors, local politics, mass media, industry), which is finally surrounded by the Macrosystem (attitudes and ideas within the culture).
   a. The interplay between these developmental theories provides the basis for meeting children and families where they are in their communities to best serve their needs.
3. Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory
   a. Planning Activities based on Multiple Intelligence Theory (Georgia School Age Care Alliance)
4. Verbal-Linguistic: Writers' Workshop, Literature circles, Readers' Theater, Poetry, Journals, Interviews, Debating, Teaching others, Storytelling, Creative writing, alphabetizing, Class discussions
5. Logical-Mathematical: Predicting, Computers, Venn diagrams, Puzzles, Surveys, Classifying, Research projects, Following recipes, Sequencing, Scientific experiments, Measuring, Outlining
6. Visual-Spatial: Illustrating information, Guided imagery, Filmmaking, Webbing, Map-making, Collages, Cartoons, Murals, Designing posters, Sculpting, Painting, Drawing, Observations, Graphs, Flow charts

Lecture Part 2:

1. Bodily-Kinesthetic: Scavenger hunts, Manipulatives, Performing, Acting, Computers, Building, Sports, Crafts, Action stories, Science experiments, Physical exercise, Simulations, Miming, Dancing
2. Musical: Writing lyrics, Music in nature, Studying musicians, Musical games, Haiku, Drawing/writing to music, Cultural music, Rhythmic patterns, Time period music, Making instruments, Singing, Playing instruments
3. Interpersonal: Interviewing, Sharing, Class discussions, Character webs, Problem solving, Cooperative activities, Establishing group rules, Cross-age tutoring, Group story writing, Jigsawing information, Teaching others, Use different perspectives.
4. Intrapersonal: Journals, Independent projects, Self reflection, Personal time-lines, Personalized contracts, Family tree, Autobiographies, Likes/Dislikes, Setting goals, Coat of arms, Imagery/Dreams
5. Naturalist: Gardening, hiking, animal identification, recycling
6. Multiple Intelligence Theory shows us that each youth is an individual
   a. Each child brings their own experiences and leadership potential
   b. One child may be strong in art (visual- spatial intelligence) while another may be strong in Intrapersonal Intelligence
   c. Together they can create a student led newspaper

1. The Search Institute expanded its work on the 40 developmental assets in 2018 to create the Developmental Relationships framework.
   a. Five parts, the core of it is focused on creating pathways to foster positive relationships between peer to peer, and youth to adult.
      i. Express Care, which shows children that a person can be dependable, listen to them, believe in them, and provide encouragement to name a few,
      ii. Challenge Growth, which holds children accountable, helps them fail forward, and stretch and expect their best.

      i. Providing support. This helps them navigate situations, set boundaries, know someone will advocate for them, and empower them.

      ii. Sharing power is about mutual respect. How they are included in decision making, collaborative activities, leadership opportunities, and feeling respected makes a world of difference in the relationship building process.

      iii. and Expand Possibilities. As we have discussed throughout this section, afterschool does all of these things. Helping to inspire, broaden horizons, and connect with the larger world to grow.

   a. These five elements help in being planful in the activities and offerings you provide in your program.

      i. Thinking ahead to what is the purpose of the activity?

      ii. How will it enhance their knowledge or understanding of the topic?

      iii. Is it something new to them, something familiar?

1. Out-of-school time programs provide the space for experimenting, learning and testing social cues, learning to cooperate and work together.

   a. According to Durlak and Weissberg (2013) when programs have four distinct elements (SAFE) sequenced, active, focused, and explicit, regardless of setting or focus, children perform better academically, socially, and emotionally even if the program is not academically focused.

   b. Developmental theory provides a roadmap for planning to ensure age-appropriate, high-quality activities are being offered daily that supports the children and recognizes their local community.

   c. Putting developmental theory into practice may sound daunting, but it is something that you probably are already doing in your practice. It is typically small tweaks to practice that make a huge difference in program delivery.

Lecture Part 2:

1. Research shows that the one caring adult in a child's life, one, can determine if a child stays in or drops out of school. You make a difference.

1. BREAK

Section 2: Putting developmental theory into practice

1. Connecting the idea to prior activities or learning helps tee up the idea or introduce something that will have a longer duration.
   a. Having activities that are connected over a period of time (not too long or too short) helps engage the children and youth in the program. When doing this, we recommend using the BLT method, nope not bacon, lettuce, tomato, but Big Idea, Linking, and Teaser.
   b. There are two sets that bookend the activity. How we introduce the activity, connect it to something else, and then ask a teaser question to peak interest makes all the difference in engagement.
   c. At the close of the activity, reflection is key to help with metacognition of the knowledge gained. Reflection helps the children and youth think about thinking...with questions that draw them out.
   d. This could be connections between the introduction and reflection, connecting it to the outside world, or what they would like to learn more about or do with the information.
   e. Understanding developmentally appropriate practice helps us gauge questions that will be understandable and relatable to the children and youth we serve.

Section 2: Putting developmental theory into practice

2. The BLT in the beginning of the activity introduces the big idea, links it to previous activities, and teases what they will be talking about.

    a. Once the activity is underway, these ideas are reinforced in a hands-on, active and focused direction. Being a math activity, a visual representation of bars and graphs could help a child struggling with the concept understand it better.

    b. Additionally, active learning sticks because the children are able to manipulate the environment based on their developmental level to practice concepts they can understand.

    c. This emphasizes the importance of developmentally appropriate practice so the activity is grounded in a way they can understand. Finally, at the close of the activity comes the reflection.

1. Again, the BLT comes into play to connect the introduction and reinforce concepts learned.
2. BLT Example - Math Moves!
3. How youth development helps you connect:

    a. Supporting youth development comes down to the relationships we build with the children and families we work with.

        i. This starts at arrival time and goes beyond the end of the program day.

        ii. What you offer for activities is only part of the experience a child has in your program.

        iii. How your activities are not only designed, but more importantly implemented, makes all the difference.

    b. Planning and developmentally appropriate practice

        i. Intentional programming based on interest

        ii. Group by grades or age ranges to tailor programming

Section 2: Putting developmental theory into practice

     a. Behavior management and grouping

          i. Smaller group sizes

          ii. Opportunities for conflict resolution

     b. Youth leadership and mentoring

          i. Youth have the ability to contribute meaningfully to the program

          ii. Staff act as a role model and mentor

     c. Social-emotional and academic skill building

          i. Program structure offers opportunities for practice

          ii. Concepts are reinforced through skill-building activities

     d. How you see your role as a staff person also matters.

1. Watch this brief video from Simon Sinek on "Finding Your Why"

Debrief:

1. Ask participants to think about the children we experience in our programs every day.
   a. Are there children who come to mind when you think about developmental theory in the context of your work?
   b. How can we use their strengths to develop leadership opportunities for them?
2. A Lens for Recognizing Leadership Potential
   a. There are three areas to use when recognizing leadership potential and encouraging youth voice.
      i. Youth as Individuals
      ii. Asset Based Framework
      iii. Valuing Diverse Strengths and Perspectives Equally
      iv. Youth as Individuals

Debrief:

1. Remembering to see Youth as Individuals is the first step to giving youth a voice in their after school program.
   a. Do we know the youth in our program well enough to be able to recognize their individual potential?
      i. Do we see their perspectives, ideas, experiences, strengths, and dreams?
      ii. Do we respect their perspectives, ideas, experiences, strengths, and dreams?
2. Use an Asset Based Approach
   a. Look for each child's strengths and build on these.
   b. Recognition and exercise of each child's strengths builds
      i. Confidence
      ii. Persistence
      iii. Self control
      iv. Improves communication abilities.
   c. Recognition of children's diverse strengths enables our lens to focus on hearing their voice.
   d. Valuing Diverse Strengths and Perspectives Equally

Debrief:

1. Youth feel marginalized when their thoughts or ideas are discounted as "you don't understand."
    a. Example: When asked what he would like to do this year a youth responds, "I'd like to build a skate park."
    b. Do you take the youth seriously or discount his suggestion?
        i. The opportunity for leadership is:
        ii. Ask the youth to do a service learning project around cleaning up an existing skate park or researching how to create one.
        iii. Use woodworking skills to construct a mini-skate park to learn how to design a park.
    c. Either strategy encourages the youth to explore his/her voice even if the idea sounds outlandish, crazy, or impossible.
2. Ask participants:
    a. Do we value the diverse worldviews, perspectives, and strengths that our youth bring?
    b. Do we value the strengths that match our own or those that are different?
    c. Do we recognize and value a child's interpersonal skills as much as we value another child's ability to listen?
3. What does a leader look like?
    a. Characteristics:
        i. High energy
        ii. Respected by peers
        iii. Socially, intuitively adept
        iv. Requires staff attention
    b. Think of a child that has these characteristics.
        i. These are often the "class clowns," "attention seekers," "oh no, here he/she comes."
        ii. We need to switch the way we perceive these children from a "deficit" model to an "asset" model.
        iii. Characteristics we find annoying are the characteristics of leadership. Learn to use these to foster leadership abilities.

Group Activity 3:

Activity: Ask participants to think of a challenging child that they have worked with.
1. In small groups ask them to reflect and then share:
   a. Identify three to five strengths that this child possesses
   b. What makes this child stand out?
   c. What are some "leader actions" that they exhibit?
   d. List some steps you can take to harness and build leadership skills.
2. Allow 5-10 minutes for discussion.
   a. If needed prompt with reminders of:
      i. Developmental theories covered
      ii. "Lens for Recognizing Leadership Potential."
3. Ask participants to share some of their thoughts with the larger group.

Trainer Tips:
Reflective questions help participants to internalize the workshop content and make it their own. By thinking about a particular child (in confidence) participants can begin to apply the new knowledge.

Conclusion:
1. Points to Ponder (Use easel paper to record responses to the following questions)
   a. What good does it do us as youth workers to be able to recognize what leadership looks like in action?
   b. Thinking about the current structure of your after school program:
      i. Three ways you can build opportunities for youth to practice these leadership skills
      ii. Three ways you can continue to foster these skills
2. What is one thing you will change in your practice as a result of this session?
   a. **Remember, it does not have to be a big change, tiny tweaks along the way lead to greater program improvement over time.**

Group Activity 3:

1. Most activities can be easily implemented and have the potential to foster youth leadership and voice.
2. By combining many of these strategies you can create group projects based on children's strengths.

IX. Read the following quotes to participants:
1. Leadership is
   a. "Believing in people before they have proved themselves is the key to motivating people to reach their potential." John Maxwell
   b. "Becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself. That simple, that difficult." Warren Bennis
   c. We cannot help support youth on this difficult journey of becoming themselves and hence, becoming leaders, if we are unable to recognize and believe in the potential that they bring with them.

For More Information: For more information: add search, canzano, qsat

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- Whitaker, D. L. (2002). Multiple Intelligences and After School Environments, Nashville TN. School Age Notes