



**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**Division of Applied Psychology**

**Rapport Teen Leadership Breakthrough Program: An Evaluation Report**

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**for The Werklund Foundation and Rapport Leadership International**

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## **Rapport Teen Leadership Breakthrough program: An Evaluation Report**

### **Executive Summary**

**Why leadership training:** Research shows that youth with high self-esteem, self-confidence, and good social and communication skills will have more successful academic, social, and vocational outcomes. Effective leadership is dependent on social, emotional, communication and interpersonal competencies. Programs that can successfully teach and sustain these skills in youth are thus very valuable tools.

**Why this evaluation is important:** Although many youth leadership programs exist, there is little research that evaluates the outcomes of youth leadership programs, such as whether they produce better leaders or can enhance the development of leadership skills, particularly in the long term. The University of Calgary recently completed a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the Teen Leadership Breakthrough program developed by Rapport Leadership International, in supporting development of life skills associated with leadership in youth.

The results are important for two reasons. First, **evaluation research rarely demonstrates results of this nature.** Although social skills training can produce significant change immediately following training, studies have revealed that the changes are not maintained in the long run. Participants in this training maintained that improvement for six months following the program. Moreover, many programs that purport to effect change in youth's social/emotional functioning have not been subjected to empirical scrutiny and instead, rely on testimony and anecdotal observations and

comments. Thus, **the current study is doubly noteworthy for its findings and its empirical rigor.**

**The results:** Students who participated in the Teen Leadership Breakthrough program had improved performance in the areas of emotional intelligence and self-concept:

- Participants demonstrated a greater improvement in their understanding of the **inner self**. They are aware and understand their own feelings, are independent, have a positive attitude towards themselves and their lives, and are able to confidently communicate and express their feelings and ideas. “I learned that it is important to believe in what you think and be confident in what you are saying.”
- Participants demonstrated a greater improvement in their **social awareness and interpersonal understanding**. These individuals are dependable, can work in a team, can understand and relate well with others, and have developed adequate social skills. “The most important thing I learned was to trust others and see my own as well as others’ potential.”
- Participants demonstrated a greater capacity to **adapt to changes** in their environment. They adjust to change, are sensible and practical, and are capable of understanding and effectively solving problems. “Before the workshop I was shy and now I want to be more out there and experience more.”

- Participants demonstrated a higher degree of **emotionally intelligent behaviour**. They feel good about themselves as well as others, being optimistic and positive, and they usually believe that they are being successful in life. “It was empowering because it shows you what you all have to offer and allows you to step up.”
- Participants demonstrated a **greater capacity to attain goals and grow in competence**. They function well within their environments, experience success in life and goal attainment, respond appropriately to struggles and difficulties, and are effective problem-solvers. “It makes you do things that you never thought you could do.”
- Participants demonstrated a greater capacity to **understanding feelings and emotions**. They are aware of, show insight of, and can monitor, assess and communicate their behaviours, feelings, and emotions. “It made me more courageous because I had to not only trust other people but also go out of my comfort zone and still be strong.”

**Conclusion:** The results demonstrate that the program has the capacity to impact positively on knowledge of self and others, self-concept, and prosocial behaviour, in general. Moreover, these attributes, attitudes, and skills have, in the literature, been shown to positively impact school success and long-term life outcome.

## **Introduction**

Over the past decade educators have increasingly acknowledged that academic skill development is best fostered in optimal learning environments that encourage the development of youths' social skills. The terms, self-concept, resiliency, and emotional intelligence have become common place in educational leaders' vocabulary, reflecting an awareness of the inter-dependence of cognitive and social/emotional factors and the necessity to look to factors beyond scholastic ones to ensure that youths' school experiences are optimal. The challenge before educators currently is to find a way to integrate this emphasis on students' social understanding into their instructional program.

## **Background**

Adolescence can be a difficult time for youth. It is a period of development where extensive physical, emotional, social, and cognitive changes occur, often causing youth to feel vulnerable and to act out. Research has reported that up to eighty percent of youth engage in some sort of antisocial behaviours. Consequently, programs aimed at supporting youths' development abound. Structured leadership programs, for example, are available in many schools, community centres, and private training facilities and the designers of most programs claim to develop positive qualities such as self-esteem, self-awareness, and self-confidence in our youth. These claims derive from research that has definitively shown that youth with high self-esteem, self-confidence, and good social and communication skills will have more successful academic, social, and vocational outcomes. Conversely, effective leadership is dependent on social, emotional, communication and interpersonal competencies. Programs that can successfully teach and sustain these skills in youth are thus very valuable tools.

Although many youth leadership programs exist, there is limited research to guide the design of these programs aimed at developing youths' leadership competencies. Because the leadership construct is complex it has been operationalized in different ways. For example, more traditional approaches to leadership focus on individual characteristics, such as personality, perceptions, and behaviours, whereas more recent approaches take a relational approach by focusing on the social processes underlying leadership. Moreover, some researchers hold that leadership training should encompass self-reflection and self-knowledge, whereas others focus on collaboration, mentorship, self-assertion or decision-making. Furthermore, there is little research that evaluates the outcomes of youth leadership programs, such as whether they produce better leaders or can enhance the development of leadership skills, particularly in the long term. Therefore, research is urgently required to determine program effectiveness.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The aim of the current research was to conduct an arms-length outcomes evaluation of the effectiveness of the Teen Leadership Breakthrough program developed by Rapport Leadership International in supporting development of life skills associated with leadership in youth.

### **How the Study Was Carried Out**

#### *Participants*

Seventy-seven students (35 boys, 42 girls) participated in the study. Participants attended a public charter school in a large urban centre in Western Canada and were enrolled in grades 10 ( $N = 42$ ) and 11 ( $N = 35$ ). The control group consisted of 36 students and the teen leadership program group consisted of 41. All participants were of

average to high average intelligence and were free from emotional and behavioural issues.

The school consisted of 326 students, enrolled in grades 9 to 12 and emphasized leadership development. The student population was 60% first and second generation Canadians of Indian or East African origins, 30% Caucasian, and 10% other. Over 40% of the school's students come from a home in which English is not the primary spoken language and 15% of the students qualify for English-as-a-second-language (ESL) funding.

#### *Assessment*

Intellectual Ability The Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence (WASI; Wechsler, 1999) provided the measure of intellectual ability. This instrument is nationally standardized, reliable, and valid and can be used on individuals aged 6 to 19. It yields verbal, performance, and full-scale Intelligence Quotient scores. The assessment instrument was individually administered in approximately 45 minutes. Scores were used only to select participants (i.e., ensuring that they were of average to high average ability) and not in the statistical analyses.

Emotional Intelligence The Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ; Bar-On & Parker, 2000) is a reliable and valid self-report measure designed to assess key aspects of emotionally intelligent behaviour in children and adolescents. It measures one's potential for performance and success and is comprised of several specific quotients.

- Intrapersonal EQ evaluates the inner self (self-regard, emotional-self awareness, self-expression, assertiveness, independence, and self-actualization).

- Interpersonal EQ measures social awareness and interpersonal skills and functioning, such as empathy, social responsibility, and interpersonal relationships.
- Adaptability EQ examines how successfully one will be able to cope with environmental demands by understanding and handling/solving problematic situations. This adaptive behaviour includes change management, reality testing, flexibility, and problem solving skills.
- Total EQ provides an overall, full-scale emotional quotient score. It consists of 30 items that utilize a 4-point scale. Response options range from “not true of me” to “very much true of me”. Higher scores indicate higher emotionally intelligent behaviour, positive mood, and positive impression.

Self-Concept. The Multidimensional Self-Concept Scale (Bracken, 1992) is a standardized, reliable, and valid instrument that assesses global self-concept and self-perceptions. It is a self-report measure in which respondents are asked to reply to a simple declarative statement by circling one of the four alternatives (strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree) that they believe best describes them. It includes the following domains that are considered important in the social and emotional adjustment and development of youth and adolescents.

- Competence domain: Success or failure in attainment of goals and effective functioning within one’s environments.
- Affect domain: Recognition of behaviours associated with feelings and emotions.

### *Procedure*

Participants were recruited through their high school by word of mouth and information distributed by school personnel. After teacher, parent, and student informed



consent was obtained, an IQ measure was administered to ensure all participants were of average to high-average ability. Students who qualified were then randomly assigned to either the teen leadership program group or control group (this group was promised the teen leadership program at a later date). There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of gender, age, and grade.

Participants (i.e., teen leadership program group and control group) were assessed on emotional intelligence and self-concept measures at four intervals:

- Time 1: Pre-test
- Time 2: Post-test immediately following the Teen Leadership program
- Time 3: Post-post test six weeks after the Teen Leadership program
- Time 4: Post-post-post test six months after the Teen Leadership program

All testing sessions occurred during regularly scheduled class time and took approximately 60 – 90 minutes to complete. Additionally, interviews were conducted with a subset of the teen leadership program participants.

### *The Teen Leadership Program*

A three-day leadership program, the Rapport Teen Leadership Breakthrough workshop, was run. The workshop was offered at a rented facility, which included sleeping and eating facilities and where all participants remained for the duration of the training. The program utilizes a performance-based approach that involves interactive and experiential processes in order to improve leadership and empower youth to be successful in the short and long term. Specifically, the youth program focuses on

- Improving communication and teamwork

- Gaining passion and enthusiasm
- Increasing focus and accountability
- Enhancing self-confidence and courage
- Identifying core values and building character
- Developing strength through self awareness

### **Statistical Analysis**

First, statistical tests (i.e., t-tests) were conducted to ensure that the control and teen leadership program group did not significantly differ on either measure initially. Next, to determine the effectiveness of the Teen Leadership Breakthrough program, pre-tests scores (i.e., Time 1) of the treatment and control groups on the emotional intelligence and self-concept measures were compared to post-test scores (i.e., Times 2-4), by conducting further statistical analyses (i.e., repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance). Finally, further statistical analyses (follow-up univariate analyses) were done to determine where differences were present.

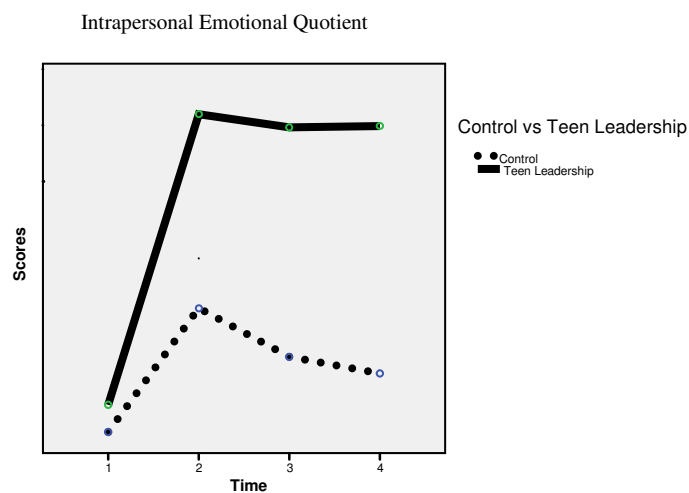
### **Results**

Statistical analyses revealed that, at testing Time 1, the control and teen leadership program group did not differ significantly. Further statistical analyses revealed that significant differences existed between the two groups following the teen leadership program (i.e. testing Times 2-4). This indicates that the Teen Leadership Breakthrough program was effective in improving student's performance in the areas of emotional intelligence and self-concept (i.e., feelings of competence in achieving one's goals, effective functioning within one's environments and understanding behaviours associated with feelings and emotions within one's social environment). Moreover, and importantly,

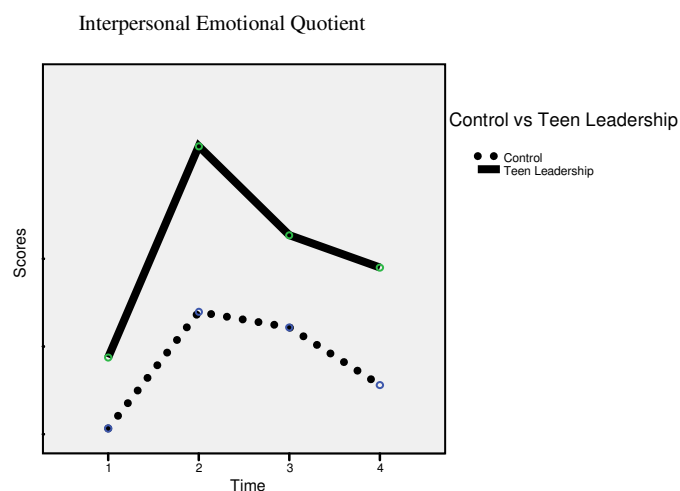
the program allowed participants to maintain that improvement for six months following the leadership program. Finally, further statistical analyses showed that significant differences existed between the two groups on specific measures, which are grafted below. The graphs show changes in the participants' performance, as reflected in the *scores* along the vertical axis, across testing times (i.e., *Time 1 to 4* along the horizontal axis). It should be noted that, although the graphs show some difference between the two groups on the pre-test (i.e., Time 1), this difference is not statistically significant. Thus it cannot be interpreted as impacting group differences at testing Times 2, 3, and 4. To explain what the graph shows, an explanation is offered, along with illustrative quotes taken from interviews with students who participated in the Teen Leadership Breakthrough program.

### *Emotional Intelligence Quotient*

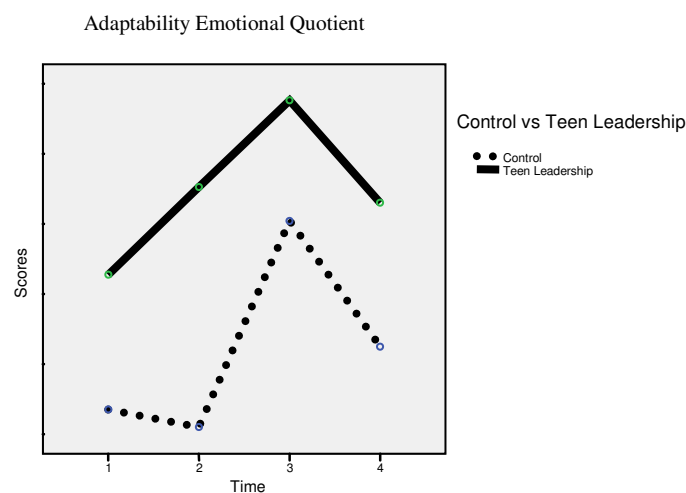
- Intrapersonal Emotional Quotient.* Statistical analyses determined that the teen leadership program group out performed the control group on this aspect of emotional intelligence at all post-tests (i.e., Time 2, 3, and 4). That is, they demonstrated a greater improvement in their understanding of the inner self. The graph below shows a marked improvement in the teen leadership program group's scores at testing Time 2 and that this improvement was maintained across testing times. Although the control group improved slightly this improvement did not exceed chance and so cannot be considered significant. The teen leadership program group's growth in intrapersonal understanding (i.e., self-regard, self-expression, and assertiveness) is illustrated by the following quote: "I learned that it is important to believe in what you think and be confident in what you are saying."



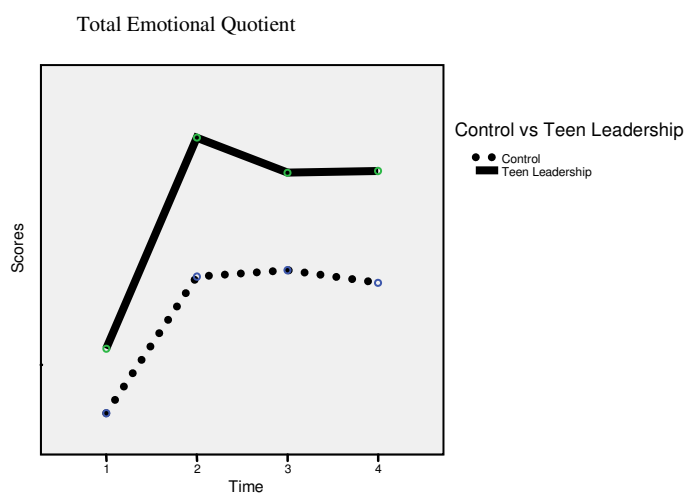
- Interpersonal Emotional Quotient*. Statistical analyses determined that the teen leadership program group out performed the control group on this aspect of emotional intelligence at all post-tests (i.e., Time 2, 3, and 4). That is, they demonstrated a greater improvement in their social awareness and interpersonal skills and functioning. The graph below shows a marked improvement in the teen leadership program group's scores at testing Time 2 (see improvement in scores represented on the vertical axis), and, although the performance of the teen leadership program group decreased at testing Times 3 and 4, it remained significantly higher than the performance of the control group. Again, although the control group improved slightly across testing times, this improvement did not exceed chance and so cannot be considered significant. The teen leadership program group's growth in interpersonal understanding (i.e., social responsibility, and interpersonal relationships) is illustrated by the following quote: "The most important thing I learned was to trust others and see my own as well as others' potential."



- Adaptability Emotional Quotient.* Statistical analyses determined that the teen leadership program group out performed the control group on this aspect of emotional intelligence at all post-tests (i.e., Time 2, 3, and 4). That is, they demonstrated a greater improvement in their capacity to cope with environmental demands. The graph below shows a marked improvement in the teen leadership program group's scores at testing Time 2 (see improvement in scores represented on the vertical axis), and, although the performance of the teen leadership program group decreased at testing Time 4, it remained significantly higher than the performance of the control group. On the adaptability scale, the teen leadership program group appeared to get higher scores on the pre-test (testing Time 1). This difference did not, however, exceed chance, as demonstrated in the statistical analysis. The teen leadership program group's growth in adaptability (i.e., change management, reality testing, and flexibility) is illustrated by the following quote: "Before the workshop I was shy and now I want to be more out there and experience more."



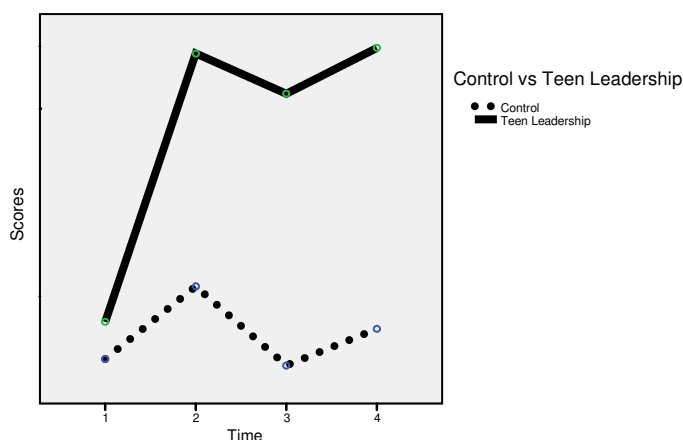
- *Total Emotional Quotient*. Statistical analyses determined that the teen leadership program group out performed the control group on this aspect of emotional intelligence at all post-tests (i.e., Time 2, 3, and 4). That is, they demonstrated a higher degree of emotionally intelligent behaviour. The graph below shows a marked improvement in the teen leadership program group's scores at testing Time 2 (see improvement in scores represented on the vertical axis), and this improvement was largely maintained across testing Times 3 and 4. Again, although the control group improved slightly across testing times, this improvement did not exceed chance and so cannot be considered significant. The teen leadership program group's growth in emotional intelligence (i.e., positive mood, and positive impression) is illustrated by the following quote: "It was empowering because it shows you what you all have to offer and allows you to step up."



### Self-Concept

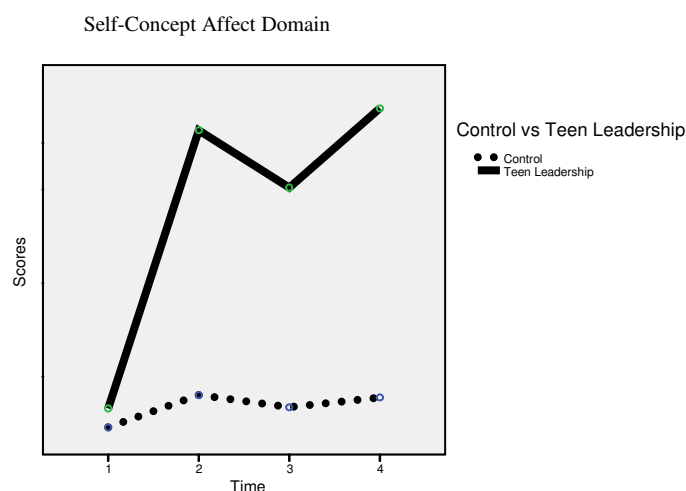
- Competence Domain.* Statistical analyses determined that the teen leadership program group out performed the control group on this aspect of self-concept at all post-tests (i.e., Time 2, 3, and 4). That is, they demonstrated a greater capacity to attain goals and function within their environment. The graph below shows a marked improvement in the teen leadership program group's scores at testing Time 2 (see improvement in scores represented on the vertical axis), and this improvement was largely maintained across testing Times 3 and 4. Although the control group improved slightly across testing times, this improvement did not exceed chance and so cannot be considered significant. The teen leadership program group's growth in competence (i.e., goal attainment and effective functioning) is illustrated by the following quote: "It makes you do things that you never thought you could do."

Self-Concept Competence Domain





- *Affect Domain.* Statistical analyses determined that the teen leadership program group out performed the control group on this aspect of self-concept at all post-tests (i.e., Time 2, 3, and 4). That is, they demonstrated a greater capacity to understanding feelings and emotions. The graph below shows a marked improvement in the teen leadership program group's scores at testing Time 2 (see improvement in scores represented on the vertical axis), and this improvement was maintained across testing Times 3 and 4. No such improvement was noted in the scores of the control group. The teen leadership program group's growth in affective understanding (i.e., feelings toward self and others, as related to behaviours) is illustrated by the following quote: "It made me more courageous because I had to not only trust other people but also go out of my comfort zone and still be strong."



## Conclusions

The results of the statistical analyses clearly demonstrate that the Teen Leadership Breakthrough program effectively improved students' scores on multiple aspects of emotional intelligence and self-concept. That is, the teen leadership program group showed significant gains whereas the control group did not immediately following the leadership workshop. Even more noteworthy is the improvement maintenance at subsequent post-tests for up to six months. Thus, the results demonstrate that the leadership program has the capacity to impact positively on knowledge of self and others, self-concept, and prosocial behaviour, in general. Moreover, these attributes, attitudes, and skills have, in the literature, been shown to positively impact school success and long-term life outcome.

In more specific terms, relative to the emotional intelligence findings, high scores on intrapersonal emotional intelligence suggest that these individuals are aware and understand their own feelings, are independent, have a positive attitude towards themselves and their lives, and are able to confidently communicate and express their feelings and ideas. Individuals with higher interpersonal emotional intelligence scores are generally those people who are dependable, can work in a team, can understand and relate well with others, and have developed adequate social skills. High adaptability emotional intelligence scores are indicative of individuals who are adaptable and able to adjust to changes, are sensible and practical, and are capable of understanding and effectively solving problems. Individuals who scored high on the total emotional quotient are generally described as feeling good about themselves as well as others, being optimistic and positive, and they usually believe that they are being successful in life.

In terms of self-concept findings, high scores on the self-concept competence domain suggest that these individuals have adequate functioning within their environments, are experiencing success in life and goal attainment, respond appropriately to struggles and difficulties, and are effective problem-solvers. Individuals who received higher scores on the self-concept affect domain are aware of, show insight of, and can monitor, assess and communicate their behaviours, feelings, and emotions.

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