

My Future Matters Program Evaluation

ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESULTS FROM SPRING 2015 AND FALL
2015 SEMESTERS
COMMUNITY WORKS

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Introduction

This report analyzes the results of a pre- and post-survey administered to students who participated in the My Future Matters high school leadership and service learning curriculum in six Los Angeles high schools in the Spring and Fall semesters of 2015. The survey tool is the same for both pre-and post- program, and is intended to track changes in students’ attitudes about their own leadership skills and futures, as well as their understanding and perceptions of leadership and service.

Data and Methodology

At the start of the semester, students at the participating high schools were given a pre-survey to assess their baseline responses to:

- 22 ratings of personal attitudes/behaviors, as assessed on a 1-5 Likert scale;
- 4 frequency measures, of their leadership and school behaviors; and
- 3 short answer questions on perceptions and understanding of leadership

This same survey, with no changes, was administered to students again at the end of the curriculum. The results of the pre- and post-surveys were analyzed for comparison to assess any changes over time or trends across the schools.

The data has been coded anonymously and all personal identifiers have been removed from the short answer responses. The following table summarizes the data collected from the schools.

	Pre-Survey	Post-Survey	Total
Number of total student responses	137	139	276
Number of invalid responses	14	34	48
Number of valid quantitative student responses	123	105	228
Surveys missing qualitative responses	48	20	68

In the aggregated pre-surveys, 137 students across the six schools partially or completely filled out the tool. In some pre-surveys, respondents clearly did not put any effort into answering the questions, simply checking all the same numbers down the first section. These surveys have been removed from the analyzed sample. Additionally, 48/137 pre-surveys had no responses to the open-ended qualitative questions. These surveys are still used for quantitative analysis, but obviously cannot be used for qualitative analysis.

In the aggregated post-surveys, 139 students across the six schools partially or completely filled out the tool. In 34 post-surveys, the respondents clearly did not put any effort into answering the questions and so these are excluded from the analyzed sample. Additionally, 20/139 pre-surveys had no responses to the open-ended qualitative questions. These surveys are still used for quantitative analysis, but obviously cannot be used for qualitative analysis.

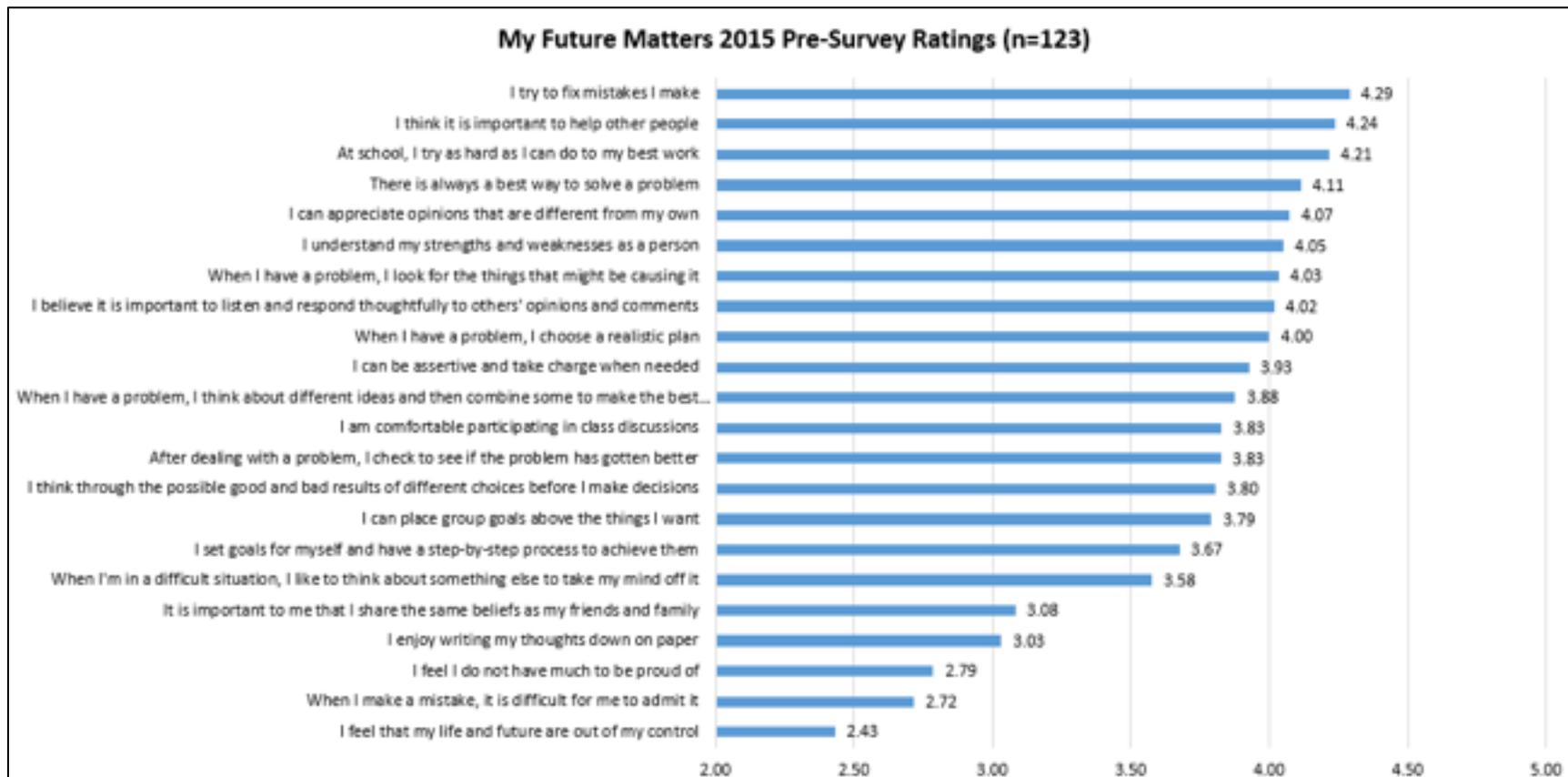
In an ideal world, we would only analyze the results of surveys for which we have both pre- and post-measurements for the same students, but very few of these surveys have personal identifying information. Therefore it is impossible to tell if the pre-survey respondents all correspond to post-survey respondents, or if there were new MfM participants after the curriculum began, or if there were many students who did not complete the curriculum. Therefore we include all complete and effortful responses to the pre-survey (n = 123 across all schools) and the post-survey (n=105 across all schools) in our results.

Our method of analysis is to calculate average results across all 22 rating questions, and all four frequency questions, for all schools combined in the pre-and post- surveys. Then we compare changes in ratings between pre-and post-surveys. For the three short-answer questions, we code the responses for similarities/reoccurring themes, and share any changes observed in those.

Findings and Discussion

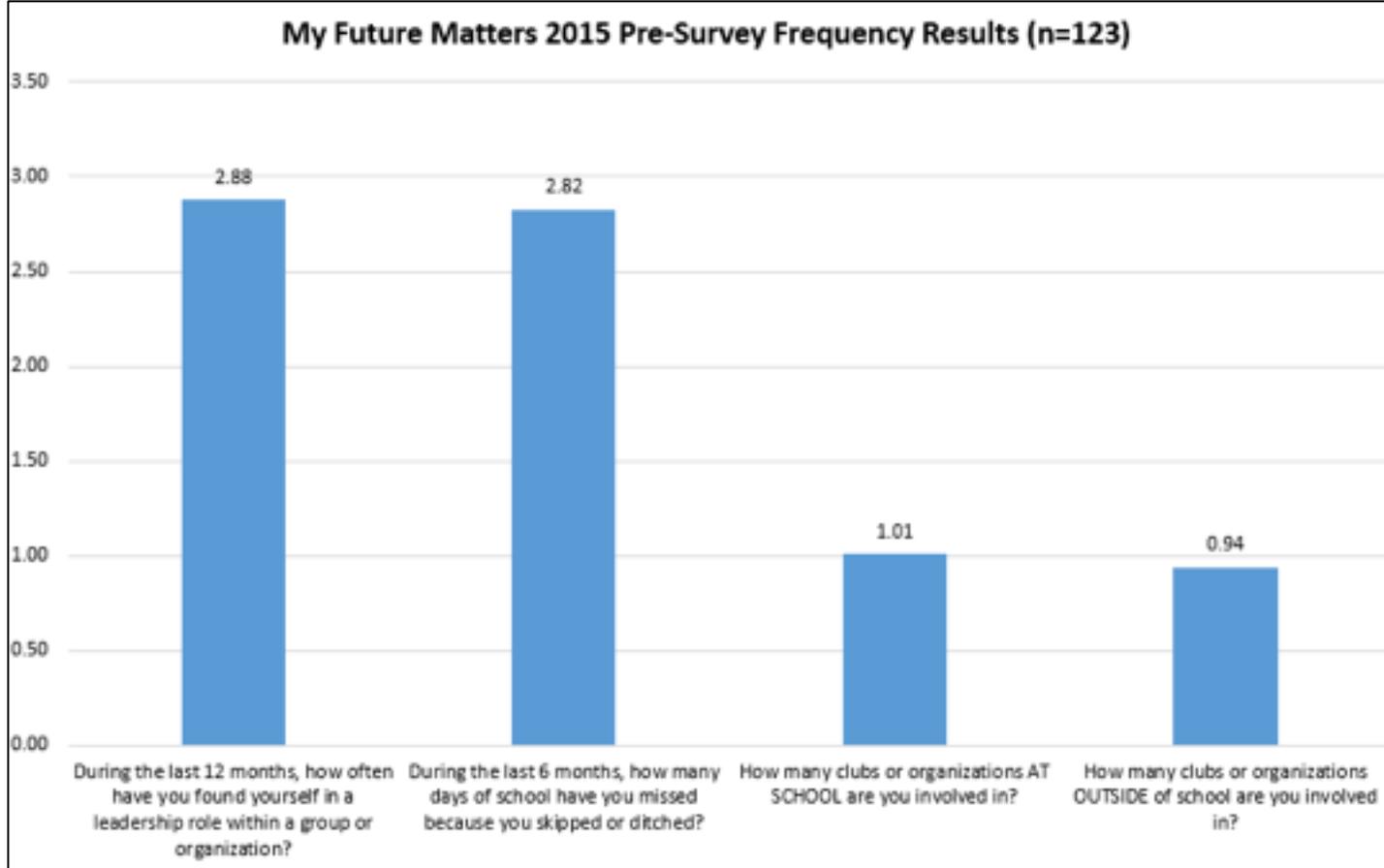
Pre-Survey

The chart below shows average ratings across students in the pre-survey for the 22 rating statements. The lowest-scoring statements, all with average ratings below 3.0, were “I feel I do not have much to be proud of,” “When I make a mistake, it is difficult for me to admit it,” and “I feel that my life and future are out of my control.” Note that a low rating for “I feel that my life and future are out of my control” is a positive result, indicating that students do in fact feel some ownership of their lives. Highest-scoring statements, with scores of 4.20 or above, were “At school, I try as hard as I can to do my best work,” “I think it is important to help other people,” and “I try to fix mistakes I make.” The average rating for most of the statements were quite similar, with the top 17/22 within a 0.75-point range (3.58-4.29) of each other.



The following chart shows the results of the frequency questions of the pre-survey. On average, students found themselves in leadership roles just under three times in the last 12 months, and students skipped/ditched just 2.82 days of school in the past 6 months. They were involved in one club in school, and just under one club outside of school.

The three short answer questions asked in the pre-survey are:



1. List three characteristics of an effective leader.
2. Name someone who you think is a good leader and explain how he/she demonstrates good leadership.
3. Leaders are often confronted with barriers or obstacles while working on a project. Describe 3 ways an effective leader can work through barriers or obstacles that arise.

Common responses to Question 1 were:

- Open-minded

- Confident
- Listens to others
- Honest/ Trustworthy
- Respectful
- Good communication skills
- Intelligent
- Patient

The most common response to Question 2, was “my mother,” with 25 students listing their mothers for various reasons. Other multiple responses included other family members (father or sister), and two public figures: Barack Obama and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Common responses to Question 3 were:

- Listening to others’ ideas/ collaborate
- Finding a Plan B
- Ask for help

In general, responses to Question 3 indicated a lack of understanding of the question or of alternative problem solving methods. Most answers did not directly address the question.

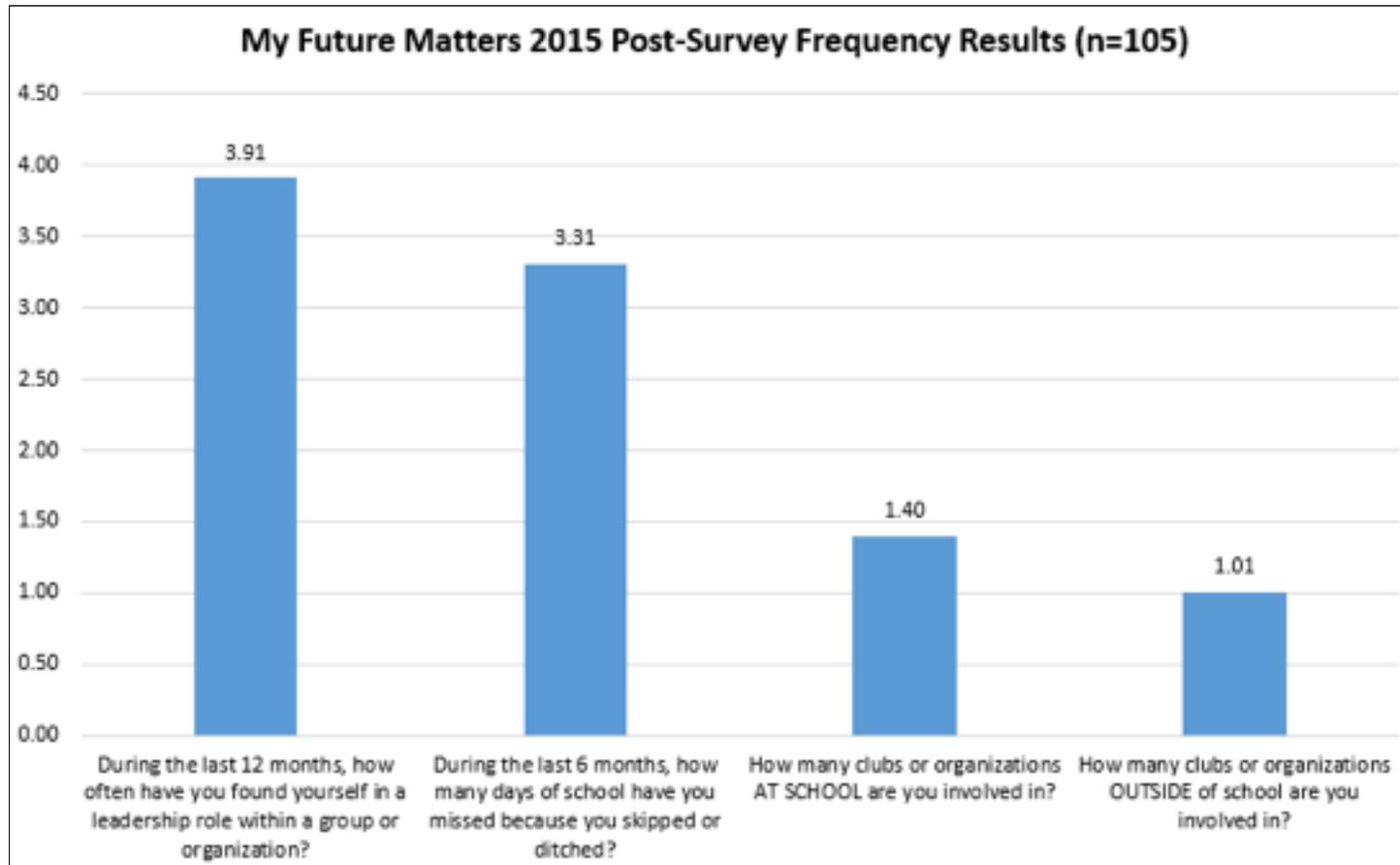
Post-Survey

The chart below shows average ratings across students in the post-survey for the 22 rating statements. The lowest-scoring statements, all with average ratings below 3.30, were “I enjoy writing my thoughts down on paper,” “I have many things to be proud of in my life,” “When I make a mistake, I can admit it,” and “I feel that my life and future are in my control.” Note that the **wording** of some of the statements changed from pre to post, in line with the recommendation given in the Spring 2015 report. The new statements are intended to be easier to interpret, and provide a more accurate reflection of students’ feelings.

Highest-scoring statements, with scores above 4.2, were “I am comfortable participating in class discussions,” “I try to fix mistakes I make,” “I think it is important to help other people,” and “It is important to think about multiple ways to solve a problem.”



The following chart shows the results of the frequency questions of the post-survey. On average, students skipped/ditched 3.31 days of school in the past 6 months, and were involved in 1.4 clubs in school, and 1.01 clubs out of school. However, they did report taking on leadership roles almost four times in the past year.



The three short answer questions asked in the survey are:

1. List three characteristics of an effective leader.
2. Name someone who you think is a good leader and explain how he/she demonstrates good leadership.
3. Leaders are often confronted with barriers or obstacles while working on a project. Describe 3 ways an effective leader can work through barriers or obstacles that arise.

Common responses to Question 1 were:

- Responsible/ Reliable/ Dependable
- Respectful
- Loyalty
- Determined/ Driven
- Confident
- Smart/ Knowledgeable
- Good listener
- Honest

The most common response to Question 2, was “my mother,” with 33 students listing their mothers for various reasons. Additional family members were the other most frequent responses (father, sister, or brother), and three famous figures earned multiple mentions: Barack Obama, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Jesus Christ. Teachers were also cited eight times.

Common responses to Question 3 were:

- Set goals
- Go step-by-step
- Ask the group for advice or ideas
- Be patient and open-minded

Comparison: Pre-and Post-Surveys

Comparing the combined pre- and post-survey rating results in the chart on the following page, we find 6 of 22 indicators with higher pre-survey values than post-survey values: “When I’m in a difficult situation, I like to think about something else to take my mind off it”; “When I have a problem, I choose a realistic plan”; “When I have a problem, I look for the things that might be causing it”; “I can appreciate opinions that are different from my own”; “At school, I try as hard as I can do to my best work”; and “I try to fix mistakes I make.” However, the differences between pre- and post-ratings on these 6 indicators are not large, ranging from 0.01-0.13 ranking points.

The changes in wording of “I feel I do not have much to be proud of” to “I have many things to be proud of in my life” and “I feel that my life and future are out of my control” to “I feel that my life and future are in my control” appear to have impacted the rating results, with both of these statements showing strong positive changes from pre- to post-program. “I have many things to be proud of in my life” moved from an average of 2.79 to 3.16, nearly half a ranking point. “I feel that my life and future are in my control” moved from an average of 2.43 to 3.0, a difference of over half a ranking point.

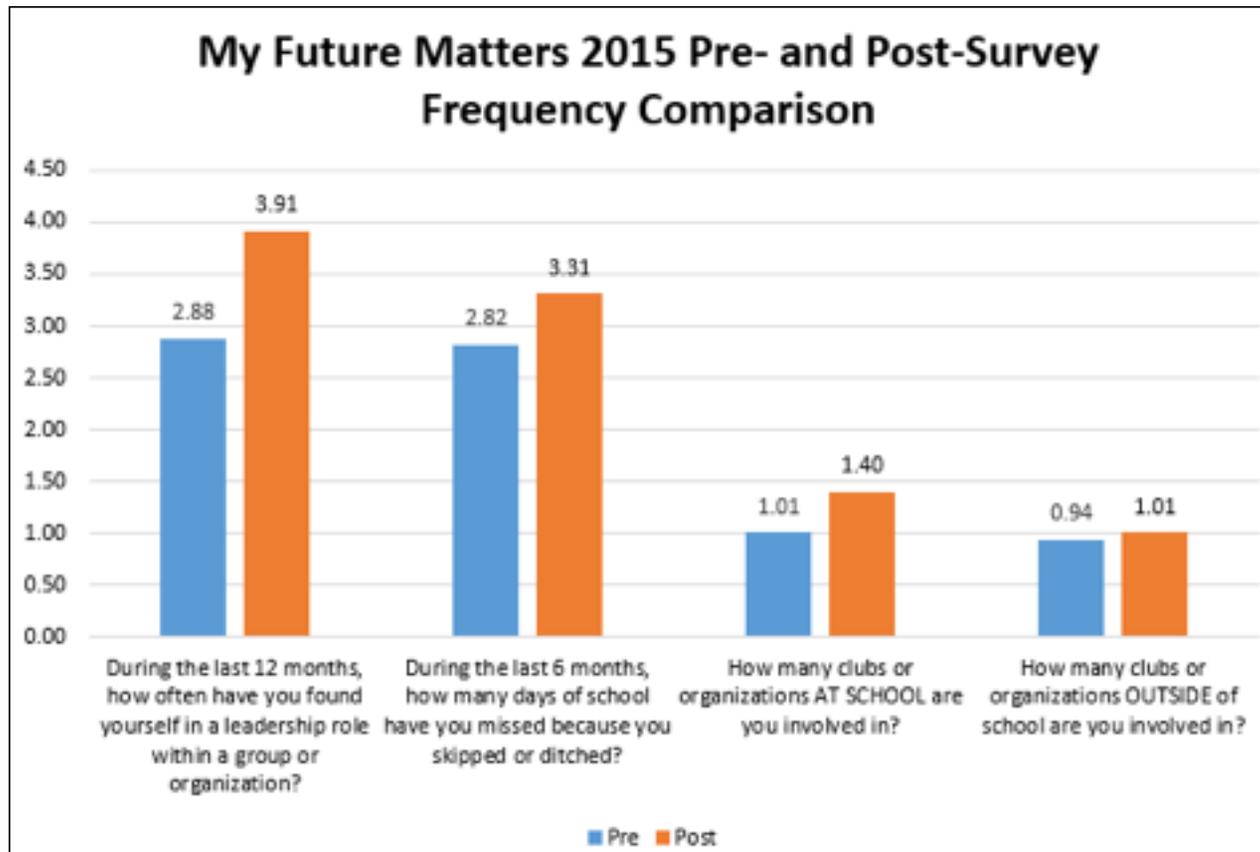
The overall average statement ratings improved from pre- and post-program. Pre-program, the average rating across all 22 statements was 3.70 – though it should be noted that for a few of the statements in the pre-survey (before wording changes), a lower score (1) would indicate a more positive outcome than a higher score (5), so this average rating does not tell the entire story. Post-program, the average rating across all 22 statements was 3.84, **an increase of 0.14 ranking points. Additionally, post-program ratings had a higher minimum and maximum than pre-program ratings: the minimum rating on a pre-program statement was 2.43, while the minimum rating on a post-program statement was 3.0.** The maximum on a pre-program statement was 4.29, while the maximum rating on a post-program statement was 4.35.

Given the relatively small sample size, we cannot say that these results are statistically significant, or indicate a causal relationship between the My Future Matters program and the increases in statement ratings that we observe. However, they are suggestive of a positive correlation between program participation and improved attitudes/behaviors regarding one’s leadership and future outlook.

My Future Matters 2015 Pre- and Post-Survey Ratings Comparison



Comparing the results of the frequency questions, we do find that students were in more leadership positions after the My Future Matters program than before the program (over one full role more). Students also are in more clubs both in and out of school than they were previously. However, students have skipped/ditched on average about 0.49 more days of school after the program; but this difference is quite small, about 4 extra hours of school skipped, and could be a result of the small sample size.



Notable Trends

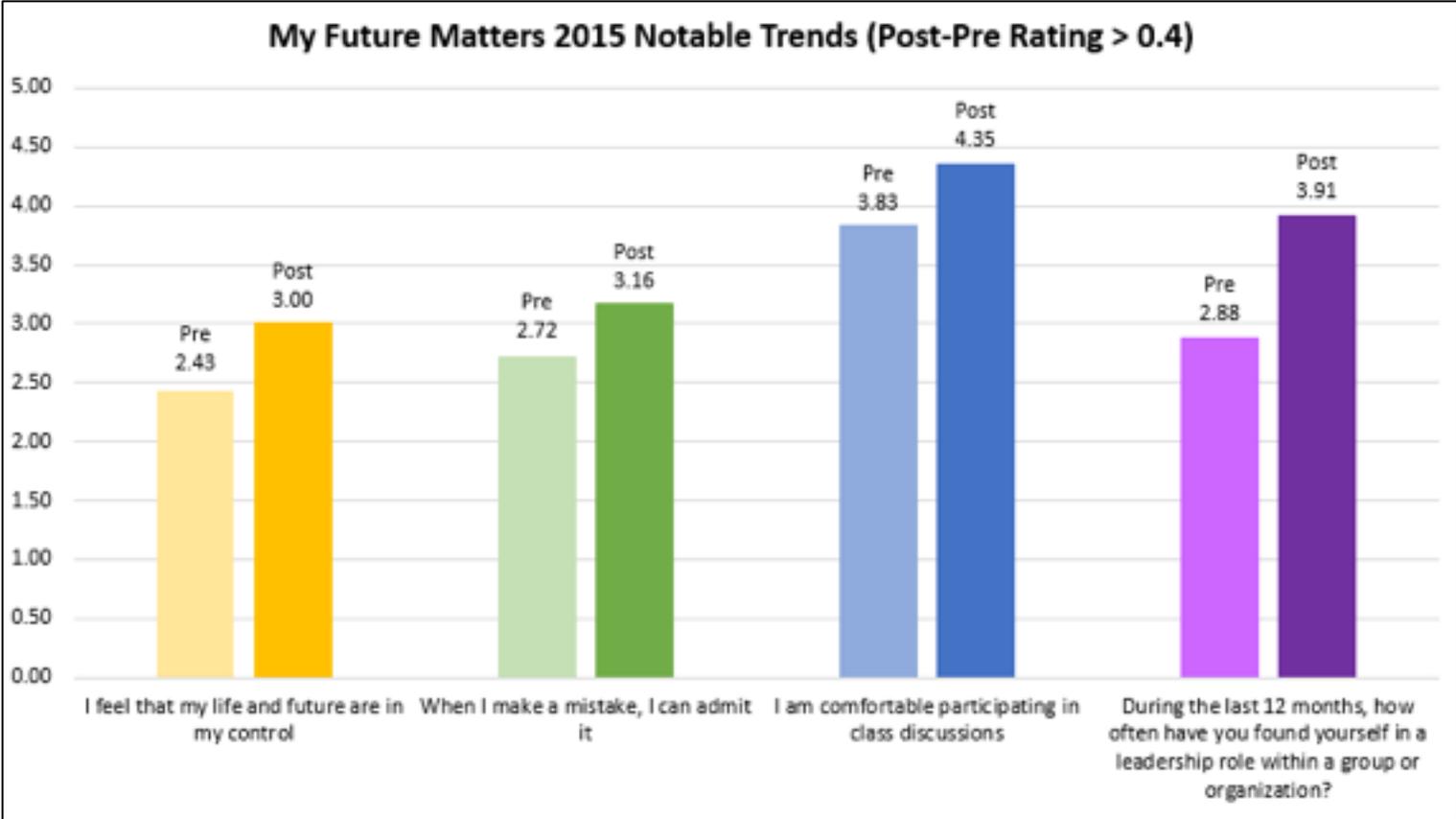
The cumulative sample size across pre- and post-surveys, while much improved from the Spring 2015 collection, is still relatively small (123 pre-surveys, 105 post-surveys), and the substantial number of surveys without completed qualitative responses precludes us from drawing causal conclusions regarding the effect of My Future Matters on students' attitudes about their own leadership skills and futures, and their understanding of service leadership. Nevertheless, here we describe four interesting trends (with average positive ratings differences of greater than 0.4 from pre to post) that emerged from the data that provide encouraging results and are worth further exploration in future program evaluation.

Trend 1: "When I make a mistake, I can admit it." From pre-program to post-program, students reported greater ability to admit their mistakes after participation in My Future Matters. As the chart on the following page shows, students' pre-program rating was 2.72, and post-program was 3.16, an increase of 0.44 rating points.

Trend 2: "I feel that my life and future are in my control." From pre-program to post-program, students indicated more ownership of their own activities, relationships, etc., after participation in My Future Matters. As the chart on the following page shows, students' pre-program rating was 2.43, and post-program was 3.0, an increase of 0.57 rating points.

Trend 3: "I am comfortable participating in class discussions." From pre-program to post-program, students' comfort level with class participation increased, an encouraging result given that one of My Future Matters' main goals is to help students voice their opinions. As the chart on the following page shows, students' pre-program rating was 3.83, and post-program was 4.35, an increase of 0.52 rating points.

Trend 4: Leadership roles within a group or organization. From pre-program to post-program, students described taking on more leadership opportunities after participation in My Future Matters. As the chart on the following page shows, students' pre-program average number of leadership roles in the past 12 months was 2.88, and post-program was 3.91, an increase of 1.03 roles.



Conclusion

While overall ratings and frequency results suggest that My Future Matters does have a positive effect on student attitudes and behaviors on leadership, the small sample size and relatively small differences between pre and post results on most questions do not allow us to causally attribute the changes observed to program effects. Nevertheless, the results are encouraging.

We recommend that Community Works continue collecting pre- and post-My Future Matters survey data, and to emphasize the importance of continuity and complete data collection to program facilitators. We also recommend that adjustments be made to the last section of the survey – the three open-ended questions – as those seem to be prone to omission or less thoughtful answers than desired. We encourage the program to continue improving the quality and increasing the quantity of its data.