Focus Group Report of the Long Beach
Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning (CORAL)
Youth Institute

Current Summer 2004 Participants
Alumni Participants from 2001-2003 Class

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Results of Youth Focus Groups of Current and Alumni Participants

Overview

This report presents the findings from a qualitative study that was part of a larger program evaluation that focused on outcomes and changes gained from participating in program activities of the Long Beach CORAL Youth Institute. Focus groups with the 2004 CORAL Youth Institute Intensive Summer Program youth participants and previous class participants (alumni) on all key program components were conducted during August 2004 to gain qualitative data from youth participants.

Format of Focus Groups

The focus groups for current youth participating in the program and alumni met for two hours with a trained facilitator to answer a series of questions (see Appendix A). All focus group participants were recruited through a letter sent to their home address asking them to participate in the study. If they were below the age of 18, parental permission was sought. The sessions were conducted in English and were audio taped for transcription. Due to the number of participants in the program, six different focus groups (3 alumni and 3 current group participants) were held on different dates to maintain a workable group size. Alumni and current participants were not mixed together in the focus groups. A total of 35 youth from the 2004 CORAL Youth Institute Intensive Summer Program (88% of total sample) participated in the current participant focus groups. One hundred of the alumni participants from the 2001, 2002 and 2003 youth participants (75% of total sample) participated in the alumni focus groups. The qualitative data gathered from these focus groups was analyzed using content analysis with *Ethnograph v 5.0* software. Themes were analyzed for patterns of similarities, dissimilarities and frequency.

CORAL Recruitment and Reasons for Application

The CORAL Youth Institute recruits 40 new students from area middle and high schools around Long Beach each year. The focus group participants from the current class indicated a number of ways that they heard about the program. Most students heard about the Institute through a friend or family member who had been involved in the Institute. However, the school and career center was also a primary recruitment tool with counselors, teachers and other school personnel providing applications to the Institute. Other respondents indicated that they learned about the Institute from alumni who had been involved in the program. Alumni focus group respondents indicated other sources such as a neighbor, career center brochures, and other programs such as Healthy Start at school. However, the primary recruitment source for both alumni and current participants appeared to be friends and alumni who had participated in the program. This represents a change from last year's focus groups in which school personnel were the primary source. This change indicates that as the program develops each year, previous participants become the best recruitment resource.

Most of the focus group participants (both current and alumni) stated that the reasons for applying to the Institute were primarily the money and the opportunity to learn about computers, software and gain technology skills for their future jobs and higher education. However, others reasons such as the opportunity to develop new friendships, have something to do in the summer that is challenging and interesting such as teaching others and going on field trips were also mentioned because of the experiences their friends who told them about the program reported. Current and alumni participants discussed the following reasons for applying:

I joined CORAL so that I could learn more about technology and to go on some of the field trips that they were offering and make new friends.

I wanted to be part of the CORAL Youth Institute because I was always interested in film and I heard that there was a lot of film and technology involved. The money was also an added bonus. I was actually going to go to another program across the country where I had to pay to do it. I decided to stay with CORAL because I wanted to get paid to do it.

I did it for the education. I mean it's going to lead me toward my career and education. It's going to look good on future resumes.

I wanted to be involved with CORAL because I didn't want to be home during the summer. I never knew it was going to be like it is. I like it.

I wanted to be in CORAL because I wanted to do different things.   I hang with different people so I can learn and do different things so I can teach different things.

I came here to learn how to make a web site and movies and I also wanted to meet new people.

Participation and Opinions on Program Activities

A number of program activities take place during the Youth Institute Intensive Summer Program including a retreat, technology skill development, field trips and service projects. Field trips for the current participants had been reduced this year due to programmatic changes. Current participants discussed in the focus group but were only aware of this because of the alumni participation in the summer program allowed participants to compare their experiences with those of past participants. However, the response to program activities was overwhelmingly positive by focus group participants.

Participants in the Institute go on a wilderness retreat before the summer program begins. The prime objectives of the retreat are team building and diversity training. Students carry out every task in their project teams such as setting up camp, cooking, climbing, hiking, and a map and compass orienteering course. Alumni focus group participants reported that they liked this program activity and were able to recall many details of the trip despite it not being as recent as for the current participants. It was more frequently mentioned by alumni rather than current

participants as many of the current participants focused on the technology software they learned in the program.

After youth graduate from the intensive summer program, participants then join the Alumni Program for the remainder of their high school career. The Alumni Program offers multiple components for participant involvement. Some, like the Tech Tutor community service learning component are mandatory. Others, like use of the CORAL lab or equipment checkout are voluntary. Paid works on technology projects or special field trips are open to select participants. Many of the participants in the alumni focus group discussed opinions about both the summer intensive program that they participated in as well as the alumni program as their comments reflected:

During the Institute we had to do various projects like make a movie and a magazine article and we also went on a lot of field trips that had an impact on me. We went to San Francisco which was pretty fun. We also went to Catalina and Cal State Long Beach which was fun also.

I liked having the break in between doing all the work. Last year we had a whole lot more field trips than the new class this year. We were able to go to the beach, the museum and a whole bunch of different places. In between all of the trips, we were trying to story board, edit and film. It was nice to get a break away from all of the technology. I also liked the San Francisco trip that we had afterward too.

Current participants did not describe the retreat in as much detail as the alumni participants but at least one person in each group mentioned it as one of their favorite activities. Interestingly most current participants focused more on the technology software they learned in the program. Field trips to Cal State Long Beach, the beach, and activities such as surfing, snowboarding and repelling were also mentioned as activities participants enjoyed.

I enjoyed the camping trip because you got away from the city. Getting away from all the bad things in the city brought you closer to nature. Sailing on the river was kind of cool.

The camping trip was fun because it teaches you discipline and responsibility. Sleeping on the ground doesn't hurt as you get to see how the homeless feel.

I liked sleeping in a tent because you can react to people more because everyone is in the same tent. You can talk to them more. At home you can talk to family but you can meet more people and talk when you spend the night.

I heard from a lot of alumni that they went to more places like San Francisco. We only got to go on one trip and alumni had more beach days and stuff like that.

We only went on a camping trip and to the beach. We heard from alumni that they went to Catalina Island.

The summer institute begins in June and ends with graduation in early August (a total of eight weeks) with a focus on 'Creative Digital Arts'. Students are exposed to a wide variety of software programs and computer skills. Students are placed in project teams and carry out multiple assigned tasks toward the creation of a short film and a Teen Magazine. During this process, the students learn storyboarding, pre-production, production, and post-production editing. They work with i-Movie and Final Cut Pro editing software. They develop a screenplay through different word processing and presentation software such as Microsoft WORD, Appleworks, Power Point, Keynote, and Inspiration 7. They learn lighting, sound, special effects in filming, locations, and sets. They also learn other skills through digital 3D editing software such as Cinema 4D. Other technology activities include creating individual websites through learning web design and HTML as well as the software Macromedia's Dreamweaver, Flash, and Fireworks. A new program added for the current participants included BEATS that allowed students to create their own digital music which could be added to their film. Students were also taught to use technology for interactive presentations.

Most of the technology program activities were mentioned by focus group participants as something they enjoyed. Current participants reported that they were excited by the opportunity to learn new technology skills particularly in the areas of making a movie, creating music and web design. They also enjoyed the opportunity to learn about graphic design and animation.

Some focus group participants reported that they disliked certain software programs such as Cinema 4D and Final Cut Pro as they had difficulty learning the software or using for the editing process. Current participants discussed the following:

I liked making my own web site because you could add your own musical beats and stuff.

I enjoyed using Photoshop, Dreamweaver, Fireworks, and Flash. I was really good at using these programs because I could create different web sites, animations and make them different.

My favorite thing was to use the biggest camera they have here because it is so nice to use and you can finally show people movies you created which is cool.

I disliked Final Cut Pro because it takes awhile to learn and do stuff you want to do with it.

I didn't like editing at all-it was pretty hard.

Alumni participants mentioned some of the software programs and working in groups but discussed other aspects of the program such as the wilderness retreat and field trip experiences as the program activities they most enjoyed.

We had production groups in which we filmed each field trip we went on. My group had to film the LA news group and the art museum. I liked that group because we had to work with other people that we usually wouldn't work with.

When we went up to camp it was different because we had to sleep in a round house instead of a tents which made us closer together and work as a team.

I liked the San Francisco Trip, editing and photography stuff.

We were able to go to the beach, the museum and a whole bunch of different places. In between all of the hectic trips, we story boarded, edited and made films. It was nice to get a break from all of the technology as I liked the San Francisco trip.

Other program activities that both groups (current and alumni) focus group participants mentioned as ones they enjoyed included field research trips to The Museum of Tolerance, The Aquarium of the Pacific where students do tide pool surveys, the Long Beach Nature Center and a video appreciation workshop with The Long Beach Museum of Art.

Opinions of Overall Learning in Program

All focus group participants were asked about what aspects of the program taught them the most and least as well as what contributed the most to their learning and development. For the current participants, they mentioned learning certain software programs such as Flash, Dreamweaver and Reason to make websites, movies and music but also focused on leadership, group and relationship-building skills.

I learned how to work in a group because usually I don't work in a group because I like to work individually.

I learned how to step up and be a leader. I learned how to make music and put it on a website and movie.

I learned how to use Flash. At first it was hard but I practiced on my own and did a little movie. I also learned how to work with different people and to trust.

I learned how to be open-minded and think outside of the box.

Alumni participants also discussed both technology skills as well as leadership and group skills. Their comments included:

I learned how to build my own website and I gained a little bit of leadership skills.

I also learned leadership skills and a lot about myself. I learned that I was selfish and immature and it kind of opened me up to the real world. But I also learned a lot of technology such as websites, cameras, editing, and storyboarding. Just a lot of technology!

I also learned a lot of technology things that I don't think I would have ever learned until I started my major in college. But even then you have to wait until your junior year before you can even go into the field. So I think it is nice that we had a head start with all that technology as you learn a lot of office skills. I learned how to meet deadlines and how you actually get paid based on the product you put out. CORAL was like a corporate job. You also deal with people in a work kind of situation and learn you have to just get over your differences to produce the product.

Access to Computers

With the Institute's focus on technology, participants were asked about the kind of computer access they had prior to starting the Institute and how they used computers. Most of the current focus group participants indicated that they had a computer at home and used it primarily for homework, school projects and internet chat rooms. Other uses of the computer were browsing the Internet, word processing, graphic design, games, e-mail, downloading music. Some participants stated they had a computer but it was broken so they were able to rely on Youth Institute staff to help them fix it. They also indicated that they had computers at school but were not always able to use them. Those who did not have access at home stated that they would use a friends or family members' computer when needed. Other participants discussed having access to other technology such as cameras as beneficial.

My computer was broken so I could not get on the Internet. While at CORAL, one of the staff members helped me fix it.

I had access but the computer was at my grandma's house.

Alumni participants discussed having access to other technology such as special software programs and cameras as beneficial.

I had lots of access to the computers but I would say that the technology at CORAL was just a lot more advanced than what I had at home. I did not have any access to cameras at home.

I had a computer but it didn't have all the special programs to make movies, edit footage and make music. My computer did not have all that extra stuff.

I had lots of opportunities to use computers but just didn't know what to do with it.

Knowledge, Skills and Application of Technology

Focus group participants were asked both about what knowledge and skills they gained from participating in the Youth Institute program activities and specifically about the technology skills they developed. Current youth participants mentioned an increased knowledge and skill in

a number of technology and digital media when asked specifically about technology that

included: 1) knowledge of different technology skills such as filmmaking, editing,

storyboarding, web design and video editing; 2) how to use software such as Cinema 3D,

Reason, I-Movie, Fireworks, Dreamweaver, Final Cut Pro, Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator;

and, 3) how to use technology equipment such as a camera and camcorder. Alumni participants

were also specific about skills as well as software programs they learned.

The CORAL program was primarily focused on filmmaking so I learned editing, story boarding, working with cameras, and lots of hands-on type of work.

I learned how make a simple web page and turn it into a web site.

I learned how to set up cameras and put them in place as well as other filming information.

I don't think that any of us knew how to use Cinema 4D, Adobe Illustrator, or Photoshop software. I gained technology skills just from learning the software.

I did not learn about software only. I learned how to use a computer and a little bit more. I didn't even know there was composition to pictures and stuff.

I learned about cameras and how to use light and balance. I also learned about all the buttons on cameras from the XL1 to the GO1.

There is a program called Reason and we had this boy from Washington High come and show us how to use the keyboard and what sounds to use for the software program.

Focus group participants were asked how they think the knowledge and skills they gained

from the Institute has helped them now and for the future. Many current participants shared

immediate benefits at school and with homework. They discussed how their projects would look

much better. Others mentioned learning about new options for careers and college as well as

skills for getting a job.

CORAL taught me a lot because in school they won't teach us this kind of information. It helped me a lot because I would do my projects with Photo Shop so they would look better.

As we get older, we are going to get a job. On my resume now, I can say I know how to do computer programming and lots of other technology skills.

CORAL helped me do homework faster and more efficiently.

Alumni participants particularly mentioned future college and job skills such as creating a

resume:

The software programs that helped me the most in school were Photo Shop and Illustrator because we did not have that in school. Before CORAL, I had to do a resume for a class that I could not do. After CORAL, I did my resume on Illustrator and it came out so much nicer than everyone else because of the new technology. Also, people at my school wanted to know how I used Photo Shop because they did not know that schools have Photo Shop or how to use it.

It opened me up to what I want to do in life. I want to major in film when I grow up.

I think it will help me in the future. I don't know with what but I will find out.

I was able to get a job working in teaching technology.

I used a digital camera to take pictures for my photography portfolio and also the films that I made as a part of CORAL. I am going to put all this in my video portfolio for college when I apply for art school.

Both current and alumni participants discussed help with other areas that went beyond the

knowledge and skills mentioned above.   These included:

I learned more that was outside of technology because I came in knowing quite a bit about technology. I learned the most about myself and leadership skills.

I learned how to deal with people more than technology. This has helped me a lot because I learned the most about how to interact with people and how to look at your self too.

I learned how to express myself through film because you can make movies that come from you. You learn how to express your identity and individuality according to media.

I learned about group work because even if you can't get along with people or don't like them, you have to deal with them to get through a project.

Focus group participants were also asked how they have been able to share and use their

knowledge and skills with others outside the Youth Institute. The majority of the current

participants talked about sharing their knowledge with their family, friends and teachers at

school.

I'm teaching my step father how to create a website and I'm showing my little sister Photo Shop. She is interested in creating a ballet with software so I'm teaching her how to add animation to what she wants to do.

I'm in a magnet program and next year we are doing digital film making so I will be able to help the teacher at school.

My sister likes to do a lot of web designing. She always ask me after I come home from CORAL "how did you do that and did you learn anything new?"

Alumni participants also discussed many of the same types of experiences but particularly highlighted the opportunity to share their knowledge with friends at school.

I have done school projects and have brought friends over to help with their projects. They are always really amazed. They say "wow, you know all this stuff."

I have taught my dad how to use Photoshop. We all get to check out laptops and take them to school so I took physics notes in class with the laptop and give to friends.

Program Benefits

The Youth Institute evaluation was primarily focused on the changes and benefits gained by participants in the Institute. Program participants were asked about their perceptions of the changes in themselves and others, school performance, relationships with peers and family, leadership, cultural understanding and community.

Changes in Self and Others

Both current and alumni focus group participants were very open about the personal changes they noted about themselves from participating in the program. Many discussed how they learned to deal with other people, particularly those from other races, as well as changing personality characteristics about themselves such as shyness and arguing with others. Others discussed how their perceptions of others had changed and were candid about the changes they noted about others particularly in terms of maturity.

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Everybody in CORAL became more mature and tolerable of differences that they see. Even outside of CORAL or at school, people acted differently around their friends and tried to make new friends.

I learned to deal with people. I learned to watch myself because my actions sometimes can be taken the wrong way. I learned to be aware of peoples' perceptions of you and how to deal with them. I did not think I was doing something but sometimes it was taken the wrong way and I learned to watch that.

I probably learned a lot about moral issues about myself such as how to respect others and what they see about me. I learned about immaturity and just to be mellow and live each day to the fullest and take it slow.

I feel like a better person because I can get along with different people-both people of my race and other races.

I'm not shy anymore. I was shy before I joined CORAL and didn't talk. CORAL helped me out of my shyness.

I think I got wiser and learned to take more responsibility. I went to CORAL to learn and not have fun all the time because you can have fun on your on time. At CORAL, you get to learn and meet new people.

School Performance

Because the focus group is conducted in the summer, current participants had not started back to school. However, they were asked about any changes they noted about their attitudes about going back to school. Most were very positive about this and noted a change about how they looked at future schooling such as college.

My attitude changed because I would have never thought about going to college. CORAL has been making me think about what I want to do in the future and what college I want to go to. CORAL changed my perspective about school, how I want to learn and what I want to do with my time at school.

I think I'm going to start applying myself because I didn't get that good of grades before CORAL. I want to go to college now so I want to start doing my schoolwork.

I was thinking of going to a community college like LBCC but then after I saw most of our staff and past CORAL participants getting accepted to universities, it makes me want to change my mind and go to a university..

At first I wasn't planning to go to college. I just wanted go in the military or get a government job. But I have thought about it and lately I have been at the hospital so I decided that I would try to study to be a RN.

Alumni focus group participants also discussed how their attitudes had changed about the future with many indicating a desire to go to college or more focused career goals. They also discussed accomplishments and changes they made toward finishing high school.

In my freshman year I got pretty bad grades. I had a couple of D's. Last year I almost had all straight A's. So my attitude changed drastically after CORAL.

I have graduated from high school!

I have a different attitude toward school because instead of getting upset about teachers not helping you with your homework, I have learned to help out myself once in a while without always asking for the teacher. If I have a mistake on my homework, I will go up to the teacher without being scared about it and ask them to help me correct it.

CORAL helped solidify that I want to do film.

I was already planning to go to college but now I am more prepared for college and the things that they expect from me.

I got help to apply for college and do the financial aid paperwork.

I did a lot better at school. I work better with the people there and I concentrate in class better.

CORAL made me think twice about a career. It opened up more options for me especially getting involved. It makes you realize that there are more things out there.

Relationships with Peers and Family

Focus group participants spent the most time talking about the changes they had seen in their relationships with family, particularly their parents. Most expressed that their parents gained more trust and understanding of them and that they appreciated their parents more. They also discussed more positive relationships with peers and the ability to understand peers' perspectives better and a revaluation of certain friendships.

I barely go out with my friends that I used to hang out with. The reason why I don't hang out with them is because I am spending most of my time at CORAL instead of playing basketball like I used to.

CORAL did affect my relationships with friends because they are the hard type. They always ask me "why are you being soft?" and I tell them "being soft is better than being hard."

It has affected my relationship with my family because now I listen to them when they have problems.

My friends make fun of me because they are too cool. Now they are all gangsters so they wanted me to become one of them. They are mean to me but I really don't care because I have friends and a new community to be a part of.

I have seen a lot of changes. I don't really get close to some of my friends outside of CORAL. In the CORAL Youth Institute, I can say that we got real close together as a family.

Leadership

Focus group participants shared a great deal about the lessons on leadership they gained from the Institute. They were asked to reflect on what they learned about leadership and what changes they have seen in their leadership abilities. Most of the focus group participants would build on something another person said and they were very positive and willing to share what they learned.

I think it taught me to be a leader because the CORAL staff told me to step up because I couldn't really step up and say what my deal was. So the CORAL staff taught me to be a leader and showed me how to gain control of your group and get people to listen to me.

CORAL taught me how to be a leader instead of a follower.

CORAL taught us how anybody can be a good leader if you have supporters and you get supporters to be nice to you. I learned if you are going to boss them around, tell them what to do or be rude to them, you will never get anybody to talk to you. I also learned it is a good idea when they make a mistake to tell them in a nice way.

Alumni participants had lots of discussion about what they learned about leadership and changes they saw in themselves regarding their leadership abilities in their focus groups and comments included the following:

I have a little more security or certainty in leadership now because I used to be shy about leadership and be in the corner. Now I kind of step up and try not to get nervous about leadership.

I learned being a leader is hard because people look up to you. If you do the wrong thing then they are going say she is supposed to be the leader that I am looking up to.

I learned being a good leader involves patience because not everybody is going to have the same opinion as you. You have to be open-minded and think about what others have to say. Even if you don't like what they are saying you should, as a good leader, listen and take into consideration what their ideas are.

This year I have been able to actually teach a class which is a lot harder than just assisting someone and going around and reiterating what one of the staffs says. I actually have to be in charge and it is a little harder then I had thought. I found I am pretty good at leadership which is one thing that I learned.

I learned that good leaders ask for help.

I learned that there are many different styles of leadership. I have also noticed that sometimes people have the misconception of what leadership is.

I found out that I am able to have a friendly or an authoritative figure as a leader. I am able to switch between each one pretty quickly and be a very dynamic leader.

Being involved with CORAL Youth Institute you have to take on a leadership role which gives us more practice with exercising our leadership skills. It shows us our capabilities, our limits, and what works and not works.

Cultural Understanding

Focus group participants were asked about what they learned about other cultures and how that knowledge has influenced them in terms of personal development and future plans. Current participants focused on how they learned to get along with other cultures and races despite having past experiences of tension with other races.

I found that before CORAL, other cultures would be mean to you and want to start a fight with you. But then as you take time and get to know them a little more, you can get along with them.

I know that in the CORAL program people are really getting along with each other but outside the program there are still things going on.

I changed a lot as I'm trying to have more compassion for other cultures. When I was in school I was not allowed to hang out with them and I never knew why but now I got to know why and that is smart of me. I know it's not right to put people down because of their color.

I also changed because at school I only use to hang with my own race. I thought if I hung with others from another race, others would say something about me. Now I don't care what they say. It's good to hang with people of a different race.

Alumni participants focused more on what they learned about other cultures and how it

has helped them now and in the future.

I learned a lot about Khmer classical dance and different things in the Khmer culture like their religion. I had no idea there were so many people here that had parents that went through all that and it was really interesting but sad to hear what that they had to go through in their country.

CORAL is based on diversity and I have hung out with a lot of people from different races after CORAL. I have hung out with people that do Khmer dancing to see how their lives are like mine. They have much more strict parents and just lots of different things in their culture.

I went to different kinds of birthday parties. I went to a Filipino birthday party called a debutante and a quinceñera in the Hispanic culture.

We had family presentations and people talked about their family and what they have been through. I think that is one of the things that brought us closer because people shared some stuff they wouldn't share with other people related to their cultures.

Here at CORAL every race gets along. However, on the streets, this race doesn't like that race. At CORAL, we forgot about that hate and all got along.

I have been more culturally sympathetic or more culturally open. Before I would see something that happened because of their culture and would say to myself "yuk, what are they doing?" But now I understand it is part of their culture and I respect it.

We are more open to other cultures than before when we were not involved in the CORAL program. We have a different level of respect after going through the program because it is so diverse that you can't ignore that.

All of us eat different ethnic foods and we speak each others' languages to each other and sometimes we will pick that up. I do cultural dance and people see that and say that's cool. So we all bring our culture into the program and incorporate that into our media and stuff.

I would like to say that there is some cultural things that I wouldn't even consider but now I actually would like to explore a little more and understand them better and not just pass them by. Now I ask what it is like. I actually want to understand more about other peoples' culture.

The CORAL program really breaks a lot of racial stereotypes.

I would like to travel around the world to see what kind of cultural events go on.

I like to do things for the different experiences so I will be more of a well rounded person.

Community

Current focus group participants had not started the community service part of the

CORAL Youth Institute as this occurs during the academic school year. However, alumni

participants were asked about what they thought they gained from these community service

experiences. All of the participants reported positive changes including knowledge about

working with the government and working with children as well as wanting to be more involved

to make changes in their community.

I did the CORAL by the Beach thing where we taught younger kids about computers. It is a summer program for them too. It is interesting to see what they think about computers, how they can use computers and it is really fun showing them. We taught them how to use the Internet and they thought it was really cool. It was fun to show younger kids how to do stuff when they get excited about it.

I think it is very rewarding to be able to give back to the community especially the younger age group because that's when they absorb more and when they really need the peer support. Even though there is a bit of an age difference, I found it rewarding for both for us.

I found working with the school sites fun. It was kind of frustrating because the little kids got rowdy, wanted to talk a lot, not listen and do things with the computer. I learned kids can be hyperactive.

I have joined a civil rights group.

I am part of the Long Beach youth philanthropy funding board which gives out grants to youth led programs throughout the community. I have also been on the 1st district youth council.

I have been on the 1st district council and have been in the health leadership training, which I am going to graduate from on August 21.

I volunteer for cultural events that happened during the year.

I got a chance to see those kids I worked with before. It was fun seeing them grow up and having them screaming your name.

Most of the kids don't have anybody to look up too. When they see you, they look up to you as role models.

Perceptions of Staff

Alumni focus group participants were very positive about the staff and discussed a

variety of roles and ways they assisted them.

The staff at CORAL was like parents. They made sure we were doing well and they checked up on us in school and stuff. If we needed help on projects, they would supply that kind of help.

There has been quite a few staff that have come and gone. Some of them were better than others but they definitely gave us a lot of respect and trust us once we gained it. It makes it seem like they are our friends more than our teachers. We shared interests like music and guitar. All of the staff is different which is what I liked.

All of the staff is fun but seem mean at first. Later you get to know them well and they are fun. They are there for you whenever you have problems and you need someone to talk to. They are like family.

The CORAL staff has helped me with setting up for college and in high school with problems. I can always go to them with any kind of problem. They are like a parent to us.

I would also like to add that along with school and money situations, the staff has also helped with more personal problems like relationship problems with family and peers.

The staff tends to listen a lot when you are telling them your problems. They give you their opinion but don't tell you what to do. They leave it up to you.

Most of the staff went through similar experiences when they were younger and they sort of can give you a heads up on a way to deal with the situation.

Current participants also indicated positive feelings about staff and alumni who they

considered helpful to them while indicating others who may not have been as helpful. Opinions

varied widely within the groups but most made positive comments about the staff they found

helpful to them personally.

Well there was a couple of staff members were really cool. They were with the group because they just hang out with you and want to be with people. But there was the other group of staff that took everything too seriously and did everything for their group.

All I know is the staff were cool with me and I did not have any problems with them. I have a staff member who was like a friend to hang out with. He is cool with me. Most of them are. It's like they help you out too.

I learned to grab a staff member and say "hey, can you teach me this?" If they don't have the time, they will tell you. You have to take responsibility for your own learning. If you don't understand something, they will help you. That's the one on one I would get from the staff.

Some staff would take you out. I am a Mexican, and the staff that I hung out with was Asian. I had never seen a Mexican being in an Asian car. I live here in Long Beach and they actually took me out. It really showed me how we can come from a different race but most of the time we are just regular people. So I did bond with most of the staff.

I feel the staff is more than a staff. I considered them like family I considered them close because of all the struggling and problems we have been through.

Summary of Program Benefits and Changes

Both current and alumni focus group participants were positive about all aspects of the program and noted a number of changes in the areas discussed above. It is clear that the program impacted their relationships with the family and friends, changed their attitudes about leadership, cultural understanding and community service and helped their personal development in terms of future goals. It is interesting that alumni participants continued to report positive experiences despite the summer experience being one to three years in the past. Often they could give more detailed accounts than current participants about Institute experiences and staff they found helpful. It reflects that the program impacts the participants beyond the immediate results as indicated by current participants.

All of the focus groups ended with the question: Would you encourage a friend to participate in the Youth Institute and if so, what benefits would you tell them they would gain from participating in the CORAL Youth Institute. Both current and alumni participants indicated

they would refer friends and considered the benefits to be not only the technology skills and

knowledge but personal development as key. Their comments summarize the positive

experiences discussed above.

Yes I have referred friends already. I tell them that it is unlike anything else and they will gain lots of life experience as well as experience with technology. Also, you learn people skills and get money on top of it.

Definitely because it's a good experience no matter if you learn something about computers, about yourself, or about others. It doesn't matter because everything you learn from CORAL is good.

There is no other program like this to enroll in so I try to tell friends do this now. Yeah I highly recommend them to be in CORAL.

I think I got two of my closest friends in already and I am planning to get more of them in.

I would tell my friends they would gain a once in a lifetime experience of learning technology, going to trips, learning about other peoples culture and tons of fun stuff.

I would tell my friends they would bond with people at a mature degree that they probably wouldn't find with anybody else like friends of with family.

They would gain the benefit of cultural diversity, gain new friendships, learn to bond with people and learn to lean on each other.

You gain a place where the doors are always open. If you feel like you don't want to be in school one day you can just walk in and they will let you in.

Basically the same thing that everyone has said but also the fact that you get to feel like there is someone that you are helping out. Everyone appreciates you for who you are and the fact that you can be yourself and not worry about anything.

It opens up many opportunities to make your life better in the future. We basically get lifelong friends that you can make connections with and network around them in the future.

You gain a sense of self understanding and you understand your strong and weak points. You also learn what you really want in life and how to interact with other people when you want to interact with other people.

I encourage my friends to join CORAL because I think they really need it because they can realize what people from other ethnicities have inside them of and not what they look like and what their color are. They will gain friendships and trust from people. People from CORAL will be their friends.

I would encourage my friends to join CORAL because the technology and leadership skills you learn. You also work together with different people and different races.

I would encourage my friends to come because not only do they learn the great program that they are teaching us right now but also gain the friendships from many people. CORAL can help you in the future.

Yes, because at the end of summer they will realize it is not all about the money. It is about your education and how you grow up.

I will tell them that they are going to gain money a lot of friends, people you can look up to, and maybe parental figures. You also learn a lot about technology.

I really recommended it to a lot of my friends. I even fill out applications for all of them. I just told them they are actually moving forward and it's cool that you get to meet new people.

You gain adventure, trust, and a lot of knowledge about technology and other software.

Teamwork, participation and respect are benefits I would tell them about.

I would tell them that adventure could be also learning. You get into computers but not just on the Internet. You get real knowledge of the computer. People think computers are for the Internet, chatting or I-Tunes. But they would know how far they could go and that helps them with their future.

You gain respect for others and different kind of races. We shouldn't judge people by their looks.

I feel that CORAL is a Mafia. Once you are in, there is no way out. So if you were to join CORAL, you are initiated into the mafia.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, these findings provide some support for ideas incorporated into the Youth Institute Framework developed for the program. The summer program appears to have helped current and alumni participants to gain multiple new skills in terms of their technology skills and development of self. In addition, some of the leadership and community involvement comments serve as proxy indicators of improvement in terms of self-efficacy and self-confidence. It is worth noting that alumni participants continue to report positive benefits and changes that have

continued through the program with their involvement in the Alumni program. The focus group comments indicate that the experiences they had in the Youth Institute have influenced their choices for career and college plans as well as relationships with other people. Taken together these finding are exciting and suggest the program is achieving some of its stated goals. The alumni group comments indicate that some of the goals may have more long-term outcomes than previously thought.

It is also exciting that the technology component combined with a money stipend continues to be a strong initial attraction for youth participating in the program but the focus group data indicates that participants gained more from the staff and other participants in the program. The focus group data also indicated that participants gained other skills beyond technology skills. Focus group participants were attracted to the Institute for the money and technology skills but gained much more in terms of their personal development, life and relationship building skills. The technology and service learning component appears to promote youth development and community involvement. This youth development perspective suggests that teens are more likely to participate in out-of-school activities if they make connections between program participation and personal benefits. The youth development perspective also suggests that teens are more likely to participate in out-of-school activities if they are bonded to program staff and other participants. This is a key element to program success because research suggests that teens are less likely than younger children to stay involved in programs.

These focus group findings from both current and alumni participants indicate the Youth Institute experience is positive for participants and that many changes and benefits occur as a result of their involvement. The most interesting focus group findings for alumni participants

indicate that the program needs to continue to follow these participants and to see the changes as they progress through their college and career goals.

Appendix A

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS FOR
EVALUATION OF CORAL YOUTH INSTITUTE

Questions for Youth Participants

1. Why did you want to be involved with the CORAL Youth Institute? How did you hear about the Institute? What was it about the program that was of most interest to you and made you apply?

2. What program activities did you participate in? Which ones did you enjoy the most? What program activities did you enjoy the least?

3. What knowledge and skills do you think you learned from participating in the Youth Institute program activities? How have you been able to share your knowledge and skills with others since participating in the program?

4. Before you started the Youth Institute program, what type of access did you have to computers? If you had access, what did you use computers for?

5. With the focus on technology in the program, what technology skills did you develop from participating in the Youth Institute? How have you been able to share your technology skills with others since participating in the program? Give some examples of how you have used technology outside the Youth Institute.

6. How do you think the knowledge and skills learned from the program have helped you now? How do you think they will help you in the future?

7. What aspect of the program taught you the most? What aspect of the program taught you the least? What aspect of the program contributed the most to your learning and development?

8. What changes have you seen in yourself and others since participating in the CORAL Youth Institute? Has your involvement affected your relationships with others (friends, family)? How so?

9. What changes have you seen in your school performance since participating in the CORAL Youth Institute? What changes have you seen in your attitude and involvement in school? How have these changes influenced your plans for the future?

10. What have you learned about leadership since participating in the CORAL Youth Institute? What changes have you seen in your leadership abilities since participating in the CORAL Youth Institute? How have these changes influenced your plans for the future?

11. What have you learned about other cultures since participating in the CORAL Youth Institute? What changes have you seen in your understanding of other cultures since participating in the CORAL Youth Institute? How have these changes influenced your plans for the future?

12. What changes have you seen in your relationships with peers, family and school personnel since participating in the CORAL Youth Institute? How have these changes influenced your plans for the future?

13. In what ways have you been involved with the community since joining the Youth Institute? Tell me your thoughts and experiences about community services work with the elementary school students? What have you gained from these community experiences?

14. Tell me about your relationships with the Youth Institute staff. How has the staff at the CORAL Youth Institute helped you? How have they not helped you? What types of bonding and mentoring opportunities have you had with the staff?

15. Would you encourage a friend to participate in the Youth Institute? If so, what benefits would you tell them that they would gain from participating in the CORAL Youth Institute?