After School Programs Show Positive Results

The Situation

Kids After School Help (K.A.S.H) and the Lincoln County Adventure Club are after school child care programs, sponsored by the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System. These programs provide school age children (ages K - 6th grade) a place to go between the time school is out and parents get home from work.

The concept of providing after school help grew out of community advisory groups. These broad based groups included, childcare providers, Health and Welfare, District Health, county school districts, law enforcement, state educators and interested citizens. Both Gooding and Lincoln Counties are well above the state average for children living in poverty. Children come home to empty houses with approximately sixty-nine percent of parents in the work force. Both advisory committees determined there was a real need to provide supervised, planned, tutored, and carefully evaluated childcare for school age youth, concentrating on grades K-6. These advisory groups believe children need to feel the community cares about them and then in turn the children will take pride in and care about their community.

Our Response

The major focus of both the after school programs is to provide a SAFE, EDUCATIONAL environment for school age children, grades K-6. The staff to child ratio is 1-12. The children receive education on issues regarding conflict resolution, team building, collaboration ability, self-esteem building proficiency and other life skills. Parents receive daily information on the progress of their children in the program. Monthly parent nights also give the parents a chance to evaluate the program accomplishments and endeavors. Parenting and youth information is distributed daily through brochures and flyers. Classes regarding parenting issues are offered throughout the year.

The programs especially target those lower income children with scholarships sponsored by grant monies, local churches, businesses and local citizens. The staff are recruited, trained and supported to conduct community-strengthening activities. The programs work with various organizations in the community, including Senior Citizens.

Grant monies have funded children who would otherwise remain home alone, built a parenting library, a child’s library, and purchased computers with Internet capabilities. The Internet continues to open doors for both the children of the program as well as local citizens.
Achievementss

Current enrollment at K.A.S.H. is 62 children, with a daily average of 28 to 30 children. Current enrollment at the Lincoln County Adventure Club is 28 children, with a daily average of 11 children. Survey results from parents and teachers show the effectiveness of the SACC (School Age Child Care) programs. Ninety-six percent of those interviewed stated that their children were gaining positive life skills in the program and the homework/tutoring portion was helping school grades and family relations in the evenings. Fifty-three percent of parents cited improved discipline at home and school. Seventy-five percent noted increased awareness of positive nutritional habits.

Many high school organizations require their participants to fulfill community service hours. Last year sixty percent of Gooding’s youth fulfilled these hours in the K.A.S.H. program. They served as role models for the children and were extremely helpful in all aspects of the program. The local diversion board also recommends the program to youth offenders when community service is required. All the youth enjoy the positive atmosphere of the programs and many continue to help the program after their service hours are completed.

The after school programs give parents security and peace of mind knowing their children are in a safe environment after school while providing the children an opportunity to learn structured educational activities. Proper nutrition and self-reliance is taught as children help prepare some of their own snacks.

Goals:
1. Provide every child, regardless of income, access to a safe, fun, and educational environment with adult supervision during the period school is out and parents return home from work.

2. Expand this program into other school districts within Gooding County.

For More Information

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