

## Prince Edward Learning Centre: Making Systems Work for Me Report



*Presented by The Students Commission of Canada, 2020*

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Project</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Process and Tools to Date</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Organization of the Report</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Demographics</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Results: Youth voice</b>	<b>8</b>
<i><b>Youth Voice: Focus Group</b></i>	<i><b>11</b></i>
<i><b>Initiators</b></i>	<i><b>12</b></i>
<i><b>Individual</b></i>	<i><b>12</b></i>
<i><b>Social</b></i>	<i><b>13</b></i>
<i><b>Community</b></i>	<i><b>14</b></i>
<i><b>Qualities</b></i>	<i><b>14</b></i>
<i><b>Recommendations</b></i>	<i><b>15</b></i>
<b>References</b>	<b>18</b>



Social Program Evaluation Group, Queen's University  
 511 Union Street, Room B164, Kingston, ON, K7M 5R7  
 Tel: (613) 533-6255, Fax: (613) 533-2556  
 Email: [spemail@queensu.ca](mailto:spemail@queensu.ca), URL: <http://orgs.educ.queensu.ca/speg>



**The Students  
 Commission**  
*Centre of Excellence for  
 Youth Engagement*

The Students Commission / Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement  
 23 Isabella Street, Toronto, ON, M4Y 1M7  
 Tel: (416) 597-8297, Fax: (416) 597-0661  
 Email: [info@studentscommission.ca](mailto:info@studentscommission.ca), URL: [www.studentscommission.ca](http://www.studentscommission.ca)

**Suggested citation:** Amara, F, Wheatcroft, K, The Students Commission of Canada. (2020) *Prince Edward Learning Center*. Report prepared for Prince Edward Learning Centre.

## Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to analyze the feedback from youth in the Making Systems Work for Me Project of the Prince Edward Learning Center. The program engages youth in teaching each other effective skills and knowledge regarding education options, financial security, and resources in the community.

During the program, youth were asked to fill out the following surveys: Resources in Community, Financial Skills, Academic Success and a Workshop Evaluation. This report compares youth's responses to surveys before and after the workshops. Additionally, youth participated in a Focus group that captured their impressions of the program.

Youth felt more confident in their knowledge on the resources in the community after the workshops. The data shows a spike in: ability to find interesting opportunities in the community (4), communicating with others (4.4), getting advice (4.2), and acquiring information in the community (4).

The data shows a noticeable increase in youth's interest to go to trade school (3.6), as well as a slight increase in youth's interest to go to college or university (4.6).

The data demonstrates that there was not an evident change in perceptions on financial skills pre- and post-survey. Youth only demonstrated a change for the following statement: "I know when I need advice about money" (4.1 to 4.4).

Youth found the workshop to be very useful for themselves (4), and somewhat useful for their school and community (3.7). On average, youth also rated the workshop as being very interesting (3.7).

Youth who participated in the focus group said that what initiated their interest in the workshop was the INSPIRE program (3). Youth explained that the individual, social, and community outcomes respectively were new knowledge, learning from others, and resource awareness. Youth reported the program's main quality to be the good program leaders.

In essence, it is evident that the Making Systems Work for Me program shows positive benefits and feedback from youth. The data was compared to the available Sharing the Stories aggregate data for the following modules: Resources in Community and some questions of the Academic Success survey. The aggregate includes youth voices from other programs. While the STS aggregate can provide a useful comparison to contextualize the results, please note that due to the small number of survey participants, comparisons have not been tested statistically.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the differences between results from youth in the Making Systems Work for Me program and youth from other programs may be due to random chance.

---

<sup>1</sup> In order for a statistical analysis to be considered significant, the p value must be equal to or lower than 0.05. When samples sizes are small, less than, 30 or ( $n < 30$ ), there may not be enough power for the analysis to be "significant" in statistical terms. However, smaller response numbers do show trends, but please interpret with caution.

## The Project

The Prince Edward Learning Centre, in partnership with the Greater Than: County Youth Collective and the United Way of Hastings and Prince Edward and the Poverty Round Table piloted a program in the winter of 2019 called Making Systems Work for Me. The pilot was a peer-to-peer project to support high school graduation rates and transitions to college or work. Youth Peer Navigators attended workshops on Education Options, Increasing Financial Stability While Pursuing Education and Accessing Community Supports with the goal of sharing this knowledge with their peers in the community.

## Process and Tools to Date

The Making Systems Work for Me program chose five qualitative survey modules to identify trends and measure outcomes of the program. 8 participants total filled out the modules used to evaluate the program.

The following is a brief summary of each tool used;

- The Resources in the Community Module examine the extent to which youth know about and easily navigate (i.e.: reach, use or join) resources in their communities.
- Academic Success Module looks at how youth view their academic career and ambitions.
- Financial Skill Scale Module examines the extent to which youth acquire financial skills.
- Workshop Evaluation looks at youth’s feedback on their experience at the workshops.
- The Youth Voice: Focus Group is based on the youth engagement framework. The initiators, sustainers and qualities of engagement are all associated with outcomes of engagement.

Program	Tools
Making Systems Work for Me	Resources in community (pre-survey: n=5; post-survey: n=5) Academic Success (pre-survey: n=7; post-survey: n=5) Financial Skill Scale (pre-survey: n=6; post-survey: n=5) Workshop Evaluation (n=15) Youth Voice Focus Group (n=4)

## 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 various demographics of participants of the program. The information in this section will be displayed as an infographic to allow for a visual representation of the data.
- 2) Resources in community module examines the extent to which youth know about and easily navigate (i.e.: reach, use or join) resources in their communities.
- 3) Academic success module looks at how youth view their academic career and ambitions.
- 4) Financial skill scale examines the extent to which youth acquire financial skills.
- 5) Workshop evaluation looks at youth's feedback on their experience at the workshops.
- 6) Youth Voice Focus Group looks at youth's feedback on the workshop and is based on the youth engagement framework.
- 7) Discussion and Conclusion
- 8) References

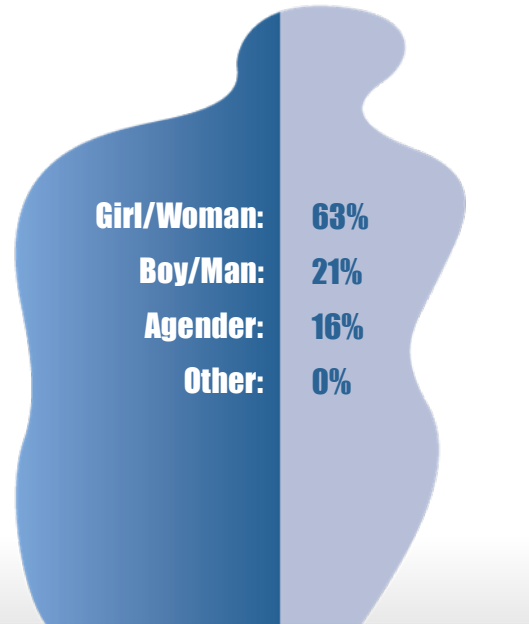
25

Average Age

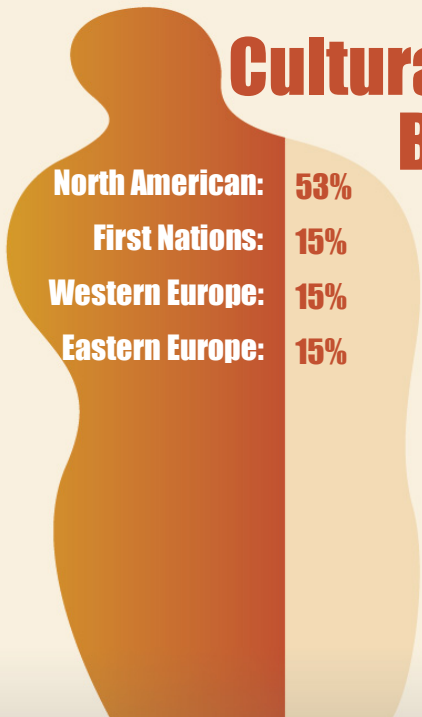
# Demographics

This section outlines the demographic breakdown of the Making Systems Work for Me program at the Prince Edward Learning Center.

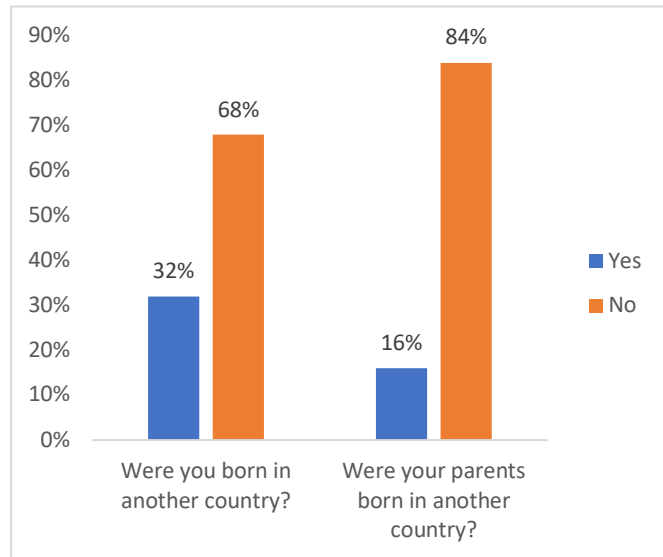
## Gender



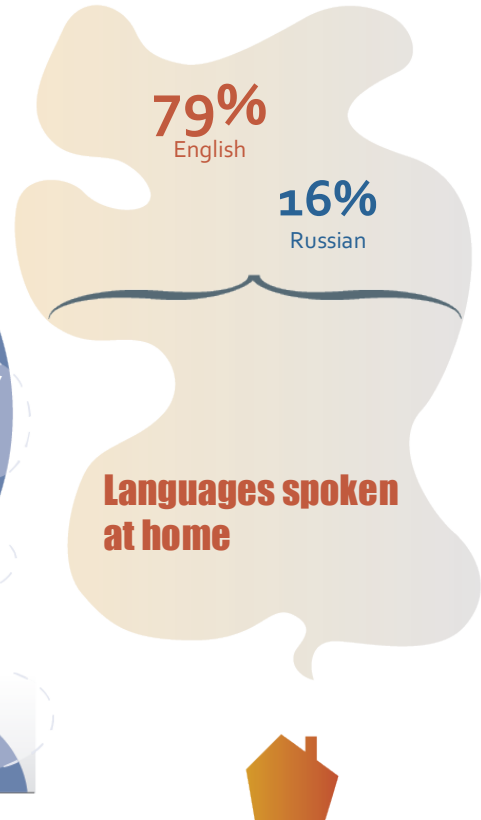
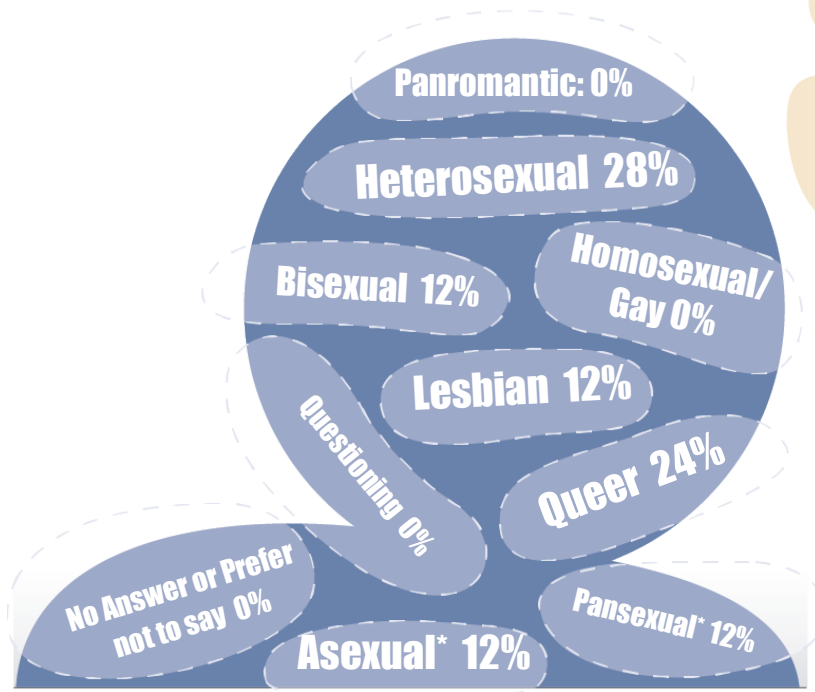
## Cultural and Racial Backgrounds



## Country of Origin



# Sexual Orientation

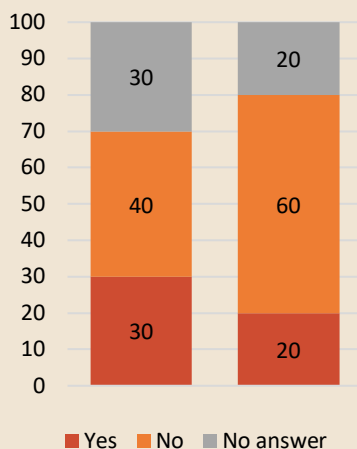


## Rural or Urban

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

Do you live in a town or community that is smaller than 10,000?

Do you live more than an hour's drive from a city?

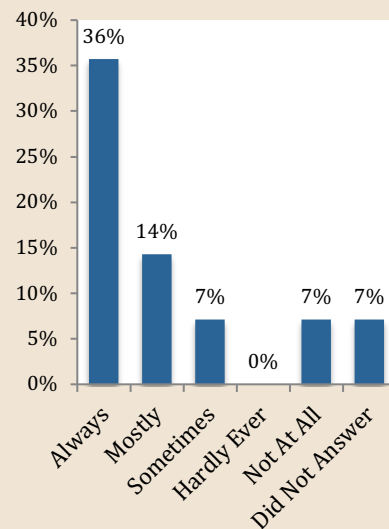
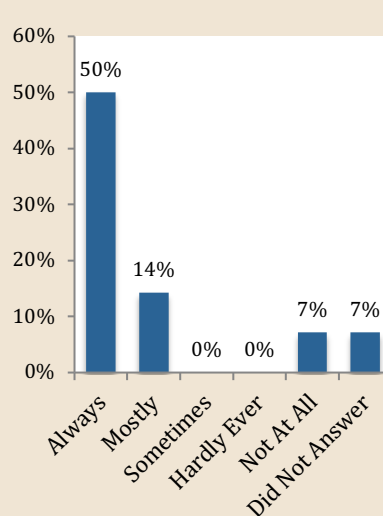


## Money for Basic Needs & Fun Activities

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

Meet your basic needs (food, housing, clothing, health care)?

Do you have enough money (from a job, parents/guardians, etc.) to do the fun things you'd like to do?



# Results: Youth voice

## Resources in Community

The Resources in the Community Module contains 11 items that youth may rate from “Not at all” (1) to “Completely” (5). These statements are divided into three components related to different aspects of resources: Community Involvement (is the individual taking part in the resources?), Community Knowledge (does the individual know about the resources or how to find them?), and Skills for Assessing Resources (one’s capacity to find and/or take part in the resources). The following graph illustrates the contrast in the answers before and after the workshops.

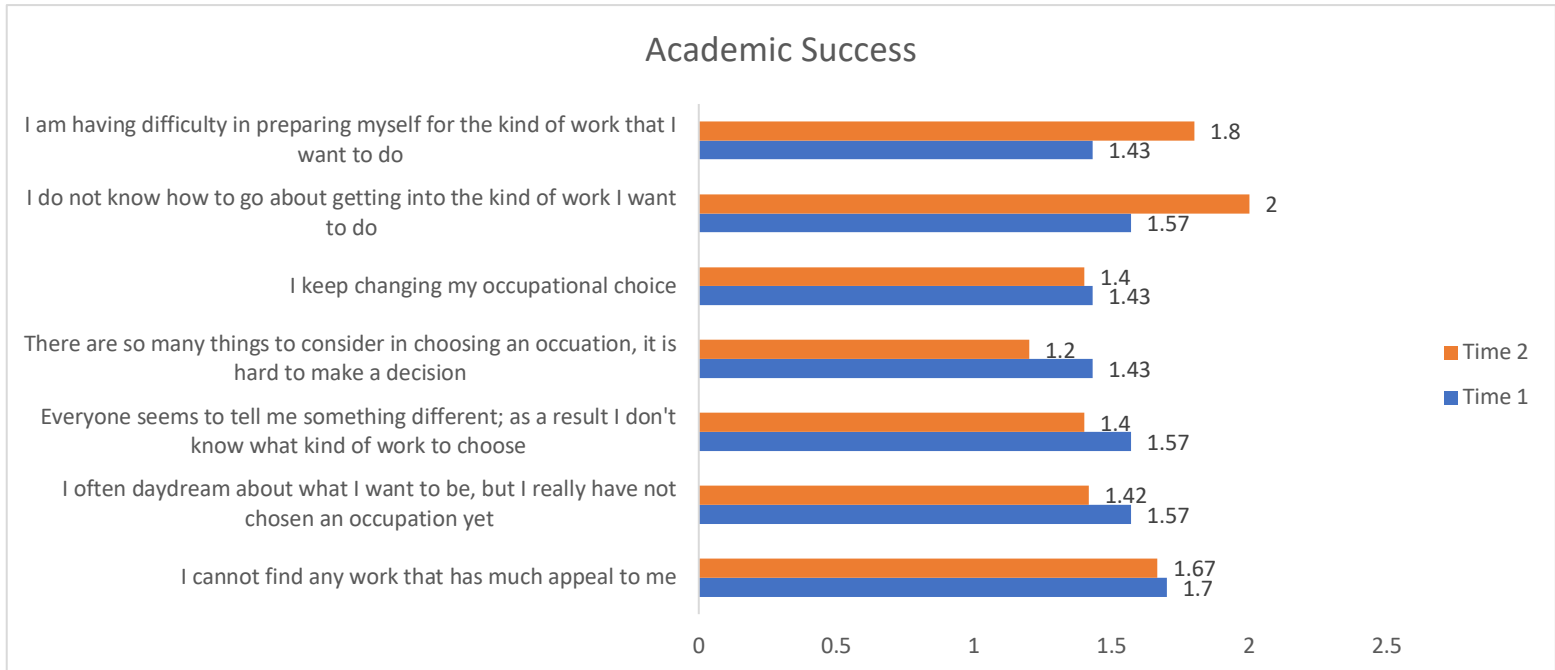


**Takeaway:** It is evident that youth felt more confident in their knowledge on the resources in the community after the program workshops. The data shows a spike in: ability to find interesting opportunities in the community (4), communicating with others (4.4), getting advice (4.2), and acquiring information in the community (4). When comparing the data to the aggregate, we can observe that for nearly each question, the post-survey results are higher than the aggregate; this demonstrates the positive impact that the workshop had on youth. The aggregate had a slightly higher score (4.0 vs. 4.1) for the question: “I know where to get information about programs.”.



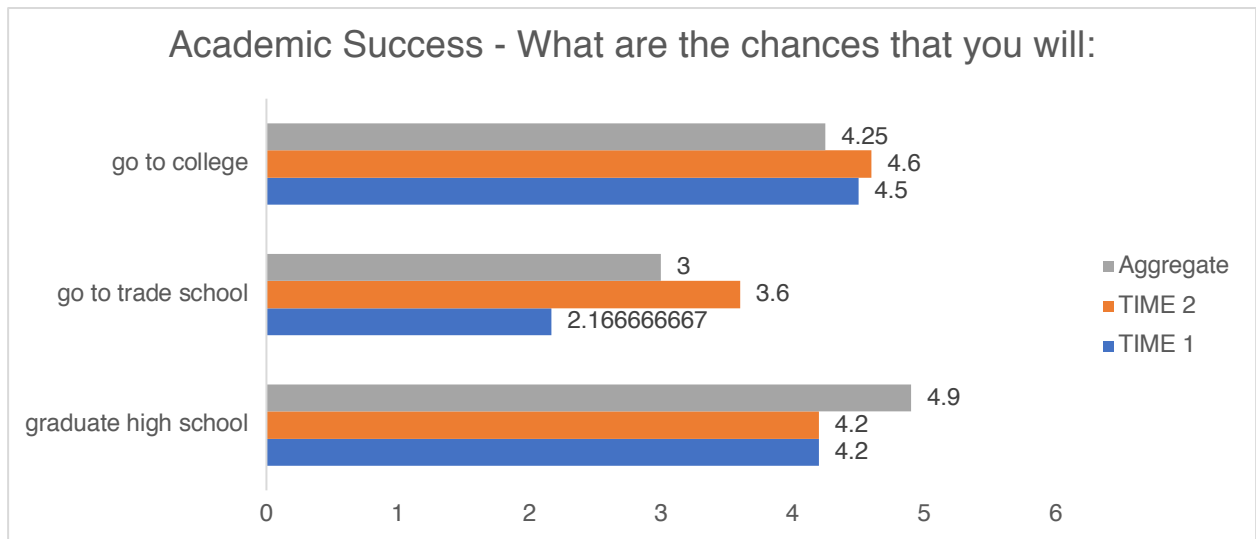
## Academic Success

Youth were asked to either agree (1) or disagree (2) with various statements about academic success. The following graph illustrates the level of agreement; the lower the scores, the higher the agreement.



**Takeaway:** The data demonstrates that after the workshop, youth highly agreed that it is difficult to make decisions in regards to what occupation to follow. On the other hand, after the workshop, all participants disagreed with the following statement: “I do not know how to go about getting into the kind of work I want to do”. This statement also illustrated the greatest difference pre- and post-survey.

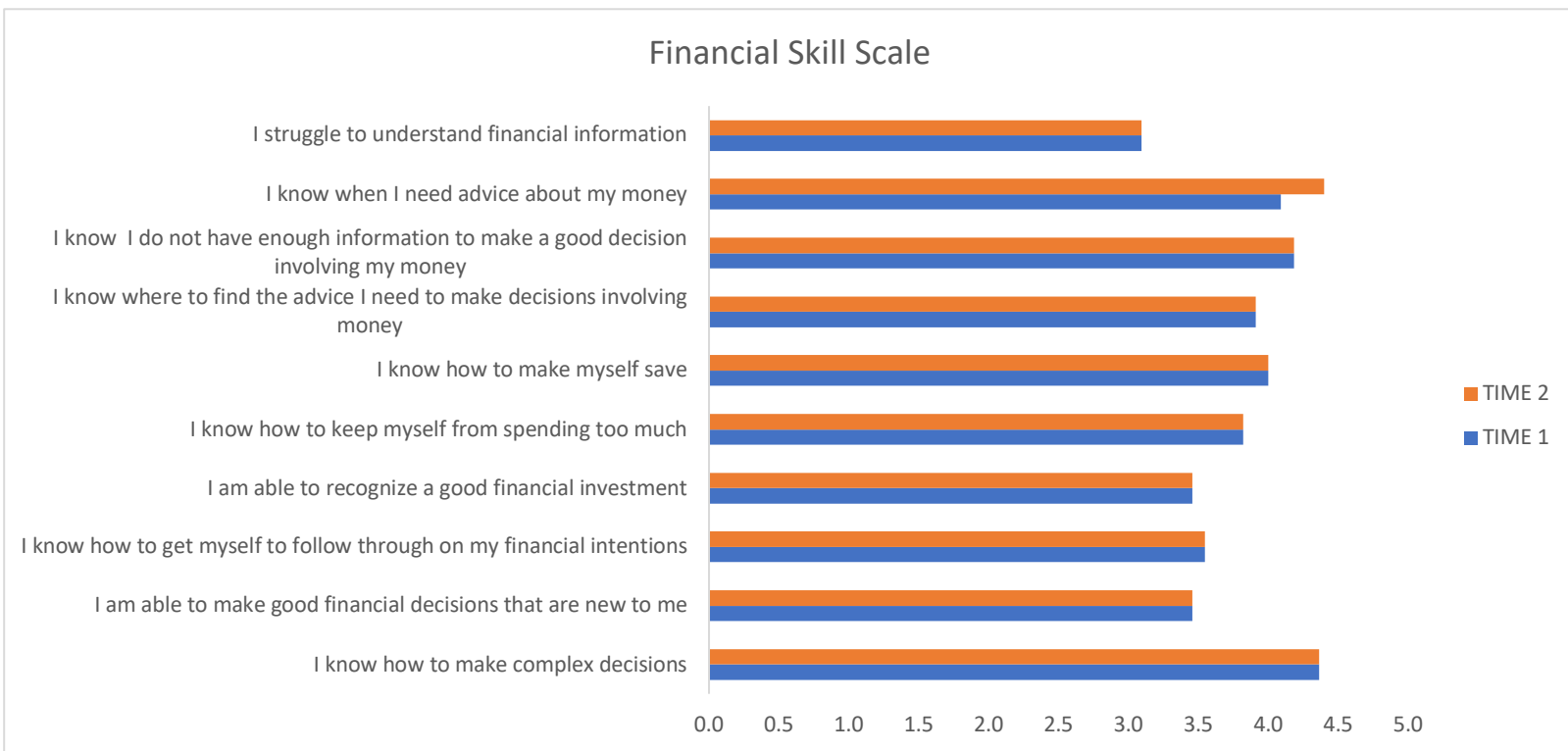
Youth were also asked to fill out a survey concerning education by answering to questions on a scale from “not at all” to “completely”. The following graph demonstrates the significant differences in answers before and after the program workshops.



**Takeaway:** The data shows a noticeable increase in youth’s interest to go to trade school (3.6), as well as a slight increase in youth’s interest to go to college or university (4.6). There was no difference in responses in terms of high school graduation before and after the workshops (4.2). When comparing the data to the aggregate, we can observe that those who attended the workshops believed that the chances of them graduating high school were lower than the aggregate (4.2 vs. 4.9), even after the workshops. Interestingly enough, many of the participants were in their last year of high school and therefore, they were thinking about their future career. It is crucial to note that some participants already graduated high school; this has an impact on the answers for the likelihood of graduating high school.

### Financial Skill Scale

The Financial skill scale examines the extent to which youth acquire financial skills. The following graph illustrates youth’s level of agreement (0-5) with various statements.



**Takeaway:** The data demonstrates that there was not an evident change in perceptions on financial skills pre- and post-survey. Youth only demonstrated a change for the following statement: *“I know when I need advice about money”* (4.1 to 4.4).

## Workshop Evaluation

The Workshop Evaluation module looks at the experience of youth at the workshops. Youth are asked to rate on a scale from 1-5 their overall rating of the workshop, its usefulness, and how interesting it was.

The data shows that, overall, youth rated the workshop very highly (average score of 4/5).

*“All aspects were valuable because you are constantly learning.”*

Youth found the workshop to be very useful for themselves (4), and somewhat useful for their school and community (3.7). On average, youth also rated the workshop as being very interesting (3.7)

*“I think that learning local supports was very beneficial to me because now I know where my friends can go for help.”*

When asked which aspects of the workshop were most valuable, youth disclosed that they found the information on financial aid and education options, as well as government benefits to be extremely valuable.

*“Learning about the different government organizations. They were the most valuable because I will/may need assistance in the future.”*

*“Learning what I have ahead of me. The application process for schooling is something I've been anxious about.”*

When asked to provide feedback on the workshop, youth said that it was well-run, interesting, engaging, non-judgemental.

*“Hearing the opinions of others and understanding that I'm not the only one that has these issues.”*

## Youth Voice: Focus Group

PELC chose to do a focus group along with other qualitative data from surveys. The analysis of the focus group is organized based on the youth engagement framework. The initiators, sustainers and qualities of engagement are all associated with outcomes of engagement; having strong initiators, sustainers and qualities can lead to a more effective youth program (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Lawford, Ramey, Rose-Krasnor & Proctor, 2012).

- Initiators: The reasons for youth joining the Program.
- Individual Outcomes: Outcomes youth experience as a result of the Program that improve them as individuals.

- Social Outcomes: Outcomes youth experience due to the program that affect their social networks and relationships such as friends and families.
- Community Outcomes: Outcomes youth experience due to the program which have an even larger reaching impact such that it affects their communities or organizations.
- Program Qualities: Various features that characterize the atmosphere and structure of the Program.

### **Initiators**

#### **Inspire (3)**

Three of the participants mentioned coming to Prince Edward Learning Centre because of the INSPIRE program.

*"I don't know I was a student at PELC before I did the INSPIRE program."*

*"I was here through INSPIRE as well, I've interacted with most teachers and instructors and I think they know me."*

*"I was doing INSPIRE, I was an INSPIRE student."*

#### **Youth2youth summit (1)**

One young person mentioned the youth2youth summit is what brought them to the program.

*"I went to the youth2youth summit."*

### **Individual**

#### **New knowledge (5)**

There were several participants in the program who mentioned the new knowledge that they gained from being a part of the program.

*"It's been good to finalize some of the questions I've had about certain things out there and it'll be good to give proper and solid info to people I know. It was a good learning experience."*

*"...having accurate knowledge and being able to actually talk to people...Knowledge is power."*

*"..I've learned a lot."*

#### **New skills (3)**

Young people also mentioned the way that they gained new skills being in the program.

*"....and gave us a good run down on how we're supposed to facilitate and facilitating was really good."*

*"I didn't know what facilitating means... on the email for the workshop. We did have a good workshop on that though."*

### **Personal Growth (Life Skills) (3)**

Many of the youth experienced personal growth and developed life skills through the program.

*“...I’m just graduating high school and learning the steps to take to further my life, it seems more simple than it did a month ago, it used to seem scary.”*

*“It kind of simplified the stuff around going to school like post-secondary it made it easier to understand.”*

*“I think there were a couple situations where you were expected to go out of your comfort zone to have the ability to present clearly and be understood and present to other people.”*

### **Social**

#### **Learning from others (5)**

Many of the participants mentioned learning from the other people in the program.

*“...you can see other people’s experience and empathize and see how it applies to you and be able to do better.”*

*“It was good to find out where everyone was coming from.”*

*“...when we would share our takeaways you could see people had similar takeaways.”*

#### **Interpersonal Skills (3)**

Some youth also gained interpersonal skills from being a part of the program.

*“People skills. Dealing with different people.”*

*“Walking in and knowing you’re going to work with someone and facilitate with someone and not knowing them on a personal level and having to balance your differences and stuff, and not knowing how it’s going to end...”*

#### **Helping others (3)**

Participants noted having the ability to help others now as a direct result of the things they had learned in the program.

*“I’ve used information from this program to help my brother look at the college programs and see what is available for him.”*

*“I’ve also talked to people about the free tax clinic and a couple different things..”*

#### **Close relationship with peers (2)**

A couple participants also mentioned the close relationship they had with the other participants in the program.

*"...getting to know the people was good."*

## **Community**

### **Resource awareness (7)**

Many of the youth gained awareness of new resources because of the program.

*"They're both really awesome programs that help spread knowledge in the community."*

*"There's a lot of services available to everyone... It was a really amazing thing to see. I didn't know about a lot of the resources."*

*"It gives me peace of mind knowing there's services to help people."*

### **Connection to community (2)**

There was also evidence that the program was relatable to the participants and well connected to the community.

*"..every topic that we spoke about there was always someone there with some experience."*

*"Making information a lot more accessible in the community. It branches out when people tell more people who tell more people."*

## **Qualities**

### **Good program leaders (5)**

One of the main qualities of the program that youth emphasized was the great program leaders they had.

*"The one thing that I did like is that they got the time to know all of us and they found out our strengths and weaknesses, and put together groups based on that. They put pairs together based on similarities, who will work well together instead of just picking a random partner."*

*"...the coordinators are really easy to get along with."*

### **New opportunities (3)**

Youth also gained new opportunities from being a part of the program.

*"I learned that there's a lot more opportunities than people think and they just pass them by because of lack of knowledge."*

*"Like others said there are different opportunities that people didn't take advantage of..."*

### **Shared experience (3)**

The program offered a shared experience for many of the young people who participated.

*“Shared hardships. When someone has gone through similar struggles as you it provides kinship.”*

*“It was good to know that there are other people you can relate to. Not in terms of all of us gaining knowledge but we also have shared experiences.”*

### **Open space (2)**

The space was also open and accepting for the youth who participated. They never felt shut down or like they had to be filtered when being there.

*“When I’m here it’s pretty good and pretty open...”*

*“They were really open to hearing or changing information based on our experiences.”*

### **Informative (2)**

The youth also felt that the program was very informative.

*“They answer all of your questions too, to the best of their ability or they make sure they can get that information for you.”*

*“The sessions have been informative and stuff too.”*

### **Flexible**

One young person mentioned the flexibility of the program as a great quality.

*“...here it’s flexible and there’s no tests so you’re not forced to get stuff down in a specific order and recite it back. It’s based on your own understanding, what you put in is what you leave with.”*

### **Interactive**

One young person also mentioned the interactive component of the program and how they enjoyed that.

*“The interactive part where you were interacting with the activity or with each other, it was really good because I learn better with hands-on practical learning.”*

### **Recommendations**

The youth had a few recommendations for the program. First was that the program should provide some of the information that they would be using in each workshop prior to actually arriving. They also felt like they wanted more take home information for reference that they could have with them as the program progressed so they could re-read it and process it. One young person also mentioned how they wanted the program to run at different times as they had a hard time getting the time off with their employer.

## Discussion: Making meaning of the findings

When analyzing youth responses to questions about education, financial literacy, and resources in the community before and after the workshop, a significant difference can be identified.

Youth felt more confident in their knowledge on the resources in the community after the workshops. The data shows a spike in: ability to find interesting opportunities in the community (4), communicating with others (4.4), getting advice (4.2), and acquiring information in the community (4). When comparing the data to the aggregate, we can observe that for nearly each question, the post-survey results are higher than the aggregate; this demonstrates the positive impact that the workshop had on youth. The aggregate had a slightly higher score (4.0 vs. 4.1) for the question: *“I know where to get information about programs.”*

The data demonstrates that after the workshop, youth highly agreed that it is difficult to make decisions in regards to what occupation to follow. On the other hand, after the workshop, all participants disagreed with the following statement: *“I do not know how to go about getting into the kind of work I want to do”*. This statement also illustrated the greatest difference pre- and post-survey. The data also shows a noticeable increase in youth’s interest to go to trade school (3.6), as well as a slight increase in youth’s interest to go to college or university (4.6).

In terms of financial skills, there was not an evident change in perceptions on financial skills pre- and post-survey. Youth only demonstrated a change for the following statement: *“I know when I need advice about money”* (4.1 to 4.4).

Youth found the workshop to be very useful for themselves (4), and somewhat useful for their school and community (3.7). On average, youth also rated the workshop as being very interesting (3.7).

Youth who answered the Focus Program Survey said that what initiated their interest in the workshop was the INSPIRE program (3). Youth explained that the individual, social, and community outcomes respectively were new knowledge (5), learning from others (5), and resource awareness (7). Youth reported the program’s main quality to be the good program leaders (5).

A possible recommendation could be increased information about specific organizations in their communities; the post-survey results demonstrate that youth still were not as confident as the aggregate for the following statement: *“I know where to get information about programs.”* However, it is possible that this response could be because of the lack of programs in a rural setting.

Moreover, the program should provide some of the information that they would be using in each workshop prior to actually arriving. Youth also felt like they wanted more take home information or at least all the information in one place for them to reference that they could have with them as the program progressed. Finally, ideally, the program would also at different times in order to be convenient for a greater number of individuals.

In essence, it is evident that the Making Systems Work for Me program shows positive benefits to the youth participants. The program encourages change in terms of thoughts and confidence concerning education, financing, and resources in the community.



## Conclusion

It is evident that the workshop has positive impacts on youth in terms of their thoughts, beliefs, and confidence regarding their community resources, academic success, financial skills. The post-survey results demonstrate that youth acquired new knowledge, awareness, values, confidence, and optimism. The program also allowed youth to meet other youth with similar obstacles, form social bonds and feel less alone. Overall, the program promoted positive individual, social, and community outcomes.

## References

- Eccles, J. S., & Gootman, J. A. (2002). Features of positive developmental settings. In J. S. Eccles (Ed.) and J. A. Gootman (Ed.). *Community programs to promote youth development*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Lawford, H., Ramey, H., Rose-Krasnor, L., & Proctor, A. (2012). Predictors of adolescent successful development after an exchange: The importance of activity qualities and youth input. *Journal of Adolescence, 35*, 1381-1391.
- Oman, R. F., Vesely, S. K., Mcleroy, K. R., Harris-Wyatt, V., Aspy, C. B., Rodine, S., & Marshall, L. (2002). Reliability and validity of the Youth Asset Survey (YAS). *Journal of Adolescent Health, 31*(3), 247-255.