Promising Practices for Peer-led Education Programs

City of Austin Healthy Adolescent Program

**Austin Healthy Adolescent (AHA)**

**Mission**
- Provide youth and community led educational, visibility and skills development programming through evidence informed curriculum and the creative arts.
- Empower youth and young adults as peer health educators and health equity planners.
- Collaborate across the community to improve the adolescent health infrastructure

**Austin Healthy Adolescent (AHA) Overview**

**Goals**
- Empowered communities with greater educational and work options and opportunities for its youth.
- Community-based Youth-Adult Partnerships advising, guiding, building and directing health equity efforts through education, access to care and community building.

**Curriculum Participant Objectives**
- Postponement of first pregnancy until after high school graduation
- Decrease in HIV/STD

**Strategies**
- Peer to Peer (P2P) Health Education Model
- Youth Development, Empowerment, and Leadership
- Building community partnerships to work with youth

**Motivational Statement**
AHA’s centers its practice on the provision of space, resources and platforms for marginalized youth and young adults to be recognized for the expertise of their lived experience through full engagement in and leadership of efforts to realize health equity.
Learning Promising Practices in Peer-led Education Programs

Positive Youth Development:
- Building Positive Assets, Search Institute
- Youth as leaders, Ready by 21 and Advocates for Youth
- Ladder of Participation (Arnstein, 1969) and (Hart, 1994)

Youth Empowerment and Leadership
- Identifying youth as Peer Health Educators (PHE)
- Training youth on an evidence-based curriculum
- Youth have agency in program implementation
  - Providing practical support in classroom setting as needed

Youth-Adult Partnerships
- Youth offer vision and passion, adults offer resources and mentorship
  (Zeldin, 2013 and Camino, 2000)

Scaffolding Participation

The Ladder of Participation

Amstein, 1969

Testing Promising Practices in Peer-led Education Programs

Lived Experiences
- Successes
  - PHE recruited groups held during school or their location of choice
  - PHE become health resource and a positive peer influence on campus and in their communities
  - AHA staff and School Champions become important adult mentors to PHE and participants
  - PHE have social role and real world responsibility
  - Quantitative and qualitative evaluation
  - Real incentive for youth in form of financial payment
  - Collaborative partnerships formed between multiple agencies
- Challenges
  - Lack of school administrative support
  - Afterschool programming
  - Policies that create barriers to true comprehensive sexual health education
Perspectives from PHEs

• Offers the chance to help others
• A chance to learn new skills like public speaking, facilitating
• A way to have a real positive impact on our peers

P2P Achievements

• Cadre of youth leaders trained in “Making Proud Choices” curriculum and implementing curriculum in schools & recreation centers
• Improvements in knowledge, skills, attitudes, & behavioral intention
• Conference presentations
• Partnerships with local non-profits
• Partnerships with schools
• P2P Recruitment Video: https://vimeo.com/120500648
• 600 youth reached with evidence-based curriculum

Discussion

Q & A

THANK YOU!

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