

Evaluation Report:
SWOVA's R+R (Respectful Relationships) Program, 2013-14

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INTRODUCTION

Background

The R+R (Respectful Relationships) program for youth aged 13 to 16 was developed by SWOVA (Salt Spring Women Opposed to Violence and Abuse) and has been delivered continuously in the Gulf Islands and periodically in other communities in BC for the past 14 years. It is widely recognized, including by the United Nations,¹ as an effective educational tool to help students in grades 7, 8, 9 and 10 (aged 13 to 16) develop the social and personal understandings, the skills and the values they need for safe, healthy and respectful interpersonal relationships in their immediate lives and in the future.

The R+R program consists of 12 modules delivered in each of the four years, for a total of 48 age-appropriate workshop-style sessions that build in complexity and challenge from one grade to the next. It is delivered during school hours by a team of specially-trained community-based facilitators, one female and one male, who work with the youth in a non-traditional “circle” setting. Both the gender balance and the physical setting are features that embody core values of the program, encouraging students to explore the topics and engage in the activities of the curriculum with the values of respect, equality for all and non-violence always in mind.

Each session has its own specific learning objectives, but the overall goals of the R+R program are to:

- develop social-emotional competence in the students
- encourage critical thinking and responsibility in relation to issues of interpersonal respect and social equality, and
- help prevent relationship violence in all its forms (physical, verbal, emotional or sexual) both in school culture and in students' daily life experience.

By inviting students to engage with subjects that range from identifying, talking about and managing their emotions, to recognizing and combating stereotypes, to understanding the cycle of violence in abusive relationships, the R+R program places ‘emergency issues’ like bullying and drug abuse into their broader context, where complex social dynamics intersect with students' own choices and decisions for living.

The program is made available to students in the Middle School for their last two years (grades 7 and 8), and to students in the Secondary School for their first two years (grades 9 and 10), spanning an important educational transition process in their lives.

The adult facilitators are assisted in the classroom by a “youth team” of senior students who have experienced the R+R program themselves in earlier grades and choose to continue their own personal and social development through weekly team meetings and training as junior facilitators.

¹ In 2007, SWOVA's Respectful Relationships (R+R) program was cited by [United Nations Habitat](#) as a Good Practice in youth violence prevention, as part of world-wide Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment.

R+R has been independently evaluated in every year of its delivery. Results have been used to inform funders as well as contribute to curriculum revision and increase program impact.

Program delivery in 2013-14

In 2013-14, R+R program delivery was limited to the program's home community (the Southern Gulf Islands),² where the teachers and administrators of School District 64 have welcomed it and helped in its development, and contribute financially in a small way to its continuity. Normally teachers are present for workshop sessions and often participate on an equal basis with the students, taking their place in the discussion circle and building own familiarity with the concepts and methods of the R+R program.

This past year, delivery in the Middle School was affected by the medical absence of the principal, a long time supporter of the R+R program who conveyed that view to her staff and assisted in integrating the program into the school and solving problems if necessary. The SIMS school counselor proved helpful in her absence, and an argument might be made for establishing the counselor as the on-going link for SWOVA with that school, including (ideally) an introduction of the program in each class. More specifically:

- In grade 7, five classes (or groups from different classes) participated in the R+R program for a total of about 95 potential student attendees. The structure and ideas of R+R are new at this grade level, and emphasis always has to be placed on the introduction of some of the challenging ideas and practices that are central to R+R, particularly (i) respectful listening and responses to others, and (ii) the identification of emotions and their role in respectful relationships.
- In grade 8, three classes participated, for a total of about 93 potential attendees. At this age, students are well known to be "hormonal" and often rebellious in small and large ways, also to be increasingly peer-oriented, and both resistant and open to new ideas at the same time. Competitive power dynamics among the boys were strong this past year, and often anything but respectful, which was both a challenge for program delivery but also a rich opportunity for engagement with key concepts in the moment. Involvement of the R+R youth team at this grade level was found to be helpful in positive engagement.

Delivery at the Secondary School level is always somewhat problematic simply because of the complex, subject-oriented timetable that is typical of this stage of the education process. Due to normal turn-over in the administration of this school over the years when R+R has been delivered there, the original familiarity with and strong support for the program from senior administrators appears to have faded, though one of the vice principals was very helpful this past year. In the future, it might be advisable for SWOVA to find ways of demonstrating the benefits of R+R to all administrators, perhaps through direct engagement e.g. a demonstration by the Youth Team. More specifically:

- In grade 9, the program was facing re-engagement with a difficult cohort of grade 8s from the year before. Despite some challenges, the experience was positive, in part because SWOVA's facilitators were "familiar faces" from past years and also because they placed greater emphasis on supporting the students in their transition from middle to high school. To that end, it is useful that R+R is normally delivered early in the fall

² The R+R program has been delivered and found valuable in seven other school districts in BC. Despite those positive outcomes, long-term funding has been difficult for communities to find.

term. That said, the R+R curriculum for this grade introduces and explores systemic violence, which is always a challenge for some students and produces resistance which facilitators anticipate and plan for. One future goal they have identified is to develop a more effective and integrative approach with the international students who come to the Gulf Islands.

- As in the recent past, effective program delivery in grade 10 was significantly diminished by the absence of a clear message from the administration to teachers and students that their participation in the R+R program is a required part of the grade 10 curriculum, not an option (except in rare cases of parental preference). About 40% of enrolled students chose to attend the program, and because of the self-selection factor, their participation and engagement levels were very high and positive. However, as some attending students noted, many of those who were not there were those who particularly needed to be exposed to the concepts of the R+R program.

Evaluation

Program evaluation for 2013-14 is based on the results of a short written feedback survey which all attending students were asked to complete at the end of their final workshop session. (Funding limitations unfortunately do not permit a more extensive evaluation, including behavioural measures.) SWOVA's facilitators also gave participating students the opportunity to make closing comments, and hear them from their peers, as part of the final circle. These comments were not recorded.

The grade 7 and 8 students were asked to complete roughly the same feedback questionnaire, consisting of 15 questions in all. Most were fairly simple check-off questions with pre-set choices, rather than open-ended questions requiring written responses, since past experience has shown that most 13 and 14 year-olds are either not self-reflective enough or not sufficiently skilled at written self-expression to provide meaningful answers. The older grade 9s and 10s were given a somewhat different questionnaire, consisting of 12 questions, with more opportunity for written elaboration of pre-set check-off selections, or for other individual comments on an open-ended basis.

Decisions were made to continue asking some questions that have been asked in previous years, in order to permit year to year comparison of results when funding permits. Some new questions were asked in order for this year's evaluation to be able to look more deeply into particular issues of significance to SWOVA staff.

The evaluation report is divided into four major sections, presenting the evaluation results for each of the four grades separately. A final section on conclusions and recommendations completes the report. It should be kept in mind that response numbers are small, limiting the certainty of unique results. That said, it should also be noted that the R+R program has been evaluated over many years, by several different evaluators, adding confidence to each year's results.

GRADE 7

The R+R program was delivered to five classes or groups of grade 7s, some from split grade classes, with a total enrollment of 95. The response rate for the feedback questionnaire was 73%. By gender, 39% of the respondents were boys, 49% were girls and 12% checked “other” or did not reply to that question. This would have been the first year in which they participated in the program.

Their responses to the 15-item questionnaire are grouped under three headings: (i) respect, (ii) specific program components, and (iii) overall program approval.

Respect

The theme and core organizing concept for the R+R program is that of respect, a multi-dimensional human attitude that shapes and informs interaction with others. In 2013-14, five of the questions in the grade 7 questionnaire focused on elements of respect.

To help assess the centrality of the concept to them, students were asked how important it is to them “to have respect from the people around you”, circling the number from 1 – 5 that best matched their feelings.

Table 1: Importance of Respect

Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Boys	4	1	9	8	5	27
%	15%	4%	33%	30%	18.5%	100%
Girls	2	1	8	12	10	33
%	6%	3%	24%	36%	30%	100%
Other	2	0	3	0	3	8
%	25%	-	38%	-	38%	100%
Total Students	8	2	20	20	18	68
Total %	12%	3%	29%	29%	26%	100%

It might be expected that most students would say that ‘respect’ is important at the 4 or 5 level, but only a combined total of 55% did so. Despite small numbers, the difference by gender is notable with 69% of girls circling 4 or 5, but only 48% of boys doing so. There was no follow-up probe asking students to explain their choices, something to consider adding in the future as a window on gender differences in students’ identification with program goals.

The students were also asked what form of abuse or violence concerned them the most, and were invited to name something in their personal lives, school environment, community, Canada or the world. About 57% responded, covering a great many aspects of the issue, sometimes in a long list within one response. At the school level, cyber-bullying received the most mentions followed by bullying and disrespect more generally. It was also striking that almost 25% of those who responded mentioned a world problem such as terrorism, war or slavery.

Continuing on the theme of respect, students were asked how much three key curriculum elements had helped to increase mutual respect among their classmates: listening to one another, learning what violence is and learning about empathy.

Table 2: Impact of Selected Curriculum Components on Respect

Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Listening to each other in the circle	11	11	23	17	7	69
%	16%	16%	33%	25%	10%	100%
Learning about empathy	14	10	23	17	5	69
%	20%	14%	33%	25%	7%	100%
Learning that violence is more than hitting	6	11	16	12	9	54³
%	11%	20%	30%	22%	17%	100%

The grade 7 students rated each of the elements in a similar range, with over 30% rating all three quite highly at 4 or 5, about 30% rating all three at the midpoint score of 3, and just over 30% giving them a low score of 1 or 2. The question sets a high bar for observed impact, asking the students to assess gains in respect in the relatively short period from the start of the R+R program to the last session, when they complete their program evaluations. From this point of view, the range of responses is encouraging.

Finally, in relation to respect, the students were asked how much the R+R program had helped them personally to think more deeply about respect in their lives.

Table 3: How Much Did the Program Help You Think About Respect?

	Really a lot	Quite a bit	Some	Not very much	None	Totals
Boys	2	7	6	9	3	27
%	7%	26%	22%	33%	11%	100%
Girls	2	12	11	8	1	34
%	6%	35%	32%	24%	3%	100%
Other	0	3	2	0	3	8
%	-	37%	25%	-	37%	100%
Total Students	4	22	19	17	7	69
Total %	6%	32%	28%	25%	10%	100%

Combining the three most positive responses, 66% of these students said that the program had helped them “some” or more, to engage with the concept of respect in the context of their personal lives, a central program goal. Just over 40% of the girls said it had helped them “quite a bit” or “really a lot”, compared with 33% of the boys.

³ Not all grade 7 students were asked this question.

Specific program components

Conflict, arguments, fights (whether physical or not) and other forms of disagreement are a fact of human life, and are common among children and youth until they develop the skills to recognize them and act effectively to avoid or resolve them. Those who see children mainly in the school context may assume that their conflicts are mostly with each other, but evaluation research on the R+R program shows otherwise.

Table 4: Most Conflicted Relationships

Brothers, sisters	Parents	Friends	Other students	Teachers	Total⁴
31 45%	19 28%	10 14%	9 13%	8 12%	77 112%

Confirming results from the 2012-13 school year, this year’s grade 7 students indicated clearly that the greatest sites of conflict in their lives are at home, especially with siblings. Nevertheless, conflicts with peers are very important to students and to the school environment, and they provide a learning context for the skills of conflict resolution.

The grade 7s were also asked if they thought that what they were learning in R+R could help them resolve conflicts in their lives. It is not expected that youth of this age can easily or fully achieve a high skill level in this area, but it is useful to test for perceived gains, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Help with Conflict

	Yes	No	Maybe, with more practice	Other	Totals
Boys	7	10	7	3	27
%	26%	37%	26%	11%	100%
Girls	7	6	18	2	33
%	21%	18%	54%	6%	100%
Other	3	3	1	1	8
%	38%	38%	12%	12%	100%
Total students	17	19	26	6	68
Total %	25%	28%	38%	9%	100%

One in four said a clear ‘yes’, and almost 40% answered ‘maybe with more practice’, which reinforces other research and program experience that demonstrates the importance of practice in learning these complex social skills. Conflict resolution is in fact not easy for people of *any* age to learn and apply successfully, let alone for children, which suggests the value of extended

⁴ A small number of students checked more than one box so the total of responses (77) exceeds the number of discrete respondents (69). Percentages for each choice were calculated on the basis of the number of respondents, so it is correct to say that 28% of the grade 7 students have significant conflict with their parents, 45% with their siblings, etc.

practice within the four-year R+R program as well as the benefits that could be gained if *teachers* were to be more highly trained in the methods of conflict resolution.

Bullying is one of the most disturbing and persistent forms of conflict found among youth. Considerable research shows that the role of bystanders can be significant in amplifying or limiting such behaviour, although the dynamics are not simple. The program goal for R+R at this age is simply to introduce the idea that bystanders can have a significant impact and therefore have a responsibility to govern their actions. In the questionnaire, students were asked, “can bystanders make a difference what bullying or fighting is going on?”

Table 6: Can Bystanders Make a Difference?

Yes	No	Not sure	Totals
35	4	12	51
69%	8%	24%	100%

A full 69% said yes, without reservation, and only 8% said no.⁵ About 43% offered explanations of the bystander role, though not all were clear or on point, suggesting the need for reinforcement of this strategy. Only a small number suggested getting help from an adult. One made the central point that, “*If they’re not doing anything they’re accepting bullying.*”

An important feature of the R+R program model is the exploration of gender differences as well as similarities in the context of respect, and the goal to increase students’ critical awareness of the role of gender in social relations. Among the methods for doing this is for facilitators to conduct one or more ‘gender separate’ segments as part of R+R workshops. The normal procedure is to allow each of the gender groups to spend time discussing a significant issue, first among themselves and then as a whole group, to compare results. These sessions are almost always a highly valued part of the R+R program. This year the grade 7s were asked for their views about the amount of time allocated to separate gender work.

Table 7: Time Spent in Separate Gender Sessions

	Would have liked more	Would have liked less	Amount of time was ok	Totals
Boys	9	3	15	27
%	33%	11%	56%	100%
Girls	11	3	17	31
%	35%	10%	55%	100%
Other	4	1	1	6
%	67%	17%	17%	100%
Total students	24	7	33	64
Total %	38%	11%	52%	100%

Normally, two of the 12 sessions in each grade include separate gender work. The majority of grade 7s thought this was the right balance, with little difference by gender. The latter finding is an encouraging one given that past years’ results have suggested that boys were less positive

⁵ Not all students were asked this question.

than girls about separate gender sessions. This data does not provide an explanation for the change, but one possibility may be the skill level and personality of the current male facilitator.⁶

Finally, in terms of selected program components, the questionnaire asked about cyber-bullying, an increasingly serious form of harassment and psychological violence both within schools and communities, and more impersonally in the wider internet culture. As a measure of students' concern and sense of vulnerability, they were simply asked if the R+R program should spend more time on cyber-bullying.

Table 8: Time on Cyber-bullying

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Totals
6 9%	24 36%	33 49%	2 3%	2 3%	67 100%

There was a nearly even split between those who were 'not sure' and those who agreed or strongly agreed that more time is needed. Almost no students disagreed at either level. It would be useful in the future to ask for some explanation from the large number who were not sure, to establish the nature of their uncertainty.

Overall program approval

The students were given an open-ended question which asked them to think back over all of the R+R sessions and say what the best part of the program was for them. They were not given any prompting to remember key concepts or curriculum. Only eight students (12%) provided no answer, and although 25% provided a silly, neutral or negative answer, 64% provided a substantive answer. Content analysis was done in very broad terms to identify the key themes.

Table 9: Best Part of R+R

No reply	Silly, neutral or negative	Talking in the circle	Specific activities	Totals
8 12%	17 25%	16 23%	28 41%	69 100%

The single most commonly mentioned aspect of the R+R program that students thought of as "the best part" was the opening circle and check-in, chosen by almost one in four students. Some of their comments were:

[See next page.]

⁶ It is a fundamental conviction of the R+R program, backed up by the research that has been done on it, that having a male and female pair of facilitators is an enormous advantage in demonstrating male-female equality in action. However, it has sometimes been challenging to find and retain strong, effective male facilitators for a variety of gender-related reasons.

[The best part was] sitting in the circle and listening to everybody.

I really liked the check ins because we got to tell about what's going on after school.

People opening up to the group and sharing their personal stories [was the best].

When we could talk about ourselves and not be interrupted or judged.

Hearing that some people are different from what I thought.

The largest percentage (41%) mentioned a wide range of the R+R program specifics, and there were seldom more than two or three who referred to any one element. This broad sweep provides evidence (i) that the R+R program makes its impact on students in a wide range of ways; (ii) that students need a rich variety of routes to core skills and values—complexity, not simplicity; and (iii) that repetition of key messages in many forms and formats helps students to engage effectively in social and emotional learning on the way to healthy relationships. Some examples of program elements they mentioned as “the best part” for them were:

Learning that jokes can be a form of bullying.

When we learned how to deal with conflict.

I think the best part for me was when we talked about cyber-bullying.

Maybe [it was] the family problems part.

Getting to know everyone and seeing some people mature.

The separate gender workshops.

The whole entire thing!

Students were also asked, “If you could go deeper, or spend more time, on any of the problems of disrespect, bullying and violence for today’s youth that R+R brings up for discussion, what would it be?” Again their answers ranged widely, but cyberbullying received the most mentions.

Finally, for this grade, it is standard policy to ask if there was anything the students did not like about the program, since this questionnaire is their opportunity to provide their feedback. It is normal that many have something critical to say. What is rare is that they are asked their views about a school program at all.

About 50% of the grade 7s responded to this question, although about 10% of those actually named something they liked. R+R facilitators expect that some parts of the program will be uncomfortable for students, and feel that far from being a negative outcome, that discomfort can be a signal of engagement on a difficult topic and/or insight into one’s own behaviour. In fact most of the comments were quite general, such as “it was too long” (from a small number of students), “there were too many personal questions” (from even fewer), and “I didn’t agree with everything they said” from just one. Five students said that they didn’t feel listened to, which seems surprising given the great stress the program places on listening, and it invites reflection by facilitators.

GRADE 8

Three classes of grade 8s, with a total enrolment of 93, participated in the R+R program. The response rate for the feedback questionnaire was 68%. By gender, 38% of the respondents were boys, 52% were girls, and 10% either did not answer or else checked ‘transgender’ or ‘other’. At 68%, the overall response rate was slightly lower than for the grade 7s at 73%, but the breakdown by gender was similar for the two grades.

Students in both of these Middle School grades were asked nearly identical set of 15 questions. Analysis of their responses is grouped under three headings: (i) respect, (ii) specific program components, and (iii) overall program approval.

Respect

To help assess the centrality of the concept of respect to the grade 8 students, they were asked how important it is to them “*to have respect from the people around you*”, circling the number from 1 – 5 that best matched their feelings.

Table 10: Importance of Respect

Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Boys	0	0	6	13	5	24
%	0%	0%	25%	54%	21%	100%
Girls	0	1	2	17	13	33
%	0%	3%	6%	52%	39%	100%
Transgender	0	0	1	1	0	2
%	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%	100%
Other	0	0	1	1	2	4
%	0%	0%	25	25%	50%	100%
Total Students	0	1	10	32	20	63
Total %	0%	2%	16%	51%	32%	100%

Grade 8s ascribed a considerably higher level of importance to respect than the grade 7s did: 83% at the 4 or 5 mark as compared with 55% for the grade 7s. Differences by gender were small among the grade 8s, whereas it was significant among the 7s. It is worth noting that the grade 7s were almost twice as likely as the 8s to choose ‘3’, the middle or neutral number. This may be an indication that, at their age, the 7s had only begun to engage with the concept and had not yet made up their minds about its importance, whereas it had gained in importance for those in grade 8.

Turning to their perceptions of the effectiveness of selected elements of the R+R program in helping them learn more respect for one another (see Table 11), the grade 8s were more positive than the grade 7s. They felt particularly positive about learning assertive communication skills and about the opening circle (discussed in more detail in the previous section). At both grade levels, the lowest marks were given to ‘learning about empathy,’ which may reflect a weakness in their understanding of the term itself rather than what they derived from the activities built around empathy in the curriculum.

Table 11: Impact of Selected Curriculum Components on Respect

Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Listening to each other in the circle	4	6	28	22	3	63
%	6%	10%	44%	35%	5%	100%
Learning about empathy	2	10	34	15	2	63
%	3%	16%	54%	24%	3%	100%
Learning about assertive communication	5	4	26	25	3	63
%	8%	6%	41%	40%	5%	100%

In terms of their overall assessment of the how much the R+R program helped them think about respect in their own lives, the grade 8s were quite positive, with 76% saying a minimum of 'some' or else more, 'quite a bit' or 'really a lot'. Girls were somewhat more likely to give a high rating than boys. This was a better result than for the grade 7s which showed a bigger difference by gender.

Table 12: How Much Did the Program Help You Think About Respect?

	Really a lot	Quite a bit	Some	Not very much	None	Totals
Boys	1	8	10	5	0	24
%	4%	33%	42%	21%	0%	100%
Girls	3	14	10	5	1	33
%	9%	42%	30%	15%	3%	100%
Transgender	0	0	1	1	0	2
%	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%	100%
Other	0	0	1	1	2	4
%	0%	0%	25%	25%	50%	100%
Total Students	4	22	22	12	3	63
Total %	6%	35%	35%	19%	5%	100%

Specific program components

The first program element addressed in the survey was conflict and conflict resolution.

As with the grade 7s, results show that the grade 8s have the majority of their conflicts (65%) at home with family members, not at school or with their friends. However, the comparative data for these year-older students shows what may be the beginning of a shift away from a focus on family relationships, which would be predicted in terms of normal development as youth gradually develop more independence from family and more focus on peers.

See table 13, next page.

Table 13: Most Conflicted Relationships

Brothers, sisters	Parents	Friends	Other students	Teachers	Total ⁷
20 32%	21 33%	14 22%	12 19%	2 3%	69 100%

The grade 8s were also asked if they could use the ideas and skills from the R+R program to help reduce or resolve the conflicts in their lives. They were distinctly more positive about this than the grade 7s were, suggesting that there has been a cumulative learning of skills. However, it remained the case that the greatest number of grade 8s answered “*maybe, if I had more practice,*” adding weight to the idea raised earlier that spending more time on this skill set would indeed be worth considering for the future.

Table 14: Help with Conflict

	Yes	No	Maybe if I had more practice	Other	Totals
Boys	5	6	12	1	24
%	21%	25%	50%	4%	100%
Girls	12	3	15	3	33
%	36%	9%	45%	9%	100%
Transgender	1	0	1	0	2
%	50%	0%	50%	0%	100%
Other (no conflict)	0	2	2	0	4
%	0%	50%	50%	0%	100%
Total Students	18	11	30	4	63
Total %	29%	17%	48%	6%	100%

The grade 8s (but not the grade 7s) were asked whether it is a good idea for everyone sitting together in the R+R circle to hear uninterrupted comments from one another at the beginning and end of each workshop session—the opening check-in and check-out. This element of program design has many functions, one of which is the development of empathy, although use of the term is not normally a feature of the activity. Check-ins in particular are deliberately unstructured and open (within some limits) to the directions taken by the students in-the-moment. Sometimes they can be quite raw, revealing and/or intense, and younger students in particular may find the invitation to identify and discuss emotions challenging. They are always able to ‘pass’, without judgment. Indeed, it is considered that they can gain as much from listening as from actively participating.

Overall, 75% of the grade 8 students said ‘yes’, it is a good idea to spend time in check-in and check-out (see Table 15), a strongly positive result.

⁷ A small number of students checked more than one box (or none) which means that the total of responses in this table (69) exceeds the number of discrete respondents which was 63. The percentages for each choice were calculated on the basis of the number of respondents (63), so it is correct to say that 33% of the grade 8 students have significant conflict with their parents, 32% with their siblings, etc.

Table 15: Value of the Check-in and Check-out

	Yes	No	Not Sure	Totals
Boys	17	5	2	24
%	71%	21%	8%	100%
Girls	28	1	4	33
%	85%	3%	12%	100%
Transgender	0	1	1	2
%	0%	50%	50%	100%
Other	2	1	1	4
%	50%	25%	25%	100%
Total Students	47	8	8	63
Total %	75%	13%	13%	100%

In terms of time spent in separate gender sessions, the overall distribution of opinion is very similar to that among the grade 7s, with the majority satisfied. What is interesting is that the distribution by gender is quite different: a *lower* percentage of grade 8 boys (than grade 7 boys) saying they would have liked more time and a *higher* percentage of grade 8 girls making that choice. Given the small number of respondents, however, especially among the boys, it is not possible to identify a trend based on this data.

Table 16: Time Spent in Separate Gender Sessions

	Want More	Want Less	Amount of time OK	Totals
Boys	2	2	12	16
%	13%	13%	75%	100%
Girls	16	2	11	29
%	55%	7%	38%	100%
Transgender	0	1	1	2
%	0%	50%	50%	100%
Other	1	0	1	2
%	50%	0%	50%	100%
Total Students	19	5	25	49
Total %	39%	10%	51%	100%

The last element to be discussed in the ‘specific program components’ section is time spent on cyber-bullying. The views of the grade 8s were quite similar to those of the grade 7s, with the majority indicating the need for more time, and almost as many ‘not sure’. See Table 17, below. A slightly larger percentage of grade 8s thought that no more time was needed, but the raw numbers in those categories are small.

This question was not analyzed by gender at the grade 7 level, but it was for the grade 8s. Differences between boys and girls were not significant.

Table 17: Time on Cyber-bullying

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Boys	2	11	9	2	0	24
%	8%	46%	38%	8%	0%	100%
Girls	4	12	14	2	1	33
%	12%	36%	42%	6%	3%	100%
Transgender	0	0	1	1	0	2
%	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%	100%
Other	0	0	1	1	2	4
%	0%	0%	25%	25%	50%	100%
Total Students	6	23	25	6	3	63
Total %	10%	37%	40%	10%	5%	100%

Overall program approval

About 83% of the grade 8s answered the question, “*what was the best part of the program for you*”, and most of them engaged well with the curriculum in their replies: only 7 students gave negative or silly answers. As in grade 7, what the grade 8s thought was best ranged widely across the curriculum, a good result in itself. The three aspects with the most mentions were the check in (including reasons), the separate gender sessions and the videos. The grade 8s were also more able than the 7s to express their thinking, and provided some valuable evidence that R+R often “lands” or takes hold just as it is intended to in the students’ minds. For example, some of the ‘best parts’ were:

Hearing ways to sort things out.

Learning about modern slavery -- really inspirational but extremely sad. Should spend more time on this.

The best part for me was the check-ins. They helped me be much more comfortable speaking with a group.

Probably the separate gender. Or when we talked about stereotypes and body image.

The energizers. They started off fun but you ended up learning from it.

To hear talking about respect for women.

Being able to feel safe talking about my stuff [in the circle] with everyone listening.

Gossip - talking about and understanding what gossip meant. Bullying - different types (bully, bullied, fixer).

I liked how we addressed all these issues that are very important and rarely discussed.

The grade 8s were also asked, ‘if they could go deeper into any of the topics they’d spent time on during the R+R program, what would that be?’ Again, responses referred to many aspects of the curriculum, but the two areas with the most mentions were (i) learning more practical skills

(such as “how prevent bullying in our school”, “avoiding and dealing with conflicts”, “settling arguments without anger” and “how to break up a fight safely”) and (ii) going more deeply into aspects of sexism, sexualization, sexual harassment and gender conflict.

The last question in this grade-section is more properly about planning for optimum engagement by students than about ‘program approval’ per se, but past experience indicates that the amount and pattern of time allocated for the R+R workshops is a factor in both engagement and approval.

Over the years of R+R program delivery, SWOVA has faced some challenges in fitting its carefully structured curriculum into the varying times and schedules that work best for different schools and teachers. The original program design was based on a regular schedule of 12 sessions of 35-45 minutes in middle schools and 12 hour-long sessions in secondary schools. Sometimes that is what the delivery looks like in practice, but there have been many alternate variations including half-day and even full day combined-session workshops.

The facilitators take the view that almost any timetable can be made to work to some degree for students, although that may happen at the cost of shortening and limiting the curriculum, and it may be at odds with ‘best practices’ for delivery of the program as well as optimal outcomes. This year it was decided to ask students for their feedback on the matter in their feedback and evaluation questionnaires. The grade 8s were asked ‘*how long each session should be for you to learn the most*’, with the reminder that the total program time is intended to be 12 hours.

They had mixed views, as can be seen in Table 18 (below), but a clear majority thought that 2 hours is the best length of time per session—not too short for the group to get into some complex discussions and cover a set of activities designed to build on one another, but not so long that some students get bored or need a change of focus.

Table 18: Amount of Time per Session

About 1 hour	About 2 hours	About 3 hours	More than 3 hours	Totals
14	28	10	9	61
23%	46%	16%	15%	100%

GRADE 9

In the Gulf Islands school district, the transition to secondary school takes place from grade 8 to grade 9. The 3rd and 4th years of the R+R curriculum are delivered to secondary students in their first two years there.

This year, 120 students were enrolled in grade 9, of whom 90 filled out post-R+R assessment surveys, a response rate of 75%. Of those, 37% were boys, 42% were girls and 21% either checked ‘transgender’ or ‘other’, or did not respond to the question on gender. The survey for these two grades was slightly shorter than the one for the middle school students, at 13 questions. The questions were designed to provide data on (i) the students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the R+R program *for them* (four questions), (ii) its effectiveness more broadly (two questions), and (iii) their views on specific aspects of the current grade 9 curriculum and on program delivery time (three questions).

R+R Program – Personal Effectiveness

The first question asked a broad, open-ended question, ‘*what was the most valuable part of R+R for you this year, and why?*’ A total of 87% (78) of the students responded, and although there were a small number of negative or silly comments, most were content specific, on point and ranged widely across the curriculum.

Some of the concepts and learning activities named as most valuable were: listening skills, the circle of relationship violence, internet addiction, sexism, my rights, body types, how to express emotions and stereotypes in the media. Of significance in demonstrating program impact were the more detailed comments, such as:

Learning life lessons/getting a hit of reality.

Just how eye opening it is. Especially the racism part. The bike stealing video [re racism] was very interesting too.

When we talked about abuse because now I know what is right and wrong in a relationship.

When they showed the video about sexualization of women, I learned a lot.

I think it was the violence relationships topic because a lot of people are going through that.

Continuing to talk about important topics and being open to express myself.

Everything. I learned a great deal about [the people in] my class. And that they are not as different from me as I once thought.

The discussions about current issues because it helps me feel less alone when other people talk about [those difficult things] too.

Talking about healthy relationships has helped me to responsibly deal with my family relationships.

The second question asked students to think back over all their R+R sessions, and identify three useful or important insights, ideas, ways of handling problems or other learnings that they would take away from the workshops this year and use in their lives. Nineteen did not reply, but most of the rest gave strong, connected answers, some of which were as follows:

Reflective listening skills; recognizing the explosion/honeymoon/tension cycle clearer; being able to express my emotions calmly.

Staying calm in an argument and listening to the other person; abusive situations are not right and must not be tolerated; stereotypes are not always true.

Making “I” statements about how something affects you, not just blaming the other person.

Saying “I feel uncomfortable” is one thing I will try; “use your words” is good advice because I know when I’m in a fight I don’t use words.

How to recognize an abusive relationship; showing me how much media controls people.

Putting yourself in others’ shoes (empathy); everyone has a story and everyone has problems; the proper way to deal with abusive relationships.

Reflective listening, how to deal with stress, how to deal with strong emotions.

Grade 9 students were also asked how much the R+R program helped with the transition from middle to high school, circling the best number on a scale of 1—5. This objective is not central to the program, but staff were interested to find out whether there was an impact, in student’s own perceptions, given the timing of the delivery of R+R in the fall term.

It appears from the data in Table 19, below, that many students do perceive a positive effect, at least at a moderate level, indicating an unintended but beneficial consequence of the program. Very few students rated the impact at the 5 or highest level, but 50% said that it helped them with the transition at the 3 or 4 level. Girls were slightly more likely than boys to have perceived this benefit. It is interesting to note that the transgender and ‘other’ students tended to give more negative scores, though it is not possible to draw any conclusions given the small numbers.

Table 19: Help with Transition to High School

Rating	1 (not at all)	2	3	4	5 (a lot)	Totals
Boys	11	4	10	7	0	32
%	34%	13%	31%	22%	0%	100%
Girls	5	8	11	12	1	37
%	14%	22%	30%	32%	3%	100%
Transgender	2	2	0	0	0	4
%	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Other	8	1	3	1	2	15
%	53%	7%	20%	7%	13%	100%
Total Students	26	15	24	20	3	88
Total %	30%	17%	27%	23%	3%	100%

Finally, in this section, students were asked to indicate how much, in their opinion, the R+R program this year helped three categories of grade 9 students to have safer, healthier and more respectful relationships in their lives, on a scale from 1 to 5. This question has not been asked with reference to these different categories in previous evaluation surveys.

Results show that respondents think those who have benefited the most are ‘grade 9 students with problems’; 50% are seen to have benefited at the 4 or 5 levels. Rates are lower for ‘grade 9 students in general’ (24%), and lowest for ‘you personally’ (19%). It may be that the ideal result for this question would be for respondents to think that all categories of grade 9 students benefit from the program at an equally high level; however, the actual result can be seen as positive too, though in a more complex way. It may be that many students see themselves as needing less help than ‘students with problems’, whether or not this is true. This would open up the possibility that, if they see those students as benefitting the most from R+R, they may be inclined to take a more positive view of *them*, which could in turn have a positive impact on school culture.

Table 20: Who Benefits Most?

Rating	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Grade 9 students at GISS in general	13	21	33	18	4	89
%	15%	24%	37%	20%	4%	100%
Grade 9 students with problems	9	10	26	30	14	89
%	10%	11%	29%	34%	16%	100%
You personally	30	17	25	10	7	89
%	34%	19%	28%	11%	8%	100%
Total responses	52	48	84	58	25	267
	19%	18%	31%	22%	9%	100%

Curriculum and Options for Delivery Time

The questionnaire asked the grade 9s to indicate whether six key topic areas considered by SWOVA staff and past research to be of importance in the prevention of interpersonal violence, including dating violence, should be given more time in the R+R program, and to answer either yes or no. They were also given a blank space in which to note any other topic they thought should be allocated more program time.

Responses to this question are presented and analyzed by gender. See Table 21 below.

Overall, the students agreed in every case but one (pornography) that more time should be given to *all* of the named topics. In every case but one (cyber-bulling), girls felt more strongly than boys that the named topics needed more time. This difference by gender ranged from a low in the case of ‘communication with parents’, where only 8% more girls than boys felt that the issue needed more time, to a high in the case of ‘pornography’, where fully 38% more girls than boys thought that it did.

In general, it is not surprising that, girls ascribe more importance than boys do to relationship and safety issues. However, the extent of the difference by gender in this data also emphasizes the fact that girls and boys do not have the same lived relationship to these issues, that they do not experience risk in the same way, and that girls are more likely than boys to feel the need to protect themselves against possible victimization.

Table 21: Time for Key Issues

TOPIC	BOYS	GIRLS	OTHER	TOTAL
Pornography	Yes – (12) 38%	Yes – (25) 76%	Yes – (12) 63%	Yes – (49) 58%
	No – (20) 63%	No – (8) 24%	No – (7) 37%	No – (35) 42%
Drugs & alcohol	Yes – (22) 67%	Yes – (30) 83%	Yes – (13) 72%	Yes – (65) 75%
	No – (11) 33%	No – (6) 17%	No – (5) 28%	No – (22) 25%
Communic'n w. parents	Yes – (25) 76%	Yes – (32) 84%	Yes – (11) 61%	Yes – (68) 76%
	No – (8) 24%	No – (6) 16%	No – (7) 39%	No – (21) 24%
Cyber-bullying	Yes – (25) 76%	Yes – (26) 74%	Yes – (10) 59%	Yes – (61) 72%
	No – (8) 24%	No – (9) 26%	No – (7) 41%	No – (24) 28%
Rape culture	Yes – (21) 64%	Yes – (30) 81%	Yes – (13) 72%	Yes – (64) 73%
	No – (12) 36%	No – (7) 19%	No – (5) 28%	No – (24) 27%
How to respond to violence	Yes – (22) 67%	Yes – (30) 81%	Yes – (10) 56%	Yes – (62) 70%
	No – (11) 33%	No – (7) 19%	No – (8) 44%	No – (26) 30%

As part of this question, students were invited to add in any other topic that they thought needed more time in the R+R curriculum. Sixteen of them did so, listing sixteen different topics. They are transcribed here without further comment, as information for SWOVA staff in on-going curriculum planning: *media, listening to each other, trouble with parents (parent sexual touch), body image, racism, self harm, eating disorders, anxiety, history about how these things evolve, depression/mental health, how to defend yourself against violence, being nice, finding yourself, safe sex, peer pressure.*

The next question asked them to say which of the six listed topics is *the most important* for R+R to spend more time on. Seventy-one of the students (79%) replied in a serious way. Sixty-one (68%) chose one or more⁸ items from the list. Seven referred to something that was not on the list, and three said “all of them”. The distribution of their choices is shown in Table 22, below.

Table 22: Which Topic is the Most Important to Add Time For?

Porn-ography	Drugs & alcohol	Communic w. parents	Cyber bullying	Rape culture	Respond'g to violence	All of the above	Something else ⁹
10	15	11	4	11	10	3	7
14%	21%	15%	6%	15%	14%	4%	10%

Drugs and alcohol was chosen by the most students, though not by a large margin. The most striking thing is how evenly dispersed their views are about topics that need more time. This can be interpreted as both an affirmation of the existing curriculum, and an argument for more time over all.

The final question in this section asked students for their views about the new R+R delivery schedule for grade 9 which was being tried this year. (Instead of 12 one-hour sessions, workshops were delivered in four three-hour blocks.) Students were able to indicate approval, disapproval or indifference to this change, and to state their reasons.

⁸ If they chose more than one, only the first one they mentioned was counted.

⁹ The ‘other’ choices, not on the list as presented, were: racism, self-harm, depression and other mental health issues (x2), communication in general, peer pressure, media influence.

The largest percentage of students (44%) did not like the longer blocks, a result that was dominated by the strong trend in that direction among the boys. In fact, a small majority of girls preferred the longer blocks. Twenty-one percent of both boys and girls said that the delivery schedule didn't matter, either way. See Table 23, below.

In the reasons they gave, perhaps the most important finding is that thirteen students (15%) expressed annoyance because the new schedule meant that they missed other classes and class work that were particularly important to them. One commented that the R+R program should be scheduled in the "flex time" block.

Table 23: Views of Program Delivery Schedule

	Yes	No	Doesn't Matter	Totals
Boys	8	18	7	33
%	24%	55%	21%	100%
Girls	16	14	8	38
%	42%	37%	21%	100%
Transgender	2	1	1	4
%	50%	25%	25%	100%
Other	3	5	3	11
%	27%	45%	27%	100%
Total Students	29	38	19	86
Total %	34%	44%	22%	100%

Long Term and Transferable Value of the R+R Program

The Respectful Relationships program has been part of the curriculum in the middle and secondary schools of the Gulf Islands school district for more than 10 years. Many students are aware of it not only through their own experience (which is naturally the most influential factor) but also through its reputation as expressed to them by siblings or others in the community. It is of interest to know whether, considering all the information they have at their disposal, they think R+R has helped to reduce disrespect, bullying and abuse among youth in the schools they have attended in the district.¹⁰

The majority were unwilling to draw a firm conclusion, choosing 'maybe' as their answer. Girls were slightly more likely than boys to say 'yes'. See Table 24, below.

¹⁰ Note that this is opinion data. Longitudinal statistics on student behaviour is not available.

Table 24: Over Time, Has the Program Helped?

	Yes	No	Maybe	Totals
Boys	8	8	15	31
%	26%	26%	48%	100%
Girls	11	1	23	35
%	31%	3%	66%	100%
Transgender	0	2	1	3
%	0%	67%	33%	100%
Other	1	3	6	10
%	10%	30%	60%	100%
Total Students	20	14	45	79
Total %	25%	18%	57%	100%

The explanatory remarks of the grade 9 students reflected their reservations about fully achieving respectful relationships in schools and society, their limited perspective and information on long term program success, and also sometimes their hopefulness.

Bullying will never stop. This program may reduce it but not by much.

It can't hurt and it must help.

I think people need to hear the information but they don't always know that when they enter the program or until much later.

I think there has been violence, abuse and definitely bullying. I have been bullied before and the R+R program helped me.

I've heard that it helped a lot in the past but there's still a certain amount of abuse in this school, mostly verbal.

The [Gulf] islands have less bullying than most other schools I think.

Making people aware of issues always at least affects one person. With my short experience here [I think] that people are affected, and talk about R+R.

I don't have anything to compare to.

Well [I've come] from PGSS [Prince George Secondary School] and kids here are nicer and better behaved.

People say it helps but it does not.

SWOVA helps a lot.

The final question asked the grade 9s if they would recommend the program to youth in other places. The largest percentage said 'yes' among both genders (43%), with a higher percentage among the girls (57%) than the boys (40%). The next most frequent choice was 'maybe' for both genders (32%), with 25% overall saying they would not recommend it.

See Table 25, below.

Table 25: Students' Recommendations

	Yes	No	Maybe	Totals
Boys	12	9	9	30
%	40%	30%	30%	100%
Girls	21	3	13	37
%	57%	8%	35%	100%
Transgender	0	2	2	4
%	0%	50%	50%	100%
Other	2	6	2	10
%	20%	60%	20%	100%
Total Students	35	20	26	81
Total %	43%	25%	32%	100%

About 15% of those who responded said something negative, but most comments were positive, thoughtful and frankly expressed.

Take it seriously.

It teaches youth about violence, rape, self image and how to deal with them so you can have healthy relationships.

R+R will teach you how to treat people, including yourself, respectfully and responsibly but it can only help you theoretically, you still need to find your own way to deal with it after all.

It has some interesting and helpful topics, but it was kind of pretentious.

Interesting and useful program, [you] should go in with an open mind.

Some people might learn from it.

It's good if you feel like it.

It is eye opening and even if some things mean nothing, there is going to be at least one thing that means something to you.

It's a safe place where you can share your own feelings as well as appreciating other people's.

I would say if they have any problems they should go there.

This is a very informative program that has clarified many things in my life.

You learn how to treat others and it's kind of life changing.

Do this program!

GRADE 10

There were 145 students enrolled in grade 10, of whom 53 filled out post-program assessment surveys, a response rate of just 37%. The high school's support for R+R as a curriculum requirement was apparently not made clear to the students, a long-standing problem in this grade. One critically placed teacher did not require students' attendance, an issue which was not resolved for the past year, but looks to be so for next year.

Of those students who chose to attend R+R, 49% were boys, 43% were girls and 8% either checked 'transgender' or 'other', or did not respond to the question on gender.

Except for the question about the transition from middle to secondary school, which did not apply, the grade 10s answered the same set as were asked of the grade 9s. These questions provided data on (i) students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the R+R program *for them* (three questions), (ii) its effectiveness more broadly (two questions), and (iii) their views on specific aspects of the current grade 10 curriculum and program delivery time (three questions).

R+R Program – Personal Effectiveness

The first question asked a broad, open-ended question, '*what was the most valuable part of R+R for you this year, and why?*' A total of 49 of the participating students responded (92%). Some responses were content specific, identifying topics such as 'drugs and alcohol and parties', 'healthy ways to deal with stress', 'learning to know my rights', 'the unit on abusive relationships', 'things in social/family life', and 'learning about sexualities', but the majority of students identified aspects of the fundamental approach of R+R as what was most valuable to them. Examples included:

The group conversations on varieties of subjects in which there was lots of participation and depth.

The check-in part. We can know each other more and communicate more.

Being able to state my opinion in a group setting.

Learning how to be vulnerable and expressing what you're feeling.

The realistic real life group discussions.

I learned a lot more about understanding other people.

When we had group conversations and really got into things.

The group discussions because I learned a lot about my peers and life skills for communication and for myself.

The second question asked students to think back over all their R+R sessions, and identify three useful or important insights, ideas, ways of handling problems or other learnings that they would take away from the workshops this year and use in their lives. 83% responded, some with general restatements of the ideas of respect and safety, but many with strong, well-connected answers, examples of which are as follows:

Listening is really good for resolving conflict/ Put yourself in other's shoes/ I was surprised how high the rates of violence against women were.

How to speak to others in abusive relationship/ How to see violence in depth/ How I can make an impact on society by being a good listener.

Ways to not get as mad/ Dealing with conflict in family and others/ To take risks and be vulnerable sometimes.

Ways to not get as mad/ Dealing with conflict in family and others/ To take risks and be vulnerable sometimes.

Dealing with stress in a healthy way/ Talking to people/ Tell people how I'm really feeling.

Listening to music (stress)/ Talk to an adult around problems/ Non consent to rape.

Remembering to reflect on your day/ Dealing with racism/ Dealing with homophobia.

Empathy Coping with stress/ Media literacy.

Substance abuse/ Reflective listening/ Abuse in relationships.

Finally, in this section, respondents were asked to indicate how much, in their opinion, the R+R program this year helped three categories of grade 10 students to have safer, healthier and more respectful relationships in their lives, on a scale from 1 to 5. In comparison with the grade 9s, the grade 10s reported a higher level of confidence in the R+R program, both overall and for the three specific groups named in the question. (See Table 26, below.) This tendency would be predicted from a self-selected group.

Even so, it is interesting to note that they agreed with the grade 9s that the group to benefit most was the 'the students with problems', whom 74% saw as benefiting at the 4 or 5 point level. 'Grade 10 students in general' were seen by 54% as benefiting at that level. Almost as many (51%) saw themselves as benefiting at that level, which was a much higher percentage than for the grade 9s at only 19%.

Table 26: Who Benefits Most?

Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Grade 10 students at GISS in general	2	7	15	24	5	53
%	4%	13%	28%	45%	9%	100%
Grade 10 students with problems	0	5	9	27	12	53
%	0%	9%	17%	51%	23%	100%
You personally	5	10	11	17	10	53
%	9%	19%	21%	32%	19%	100%
Total responses	7	22	35	68	27	159
	4%	14%	22%	43%	17%	100%

Curriculum and Options for Delivery Time

As with the grade 9s, the questionnaire asked the grade 10s to indicate whether six key topic areas of importance to the prevention of interpersonal violence, including dating violence, should be given more time in the R+R program, answering either yes or no. As with the grade 9s, in general they thought all of the named topics should be given more time, especially drugs and alcohol, communication with parents and how to respond to violence. Gender differences were less pronounced, and very different re pornography.

Table 27: Time for Key Issues

TOPIC	BOYS	GIRLS	OTHER	TOTAL
Pornography	Yes – (19) 76%	Yes – (11) 52%	Yes – (3) 75%	Yes – (33) 66%
	No – (6) 24%	No – (10) 48%	No – (1) 25%	No – (17) 34%
Drugs & alcohol	Yes – (21) 81%	Yes – (21) 91%	Yes – (3) 75%	Yes – (45) 85%
	No – (5) 19%	No – (2) 9%	No – (1) 25%	No – (8) 15%
Communic'n w. parents	Yes – (20) 77%	Yes – (21) 91%	Yes – (3) 100%	Yes – (44) 85%
	No – (6) 23%	No – (2) 9%	No – (0)	No – (8) 15%
Cyber-bullying	Yes – (16) 64%	Yes – (18) 86%	Yes – (3) 100%	Yes – (37) 76%
	No – (9) 36%	No – (3) 14%	No – (0)	No – (12) 24%
Rape culture	Yes – (17) 71%	Yes – (15) 68%	Yes – (3) 75%	Yes – (35) 70%
	No – (7) 29%	No – (7) 32%	No – (1) 25%	No – (15) 30%
How to respond to violence	Yes – (21) 84%	Yes – (20) 87%	Yes – (3) 100%	Yes – (44) 86%
	No – (4) 16%	No – (3) 13%	No – (0)	No – (7) 14%

As part of this question, students were invited to add in any other topic that they thought needed more time in the R+R curriculum. Seven of them did so. Their recommendations are listed here without further comment, as information for SWOVA staff to consider in curriculum planning:

Respecting environment; Media; Respect; How to deal with personal issues; Self harming; Drugs & Alcohol should be covered a lot more; Dealing with abuse when it is happening.

Students were also asked which one of the listed topics is the most important for the R+R program to spend more time on. Forty-eight (91% of participating students) responded. As with the grade 9s, drugs and alcohol was selected by the most grade 10s, and by a larger margin at 31%. (See Table 28, below.) Three of the topics were in a near tie: communication with parents, how to respond to violence, and rape culture.

Table 28: Which Topic is the Most Important to Add Time For?

Porn-ography	Drugs & alcohol	Communic w. parents	Cyber bullying	Rape culture	Respond'g to violence	All of the above	Something else ¹¹
1 2%	15 31%	8 17%	3 6%	6 13%	7 15%	6 13%	2 4%

¹¹ The 'other' choices, not on the list as presented, were: racism, self-harm, depression and other mental health issues (x2), communication in general, peer pressure, media influence.

Turning to ‘options for delivery time’, this question was asked differently to the grade 10s than the 9s, reflecting the different delivery patterns at the two grade levels and also the importance of variables on which facilitators wanted feedback. (The delivery pattern for grade 10s this year was 1-hour sessions every day for 10 days in a row.)

The result from students was a strong preference for the 10 days format, with 77% of participating students liking the condensed schedule for one or the other of the reasons built into the question. Only 9% did not like it for either of the two reasons provided.

Table 29: Options for Delivery Time

	Yes (intensity and focus)	Yes (group stayed connected)	No (sessions too rushed)	No (needed + time to think)	Other	Totals
Boys	13	17	3	2	7	42
%	31%	40%	7%	5%	17%	100%
Girls	16	18	1	1	5	41
%	39%	44%	2%	2%	12%	100%
Transgender	1	1	0	0	0	2
%	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Other	2	3	1	1	0	7
%	29%	43%	14%	14%	0%	100%
Total responses	32	39	5	4	12	92
Total %	35%	42%	5%	4%	13%	100%

Nine students also made comments, seven of which were some version of saying that the program needs more time *in total*, for example:

Should be a full course, give time to fully dissect topics and issues.

Add a couple more weeks but leave some time for Planning 10.

More classes of SWOVA (Respectful Relationships).

Do a longer time for each class.

Long Term and Transferable Value of the R+R Program

Grade 10s, who in that grade complete the 4th year of the 4-year program, are in a particularly good position to comment on its impact, as they perceive it, over the lifetime of program delivery in the school district. They were asked if they think it has ‘helped to reduce disrespect, bullying and abuse among youth in our schools’ in its more than 10-year lifetime in this community. Forty-four percent think it definitely has, and 48% said “maybe” it has, explaining in different ways that it is hard to be sure. Only 8% say they think it definitely has not. (See Table 30, below.) This is a stronger result than for the grade 9s, as would be expected from a self-selected group.

In their explanatory comments, the grade 10s reflected what the years of evaluation research have demonstrated: progress and strong foundations for respectful behaviour, which requires consistent reinforcement throughout society to reach the desired goal:

It has made people more educated and more likely to “think before you do”.
I'm not sure how bad the school was before SWOVA, but I've heard terrible things.
For me, Salt Spring was always respectful, so it is hard to make it much better.
Some people think that it's cool to bully but others actually stop and listen to SWOVA.
I think it has informed many students how to be respectful and some have actually used that.
It brought us all closer and showed us what's happening in other places.
Just because you talk about it doesn't mean you're fixing it.
It really helps to show people how to respect others.
I have only been on SSI for a few years and when you get here you really notice how respectful people are.

Table 30: Over Time, Has the Program Helped?

	Yes	No	Maybe	Totals
Boys	11	2	13	26
%	42%	8%	50%	100%
Girls	11	2	10	23
%	48%	9%	43%	100%
Transgender	0	0	1	1
%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Other	0	0	0	0
%	-	-	-	0%
Total Students	22	4	24	50
Total %	44%	8%	48%	100%

Finally, the grade 10s were asked if they would recommend the R+R program to youth in other places. See Table 31, below.

Table 31: Recommendations from Students

	Yes	No	Maybe	Totals
Boys	17	2	7	26
%	65%	8%	27%	100%
Girls	18	1	4	23
%	78%	4%	17%	100%
Transgender	1	0	0	1
%	100%	0%	0%	100%
Other	0	0	0	0
%	-	-	-	100%
Total Students	36	3	11	50
Total %	72%	6%	22%	100%

They answered strongly in the affirmative, with 72% saying ‘yes’ and 22% saying ‘maybe’. They went on to make the following kind of comments in response to the follow-up question, ‘what

would you tell them about the program?'. Note that some replies suggest that a few students reinterpreted the follow-up question to mean, 'please explain your answer', rather than 'what would you say about it' as asked. Here are some samples of their replies:

[I would tell them] how great it is. And how much you learn.

You learn a lot about others in your community and about yourself too.

You learn a lot about things happening in life everyday.

I'd tell them, show up and keep an open mind.

You can just talk and have no one judge you.

I'd send it to the bad schools in bad places who obviously don't get this education.

If they aren't into sitting down and having a real conversation then it probably isn't for them.

It teaches you about things that might happen in your future and how to prevent them.

It teaches you life skills. Don't complain, just do it.

I would tell them about all the topics we go through and how it's very helpful.

If there is nothing like it where they are, make something like it.

Hey listen up. This stuff is important. Be like SSI. Respect!

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Respectful Relationships program is an award-winning anti-violence and healthy relationships initiative developed and delivered by SWOVA, a small community-based NGO, in partnership with BC School District 64. After over almost 15 years in continuous operation with yearly evaluation research to inform its maturation process, it is well-established, widely supported by almost all teachers and school administrators in the district, appreciated for its contributions to a positive school culture by both the school board and parents associations, and generally welcomed as a part of the school year by the majority of students in grades 7 through 10.

The results of this year's student feed-back survey and program assessment confirm those previously established conclusions at the level of the R+R program as a whole: its unique curriculum model is a strong one; it is strongly supported by participants and observers alike; and it is making a difference. At the program level, the evaluator has only a few recommendations, as follows:

1. In the interests of smooth implantation of the program it would be useful for the school board to reiterate its support for the program as a requirement for all students in the four target grades, and to convey this through the administrative structure to individual schools.
2. In the course of normal school and district operations, senior administrators have changed over the years. Those who now fill such positions may have little or no first-hand familiarity with the R+R program. It is recommended that they be invited next year to observe the program in action, whether directly in the classroom setting or perhaps through a special presentation by the R+R Youth Team, or both.
3. This year for the first time, a sister program (called Peace Kids) was funded on a one-year pilot project basis for children in grades 4, 5 and 6—the years just preceding R+R. The evaluation of that pilot was very positive, and it seems likely that the engagement of older students in the R+R program, as well as their skill development, will be increased if they have had the preparation of the Peace Kids program by the time they reach grade 7 (the first year of R+R). Although the two programs are funded separately and can stand alone for their age groups, it is nevertheless worth recommending here that Peace Kids be supported to continue as a regular part of the SD64 curriculum as a precursor to and preparation for R+R.

Further observations and recommendations will be made at a grade specific level, below. It should be remembered that not all questions were asked in each grade. For curriculum review purposes, the full text of this report should be considered.

4. Grade 7 students confirmed that they were concerned about respect in their lives, and felt particularly strongly about cyber-bullying at the school and peer level, while also mentioning some of the fearsome social problems of terrorism, slavery and war.
5. Grade 7s said they had the most conflict in their lives with siblings and parents, less with peers or school personnel. Although 66% thought the R+R program had helped to a least some degree in their thinking about respect, the majority indicated (quite sensibly) that they needed more practice in resolving conflicts.

6. Grade 7s' responses to a question about the role of bystanders in the dynamics of bullying revealed some weakness in their understanding, and suggests the need for a review of this curriculum item by facilitators.
7. Grade 8s indicated a greater concern about respect in their lives than the grade 7s did, and were more positive about the role of R+R in helping them develop it. This kind of result supports the multi-year program model.
8. Like the grade 7s, the grade 8s reported more conflict with family members than with peers or others, though the trend was shifting toward peers. Also like the grade 7s, they reported that the program was helping but that they needed more practice with conflict skills, e.g. in scenarios they might be facing.
9. Both grade 7s and 8s demonstrated strong support for the circle format and check-in process.
10. Grade 8s felt even more strongly than 7s that more time was needed on cyber-bullying, but among the wide range of topics or activities they wanted to "go deeper on" the most often mentioned were practical skills generally, and sexism as an immediate social challenge.
11. When asked about the amount of time they thought was right for R+R sessions, the majority of grade 8s selected 2 hours. Although students' preferences are not the primary factor in program scheduling, it is recommended that it be considered to the extent possible within the complex school calendar.

Students in grades 9 and 10, both secondary school grades in this district, answered the same survey. However, in interpreting assessment results it should be remembered that the grade 10s were a largely self-selected group, attending R+R by choice, and would therefore be expected to have more positive views than the population of grade 9s. They were also asked fewer questions than the 7s and 8s, with the expectation of longer, more elaborated textual responses.

12. When asked to name the most valuable part of the R+R program for them, the responses from the grade 9s ranged widely across the whole of their year's curriculum, a good indicator of the range of strengths in the program.
13. Similarly, when asked to name three useful or important insights, ideas or ways of handling problems that they had gained from the R+R program that year, their answers showed great individual variation and, at the same time, strong connection to the key concepts of the curriculum.
14. Grade 9s indicated that the program had helped them in the transition from middle school to secondary school, and it is therefore recommended that SWOVA continue to negotiate for delivery time in September-October for this grade, and to weave elements of the experience of going from the top of the age hierarchy in the previous year (grade 8) to the bottom in the new year into R+R sessions and activities.
15. Most grade 9s thought that all of the key R+R topics named in the survey needed more time in their program, with girls feeling more strongly than boys. When asked which one topic they would select to get more time, it was 'drugs and alcohol', though responses were dispersed across the range of choice, excepting cyber-bullying. It is recommended that these views be considered in planning next year's curriculum priorities.

16. When asked if they liked the new program delivery length, the majority of grade 9s said no (44%), although not by a large margin over those saying yes (34%), especially considering that 22% said it did not matter. More boys than girls did not like the longer format, which might be a consideration for future decision-making in terms of male engagement.
17. Like the grade 9s, the grade 10s named a wide variety of program elements as 'what they found most valuable' in the R+R program, and gave strong answers when asked to 'name three program elements they found insightful or useful'.
18. Again like the grade 9s, the 10s thought that all six of the program elements named in the questionnaire needed more time, and also singled out 'drugs and alcohol' issues as the most important.
19. When asked if the R+R program made a positive difference in their schools, over time, the grade 10s gave a much stronger 'yes' than the grade 9s, which would be predicted from a self-selected attendance group.
20. Similarly, they were considerably more likely than the grade 9s to say they would recommend the program to others.

Opinion data of the kind that has been collected and analyzed here is of importance to SWOVA in understanding the impact of its work and directing change. It is also important for students to be given the chance to be active participants in their own education by providing feedback on their experience. It is not that they always know best, but what they know about their own feelings and experience matters.

That said, opinion data has limits, and it is hoped that planning for evaluation research next year will permit a somewhat different focus, namely on finding out more about students' experience of disrespect and violence in their own lives, their schools and their communities.