



EVER ACTIVE SCHOOLS EVALUATION REPORT YEAR 2 2025-2026

This report contains highlights of an independent evaluation conducted by the Students Commission of Canada on the specific results of the Ever Active Schools grant, funded by Catapult Canada through the Rideau Hall Foundation. Catapult Canada is a national platform dedicated to increasing equitable access to learning opportunities for youth across Canada. Specifically, Catapult Canada invests in community-based organizations committed to improving educational outcomes for youth through innovative approaches.

**Written by Nadia Hanif, the Students Commission of Canada,
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Ever Active Schools supports newcomer and refugee youth ages 12-24 in Medicine Hat and Brooks, Alberta using extra-curricular recreation and outdoor exploration to foster connection, belonging, and successful transition into their new communities. Through its “Resettlement Through Recreation” and “Resettlement Through Recreation – Leadership” programs, the organization promotes pathways to leadership, academic success, and employment within the recreation sector. With its two-year grant from Catapult Canada, Ever Active Schools completed Year Two of programming in 2025-2026, offering activities that enhance well-being, build community relationships, and strengthen career development and employment opportunities for newcomer youth.

METHODOLOGY

Ever Active Schools partnered with the Students Commission of Canada (SCC) through its Sharing the Stories (StS) platform, which provides youth serving organizations with the capacity and consistent tools to tell the story of their “Resettlement Through Recreation – Leadership” and “Resettlement Through Recreation” programs through rigorous evaluation and outcome tracking. This report draws on quantitative survey data from the “Resettlement Through Recreation – Leadership” program, complemented by qualitative insights from youth participants in both Medicine Hat and Brooks. Although data collection was planned for the broader “Resettlement Through Recreation” program, travel disruptions caused by a winter storm and the limited remaining timelines for data collection prevented this from occurring. As a result, no “Resettlement Through Recreation” (non-leadership) data were gathered this cycle, although partner reflections still helped contextualize program activity across both communities.

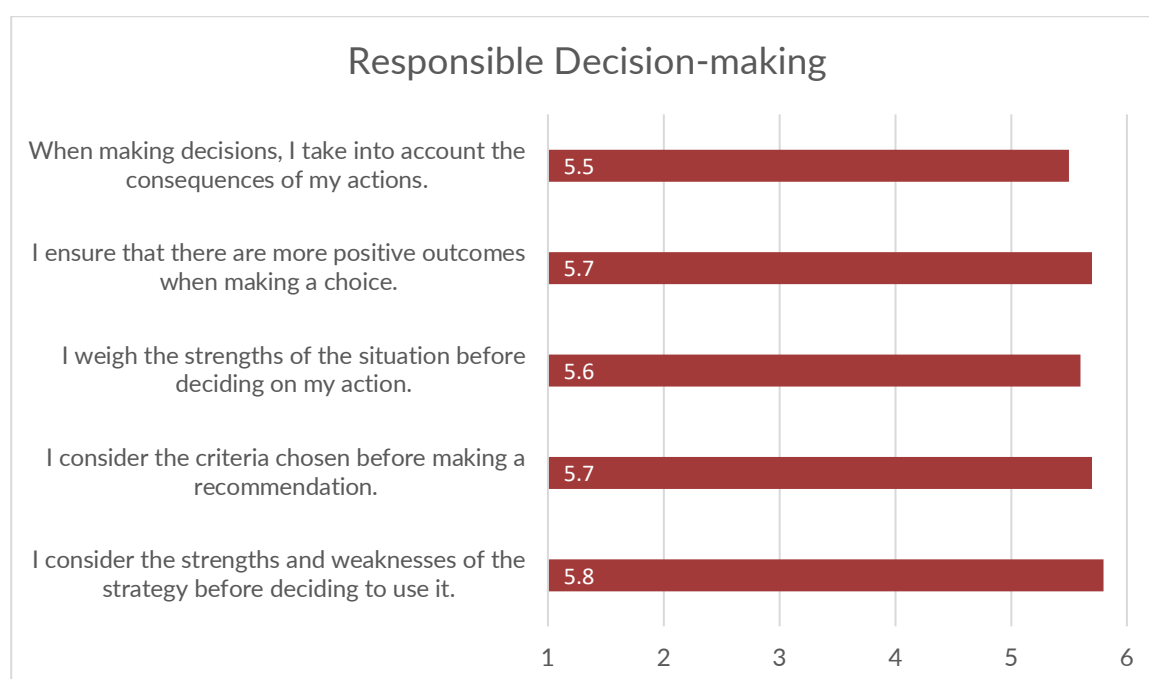
EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

This year’s results show that participants are developing strong foundations in leadership related skills, particularly in their ability to make thoughtful decisions, stay motivated as learners, and build meaningful connections within the program. Youth demonstrated a responsible approach to evaluating choices, consistent interest in improving their skills, and a generally positive sense of safety and belonging. They also showed a clear willingness to support others by sharing their knowledge and encouraging leadership among peers. At the same time, some variability across learning and connectedness indicators suggests opportunities exist to further strengthen critical thinking, deepen peer relationships, and continue amplifying youth voice in shaping their program experience. Overall, the findings point to steady growth across key developmental areas and highlight areas where targeted supports can enhance youth engagement and leadership.

RESETTLEMENT THROUGH RECREATION - LEADERSHIP PROGRAM IN MEDICINE HAT, ALBERTA

THE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

The Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire explores the extent to which participants have acquired key competences required to have effective responses in various social contexts. This includes the ability to identify and manage emotions in the self and with others, assisting in developing caring relationships and making conscientious decisions. For this report, the organization focused on evaluating the level of responsible decision-making and relationship management in youth who participated in the leadership program. Survey respondents (n=17) out of (n=17) were invited to rate the extent to which each statement applied to them on a scale of 1 (Not at all true of me) to 6 (Very true of me).



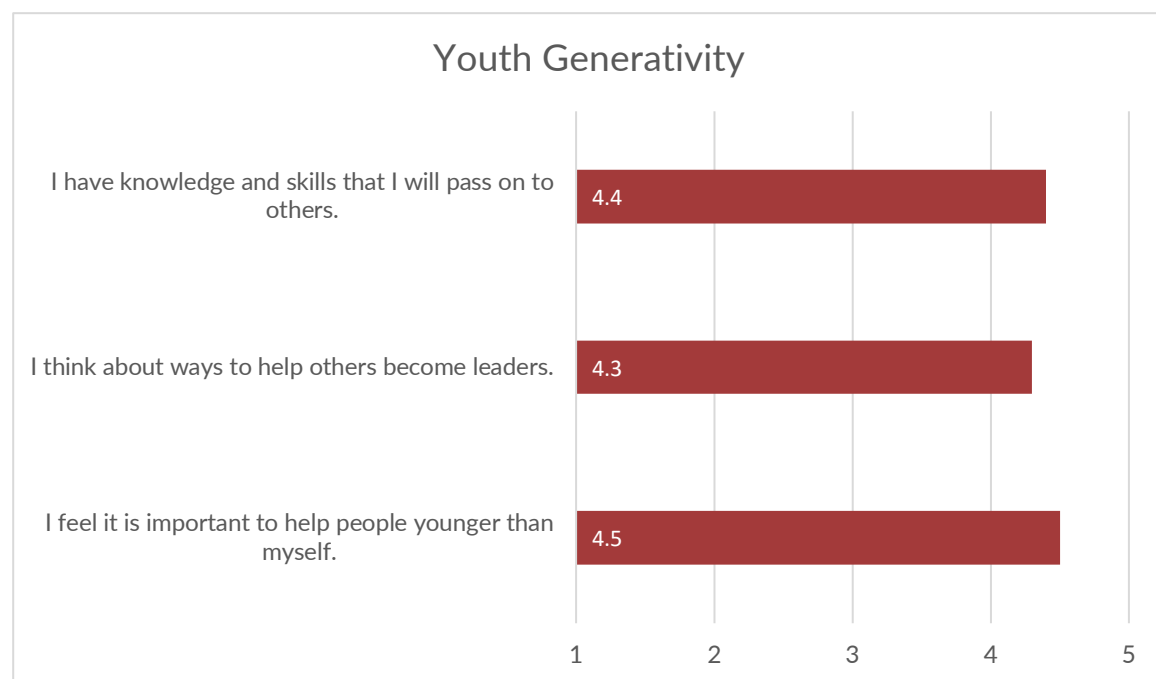
Takeaways:

The consistently high scores across all decision-making statements (5.5–5.8) suggest that participants take a deliberate and thoughtful approach to evaluating choices. They strongly consider the consequences of their actions, prioritize ensuring positive outcomes, and carefully assess situational factors before deciding. The results also show a disciplined tendency to rely on clear criteria and to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of strategies prior to implementation. Overall, these scores indicate a strategic and conscientious decision-making approach grounded in careful analysis and thoughtful planning.

THE MENTAL WELLNESS QUESTIONNAIRE

The Mental Wellness Questionnaire examines the extent to which participants demonstrate key competencies that support positive development within their social environments. One of these areas, youth generativity, reflects a young person's motivation to contribute to the growth, learning, and leadership capacity of others, particularly younger peers. These competencies are foundational for nurturing supportive relationships, fostering mentorship, and strengthening community-oriented values.

For this report, the organization focused on understanding the level of generative attitudes among youth participating in the leadership program. Survey respondents (n=17) were invited to rate the degree to which each statement reflected their beliefs on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). These ratings provide insight into how strongly participants value helping younger individuals, supporting leadership development in peers, and sharing their knowledge and skills with others.



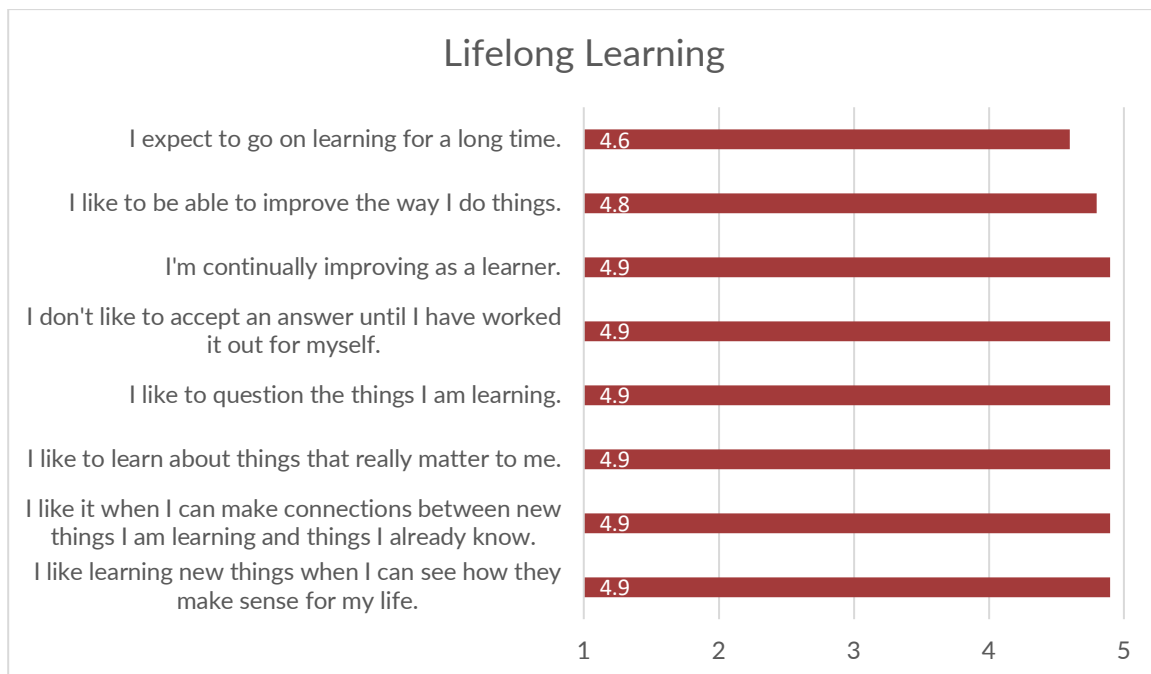
Takeaways:

The scores across all youth generativity statements (4.3-4.5) show that participants value helping others and contributing to the growth of younger peers. They express a clear interest in supporting leadership development in others and feel confident in sharing their own skills and knowledge. Overall, the results reflect a solid generative mindset, indicating that youth are motivated to mentor, uplift others, and play an active role in fostering a positive, supportive community.

PREPARING TO LEAD QUESTIONNAIRE

The Preparing to Lead Questionnaire examines the extent to which participants exhibit foundational attitudes and behaviours that support long-term growth and leadership development. One key area within this framework is lifelong learning, which reflects an individual's motivation to continually acquire new knowledge, improve skills, and actively engage in meaningful learning experiences. These competencies are essential for developing adaptable leaders who are curious, reflective, and committed to personal growth.

For this report, the organization focused on evaluating the level of lifelong learning orientation in youth who participated in the leadership program. Survey respondents (n=17) were invited to rate the extent to which each statement applied to them on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Their responses provide insight into how strongly participants value ongoing improvement, critical thinking, and learning that is connected to real-life relevance.



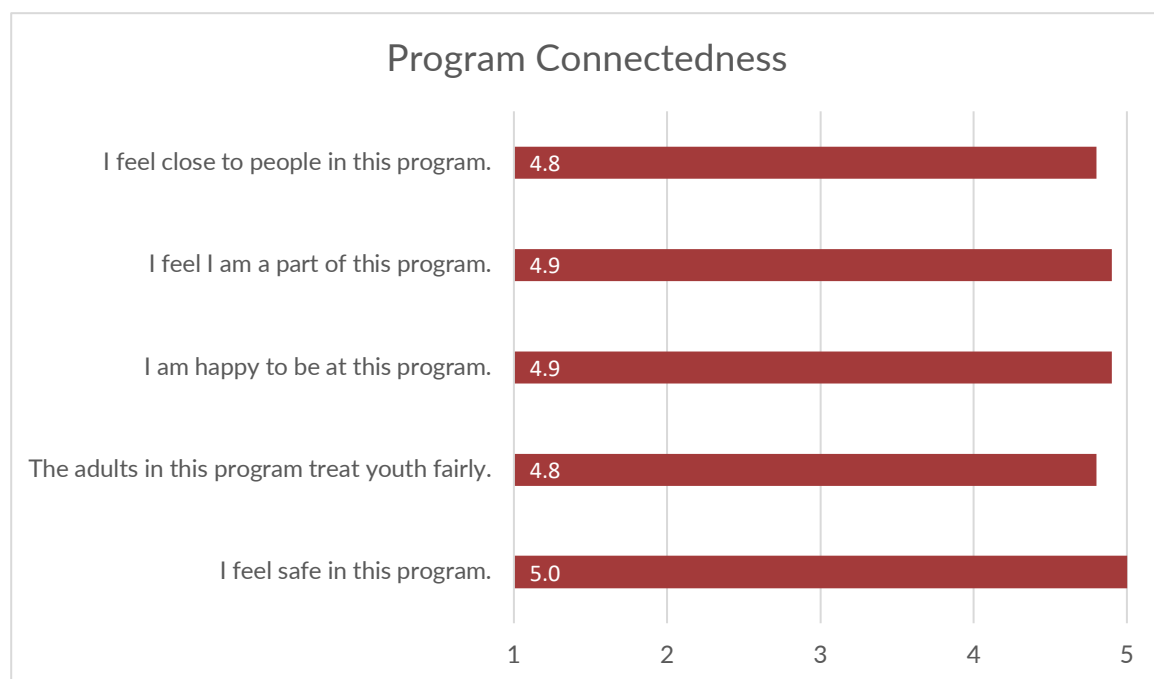
Takeaways:

The consistently high scores across all lifelong learning statements (4.6–4.9) show that participants are highly motivated, curious learners who actively seek improvement. They demonstrate strong critical thinking, a desire to understand information fully, and an ability to connect new concepts to their own lives. Overall, the results reflect a committed and self-directed learning mindset that supports continued personal and leadership growth.

HEALTHY CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS QUESTIONNAIRE

The Healthy Close Relationships Questionnaire examines the extent to which participants experience trust, belonging, and emotional safety within the environments they engage in. One component of this measure is program connectedness. It captures how strongly youth feel attached to their program community, including their sense of belonging, comfort, fairness, and interpersonal closeness. These are foundational for fostering supportive environments where youth can build positive relationships and fully engage in learning and development.

For this report, the organization focused on evaluating the level of program connectedness among youth participating in the leadership program. Survey respondents (n=17) were asked to rate the extent to which each statement applied to them on a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Their responses provide insight into how welcomed, valued, and supported participants feel within the program.



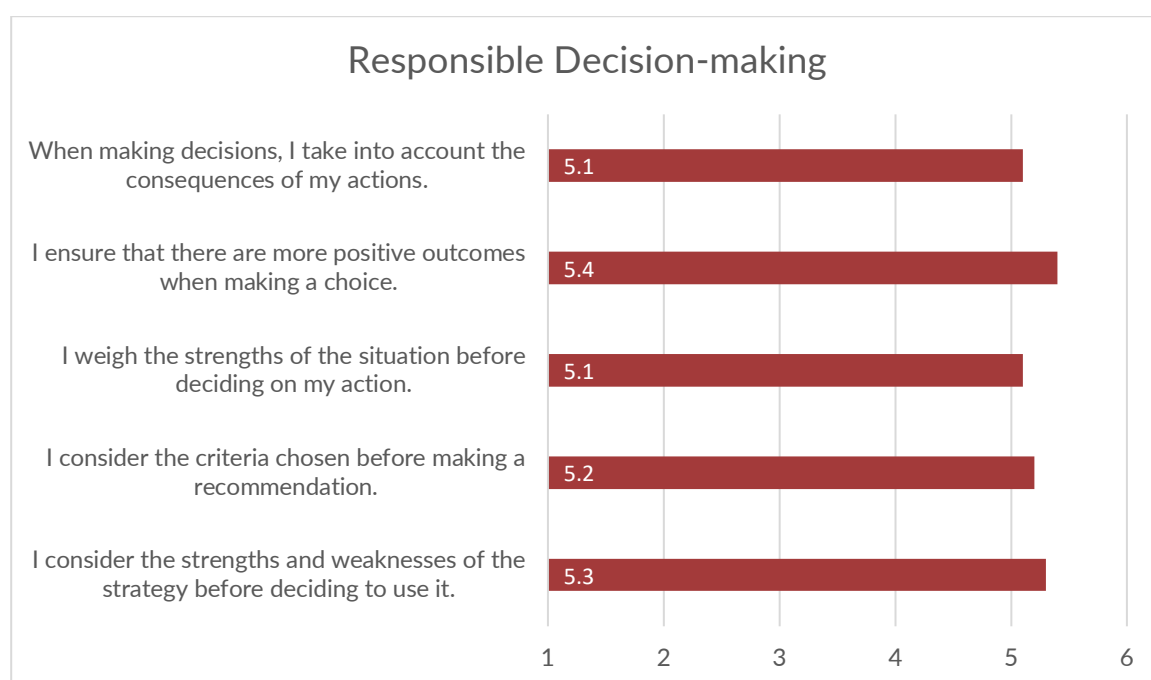
Takeaways:

The strong scores across all program connectedness statements (4.8–5.0) indicate that participants feel a deep sense of belonging and emotional safety within the program. Youth report feeling part of the community, supported by fair and caring adults, and genuinely happy to attend. Overall, the results reflect a warm, inclusive, and secure environment where participants feel connected and valued.

RESETTLEMENT THROUGH RECREATION - LEADERSHIP PROGRAM IN BROOKS, ALBERTA

THE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

The Social Emotional Competence Questionnaire explores the extent to which participants have developed core competencies that support effective reasoning and thoughtful responses in various situations. These competencies include the ability to evaluate potential outcomes, assess situational factors, and make choices that reflect careful judgment. For this report, the organization focused on understanding the level of responsible decision-making among youth who participated in the leadership program. Survey respondents (n=11) out of (n=11) were invited to rate how true each statement was for them using a scale from 1 (Not at all true of me) to 6 (Very true of me). The results provide insight into the deliberation, structure, and intentionality youth apply when making decisions.



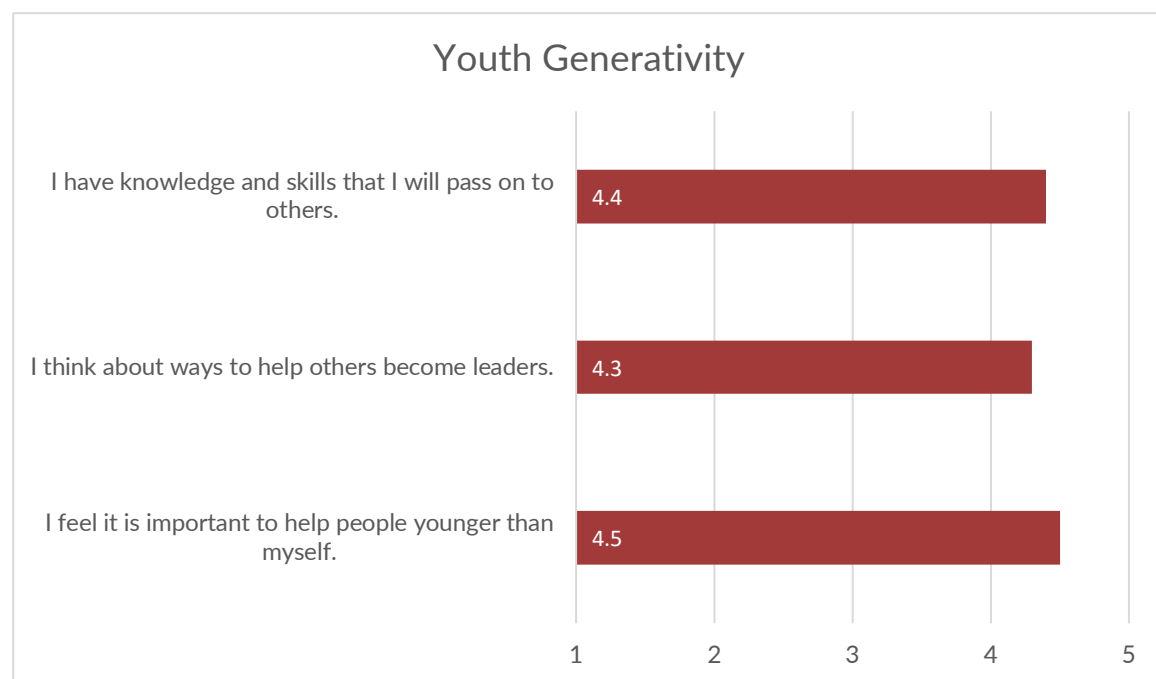
Takeaways:

The high scores across all responsible decision-making statements (5.1–5.4) indicate that participants use a careful and thoughtful approach when making decisions. They consistently consider consequences, evaluate situations, and review strategies before acting. Overall, the results reflect a responsible and intentional decision-making style.

THE MENTAL WELLNESS QUESTIONNAIRE

The Mental Wellness Questionnaire examines the extent to which participants demonstrate key competencies that support healthy functioning in social environments. One of the constructs measured is how youth generativity captures the degree to which young people feel motivated to support, guide, and positively influence others, particularly younger peers. These capacities contribute to the development of caring relationships, stronger communities, and a sense of purpose through helping others grow.

For this report, the organization focused on assessing the level of generative attitudes among youth who participated in the leadership program. Survey respondents (n=11) were invited to indicate how true each statement was for them using a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Their responses provide insight into how youth view their role in mentoring, leadership development, and sharing knowledge with others.



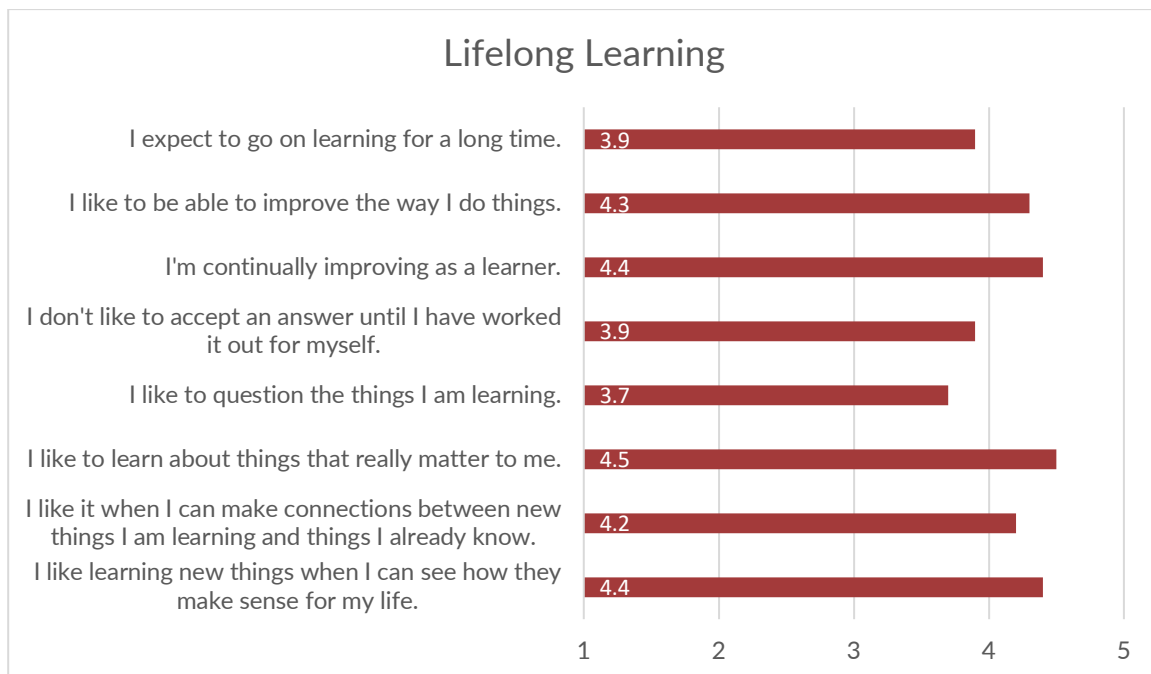
Takeaways:

The strong scores across youth generativity statements (4.3–4.5) show that participants value supporting others and contributing to their growth. Youth express a clear sense of responsibility toward helping younger peers, encouraging leadership in others, and sharing their own skills. Overall, the results indicate a positive orientation toward mentoring and uplifting those around them.

PREPARING TO LEAD QUESTIONNAIRE

The Preparing to Lead Questionnaire examines the extent to which participants demonstrate foundational attitudes and skills that support long-term growth and readiness for leadership. One of its key components, lifelong learning, focuses on youths' motivation to continue learning, their curiosity, willingness to question information, and commitment to ongoing personal improvement. These qualities are essential for developing adaptable leaders who think critically, seek meaningful knowledge, and take initiative in their own development.

For this report, the organization examined the level of lifelong learning orientation among youth who participated in the leadership program. Survey respondents (n=11) were asked to rate how true each statement was for them using a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The results provide insight into how youth approach learning, problem-solving, and their enthusiasm for acquiring knowledge that supports their growth.



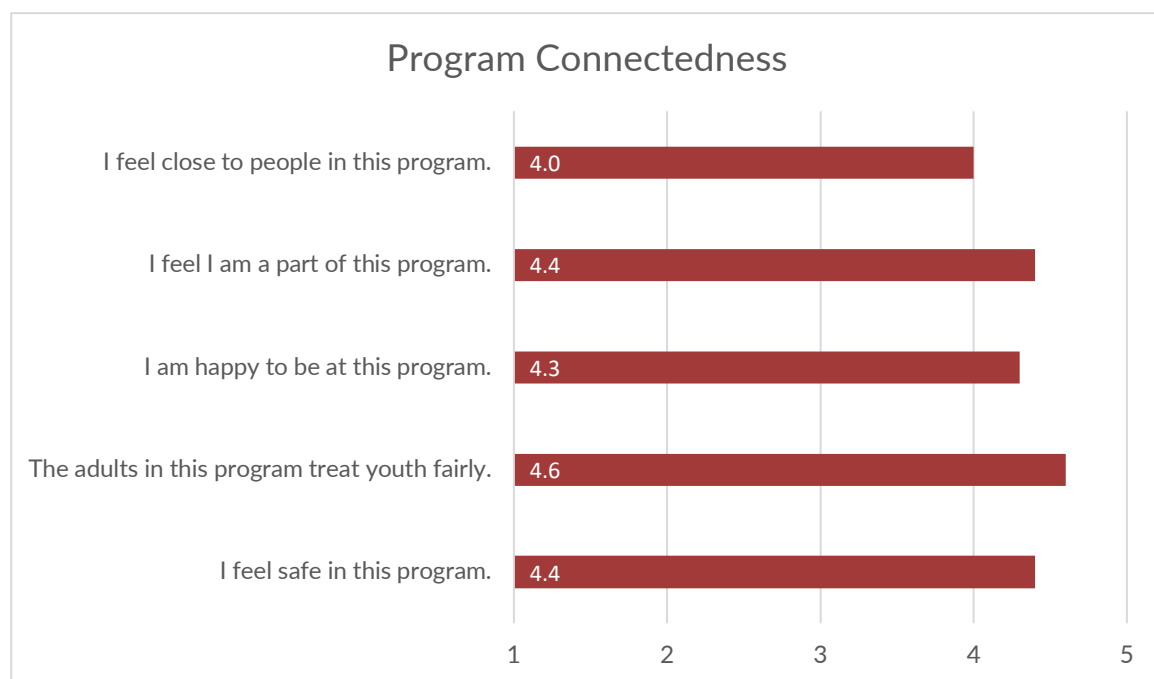
Takeaways:

The scores across the lifelong learning statements (3.7–4.5) indicate that participants generally value learning and self-improvement, especially when the material feels meaningful or relevant to their lives. While youth show strong motivation to grow as learners, the lower scores on questioning information and working through answers independently suggest opportunities to further develop critical thinking and deeper engagement in the learning process. Overall, the results reflect a solid foundation for growth with room to strengthen confidence and curiosity in learning.

HEALTHY CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS QUESTIONNAIRE

The Healthy Close Relationships Questionnaire examines the extent to which participants experience positive, supportive, and trusting connections within the settings they engage in. One component of this measure, program connectedness, focuses on how strongly youth feel a sense of belonging, emotional safety, fairness, and interpersonal closeness within a program environment. These elements are essential for fostering strong relationships, promoting engagement, and creating conditions that support healthy development.

For this report, the organization focused on assessing the level of connectedness youth feel within the program. Survey respondents (n=11) were invited to rate how true each statement was for them on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Their responses provide insight into the degree to which youth feel welcomed, supported, and included in the program community.



Takeaways:

The solid scores across program connectedness statements (4.0–4.6) show that participants generally feel safe, are treated fairly, and feel positively connected within the program. While youth report a good sense of belonging and happiness in the program, the results also highlight opportunities to strengthen peer closeness and deepen overall engagement. Overall, the findings reflect a supportive environment with room to further enhance relationships and connection for some.

RESETTLEMENT THROUGH RECREATION – LEADERSHIP PROGRAM IN MEDICINE HAT, ALBERTA

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: HEAD, HEART, FEET, SPIRIT

Head, Heart, Feet, and Spirit is an open-ended survey for collecting responses from participants on their engagement experiences. Specifically, the different components of the HHFS survey examine the following aspects of a participants' experiences:

- Head: what they learned from the experience (cognitive aspect)
- Heart: what they felt about their participation in the experience (affective aspect)
- Feet: what they intend to do as a result of their participation (behavioural aspect)
- Spirit: How their experience connects/contributes to something outside of the self.

The survey responses were analyzed for key themes which are presented below with illustrative quotes. Participants (n=17) in the Resettlement Through Recreation – Leadership program in Medicine Hat, Alberta, completed this survey at the end of the program.

Head

Youth feedback demonstrates clear cognitive learning from the Resettlement Through Recreation – Leadership program, with participants consistently describing gains in understanding new recreational activities, developing knowledge about fairness, kindness, inclusion, accessibility, and how to treat others, especially those with different abilities. Many also articulated learning core leadership concepts such as being a good leader, demonstrating responsibility, and modeling positive behaviour, alongside personal growth in patience and community awareness.

"I have learned new games and how to treat people fairly in the community."

"I learned how to be kind [to] other people. I learned how to play games."

"Patience."

"I have learned how to treat people... all kind[s] of people... like ones with disability, many games, accessibility, acceptance, and taking care of kids."

"I am happy to be at this program. I feel safe in this program. I lean games, inclusion, & accessibility."

"I learned that we should treat people nice, not rude, and [to] be a good leader."

"I learned how to play new game[s]."

"I learned to be a [leader]."

"I learned how to be a good leader."

Heart

Youth responses, strongly reflect positive emotional experiences in the Resettlement Through Recreation – Leadership program, with participants frequently expressing feelings of happiness, excitement, safety, inclusion, and overall enjoyment. Many shared that they felt glad to attend, appreciated the welcoming and secure environment, and experienced a sense of belonging within the group. These affective outcomes highlight the programs’ success in fostering emotional well-being, building comfort and trust, and creating a supportive atmosphere where youth feel valued and eager to return.

“I ... feel happy and excited.”

“I feel good to be here and I [enjoyed it].”

“I felt safe and happy!”

“I feel included. I feel [happy].”

“I feel really good. I’m glad I came to the program.”

“I am very happy to be here today.”

“I am happy to be at this program. I feel safe in this program. I learn games, inclusion, & accessibility.”

“I feel happy and [excited] for the [next] day.”

Feet

Youth demonstrated clear intentions to apply what they learned by helping others, sharing their knowledge with peers, siblings, and community members, and using their new skills in future work or leadership roles. Many expressed a desire to teach games or concepts to children they may work with, while other emphasized supporting people in the community, showing kindness, and practicing inclusive behaviours. These responses reflect a strong orientation toward giving back, contributing positively to others, and translating their program experience into future real-world actions.

“I will share and help different people in the community if need[ed].”

“Share to others what I learned today.”

“I will use it at my work in [the] future.”

“I will share it with my brothers and friends.”

“I will use the knowledge [that I have learned] when I work.”

“I will express the knowledge I learned today, share it with many people and with kids I will work with.”

Feet - Continued

"Share it [with] others."

"I will teach other people."

"Help other[s]."

"I'm going to teach someone [else] to learn new things."

Spirit

Youth reflections show that the program fostered meaningful connection beyond the individual, with many participants describing how games, conversations, inclusion, and shared activities helped them build relationships with peers, teachers, and the broader group. Their statements highlight an emerging sense of belonging, community, and mutual support, as well as an understanding that participation contributes to collective fun, learning, and friendship. These experiences suggest that the program nurtured a deeper sense of social connection and community spirit.

"It was easy to connect today with others and the teachers."

"I connected to [all] well."

"I [connected] today through fun games."

"I connected today through games, inclusion, fun and friendship."

"With many people and had fun, learned and was happy all day."

"Very beautiful."

"Connect through games, conclusion, fun and time friendship."

"Easy to connect whit others and the teachers."

"By talking and playing."

RESETTLEMENT THROUGH RECREATION – LEADERSHIP PROGRAM IN BROOKS, ALBERTA

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- Spirit: How their experience connects/contributes to something outside of the self.

The survey responses were analyzed for key themes which are presented below with illustrative quotes. Participants (n=11) in the Resettlement Through Recreation – Leadership program in Brooks, Alberta, completed this survey at the end of the program.

Youth responses demonstrate strong cognitive learning around communication, teamwork, and social understanding, with many highlighting new awareness of equity, diversity, and respectful interaction across cultures, genders, and languages. Participants described gaining clearer insight into how to collaborate in groups, communicate more effectively, and approach others with empathy rather than assumptions or indifference. Several also identified learning about leadership and how these skills can support their future goals, while others noted growth in understanding inclusive principles and navigating relationships with greater awareness.

"I learned the importance of equity rather than equality."

"[Learned] about teamwork, diversity, and respect in your team."

"Learn how to communicate with other culture, gender, language."

"To communicate with people easily."

"[What] I learned today, is [that] you need to understand others before assuming things."

"Don't be indifferent to others."

"About leadership and how it could be helpful on my future."

Heart

Youth expressed a range of emotions connected to their participation, with many describing feelings of happiness, excitement, and gratitude for an experience they found meaningful and motivating. Several participants noted shifts in their emotional state, moving from initial nervousness to greater confidence, which highlights personal growth and an increasing sense of comfort within the group. Others shared that the day felt productive, focused and valuable for their futures. These affective reflections together show that the program fostered positive feelings, emotional safety, and a sense of pride in participation.

“Exciting and happy.”

“This was a very worthy day... because of this program this might help me with future experiences.”

“... In the first hour, I [felt] nervous and [in] the final [hour], I [felt] very sure.”

“Today [was] productive and focused.”

“Happy and [hear]. I love being here.”

“I did like the activities that they made us do, and it was really fun.”

Feet

Youth expressed strong intentions to apply what they learned by practicing leadership, teamwork, and inclusion in real-life situations. Many shared plans to teach their siblings and other how to be friendly, inclusive, and supportive within their communities, demonstrating a desire to extend their learning beyond the program. Others noted that they intend to apply these skills when working in teams, leading groups, or contributing positively to the community, especially with children. These responses show readiness to translate program concepts into action through sharing knowledge, fostering inclusive environments, and engaging more confidently in leadership roles.

“Put into practice... tell it to my siblings so that they can also [gain] knowledge.”

“To apply once I get in a situation where teamwork is key to progress.”

“Will make a good community with kids and with everybody.”

“Can lead a full team with different connection.”

“To play with the community.”

“I will teach my siblings to make others include in ways and to be friendly.”

“Into practice”.

Spirit

Youth reflections show that the program helped them build meaningful connections with others, fostering a sense of belonging, confidence, and shared experience. Several participants noted that the day's activities enabled them to connect more deeply with peers, feel part of a group, and experience happiness through interacting with others. This demonstrates that the program contributed to a broader sense of community, collective engagement, and connection beyond their individual perspective.

"Connect so confidently."

"In [tune] spiritually with others."

"It helped me connect with other people and it makes me happy."

"[Honestly], I'm not sure, but I really enjoyed it today."

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Across the second year of Ever Active Schools' Catapult-funded initiatives, the findings demonstrate that newcomer youth are not only gaining practical skills but also developing a deeper sense of connection, confidence, and community engagement. The Resettlement Through Recreation – Leadership program fostered strong cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and relational growth. Youth reported learning about equity, inclusion, communication, and leadership while also expressing positive emotional experiences such as happiness, excitement, and increased confidence.

These findings reaffirm that the program continues to create environments where newcomer youth feel safe, included, and empowered to participate fully. High levels of emotional safety, connection, and leadership development suggest that the program is supporting youth in building both personal and community-oriented strengths. As the second year of the grant concludes, the evaluation insights can help refine programming to further strengthen communication, leadership, and inclusion-focused practices. The strong themes of growth mindset, belonging, and expanding social connections indicate that Ever Active Schools is successfully supporting youth in developing skills and attitudes that extend into their families, communities, and future opportunities, positioning them for ongoing success and deeper integration in their new environments.