



BIG IDEA PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT 2020
STUDENT OUTCOMES



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The Program

The Big Idea Project is a turn-key experiential leadership development system that allows schools and educators to make a real difference. Students identify a need in society they would like to do something about, work together with a business mentor to design their action plan and then make their Big Idea come to life. Teachers customize the curriculum to their needs and set the stage for the project, providing resources and knowledge. Teams of 3-4 students work together in a semester-long project. At the end of the semester, teams create a storytelling video and present their impact to the community for the chance to win a college scholarship and a spot at the State presentation event.

Spring 2020 Modifications

In March 2020, the Big Idea Project transitioned to remote learning when schools were closed to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Program Objectives for Students

- > Increase in leadership and other professional skills related to workforce readiness.
- > Increase student social and emotional skills.
- > Increase personal well-being and supportive classroom culture.

Evaluation Goals & Approach

- > To address the impact of COVID-19 and school closures, we drafted a new post-program survey instrument to gather input on how students were coping with school closures and learn how the Big Idea Project or Leadership Challenge may have helped students to cope with the pandemic experience.
- > The pre-program survey was administered online in classrooms. The post-program survey was administered online, with students responding from home. (see the Appendix for details)

"[Big Idea Project] was truly life changing and taught me things that I will carry for the rest of my life."

— Student



748 students



38 classes



27 teachers



15 schools



5 school districts



Response to School Closures

- Bored, but hopeful
- Miss social interaction
- Struggle with online learning
- Stressed by uncertainty

22% not coping very well
9% family not coping very well
49% work ethic suffered
35% increased sense of purpose

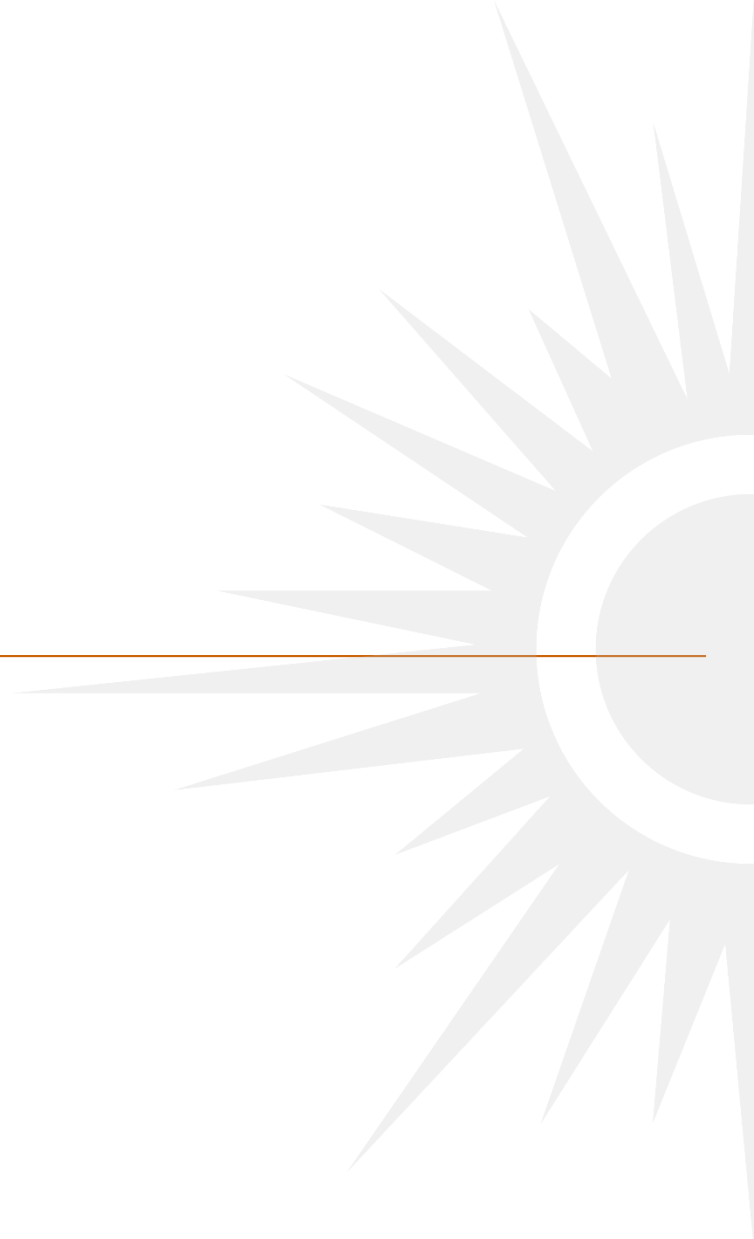


Big Idea Project Impacts

- Growth in purpose, leadership, agency, and problem solving
- See themselves as valuable
- See others with empathy
- Value chance to make a difference and help others

60% felt connected
74% empathy increased
87% grew as a leader
72% would recommend

SECTION 1
PARTICIPANT PROFILE



Standard table

> Female and white students were more likely to complete both the pre and post survey, so are slightly overrepresented in the outcome results.

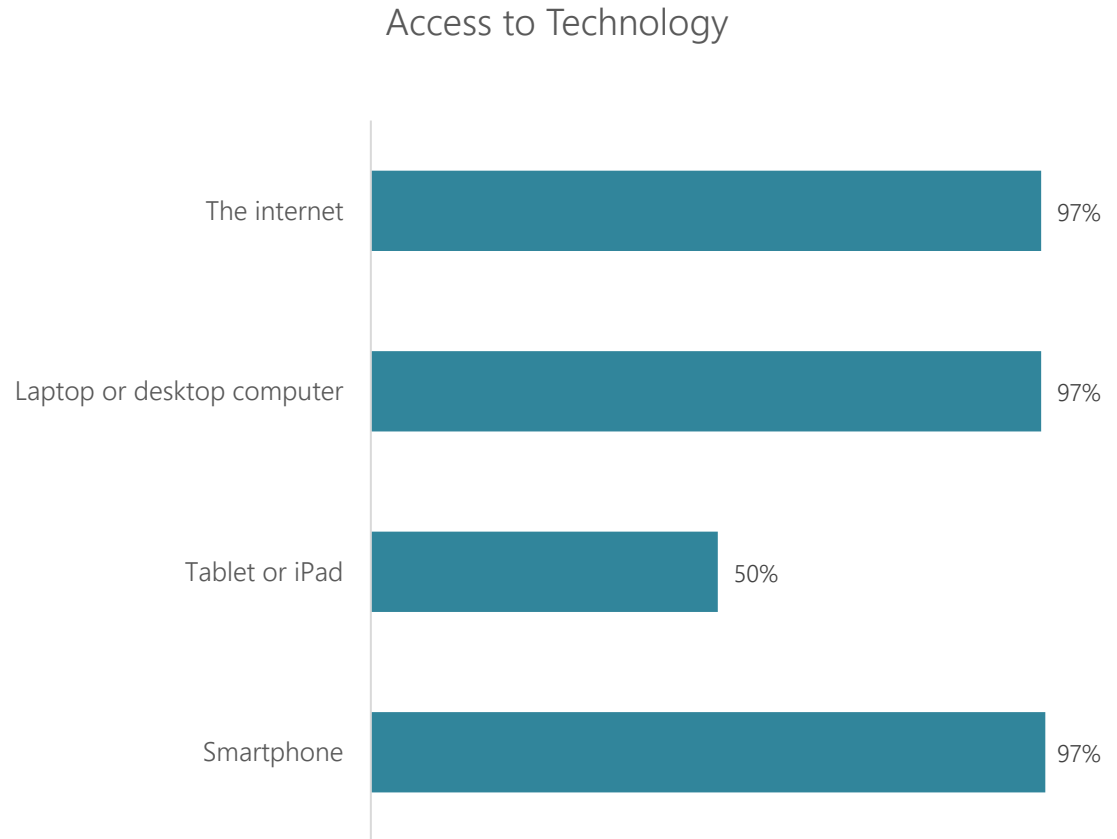
	Enrolled (Pre-Survey)	Evaluated (Pre & Post)
Total	694	325
Gender		
Male	46%	38%
Female	53%	61%
Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic (of any race)	28%	22%
Person of color (non-Hispanic)	14%	14%
White (non-Hispanic)	58%	64%
During Remote Learning		
Big Idea Project		53%
Leadership Challenge		44%
Did not continue		3%

SECTION 2
COVID-19 IMPACTS



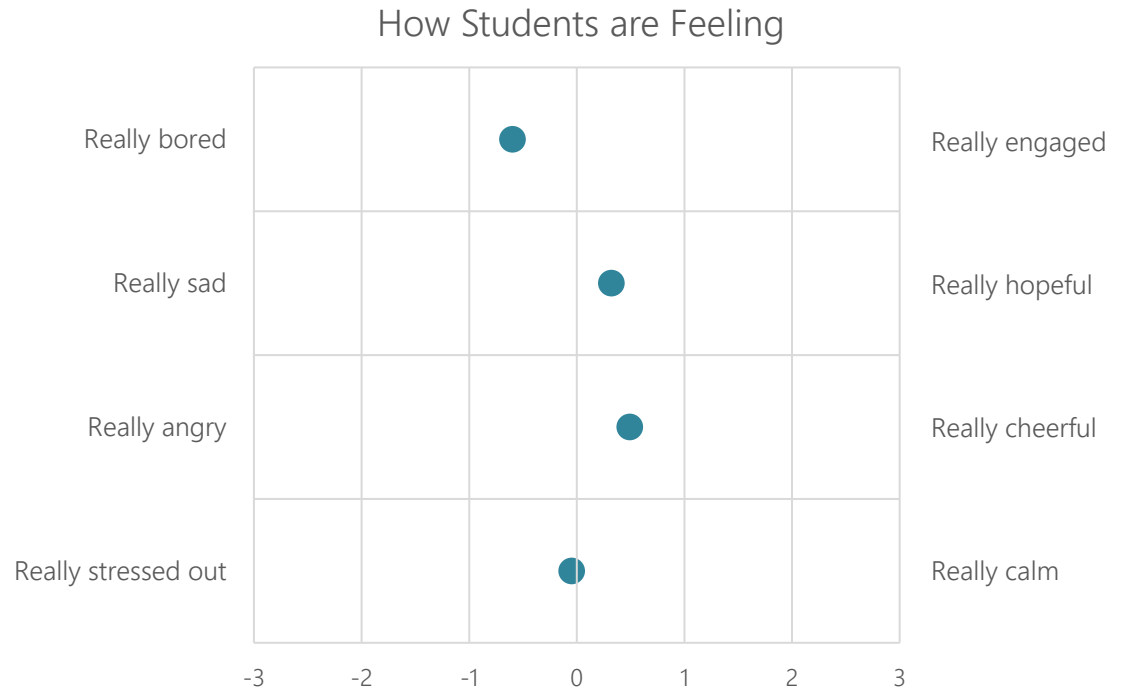
Students who completed the post survey generally had access to technology at home

- > Most students completing the post survey online have access to the internet, computer, and smartphone from home. However, because this survey was conducted online at home, students with better access to technology are more likely to have participated in the survey. Students with less access to technology are likely underrepresented in this survey.
- > Of those with a computer at home, 17% share that computer with other people in the household.
- > Hispanic students were less likely to report having access to a computer (91%) or internet (93%) at home, and more of those who do, share that computer with others (27%).



Boredom is the most common negative feeling while stuck at home

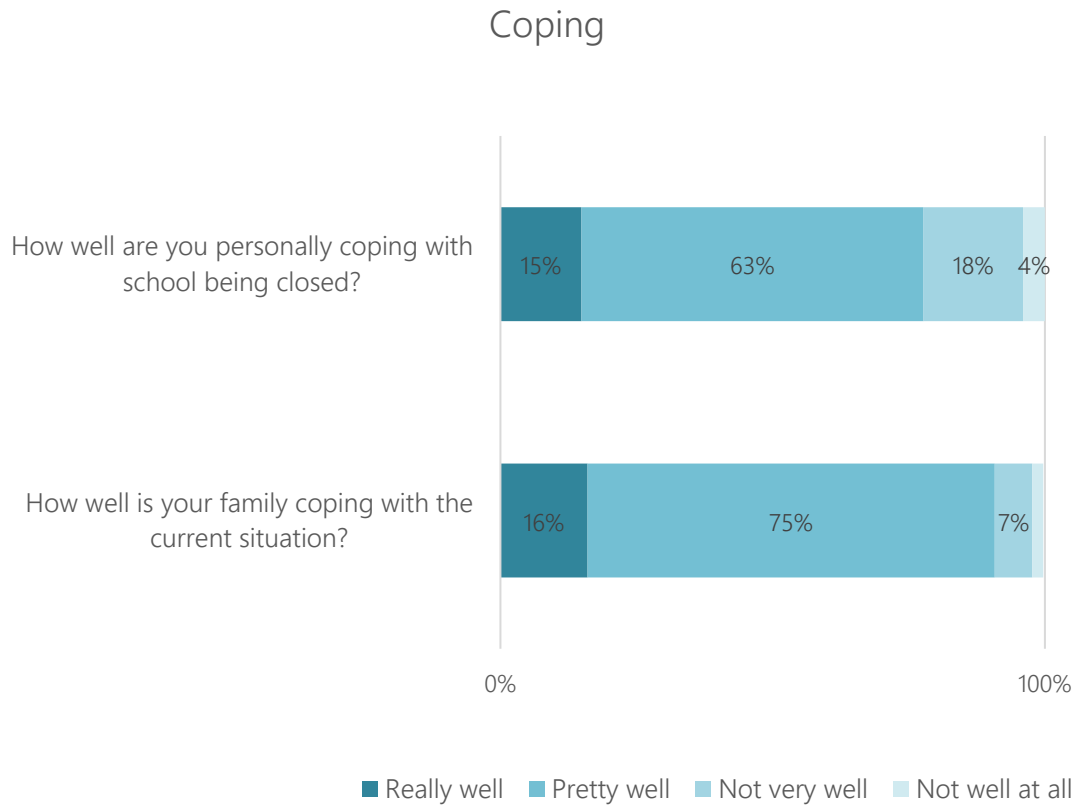
- > Students were slightly more likely to say they were hopeful (vs. sad) and cheerful (vs. angry).
- > On average, students were neither really stressed out nor really calm.
- > Because this survey was conducted as school ended for the year, emotions at this time may be more positive than they were typically during remote learning.



The hardest part about school closing is the lack of social interaction

- > **Social Interaction.** The most frequently mentioned difficulty about school closing was the lack of social interaction and not being able to see their friends. While it was common to hear that students missed seeing their peers, they also missed interacting with adults who care, as evidenced by students saying that they missed their teachers almost as often as they said they missed their friends.
 - > **Online Learning.** Students also explained that school closing was very difficult due to the switch to online learning. Some students struggled to communicate with their teachers and get clarification on assignments and course material. Many also explained that they need in-person lessons to learn and the adjustment to time management, planning, and finding focus was a challenge. While some students reported that their classes got easier because they were assigned a lot of busywork, other students said that their workload got heavier.
 - > **Sense of Closure.** A very common theme for high school seniors was a sense of regret about missing end-of-year celebrations such as prom, graduation, and saying goodbye to friends. However, non-seniors also experienced a lack of closure as well in having friendships cut short and missing out on opportunities to play sports or participate in the school musical.
 - > **Stress, Uncertainty, and Mental Health.** Many students reflected on the stress of uncertainty and the toll on their mental health. While getting out and exercising and participating in the Big Idea Project or Leadership Challenge helped students cope with these changes, many cited feelings of anxiousness or loss with school closing. Increased workload or students feeling like they had to keep up with course curriculum from home especially presented a challenge for students who struggled to find the motivation to work during unprecedented times. Additionally, many students said that they lacked the ability to do the schoolwork because of jobs or needing to help their families with things like care of younger siblings.
- "I have played no baseball with makes me stressed, anxious, and upset. But I'm finding ways to help me out such as working on my Big Idea Project."*
- Student

Students are not coping quite as well with school closing, compared to their families

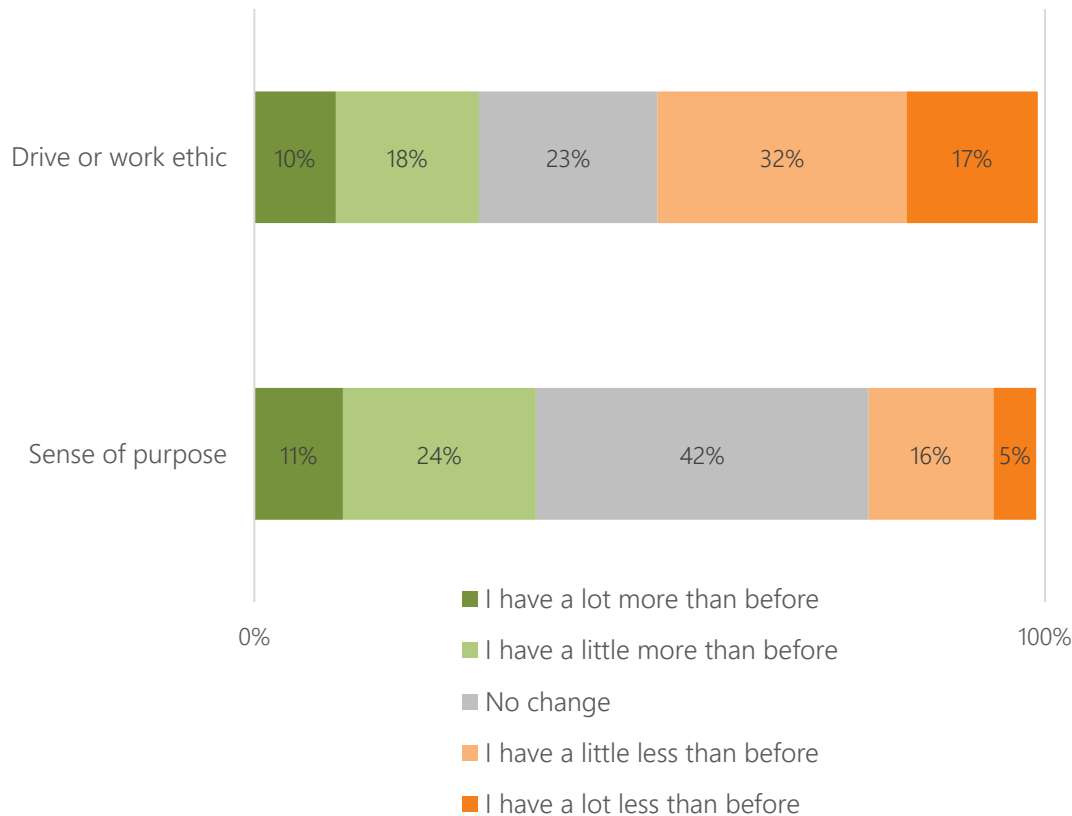


> More than one in five students said they were not coping very well or not well at all with school being closed.

Q: How well are you personally coping with school being closed?
Q: How well is your family coping with the current situation?

Almost half of students felt like their drive or work ethic has suffered during COVID-19

COVID-19 Impacts

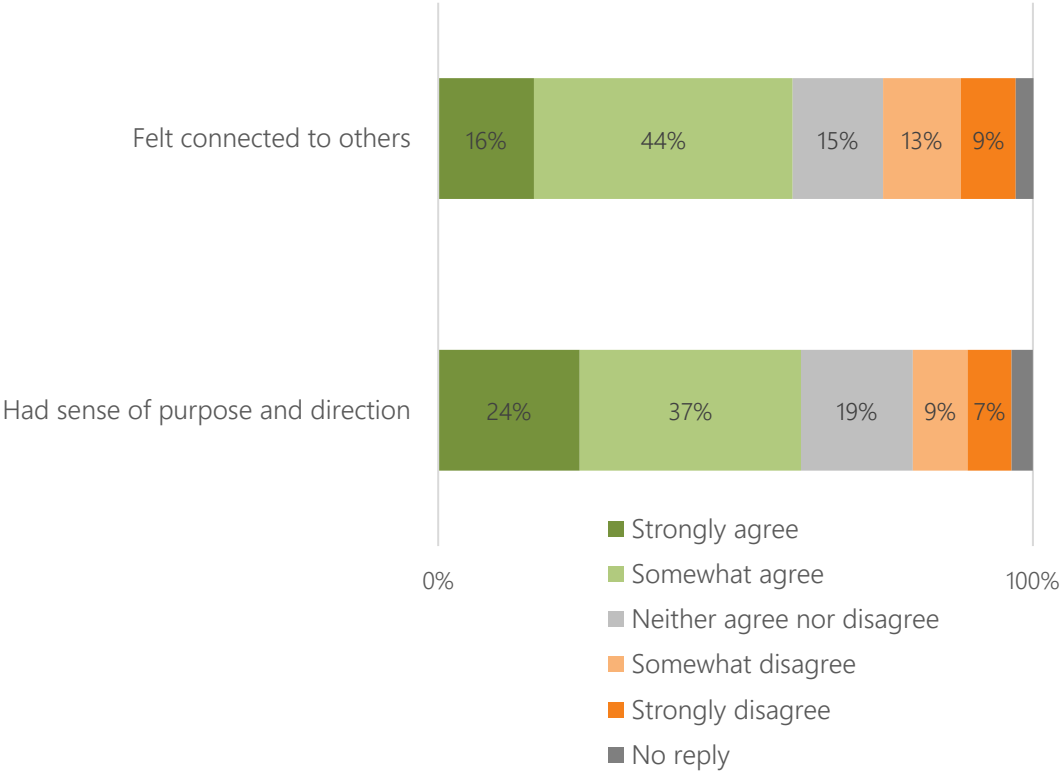


- > A quarter of students, however, felt like their drive or work ethic had increased.
- > On the other hand, most students felt like their sense of purpose had either not changed or increased during COVID-19.

Remote programming helped students stay connected and have a sense of purpose

- > About 60% of students agreed that their involvement with Big Idea Project or the Leadership Challenge helped them feel connected to others and gave them a sense of purpose and direction as the semester continued remotely.

Impact of Big Idea Project/Leadership Challenge During Remote Learning



Q: As the semester continued remotely, I felt connected to others because of my involvement with Big Idea Project or the Leadership Challenge.
Q: My involvement with Big Idea Project or the Leadership Challenge gave me a sense of purpose and direction as the semester continued remotely.

Students applied their skills in communication, empathy, and leadership to respond to COVID-19

- > **Importance of Communication.** From Big Idea Project and the Leadership Challenge, many students explained that they learned how important it is to be in good communication when it comes to setting goals, getting work done and helping people who are in need. During this time, students explained how they found themselves checking in on others and see how they can be of help.
 - > **Opportunities to Help and Lead.** Big Idea Project and the Leadership Challenge got students thinking about how they can help others around them, even if it was just members of their own family. Many explained that they were able to practice leadership and make changes for the better that were valuable even if they were still small efforts.
- "I have learned that it is really important to check in on others and make sure they are doing ok. Because if I am struggling there is a really good chance someone else [is too], so I have learned to find community within this time."*
- Student
- > **Big Idea Project and Leadership Challenge Taught Transferrable Skills.** Many students expressed their satisfaction with seeing that lessons they were learning through Big Idea Project and Leadership Challenge engagements directly related to their lives. Some reflected on how time management helped them in their schoolwork as well as how to practice patience and maintain perseverance during times of uncertainty. While success in the real world requires motivation and focus, students also acknowledged that Big Idea Project and the Leadership Challenge taught them they also need to be adaptable while building structure so they can meet commitments and be successful.
 - > **Self-Care and Gratitude.** Students often explained how lesson content helped them realize that to help and be supportive of others, you first have to take care of yourself. During this time, students were willing to see time spent reflecting, pausing, and stepping away from the stress enabled them to be more helpful overall. Through this process, many expressed a sense of gratitude for their family and the ability to be more aware of themselves and of others.

Students felt their Big Idea Project/Leadership Challenge class was less stressful and more purposeful than their other classes

- > **Structures and Goals.** Students often explained that non-Big Idea Project or Leadership Challenge classes had more work or work that was more academically challenging but that the work for Big Idea Project and Leadership Challenge felt challenging and important. Standard courses continued with curriculum and maintained the same pace of learning, which often left students feeling stressed about learning content and completing assignments. Alternatively, the Big Idea Project and Leadership Challenge classes were less about the curriculum and were more about the self-directed learning. While many students expressed that they liked the freedom and less pressure with Big Idea Project and Leadership Challenge classes, a significant portion of students also reflected on how the lack of structure and guidance was a challenge for them.
- > **Purposeful Learning.** Due to the structure and goals of Big Idea Project and Leadership Challenge classes, students expressed another significant difference from other courses was their degree of connection to and interaction with their peers and teachers. Many reflected on how this team-centered class approach was helpful for combatting feelings of isolation and allowed for some control in life, positivity, stress reduction, and fun. Finally, the flexibility in learning allowed for personal growth and feelings of agency among students, which allowed them to see their work as meaningful.
- > **Mental Health.** Again, students mentioned how Big Idea Project and Leadership Challenge work allowed them to commit to their own mental health and stability in ways their other courses did not. Through reflection and activities that allowed students to feel purpose, many reflected on how Big Idea Project and Leadership Challenge classes were grounding and helped them find motivation and structure in the rest of their lives.

"It gave me a sense of purpose, like the work I was doing really mattered and that even though we are going through a hard time I could help people. It wasn't how fast can I get this done like other classwork, it was something I was very invested in."

— Student

SECTION 3

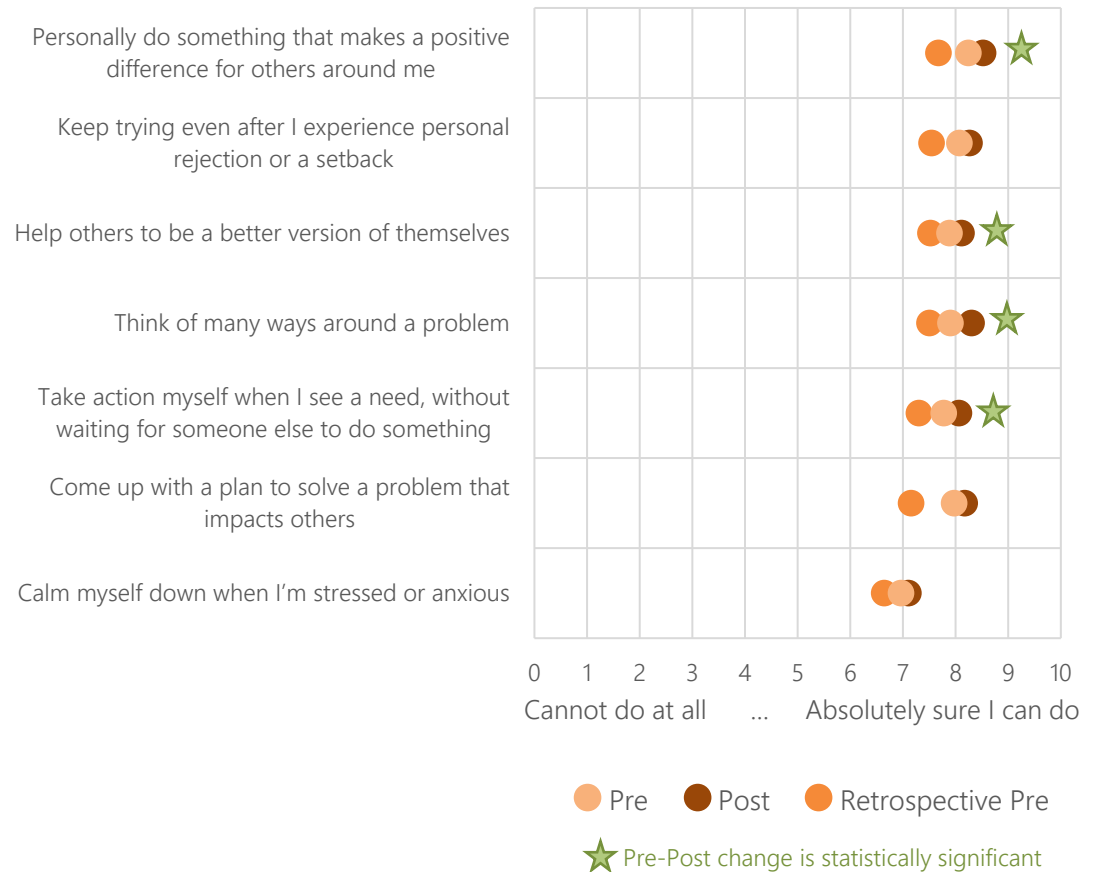
STUDENT OUTCOMES

- > Generous Leadership®
- > Social and Emotional Learning
- > Workforce Readiness
- > Well-Being

Participating in the Big Idea Project/Leadership Challenge led to growth in problem solving, leadership, agency, and purpose

- > The items at right measure skills for social and emotional learning, workforce readiness, well-being, and Generous Leadership®.
- > Both before and after the program, students were least confident in their ability to calm themselves down when stressed or anxious.
- > Students showed statistically significant gains in:
 - **Problem solving** (ability to think of many ways around a problem)
 - **Leadership** (ability to help others be a better version of themselves)
 - **Agency** (ability to take action myself when I see a need)
 - **Purpose** (ability to do something that makes a positive difference for others)

Areas of Growth



Q: How sure are you that you can do each of the following? (Pre/Post)

Q: How sure are you that you could have done each of the following BEFORE you started the Big Idea Project? (Retrospective Pre)

Students' greatest gains were in their ability to see themselves as valuable and see others with empathy

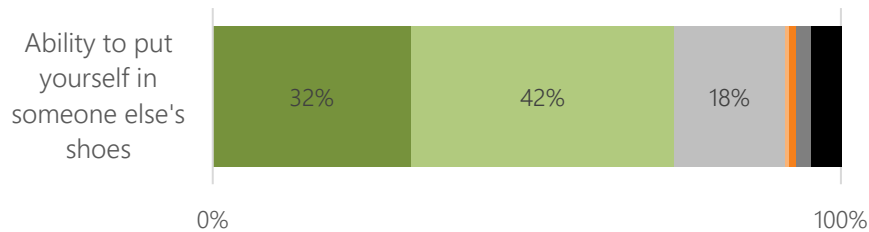
Generous Leadership Worldview



- > Compared to their views before the program started, after the program students were more likely to see themselves as valuable, to attribute other people's challenges to outside forces, and to believe that good teamwork depends on working through, rather than avoiding, conflict.

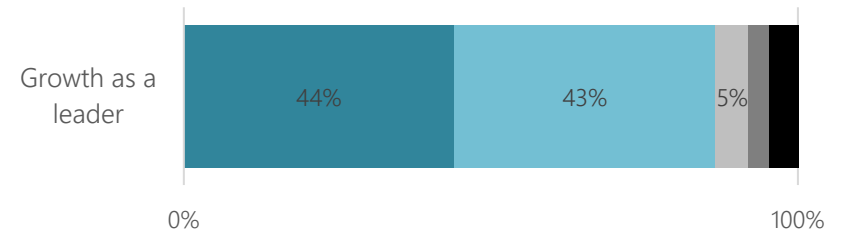
A majority of students believe their empathy has increased and they have grown as a leader through their participation

Empathy



- a lot easier
- a little easier
- neither harder nor easier
- a little harder
- a lot harder
- I don't know
- No reply

Leadership



- grown a lot
- grown a little
- not grown at all
- I don't know
- No reply

Q: As a result of participating in the Big Idea Project or Leadership Challenge, is it now easier or harder to put yourself in someone else's shoes?
Q: How much, if at all, have you grown as a leader as a result of participating in the Big Idea Project or Leadership Challenge?

SECTION 4

SATISFACTION & RECOMMENDATION

Mentors provide students with guidance and support

- > 87% of survey respondents said they had a mentor for the project, and of those who had a mentor, 60% said they continued to have contact with their mentor after school closed.
 - Students who continued with their Big Idea Project after school closed were more likely to maintain contact with their mentor than were students who switched to the Leadership Challenge (74% vs 45%).

"[My mentor] taught me that we should listen twice as much as we talk because we have two ears and one mouth. It has helped me so much to hear others. I like to be the one talking but after listening more to others I've learned a lot."

— Student

- > **Project Scoping and Feedback.** Students credited mentors with teaching them how to generate ideas, pitch projects to their team members, settle on a project with the appropriate scope, and develop plans for how to implement the project. During idea generation, mentors helped students realize that understanding a problem requires listening to others and changing one's point of view. Mentors also played a key part in providing feedback for how to select the right project and reminded students that there are many ways to solve a problem.
- > **Project Management, Role Modeling, and Connections.** Prior to virtual learning, mentors played an essential role in teaching about project management. Mentors helped students identify steps they would need to work through and the timeline they had to maintain to do so. They also taught lessons in effective communication, group dynamics and teamwork. Often, students explained how they learned by seeing their mentor in action such as by how he or she managed his or her own time, set expectations for schedules and communication, or went out of their way to help the team complete tasks. As projects got underway, mentors also played an important role in helping students network, learn to communicate with other professionals, or share concrete knowledge about a specific topic such as how to fundraise.
- > **Perseverance, Problem-Solving, and Life Lessons.** As students shifted to remote learning, mentors played a key part in helping their teams maintain motivation or find new directions. They were essential in providing examples of perseverance and determination. More importantly, however, they reminded students during an unprecedented time that they were valuable and have much to offer the world.

Most students would recommend the Leadership Challenge, but many wished they had been able to do the Big Idea Project

- > Overall, of students who switched to the Leadership Challenge after school closed **65% would recommend the Leadership Challenge** to other students.
 - However, 73% of females and 79% of students of color (non-Hispanic) would recommend.
 - Only 11% of students said they would not recommend the Leadership Challenge. The remainder said they didn't know or skipped the question.
- > Reasons for recommending the Leadership Challenge as an alternative to the Big Idea Project included that it allowed for:
 - **Personal growth and entertaining engagement.**
 - **Leadership opportunities.**
 - **A chance to learn about others.**
- > Reasons for not recommending the Leadership Challenge included:
 - **Fit and Meaning.** They see the Leadership Challenge as an opportunity for introspection and personal growth and that not all students are ready to engage with this. Additionally, several mentioned that the Leadership Challenge fell short in comparison to their expectations for Big Idea Project as they felt the engagements were more busywork, obligatory, and stressful than meaningful.
 - **Missing out on Big Idea Project.** While students often appreciated the reflection opportunities and the way to find meaning once school switched to online learning, they acknowledged the outcomes of Big Idea Project and Leadership Challenge were different. The Leadership Challenge allowed them to focus on themselves and make small and practical changes, while the Big Idea Project was to allow them to demonstrate leadership, engage with a problem in their community, and have a positive impact. Generally, students seemed to have a sense of loss from not being able to complete their Big Idea Project but still expressed appreciation for the Leadership Challenge.

"My team and I originally only did the Leadership Challenge because we would not be able to do our original project. But, it turned into so much more. It helped me to stay positive during an otherwise tough time. It's kept me in line, and I've made sure to take care of others and myself during this bizarre time. Also, it's a ton of fun! While doing each of my experiments, I was having fun. Not only me, my family enjoyed the project a lot as well! Some of my experiments benefitted them, and some of the experiments they did with me because they saw how much fun I was having!"

— Student

- > Overall, **72% of students would recommend the Big Idea Project** to other students.
 - This was true both for students who continued their Big Idea Project after school closed, as well as those who switched to the Leadership Challenge.
 - Among female participants, 78% would recommend the Big Idea Project, as would 81% of Hispanic students.
 - Only 8% of students said they would not recommend the Big Idea Project. The remainder said they didn't know or skipped the question.

"It may be overwhelming mainly because it requires so much time outside of school but it provides a platform to learn real-world skills that most high school classes or projects can not provide."

— Student

- > Students who would recommend the Big Idea Project often cited:
 - **Personal growth, empowerment, and purpose**
 - **Making a difference and helping others**
 - **Problem solving, resilience, and perseverance**
- > For those who were not sure or wouldn't recommend it, they were most concerned with:
 - **Structure of the program.** Some students found the project confusing, wanted less time doing the beginning set up and paperwork, or wanted more time to just do the project.
 - **Necessary time commitments and stress of project work.**
 - **Whether it was the right fit for the student.**
- > In addition, several students who had switched from Big Idea Project to the Leadership Challenge said they would like to see students **have the option to choose between the Big Idea Project and the Leadership Challenge** from day one, as one or the other may best suit each student's situation.

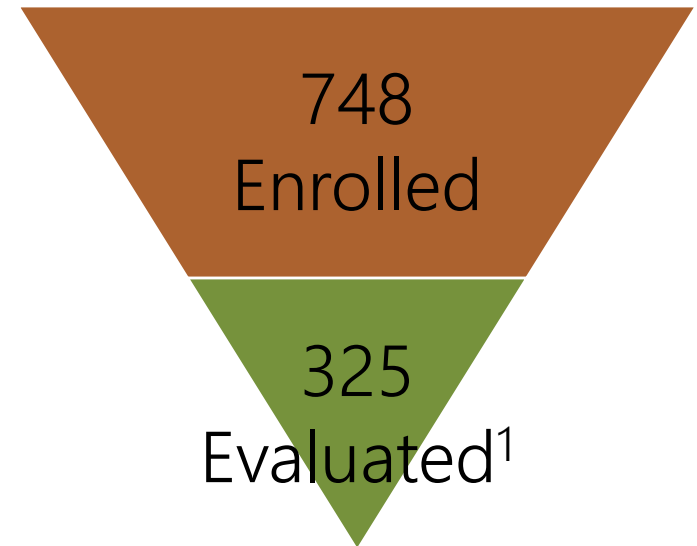
"I would like to share that the BIP saved me in many ways. It allowed me to become more of the person I am internally rather than the one I portray on the outside. It gave me a sense of reality that has pushed me to accomplish goals and work through problems to prevent situations that may arise in the future. It allowed me to connect with people in my community that I didn't even know before. And most of all it allowed me to become humble and participate in civic engagement that benefits the vast majority of the people I came across in my short time with the project. I would also like to say that my group and I have decided together that continuing our mission after quarantine would be beneficial and helpful for all the people who could use a hand in the hard times we are going through. Thank you all for the opportunity!"

— Student

APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY & ANALYSIS DETAILS

<i>Design</i>	Pre/Post evaluation
<i>Program participants</i>	748 students
<i>Program dosage</i>	Integrated program: 1 semester; 10 hours of instruction; 8 hours of coaching; 30-40 service hours
<i>Evaluation participants</i>	325
<i>Evaluation rate²</i>	43% of participants completed both surveys
<i>Mode</i>	Online surveys using Survey Gizmo software; pre survey administered in classroom, post survey administered online during remote learning due to Covid-19.
<i>Length</i>	Pre survey: 6.5 minutes; Post survey 12 minutes
<i>Time frame</i>	Pre survey: January 6-16, 2020 Post survey: May 1 – June 17, 2020



1. **Evaluated** indicates the number of students who took both the pre and post surveys and were included in the full analysis.
2. **Evaluation rate** is the proportion of program participants who participated in the evaluation (completed both pre and post surveys).

Generous Leadership®
Social and Emotional Learning
Workforce Readiness
Well-Being

Items written specifically for Big Idea Project, to capture behaviors needed to be a generous leader.

Scale measures perceived self-efficacy for performing actions:

*0 = "cannot do at all" to
10 = "absolutely sure I can do."*

- > **Self-care** (Calm myself down when I'm stressed or anxious)
- > **Self-awareness** (Reflect on how I have grown through a challenging experience)
- > **Agency** (Take action myself when I see a need, without waiting for someone else to do something.)
- > **Resilience** (Keep trying even after I experience personal rejection or a setback.)
- > **Purpose** (Personally doing something that makes a positive difference for others around me.)
- > **Leadership** (Help others to be a better version of themselves.)
- > **Leadership** (Help others to accomplish more than they thought they could.)
- > **Problem solving** (Come up with a plan to solve a problem that impacts others.)
- > **Problem solving** (Think of many ways around a problem.)
- > **Empathy** (Conduct interviews to learn about a problem from the perspectives of those affected by it.)
- > **Teamwork & relationships** (Ask for help from a mentor to reach my goals.)

- > Survey responses were downloaded from SurveyGizmo and exported to Excel for data cleaning and matching. A pre and post survey were “matched” for a particular student if the student’s email address was an exact match on both records or if the combination of initials and birthdate were an exact match on both records. A final pass for matches looked at the remaining set of unmatched surveys within a classroom and paired any sets of pre and post responses that could be confidently attributed to the same person (e.g., matching initials and day and month of birth, with one birthdate entered with the current year and one with birth year; or two email addresses with the same username at two different domains).
- > After matching, matched responses were coded and imported into Snap 11 Professional survey software for tabulation of data.
- > Data were exported to R for statistical analysis of change over time. Multi-level modeling was used to measure the change over time in students’ social and emotional learning/leadership/ workforce/ well-being/ engagement behaviors. This type of analysis is used when the data set contains repeated measures for individuals (i.e., pre, and post surveys) and those individuals are nested within classrooms and within schools. The analysis was conducted using the Linear and Nonlinear Mixed Effects Models (nlme) package in R statistical software.

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