

Youth's Commitment to Responsibilities in Youth Programs

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Abstract

Youth programs can provide a space for skill development and practice through task-oriented activities (Denner, Meyer, & Beon, 2005). This qualitative, grounded theory study was aimed at learning why youth remain committed to their responsibilities in youth programs and also, what role program leaders play in this process of youth commitment. The coded responsibility data was analyzed from the Pathways Project, which is a longitudinal study on youth, parents, and program leaders from voluntary project-based programs. Results show that in youth developing commitment, there were four themes: (1) youth viewed their responsibilities as a team effort; (2) youth had self-pride when responsibilities were completed; (3) youth believed that responsibilities were achievable; and (4) youth were able to stay committed to their responsibilities when planning was done in advance. For the leaders' roles, there were three themes found that highlighted the importance of: (1) facilitating within a group of youth, (2) supporting the youth through flexibility, and (3) being present to serve as examples for the youth. In all, these factors were shown to play an important role in the youth staying committed. This study should be continued and used to improve curriculum development in and outside of classroom settings.