

# AMADEUSZ

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## EVALUATION REPORT YEAR 1

Written by the Students Commission of Canada

### Project Description

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Amadeusz is a charitable organization which supports young people who are incarcerated to create positive change in their lives through access to education, community programs and supports, mentorship, and exceptional care. The Amadeusz education program supports young people aged 18 to 35 in working towards their educational goals. The goal of this program is to provide young people who are incarcerated with the opportunity, resources, and support to complete their high school education and to explore, prepare for, and attend post-secondary schooling.

### Methodology

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Amadeusz has collaborated with the Students Commission of Canada (SCC) through their Sharing the Stories (StS) program, which offers customizable evaluation for non-profits serving youth. Together, they are working to ensure that Amadeusz continues to support young people who are incarcerated. The purpose of this report was to evaluate the impact of programming on the lives of the participants. For this evaluation, Amadeusz used both quantitative tools (surveys) and qualitative tools (participant focus groups written responses) to evaluate the impact of their programming.

The quantitative results showed that participants felt that they had a better likelihood of pursuing a number of different academic goals in the future after participating in the program. Participants also reported achieving higher grades in school after the program.

The qualitative results showed that participants were able to achieve various academic goals as a result of being enrolled in the program. They also described many other positive influences that the program had had on them and their lives.

Overall, the program succeeded in providing young people who are incarcerated with the tools that they needed in order to finish or begin the process of finishing their high school education, as well as pursue post-secondary education.

# Demographics

## Languages Spoken at Home



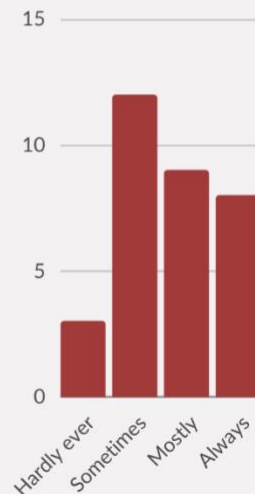
## Where do you live?

In own home	50%
In parents' home	19%
Homeless, couch surfing	13%
Other	9%
In a group home	3%
Homeless, on the street	3%

## Current Level of Education



## Do you have enough money to meet your basic needs?



## Disabilities and Accessibility Needs



Has a disability	31%
Has accessibility needs	13%

## Cultural and Racial Groups

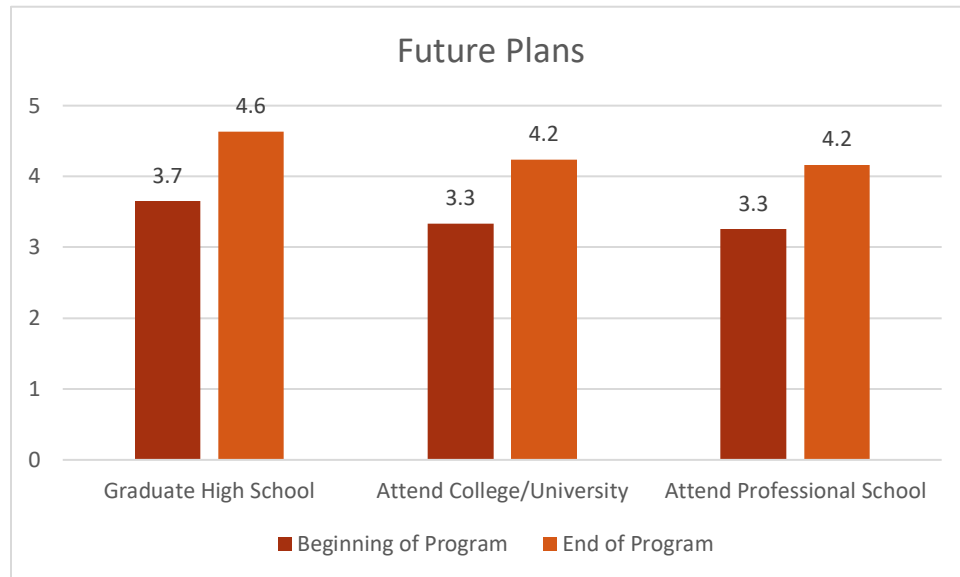


Caribbean	38%
North American	22%
First Nations	16%
South Asian	9%
Western European	6%
West African	6%
Latin American	6%



# Academic Success: Future Plans

The Academic Success module includes questions pertaining to one's future plans. Specifically, the first three questions seek to better understand how likely participants are to graduate from high school, attend professional school to learn a trade, or go to college or university (rated on a five-point scale, from 1 = very low to 5 = very high). Because this was a post-retrospective survey, youth were asked to reflect on how they felt before and after the program. The following graph illustrates the average scores for youth who participated in the program (n = 32).

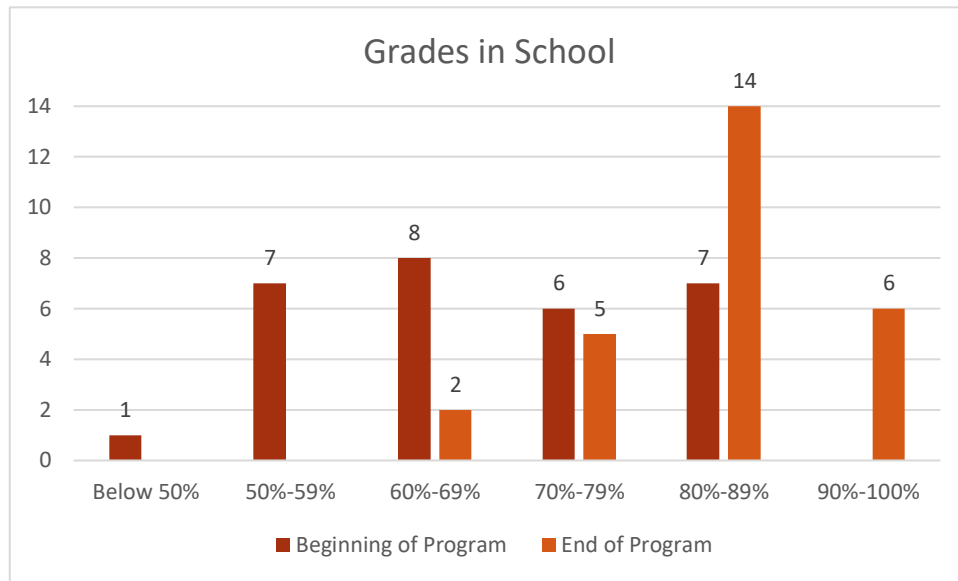


## Takeaways for Academic Success: Future Plans

- Participants reported greater likelihood of graduating from high school, attending college or university, and attending professional school in the future following the program versus before the program.
- Before the program, participants generally reported an 'about 50/50' to 'high' likelihood of graduating from high school, attending college or university, and attending professional school in the future. Following the program, participants generally reported a 'high' to 'very high' likelihood of pursuing these future academic and professional goals.
- This suggests that Amadeusz gave participants the tools and support they needed in order to envision a future where they are able to achieve these academic and professional goals.

# Academic Success: Grades

The final question concerns the participants' typical grades achieved in school, ranging from below 50% to between 90% and 100%. Because this was a post-retrospective survey, youth were asked to report their typical grades before and after the program. The following graph illustrates the amount of youth who participated in the program (n = 32) reporting typical grades in each grade bracket.



## Takeaways for Academic Success: Grades

- Participants more often reported achieving higher grades in school after the program versus before the program.
- Participants generally reported grades in the range of 50% to as high as 89% before the program, and grades in the range of 70% to as high as 100% after the program.
- This suggests that Amadeusz has provided the tools and support participants needed in order to improve their grades in school. Higher grades in school also provide participants with better academic and professional opportunities in the future.

# Participant Focus Group Written Responses

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Amadeusz had participants (n = 32) provide written responses to focus group questions in order to gain insight on their experiences and the impact of programming. The following qualitative analysis illustrates the key themes that emerged, the number of times each theme was mentioned, and quotes taken from participants.

## **Positive Experiences (18)**

Participants often referred to the many positive experiences that they had with the Amadeusz program as a whole, due to its enjoyable nature and its ability to inspire participants:

*This program is one of the most positive programs and the only other program than the [program name] that occupies inmates' time in a positive way that I have participated in while being incarcerated.*

*The Amadeusz program saves and changes some inmates' lives due to being the only positive in their lives. Without it, I would still be a grade 10 drop-out with less understanding and desire to be better and motivation.*

*[This program will make an impact in my community] by showing people who have given up on school or left for other reasons that they are capable.*

## **Individual Outcomes**

Participants described several different individual outcomes that resulted from being enrolled in the program. The themes that emerged from their answers are summarized below.

## **Academic Achievement (35)**

Participants reported on the various academic goals that they were able to pursue and/or achieve as a result of the program, whose main goal is to provide academic opportunity and support to these young individuals who are incarcerated:

*I've succeeded in getting my high school diploma (OSSD) and am well on my way to finishing a business (Marketing + Management) certificate program at Centennial College.*

*I've already completed my 1st credit and scored 98%, and I've also started 2 more courses. On top of this, I was able to get valuable information through the program that will help me further reach my goals.*

*I've obtained my GED and received help upgrading my credits, as well as set up and started with my bridge programs for my college courses (from inside the jail and in the outside community).*

## **Personal Growth (51)**

Participants often commented on the many ways in which they had bettered themselves and their lives as a result of the program. They often reported that they had learned more about themselves and their goals in life:

*I've learned to persevere and that it's never impossible to reach your goals as long as you work hard and don't give up. I've also learned to better manage my life, time, energy, etc. I've even learned it's okay to swallow my pride and ask for help when I need to.*

*...as been I'm finishing up on my schooling/staying out of trouble, I've become a better human being. Getting back into school has done me a world of good. Now I just want to reach my goal.*

*I have become more responsible, self-disciplined, and more ambitious.*

## **New Skills and Knowledge (39)**

Participants frequently described how they gained a variety of new skills while enrolled the education program, as well as useful and relevant knowledge:

*I learned how to write a resume and cover letter, how to focus, and how to properly dissect bodies of writing.*

*I've gained time management skills, important for when dealing with daily tasks, and appropriate grammar.*

*Personal life management. Time management. Goal setting. Hard work ethic.*

## **Employment Opportunities (5)**

Participants sometimes noted that they gained more and/or better opportunities for employment as a result of the program:

*I was able to apply for better jobs and maintain them.*

*This program will make an impact in my community because it provides] lots more job opportunities.*

## **Social Outcomes**

Participants also described several different social outcomes that they achieved as a result of being enrolled in the program. The themes that emerged from their answers are summarized below.

## **Support from Staff (37)**

Participants frequently referred to the support that they received from the program staff (in this case, the education case workers), and how that helped them achieve the various individual outcomes summarized above:

*I'd say [the most important characteristic of the program is] the people who have helped us (me & fellow students) succeed in our programs. Kudos to the Amadeusz team for being friendly, dedicated, and super understanding!*

*Staff acted like role models departing lots of knowledge. The organization is very hardworking, sending staff every week to update us and encourage us.*

*The most important characteristic of the program for me is how my teacher treats me with a lot of respect. It makes me want to get my work done. Like I said before, she is the best. I have a chance at life again. Thank you.*

## **Relationship Skills and Knowledge (18)**

In addition to the new skills and knowledge summarized above in the Individual Outcomes section, participants also often mentioned gaining and improving on a variety of social skills as a result of the program:

*I'm starting to build social and communication skills.*

*I learned how to communicate better with my teacher about what problems I'm having, which is a great skill.*

## **Community Outcomes**

Participants often described the positive impact that the program would have on the community. The themes that emerged from their answers are summarized below.

## **Access to Opportunity and Resources (12)**

Participants often mentioned that the program would provide community members (specifically, individuals who are incarcerated) with improved access to the opportunities and resources they need in order to succeed, academically and otherwise:

*[The program will make an impact in my community by] giving access to people in distress the opportunity to help and bettering themselves.*

*These programs are amazing, and I believe a key component in helping people better their lives, education, and changes. These programs help us move forward in life and better prepare us which helps us break the cycle of recidivism as well.*

*[This program] gives a lot of people the chance to achieve their goals and get on the right path to success.*

## **Connection to the Community (4)**

Participants sometimes described how the program would allow them to successfully re-integrate into their community following incarceration and contribute to society in a meaningful way:

*[The program will make an impact in my community] by making me a valuable member to society and community where I can give back my leading as a positive example.*

*The positive outcome of this program is to rehabilitate back into society. Encouraging to finish school and do something positive when back into the community.*

# Discussion and Conclusion

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Overall, Amadeusz has had a positive impact on the lives of young people who are incarcerated by giving them the tools and support they need in order to pursue their academic goals, whether that involves graduating from high school or attending post-secondary school.

The report showed that participants felt as though they given the resources and support that they needed in order to finish their high school education, enrich their lives, and envision and work towards future post-secondary education. Many participants described being given a sense of purpose from the program and found peace in being able to be productive towards their futures while incarcerated.

The quantitative results showed that participants improved their grades and could better envision a future in which they reach various academic goals after their enrollment in the program.

The qualitative results showed that participants were able to attain various academic and professional goals, learn new skills and gain more knowledge, improve themselves and their lives in various ways, and felt more positive about re-integrating into society after their incarceration period ended as a result of the program.

Throughout this report, it is evident that Amadeusz succeeded in providing young people who are incarcerated with access to education and community support. The voices of the young individuals who are incarcerated gathered in this baseline report can help to better understand reality for this group, the impact of such a program for this group, and can help to develop and improve similar programs that are beneficial for this group. Our recommendation is to discuss the present results with young individuals who are incarcerated in the community to see if this data portrays what they are experiencing.

