Evaluative Paper

Engaging 4-H Volunteers in Evaluating Leadership Skill Application by Youth

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The 2007 Winter Leadership Adventure Camp Planning and Teaching Team consisted of the following UW-Extension staff members: Paula Huff, Jill Jorgensen, Dawn Kuelz, Amber Rehberg, and LuAnne Ujazdowski.

May 2009

Published by the
Department of Youth Development
In a revamping of the successful “Winter Leadership Adventure Camp”, 47 middle-school 4-H youth applied newly acquired leadership skills to mini-capstone projects. The scenario-based projects were used to facilitate the transfer of skills. Eight adult 4-H leaders evaluated the application of leadership skills by youth teams. The majority (93%) of the teams’ ratings of competency assessments was either in the category of Moderate or High Level, indicating that youth were applying their leadership skills to their projects. Even though youth rated their individual knowledge of leadership skills higher than evaluators rated the team’s ability to apply the skills, 4-H volunteers reported that youth knew the skills, but sometimes needed coaching to successfully apply them.
**Situation**

Winter Leadership Adventure Camp (WLA) provides an educational experience for middle school-aged 4-H youth from a 14-county area in Wisconsin (Huff, Klemme, Mehlberg, Pointer, Vos, Wegner, 2004). Since WLA’s inception in 2003, 248 youth have attended the camp which is planned and taught by UW-Extension staff. In 2007, WLA was awarded a Program of Distinction by National 4-H Council (United States Department of Agriculture, 2007).

During the two-day WLA, youth participants rotated through educational sessions which focused on the following leadership skills: Teamwork, Communication, Planning and Organizing, and Decision-Making (Huff et al., 2004). In the initial design of the program, youth worked with an adult chaperone from their county to plan a project for their county which was to be completed upon their return to their county. However, Huff et al. (2004) reported that youth completed fewer than 30% of the planned projects once they returned home, thereby losing an opportunity to apply the concepts learned at camp. Reasons identified by the planning team for the low completion rate of projects included the following: variation in the degree of adult support, projects not fitting county needs, geographic separation of participants, single or limited number of county participants at camp, and no adult chaperone from that county at camp.

To address the low success rate for completing projects while encouraging the future success of participants in applying the WLA materials, the 2007 planning team designed a structured mini-capstone scenario-based project—“Pulling It All Together”—to provide youth the opportunity to apply their newly acquired leadership skills to a specific situation while still at camp. The scenarios were designed to provide a transfer and application of the skills youth acquired at camp to commonly encountered 4-H situations. This “teaching for transfer” provided practice in the application of newly acquired skills which is regarded as a crucial component of the learning process (van Gelder, 2005). The “Pulling It All Together” session provided youth teams with the opportunity to apply their new skills to practical
scenarios. The use of case-based learning has been shown to be an effective instructional tool, one that has the potential to increase participant retention of material by “linking course theory with practice” (Lee, 2007).

The enhanced design of the “Pulling It All Together” final project also provided an opportunity to involve the adult volunteers in a more meaningful experience at camp. Adult volunteers were trained at camp as Table Host/Evaluators for the “Pulling It All Together” session in an effort to more fully utilize the skills of adult volunteers and engage them in the learning process along with the participants.

**Objectives**

The objectives for the “Pulling It All Together” session at Winter Leadership Adventure Camp were as follows:

Objective 1. Youth will successfully apply the leadership skills taught at WLA using a simulated scenario prior to leaving camp.

Objective 2. Adult volunteers will be engaged both in learning and in the evaluation process at Winter Leadership Adventure Camp.

**Methods**

**Pulling It All Together Sessions**

After completing the leadership skills sessions at WLA, youth were divided into eight teams. Each team received one of eight different scenarios that focused on a typical 4-H situation that youth might encounter in their counties (Appendix A). Each scenario consisted of the following parts: 1) Presentation Guidelines, 2) Scenario, and 3) Resource Materials.

Each scenario was crafted to encourage the use of the following leadership skills learned in the camp educational sessions: Teamwork, Planning and Organizing, Decision-Making, and Communication.
Communication skills focused on materials learned in the Real Colors training (National Curriculum & Training Institute, Inc., 1999).

Youth were given 60-75 minutes to work in their teams and develop an action plan for their scenario, under the guidance of their Table Host. Youth then presented their scenario and action plan to the entire group.

Enhanced Volunteer Roles

Adult volunteers were introduced to their roles shortly after their arrival at camp. In addition to performing basic chaperoning duties, volunteers were given the option of assuming an enhanced role at Winter Leadership Adventure Camp. During a volunteer orientation session, a staff member outlined the educational objectives that would be presented in the sessions, and how those objectives would relate to a final project in the “Pulling It All Together” session. The evaluation rubric was introduced and together the group reached a shared understanding about its use and terminology. Volunteers explored their potential roles as Table Hosts/Evaluators. As Table Hosts/Evaluators, they were instructed to encourage youth in their planning and decision-making, and were given suggestions on how to do so through the use of prompting questions, rather than generating specific options for youth.

At this meeting, each volunteer was given the following: 1) Scenario, 2) Prompting Guidelines (both procedural and content-wise, as it related to the individual scenario) (Appendix B), and 3) Evaluation Rubric (Appendix C). Volunteers were encouraged to become familiar with the “Pulling It All Together” material; discussion amongst themselves and trading of scenarios was encouraged. The Table Hosts/Evaluators and the Staff Trainer met again after the leadership sessions for further clarification of the materials and scenarios. This included a review of the material presented in the leadership sessions, discussion of its application to the scenarios, and a review of the Table Host/Evaluator role.
Evaluation

Self Evaluation

A self-assessment was completed by all youth attending WLA using a variation of the Post–then- Pre instrument developed for the 2003 WLA Camp (Huff et al. 2004). Because this project focused on analysis of the application of perceived skills—not on the level of gain in skill—only the Post-training data were used.

Team Evaluation

A rubric was used for the team evaluation; it was tied to the learning objectives used in the training and measured in the self-assessment (Appendix C). Adult volunteers served as evaluators, observing youth as they worked in their teams. In addition, UW-Extension staff circulated to observe volunteers and to serve as resources, both for content and evaluation.

Volunteer Evaluation

Volunteers were contacted in 2008, about one year after the camp experience to assess perceptions of their role at camp. Initial contact was made through a letter, which requested their participation in individual telephone interviews. Each telephone interview was conducted using identical questions and questioning techniques.

Analysis

Each of the 8 teams was judged by a Table Host/Evaluator in 7 competencies developed from the learning objectives. The result was a total of 56 competency assessments.

Results

Pulling It All Together Sessions

There were 47 youth participants at the 2007 WLA, working in 8 teams. Table Hosts/Evaluators assessed the teams as they applied leadership skills (as defined by the learning objectives of the
workshop) to their scenarios (Table 1). All 8 of the Table Host/Evaluators completed team evaluations of the 7 competencies (Table 1). The majority (93%) of the competency assessments (52 of 56) was either in the categories of Moderate or High Level, indicating that youth were using their leadership skills as they worked through the scenarios. In only 4 of the competency assessments did the Table Host/Evaluators report that there was no evidence of skill application.

Table 1. Assessment of Youth Working in Teams at the 2007 Winter Leadership Adventure Camp.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High-Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowing and Understanding Self and Others</td>
<td>No mention of individual or team colors.</td>
<td>Asked about each others’ colors.</td>
<td>Asked about each others’ colors and used individual colors in working together to plan presentation/project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Youth worked independently without consideration for other team members.</td>
<td>Youth discussed teamwork and were aware of the value of having all members contribute and work together.</td>
<td>Youth looked for ways to engage all members of the team, and worked together to produce a team product.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning &amp; Organizing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>No brainstorming took place.</td>
<td>Youth discussed brainstorming techniques.</td>
<td>Youth used brainstorming techniques to develop their plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal-setting</td>
<td>Youth did not set any goals for their project.</td>
<td>Youth set some goals for solving their scenario.</td>
<td>Youth set up goals and made a list of action steps to reach their goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Steps</td>
<td>There was no mention or use of action steps in solving the scenario.</td>
<td>Loosely organized steps were used in the solution.</td>
<td>Well-organized and detailed action steps were developed during the planning process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making</td>
<td>The youth exhibited no real structure to their decision-making process.</td>
<td>Youth identified a process for making decisions.</td>
<td>Youth identified and used a process for making decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>No discussion on how to speak to other colors.</td>
<td>Youth discussed the differences between how colors communicate.</td>
<td>Youth discussed how different colors communicate and addressed those unique differences as they were planning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The evaluations by the Table Host/Evaluators served as a comparison between how the youth rated their own knowledge level and how the adults rated the application of the skills by youth (Table 2). In general, youth rated their individual knowledge of the skill higher than the Table Host/Evaluators.
rated the team’s application of the skill. For example, in the competency of “I know how to develop an action plan to reach my goals”, all youth felt that they knew how to do this at the level of “Somewhat” or higher, yet Table Host/Evaluators saw that 25% of the teams showed no evidence of being able to apply the skill.

Table 2. Comparison of Skill Assessment of Youth Participants, Individually and in Teams at 2007 Winter Leadership Adventure Camp.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Skill</th>
<th>Self Assessment (Individual)</th>
<th>Team Assessment (Evaluated by Table Host/Evaluators)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual participant’s rating of his or her knowledge of a particular skill</td>
<td>Adult’s rating of teams ability to perform particular skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing &amp; Understanding Self</td>
<td>Yes 86% (n=30)</td>
<td>High Level 50% (n=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to work with others who think and act differently from myself.</td>
<td>Somewhat 14% (n=5)</td>
<td>Moderate 38% (n=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 0% (n=0)</td>
<td>None 12% (n=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Yes 94% (n=30)</td>
<td>High Level 38% (n=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to be an effective team member.</td>
<td>Somewhat 6% (n=5)</td>
<td>Moderate 62% (n=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 0% (n=0)</td>
<td>None 0% (n=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning &amp; Organizing</td>
<td>Yes 64% (n=23)</td>
<td>High Level 88% (n=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know three ways to brainstorm ideas.</td>
<td>Somewhat 33% (n=12)</td>
<td>Moderate 12% (n=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 3% (n=1)</td>
<td>None 0% (n=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to set goals.</td>
<td>Yes 86% (n=31)</td>
<td>High Level 25% (n=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat 14% (n=5)</td>
<td>Moderate 75% (n=6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 0% (n=0)</td>
<td>None 0% (n=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to develop an action plan to reach my goals.</td>
<td>Yes 80% (n=28)</td>
<td>High Level 25% (n=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somewhat 20% (n=7)</td>
<td>Moderate 50% (n=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 0% (n=0)</td>
<td>None 25% (n=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>Yes 75% (n=27)</td>
<td>High Level 88% (n=7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know the steps I need to take to solve a problem.</td>
<td>Somewhat 25% (n=9)</td>
<td>Moderate 12% (n=1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 0% (n=0)</td>
<td>None 0% (n=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Yes 70% (n=25)</td>
<td>High Level 50% (n=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to speak to other “colors” (Real Colors).</td>
<td>Somewhat 22% (n=8)</td>
<td>Moderate 38% (n=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 8% (n=3)</td>
<td>None 12% (n=1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Enhanced Volunteer Roles

All 8 adult volunteers chose to serve as in the role of Table Host/Evaluator. Four of the 8 volunteers participated in follow-up telephone interviews regarding their experiences at WLA.

The training of adult volunteers prior to the educational sessions at WLA seemed to have the effect of making the volunteers more actively engaged in the learning that was going on at the Camp than in past years. One volunteer commented, “I was glad that you pulled the adults out and gave us a valuable role. It was different than the traditional chaperone roles.” Volunteers were observed by UW-Extension staff to be fully engaged both in learning during educational sessions and in their role as Table Hosts/Evaluators during the “Pulling it all Together” session. According to another volunteer, “It opened up new ideas and avenues for me.”

Each of the volunteers reported that their Table Host/Evaluator role was important in focusing the groups’ efforts by “prompting them when needed” and “bring(ing) them back on course”. All volunteers mentioned that they were impressed with the knowledge that the youth acquired at WLA, and felt that their Table Host/Evaluator role was one of helping the youth get started and keeping them going.

The “Pulling It All Together” session provided the opportunity for youth to begin to apply what they had learned in a supportive environment. All volunteers reported that they felt that the youth knew what they were doing – but they needed reminders to get back on track. As one volunteer stated, “They still needed direction into HOW to use it….not that they didn’t know, but that they need some guidance because of their age.”

Volunteers seemed to appreciate a role where they could directly share their expertise with youth. One volunteer said, “Any project that is going to teach leadership or teamwork to that age range
you have to have leaders that have experienced things first hand. And can give advice based on what
they know and have done. It’s important to be able to share that with kids…”

Implications

Implications of Scenarios in Skill-based Learning

“Teaching for Transfer” is imperative in skill acquisition (van Gelder, 2005).

It may not be enough to teach skills and expect that participants will be able to transfer them to
situations that they encounter. By participating in the capstone scenario-based projects—similar to
situations that they might encounter in their local county 4-H programs—the youth at WLA 2007 were able
to practice the transfer of their newly acquired leadership skills soon after learning them, with guidance
and support from 4-H volunteers.

Well-crafted scenarios can create situations that direct learning toward a specific purpose.

Through working on their own scenario, and listening to others’, participants were exposed to several
typical 4-H situations that they might encounter in their own county. These scenarios were written
without the dissonance of real-life situations that often provide distractions to learners. Scenarios give
learners the opportunity to develop their skill through application in appropriate situations. They also
provide a specific concrete example upon which learners can reflect; this may provide a trigger for the
application of leadership skills to similar situations in the future.

A measure of success in the retention of the skill taught is if the learner can recognize where that skill
can be used appropriately (Halpern, 1998).

At WLA, both the youth and Table Host/Evaluators saw evidence of the leadership skills, although in
many cases, prompting was needed. More opportunities for transfer would likely be of benefit to the
learner, and increase the likelihood that youth would recognize appropriate situations in which to apply their skills. Further evaluation is necessary to gauge success in skill application in real-life situations.

A supportive environment is key to the transfer of the newly acquired skills.
Past participants of WLA reported that they learned leadership skills at camp (Huff et al., 2004); the mini-capstone evaluations showed that youth could apply the leadership skills taught at WLA using a simulated scenario, with guidance. The Table Host/Evaluators were able to give direction in a positive and facilitative manner when the youth attempted to apply the skill for the first time. Youth may need multiple opportunities to practice the application of skills before they can successfully do it on their own.

Implications for Volunteers in Evaluative Roles
Volunteers are valuable partners in both the learning and evaluation processes.
The involvement of adult volunteers in key roles at WLA was a positive change. The volunteers had an active, valuable role that they appreciated. They were engaged in both the learning and evaluation processes, and saw themselves as contributing to the success of camp.

Volunteers may need guidance and support in their enhanced roles.
To ensure the success of volunteers, it is necessary to make sure that they thoroughly understand their roles and are comfortable with them. It is important to dedicate the staff time necessary for the group to develop a shared understanding of terms, techniques, and objectives.
Literature Cited


http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/family/in_focus/youthdev_if_programs.html

Appendix A

Winter Leadership Adventure
“Pulling it all Together”

Presentation guidelines:

- Begin your presentation by introducing each member in your team, and thanking your table host!
- Read your scenario to the audience, or include it in your presentation so that everyone knows what you will be doing.
- When you plan your presentation, you may want to remember the three parts of a good speech - the introduction, the body of the talk, and the conclusion.
- Asking for questions at the end of your presentation gives you the chance to make things more clear, and to get the audiences' ideas about what you've said.

Scenario One

4-H Meetings have three parts:

Business
Education
Recreation

Your challenge is to design a 4-H club meeting agenda that meets the needs of each of the color types: Gold, Blue, Green, and Orange.

Resource material: Meeting Agenda Planner
How to Speak to Colors
How Colors Speak
Colors Summary
Table Host Prompts

Scenario One

Procedure

- Which of the things that you learned in the Planning and Organizing sessions might help you get started?
- How will you make decisions as a group?
- What colors are your team members? How will that affect how you work together to get this project done?
- What are the benefits of working as a team to get this done? How will you go about doing that?

Content

- What goes on in each of those parts of a 4-H meeting?
  - Business (don't get stuck here - this should only last 20 minutes)
  - Education (demonstration, speaker, etc)
  - Recreation (games, activities, crafts)
- The following might help the group focus in on the different colors...
  - What would make a gold person comfortable the minute they walked into a 4-H meeting? A green? Blue? Orange?
  - What might upset or annoy a gold person during a business meeting? Green? Blue? Orange? What are some ways to avoid those things, and yet meet the needs of the other members?
  - What would keep an Orange interested in what was going on? A gold? Blue? Green?
  - It's probably not possible to make everyone "happy" all the time, but it's good to avoid things that you know will make someone edgy - like withholding information from a green, or making an orange sit in a chair for an hour to discuss a topic in which they have no interest.
- Are there any clues you can get from your handouts (How to speak to colors, How colors speak, Meeting Agenda Planner)?
Pulling It All Together
Table Host Checklist

During the Pulling It All Together session, we ask that Table Hosts observe their own group. In the left-hand column, you will find the topic areas for evaluation. As the group is working, please put a checkmark in the box that best represents their level of participation in each of the five areas. There is a comment area listed with each topic as well as comment space at the end if you need additional room. Thanks for helping to evaluate this activity!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowing &amp; Understanding Self</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High-Level</th>
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<p>| Teamwork | Youth worked independently without consideration for other team members. | Youth discussed teamwork and were aware of the value of having all members contribute and work together. | Youth looked for ways to engage all members of the team, and worked together to produce a team product. | | |</p>
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Other Comments: