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

Year 2 (2019-20) Local Evaluation Report

SUBMITTED TO:

Westchester County Youth Bureau (Grantee)

AUTHORED BY:

Matt Klepfer, Research Assistant

Laura Ricciardi, Research Associate

Susanne Harnett, Managing Senior Associate



55 Broad Street
25th Floor
New York, New York 10004
212-425-8833
www.metisassociates.com

metis associates

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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 non-profit 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) through a competitive process from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Administration for Children and Families.

WCYB worked with five local youth bureaus in Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Peekskill, White Plains, and Yonkers to deliver SRAEP.¹ These sites are located in New York State's 16th Congressional District, the poorest district in the United States. New York's 16th Congressional District has been identified as a high needs area, with a high unemployment rate, a high rate of youth who are neither working nor in school, and an above national average rate of violent crimes. WCYB's program was created to develop and support the instruction of sexual risk avoidance, encourage positive youth development, and provide counseling and referral services as needed.

Through the SRAEP grant, the WCYB aimed to improve outcomes for youth through relationship awareness, sexual risk awareness and avoidance, college and career awareness, and cultural education. For relationship awareness and sexual risk awareness and avoidance, sites assigned facilitators who have been trained to deliver the Adult Identity Mentoring (AIM) curriculum. For college and career awareness and cultural education, SRAEP partnered with staff from Community Change, Inc. (CCI), an educational, capacity-building firm based in Westchester County. CCI facilitators engaged students through its approach to college and career awareness and cultural education, the Legacy Model (Legacy), which engages students in learning about the manifestations of their culture in various fields.

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 evaluation included a descriptive study that examined the outcomes for participating youth in the six-week program based on findings from post-surveys and collection of program participation data (i.e., attendance records). This report provides information on implementation of and outcomes for SRAEP in its second, and final, year of implementation.

¹ Note that Peekskill was added as a site in Year 2.

Program Design

Program Activities

In Year 2, the SRAEP activities consisted of the following services:

- Workshops from Evidence Based Curricula – Sexual Risk Avoidance (AIM)
- Workshops based on College and Career Awareness and Cultural Education (Legacy)

These services took place during the months of February through September 2020. Each of the five sites implemented the program for two hours per week, twice a week, for a total of six weeks (equaling 24 hours of coursework). However, the exact implementation dates varied by site. Additionally, most sites offered the program to two consecutive cohorts of youth participants (with the exception of White Plains; see Table 1). The two-hour sessions included one hour of workshops on sexual risk avoidance using the Adult Identity Mentoring (AIM) curriculum and one hour of college and career awareness and cultural education using the Legacy curriculum.

Each local lead partner assigned a site coordinator to manage the day-to-day operations of the program. CCI assigned one facilitator in each city to lead the college and career awareness and cultural education curriculum (Legacy), while trained staff from each of the sites led the sexual risk avoidance curriculum (AIM).

Table 1: Program Start and End Dates – Year 2 (2020)

City		Start Date	End Date	Days of Operation	Hours Offered
New Rochelle	Cohort 1	6/8/20	7/22/20	12	24
	Cohort 2	7/25/20	8/29/20	12	24
Mt. Vernon	Cohort 1	2/28/20	6/23/20	12	24
	Cohort 2	7/6/20	8/14/20	12	24
Peekskill	Cohort 1	6/13/20	7/18/20	12	24
	Cohort 2	7/25/20	8/29/20	12	24
White Plains		4/23/20	6/11/20	12	24
Yonkers	Cohort 1	6/6/20	7/17/20	12	24
	Cohort 2	Fall 2020*	Fall 2020*	12	24

* Exact start and end dates were not available at the time of the report.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

Programming was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought stay-at-home orders to New York State early in the SRAEP Year 2 rollout—mid-March 2020. The communities served by SRAEP were among the hardest impacted by COVID-19 in New York State and the US as a whole, and had some of the earliest outbreaks.²

Some sites had started programming before the lockdown began and had to pause and pivot to remote programming, while other sites delayed the start of their programming. Sites quickly adapted for a virtual rollout, but were delayed by some participants' lack of access to internet-enabled devices and reliable internet. Many students, especially those who are low income, simply did not have internet-enabled devices at the time of the outbreak, and it took time for schools, communities, and the State to respond to the need.³ Some sites, such as Mt. Vernon and New Rochelle, were able to expedite device access through innovative community partnerships, while others were delayed, waiting for school districts to provide devices to their students.

Programming was also impacted by the social and emotional needs of its participants in the midst of a global pandemic. SRAEP sessions not only provided a space to discuss sexual risk avoidance and positive youth development but also a venue for providing for social and emotional support during the pandemic. Given the circumstances, SRAEP staff pivoted to the best of their ability, and successfully provided an engaging, remote curriculum during a traumatic, uncertain time.

Curricula

WCYB utilized two separate curricula to deliver the career and sexual risk avoidance components of the program. First, SRAEP provided relationship and sexual risk avoidance 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.”⁴ 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. Fourteen program staff from across the implementation sites

² CNN, “What life is like inside the coronavirus containment zone in New Rochelle, New York.” Accessed 10/1/20. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/12/us/new-rochelle-coronavirus-containment-area/index.html>

³ Lohud, “Coronavirus: In communities where kids lack technology, online school is a big challenge.” Accessed 10/1/20. <https://www.lohud.com/story/news/education/2020/04/01/new-york-schools-online-classes-struggle/2920746001/>

⁴ Adult Identity Mentoring (Project AIM) Program Overview. <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/research/interventionresearch/rep/packages/aim.html>

were trained on the AIM curriculum by the program developers in February 2020. The curriculum covers a number of key areas, including:

- Identifying role models to encourage youth to explore personal interests and to identify people in their lives who 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; and
- Helping youth 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 Legacy Model, developed by CCI, uses cultural education to engage students in “an exploration of their culture as it is manifested in their field of interest.”⁵ It allows youth to explore “the kind of people they can be for themselves and their community,” and uses age-appropriate and challenging activities to help students become aware of the presence and impact of their community and culture in a variety of subjects and fields.

Participants

Recruitment Activities

Recruitment of middle and high school-based youth was conducted through each of the local youth bureau after-school programs. Each bureau recruited from students already involved in their site’s other programming. This was done primarily through flyers at each bureau. Additionally, 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

Demographic data and attendance were collected from participants in order to examine the diversity of the initiative’s participants, as shown in Table 2 below. Participants were predominantly Black or Latinx, and, overall, more female students than male students participated.

⁵ Community Change Inc. Legacy Curriculum documentation.

Table 2: Program Participation Data and Demographic Characteristics – Year 2

City	N	Ethnicity			Gender	
		Black	Latinx	Other	Female	Male
Mt. Vernon	35	32	2	1	21	14
New Rochelle	10	4	6	0	3	7
Peekskill	25	19	4	2	11	14
White Plains	32	2	29	1	27	5
Yonkers	33	23	5	5	16	17
Total	135	80	46	9	78	57

Evaluation Methods

The evaluation of SRAEP included a descriptive study that examined the outcomes for participating youth in the six-week program based on findings from post-surveys and collection of program participation data (i.e., attendance records).

Data Sources

- **Review of program documentation:** Metis staff collected all available program materials, including information on the AIM and Legacy curriculum implemented.
- **Review of participant data:** Participant enrollment, demographics, and attendance data were collected from program staff at each site using a standard reporting format.
- **Post-program surveys for participants:** Data gathered through a post-survey/assessment for youth participants were analyzed. The survey covered the two major domains of the program (e.g., Sexual Risk Avoidance Education and Legacy training). Surveys were administered online to students in the final week of their participation or directly following their completion of the program.

Post-Survey Response Rates

Student outcomes were measured through a post-survey that was sent out to all program participants after their participation in the program. A total of 29 students across all five sites completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 21.5%. The number of responses by site is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Post-Program Student Survey responses by site

Site	Number of Participants	Number of Survey Responses	Response Rate
Mt. Vernon	35	8	22.9%
New Rochelle	10	5	50.0%
Peekskill	25	6	24.0%
White Plains	32	4	12.5%
Yonkers	33	6	18.2%
Total	135	29	21.5%

Evaluation Questions

The questions that guided the implementation study were designed to help the research team interpret the findings from the outcome's evaluation. They have a key focus on implementation outcomes and milestones met, strengths and challenges.

Implementation

- What are barriers to participation?
- To what extent and how do these challenges and barriers vary across sites?
- To what extent do participants persist in program activities?
- Are there differences in program persistence and attrition across activities and sites?
- What are the overall successes and challenges/barriers to implementation?

Outcomes

- Do participants of the WCYB SRAEP project show improvement in participant relationship awareness, career readiness and awareness, and sexual risk awareness and avoidance?
- Do participants of the WCYB SRAEP project show positive changes in their intentions (such as their expectations for future romantic relationships and their commitment to career goals)?
- Do participants of the WCYB SRAEP project show positive changes in their behaviors (such as sense of purpose and positive view of relationships)?

Findings

This section shows findings from the post-program student survey. Findings from the post-program student survey show outcomes for participants in four areas: College and Career Readiness; Self-Awareness, Relationships, and Interactions; Pregnancy, Sex, and Sexual Risk Avoidance; and Program Implementation.

Post-Program Student Survey

College and Career Readiness

Students were asked a variety of questions to measure program impacts on their college and career readiness, using a scale from 1 (no impact) to 8 (very strong impact). As shown in Figure 1, **the majority of students felt there were very strong or strong impacts on their college and career readiness as a result of the program.** Students reported the program had strong impacts on their plans after graduating high school (mean=6.9), as well as their knowledge of the following: different jobs and careers (6.7), the level of education needed to do the work in which they are interested (6.6), and self-knowledge for the purpose of choosing an occupation or career (6.5). Students also reported strong impacts in their knowledge of the specific skills that people need to do the work they are interested in (6.5), their understanding of the challenges or risks that people face in the work in which they are interested (6.3), and their ability to make decisions about their ongoing education (6.3).

Figure 1: Student Perspectives of Positive Program Impact on their College and Career Readiness

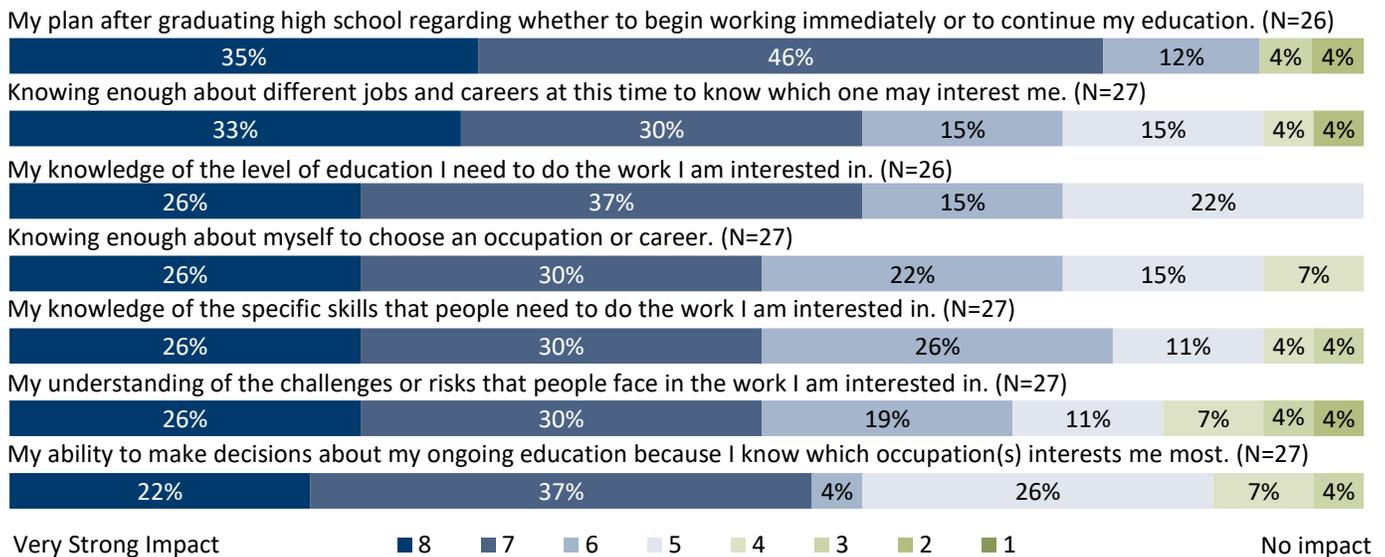
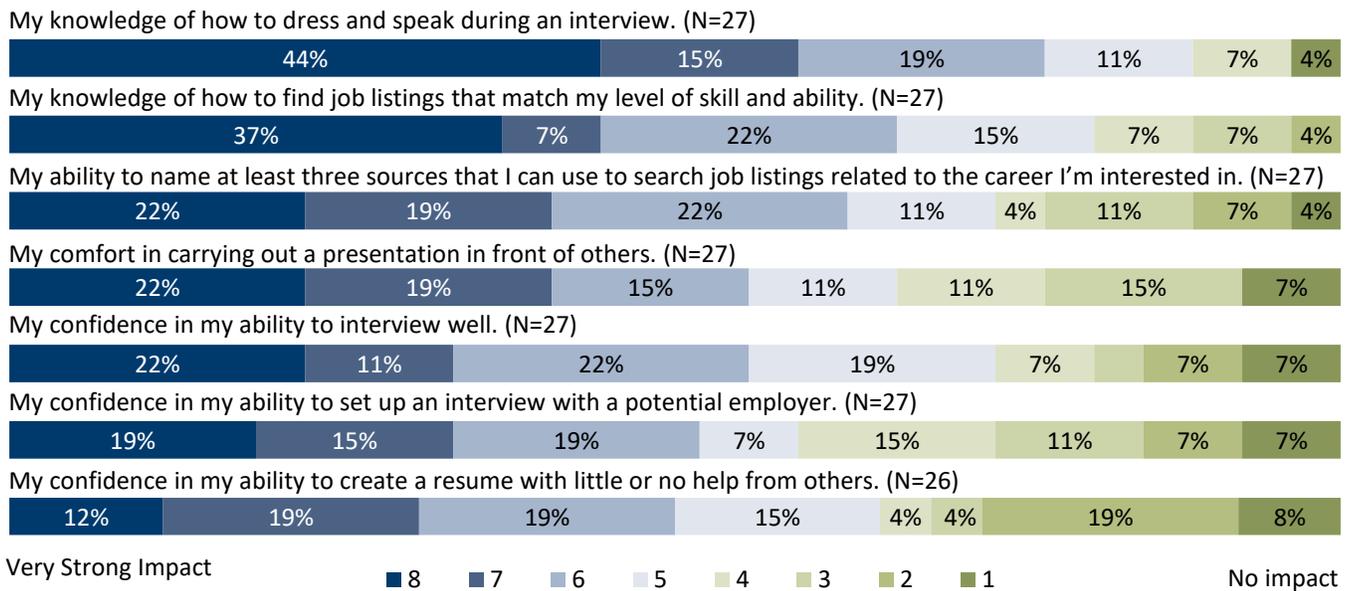


Figure 2: Student Perspectives of Positive Program Impact on their Career Readiness



As shown in Figure 2, students reported strong and moderate program impacts on additional career readiness areas, including job search and interview skills. Overall, they reported the greatest impact in knowledge of how to dress for and speak during an interview (mean=6.6) and how to find relevant job listings (6.1). Students reported a moderate impact on their knowledge of job source listings (5.6), their comfort carrying out a presentation in front of others (5.5), and their confidence interviewing well (5.4), setting up interviews (5.1), and creating resumes (4.9).

As shown in Figure 3, 52% of students reported being more committed to their career goals after participation with the program, with 48% feeling “just as committed.” No students reported feeling less committed to their career goals after the program.

Figure 3: How would you rate your level of commitment to your career goals right now compared to how committed you felt prior to the start of this program? (N=27)

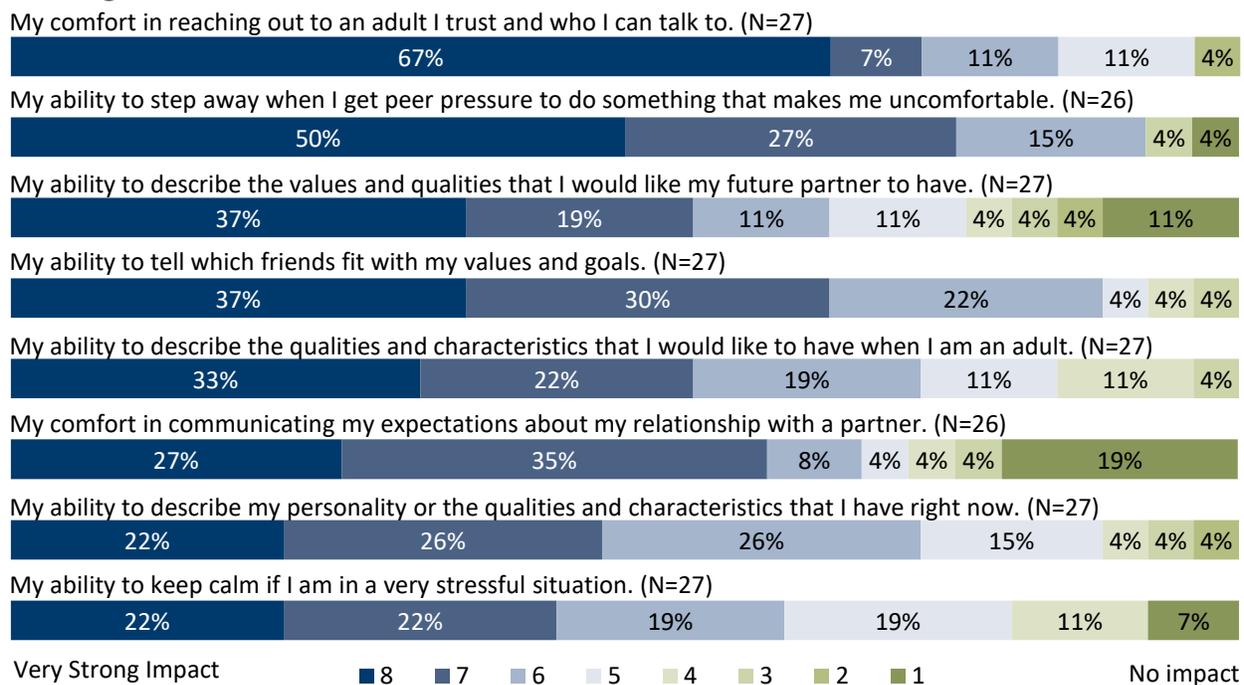


In open-ended responses, students described the program’s impact on their college and career readiness. Many students expressed the best part about participating in the program as feeling more confident about their future, and the best aspect was learning about careers. As one student shared, “It was fun, and I was able to know more about what I want to do in the future.” Moreover, another shared, “It is a good program especially if you want to learn about careers and planning your future life.”

Self-Awareness, Relationships, and Interactions

Students also were asked a variety of questions to measure program impacts on their self-awareness and relationship planning, responding to items using a scale ranging from 1 (no impact) to 8 (very strong impact). As shown in Figure 4, **the majority of students reported the program had impacts on their self-awareness and relationship planning.** In particular, most students reported a very strong impact on their comfort in reaching out to a trustworthy adult (mean=7.1) and their ability to step away from peer pressure (7.0). Students also reported strong impacts on their ability to tell which friends fit their values and goals (6.8), to describe the qualities and characteristics that they would like to have as an adult (6.4), and to describe their personality and qualities (6.2). Students reported moderate impacts on their ability to describe the values and qualities of a future boyfriend or girlfriend (5.9), their comfort communicating expectations with a partner (5.7), and their ability to keep calm in stressful situations (5.9).

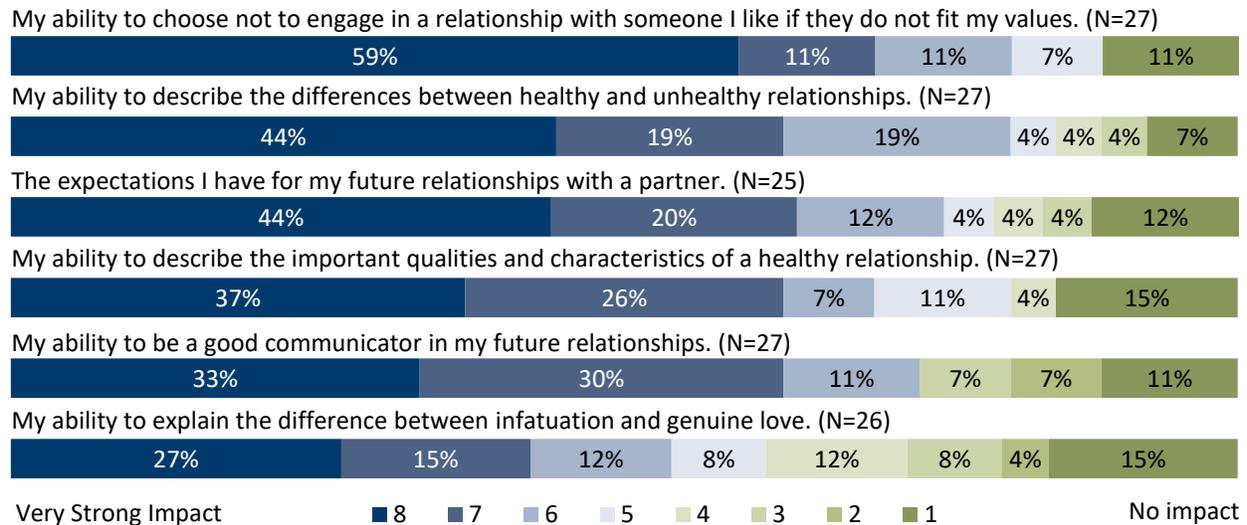
Figure 4: Student Perspectives of Positive Program Impact on Self-Awareness and Relationship Planning



Students were asked additional questions related to relationships and interactions and were asked to respond using a scale from 1 (no impact) to 8 (very strong impact). **As shown in Figure 5, the majority of students reported the program had very strong, strong, or moderate impacts on their perceptions on relationships and interactions.** Overall, students reported a *very strong* impact on their ability to not engage in relationships with individuals who do not fit their values (mean=6.7) and a *strong* impact on their ability to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy relationships (6.5). As

one student shared in an open-ended response, “I have the tools necessary in becoming a caring adult.”

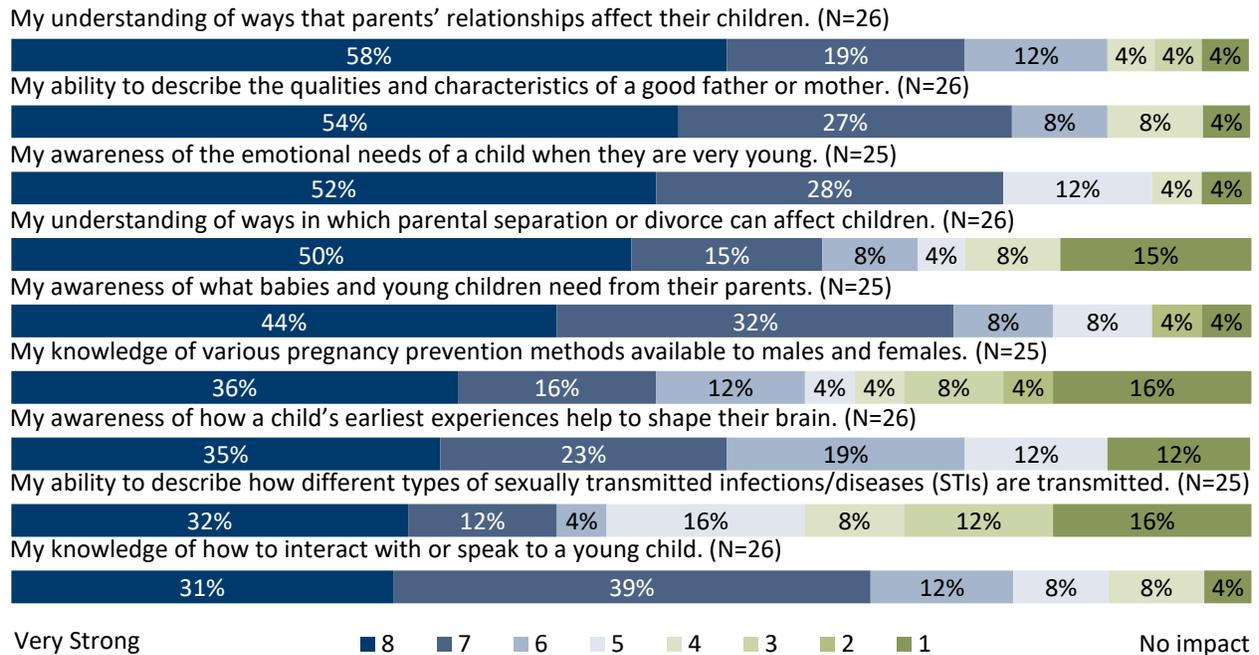
Figure 5: Student Perspectives of Positive Program Impact on Relationships and Interactions



Pregnancy, Sex, and Sexual Risk Avoidance

Furthermore, students were asked a variety of questions designed to measure program impacts on pregnancy, sex, and sexual risk avoidance. These items used a scale ranging from 1 (no impact) to 8 (very strong impact). As shown in Figure 6, **the majority of students reported the program had very strong, strong, or moderate impacts on their perceptions about pregnancy, sex, and sexual risk avoidance.** Overall, students reported very strong impacts on their understanding of ways that parents’ relationships affect their children (mean=7.0) and their ability to describe the qualities and characteristics of a good father or mother (7.0). Students generally reported strong impacts on their awareness of the emotional needs of a child when they are very young (6.9), their awareness of what babies and young children need from their parents (6.8), their knowledge of how to interact with or speak to young children (6.6), their understanding of ways in which parental separation or divorce can affect children (6.2), and their awareness of how a child’s earliest experiences help to shape their brain (6.2).

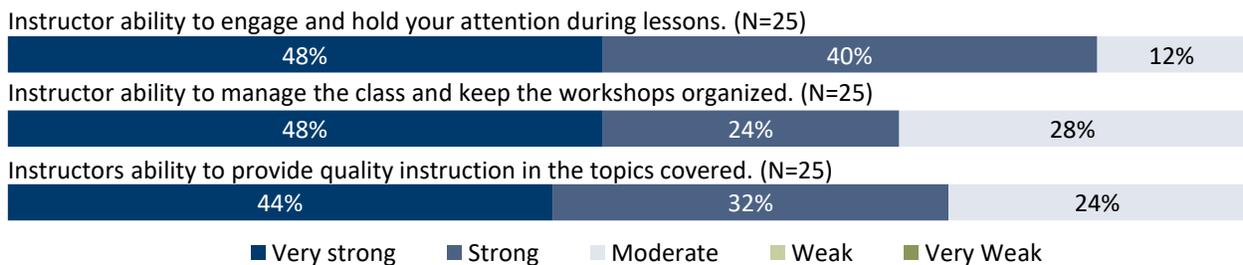
Figure 6: Student Perspectives of Positive Program Impact on Perceptions about Pregnancy, Sex, and Sexual Risk Avoidance



Program Implementation

Students were asked a variety of questions on instructor implementation, using a scale from *very weak* to *very strong*. As Figure 7 shows, **students had positive perspectives on instructor effectiveness**. Most students felt that the instructor was *strong* or *very strong* at engaging and holding attention (88%), managing and organizing the class (72%), and providing quality instruction (76%).

Figure 7: Student Perspectives of Instructor and Program Implementation



In open-ended responses, students reported that they enjoyed the conversations, meeting new people, learning about different cultures, and thinking about their futures. Some also noted that they would recommend the program to others. Regarding their recommendations for improvement, some students felt the sessions could have been more interactive, with more games and dancing, and could have included more interesting books.

Key Takeaways

In spring through fall 2020, the Westchester County Youth Bureau (WCYB) offered its second of two years of Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Program (SRAEP) programming at five local youth bureaus, including those located in Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Peekskill, White Plains, and Yonkers. Despite significant community and program impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, the program successfully engaged 135 students across these five sites in high-quality programming.

Key Takeaways: Implementation

- The program engaged 135 students across all five sites, with 35 students at Mt. Vernon, 10 at New Rochelle, 25 at Peekskill, 32 at White Plains, and 33 at Yonkers.
- Implementation was significantly impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Some communities were more impacted by the pandemic than others, and some were better equipped to pivot to remote instruction than others. Given the circumstances, SRAEP staff pivoted to the best of their ability, and successfully provided an engaging, high quality remote curriculum during a traumatic, uncertain time.
- Participants provided overall positive feedback of the program, including content, implementation, and instructor effectiveness.

Key Takeaways: Impact

As measured through the Post-Program Student Survey, participants reported:

- Improvement in their relationship awareness, career readiness and awareness, and sexual risk awareness and avoidance;
- Positive changes in their intentions, such as expectations for future romantic relationships and their commitment to career goals; and
- Positive changes in their behaviors, such as sense of purpose and positive view of relationships.

Appendix: Additional Student Survey Tables

Table A1: Student Perspectives of Positive Program Impact on their College and Career Readiness

	N	Mean
My plan after graduating high school regarding whether to begin working immediately or to continue my education.	26	6.9
My knowledge of the level of education I need to do the work I am interested in.	27	6.7
Knowing enough about different jobs and careers at this time to know which one may interest me.	27	6.6
My knowledge of how to dress and speak during an interview.	27	6.6
My knowledge of the level of education I need to do the work I am interested in.	26	6.6
Knowing enough about myself to choose an occupation or career.	27	6.5
My knowledge of the specific skills that people need to do the work I am interested in.	27	6.5
My ability to make decisions about my ongoing education because I know which occupation(s) interests me most.	27	6.3
My understanding of the challenges or risks that people face in the work I am interested in.	27	6.3
My knowledge of how to find job listings that match my level of skill and ability.	27	6.1
My ability to name at least three sources that I can use to search job listings related to the career I'm interested in.	27	5.6
My comfort in carrying out a presentation in front of others.	27	5.5
My confidence in my ability to interview well.	27	5.4
My confidence in my ability to set up an interview with a potential employer.	27	5.1
My confidence in my ability to create a resume with little or no help from others.	26	4.9

Table A2: Student Perspectives of Positive Program Impact on Career Goal Commitment

	N	Less committed	Just as committed as I was before	More committed
How would you rate your level of commitment to your career goals right now compared to how committed you felt prior to the start of this program?	27	0 (0%)	13 (48%)	14 (52%)

Table A3: Student Perspectives of Positive Program Impact on Self-Awareness and Relationship Planning

	N	Mean
My comfort in reaching out to an adult I trust and who I can talk to.	27	7.1
My ability to step away when I get peer pressure to do something that makes me uncomfortable.	26	7.0
My ability to tell which friends fit with my values and goals.	27	6.8
My ability to describe the qualities and characteristics that I would like to have when I am an adult.	27	6.4
My ability to describe my personality or the qualities and characteristics that I have right now.	27	6.2
My ability to describe the values, qualities and characteristics that I would like my future boyfriend or girlfriend to have.	27	5.9
My ability to keep calm if I am in a very stressful situation.	27	5.9
My comfort in communicating my expectations about my relationship with my (current or future) partner.	26	5.7

Table A4: Student Perspectives of Positive Program Impact on Relationships and Interactions

	N	Mean
My ability to choose not to engage in a relationship with someone I like if they do not fit my values.	27	6.7
My ability to describe the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships.	27	6.5
The expectations I have for my future relationships with a partner.	25	6.2
My ability to describe the important qualities and characteristics of a healthy relationship.	27	6.1
My ability to be a good communicator in my future relationships.	27	5.9
My ability to explain the difference between infatuation and genuine love.	26	5.2

Table A5: Student Perspectives of Positive Program Impact on Perceptions about Pregnancy, Sex, and Sexual Risk Avoidance

	N	Mean
My ability to describe the qualities and characteristics of a good father or mother.	26	7.0
My understanding of ways that parents' relationships affect their children.	26	7.0
My awareness of the emotional needs of a child when they are very young.	25	6.9
My awareness of what babies and young children need from their parents.	25	6.8

	N	Mean
My knowledge of how to interact with or speak to a young child.	26	6.6
My awareness of how a child's earliest experiences help to shape their brain.	26	6.2
My understanding of ways in which parental separation or divorce can affect children.	26	6.2
My knowledge of various pregnancy prevention methods available to males and females.	25	5.6
My ability to describe how different types of sexually transmitted infections/diseases (STIs) are transmitted.	25	5.3

Table A6: Student Perspectives of Instructor and Program Implementation

To what degree did your instructor:	N	Very Weak	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Very strong
...provide quality instruction in the topics covered?	25	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (24%)	8 (32%)	11 (44%)
...engage and hold your attention during lessons?	25	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (12%)	10 (40%)	12 (48%)
...manage the class and keep the workshops organized?	25	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (28%)	6 (24%)	12 (48%)