



TEENZONE AFTER-SCHOOL HOURS DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The History of TeenZone

High-quality after-school programs have long been identified by researchers as important for the positive development of children and youth.

Research has demonstrated that youth spend approximately 80 percent of their waking hours outside of school, and that youth who are unsupervised during this time are at greater risk for: alcohol, cigarette, and drug use, poor academic achievement and school attendance, criminal activities, anger, depression, loneliness, and decreased self-esteem. Research also reveals that involvement in quality after-school programming can help to offset these risks and improve social competence, emotional well-being and school performance.

TeenZone Goals

In 2006, United Way of Calgary and Area, Burns Memorial Fund, the City of Calgary and UpStart: Champions for Children and Youth initiated the TeenZone pilot, with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Calgary, as a means to look at how best to ensure effective programs were available to Calgary's youth in the critical after-school hours. The mandate of the three-year project was to study and demonstrate the impact of high-quality after-school programs on youth.

TeenZone sought to increase the quantity, quality and accessibility of after-school programming in the North of McKnight communities by:

- a) providing funding to increase the number of programs available to youth aged 11 to 16 living in those communities
- b) enhancing the capacity of the program partners, along with the quality of the programming they provide, through inter-program collaboration, development of program quality standards, training for service providers and administrative support

TeenZone Accomplishments

Over three years, TeenZone funded a total of 17 new or enhanced programs, with a maximum of 13 programs and approximately 350 program spaces available at one time. At least 915 youth participated in TeenZone programs between 2007 and 2010.

As this was a demonstration project, with the goal of learning more about the impact of after-school programs on youth, Guyn Cooper Research Associates Ltd was contracted to conduct a rigorous, comprehensive evaluation. The following page provides a brief summary of the research findings, which indicate that the project was successful in developing a range of high-quality after-school programs which engaged a diverse cross-section of youth. The full report is available upon request from any of the project partners.

Highlights from the Evaluation

TeenZone met all of its objectives.

- By providing funding, training, quality assessment, and a range of supports to a group of after-school programs, TeenZone increased the quantity, accessibility, quality, and intentionality of after-school programming for youth aged 11 to 16 years in the North of McKnight communities.
- By leading and nurturing collaboration among the program partners, TeenZone strengthened the capacity of the programs, both individually and collectively.
- TeenZone attracted a diverse group of participants that included disproportionate numbers of immigrant, ethnocultural minority, and Aboriginal youth, many of whom were initially engaged in culturally-specific programming but subsequently expanded their exposure to a range of new opportunities and experiences by joining other programs.
- TeenZone overcame the many barriers identified by research—language, cultural, financial, physical location—that often prevent low-income and newcomer youth from participating in after-school programming and other extra-curricular activities.
- Feedback from the parents of participants was universally and overwhelmingly positive. Parents were very impressed with, grateful for, and enthusiastic about what TeenZone offered to their children, and in many cases, parents expressed relief that these programs kept their children busy and off the street when they were not at school. Parents also felt that TeenZone programs provided their children with opportunities to meet new friends and to learn skills that they did not have before and, for some of the at-risk youth, the opportunity to gain personal confidence and express themselves within peer settings, without embarrassment or fear.

PARTICIPATION BY PROGRAM

