



Spring 2018

Evaluation Tip

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Using Artwork as Alternative to Complete Program Evaluation



Agents are conducting programs for pre-school and young elementary youth who do not have the reading and writing skills to complete traditional Extension evaluations. Consider using drawings. Invite each student to draw a picture and tell you about his or her experience.

At left is an example from the Chicago Pre-College Science and Engineering program that uses drawing and interviews.

Elisah described that “when you put vinegar and baking soda in a water bottle and put a cork on it, the cork exploded off the water bottle. The person who did the experiment was a chemical engineer and did awesome things like this.”

When evaluating youth programming, art-based activities are an exceptional way to evaluate because:

Drawing artwork together builds rapport and engages program participants. Young people may feel uncomfortable talking to unknown evaluators/adults. Art-based activities are a fun, nonthreatening way to break the ice.

Art is a great communication tool. Young people share relevant and meaningful information when explaining their art. During this process, it is incredibly important for adult evaluators to actively listen as youth share the intent and meaning behind their artwork.

Art can be a strength-based tool. When young people make art, it affirms their vision, voice, and opinion. As the artist, the young person has power to explore topics that are important to them.

Using art as an evaluation tool helps evaluators collect rich, interesting and valuable information. Sometimes, it is easier to express emotions and experiences while drawing. Art-based evaluation should always be accompanied by a listening or discussion session.

Using art as an evaluation tool is not difficult. From stick figures to complicated images, art is fun for everyone! The artist’s skill level does not matter because the story behind the art can still be shared.

Adapted from the American Evaluation Association AEA365 post January 23, 2018.