

Healthy Relationships for Youth Program Evaluation Report 2010-2011



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***Healthy Relationships for Youth Program
Evaluation Report 2010-2011***

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Introduction

The Healthy Relationships for Youth (HRY) Program is a school based violence prevention program which includes youth as peer educators in the classroom as well as in their schools. The HRY Program delivers a series of twelve cumulative sessions within the Grade 9 Health curriculum. The program is offered to high schools in the Strait Regional School Board. It focuses on facilitating youth learning about developing and maintaining healthy relationships.

The HRY Program is based on the belief that sexism, racism and homophobia are forms of oppression which contributes to violence. Through enhancing awareness of the social context of their lives and providing skill development to promote healthy interpersonal communication, youth can make positive decisions about their own behaviour and reduce violence.

All Antigonish Women Resource Centre programs are evaluated on a regular basis. The HRY Program evaluates annually its three main components, namely: grade nine student participants, youth facilitators, and teachers/adult facilitators. Teachers were responsible for the administration of the surveys to the grade nine students. These three evaluation components have been compiled to create "*The Healthy Relationships for Youth Evaluation Report for 2010-2011.*"

Program Objectives

- to engage Grade 9 students in ten school sites within the Strait Regional School Board of Nova Scotia in a series of classroom sessions designed to promote healthy and respectful relationships
- to assist youth in developing the attitudes, values and skills they need to build and maintain healthy relationships
- to increase students' understanding of racial/cultural diversity specifically relating to the Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian communities
- to increase students' awareness of issues related to violence prevention and social inequities from a gender based perspective
- to foster youth development which includes: peer support, youth empowerment, youth-adult partnerships, meaningful contribution and experiential learning

Delivery and training

Start-up for the school based HRY Program begins in September. During this fifth year of funding through the Canadian Women's Foundation, the HRY Program has continued in nine schools of the Strait Regional School District. This year, 10 teachers, two community-based adult facilitators, and 91 youth facilitators delivered the program to a

total of 536 students. In addition, the youth facilitators from half of the schools made a social action plan based around a topic of their choice.

The HRY Co-ordinator trains the teachers, community-based workers, and youth early in school year. The HRY teachers and community-based facilitators were trained on September 16 at the Mulgrave Professional Development Centre. Youth facilitation training requires a co-facilitator for added support and safety. Kalysa Archibald co-facilitated training the Mainland youth facilitators at J.H. Gillis Regional High on September 16, and 24. Genevieve McGean co-facilitated training the Cape Breton youth facilitators at Dalbrae Academy on October 1 and 2. St. Mary's had follow-up training on November 12 because 6 new youth facilitators had been recruited. Youth facilitators at both training sessions were eager to practice their facilitation skills and meet students from other schools.

HRY Participation for 2010-11

Participating Schools	Total # of Students Per School	Number of Grade 9 Classes
Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School	829 (9-12)	9
East Antigonish Academy	308 (P -12)	2
St. Mary's Academy	194 (9-12)	1
Canso Academy	80 (9-12)	1
Guysborough Academy	311 (P -12)	1
CBHA - Cape Breton Highlands Academy	398 (P -12)	2
Inverness Academy	290 (P -12)	1

** East Antigonish Academy delivered the HRY Program within the grade 9 English class.*

Healthy Relationships for Youth Program Student Survey Report 2010/2011

The HRY Program is evaluated by surveying the participating grade 9 students. The student surveys were delivered to all nine schools in February and March of 2011. This year, 172 student surveys from six schools were completed and returned to the HRY Program Co-ordinator between March and June 2011. Administration of the surveys required about 30 minutes. Due to time pressures, not all participating schools administered the student surveys. Efforts made by the teachers to have the student surveys completed and returned is greatly appreciated as it helps us demonstrate the effectiveness of the program, continue to improve the program, and learn from our experiences. The student survey report is a review and analysis of each of the seven survey questions.

Surveys completed by participating schools and gender

School	Surveys completed	Male Students	Female Students	Other or unidentified
Canso Academy	18	6	12	0
Cape Breton Highlands Academy	36	13	23	0
Guysborough Academy	18	12	6	0
Dalbrae Academy	17	9	8	0
Inverness Academy	27	14	12	1
Richmond Academy	56	31	25	0
Total	172	85	86	1

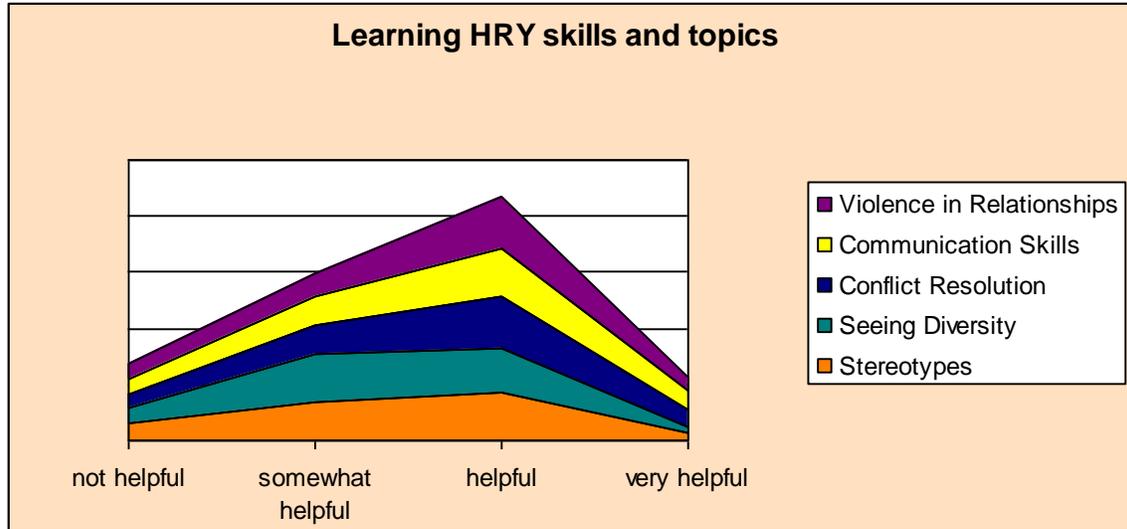
Survey format

The student survey was three pages long, and composed of a series of multiple choice and short answer questions. The multiple choice questions asked students to rate a topic by circling a number from 1 to 4; 1=not helpful, 2=somewhat helpful, 3=helpful, 4=very helpful. Below each scale, students were given space to write about what they learned as a result of the discussion.

Question 1: Please rate how useful it was to learn about the following topics and provide an example of what you learned.

The five key topics evaluated included: stereotypes affecting boys and girls, awareness of diversity in your school and community, conflict resolution, healthy communication skills, and violence in relationships. The chart below demonstrates that most students

rated the discussions between somewhat to very helpful, with the majority of students rating all discussions as helpful. Students reported the highest *helpful* ratings for conflict resolution.



A) Stereotypes

Of the 172 completed student surveys, 51% percent of student felt it was *helpful* to *very helpful* to learn about stereotypes while 16 % expressed it was *not helpful*. There was a difference in responses to discussions on the topic of gender stereotyping according to gender; 58% of girls found it was *helpful* to *very helpful* ($n=49$), while 41% of boys ($n=35$) found it was *helpful* to *very helpful*.

Stereotypes are identified by the students as an inaccurate form of judgement that is harmful. Students express the understanding that there are many forms of stereotyping and that stereotyping can be mean and hurtful.

- “*Stereotypes are everywhere, even if you don` t realize it. I was able to see stereotypes everywhere and try to change them.* ”
- “*There are lots of stereotypes that affect both girls and boys.*”
- “*I learned not to judge from gay to straight.*”

B) Seeing Diversity in your school and community

HRY has a diversity focus in that the program presents roots of violence such as racism, sexism, and homophobia. Accepting diversity involves understanding differences and how diverse experiences affect who and how we are in the world. The majority of the students (82%) rated this topic as *somewhat helpful* (40%) or *helpful* (42%). More female students (10%) rated the session as *very helpful* than male students (1%). Students

commented on understanding diversity as a strength in the community and as an individual quality:

- *“Everyone is different in their own way and it’s good to have diversity.”*
- *“Everybody is unique in their own way but just because you are not the same as somebody doesn’t mean you are not as good.”*
- *“Everyone should be treated fairly.”*

Students also mentioned discrimination and an understanding on inequities based on diversity.

- *“Helped me realize what some people are going through.”*
- *“People are often judged by race.”*
- *“A lot of people are racist to black people.”*

C) Conflict resolution

Students learn and practice conflict resolution skills of active listening and negotiation to solve problems. Conflict resolution had the overall highest ratings with 88% of students ranking it helpful in some way: 16% found it *very helpful*, 45% found it *helpful*, and 26% found it *somewhat helpful*. On the other end of the scale, male students were three times as likely to rate the session as *not helpful* (19%) as compared to female students (5%).

Students commented on the importance of conflict resolution:

- *“There’s always a way out. Every problem can be fixed.”*
- *“Solve problems without making bigger problems”*
- *“Sometimes you have to really work to keep your temper.”*

They also mentioned specific conflict resolution skills they learned:

- *“The right way to talk and listen to people”*
- *“You should speak your mind without yelling rudely and inappropriately.”*
- *“I learned how to solve a problem the right way and to hear both sides of the situation.”*

D) Healthy communication skills

Healthy communication skills are the building blocks for healthy relationships. They are required in order to be successful at resolving problems and conflicts. Most students found this skill development helpful in some way: 17% found it *very helpful*, 43% found it *helpful*, and 26% found it *somewhat helpful*. This is a similar rating to conflict resolution. Students surveyed expressed the importance of healthy communication and were able to identify key elements of communications skills learned during the HRYP Program sessions:

- *“Make eye contact gently”*
- *“There’s more to listening than just sitting there and hearing”*
- *“My vocabulary grew.”*

The following comments demonstrate how students are using communication skills to build and maintain respectful relationships:

- *“This was helpful because it taught us how to successfully interact with each other”*
- *“How to communicate in a healthy way that doesn’t end up hurting yourself or your peers”*
- *“You shouldn’t push someone to do something they don’t want to do.”*

Students demonstrated a range of previous knowledge and skill around communication. One student commented that she learned, “how to communicate better – I wasn’t very good at it before.” Others responded that this was not new information to them. For example, one student said, “It may be good for some people but to me personally I think we all know how to have a healthy conversation.” These comments highlight the range of comfort around communication and the importance of developing spaces for those students with less communication skills to practice and develop them.

E) Violence in relationships

Over half of students surveyed (56%) responded that learning about violence in relationships was *very helpful* (11%) or *helpful* (45%). According to the survey, 30% more girls considered it *very helpful* or *helpful* to learn about dating violence, 82% of girls ($n = 70$) compared to 52% of boys ($n = 44$). Also, 25% of boys ($n=21$) rated this session as *not helpful* in comparison to 6% of the girls ($n=5$). This difference highlights both a perception that dealing with dating violence is not a male issue as well as the difficulty in engaging boys in effective discussions about violence in relationships. The HRY program aims to engage students by building strong community for discussion as well as give space for boys to speak out against violence.

Several male students commented on what they learned. These comments demonstrate that the program is effective for some male student, an element that can be built on to engage more male students.

- *“Always respect the other person in a relationship and don’t solve problems with abuse.”*
- *“It is not right to hurt the one you love, and if you know someone getting hurt you should try and help.”*
- *“Anybody can be affected by violence in a relationship.”*

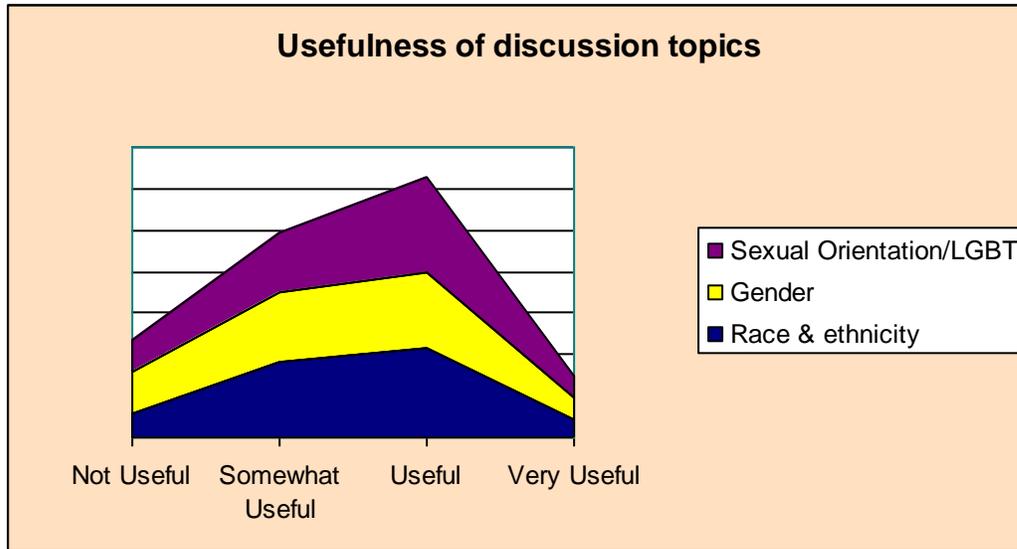
In the HRY Program, a clear emphasis is placed on recognizing the signs of abuse, the challenges of getting out of an abusive relationship and the supports available.

- *“Some signs of an abusive relationship and I wish I would have known that earlier”*
- *“People can’t always get out of violent relationships; sometimes they need someone to support them.”*
- *“Lots of people stay in violent relationships because they are scared of what will happen if they try to leave.”*

- *“That there is always a way out and how you don’t really know what’s happening behind closed doors.”*

Question 2: Please rate how useful it was to discuss the following topics and provide an example of what you learned about the topic.

The second question asked students to rate the usefulness of the following discussion topics: race and ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation/LGBT. The chart below illustrates that the topics were overall useful discussions. The discussions around sexual orientation/LGBT and race and ethnicity had the highest usefulness ratings.



A) Race/ethnicity

Racial diversity is present in all schools in the Strait Regional School Board. Part of respecting diversity is being aware of the social impact of intolerance. Intolerance of racial diversity is racism. In order to address racism we must be able to recognize how it is still a problem. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of students surveyed, expressed that discussing racism in the HRY Program was *very useful* to *somewhat useful*. Eleven percent (11%) of students did not find discussing race and ethnicity useful. The student comments below express the impact of discussing race & ethnicity:

- *“We should not be judged by our race.”*
- *“It doesn’t matter what you look like, or what shape and size you are, you are still a human being.”*
- *“A lot of people don’t understand the amount of racism going around.”*
- *“How to be more careful on the words I use.”*

B) Gender

The topic of gender was discussed throughout the HRY Program sessions. Two sessions give students the opportunity to explore how society can place expectations and pressures

upon us based on our perceived gender. Seventy percent (70%) of students rated discussing gender as *somewhat useful* (33%) or *useful* (37%). A smaller percentage of students (10%) rated the gender discussion as *very useful*.

The gender discussions helped students have the space and facilitated discussions to learn about themselves and others. Some were able to see the unique perspectives between genders.

- *“I learned a lot about what boys think and what they think they know about us.”*
- *“About the points of view of the opposite gender and how we should trust each other”*
- *“We learned how different genders are portrayed.”*

The separate gender sessions have been valued by students for the past four years of the HRY Program.

- *“When we were split up into groups by gender it was nice because people were more comfortable.”*

This improved understanding leads to the development of empathy among the genders as some youth expressed. Discussing gender often leads youth to see the underlying similarities that exist in all of us.

Equality was also identified by numerous students as a result of the gender discussions:

- *“All genders are 100% equal.”*
- *“Girls have just as many rights as boys.”*

C) Sexual Orientation/LGBT

One HRY Program session presents information on LGBT terminology and seeks to normalise diversity of sexual orientation and gender within the high school population and beyond. When asked to rate the usefulness of this discussion, students responded positively: 11% found it *very useful*, 45% found it *useful*, and 28% found it *somewhat useful*.

Comparing gender differences in responses, 36% more females responded that the discussion on sexual orientation was *useful or very useful* and 20% more males reported the discussion *somewhat helpful*. More males than females also responded that discussion was *not helpful*, with a difference of 17%.

When asked what they learned from this discussion, many students reported more understanding of terminology.

- *“The different terms used to address certain people.”*

The discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity is an issue of which many students reported increased awareness. Other comments reflect respect for diversity of sexual orientation:

- *“Not to judge people on their sexuality”*

- *“It is okay to discover your sexual orientation.”*
- *“Being LGBT is normal and should always be respected.”*
- *“That it’s not a decision, it just happens.”*
- *“It’s important to accept people for who they are, you can’t change them.”*

Student comments also showed some remaining misconceptions around sexual orientation as an individual choice. Several students wrote about respecting others’ choices and way that they want to be.

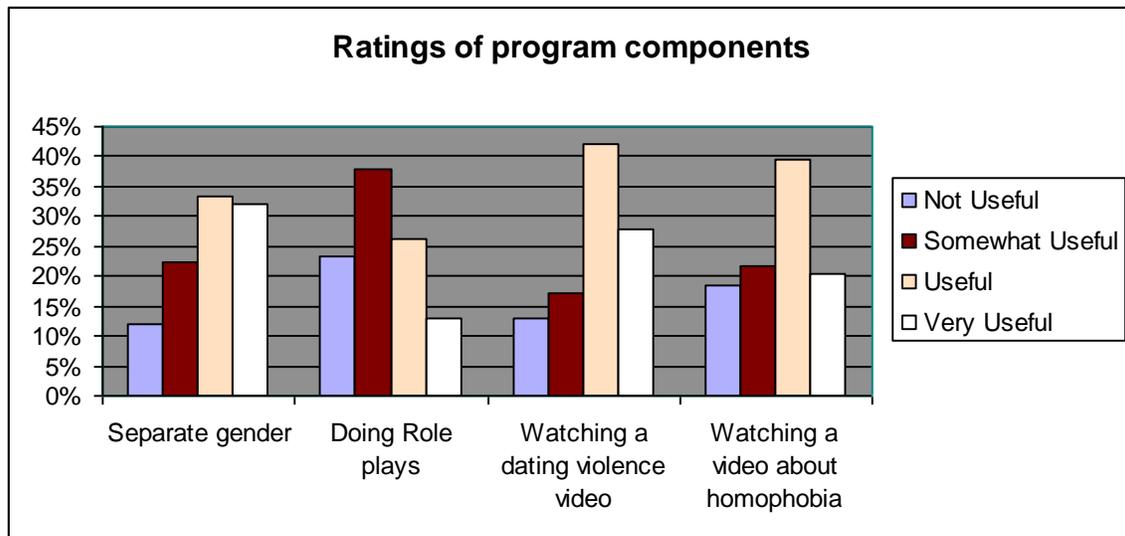
- *“We are who we are and that’s a choice.”*

For many students, this was the first time sexual orientation had been discussed in the classroom and the program allowed for an open, respectful discussion.

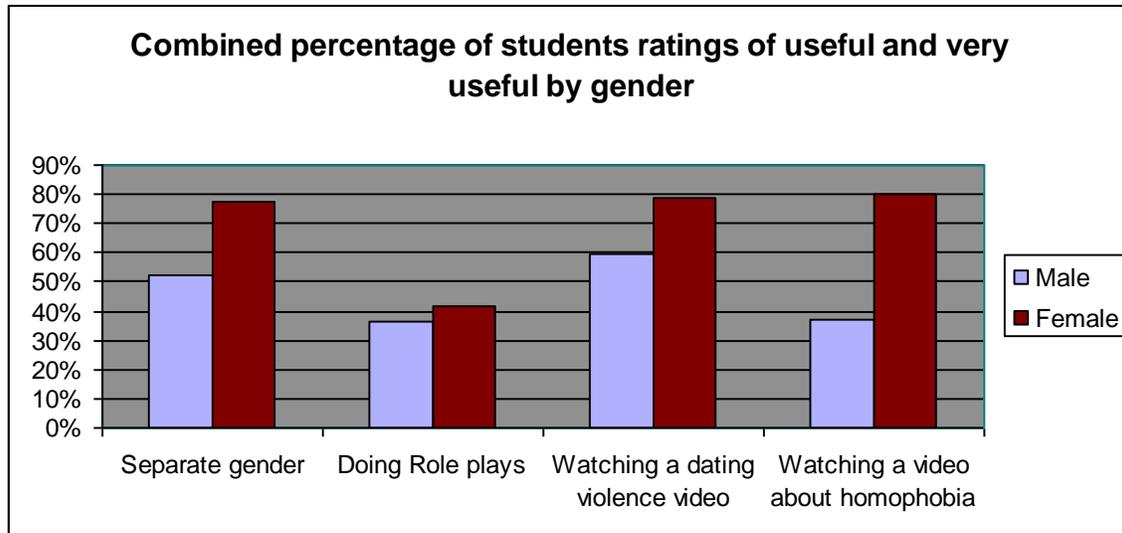
- *“Many people are uncomfortable with talking about LGBT but it was not uncomfortable in the program.”*

Question 3: Circle the number which best describes how you would rate each of the following.

Students were asked to circle the effectiveness of program components: separate gender sessions, role-plays, watching a video on dating violence and watching a video about homophobia. This makes up several different teaching and facilitation styles within the program. The chart below depicts these components as rated from *not useful* to *very useful*.



Overall, responses varied according to gender. The following chart depicts the gender breakdowns in the percentage of students who rated the components as *useful* or *very useful*. In general, more girls than boys reported that the program components were *useful* or *very useful*, with the greatest difference for the video about homophobia.



Separate Gender

The two separate gender sessions in the HRY Program curriculum were viewed as positive; 32% rated of students as *very useful* and 33% rated them as *useful*. Gender differences were observed between those who thought separate gender discussion was *very useful*. Although there was a high rating overall for separate gender discussion, 47% of girls reported finding it *very useful* while 16% of males did.

Role Plays

Role Plays are used in several HRY Program sessions including conflict resolution and communication styles. Over three quarters (77%) of the students surveyed rated the role plays from *very useful* to *somewhat useful*. Overall, role-playing had the least useful ratings of the program components.

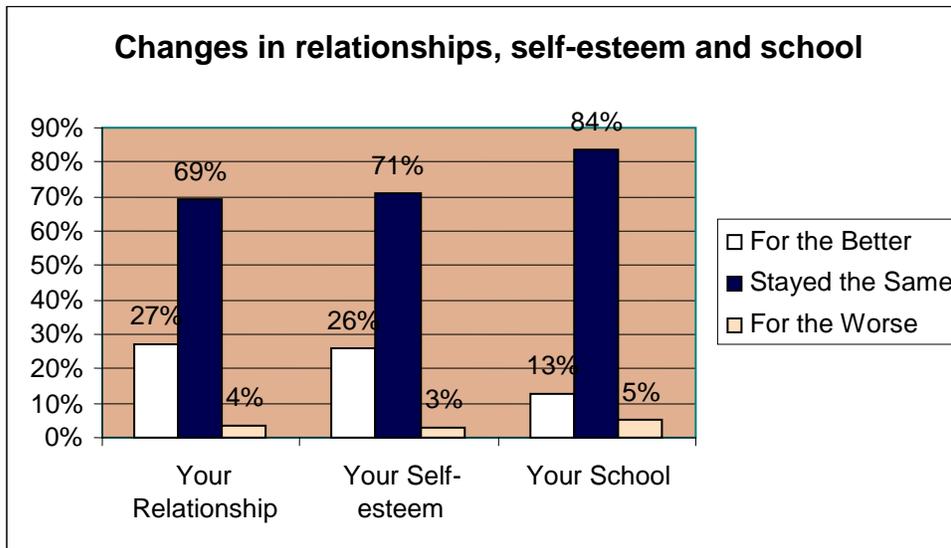
Dating Violence and Homophobia Videos

Two videos are used in the HRY Program curriculum. One video is about dating violence and the other is about homophobia. Students at Chedabucto did not watch the videos so this question was not relevant for them. Both videos were rated well by the students with 24% of students identified watching the HRY Program videos as *very useful*, 41% rated them as *useful*, 20% as *somewhat useful* and 16% rated the videos as *not useful*. More girls than boys rated watching the videos as *useful* to *very useful*, with a large difference of 43% for the video about homophobia and 20% for the video on dating violence.

Question 4: Please check the answer which best describes changes in the following:

Students were able to rate perceived changes in relationships, self-esteem, and school by ticking one of three boxes: for the better, the same, the worse. Students were also asked

to explain their answers. The majority of students reported that everything stayed the same. For every context, more students reported positive changes than negative changes.



A) Your relationships

Most students (69%) reported their relationships had not changed. Students who noticed a change for the better in their relationships (27%) expressed that they now had increased respect, understanding and improved communication in their relationships.

- *“I learned how to handle relationship problems.”*
- *“I learned how to communicate better, and became closer with people.”*
- *“I see how to respect myself and my partner better.”*
- *“I started going to dances and talking more.”*

Students also expressed an increased understanding of the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships.

- *“I know which relationships are healthy for me and which ones aren’t.”*
- *“I know how to tell when to get out of a relationship.”*

B) Your self-esteem

Twenty-six percent (26%) of students reported a change for the better in their self-esteem. Students who reported an increase in self-esteem expressed that they felt more confident and have an improved self image. The following are a selection of those comments:

- *“I’m much more proud to be me.”*
- *“I’ve never had a problem but HRY kept my self-esteem up.”*

- *“I can accept myself for who I am.”*
- *“Since I have learned a lot of different words and different relationships, I can go out into the world and try to change those things.”*
- *“More patient.”*

C) Your School

Thirteen percent (13%) of students who answered this question said they thought there was a change for the better in their school after the HRY Program. A large majority (84%) of the students identified that there was no change in their school while 5 % reported a change for the worse. Some comments about the school climate remaining the same include:

- *“Nothing changed, our school is pretty awesome.”*
- *“Our school is not affected by our PDR class.”*
- *“Some people can’t or won’t change.”*
- *“It is still unequal.”*

Some students took this opportunity to record that although the HRY Program sessions did not change the overall climate of the school, they did feel it had a positive impact on the classroom environment.

- *“We understand each other better.”*

Students who reported a change for the better commented on increased understanding, better relationships and reduced violence.

- *“People are less likely to be violent.”*
- *“I know more about diversity, stereotypes and LGBT so I know the school better.”*

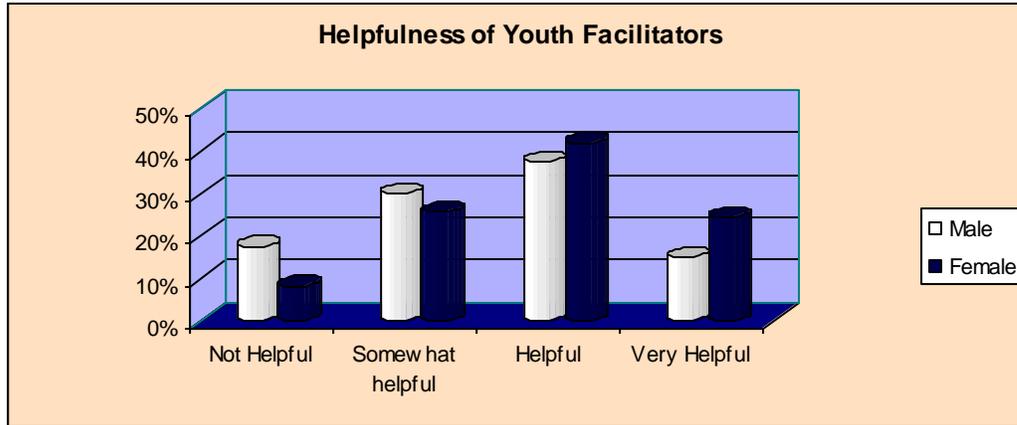
It is not clear if all of the changes can be attributed to the HRY Program due to the broad wording of the question and/or responses.

Question 5: Circle the number which best describes how you rate having youth facilitators.

Youth facilitators are trained to present the HRY Program sessions with the support of their teachers when needed. This peer education element is considered a best practice for youth violence prevention programs as identified by the Canadian Women’s Foundation. Peer education stands out as a very successful element of the HRY program according to the majority of grade 9 students in the Strait Regional School Board; 60 % rate it as *helpful* or *very helpful*; 28% rated them *somewhat helpful*, and 13% rated them as *not helpful*.

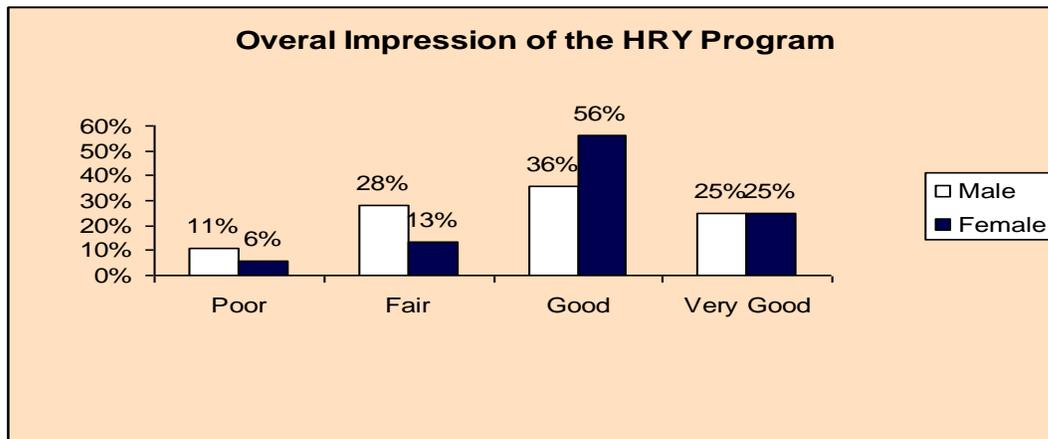
As demonstrated in the chart below, there was a mentionable difference between genders

for the *very helpful* and *not helpful* categories. Nine percent (9%) more girls than boys rated the youth facilitators as *very helpful*. Whereas, 10% more boys than girls rated it as *not helpful*. This difference may be attributed to the unequal gender ration of facilitators. Although the program strives to have diverse facilitators (in terms of gender, race, etc), the youth facilitators are predominantly female in most schools.



Question 6: What is your overall impression of the Healthy Relationships for Youth Program?

Students were asked to rate their overall impression of the HRY Program by circling a number from 1 to 4; 1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=very good. The majority of students surveyed (71%) reported their overall impression of the HRY program to be either good to very good ($n=76$ good; $n=41$ very good). Twenty-one percent (21%) rated the impression of the program as *fair*, and 8% rated it as *poor*. As shown in the chart below, although 25% of both males and females rated the program as *very good*, in general females reported a better overall impression than males.



9. What is one thing that you learned or took away from the HRY Program?

Students responded to this question with a wide variety of responses. Final comments from students about the HRY Program can be categorized into the following groups: the experience of having youth facilitators in the classroom, violence in relationships, communication skills, sexual orientation and gender stereotypes. Here is a selection of comments from the 172 surveys:

Youth facilitators

- *“I learned that talking to your peers (HRY) is much easier than having to talk to a teacher.”*
- *“Youth teaching the youth ☺”*
- *“It is fun to be taught by students.”*

Communication Skills

- *“I learned how to stand up for myself”*
- *“I learned that I have to be able to express my feelings in a relationship for it to be healthy; I never could before.”*
- *“If you give someone respect, you’ll get it back.”*
- *“I learned how to handle conflict better.”*

Violence in relationships

- *“How much abuse takes place around here and not just in cities.”*
- *“Relationship violence”*

Sexual orientation

- *“Homophobia is scary.”*

Gender stereotypes

- *“All the stereotypes for boys.”*
- *“‘All ___ are ___ statements’ are false.”*
- *“I learned that guys actually want girls to know they have feelings.”*
- *“The session about how the media portrays women really stood out to me. The media can be disgusting.”*

It is clear that the students surveyed felt they had learned valuable information in relation to the development of healthy and respectful relationships from the series of twelve HRY sessions. The HRY Program can impact individuals differently and the results of the student survey answers demonstrate a range of ways it has affected the grade 9 students across the Strait Regional School Board district.

HRY Program Youth Facilitator Focus Groups 2010-2011

The role of youth facilitator can be demanding and also rewarding. Youth facilitators are required to participate in two days of training in September. The youth are trained to facilitate two or more of the 12 cumulative HRY sessions in one or more classes. There are also requirements of individual preparation time, meetings with the HRY teacher, and several monthly HRY Team meetings with the Program Co-ordinator. Along with facilitating, the youth facilitators develop a “youth action” event to encourage violence prevention among the larger school population.

The youth facilitators evaluated their experience with the HRY Program by participating in focus groups during the spring of 2011. During the focus groups, youth facilitators were asked to evaluate their experiences as a youth facilitator and reflect on the overall HRY Program. Students responded orally but also had the option of submitting written comments. Over 60 students participated in the focus groups and thirteen submitted written responses. Below is a summary of each focus group question as well as a sample of answers.

Benefits

Youth facilitators described many benefits of the program in their own lives. Their comments loosely fit into leadership and facilitation skills, social skills, volunteer experience and knowledge.

Youth facilitators enjoyed being involved in their schools as leaders of the HRY program. They gained experience and confidence in leadership, public speaking and social action. Some of the benefits they named include:

- “Public speaking. It was hard to start off with and I had to write everything down but I worked on it and got more comfortable by the end. It helped to be paired up with somebody who was more comfortable.”
- “You want to be a better role model.”
- “Patience.”
- “Able to find your own voice and find the way you want to present.”
- “It brought me skill to lead a group and also gave me an experience to co-facilitate with another student which created new friendships and memories.”
- “I learned leadership skills, public-speaking skills as well as how to keep a group of teens under control and so that they are listening to what I have to say.”
- “If you see bullying in the hallways it’s easier to step in. The students see us as HRY.”

Youth facilitators also gained confidence with meeting new people and developing social relationships. The youth teams got to know each other in a new context and meet all the grade 9 students. They also connected with students from other regions during the training.

- “Getting to know younger grades.”
- “Meeting new people.”
- “Teaches you how to talk to people.”

- “We are still friends with people from the HRY leadership training. That’s where I met some of my best friends.”

The facilitators also used their volunteer experience on resumes for jobs, awards and post-secondary education.

- “Looks good on a resume.”
- “Used the experience as a reference for the Lieutenant Governor award.”

The facilitators also spoke of the knowledge they gained through reviewing the curriculum and through conversation with other students.

- “When you are reintroduced to topics as you grow older, you can use information in different ways.”
- “I liked hearing the way other students thought. I found out what they think about and what is important to them.”
- “At training, I found out about what is happening in other places and how young people are dealing with things.”

Challenges

The youth facilitators take on the responsibility of guiding the grade 9 students through activities and conversations. In this leadership role, they experience and work through different challenges. Most of the challenges stemmed from classroom management and student participation. Other challenges arose from the difficulties of organizing and preparing a session during “free” time.

The grade 9 students showed mixed levels of interest in the program. A few students that didn’t listen or take the session seriously could really disrupt the entire class. Youth facilitators sometimes struggled with getting their attention and keeping the session on track when students kept joking around. Some facilitators identified that the grade 9s might not be taking it seriously because they know the facilitators outside of class or because the facilitators are so close to them in age. Other facilitators felt that the proximity in age increased the level of respect.

- “Students need to realize this is not a joke. There was a person in the class who was LGBT so it is important they understand it will hurt if they laugh.”
- “Getting a real answer. Sometimes people just give joke answers.”
- “A challenge as a youth facilitator has been having loud and rude students in the classroom who would not be respectful towards me as a facilitator, their fellow classmates or their teacher.”
- “Some students were really ignorant to others and said inappropriate things that could have been really hurtful.”
- “As a facilitator they didn’t always take it seriously. Other may feel that they will be made fun of if they took it seriously.”

Most of the facilitators also spoke of the difficulty in getting students to participate and respond to their questions. They identified that shyness, discomfort with the issues and the small size of the school might contribute to the lack of participation.

- “Shyness, trying to get people to talk.”
- “Sometimes the boys talk more than the girls.”
- “They don’t want to be the first one to speak.”
- “Our school is really small and everybody knows each other.”
- “Same people participating.”

Organization and preparation time were other issues. This varied greatly depending on the school. Some students knew exactly when and what they were presenting with plenty of time to prepare. This was mostly the case when teachers developed an overall schedule at the beginning of the year. Other students wished they had more advance notice for facilitating sessions. It helped with their own preparation and ability to get permission to miss class. Facilitators also expressed mixed reactions to the monthly lunch-hour meetings. While some found them helpful and enjoyable, other felt like they were too busy over lunch hour for the meetings. Challenges included:

- “Some facilitators did not get to facilitate.”
- “No schedule”
- “Hard to get out of class”
- “Spur of the moment works sometimes.”

Facilitators also addressed timing of the sessions. Some sessions were too short and some were too long for the class timeframe. Timing also depended on the amount of conversation generated.

- “Sometimes one hour was too long. Sometimes is too short.”
- “Timing is challenging. You have to choose activities depending on the class.”

Most of these challenges can be addressed in collaboration with the classroom teacher. The teacher sets the tone, frames the program and intervenes with disciplinary measures as necessary. Other techniques, such as increasing participation, can be incorporated into training.

Impact on the grade 9 students

Youth facilitators thought that the grade 9 students also benefited from the program. They highlighted increased awareness, separate gender sessions, team-building and peer education as the strengths of the program for the grade 9s.

Facilitators commented on increased awareness of issues and supports in general as well as a better understanding of signs of abuse and LGBT terms and issues in particular.

- “Got them thinking, more aware of issue they looked past before.”
- “Helps students realise what’s abuse and what’s not normal; that it’s not just physical. They feel comfortable to talk about what’s happening to them and we won’t judge them.”
- “Aware that they have us to talk to, not just teachers.”
- “Understand terms of LGBT better.”
- “The LGBT session should make a difference but it depends on their mindset.”

- “The cycle of violence.”
- “Some kids don’t truly understand all of the different kinds of abuse or how they could be hurting someone, and this program showed them a lot.”
- “They are more comfortable and aware of the health centre.”
- “I feel the grade 9s have been impacted by hearing of subjects not usually discussed in schools, this makes them interested to learn about these subjects.”

They also noted the value of the separate gender sessions.

- “Separate gender was good for them because they got to see another side.”
- “Boys and girls talk differently by themselves.”

The facilitators spoke about how the HRY program helped develop stronger bonds in the classroom and in the school. They thought that the peer-education model has positive impact because it is a different way of learning.

- “I think the grade nine students learned a bunch this year. And just the fact that it’s coming from a peer, and not a teacher, that’s what makes the difference.”
- “It relaxes them. They can say more than they normally would because they know us.”
- “They took it to heart more than they would from a teacher.”
- “I feel that the HRY Program is great, especially the grade 9s with the transitions they are going through. I also feel that it is even more inspirational coming from other students who have been in their positions.”
- “Outside the classroom we are more connected to the grade 9s too. They come up and tell me stuff and ask about my day.”
- Sometimes you expect the quieter kids not to speak but they did. And the more popular kids actually turned out to be more beneficial to the group when you expected them to mock it. I think it’s because we showed respect.

Changes to Program

Youth facilitators are in a wonderful position to provide recommendations for program changes. They are in the classroom facilitating and also bring an articulate youth perspective. They made suggestions for issues covered, effective approaches, age of students, curriculum format and training. In general, they felt the curriculum was great but made some suggestions for what they would like to see in years to come.

In terms of issues, several facilitators felt that they could use both more training and more materials on LGBT issues and on cyber bullying. There was both an interest and a need for going more in depth on these subjects.

- “Do more sessions on LGBT, beyond the terms to put more of a human face on it. Students might not realize how hurtful language is because they have not witnessed it.”
- “The presentation we did on homophobia at the health fair really interested them.”
- “This is the first time students would have discussed LGBT awareness.”

- “Cyber bullying – more on that, what people say on Facebook and child pornography.”

Facilitators wanted more of the approaches that worked: movies, separate gender sessions and fun activities.

- “Do more fun team building activities at beginning, like what we did at training.”
- “Kids input more with video. They understand the difference when they see it happen.”
- “More separate gender sessions. The guys got talking and were more comfortable in the small group. They were being more open.”
- “Changes to the curriculum could be made. Things like less corny exercises and more fun ones. Also, to get more engaging rather than the facilitators reading the material.”
- “More games and activities so they are forced to take part”

Several groups felt like some of the topics should be covered at a younger age. They suggested doing the entire program or parts of the program for students in grades 7 or 8.

- “Start with younger students because the grade 9s already have their opinions about the way things are supposed to be (like the media).”
- “The presentation on the cycle of an abusive relationship should be done at a younger age so that they can speak out sooner.”

They also talked about specific aspects of the curriculum. For example, while the storytelling session went over really well in some schools, other facilitators did not feel it was relevant. They suggested making explicit links between the activities and the program objectives so that everybody could see how it fit together. They also requested a summary of different games and activities that they could use to fill in or make replacements. This would give them more tools for adjusting the timing differences between sessions.

Impact on future career or education choices

The youth facilitators developed valuable skills and knowledge that can influence their career and education choices. Through their leadership role, they discovered their personal strengths and interests, developing a stronger self awareness. Many facilitators articulated that they would like to bring their facilitation, public speaking and communication skills into whatever career they choose. Some facilitators said that the program directly impacted or reinforced their choice of pursuing a career in education or social work. Others commented that they would not like to become a teacher, after having experienced a classroom from a teacher’s perspective.

- “Gave me a new perspective on being on the other side as a teacher.”
- “I know myself better, like I am more certain if I am right for something or not.”
- “The HRY program has influenced my work and future career choice because I enjoy working with youth. I feel that sometimes youth get ratted on but most of

them are just trying to find their way. This is what I have seen over my three years facilitating.”

Impact on personal relationships

Facilitators are impacted by the content of the healthy relationship curriculum. For some, it influences their personal or relationship choices. For others, it provides a deeper analysis for understanding issues. Youth talked about the experience impacting the way they treated and saw others in general, their ability to recognize healthy and unhealthy relationships and their personal behaviour.

- “Asserting yourself with friends and family”
- “More likely to recognize a healthy or unhealthy relationship when you’re trained”
- “I challenge racism and homophobia.”
- “I didn’t know what was right until I came here.”
- “I learned about the issues the students brought up. I found out more about my own opinions and what is right and wrong to me.”
- “It helps you see relationships more critically and notice stuff going on around you.”

Highlights

Almost all of the youth facilitators really enjoyed the experience. They highlighted favourite parts, ranging from skills acquired to specific activities. In general, facilitators enjoyed the leadership role of working with younger students, the ability to make a difference in the way students think about themselves and issues, and the training component. Highlights include:

- “Knowing what I am teaching is useful.”
- “More people are challenging racism.”
- “Getting to see a younger student being able to speak up – she had a voice.”
- “They see us as role models. They trust us more.”
- “People in this school used to be further apart. Now we are closer together.”
- “I liked meeting everyone at training. They are all really cool people.”
- “I have enjoyed teaching the students and hearing input from students that I thought would never speak up. I have built relationships with students in my school from educating them about subjects they want to know about. I really enjoyed teaching this year and will be joining HRY again next year!”
- “Leadership”

Healthy Relationships for Youth Program Teacher Survey Report 2010-2011

This year five out of nine HRY teachers completed a feedback survey. Teachers also provided some feedback during the youth focus groups and monthly meetings. The survey was composed of two parts: Part I posed a series of questions to gauge the level of involvement and Part II asked for comments on what worked well, what did not work well and recommendations. They provided feedback on the HRY team, the HRY approach and the HRY curriculum.

Part I

Most of the teachers either co-facilitated or observed the sessions. They all coordinated the session schedules and maintained contact with the HRY coordinator. Three out of five prepared the youth facilitators for each session. Overall, the teacher involvement, leadership and organizational support for the students led to a successful program. It requires a balance of stepping back and providing space for the youth facilitators to lead sessions while maintaining a respectful classroom environment.

Part II

Teachers' comments can be categorized into three themes: youth facilitators, separate gender, curriculum activities and recommendations.

Youth facilitators:

In general, the teachers made great comments about the youth teams in terms of their dedication, perspective and openness.

- "I was confident the facilitators could deliver lessons maturely and effectively and I enjoyed seeing peer-peer learning taking place."
- "I had a number of very committed and energetic facilitators this year who were very dependable."
- "The group members seemed very willing to work with one another and were very positive when facilitating."
- "The grade nine students always asked who was coming in next with HRY. They really liked it."

The main challenges were around organizing meetings and preparing for sessions. Lunch-time meetings are difficult because of limited time and other commitments. While some teachers felt the schedules worked well, others expressed a need for more organization and clarification around students' responsibility to prepare for sessions. Sometimes teachers or other youth facilitators had to step in as facilitators at the last minute.

- "Students were not always prepared. More emphasis on responsibilities."
- "It is difficult to meet every month."

Separate gender sessions:

Teachers noted that the separate gender component of the program was well received by the grade 9 students.

- "My students REALLY enjoyed the separate gender sessions."

However, these sessions were often the most difficult to co-ordinate due to the lack of a second adult facilitator, especially for the male group. Teachers made up for this by moving between both groups but would have preferred the presence of another teacher (different sex) to observe or co-facilitate.

Curriculum activities and recommendations:

Teachers were supportive of the overall curriculum. The layout was easy to follow and well developed. In terms of specific activities, teachers had varied responses. Some activities worked well in certain schools but not as smoothly in others (sitting in a circle, check-ins and storytelling). A couple of teachers also requested more emphasis on LGBTQ issues. Several teachers noted the positive reception of the games and more physical activities and wanted to increase this aspect of the program. They also noted a discrepancy in timing between different sessions and classes. This requires review within the curriculum and a possible addition of a selection of activities to fill in extra time or replace longer activities when necessary. Another teacher expressed that the program should be done in grade 7 or 8 rather than in grade 9.

- “I found the circle discussion was difficult for the class to adjust to – too large.”
- “Continue doing what is already in place.”
- “The curriculum was great! Maybe more on LGBTQ.”
- “More games.”

Teachers are positive about the HRY program, especially regarding youth facilitators and the issues covered in the curriculum. The peer education model and the separate gender sessions stand out as important aspects of the program. Each classroom presents a different dynamic and requires flexibility within the curriculum and the approach to adjust to different contexts. Some of the continuing challenges are around organizing, preparation and meeting times. Feedback from the teachers really helps the program coordinator support both students and teachers.

HRY Program Evaluation Conclusion

The information collected from grade 9 students, teachers and youth facilitators indicates that the program is attaining the intended objectives. Overall, students report increased awareness and skills for developing healthy relationships. Youth facilitators express a strong sense of empowerment and meaningful contribution to their schools. In the 2010-2011 school year, the majority of students (71%) rated the HRY Program as *good* to *very good*, 21% rated the program as *fair* and 8% rated it as *poor*. The most valued learnings commonly reported were communication and conflict resolution skills. Other common learnings were in the topics of diversity awareness, gender stereotypes and violence in relationships.

Teachers continue to be supportive of the HRY Program as it completed its fifth year of in-school programming. Highlights included the youth facilitators and the separate gender sessions. These two components can be the most difficult to coordinate but are identified as the most effective approaches in the program. Several teachers requested more games and activities to engage more students and to balance the timing of sessions. Youth facilitators also requested more games and activities for effective participation. Another recommendation was to direct the program to younger students.

Youth facilitators continue to enjoy their peer educator role with the HRY Program. Many express improved public-speaking, facilitation and leadership skills as a result of their involvement with the program. They enjoy making a positive difference in their schools.

The HRY Program thanks everyone who participated in the evaluation process. Feedback guides improvements to the program.