

Linking Research to Family and Youth Programs

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INFORMED WITH RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS



Early Findings Show PROSPER is WORKING!

PROSPER (PROmoting School/

community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience) is working! Early results from youth participants indicate parents are using improved child management techniques and that their time together as a family has improved.

In Pennsylvania and Iowa, PROSPER is investigating ways to build networks with

schools, state extension services, universities, and community members who are engaged in providing life-skills training for youth and families. The

programs being implemented through PROSPER have been scientifically evaluated by prevention researchers and shown to reduce teen problem behaviors like smoking, drinking, and drug use.

According to Dr. Daniel Perkins and Dr. Claudia Mincemoyer, associate professors in Agricultural and Extension Education, local PROSPER partnership teams are the core of the model. Team members represent three entities: (a) Land Grant University Extension System and personnel (e.g., family and youth program content specialists, county educators, and prevention researchers); (b) elementary and secondary school system personnel (e.g., school-based prevention coordinators, curriculum directors, teachers, principals); and (c) community providers

of prevention, family, and youth services, and other community stakeholders (e.g., representatives of the juvenile court system, students, parents).

These partnership teams foster implementation of evidence-based youth and family program interventions with ongoing local needs assessments, monitoring of implementation quality and partnership functioning, as well as evaluation of intervention outcomes.

“The programs being implemented have been...shown to reduce teen problem behaviors like smoking, drinking, and drug use...”

The teams are assisted by a coordinating team of university-level prevention scientists and extension specialists and a

prevention coordinator who functions as a liaison between the university prevention group and the local teams. Early results include:

- 2,650 families involved at 14 sites in Pennsylvania and Iowa with over 11,000 sixth and seventh graders in the study.

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an OUTREACH program of the College of Agricultural Sciences

Homeschool Numbers on the Upswing

Home-schooling, an outgrowth of the alternative school movement, is on the upswing in the U.S., and Penn State researcher



JoAnn C. Vender, a graduate student in geography, is trying to piece together a snapshot of the movement although many states require little record keeping. Homeschoolers number about 1.1

million students, representing about 20 percent of the privately-schooled population in the U.S. While homeschoolers reflect the whole spectrum of American society, they can be divided into two broad groups, those who homeschool primarily for religious reasons and those who homeschool for ideological, social or simply practical purposes.

Pennsylvania, the high-regulation state in Vender's study, can document that homeschooling increased from 11,027 in 1993 to 24,415 in 2002. In 1993 only .5 percent of students were homeschooled, but by 2002 that had increased to 1.2 percent. Because state law does not require students to be enrolled until age eight, it is likely that more five- to seven-year olds are actually being homeschooled in Pennsylvania than the numbers reflect. Although the distribution

of homeschool students generally corresponds with population patterns in the state, the highest concentration of homeschoolers occurs in Lancaster, Berks and York counties, all counties with large Amish and Mennonite populations.

The relationships that homeschoolers have with their school districts in Pennsylvania varies by school district and breaks down to 59 districts allowing homeschoolers to participate only in academic activities, 81 allowing participation only in extracurricular activities, 183 districts that allow both academic and extracurricular activities, and 178 that do not allow any interaction at all.

"Many homeschoolers are committed integrators, connecting content and activities to everyday life wherever possible, so geography is an ideal vehicle for learning. Homeschoolers in fourth through eighth grade are incredibly well represented in the National Geographic Bee. They represent about 2 percent of the students who return qualifying tests but more than 50 percent of these homeschoolers place in the top 100 students in their states," reports Vender who can be reached via email at jvender@psu.edu or by phone at (610) 420-7688. ■

"Homeschoolers number about 1.1 million students, representing about 20 percent of the privately-schooled population in the U.S."

(PROSPER - Continued from front)

- *PROSPER* attendance rate for the family-based program averages 17 percent of all the eligible sixth grade families in communities compared to 1-6 percent who attended similar prevention programs in other communities.
- Youth who participated in *PROSPER* programs report that their parents are using improved child management techniques (e.g., discipline and consequences).
- Youth also report that their time together as a family has improved (e.g., cohesion and parent-child activities).

- Monitoring indicates *PROSPER* sites are implementing the evidence-based programs as designed with high quality:
 - Strengthening Families - 91 percent as designed
 - All Stars - 94 percent as designed
 - Life Skills Training - 89 percent as designed
 - Project Alert - 88 percent as designed

For more information contact Dr. Perkins at dfp102@psu.edu or (814) 865-6988 or go to <http://www.prosper.ppsi.iastate.edu/default.htm> or one of the additional Penn State Extension educators involved in *PROSPER*: Edward Bender, Denise Continenza, Melinda Graver, Donna Grey, Becky Kaucher, Claudia Mincemoyer, Christine Orrson, Karen Thomas, and Paul Webster. ■

Consumers Suspicious of Sponsored Links

Businesses spent an estimated \$8 billion to lure consumers to specific Web sites through sponsored links in 2004. However, a Penn State study conducted by Dr. Jim Jansen, assistant professor in the Penn State School of Information Sciences and Technology (IST), shows most online shoppers don't take the bait. Findings showed that on more than 80 percent of the searches, study participants went first to the results identified as "organic." Sponsored links were viewed first only six percent of the time.

Consumers have a bias against the links that businesses pay search engines to provide which indicates that sponsored links should only be one part of an online advertising campaign. To make sponsored links a viable business model, consumers need education about sponsored links. Until then, the researchers recommend

that businesses make sure their web sites appear high in organic results as well. Jansen says, "for paid searching to be a sustainable revenue model, search engines and e-commerce organizations have to address consumers' negative bias against sponsored results."

Details of the study appear in a paper entitled, "Examining Searching Perceptions of and Interactions with Sponsored Results," that Dr. Jansen co-authored with Dr. Marc Resnick, associate professor of industrial and systems engineering, Florida International University. The complete story can be found at <http://www.psu.edu/ur/2005/sponsoredlinks.html>. Dr. Jansen can be reached at jjansen@ist.psu.edu or (814) 865-6459. ■

"Businesses spent an estimated \$8 billion to lure consumers to specific Web sites..."

Employment Prospects Good for Cancer Survivors

Research documents that encouraging people to get mammograms to detect breast cancer and PSA tests to check for prostate cancer has clearly had a positive effect. People diagnosed early with these cancers usually have a good quality of life four to five years after treatment — including full-time employment.

Dr. Pamela Farley Short, professor of health policy and administration and demography, led the study supported by a grant from the National Cancer Institute. The researchers found that similar numbers of men and women stopped working during cancer treatment (41 percent of men and 39 percent of women) and most of those who returned to work did so during the first year after treatment. The rate of return to work after four years was 84 percent.

Cancer caused one worker out of eight to quit work within four years of being diag-

nosed, with women more likely to quit than men. The highest rates of quitting were among those with blood, central nervous system, and head and neck cancers. The lowest rates of quitting were among survivors of uterine, female breast, prostate, and thyroid cancers.

Dr. Short notes, "Today, most cancer patients can be very hopeful for a good outcome and a continued ability to work. But survivors who experience lasting problems post-treatment should not hesitate to tell their physicians when they have difficulty at work." The complete news release can be found at <http://www.psu.edu/ur/2005/cancersurvivors.html>. Dr. Short can be reached at pxs46@psu.edu or (814) 863-8786. ■



Elderly Residents Do Not Reduce School Tax Base

In a recent study examining the impact of senior citizens on local spending for public school education, findings show the “aging of America” can be a financial boom to a school district, rather than an impediment, unless the group includes a high percentage of newcomers with few, if any, emotional ties to the area.

As expected, longtime older residents find higher taxes for public school education more acceptable than newcomers, who favor lower spending. The differences in spending levels depend not only on the degree of their personal commitment to the host community but also in the way in which states and municipalities finance local public education.

In some localities, the arrival of new retirees is not only welcome but desired and encouraged. They have disposable income — a plus for economic development — and appear to impose few costs on the community. Retirees tend to be property-owners, they do not increase the number of school children, they commit few crimes, and they incur social services, such as medical care, often funded by state or federal government rather than by local agencies.

By the year 2030, people over age 65 will outnumber those under 20, reversing the nation’s demographic profile. As baby boomers’ age and

life expectancy increases, political decisions, including those related to education, will be more and more influenced by the needs and preferences of older Americans.



Nevertheless, the results of the study co-authored by Dr. Michael Berkman, associate professor of political science, and Dr. Eric Plutzer, associate professor of political science, reported in, “Gray Peril or Loyal Support? The Effects of the Elderly on Educational Expenditures,” show that the aging of America does not in any sense pose a threat to school funding. The data indicates that the great majority of senior citizen residents will support educational funding if they feel an emotional attachment to the community.

Additional details can be found at <http://www.psu.edu/ur/2005/elderlyschooltax.html>. Dr. Berkman can be reached at mbb1@psu.edu or (814) 863-6120; Dr. Plutzer is at exp12@psu.edu or (814) 865-6576.

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