

Evaluation of Youth Frontiers, 2010-2011

Evaluation team:

Timothy Sheldon, PhD

Molly Gordon, PhD

Sue Rickers, MSW

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We would like to thank participating school principals, teachers, and students for their assistance during the 2010-2011 evaluation. Again this year, our school contacts were thoughtful and responsive to all of our requests and helped make this year's evaluation a success.

We wish to acknowledge the help we have received from Youth Frontiers staff in 2011. We especially want to acknowledge the assistance we received from Alison Sipkins, Executive Assistant/Evaluation Coordinator - our main contact at Youth Frontiers. Alison has worked with CAREI staff throughout the three years of our evaluation and her support has been immensely helpful.

Our current work with Youth Frontiers, Incorporated comes to an end with this, our third and final evaluation report. Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement staff members have enjoyed and benefitted from our work with Youth Frontiers. We look forward to continuing our research and evaluation work with Youth Frontiers staff sometime in the future.

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Evaluation of Youth Frontiers, 2010-2011

OVERVIEW OF THE CAREI EVALUATION

In fall 2008, Youth Frontiers, Incorporated (YF) contracted with the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) to conduct an evaluation of Youth Frontiers programming for three years. The purpose of the evaluation was threefold: to determine the extent to which participation in YF programming increases students' social and emotional learning competencies; to determine if participation helps students feel more connected to peers and adults in their school communities; and to determine whether YF Retreats have a positive effect on youth participants and the school as a whole.

To achieve this purpose, CAREI staff used a number of evaluation activities and gathered data from a variety of sources including: observations; interviews and focus groups with students, teachers, school administrators, and Youth Frontiers Retreat staff; surveys of students who participated in Kindness, Courage, and Respect Retreats; a review of literature and past YF evaluations; and, an analysis of demographic data. The section below recaps the evaluation activities that occurred during years one and two and some of the more salient findings from those evaluation activities.

Activities and Findings, Years 1 and 2

In the first year (2008-2009), CAREI conducted four evaluation activities: 1) we completed a review of the research literature on relevant topics; 2) analyzed data from two previous evaluations to identify the important findings and conclusions of those evaluations; 3) convened and facilitated focus groups with all YF Retreat directors and retreat staff and analyzed their responses for recurrent themes and important issues that they raised; and, 4) analyzed data from school district and data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) to learn about the demographic characteristics of all YF client schools.

Our findings for year one revealed that the retreat approach was a viable strategy for reaching students and teaching skills. The literature suggests that positive life events, such as retreats, can have a lasting impact on participants. When we analyzed the retreat structure in the context of the literature, we found that Youth Frontiers Retreats incorporate many of the best practices of research including, highly energetic and emotionally engaging, age-appropriate activities, opportunities for student reflection and sharing among peers, mementoes that serve as reminders of the day's activities, and activities that are led by non-teachers. The literature also suggested a typical six-hour YF Retreat fell at the lower end of what was deemed effective training, which was 16 hours of contact time. These findings suggested that YF Retreats did many things "right," and it suggested the value of providing follow-up support for teachers and students after the retreat.

In 2009-2010, we worked closely with YF staff and a committee of YF Board members to set up a plan for the second year of evaluation. We focused on a small number of schools to better understand the interactions between YF Retreats and changes in student perceptions and behaviors. We used a case study approach, which according to Kenny and Grotelueschen (1980), "is appropriate when the

objective of the evaluation is 'to develop a better understanding of the dynamics of the program. When it is important to be responsive and convey a holistic and dynamically rich account of the educational program, case study is the tailor-made approach.'"¹ Because of the intensive nature of this approach, we limited our study to seven elementary schools within a 60-mile radius of Saint Paul. We also limited our cases to schools that had scheduled a Kindness Retreat in January or February 2010. We observed only Kindness Retreats because Youth Frontiers staff said these retreats had the clearest set of learning objectives.

The findings from CAREI's second year of evaluation suggested that YF directors may need to clarify the concept of silent bullying during the Kindness Retreat. For instance, retreat leaders should consider providing additional examples or spending more time on the concept of silent bullying, because this concept was the least understood by retreat participants. We also found that younger fourth graders did not fully grasp other abstract concepts such as kindness, physical, verbal, and non-verbal/silent bullying. Evaluators recommended that YF staff seek guidance regarding developmentally appropriate lessons for this age range.

The year two evaluation also revealed that differences in students' perceptions of their schools, their own behaviors, their classmates' behaviors, and their perceptions of adults in school depending on a student's gender and ethnicity. We found that girls were significantly more positive about the impact of the retreat than boys. In addition, we found that white students were more significantly positive than non-white students in their perceptions of adults in school. We suggested that YF staff consider revisiting some games, activities, and talks to reach out to both boys and girls and to connect with students of all ethnicities. Lastly, cultural shifts occurring in districts make it even more important to adopt stories, songs, and activities that seek to reach students of non-European descent. Youth Frontiers should consider incorporating multicultural features (songs, skits, stories) into retreats, which may help create a deeper connection with these students.

We suggested that Youth Frontiers Retreat directors and staff may want to pay more attention to school site differences prior to the retreats. Teachers who participated in focus groups expressed a desire for more tailored retreats that are adapted to specific school issues. Besides paying attention to developmental and demographic differences, YF staff may also want to focus on enhancing the retreat experience for students. Several schools have expressed interest in a number of enhancements to Youth Frontiers Retreats including partial retreats, return visits, learning/teaching appropriate songs, book, art, and other curricular resources to supplement their teaching. Youth Frontiers might consider "bundling" a package of services together.

¹ Kenny, W.R., & Grotelueschen, A.D. (1980). *Making the case for case study*. Occasional Paper, Office for the Study of Continuing Professional Education. Urbana-Champaign: College of Education, University of Illinois, 1980, p.5. Cited in Merriam, Sharan. (1991). *Case study research in education*. San Francisco: 1991-03-25., pp. 29-33.

EVALUATION ACTIVITIES, YEAR 3

For the 2010-2011 evaluation, we designed and carried out three evaluation activities to help us better understand the interactions between YF Retreats and changes in student perceptions and behaviors. For 2011, we collected data from student participants by surveying retreat participants from 19 different schools across Minnesota and through a smaller number of students using a focus group approach. We also conducted phone and face-to-face interviews with administrative leaders from the six school sites where the focus groups were convened. Table 1 summarizes all 2011 evaluation activities.

Table 1. Summary of 2011 Evaluation Activities

Activity	Description	Measurable effects
STUDENT SURVEYS	Pre-Retreat Courage and Respect Surveys: 31-item scaled survey given to students at least one week prior to the retreat; Students were asked their level of agreement on each statement; We also asked for demographic data	Students' perceptions of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Connection to peers ▪ Presence of caring adults at school ▪ Bullying and peer pressure at school ▪ Impact of retreat on self, peers, school ▪ Behavioral change as a result of YF participation ▪ School belonging ▪ Prior YF Retreat experience ▪ Gender and ethnicity data
	Post-Retreat Courage and Respect Surveys: 31-item scaled survey given to students between 30 and 45 days post retreat; Students were asked their level of agreement on each statement; We also asked for demographic data	Students' perceptions of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Connection to peers ▪ Presence of caring adults at school ▪ Bullying and peer pressure at school ▪ Impact of retreat on self, peers, school ▪ Behavioral change as a result of YF participation ▪ School belonging ▪ Prior YF Retreat experience ▪ Gender and ethnicity data
STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS	Student focus group data. Semi-formal, structured group discussions with retreat participants convened sometime after the retreat.	Collect perception data from students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the overall impact of the Courage/ Respect Retreat? ▪ What did students learn about themselves and their peers? ▪ What was the most meaningful part of the retreat?
ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEWS	Semi-structured interviews with Principals/Assistant Principals lasting between 30-45 minutes. Conducted sometime after the YF Retreat. Five interviews conducted by phone, one conducted in person.	Administrators' perceptions and attitudes of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ YF programming ▪ How YF Retreats related to overall mission ▪ Use of other curricula for character development or social-emotional learning ▪ perceptions regarding school climate, bullying, and peer-pressure

Student Survey

Purpose

The purpose of the pre- and post-retreat surveys was to determine the extent to which student perceptions changed from before to after a Youth Frontiers Retreat. By comparing pre-retreat responses to post-retreat responses, we could assess the extent to which students' perceptions of their peers, their own behaviors, adults in school, and levels of bullying and peer pressure changed after experiencing a Youth Frontiers Retreat. The overall purpose of gathering this data was to assess the impact Youth Frontiers Retreats had on students and on school climate.

Methods

The pre-retreat survey was administered to students in their classrooms by their teachers one to two weeks before attending a Youth Frontiers Courage or Respect Retreat. We created two separate, yet nearly identical surveys, for both the Courage and the Respect Retreats [See Appendix A for a copy of the surveys]. The 31-item surveys were designed to collect information in the following areas:

1. Students' attitudes towards their school and classmate relationships
2. Students' self-assessment of their own behavior
3. Students' perceptions of their classmates' behavior
4. Students' perceptions of peer pressure and bullying
5. Students' perceptions of adults in their school

For each of the individual items belonging in the above categories, students were asked their level of agreement using a 4-point Likert-type scale (1=Strongly disagree to 4=Strongly agree). In addition to asking students their perceptions of the above, we also asked students on the pre-retreat survey whether or not they had participated in previous Youth Frontiers Retreats and whether they had served as a peer leader on any previous retreats. Students could answer 'Yes,' or 'No,' to that question.

The post-retreat survey was administered to students in their classrooms approximately 30-45 days following the retreat. The post-retreat survey was virtually identical to the pre-retreat survey, but with one additional item. On the post-surveys we asked participants whether they followed through on their retreat assignments (that is, their Act of Courage or their Commitment to Respect). Students could answer 'Yes,' 'No,' 'Partially,' or 'I don't know.'

Surveys were analyzed separately by retreat-type. We looked at frequencies for the pre- and post-Courage and Respect Retreat surveys. In the following Tables 2 through 6 of Courage and Table 11 through 15 of Respect, we include the percentages of students responding 'Strongly disagree,' 'Disagree,' 'Agree,' and 'Strongly agree' on each item both pre- and post-retreat on the surveys. In addition, we include the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) for each item pre and post. The mean was calculated using a 4-point scale with 1=Strongly disagree and 4=Strongly agree. Thus, the higher the mean is, the stronger the level of student agreement is with the statement on the survey. The standard deviation is the sampling distribution of the mean.

To assess changes pre-retreat to post-retreat, we conducted individual samples *t* tests to test for significant differences. In other words, we ran a *t* test on each of the 30 pairs of means. Significance levels were statistically significant if the *p* values were less than .05. In Tables 2 through 6 and 11 through 15, we indicate whether or not the pre-post changes in the means were significant by stating

yes or **no** in the columns marked ‘Statistically Significant.’ Finally, we marked whether or not the post-retreat means were higher or lower than the pre-retreat means using an arrow pointing either up (higher) or down (lower).

Finally, we used a statistical technique called factor analysis; whereby we created new variables based on underlying themes in the data. In essence, we combined questions on the surveys which were related to one another statistically. Four overall themes emerged from the data and four new variables were created: 1) Student attitudes of school and classmate relationships; 2) Student self-assessment of their own behavior; (3) Student perceptions of their classmates’ behavior; and, 4) Student perceptions of adults in school. Next, we tested for significant differences in the means of each of the four newly constructed variables by gender, ethnicity (white vs. non-white students) and whether or not students participated in a prior Youth Frontiers Retreat.

Findings

In this section, we present the findings of the survey analysis. First, we present the findings from the Courage Retreat and then the Respect Retreat. Each sub section begins with a question or questions we attempted to answer, followed by the key findings of our analysis.

(Pre Retreat N=1725; Post Retreat N=1563)

Do youth feel more connected to peers, teachers, and schools as a result of YF participation?

Did students’ perceptions of their school change after the retreat?

In Table 2 below, students’ attitudes towards school did not change significantly from before the Courage Retreat to around 30 days after the retreat. The majority of students, both pre- and post-retreat agreed that they felt a part of the school, have respect for themselves personally, fit in with their class, and felt close to their peers. The biggest change pre- to post-retreat occurred with the item, “I enjoy school.” We found a statistically significant decrease pre- to post-retreat in students reporting that they enjoy school.

TABLE 2: Students Attitudes of School and Classmate Relationships (Courage)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	M	SD	Statistically Significant
2.1. I feel a part of my school.	Pre	1.9%	6.9%	61.0%	30.2%	3.20	.64	No
	Post	1.6%	7.6%	58.5%	32.3%	3.21	.65	
2.2. I have respect for myself.	Pre	0.9%	2.0%	39.5%	57.6%	3.54	.59	No
	Post	0.8%	3.0%	40.3%	55.9%	3.51	.60	
2.3. I feel close to my peers.	Pre	2.2%	10.4%	55.3%	32.1%	3.17	.69	No
	Post	2.7%	13.3%	52.6%	31.4%	3.13	.74	
2.4. I feel like I fit in with my class.	Pre	4.1%	13.0%	47.7%	35.2%	3.14	.79	No
	Post	5.1%	12.0%	51.9%	31.0%	3.09	.79	
2.5. Students here respect what I have to say.	Pre	6.4%	21.5%	56.9%	15.2%	2.81	.77	No
	Post	6.8%	20.3%	57.0%	15.9%	2.82	.78	
2.6. Students at school care about me.	Pre	4.3%	15.1%	59.4%	21.2%	2.97	.73	No
	Post	5.0%	15.4%	58.6%	21.0%	2.96	.75	
2.7. I enjoy school.	Pre	9.0%	15.7%	47.2%	28.1%	2.94	.89	Yes ↓
	Post	9.9%	18.1%	46.5%	25.6%	2.88	.90	

Did students’ perceptions of themselves change after the retreat?

In Table 3 below, we found three statistically significant decreases in the mean on items having to do with students’ perceptions of their own behavior pre- to post-retreat. More specifically, we found that significantly fewer students agreed post-retreat that they treat teachers with respect even if they disagree with them, that they help other kids who are having problems, and that they fix mistakes they make. Most students agreed pre- and post-retreat that they stand up for what they believe is right, even if others disagree with them, that they show respect for others who may not share their view, and that they are respectful to all students, not just their friends. Approximately 75-77% of students reported that they have stood up for someone who was being bullied.

TABLE 3: Student Self-Assessment of Their Own Behavior (Courage)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	M	SD	Statistically Significant
3.1. I stand up for what I believe is right, even if others disagree with me.	Pre	1.9%	10.1%	53.8%	34.3%	3.20	.69	No
	Post	2.0%	9.7%	55.5%	32.8%	3.19	.68	
3.2. I show respect for others who may not share my view.	Pre	1.6%	7.9%	63.9%	26.6%	3.16	.62	No
	Post	1.7%	8.7%	61.6%	28.0%	3.16	.64	
3.3. I am respectful to all students in this school, not just my friends.	Pre	2.0%	10.9%	52.7%	34.4%	3.19	.70	No
	Post	1.6%	11.3%	56.6%	30.5%	3.16	.68	
3.4. I have stood –up for someone who was being bullied.	Pre	3.2%	20.0%	49.3%	27.5%	3.01	.78	No
	Post	3.2%	21.3%	51.3%	24.1%	2.96	.76	
3.5. I treat teachers with respect, even if I disagree with them.	Pre	0.5%	4.8%	50.6%	44.1%	3.38	.60	Yes ↓
	Post	1.3%	6.5%	49.5%	42.7%	3.34	.66	
3.6. I help other kids who are having a problem.	Pre	1.8%	12.5%	63.5%	22.3%	3.06	.64	Yes ↓
	Post	2.4%	14.8%	63.0%	19.8%	3.00	.67	
3.7. I fix mistakes I made.	Pre	1.0%	6.1%	58.6%	34.3%	3.26	.61	Yes ↓
	Post	1.6%	8.4%	61.4%	28.6%	3.17	.64	
3.8. I hang out with students who are different than I am.	Pre	2.5%	9.7%	54.0%	33.8%	3.19	.71	No
	Post	2.6%	9.6%	55.7%	32.1%	3.17	.70	

Note: In the survey we used a Likert-type scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree; Percentages are reported along with M=Mean and SD=Standard Deviation. Items are statistically significant if p < .05.

Did students’ perceptions of their peers change after the retreat?

We found a statistically significant decrease pre- to post-retreat on one of the five items in Table 3: “my peers follow school rules and expect me to follow them” [See Table 4 below]. About 80% of students agreed with this item pre-retreat and 75% post-retreat. Although not statistically significant, we found a very slight increase in the mean pre- to post-retreat on the item, “students at my school help new kids feel welcome.” In addition, we found very slight decreases in students agreeing pre- to post-retreat that students treat classmates with respect and show respect for others who work hard and do well.

TABLE 4: Student Perceptions of their Classmates Behavior (Courage)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	M	SD	Statistically Significant
4.1. Students at this school treat classmates with respect.	Pre	4.8%	21.3%	58.2%	15.7%	2.85	.74	No
	Post	5.4%	21.7%	58.6%	14.3%	2.82	.74	
4.2. Students in this school show respect for others who work hard and do well.	Pre	3.9%	19.0%	57.0%	20.0%	2.93	.74	No
	Post	5.1%	19.4%	56.4%	19.2%	2.90	.76	
4.3. Students at this school mostly resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.	Pre	8.8%	31.7%	47.1%	12.5%	2.63	.81	No
	Post	10.9%	28.9%	46.5%	13.7%	2.63	.85	
4.4. My peers follow school rules and expect me to follow them.	Pre	3.2%	16.8%	57.0%	23.0%	3.00	.73	Yes ↓
	Post	4.8%	20.3%	55.9%	19.0%	2.89	.76	
4.5. Students at my school help new kids feel welcome.	Pre	3.2%	11.8%	56.0%	28.9%	3.11	.73	No
	Post	2.8%	11.0%	55.8%	30.4%	3.14	.71	

Note: In the survey we used a Likert-type scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree; Percentages are reported along with M=Mean and SD=Standard Deviation. Items are statistically significant if $p < .05$.

Did students' perceptions of bullying and peer pressure change after the retreat?

Overall, we found two statistically significant changes pre- to post-retreat on items about peer pressure listed in Table 5 below. For example, statistically fewer students agreed that their peers stand up to negative peer pressure post-retreat. In addition, significantly higher percentages of students reported that their peers have encouraged them to call people names and be cruel to others. Although not statistically significant, slightly fewer students agreed post-retreat that bullying was a problem at their school.

TABLE 5: Student Perceptions of Bullying and Peer Pressure (Courage)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	M	SD	Statistically Significant
5.1. I stand up to negative peer pressure.	Pre	3.4%	11.9%	53.0%	31.7%	3.13	.75	No
	Post	3.6%	13.0%	54.4%	29.0%	3.09	.75	
5.2. My peers stand up to negative peer pressure.	Pre	4.3%	19.2%	57.3%	19.2%	2.91	.74	Yes ↓
	Post	5.6%	23.6%	55.2%	15.6%	2.81	.76	
5.3. My peers have encouraged me to call people names and be cruel to others.	Pre	53.1%	33.8%	10.3%	2.8%	1.63	.78	Yes ↑
	Post	46.0%	34.3%	14.7%	5.0%	1.79	.87	
5.4. Students in this school who are not part of popular groups get hassled or excluded.	Pre	13.0%	41.4%	32.0%	13.6%	2.46	.88	No
	Post	13.2%	39.4%	35.6%	11.7%	2.46	.87	
5.5. Bullying is a problem at my school.	Pre	20.3%	46.5%	23.4%	9.8%	2.23	.88	No
	Post	21.7%	43.4%	26.2%	8.7%	2.22	.88	

Note: In the survey we used a Likert-type scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree; Percentages are reported along with M=Mean and SD=Standard Deviation. Items are statistically significant if $p < .05$.

Did students’ perceptions of adults in their school change after the retreat?

Overall, we found two statistically significant changes pre- to post-retreat on students’ perceptions of adults in their school. Statistically fewer students post-retreat than before the retreat reported that they think adults at their school care about all students, not just a few and that their principal models respectful behavior. The majority of students agreed that teachers care about them as a person and value what they have to say in class, although we found no statistically significant changes pre- to post-retreat.

TABLE 6: Student Perceptions of Adults (Courage)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	M	SD	Statistically Significant
6.1. Adults at my school care about all students, not just a few.	Pre	3.8%	10.8%	43.6%	41.8%	3.24	.79	Yes ↓
	Post	5.3%	11.4%	46.9%	36.3%	3.14	.82	
6.2. My teachers care about me as a person.	Pre	2.5%	7.5%	54.9%	35.1%	3.23	.69	No
	Post	3.4%	8.2%	54.1%	34.2%	3.19	.73	
6.3. Teachers value what I have to say in class.	Pre	2.5%	9.4%	58.2%	29.9%	3.16	.69	No
	Post	3.8%	8.2%	56.6%	31.5%	3.16	.72	
6.4. Teachers model respectful behavior.	Pre	1.7%	5.5%	51.3%	41.5%	3.33	.66	No
	Post	2.5%	6.3%	51.3%	39.9%	3.29	.69	
6.5. My principal models respectful behavior.	Pre	2.0%	2.4%	40.5%	55.1%	3.49	.65	Yes ↓
	Post	3.6%	6.8%	46.7%	42.9%	3.29	.75	

Note: In the survey we used a Likert-type scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree; Percentages are reported along with M=Mean and SD=Standard Deviation. Items are statistically significant if $p < .05$.

In Tables 7 and 8 below, we present the frequencies for the demographic variables on the survey including the percent of students who participated in a previous Youth Frontiers Retreat and percentage that followed through on their Act of Courage. In addition, Tables 9 and 10 show the racial and gender makeup of the students who took the Courage Retreat survey.

TABLE 7: Participation in Previous Youth Frontiers Retreats (Pre only)

YF Kindness Retreat	19.2%
Peer Leader	2.8%

TABLE 8: Followed Through on Act of Courage (Post only)

Yes	56.3%
No	2.7%
Partially	29.0%
I don’t know	12.0%

TABLE 9: Race/Ethnicity (Pre)

African	2.1%
Black or African American	9.7%
American Indian	4.0%
Asian or Asian American	8.3%
Hispanic or Latino	10.6%
White	68.9%
Other	8.3%

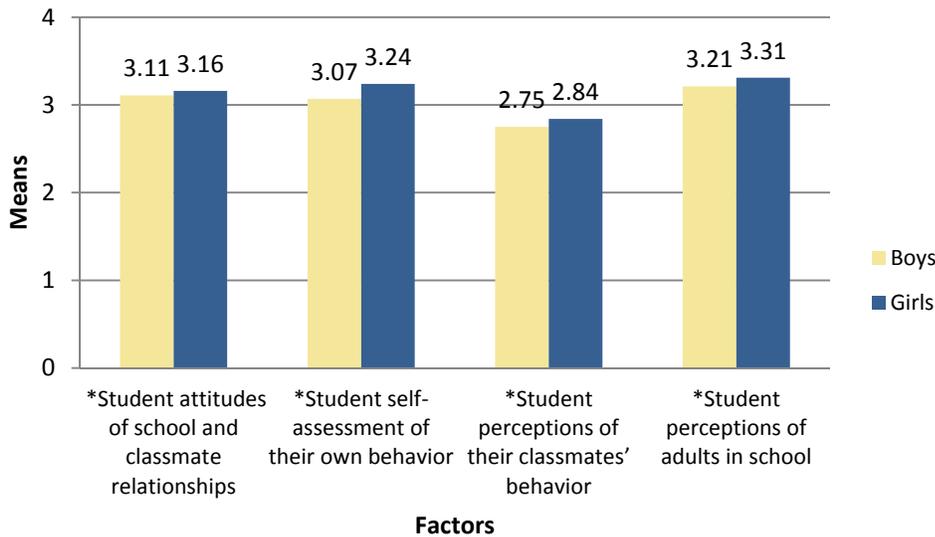
TABLE 10: Gender (Pre)

Male	52.2%
Female	47.8%

Responses on Survey Items by Demographics

We found statistically significant differences by gender on all four factor variables: (1) student attitudes of school and classroom relationships, (2) student self-assessment of their own behavior, (3) student perceptions of their classmates’ behavior, and (4) student perceptions of adults. In all instances, girls were more positive than boys.

FIGURE 1: Mean Differences by Gender (Courage)

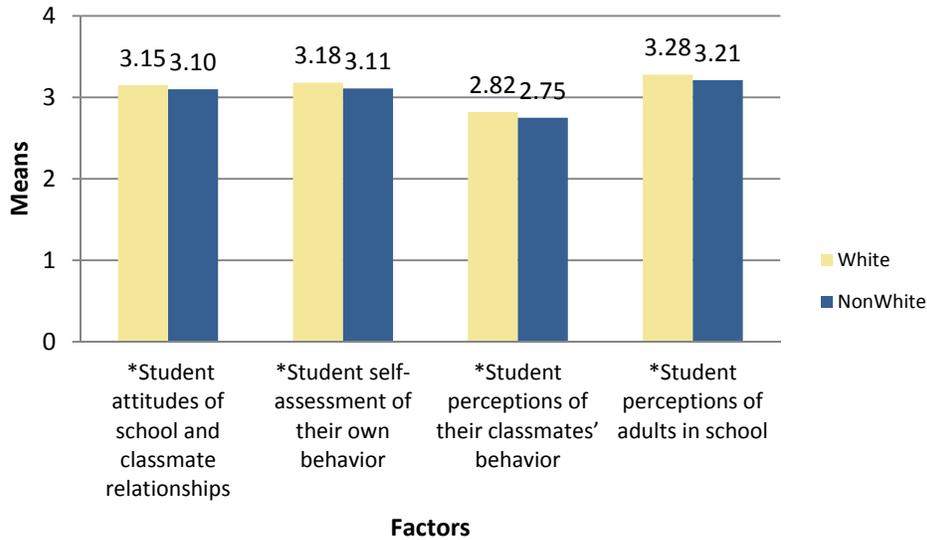


* The comparison shown represents two means significantly different from each other at $p < .05$; Note: In the survey we used a Likert-type scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree

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We found statistically significant differences by ethnicity as defined by white versus non white students on all four factor variables: (1) student attitudes of school and classroom relationships, (2) student self-assessment of their own behavior, (3) student perceptions of their classmates' behavior, and (4) student perceptions of adults. In all instances, white students were more positive than non-white students.

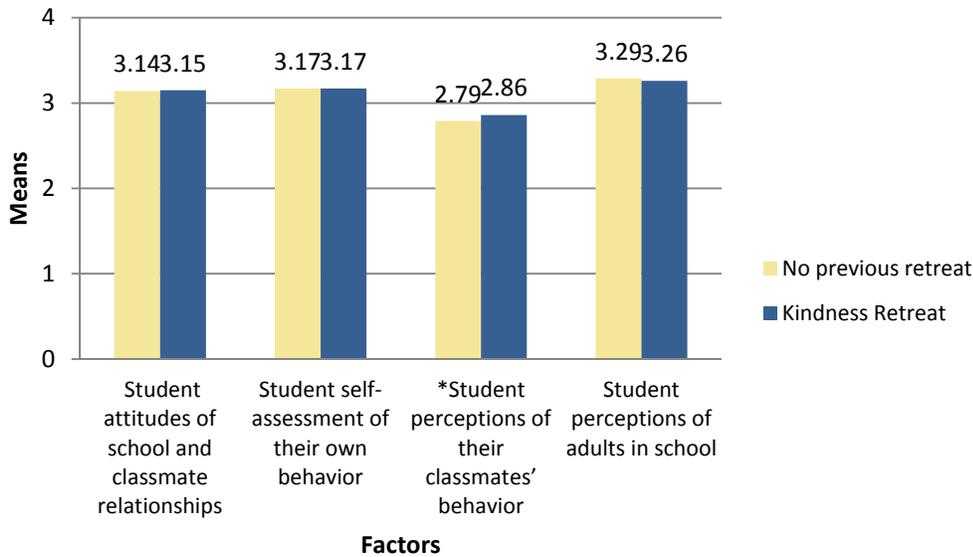
FIGURE 2: Mean Differences by Ethnicity (Courage)



* The comparison shown represents two means significantly different from each other at $p < .05$; Note: In the survey we used a Likert-type scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree

Previous retreat experience matters in only one of the four areas: student perceptions of their classmates' behavior. In this instance, students who have attended a previous Youth Frontiers Kindness Retreat were statistically more positive about their classmates' behavior than their classmates who had no previous Youth Frontiers Retreat experience. We found no statistically significant difference in students with previous YF Retreat experiences and those without previous retreat experience on students' attitudes of school and classmate relationships, students' assessment of their own behavior, or students' perception of adults in their school.

FIGURE 3: Mean Differences by Previous Youth Frontier Retreat (Courage)



* The comparison shown represents two means significantly different from each other at $p < .05$; Note: In the survey we used a Likert-type scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree

Summary of Courage Retreat Pre- Post-Survey Findings

Overall, we found statistically significant changes pre- to post-Courage Retreat in all areas of the survey. Although the majority of students who took the Courage Retreat survey agreed that they fit in with their class, felt part of their school and felt close to their peers, there was a significant drop pre- to post-retreat in students reporting that they enjoy school. One explanation for this significant decrease may be that the timing of the 30 day post-survey corresponded with other school level factors which may have impacted students' feelings about enjoying school (i.e., test taking, school fatigue).

We found mixed results pre- to post-Courage Retreat in students' perceptions of themselves and their own behavior. For instance we found a statistically significant decrease post-retreat in students reporting that they treat teachers with respect even when they disagree with them, that they help other students who are having problems, and that they fix mistakes they have made. One hypothesis for these significant declines may be that post retreat students have greater awareness of what it means to be respectful and courageous and therefore assess their own behaviors more accurately.

There was also a statistically significant drop pre- to post-retreat in students reporting that their classmates' follow school rules and expect them to follow school rules. Furthermore, we found very slight, but not statistically significant, decreases in students agreeing pre- to post-retreat that students

treat classmates with respect and show respect for others who work hard and do well. On the other hand, we did find a very small increase in the mean pre- to post-retreat on the item, “students at my school help new kids feel welcome.”

Regarding demographic differences in the way students answered questions on the Courage Retreat surveys; we found statistically significant gender differences in how boys and girls view relationships with their classmates or school, assess their own or other classmates’ behaviors, and perceive adults in their schools. In all instances, girls were significantly more positive than boys. In addition, we found statistically significant differences in how white students and students of color view relationships with their classmates or school, assess their own or other classmates’ behaviors, and perceive adults in their schools. In all these cases as well, white students were significantly more positive than students of color.

Previous retreat experience matters only in one of the four areas: students’ perceptions of their classmates’ behavior. In this instance, students who have attended a previous Youth Frontiers Kindness Retreat were statistically more positive about their classmates’ behavior than their classmates were with no previous Youth Frontiers Retreat experience. We found no statistically significant differences in students with previous Youth Frontiers Retreat experiences and those without on students’ attitudes of school and classmate relationships, students’ assessment of their own behavior, or students’ perception of adults in their school.

Student Respect Retreat Survey Results

(Pre Retreat N=1842; Post Retreat N=1501)

Do youth feel more connected to peers, teachers, and schools as a result of YF participation?

Did students’ perceptions of their school change after the retreat?

Overall, students’ attitudes towards their school did not change significantly from before the Respect Retreat to around 30 days after the retreat [See Table 11 below]. The majority of students, both pre- and post-retreat agreed that they felt a part of the school, fit in with their class, felt close to their peers and enjoyed school. The biggest change pre- to post-retreat occurred with the item, “I have respect for myself.” We found a statistically significant decrease pre- to post-retreat in students reporting that they respect themselves. Although there was a significant decrease in the mean on this item, only a small percentage of students (4.5-6.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

TABLE 11: Students Attitudes of School and Classmate Relationships (Respect)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	M	SD	Statistically Significant
11.1. I feel a part of my school.	Pre	2.5%	10.8%	61.5%	25.3%	3.10	.67	No
	Post	2.7%	8.7%	64.0%	24.6%	3.11	.66	
11.2. I have respect for myself.	Pre	.9%	3.6%	45.3%	50.1%	3.45	.61	Yes ↓
	Post	1.9%	4.5%	49.2%	44.3%	3.36	.66	
11.3. I feel close to my peers.	Pre	3.1%	14.0%	58.8%	24.1%	3.04	.71	No
	Post	3.3%	13.7%	59.8%	23.3%	3.03	.71	
11.4. I feel like I fit in with my class.	Pre	3.5%	16.5%	59.3%	20.8%	2.97	.71	No
	Post	3.5%	13.4%	60.9%	22.2%	3.02	.71	
11.5. I enjoy school.	Pre	10.7%	19.3%	51.3%	18.7%	2.78	.87	No
	Post	8.7%	18.6%	53.7%	19.0%	2.83	.84	

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Note: In the survey we used a Likert-type scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree; Percentages are reported along with M=Mean and SD=Standard Deviation. Items are statistically significant if $p < .05$.

Did students' perceptions of themselves change after the retreat?

In Table 12 below, we found no statistically significant changes pre- to post-retreat on items having to do with students' perceptions of themselves or of their own behavior. Although there were no statistically significant changes, slightly larger percentages of students agreed post-retreat that they are respectful to all students in the school, not just their friends, that they help other kids who are having problems, that they show other students respect who may not share their view, and that they hang out with students who are different than they are.

TABLE 12: Student Self-Assessment of Their Own Behavior (Respect)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	M	SD	Statistically Significant
12.1. I stand up for what I believe is right, even if others disagree with me.	Pre	1.1%	7.7%	55.5%	35.7%	3.26	.64	No
	Post	1.5%	7.0%	59.9%	31.6%	3.22	.63	
12.2. I am respectful to all students in this school, not just my friends.	Pre	2.5%	12.7%	53.5%	31.2%	3.13	.72	No
	Post	1.9%	9.6%	59.4%	29.1%	3.16	.66	
12.3. I have stood –up for someone who was being bullied.	Pre	2.9%	22.7%	54.3%	20.1%	2.91	.73	No
	Post	3.0%	21.7%	57.3%	17.9%	2.90	.71	
12.4. I treat teachers with respect, even if I disagree with them.	Pre	1.8%	7.9%	55.9%	33.7%	3.22	.66	No
	Post	1.7%	6.3%	58.0%	34.0%	3.24	.64	
12.5. I help other kids who are having a problem.	Pre	1.5%	15.9%	64.4%	18.2%	2.99	.63	No
	Post	1.6%	1.4%	65.4%	19.6%	3.03	.63	
12.6. I show respect for others who may not share my view.	Pre	1.5%	8.6%	65.7%	24.2%	3.13	.61	No
	Post	1.5%	6.9%	66.0%	25.5%	3.16	.60	
12.7. I fix mistakes I made.	Pre	1.1%	9.7%	65.4%	23.8%	3.12	.60	No
	Post	1.4%	8.6%	65.0%	24.9%	3.13	.61	
12.8. I hang out with students who are different than I am.	Pre	1.7%	14.2%	57.3%	26.8%	3.09	.69	No
	Post	2.9%	9.6%	59.4%	28.0%	3.13	.69	
12.9. I stand up to negative peer pressure.	Pre	2.4%	15.6%	58.7%	23.4%	3.03	.70	No
	Post	2.2%	13.0%	60.1%	24.7%	3.07	.70	

Note: In the survey we used a Likert-type scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree; Percentages are reported along with M=Mean and SD=Standard Deviation. Items are statistically significant if $p < .05$.

Did students’ perceptions of their peers change after the retreat?

We found statistically significant increases pre- to post-retreat on two items in Table 13: “students in this school mostly resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats,” and “students here respect what I have to say.” Although not statistically significant, we did find slight increases in the mean on the rest of the items in this table.

TABLE 13: Student Perceptions of their Classmates Behavior (Respect)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	M	SD	Statistically Significant
13.1. Students at this school treat classmates with respect.	Pre	5.4%	26.8%	57.4%	10.4%	2.73	.72	No
	Post	6.3%	22.1%	60.5%	11.1%	2.76	.73	
13.2. Students in this school show respect for others who work hard and do well.	Pre	4.2%	22.6%	57.1%	16.0%	2.85	.73	No
	Post	4.3%	19.7%	60.0%	16.0%	2.88	.72	
13.3. Students at this school mostly resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.	Pre	12.5%	36.2%	41.2%	10.1%	2.49	.84	Yes ↑
	Post	11.0%	31.8%	46.2%	11.1%	2.57	.83	
13.4. My peers follow school rules and expect me to follow them.	Pre	4.5%	25.3%	58.0%	12.2%	2.78	.71	No
	Post	4.7%	21.3%	62.1%	11.9%	2.81	.70	
13.5. Students at my school help new kids feel welcome.	Pre	3.7%	19.7%	60.8%	15.8%	2.89	.70	No
	Post	4.1%	16.5%	61.8%	17.6%	2.93	.71	
13.6. Students here respect what I have to say.	Pre	4.5%	25.6%	60.5%	9.4%	2.75	.68	Yes ↑
	Post	4.2%	22.2%	61.3%	12.4%	2.82	.69	
13.7. Students at school care about me.	Pre	4.1%	18.8%	64.6%	12.5%	2.86	.68	No
	Post	4.2%	16.5%	66.3%	13.0%	2.88	.67	
13.8. My peers stand up to negative peer pressure.	Pre	4.3%	28.5%	57.7%	9.5%	2.72	.69	No
	Post	4.8%	27.5%	56.7%	11.0%	2.74	.71	

Note: In the survey we used a Likert-type scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree; Percentages are reported along with M=Mean and SD=Standard Deviation. Items are statistically significant if $p < .05$.

Did students’ perceptions of bullying and peer pressure change after the retreat?

Overall, we found no statistically significant changes pre- to post-retreat on items in Table 14 about bullying and peer pressure. We did find that slightly higher percentages of students agreed or strongly agreed that their peers encouraged them to call people names and be cruel to others post-retreat (19% pre and 22% post). In addition, slightly more students agreed or strongly agreed post-retreat that bullying was a problem in their school (33% pre and 34% post). On the other hand, slightly fewer students agreed post-retreat that students in their school who are not part of popular groups get hassled or excluded.

TABLE 14: Student Perceptions of Bullying and Peer Pressure (Respect)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	M	SD	Statistically Significant
14.1. My peers have encouraged me to call people names and be cruel to others.	Pre	39.2%	41.4%	15.7%	3.7%	1.84	.82	No
	Post	36.6%	41.5%	18.7%	3.2%	1.88	.82	
14.2. Students in this school who are not part of popular groups get hassled or excluded.	Pre	9.6%	42.5%	39.2%	8.7%	2.47	.79	No
	Post	10.8%	43.1%	37.7%	8.4%	2.44	.79	
14.3. Bullying is a problem at my school.	Pre	18.0%	49.0%	24.7%	8.3%	2.23	.84	No
	Post	16.2%	49.7%	25.4%	8.7%	2.27	.83	

Note: In the survey we used a Likert-type scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree; Percentages are reported along with M=Mean and SD=Standard Deviation. Items are statistically significant if $p < .05$.

Did students’ perceptions of adults in their school change after the retreat?

Overall, we found no statistically significant changes pre- to post-retreat on students’ perceptions of adults in their school shown in Table 15 below. The majority of students agreed that teachers care about them as a person and value what they have to say in class. Slightly more students post-retreat than pre-reported that they think adults at their school care about all students, not just a few. Although the majority of students agreed, slightly fewer students reported that teachers or principals model respectful behavior 30 days post-retreat.

TABLE 15: Student Perceptions of Adults in School (Respect)

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	M	SD	Statistically Significant
15.1. Adults at my school care about all students, not just a few.	Pre	4.6%	15.7%	56.0%	23.7%	2.99	.76	No
	Post	4.8%	14.3%	55.3%	25.5%	3.02	.77	
15.2. My teachers care about me as a person.	Pre	2.8%	12.4%	64.5%	20.2%	3.02	.66	No
	Post	3.8%	10.2%	62.0%	24.0%	3.06	.70	
15.3. Teachers value what I have to say in class.	Pre	2.8%	12.6%	64.5%	20.0%	3.02	.66	No
	Post	3.2%	10.0%	64.4%	22.3%	3.06	.67	
15.4. Teachers model respectful behavior.	Pre	2.5%	8.2%	63.5%	25.8%	3.13	.65	No
	Post	3.1%	8.1%	63.2%	25.6%	3.11	.67	
15.5. My principal models respectful behavior.	Pre	3.6%	5.3%	58.1%	33.0%	3.20	.70	No
	Post	4.8%	6.2%	56.0%	33.0%	3.17	.75	

Note: In the survey we used a Likert-type scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree; Percentages are reported along with M=Mean and SD=Standard Deviation. Items are statistically significant if $p < .05$.

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In Tables 16 and 17 below, we present the frequencies for the demographic variable on the survey including the percent of students who participated in a previous Youth Frontiers Retreat and percentage that followed through on their Commitment to Respect. In addition, Tables 18 and 19 show the racial and gender makeup of the students who took the Respect Retreat survey.

TABLE 16: Participation in Previous Youth Frontiers Retreats (Respect)

YF Kindness Retreat	10.7%
YF Courage Retreat	27.0%
Peer Leader	2.2%

TABLE 17: Followed Through on Commitment to Respect (Post only)

Yes	62.0%
No	2.7%
Partially	24.8%
I don't know	10.5%

TABLE 18: Race/Ethnicity – 2010-2011 (Respect)

African	4.8%
Black or African American	11.8%
American Indian	4.8%
Asian or Asian American	13.3%
Hispanic or Latino	8.6%
White	64.4%
Other	8.8%

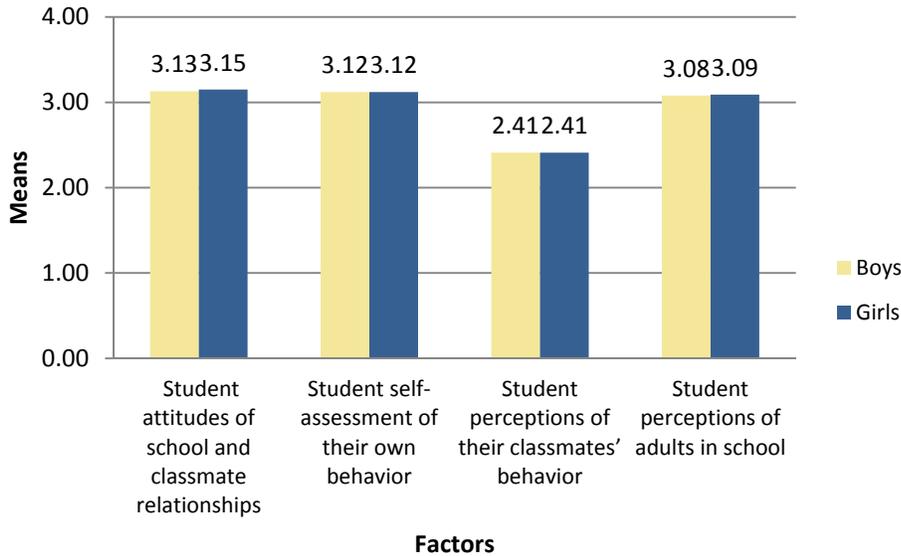
TABLE 19: Gender – 2010-2011 (Respect)

Male	49.5%
Female	50.5%

Results of Survey Items by Demographics

We found no statistically significant gender differences in Respect Retreat survey items. More specifically, we found no statistically significant differences by gender on any of the variables: 1) student attitudes of school and classroom relationships; 2) student self-assessment of their own behavior; 3) student perceptions of their classmates' behavior; and, 4) student perceptions of adults.

FIGURE 4. Mean Differences by Gender (Respect)

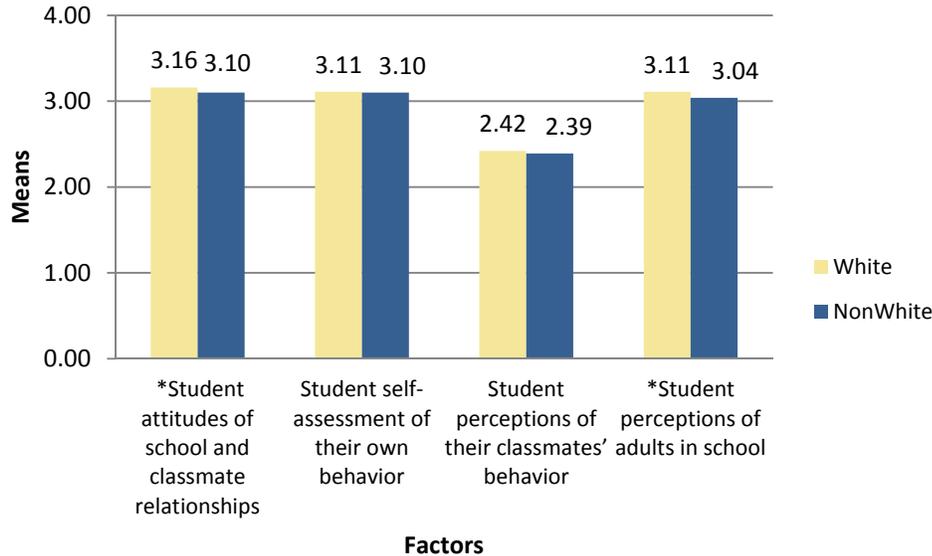


* The comparison shown represents two means significantly different from each other at $p < .05$; Note: In the survey we used a Likert-type scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree

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We found statistically significant differences by ethnicity (defined as white versus non-white students) on two of the four factor variables: student attitudes of school and classroom relationships and student perceptions of adults in school. In both instances, white students were more positive than non-white students. We found no statistically significant differences by ethnicity in student self-assessment of their own behavior or student perceptions of their classmates' behavior.

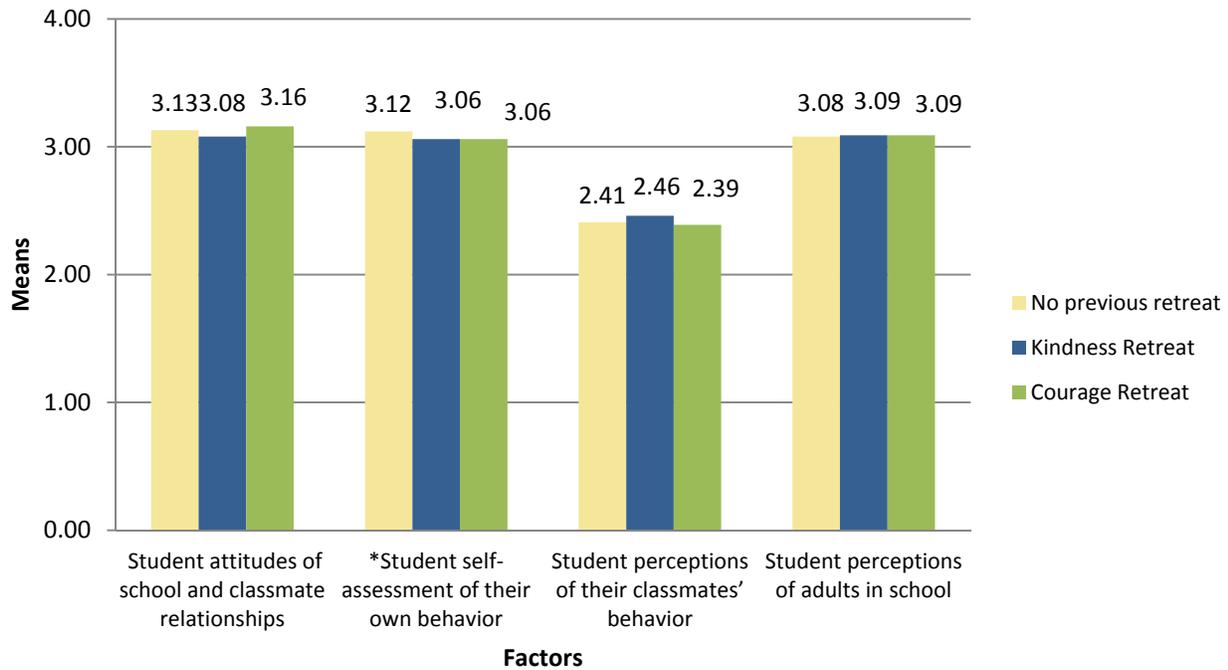
FIGURE 5. Mean Differences by Race/Ethnicity (Respect)



* The comparison shown represents two means significantly different from each other at $p < .05$; Note: In the survey we used a Likert-type scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree

Previous Youth Frontiers Retreat experience matters only in one of the four areas: student self-assessment of their own behavior. In this instance, students who have not attended any previous Youth Frontiers Retreats were statistically significantly more positive about their own behavior than students who had attended a Courage or Kindness Retreat. We found no statistically significant difference in students with previous Youth Frontiers Retreat experiences and those without on students' attitudes of school and classmate relationships, students' perceptions of their classmates' behavior, or students' perception of adults in their school.

FIGURE 6. Mean Differences By Previous Retreat (Respect)



* The comparison shown represents two means significantly different from each other at $p < .05$; Note: In the survey we used a Likert-type scale with 1=Strongly Disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Agree; 4=Strongly Agree

Summary of Respect Retreat Pre- Post-Survey Findings

We found no statistically significant changes pre- to post-Respect Retreat in the areas of student attitudes towards school, student perceptions of their own behavior, and students' perceptions of adults in their school. We did find one statistically significant change pre- to post-Respect Retreat in students' perceptions of themselves. We found a statistically significant decrease pre- to post-retreat in students reporting that they respect themselves. One explanation could be that once students learn more about what it means to have self-respect, they realize post-retreat that they have more work to do in this area.

The largest change we found pre- to post-Respect Retreat was in the area of students' perceptions of their peers' behavior. More specifically we found a statistically significant increase in the mean for the items: "students in this school mostly resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats," and "students here respect what I have to say." In other words, significantly more students post-Respect Retreat agreed that students are more likely to resolve conflicts without fighting, insulting or threatening other students and that students overall respect what other students say. These findings indicate a change pre- to post-retreat in the level of respect students have for their classmates' opinions and a change in how conflicts are resolved in these schools.

Students' perceptions of bullying and peer pressure, however, did not change significantly pre- to post-Respect Retreat. Although not statistically significant, we did find slightly higher percentages of students

reporting post-retreat that their peers pressure them to call people names or be cruel to others and slightly more reported that bullying was a problem at their schools.

Regarding demographic differences in the way students answered questions on the surveys, we found no statistically significant gender differences in the Respect Retreat survey items. This indicates that there were no differences in how boys and girls view relationships with their classmates or school, assess their own or other classmates' behaviors, or perceive adults in their schools. We did find statistically significant differences between white students and student of color in student attitudes of school and classmate relationships and student perceptions of adults in school. In both instances, white students were more positive than students of color. We found no statistically significant differences by ethnicity in student self-assessment of their own behavior or student perceptions of their classmates' behavior.

Previous retreat experience mattered in only one of the four areas: student self-assessment of their own behavior. In this instance, students who have not attended any previous retreats were statistically significantly more positive about their own behavior than students who had attended a Courage or Kindness Retreat. One explanation for this could be that students who have attended previous Youth Frontiers Retreats are more aware of what it takes to be kind and practice every day courage and respect and therefore judge their behaviors against that standard. On the other hand, students who have had no previous Youth Frontiers Retreat do not have that same foundation or criteria for assessing their own behaviors. We found no statistically significant difference in students with previous Youth Frontiers Retreat experiences and those without on students' attitudes of school and classmate relationships, students' perceptions of their classmates' behavior, or students' perception of adults in their school.

Student Focus Groups

Purpose

The purpose of convening student focus groups was to collect data about the Courage and Respect Retreats from the students' perspectives. Collecting student views provided additional information about topics such as what students learned about themselves and their peers at the retreat and the overall impact of the retreat.

Methods

CAREI evaluators conducted focus groups at six schools from December through April. Three focus groups were conducted with 25 students who attended a Courage Retreat and three were conducted with 23 students who attended a Respect Retreat during this academic year. Each focus group lasted about 30 minutes. During the focus groups, students were asked to share their opinions on a number of topics including: their preparation for the retreat, the purpose of the retreat, their definition of everyday courage or respect, the level of bullying and peer pressure at their school, what they learned about themselves and their peers, the most meaningful part of the retreat, and the impact of the retreat [see Focus Group protocol, Appendix A]. A thematic analysis was completed for each focus group and themes were aggregated across the respective Courage Retreat and Respect Retreat focus groups.

Findings

Student preparation for the Courage Retreat

Student preparation for the Courage Retreat varied from school to school. At one school all focus group participants (9) had previously attended a Kindness Retreat. For example, the students reported that the teachers at this school prepared them for the retreat by reminding them about the Kindness Retreat. Teachers told students that the topic for this retreat was, Courage. Students mentioned that they had also learned from eighth graders who had previously attended the Courage Retreat that the retreat was fun.

None of the students (7) at the second school had previously attended a Youth Frontiers Retreat. Students at this school indicated that students who had previously attended a Courage Retreat shared information about the retreat. In addition, some of the focus group participants indicated that a teacher had shown them a video about the Kindness Retreat from the Youth Frontiers website.

At the third school, two of nine focus group participants had attended a Kindness Retreat. Students who had previously attended a Courage Retreat shared that the retreat was fun, that there would be games, and that it would be emotional and students might cry. This description left one focus group participant nervous about why students would cry. According to the students in the focus group, teachers at this school did not provide much information about the Courage Retreat. They did tell students that they would enjoy the day and that they would have to, *“witness the experience.”*

What is the purpose of the Courage Retreat?

During the focus groups, the facilitators asked students to write down what they believed to be the main purpose of the Courage Retreat. Student responses ranged from *“standing up for what is right”* to *“creating a closer school community”* [see Student Responses, Appendix B].

Eighteen of the 25 students (72%) reported that the purpose of the Courage Retreat was to teach students to stand up for what is right, which includes being better people, respecting self and others, or learning about courage. For example, one student wrote, *“I think it was about having the courage to stand up for what’s right.”* Another student highlighted learning about courage in their response. This student wrote, *“I think the main purpose of this retreat was to learn what courage was about.”* In addition, responses included stopping bullying and being a nicer person. For example, one student wrote, *“To stop bullying and to give people courage to stand up.”*

A few students (4) indicated that they believed the purpose of the Courage Retreat was to create a closer community. Related to creating a closer community, students identified the importance of learning about the experiences of other students. For instance, one student wrote, *“I think the purpose of the retreat was for us to become closer and to understand each other more and to work on teamwork.”* Another student wrote, *“I think the main purpose of the retreat was to get people to let their feelings out so people will know what they are going through in school or home.”*

Two responses provided different views of the retreat. One respondent provided a more abstract purpose of the retreat, writing, *“To help everyone believe in and achieve a goal.”* A different student stated the purpose of the retreat was to have fun. This student wrote, *“To show kids how fun life can be!!!”*

Definition of everyday courage

During the focus groups students also wrote down their definition of the Youth Frontiers’ concept, *everyday courage*. Students’ definitions of everyday courage included “*standing up for what is right*” and “*being true to oneself*” [Appendix B].

Almost half of the students who responded (12 of 25; 48%), explicitly mentioned standing up for what is right in their definition of everyday courage. For example, one student wrote, “*Standing up for what is right; sticking up for someone.*” Another student wrote, “*Courage – to stand up for what’s right.*”

Six students defined everyday courage as being true to oneself. For example, one student wrote, “*To not be afraid to be who you are.*” One student discussed being true to yourself even in the presence of peer pressure. This student wrote, “*To be yourself and go out there, even with people who you know will put you down.*” Several students (7) combined the idea of standing up for what is right and being true to oneself.

Level of bullying and peer pressure at school

Students rated the level of bullying and peer pressure at their school using a scale from one to five with one indicating the absence of bullying or peer pressure and five indicating a significant problem at the school. In the conversation, students often discussed the types of bullying and peer pressure that occurred at their school.

Table 20 shows that, in general, students perceive low to moderate levels of bullying and peer pressure at their school. In two of the three Courage schools, students believed that peer pressure was a somewhat bigger problem than bullying. And at one school, the focus group participants rated the level of bullying and peer pressure within their class as lower than in the school as a whole.

Table 20. Perception of Bullying and Peer Pressure (Courage Focus Groups)

School	Mean Bullying Score	Mean Peer Pressure Score
School 1	1.75	1.75
School 2	3.29 (1.43)*	3.43 (1.43)*
School 3	2.40	2.27

**Student rating of bullying and peer pressure in their class*

Students generally described verbal bullying as name calling and put-downs. Physical bullying usually referred to things such as bumping into people in the hallway. One student noted that what sometimes starts out as teasing may escalate into what other students consider bullying. Pressure to dress or act a specific way was also described in the focus groups.

What did students learn about themselves and their peers?

CAREI evaluators asked students to describe what they learned about themselves and their peers at the retreat. Most students had a difficult time describing what they had learned about themselves. Some students offered that they realize that they sometimes take things too far and students feel hurt. For example, one student offered, “*I learned about me that like, I guess I can take stuff too far sometimes with people and then they take it in a different way.*” Another student said that they learned they could be courageous. This student stated, “*I learned that I could be like more courageous and stuff.*” This comment seems to indicate a sense of empowerment and the ability to be courageous as a result of the Courage Retreat for this student.

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Participants in all three focus groups identified learning about the experiences and challenges of their peers as particularly helpful. Understanding what other students go through appeared to heighten what students felt they held in common. For example, one student noted that it was helpful to discover that others are going through similar experiences: *"You find out that your friends, people you knew, were going through the same things and you can ask for help or talk about it."* This awareness made it possible for students to be more empathetic and supportive of each other. Students said they realized it is alright to ask for help or talk about problems.

What was the most meaningful part of the retreat?

Across all focus groups, students described the closing activity, *the pebble in the pond*, as the most meaningful part of the retreat. A few students also said the retreat leaders' personal stories were meaningful.

Students said that the courage displayed by their classmates, to stand up, apologize, and/or say what they would like in the future, was the reason the *pebble in the pond* activity was so meaningful. One student stated, *"For me, the pond really showed how courageous people can be and also how kids who have not really respected others can have a change of heart and really help others."* Similarly, another student stated, *"I'd say the pebble in the pond too. It takes a lot of courage to stand up in front of everybody and talk about how you want to start acting differently."*

Some students also identified the stories shared by retreat leaders as especially meaningful. Focus group participants said these personal stories helped students feel more connected to the retreat leaders and also demonstrated to students that it is possible to move through difficult situations. One student described the importance of the vignettes this way, *"When the leaders shared their stories, I could connect with what they said, and how they felt when they were younger."*

What was the impact of the Courage Retreat?

Three of the focus group questions related to the impact of the Courage Retreat:

- 1) *What impact did the retreat have on the behavior of other students in the school?*
- 2) *Did attending the retreat change the way you think or behave in your school in any way? And,*
- 3) *Since the retreat, have you seen any differences in your school, good or bad?*

Students were also asked if they had followed through with their Act of Courage that they wrote down at the end of the retreat and if the retreat purpose had been met.

Overall, most students believed the retreat had a positive impact. Some students noted an increase in kindness and helpfulness in the school. For example, one student stated, *"I've definitely seen a lot more good activity. I've seen lots of examples of helpfulness...and a lot of, 'Hey, nice job'. There's lots of encouragement, kind words, and praise."* Another student described the change this way, *"I just feel like everybody is being a lot nicer to everyone else. They're respecting everybody's differences without arguing or fighting about it."* Students also mentioned a reduction in fighting and bullying in general.

While some students saw a change after the retreat, students also acknowledged that not all students had changed. For instance, one student described seeing a student stand up and talk at the retreat, but hadn't then changed his behavior, saying, *"One person that stands out, cried at the Courage Retreat, but he hasn't really changed."* Another student stated that she had tried to change the style of clothing she wore, but she felt pressure from her friends to not change. One student noted that the change occurred for students who participated in the retreat, but not the rest of the students in the school. *"I think there*

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has been a change in the sixth grade, because we are the ones who went on the retreat. But, change in the rest of the school; not so much. It is the same as it's always been."

When asked by the CAREI evaluators, the majority of students (18) believed they had followed through on their Act of Courage. Some students (5) acknowledged that they had "sort of" or partially followed through with their Act of Courage. Two students said they did not follow through with their Act of Courage. These students said they had forgotten about their Act of Courage.

During the focus group discussion, the facilitators asked students if they thought the purpose of the retreat had been achieved. Overall the students indicated that the retreat had met its purpose. Fifteen students (60%) agreed that the retreat had accomplished its purpose while the remaining 10 students agreed that the retreat had partially accomplished its purpose. One student expressed the challenge of meeting the retreat purpose this way, *"I thought it helps with our grade, because we did it. But the older kids kind of fall back and the younger kids don't get it yet. So it's a mixed [impact]."*

Summary

The Courage Retreat focus groups revealed that the most meaningful part of the retreat was what students learned about themselves and their peers. Almost three-fourths of the students thought the purpose of the retreat was to teach young people to stand up for what was right and to be kinder and more respectful at school. More than half of the students believed the retreats had accomplished that purpose.

Students stated that, because of the retreats, they learned they were not alone and that others had struggled or at times had bad experiences at schools. Students said that the shared experiences of retreat leaders and other students helped them gain perspective that they had not had.

Considered the most meaningful activity of the retreat, *the pebble in the pond*, provided an opportunity for students to show everyday courage by standing up in front of peers to apologize or share a personally meaningful experience. Retreat leaders' personal stories also helped students realize that even older people have experienced bullying behavior and peer pressure.

Students reported that the retreat did result in many students showing more kindness and courage, but this was not universal. Some retreat participants noted that the impact of the retreat was on the students who participated, not the other grades or the whole school in general.

Student preparation for the Respect Retreat

Student preparation for the Respect Retreat varied from school to school. At one school five of six focus group participants had previously attended a Youth Frontiers Retreat. This school's teachers prepared students for the retreat by announcing that students would be attending a retreat, but did not share any additional information.

Two of nine students at the second school had attended a Youth Frontiers Retreat previously. Students at this school indicated that they had heard they were going to cry, but that they had not heard other things about the retreat. Teachers at this school encouraged the students to enjoy the day and be open to possibilities. Referring to the teachers, one student said, *"They said to go with an open mind and heart. Respect people and try to have fun with it."*

At the third school, three of eight focus group participants had attended a Courage Retreat. Students heard a variety of student opinions about the retreat ranging from fun to boring. They also heard that the retreat was very touching and that people cried. According to the students in the focus group, teachers at this school did not provide any specific information to students about the retreat.

What is the purpose of the Respect Retreat?

During the focus groups, students wrote down the main purpose of the Respect Retreat. Student responses clustered into two main categories: 1) learning how to respect oneself and others; and, 2) getting to know their classmates better [see Student Responses, Appendix B].

Seventeen of the 23 students in the respect focus groups (74%) described the purpose of the retreat as learning about respect including respect for oneself and others. For example, one student wrote, *"To help us better understand respect for ourselves and respect for each other; and how important it is."* Another student wrote that the purpose of the retreat was, *"Learning about how to better respect our peers, adults, and ourselves."* Another student described the purpose of the retreat as putting the learning about respect into action. *"What I think it was about was us trying to be respectful and treat others the way you want to be treated."* One participant included resisting bullying. This student wrote that the purpose of the retreat was, *"Learn to be a better person and step up to bullies and problems."*

Five students viewed the purpose of the retreat as getting to know classmates better and remixing groups. One student wrote, *"The purpose of the retreat was to learn about our classmates, learn to listen and trust one another."* Another student described the retreat purpose this way, *"To get to know other freshmen besides your friends."* Similarly, another student described the purpose of the retreat as developing a better understanding of other students. This student wrote, *"I think the purpose of the Respect Retreat was to get our class together and understand each other a little bit better. To teach us that sometimes there is stuff you may not know about a person."*

Definition of respect

During the focus groups, students were asked to write down a definition for respect. Fifteen students (65%) associated respect with concepts such as integrity, tolerance, kindness, and concern for the feelings of others. For example, *"Respect is to help others kind of like integrity. To be kind and give people their space"* and *"I think that respect is showing other people that you care what they think or want. I also think that respect goes along with the word tolerance."* Responses also addressed having empathy or being kind to others despite disagreements and taking the feelings of others into consideration. One student wrote, *"Respect – to listen, to watch, to care for or about someone; if you disagree just humbly agree to disagree; take other's feelings into play."* Seven students (30%) associated the definition of respect with the golden rule. One example of this definition is, *"Treat others how you want to be treated."* One student provided no definition of respect [Appendix B].

Level of bullying and peer pressure at school

Students rated the level of bullying and peer pressure at their school using a scale from one to five with one indicating no problem with bullying or peer pressure and five indicating a large problem at the school. Students also discussed the types of bullying and peer pressure that occur at their school.

In general, regardless of school, students in the focus groups indicated low to moderate levels of bullying and peer pressure at their schools. Students in two of the three schools rated peer pressure as a bigger problem (slightly) than bullying [Table 21].

Table 21. Perception of Bullying and Peer Pressure as a Problem (Respect Focus Groups)

School	Mean Bullying Score	Mean Peer Pressure Score
School 1	2.91*	2.91*
School 2	2.28	2.78
School 3	2.44	2.75

Note: Students used a scale from 1-5 with 1 indicating no problem with bullying or peer pressure and 5 indicating that bullying or peer pressure is a big problem.

*Students provided one average rating for bullying and peer pressure.

Students named and defined the three types of bullying: Verbal, physical, and non-verbal/silent. Examples that the students offered for verbal bullying included: gossiping, name calling, and put downs. Students mentioned shoving, pushing, and fights as examples of physical bullying. Students listed exclusion as an example of non-verbal/silent bullying. One student described teasing that escalated to what might be perceived as bullying. This student stated, *“Messing with people and taking it too far. The other person gets angry I guess.”*

Students in one of the focus groups distinguished between good peer pressure and bad peer pressure. Thus, an example of positive peer pressure included pressure to join a club or participate in a sport. Negative peer pressure included pressure to use drugs or alcohol, or to have sex.

What did students learn about themselves and their peers?

When we asked students what they had learned in the retreat, they generally spoke about what they learned about others rather than address what they learned about themselves. In the focus groups we heard some students acknowledge that they may have been too quick to judge others or to not treat others with respect. One student said, *“I have a lot more respect for some of the people in our grade than I did before the retreat. They really deserve it.”* Another student stated that what they had learned personally was that, *“I haven’t always treated people fairly.”*

Responding to what they learned about other students, focus group participants noted that they learned that everyone is different, and some students have challenges that others are not aware of; so we shouldn’t jump to conclusions about other students. One student noted how powerful it was to hear others share about their own experiences during the closing activity saying, *“When they went up and told their stories, I never knew that about them until they shared it. I respected them more after they shared.”*

What was the most meaningful part of the retreat?

Focus group participants from all three schools described the closing *campfire* as the most meaningful part of the retreat. Two of the focus groups also described the retreat leaders’ personal stories as especially meaningful to them.

When asked to describe what made the *campfire* the most meaningful, students described two specific factors: students being real and honest and learning things about classmates that they did not know.

Many students, in all three of the focus groups, described the *campfire* activity as authentic. Students viewed the activity as serious and emotionally charged and also saw the activity as a chance to be real. Some students used the *campfire* activity to publicly apologize for past actions.

Not all students viewed the *campfire* activity as authentic, however. A few students expressed concern that some of the students acted disingenuously. Students described students who appeared to be getting *“caught up in the moment”* at the time of the retreat, but not changing their relationships or behavior after the retreat. This led one student to question why someone would say something if they did not mean it. This student stated, *“Why even say it if you never really mean it?”*

Some focus group students said that the *campfire* activity created both a time and a space to share about themselves. One student said, *“It was interesting to see that, outside of the hard exterior that students usually display, when you actually get to know them, then they open up to you and you can really see what their personality is.”* Another student said that they were unaware of the challenges some students face inside and outside school.

Students in two of the focus groups said that the stories told by retreat leaders were effective and meaningful. The experiences describe by the leaders seemed especially powerful to some students. One student stated, *“What he went through could happen to any of us.”*

What was the impact of the Respect Retreat?

CAREI evaluators asked focus group participants about their perception of the impact of the Respect Retreat. We asked three questions that related to retreat impact including:

- 1) *What impact did the retreat have on the behavior of other students in the school?*
- 2) *Did attending the retreat change the way you think or behave in your school in any way? And,*
- 3) *Since the retreat have you seen any differences in your school, good or bad?*

In addition, students were asked if they thought the purpose of the Respect Retreat was met and whether they had followed through with their Commitment to Respect, a commitment they wrote down at the end of the retreat experience.

Student perceptions of the impact of the Respect Retreat varied. Some students said they thought the retreat had a small, but lasting impact. For example, one student commented, *“It just helps you remember. It is just that little thing in the back of your mind helping you to remember this is what I should do, but it doesn’t take over you as a person.”* Similarly, another student said they observed changes in how students treated one another. They also referenced the Respect button they received as a participant. For example, this student said, *“It’s like I didn’t really change a lot on how I felt towards myself, but how I respect others has changed a lot and I still wear the respect button on the coat I wear every day. I look down and I see it.”*

Rather than having a lasting impact, many students viewed the retreat effects as temporary. *“I feel like it was one of those things where everybody was like ‘oh, I’m going to change!’ But then, a week later it was right back to how everybody was,”* was a fairly typical response from students in the focus groups. Another student offered, *“Yeah, it was sort of like people like that got caught up in the moment and they made it seem like you know that they were going to change after this, but not a lot really changed for them.”*

One student thought that the impact of the retreat varied from student to student. They said it was difficult to generalize the impact of the retreat across all students.

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This student said, *“I feel like people got out what they put into it and you could tell that some people really just didn’t take it very seriously. They kind of put on an act like they did, but later, it was obvious when we got back to school who was really changed by it.”*

The variation in student views about the impact of the retreat was illustrated in the student responses to following through with their Commitment to Respect. At two of the schools all students (9 and 8) indicated they had followed through with their commitment. At the second school, five of six students stated they forgot what they had written down as their commitment. Among students who had followed through on their commitment, several indicated they still had the card with their Commitment to Respect. One student stated that the commitment was challenging and offered that it became harder to follow through than initially anticipated. Students who did not follow through with their commitment stated that they forgot what they had written down.

During the focus group session, CAREI evaluators asked students if the retreat purpose had been met. Though student responses varied, 12 students responded that the retreat purpose had been met. Three other students said that the retreat purpose had been met “sort of.” Seven students did not feel the retreat purpose had been met. A few students believed that the impact of the retreat could be strengthened through more follow-up activities in the classroom to reinforce the message of the retreat.

Summary

Focus group participants said that the main purpose of the retreat was learning about respect and learning about their classmates. Fifteen of the 23 (65%) agreed that this purpose had been met.

At the retreat, focus group participants learned about themselves and their peers. Students gained greater awareness of the way they treat others. According to respondents, they also developed a better understanding of the life circumstances of some of their fellow students. The opportunity to learn more about their peers was described as especially valuable.

For focus groups participants, authenticity appeared to be an important criterion in determining the most meaningful portion of the retreat. Many students described the campfire activity as particularly meaningful because students had the opportunity to share with peers in a “real” way. Some students were more skeptical. These students evaluated authenticity by not only what was shared at the retreat but also by whether student behavior changed in the days and weeks following the retreat. The personal stories shared by the retreat directors were also described as meaningful.

The overall impact of the retreat was viewed by focus group participants as variable. Students were able to identify specific changes in themselves and in some of their peers. Looking broadly, students did not view the retreat as having a lasting impact on students. They believed student behavior often returned to pre-retreat levels over several weeks. Students suggested ongoing activities in their classrooms and schools around the respect concept might be one approach that would enhance the impact of the retreat.

Administrative Interviews

Purpose

The objective of the administrative interviews was to assess the perceptions and attitudes of school leaders about the Youth Frontiers program. For instance, we wanted to learn from administrators how YF retreats related to the school's overall mission, whether other curricula were in place for character development or social-emotional learning, administrators' perceptions about school climate with regard to peer-pressure and bullying, and so forth. The interviews augmented the data we had already collected from the student surveys and student focus groups about the retreats, the quality of student interactions, and school climate, but from the point of view of school leaders.

Methods

CAREI staff conducted interviews with six school administrators from middle schools and high schools in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. The interviews were conducted in the same sites where student focus groups were held.

In all instances, we interviewed the administrator who worked most closely with Youth Frontiers, in this case, five principals and one assistant principal. Our interviews lasted between 30 to 45 minutes and occurred at least 30 days after each retreat. One administrator was interviewed in-person. The five other interviews were conducted by telephone [see the Interview protocol, Appendix A].

Findings

The findings are derived from the analysis of the six interviews, which are organized by the topics discussed.

Relationship between Youth Frontiers Retreats and School's Mission

We asked administrators to describe how the YF Retreats related to the school's overall mission. Five of the six administrators explained how YF programming directly addressed specific aspects of the school's overall mission.

Four of the administrators noted the pro-social dimensions that were emphasized during YF Retreats. These administrators mentioned that the retreats reinforced values of tolerance and acceptance, made students better citizens, and developed better leaders in society. Two administrators correlated academic achievement with meeting basic needs. For example, one administrator said,

"We know that students who are distracted by anything -- whether it is their mental health, their physical health, their dental health, or any major life changes – these all distract students from being super focused on learning. Youth Frontiers retreats give us a platform and a language to use with students when it comes to things like how they treat each other and how they behave at school."

All six principals discussed how providing an underlying base of social skills and interpersonal skills was a prerequisite for academic learning. Most administrators agreed that student learning takes place only *after* the basic needs of students have been met.

Balance between Pro-social Behavior and Academic Learning

Four administrators indicated that the school's curriculum seeks a balance between emphasizing social and academic aspects of school. A few principals alluded to the need to maintain high academic standards, but at the same time, they acknowledged that teaching pro-social skills and ensuring a positive school climate was essential to a smooth-running school.

Discipline Policies and the Use of Specific SEL or Character Education Curricula

All principals indicated that formal discipline policies were in place at their schools. However, only one of the administrators we interviewed said their school currently used a specific curriculum for social-emotional learning or character development. The other five principals said that they had used parts of programs, or were using other programs to support these kinds of efforts. For example, administrators mentioned promoting membership in national clubs, sports, and school-originated interest groups in an attempt to get every student connected to out-of-school programming.

Retreat Attendance by the Administrator

We know that administrative support is an important component of a program's success, so we asked administrators whether they attended the retreats. Half of the principals, three of six, said they "popped-in" but did not stay in the retreat for an extended period of time. Three of the administrators indicated that they did not attend the retreat this year, but did in the past.

Most Meaningful Retreat Activity to Students

Regardless of whether they attended the Courage or Respect Retreat, we asked the administrators what they thought might be the most meaningful activities of the retreats. Administrators frequently mentioned the closing activity most often as the most meaningful portion of the retreat. For example, one principal said, *"Anytime a student has time to self-reflect, it is good. I think the whole retreat could fall under that banner, but the self-reflection piece is the A1 thing. It's what makes it worth it."*

In addition, the principals saw the value of the small-group activities, the humor and energy of the retreat leaders, and the emotional stretching that YF Retreats require of student-participants. An example of each of these sentiments is provided below.

"Pebble in the pond is touching and very meaningful for the students. But I think the small group discussions are a very valuable piece of those retreats. ...Of course, the kids love the high activity and games, but I think the most meaningful, and what they take away from the retreats, are the small group discussions."

"The people who were running it were just phenomenal in being able to connect with kids. They were just funny. You talk about a hook! You can't teach kids anything until you've got them and Youth Frontiers leaders were able to get them, and go!"

"[The students] are kind of forced to come out of their comfort zones a bit and share with some of their classmates that they would not normally interact with. They have to build that trust and I think they leave the retreat feeling that they got to know their classmates better; that they don't have to always stay in their little peer groups that they are in."

The "Value-added" to School/Students

Four administrators addressed the question of the "value-added" YF Retreats bring to the schools. One principal mentioned the common language that develops and is reinforced with the YF Retreats. This principal said that students reinforce the lessons of the retreat by using the language afterwards.

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The opinion of another principal was that the value-added came in helping students feel like they are members of and contributors to the community. This administrator noted the importance of building a culture of respect and kindness.

Two of the administrators mentioned the benefits that came directly to students. For instance, *“They loved it. They thought it was so...they couldn’t rave enough and at one point we had one of our teachers there –who is also the teacher representative for student council –and her statement was, ‘I want student council to support this for 8th grade’.... I think the retreat had a profound effect on our teachers and staff, they really liked it, and they felt like it made a difference with the kids.”*

“I would say generally the students felt pretty positive about the time away and dealing with the important topics that they dealt with. However, my interaction with teachers wasn’t quite so positive, in fact, I would say they do not feel as engaged at our retreats whether they be YF Retreats or other retreats, they feel like they are more there to prefect and not to engage, and that is a disappointment for me. They sit out in the back often times are grading papers and that is disappointing because I think there is a real opportunity for students to see how teachers care about them through their involvement.”

Characterization of Students’ Relationships and Behavior

The principals were asked to reflect on how their students relate to one another and how they behave towards teachers and school staff. We noted that principals’ responses tended to fall into one of three groups. One group of administrators noted that student relations were generally good and saw no real need to intervene in any way. There were three administrators who had this perspective. They believed that the students generally had good relations with one another and their teachers.

A second group believed that some kids may be falling through the cracks. They indicated that efforts by the administration and teachers were underway to reach those students. For example, one administrator said that they worried that about one-third to one-half of the students at the school fall through the cracks. And for that reason they are attempting to provide a broad range of activities that would appeal to all types of students. The two principals in this group underscored the role that school staff plays in cultivating a positive school environment and the positive benefit of teachers and administrators who find the time to really get to know the students.

The third group of principals implied that any problems which may exist are beyond the control of the administrators. For example, these administrators asserted that relations among students were intrinsic to the particular group of students, with some grades exhibiting more or less pro-social behavior. Evaluators took this to mean that these administrators believed that school climate was largely dependent on the type of group you had. An administrator in a middle school, pointed out that some perceived negative behaviors were not malicious, but rather a general characteristic of the age.

Problems with Bullying

Interviewers asked the administrators if they believed students would cite bullying (physical, verbal, and non-verbal) as a problem in their school. Three of the administrators responded that students would cite bullying as a problem in their schools. These administrators did not appear to think the amount of bullying was about average for their school, and cited no additional plans to address the issue.

The other three administrators characterized these types of negative behaviors not as bullying, but as peer pressure, some pushing and shoving but not actually singling a person out. These same

administrators said it would be foolish to believe that some bullying does not occur. Two of the administrators mentioned Facebook, and specifically girls using electronic media to tease or bully others, as a problem in their schools.

Experience of Less-popular and Marginalized Students

Administrators all discussed the need to pay more attention to less-popular students and students at the margins. Four of the administrators thought the retreats were a good vehicle for breaking down some of the traditional niches and peer groups. They indicated that retreats helped shy and isolated youth come out of their shells. One administrator commented,

“Youth Frontiers Retreats kind of put kids on an equal footing. I think the in-group [concept] is outdated; it is really about kids in niches getting familiar with kids in other niches. I think Youth Frontiers Retreats put kids in touch with these different types of kids.”

Three of the principals said they saw value in remixing students from their usual groups. One principal concisely responded, *“Youth Frontiers puts kids in touch with different types of kids.”*

Specific Behavioral Changes (positive or negative) Attributable to the Retreat

Half of the administrators (3) thought positive changes in the school climate were observable, but they were less certain about the persistence of this change. One administrator thought that change lasted between two to six weeks. A high school administrator said the change was more likely to occur at the individual level saying, *“We have had some kids go off the charts. Some kids go up to teachers and say things like, ‘You know what, I’ve decided to grow-up.’ Every year we have little awareness pieces, and I know this is only the tip of the iceberg. That is, where one kid says it, but we know a whole lot more are experiencing it.”*

The other three administrators did not identify any measurable changes that they could attribute to the YF Retreats in particular.

Retreat Follow-up

The administrators universally saw the need for follow-up work after the retreats, but four of the administrators did not know of any specific follow-up activities taking place in their schools. One private school administrator thought that follow-up activities happened more often in the elementary grades, but that some discussions occurred in the religion classes.

On the whole, administrators’ responses are best summed up by one administrator, who said, *“Curricular follow-up is probably the biggest area for growth. As a school we need to be more systematic about how everything connects back to the social curriculum. We need to say, ‘Here is our year-long calendar and here are the objectives and events – and here is how this work ties back to the classroom.’ We need to be making those connections across the system.”*

Other Comments and Suggestions

The administrators interviewed offered few actionable comments except when it came to the cost of the retreats. Four of the six administrators indicated that the cost of YF Retreats was an issue. One administrator said their school will be dropping one YF Retreat next year, and this school was already receiving \$1,000 in outside support for the retreats.

On the other hand, one administrator said, *“Cost is an issue, but we find a way. It is not insurmountable. For me, it’s important enough, so yes it’s an issue, if it wasn’t I’d like to do a whole lot more.”* Another administrator discussed how there is added scrutiny about taking students out of the classroom for an entire day, and the need to justify these activities.

Summary of Administrator Interviews

Principals who pay for Youth Frontiers Retreats know how the retreats support their schools' missions. They also see that retreats target a social dimension of learning that they believe is both fundamental to learning and a prerequisite for it.

While most of the administrators we interviewed believe students are drawn to the personal sharing activity that closes YF retreats, they also see the small group activities as an important time to mix students together and rearrange some of the default groupings of students. Principals also mentioned the value in having outside leaders who fully engage the students in ways that teachers often cannot.

About half the administrators believed bullying and peer pressure were problems at their schools. Some of these administrators thought these behaviors were normal and had planned no additional efforts to address the issue. Other administrators in this camp had added additional afterschool clubs and activities in an attempt to promote every child becoming involved in the school.

Generally speaking half of the principals believed retreats changed students' behaviors, but were less certain how long the effect lasted. One principal said retreats made their greatest impact on individual students. The other three principals did could not identify any observable changes to their students' behaviors.

All principals agreed that follow-up after the retreats needed to be done at their schools. These administrators said that the positive outcomes of the retreat could only be sustained if the teachers used the language and referred back to the retreat in an ongoing way.

Finally, administrators warned that the cost of retreats was a concern. A few of the principals were wrestling with how to justify and pay for an all-day activity away from regular classes. Two principals said they would continue to explore ways to fund retreats.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our interviews with administrators demonstrate that school leaders pay attention to the ways in which programming addresses the school's mission. Administrators are also aware that Youth Frontiers programming supports the development of pro-social behaviors and skills of their students. We recommend that Youth frontiers staff consider how they might demonstrate and promote Youth Frontiers successes in this area. We also recommend that Youth Frontiers staff actively seek out and articulate how Youth Frontiers fits into schools' missions.

In the Kindness survey results (2010) and again in the Courage survey results (2011), we found significant differences by gender in all areas including student attitudes of school and classmate relationships, student self-assessment of their own behavior, student perceptions of their classmates' behavior and student perceptions of adults in school, with girls significantly more positive than boys. Youth Frontiers staff should consider revisiting the games, activities, and talks in these Retreats so that they reach students of both genders. Interestingly, we did not find the same kinds of gender differences in the Respect Retreat survey results, which may indicate a developmental change in students once they reach 9th grade. It also may indicate that Youth Frontiers Respect Retreats meet the needs of both boys and girls of that age equally.

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It is important for Youth Frontiers Retreat directors to reach children of color and of non-European descent as we found several significant differences in ethnicity in our surveys. For instance, in the Courage Retreat, non-white students were less positive than their white classmates in their attitudes towards school and classmate relationships, their assessments of their own and their classmates' behaviors and in their perceptions of adults in school. Youth Frontiers should consider incorporating multicultural features (songs, skits, stories) into retreats, which may help create a deeper connection with these students.

In the Focus Groups, students indicated that they positively respond to the sharing and emotional exchanges that occur in the small groups and the closing activities. Youth Frontiers staff should continue to incorporate these activities into the retreats. In addition, Youth Frontiers should explore how they might help young people translate these powerful expressions of empathy, contrition, and determination into practical steps students could take.

Because students felt that the impact of the retreat was limited to only the students who participate in the retreat (usually one grade level), Youth Frontiers might consider how to provide follow-up activities for student-participants to share lessons-learned with other grades, or the entire school, through presentations, buddy and peer systems, and school-wide activities.

Based on the comments of students and administrators (2011), and teachers (2010), Youth Frontiers should continue to look for new ways to actively connect with schools after the retreats. This is especially true because of the limited contact time available to students during the six-hour retreat.

APPENDIX A: INSTRUMENTS AND PROTOCOLS

2011 Youth Frontiers Courage Post-Retreat Survey

Instructions:

- Please do not put your name on this form.
- Read each statement and fill in the circle that best fits your opinion.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I feel a part of my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I have respect for myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I hang out with students who are different than I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I stand up for what I believe is right, even if others disagree with me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I feel close to my peers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I show respect for others who may not share my view.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I am respectful to all students in this school, not just my friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I have stood-up for someone who was being bullied.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I treat teachers with respect, even if I disagree with them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I fix mistakes I have made.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. I stand up to negative peer pressure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I feel like I fit in with my class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I enjoy school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. I help other kids who are having a problem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Students here respect what I have to say.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. My peers follow school rules and expect me to follow them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. My peers stand up to negative peer pressure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. My peers have encouraged me to call people names and be cruel to others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please continue on the back of this sheet

2011 Youth Frontiers Courage Post-Retreat Survey

19. Students at this school treat classmates with respect.
20. Students at school care about me.
21. Students in this school show respect for others who work hard and do well.
22. Students at this school mostly resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.
23. Students in this school who are not part of popular groups get hassled or excluded.
24. Students at my school help new kids feel welcome.
25. Bullying is a problem at my school.
26. Adults at my school care about all students, not just a few.
27. My teachers care about me as a person.
28. Teachers value what I have to say in class.
29. Teachers model respectful behavior.
30. My principal models respectful behavior.
31. I have followed through on my act of courage.
- Yes
 - No
 - Partially
 - I don't know
32. I am: **(MARK ALL THAT APPLY.)**
- African
 - Black or African American
 - American Indian
 - Asian or Asian American
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - White
 - Other _____
33. I am:
- Male
 - Female

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

2011 Youth Frontiers Respect Post-Retreat Survey

Instructions:

- **Please do not put your name on this form.**
- **Read each statement and fill in the circle that best fits your opinion.**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I feel a part of my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I have respect for myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I hang out with students who are different than I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I stand up for what I believe is right, even if others disagree with me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I feel close to my peers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I show respect for others who may not share my view.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I am respectful to all students in this school, not just my friends.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I have stood-up for someone who was being bullied.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I treat teachers with respect, even if I disagree with them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I fix mistakes I have made.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. I stand up to negative peer pressure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I feel like I fit in with my class.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I enjoy school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. I help other kids who are having a problem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Students here respect what I have to say.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. My peers follow school rules and expect me to follow them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. My peers stand up to negative peer pressure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. My peers have encouraged me to call people names and be cruel to others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please continue on the back of this sheet

2011 Youth Frontiers Respect Post-Retreat Survey

19. Students at this school treat classmates with respect.
20. Students at school care about me.
21. Students in this school show respect for others who work hard and do well.
22. Students at this school mostly resolve conflicts without fighting, insults, or threats.
23. Students in this school who are not part of popular groups get hassled or excluded.
24. Students at my school help new kids feel welcome.
25. Bullying is a problem at my school.
26. Adults at my school care about all students, not just a few.
27. My teachers care about me as a person.
28. Teachers value what I have to say in class.
29. Teachers model respectful behavior.
30. My principal models respectful behavior.
31. I have followed through on my commitment to respect.
- Yes
 - No
 - Partially
 - I don't know
32. I am: **(MARK ALL THAT APPLY.)**
- African
 - Black or African American
 - American Indian
 - Asian or Asian American
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - White
 - Other _____
33. I am:
- Male
 - Female

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

Appendix A: Courage Retreat Focus Group Protocol

Opening Remarks:

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and participate in this focus group.

We were hired by Youth Frontiers staff to look at how Youth Frontiers retreats affect you, the students, and your school. You already filled out two surveys from us, but now we really want to hear from you about what you learned from the Courage Retreat, what you liked and didn't like and then any ideas you have to make the Courage retreat better.

We are collecting this data for Youth Frontiers, but we were hired to give our honest opinions about what we learn. So, we want you to share your honest opinions about the retreat. We will not identify you personally *in any way* in this evaluation – we won't tell them your name or who said what. Of course, YF will know this information comes from students in the <grade> grade from <schoolname> school, but *you* will not be identified. You can also change your mind and decide you do not want to participate and that will not affect your relationship with your school, Youth Frontiers, the University of Minnesota, or us.

This is a good time to ask any questions, before we begin. Can we answer any questions that you have? For this focus group we would like people to share their opinions as they wish, we will not go around in a circle and you may talk to each other. Please listen to everyone's comments and if you have something new to add, we want to hear from you. With this first question we *would* like to go around in the circle to hear from everyone...

1. So, let's start by going around in a circle. Please tell us: your first name, your grade, and favorite band or singer.

Key Questions:

2. Did you know anything about YF before the retreat? What had you heard about it? Did teachers or school leaders say anything to prepare you for the retreat? What did they tell you?
3. Take a minute to think about the purpose of the retreat (NOTE: hand out a scrap of paper for them to write on, *before* they shared). In your own words, what is the main purpose of the retreat?
 - a. Let me see a show of hands, how many of you think the retreat accomplished its purpose?
 - b. Let's review, what were the different parts of the retreat?
4. Thinking back on the retreat, what was the most meaningful part of the retreat to you, and why?
5. What did you learn about your peers? What did you learn about yourself at the retreat?
6. What impact did the retreat have on the behavior of other students in the school? Did attending the retreat change the way you think or behave in your school, in any way?

Appendix A: Courage Retreat Focus Group Protocol

7. Now I would like to ask you to rate the level of bullying and peer pressure at your school. On a section of the paper I gave you, write down on a scale of 1-5 with one being not a problem at all and 5 being a huge problem, how would you rate the level of peer pressure at your school? How about the level of bullying? Can you share any examples of the types of peer pressure and bullying that happens at your school?
8. Since the retreat, have you seen any differences in your school, good or bad? Examples?
9. On the sheet of paper I handed out, please write down your definition of “everyday” courage. [answer: to do what is right for yourself and others by following one's heart in the face of fears of social repercussions and peer pressure.] Does anyone want to share what they wrote down?
10. Let me see a show of hands, how many of you followed through with your Act of Courage (what you wrote at the end of the retreat)?
11. Is there anything you would want Youth Frontiers or your school to know about the Youth Frontiers Retreats?

We really want to thank you for taking the time to talk with us!

Appendix A: Respect Retreat Focus Group Protocol

Opening Remarks:

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and participate in this focus group.

We were hired by Youth Frontiers staff to look at how Youth Frontiers retreats affect you, the students, and your school. You already filled out two surveys from us, but now we really want to hear from you about what you learned from the Respect Retreat, what you liked and didn't like and then any ideas you have to make the Respect retreat better.

We are collecting this data for Youth Frontiers, but we were hired to give our honest opinions about what we learn. So, we want you to share your honest opinions about the retreat. We will not identify you personally *in any way* in this evaluation – we won't tell them your name or who said what. Of course, YF will know this information comes from students in the <grade> grade from <schoolname> school, but *you* will not be identified. You can also change your mind and decide you do not want to participate and that will not affect your relationship with your school, Youth Frontiers, the University of Minnesota, or us.

This is a good time to ask any questions, before we begin. Can we answer any questions that you have? For this focus group we would like people to share their opinions as they wish, we will not go around in a circle and you may talk to each other. Please listen to everyone's comments and if you have something new to add, we want to hear from you. With this first question we *would* like to go around in the circle to hear from everyone...

1. So, let's start by going around in a circle. Please tell us: your first name, your grade, and favorite band or singer.

Key Questions:

2. Did you know anything about YF before the retreat? What had you heard about it? Did teachers or school leaders say anything to prepare you for the retreat? What did they tell you?
3. Take a minute to think about the purpose of the retreat (NOTE: hand out a scrap of paper for them to write on, *before* they shared). In your own words, what is the main purpose of the retreat?
 - a. Let me see a show of hands, how many of you think the retreat accomplished its purpose?
 - b. Let's review, what were the different parts of the retreat?
4. Thinking back on the retreat, what was the most meaningful part of the retreat to you, and why?
5. What did you learn about your peers? What did you learn about yourself at the retreat?
6. What impact did the retreat have on the behavior of other students in the school? Did attending the retreat change the way you think or behave in your school, in any way?
7. Now I would like to ask you to rate the level of bullying and peer pressure at your school. On a section of the paper I gave you, write down on a scale of 1-5 with one being not a problem at all and 5 being a huge problem, how would you rate the level of peer pressure at your school?

Appendix A: Respect Retreat Focus Group Protocol

How about the level of bullying? Can you share any examples of the types of peer pressure and bullying that happens at your school?

8. Since the retreat, have you seen any differences in your school, good or bad? Examples?
9. On the sheet of paper I handed out, please write down your definition of respect. [answer: "relooking at yourself and others to see value."] Does anyone want to share what they wrote down?
10. Let me see a show of hands, how many of you followed through with your Commitment to Respect (what you wrote at the end of the retreat)?
11. Is there anything you would want Youth Frontiers or your school to know about the Youth Frontiers Retreats?

We really want to thank you for taking the time to talk with us!

Appendix A: Principal Interview Protocol

Youth Frontiers Principal Interview Protocol 2010-2011 School Year

How Youth Frontiers fits with school vision/mission/goals

1. How does the Youth Frontiers Retreat relate to the overall mission and/or objectives of your school?
2. How would you describe the balance between the emphasis on pro-social behavior and academic learning at your school? Do you use a specific discipline program (ex. PBIS)? What discipline policies do you have in place at your school?
3. Does your school use any specific SEL or character education type curriculum? If, so, please explain.

General opinions about retreat

4. Did you attend the retreat? If so, was there a specific activity that you believe was the most meaningful to students? Or, the most interesting to you?
 - a. If you could change the retreat, in what way would you change it?
5. In your opinion, what is the “value-added” your school/students receive by hosting a retreat?

Student relationships and behavior

6. How would you characterize students’ relationships with one another? How do students behave towards administrators, teachers and other adults in your school generally?
7. Do you think your students would cite any problems with bullying at your school? If so, could you describe the types of bullying (physical, verbal).
8. How would you characterize the experience of less-popular, perhaps, marginalized students at your school? Any demonstrable changes since the retreat that you have observed?
9. Have you noted any specific behavioral changes (positive or negative) that you would attribute to the retreat?

Retreat follow-Up

10. In what ways have concepts learned and discussed at the retreat been followed-up within classes in your school before and after the retreat?
 - a. Probe examples such as discussion of the retreat, use of curriculum, language, or materials.
11. Is there anything we have not covered, that you would really like us to know about?

APPENDIX B: DATA

Table A1. Student Descriptions of the Main Purpose of the Courage Retreat

School	Student Written Descriptions of the Main Purpose of the Courage Retreat*
School 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To respect one another and stand up for yourself and other people. • I think the purpose was to speak our minds about what we feel is right. • I think it was about having the courage to stand up for what’s right. • To stop bullying and to give people courage to stand up. • To make us more courageous and to help us stand up to wrong-doing. • To give people courage to stand up to what they know is wrong. • Teach kids in a fun way to stand up to bullying. To have courage. • To change the school environment and make it better.
School 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think the purpose of the retreat was to learn to be courageous and respectful. • To be better people and to be intelligent more. • Teach people to be nicer, respectful to others, have fun. • To stop bullying. • To help school’s children be nicer. • To show kids how fun life can be!!! • To help everyone believe and achieve a goal.
School 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think the purpose of the retreat was for us to become closer and to understand each other more. And to work on teamwork. • I think the main purpose of the retreat was to get people to let their feelings out so people will know what they are going through in school or home. • To learn how to have courage and examples of people who have come out. To show others what they did to hurt other people’s feeling even if they themselves didn’t realize it. • So you can learn how to be responsible and to have respect for yourself. • I think the main purpose of this retreat was to learn what courage was about. • I think the purpose of the retreat was is you need to say something , you could. Also to learn things about people. People to be nicer to people. • I think it was to build up your self-confidence. Think of yourself in a good way. • I think the retreat’s purpose was to build courage and confidence to each student. • I think the purpose of the Courage Retreat is that there is a lot going on in our lives and we should be honest with friends and family so we can get over the bad things and continue the good things.

*Grammar, punctuation, and spelling were corrected in student statements.

Table A2. Student Definitions of Everyday Courage

School	Student Definitions of Everyday Courage*
School 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing up for others, being courageous. • Standing up for what is right. Don't be afraid to voice your own opinion. • Standing up for what is right sticking up for someone. • Courage is not giving into peer pressure or standing up for someone. • Everyday courage - acting against wrong as often as you can. • Standing up for what you think is right and being yourself; not giving into peer pressure. • Everyday courage is staying true to yourself and not doing what others think. • Courage – to stand up for what's right. • Everyday courage is people being brave to share their thoughts and ideas; not worrying what other people think.
School 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping people; stop bullies; complement each other; stand up for yourself. • When someone puts their hand up even if they might be bullied if they are wrong. • To not be afraid to be who you are. • Help people; raise my hand in class; stand up for yourself; and wear what you want to school. • Raise your hand; helping people up; not teasing someone. • Actually going to school happy and not thinking what anybody else thinks and just being yourself; stand up and be courageous. • Being courageous and being respectful and be nice to people.
School 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being yourself – Doing the right thing. That's everyday courage. • Standing up for yourself and people. If you promised to not bully keep the promise don't leave it behind in a trash can. • To be yourself and go out there, even with people who you know will put you down. • People standing up for each other and people taking charge of their lives. • Not being mean or making fun of them to people. • Standing up for you and your peers. • Every day to believe in yourself. Think positive. • I think the definition for "everyday courage" is do something helpful that you want to do for yourself or someone else. • Standing up for friends, family and yourself, or just getting up in class to speak your mind and explain yourself.

*Grammar, punctuation, and spelling were corrected in student statements.

Table A3. Student Descriptions of the Main Purpose of the Respect Retreat

School	Student Written Descriptions of the Main Purpose of the Courage Retreat*
School 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think that the purpose was that so people would show more respect to each other and just don't be so cruel to each other and care about how others feel when you treat them in a certain way. • I think the purpose of the Respect retreat was to get our class together and understand each other a little bit better. To teach us that sometimes there is stuff you may not know about a person. • For everyone get along; stop bullying in school; try to be open to people. • To respect others and ourselves more, also to stand up for other people. • I think the purpose of the retreat was for us to develop more knowledge of respect for others and ourselves. • What I think it was about was us trying to be respectful and treat others the way you want to be treated.
School 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the retreat was to learn about our classmates; learn to listen and trust one another. • I think it was to bring our class closer together. • To get to know other freshmen besides your friends. • To show everyone that it is very important to respect everyone at all times. • To get to know other people you don't usually talk with or respect people you don't usually talk to. • To help respect yourselves and others and to bond. • To help others in the respect thing because not everyone respects themselves and others. • Learning about how to better respect our peers, adults, and ourselves. • To help us better understand respect for ourselves and respect for each other and how important it is.
School 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to be more kind to yourself and others; to get more self confidence. • Respect yourself, others, and your surroundings. • The purpose was to learn to respect other people more and yourself. • Respect yourself and others. • Have respect for yourself and others. Show respect. • To be respectful to yourself and others. • Respect yourself and others. • Learn to be a better person and step up to bullies and problems.

*Grammar, punctuation, and spelling were corrected in student statements.

Table A4. Student Definitions of Respect

School	Student Written Definitions of Respect*
School 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think respect means to be thoughtful, kind, and care about others. • Respect is treating people how you want to be treated. • Treat others how you want to be treated. • My definition of respect is to treat others the way you want to be treated by them. • Respect is kindness and the way you treat others the way you want to be treated. • Treat others the way you wanted to be treated.
School 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect – to listen, to watch, to care for or about someone. If you disagree just humbly agree to disagree. Take other’s feelings into play • Respect means loving one another and being considerate • Treating people the way you want to be treated • Showing kindness to everyone because no matter who they are or what they have done they still deserve your kindness. • Treating a person like a person and having understanding of what they are going through • To not be rude and instead be polite and unjudgeful (sic) to those • Respect in my point of view is being kind to others and helping others and not doing bad stuff about them. • I think that respect is showing other people that you care what they think or want. I also think that respect goes along with the word tolerance. • The ability to empathize and understand the people around you without judging.
School 3^	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect is to help others kind of like integrity. To be kind and give people their space. • Treat others the way you want to be treated. • Respect – being loyal to others and caring of their wishes and thoughts. • Respect is to help and give a chance to others. • Respect is to great others and yourself good, to be kind. • Respect – Caring, kind, treating people right, even if you do not like them. • Being nice and having good manners towards someone or yourself.

*Grammar, punctuation, and spelling were corrected in student statements.

^One student did not provide a written definition of respect.