

The Local Projects

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Gaining an Understanding of Local Projects

To gain a better understanding of what local projects looked like and how they operated, we spent several months in 1996 observing local activities and interacting with project administrators, staff members, participants, university personnel and members of the community who are involved in NYSP. Of particular interest were the range of sports activities and project enhancements that made up local projects, issues of staffing and staff development, and the roles that local NYSP projects played in the university and the broader community. In addition, we investigated, from a local perspective, a number of policy and governance issues such as project administration, evaluation, funding and recognition.

During the spring and summer of 1996, nine members of the evaluation team conducted site visits to 11 local projects. Sites were selected from among public and private institutions, rural, suburban and urban communities, large and small schools, and various regions of the country. Visits lasted from one to eight days. Most projects were visited only once during the summer session, but a few had multiple visits. Timing ranged from two months prior to the start of the project to the final days of the summer session, but most were conducted in the midst of project activity.

While on site, members of the evaluation team observed program activities including arrival and departure, sports instruction and competition, drug/alcohol education, health and nutrition classes, mathematics and science components, career education, staff development, staff meetings, mealtimes, advisory committee meetings, and Evaluator visits. We interviewed Project Administrators, Activity Directors, Educational Specialists,

Sports Instructors, Medical Coordinators, Liaison Officers, Project Aides, participants, advisory committee members, community representatives, and university administrators. We reviewed activity and lesson plans, recruitment materials, skills tests and other assessments, program schedules, job descriptions, staff development materials, minutes of personnel and advisory meetings, and other documentation. In many cases, we followed up with phone calls to verify information or ask additional questions. We shared drafts of site visit reports with Project Administrators and asked for their comments and concerns.

Shorter visits were made to 10 additional sites in conjunction with administration of the student survey. Although the primary purpose of these visits was to monitor the collection of data on student perceptions of the program, site visitors kept anecdotal records of their time on site. These notes were reviewed as this chapter was prepared.

In addition to site visits to selected projects, the evaluation team sent a survey to all 171 sites listed in the Institutional Listing.¹ We asked Activity Directors to comment on levels of campus and community support, the needs of youth, staff quality, major challenges and successes and other aspects of the 1996 program and NYSP in general. To date, 133 Activity Directors returned the survey; 132 were completed. Findings from this survey are included when relevant. A fuller reporting of the Activity Director survey is included later in this chapter.

As we had hoped, we know a great deal more about local projects now than when we began our work a year ago. We found striking similarities and considerable differences across projects. We identified issues that relate to the current operation and future status of NYSP. Our findings are presented in four sections:

- issues related to project purpose, structure and operation;
- those involving participants and personnel;
- issues related to university and community linkages;
- those concerning relations with the National Office.

They represent the content analysis and synthesis of field notes, summary reports, and collections of documents and other artifacts from the site visits. To preserve the anonymity of the

¹ University of Hilo, Hawaii returned the survey informing us that their NYSP program did not operate in summer, 1996.

projects and the people involved, projects and individuals are not identified by name in our reporting. The third to last section of this chapter summarizes our findings and discusses their implications for the program at local and national levels.

Issues Related to Project Purpose, Content and Operation

Our observations and interviews at local sites and the results of the Activity Director survey revealed a number of issues related to the purpose, content and operation of local projects.

Multiplicity of Purpose

Even though NYSP requirements push us toward uniformity, there is plenty of opportunity for uniqueness; opportunity for us building a program to fit the needs of our community. *NYSP Project Administrator*

Local projects were heavily shaped by directives from the National Office. The Guidelines, the evaluation process, the awards structure, all served to create a common core across all 170 projects. Expectations of uniformity ran high; given, that 106 out of 123 Activity Directors who responded to the survey reported that the Guidelines addressed 70% or more of program operation. Despite this basic similarity, there were differences in what Project Administrators saw as the central mission of their program.

As indicated in the Mission Statement (see page 2), the first objective of NYSP is

- to expand opportunities for youth from low income families to benefit from sports-skills instruction, engage in competition, and improve their physical fitness.

The Guidelines further emphasize sports by requiring sports skills testing, mandating that 90% of program activity include sport instruction and competition, and providing a fixed set of sport activities. As presented in the introductory chapter, the remaining objectives address drug and alcohol use prevention, nutrition, good health practices, citizenship, career education and academics, solutions to community problems, and on-the-job training in sports instruction and administration.

For many projects, especially those in operation a number of years, sports instruction, competition and the resulting benefits were clearly what they were about. In these projects, competitions were public and publicized, rewards were given primarily for winning and skill building (referred to in chapter 5 as "performance" and "mastery" orientations, respectively). In other projects full participation and sportsmanship were valued over maximum preparation and competition. In these sites, activities and formal and informal reward systems emphasized effort, respect for others, and following the rules over winning. A third group of Project Administrators and Activity Directors saw NYSP as an attempt to directly counteract drug use, vandalism, and gang action in their communities. They emphasized communication, self control, self esteem, role models and security. Finally, some project people saw themselves as trying to increase the pool of college eligible youth by engaging them in academics and providing otherwise unavailable access to a college campus.

That is why the concept of youth camps is excellent. Many youngsters have no idea of what a campus is like. It's like when one kid went to Atlanta for the first time and saw Black people with suits and attaché cases. They change aspirations. Our job is to see that the opportunity remains. *NYSP Activity Director*

As indicated in the quote at the beginning of this section, most Project Administrators felt that guidelines were roomy enough to allow these different emphases to operate under the same national umbrella. Others wondered how much latitude they had from a strict sports skill emphasis.

How much national support is there for shifting from sports skills to social skills and adjustment? I don't know. *NYSP Project Administrator*

A few advocated changing the Guidelines by reducing the sports skill emphasis and giving greater time to academics and/or social concerns. Some even suggested a name change.

To me the National Youth Sports Program is a misnomer. This program is so much more than sports. Sports is what we use to get them here, but once we have got them, the emphasis is on self respect. *NYSP Project Administrator*

It is not surprising that such variation occurs in a program based on a partnership negotiated among NCAA, universities and communities. The Guidelines imply uniformity--and uniformity exists--but project people, Evaluators and others acknowledge variation. Local project staff members disagreed about the extent to which the National Office personnel acknowledged and appreciated the different emphases that projects gave to the different objectives of the program and the extent to which they included components not covered by formal objectives. It was commonly expressed that the Guidelines implied more uniformity in content, operations, and intended outcomes across local programs than actually existed.

Sports

In local programs, most sports activities were organized around groups of perhaps twenty-five kids, a group remaining intact for the five week session and group members moving through daily activities (including non-sports activities) as a unit. Thus the experience of teamwork and personal interdependency were reinforced in terms of group membership. It started each day with recognition of membership in NYSP as at Metro State (chapter 8).

Each morning at 9, after breakfast in the cafeteria, the counselors, coaches, and youngsters gathered at the edge of the close-by playing field. Betsy, the Activity Director, greeted a number of kids, recognizing them by name, offering a "high five" here and there. With over 200 voices following her, they belted out the NYSP pledge, then broke into their regular groups, were briefed on the events of the day, the rules needing heed, and the hearing of personal problems. Most frequent question was, "When is swimming?"

Sense of membership was reinforced throughout the day in competition and with the reward structure of the program

The first objective of NYSP is to expand opportunities for youth to benefit from sports-skill instruction and to engage in sports competition. We found the amount of the total program devoted to sports varying some from site to site but, at all sites we observed, the staff worked hard and successfully to expand those opportunities. There are people who would shift the balance between skill instruction and competition and people who

would add to or diminish the non-sports activities, all important decisions for local programming, but so far those choices do not seem to bear directly upon national program quality. And which sports to include within and beyond those specified by the Guidelines seemed to be determined mostly by facilities and staffing, not directly a matter of what will be of enduring benefit to the child. But choices based on resources seem based on benefits, too. The facilities and inexpensive personnel available to coach are enormous assets for the program, well capitalized upon by present policies.

The ethic of "every youngster active" has been promoted vigorously by NYSP Evaluators. Chief Evaluator Fred Furukawa remonstrated against projects being "like schools," meaning that in school, too often, the children are idle recipients of instruction, spectators to another child's performance. Most of the coaches we saw did not put a high priority on "everyone active," recognizing that many children get discouraged by too much skill instruction and too little team play. We pondered the matter as we saw one coach allowing three boys to play second base at the same time. Were they learning or just playing softball?

Perhaps the most concerted effort at skill building was in swimming, but that too was hard to maintain in sometimes crowded conditions or in the absence of Project Aides able to assist with swim instruction as illustrated at one site.

Today there are two groups in the indoor pool. Kate, the Group 4 coach, gives the "deep boys" push boards and they kick to the other end of the pool. After a dozen "dunks," she has the 14 Group 4 non-swimmers push-boarding 20 feet. Group 5 is playing keep-away. With the noise and joy of water, Kate's non-swimmers soon too are caught up in play. Kate does not appeal to Aides Mark and Peter, but reminds Mario that, under these conditions, she only can coach the ones who want it. The kids splash away, happily, some using pylons for buckets.

In many sites, the extent to which lesson plans were carried through, or to which organized teaching evolved into games, disarray, and disciplinary action, was not closely monitored. The number of sessions of concentrated coaching were often fewer than acknowledged. Sports skills testing was not evident in most of the projects we visited and individual progress was not carefully monitored. But many coaches and professionals who tried too hard to concentrate on skill building without

adequate structure or sufficient staff support faced group atrophy. As in the swimming episode above, a sports experience that was a disappointment to a coach was often what the youngster listed in chapter 5 as reason for coming back next year.

The issues regarding sports instruction and teaming did not seem to be major issues at the local level. Clearly this central thrust to NYSP is important to the children, the staffs, and it fits comfortably and opportunistically into the lofty place given sports in the American scene.

Non-Sports Components

As required in the Guidelines, each project offered an education program that included drug/alcohol prevention education, nutrition, hygiene, educational goal setting, and career planning. Some projects offered mathematics and science education as well. Although most Activity Directors were satisfied with the quality of their sports instruction (103 out of 130 survey respondents), during site visits, we found less satisfaction with the non-sport components of local programs.

According to our observations, at their best the educational components served to draw sports and other aspects of the program together, to motivate students, provide them with role models and acquaint them with community resources. For example, one inner city project offered a "Law and Justice" course, with police officers and lawyers from the community involved in animated discussions with participants about the workings of the criminal justice system and their rights within it. At another site, the African American CEO of the major employer in the community (and former high school athlete) spoke with participants about job opportunities in his company, let them in on qualities that he looks for when hiring new employees, and presented the rationale for the drug-free policies of the company. At their worst, education sessions were characterized by rote learning, didactic instruction, passive participants, and unconnected lessons or presentations by outside speakers.

Auxiliary staff members cited time constraints and restrictive guidelines as barriers to effective programming. Most education sessions were held four times a week for 45 minutes each time. The short periods limited preparation prior to and debriefing after activities; discouraged discussion and hands-on

formats. While some projects combined periods to create two 90 minute blocks or simply increased the time spent on education, others felt unable to do so because of scheduling of athletics facilities. Some Educational Specialists interpreted the Guidelines and Evaluators' statements to mitigate against integration of the education component into the sports program because, according to their interpretation of the Guidelines, a single activity cannot count in two categories.

Alcohol and other drug prevention education. Current thinking about substance abuse prevention tells us that to be most effective, the anti-abuse message should be infused throughout all aspects of program, not taught in isolated classes. Role models are particularly effective ways of conveying information and the most effective role models are people like the children to be influenced, people from the same community, background, gender. Rather than using scare tactics or "just say no" ultimatums, state of the art programs provide children with alternatives to taking or dealing drugs; they help them understand the risks involved and teach cognitive behavioral strategies to deal with risk behaviors and their consequences. Some approaches focus on building resiliency factors such as self esteem, spirituality, family support, opportunity. Others teach anger management, violence prevention, stress reduction. The ideal is to offer continuity and access over time and to tie students into resources in their schools, families and communities that can help them make good decisions and avoid abuse (Mary Nakashian, Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse, personal communication).

Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Specialists in local projects faced a difficult challenge of putting together a coherent, compelling program with limited time and resources. Some were striving to integrate substance abuse prevention education into their program by promoting sports as an alternative to substance abuse, using the university or college campus as a means of introducing opportunity, and capitalizing on the presence of counselors as possible role models. They were finding it slow going, however, and sought help from NCAA and other local projects to make their approach more professional.

I would like to tie drug and alcohol prevention to our great program (violence and gang reduction). What I really would appreciate is better information about possible education activities, perhaps an NYSP Education Notebook. And I would

like to work closer with other Education Directors. *Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Specialist*

Mathematics and science instruction. The mathematics and science lessons we saw featured engaging hands-on activities. Clearly, the instructors were more focused on creating a situation where students had fun rather than trying to teach specific skills or content. Their efforts to find engaging activities that could be done with large groups of students in short periods of time generally resulted in a “bag of tricks” approach, that is, a set of proven but little related lessons more or less illustrating a variety of scientific and mathematical principles. Some were related to sports, health, and nutrition, but most were not. Some varied with the age of the participants, but most were standard for everyone. Some attempted to determine what students knew prior to or after the lesson, but most were more concerned with keeping them active and happy than with outcomes. Some utilized the instructional resources of the campus, but most relied on materials and equipment that could be found almost anywhere. Some Education Specialists told us that they wanted to do more with mathematics and science but they needed coaching to do that.

It would be helpful to have a clearer idea of what the math and science component could be like. I’d like to visit some programs that are considered really good and see how they do it. I think we do a good job of entertaining the kids and getting them to think that it can be fun, but I’d like to see kids come away with more than that. But maybe that is all we can expect from a program like this. *NYSP Educational Specialist*

In person and through the mail, local project people expressed a need for additional guidance in the non-sports aspects of NYSP. At one site, our observer found the tennis coach “remarkably uncurious about the non-tennis aspects of the program.” One hundred and eighteen of the 130 Activity Directors who responded to our survey indicated that a notebook of exemplary activities for integrating sports skills and education efforts would be useful to them. Of course, a notebook alone will not be sufficient to upgrade the quality of local non-sports components. Information about staff development, use of university and community resources, lesson development and other information about how to implement exemplary math and

science programs is needed to give other projects insight into the process of creating such a program in their local context.

Enhancements. NYSP directives and Evaluators have made it clear that local projects are to enhance their programs with extra instruction that fits within and extends NYSP goals. This includes direct efforts "to help them become better citizens and to help acquaint them with career and educational opportunities by utilizing the personnel and facilities of institutions of higher education." Doing such difficult tasks well calls for programming competence that some local Education Directors do not have. Their plight will be brought up later as a staff development issue. Part of an enhanced program might be integration of educational learnings with sports instruction. During the past summer we saw only rare instances of coaches mentioning score keeping tasks, science principles, fitness principles, life styles, social issues or career choices. These are complex and somewhat tangential ideas to squeeze into an hour's instruction but could enhance the educational offerings.

Modes of instruction. The policy of the NYSP, particularly in the advice of the Evaluators, has been to provide instruction using a participatory mode, with "hands-on" tasks leading to experiential learning. In such a mode, the instructor provides conceptual structure but steps back to facilitate the youth gaining meaning more from their participation than passively from direct instruction. The policy is consistent with the pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey, from progressive education and from contemporary educational experts in both formal and informal education. Many instructors and coaches embrace the approach; many do not, some leaning excessively to "drill" on the one side and "play" on the other. The programmatic choice of participatory instruction seems sound and not a national policy issue at this time, however the capacity of a local staff to carry it out will be addressed in a later section.

Lesson plans. It is our understanding that instructors and coaches are required to submit lesson plans at the outset of summer activities. This provides some guarantee that they will plan their instruction in advance, strive for continuity and youth participation, obtain coverage and grounds for evaluation of the activities. Some lesson plans were detailed, most were brief

outlines. A great many were not followed closely, quite a few were not even closely connected with what goes on that day. Staff members were not obligated to change their plans when schedules change (e.g., weather, their own absence, schedule shift). The better coaches and instructors did not much need the outlines, the weaker ones did not seem to do much better because of them. Discrepancies between the planned and the actual are common in sports programs, schools, museums, and other informal education settings. It is not apparent that greater enforcement of the requirement would be a step in the right direction.

Organization, Structure, Discipline and Behavior Management

Discipline and structure were viewed as important in all the projects we visited, not surprising in an enterprise that requires moving large groups of children through a number of activities according to a schedule. Projects differed, however, in the centrality of discipline to their mission. For many, disciplinary and management systems were necessary to make the program operate efficiently and to provide instructors with the opportunity to teach and participants with the opportunity to learn. In other projects, discipline served as an organizing principle for the program, providing many participants with structure and security they did not have in their homes, schools or community. As the following quotes illustrate, in these projects, structure and discipline were seen not so much as establishing social conformity as preconditions to opportunity and personal happiness.

Camp provides structure, something concrete; not all their homes have it. Here they get sports, education, but mainly they get security, something they can depend on. If you don't have structure in life, consistency, you drift, you wander. They don't show they feel these things, but down low, they appreciate it. *NYSP Activity Director*

I would say something about structure, of discipline, in the make-up of the youth camp, making it something of a "boot camp." One way or another, for a kid to succeed there has to be some form of social structure. Kids don't know the system, they need to be taught. Preparation for life responsibilities requires discipline. Some treat youth by becoming youth themselves. I speak to them as an adult, not as one of them. They find my patterns do not vary. Youth are observant, sharp; they see stuff. They need models, action, and talk, not only from

individual adults, but from whole schools and neighborhoods.
NYSP Activity Director

The differing views of discipline were echoed in the responses to the Activity Director's survey. When 118 respondents were asked to describe the ambiance of their camp, 48 chose "structure, order, discipline;" 30 chose "feeling good and being happy;" and 40 chose both.

Many local projects officers stressed constant contact with and supervision of students. Clear and frequent communication among staff members helped maintain consistency and control. Expectations were explicit--evident in the reward system. There were differences in what was rewarded and penalized, however. There also were difference in the level at which discipline was handled. In some projects Project Aides dealt directly with virtually all behavior management. In others, auxiliary staff members became involved almost any time disciplinary action was required. Suspensions and expulsions were used by virtually all projects although rates and procedures varied. In some projects, parents were involved in discipline, others handled it without involving families.

Many local projects officers worked to have the youth move between activity periods quietly and in formation. Many made the disciplining of rule-breakers as well known to other participants so that others can learn the consequences. These are examples of the structural disciplinary approach, a "tough love" approach, helping the youth to understand and live within a rule-based society. Officers at other projects obligated youth to conform to rules mostly to avoid interference with good training for all the group. This included, of course, restraining behavior that offends the surrounding campus and lowers the standing of NYSP.

Emphasis on discipline and order apparently paid off. The incidence of serious misbehavior was very low across projects. When things went wrong it was usually between Project Aides and kids. It was sometimes due to the lack of clear distinction between children and adults, especially where Aides were close in age to participants or were unprepared to deal with challenging behaviors. Other problems occurred when participants were idle or unsupervised and Aides were not present or not engaged. Both of these scenarios underscore the

need for strong staff development and supervision of Project Aides, a topic that will be dealt with in the next section.

Discipline. Discipline is a major issue for local projects. It is not the question of whether discipline is good or bad in local projects, but whether or not the present policies regarding discipline are consistent with the best interests of the youth and the larger society. The policy question is whether to use "discipline" as a focus of structural offerings for youngsters, many who have inadequate or abusive parental, peer, community, or school support. Or whether to use "discipline" only as providing opportunity for instruction and other program activities to be carried out.

Understanding the relationship between various approaches to discipline and student outcomes such as attitude toward the program, self-esteem, motivation, and goal orientation could give valuable guidance for program development. Also, given the increasing challenges posed by the changing population served by NYSP, affective aspects may figure more prominently in the NYSP of the future. Though it is improbable that a five week program will have lasting effects on such outcomes, even short term differences would support the attention that is given to discipline as a organizing construct for the program.

Extension Beyond the Summer

Among several projects, particularly those whose leaders viewed themselves as offering an alternative to gangs or emphasizing access to college, staff members expressed a strong need for a formal extension of the program beyond the summer.

What we spend on NYSP is money well spent. But there is a piece missing. They come to NYSP for five weeks and go home to the neighborhood. How should their experience be reinforced? Everyone needs to work to support their attitudes. They need help putting down negative environments from which they come. What can be done to provide follow-up?
NYSP Educational Specialist

Many projects had informal connections with NYSP participants throughout the school year. Public school teachers and coaches who served on the auxiliary or professional NYSP

staff spoke about the need for maintaining contact with NYSP participants who attend their schools.

The kids wear their [NYSP] shirts. I see them in the halls and acknowledge that. Or sometime I will see a kid take leadership when they normally wouldn't or do well at a sport because they have had exposure to it in NYSP. *NYSP Educational Specialist*

In some cases, projects made arrangements for one or two NYSP retention and recruitment activities during the school year. Other projects attempted to link participants with other programs and recreational opportunities.

We try to get YMCA memberships for as many students as possible. The local health clubs donate a couple of memberships as well. Parks and recreation have some extramural opportunities for kids. It is mostly a band-aid approach though. It doesn't happen for most kids. *NYSP Liaison Officer*

Extended year programming was viewed as an important tool for retention and recruitment as well as for supporting students in their efforts to become involved in sports and maintain healthy lifestyles. However, few projects included extended year programming. Staff members in those that did felt that their efforts fell short of what was needed. Documenting the funding strategies, content, and operation of well established extended programs might be useful to local staffers who wish to develop their own.

The People Involved

NYSP Guidelines specify minimum staffing for administrative and instructional purposes and provide funding that allows assignment at stipends (were they annual salaries) up to \$45,000 for a Director to \$20,000 for an aide. Especially in an urban setting, this rate is below the going rate for a qualified staff. At the local level, NYSP relies upon people who do not have other summer employment or who can get their organizations to release them for five weeks. Given these limitations and with some key staff members returning successive years, staffing has been quite good. But at a few positions on many campuses, especially with

last minute hires, staff performance has been problematic. Perhaps it is inevitable in a short term situation, but it makes the staff development responsibility critical.

With concentration on youth participation in 1996, we of the Illinois evaluation team paid attention but did not scrutinize local management of NYSP projects. In the twenty-one sites we visited, we saw different styles and different problems and strengths. We can make some general comments about staffing and staff development at the local level.

Auxiliary and Professional Staff

One of the most striking aspects of NYSP local projects was the commitment and quality of their auxiliary and professional staffs. Many of the Project Administrators had been with the project for many years; a surprising number from its inception. The experienced administrators were well established in their institutions and communities. Most were familiar with NYSP Guidelines and policies and knew what it took to run a project according to those directives. The most well-established had assembled a cadre of auxiliary staff members and support people who worked well together and returned each year. They often networked with other Project Administrators through the Annual Workshop and similar events and occasionally established mentoring relationships with new administrators of other projects. A few Project Administrators took a hands-on role in the project. Most held figurehead or administrative roles, delegating the day-to-day operation to the Activity Director and/or Liaison Officer.

Activity Directors were the heart of local projects. Responsibilities for recruitment, scheduling, hiring and supervising the staff, negotiating university and community support, preparing paperwork, handling discipline, and interacting with parents often fell within their purview. Like the Project Administrators, many had long term involvement with NYSP. New hires had to "hit the ground running." Guidelines served as lifelines for new directors. Their own Project Administrator or experienced Activity Directors from other projects mentored a lucky few. Some were helped by Evaluator visits. In any case, staff development was spotty and insufficient for this critical group of local administrators.

The auxiliary and professional staff members (i.e., Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Specialists, Mathematics/Science Instructors, Coaches) that we met were generally public school teachers or university staff members. Few were without regular jobs. As will be discussed later in the community relations section, the prevalent use of teachers on the auxiliary staff maintained connections with school districts and kids throughout the year and enabled teachers to develop relationships with the students in a non-school setting. Most were highly professional, enthusiastic, mature, and dedicated to the project and its participants--amazingly dedicated, given that many finished up a school year one day and reported to NYSP the next. Fewer auxiliary staff members were from the university, however, the university was where NYSP found many of its well-trained Sports Instructors.

Some projects enjoyed a high return rate for staff members, but burn-out was commonplace, especially during the first year. One Activity Director told us that if a staff person returns for a second year, she knows she has "got 'em" and they will return again. Part of the reason for the shock of the first year is the lack of preparation for what is about to happen. Very few staff members were former NYSP participants and most did not have prior summer program experience. Local project staff members (even brand new ones) received, at most, two days of orientation just before the summer session began. In the survey of all local projects, something over half of responding Activity Directors reported that returning staff members would be involved in some sort of professional development activity prior to next year's program.

There is tremendous need for NYSP staff development and supervision at the local level. A few local projects were investing in staff development and reporting positive impact on retention and program quality. Most local leaders reported that short timelines, low wages and the fact that senior staff members had other employment obligations limiting their ability to train the staff prior to the start of the summer session made it impossible to provide sufficient support to Aides and volunteers. The national program could provide leadership in identifying effective models and encouraging supervision and training.

Project Aides

Many Project Aides were recruited from among undergraduates at the host institution. In some cases, they were not much older than the oldest campers. Some were from the community; others lived there only to attend school. A few were former NYSP participants. Retention rates varied across projects, but it was said to be unusual to have a majority of experienced Aides in a project in any given summer. NYSP was seen by some in the university administration as an opportunity for employment and on-the-job training for these students, but the short duration (5 weeks) and low rate of compensation necessitated that many Project Aides work at second jobs while NYSP was in session. The views of Adam West, NYSP advisory council chair at Springer University, (write-up not included in this report) illustrate the problem of untrained Aides.

West, a long-time resident of the area, was enthusiastic about discussing the program. He spoke of the importance for NYSP to be in the community, mentioning the high crime rate among the youth population. He said he spent a lot of time at the program because so many of the youth needed positive male role models. West's company considered itself in partnership with the NYSP program, encouraging West to visit the program every day.

West spoke of the need for pre-program staff training, especially for Aides but a year or so older than the students. He told of a situation in which some students were roughhousing. The Aides reprimanded them in very loud and confrontational tones, to which the students responded negatively, saying Aides could not tell them what to do. Confrontation between youth and Aides escalated and an instructor had to step in. West was confident the Springer Aides could have been better prepared.

Project Aides had the most direct contact with participants, often accompanying the same group of children throughout their NYSP day from pick-up to drop-off. In many projects, they were the front line for dealing with behavior problems and doling out discipline. They were often cast as role models by Project Administrators. It was surprising that, given their importance, so little time was spent in staff development and supervision in most projects. Expectations for their learning and leadership development seemed quite low.

As with the professional and auxiliary staffs, staff development and supervision for Project Aides was seriously lacking. Because these functionaries had the most contact with participants, it is important to emphasize them in any coordinated effort to increase training and supervision.

Staff Development Policies

Staff development. During our year-long study, we came to see staff development as the area of NYSP responsibility most needing attention. The NCAA Youth Programs Advisory Committee recognized the issue in endorsing the theme of "Team Building and Communication" for the 1997 National Workshop. A troubling number of staff members were failing to "get the word," remaining unaware of certain guidelines or changes in emphasis or expectations of their duties. Typical problems were apparent in a strong program we observed at Tidewater University (write-up not included in this report).

NYSP at Tidewater relied on college students as Project Aides, receiving credit hours if they kept a daily journal and wrote a paper. I had assumed few students would be interested, but "there is fierce competition, 55 applied, 18 were hired." They were bright, alert, committed to service. James said, "We live in community here." Their lack of experience, however, made difficult problems.

The problems were not eased by Tidewater's top down management, even though NYSP leadership here is highly laudable. Staff members did not know who else was responsible for what. Staff meetings were marked by confusion and uncertainty. The "training model" was not apparent.

Training is an issue facing all organizations, particularly those which have short-term assignments for staff members and those requiring flexibility in problem solving. (We shall speak more on flexibility in discussing "structure and compliance" in chapter 7.) Activity Directors attempt to hire experienced staff members, if not previously in NYSP then in some other youth or school activity with youth similar to those participating in NYSP. They bring important skills and knowledge but some that are inconsistent with NYSP requirements and values. They make

plans and participate in a two day summer pre-session but that is far too little opportunity to bring some of them "on-board."

The situation is confounded by the fact that the typical Activity Directors and Educational Specialists have neither the time nor the skills to monitor coaching and instruction effectively. They themselves need professional development in these skills. Right now, the policy of dealing with staff competence is to insist that they follow the Guidelines. But the Guidelines, of course, do not deal with the range and detail of help that they need. The Evaluators discuss staff shortcomings with the Activity Director and have really no alternative but to emphasize the Guidelines. Sometimes that is enough but usually not. The policy of raising program quality through staff development appears in need of considerable study as part of strategic planning. We will bring this issue up in chapter 7 in the section on "support services."

The Participants

Qualifications for Student Participation

The focus on youth from low income families appears to be an unchallenged eligibility requirement, in other words, a sound national aim, for NYSP. Even as the country moves to reduce the role of federal programs in personal affairs, particularly lowering "entitlements," NYSP continues to be seen as an effective and low-cost way to enhance life opportunities among needy youth. Provision of transportation and meals appears to be adequate to enable almost all youngsters of the catchment area to participate.

According to the Guidelines, participant eligibility was determined largely by area of residence. Some projects used an individual criterion of social service eligibility in addition to the residence criteria. The residence criteria permitted some children who lived in economically disadvantaged areas but who were not disadvantaged themselves to attend the project. We estimated that perhaps 5% of the presently attending youngsters do not come from low-income families. Some are children of staff members. We know that some projects are hard pressed to meet minimum attendance requirements. We have not looked systematically at NYSP recruitment of participants. Following the Guidelines, all projects have elaborate recruiting plans. When program enrollment hovers at the allowable minimum and no

additional poverty youth can be found, projects accept non-poverty youth, especially those likely to contribute as models or helpers. Making the group more heterogeneous is also sometimes an aim. Some admission of non-poverty youth is strongly defended by some project staff members.

Meeting the Needs of Diverse Participants

NSYP is intended as a program for economically disadvantaged children. Within that group exist other subgroups defined by culture, language, gender and disability. In the sites we visited, there was some feeling expressed that to deal effectively with culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse children implied additional resources, staff development, coordination and enhancements that many projects did not have. Some Project Administrators speculated about differential attrition and suspension rates for certain groups of participants. Others commented on the difficulty meeting community needs in the absence of affirmation or guidance from the National Office.

Some of us say, "Should we even be serving these (linguistically and culturally diverse) kids?" They have so many needs. It doesn't seem like a sports camp is the right place for them. But our advisory committee has really pushed us to be responsive to this group. So we are. It has totally changed some aspects of the program. I mean, softball isn't even a sport in their country. So instead of building skills, we are introducing them to these sports. Acculturating them if you will. Is that what we are supposed to be doing? The Guidelines sure don't cover that. In some ways, I think we are doing ourselves a disservice. I mean, how can you be an excellent sports skill camp--and you are being judged for that--and try to meet the needs of these very different kids. *NYSP Activity Director*

Similar concerns existed with medical eligibility. NYSP annually reports number of referrals based on applicant medical examinations. In a brief look, we found little use made of the referral opportunity. For contributions to general well-being of communities, perhaps more should be done with results from NYSP medical examinations.

Recruiting and Retaining

We often heard that recruiters go after returnees. Many of the boys and girls who return for an additional year share in the responsibility for making the program successful. And some NYSP staffers argue that it takes more than one summer for the program to make a difference in life's chances. But without evidence of that, it seems unfair to accept a returnee if it means turning away a first timer. What is good for program management is not necessarily good for the community and nation.

We estimate that just under 2.5% of the nation's poverty youth are enrolling in NYSP at least one summer. Of course it would be better if this portion were larger. The main limit is the size of the national program. But even without expanding, the portion could be raised a little, perhaps to 3%, by:

- giving priority to youth not previously enrolled rather than to returnees;
- imposing additional criteria of need beyond the present "eligible neighborhood" criterion;
- terminating sites with relatively few low-poverty families, especially those sites performing poorly, and creating sites in areas of greater poverty; and
- working during recruiting even more closely with school, police and housing authorities.

It of course needs to be kept in mind that a federal program is politically strongest when active in the maximum number of congressional districts.

Age Issues

For a long time, NYSP has been a program for youth 10-16 years of age. Across the projects we visited, 10-12 year olds were the largest age group represented. Fourteen to 16 year olds were hard to recruit and keep involved, although some projects were

trying to do so with differentiated programs for older youth² Most attempts to engage older participants involved specialized activities (i.e., use of the fitness center, camping). The age policy has been talked about this year, with some advocates favoring admitting even younger children, "when you can do more in shaping their lives," and others favoring admitting older youth, "those needing help transitioning to life after high school." (NYSP has a pilot program for older youth.) Programs are needed for an extended age range and innovations should be tried, but the basic age policy seems not at this time a matter of important debate.

Changing Youth Populations

According to our summer program follow-up survey, 86% of the Activity Directors said that the youth are changing. We gave them little opportunity to elaborate but some indicated that the students were less compliant, less appreciative, or less willing to commit themselves to five weeks of participation. One coach said,

These kids bring a great deal of anger with them. . . . angry at the establishment, at their own families, at their own plight. Our counselors are constantly working on the "anger" problem.

Mary, the medical director at Tidewater, pointed to a growing number of participants on medications as a "major change" in the program.

We believe there are changes. Even though the high majority of participants are deeply engaged and appreciative, we believe there are important changes. They come, not to better

²We asked Robert Long, Kellogg Foundation, one of our Advisory Group members, why relatively few 15- and 16-year olds enroll in NYSP. He said that "The older youth have been on their own for many, many years. They left the traditional youth serving organization programs back in the 60's, claiming a lack of relevance in programming, and never came back. Most of them are just hanging out with friends, video game centers, beaches, pools, teen clubs, playgrounds. Many are working at minimum wage jobs. The youth serving organizations, even with their most creative programming, only manage to keep a very small percentage involved. The majority of these connections are built for those older youth who aspire to leadership roles in the programs which serve the younger participants." He recommended Dorothy Stoneman, President of Youth Build USA as an expert in the matter of keeping older youth involved.

themselves, but because NYSP is the best thing to be doing each day, usually. And when it isn't, few feel they are letting anyone down by not being there. NYSP and the students have both changed gradually over the years but we have not tied the two trends together.

Youth Leadership

In our limited contact with sites, we were surprised how little participants were drawn into minor NYSP management responsibilities. They gathered up sports equipment here and carried a message there, helping with chores, but not really learning something about off-the-field leadership and management of youth activities. We found not a single youth advisory committee to help put their perspective into view. It was not typical for older participants to take on junior counselor or other leadership positions or to be involved in other employment opportunities through NYSP. But it is not clear that such is needed or that it would be useful. Many of the youth are highly vocal and not reluctant to tell staff members how things should be changed. It is all part of the general issue of "Who owns NYSP anyway?" Someone should keep an eye on good ideas from projects on having youth assist in the management of NYSP.

Need for Demonstration

Little is known about the relationships between local project characteristics and student outcomes or the strategies used by projects that are particularly effective at serving certain subgroups of participants defined by age, gender, language, or disability. Older students, students with primary languages other than English, and students with emotional and behavioral problems present particularly daunting challenges to the local project staff. We understand that in 1997, a small group of demonstration projects will be funded to serve older participants. Studying these projects should help Strategic Planners identify salient issues and promising practices for serving youngsters 14 and older. The demonstration projects may be one strategy for building capacity and creating exemplars for local projects to follow.

NYSP as a University-Community Collaboration

Community Relations

Relations between local projects and their communities ranged from intensely supportive to uncomfortable. Tension rose in some projects that did not serve students from the immediate community, but transported participants from other areas meeting the criteria for economic disadvantage. In these cases, NYSP participants were sometimes viewed as outsiders by community members and community support was difficult to obtain. Project staff members interpreted this as the local community's lack of investment in youth served by the program.

Good community support was evidenced in some places by membership of key community members on local project advisory committees, membership of NYSP staff members on key community committees, and financial and in-kind support from community agencies and school districts. Some advisory board members were involved directly in project operations.

I am right here on campus, so I get to stop over now and then and see the kids. I see kids in my congregation--or counselors. When I see an undergraduate that I think would be a good counselor, I send them to [the Activity Director]. That girl there, in fact, I referred her as a counselor. Or when I know a family that would benefit--I put them in touch, just as I do with other kinds of social services. *A local pastor and NYSP advisory board member.*

I am in and out of here all summer. We refer a lot of kids to this program, because, frankly, there is not much out there for them in the summer. And that causes problems. When they are here, I feel in some ways that it is an extension of the school year. I wish more kids would take advantage of it. That is why we provide the bus. To make it easier for kids to participate. *A school psychologist and NYSP advisory board member.*

Others were not directly involved, but served equally important roles such as facilitating corporate involvement in local NYSP. Corporate involvement took the form of providing monetary support and guest speakers to the project and employment opportunities for participants. In at least one

project, business people from the community served as regular instructors and mentors in the local project.

Many local projects enjoyed close, productive community relationships. In some communities, NYSP was the only alternative; in others, there was intense competition with other summer programs for participants. At one site, NYSP partnered with community organizations such as the JTPA, Park District, Police Athletic League, 4-H, and United Way, coordinating their efforts to reduce duplication in summer programs and pooling resources to maximize efficiency and services.

While some local projects enjoyed strong reciprocal relations with the surrounding community that seemed to enhance operations, others operated successfully without much interface with the community. The relationship between community support and program outcomes such as enrollment, attendance, and retention of students and staff members was, for us, a largely unexplored domain.

University Contributions

In our travels, we saw many examples of support from the highest levels of university administration. At some sites, NYSP projects were given equal status with paying camps when vying for facilities and other institutional resources. Provosts and chancellors sat on NYSP advisory committees. Project Administrators and Activity Directors were sometimes high ranking university administrators themselves. In many sites, financial support from the university substantially exceeded the 20% required contribution. Much of it was provided through in-kind support of facilities and equipment, but some local projects were funded with state funds, some even had line items in the university budget.

Most host institutions viewed NYSP as an important service to disadvantaged communities. They saw it as good public relations for the university, a productive use of campus facilities during down time and a source of employment for staff members and students during the summer months. As one Vice Chancellor told us:

Even if we did not have the money from NCAA, I think we would try to find some way to do a summer program like NYSP

for these kids. It just makes sense that here we sit with all these great facilities that aren't used in the summer. It is what we give back to the community. We all appreciate and feel good about that. [The Project Administrator and Activity Director] are top notch people who run a quality program. It makes it hard to say "No." And who knows, these kids may see this campus as something that they can attain. We may end up encouraging some student who isn't thinking of going to college that (this university) is right for him. I think that is great. We have an exceptional "town-gown" relationship. And NYSP does provide summer employment for a significant number of folks.

Ironically, we also saw projects operate successfully in the absence of strong institutional support. Operating within a university beset by political and financial problems, one Activity Director remarked, "If the program weren't here, no one [at the university] would know the difference." In the face of limited institutional resources, this Activity Director relied on extensive community support and her own considerable strength and powers of persuasion to make the project happen each year.

This example is likely to be the exception rather than the norm, however. In other sites, staff members viewed university support as critical in getting access to excellent equipment and facilities, enabling long term planning and improvement, facilitating recruitment and retention of staff members and participants, and leveraging community and NCAA support.

Sixty-three percent of the Activity Directors who responded to our survey indicated that university support was changing. About two-thirds of our respondents felt that campus support was sufficient or getting better; the remainder felt support was waning or insufficient. Our survey did not allow for much detail. In the absence of a baseline, it is difficult to judge whether change is a "constant" in university relations with NYSP--or whether there is a trend.

Influence Locally of the National Office

Role of Guidelines in Shaping Local Projects

It was clear that the Guidelines have tremendous impact on local projects, particularly because they serve as the basis of the evaluation system. However, other than stating required content and time allocations, the Guidelines provide very little direction in areas where projects seem to have the most difficulty such as the mathematics/science component, drug/alcohol prevention education, serving children from diverse backgrounds, or discipline. As one Project Administrator told us, “Some of the hardest challenges are not considered in the Guidelines.”

Others said that the Guidelines needed to provide direction and to acknowledge services and activities beyond sports competition and instruction, education, health and nutrition.

We are struggling to serve these (immigrant) children who are increasing each year. I think we are up to about 50 this year. The Guidelines don't give us so much help there. I mean they tell us so many hours of this and so many hours of that and who should be on your advisory board, but they don't give us credit for trying to include these kids who have so many problems. I mean, should we be teaching them sports or should they be somewhere learning English? I don't think “National” really understands what we are dealing with here. To be a good program, we have to meet the Guidelines in addition to doing what we can for these kids. It almost seems like we get no credit for that. *NYSP Activity Director*

The Guidelines are extremely important in shaping local programs and are highly valued by local Project Administrators, Activity Directors, and Educational Specialists. Given their importance, it is surprising that the Guidelines have remained relatively unchanged since NYSP began more than 25 years ago. Activity Directors reported that the needs of participants, campus support and community relations are changing. It is probably time to look and see if the Guidelines respond appropriately to these changes. The National Office is exploring areas in which Guidelines should be expanded or revised. Structured interviews with local project personnel, Evaluators,

National Office staff members, and external specialists could be useful.

The Role of Evaluation

A key person in each project's staffing is the NYSP Evaluator. He or she visits campus for a day during the summer (and now also is meeting the Project Administrator at the National Workshop) and influences program operations substantially. Our observation is that many Evaluators are considered a dependable guide to good practice and trouble shooting. The Evaluator is scheduled to work the same site two years and most of them take pride in the improvement they can help bring about within two years. Their work is seen largely as gaining compliance with the Guidelines but most of the Evaluators have a broad interest in how their local projects are faring. The roles of the Evaluators as a matter of policy will be raised at length in Chapter 7.

When asked what they thought about the NYSP evaluation process, Project Administrators agreed that the process was helpful to them mostly because it caused them to adhere more closely to the Guidelines and keep better records than they would without an impending site visit. It was commonly said that the process had improved in the last several years under the leadership of Fred Furukawa, that Evaluators were better trained, less arbitrary in their judgments about projects and more oriented toward helping--rather than just criticizing.

Despite the general satisfaction with the evaluation process, we heard suggestions about how it could be made more useful. While there was agreement that the Guidelines were a logical starting point for evaluation, one common complaint was that an evaluation approach that was oriented solely to the Guidelines and considered only presence or absence of a set of indicators was not helpful for mature projects that have consistently met all the Guidelines. One suggestion was to adopt an evaluation approach that is differentiated for projects in different stages of development. For advanced projects, the focus of evaluation could shift to more complex issues of quality and impact.

Regarding quality and impact, a few Project Administrators felt that the current evaluation process was overly

concerned with process and insensitive to evidence of impact. Retention of students and staff members and efforts to promote retention, level of participant and staff engagement, and the extent to which projects were meeting participant needs as evidenced by participant satisfaction, attendance and retention were seen as important quality indicators too little considered by the current evaluation.

A few Project Administrators criticized the evaluation process for over-reliance on document review and lack of opportunity for the Evaluator to observe the project and give feedback to staff members.

In some ways, it is a waste. Just because we meet the Guidelines doesn't mean we don't have problems. You have the Evaluator on site. This is a very experienced person, someone who has seen a lot of programs and who has probably run a good program himself. You should get more out of that person than just looking at what you have put down on paper. It should be more of a program improvement thing. *NYSP Project Administrator*

Some suggested that Evaluators visit only one half or one-third of the projects each year and spend more time on site so that evaluation could become more than just a cursory review.

Some concern also was expressed that the results of the evaluation varied from one site visitor to another.

One year, we got a very high score and a very positive report. I felt it was because we have a sports skill emphasis here and that was clearly what the Evaluator wanted in a program. I am not complaining, but the next year, our score changed, but the program didn't. It isn't a science, but they treat it like it is. *NYSP Project Administrator*

The evaluation process works well for many local programs, especially those that are intent on adhering to the Guidelines. Some programs who have mastered the Guidelines, but are being challenged in other areas might benefit from an alternative approach to evaluation, one in which the Evaluator focused in more depth on fewer aspects of the program.

The Awards and Sanctions Process

Project Administrators sometimes mentioned the system of awards and sanctions that accompany the evaluation process. It was important to receive a Meritorious Award or the more prestigious Conte Award; important to get off probation. Some Project Administrators who had received a number of Meritorious Awards were frustrated in their pursuit of the Conte Award. Other Project Administrators who had received or were facing a sanction questioned its validity. Whether it was based in reality or amounted to a case of sour grapes, there was a common perception among these constituents that politics, as well as evaluation scores, determined awards and sanctions. When referring to the Conte Award, a Project Administrator told us:

There is only one winner, so if programs tie, what is the basis of the decision? If there are criteria, the programs should know about them. If there aren't, then that is a problem.

Awards and sanctions were clearly powerful motivators to some Project Administrators, especially those that scored at both extremes of the range of Evaluator ratings. There was some sentiment, however, that awards and sanctions were influenced by political factors.

Comments and Conclusions

Through site visits, we examined the activities that make up local projects, explored issues of staffing and staff development, investigated participant characteristics and perceptions of the program, and studied the roles these projects play within the university and the broader community. Further insights into local project operations were gained by attending the 1996 National Workshop and through secondary analyses of existing project and public relations documents. Also, a survey was sent to all Activity Directors regarding their perspectives on their just-completed summer successes and needs, support from the national program, and the changing nature of the youth and the local institutions.

Local projects were heavily shaped by the directives of the national program, through its Guidelines, Evaluators, and system of awards and sanctions for compliance and performance. Yet,

there was considerable local diversity in emphasis on different program objectives. Most of the people to whom we talked recognized at least a dual purpose of improving sports skills while using sports as a mechanism to enhance students' life skills. Across projects, however, there were different emphases with regard to mission. We identified four types of local projects, based on the central focus of project activities, as:

- sports instruction and competition;
- sportsmanship and active participation;
- intervention against drug use, vandalism, and gang action; and
- encouragement to pursue higher education.

A diversity in project emphases is not surprising, given that the program is based on partnerships negotiated among NCAA, universities, and the local communities. Project Administrators felt that guidelines were roomy enough to allow these different emphases to operate under one national umbrella. Variations in project emphasis and the extent to which projects include components not covered by NYSP objectives are worthy aims for further study, as are relationships between the particular focus of a local project and student characteristics and outcomes.

All projects offered a non-sports "educational" component, with central directives determining some features of this component, such as specific content areas and amount of time given to each. There was variation across projects in how--and in how well--this component was carried out. At their best, the educational components served to draw sports and other aspects of the program together, to motivate students, provide them with role models and acquaint them with community resources. At their worse, education sessions were characterized by rote learning, didactic instruction, passive participants, and unconnected lessons or presentations by outside speakers. Local project people seeking to improve their programs expressed a need for exemplars of high quality drug and alcohol education and of mathematics/science instruction. We did not have clear evidence that the NYSP internal Evaluators were recognizing the instances of weak instruction we encountered.

Local staff members recognized that despite their importance to local programming and structure, the Guidelines did not address some of their more complex programmatic challenges. Over the years, the NYSP participants have been changing and their needs are increasing. Local Project Administrators felt

challenged to deal with these needs in light of current resources and staff development. At several projects, particularly those viewing themselves as offering alternatives to gangs or increasing access to college, we heard expressions of need for formal extension of the program beyond summer. Few projects included extended-year programming and the staff members at those projects felt their efforts fell short of what was needed.

Discipline and structure were viewed as important in all the projects we visited. Projects differed, however, in the centrality of student discipline to their mission. For many, disciplinary and management systems were necessary to make the program operate efficiently and to provide instructors with the opportunity to teach and the participants with opportunity to learn. In other projects, discipline served as an organizing principle, with direct intent to supplement ethical structure and security believed not adequate in participants' homes, schools or community. Discipline was found to be an issue of concern across projects we observed, not because of extraordinary breaches in discipline but because there is uncertainty as to the role discipline should be playing and as to when enough discipline is enough. National program policy and directives probably do not adequately address the issue.

One of the most striking things about NYSP local projects was the commitment and quality of their auxiliary and professional staff. Many have been with the local project for many years and know what it takes to run a project according to NYSP Guidelines and directives. Local staff development and supervision, however, appeared often to be weak, especially for Project Aides and instructors. The problem is exacerbated by a lack of communication from Project Administrators to the rest of the staff on expectations and exemplars conveyed at the National Workshop. NYSP leaders were working at this problem with "team building" and "communication" as themes for the 1997 Workshop. A substantial upgrade of staff training, well beyond the circulation of more directives and increasing communication among peers, would be expensive and not necessarily a good investment for temporary staffing. Still, staff proficiency is one of the few real weaknesses across the country. More support is needed to prepare them for working effectively with changing youth population and for understanding the sports instruction, education and other non-sports objectives specified in program directives.

Relations between local projects and their communities were found to range from intensely supportive to uncomfortable. Community tension arose more in those projects that did not serve students from the immediate community, but transported participants from more distant areas meeting the criteria for economic disadvantage. But many local projects enjoyed close, productive community relationships. Regarding relations between local projects and the universities, most host institutions viewed NYSP as an important service to disadvantaged communities. In many sites, financial support from the university substantially exceeded the 20% required contribution.

Efforts were made to recognize within the program the racial and cultural diversity of the surrounding community. Local programs had the leeway they needed to serve children of diverse backgrounds but few went out of their way to assure that special subgroups defined by language, disability or culture were well served. Conformance to a national vision of the good program was more important than optimizing a fit between the local program and its local communities. At many sites, the concept of institutional partnering was well developed between college and NYSP, but other real and potential partners were needed at other sites. There was some fear that the basic idea of NYSP would be diluted if local initiatives or other values were encouraged.

As a result of our contact with local projects we came to appreciate NYSP as a vital, beneficial enterprise in most of the communities where it operates. For five weeks each summer large numbers of youth participate in sports and educational activities that they would not likely access if NYSP were not available. Although we have raised issues concerning quality of instruction, the need for staff development, eligibility requirements, the challenge of serving a diverse grouping of participants and the role of the guidelines and evaluation that warrant action or further investigation; our general sense was that NYSP was alive and well at the local level.

Activity Director Survey

Rita Davis

In mid-August we, the Illinois evaluation team, surveyed the Activity Directors by mail to put together a "front line, in-the-trenches" perspective of the 1996 summer program. We designed a draft of the survey. After consultation with the National Office, we omitted items redundant with annually collected information, modified others. The survey responses have added to understandings of local projects and national policy. The survey was the only personal contact between the Illinois evaluation study and most of the local projects.

By seeking a "front line" perspective, we meant to learn more about instances of success and problem-solving. We hoped to see how the uniqueness of each site's situation influenced perceptions of NYSP. In the previous section, "Gaining an Understanding of the Local Projects," responses from this brief survey were used to substantiate our site visit observations. Throughout this final report, information gathered through the Activity Director Survey supports data gathered through other methods. In this section, after a brief overview of methods, we present the survey results and offer our interpretations as part of NYSP program evaluation.

Process and Returns

On August 28, a one-page Activity Director Survey (shown in Figure 1 on the previous page) was sent to all 171 sites listed in the 1996 Institutional Listing. For that mailing, we had a return rate of approximately 30%. A second mailing (with a note identifying it as so) was posted on September 25. This second mailing resulted in a 50% return rate or, for the two mailings, a return rate of 65% overall. On November 19, a third mailing was sent to the 58 Activity Directors who had not yet responded. The total number of returned surveys was 133, a 77% overall return rate.

The responses were recorded in Excel Spreadsheet. In Figure 1, we present the raw totals of the responses. Although 133 sites had responded as of March 18, 1997, only 132 filled out the survey. Each of the "discrete response" questions were

omitted at least once but none were omitted by more than seven of the 132 respondents. (However, omissions were 9 each for items #5, 9 and 15b.) The open ended questions of #3, 4 and/or 8 were omitted by roughly half the Activity Directors. (104, 58, and 64 responses were received, respectively, for the open ended questions.)

Data Summary

We report the results of the 1996 Activity Director Survey by discussing each question and the responses, item by item.

In Question #1, *By your own criteria, did you have a good 'camp' this year?*, the responses were almost unanimously "Yes." In asking the question, we thought that in addition to NYSP criteria, each Activity Director would have his or her own criteria and would judge the summer based partly on criteria for the particular site and local conditions. Almost nine out of ten Activity Directors judged this past summer to have been good. Thirteen responded "Mixed" and only one Activity Director said "No." The Activity Directors responding "Mixed" cited the challenge posed by participants, their own newness to the Activity Director position, and specific self-critique, such as, "too much like school."³

In designing Question #2, *Is campus support for NYSP changing?*, we sought to increase our understanding of local support for the projects. The item would have been better had we allowed for indication of the direction of the change. Many Activity Directors wrote of ways that campus support was changing. Roughly 2/3 of the Activity Directors indicated that support was increasing or remaining positive. Some of the Activity Directors qualified their statements with comments that they were working to increase support.

In Question #3, one hundred and four Activity Directors responded to *What was your site's most difficult problem this summer?* Our evaluation methods required "attention to coping with problems" as a basic indicator of program quality. Some of the problems mentioned were heat, transportation, and sharing

³ To encourage a candid mention of problems, we included several items designed to allow positive responses about the project, thus perhaps risking a positive response bias.

facilities. For the 47 Activity Directors responding that their solution to their most difficult problem might be one appreciated by other Activity Directors, we sent follow-up letters asking them to elaborate on their solution, hoping to receive a collection that could be passed on. Eight Activity Directors responded with elaborations.

In Question #4, we purposefully asked *Please identify any new community donors this summer to get a simple picture of project solicitation.* Only 58 Activity Directors provided us with responses, some reminding us of the availability of this information on annual reports. A few said there were no new donors. Examples of new donors were: Circuit City, McDonald's, Kiwanis, National Guard, Bank of Boston, St. Paul Baptist Church, WEUP radio station, and a group of small businesses.

In Question #5, *Which kind of ambiance did you work to develop more of in 1996?*, we asked them to choose between "discipline" versus "feeling good." In our summer observations on-site, we recognized many strong feelings about the discipline issue. Forty Activity Directors indicated "both." Forty-eight selected the response, "Structure, order, discipline;" And 30 Activity Directors chose the response, "Feeling good, being happy." Based on our site visits, we were not surprised to find a greater emphasis on discipline and order. The issue of discipline was raised earlier in this chapter and will be raised again under "Program Philosophy" in chapter 7.

In designing Question #6, *Would it be useful now to send word to schools, community groups, youth groups, to remind them of their kids' participation in NYSP?*, we had heard concerns during our observations that NYSP ends abruptly and some extension or connection to other environments of the youth would be beneficial. We hoped to learn if the Activity Directors thought the communication of the activities and the values of NYSP to others was desirable. Sixty-seven Activity Directors responded "We already do," 34 responded "Would if could afford it," and 26 responded "Not needed."

In designing Question #7, we recalled hearing several expressions of need for notebooks to guide special programs. A few Activity Directors specifically indicated that notebooks on "exemplary activities for integrating sports skills and education efforts" and "five hour-long plans of activities on nutrition" would be useful and/or valuable. A large number of Activity Directors

indicated they would appreciate an integrating notebook and about three quarters indicated a nutrition notebook would be valuable.

In Question #8, we asked the Activity Directors, *Please, if you can, give us a student quote which helps illustrate the value of the NYSP experience. We hoped for quotes that furthered our understanding of the participants' perspective.* Sixty-four Activity Directors responded to this request. The quotes of six participants, selected as representative of the responses, follow:

NYSP is all that.

I don't know what else I would be doing this summer except get in trouble.

I like NYSP because they help you learn to swim so you don't drown.

NYSP is fun and makes me feel good about myself. I also learn a lot.

NYSP teaches us about how to get along with each other.

NYSP is more than athletics--NYSP deals with preparing us for life itself.

Observing that the Guidelines prescribe only a portion of the effort and elements involved in "putting on a high quality NYSP program" we designed Question #9, *For putting on a high quality NYSP program at your site, what part of preparation is addressed by NYSP Guidelines?* Sixty-two Activity Directors selected the response, "90%" and an additional 37 Activity Directors responded "70%." Six wrote in 100%. From these responses and earlier observations, we concluded that the Guidelines were viewed by many Activity Directors as almost all that was needed to provide a satisfactory program.

Through discussions with Evaluators and project people, we learned of the complex, multiple roles Evaluators were performing. In Question #10 we asked the Activity Directors to *From your point of view, rank (from 1 down to 4) the importance of what the NYSP Evaluator does?* We averaged the responses, accommodating tied rankings, getting:

Average Rank	Role
1.6	The Evaluator monitors compliance with NYSP Guidelines.
1.9	The Evaluator provides advice about improving the local program.
2.9	The Evaluator legitimates the use of federal funds for poor kids.
3.4	The Evaluator gathers data for annual NYSP awards.

For almost all respondents, the first two above held the first and/or second ranking position and the last two roles held the third and/or fourth ranking.

In Question #11, we sought a greater understanding of the role the police play in NYSP. We asked *Do you have a substantial involvement of police officers in your NYSP program?* Eighty Activity Directors responded "Yes;" 49 responded "No." The term, "substantial," of course, is imprecise but reflects what Activity Directors felt was more than incidental. Much of the police involvement was indicated in the use of DARE guest speakers in Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention classes. A few indicated the police were used in conventional police roles. This appears to be a heavy use of police for a program that is not directly organized to do so.

Eight out of ten (103) of the Activity Directors selected "Yes" to Question #12, *Are you satisfied with the quality of your site's sports skill instruction?* We had expected something higher. That two out of ten indicated a problem surprised us. But looking more closely at the 103 Activity Directors that expressed satisfaction, we saw "a realistic tone" to their comments as well, for example:

Generally yes. Some sports instructors need more professional development, others are exceptional.

As a staff, we know there's still room for improvement in our sports instruction.

Many Activity Directors responding "No" to satisfaction with their sports skill instruction wrote comments explaining their position, for example:

I feel like we can do a better job of instruction.

As national policy is included within the scope of our contract, we asked in Question #13, *Would you like to see changes in the way NYSP is organized and operated nationally?* Eight-four Activity Directors indicated that they would like to see "None at all." Only one Activity Director responded "A lot." The remaining 41 made suggestions such as:

Should be a yearly workshop for Activity Directors.

More help, less guidelines.

More Regional Networking.

Less paperwork.

We asked, in Question #14, *Year to year, are the needs of your youth changing?* Through our collective experience with social services and educational systems serving youth, we thought that the response would be as it was: The majority of the Activity Directors (108) were seeing some change in the youth needs. Many of them provided comments explaining the changes, such as:

Less disciplined when they come to you.

We have more students from dysfunctional families.

Need less discipline.

We need to address our 14-16 year olds needs.

More counseling and behavior problems each year.

Youth need more love and discipline these days. They need to be reassured that there is still someone they can turn to and confide in, someone who cares.

In Question #15, we asked, *Are most of your staff looking forward to returning next year?* The response was overwhelmingly

"Yes." We had quickly developed the opinion that staff development would be an important issue in evaluation of the total program. To learn if Activity Directors had similar concerns, in the second part of the question, we asked, *If yes, will they be involved in any kind of professional development that should help them do even better next year?* Seventy-eight Activity Directors responded "Yes," but 38 indicated that they "Don't know" of the professional development involvement of their staff.

Issues and Interpretations

The interpretations we have drawn from the Activity Director responses added to our current understandings and, most importantly, contributed to our realization of how complex the local projects are. In this section, we present some impressions gained from the responses. The impressions do not attempt to argue a case for a conclusion or a judgment but rather argue a case for further exploration of each issue.

Most Activity Directors spoke of having a good summer at their own project, the generally positive status of campus support, the completeness of the role of the Guidelines, and their lack of desire to see changes in national organization and operation. Some responses more or less said, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." We were left with an impression after reading the returned surveys that most Activity Directors found the NYSP program to be sound in design and implementation. Still, about a third indicated that they wanted some change in guidelines or policies.

Professional development. As discussed earlier in this chapter and as to be discussed again in chapter 7, the Activity Directors experienced frustration in attempting to create a cohesive and competent staff for the five week period. In their survey responses about the involvement of police officers with NYSP, the quality of their sports skill instructional staff members, and their staff members' professional development activities, we saw a concern for staff members' skills and training. These responses speak to the challenge of recruiting, training, and retaining a staff for a summer program.

The concern was expressed in some responses to the question about their satisfaction with the quality of their sports skill instructors. One Activity Director wrote:

Still working to attract and maintain committed and experience professionals.

Participants' perceived needs. The Activity Directors addressed the participants' needs in many of the questions but, of course, their responses to Question #14 about whether the children are changing from year to year was particularly focused on the participants' needs. However, in answering Question #5 about the ambiance they worked to develop, the Activity Directors also contemplated the children's needs. For example:

Children need structure, order, and discipline. They already know how to have fun. However, I want them to have fun and be safe. Safety is controlled in a safe environment which comes from order and discipline."

It was extremely important to me as Activity Director to stress the need for feeling self-esteem, love, and belonging as well as sports activity.

Our greatest source of coming to an initial understanding of the perceived participants' needs came from Question #14 in which we asked, *Year to year, are the needs of your youth changing?* Much of the change noted indicated a concern with the greater societal issues of disintegration of the family and more challenging characteristics of the children such as disabilities and behavior. We observed that the comments reflected an opinion that the difficulties of working with the NYSP participants are many and serious.

The perceived needs of the participants by the Activity Directors created a picture of children existing in a turbulent world. Concerns of safety, discipline and self-esteem were voiced across the survey. Activity Directors communicated a great need for the intervention of NYSP and an increase in methods and resources for coping with the problems of today's children.

