

Evaluation of the Phillip Roy, Inc. Curriculum

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Independent Living Program

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INTRODUCTION

More than 100,000 youth in the child welfare system are age 16 and older, and more than 20,000 emancipate from care each year in the United States (Berzin, 2009). In South Carolina, there are currently 2,015 children between the ages of 13 and 21 in foster care (SCDSS, 2010). Studies show that foster youth who leave care through emancipation often experience difficulties making the transition from youth to adulthood (Berzin, 2009). Some of those difficulties include finding stable living arrangements, achieving financial self-sufficiency, completing secondary education, and avoiding involvement in the criminal justice system (Berzin, 2009). In 1999, the Chafee Foster Care Independence Act was developed to address the issues facing youth in transition. In South Carolina, the Chafee Independent Living Program (ILP) exists in compliance with the standards set forth by the Foster Care Independence Act. The program's overall goal is to provide youth with opportunities to learn independent living skills and to increase their ability to transition successfully from the foster care system (SCDSS, 2010). The program is designed to provide services to children who are likely to remain in Foster Care until the age of 18, focusing primarily on independent living skills and growth in the social, political, psychological, economic and personal spheres (Berzin, 2009). By participating in Independent Living programs, children work toward gaining the training and skills necessary to obtain employment and cope with the challenges of day to day living.

Phillip Roy, Inc. is a company that develops and supports curricula that are able to be duplicated and are networkable. All Phillip Roy materials are research based in accordance with the Northwest Regional Education Strategies Lab. The curricula include teacher's guides, lesson plans, are available on and off-line, and are developed to support and supplement programs such as CASAS, TABE, Job Corps, and Ansell-Casey. The material is also available in alternative

formats for students with visual impairments and has an audio function that is optional according to each participant's particular choice. The curriculum is written for high school students age 14 and up and is written at a reading level of 3.8-5.1. In addition, Phillip Roy, Inc. has created support materials that address strategies for teaching students with special needs. The specific curriculum that the Independent Living Program in South Carolina has chosen to evaluate is the Character Education/Life Skills curriculum. Each year in South Carolina, youth participating in the Independent Living Program take the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment, developed by Casey Family Services. The information provided by that assessment is used to develop individualized learning plans which address areas identified as needing further support or education. The overall goal of using the Phillip Roy Curriculum is to provide support for case managers, care-givers, and facilitators in providing skills training for these youth in a way that is economical, easy to use, allows the youth to work at their own pace, and reduces stress for their case managers/care-givers. Expected outcomes are increased knowledge and skills for youth in transition and reduced workload for care-givers and facilitators.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Independent Living Programs and professionals in the field of Child Welfare have emphasized research designed to generate a sound evidence base for interventions aimed at assisting youth as they transition to adulthood (Courtney, Zinn, Zielewski, Bess, & Malm, 2008). Studies have shown that youth who have not attained basic skills have a more difficult time transitioning to independence (Collins, 2001). Evaluations of programs vary because implementation of programs varies based on location, budget, staffing, and infrastructure (Berzin, 2009). In addition, researchers are still working to develop tools to accurately measure outcomes and increase validity and reliability of available measures (Berzin, 2009). One

national study showed that youth who receive Independent Living skills training experienced more positive outcomes than those who did not (Berzin, 2009). Of particular value are studies that examine youth perspectives, as they provide valuable information on what components of programs are helpful or not helpful (Collins, 2001).

METHOD

The purpose of this evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of the Phillip Roy Character Development/ Life Skills curriculum as a supplement to the Ansell-Casey Life Skills training for South Carolina foster youth who are ages 16 and over and are participating in the Chafee Independent Living Program. While credible evidence is generally understood to be quantitative with proven degrees of validity and reliability, acceptance is increasing for mixed-method strategies that integrate quantitative and qualitative techniques (South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, 2003). Therefore, it has been determined that the evaluation of the Phillip Roy curriculum will utilize both techniques. The study design utilizes a pre/posttest design (Appendix A). In addition, the study utilizes a satisfaction survey for participants (Appendix B) and a satisfaction survey for facilitators (Appendix C). The participant survey uses a Likert-type scale and also a comment section, which will enable researchers to incorporate qualitative data to determine the product's effectiveness. It is believed that the true value of this study will lie in the feedback obtained from the participants and facilitators. This type of participatory process is a key instrument to empowerment (SCDHEC, 2003). Both youth and community organizations must work together in participation with the Independent Living Program in order to develop and provide programs and services for youth in foster care.

Logic Model:

Resources	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Mid-Range Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
Curriculum developed by Phillip Roy, Inc. (with user guides and support materials)	Develop Pilot Program with Independent Living coordinators and work with agency providers to arrange orientations	At least 100 youth from across South Carolina trained in Character Education and Life Skills Curriculum	Youth improves independent living skills and knowledge	Youth attain High School Diplomas	Youth seek secondary education or vocational training
DSS Staff, USC MSW Intern, and agency partners	Recruit Youth Participation	All participants provided with a copy of the curriculum on CD Rom	Youth have a voice in program development	Youth avoid risky behaviors	Youth avoid incarceration
Orientation for Phillip Roy Curriculum	Facilitate Orientations for Youth and Agencies	Facilitators and Care Givers for participating groups trained in Phillip Roy Curriculum	Youth improve ability to interact with adults and peers	Youth attain gainful employment	Youth attain self sufficiency
Research/Literature Review	Provide ongoing support for facilitators	All participating groups provided with teachers aids and learning plans	Youth build confidence and are better prepared for independence		Youth avoid homelessness
	Follow up to gather data/feedback		Youth are engaged/interested in emancipation planning		

SAMPLE

Participants were chosen using a convenience sample from four aggregate care facilities and three foster youth associations. Confidentiality was maintained by utilizing a blind master list. Only facilitators had access to the participants' names and only researchers had access to participants' scores. Though there is a potential for sample bias using this method, the risk is a minimal threat to the success of the evaluation as participants were not being evaluated and nor were the agencies that facilitated their participation.

DATA COLLECTION

Participants were given orientation about the study and its purpose, asked to sign an informed consent (Appendix D), then administered a pretest. Afterwards, participants were given a workshop on how to use the Phillip Roy curriculum and asked to complete 15 learning modules chosen for their correlation to the Ansell-Casey Life Skills Domains (Appendix E). The participants were given a three month time period to complete the modules, at which time the researchers returned to administer the posttest and the satisfaction surveys.

DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis will be used to examine the effect using the Phillip Roy Curriculum (independent variable) has on the participants' scores (dependent variable). Because participants were aware of the study, there is a risk of performance bias. However, in addition to the pre/posttest, a survey tool was utilized to determine the level of satisfaction of both the students and the facilitators. The survey included a comment section for assimilation of qualitative data. The pretest that was administered could have affected scores on the posttest taken after the intervention. By including a survey to collect qualitative data from the participants and the

facilitators as to their opinions and recommendations, it is believed that the most useful knowledge gained from this evaluation was obtained in the form of feedback from the participants. Another potential threat to validity is that the sample is a convenience sample chosen from existing groups by facilitators who were willing to participate in the research. This leads to a potential of sampling bias and sampling error. The researchers have chosen to deal with this by increasing the size of the sample to try and make it as representative of the population as possible. The researchers believe that the data obtained from these surveys will help to counterbalance any potential performance bias. Results will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Phillip Roy curriculum as a supplement to the Ansell-Casey Life Skills training materials and will be used to inform evidence based practice.

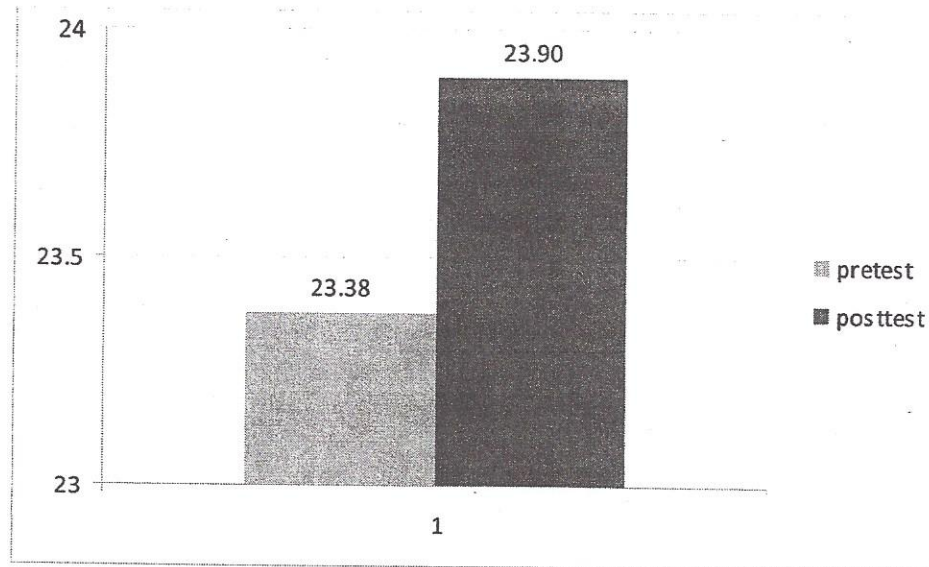
RESULTS

We used a mixed method approach to examine the effects of the Philip Roy, Inc. curriculum intervention that purports to enhance youth social skills. A mixed method analysis can mitigate against threats to internal and external validity (Weinbach, 2005). Quantitative data were analyzed using t-tests to determine the difference in the mean scores before and after the Philip Roy, Inc. intervention. Qualitative data were gathered by utilizing questionnaires administered to participants and to group facilitators. Purposive sampling was utilized in order to provide the most comprehensive understanding of the data based on observation and reflection on the part of the study participants.

Our analysis found no statistically significant differences between the mean pretest scores ($M = 23.375$, $SD = 4.417$) $t(94) = .5782$, $p = .5645$, and post test scores ($M=23.895$, $SD = 4.395$) $t(94) = .5782$, $p = .5645$, during the three month pilot study. A second analysis was done comparing the scores of those participants who did not complete the three month study

($M = 22.025$, $SD = 5.984$) $t(135) = 1.904$, $p = .0590$, with those who completed both the pretests and posttests ($M = 23.895$, $SD = 4.392$) $t(135) = 1.904$, $p = .0590$. Both findings indicate that there were no overall intervention effects.

TABLE 1



In addition to intervention data, we also surveyed the youth on their satisfaction of the life skills course. Participants were administered a Likert-type scale (5= strongly agree – 1= strongly disagree) to determine their perception of the effectiveness of the Philip Roy, Inc. curriculum. The majority of teens that participated in the study responded that they felt the lessons and activities were easy to understand and complete. Eighty-five percent believed that the curriculum was useful. Seventy-seven percent believed other students would like to learn using the Philip Roy, Inc. curriculum (see Table 2).

TABLE 2

Participant Questionnaires	Overall Mean Response
It was easy to do the lessons.	4.4
It was easy to do the activities.	4.4
It was easy to answer the questions which were at the end of the lessons.	4.41
I was able to understand the lessons.	4.43
I was able to understand the activities.	4.53
I was able to understand the questions which were at the end of the lessons	4.41
The information in the lessons was very useful.	4.39
I will be able to use the information I learned from the lessons and activities.	4.32
I think that other students would like to learn from this program.	4.02
I would like to learn other subjects.	4

In addition to the satisfaction survey, we analyzed the participants' and facilitators' responses to questionnaires designed to identify the participants' experience with the curriculum.

We identified three main themes based on the participants' responses:

1. The participants thought the curriculum contained information that would benefit them in the future.
2. The majority of the participants like the lessons and enjoyed using the program.
3. Many of the participants felt the material was too simple and did not think it was challenging.

And we found six main themes based on the facilitators' responses:

1. The facilitators thought the curriculum covered a wide range of topics related to daily living skills.
2. The facilitators thought the curriculum worked well in group settings because it gave their sessions structure and facilitated group discussion.
3. The facilitators thought that the curriculum was too simplistic and childish.
4. The facilitators like the way the lessons were organized.

5. The facilitators liked that the curriculum was self-paced and accessible to students at a variety of learning levels.
6. The facilitators would recommend use of the Philip Roy, Inc. curriculum with the Independent Living Program.

DISCUSSION

The Philip Roy, Inc. curriculum pilot study involved a diverse sample of youth across several locations and settings. The study afforded participants the opportunity to have a voice in programs and services developed for youth in foster care in South Carolina. While the participants and facilitators in the study expressed an overall satisfaction with the curriculum, there was a lack of evidence supporting any meaningful change in the youths' social skill development required for an effective transition into independent living. Perhaps a larger study, conducted over a longer period of time, may result in significant changes that would indicate program effectiveness; on the other hand, there may be significant differences due to an increase in sample size without resulting in significantly larger effect sizes (e.g. $r > .60$).

There are a number of weaknesses to this study. There were selection biases due to the sample not being randomly selected and the absence of a control group, as well as high attrition rates due to the nature of foster care settings. The attrition in this study is also a weakness in terms of the qualitative analysis conducted, since the sample size was relatively modest (e.g. $n=48$ participants completing both the pre and post test).

CONCLUSION

While the Philip Roy, Inc. curriculum addresses topics relevant to character development and daily living skills, which is an essential part of preparing youth in foster care to become independent adults, our findings did not provide evidence of significant change in the

intervention population. The guided lessons of the Philip Roy, Inc. curriculum may provide a vehicle for introducing these topics and the learning modules to facilitate discussion within groups and between the youth and their care providers. Perhaps in a future pilot study, if conducted, there should be a focus on how case managers, foster parents, and group facilitators can better introduce these topics with effective, easy to use supplemental materials.

References

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Appendix A

Character Education and Life Skills – Pre/Post Test (with answer key)

1. Most Employers
 - A. Know what their employees will look like.
 - B. Know the type of people they want to hire.
 - C. Only spend a few minutes interviewing people.
 - D. Are clean-cut.

2. To set up an interview, you must
 - A. Ask some questions.
 - B. Call fax, e-mail, or write for an appointment.
 - C. Do some research.
 - D. Find out about the company.

3. Your job application
 - A. Will impress the interviewer.
 - B. Will tell the interviewer where you went to school.
 - C. Should be filled out neatly and carefully.
 - D. Should be filled out quickly.

4. The interviewer will tell you about the pay and hours
 - A. So that you can talk him or her into giving you better pay.
 - B. To try to be fair.
 - C. So that you can decide if you want the job.
 - D. So you will know when to start.

5. If someone asks you for help, you should avoid helping him or her. It will only lead to trouble.
 - A. True
 - B. False

6. There are correct and incorrect ways to ask for help.
 - A. True
 - B. False

7. You should always buy goods that
 - A. Are on sale.
 - B. Are only half price.
 - C. Save you money.
 - D. Have the best price and quality.

8. When you buy more than you need, you
 - A. Are just stocking up on your needs.
 - B. Are not planning carefully.
 - C. Save money.
 - D. Are buying in a smart way.

9. There is no one definition of values.
 - A. True
 - B. False

10. Your values will never change.
 - A. True
 - B. False

11. If you make a decision quickly
 - A. You have confidence.
 - B. You cans save money.
 - C. It may cause problems for you.
 - D. You can save time.

12. People who make good decisions
 - A. Have a plan that helps them.
 - B. Solve problems.
 - C. Don't need a system.
 - D. Know how to make a good decision.

13. If you want to borrow money you
 - A. Are showing that you are poor.
 - B. Do not know how to handle money.
 - C. Want to buy now and pay later.
 - D. Do not have to pay it back at all.

14. When you apply for a loan most banks
- A. Look at your credit history.
 - B. Want you to pay the money back.
 - C. Give you a monthly payment booklet.
 - D. Will lend you money without asking any questions.
15. New paint on a used car means
- A. The car had been in an accident.
 - B. The owner didn't like the original color.
 - C. The car may be rusting.
 - D. Both a and c above are correct.
16. After signing the purchase agreement, you will get a title. This title shows
- A. What kind of job you do.
 - B. That you own the car.
 - C. When you should have the car serviced.
 - D. How many miles the car has gone.
17. How you think of yourself is affected by your friends.
- A. True
 - B. False
18. There can be a difference between your "ideal" self and your "real" self.
- A. True
 - B. False
19. It is alright to get "out of control" if you are not getting treated like everyone else.
- A. True
 - B. False
20. When you lose control your hands may begin to shake.
- A. True
 - B. False
21. There are time when a group may accept you and times when it may reject you.
- A. True
 - B. False

22. Group members will always agree on every subject.
- A. True
 - B. False
23. Peer pressure can make someone feel
- A. Embarrassed.
 - B. Threatened.
 - C. Angry
 - D. All of the above.
24. When friends try to make you do something, that is called
- A. Friendship.
 - B. Peer Pressure.
 - C. Loyalty.
 - D. Trust.
25. An example of how you can measure productivity for a salesperson is
- A. The number of sales each month.
 - B. How fast he or she can walk.
 - C. How well he or she plays piano.
26. A good way to get a raise is
- A. Do your job better than anyone else.
 - B. Wear the latest style of clothes.
 - C. Date the boss' daughter/son.
27. An example of a positive attitude is
- A. Making excuses.
 - B. Never admitting a mistake.
 - C. Respecting other's opinions.
28. A boss who says, "I am the boss! Do it my way!" is a(n)
- A. Democratic.
 - B. Authoritarian.
 - C. Pollyanna.
 - D. Laissez-faire.
29. There are correct and incorrect ways to ask questions.
- A. True
 - B. False

30. A command always makes a person react negatively.
- A. True
 - B. False

Appendix B

**EVALUATION OF THE PHILLIP ROY, INC.
CHARACTER EDUCATION/LIFE SKILLS CURRICULUM**

Please put a check in the box that best matches how you feel about each of the questions.

	1 Strongly Agree	2 Agree	3 No Opinion	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
1. It was easy to do the lessons.					
2. It was easy to do the activities.					
3. It was easy to answer the questions which were at the end of the lessons.					
4. I was able to understand the lessons.					
5. I was able to understand the activities.					
6. I was able to understand the questions which were at the end of the lessons.					
7. The information in the lessons was very useful.					
8. I will be able to use the information I learned from the lessons and activities.					
9. I think that other students would like to learn from this program.					
10. I would like to learn other subjects.					

Comments:

Please tell us what you liked and did not like about the Phillip Roy Curriculum.

Would you recommend these lessons for other students?

Were the lessons in the Phillip Roy Curriculum helpful? Why or why not?

Appendix D

Informed Consent

South Carolina Department of Social Services
Independent Living Program
1535 Confederate Ave.
Columbia, SC 29202-1520

The Department of Social Services Independent Living Program is committed to protecting the rights and confidentiality of all persons participating in evaluation research.

You are being asked to participate in an evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the Phillip Roy Curriculum as a supplement to the Ansell-Casey Life Skills training. Your contribution will help other youth in foster care by helping to develop programs that are useful and effective in helping youth develop the skills and knowledge needed to transition from foster care to independent living. Your participation is strictly voluntary. Your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings. Evaluators will not know the names of the participants. Information will only be identified through a code number.

We are interested in determining if this program will be useful for other youth in foster care and if the product should be made available to all youth in transition. Your contribution will help to develop programs that are effective and efficient. If you would like any more information about this study, you can contact me at (803)898-7327 or at the address listed above. Thank you very much for your time. We deeply appreciate your cooperation.

Terri D. Pope, BSW

Participant's name

Date

Facilitator/DSS Representative

Date

Appendix E

Phillip Roy, Inc. Life Skills and Character Education

Casey Life Skills Domain Module	Supplemental Phillip Roy Learning
Career Planning	1. How to Get a Job and Keep It 2. The Interview
Communication	3. Interpersonal Relationship
Daily Living	4. Comparative Shopping
Home Life	5. Values Clarification 6. Decision Making
Housing and Money Management	7. Establishing Credit 8. Buying a Used Car
Self-Care	9. Self-Concept 10. Self-Control
Social Relationships	11. Cooperation in Groups 12. Peer Pressure
Work Life	13. Productivity, Advancement, and Raises
Work and Study Skills	14. Successful Work Attitudes 15. Verbal Communication Skills