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ABSTRACT

Howe-To Industries is an intergenerational entrepreneurship project at the John de la Howe School, a state-supported institution for at-risk youth in rural McCormick County, South Carolina. Expansion of this type of program into public schools could engage the community and school system in a mutually beneficial relationship. John de la Howe School is a long-term residential treatment facility for male and female adolescents with behavioral and emotional problems. Although one of the poorest counties in the state, McCormick County has a substantial community of retired, white, affluent newcomers. Howe-To Industries was begun by adding 37 older-adult volunteer mentors to an existing enterprise market program at the school. Mentors, which comprise about equal numbers of newcomers and long-term residents, introduce youth to small business development through the operation of a country market in the school's renovated dairy barn. The diversity of mentors' life experiences gives youth from disadvantaged backgrounds opportunities to develop social and functional life skills, decide upon and manufacture their own products, learn advertising and merchandising techniques, and sell their goods and services. Students earn money, enhance their self-image, learn skills they can carry into their adult lives, and develop a stronger sense of community. Interpersonal relationships developed during the program are therapeutic and serve to dissolve age and racial stereotypes. Suggestions are offered for transferring this program to other rural communities. (Contains 15 references.) (SV)

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INTERGENERATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING

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Today, masses of children are leaving rural schools lacking the skills needed to survive in the competitive job market. This presentation will suggest an innovative project designed to prepare youth for the real world. Currently, Howe-To Industries, an Intergenerational Entrepreneurship Project is being successfully implemented at the John de la Howe School, a state supported institution for at-risk youth in rural McCormick County, South Carolina. The public schools in this area serve a predominantly minority population from families of low incomes. In addition, the public school system is drastically underfunded. Expansion of a program such as Howe-To Industries into the public schools would provide for an innovative means of engaging the community and school system in a mutually beneficial relationship. The purpose of this paper is to relate to rural educators an innovative and easily transferable volunteer intergenerational entrepreneurship project.

Rural Focus

Working-class jobs in rural areas are frequently unstable, low-paying, and seasonal. Unfortunately, the large supply of unskilled workers in these localities almost always exceeds the demand. In addition, these jobs build neither self-esteem nor financial independence. The schools in rural areas, particularly those in the south, have traditionally been underfunded and therefore unattractive to many educators seeking career advancement. Castle (1993) finds that "rural workers suffer deficits in education, cognitive skills, and work experience. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that rural workers on average have higher rates of unemployment, underemployment, and poverty than their metro counterparts" (p. 47).

Parents of children in rural areas do not see any immediate advantages to their children remaining in school. Therefore, student incentives to invest time and effort in school may be non-existent. Flora, Flora, Spears, and Swanson (1992) assert that in some rural counties, particularly those of low-income located in the South, parents fail to comprehend the relationship between years in school and a higher paying job. Therefore it is necessary to offer the youth in rural schools additional adult role models and a program which emphasizes the importance of learning skills for life time use.

Youth

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Adolescence can be a time of confusion related to issues of sexual activity, drug use, and conformity to peer expectations (Hess, Markson, & Stein, 1993). In addition, easy access to illegal substances or weapons, combined with a lack of guidance and psychological resources could potentially lead to detrimental behavior (Levitt, Selman, & Richmond, 1991). A 1989 Carnegie report on educational goals of healthy adolescent development required growth in the following areas: cognitive, social, physical,

emotional, and moral (Comer & Tisch, 1989). Self-improvement in these areas would seem inherently difficult for the general adolescent population. Compounded with developmental disadvantages such as abuse, neglect, or poverty, self-enhancement would seem nearly impossible.

Freedman (1988) asserts that adolescents may find their access to appropriate adult role models, adequate employment, education and job training, and economic resources restricted. Other researchers have suggested that these factors may play a role in placing the adolescent at risk for the onset of various problematic behaviors such as poor academic performance, teen-age pregnancy, drug use, delinquency, and unemployment (Greenberg, 1977). The problems of at-risk youth are often attributed to their lack of significant relationships. A number of factors have contributed to the deterioration of relationships between at-risk youth and their families. For example, many young people are growing up in single parent families where time to commit to the parent child relationship is often lost as the parent takes on additional employment to pay family expenses. Unfortunately, the task of developing substantial bonds is left to the school. However, Galbo (1986) reported that only a small number of children select teachers as significant others in their lives.

Intergenerational Programming

The literature indicates that a large proportion of young people grow up without the opportunity to develop relationships with caring adults (Powell & Arquitt, 1978). Intergenerational programming can serve as an intervention to meet this need as well as allow for changes in negative perceptions and improvement in attitudes between young and old (Chapman & Neal, 1990). Older adults have the capacity to play unique and valuable roles in the lives of adolescents. They can help adolescents develop positive identities by providing the historical continuity which is essential for a fully integrated sense of self (Mead, 1974).

Coleman (1973) suggested that the work environment provides an opportunity for youth to develop significant bonds with older adults. However, this seldom happens (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986). They suggested that the failure to form these bonds can be attributed to the nature of the work environment which tends to remain age segregated. Furthermore, few adult workers are interested in forming significant bonds with younger workers. Added to this situation is the fact that in many of the low paying jobs held by youth, the adolescents are generally supervised by same age peers and therefore have little contact with older adults. It would seem the work environment would be an effective arena for intergenerational contact only when older workers are willing to interact and share their skills with younger workers.

Youth may be particularly receptive to older individuals in an employment setting when they realize that job skills are crucial to future success. In addition, two issues are important when considering employment opportunities for adolescents: availability and preparedness. If youth perceive older individuals as a valid source for assisting in job preparedness, it is likely meaningful relationships will form. Indeed, older adults bring

many skills to intergenerational programs, and job related skills may be among the most crucial. Teaching youth skills needed to successfully compete in the job market may be one of the most valuable assets older volunteers can impart to youth.

Freedman (1988) identified five outstanding intergenerational programs involving at-risk youth and elder mentors. The various programs involved teenagers who were jail-bound, pregnant, single mothers, or in danger of failing or quitting school. After interviews with forty-seven pairs of elders and youth, Freedman concluded that thirty-seven had significant relationships which provided benefits to both people. Freedman also outlined several principles necessary for programs which aim to encourage the development of significant intergenerational relationships. These specific program characteristics included: provision of opportunities for one-to-one contact; bringing elders and youth together for completion of meaningful tasks; having the elder and youth pairs meet frequently and consistently for sustained time periods; making open-ended commitments, and meeting in an environment conducive to privacy and openness.

The youth in Freedman's study reported improvements in their daily living and described how they had learned numerous skills from their mentors. It seems logical then, that the resources of older adults, which are derived from their life experiences and professional developments, make them well-suited to volunteer with children (Freedman, 1988). Additionally, the mutual needs and shared characteristics of both groups create closer bonds between the elders and youth (Cherry, Benest, Gates, & White, 1985). Elders in Freedman's study agreed that there was a shared marginal status which enabled a special empathy between the two parties and better facilitated unguarded interaction.

Chambre (1987) noted that volunteers should be included in the planning, as well as the operation of the program. "Howe-To industries" is unique in that it allows participants to assume responsibility for a variety of tasks such as sales, scheduling, product development, inventory control and budgeting. This project unlike its predecessors was designed to include volunteers in the development of the project as well as its administration. The design also calls for reciprocity as opposed to one-sided learning.

John de la Howe School

"Howe-To Industries" involves at-risk youth from ages six to seventeen from the John de la Howe School in McCormick, South Carolina. The school was established in 1797 in accordance with the will of Dr. John de la Howe as an institution to provide housing and agricultural training to poor and orphaned children. The school came under direct control of the state legislature in 1918 as South Carolina's only state supported children's home. Currently, the school functions as a long term residential treatment facility for male and female adolescents with a variety of behavioral and emotional problems. It is located eight miles northwest of the city of McCormick and has as its objective the provision of a therapeutic environment for youth to rehabilitate, then successfully re-enter their communities. The average length of stay for the students is eighteen months.

Volunteer Mentors

Senior adult volunteers serve as mentors in "Howe-To Industries." They are ages fifty and older and live in one of two places in McCormick. Approximately half are new residents to McCormick County, living in the Savannah Lakes Village, which opened in 1989. This retirement community calls for the establishment of 5,100 homesites, which will more than double the size of the population in the county when all sites are inhabited. Currently, around two hundred homes have been built. The retirement community boasts many facilities including a golf course, restaurant, visitors center, condominiums, and single family homes. The residents are primarily white, affluent, and not South Carolina natives.

The other mentors are long time residents of McCormick who have lived there for over five years, however the majority of these older adults have lived their entire lives in the county. At present, there are approximately 1,162 adults over the age of 65 in the county. This is an increase of 35% since 1980. McCormick is the smallest county in South Carolina with a population of 8,868, approximately 58% of which are African Americans. McCormick also ranks as one of the poorest counties in the state with a median household income of \$19,226.

Currently, there are a total of thirty-seven active older volunteers involved in Howe-To Industries, with an equal ratio of Savannah Lakes Village residents to long time residents. The Savannah Lakes Village residents tend to be younger, more educated, and more affluent relative to their long time resident counterparts. In addition, the group of new retirees tends to be balanced with regard to gender, which is in marked contrast to the predominantly female group of long time residents.

Description of Program

Howe-To Industries Volunteer Project

Funding from the AARP Andrus Foundation enabled the establishment of Howe-To Industries through the addition of older adult volunteer mentors to an existing enterprise market program at the John de la Howe School. The objectives of this project are to improve and enrich the lives of elderly participants and at-risk youth simultaneously. It is anticipated that through this project, both groups will experience an increased quality of life and a stronger sense of community.

Howe-To Industries operates from the "BARN", the school's renovated dairy barn, which has been dubbed "Building Adult Responsibility Now." By operating a country market in the barn, youth are introduced to the ideas of small business development by volunteer mentors. The diversity of life experiences among the mentors gives youth from disadvantaged backgrounds opportunities to develop social and functional life skills, decide upon and manufacture their own products, learn advertising and merchandising techniques, and sell their goods and services as members of "companies" in Howe-To Industries. All of this is achieved through actual hands-on experience. By investing their time and energy in entrepreneurial activities, students are able to earn money and enhance their self-images, for perhaps the first time in their lives.

A total of fourteen housing units on the John de la Howe campus comprise seven different companies within Howe-To Industries. An in-migrant retiree, a long time resident, a child, and a school staff member is incorporated into every component of running the business. The one-hundred and ten at-risk youth therefore, are given the opportunities to acquire practical business skills which are often neglected, particularly in rural schools. In essence, the students of John de la Howe are learning the fundamentals of free enterprise while developing key interpersonal skills from caring, experienced older individuals.

The Howe-To Industries organizational structure is extremely functional, yet simplistic in that it can be easily replicated in other educational settings. There is a policy board which includes representatives at the county and state level. There is also an executive committee, a board of directors, and the volunteers, youth, and staff who are company members. In addition, each participant in Howe-To Industries has the opportunity to join one of the businesses' six working committees. They are the accounting, staffing and transportation, product involvement, activities and events, training and evaluation, and marketing.

Initially, each company was given a "start up" fund in a line of credit to begin company operations. Companies make decisions on the products they wish to produce as well as the prices they choose to ask. They then present their product ideas to the product involvement committee and if accepted, they contract with Howe-To Industries. Companies produce the products for which they contracted and sell their products to Howe-To Industries. Next, the board of directors issues a receipt and money is transferred from Howe-To Industries to the company's fund. Companies then distribute their profits or adjust for losses.

The inclusion of the older adults as mentors in this program facilitates the passage of vast knowledge and skills accumulated during a lifetime, while at the same time encouraging friendship and a greater understanding among all participants. Recent market products made by older adults and youth have ranged from gourd bird houses, to mailboxes, to hand-made quilts. The Activity Therapy Coordinator at the John de la Howe school attests to the therapeutic benefits of Howe-To Industries: "...caring and learning relationships have been established between [our] students and the older adult volunteers. The students are proud of the skills they learn and show respect for the senior volunteers by their attentiveness and good behavior."

Transferability

With the great needs and lack of opportunities for youth in rural areas, intervention by rural educators is imperative. Some of the more obvious applications of a program like Howe-To Industries center around the teaching of valuable entrepreneurial skills. These skills include development of advertising and merchandising techniques, manufacturing of products, communication and decision making, and other fundamentals associated with free enterprise. Skills learned through this type of program can be carried

into adult lives, regardless of students' occupational choice. This program includes older adults as mentors but other community volunteers could also be utilized. The anticipated outcomes of participation in this project include an increased quality of life, development of a stronger sense of community, and enhancement of self-images for all involved. Mentors are the envoys of knowledge and skills that the youth may otherwise be without.

An intergenerational program such as Howe-To Industries is easily transferable to a rural community. Howe-To Industries was developed specifically with a rural environment in mind. The John de la Howe's renovated dairy barn provides the perfect location for the establishment of the country market. However, other community buildings such as gymnasiums, store fronts, and school facilities could also be used. Encouragement and development of strong relationships between school and community are especially important in a rural area. A program with an intergenerational and an entrepreneurship component can contribute greatly in the formation and maintenance of healthy community relations. Through participation in the program, citizens can become directly involved in the education process. Furthermore, the general populace can be exposed to the school and its young entrepreneurs through visits to the market.

Essentially the most important elements required to start the project, are a project coordinator, a place to set up a market, volunteers, and the imagination, innovation and industry of the children. Some initial "start up" money will be needed, however much of this can be obtained through donations, loans, or a variety of other funding sources. In addition, since the market generates profits, all monies can be eventually recouped. A volunteer, teacher, or recreation professional can serve as the project coordinator until one can be hired.

Conclusion

Adolescents today face a diverse array of developmental challenges. Many of the problems faced by youth can be attributed to a lack of significant relationships. However, the implementation of a well-planned intergenerational program provides the perfect opportunity for the formation of meaningful relationships between adults and youth. Adolescence is a time of confusion related to a desire to conform to peer expectations. The school system, although adept in promoting some types of intellectual growth, often falls short in the areas of practical, social, and emotional development. However, development in these areas may be facilitated through a process of interaction with suitable adult role models, in a setting providing real-life working skills. A project such as Howe-To Industries can be self-supporting, as well as initiated and maintained with little difficulty.

The Howe-To Industries project at John de la Howe School, although still in its early stages, has provided an easily replicable model for instituting an intergenerational entrepreneurship program. The benefits of this program are tremendous. To the youth, valuable life and business skills are obtained from caring adult support figures. The pool of resources provided by their older mentors gives children a broad learning base and serves to dissolve age and racial stereotypes.

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