

PROJECT MORRY EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM

2008 Follow-up Report

On April 4th, 2008 Project Morry hosted the third annual Education Symposium (PMES), bringing together some of the best and brightest teachers, researchers, policy makers, curriculum experts, and Project Morry staff to consider the measurement of outcomes with respect to summer and out-of-school youth development programs.

The Characteristics of Effective Summer Learning Programs cited by the National Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University suggest a program's infrastructure include a "rigorous approach to evaluation and commitment to program improvement." According to the Center, the best programs focus on developing the whole child—intellectually, socially, physically, and emotionally—so that he or she is prepared for both the present and the future. The program infrastructure characteristics are part of an organization's larger strategy to achieve and maintain quality programming.¹

Our work in youth development has the capacity to change outcomes and make possibilities real for young people. While organizations often measure their success in many different ways, they sometimes have very similar goals and expected outcomes. There is increased emphasis on measuring and evaluating results, and the outcomes generated from the MCES gathering have implications for organizations in the field as well as the ability of these programs to better focus on how to measure these goals and report results.

The day consisted of four parts:

I) Introduction:

Susanne Randolph Sparks framed the "summer learning gap" and the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth through the lens of unequal access to summer learning opportunities. Ms. Sparks is the senior research coordinator at the National Center for Summer Learning where she administers the Center's research agenda through project management with the goal of informing the field of program providers, teachers, librarians, researchers, and policy makers about effective practices.

II) Morning Session:

Participants brainstormed the ways in which summer learning organizations measure their success through program evaluation and research.

III) Lunch Forum:

The lunch forum included remarks by Dr. Edmund Gordon about his research on "Supplementary Education." Dr. Gordon is the John M. Musser Professor of Psychology, Emeritus at Yale University, Richard March Hoe Professor, Emeritus of Psychology and

¹ www.summerlearning.org

Education and Director of the Institute of Urban and Minority Education (IUME) at Teachers College, Columbia University.

IV) Afternoon Session:

Led by Ellen O'Connell, Senior Program Director at the Partnership for After School Education, the afternoon session gave attending organizations the opportunity to share their methods for measuring their success and evaluating progress. Other presentations included: Classroom Inc., Homes for the Homeless, the American Camp Association-New York Section, Trail Blazers, Fiver Foundation, Project Morry and the Heart of Brooklyn.

INTRODUCTION

At the National Center for Summer Learning, Susanne Randolph Sparks administers the Center's research agenda through project management with the goal of informing the field of program providers, teachers, librarians, researchers, and policy makers about effective practices. She also assists with policy and legislative outreach as well as authoring and editing publications. Her introduction emphasized the following research briefs:

- Two-thirds of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities. As a result, low-income youth are less likely to graduate from high school or enter college (Alexander et al, 2007).
- Most students lose about two months of grade-level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer months. Low-income students also lose more than two months in reading achievement, while their middle-class peers make slight gains (Cooper, 1996). When this pattern continues throughout the elementary school years, lower income youth fall more than two and one-half years behind their more affluent peers by the end of fifth grade.

MORNING SESSION

The Characteristics of Effective Summer Learning Programs cited by the National Center for Summer Learning at Johns Hopkins University suggest a program's infrastructure include a "rigorous approach to evaluation and commitment to program improvement." Attendees discussed components of measurement and evaluation, and under each category is the entire brainstorm lists composed by the groups during the morning session. Following the brainstorm, the group engaged in a rich discussion of the lists and identified the **common themes** from the synthesized lists (**emphasized**).

HOW DO WE USE WHAT WE MEASURE?

- ✓ **Validate program**
- ✓ Educate program staff
- ✓ **Enhance resources, partnerships and collaboration**
- ✓ Create common language

- ✓ **Communicate, share information**
- ✓ Guide
- ✓ Efficiency and effectiveness
- ✓ Create programs
- ✓ Prove results
- ✓ **Improve programs**
- ✓ **Raise money**
- ✓ **Create, update and evaluate goals/benchmarks for long term strategic planning**
- ✓ **Staff, family, community “buy-in”**
- ✓ **Inspire replication**
- ✓ Public policy and advocacy
- ✓ Inform practice
- ✓ Gather information about participants

<i>WHAT IS MEASURABLE?</i>

- ✓ **Changes**
- ✓ Scores
- ✓ Behaviors
- ✓ Feelings
- ✓ Attendance
- ✓ Desire to learn
- ✓ Social skills
- ✓ **Academic skills**
- ✓ Leisure skills
- ✓ **Mission Statement**
- ✓ Participant experience
- ✓ Growth and development
- ✓ Collaboration with partners
- ✓ Satisfaction
- ✓ Needs assessment
- ✓ Retention rate
- ✓ Literacy rate
- ✓ College acceptance
- ✓ Post-high school employment
- ✓ Alumni participation/involvement

<i>HOW DO WE DECIDE WHAT TO MEASURE?</i>
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- ✓ **What is the reason for program?**
- ✓ **What is the proof?**
- ✓ **Who is the audience? For whom are you measuring?**
- ✓ **Use what is already in place**
- ✓ **Logic models**
- ✓ **What is important?**
- ✓ **Mission statement**
- ✓ **Funding opportunities**
- ✓ What the organization does well

- ✓ Based on what other programs measure
- ✓ Outside evaluator
- ✓ History of organization

<i>WHY SHOULD WE MEASURE SUCCESS?</i>

- ✓ **Drive program improvement**
- ✓ **Demonstrate/prove success**
- ✓ **Determine if needs are being met**
- ✓ **Remain relevant**
- ✓ **Validating**
- ✓ **Improvement**
- ✓ **Encourages internal evaluation/change**
- ✓ **Funders**
- ✓ **Communicate success to stakeholders**
- ✓ Advocate policy
- ✓ **Replicate**
- ✓ **Legitimacy**
- ✓ Expected to
- ✓ Justify use of resources
- ✓ Create priorities
- ✓ Align program to mission
- ✓ To monitor and encourage changes and needs of organization and stakeholders
- ✓ Strategic planning
- ✓ Expose strengths and weaknesses
- ✓ Form partnerships with organizations with similar missions
- ✓ Meet the needs of a changing world

<i>HOW DO WE MEASURE OUR SUCCESS? (METHODOLOGY)</i>

- ✓ **Alumni surveys of social and academic impact**
- ✓ # of books read, writing produced
- ✓ Focus groups
- ✓ **Interviews**
- ✓ **Data collection: both outside investigator and in-house**
- ✓ **Written evaluations from stakeholders**
- ✓ **College admissions**
- ✓ **Observations**
- ✓ Gauge broad and consistent support for organization
- ✓ **Attendance by all stakeholders**
- ✓ **Surveys**
- ✓ Artifact collection
- ✓ Pre and post testing
- ✓ **Retention rates**
- ✓ GPA's, grades
- ✓ **Test scores**
- ✓ Career awareness
- ✓ **Site visits**

- ✓ **Journals**
- ✓ **Behavior reports**
- ✓ **Longitudinal studies**
- ✓ Comparative studies

LUNCH FORUM

Edmund W. Gordon discussed his research on "Supplementary Education," about which he has edited a book with the same title. Dr. Gordon is the John M. Musser Professor of Psychology, Emeritus at Yale University, Richard March Hoe Professor, Emeritus of Psychology and Education and Director of the Institute of Urban and Minority Education (IUME) at Teachers College, Columbia University. Currently, Gordon is the Senior Scholar and Advisor to the President of the College Board where he developed and co-chaired the Taskforce on Minority High Achievement.

Dr. Gordon's remarks concerned issues associated with increasing the number of high academic achieving students who come from African American, Latino, and Native American families. His research on diverse human characteristics and pedagogy, and the education of low status populations framed his explanation of how supplementary education aids these groups to overcome enormous odds against success to become high achievers. Specifically he advanced his concepts of "affirmative development of academic ability" and "supplementary education" both which focus on improving the quality of academic achievement in diverse learners. His current study group on the Correlates of High Academic Achievement is investigating, through several projects, personal, ecological, and institutional factors that are associated high levels of academic achievement in a variety of ethnic minority students.²

AFTERNOON SESSION

Led by Ellen O'Connell, Senior Program Director at the [Partnership for After School Education](#), the afternoon session gave attending organizations the opportunity to share their methods for measuring their success and evaluating progress. Organization presentations included:

- ✓ [Classroom Inc.](#)
- ✓ [Homes for the Homeless](#)
- ✓ [The American Camp Association-New York Section](#)
- ✓ [Trail Blazers](#)
- ✓ [Fiver Foundation](#)
- ✓ [Project Morry](#)
- ✓ [Heart of Brooklyn.](#)

² www.tc.columbia.edu/faculty

ABOUT PROJECT MORRY

Project Morry, formerly known as Morry's Camp and founded in 1996, is a nationally recognized youth development organization with an intentional focus on the educational enhancement of the underserved youth. Project Morry is unique in the field of nonprofit camps due to the focus on the year-round support of its campers. First year participants are entering the fifth grade, and over the next nine years, our year-round and summer camp programs guide children through a critical period of their academic and social development. In schools and communities where fewer than 50% of incoming ninth graders graduate from high school, 100% of Project Morry students have completed high school on-time.

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