

Evaluation of the Challenges, Beliefs and Changes program: Executive summary

June 2019

Introduction

The Challenges, Beliefs and Changes (CBC) program is a peer education program on substance use and abuse that provides training to high school students ('peer leaders') to deliver education about substance use to Grade 7/8/9 students ('younger students'). Local champions help facilitate peer leader training and program delivery in area schools.

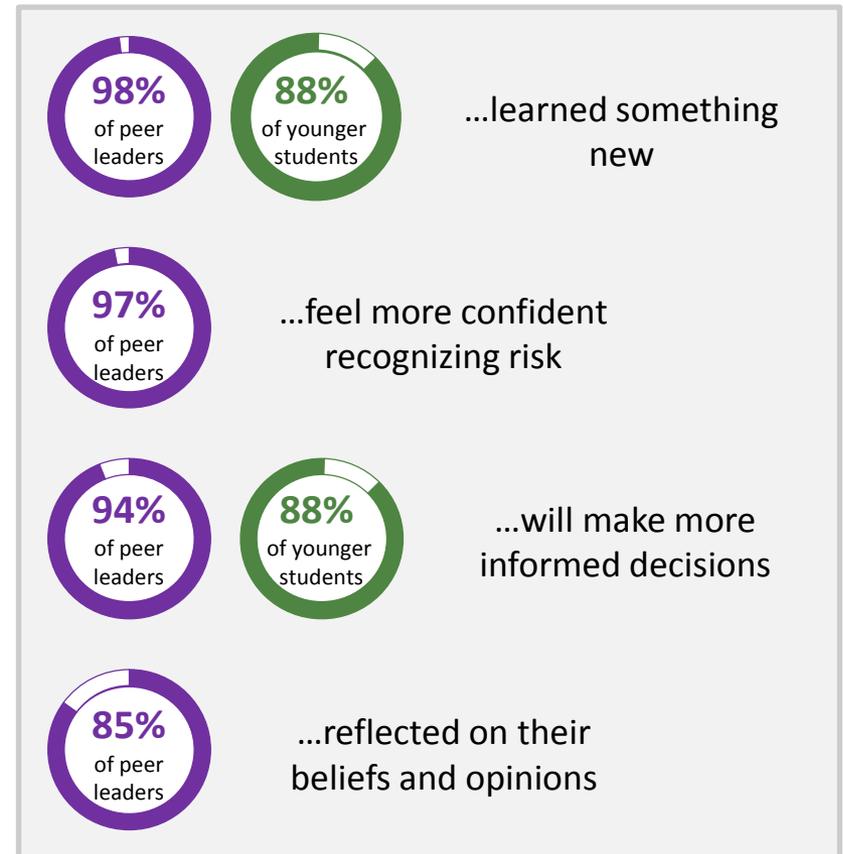
Key findings: Program implementation and reach

In 2018-19, the CBC program **reached 182 peer leaders in 9 schools** (about 1% of Ontario secondary schools).

Local champions have been able to support the successful implementation of the CBC program in a variety of different contexts, and have seen **value in the program's unique, peer-led design and its emphasis on informed decision-making for both peer leaders and younger students**. Local champions have found creative ways to make the program work (e.g., leveraging pre-existing student groups as peer leaders, encouraging Grade 10s to participate as peer leaders); however, some aspects of local coordination are challenging (e.g., transportation, navigating board approval processes), and these have potential to limit broader uptake of the program.

Key findings: Program outcomes

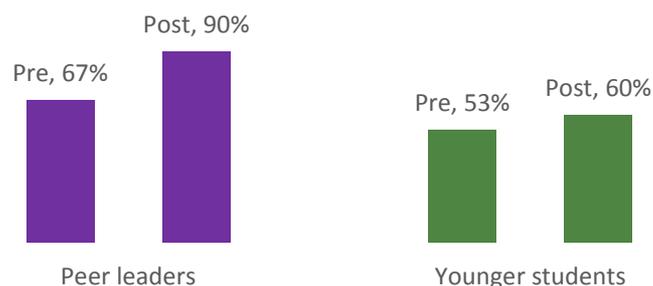
The CBC program has had a positive impact on both peer leaders and younger student participants. Students in both groups indicated that they gained knowledge, became more aware of their personal beliefs and opinions about substance use, and felt more prepared to make informed decisions.



Although it may be too early to draw conclusions for younger students, the program seemed to have a more meaningful impact (e.g., knowledge gain, outcomes) for Grade 7s than for Grade 8s or 9s.

Objectively-measured gains in knowledge were much higher for peer leaders than for younger students. This is not surprising, given that peer leaders had the benefit of a two-day intensive training program from experienced PAD staff, whereas younger students only received 1.5 to 3 hours of training from peer leaders who may not be able to cover all the core activities, and who are also less experienced teachers.

Average pre- and post-program knowledge quiz scores



In addition, peer leaders also had an opportunity to develop **leadership and facilitation skills**.

Both peer leaders and younger students found some program activities to be **more enjoyable and impactful** than others. The most enjoyable and impactful activities (for both groups) were:

- '30 Questions – The Game'
- 'Who Uses What...And Why?'
- 'Parties and Peers'
- 'Four Corners'

Conclusions and suggestions for improvement

Overall, the CBC program has been successful in the schools where it was implemented. Based on the evaluation findings, we offer the following suggestions for strengthening program implementation, peer leader training and program delivery, and future evaluations.

Program implementation

- Make things as easy as possible for local champions: Create a package of implementation supports, including materials they can use for board approvals.
- Update the program manual: Emphasize activities that are most impactful and enjoyable, and ensure references are up-to-date.

Peer leader training and program delivery

- Provide more opportunities for peer leaders to practice facilitating the activities.
- Limit distractions in the classroom (e.g., cellphones).
- Provide supplemental resources for younger students' classrooms, such as posters or videos.
- Make activities more engaging and interactive (i.e., more time in hands-on activities, less time sitting and listening).
- Provide images of substances.

Future evaluations

- Continue to evaluate the CBC program using pre/post knowledge quizzes, post-participation surveys, and follow-up surveys.
- Set up a tracking system to monitor peer leader program delivery and younger student participation.