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Westchester County Youth Bureau – Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Program (SRAEP)

Year 1 (2018–2019) Local Evaluation Report

SUBMITTED TO:

Westchester County Youth Bureau (Grantee)

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Introduction

The Westchester County Youth Bureau (WCYB) is a non-profit organization located in White Plains, NY, with a mission to support the needs of youth and families. Through the oversight of the Westchester County legislature, it monitors and provides financial support to nonprofit agencies and organizations that provide programs and services directly to youth. In fall 2018, the WCYB received a federally funded two-year grant entitled Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Program (SRAEP) from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Administration for Children and Families through a competitive process.

Through the SRAEP grant, the WCYB envisions improving outcomes for youth through relationship awareness, sexual risk awareness and avoidance, and college and career awareness and readiness education across four cities in the Lower Hudson Valley Region of New York State; these cities include: Mt. Vernon, New Rochelle, White Plains, and Yonkers. This area of New York State has been identified as high needs, with a disproportionate unemployment rate, a large percentage of single-parent homes, and an above national average rate of violent crime. SRAEP is sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Administration for Children and Families.

WCYB has partnered with Community Change, Inc., an educational, community capacity-building firm based in Westchester County that provides career awareness and readiness instruction and other youth development training. Community Change oversaw the implementation of the selected evidenced-based sexual risk avoidance (SRA) curriculum (*Adult Identity Mentoring [AIM]*) and the implementation of the career awareness and readiness curriculum (*CareerVisions*) used at the four program sites. Three of the four program sites were existing WCYB afterschool programs, and the fourth was run by the Nepperhan Community Center (NCC) at Gorton High School in Yonkers, NY. The NCC is a non-profit community-based organization that provides community outreach and support programs to further educational, emotional, and life skills in nurturing and culturally diverse environments.

The program team selected curricula that would be appropriate for all the age groups that were recruited to participate in the after-school course. The course, which served as the key component of the program's intervention, was proposed to be delivered between four and six weeks, for a total of 24 hours—12 hours of career exploration and learning, and 12 hours of relationship education and sexual risk avoidance instruction. The program aimed to serve participants ranging from 10 years old to 18 years old.

Community Change provided the course facilitators who were trained in delivering the selected curricula by the curricula providers. WCYB also hired four site-based directors to operate the program at each of the four sites on a part-time basis during the after-school implementation of the programs. Their tasks included registering students, coordinating the courses schedules delivered to participating youth, purchasing all required materials and supplies to run the programs, and working directly with the program evaluator on the outcome study.

SRAEP is both a youth development and research grant. As such, the WCYB also contracted with Metis Associates, a national research and evaluation consulting firm headquartered in New York

City, to conduct the local evaluation. Metis has extensive experience in evaluating the effectiveness of educational programs, including sexual risk avoidance programs. The Year 1 evaluation of WCYB's SRAEP initiative employed an implementation and outcomes study (sections for each below under "Findings"), whereby process measures for implementation milestones and participant growth measures were assessed over time. The originally proposed study called for an experimental design but after guidance from the federal officers in combination with a shortened Year 1 implementation period, the project employed this approach instead. Aspects of the implementation study included student recruitment, student persistence (attendance), program fidelity, and level of staff training; The outcomes study pieces included student growth in knowledge and skills in course-specific learning indicators, such as career awareness and readiness, relationship awareness, self-awareness, sexual risk avoidance skills, sexual education knowledge and other related areas.

Program Design

The following section provides a description of the various components that comprised the design of the SRAEP program. First, the SRA and career exploration curricula, which served as the key intervention for student participants through a 24-hr course is described. This section also explores the structure of the implementation components to provide some context around the comprehensive intervention, which includes the delivery of the course, along with other peripheral services in support of the needs of the students served by this project and the WCYB. Information regarding the recruitment and makeup of the students that were served appears at the end of this section to also provide additional context.

Curricula

WCYB utilized two separate curricula to deliver the career and sexual risk avoidance (SRA) components of the program. First, SRAEP provided relationship and SRA education to its target population using the *Adult Identity Mentoring* (AIM) curriculum. AIM "is based on the Theory of Possible Selves, which proposes that individuals are motivated in their present life by mental images of possible future selves, and that a person's motivation is determined by a balance of positive and negative ways people see themselves in the future." The curriculum seeks to support adolescents' development of a positive image of their future. It also guides students in the articulation of their future goals while providing instruction on the types of risky behavior choices that could negatively impact their attainment of those goals. The curriculum covers a number of key areas, including:

- Identifying role models to encourage youth to explore personal interests and identify people in their lives that will hinder or support their development into adulthood.
- Exploring their future by envisioning themselves in a future career and by tying together current behavior with behaviors needed to achieve their goals using activities such as completing a career interest inventory, developing business cards and resumes, and participating in interviews.

- Supporting youth to express themselves by allowing them to role-play around communication and small group activities involving planning and decision-making.
- Helping you to Learn to make choices regarding their future, by carving out milestones that lead to accomplishing future goals and identifying some potential pitfalls and obstacles.

The grant originally proposed the use of the Dibble¹ curriculum, and evidence-based SRA instruction model and lessons. However, the Westchester County Legislature recommended that the program research and select a different curriculum after reviewing the Dibble instruction content (more information under “Findings”).

The *CareerVisions* model is designed to use students’ personal strengths and interests as the platform from which to engage them in career explorations. *CareerVisions* seeks to develop youth into career-minded, community leaders. The curriculum used students’ identified areas of career interest to springboard their participation in career explorations and community organizing. Lessons utilize group projects, team games, conflict management workshops, field trips, and presentations as vehicles for learning, integrating career explorations and community engagement concepts into all activities. The three major components of the CareerVisions course include activities that help students to:

- Explore, define and pursue their career interests
- Analyze and address social issues that are related to their career interests
- Apply their career interests to addressing their community concerns.

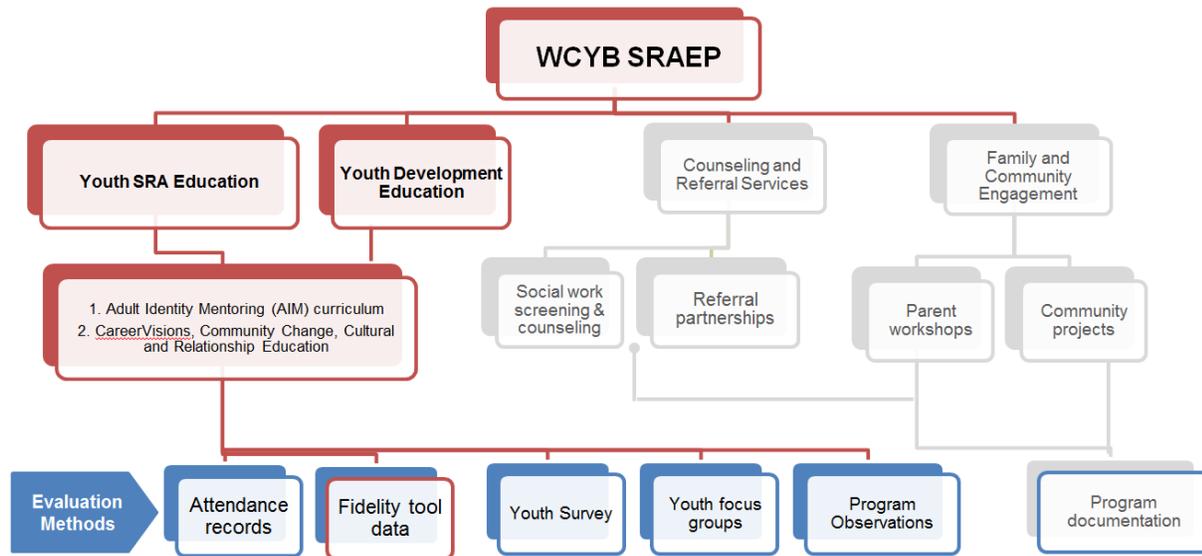
Implementation Structure

Visual charts of the program structure, implementation design and accompanying research procedures appear below. They provide a sketch of the design of the program and also participants’ expected journeys from intake through program completion, including the timing of data collection activities conducted by the local evaluators and program staff.

As shown in the first graphic below (Figure 1), the grantee (WCYB) oversaw all operation of the program, including the selection and coordination of the course delivery, which served as the program’s core intervention (items in red boxes). Because the program was embedded as part of the WCYB’s afterschool programming at the four sites, the program was also able to offer peripheral services that support a comprehensive set of student needs (e.g., counseling, referrals, and community engagement).

¹ Dibble Institute’s evidence-based curriculum is entitled *Relationship Smarts* (for youth ages 12-14) and *Love Notes* (ages 15-19). The workshops provide education to youth that normalize the optimal health behavior of avoiding non-marital sexual activity, teaching teens and young adults relationship skills that encourage and motivate them to make healthy relationship decisions.

Figure 1: Program Structure



Monthly Project Meetings

SRAEP leadership staff (Project Director and Site-Based Coordinators) held periodic meetings over the course of Year 1 in preparation for the program’s rollout in spring 2019. The meetings included the Project Director (WCYB Program Administrator), a representative from Community Change, representatives from each of the four WCYB program sites, and Metis evaluators. These project advisory meetings were held approximately once per month during Year 1 through the start of program implementation at the program sites, followed by conference calls as needed thereafter. During these meetings, implementation design and logistics were discussed in detail, leading into the start of services for the program’s first cohort of youth participants between May and August 2019.

Participants

Recruitment activities

Recruitment of middle and high school-based youth was conducted through each of the local youth bureau after-school programs for three of the sites—Mt. Vernon, New Rochelle, and White Plains—and through the Nepperhan Community Center (NCC) after-school program in Yonkers. Each site had an existing site director and support staff. However, the project hired site coordinators to manage the SRAEP program component and work directly with parents, students, and the evaluator.

Description of Participants

In the recruitment process, each site distributed the project’s flyer & registration form to existing afterschool participants of the youth bureau or NCC programs to sign up for the SRAEP course. In

addition, WCYB and Community Change, Inc. staff provided parent presentations at the different sites.

In total, 221 students participated at least one day in SRAEP-related coursework between May and August across the four target sites. Demographic data were also collected from participants in order to examine the diversity of the initiative’s participants. As shown in the Table below, nearly all of participants who registered for the programs were either Black or Hispanic, with a few students identifying as either White or Other, and there was a fairly equal balance of male and female students.

Table 2: Program Demographic Characteristics – Year 1

City	N	Ethnicity				Gender	
		<i>Black</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
Mt. Vernon	65	59	4	0	1	35	29
New Rochelle	28	3	23	1	1	19	11
White Plains	57	5	51	1	0	22	35
Yonkers	71	41	26	0	1	34	37
Total	221	108	104	2	3	110	112

Research Methods

Prior to the start of the initiative, Metis worked collaboratively with the project team from WCYB and Community Change to draft the research design and questions, as well as the activities to address each of the questions as part of the original proposal submitted to the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Administration for Children and Families. This section provides information about the research design, questions, data sources, and analyses conducted during Year 1.

This section provides a list of the research questions and performance measures proposed in the original grant proposal, the data resources developed and used to address these questions and measures, and a visual illustration of how the independent evaluation aligned with the implementation structure of the program. Finally, a section detailing the methods used to analyze the data collected through the various methods is presented at the end.

Research Questions

The local evaluation used a two-tiered approach by employing an implementation study and an outcomes study. The implementation study examined aspects of the program service roll out and the extent to which the initiative was implemented as planned. It also explored student persistence, any notable variations within and across sites, participants’ perceptions of the initiative, and challenges and successes of the implementation. The outcomes study used evaluation instruments to capture student perceptual data to explore the extent to which students gained knowledge in

the following key areas: relationship awareness, career readiness and awareness, and sexual risk awareness and avoidance (SRA). The research design included formative components—to provide information about best practices in order to inform ongoing program decisions—and summative components—to provide objective data about the initiative’s results in improving outcomes for participants. The implementation and outcomes studies were each guided by a set of questions, as listed below.

Implementation Study

The questions that guided the implementation study were designed to help the research team interpret the findings from the outcomes evaluation. They have a key focus on implementation outcomes and milestones met, strengths and challenges. Fidelity and Participation research questions and performance measures are addressed in specific sections of this report, while implementation successes and barriers are addressed throughout the findings section and in the conclusions.

Research Questions

Fidelity

1. To what extent is the SRAEP project, including the evidence-based curricula, being implemented with fidelity across and within sites?
2. What factors contribute to and/or inhibit fidelity?

Participation

3. To what extent are sites meeting their target numbers of participants?
4. To what extent do participants persist in program activities?
5. Are there differences in program persistence and attrition across activities and sites?
6. What factors account for differences?

Performance Measures

1. Program instructors will meet required fidelity standards
2. Program instructors will meet facilitator quality measures
3. 90% of participating youth will provide strong ratings to the instructors’ quality, engagement, and group cohesion

4. *A total of 320 youth will participate in the study²*
5. A total of 160 youth will receive services
6. Youth will engage in at least 12 hours of project activities
7. SRAEP staff will engage in 18 hours of training
8. At least 80 parents/family members will participate in program workshops or activities
9. At least 90% of youth participants will complete all SRA lessons
10. At least 90% of youth participants will complete all *CareerVisions* lessons

² This measure was removed because the study did not utilize an experimental design and no longer requires the recruitment of twice as many students to form a control group that matches the size of the participating (“treatment”) group.

Implementation successes/barriers

7. What are barriers to participation?
8. To what extent and how do these challenges and barriers vary across sites?
9. How can implementation be improved?

Community Measures

11. At least 20 community partnerships will be developed
12. At least 40 referrals will be provided by SRAEP staff to students and/or families

Outcomes Study

The outcomes-based research questions and performance measures addressed progress made in meeting achieving the targets for the indicators as a result of the intervention (i.e., course) provided to students at each site.

Research Questions

1. Do participants of the WCYB SRAEP project show improvement in participant knowledge in: sexual risk avoidance skills; medically accurate information; healthy life skills; and positive, adaptive skills related to community change, legacy, and peace?
2. Do participants of the WCYB SRAEP project show positive changes in their intentions (such as plans for future abstinence from pre-marital sexual activity and other risky behaviors, as well as commitment to career goals)?
3. Do participants of the WCYB SRAEP project show positive changes in their behaviors (such as sense of purpose and positive view of relationships, current abstinence from pre-marital sexual activity and other risky behaviors)?

Performance Measures

1. Students will demonstrate increase in their knowledge of risk avoidance skills, medically accurate information, and healthy life skills and protective factors (*Outcome 1*)
2. 85% of participating youth will demonstrate improvement from pre to post in their ability to analyze issues, cultural awareness, and conflict management/relationship skills (*Outcome 2*)
3. A greater percentage of students will report their intention to abstain from future pre-marital sex (*Outcome 3*)
4. At least 85% of participating youth will report greater commitment to their career goals from pre to post (*Outcome 4*)
5. A greater percentage of students will report having voluntarily refrained from sexual activity over the program period compared to the period prior to program participation (*Outcome 5*)
6. 85% of participating youth will demonstrate improvement from pre to post in their positive future outlook and health of their relationships (*Outcome 6*)

Data Sources

The research methods were designed to include the collection and analysis of various sources of qualitative and quantitative data from SRAEP youth study participants as well as data from staff delivering the intervention. This approach would enable Metis to capitalize on the complementary strengths of multiple data sources so that findings could be triangulated, thereby increasing the strength of the findings. It should be noted that because the Year 1 program was only partially

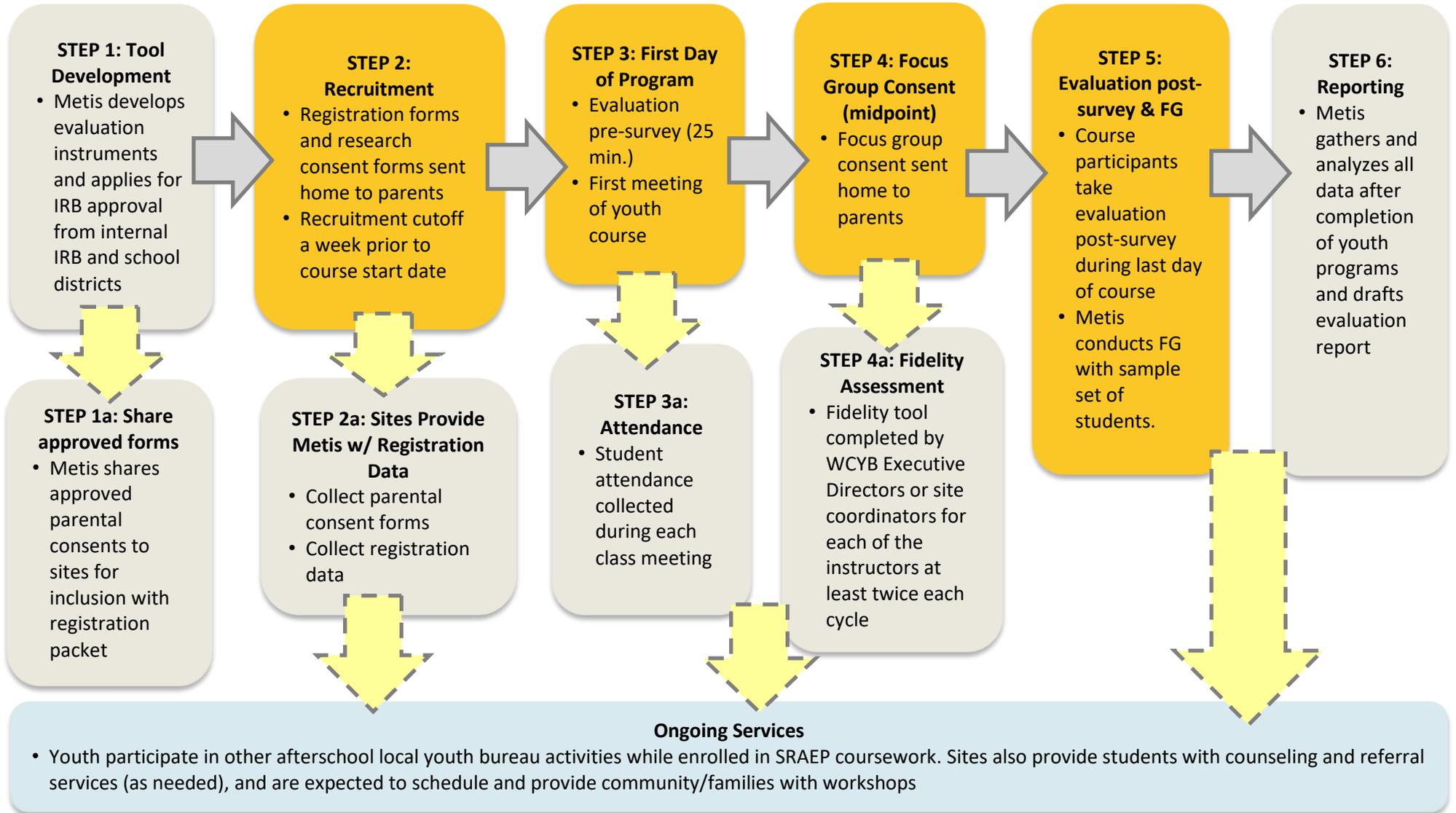
implemented given the condensed available timeframe for program implementation, not all proposed research activities were carried out and was outside of the evaluator's control.

- **Review of participation data** – Metis gathered participant background and participation data from each site. These data included participant enrollment, demographic (date of birth, gender, grade level and ethnicity), and attendance data for use in addressing performance measures related to program implementation and dosage.
- **Review of program documentation** – Metis staff collected student recruitment applications, curricular materials, and other program materials throughout the project period.
- **Pre/post local evaluation program surveys for participants** – Metis worked with program staff to collect and analyze data gathered through the participant pre/post surveys, which covered all three major domains of the program (e.g., relationship awareness, career readiness and awareness, and sexual risk awareness and avoidance). The surveys were administered to youth participants at the start of the curriculum courses and again at the end of the program. In total, 49 of 221 (22%) youth participants of the programs obtained parental permission to participate in the research component and completed surveys. Out of the 49 that completed surveys, 15 completed both pre- and post-surveys.
- **Focus groups** – Metis staff conducted separate focus groups at each of the participating sites. Focus groups were conducted with a sample of participating youth. Each group included four to eight participants. Focus group questions included items that tapped participants' perceptions of the project's impact on them, the successes and challenges of the project, information about what they learned through the lessons and activities, and their ideas for how the program could be improved in Year 2.
- **Program observations and fidelity data collection** – As designed, project staff were to observe a sample of program activities during the implementation of each site-based course provided during Year 1. These visits would allow for the collection of fidelity data using curriculum-specific data collection tools, and would provide contextual information about the implementation at each site. This activity was not conducted in Year 1 but is expected to be captured in Year 2.

Evaluation Procedures

In terms of the participation and evaluation roadmap (next page), once a site was prepared to begin implementation (i.e., having established a physical location and necessary materials, hired and trained instructors, and finalized a schedule of activities), the site opened registration to youth. Youth who were already enrolled in one of the four sites' afterschool local youth bureau programs were invited to also participate in SRAEP. Project staff provided registration forms for each youth to take home and return signed by a parent or guardian. Some sites also provided parental information sessions. After the close of registration at each site, Metis then distributed parental permission forms for participation in the research component of the program. All participating youth who received parental permission were invited to complete an initial pre-survey and a post-survey at the beginning and end of the course, respectively. At the end the course, Metis also conducted focus groups with participants to gather participant impressions and discuss evaluation-related topics in more depth.

Alignment of Program Implementation and Evaluation Activities



= Student involved
 = Staff/evaluator

Data Analyses

Quantitative Analyses

The youth assessment survey instruments included separate sections with rating-scale questions specifically geared to measure respondent knowledge and skills in the three domains addressed by the evidence-based curriculum course: relationship awareness skills (including self-awareness), career awareness and readiness, and sexual risk awareness and avoidance. Responses for questions within each section were computed to create composite scores for indicators under these three domains. The analysis compared the composite score gains from pre-survey to post-survey to examine whether there were statistically significant gains from the start to end of program participation.

Due to the small sample sizes and small number of matched pre- and post-survey responses, the evaluators also analyzed unmatched post-surveys to capture a wider range of responses and provide descriptive data on where student perceptions stood after completion of the course and whether it correlated with participation levels (attendance). In the longitudinal analyses tables in the Outcomes Study section, the analyses used t-tests to see if students demonstrated growth in various performance indicators. In order for a mean difference between pre and post scores to be statistically significant, the statistical test used to measure growth (*t*-test), must yield a *p*-value score at or below .05 (see “Outcomes Study” section below)

Table 1 displays the sample sizes of matched responses by the various indicators measured through the survey instrument. As can be seen below, survey responses were obtained from between 36 and 49 respondents across the indicators though many fewer respondents had both matched pre and post surveys (N=15 for all but one indicator). Also, based on the fluctuations of scores among the respondents for each indicator, the standard deviations were large, which limited the strength of the mean growth from pre to post-test (see “Findings” for more details).

Table 1: Research Group Sample Sizes and Characteristics for Each Outcome Analysis

Baseline Measures	Participating Youth Groups			
	Sample Sizes		Analytic Sample Characteristics	
	Research Group N	Matched Pre & Post Data	Post-Survey Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Career Readiness Composite	49	15	84.16	22.94
Relationship Awareness Composite	48	15	69.33	26.16
Self-Awareness Composite	48	15	50.02	10.61
Sexual Risk Avoidance Composite	48	15	66.40	35.25
Sexual Education Knowledge Composite	49	15	6.59	3.82
Sexual Behavior Composite	36	14	4.31	1.24
Intimacy Outlook Composite	37	15	19.08	8.38

Qualitative Analyses

Analysis of qualitative data, including those gathered through documentation review and focus groups, focused on the participants' experiences, their perceived growth in the topics covered, fidelity of program implementation, and overall programmatic successes and challenges. To aid in the analysis, focus groups were digitally recorded and transcribed, only after students provided permission to do so. After the transcription and analysis, the audio recordings were destroyed. Content analyses were conducted to identify common themes and patterns that emerged across respondent groups to provide a detailed description of program practices and to generate an understanding of the relationship between implementation and outcomes.

Findings

As described above, the local evaluation of SRAEP was guided by its study questions and performance measures. Data are provided in the sections below to address each of the implementation and outcome study questions, detailing the results of the independent evaluation of the program's implementation of SRAEP.

Course Implementation & Fidelity

Fidelity of Implementation

During Year 1 of the initiative, four cities implemented the youth SRAEP program. Information on the course scheduling and timing of the programs is provided in the table below. At each site, the program was staffed by the SRAEP Site Coordinator (usually a WCYB site coordinator), a youth bureau staff member (to coordinate implementation), a school-based instructor (to deliver the course content), and a partnering Community Change Trainer/Coach, who served as both the liaison between the curriculum provider and a secondary instructor. The youth program first launched in New Rochelle on May 23; this site was able to host the program over five weeks, allowing them to complete 22 of the 24 target hours. Other sites were faced with more condensed schedules and completed between 12 and 20 hours of course instruction.

Table 3: Program Start and End Dates – Year 1 (2019)

City	Location	Start Date	End Date	Days of Operation	Hours Offered
New Rochelle	Hugh A. Doyle Center (New Rochelle Youth Bureau site)	May 23	June 26	11	22
	New Rochelle district offices	Aug. 12	Aug. 15	4	16
Mt. Vernon	Mt. Vernon High School	April 23	June 7	10	20
White Plains	White Plains Middle School	July 11	Aug. 8	10	20
Yonkers	Gorton High School	April 22	June 6	6	12

The majority of Year 1 was dedicated to formulating the overall implementation design for the project, working with the evaluator on the development of the research design and associated data collection instruments, hiring staff, securing the curricula, training staff on delivering the content, setting up the implementation schedules, and working with the local programs on recruiting students. The grant was originally approved to conduct an experimental design, but after close consultation with federal grant officers at the grantee meeting in early 2019 and, given the short implementation time frame remaining in Year 1 after the planning period, the project decided to only track outcome data for its youth participants. The programs were scheduled to begin in March 2019, allowing for all four sites to implement the proposed 6-week, 24-hr course prior to the end of the school year; however, the Westchester County Legislature who oversees the WCYB, upon reviewing the originally selected curriculum (Dibble), recommended that the program research and select a different curriculum. There were concerns regarding the content of the Dibble curriculum. This delayed the start of project implementation by two months as the project leadership worked diligently to research, propose a new curriculum to the legislature, and then enter into a contract agreement with a new vendor. By mid-May, the project staff were retrained in the new curricula and prepared to start, but with state testing schedules and little time left before the end of the school year (second week of June), sites were only able to provide condensed versions of the original course (Yonkers and Mt. Vernon), and one site moved implementation to the summer school session (White Plains). These modifications greatly affected the fidelity of implementation, but the project hopes to implement the program as intended in Year 2.

The above delay, timing of new schedule, and shorter window for implementing the course at three of the sites (New Rochelle, Mt. Vernon and Yonkers) required for each program to be flexible in allowing students to complete and participate in other after-school activities, including other WCYB events. Some students also were required to complete test preparation workshops in advance of state testing scheduling. With shorter implementation, the program did not administer the fidelity of implementation instrument that accompanies the AIM curriculum in Year 1.

In the youth focus groups, participants reported that they had all participated in programming related to career exploration, but the implementation of all other topics varied across groups, with two groups having not learned about relationship or sexual knowledge and behaviors. Youth across sites shared that they participated in mock interviews and were provided tips to help them improve their interviewing skills. Some youth also reported discussing the concept of legacy, the power of positive and negative influences, and the difference between a career and a job. Youth also described various other career-related activities they participated in, such as drafting resumes, learning about career paths, and discussing how they could begin preparing for their desired careers. When asked what they considered to be the most useful career activity, responses differed across focus groups, with responses including identifying careers of interest, planning for future careers, and discussing the effects of negative influences in their lives. One group reported that they would have liked to spend less time discussing legacies (the impact that the individual imparts on others), as this was a large portion of the discussions.

While participants in two focus groups explained that they had not covered material other than that related to career exploration, one group noted having discussions about the types of relationships,

including work relationships. Through a combination of discussions, worksheets, and mock Jeopardy game, youth learned about STD and pregnancy prevention, and they agreed that Jeopardy was the most useful activity.

Effectiveness of Recruitment Efforts

Because of the already existing WCYB and NCC afterschool programs at the four sites, the SRAEP course did not face any challenges in recruiting enough students to meet the target of 160 students across the sites. In fact, as show in Table 2 above, the project well-exceeded the target, serving 221 youth in Year 1.

In the focus groups, youth confirmed hearing about SRAEP through their WCYB program, but also through their involvement with other programs, such as the Comprehensive Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (CAPP) program at Mt. Vernon HS. Students in one group said that their parents decided that they would participate in the program and that it was not up to them. Students in another group shared that they were drawn to the program because it sounded like a good opportunity to help identify their career interests and prepare for the upcoming school year. Some participants noted that other students did not want to participate in the program because it took place during other after-school activities that they wanted to attend.

Staff Training (*Implementation Performance Measure 7*)

The grant proposed a target of 18 hours of training (Implementation Performance Measure 7) for the evidence-based SRA curriculum that would be provided to staff ahead of their delivery of the course at each site. In March, 2019, staff from Community Change participated in 21 hours of training (three days, seven hours each day) on learning the content of the Dibble curriculum prior to the first proposed youth program start date later that month. However, when the curriculum change occurred from Dibble to AIM prior to the course kickoff (at New Rochelle), Community Change staff needed to again participate in an additional 21 hours of training (also three days and seven hours each day) on the new curriculum. In total, hired teaching staff completed 42 hours of curriculum content training in Year 1.

Participation Target Goals, Attendance, and Attrition

The performance measures associated with student participation addressed the number of participants reached by the project and the number and proportion of hours completed by participants. The project aimed to recruit 160 participants across the four sites, with an average of 40 per site. As shown on the table below, the program served 221 students, 38 percent more than the target (Implementation Measure 5), with a range of 28 to 71 students served by site. Out of the 160 students who were served across the sites, 78 (35%) completed over 12 hours of course instruction (Implementation Performance Measure 6) falling well short of the target. When disaggregated by course component, 47 (21%) completed all Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRA) instructional hours and 97 (44%) completed all *CareerVisions* instructional hours offered with a target of 90 percent of students completing all lessons offered (Measures 9 and 10), also falling shy of the targets.

Table 4: Course Participation Outcomes – Year 1

City	Target N (Implementation Measure 5)	N Served (Impl. Measure 5)	N (%) Completed 12+ hours (Impl. Measure 6)	N (%) Completed ALL** SRA hours (Impl. Measure 9)	N (%) Completed ALL** CareerVisions hours (Impl. Measure 10)	Attended over 80% of lessons offered
Mt. Vernon	40	65	7 (%)	3 (5%)	0 (0%)	3 (5%)
New Rochelle	40	28*	21 (%)	10 (3%)	19 (68%)	13 (46%)
White Plains	40	57	50 (%)	28 (49%)	36 (63%)	38 (67%)
Yonkers	40	71	0 (0%)	6 (8%)	42 (59%)	4 (6%)
Total	160	221	78 (35%)	47 (21%)	97 (44%)	58 (26%)

*These include 14 students from the spring session and 14 students from the summer session.

**Implementation measures 9 and 10 specify that at least 90% of participating students will complete ALL SRA and CareerVisions lessons, respectively.

As noted earlier, the implementation of the courses at the sites faced some logistical challenges that did not promote student participation, and students also had competing priorities that created difficulties for their involvement. Two of the sites started implementation in May but needed to pause after implementing *CareerVisions* because the training for AIM was delayed. The pause between the implementation of the Career and SRA lessons led to some students no returning to complete the entire course. In addition, because the SRAEP courses were offered as a subcomponent of the already existing youth bureau or Nepperhan Community Center programs at each site, students had the choice to participate in other competing activities that did not promote continuous participation. Specifically, because of the time of year (late into the school year), there were various instances where students were pulled for testing preparation after school or were invited to end-of-school-year celebrations and other school-based events that attracted student participation.

The project also proposed to provide parents with SRAEP-related workshops in Year 1. Data provided by the sites showed that one parent workshop was held (in Mt. Vernon) in May. Other sites plan to offer these in Year 2.

Outcomes Study of SRAEP

The outcomes study used a descriptive design to provide baseline data for the initiative’s effects on participants in the three major domains of support—relationship awareness skills, career readiness and awareness, and sexual risk awareness and avoidance. The sections below detail findings from the analyses of survey data across these three areas. It should be noted that the matched sample size of students that completed both pre and post surveys was very low (N=15) and therefore, the outcomes should be interpreted with caution. An increase in participants that complete both pre and post surveys may result in different outcomes in the future.

The table below first provides a crosswalk of how the analysis indicator measures comprised by

student survey items were grouped assess and align with student growth in the support domains covered through the curricula. The table provides a representative sample of items from the student survey that describe the topics used to measure student knowledge and skills.

Table 5: Crosswalk of Alignment Between Survey Items and Analysis ‘Indicator’ Measures, Project Support Areas, and Performance Measure Outcomes

Support Area (Course Topic)	Indicator Measure	Associated Performance Measure Outcomes	Description of Survey Items (Representative Descriptors)
Sexual Risk Awareness and Avoidance	Sexual Risk Avoidance Composite Score	Outcome 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge of different types of intimacy - Communication skills around discussing intimacy with partner - Knowledge of social impact of intimacy - Understand of emotionally healthy relationships - Knowledge of Sexual Transmitted Infections - Sexual risk prevention skills
	Sexual Risk Knowledge Composite Score		
	Intimacy Outlook Composite Score	Outcome 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perceptions of future intimacy - Perceptions of future substance use
	Sexual Behavior Composite Score	Outcome 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intimacy-related behaviors - Experience with substances
Relationship Awareness	Relationship Awareness Composite Score	Outcome 2 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding strategies for healthy communication - Understanding the foundations of healthy relationships - Understanding different types of relationship feelings - Understanding expectations for future partner(s) - Identifying the different types of conflict and approaches to resolutions
	Self-Awareness Composite Score		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning to describe personal characteristics - Describing personal values - Understanding self-expectations - Knowing when to seek help - Choosing friends that share values and goals
Career Readiness and Awareness	Career Readiness Composite Score	Outcome 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge of personal strengths - Knowledge of careers that match interests - Knowledge of educational requirements for different careers - Knowledge of required skills for careers of interest - Interviewing skills - Resume building skills
	Commitment to Career Goals (Scale)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perceived commitment to career goal (3-pt rating scale)

Effects of SRAEP on Sexual Risk Awareness and Avoidance (Outcomes 1, 3 and 5)

The analysis of the various composite scores for sexual risk avoidance and awareness target areas suggest that the SRAEP program outcomes showed no statistically significant growth (i.e., *p*-values were not at or below .05). In terms of the scores themselves, youth demonstrated slight improvement in their sexual risk avoidance skills and knowledge scores from the pre-survey to the post-survey. However, youth also showed lower post-survey scores in the domains of intimacy outlook and sexual behavior, as compared to their pre-survey scores (see Table 6).

Table 6: Composite Score Gains on Sexual Risk Avoidance and Awareness-Related Measures

Measure	N Matched*	Composite Means			
		Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference	<i>p</i> -value
Sexual risk-avoidance skills	15	75.07	76.53	1.47	.747
Intimacy outlook	15	20.20	18.80	-1.40	.536
Sexual behavior	14	5.64	4.71	-0.93	.648
Sexual risk knowledge	15	7.53	8.47	0.93	.511

*Youth included in this matched analysis attended an average of 72.2% of program hours.

Additionally, a correlation analyses were also run to examine whether post-survey scores in each learning indicator were related to level of participation in the course (i.e., attendance hours completed). Table 7 also shows that there were no correlations found between indicators of SRA knowledge and skills and greater levels of participation (i.e., attendance).

Table 7: Correlation between Program Attendance and Sexual Risk Avoidance and Awareness-Related Post-Survey Scores

Measure	N	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Sexual risk-avoidance skills	46	-.167	.266
Intimacy outlook	36	-.294	.082
Sexual behavior	35	.170	.328
Sexual risk knowledge	47	-.121	.419

Feedback from the student focus group indicated that little if any of the SRA component of the course was spent on going over specific topics of sexual risk avoidance and information about sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The original Dibble curricula contained specific lessons that covered these topics in detail. The AIM curricula, however, focuses mostly on topics of self-awareness, relationship skills, planning for the future, and career-related discussions.

Effects of SRAEP on Self-Awareness and Relationship Awareness Skills (Outcomes 2 & 6)

A number of the survey items focused on students' knowledge and skills in the areas of self-

awareness and relationship awareness skills, two areas addressed by the curricula. The change in scores suggest that respondents increased their self-awareness score at post but the change was not statistically significant. The relationship skills scores remained nearly the same from pre to post, dipping by one point at post.

Table 8: Composite Score Gains on Self-Awareness and Relationship Skills Measures

Measure	N Matched*	Composite Means			
		Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference	p-value
Self-awareness	15	41.93	46.53	4.60	.398
Relationship awareness	15	75.93	74.93	-1.00	.872

*Youth included in this matched analysis attended an average of 72.2% of program hours.

Correlational analyses were also run to examine whether participant post-scores in the two areas above were affected by level of participation. The results for the attendance and the self-awareness/relationship correlational analyses did not show any association between the two.

Table 9: Correlation between Program Attendance and Sexual Risk Avoidance and Awareness-Related Post-Survey Scores

Measure	N	r	p-value
Self-awareness	46	.122	.420
Relationship awareness	46	-.052	.730

Career Readiness and Awareness (Outcome 4)

The analysis of the career composite for youth (Table 10) suggests that although the SRAEP program participants with matched surveys that scored higher on their “Career Readiness and Awareness” score at post-survey than they did on the pre-survey, the difference did not demonstrate a statistically significant gain.

Table 10: Composite Score Gains on Career-Readiness/Awareness-Related Questions

Measure	N Matched	Composite Means			
		Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Difference	p-value
Career Readiness & Awareness	15	73.40	80.60	7.20	.308

*Youth included in this matched analysis attended an average of 72% of the program hours offered.

In the case of the career readiness and awareness indicator, attendance levels and career readiness & awareness scores were not found to be correlated (see Table 11).

Table 11: Correlation between Program Attendance and Career-Readiness/Awareness-Related Post-Survey Scores

Measure	N	r	p-value
Career Readiness & Awareness	47	.091	.544

In direct response to outcome measure 4, the survey asked students on the post-survey to answer a question regarding their perceived commitment to their career goals at the end of the course as compared to how they perceived their level of commitment prior to the start of the course. As shown in the table below, nearly half (47%) of respondents believed themselves to be more committed after participating in the SRAEP course, and an equal percentage (47%) also believing that their level commitment has remained the same.

Table 12: Perceived Commitment to Career Goals

Measure	N	Less Committed	Just as Committed	More Committed
Self-rated level of commitment to your career goals now compared prior to start of this program	38	2 (5%)	18 (47%)	18 (47%)

Focus group participants agreed that the career explorations curriculum helped them to consider their desired career paths and begin to prepare for them. One group also shared that discussing legacies was thought-provoking as well. As one student described, “The topic of legacies—following someone’s path—it made me think about how I plan to continue my parents’ legacies. It made me think about not wanting to be broke.” One student noted that he/she was now considering a career as a therapist, and another was considering pursuing a career as a forensic scientist. One student explained that having different career options is beneficial as it provides a safety net when the first option does not pan out, stating, “I learned about another career as well that I can use as a backup, if I can’t reach what I want to do. There’s always a side career or job where I can have the same plan, but go in a different direction.”

Other Findings

Implementation performance measure 3 specifies that 90 percent of participating students will provide “strong” ratings to instructor quality, engagement, and ability to keep the class organized. The post-survey asked students to provide their ratings for these three areas in response to this measure. Using the five-point scale of *not at all* to *very high*, the analysis considered a *high* or *very high* rating to serve as “strong” performance in accordance with the performance measure. As seen in the table below, 57 percent of participants believed their instructors provided “strong” instruction quality in the topics covered, 71 percent believed their instructors were “strong” in their engagement of students, and 70 percent believed their instructors were “strong” in their management of class organization.

Table 13: Student Ratings of Instructor Effectiveness

To what extent did your instructor...	N	Not at all	Slight	Moderate	High	Very high
...provide quality instruction in the topics covered?	44	2 (5%)	1 (2%)	13 (30%)	15 (34%)	13 (23%)
...was engaging and held the classes attention during lessons?	44	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	10 (23%)	10 (23%)	21 (48%)
...was able to manage and keep the class organized throughout the workshops?	44	1 (2%)	2 (5%)	10 (23%)	8 (18%)	23 (52%)

When asked whether they would recommend the program to their friends, all but one focus group participant said he/she would. Participants shared that they would recommend the program because it helps students begin to think about and plan for their careers and how to avoid peer pressure. As one student replied, *“They teach a lot. Especially being in high school, there is a lot of peer pressure and it gives you more knowledge on what not to do. It teaches you more about what you want to be or what field you want to go into.”*

Finally, other performance measures will be addressed during Year 2, when the project will have more time to continue building the comprehensive program is proposed. These include recording and building new partnerships with other community organizations that can work directly with SRAEP student participants. However, the WCYB currently holds many partnerships with organizations in Westchester that it can currently use to address the needs of its participants beyond what is offered through SRAEP. As an extension of these partnerships, the program will also record data on referrals to participating students and their families as needed (Community outcome measures 11 and 12).

Key Takeaways & Recommendations

Key Takeaways

In 2018–2019, the Westchester County Youth Bureau’s SRAEP initiative took its first step towards building an impactful program for some of Westchester County’s most vulnerable youth. Overall, the initiative served 221 middle and high-school-aged participants, with approximately equal proportions of males and females. All participants were offered the three target domains of career awareness and readiness, relationship awareness and skills, and sexual risk awareness and avoidance. The program also fully trained its hired staff to deliver the course content, and worked closely with the evaluator throughout the planning process to build a strong data collection process that would provide the program with outcome data to address its proposed performance measures. Because of the condensed implementation schedule in Year 1, some proposed services were earmarked to be delivered in Year 2, including the building of new partnerships to support the needs of SRAEP participants and their families, and a mechanism for referrals to address the needs of students that go beyond the supports provided by SRAEP and the WCYB.

- The project effectively met its recruitment target (160 students), serving 221 students in total, resulting in 38% more students served than originally proposed in the grant.
- Overall, participants who completed surveys and participated in focus groups provided positive feedback regarding their experiences in the programs. As noted in the report narrative, during focus groups, students reported being pleased overall with the career exploration activities, especially in better understanding legacies, career-oriented preparation skills such as interviewing and resume-building.
- The effective implementation of the program in Year 1 was adversely affected by the delay in securing approval of an SRA curriculum by the Westchester County legislature. The two-month delay in spring 2019 created a condensed implementation rollout closer to the end of the school year, and the program was unable to provide a complete course as originally proposed. It is possible that a longer dosage period would lead to improved attendance and higher levels of student learning and performance in Year 2.
- The implementation of the course across the sites was uneven with some sites offering more hours of career exploration or sexual risk avoidance and relationship education than others. The delay in securing the SRA curriculum also deferred the training of staff to deliver this component.
- There were competing workshops, activities and events that SRAEP participants were required to or could choose to attend. In some cases, test preparation would pull students from SRAEP course time, but in other cases, students were allowed to attend other after-school social events, creating reduced participation levels in the course.

- Baseline outcome data indicates that students are showing some level of growth in particular areas with higher scores on the post-survey (e.g., self-awareness, sexual risk knowledge and sexual risk avoidance skills, and career readiness & awareness), but these increases in scores were not found to be statistically significant. Perhaps with a more steady dosage across the sites, and more completion of course hours by participants, these increases will prove to be significant in the project's second year. It should also be noted that the matched sample size was very low (N=15) and with an increase in participants that complete both pre and post surveys could result in different outcomes.

Though the data suggest that the project has considerable room to grow, it is evident that a great deal was accomplished in Year 1 and, with some thoughtful planning and adjustments, the project is well positioned to continue to strengthen and potentially make a strong impact on subsequent cohorts.

Recommendations

Data collected through the evaluation suggest areas for continued growth and improvement. Based on a synthesis of the findings, Metis offers the following recommendations for strengthening the SRAEP initiative.

- ❖ **Devise strategies for promoting participant persistence.** The project staff was able to roll out the four programs in Year 1 despite challenges caused by the unforeseen delays in implementation and the resulting challenge of the timing of the course offerings. However, only a little over a quarter (26%) of participants across the four sites participated in 80 percent or more of the lessons offered. This resulted in an inconsistent level of instruction for students who participated. An earlier start to the course offering should help alleviate the burden on the program to attempt to “squeeze” the course into a short and logistically challenging part of the school year. Still, the program should also recruit and offer the course to students that can commit to participate in the vast majority of the course in order for the dosage to lead to growth in knowledge and skills.
- ❖ **Make fidelity of implementation data collection a priority.** The project did not complete certain components of the proposed program, mostly due to the condensed nature of the initiative in Year 1. However, data collection of course implementation fidelity is an important component and should be completed in Year 2. There should be specific guidelines provided to sites on how these data are to be collected by the site coordinators to ensure that implementation of the curriculum is happening in a uniform fashion across the sites.
- ❖ **Provide parent workshops and information sessions in Year 2 across all sites.** Prior to the start of Year 2 implementation, it is recommended that the program schedules and hosts parent SRAEP informational meetings at each site and should include the evaluator. Some sites hosted parent information sessions, but some did not. It is unclear how the parent information sessions that were held assisted with recruitment or student

participation and persistence, but this is a component that the program would benefit from and provide parents with the opportunity to ask questions about the content being offered, which is sensitive in nature.

- ❖ **Create parent workshops aligned to key domains covered in SRAEP course.** Information provided to students regarding SRA knowledge, relationship awareness and career exploration are valuable for parents and families to also learn to support positive student outcomes.
- ❖ **Revisit use of ongoing project staff meetings.** Ongoing project implementation and evaluation meetings are important to the effective implementation of the program's intervention. It is recommended that project meetings are held regularly each month in order to address immediate challenges, allow program sites to learn from each other's implementation strategies, and allow the evaluator to gain context around implementation and to maintain a steady and consistent line of communication with the programs.