What are the perceptions of Pathways to Education students of the post-secondary educational and other opportunities available to them?

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Background to Project

- **Pathways to Education**
  - A community-based program
  - Designed to reduce high-school drop-out rate

- **Where?**
  - 11 at-risk neighbourhoods across Canada, including Kingston
  - Helps youth through Mentoring, Tutoring, Student-Parent Support Workers, and Post-Secondary Financial Incentives

- **Why?**
  - Many students in program face significant barriers to high school graduation and transition to post-secondary destinations

Purpose

This study sought to describe and understand the perceptions and knowledge of post-secondary destinations that were held by students enrolled in the Pathways to Education program. In particular, this study sought to establish whether the students knowledge and perceptions changed during the period when they were exposed to activities in the Pathways to Education program that were designed to increase students awareness of post-secondary choices and destinations.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants for the questionnaires were recruited through the Pathways to Education program. The participants were selected, with 25 students completing the first questionnaire, and 11 completing the second questionnaire a few weeks later. This study was intended to allow the researcher to establish whether students’ perceptions and knowledge of post-secondary choices changed following their exposure to the activities in the Pathways to Education program.

Review of the Literature

Anecdotal and empirical evidence suggests that youth organizations can provide environments that foster and promote development for disadvantaged youth (Jones & Deutsch, 2010). Research suggests that young people from affluent backgrounds have greater opportunities and scaffolding to develop these skills, making them more competitive in today’s society than their poorer counterparts (Lexmond & Reeves, 2009).

The students’ perspectives shared through the questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews, reveal a number of factors that might contribute to ongoing support provided by Pathways to Education at the Kingston site.

Discussion

1. Many of the students felt a level of uncertainty about their post-secondary choices and future career aspirations.
2. Pathways to Education was seen by many as a vital source of information, guidance, and support that was helping to scaffold students through their uncertainty.
3. The sense of community provided by Pathways to Education was valued by almost all participants of this study.
4. Many students relied upon the tutoring provided to support their high-school grade performance.
5. Pathways to Education was the second most popular choice with which to discuss post-secondary education.

Interview Data

Analysis of interview data revealed the students felt Pathways to Education were shaping their post-secondary perceptions and preparation through the following themes:

- **sense of community**, providing scaffolding, opening doors, skills development, and learning from others.

Students were concerned about career planning and preparation and felt Pathways to Education were providing a critical form of support, advice, and guidance during this challenging time. In many instances, students were uncertain of choices and pathways that were available to them.

Table: Focus Group Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paths to Education is the perfect place to try different things, cause it’s about rising to new heights right</td>
<td>Michael said…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The theme: “Areas of change” included students’ finding things out about themselves, about what they were capable of doing, what their stories were, and to get help, advice, and support.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pathways to Education was providing a critical form of support, advice, and guidance during this challenging time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The students were uncertain of choices and pathways that were available to them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: Questionnaire Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paths to Education was providing a critical form of support, advice, and guidance during this challenging time.</td>
<td>Abbi said…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The students were uncertain of choices and pathways that were available to them.</td>
<td>Andrew said…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to become a mechanic</td>
<td>Kerry said…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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References


Contact Information

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- Imperial Oil Foundation
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Footnotes:

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References:

