Higher Education for At-Risk Youth in Santa Cruz County

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Too many at-risk youth do not pursue higher education in the county of Santa Cruz due to a lack of knowledge of higher education opportunities.

**Background**

- Typically youth who keep delinquency habits can stay up to 3 to 5 years in a probation facility (Greenwood, 2008).
- At-risk youth tend to have longer stays in the probation/juvenile system due to the lack of education (Greenwood, 2008).

**Agency Description**

Friday Night Live (FNL) County of Santa Cruz is an adult and youth-led leadership advocacy program that creates positive changes in the county’s local communities. FNL caters to all youth populations which include at-risk youth who are in the probation system as well as post-probation.

**Motivation**

- In the County of Santa Cruz, at-risk youth are not exposed or have minimal to no awareness of higher education (Greenwood, 2008).
- At-risk youth are not receiving the proper resources when it comes to higher education (Greenwood, 2008).

**Problem Statement**

This project involved an implementation process of a created curriculum for an 8-week duration that lasts for an hour. Each week covers a different topic that connects back to the Higher Education unit under the curriculum for the chapters of Juvenile Hall and Evening Center.

Before and after the implementation process, participants are given an evaluation of a pre- and post-survey that tackles questions regarding higher education and background knowledge.

**Capstone Project Description**

- Session 1: What is College?
- Session 2: The Benefits of College
- Session 3: Social Life
- Session 4: Housing (On Vs. Off Campus)
- Session 5: Financial Aid & Resources
- Session 6: Colleges and Careers
- Session 7: California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB)
- Session 8: College Trivia & Movie-October Sky

Activities in each session included:
- True or False
- Pop quizzes
- Group discussions
- Worksheets
- Crossword Puzzles
- Word search
- Bingo
- Educational videos
- Trivia board
- Concluding film

This capstone implementation process was held at the Juvenile Hall facility in Felton, California. This process consisted of a one-hour, 8 weekly session that happened once a week at the facility. Each lesson plan (session) consisted of at least 4-5 activities that involved the topic of the day.

**Expected Outcomes:**
- High participant satisfaction.
- Increased knowledge about higher education.

**Results:**
- Around 70% of participants were ‘satisfied’ with the capstone project.
- Participants also mentioned how much knowledge they have gained after the implementation process has been completed.

**Conclusion / Recommendations**

- The unit implemented as part of this capstone surpassed expectations and will be included in future curriculums at the Juvenile Hall and Evening Center chapters for the FNL organization.
- I recommend Friday Night Live implementing similar units in other traditional chapters that we work with, specifically those in the County of Santa Cruz school districts.

**Acknowledgments**

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**References**


Collaborative Health and Human Services Department of Health, Human Services & Public Policy

**Policy Description**

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