



U Connect Kentucky – Summary of Years 1 and 2

In 2015 and 2016, two cohorts of youth participated in the *U Connect* program at Imani Family Life in Lexington and at the Rosenwald Center for Families and Children in Frankfort. Programming included: Check & Connect, STEM, nutrition education, and parent engagement. The foundation program, *Check & Connect*, is an evidence-based student engagement intervention that promotes young people’s self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and persistence. This intervention supports positive youth development by promoting relationships with caring adults and peers, skill building within a safe environment, and cognitive engagement with school and learning.

Method

At the beginning and end of each academic year, youth completed a survey to allow us to better understand their needs and experiences with *U Connect*.

- Year 1 (2015)
 - In March, the pre-survey was completed by 6 students.
 - In July, 5 students completed the post-survey.
- Year 2 (2015-2016)
 - In December, the pre-survey was completed by 41 students.
 - In June 2016, 44 students completed the post-survey.

The results reflect general attitudes and beliefs about each group of youth at the four time points.

Youth Participants

Demographics	Year 1		Year 2	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Number of participants	6	5	42	44
About how many hours per week do you participate in this club or activity?	4.5 hours	3.6 hours	3 hours	3.5 hours

Perception of Adult and Peer Behaviors in the Program

Youth reported on their perception of the behaviors of adults and peers in the program using a five point scale ranging from “Never” to “Always”. Youth generally reported a slight decrease in positive adult and peer behaviors from the pre to post-survey in both years. The year 2 post-survey revealed that almost three quarters of the youth reported adults make sure the rules are followed and adults are eager to help youth. Close to one-third of youth reported that peers are a source of protection from bullies.

	Year 1		Year 2	
	Pre (n=6)	Post (n=5)	Pre (n=42)	Post (n=44)
Adult and Peer Behaviors	"A lot" or "Always"		"A lot" or "Always"	
Adults make sure the rules are being followed	100%	100%	84.6%	70.5%
Adults are eager to help young people	83.3%	60%	71.8%	65.9%
Young people are willing to help each other	83.4%	40%	51.2%	40.9%
Young people protect each other from bullies	33.3%	20%	21.1%	32.6%
If someone is being picked on, young people try to stop it	33.3%	0%	31.6%	23.3%

What Students are Learning about Interacting with Others

Youth reported on the frequency of learning how to interact with others and make good decisions on a five point scale from "Never" to "Always." By the end of year 2, half the youth reported frequently learning about getting along with others, learning how to treat others with respect, and learning how to make good decisions.

	Year 1		Year 2	
	Pre (n=6)	Post (n=5)	Pre (n=42)	Post (n=44)
Skills	"A lot" or "Always"		"A lot" or "Always"	
Young people learn about getting along with others	50%	20%	54%	50%
Young people learn about treating others with respect	50%	40%	47.4%	50%
Young people learn about different cultures	0%	20%	48.6%	36.4%
Young people learn how to make good decisions	50%	20%	31.6%	53.5%

Learning about Nutrition

Lessons on nutrition education are an integral part of *U Connect*. Youth reported how hard it would be to choose healthy food options over unhealthy options on a three point scale from "Not hard at all" to "Very Hard." In both post-surveys, youth reported similar or lower levels of healthy food choices compared to pre-surveys.

	Year 1		Year 2	
	Pre (n=6)	Post (n=5)	Pre (n=42)	Post (n=44)
Nutrition	"Not hard at all"		"Not hard at all"	
Eat fruit for an after school snack	83.3%	25%	73.7%	63.6%
Eat vegetables for a snack	33.3%	0%	55.3%	39.5%
Choose water instead of soda pop or Kool-Aid when thirsty	50%	25%	55.3%	40.9%
Drink 1% or skim milk instead of 2% or whole milk	66.7%	25%	44.7%	47.7%
Eat smaller servings of high fat foods (e.g. french fries, chips, cookies)	16.7%	50%	44.7%	44.2%
Eat a low fat snack like pretzels instead of chips	50%	50%	57.9%	56.8%

Future Goals and Family

Youth also responded to a series of questions about their future goals and family engagement in school. They responded on a four point scale from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”. Overall, in both years, youth agreed that they plan to continue their education beyond high school and that higher education would create opportunities for their future. Youth also reported high levels of family support for school success during both years.

	Year 1		Year 2	
	Pre (n=6)	Post (n=5)	Pre (n=42)	Post (n=44)
Future Goals and Family	“Agree” or “Strongly Agree”		“Agree” or “Strongly Agree”	
I plan to continue my education following high school	100%	75%	81%	86%
My education will create many future opportunities for me	100%	75%	88.9%	95.4%
I am hopeful about my future	100%	75%	83.3%	97.6%
My family/guardian are there for me when I need them	100%	100%	78.3%	90.9%
When I have problems at school my family/guardian are willing to help me	100%	75%	81%	86.4%
When something good happens at school, my family/guardian want to know about it	100%	75%	89.2%	88.6%
My family/guardian want me to keep trying when things are tough at school	100%	75%	56.5%	93.2%

Beliefs Students Hold

Youth also responded to a series of questions on beliefs they hold about fairness and honesty. They responded how important each of the beliefs were to them on a four point scale from “Not Important” to “Extremely Important”. The post-survey in year 2 indicated that youth held strong beliefs about conducting themselves with honesty and fairness.

	Year 1		Year 2	
	Pre (n=6)	Post (n=5)	Pre (n=42)	Post (n=44)
Student Beliefs	“Important” or “Extremely Important”		“Important” or “Extremely Important”	
Helping to make sure all people are treated fairly	83.8%	100%	86.1%	93%
Doing what I believe is right, even if my friends make fun of me	50%	80%	83.7%	90.9%
Telling the truth, even when it’s not easy	83.3%	75%	77.8%	72.7%
Accepting responsibility for my actions when I make a mistake or get in trouble	83.3%	50%	83.4%	81.8%
Doing my best, even when I have a job I don’t like	83.3%	50%	83.3%	86.3%

Decision Making

Youth also reported how frequently they engaged in a number of steps associated with decision making on a four point scale ranging from “Never” to “Always”. Overall, in both post-surveys, youth reported an increase in the frequency of using a number of steps in decision making. In year 2, post-survey revealed that three fourths of the youth spent time thinking about all the information they had related to their choices as part of their decision making process.

	Year 1		Year 2	
	Pre (n=6)	Post (n=5)	Pre (n=42)	Post (n=44)
Decision Making Steps	“Usually” or “Always”		“Usually” or “Always”	
Look for information to help me understand the problem	50%	50%	48.6%	59.5%
Consider the risks of a choice before making a decision	16.7%	75%	54.3%	64.3%
Think about all the information I have about different choices	60%	75%	54%	76.2%
Keep my mind open to different ideas when planning to make decisions	33.4%	75%	59.4%	65.9%
Usually have more than one source of information before making a decision	33.4%	25%	59.4%	65.1%

Conclusion

Through *U Connect*, youth report receiving useful skills and knowledge while spending quality time in a safe and nurturing environment; youth reported relatively low rates of making healthy food choices. Youth report high levels of hope for their future along with a strong belief in the value of education beyond high school. They also report a highly supportive family environment encouraging academic success. This report summarizes the first two years of the *U Connect* program (year 1 was a pilot). *U Connect* will continue until August 2019.