Chaperone Training: Providing A Toolkit For Youth Meetings That Increase Learning And Life Skill Development

Program Description
The Curriculum was designed to increase youth content learning and Life Skills development on chaperoned trips. The curriculum provides a basic outline for engaging youth through pre-event activities, event meetings, and post-event activities. The activities and meetings are engaging and use experiential education tools and techniques. The curriculum supports chaperones, multiple community building activities, group naming activities, experiential activities, and closing reflections from which to choose. Three Life Skills were targeted for all groups to work on during the meetings. On trips there are physical safety concerns, so Personal Safety was a life skill selected. Sharing a hotel room and working closely with new people was addressed by which to choose. Three Life Skills were targeted for all groups to activities, experiential activities, and closing reflections from using the curriculum, with the attitude and knowledge to continue using the tools and techniques for other youth work situations.

Expected Outcomes
The primary desired outcome, for youth participating in the curriculum, would be the youth's self-reporting higher learning and greater growth in Life Skills, when compared to youth who didn't experience these lessons. However, the gains were not expected to be high, since the Know Your Government (KYG) content curriculum already includes direction to chaperones that developing Life Skills is key to the experience. Also, the chaperones would report observing KYG youth learning Life Skills quicker than just trips that they have chaperoned. The secondary desired outcome would be chaperones reporting satisfaction in using the curriculum, with the attitude and knowledge to continue using the tools and techniques for other youth work situations.

Targeted Group
The curriculum is for any youth on chaperoned trips. The curriculum targets chaperones who desire to improve the content learned on a trip and support the development of Life Skills. The first pilot of the curriculum was used on the 2011 WSU 4-H KYG program, which connects youth in 9-12th grade with our political process. Youth participate in a mock election experience, stay in Olympia, and meet our legislators. The chaperones all were over 18 and leaders with formal 4-H training in the mission and vision of 4-H developing Life Skills in youth. 50 youth from nine counties piloted the curriculum with 175 youth from 22 counties as the control group.

Research Base
While there are many resources for risk management and the responsibilities of chaperones, there are few on how to run a highly engaging meeting, proactively managing trip behavior, and improving learning and Life Skills. Little chaperoning training has been identified, and what does exist is largely comprised of manuals, many of which are print-based (Parsons, et al., 2000). Griffin & Summington 1997, Wood, E. (2010). An observation of 200 parent chaperones showed that many chaperones assume roles center to the expectations of the trip planners (Wood, 2010). Also, chaperones engage in less discussion than trained teachers (Burnsyle & Costello, 2005). While much evidence exists showing the issues with chaperoneing, there are many identified solutions.

Solutions include training in roles, Life Skill development, instructional social interactions, and structured tools. The issues with chaperones can be mitigated with education on the roles of chaperones (Wood, 2010; Parsons & Breine, 2000). Two aspects to include in training are Life Skill development and social interaction. When providing social interaction, learning improves (Falk & Dierking 2000, Biggs, S. 2002). Also, the social adult-youth interaction plays an important role in helping youth obtain these Life Skills (Fogarty et al., 2002; Paixley and Ferran, 2005). Another suggestion for improving outcomes in the inclusion of structure and tools for encouraging discussion during and after the trip (Parsons, C. and Miller, K. 1995, Knodel, 2006). The common finding is that more training and resources for chaperones positively impact the youth learning.

Life Skills: Gained: Chaperone Meeting Curriculum

Conclusions: Youth Content and Life Skills
Youth Content
The chaperoned curriculum group showed an 11.2% higher gain compared to the control group in content learned. Since this number is small, no strong conclusions can be drawn on the trip meetings having a greater impact on knowledge gain than the control group. However, with the total gain reported as a 38.7% increase in knowledge of media’s influence on politics, it is important to acknowledge this as a positive outcome.

Youth Life Skill
The Chaperoning Curriculum group showed a 36.44% higher gain in Life Skills compared to the control group. This percentage is significant and shows the success of the curriculum in helping to support youth's learning Life Skills on the trip.

Conclusion for chaperones
Chaperones reported that the cards were successful in engaging the youth during the trip. Six out of seven reported that they were using the cards with youth in other contexts. This change in behavior is another measure of success for the program and will have further positive impacts on youth learning after the Chaperoning KYG event.

Acknowledgements
Thank you to the initial group that worked on the WSU 4-H chaperoning guidelines which promoted chaperone training.

Special thanks to Jan Klein who coordinated KYG and supported the training and evaluation of KYG participants.

References


Brian Brandt, MIT Assistant Professor
WSU Extension
bbrandt@wsu.edu