



HELPING TEENS REACH THEIR POTENTIAL THROUGH EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

What is Project Reach:

- Project Reach examines why teenagers participate in extracurricular activities and how their participation impacts their future success.

Your help was essential:

- We collected data on 7th grade students through focus groups in 2008 and in-depth family interviews in 2010. These studies provided invaluable information from families in your community.

- We have given several national presentations and written the first paper. We could not have accomplished this without your help!

How can we help?

- We truly appreciate your support of Project Reach.
- We have attached pamphlets for parents about the benefits of activities and available activities in your area. Please let us know if we can give a talk or provide other information.

Next steps:

- Because we only talked to a small number of families, our next step is to examine these issues with a much larger group of families.
- We hope to collaborate with you on this interesting project.

What Have We Learned So Far

Parents and teens told us about the challenges they face concerning extracurricular activities and strategies that were helpful. Below is a summary of the main challenges and possible strategies to overcome those challenges. A full report of this research is in the attached article.

Common Barriers Reported

Family Resources:

- Many families had trouble affording fees if they were more than \$80.
- Most parents did not want their children walking home even if it was a short distance because they were worried about their safety in the neighborhood.

Parent Knowledge and Experience:

- Several of the parents did not participate in organized activities growing up. Parents with limited experience with activities did not understand the goals and benefits of activities. For example, many parents thought the school soccer team had the same benefits as a pick-up game of soccer between neighborhood kids.
- Almost all parents learned about organized activities through their children. Participation was more likely if parents directly received the information.



Activity Requirements:

- Many youth had a hard time attending an activity regularly because parents' work schedules vary each week and youth needed to help out at home.
- Youth often decided not to go to an activity because they preferred to spend time with family.
- Youth could not participate because they did not meet the grade requirements or get selected at tryouts. This happened most often with sports, particularly soccer.

Possible Strategies

- ⇒ The only reason some youth could participate was because schools offered scholarships or activities with no or nominal fees .
- ⇒ One school offered most of their activities on the 1-2 days per week that they offered a late bus.
- ⇒ It is vital to show parents that the benefits of activities outweigh the costs in order to promote participation. Provide information to parents about the specific benefits of organized activities. Please use the attached flyer on the benefits of activities.
- ⇒ Review methods for getting information directly to parents. Consider creating personal connections through parent liaisons or recruit at school events with parents (e.g., health fairs, open houses). Many of the youth who participated had a teacher who was the leader or who talked to their parents in person.
- ⇒ Offer some activities with more lenient attendance requirements or allow them to join throughout the year.
- ⇒ Include families as much as possible in activities, such as including siblings as older volunteers or through multi-age activities
- ⇒ Offer more teams for activities with high interest. Some of these teams could be non-competitive and have relaxed requirements.