



YSP/KSA Curriculum – Relationship to Family & Community Handout 4A.2

No More Islands: Executive Summary

No More Islands describes some of the barriers to successful family involvement experienced by school and youth program staff. Additionally, the report identifies several myths that should be discarded to improve program quality by involving family members:

Myth #1: “Youth Should Be the Sole Focus of the Intervention”

Many youth programs are described as working only with young people and not their families or communities. This likely reflects both program philosophy and the training of teachers and youth workers that focuses almost exclusively on the young person, without a complementary focus on the home or adult family members.

Myth #2: “There is No Need to Involve the families of Adolescents”

There is a perception by some teachers and program staff that it is not worthwhile involving families of adolescents, because of conjectures that families are less important in the lives of adolescents and because adolescents do not want their families around them and their friends. Research, however, documents the enduring importance of families throughout the development of the young person.

Myth #3: “The Success of Family Involvement Can Only Be gauged Through the Physical Presence of Family Members at Schools or Youth Programs”

There is a perception that to be involved with a school or a youth program, the family member must be physically present at the school, the youth center or at meetings. Many school and youth programs seem to determine their effectiveness with family involvement by the number of individuals in attendance at school or program functions and not by the quality of the family participation. Teachers and program staff must understand that successful youth outcomes may be as contingent on the family member’s involvement *with the young person* as the family member’s involvement with the program. Rather than giving up on family involvement, teachers and program staff need to find out more about families, their availability and other duties and seek to develop flexible and creative approaches for capturing their involvement.

Adapted from American Youth Policy Forum (n.d.). *No More Islands: Family Involvement in 27 School and Youth Programs*. Retrieved on November 5, 2007, from <http://www.aypf.org/publications/nomoreisle/index.htm>

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Myth #4: “Parent tracking is Okay”

A perception too often exists that it is alright for schools and programs that serve large numbers of low-income children and youth and, by extension, their low-income parents, to adopt problem-based approaches because these children and families “likely have problems that need to be fixed.” Often, practitioners decide on family involvement activities and develop a family curriculum “track” without a needs assessment. Conversely, there is a myth that parents at higher socioeconomic levels do not need family-related activities because they “have it all figured out.”

Myth #5: “Families Have Nothing to Offer”

Some school and youth program staff feel that given the host of problems that some family members may experience, they do not have the time, energy or expertise to contribute to school functions. Many schools are more interested in teaching “parenting” skills than in learning the insights that parents can contribute about their children.

Myth #6: “Involving Families Means Involving Mothers”

The definition of family in this report is broader than just biological parents and can include guardians, grandparents, aunts, uncles, foster parents, or others who play significant roles in the lives of children and youth in a particular program. Special efforts should also be made to involve fathers. Organizations like the National fatherhood Initiative can be helpful in providing information on why fathers are so important to children and how fathers can be included in family involvement activities.

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