Brokering Learning Opportunities Within an Out-of-School Network: A Conceptual Model for Supporting Youth Interest-Driven Learning

Abstract

Brokering future learning opportunities to youth entails engaging in practices that connect youth to events, programs, internships, individuals, and institutions related to their interests, which may fall beyond the window of a specific program or event. Brokering is especially crucial for youth who are near an area of interest. It helps them develop both a baseline understanding of the information landscape and a social network that will respond to their needs as they pursue various goals. We describe three critical levers for brokering well in informal settings: (1) creating learning environments that allow trust to form between youth and educators and enable educators to develop an understanding of a young person’s interests, needs, and goals; (2) attending to a young person’s tendency to not to reach out to educators after a program is over to solicit assistance, and (3) enabling potential brokers to efficiently locate appropriate future learning opportunities for each youth that approaches them. We also include a set of program practices for providers who wish to increase their brokering impact, as well as recommendations geared primarily toward organization leaders.

Model Development: Participatory Knowledge Building with Hive NYC

In 2013, HRL engaged in ethnographic fieldwork, developing biographic case studies (Barron, 2015; Morrison, 1988) of 8 high school students and recent high school graduates (Ching, 2016), focusing on their experiences during Hive-infused afterschool programs and 5-72 months afterward. We identified in some youth significant decreases in their perception of social support during and after a program, a phenomenon we reported as the “post-program slump” in support.