"Together We Can!"
Peer Mentored Girls Groups for
Positive Youth Development

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The Phenomenon:

Students at NBCC St. Andrew's Practical Nursing
Program...

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Challenges:

- Gender inequality places girls at disproportionate risk of violence, low self-esteem, and mental health issues (Girls Action Foundation, 2015. GAF).

- The challenges they face are compounded by factors such as race, sexual orientation, and economic status, and in rural settings are further magnified by transportation barriers, isolation, and limited access to confidential and culturally appropriate services (GAF, 2012).

- Social pressures and cultural messages associated with hyper-sexualization have an eroding effect on girls' psychological, social, physical and sexual well being, and affect their capacity to participate fully and equally in society (APA, 2007).

- Self-esteem and self-confidence significantly drop in young girls by 35 per cent in the five years between middle school and the end of high school (GAF, 2012)

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Interventions:

High self-esteem and self-efficacy have been correlated with good overall health and well-being (Loretta, 1999).

Research has led to promising practices in health promotion where girls are identified (Government of BC, 2012). Similarly, various girls-specific programs (Henneberger, Deutsch, Lawrence & Sovik-Johnston, 2013; LeCroy, 2004; Tirlea, Truby, & Haines, 2014) have been shown to improve positive youth development or prevent declines in measures of positive identity and/or self-esteem.

Peer-mentored groups for youth has been used to encourage a variety of positive health behavior changes including, a reduction in harmful drinking (e.g., White, Park, Israel & Cordero, 2009), sexual health promotion (e.g., Brigham et al. 2002), and improvements in levels of physical activity (e.g., Best, Miller, Eng & Routhier, 2016; Spencer, Bower, Kirk & Friesen, 2014). Some studies have demonstrated promising use of this approach in mental health interventions (Kirsch et al., 2014; Thombs et al., 2015). This approach is often targeted to an at-risk population (Breithaupt et al., 2016; Bulanda, Bruhn, Byro-Johnson & Zentmyer, 2014; Dowd et al., 2015).

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Our Three Year Project...

...aims to test the effectiveness of the Girls' Action Foundations' *Amplify* program, which was delivered by peer-mentors within rural school environments to junior high school girls, on some of the key outcomes within the Developmental Assets Profile Survey (DAPS – CASEL supported).

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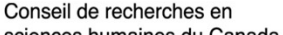Research Council of Canada

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CASEL: Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning

THE EIGHT CATEGORIES OF DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS

External Assets	Internal Assets
SUPPORT Young people need to be surrounded by people who love, care for, appreciate, and accept them.	**COMMITMENT TO LEARNING** Young people need a sense of the lasting importance of learning and a belief in their own abilities.
EMPOWERMENT Young people need to feel valued and valuable. This happens when youth feel safe and respected.	**POSITIVE VALUES** Young people need to develop strong guiding values or principles to help them make healthy life choices.
BOUDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS Young people need clear rules, consistent consequences for breaking rules, and encouragement to do their best.	**SOCIAL COMPETENCIES** Young people need the skills to interact effectively with others, to make difficult decisions, and to cope with new situations.
CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME Young people need opportunities—outside of school—to learn and develop new skills and interests with other youth and adults.	**POSITIVE IDENTITY** Young people need to believe in their own self-worth and to feel that they have control over the things that happen to them.

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GIRLS ACTION
FOUNDATION

Conceptualization:

The programming follows the principles of popular education (social justice) via a participatory action model. Empowerment is a key component.

CASEL: Social And Emotional Learning Principles	GAF: Outcome Areas For Girl-Specific Programming	Developmental Assets
Self-Awareness	Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence	Positive Identity
Self-Management	Resilience	Positive Values + Boundaries and Expectations
Social Awareness	Connectedness	Social Competencies
Relationship Skills	Communication	Support + Empowerment
Responsible Decision-Making	Critical Thinking	Commitment to Learning + Constructive Use of Time

Ecological Theory
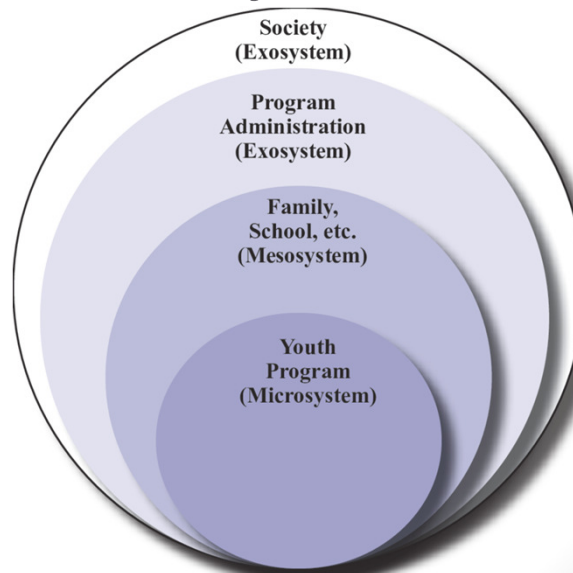
- Setting: 7 schools in rural NB

- Participants: 115 girls in grades 7 – 10 (n=10 per group)

- Peer Mentors: Students at NBCC St. Andrew's –
  Practical Nursing Program (GAF training)

- 12 One-hour sessions over two years

- Three Summits for all participants (beginning, middle
  and end)

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Year One	Year Two	Year Three
Project Introduction February 2016	2nd Girls Summit April 2017	Final Girls Summit & Final Survey April 2018
1st Survey - Baseline April 5 - 14, 2016	2nd Intervention Early Groups April – June 2017	End of Project June 2018
1st Girls Summit April 2016	4th Survey September 2017	
1st Intervention Early Groups April – June 2016	2nd Intervention Delayed Groups November - December 2017	
2nd Survey September/October 2016	5th Survey February 2018	
1st Intervention Delayed Groups October –December 2016		
3rd Survey February 2017		

"TOGETHER WE CAN"
Girls Summit April 15th, 2016

The Girls' Summit was the official launch of the program:

- 133 students and 14 NBCC NP student volunteers participated
- AM: Small group ice-breaker activities
- Lunch: Pizza and cupcakes
- PM: photo booth, video booth, rock, naming the project, play-doh and colouring station, graffiti table
- Selecting content for sessions
- Swag bags (which they loved!)

Summit

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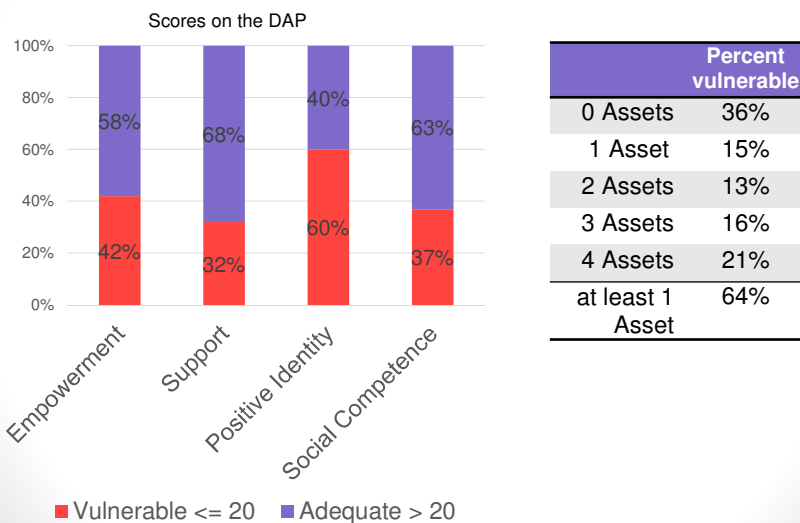| GIRLS VOTES on SESSION ACTIVITIES	SESSION ACTIVITIES
77/104	What Do They Think of Me? (Amplify p. 435)
67/104	What We Hear, What We Think: Looking at Messages in Pop Music (Amplify p.413)
63/106	Friendship (Amplify p. 320)
50/107	Beauty Masks (Amplify p. 297)
36/106	Healthy vs. Unhealthy Relationships (Amplify p. 314)
27/104	Candy Bags (Amplify p. 356)
26/104	Gender Stereotyping (Amplify p.396)
26/107	My Body, My Choice: Agency, Intimacy and Consent (Amplify p. 333)
24/107	Creating a Mask of My Identity (Amplify p. 378)

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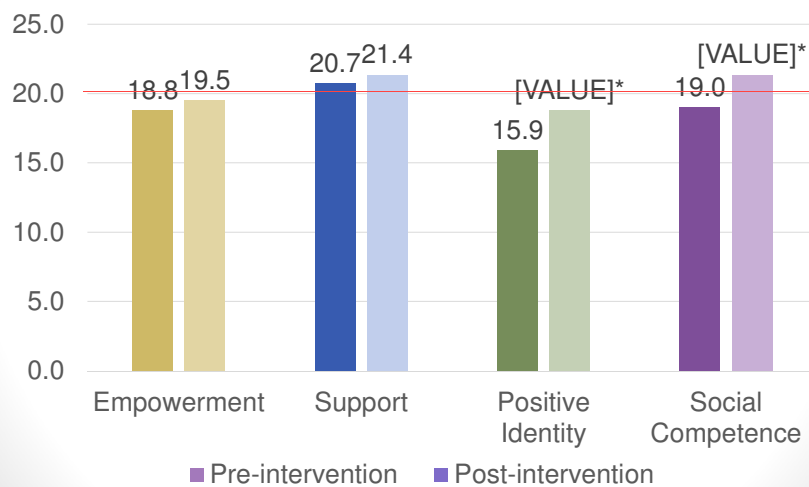Canada

Themes from Summit Day:

- They could make friends, easily.
- They were not alone.
- Many identified their mothers as key supports.
- Strong connection to pets/animals.
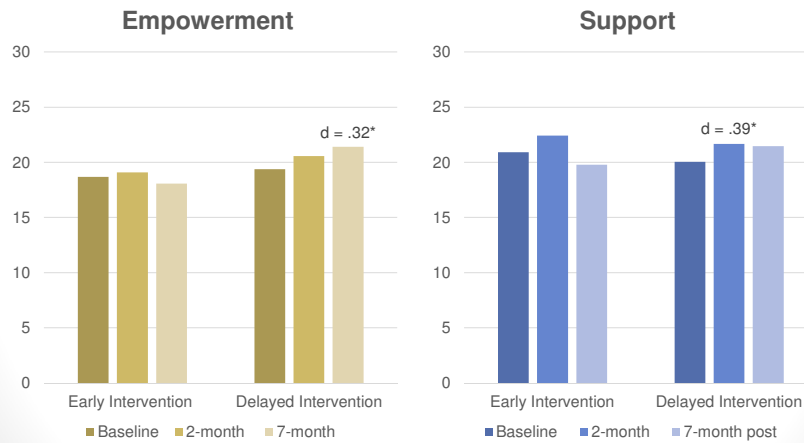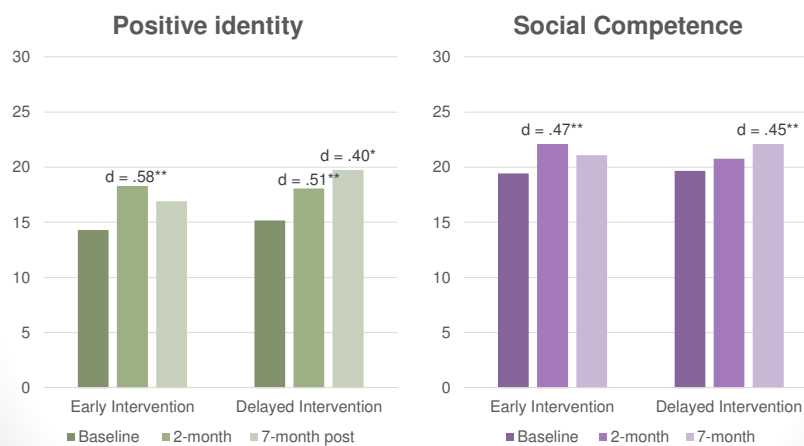- Summit was a safe place to socially connect and share with others.

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How many girls were "at-risk"?

Scores on the DAP

	Percent vulnerable
0 Assets	36%
1 Asset	15%
2 Assets	13%
3 Assets	16%
4 Assets	21%
at least 1 Asset	64%

Chart: Scores on the DAP (stacked bar, Vulnerable <= 20 / Adequate > 20)
- Empowerment: Vulnerable 42%, Adequate 58%
- Support: Vulnerable 32%, Adequate 68%
- Positive Identity: Vulnerable 60%, Adequate 40%
- Social Competence: Vulnerable 37%, Adequate 63%

Legend: ■ Vulnerable <= 20   ■ Adequate > 20

Overall effects of the Amplify program for "at-risk" girls

Chart (Pre-intervention / Post-intervention):
- Empowerment: 18.8, 19.5
- Support: 20.7, 21.4
- Positive Identity: 15.9, [VALUE]*
- Social Competence: 19.0, [VALUE]*

Legend: ■ Pre-intervention   ■ Post-intervention

Change in DAPS scores over time for "at-risk" girls

Change in DAPS scores over time for "at-risk" girls

Next steps

- Website Launch, Sept, 2017
- Delayed groups second half of the program - Fall
- Sharing of results with SSHRC team and school board.

- Grant proposal writing for boys' groups
- Scale up for replication in NB?
- Implementation manual creation
- Mini-pilot in Antigonish, NS, Sept, 2017

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Thanks!

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