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Evaluation of CareerVisions, Ltd.'s Community Change Ambassadors Program

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SUBMITTED TO:

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Introduction

In February 2021, CareerVisions received funding from the NYC Department of Education’s Office of Students in Temporary Housing (STH) to provide positive youth development programming to middle and high school English Language/Multilingual Learners (MLLs) living in temporary housing in the Bronx. The goals of the program were to support newcomer MLL students in their effective use of the English language (using resources provided by the NYCDOE Division of Multilingual Learners), and also to engage them in culturally-responsive exploratory lessons aimed at analyzing and addressing community concerns (using CareerVisions’ Community Change program model). As a result of their sustained participation, the objectives of the Community Change Ambassadors program are to promote students’ understanding of issues in their community and their ability to develop strategies to address community concerns, and to promote students’ leadership, literacy, public speaking and research skills.

The Community Change Ambassadors program operated four days per week (Mondays-Thursdays) from April 5 - June 17, 2021. The program was delivered entirely online due to continuing COVID-19 concerns. Each session was led by one of two bilingual NYCDOE teachers hired to facilitate the program. Students attended sessions two days a week from 4:30pm to 6:30pm. One group of middle school students met Mondays and Wednesdays, one group of middle school students met Tuesdays and Thursdays, and a group of middle school students met on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. In total, 60 middle and high school students attended the program.

Evaluation

CareerVisions contracted Metis Associates, an independent research and evaluation firm, to administer an online survey (in Spanish) to students to assess their perceptions of the impacts of the Community Change Ambassadors program on their knowledge and skills. During the first week of the program, students were provided with a pre-survey that assessed their perceptions of their community organizing, leadership, literacy public speaking and research skills. Additionally, students were asked what they hoped to learn from the program. After completing the final session, students were provided with a post-survey that asked them their perceptions of the impact of the program on their knowledge and skills. Survey response rates are included in the table below. This report provides a summary of findings from the pre- and post-surveys.¹

Table 1: Numbers of Completed Surveys

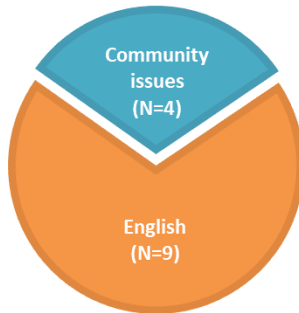
Group	Total N Enrolled	Pre-Survey N	Response Rate	Post-Survey N	Response Rate
Grade 5	14	0	0%	0	0%
Grade 6	13	4	31%	10	77%
Grade 7	17	7	41%	7	41%
Grade 8 *	16	5	31%	5	31%
Total	60	16	27%	22	37%

*This group includes one 11th grade student participant.

¹ The online surveys were anonymous and, therefore, pre to post matching of individual survey responses was not possible.

Pre-Survey Results

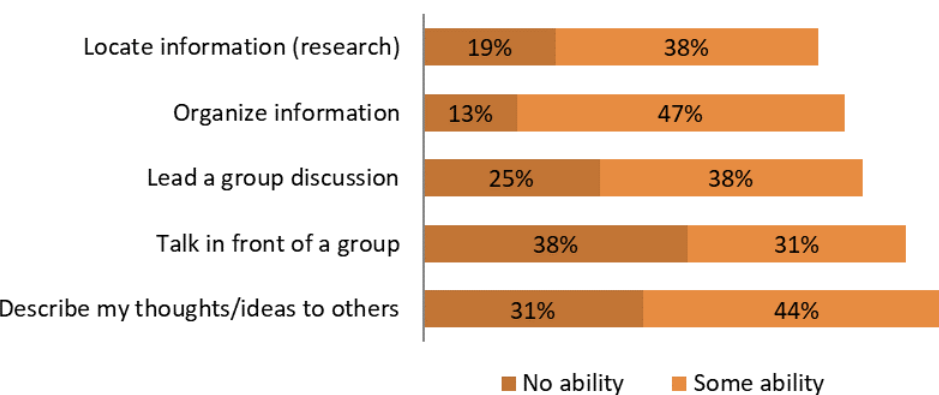
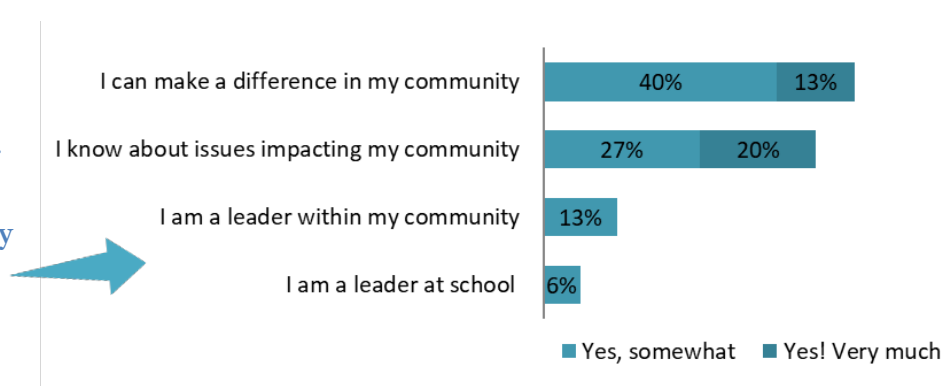
A total of 16 students in grades 6-8 completed the pre-survey in April 2021. On the survey, students were asked their perceptions regarding their leadership, public speaking and research skills, as well as what they hoped to learn from the program. The results are summarized below.



Most student respondents hoped to learn English as a result of their participation in the program. Some hoped to learn about issues affecting their community (or both).

About half of student respondents reported being aware of issues affecting their community (47%) and that they could make a difference in their community (53%).

Only one or two students felt as if they were leaders in their community or at school.

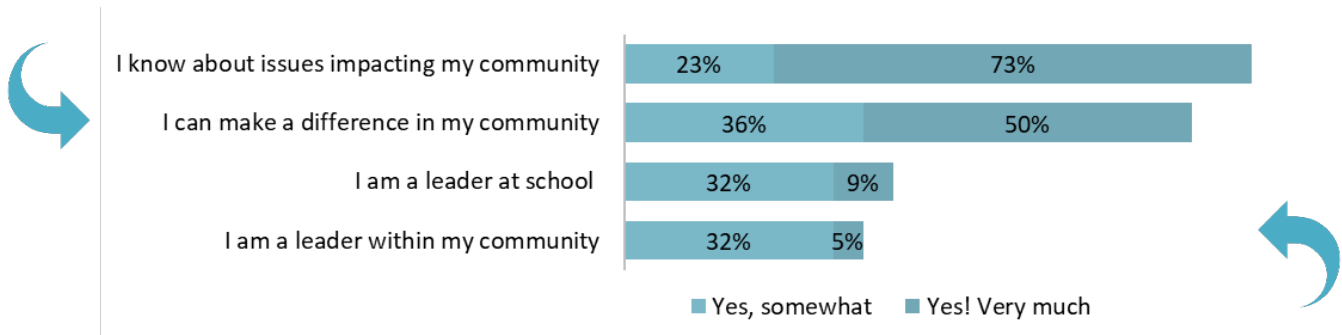


Many students also indicated a lack of confidence in their research, leadership, and public speaking skills.

Post-Survey Results

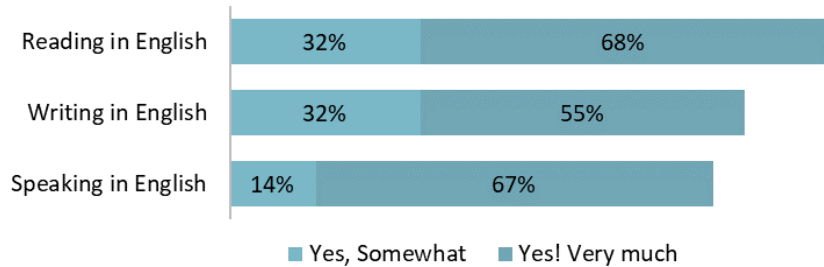
A total of 22 students in grades 6-8 completed the post-survey in June 2021. On the survey, students were asked their perceptions regarding the impact of the Community Change Ambassadors program on their leadership, public speaking, and research skills, as well as on their English literacy skills. The results are summarized below.

By post-survey, the great majority of students reported being aware of issues impacting their community (96%) and that they could make a difference in their community (86%).

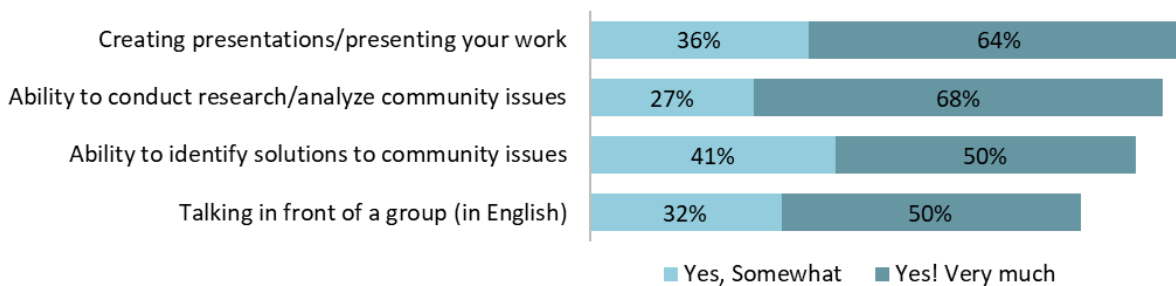


The proportions of students who reported being leaders at school (41%) or in the community (37%) were greater at post-survey than at pre-survey as well (6% and 13%, respectively).

The great majority of students reported that the program helped them with their English literacy skills, particularly in reading (100%), writing (87%), and speaking (81%).



Finally, many student respondents (at least 82%) felt that the program helped them with their presentation skills, research skills, and public speaking skills.



When asked to give examples of how the program helped them, several students described how the program helped them become more confident in their ability to be an **active participant** in class: “*The program helped me understand more English and helped me want to participate more,*” wrote one student. *The program helped me participate more, because before I did not participate in school because I was afraid to,*” wrote another student. Students also described how the program helped them with **effort** (“*Before I did not try very hard in school, but this program helped me become more responsible*” wrote one student), **persistence** (“*It helped me in many areas, including not giving up when things get difficult,*” wrote another), **research skills** (“*Before I was slow at researching and now I’m good at it*”) and **future aspirations** (“*Now my opinion is that I should finish high school and go to college because that is one way I can help my community*”).

Finally, several students provided **general praise** for the program: “*I didn’t want to be in this program because I was scared, but then I changed my mind and now I like the program a lot,*” explained one student. “*I loved it, and I would recommend it to other people my age that are interested in learning English,*” wrote another.

Conclusions

The Community Change Ambassadors program aimed to increase students’ understanding of issues in their community while promoting their English literacy, leadership, public speaking, and research skills. Students’ responses to the pre-survey indicated that they were unaware of issues impacting their community and lacked confidence in their research, leadership and public speaking skills. Students also went into the program hoping to learn English. Results from the post-survey indicate that students made improvements in their English literacy skills and in their ability to conduct research, create presentations, and talk in front of a group. The proportions of students who felt they were leaders at school or in the community were greater at post-survey than at pre-survey, as were the proportions of students who felt aware of community issues and that they could make a difference in their community. Overall, these findings suggest that the Community Change Ambassadors program was successful in its efforts to improve student outcomes in these areas.