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**SWOVA'S R+R (Respectful Relationships) Program:  
Evaluation Report, 2012-2013**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Background

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

The 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 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 and encourage students to explore the topics and engage in the activities of the curriculum with the values of respect, equality and non-violence always in mind.

Each session has its own learning objectives, but the overall goals of the R+R program are to develop social-emotional competence in the students, to encourage critical thinking in relation to issues of interpersonal respect and social equality, and to 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 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 adult facilitators are assisted 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 by training as junior facilitators.

The program has been independently evaluated in every year of its delivery, and the results have been used by SWOVA to inform curriculum revision and increase program impact.

Program delivery in 2012-13

In 2012-13, R+R program delivery was limited to the program’s home community (the Southern Gulf Islands),<sup>1</sup> where the teachers and administrators of BC School District 64 have welcomed and helped in its development, and contribute financially in a small way to its continuity. The program is made available to students in the Middle School for their last two years there (grades

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<sup>1</sup> When funding has been available, the R+R program has been delivered and found valuable in seven other school districts, but stable long-term funding has been difficult for communities to find.

7 and 8), and to students in the Secondary School for their first two years there (grades 9 and 10), spanning the period of an important transition and maturation process in their lives.

In grades 7 and 8, it is normal for SWOVA's facilitators to work with students in their existing class groups, although sometimes students from more than one class are combined for R+R sessions. In 2012-13 there were four class groups of grade 7s and three of grade 8s. What was different this year in both grades was the choice made by the school to schedule the 12-session R+R program into three successive half-days for each class, instead of the more usual series of 12 workshops (smaller "doses") over a longer period of time.<sup>2</sup>

At the secondary school level, scheduling for grades 9 and 10 has faced different challenges because of greater subject specialization and more complex, less flexible timetabling, and because of the demands of the Ministry-driven curriculum. Accordingly, it can be difficult for school officials to find a place for R+R.

This past year, it appears that the grade 9s were directed out of study periods for R+R,<sup>3</sup> and seven small workshop groups were created in this way. In grade 10, as in past years, R+R was delivered to students as part of their regular "Planning 10" curriculum, resulting in three class groups for R+R purposes in 2012-13. However, for reasons that are not clear to the evaluator, not all of the students registered for Planning 10 attended R+R workshops, by a considerable margin.

In both grade 9 and 10, the program was delivered in 12 1-hour blocks over 12 to 15 weeks.

Based on the number of questionnaires completed at each grade level for evaluation purposes, the number of students reached by R+R in the four grades taken together was approximately 282. On a grade by grade basis, their numbers were distributed as follows:

GRADE LEVEL	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
Grade 7	71
Grade 8	63
Grade 9	94
Grade 10	42
Outer Islands <sup>4</sup>	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>282</b>

## Evaluation

Program evaluation for 2012-13 is based on the results of a written feedback survey which all attending students were asked to complete at the end of their final workshop session. SWOVA's facilitators also gave all participants the opportunity for closing comments as part of the final circle. These verbal comments were not recorded.

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<sup>2</sup> The evaluator was unaware of this change, so the questionnaire did not ask students to comment.

<sup>3</sup> It is not clear to the evaluator whether this was the case for all grade 9 students or only some.

<sup>4</sup> This refers to a mixed class of grade 7s and 8s conducted on one of the smaller islands in the District, where the total school enrolment is small. Because of the program modifications that are necessary for delivery in that context, questionnaire responses from these students are excluded from this analysis.

## **Minerva Research & Communications**

*June 30, 2013*

The grade 7 and 8 students were asked to complete the same feedback questionnaire, consisting of 20 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 this age group does not respond well to the latter. Most 13 and 14 year-olds are either not self-reflective enough or not sufficiently skilled at self-expression in writing to provide meaningful answers.

The grade 9s and 10s were given a somewhat different questionnaire, consisting of 15 questions, of which eight asked for written elaboration of pre-set check-off selections, or for other comments on an open-ended basis.

For evaluation reporting purposes, their responses were grouped around specific themes for each of the two grade groups. For the grade 7s and 8s the themes were:

- Students' perspectives on respect
- Students perspectives on conflict
- Students' satisfaction with key elements of program design
- Students' views about working with SWOVA's facilitators
- Students' learning and overall assessment of the R+R program.

For the grade 9s and 10s, these were:

- Students' perceptions of key learning outcomes
- Students' views about working with SWOVA's facilitators
- Students' assessments of changes in school climate
- Students' overall assessment of the R+R program.

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 final 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.

**GRADE 7**

The demographic background information for the grade 7 cohort (N = 71) shows:

- An even distribution by gender: 50% of the grade 7s were boys and 50% were girls.<sup>5</sup>
- In terms of family background, a majority of the students (almost 69%) reported having close relatives (defined as parents or grandparents) who were born in another country. About 26% stated that they had no parents or grandparents who were born in another country and about 5% were “not sure”.
- Slightly more than one in ten students (10.7%) reported having a close relative (parent or grandparent) who thinks of themselves as First Nations, Inuit or Métis.

The grade 7 questionnaire consisted of 20 questions, some of which were ‘multiple choice’ in format and others of which were open-ended, requiring students’ to reply in their own words. For analysis and reporting purposes, their response sets were grouped into five evaluative themes: (1) exploring respect, (2) exploring conflict, (3) exploring key elements of program design, (4) working with SWOVA’s facilitators, and (5) overall assessment of the R+R program.

**1. Exploring respect**

Students were asked to use a scale of 1 to 5 (where 5 is the high score) to indicate how important respect is to them across five different dimensions of relationships. The following table shows the results in rank order, starting with the area of their lives where respect is the most important for the greatest number of grade 7 students.<sup>6</sup>

Importance of respect

Reasons	Rating					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Respect in your family?</b>	1 (1.4%)	1 (1.4%)	4 (5.6%)	14 (19.7%)	<b>51</b> <b>(71.8%)</b>	71 (100.0%)
<b>Respect among your friends?</b>	0	1 (1.4%)	6 (8.5%)	29 (40.8%)	<b>35</b> <b>(49.3%)</b>	71 (100.0%)
<b>Respect around Salt Spring?</b>	0	5 (7.1%)	18 (25.7%)	<b>25</b> <b>(35.7%)</b>	22 (31.4%)	70 (100.0%)
<b>Respect among people on the internet?</b>	3 (4.3%)	11 (15.7%)	18 (25.7%)	<b>20</b> <b>(28.6%)</b>	18 (25.7%)	70 (100.0%)
<b>Respect among everyone in your school?</b>	1 (1.4%)	4 (5.6%)	<b>27</b> <b>(38.0%)</b>	<b>27</b> <b>(38.0%)</b>	12 (16.9%)	71 (100.0%)

Students clearly rated “respect in your family” as the most important among these choices to them, with slightly over half of all students selecting the highest possible rating. Having respect “among friends” ranked as the second highest choice, with just over a third of students giving

<sup>5</sup> Five grade 7 students did not provide information on their gender; however, their answers are included in the tables for all students in this section.

<sup>6</sup> Rank order is based on the number and percentage of students who rated the item as a ‘5’ on the scale, and in the case of a tie, the combined number of students who rated the item as a ‘4’ or ‘5’. Between three and eight students selected ‘mid-point’ rankings (i.e. 4.5 rather than 4 or 5: in each case these choices were coded in the direction of the mean.

this the highest rating. It is notable and perhaps surprising that respect “*in your school*” was in last place on the list. Also of interest is the proportion of students who said that respect “*on the internet*” was not very important to them (about 4% selected a score of 1, the lowest level) or only a little bit important (about 16% selected a score of 2). This year is the first time this set of questions has been asked. The results invite discussion and further investigation in the future.

The students were asked to use a five-point scale to show how much the R+R program helped them to “*think about respect*” in their lives, with the choices ranging from “*not at all*” (score of 1) to “*really a lot*” (score of 5). As the following table shows, the greatest number of grade 7 students chose the second highest score, “*quite a lot*”, and more than half (about 55%) selected the two highest ratings taken together. Just over a third chose the mid-point on the scale (“*some*”), and only 8.4% selected either of the two lowest ratings (“*not very much*” or “*not at all*”).

How much has the program helped you think about respect?

1 (not at all)	2 (not much)	3 (some)	4 (quite a lot)	5 (really a lot)	Total
2 2.8%	4 5.6%	26 36.6%	28 39.4%	11 15.5%	71 100%

Students were also asked how much the ideas and skills in the R+R program “*will help people in your class treat each other with more respect*”, using the same rating scale. The table below shows that, once again, the greatest number of grade 7 students chose the second highest score (“*quite a lot*”), and about the same number (56%) selected the two highest rankings taken together. A slightly greater number chose one of the two lowest ratings for this question than for the previous question, but results were strikingly similar.

How much has the program helped your class treat each other with respect?

1 (not at all)	2 (not much)	3 (some)	4 (quite a lot)	5 (really a lot)	Total
3 4.2%	6 8.5%	22 31.0%	34 47.9%	6 8.5%	71 100%

These results indicate that the grade 7 students have a generally positive view of how the R+R program has affected their thinking processes (“*helped me think about respect in my life*”) as well as how it has affected other students (“*helped people in your class treat each other with more respect*”), with high-end ratings (4 or 5) from over 50% of the students.

**2. Exploring conflict**

The students were asked to check off who in their lives they have the most conflict with, choosing between the options of “*parents*”, “*friends*”, “*dating partner*”, “*teachers*” and “*other (specify)*”. The question asked for a single choice but a few students selected more than one, a plausible response. We chose to count all answers, with the result that the number of responses in the table below (80) is greater than the number of responding students (71).

The greatest number of students reported having conflict with their parents (41%), followed by conflict with friends and conflict with others (usually siblings), which are almost equal at 31% and 30%. A much smaller proportion of students reported having conflict with teachers, 9%, and only two students (3%) reported having conflict with a dating partner. This last result is

consistent with the finding in previous years that very few middle school students, at least in this community, are in what they would identify as “a dating relationship” at this point in their lives.

Students’ reports of conflict in their relationships

Parents	Friends	Dating partner	Teachers	Other	Total
29 40.8%	22 31.0%	2 2.8%	6 8.5%	21 29.6%	80 <sup>7</sup> ----- [112.7%]

The students were then asked whether they could use the ideas and skills they had learned in the R+R program to reduce or resolve the conflict they identified in the previous question. The choices presented were “yes”, “no”, and “maybe, if I had more practice”. Offering this last choice was designed to gauge student’s confidence in applying skills that they had only just been introduced to, given that the four-year R+R program begins in grade 7.

Using R+R to reduce or resolve conflict

Yes	No	Maybe, if I had more practice	Other	Total
34 47.9%	7 9.9%	25 35.2%	5 7.0%	71 100%

The student’s responses show that almost half of the cohort (48%) felt confident about their ability to implement R+R ideas and skills to reduce or resolve conflict.<sup>8</sup> However, just over a third (35%) were less confident, indicating that they need more practice. Whether they would derive the most benefit from more practice within the R+R setting, or in ‘real-life’ situations following the R+R sessions along with subsequent discussion, or in follow-up practice with teachers in their classrooms – or a combination of these options -- is a question for further discussion and investigation.

**3. Exploring key elements of program design**

Students were asked three questions that explored their views on key elements of R+R program design. These were:

- i. the check in and check out at the beginning and end of each session,
- ii. the occasional separation of students into gender-specific groups for discussion
- iii. the amount of time allocated to the issue of cyber bullying.

Check in and check out at the beginning and end of each session are intended to help students make the transition into and out of the R+R workshop context (which is different in many ways from normal classroom set-up and content), to ‘become present’ on arrival, and to comment on the workshop and its impact on them before leaving, if they so wish. Grade 7 students were

<sup>7</sup> The calculations in this table show the number and percentage of the 71 students who checked each specific option. Because some students checked more than one option, the total of the option-specific percentages is greater than 100%

<sup>8</sup> This level of confidence is certainly encouraging but it would be useful to have a behavioural measure of their success, either in the form of observational data from those in relationship with them, or as part of curriculum activities.

asked whether check in and check out are a good idea, selecting from the responses provided of “yes”, “no”, “not sure” and “other”. Slightly more than half of the students indicated that check in and check out are a good idea. While 31% said they were “not sure”, only 4% of students said that they are not a good idea. It would be helpful in the future to probe more deeply into the reasons why a significant number were unsure, or had mixed feelings.

Are check-in and check-out a good idea?

Yes	No	Not sure	Other	Total
<b>37</b> <b>52.9%</b>	3 4.3%	22 31.4%	8 11.4%	70 100%

Another important feature of the R+R program is the separation of students into gender-specific groups on occasion to discuss issues and ideas, working with a facilitator of the same gender, and then recombining as a whole group to explore similarities and differences.<sup>9</sup> The table below shows the responses of the grade 7s when asked how they felt about the amount of time spent in ‘separate gender’ sessions.

Time spent in separate gender sessions

I would have liked more	I would have liked less	The amount of time was ok	Total
<b>27</b> <b>61.4%</b>	2 4.5%	15 34.1%	44 100%

As in previous years, the majority of students (61%) said that they “would have liked more” time spent in separate gender sessions. A further 34% reported that “the amount of time was ok,” and only 5% of the grade 7 students said they “would have liked less” time. It should be noted that, for unknown reasons, 27 students did not respond at all to this question.

They were also asked if they thought that more time should have been spent on the issue of cyber bullying. The options provided were “strongly agree”, “agree”, “not sure”, “disagree” or “strongly disagree”, as per the table below.

Should R+R have spent more time on cyber bullying?

Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
4 5.6%	25 35.2%	<b>33</b> <b>46.5%</b>	9 12.7%	0 0%	71 100%

The largest group of grade 7 students was “not sure” if more time should have been spent on cyber bullying. The next largest number agreed that there should have been more time. No students chose “strongly disagree” and only about 6% choose “strongly agree”. The large cluster of students in the “not sure” category may be related to the low importance rating for “respect among people on the internet” in the earlier section of the evaluation. However, it might also have been a signal that the time was fine as it was, since that option was not provided.

<sup>9</sup> Developing critical awareness of the role of gender in healthy and unhealthy relationships is one of the overall learning objectives of the program.

**4. Working with SWOVA’s facilitators**

The grade 7 students were asked three questions to explore their opinions about working with the community-based R+R program facilitators, who are selected and trained by SWOVA. They were asked (i) an overall rating question, (ii) whether there was anything they did not like about working with the facilitators, with an opportunity to provide details, and (iii) whether they think it is better to have “*people from outside the school*” or “*your regular teachers*” deliver the program.

In the rating question, students were given four choices (in words), with which to express their overall feelings about working with the facilitators, as shown in the table below.

How much students liked working with the facilitators

Not very much	Some	Quite a bit	Really a lot	Total
4 5.8%	11 15.9%	<b>35</b> <b>50.7%</b>	19 27.5%	69 100%

Half of the grade 7 students (51%) said that they liked working with the facilitators “*quite a bit*”, followed by 28% who said that they liked working with them “*really a lot*” for a total of 78% in the two highest categories. While some students selected the lower ratings of “*some*” (16%) and “*not very much*” (6%), these were very much in the minority.<sup>10</sup>

As a follow up question, students were directly asked if there was anything they did not like about working with the facilitators. They were given a yes/no choice for their initial answer, and also an opportunity to provide an explanation in their own words. As shown in the table below, a strong majority of students checked no, meaning that there was nothing they did not like about working with the facilitators.

Was there anything you did not like about working with the facilitators?

Yes	No	Total
14 21.9%	<b>50</b> <b>78.1%</b>	64 100%

Explanatory comments were almost entirely positive,<sup>11</sup> such as:

- *They care.*
- *They are awesome and understanding.*
- *They were great and I could really talk to [name].*
- *They were very nice and fair.*

The final question about facilitation asked students whether it is better to have people from outside the school or teachers leading the R+R workshops. Students were given three text choices, as well as the opportunity to give an explanation for their choice.

<sup>10</sup> While liking the facilitators may relate positively to learning, the facilitators themselves take the view that the R+R program can be challenging, even uncomfortable for some students, and they would rather see evidence that they are getting students to think and feel than to be popular with every student.

<sup>11</sup> A small number of negative comments were made by students in a class which was dominated by a difficult group of boys, as confirmed by the teacher.

Who is best to lead the R+R sessions?

People from outside school	Teachers	It doesn't matter	Total
36 52.9%	6 8.8%	26 38.2%	68 100%

More than half of the students (53%) said that it is better to have “*people from outside the school*” lead the workshops. One reason for this view is the perceived value of working with facilitators who have specialized skills and knowledge. One student explained that “*People who specialize in R+R should teach it*”. Other students said they preferred to work with facilitators who did not already know them, stating that “*I find it easier to learn this type of thing from people I don’t know but [can] relate to*” and “*You don’t know them as well, yet you feel more comfortable to talk to them*”.

Only a small group of students (9%) thought that the program should be delivered by teachers. A further 38% of students indicated that it didn’t matter to them who led the sessions, offering comments such as, “*I think there are pros and cons about both*” but without providing much insight. In the past, teachers themselves have generally agreed that SWOVA’s facilitators are the best people to engage youth with the life-issues raised in the R+R curriculum.

**5. Overall assessment of the program**

Grade 7 students were asked three questions to assess their views of the R+R program as a whole. Two of the questions were open-ended, requiring them to say in their own words what the best part of the program was, and whether anything in the program should be changed.

In each of the four workshop groups, approximately 15 students wrote in comments to explain what the best part of the program was for them. In three of the groups, the comments ranged widely over three themes: elements of program methods (videos, games, activities), specific program content (respect, slavery, conflict), and the discussions that took place in the group. In the fourth group, however, 13 of the 15 responses indicated that the best parts of the program were the separate gender sessions, raising a question about whether the separate gender sessions with that group were special in some way, with a uniquely positive impact.

In terms of what should be changed, a few students commented on the length of the sessions (half-days) and many others recommended more activity, more breaks, more games—suggesting that they found the time long.<sup>12</sup> Several recommended more time in separate gender sessions, and a few suggested that more time with the youth team would be valuable.

A third question asked students if they would recommend the R+R program to next year’s students, giving them a choice between “*yes*”, “*no*”, and “*maybe*”. Again, a majority (59%) of the students said they would recommend it. A further 28% said that they might do so and 13% of students said that they would not recommend the program to other students (see below). They were not asked to explain these views.

<sup>12</sup> Past evaluations have found that, even though the R+R program is interactive, with activities and energizers built in, many grade 7 students find sitting and listening difficult, as is typical of their developmental age and stage. It would be useful to obtain input from the teachers on this point.

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Would you recommend R+R to next year's students?

Yes	Maybe	No	Total
<b>40</b>	19	9	68
<b>58.8%</b>	27.9%	13.2%	100%

A final write-in question gave students the opportunity to provide any further comments they might want to make about R+R or “any related issues”. Two students raised the important issue of time and scheduling, stating “*It should be more than three days. It should be once or twice a week for a few months,*” and “*They should do it every year, and for longer.*” A number of other students took the opportunity to say thank you to the facilitators for the program, or indicate that it was a positive experience for them, with comments such as,

*“I would do it every year if I had the choice.”*

**GRADE 8**

Demographic background information for the grade 8 cohort is as follows:

- There were a few more boys than girls in this cohort, which appears to have met in three large workshop groups: out of the 63 students, 53% were boys and 47% were girls.
- In terms of family background, a majority of students (almost 60%) reported having close relatives (defined as parents or grandparents) who were born in another country. About 40% stated that they had no parents or grandparents who were born in another country. In contrast to the grade 7s, none of the grade 8s presented as unsure about this.
- About 13% (8 students) reported having a close relative (parent or grandparent) who thinks of themselves as First Nations, Inuit or Métis.

**1. Exploring respect**

As with the grade 7s, grade 8 students were asked how important respect is to them on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 5 is the high score), in five different areas of their lives. The following table shows the results, in rank order, starting with the area of their lives where respect is the most important for the greatest number of grade 8 students.<sup>13</sup>

Importance of respect

Reasons	Rating					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Respect in your family?	2 (3.2%)	0	4 (6.3%)	9 (14.3%)	<b>48</b> <b>(76.2%)</b>	63 (100.0%)
Respect among your friends?	0	2 (3.2%)	8 (12.7%)	23 (36.5%)	<b>30</b> <b>(47.6%)</b>	63 (100.0%)
Respect around Salt Spring?	6 (9.5%)	0	19 (30.2%)	<b>19</b> <b>(30.2%)</b>	<b>19</b> <b>(30.2%)</b>	63 (100.0%)
Respect among everyone in your school?	0	5 (7.9%)	25 (39.7%)	<b>18</b> <b>(28.6%)</b>	<b>15</b> <b>(23.8%)</b>	63 (100.0%)
Respect among people on the internet?	7 (11.1%)	8 (12.7%)	16 (25.4%)	<b>17</b> <b>(27.0%)</b>	<b>15</b> <b>(23.8%)</b>	63 (100.0%)

As with the grade 7s, “family” ranked strongly as the most important of these contexts, with “friends” in second place, contradicting a common assumption about the extreme focus by teens on relationships with and among their friends, at the expense of family. Respect in the community (“around Salt Spring”) was in third place, followed closely by respect in the school community. Again, the students were less concerned about respect in the school environment, where they spend so many of their waking hours, than in the community more broadly.<sup>14</sup> The fact that respect on the internet came last in their ranking may reflect the fact that, in current North American culture, the internet and other forms of media seem to be widely accepted as sites where disrespect is “acceptable”, even promoted.

<sup>13</sup> Rank order is based, first of all on the number and percentage of students who rated the item as a ‘5’ on the scale, and in the case of a tie, the combined number of students who rated the item as a ‘4’ or ‘5’.

<sup>14</sup> Past research on this program showed that some students feel stereotyped by some adults in the community.

The implications of these data are worth discussing by SWOVA staff, but should be treated as exploratory only. The next steps could be to probe more deeply with supplementary questions with a larger group of students for more insight. In particular, the meanings that the students themselves apply to the terms used such as “*around Salt Spring*” and “*on the internet*” need to be established with greater certainty before conclusions could be reached.

The students were also asked how much the R+R program has helped them personally to “*think about respect*” in their lives, using a verbally constructed five-point scale, where the choices ranged from “*not at all*” to “*really a lot*”. The greatest number chose the midpoint on the scale (“*some*”), as the following table shows. Only 12.7% chose the two high ratings (“*quite a bit*” and “*really a lot*”) whereas 44.4% chose the two low ratings (“*not very much*” and “*not at all*”). These results are notably less positive than for the grade 7s.

How much has the program helped you think about respect?

1 (not at all)	2 (not much)	3 (some)	4 (quite a lot)	5 (really a lot)	Total
13 20.6%	15 23.8%	<b>27</b> <b>42.9%</b>	7 11.1%	1 1.6%	63 100%

The grade 8s were also asked how much they thought the ideas and skills taught in the program will help the students in their class treat each other with more respect, using the same set of choices. In this case, the greatest number chose the second lowest rating (“*not much*”) and a further 20.6% chose the lowest rating (“*not at all*”) for a total of 57.1% at those levels.

How much has the program helped your class treat each other with respect?

1 (not at all)	2 (not much)	3 (some)	4 (quite a lot)	5 (really a lot)	Total
13 20.6%	<b>23</b> <b>36.5%</b>	22 34.9%	4 6.3%	1 1.6%	63 100%

These results are not entirely surprising. The grade 8s have often proved a challenging cohort for R+R facilitators, for a complex set of factors including systemic issues such as the effects of puberty and the sense of ‘seniority’ that appears in the year before graduation from middle school, as well as specific factors such as relationships with particular teachers and factors within peer groups. That said, these numbers are unusually low and raise questions for SWOVA about the dynamics in the grade 8 cohort in this past year and possible strategies for working with them next year when they are in grade 9, as well as about the fit between the program and the needs of this age-group at this point in time.

## **2. Exploring conflict**

Respect (or its absence), is an everyday phenomenon that can be used as a measure of healthy relationships of all kinds and on many dimensions. The R+R program asks students to consider diverse challenges to respect, from the use of stereotypes as a basis for judging others to the effects of gossip on its targets to the risk factors in party and dating situations. Where there is conflict in relationships, youth and adults alike find it especially challenging to act with respect. Accordingly, conflict resolution along with related skills such as boundary-setting and the use of assertive communication are skills which the program introduces to students.

This year’s evaluation asked the grade 8 students who in their lives they have the most conflict with, and given check-off options of “*parents*”, “*friends*”, “*dating partner*”, “*teachers*” and “*other (specify)*”. Some checked more than one option, and all answers were counted, with the result that the number of responses in the table below (77) is greater than the number of responding students (63). The percentages were calculated on the base number of 63 so that they represent the percentage of students who reported each kind of conflict.

The table below shows that the greatest number of grade 8 students (54.0%) report conflict with parents; 30.2% report conflict with friends; 12.7% report conflict with teachers; 1.6%<sup>15</sup> report conflict with a dating partner and 23.8% report conflict with “*others*” (usually siblings). The fact that parents top the list is consistent with, and may help to explain, their earlier responses indicating that respect in their families was the most important of the listed contexts.

Students’ reports of conflict in their relationships

Parents	Friends	Dating partner	Teachers	Other	Total
<b>34</b> <b>54.0%</b>	19 30.2%	1 1.6%	8 12.7%	15 23.8%	63 <sup>16</sup> ----- [122.3%]

They were also asked a follow-up question about whether they could use any of the ideas and skills they had explored in the R+R program to reduce or resolve that conflict. The check-off options went beyond “*yes*” and “*no*” to include the option “*maybe, if I had more practice.*” This option was included to probe one of the challenges faced in the program in relation to time allocation, i.e., deciding the number and extent of learning activities required by most youth to absorb the keys concepts and skills in the R+R program.

Using R+R to reduce or resolve conflict

Yes	No	Maybe, if I had more practice	Other	Total
17 27.4%	20 32.3%	<b>23</b> <b>37.1%</b>	2 3.2%	62 100%

The grade 8s indicated much less confidence. Almost a third said, “*No*,” they were not able to use the ideas and skills they had learned in real life situations of conflict, and over a third said “*maybe*” they could use the ideas and skills if they had more practice. The percentage saying “*yes*” was 20 points lower than for the grade 7s. These results reinforce the idea expressed earlier in this report that a review by SWOVA staff of the opportunities for practice in the curriculum, including implications for time allotment, may be worthwhile.

**3. Exploring key elements of program design**

The feedback questions for this year’s students included three that asked for their views on key elements of R+R program design: (i) the check in and check out at the beginning and end of

<sup>15</sup> It is consistent with previous years’ findings that few students at this grade level are dating.

<sup>16</sup> The calculations in this table show the number and percentage of the 63 students who checked each option. Because some students checked more than one option, the total of the option-specific percentages is greater than 100%

each workshop, (ii) the inclusion of blocks of time spent in separate gender discussion, and (iii) the amount of time currently allocated to the significant issue of cyber bullying.<sup>17</sup>

Students were asked if they think it is a “*good idea for everyone to hear from one another at the beginning and end of each session*”. The check in has a number of intended functions, including the transition from regular classes to the R+R workshop setting, the sharing and laying aside of any strong feelings from outside the R+R circle, and the building of trust and mutual acceptance among all those who sit inside the circle—students, facilitators and teachers alike. The check out is an opportunity for everyone present to say how they are feeling at the end of the workshop, and set aside any strong feelings it may have aroused.

About 33% of the grade 8 students thought these were good things to do. About 22% said they were not. About 40% were not sure and 5% offered another answer. These numbers are less positive than for the grade 7s. Students were not asked to explain their views.

They were also asked how they felt about the amount of time spent in ‘separate gender’ sessions (described in the grade 7 section). About 29% said they would have liked more time. About 12% would have liked less time. The majority (59%) said the amount was okay the way it was. (In the case of the grade 7s, the majority wanted more time.)

The question on cyber bullying asked “*do you think the R+R program should have spent more time on cyber bullying?*” The options were presented as ‘strongly agree’, ‘agree’, ‘not sure’, ‘disagree’ and ‘strongly disagree’. The majority (54%) indicated that they were ‘not sure’; 23% agreed that more time should have been spent, and 23% disagreed—something of a stalemate. There was a notable difference by gender, with more girls either agreeing or being unsure, and more boys disagreeing that more time was needed. (See table below.)

On cyber-bullying

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree	TOTAL
Boys	1 3.1%	5 15.6%	15 46.9%	7 21.9%	4 12.5%	32 52.5%
Girls	1 3.6%	7 25.0%	18 64.3%	1 3.6%	1 3.6%	28 45.9%
TOTAL	2 3.3%	12 19.7%	33 54.1%	8 13.1%	6 9.8%	61 100% <sup>18</sup>

Since cyber bullying is a fairly new area of the R+R curriculum, it is difficult to interpret the split distribution without additional evidence to draw on. The other evidence we do have is from this year’s grade 7s, which shows that the majority of them also chose “*not sure*” but the rest of their scores leaned strongly toward agreement that “*more time*” is needed. Based on past evaluation research results, it is also possible that there may be an issue of territoriality for some youth in relation to what they see as ‘their’ media.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Cyber bullying may be defined as using the internet or other technologies to harass, demean or in other ways inflict cruelty on a person, often anonymously and/or by using the power tactics of ‘virtual’ gangs.

<sup>18</sup> The figures in this table do not quite add up to 100% because one student did not indicate his/her gender, so is included in the total but not in the gender breakdown.

<sup>19</sup> As discussed in the previous section, students may have interpreted the wording of the midpoint choice as meaning neither agree or disagree, rather than more literally that they were uncertain.

**4. Working with SWOVA’s facilitators**

The students were asked if they “*liked working with this year’s facilitators*”, and given four choices in words to express their views. About 30% checked either “*really a lot*” or “*quite a lot*”, taken together. However, about 43% checked “*some*” and 27% checked “*not very much*”, as can be seen in the following table. These numbers are notably lower than for the grade 7s.

How much students liked working with the facilitators

<b>Not very much</b>	<b>Some</b>	<b>Quite a bit</b>	<b>Really a lot</b>	<b>Total</b>
17 27.0%	27 42.9%	<b>15</b> <b>23.8%</b>	4 6.3%	63 100%

However, when asked a second, more pointed question, “*Was there anything you did not like about working with the facilitators?*”, about 28% said “yes”, and 70% said “no”, with 2% saying checking both yes and no. Eighteen students provided an explanation for their judgment, but only a few of those were in the most negative group. Some negative opinions are to be expected of course, and comments like “*they were too strict,*” “*they asked too many questions*” and “*it (the program) was repetitive*” were familiar from previous years. There were also a small number of strongly worded criticisms that should be reviewed by staff.

When asked if they think it is “*better to have people from outside the school (like the current facilitators) leading the workshops or to have your regular teachers do it*”, 33% said it is better to have people from outside the school, 5% said it would be better to have teachers do it, and 62% said that it “*didn’t matter*” to them.

Who is best to lead the R+R sessions?

<b>People from outside school</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>It doesn’t matter</b>	<b>Total</b>
20 33.3%	3 5.0%	<b>37</b> <b>61.7%</b>	60 100%

Only a small number of students provided a reason for their view; in one group, none at all did, suggesting that they may have been running out of time in which to respond. The majority of those who did give a reason generally said that SWOVA’s facilitators have more expertise, they don’t have preconceptions about the students, and that students find it easier to talk to them than to their teachers about personal/emotional issues. The few who favoured teachers tended to see the pre-existing familiarity between teachers and students as a benefit (no doubt depending on the specific teacher).

**5. Overall assessment of the program**

Discussion of several program assessment questions that asked about specific features of the program have been discussed earlier in the Grade 8 data analysis section. This final subsection looks at the results from three questions that asked about the program as a whole. The students were asked what “the best part” of the program was for them, and whether in their opinion “anything in the program should be changed”. These two questions were open-ended, requiring them to answer in their own words.

What students liked ranged quite widely across the curriculum, referring to both content (e.g., stereotypes, sexism, the slogan game, “*when [the male facilitator] spoke about respect*”, learning the bully triangle) and process (the debates, the videos, separate gender, the energizers). A small number spoke more personally, e.g. “*knowing that you’re not alone, lots of people are the same*”; “*when we had conversations about sexual harassment – I’ve been there*”.

About 40% of the students made suggestions for changes to the program. Some were restatements of what they had liked best, e.g. “more separate gender”, “more debates”, “more videos about the media”. Several students asked for more activities, and several spoke critically about the long time blocks.

The third question asked whether they would recommend the R+R program to next year’s students. In response, only 11% of the grade 8 students said “yes”, 47% said “maybe” and 42% said “no”, with sizeable differences by gender. (See table below.) They were not asked to explain their answers, which in retrospect might have yielded some useful insights into the reasons for the thinking behind their responses and the degree of negativity expressed.

Would you recommend R+R?

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Maybe</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Boys	3 9.4%	13 40.6%	16 50.0%	32 51.6%
Girls	4 14.3%	16 57.1%	9 32.1%	29 46.8%
TOTAL	7 11.3%	29 46.8%	25 41.9%	62 100% <sup>20</sup>

One of the benefits of the R+R program, demonstrated consistently throughout the evaluation period, is that it takes place over four years—an unusual and commendable commitment by the school district. For youth, these are critical years in the social and emotional maturation process. Many of them demonstrate an arc of social and emotional growth and insight over the four-year period that they would not and could not develop in a single year’s engagement with the R+R curriculum and learning process.

<sup>20</sup> The figures in this table do not quite add up to 100% because one student did not indicate his/her gender, so is included in the total but not in the gender breakdown.

**GRADE 9**

By grade 9, the students in school district 64 have graduated from middle school and begun their four-year period in secondary school. They have more personalized timetables and there is no obvious place for R+R, given that the requirements of the social studies curriculum do not leave room for it. In 2012-13, grade 9 students were drawn from study periods for R+R, a cause for resentment for some. This approach (plus inconsistent attendance) led to the formation of 7 small groups, which was not ideal for facilitation and group process in the workshops.

It is also noted that the grade 9 delivery is scheduled for September and October, when these students are adjusting to their new school environment. A question worth probing in the future is whether the grade 9s find this timing for R+R helpful to the transition process.

Demographic information for the grade 9 cohort (N = 94) is as follows:

- Gender: 52% of grade 9 respondents were boys and 48% were girls (with five students did not report their gender).
- In terms of family background, 61% identified as “white” (Anglo, Caucasian, European, etc.), 24% as “mixed” (more than one racial or ethnic background), 6% as “Aboriginal”; and 9% as having some other racial, ethnic or cultural background. Nine students did not respond.

The grade 9 and 10 students were asked a total of fifteen questions, some of which were check-off questions with pre-set choices and some of which were open-ended, requiring responses in their own words. Past experience has demonstrated that students of this age and educational stage are more likely than the middle school students in grades 7 and 8 to respond to these open-ended questions in higher numbers and with insightful comments. The trade-off for this decision is that fewer questions can be asked.

As with the previous grades, the questions were grouped thematically for analysis and reporting purposes, probing four evaluative themes: (1) learning, (2) working with SWOVA’s facilitators, (3) difference in school climate, and (4) students’ assessments of the value of the program.

**1. Learning**

The grade 9 students were asked how much they were learning that could help them to have respectful relationships in their everyday lives, responding on a five-point scale (where '5' is the high score). Responses clustered around the midpoint (55% of responses), with slightly fewer than 25% of students responding on either side of the 3-point mark.

Self-reports of learning

1 (nothing)	2 (not much)	3 (some)	4 (quite a lot)	5 (really a lot)	Total
8 9.1%	12 13.6%	<b>48</b> <b>54.5%</b>	19 21.6%	1 1.1%	88 100%

To provide more insight, they were asked to name three “*useful or important*” things they had learned. It is interesting to note that some students who circled one of the low-end choices on the scale (1 or 2), indicating that they believed they had not learned a lot, could nevertheless

name important things they had learned. What follows is a summary of the broad categories into which their answers fell. They appear to reflect the content of the R+R curriculum quite well:

- **Some students named new skills that they had learned or improved:** e.g., ‘reflective listening’, ‘how to say no’, ‘thinking outside the box’, ‘expressing anger’, ‘to deal with emotions in a healthy way’, ‘new ways to handle problems’, ‘always stay with friends at parties’, ‘[how to recognize] good and bad relationships’, ‘how to see my friends’ point of view’.
- **Some named significant ideas/issues they had explored:** e.g., ‘your rights’, ‘it’s important to have empathy for people’, ‘women’s rights and history’, ‘I didn’t realize how young abuse starts’, ‘about anorexia’, ‘cyber bullying awareness’, ‘it’s about who you are not how you look’, ‘the serious problem of sexism’.
- **Some saw themselves or aspects of their lives differently:** e.g., ‘there are more people out there with the same bad situations as me’, ‘I need to stand up for what I believe is right’, ‘SWOVA says useful things to help me with school relationships’; ‘[I learned] that there are people that will listen to me’.

A minority of the grade 9 students did not list anything that they had learned, and a very small number said explicitly that they had not learned anything new or valuable.

**2. Working with SWOVA’s facilitators**

The students were asked if they think it is better to have workshops on respectful relationships taught by people from outside the school (such as the facilitators they had worked with), or by teachers in their school. In response, about 53% said they preferred people from outside the school; 7% said teachers; 40% said that they were open to either possibility.<sup>21</sup>

Who is best to lead the R+R sessions?

People from outside school	Teachers	It doesn’t matter	Total
47 52.8%	6 6.7%	36 40.4%	89 100%

They were also asked to say what they liked best about working with the current facilitators, and whether there was anything they did not like.

- Common themes in terms of what the grade 9 students liked best were the facilitators’ passion for and dedication to their work, the fact that “*they knew what they were talking about*”, that they were good listeners, that they encouraged openness (were non-judgmental), that they understood what is going on for teens, and that “*we don’t have to worry about what they think of us*”.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> It would be interesting in a future evaluation to ask what specific characteristics matter most to them in facilitators of this kind of material. Past results from evaluations of SWOVA’s program model has provided strong support for the employment of carefully selected, specially trained, community-based facilitators.

<sup>22</sup> It is presumed that this comment refers to the fact that, as non-teachers, the facilitators are not in a power relationship to the students. This factor has been seen as a very important advantageous of working with outside facilitators, allowing for greater openness and honesty.

- In terms of negative views, many students indicated that there had none or else they omitted the question. Most of the others listed aspects of the *program* that they did not like: reading out loud, energizers, activities that were “not fun” (usually unspecified). A small number noted that R+R workshops were scheduled during “work zone” which is normally a time when they can get homework done, and were unhappy to have lost that opportunity. A few made negative references to facilitators being too strict, or else too convinced about their own point of view.

### **3. Difference in school climate**

The grade 9 students were asked if they think the R+R workshops can reduce disrespect, bullying and abuse in their school, and to explain their view. In response, 72% checked YES; 20% checked NO; and 8% checked both, indicating that they hold an indeterminate or mixed view. Some quotations from those who checked “yes”:

- √ *Yes because people realize how important this stuff is and how much they can help.*
- √ *The program is telling you that it is alright to seek help and showing people that bullying is a huge problem and can lead to even suicide.*
- √ *I think it helps a lot because we can talk about our feelings and hear other people’s feelings and know that they can get hurt too.*
- √ *Because [...] if you don’t know you are bullying you can realize you are.*
- √ *Now I know the signs [of an unhealthy relationship] and how to deal with it.*
- √ *I think it does prevent bullying and abuse and disrespect but no one notices because [R+R has] been here for so long.*

Most of those who said “no” did not provide an explanation.

They were also asked if they have noticed students in their class treating each other with more respect since taking the R+R program. In this case, they were less positive: 26% checked YES; 70% checked NO; and 4% checked both. However, although a majority did not explain their view, many of those who said “no” explained that most people in their school already treat each other with respect<sup>23</sup>. Some examples of their explanatory comments:

- √ *[Yes.] A little, like [making] less inappropriate comments [i.e., less verbal abuse].*
- √ *[Yes and No.] I don’t see a lot of bullying in our school so I don’t see much change.*
- √ *[No.] I haven’t been at the school for very long but I’ve noticed people being respectful.*
- √ *[Yes.] I think we have been great towards each other because we’ve gotten to know each other and we have trust.*
- √ *[Yes and No.] Some people have changed thanks to this but others have not.*
- √ *[No.] Because the bullies don’t really care.*

### **4. Value of the R+R program to students**

The grade 9 students were asked how valuable they found the program this year, to them personally, on a 4-point scale. Results were as follows:

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<sup>23</sup> Students in grade 9 have already had R+R workshops in grades 7 and 8, and SWOVA has been working with the school district for over a decade to help build a respectful school climate.

Value of the program

1 (not at all)	2 (not very)	3 (somewhat)	4 (very valuable)	Total
10 11.5%	20 23.0%	<b>46</b> <b>52.9%</b>	11 12.6%	87 100%

To elaborate their rating scores, they were also asked to specify what “the best part of R+R this year” was for them. Some did not reply, and a number of those who did referred to the video in the session they had just completed, leaving us with a limited range of answers. However, positive comments outnumbered negative ones by a ratio of about 10 to 1--an encouraging result given that the program focuses on complex, sometimes highly charged social issues and areas of personal experience and opinion, and can be controversial among students (as could be observed among the grade 8s), as the following examples illustrate:

- *The movies – they had a lot of valuable information.*
- *Learning about how bad it is for women in the world because I think it showed us how bad it really is.*
- *The group talks.*
- *The [facilitators] were actively involved and passionate.*
- *Becoming closer with the people in my class.*
- *Getting our own opinions [heard].*
- *Talking about real life situations, and them [the facilitators] giving us advice.*
- *There were no good parts.*
- *I didn’t like it because I have already taken it twice and it was no different—boring.*
- *Can’t think of one, it took my work zone.*

These responses were somewhat limited in terms curriculum specifics but given how much material is covered in the curriculum, it may be unreasonable to expect students to think back over the entire 12-session program, and identify meaningful highlights, especially in the brief time available for completion of the questionnaire.<sup>24</sup> It might be advisable in future surveys to take another approach to the assessment of program content, e.g. to include a list of sessions and/or topics as an *aide-memoire*, or to probe their responses to particular topics, or to conduct several shorter evaluations throughout the delivery period.<sup>25</sup>

Students were asked if “*there is anything you think should be changed*” in the R+R program. Almost 50% said “*no*”, that nothing needed to be changed, or made a positive comment being “*all good*”, or did not respond. Recommended changes were grouped around several themes:

- About 10% wanted the scheduling changed in some way, either so that they did not have to miss “work zone”, or so that the program was optional or else shorter or, in a few cases, longer.
- The others identified specific things they wanted to see more of (e.g. films, outside speakers, games) or less of (e.g. writing, energizers, “strictness”).

<sup>24</sup> It can be a scramble to complete at the end of the packed last session, before the bell rings.

<sup>25</sup> When the program began, funds for evaluation research were sufficient to allow for a one-page assessment to be filled out by every student at the end of every one of the 12 workshops per grade. This information was extremely useful for curriculum development. It might be worth updating this information in relation to today’s students.

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- A few boys challenged the gender balance in the content, which has been shown in other research to occur when girls' experience is given equal treatment. Facilitators have said they would like to incorporate some ideas from recent research and writing on boys' experience in our current culture, though without any less focus on the role of gender in interpersonal violence, which boys often deny or find it challenging to hear in a way that invites them to act positively in response.
- One student made the interesting suggestion that each year's program should focus on a specific theme for all 12 sessions, which would have the effect of make R+R seem "*more new*" each year.

Finally, the grade 9 students were asked if they would recommend the program to other students. In response, 31% checked YES; 14% checked NO; 55% checked MAYBE, with very little difference by gender. (See below.)

### Would you recommend R+R?

	Yes	Maybe	No	TOTAL
Boys	13 29.5%	<b>23</b> <b>52.3%</b>	8 18.2%	44 100%
Girls	13 32.5%	<b>23</b> <b>57.5%</b>	4 10.0%	40 100%
TOTAL	26 31.0%	<b>46</b> <b>54.8%</b>	12 14.3%	84 100%

This is a more favourable outcome distribution than in grade 8, although the high proportion of "*maybe*" responses is high. Again, an explanation of their choices would have provided insight, and should be asked for if this question is retained in future surveys.

**GRADE 10**

Demographic background information for the grade 10 cohort is as follows:

- Gender: 42% of grade 10 respondents were boys and 57% were girls. This large a discrepancy by gender is unlikely to be the result of chance, and suggests a need for SWOVA to investigate boys’ attendance in the grade 10 program and their reasons for non-attendance.<sup>26</sup>
- In terms of family background, 52% identified as “white” (Anglo, Caucasian, European, etc.), 21% as “mixed” (more than one racial or ethnic background), 7% as “Aboriginal”; and 19% as having some other racial, ethnic or cultural background. It is likely that the higher percentage of students identifying as “other” in the grade 10 cohort, in comparison with grade 9, reflects the enrolment of overseas students recruited by school district officials to participate in an exchange program with students from GISS.

Like the grade 9s, grade 10 students were asked a total of fifteen questions, some of which were check-off questions with pre-set choices and some of which were required them to answer in their own words. For analysis and reporting purposes, questions were grouped into four sets, probing four evaluative themes: (1) self-assessed learning, (2) perspectives on working with SWOVA’s facilitators, (3) making a difference in school climate, and (4) assessments of program value.

Because a significant number of grade 10 students did not participate in the R+R program this year, and the basis of their selection to participate or not is unknown to the evaluator (but is unlikely to be random), survey results for this cohort must be interpreted with caution.

**1. Learning**

Students were asked how much what they were learning in the R+R workshops is helping them to have safe, healthy and respectful relationships in their everyday lives on a five-point scale from “not at all” (1) to “really a lot” (5). Results were positive for the program, with about 43% of students replying at the 4 or 5 point level (“quite a lot” or “really a lot”), as shown in the table below. About 17% of their responses fell below the midpoint of the scale, a fairly standard number, though the issue of non-attendance makes comparisons with past years’ results problematic.

Self reports of learning

1 (not at all)	2 (not much)	3 (somewhat)	4 (quite a lot)	5 (really a lot)	Total
5 11.9%	2 4.8%	<b>17</b> <b>40.5%</b>	15 35.7%	3 7.1%	42 100%

To probe more deeply, a follow-up question asked students to name three useful or important things that they learned during the series of 12 R+R workshops they had participated in during

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<sup>26</sup> Comments made in answer to this and other questions suggest that the students who absent themselves are considered by at least some of their colleagues to be perpetrators of the disrespectful behaviours that the program seeks to address. It also appears that the French immersion class was omitted from the workshop schedule.

the 2012-2013 school year. Nearly 75% listed at least two and in most cases three ideas or attitudes or skills from the R+R curriculum that they had learned. These included:

general life lessons in the pursuit of healthy relationships such as “*don’t be afraid to be you*”, “*never assume things about others*” and “*it’s okay to get help*”;

skills such as “*non-violent communication*”, “*listening*”, “*dealing with stress*”, and “*what is considered an abusive relationship*”;

facts and information such as “*the real effects of alcohol and drugs*”, “*about people being trafficked*”, and “*what systemic violence is*”.

**2. Working with SWOVA’s facilitators**

The grade 10 students were asked if they thought it was better to have workshops on respectful relationships taught by “*people from outside the school*” (such as the facilitators they had worked with), or by teachers in their school. In response, 61% said they preferred people from outside the school; 7% said teachers; 32% said that it didn’t matter to them either way.<sup>27</sup>

Who is best to lead the R+R sessions?

People from outside school	Teachers	It doesn’t matter	Total
25 61.0%	3 7.3%	13 31.7%	41 100%

They were also asked to say what they liked best about working with the facilitators, and whether there was anything they did not like. Again, some commented on program content rather than on the facilitators themselves intended. Some examples of their responses:

- *The way [they] tried to connect with the students was impressive.*
- *They seemed skilled in what they do.*
- *They were very relaxed and non-judgmental – just purely facts.*
- *I liked the way that [they] had real life scenarios to share with the class because it made things like more reality.*
- *I liked the non-teacher insight and views. It was as if they have whole other thoughts and feelings compared to teachers.*
- *They were a little too calm and not assertive enough. You need to be calm but not let [students] walk over you.*
- *To me, they treated us like we were younger than we were.*
- *It was like my beliefs and ideals were not even brought up so it’s like [they presented only] one side of a coin.*

**3. Difference in school climate**

The students were asked if they think the R+R program can help to reduce disrespect, bullying and abuse at their school. In response about 85% checked YES and 15% checked NO, a strong affirmation. Some quotations from those who checked “yes”:

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<sup>27</sup> In the future, it would be useful to ask what characteristics make a good facilitator of this material.

- √ *By making people more aware of their actions, self-aware.*
- √ *They teach us why we need respect.*
- √ *We talked about different issues which made us do more thinking.*
- √ *I find these kinds of workshops motivational and [they] help me a lot.*
- √ *It will help people become more aware of the issues.*
- √ *It could if the kids listened to you guys. If they don't care, they won't listen.*
- √ *If even one single person learns something they will remember, these workshops will have proven successes.*

They were also asked if they have noticed students in their class treating each other with more respect since taking the R+R program. The results for this question were more positive than the results for the same question from the grade 9s, but less positive than their own results were for the previous question: 45% checked YES; 55% checked NO. They were asked to explain their views, providing responses which help us to interpret the numbers.

As with the grade 9s, some grade 10 students consider that standards of respect at GISS are already high. Others noted that some who needed the program had chosen not to attend. Some examples of their verbatim responses are as follows:

- [Yes.] People have been listening more to each other than they were [doing] at the start.*
- [No.] A bully that I know has actually chosen to skip this course. There should be more punishment for people not showing up.*
- [No.] The students in my classes treat each with the same respect as before, which is thankfully high.*
- [Yes.] They are helping each other move the desks and listening well while another one talks.*
- [Yes.] Students have learned to openly share their life stories.*
- Not really. Some of my friends (...) still make racist and religious jokes.*

**4. Value of the R+R program**

As with the grade 9s, the grade 10s were asked how valuable they found the program this year, overall, responding on a 4-point scale. Results were considerably more positive at this grade level, with about 83% of these students rating the program above the midpoint, at either at a '3' (somewhat valuable) or '4' (very valuable), as can be seen in the table below. A comparison with the lower scores from the grade 9s raises questions about the dynamics in each grade this year, but it is not one which the evaluation can answer with the data in hand.

Value of the program

1 (not at all valuable)	2 (not very valuable)	3 (somewhat valuable)	4 (very valuable)	Total
4 9.8%	3 7.3%	23 56.1%	11 26.8%	41 100%

To elaborate their rating scores, the grade 10s were asked to specify what the best part of R+R was this year, for them personally. There were more responses given than in the grade 9 cohort. Quite a few of the grade 10s mentioned the videos and related discussion as delivering valuable new learning for them, but it was encouraging to see that their examples ranged widely over the R+R course material. Some examples of what they thought was "best" are:

- *The stress workshop.*
- *The talk about transphobia and how to deal if you/your friend is sexually abused.*
- *Watching the videos and having time to think about things in our heads.*
- *The drinking video.*
- *Everything was good.*
- *Me being older and a little wiser let me understand this course better.*
- *The check-ins.*
- *Too much for me to say – all of it was very valuable.*
- *All the conversations we had with the group and the videos.*

When asked if there is anything about the program that should be changed, up to 50% left the question blank or else said “no” or “nothing”. As shown in the selected quotations below, most of those who responded made constructive comments, but a small number were very negative in their assessment:

- *Nope, it's good as it is.*
- *Just [add] more about dealing with the topics.*
- *No, you guys rock!*
- *More talk about sexism and problems with male dominance.*
- *More time focused on healthy relationships and marriage.*
- *No, it seems solid.*
- *Nope. Thanks for sticking with us for 4 years.*
- *I think the class needs to try new things and cover different topics. I don't feel like I learned anything more from the previous years.*
- *Everything was outdated.*
- *I would axe the circle thing.*
- *Not to be mean, but lay off the men on women violence a little. Women control men too!*
- *The R+R program needs to stop wasting valuable educational time.*

The grade10s were considerably more likely to recommend the R+R program to other students, as the table below shows:

Would you recommend R+R?

	Yes	Maybe	No	TOTAL
Boys	<b>14</b> 66.7%	5 23.8%	2 9.5%	21 100%
Girls	6 35.3%	<b>10</b> 58.8%	1 5.9%	17 100%
TOTAL	<b>20</b> 52.6%	15 39.5%	3 7.9%	38 100%

Almost 53% said that they would recommend the program, and only 8% said that they definitely would not. It is interesting to note that, by gender, it was the boys who were most clear about recommending R+R to other students, which is not the usual outcome. Again, this result could be influenced by self-selection in relation to attendance.

## CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

In a time of shrinking financial support for community-based programming by governments at all levels, it is a testament to the calibre of the R+R program and the effectiveness it has demonstrated over time, as well as the commitment of SWOVA's staff and board members and the ongoing support of Gulf Islands school administrators and teachers, that R+R continues to be delivered in SD 64 to the benefit and appreciation of participating students.

The evaluation done in 2012-13 was limited in scope but it yielded considerable evidence of the continuing positive impact of the program. As it should do, it also points to some areas in need of review and possible revision, as well as to questions for further investigation.

### Limits and potential of the evaluation

This year's evaluation was based on short surveys completed by all participating students at the end of their 12-session program, supplemented by interviews with the adult facilitators. Its benefits are that it:

- provides valuable data about and insights into program impact,
- points to a number of questions or areas for discussion by staff,
- provides funders with evidence of value-for-money.

That said, a program as extensive, multi-faceted and significant in its goals as R+R is best served by more comprehensive evaluation research on a continuing basis. R+R has benefited from significant review in the past. However, as the challenges facing students, schools and communities in relation to the objectives of the program continue to change, the need for multi-faceted assessment data to support program development continues too.

Moreover, beyond its local benefits, a program like R+R presents an important opportunity for research into the social development of today's youth and more specifically into the best ways to support their growth as self-aware, socially and emotionally competent young adults who are committed to respect and equality in their own lives and communities. Ideally, this research would involve (i) triangulated assessment data from facilitators and teachers as well as students, (ii) the opportunity for more session-specific data, especially from the students, and (iii) an assessment of the experience and contributions of the youth team.

If such an agenda for evaluation research is not possible, **it is recommended** that a review of evaluation goals and methods be built into next year's program planning schedule, and that it take place well in advance of the normal September start date for R+R in the classroom. In particular, the continued use of the current 'program completion survey' as the main form of evaluation should be reconsidered. If it is decided to retain that tool as a matter of practicality and economy, **it is further recommended** that the goals and focus of the questions be reviewed with staff, and that the questionnaire be redeveloped in a timely manner.

### Program achievements and challenges

#### 1. SWOVA-schools relationship

One of the most positive achievements of the R+R program is that it continues to be regarded by teachers and administrators in its home school district as a significant benefit to their students, and that they continue to find space for a 12-hour community-developed violence

prevention program as part of a complex and demanding set of expectations and requirements set for students and teachers by provincial officials. For the most part, the relationship of local educators with SWOVA is an example of an effective school-community partnership, and the credit for its success belongs to both partner groups.

That said, there were some problems in relation to both scheduling for the workshops and norms around student attendance this past year, and seem to need a more consultative process between the partners so that 'best practices' for positive student outcomes can be maximized.<sup>28</sup> In the high school, scheduling and the management of attendance appeared to have worked together against full student participation in the R+R program.

Accordingly, **it is recommended that the options for a more consultative planning process be explored.** The process should involve both school officials and SWOVA staff, with discussions to take place during the time when the schools are normally setting their schedules for the following year and a 'check-in' before each grade's sessions begin.

## 2. Grade 7s and 8s (middle school)

Responses to the survey from the grade 7s made it clear that they had a very positive experience with R+R this year. Although there was no overall rating question asked, a 60% majority said "yes", they would recommend the program to others, an indicator of general approval, and almost all the rest said "maybe" they would. About 55% said "yes", that R+R helped them think about respect in their own lives, and also that it helped their class treat each other with respect at the 4- or 5-point level on a scale of 1 to 5, with only a few scores below the midpoint (3). As well, almost 50% said "yes", they could use some of the ideas and skills they had learned in R+R to resolve conflicts in their lives, and most of the rest (35%) said they thought they could if they had more practice.

Responses from the grade 8s were less positive, which did not come as a surprise to the facilitators: in previous years it has been fairly common for at least a few students at that grade level (and sometimes more than a few) to challenge aspects of the program and/or pose classroom management problems.<sup>29</sup> Above normal negativity in their assessments of the value of the program this year (see below) may reflect broader dynamics, for which the evaluator has only anecdotal evidence.

- This year, the greatest number of grade 8s (47%) said "maybe" they would recommend R+R to other students and over 40% they would not recommend it. The question did not provide an opportunity for them to explain.
- When asked about learning, more than 40% of the grade 8s said that the program had not helped them think about respect in their own lives, and more than 50% said it had not helped people in their class treat each other with respect.

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<sup>28</sup> Attendance posed problems at the high school, in both grades. In the middle school, scheduling such that the program took place over 3 consecutive days has at the very least pros and cons which require further discussion and, if possible, a research-based assessment of effects.

<sup>29</sup> This can be considered normal for their stage of adolescent development, which includes an increased tendency to "question authority" at around the age of 14-15. As well, some of the boys in one class were exhibiting some troubling gender dynamics, which collided with core aspects of the Respectful Relationships" curriculum.

- In terms of conflict resolution, only 27% said that they could use of the ideas and skills they had learned in R+R to resolve conflicts in their lives, and 37% said they thought they could if they had more practice.

Given these findings, **it is recommended** that SWOVA staff review the evaluation results for grade 8, possibly with input from teachers and/or the youth team, and discuss the possibility of program modifications or other appropriate strategies for increasing positive engagement with the grade 8s next year. More specifically in relation to respect, for greater understanding of the scores, **it is recommended** that some additional questions be asked in the future about the degree of respect already present in different contexts of students' lives (to establish a point of reference), and also about their views on the factors that "get in the way" of respect.

### 3. Grade 9s and 10s (high school)

The grade 9s seem to have had a largely positive experience, although many did not like that R+R was scheduled in "work zone" for them, and attendance was lower than expected, possibly for that reason. It should also be noted that the grade 9s normally take R+R in the fall, when high school is still very new to them, and some may be having transition issues.

When asked how valuable they found the +R program this year to them personally, 65% of the grade 9s said they found it "somewhat valuable" or "very valuable". About half suggested changes, some of which involved scheduling (discussed earlier) but most of which were expressions of individual preferences and comfort levels. It is normal practice for SWOVA staff to review the specific recommendations, and facilitators have already indicated that they are sympathetic to the idea that some changes to the way 'boys' culture' is addressed could strengthen the program. **It is recommended** that this direction be pursued, with the goal of increasing the positive engagement of boys in both grade 8 and grade 9.

In terms of learning, about 22% of the grade 9s said they had learned "a lot" or "really a lot", with 55% saying they had learned "some", the midpoint score. When asked to specify what they had learned, their answers were strong, showing both curriculum relevance and evidence of positive engagement. As well, even students who had given a middling or low score to their learning could name something or several things that they had learned. They were not asked the questions about respect and conflict that the grade 7s and 8s were, but when asked if they thought the R+R workshops reduce disrespect, bullying and abuse in their school, a strong 72% said "yes". When asked if they had noticed students in their class treating each other with more respect since taking the program, a much lower percentage said "yes" (26%). However, many of those who said "no" went on to say that they *already* treated one another with respect, which past evaluation research indicates is, at least in part, a result of the four-year R+R program.

About 30% of the grade 9s said "yes", they would recommend the R+R program to other students, and about 55% said "maybe" they would, a more positive distribution than for the grade 8s but less positive than in other years for grade 9s. **It is recommended** that future versions of this question include a follow-up probe to explain the number of "maybes".

The grade 10s seem to have had a very positive relationship to the program this past year, based on their survey responses, although it is noted that attendance was low compared to school enrolment figures, and therefore some self-selection favouring students who are committed to the program (based on their past experience) may be involved.

When asked how valuable they found the program this year, 83% said they found it “somewhat valuable” or “very valuable”, a very positive outcome. When asked to name “the best part” for them, a higher percentage of grade 10 students responded than grade 9s, and their responses indicated both good recall and strong connection to curriculum material. When asked if anything should be changed for the future, almost half either left the question blank (signaling no changes necessary) or made positive comments about how good it had been.

About 43% of the grade 10s said they had learned “quite a lot” or “really a lot”. The majority followed that up by naming one or more “useful or important things” they had learned, with answers that strongly supported curriculum content. When asked if R+R can help to reduce disrespect, bullying and abuse in their school, a very strong 85% said “yes”. The percentage saying “yes” to the question asking if they had noticed people in their class treating each other with more respect since taking the R+R program, was lower at 45%. Again however, many of those who said “no” pointed out that standards of respect were already high in their school, in some cases noting that the R+R program played a part in that; others noted that some of the people who needed to learn the most about respect had chosen not to attend the workshops.

The grade 10s were also considerably more likely than the grade 9s to say they would recommend the program to others. Overall, about 53% said they would, with about 40% saying “maybe” they would. There was a greater gender difference among the grade 10s than the grade 9s, with about twice as many boys as girls saying “yes”, an unusual outcome.

#### 4. Additional program specifics

*Program scheduling and delivery issues.* The need for application and practice of new skills in order to embed them in the human brain is well established in educational literature, and it was interesting to see in this year’s evaluation results that a significant number of students thought they needed more practice in some of the skills introduced in R+R workshops. This raises the possibility that full program delivery in three successive half-days, as was done in the middle school last year, reduces the opportunity for ‘testing’ and practice of new ideas in students’ lives and weakens program impact.<sup>30</sup> **It is recommended:** (i) that the compressed delivery model be modified to permit a longer learning period for students in all grades; (ii) that consideration be given to the identification of a short list of critical skills for priority practice and rehearsal in creative ways in each year and across several years; (iii) that the practice used in some other ‘healthy relationship’ programs of revisiting students for “top up” sessions later in the year be studied for possible application.<sup>31</sup>

*Working with community-based facilitators.* The previous year’s evaluation results showed a dip in the normally high rate at which students have said they prefer to have the R+R program delivered by “outside facilitators” rather than their regular teachers. This choice has been a fundamental one for SWOVA, and the choice to use specially trained facilitators from outside the schools has been strongly supported in the past both in other research literature and by results in SWOVA’s experience in all the communities in which it has worked. This year’s results support the outside-facilitator model: depending on the grade level, students chose facilitators over regular teachers at a rate of between 5:1 and 10:1. That said, a

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<sup>30</sup> It is recognized that the four-year learning period offers definite advantages for mastery of the overall material, but some skills are never revisited after their first introduction.

<sup>31</sup> It is recognized that it is unlikely that schools would be able to find additional time for this, so it would have to be considered as an alternative use of program time.

significant number said “it doesn’t matter”, a perspective that invites further research in the next year.

*The youth team.* It was not possible for the evaluation to include a review of the Youth Team’s experience last year, but the adult facilitators reported success in involving YT members in the middle school, and an intention to arrange for more of their time in grade 9 and 10 workshops next year if possible. If so, **it is recommended** that this be included in evaluation plans as well, since past results suggested some resistance to peer involvement at those grade levels, and some challenges for the youth facilitators as well. (Some of those issues might be avoided if the plan is to deploy YT members from grade 12 to work with the grade 9s and 10s, in order to maximize the ‘seniority’ gap.)

*Curriculum components.* One of the priorities for this year’s evaluation was on several specific curriculum components. The results in terms of understanding grade 7 and 8 students’ experience and priorities in relation to the key concepts of respect and conflict were interesting, and somewhat unexpected in terms of their stress on the family as a site of significant concern. R+R is primarily focused on peer relations, but **it is recommended** that consideration be given to the occasional inclusion of family relationships, particularly sibling relationships,<sup>32</sup> where that is practical in the curriculum.

The results in terms of separate gender work support the expansion of that approach to curriculum delivery, especially given evidence of concern to the facilitators that contemporary ‘boy culture’ is showing signs of increased misogyny and acceptance of violence to solve problems, with impacts in local schools. **It is recommended** that this direction be considered for trial application in next year’s delivery.

Results in terms of cyber bullying were inconclusive, and require further research.

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<sup>32</sup> Sibling aggression as a cause of psychological damage in the victims that is similar to the effects produced by peer aggression has been the subject of recent research and media attention. See for example recent publications by professor of family studies Corinna Jenkins Tucker et al and others by clinical psychologist John Caffaro.