



FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Division of Applied Psychology

Teen Leadership Program Interim Report

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Background

Over the past decade educators have increasingly acknowledged that academic skill development is best fostered in optimal learning environments that encourage the development of youths' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. The terms self-concept, resiliency, and emotional intelligence have become common place in educational leaders' vocabulary, reflecting an awareness of the inter-dependence of cognitive and social/emotional factors and the necessity to look to factors beyond scholastic ones to ensure that youths' school experiences are optimal.

The challenge before educators currently is to find a way to integrate this emphasis on students' social cognition into their instructional program. This challenge is made more difficult by teachers' traditional training and practice, which has focused almost exclusively on academics, especially in the secondary grades.

Current Study

Purpose. The aim of this evaluation study is to conduct an arms-length outcomes evaluation of the effectiveness of the Rapport Teen Leadership Program in supporting development of social cognition in youth. The following key attributes have been targeted within the program:

- Interpersonal skills
 - Communication
 - Teamwork
 - Leadership
 - Understanding of the perceptions and feelings of others
- Intrapersonal skills
 - Self-awareness
 - Confidence
 - Core values
 - Courage

Design. In our evaluation of the Rapport Teen Leadership Program, we have utilized a pre- post-test comparison group design. More specifically, participants were divided into two groups, treatment and delayed treatment. All participants were/are to be tested at the following points: before treatment, immediately following treatment, and six weeks after treatment.

Participants. Participants were 77 tenth grade students (equivalent number of girls and boys) who attend a publicly funded charter school in a large urban centre in western Canada. An assessment of participant's intellectual ability indicated that they were of average ability and were free from symptoms of emotional and behavioural problems.

Assessment Measures. Quantitative and qualitative measures were used in an effort to capture a complete picture of the effects of the Rapport Teen Leadership program.

A series of quantitative standardized measures were used to assess students' inter- and intra-personal attributes, attitudes, and skills:

- Resiliency
- Self-concept
- Emotional Intelligence
- Family Communication

These measures were chosen for their psychometric properties (i.e., strong reliability and validity) and because average to high performance levels are associated with prosocial behaviour, school success, and positive long-term life outcomes.

Qualitative measures in the form of a follow-up semi-structured interview targeted the following areas:

- Communication skills
- Teamwork
- Enthusiasm
- Self-confidence
- Core values
- Self-awareness
- Personal focus and commitment
- Personal accountability

Results. Our quantitative analysis of the pre- post-treatment results indicated that the Rapport Teen Leadership Program was effective in improving student’s performance. In other words, statistically tests revealed that significant differences existed between the two groups following treatment but not prior to treatment. Specifically, significant improvements have been demonstrated in the youth participants in the following areas:

- Emotional intelligence
- Self-concept
- Social skills
- Leadership skills
- Interpersonal relationships

To illustrate the positive change scores, the following graphs report percentage of improvement.

Figure 1. Percent Change in Resiliency (Sense of Mastery)

The graph below shows that participants who participated in the intervention program demonstrated an improvement score of 17% between their pretest and the testing immediately following the intervention. This improvement represented a statistically significant change. In contrast, the control group improved only 4%, and this change was not statistically significant. Further, when we compared the pretest scores of students who participated in the treatment with their scores six weeks after treatment, we determined that an improvement score of 8% was maintained and that this represented a statistically significant change. In contrast, there was no statistical difference between the pretest and six-week test results of the control group.

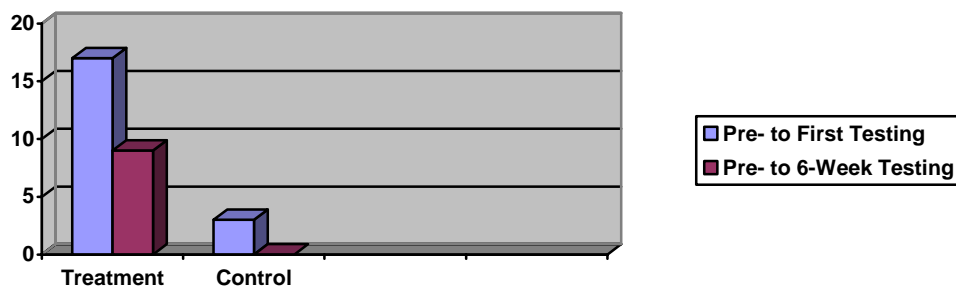


Figure 2. Percent Change in Emotional Intelligence

The graph below shows that participants who participated in the intervention program demonstrated an improvement score of 17% between their pretest and the testing immediately following the intervention. In contrast, the control group improved only 10%. There was a statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of the two groups both immediately following the intervention and six weeks after the intervention.

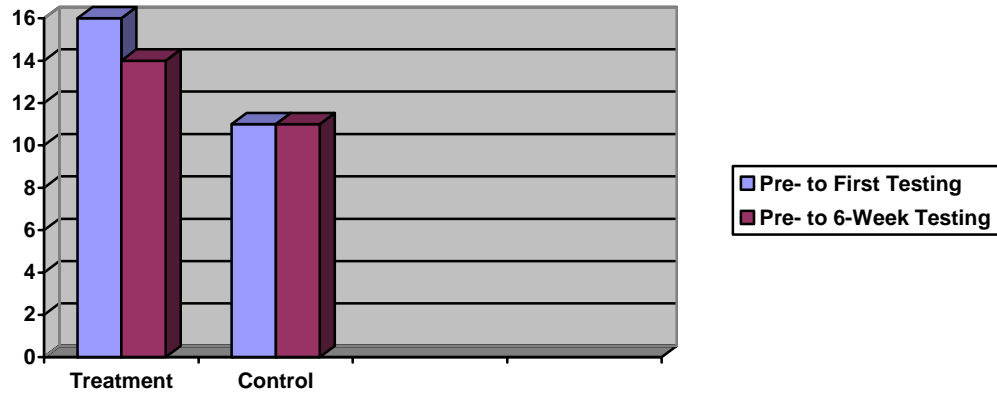


Figure 3. Percent Change in Self-concept

The graph below shows that students who participated in the intervention program demonstrated an improvement score of 11% between their pretest and the testing immediately following the intervention. This improvement represented a statistically significant change. At the six-week testing, this change was maintained at 8% for the group who received the treatment, a change that remained statistically significant. However, there were no significant differences in the change scores of the control group.



The quantitative analyses of the follow-up interviews clearly demonstrated that the program helped participants to

- Improve their communication skills
- Work as a member of a team
- Become more committed and enthusiastic about things
- Gain self-confidence and a stronger belief in themselves
- Take on bigger challenges
- Understand the values that are important to them
- Become more aware of their feelings and thought, and the impact they have on others
- Be more able to set goals and focus on achieving them
- Become more aware of their own strengths and how to make the most of them
- Accept responsibility for their actions

Interpretation

The results of the statistical analyses clearly demonstrate that the Rapport Teen Leadership Program effectively improve students scores on multiple aspects of inter- and intra-personal skills and attributes. That is, the treatment group showed significant gains whereas the delayed treatment group did not immediately following the intervention workshop. Even more noteworthy is the improvement maintenance after a six-week lag. Thus, the results suggest that the intervention program has the capacity to impact positively on knowledge of self and others, self-concept, and prosocial behaviour, in general. Moreover, these attributes, attitudes, and skills have, in the literature, been shown to positively impact school success and long-term life outcome.

Research rarely demonstrates results of this nature. For example, although social skills training has been demonstrated to produce significant change immediately following training, meta-analyses of outcomes studies of social skills training programs have revealed that the changes are not maintained in the long run. Moreover, many programs that purport to effect change in youth's social/emotional functioning have not been subjected to empirical scrutiny and instead, rely on testimony and anecdotal observations and comments. Thus, the current study is doubly noteworthy for its findings and its empirical rigor.

Publication Plans

Given these preliminary results, the Teen Leadership Breakthrough appears to be a successful intervention that could be used with youth throughout North America to promote leadership qualities, communication abilities, and self-confidence. These results need to be disseminated to Canadian professionals, researchers, and practitioners working with youth so that these professionals become aware of the benefits to using and recommending the Teen Leadership Breakthrough. We anticipate publishing two articles in academic journals to report these remarkable results. The results can be clearly separated into two categories: those related to social and self-efficacious outcomes and those pertaining to relationship outcomes. Additionally, we are submitting two proposals to the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) annual conference, being held in Halifax in June 2008. This is an opportunity for researchers and practitioners to present research results and learn about new psychological studies, treatments, and interventions.