Sharing the Stories

The Students Commission
Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement

Aspire for Higher – YOF Development Program

Evaluation Report 2018-19

Presented by The Students Commission of Canada, August 2019

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Program Information

Aspire for Higher is a not for profit grassroots organization that has provided basketball programming for youth in the Greater Toronto Area since 2013. They offer a variety of youth programs for children aged 4 to 17 including: introductory basketball programs, development leagues and summer camps. Their unique basketball programming is built off of Canada's Sport for Life Long Term Athlete Development Model - it is athlete-centered, coach driven and government, sport science, and sponsor supported. It is through their unique programming that their organization is able to facilitate a clear path to better sport, greater health and higher achievement among athletes.

Having all played university basketball at the highest level in North America, the A4H executive team understands first-hand how valuable skills developed through participation in sport are. Their curriculum and programming builds on the understanding that sports are a great way to develop goal setting, teamwork skills and tools to help manage adversity - all of which can be applied off the court.

This evaluation report focuses on the YOF Development Program funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. The program focuses on mentorship, basketball and educational programming for Black youth in Peel. The YOF league teaches fundamental basketball skills, teamwork, sportsmanship and a passion for the love of the game of basketball while also learning about what it takes to be a student athlete through different educational workshops.

Youth participants have access to caring staff and feel a sense of belonging in the community where they can access support, friendship, and share experiences with their peers.

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to explore the experiences of the youth and staff (young coaches) for the Aspire for Higher – YOF Development League program. In order to do this, the program participants were evaluated using four quantitative survey modules; two modules (*Consistent Caring Person* and *Preparing to Lead*) were used with the program participants and two modules (*Engaged in Community* and *Leadership Qualities*) were used with the program staff (young coaches). The program staff also provided feedback using two qualitative tools, the *Head, Heart, Feet, Spirit* reflections and a focus group.

Overall, program staff (young coaches) reported that having a say in their communities is both important and enjoyable. At the last data collection, staff reported higher levels of perceived knowledge of their communities. The youth participants in the YOF Development League seem to feel connected to their parents and guardians and have motivation to change and improve the way they do things. Generally, youth reported feeling that adults make negative assumptions of them which may hinder their engagement.

- The highest scoring question for youth participants was "I like to be able to improve the way I do things" (4.56/5).
- The lowest scoring question for youth participants was "Adults do not make negative assumptions about me" (2.21/5).

There was a collective agreement that the program has had a positive impact on the community. Participants explained that the sport brings everyone together and it helps to build relationships (even with people they would not normally think they would build relationships with). By having youth play a sport that they are interested in, it makes them relate with others in a way that is unique from other types of relationships in their lives.

Process and Tools to Date

The Aspire for Higher program chose four quantitative survey modules to identify trends and measure outcomes of the program; two modules (*Consistent Caring Person* and *Preparing to Lead*) were used with youth program participants and two modules (*Engaged in Community* and *Leadership Qualities*) were used with the program staff (youth coaches). Descriptions of the four modules are listed below.

- **Consistent Caring Person** module aims to explore the extent to which they have adult support as well as social support, partnerships and connections
- **Preparing to Lead** module aims to establish the extent to which participant express qualities of leadership through their engagement, their lifelong learning intentions as well as their generativity
- **Engaged in Community** module aims to establish the extent to which an individual is engaged in their community through civic participation, perceived sociopolitical control, as well as their sense of integration and community

- **Leadership Qualities** module aims to evaluate the extent to which individuals in the program possess qualities of leadership during the program.

Youth in the Aspire for Higher program also filled out a **Demographics** tool to share more about themselves.

Program staff (youth coaches) submitted 24 reflections using a qualitative tool, **Head, Heart, Feet, Spirit (HHFS)** and participated in an end of the year **focus group**. The HHFS reflections and the focus group provided a space for the young coaches to reflect on their experiences, share ideas for improving the program, and share impacts that participation has had on their lives. 11 coaches contributed to the focus group held on June 2019. The focus group was facilitated by SCC staff and was recorded and transcribed to be analyzed for significant themes. Significant quotes were drawn from the analysis with participants' thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences. Names or identifying information have been removed from the quotes and replaces with denotations such as "[name]" or a letter in place to insure anonymity.

Program	Quantitative Tools	Qualitative Tools
Aspire for Higher – YOF Development Program	**Program Youth:** - Consistent Caring Person (n=69) - Preparing to Lead (n=35) - Demographics (n=65) **Program Staff:** - Engaged in Community (n=20) - Leadership Qualities (n=35)	**Program Staff:** - Focus Group (n=11) - Head, Heart, Feet, Spirit (HHFS) Reflections (n=24)

Each module consists of 10-20 questions.[1] All of the questions within the 3 modules used a 5-point scale (1= Strongly disagree, 5= Strongly agree) to determine how much participants agreed or disagreed with the statements.

The Aspire for Higher program data is graphed alongside the Sharing the Stories (StS) aggregate data, which includes youth voices from other programs. The StS data aggregate provides a useful comparison to contextualize the results.

[1] Questions are grouped into statistically reliable sets. Reliability is a measure of internal consistency of a set of questions. In other words, each set of questions is good at measuring the related, but different aspects of what is being studied.

Organization of the Report

This report will be broken down into four sections. The sections will be as follows:

1) Demographics: This section will give an overview and breakdown of the demographics of youth who took part in the program. The information in this section will be displayed as an infographic to allow for a visual representation of the data.

2) Quantitative Results – Youth Participants

a) **Consistent Caring Person Module**: This section is a quantitative analysis of how youth answered the consistent caring person module and is graphed alongside the StS aggregate to provide a visual representation and comparison of the data.

b) **Preparing to Lead Module:** This section is a quantitative analysis of how youth answered the preparing to lead module and is graphed alongside the StS aggregate to provide a visual representation and comparison of the data.

3) Quantitate Results – Program Staff

a) **Engaged in Community Module**: This section is a quantitative analysis of how youth answered the engaged in community module and is graphed alongside the StS aggregate to provide a visual representation and comparison of the data.

b) **Leadership Qualities Module:** This section is a quantitative analysis of how youth answered the leadership qualities module and is graphed alongside the StS aggregate to provide a visual representation and comparison of the data.

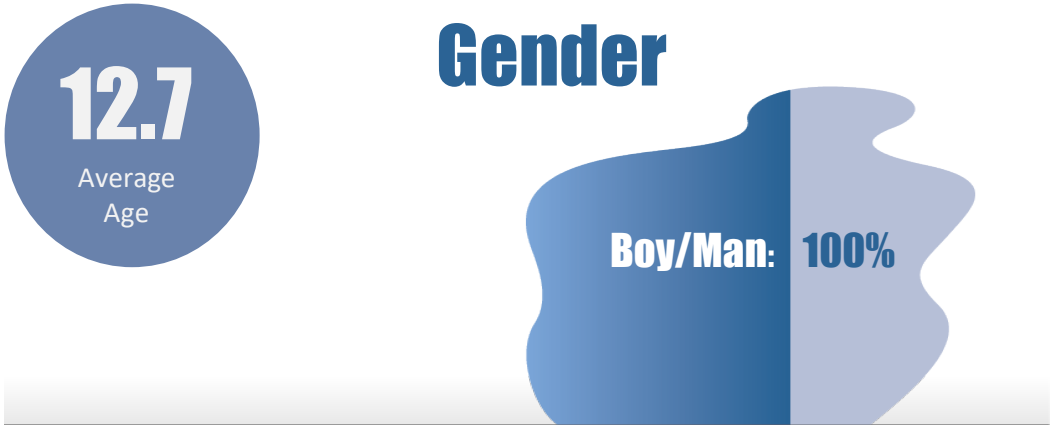
4) Qualitative Results – Program Staff

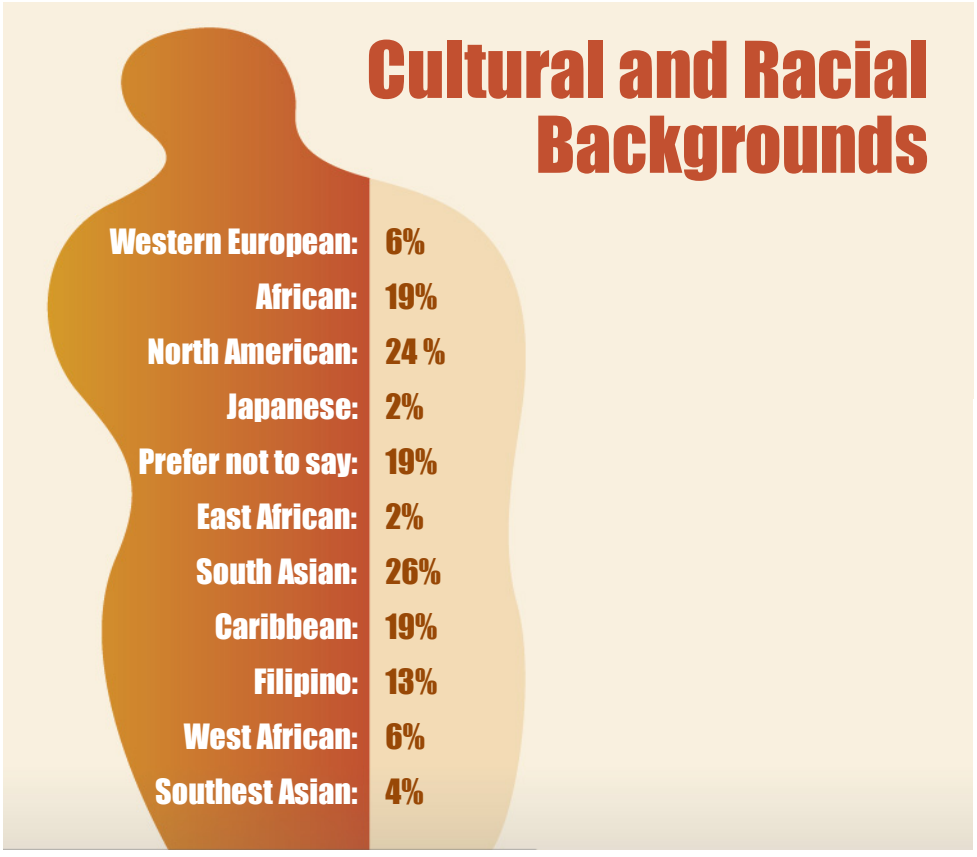
a) **Head, Heart, Feet and Spirit:** This section is a qualitative overview of themes that came up during the completion of the tool.

b) **Focus Group**: This section is a qualitative analysis of the focus group where staff members were asked to share their experiences with the program.

Demographics

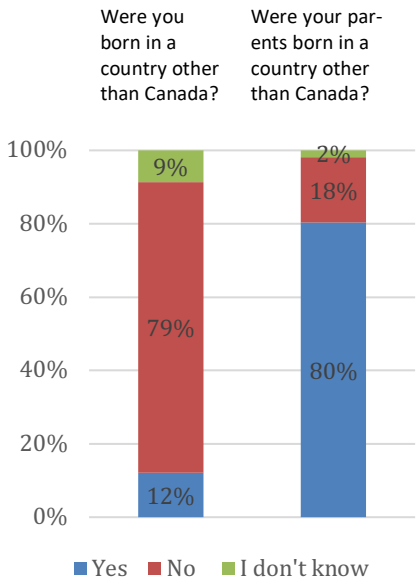
This section outlines the demographic breakdown of the Aspire for Higher – YOF Development League program from 2018-19.



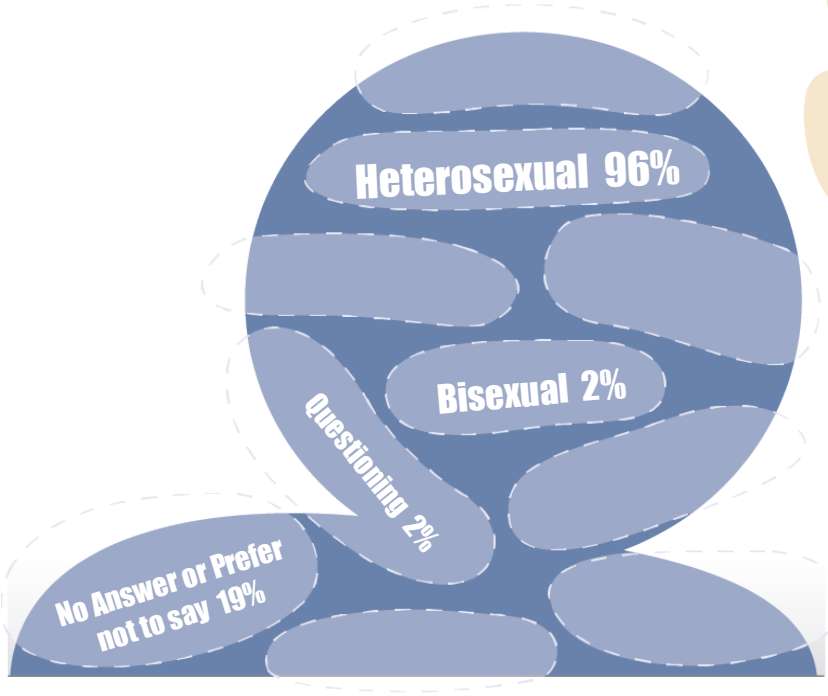


Country of Origin

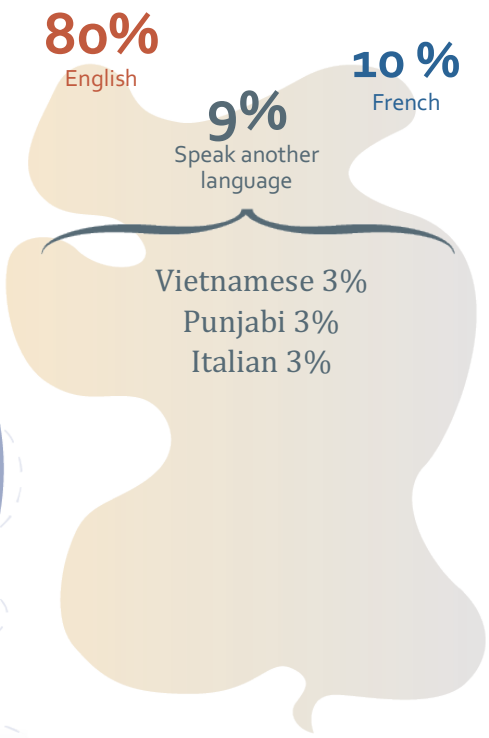
Participants were asked two questions to determine their country of origin.



Sexual Orientation

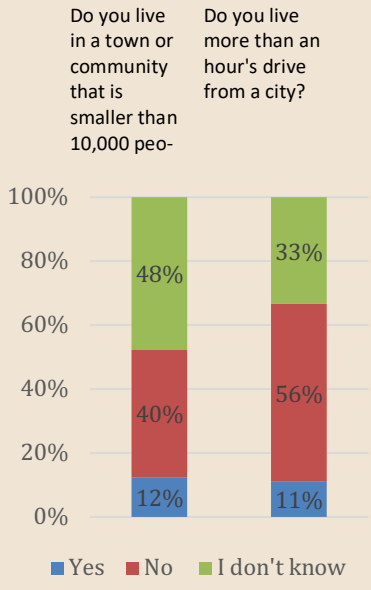


Languages spoken at home



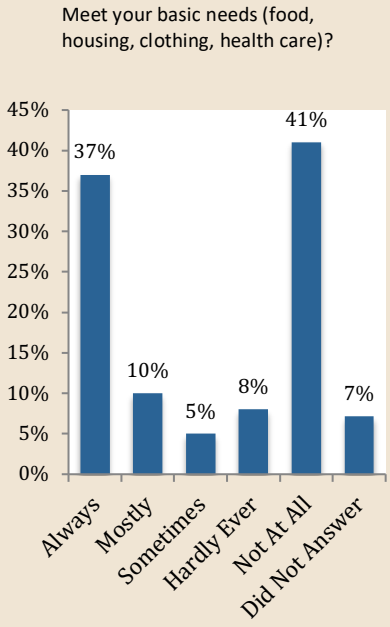
Rural or Urban

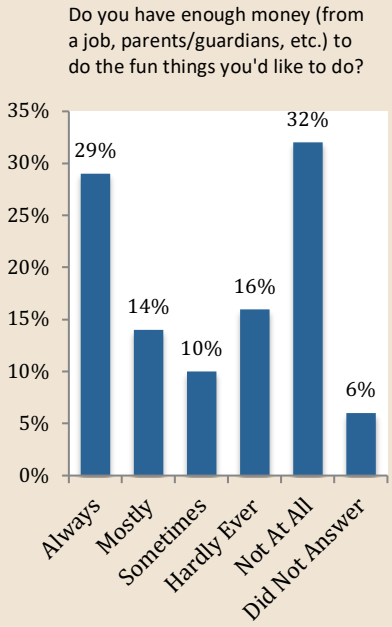
Participants were asked two questions to determine whether they lived in rural or urban areas.



Money for Basic Needs & Fun Activities

Finally, participants were asked the degree to which they had enough money to meet their basic needs and participate in fun things



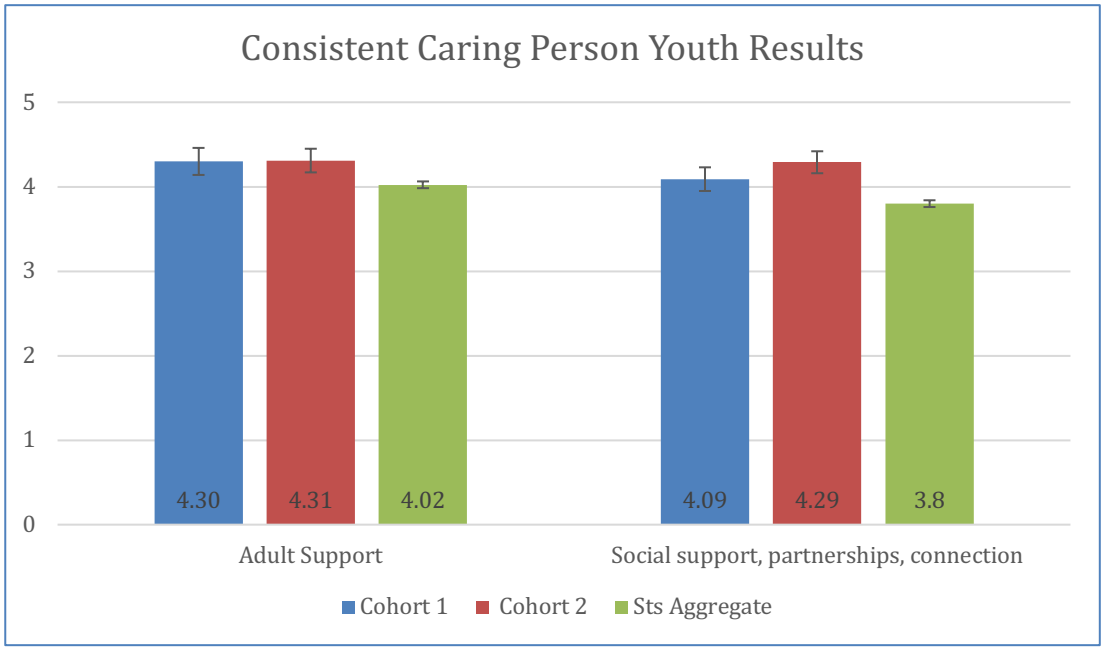


Quantitative Results: Youth Participants

Consistent, Caring Person Module

In the *Consistent, Caring Person* module, youth answered eight (8) questions that aimed to explore the extent to which they have ***adult support*** and ***social support, partnerships and connections***. In this case, we are comparing two cohorts (two different groups of youth who took part in the program) and the Sharing the Stories (StS) aggregate data (program participant data from across Canada).

Both the cohort 1 and cohort 2 data collections only happened at one point in time so outcome changes cannot be tracked over time. However, as seen in the corresponding graph, both of the program's cohorts reported similar results, which scored higher compared to the StS aggregate data. When conducting statistical analyses for this module, all but 2 questions from this module were statistically lower for the StS aggregate. This means that group participants answered this module in a way that is significantly different than participant from other program across Canada.



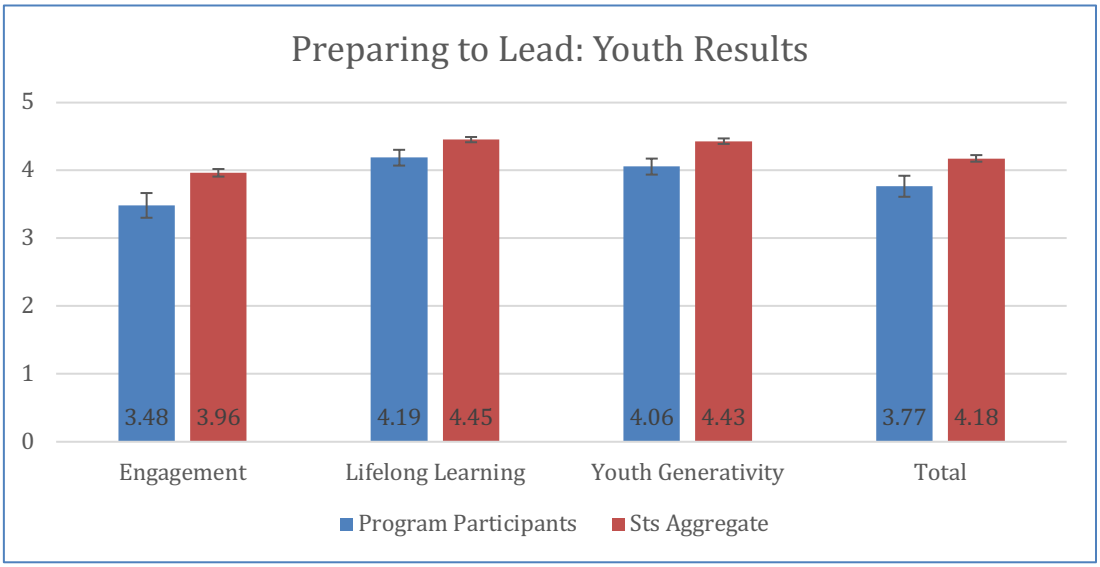
The question with the lowest score was: "How well do you work with adults?" (Cohort 1: 3.44/5, Cohort 2: 3.91/5). For both cohorts, the highest scoring question was the last question on the module: "How well do you feel connected to your parents or guardians?" (Cohort 1: 4.59/5, Cohort 2: 4.66/5). Youth from the program may feel as though they are well connected to their parents or guardians but that they do not work as well with other adults.

A full breakdown of results by each individual question in this module can be found in the *Appendix* (page 24).

Preparing to Lead Module

The *Preparing to Lead* module was also answered by youth participants, however only the second cohort completed this module. The module consists of 25 questions and seeks to establish the extent to which participant express qualities of leadership through their ***engagement***, their ***lifelong learning*** intentions as well as their ***generativity*** (desire to leave a positive legacy of the self for generations to come).

As seen in the graph below, the group consistently scored slightly lower than the Sharing the Stories (StS) aggregate data (program participant data from across Canada). The difference is enough that when tested statistically for its difference, the results were positive (this means that the difference between both groups is big enough that it cannot be attributed to chance alone). This might indicate that the YOF Development League program is reaching young people who can benefit from building their leadership qualities. The data collections only happened at one point in time so changes in leadership qualities cannot be tracked over time.



In this module, the highest scoring question was "I like to be able to improve the way I do things" (4.56/5). The lowest scoring question was: "Adults do not make negative assumptions about me" (2.21/5).

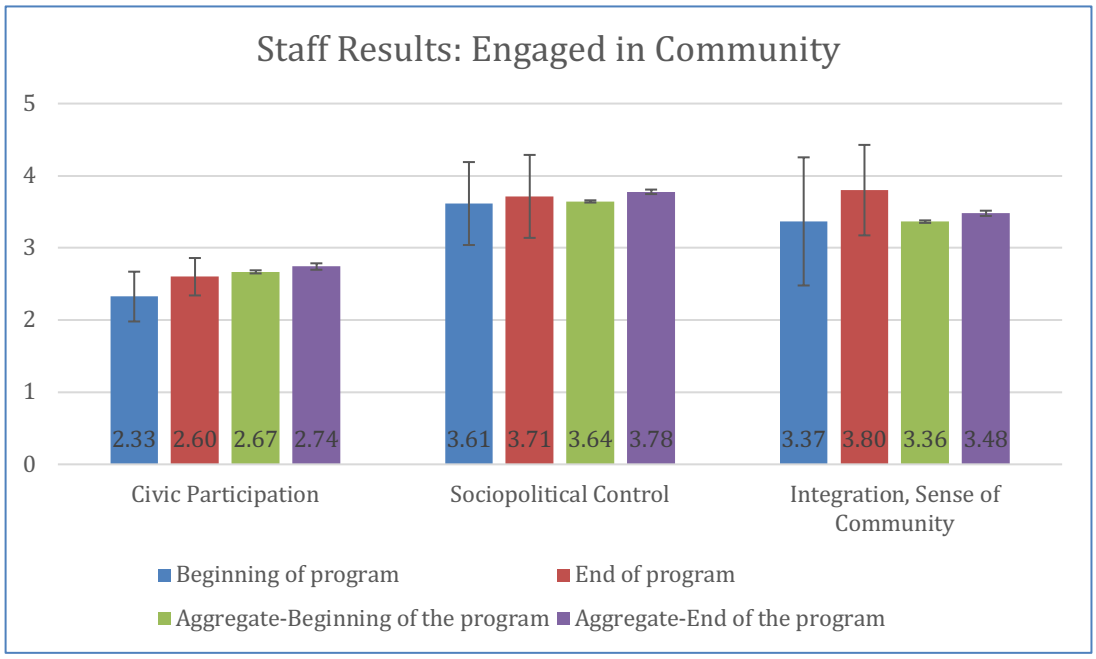
A full breakdown of results by each individual question in this module can be found in the *Appendix* (page 25).

Quantitative Results: Program Staff

Engaged in Community Module

The *Engaged in Community* module was answered by the staff of the program (young coaches). Program staff completed the survey at the beginning of the program and at the end of the program, their data is compared to the Sharing the Stories (StS) aggregate data (program participant data from across Canada). The module consists of 15 questions and aim to evaluate the extent to which an individual is engaged in their community through ***civic participation***, perceived ***sociopolitical control***, and their ***integration and sense of community***.

As seen in the graph below, the scores between both data collections and the StS aggregate follow similar patterns in all three areas of community engagement. At the end of the program staff scored higher in all three areas, particularly in the ***integration and sense of community*** area. Considering that the group size was small, it is not possible for us to conduct a statistical analysis to confirm that the differences were statistically significant.



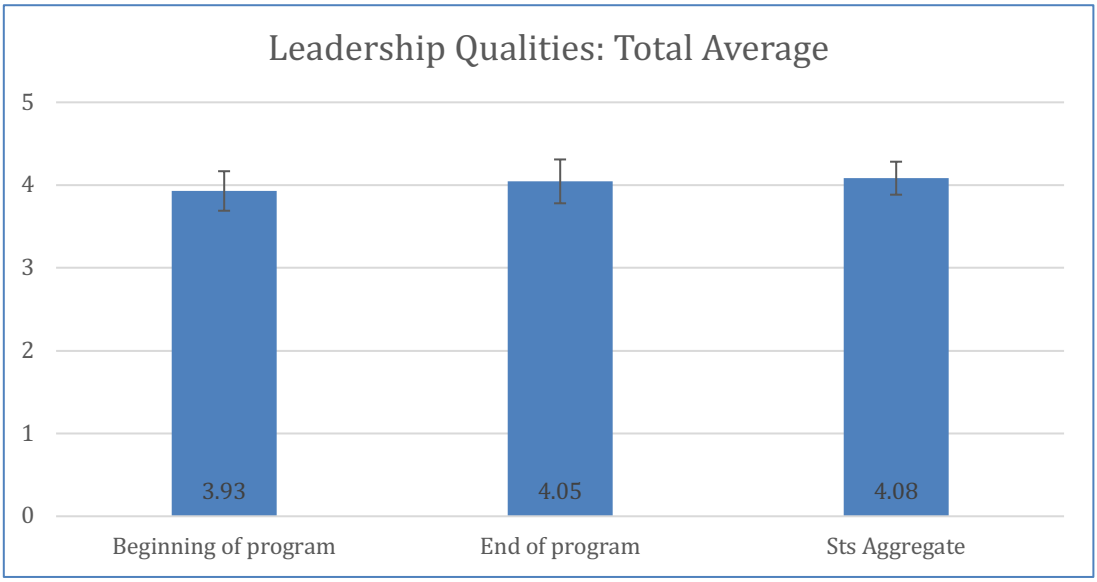
In this module, the highest scoring questions during the beginning of the program were "I enjoy participation because I want to have as much say as possible in my community" and "Many local activities are important to participate in." (3.9/5). As for the end of the program, "How well do you know your own community?" (4.2/5) scored the highest. The lowest scoring question for both beginning and end of the program was: "Posted about news, issues or politics using social media" (1.3/5 at the beginning of the program and & 1.4/5 at the end of the program).

A full breakdown of results by each individual question in this module can be found in the *Appendix* (page 27).

Leadership Qualities Module

The *Leadership Qualities* module was answered by the staff of the program (young coaches) and is compared to the StS aggregate data (program participant data from across Canada). This module aims to evaluate the extent to which staff in the program exhibited leadership qualities. Since numbers of participants (including for the aggregate) were quite low, we were unable to conduct statistical analyses for this module. Instead, a comparison of averages is done.

As seen in the graph below, the staff scores between the beginning and the end of the program and the StS aggregate data are quite similar. There was a slight increase in responses between the two data collections. Additional data collection will be required to conduct statistical analyses in the future.



For this module, the questions that were answered with the highest scores were “I feel like I am teaching the youth new skills.” (4.67/5 at the beginning of the program) and “I am careful to talk in ways that youth can understand and are comfortable with.” (4.7/5 at the end of the program). “If I find myself making negative assumptions about youth, I ask myself why I am thinking this way.” (2.67/5 at the beginning of the program) had the lowest reported score, which was also the lowest scoring question for youth on the *Preparing to Lead* module (please see last paragraph on page 10).

A full breakdown of results by each individual question in this module can be found in the *Appendix* (page 28).

Qualitative Results: Program Staff

Head Heart Feet Spirit Reflection

Staff members (young coaches) completed the *Head, Heart, Feet, Spirit (HHFS)* reflection tool to share their experiences regarding the YOF Development League program. This tool answers the following questions:

- Head – what have I learned today?
- Heart – how do I feel about today?
- Feet – what will I do with what I've learned today?
- Spirit – how did I connect today?

Theme	Frequency	Quotes
Head – What have I learned today?		
Adapting teachings to youth	9	*"I also learned that kids need to be told thing more than one time so they understand."* *"Some kids require more time than others so that is something to keep in mind. Balance as well."* *"Today I learned that if you find common ground with the youths, it is easier to connect to them and for them to participate."* *"Communication skills, people skills, different kids have different behavioural traits, find different ways to connect to the kids."*
Communication	7	*"I learned to stay positive and to encourage each other. Build relationship and communicate better."* *"I learned to communicate with my fellow coworkers, kids, and parents."*
Goal Setting	6	*"I learned how to set and create goals more effectively."* *"Creating goals, specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely."* *"I learned that setting goals and working towards them can be rewarding in many different ways."*
Time Management/Patience	5	*"Today I learned how to manage my time more effectively and my communication skills within this work atmosphere especially with volunteers."*

		"I learnt that not everyone is patient, and I also learnt to organize time wisely, and be patient with those who are impatient."
Mentally Ready	2	*"I learned about how to mentally stay on top of yourself and never let life limit you in anything."* *"I learned to stay mentally ready and positive."*
Teamwork & Leadership	1	*"Today I have learned a lot about being a leader and the importance of working as a team."*
Heart – How do I feel about today?		
Happy/Good	12	*"I felt really good today because after finding common ground with my team, everything just went smoothly and participated."* *"I feel like today was a good day no matter if bad things happened."*
Motivated/Inspired	5	*"The speaker was very vocal, and his message was very motivational."* *"I feel very good about today, with my team and the guest speaker really motivated us to do better and reach for something higher."*
Goal-Oriented	2	*"I felt like today really made me think about setting and creating goals for myself that are important."*
Productive	2	*"I feel that I taught everyone on my team at least 3 new skill sets which was passing, dribbling, and communication."* *"Today was productive for the most part, my kids listened and followed verbal instructions along with the demonstrations. The kids have a lot of promise and potential."*
Feet – What will I do with what I have learned today?		
Apply to Future/Present Life	10	*"I will apply what I've learned today in my everyday lifestyle."* *"With what I've learnt I will take this along with me in my future and other situations I may encounter in my career."* *"I will soak up what I learned today and take it with me in the real world."*

Help Others	5	*"With what I learned today I will pass it on to other family members and make them aware as well."* *"Reflect on the day and figure out how I can keep the kids engaged."*
Spirit – How did I connect today?		
One-on-One Interactions	6	*"I connected with my co-workers by communicating and getting to know each other and built a stronger comradery with my team."* *"I connected by learning the kid's personality and which ones may need more attention or encouragement."*
Common Goals	4	*"I connected with my team through common ground and with one goal."* *"I provided feedback to the youth on my team in order to better themselves. I allowed them to express themselves by stating their goals and what we plan to do to achieve that goal."*
Similar Interests	3	*"I was able to find something the kids relate to either a player or hobby for me to be able to teach new concepts."* *"I connected to the young kids through basketball and same interests."*
Personal Stories	2	*"I connected because I played basketball myself and I know how hard it is to be a consistent top-notch player."* *"I connected with personal stories & experiences. Related to past stories."*

Focus Group

During a one hour focus group, the program staff (young coaches) were asked a series of questions about their experience with Aspire for Higher. Aspire for Higher is committed to continuously improving the experience of their youth and staff; therefore, participants were encouraged to offer feedback and recommendations for program improvements and growth. Focus group findings have been broken down into several themes below.

Positive Experiences with Parents

When coaches were asked about what they liked best about the program, they responded that they were pleased to have gotten the opportunity to connect with parents because it gave them more confidence in their work. Some coaches felt appreciated when their work was valued by the parents of the young people they worked with.

> *"I think from the program, like speaking with parents and everyone, and I felt like it was well received and like some comments.. parents always coming up saying they really appreciate the program.. like 'my son looks forward to this every week', or 'we really like what you're doing in the classroom and how you're you know talking about the importance of you know leadership skills, addition to being like a whole person'. So I think that.. that was nice and it made me feel that what we are doing is appreciated and valued. Sometimes when you're like in the nitty gritty it is hard to feel that way."*

> *"I think like from, if we were going to look at the beginning how we felt.. the beginning of the program versus after, like confidence and ability to speak with parents. You know, comfort after speaking with parents, all that kind of stuff has gotten better as the program went on."*

> *"Um best part, getting the involvement of parents. That's when it's kind of fun. Um especially with their relationships with coaches, they really love to give their input. They want to see them like succeed… it was nice."*

Commitment to Learn & Improve

Some coaches stated that the best things about Aspire for Higher is that there always seems to be an effort to keep improving the program. Later in the focus group, coaches gave suggestions for how to build an even stronger program next year (please refer to the *Recommendations Form Staff* section below for more information).

> *"The kids want to learn, that's the best thing. I liked how we're, we're like actively trying to improve the program constantly together. We are always looking for room to improvement, whatever it is. Um like whether it's feedback from parents or coaches or youth, we like to make um arrangements to improve our program."*

Workforce Preparation

During the course of the program, the young coaches reported learning increased patience and workforce preparation skills including increased punctuality, accountability, communication skills, teamwork skills, leadership skills, and instructional skills.

> *"It's a job right. If you're not going to show up and you know you're not going to show up, you text, you call your job. Employment should matter to you. Just cause you come one day a week doesn't mean that it's not a real job. Just like you want our players to come every week cause it lets the team down if they don't, and parents take the time out of their week, their busy work schedule, they have to take care of their kids to be there. We should also be there for them."*

> *"Yeah like learned leadership and patience ... it's frustrating but we just gotta realize like that they are still learning."*

> *"I feel like I learned more about communication skills. Sometimes how I think would be the best way to communicate doesn't always work. Even like relating to staff and everybody, as the program went on we were better communicators with each other. And we were more accountable for more things and it wasn't just one person."*

> *"Figuring out different ways to teach the same thing. You know like some of them may be visual, some of them like you have to do it with them."*

Supporting Youths' Growth and Development

Coaches were also able to work closely with young people to help them grow and develop. Coaches supported young people to reach their dreams, helped them increase their confidence and physical health, saw changes in youth being able to manage their emotions, saw an increase in teamwork, and have worked towards ensuring youth are becoming well-rounded individuals.

> *"There is a lot of ups and downs but I think that we've successfully been able to you know talk about the importance of being a wholesome person and giving that whole picture of a student athlete… like being involved in your community and understanding more than just basketball, and understanding that you can use the tools you learn here and apply them."*

> *"Understand to move on, and finding another way to approach the ref instead of just yelling"*

> *" Just seeing how we can give kids opportunities to continue like the basketball dreams. Like one kid it exposed him by giving him the opportunity to play for a rep team. He's never played for a rep team. So one of the parents saw him and saw his raw talent and said 'hey I know someone who can put him on a team'. So I feel like if we can give kids opportunities to you know continue their progress."*

"Seeing the improvement in the youth, skill wise, being a better teammate, listening to certain plays. We can see the growth in the team and the chemistry. I consider that an achievement. It was great."

"It's not just about winning at the end of the day. My team we didn't win much games but I seen the kids like mentally growing you know. Being able to handle things through a certain amount of pressure."

"A player has been with us for a while, for a couple years now and um like he needed to be a little more active right... just coming to our program every summer, he's healthy and more confident now."

Building a "Family"

The coaches explained that the sport brings everyone together. It helps build relationship even with people you wouldn't normally think you would build relationships with. By having youth play a sport that they are all interested in, it makes them relate with others in a way that is unique from other types of relationships in their lives.

"Um I am going to say like friendship. And we all uh seem really comfortable around another and we stay, and we stay in contact. Um and so we grow into somewhat of a family in the organization right. So that's something successful that I want to put out there."

"I feel like we fit as a family. Everybody here, some of them like I haven't met before, I haven't seen. We click very easily like just you know like coming here to have like a good time… you know, coach kids, stuff like that. So I feel like we've grown a lot together."

"To add to that I feel like the kids that um like the basketball minded kids that are sometimes by themselves, some of their friends don't play any sports and don't play basketball, so they are trying to find people that are like them, able to play the same sport, have the same passion. They are able now to have friendships outside of the program. Now maybe they live down the street from each other but they never knew. So now in the summertime they can interact, work on their game or play video games, whatever they do but now they found more friendships to be had."

"I think basketball brings everyone together no matter what. Like I think I won't like someone in real life, not all the time, you know what I mean. But now we are talking like on a basketball court. So you have to learn to build relationships with other people. People that you would never think that would be like that much of a friend."

Safe Space for Youth

Having a recreational program available to youth with structured workshops, instead of youth just playing on the streets, is something that a lot of the coaches wish they had when they were growing up. Having a space where young people (Black youth in particular) can participate in

activities that are engaging and meaningful to them and having a space where young people feel welcomed can help decrease anti-social behaviour.

> *"The program helps decrease the risk of Black youth violence cause a lot of these kids, they have nowhere to go on a Saturday, nothing to look forward to. Like a lot, you know, get bored you know and you may find yourself in trouble doing something you shouldn't be doing… and you know getting in trouble with the law or whatever it might be. But yeah definitely, yeah definitely this reduces the risk of violence on black youth."*

> *"One more thing to add to yeah, it's like, it's like a family environment. Like you go in, it doesn't feel hostile. Like the kids feel comfortable here. Feel like they can do their thing."*

> *"For me just like the whole program, just the growth. You know seeing it from the start to now um that's kind of for me like a big thing because I was here from the beginning… I think just seeing where it is now like how we have the YOF and are bringing people in to helping kids. You know, growing up we didn't have a lot of that, you know what I am saying, so for me to help provide that for the kids now is just a good thing you know."*

> *"I had a parent talk to me. His son was in a program in [location] and um he was very... the program was full, and then we had one person drop out so we were able to accommodate him... so he was saying his son felt very racialized in his old team in [location] um and how the coach wasn't allowing them to kind of have these dreams of playing in the [name] and everyone was kind of shutting him down. And like every single week he comes up to me and he is so grateful for this program. And he just likes the coaches and he likes that the coaches are reflective of his son, and that they are allowing, you know, they're inspiring him to do whatever he wants to do, and not shutting down anyone's dreams. He says that every week he comes up to me."*

Recommendations from Staff

Program Structure

Having the youth workshops before the basketball games and making them a mandatory condition in order for youth to play in the game.

> *"Do you guys think it would be useful next year if we did the in-class sessions before the games?" … "That makes sense, that's way better … if you don't come to participate in this, even if you come late and you didn't tell us, then you're not playing. It holds them accountable."*

Interactive Workshops

Bringing in more interactive, physical, and/or relevant workshops/presentations into the space. Also, ensuring that the workshops do not make the young people feel like they are in school. Some of the workshops that were well received included the police officer, a Raptors 905

representative, a physiotherapist, and a guest speaker who used interactive methods to teach youth about leadership and communication.

> *"I feel like some of the kids when they sit there, some of them, the topic may feel a little bit ahead of them in terms of their thinking"*

> *"Yeah and like, not making it feel like you're in the classroom. Like maybe having them like move around like an interactive setting."*

> *"But also like our goal is to increase mentorship and leadership skills and education but I think it is good to figure out ways that we can do that, that are interactive and fun and not like school."*

Involve Youth in Decision-Making

Having engagement sessions to learn more about youth interests (and more about the youth in general) prior to planning the workshops.

> *"The in class sessions were able to get like a diverse group of guest speakers but I think that an improvement that can be made is you know asking for the youth input on what they want to hear about as opposed to just deciding on what a session should be. As well as like staff. I think the staff know the kids the best so that might be something that we could improve on for next year."*

> *"Yeah, I agree. But not just the topics. Last week [name] said he has a learning disability. I figured it out over time obviously but maybe asking that information before? Or they can write it on notes or however they sign up, or something like that."*

Increased Connections & Resources

Having a larger network of guest speakers who tailor their workshops/presentations to the participants could increase youth engagement in the workshops.

> *"I think um it would be nice to have a big, better network of guest speakers in our program, because sometimes we have an idea of what someone is going to be teaching, they send us an outline… and but then you know they're not engaging. They don't understand how to engage with 14 year olds… or you know, the financial literacy, what they were teaching was not age appropriate. It's been challenging, like I kind of put an email blast out for Trillium and a few other people to get um black professionals to come and be guest speakers but it hasn't necessarily been easy confirming them, or like getting something the kids actually want to listen to."*

Staff Training Opportunities

Increase staff training opportunities around professionalism and around mentoring and working with other young people with shared identities.

"Just like you know understanding what the program is doing, the purpose of it, and how we can best do it. So I think like more training on professionalism, more training on working with racialized youth, like the reason that these people are labeled that way, understanding that we as a group are racialized black youth, right? I think a lot of times people don't really understand that. So like getting the right support. The program is intentionally targeting male black youth"

Building Expectations Around Professionalism

Punctuality; implementation of consequences regarding arriving late (holding coworkers accountable).

"We can't be late every week and come up with 'oh, yo, I had to do this', or like just because you are giving a reason as to why you're late doesn't make it acceptable."

"So maybe we will have it so that you have.. you cannot be late more than two times or you're not going to be doing the winter session as a coach."

Scaling the Program

Many coaches talked about needing to scale the program due to not having the capacity to accept more youth into the program. Aspire for Higher can consider looking into having a second location to accommodate for the high demand and to open the program to youth in other communities, if funding permits.

"I think we were able to put forward a successful program um and from the first season to the second season, the program was so popular that we actually had to increase to 9 players per team, um which means like we were able to reach 56 youth this season and we are only at uh 48 last season and we had a wait list of 45… so that was good."

"Yeah it's kind of sad because we have to say no to a lot of people, but yeah we had a wait list of 45 and we increased to 56."

"Yeah we could have two locations but we need more funding."

"I just like the opportunity of allowing other people from outside this community to be involved."

Conclusion

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the experiences of youth and young staff (coaches) of the YOF Development League program and compare them with the Sharing the Stories (StS) aggregate data (program participant data from across Canada).

Program staff reported high levels of understanding in regard to effective ways in reaching out and communicating with youth participants, and feel as though they are teaching younger participants new skills. The program staff seem to have a level of engagement in their communities that is similar to participants from other program across Canada. They reported that having a say in their communities is both important and enjoyable. At the end of the program this year, the program staff reported higher levels of perceived knowledge of their communities.

The youth participants who answered two survey modules (*Consistent, Caring Person* and *Preparing to Lead*) seem to feel connected to their parents and guardians and have motivation to change and improve the way they do things. Their views on adults may hinder their experiences; the two lowest scoring questions on the survey modules were around working well with adults and their perception of adults making negative assumptions about them (this may or may not be related to the young adults in the program). A discussion around these quantitative findings can lend to a deeper understanding.

The program can consider looking into the recommendations that were offered by coaches during the focus group. Next year, youth participants can be evaluated at the beginning and at the end of each cohort so that the evaluation scores can be compared over time, which offers more accurate conclusions about the program and its effect on youth. An in-depth discussion with the youth participants will be beneficial in the future; stories shared by participants will complement and confirm the quantitative findings in this report.

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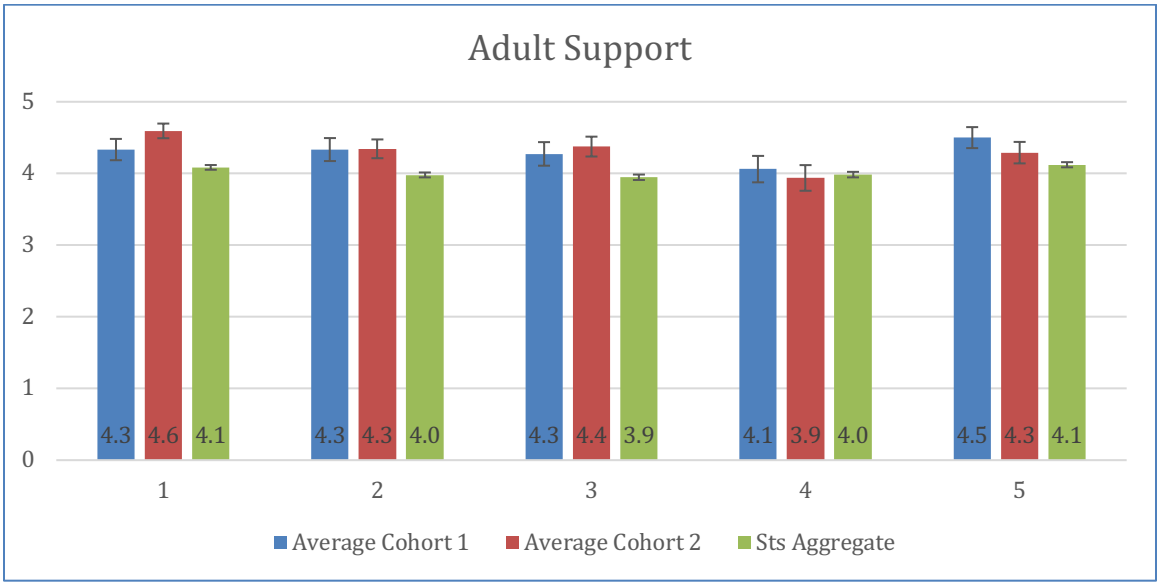
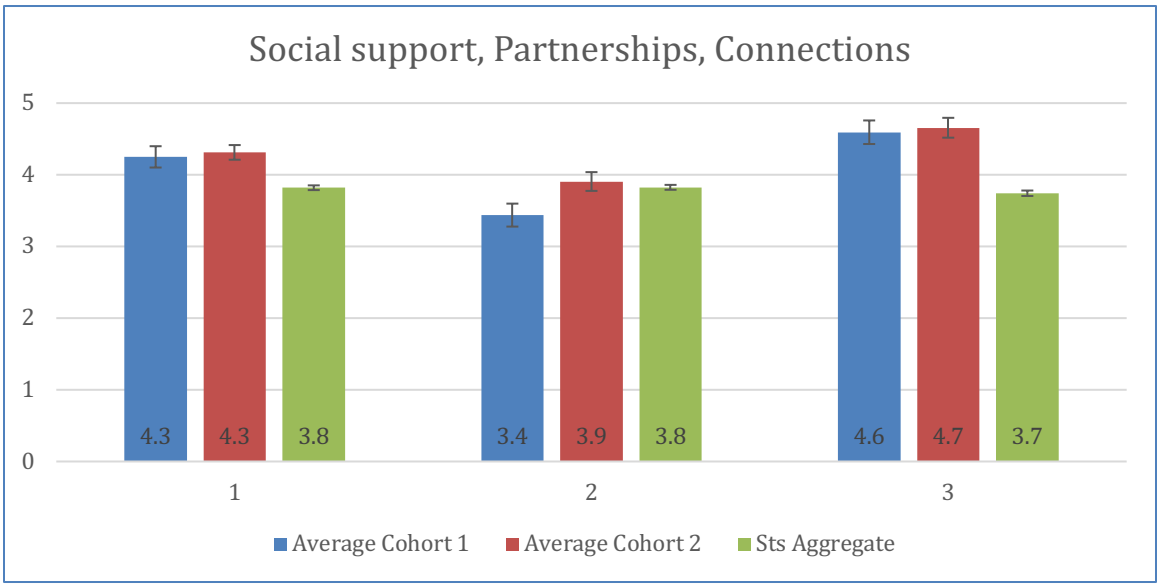
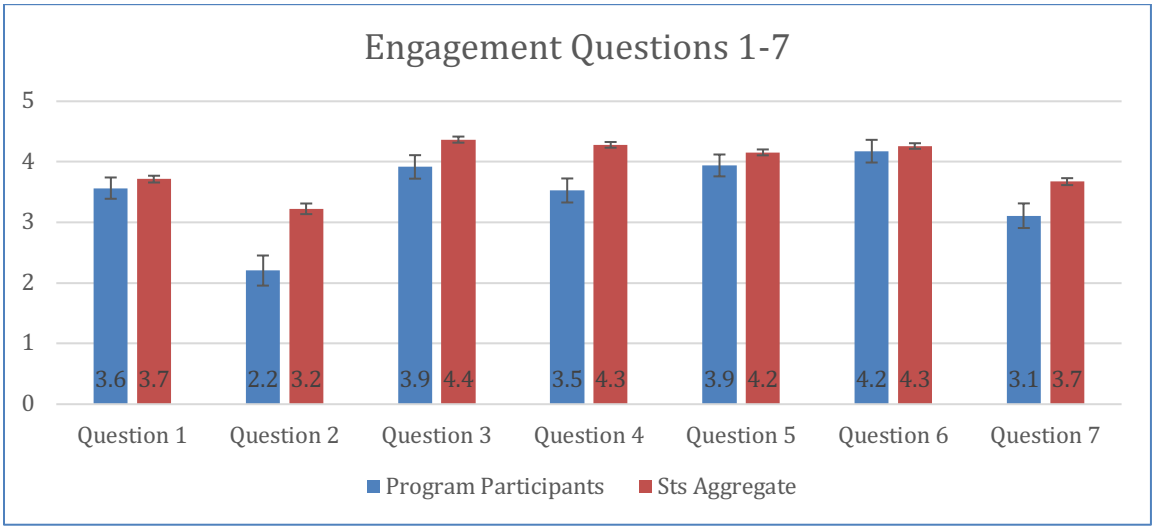
Appendix

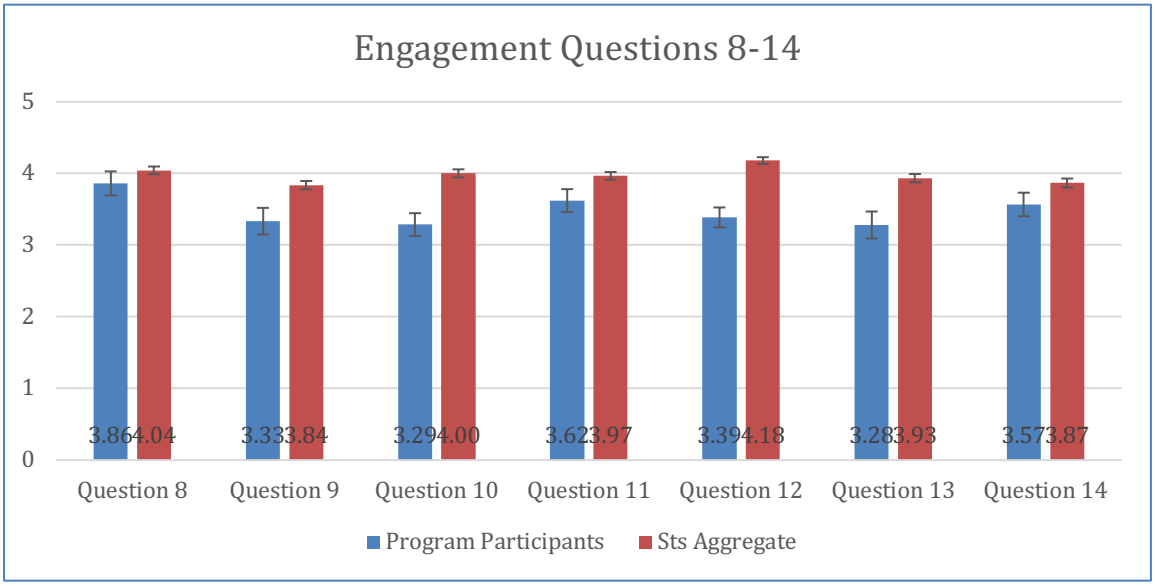
Consistent Caring Person Module – Youth Results

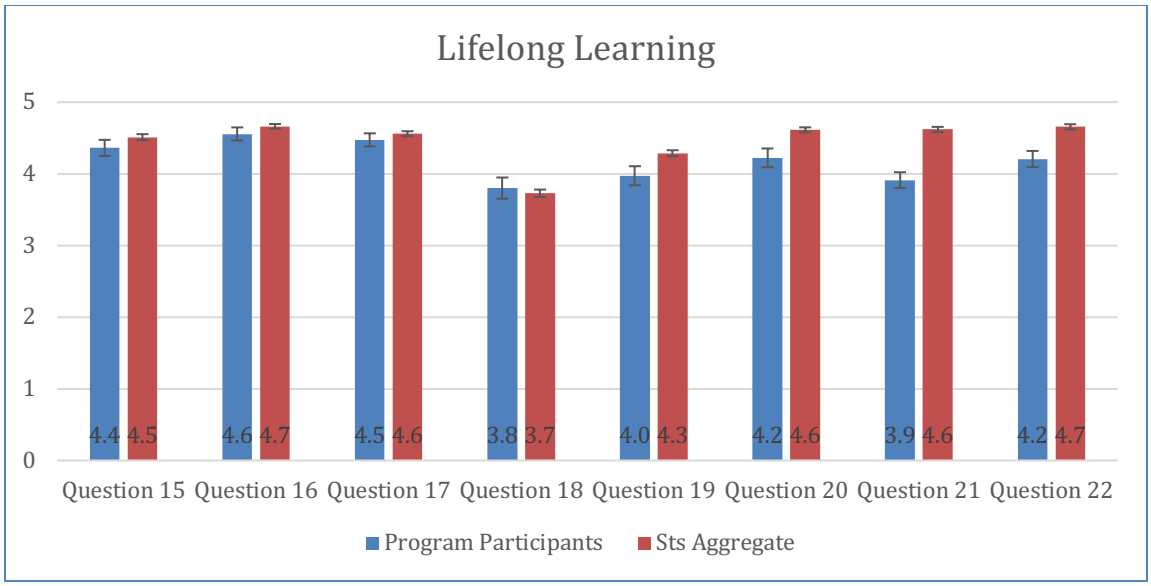




Preparing to Lead Module – Youth Results



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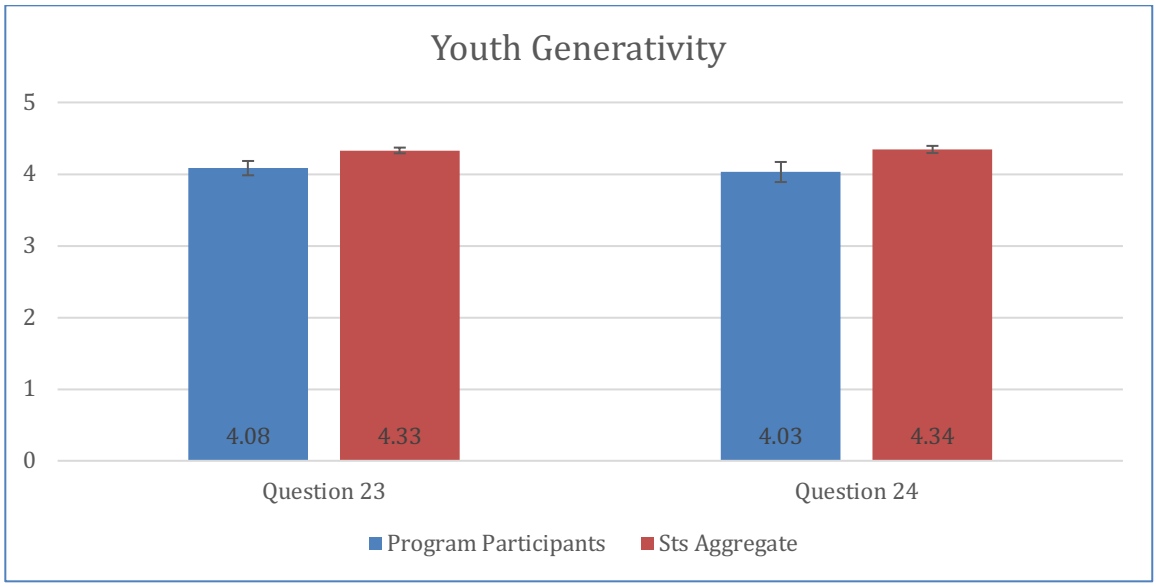
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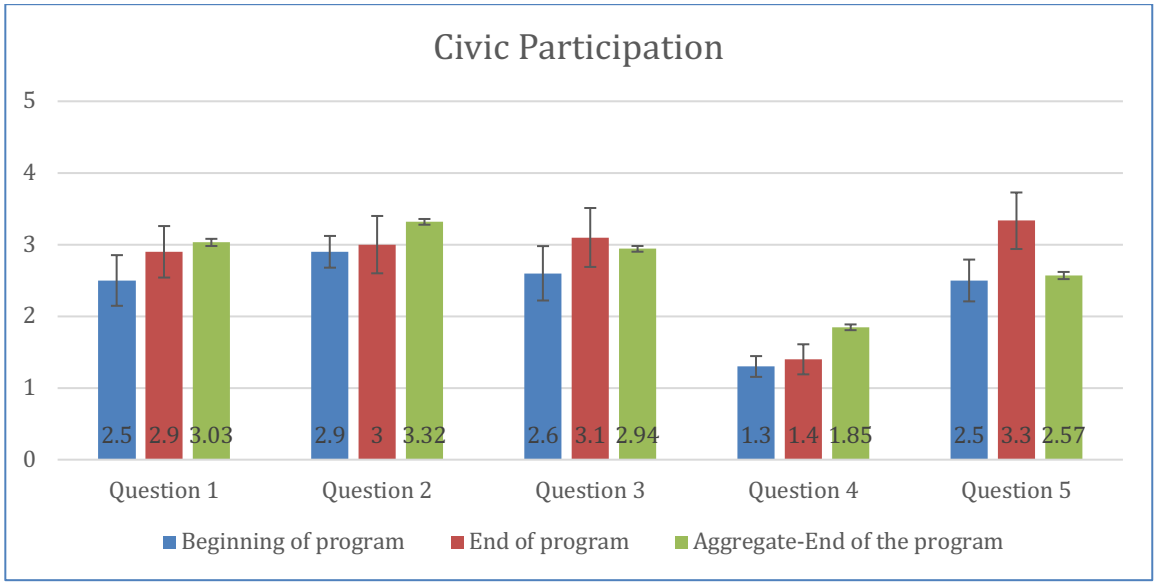
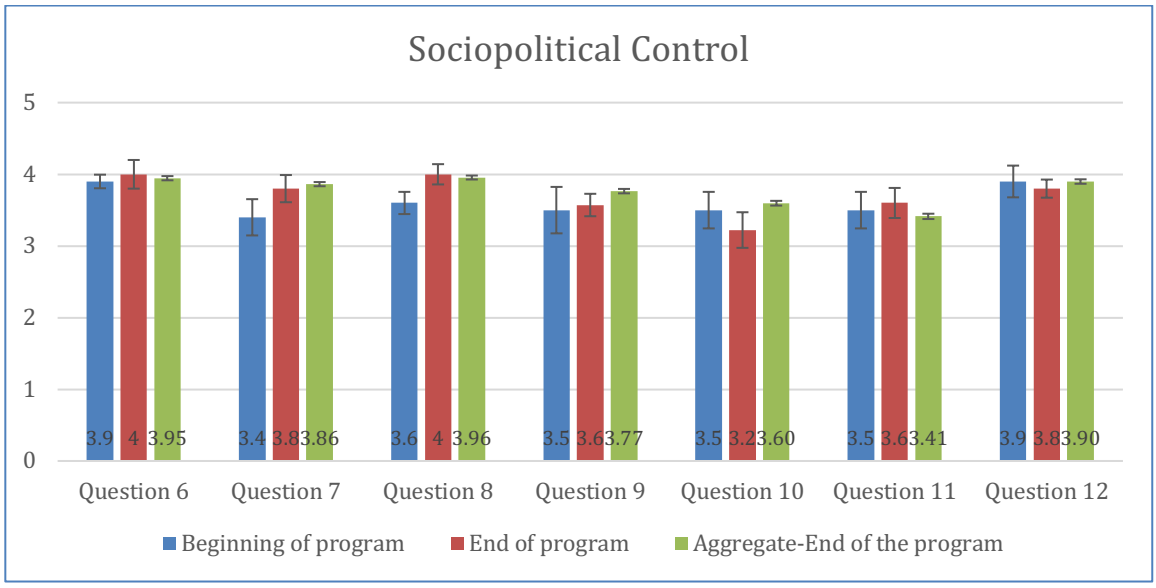
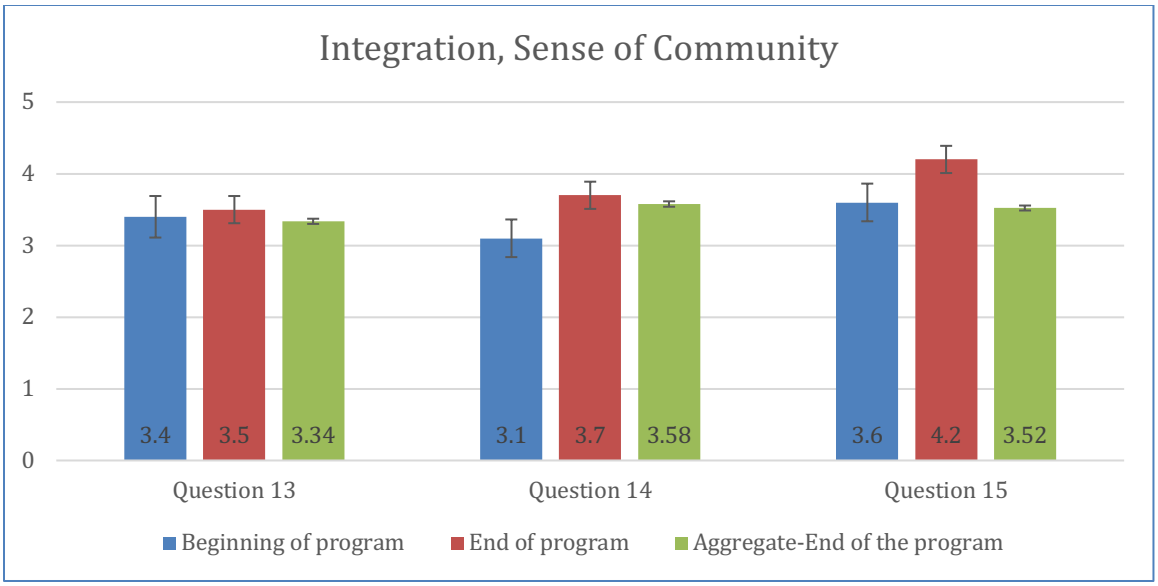
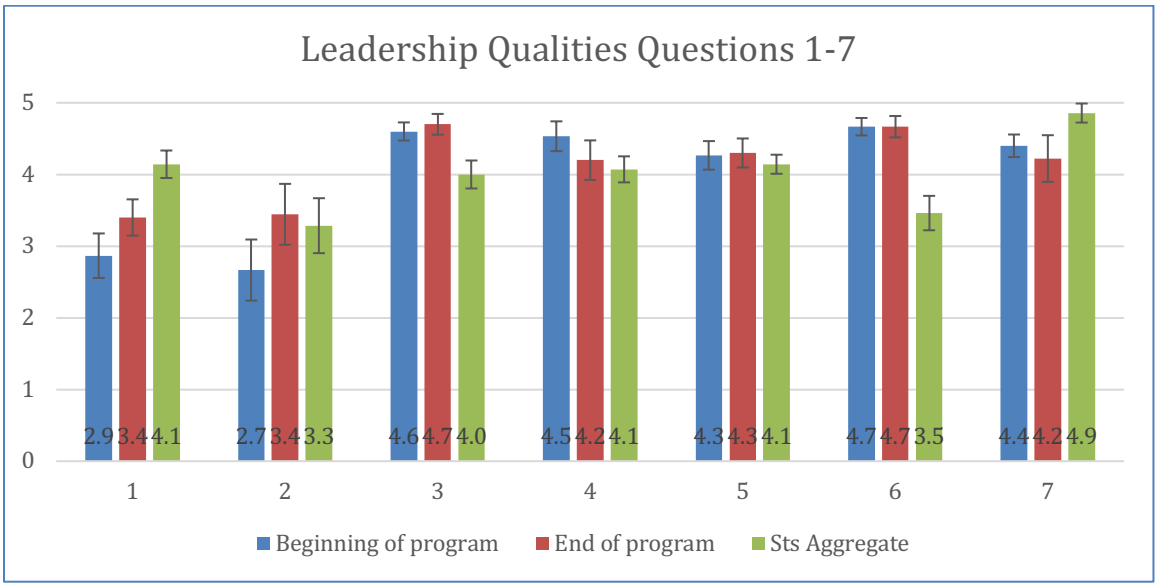
Engaged in Community Module – Staff Results

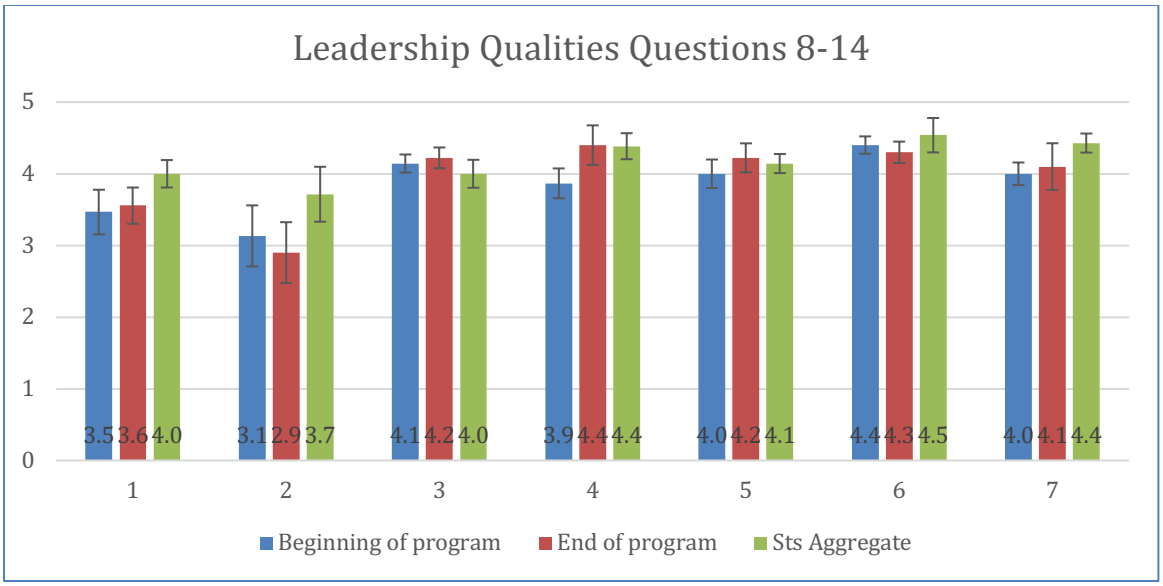






Leadership Qualities Module – Staff Results

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