

VIII. Facilities Improvement Specialist

The Setting

Savannah's Parks and Recreation Department manages several parks and recreation centers throughout the city. While their efforts focus on the activities that happen in the parks and recreation centers and the people who attend them, they spend a lot of time and energy maintaining and improving the facilities for these programs. It is important to them that the facilities meet the needs of the people and programs they serve.

Comparable Settings

The task described below has been implemented, in differing forms, in several different park settings in Georgia and Arizona. It could also be adapted to fit the needs of most institutions or businesses that provide facilities for diverse activities. Some examples include convention centers, meeting halls and school annexes, among other places.

The Work

A team of 5 young people and one adult supervisor identified facility needs and developed and implemented a plan to meet these needs at a neighborhood recreation center. They started by surveying the people who used the center, asking them what they liked to do at the center, and what improvements needed to be made to the center to make these activities better. They used this information to identify and prioritize several projects that would allow the center to better meet the needs of its clients. They then chose a couple of projects that could be done within the time and money constraints they faced.

Finally, they developed and implemented a work plan for these projects: painting some of the rooms of the recreation center, cleaning graffiti and painting parts of the exterior of the building, and planting some shade trees. They identified the specific work needed for each project and decided who would do each step. They also identified the materials and equipment they needed, what they had, and how they would get what they did not have. Finally, they worked as a team to follow through on their plan and make the needed improvements.

The Learning

The young people learned about painting and landscaping by doing this project. More importantly, they learned many skills that are applicable to other work settings. They learned both interpersonal and information skills by conducting the survey. They developed resource skills by considering the time, people and materials available when identifying projects and developing a work plan. They learned about systems by following the project through all of its stages, from deciding what to do, to determining how to do it, lining up the resources, and completing the work. They developed some technology skills in choosing and using the tools necessary to write and conduct the survey, and to do the actual painting and landscaping work. Finally, they developed great interpersonal skills by working through the whole project as a team.

*Source: The Institute for Policy Studies
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Dr. Arnold Packer*