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Dr. Montague, as an external evaluator, has conducted numerous program evaluations over the past 15 years for a variety of programs funded by various agencies and organizations including the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the South Florida Inner-City Games After School Programs, Cool School Inc., and the Miami-Dade County Juvenile Courts. She has also conducted numerous research projects at the University of Miami, where she is a professor, and has over 50 publications.

ARISE Foundation Title IV Community Service Grant Project Results

Results indicated that the project had a very positive impact on the middle and high school students served. Additionally, the project was viewed very favorably by the students' teachers and parents as well as the elementary school children who participated.

Impact on Students Served

1. Behavior reports

- Report card conduct grades for the students averaged 2.6 on a 4-point scale (C-).

2. Discipline referral rate

- Middle school students' discipline referrals, which were the reason for referral and placement in the alternative school setting, seemed to decline somewhat after placement.
- High school students' discipline referrals decreased substantially from 2003 to 2004. Only 6 students were suspended in 2004 (range of 3 to 11 days).

3. Increased graduation rate: not applicable.

4. Attendance

- On average, students in the program at the two sites attended school at least 90% of the time.

5. Academic grades

- Students' report card grades for English/language arts averaged 3.2 on a 4-point scale (B).
- Students' report card grades for mathematics averaged 2.8 on a 4-point scale (C-).

6. Chapter quiz scores: Mastery = a score of at least 75% on the quiz.

- Self-esteem: 90% of the students met mastery on the quiz.
- Networking, jobs, and money: 100% of the students met mastery on the quiz.
- Anger management: 99% of the students met mastery on the quiz.
- Substance abuse and guns: 100% of the students met mastery on the quiz.
- Violence and conflict: 95% of the students met mastery on the quiz.

Impact on Those Who Were Served

7. Summary of focus groups with students and staff, service learning questionnaires completed by students; and teacher and parent surveys.

Focus groups (see transcripts later in the report):

McArthur North Senior High School

The students were articulate and extremely positive about the program. They discussed their relationships with the younger children and how the program had a positive impact on their self-esteem. They took the program very seriously and talked about the joys of teaching the youngsters. They also mentioned how they learned as much from the children as the children learned from them. All of the participants agreed that the program was very valuable, and they thought that all high school students should have a similar opportunity because of the effect it has on their academic performance, behavior, attitude, and confidence.

The teacher interviewed expressed complete satisfaction with the program and thought the program had an enormous impact on the students' self-esteem and school performance. One suggestion for improvement was to include more cultural awareness in the lessons to help youngsters understand the differences and similarities in cultures they encounter. The teacher thought the program was "fantastic."

500 Role Models Middle School

The students loved the program. They talked about how much they learned about teaching others and how much they learned about themselves. A few mentioned that they were afraid at first but then developed the confidence to work effectively with the elementary school children. Like the high school students, they felt the program helped them with their self-esteem, academic skills, and attitude. Also, like the older students, they would have liked to have more time with the younger students.

The teachers saw the enormous impact the program had on these students with respect to school performance, behavior, self-confidence, and ability to identify with others. They specifically mentioned that they "now appreciate what a teacher does." They thought the program was very important in helping youngsters develop communication skills, empathy, and academics.

West Little River Elementary School

The students loved the program and were able to discuss what they did in the program. Their favorite topic and activity was the friendship lesson. They thought the older students related to them and their problems and that the lessons were fun. They were able to identify the important lessons, for example, the dangers of drugs and guns and what to do when a stranger approaches.

The teachers were all very positive about the program and agreed that the students were excited when their mentors came to work with them. They also remarked on the excellent friendship lesson. They all felt the program had an extremely positive effect on the children's behavior, academic skills, and attitude. The only improvement noted was to increase the amount of time the students worked with the children.

Service Learning Questionnaire:

5 questions on a scale of 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree): ($n = 65$)

- I like this service learning project. 88% agreed or strongly agreed.
- I am helping young children. 88% agreed or strongly agreed.
- This project helps me do something for others. 94% agreed or strongly agreed.
- This project builds my self-esteem. 86% agreed or strongly agreed.
- I would like to be involved in other service learning projects. 91% agreed or strongly agreed.

Teacher Survey:

4 questions on a scale of 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree): ($n = 6$)

- My students benefited from the ARISE Life Management Skills lesson. 100% agreed or strongly agreed.
- The mentor from Miami-Dade College was a positive role model for my students. 100% agreed or strongly agreed (4 responded).
- The students' involvement in the community service project enhanced their self-esteem. 100% agreed or strongly agreed.
- Being involved in the ARISE Life Skills and in a community service project helped improve their attendance. 50% agreed or strongly agreed.

Parent Survey:

5 questions on a scale of 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree): ($n = 23$)

- My son/daughter's attendance has improved. 87% agreed or strongly agreed.
- My son/daughter's behavior seems to have improved. 74% agreed or strongly agreed.
- My son/daughter is not getting into as much trouble now. 70% agreed or strongly agreed.
- My son/daughter seems to be controlling anger better. 74% agreed or strongly agreed.
- My son/daughter has enjoyed the community service project. 91% agreed or strongly agreed.

It should be noted that the program initially enrolled 40 students at McArthur North Senior High School and 40 at the 500 Role Models Middle School ($n = 80$). These schools are both alternative schools. Students who attend these schools are referred by their school principals for disciplinary reasons or by the juvenile courts. Consequently, these students have a history of disciplinary actions that led to placement in the alternative school and are considered to be at high risk for truancy, dropping out of school, and delinquency. On a more positive note, students who are successful in the alternative setting may be returned to their home school. Thus, students may be withdrawn from the alternative school or the program for several reasons. As a result of withdrawals or excessive absenteeism, data are reported for 30 students at the middle school and 14 at the high school ($n = 44$).

Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted at McArthur North Senior High School, 500 Role Models Middle School, and West Little River Elementary School on April 26, 2004.

The following questions were asked at the high school and middle school:

Youth questions:

1. Tell me about your experience doing community service at the elementary school.
2. What did you learn about yourself by your community service experience?
3. How did having ARISE groups at school and then teaching elementary school children important life skill topics help you in school?
4. Tell me in what ways did you help the elementary school children?
5. Why should other young men and women participate in the program?
6. What could ARISE do to improve the program?

Instructor questions:

1. In what ways were your students helped by the ARISE community service project?
2. Tell me about the important life skill lessons they learned.
3. Tell me in what ways this community service life skills project helped them academically.
4. How did this community service life skills project help them regarding their behavior?
5. Share how you feel this community service project helped enhance their feelings of self worth.
6. How do you think this program could be improved?

The following questions were asked at the elementary school.

Youth questions.

1. What did you learn when the boys and girls came from the 500 Role Models Academy?
2. What topic did you like the most that they talked about?
3. What activity did you most enjoy?
4. How do you feel about the bigger kids that worked with you?
5. Why did you like to have the middle school kids come?
6. Tell me what the middle school kids did when they came to visit?

Instructor questions.

1. In what ways were your students helped by the ARISE community service project?
2. Tell me about the important life skills lessons they learned.
3. What do you feel was the best part of the project?
4. Explain how it might have helped your children with their attitude.
5. Tell me about the behavior of your students on the day the middle school students come.
6. Tell me in what ways this project has helped your children academically.
7. How do you think the program can be improved?

McArthur North Senior High – 7 students (3 males, 4 females)

1. Tell me about your experience doing community service at the elementary school.

- Working with kids, making them feel good, teaching what I know.
 - Exciting and hands-on, one-on-one.
 - What I might want to do in the future.
 - Very exciting. I never had this in elementary school.
 - The kids enjoy it and I did too.
 - Help kids' whose parents don't talk to them.
 - Teaches them about strangers and drugs. It helps them.
 - We develop special relationships with the kids.
 - It's fun and we learned different ways to deal with different pressures in a positive way.
 - They were happy to see us. We taught them new things.
 - I taught them, and they learned.
2. What did you learn about yourself by your community service experience?
 - No matter what it takes, if you put your mind to it, you can do it.
 - I'm in grade 12, but I am not on grade 12 level, so I was afraid not knowing what to do, but I did it.
 - You learn more from the kids than they do from you. We put on positive impressions for them.
 - I learned the potential I had to get out there and teach kids lessons on self-esteem.
 - I will never forget it because it was so positive, and for me because I get hotheaded. I learned to stay positive and it helped me.
 - That I can have patience, not only from teaching, but also for other things.
 3. How did having ARISE groups at school and then teaching elementary school children important life skill topics help you in school?
 - You experience what your teachers do when they are teaching. I have more respect for my teacher. When I want to behave badly, I think twice.
 - Reading skills.
 - I read more, and I have more confidence.
 - Self-esteem along with dealing with peer pressure because you can't teach students if you don't feel good about yourself.
 - Listen to what the teacher says.
 4. Tell me in what ways did you help the elementary school children?
 - Teaching life's lessons. These are important tools for them when they are in middle and high school.
 - Express them and ask for help and raise their hand.
 - Ask questions if they do not understand.
 - Communicating with parents more openly.
 - The same way we learned how to interact with them, they learned how to interact with us.
 - Build relationships and trust.
 - Teaching them about strangers made me feel good because they did not know about it and remembered it.
 - How to pay attention.
 - We were in competition to see which class was better. It makes you feel good.
 5. Why should other young men and women participate in the program?

- It's a good program.
 - If you have a bad day, I would only think about teaching and forget my problems and focus on teaching and doing the lesson and doing the best for the kids.
 - They make your day. I would walk in and they would say my name and put a smile on my face and teach them. You can't be angry because not to give a good lesson is not fair to the kids.
 - They would give us pictures and make us feel special and important.
 - See yourself as them.
 - Get to do well and feel good.
 - Guiding them through life, which they have never had before. You teach them and impact on their lives.
 - If I had had someone to teach me, I might not have made the mistakes I made.
6. What could ARISE do to improve the program?
- Pictures of the kids would be nice because I want to remember my first teaching experience.
 - Everything is perfect about the program.
 - Include more schools.
 - Teaching 5th grade because going to the middle school is important. That is where it's happening.
 - Get them while they are young.
 - More students should have a chance to participate.

McArthur North Senior High (1 female teacher)

1. In what ways were your students helped by the ARISE community service project?
 - They saw themselves how they were in elementary school.
 - It made them feel good. It lifted their self-esteem.
 - Gave them courage no matter what happened in their past.
 - They can do whatever they want. I made them feel special. It's the most positive thing in their life and they earn it.
2. Tell me about the important life skill lessons they learned.
 - Community service helps them. They have to have it for graduation, but it's not the focal point for them. Self-esteem, drugs and guns, but really for all of them, self-esteem. Also anger management.
3. Tell me in what ways this community service life skills project helped them academically.
 - I think it has helped because each lesson affects each one of them.
4. How did this community service life skills project help them regarding their behavior?
 - Yes, very much, attitude wise. Our goals and what we say. Every student should be exposed to the ARISE program.
5. Share how you feel this community service project helped enhance their feelings of self worth.
 - Their self-esteem and confidence improved.

6. How do you think this program could be improved?
 - Perhaps a board of directors including 2 students from every program.
 - Include more awareness of cultural differences in the lessons.
 - Great support from Ms. Abrams and the principal.
 - I could not think of a better way to teach kids with some problems with such a self-reflecting method. I saw them with the kids and they bring back and share their experiences.
 - Fantastic program. It has to continue.
 - It is making a difference. The kids grew leaps and bounds from the beginning until now.

500 Role Models Middle School (8 students: 6 females and 3 males)

1. Tell me about your experience doing community service at the elementary school.
 - I like it. It's good to work with a group. Start to talk to the students and go from there.
 - It was good. Some of the kids don't listen, like we do. I like it.
 - I like it. Teach them how to be friends. They look forward to our coming because we get attached to them and vice versa.
 - We teach them life skills, what to do and what not to do.
 - The lessons were good. They get experience that will help them in life.
 - We practice the activity about 12 times before we go to the elementary school.
2. What did you learn about yourself by your community service experience?
 - Learn about us.
 - I have the ability to teach others.
 - I can tolerate little kids. I have the patience.
 - I like kids.
 - Children look up to you. They get attached. They have role models.
3. How did having ARISE groups at school and then teaching elementary school children important life skill topics help you in school?
 - We have to earn the field trips.
 - Very much.
4. Tell me in what ways did you help the elementary school children?
 - Show them what to do before a situation happens.
 - Show videos like Jimmy Rice to teach them. Children like to see them.
 - We ask them questions about the last time we were there and they remember.
 - They are like our little sisters and brothers. They are our friends.
 - We talk to them about situations and give advice.
5. Why should other young men and women participate in the program?
 - Good for high school.
 - Shows communication skills.
 - Important to take time to help others.
 - Prevention of problems.
 - Learn how to be patient.
 - Learn more about myself.
 - When you are teaching, you learn about yourself.

- It is a good deed.
 - We are the same, even though they are younger, you can teach them.
6. What could ARISE do to improve the program?
- Go to more schools.
 - Stay in contact with the students.
 - Have the students visit our school.
 - Meet outside of the school setting.
 - Take them on a field trip.

500 Role Models Academy (2 teachers: 2 male and 1 female teacher)

1. In what ways were your students helped by the ARISE community service project?
 - I like this program a lot. The spend time in an elementary school working with students. It's a good role reversal. I wish we could do more of this. They are role models for the younger kids. The materials are put together well and current. Reciprocal teaching works well.
 - It opened students' eyes. They now appreciate what a teacher does. It puts things in perspective for them. The discussions get them thinking and focusing on the future. It is very worthwhile for students.
2. Tell me about the important life skill lessons they learned.
 - They have young siblings so they have experience, but this helps them become softer around younger kids. They tone down their language. They are role models and learn how to do the right thing.
3. Tell me in what ways this community service life skills project helped them, academically.
 - They improved academically.
 - They are reading more.
4. How did this community service life skills project help them regarding their behavior?
 - The field trips help with the behavior.
 - The program has a big impact on behavior.
5. Share how you feel this community service project helped enhance their feelings of self-worth.
 - Some students are thinking more about education because of this program.
 - The ESE students have difficulty writing about their experiences. They need more chances to discuss their experiences verbally. But the program makes them feel good.
6. How do you think this program could be improved?
 - Get more kids involved. Increase the grade levels involved.
 - Have guest speakers.

West Little River Elementary School (6 students: 3 boys, 3 girls)

Youth questions.

1. What did you learn when the boys and girls came from the 500 Role Models Academy?
 - Drugs and smoking are not good.

- If you see a gun, dial 911 and run.
 - Friendship.
 - Never play with guns. Friendship.
 - Never talk to strangers. Run away.
 - Don't listen to stranger and walk away.
 - Learned about Jimmy Rice.
 - Learned about Frederick Douglas.
2. What topic did you like the most that they talked about?
 - Everyone liked the friendship activity best.
 3. What activity did you most enjoy?
 - The friendship activity.
 4. How do you feel about the bigger kids that worked with you?
 - I felt comfortable. They made it fun.
 - They corrected us when we were wrong but didn't laugh at us.
 - Like a big brother or sister.
 - Made us laugh and had a great day.
 - Taught us about how not to be angry.
 - They made learning fun.
 5. Why did you like to have the middle school kids come? And 6. Tell me what the middle school kids did when they came to visit?
 - When they came, we did fun activities.
 - We watched movies, wrote, and drew pictures.
 - They put us in a group with 3 or 4 kids.
 - We did stuff and had fun.
 - We wrote poems about being mad.
 - We talked to them about things we can't talk about with other people.
 - They are our friends.

West Little River Elementary (3 teachers)

1. In what ways were your students helped by the ARISE community service project?
 - Coming together with the students was a very positive experience for the children.
 - They were excited.
 - It was really helpful to the children.
 - It enlightened them and had a great impact.
 - Their activities were very.
 - They get information from other students and remember what they were told.
 - It's a wonderful program.
2. Tell me about the important life skills lessons they learned.
 - The friendship lesson was excellent because it helped them with difficulties they face with other children.
3. What do you feel was the best part of the project?
 - The activities were great, very hands on.
 - Students opening up to the kids and having them open up.
4. Explain how it might have helped your children with their attitude.

- It helped a whole lot. Their attitude has turned around.
5. Tell me about the behavior of your students on the day the middle school students come.
- Their behavior has changed for the better.
6. Tell me in what ways this project has helped your children academically.
- Their academics have improved. We have talked to the other teachers and they want the program in the lower grades.
7. How do you think the program can be improved?
- Spend more time with the kids.

Title IV Project: Focus Group Summary

Focus groups were conducted at McArthur North Senior High School, 500 Role Models Middle School, and West Little River Elementary School on April 26, 2004.

McArthur North Senior High School

The students were articulate and extremely positive about the program. They discussed their relationships with the younger children and how the program had a positive impact on their self-esteem. They took the program very seriously and talked about the joys of teaching the youngsters. They also mentioned how they learned as much from the children as the children learned from them. All of the participants agreed that the program was very valuable, and they thought that all high school students should have a similar opportunity because of the effect it has on their academic performance, behavior, attitude, and confidence.

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The students loved the program. They talked about how much they learned about teaching others and how much they learned about themselves. A few mentioned that they were afraid at first but then developed the confidence to work effectively with the elementary school children. Like the high school students, they felt the program helped them with their self-esteem, academic skills, and attitude. Also, like the older students, they would have liked to have had more time with the younger students.

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