

Economic Development and Quality of Life for People and Communities

Project SOAR

Issue

Gang activity, drug use and truancy can affect even students in elementary grades. Students who engage in these behaviors may end up with bad grades and early police records. Studies show that youth stand a better chance of avoiding risky behavior and academic failure when they experience strong connections in school. Mentoring programs offer students both academic and emotional support.

What has been done?

Project SOAR is an extensive mentoring program for elementary school youth who are in danger of academic failure and of engaging in high risk behavior. The program is jointly administered by the Arizona Supreme Court, Arizona Cooperative Extension Family Community

Leadership/4-H Youth Development, two elementary schools and two community colleges. Students, parents and mentors work together in a comprehensive program that includes mentor training, academic support, skill building, leadership enhancing opportunities, parental involvement, and social and personal interaction. Held at Hamilton and Fry elementary schools in the Phoenix area, it targets ethnically diverse students and families, with primary focus on Hispanic, African American and Native American students.

Impact

Officer referrals decreased by 77% at one school site. Average attendance increased by 5 days at Fry school. Students reported 2.4 on a 3 point scale in knowledge gained in SOAR. Pre/post student behavior scales by

teachers showed a significant increase in scores of 3.72 points (using tests). Using a 4-point scale, parents reported that their children exhibited positive behavior changes (3.6), good school work (3.8), positive attitude (3.6), less violence (3.9), less delinquency (3.3) and less gang participation (3.9). About 76 % of the students increased their academic performance.

Funding

UA College of Education
Hamilton and Fry Elementary schools
South Mountain and Chandler-Gilbert Community colleges
grantors from United Way, Phoenix/Chandler, and the Arizona Supreme Court

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