



# GRAEME DINGLE FOUNDATION

Empowering kids to overcome life's obstacles  
Whakamanawatia ngā tamariki kia eke panuku



## Project K ALUMNI

### March 2020

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*“Project K literally changed and saved my life. I can honestly say I may have gone down a bad path. When your young you think you’re an adult, and you don’t realise the impact your choices will have in your life, in the near and far future.”*

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# THE SURVEY

Project K is a 14-month programme for selected students with low self-confidence. It involves four programme stages including an induction, wilderness adventure, community challenge and a 12-month individual mentoring partnership with a trained mentor. The programme focuses on building confidence, teaching life skills, promoting good health and encouraging a positive attitude. The aim of Project K is to arm participants with a belief in their own ability to complete tasks and achieve goals, and to help them find purpose and direction.

At the request of the Graeme Dingle Foundation Regional Manager, 55 Bay of Plenty Project K Alumni completed an online survey. The aim of the survey was to explore the current status of the Project K graduates and gather their perceptions of the impact that Project K had on their education, career and other life achievements.

## Participants

In 2019 a link to the survey was sent in an email to 98 Bay of Plenty alumni and, in 2020, a follow up email was sent to 43 alumni who had not responded previously. A total of 63\* of the 98 alumni completed the survey over the two collection points, a response rate of 64%.

The alumni attended two Bay of Plenty Project K schools and graduated from fifteen Project K programmes between 2009 and 2019.

The largest number of respondents graduated in 2014 and 2015 and completed the survey four/five-years post-programme. The earliest respondents graduated in 2009 and completed the survey ten-years post programme.

Of the 63 respondents, 62 were Project K graduates, one respondent did not graduate Project K.

*N.B. Due to a software malfunction, 11 of the 63 alumni completed only the quantitative question 'Ways Project K helped' and 52 alumni completed the whole survey.*

**Table 1.** Number (%) of all survey respondents and years' post-programme, by the year of Project K graduated (n = 63).

Year Graduated	Number (%) of respondents	Years post-programme
2009	2 (3%)	10
2010	9 (14%)	9
2011	5 (8%)	8
2012	3 (5%)	7
2013	2 (3%)	6
2014	11 (17%)	5
2015	10 (16%)	4
2016	9 (14%)	3
2017	8 (13%)	2
2018	1 (2%)	1
2019	3 (5%)	0
Total	63 (100%)	

## KEY FINDINGS

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- Most participants (74%) were still at school at age 17 years and 26% were still at school at 18 years.
- Of the respondents that had left school, the majority, 95%, had achieved at least NCEA level 1, 82% had achieved at least NCEA level 2, and 33% had achieved NCEA level 3.
- The majority of Project K alumni (70%) are either in full-time employment or attending a full-time further education or training course.
- None of the participants said they were inactive i.e. unemployed, and not attending a course or training, and not looking for employment.
- Strategies developed to overcome constraints to working or studying full-time such as being the primary caregivers of a child or children, sickness or injury, show the commitment of the Project K alumni to achieving their employment/career goals.
- Many of the alumni rated highest that Project K helped them by motivating them to set personal/life goals, recognise good opportunities and having the confidence to try new activities.
- Being supported to set and achieve goals also helped the alumni with their academic achievements, job/career choices and to recognise good opportunities.
- Alumni who felt that Project K helped them with their communication skills were also helped to build positive relationships.
- There is evidence that helping participants achieve academically and with their job/career choices may also provide some protection against negative peer pressure.
- The Wilderness Adventure was a programme highlight for the many of the respondents. They described the Wilderness Adventure as an intense experience that took them outside their comfort zone, provided opportunities for leadership and developed their social competence.
- The Wilderness Adventure also helped them to develop a more positive and grateful outlook.
- Most alumni said they valued their mentor as a confidant, advisor and positive role model who motivated and inspired them to set and achieve life goals. Participants comments revealed variations in the degree of support they received from their mentors, although most believed mentoring to be beneficial. Some participants considered the programme manager as a role model and valuable source of guidance and support,
- Project K alumni who said their mentor has helped them were more likely to still be in contact with their mentor post-programme.
- Project K alumni who want to be a Project K mentor in the future were more likely to still be in contact with Project K staff.
- The alumni say that by taking part in Project K they gained confidence, competence and connections, and this has led to a more positive view of their abilities and to positive outcomes in other areas of their life.
- Recommendations for improving Project K include more support meetings after the programme has ended and incorporating Maori culture.
- The alumni said they would recommend Project K because of the positive impact it had on themselves and the opportunities it offers to other young people. They say it helped them to grow in confidence and overcome interpersonal challenges and made them aware of the many opportunities available to them, and how the choices they make now can impact their future lives. They believe that Project K is especially beneficial for young people who feel they do not fit in, are struggling in school, or are dealing with difficult life situations.

# SECTION A: AFTER PROJECT K

## Qualifications

### NCEA

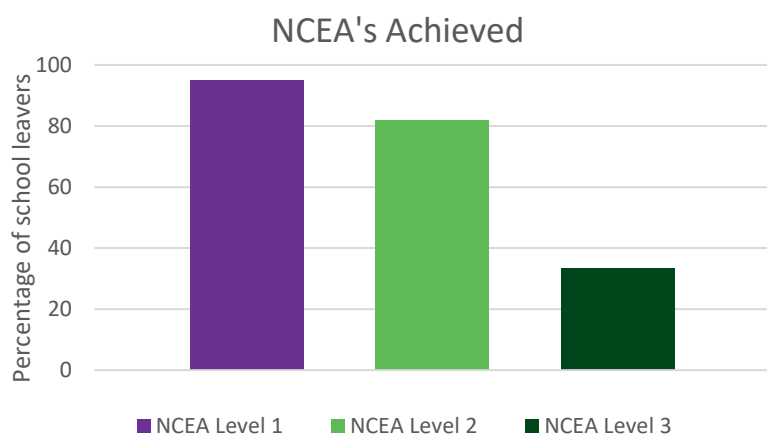
The main qualification for secondary school students is the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). Leaving school with NCEA 1, 2 and/or 3 increases future educational, job and earning prospects. Level 1 serves as a foundation for later study or employment, Level 2 “gives people opportunities in term of further education and employment, contributing to better health outcomes and a better quality of life” and young people with Level 3 are slightly more likely to enrol in a tertiary institution.<sup>1</sup>

Project K selects participants with low academic and social self-efficacy compared to their peers. Students with lower self-efficacy lack the confidence to take on challenges and persist in the face of setbacks. Low academic self-efficacy (your belief in your ability to successfully self-regulate your learning) has been associated with lower academic aspirations and achievement, and higher school dropout. Previous research has shown that Project K has a positive impact on academic self-efficacy.<sup>2</sup>

### Respondent School Leavers

- 75% (39 of 52) of the Project K alumni were school leavers at the time of completing the survey.
- Of the 39 school leavers, 74% (29 of the 39 school leavers) were still at school at 17 years and 26% (10 of 39) were still at school at 18 years.
- 95% (37 of the 39 school leavers) achieved at least NCEA level 1, 82% (32 of 39) achieved at least NCEA level 2, and 33% (13 of 39) achieved NCEA level 3.

**Graph 9.** The percentage of school leavers achieving NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3 (n = 39)



### Respondents still at school:

- 18% (13 of the 52 survey respondents) are still at school.
- To date, all have achieved NCEA level 1, and 54% (7 of 13) have achieved NCEA level 2.

<sup>1</sup>Ministry of Education (2019) Education and Learning Outcomes

[https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/6409/NCEA-Level-2-or-Above-Indicator.pdf](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/6409/NCEA-Level-2-or-Above-Indicator.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Deane, K. L., Harré, N., Moore, J. & Courtney, M. G. R. (2017). The impact of the Project K youth development program on self-efficacy: A randomized control trial. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(3), 516-537. Doi: 10.1007/s10964-016-0463-9.

## Tertiary courses and qualifications completed

The alumni that had left school were asked whether they had attended any further education courses or training programmes in the last 12-months, and whether they had completed any qualifications at a tertiary institute. The tertiary courses completed, and tertiary qualifications achieved are listed in tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3. Tertiary courses completed by school leavers, in the last 12-months

Type of course or programme
Automotive Level 3
MOOC Dementia training, understanding and preventing
Marine Biology Degree
Employ NZ (2 participants)
Pacific coast bay path ways
Employee NZ
Diploma of Business
Bachelor of nursing
Certificate in skincare and make up Level 3
Electrical engineering
Te wananga o Aotearoa. career preparation
Diploma in digital design (web and graphic)
Bachelor of science major in Psychology
Certificate in mechanical engineering level 3
Commerce degree, major in finance

Table 4. Tertiary Qualifications achieved by school leavers

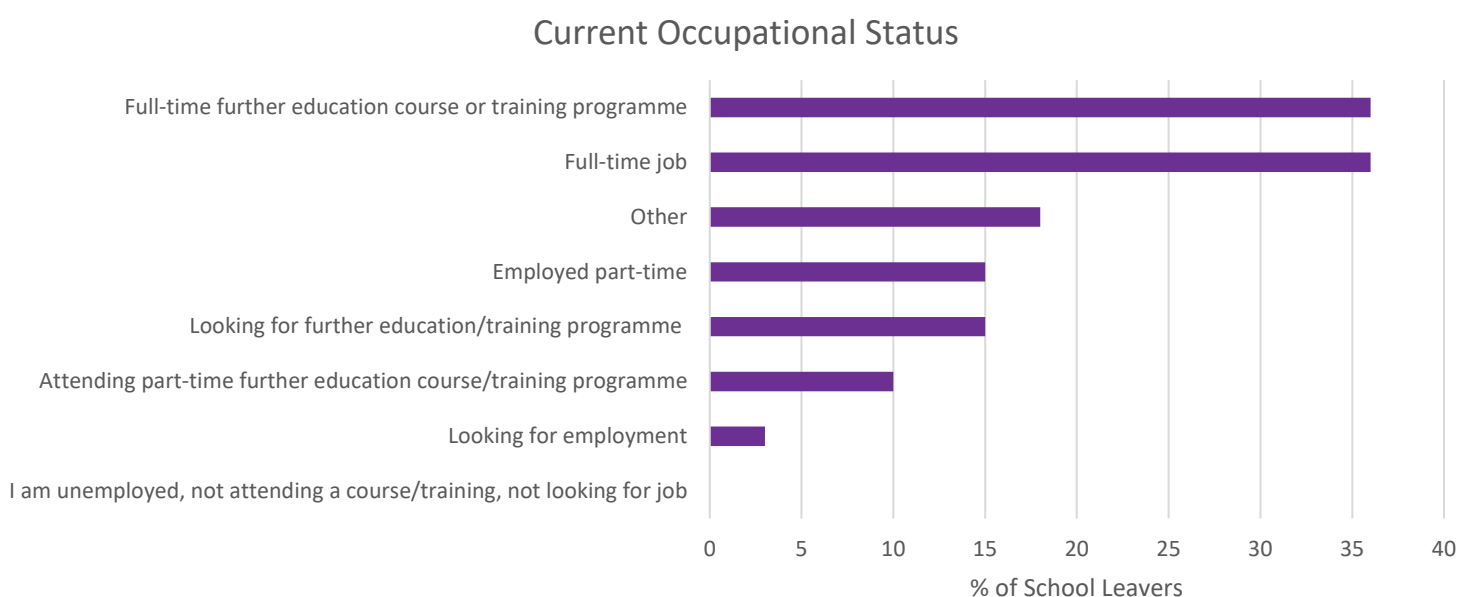
Qualifications
New Zealand Diploma in Business (Level 6)
Bachelor of business in event management
Dive Instructor, First aid Instructor
Beautician, beauty therapy (now doing my Bachelor of Nursing)
Diploma in Business (Level 5)
Liquor License control qualification
Cert in barista and bartending. Food handling cert. duty managers cert Level 5 business and marketing Level 3 Comprehensive first aid. Behavioural styles and emotional intelligence certificate. Teacher aiding certificate. Completed mentor training for project K
Level 4 radio broadcasting certificate
Certificate of design lvl2, Certificate of design lvl3
Level four health care assistance (2012) Mental Health Cert level 4 (2015)

## Current Occupations

The 37 alumni that had left school were asked what is your current occupational status? All were currently working towards a purposeful future. Most (70%) were either attending a full-time further education course/training programme or had a full-time job.

- 36% (14 of the 39) are attending a full-time further education course or training programme.  
Three of the 13 also have part-time employment
- 36% (14 of the 39) have a full-time job.  
Two of the 13 also attend a full-time further education course
- 10% (4 of the 39) are attending a part-time further education course or training programme.  
One is also employed part-time  
One is also the primary caregiver of a child/children
- 15% (6 of the 39) are employed part-time.  
Two of the 6 are also looking for a further education course or training programme
- 15% (6 of the 39) are looking for a further education course or training programme  
Three of the 6 also have childcare responsibilities  
Two are also looking for employment/a career path
- 1 of the 39 is looking for employment  
And a further education course or training programme
- 18% (7 of the 39) selected 'other', six were the primary caregiver of a child or children\* and one looking for a career path.
- No participant said they were inactive i.e. unemployed, and not attending a course or training, and not looking for employment.  
*\*See 'Restrictions' on page 2.*

**Graph 10.** Percentage of school leavers for each category of current occupational status (n – 39)



**Table 5.** Number (percentage) of school leavers currently enrolled in a Further education/training programme

Type of course or programme	school leavers
University	6 (15%)
Other ( <i>Online digital art course; school for young parents; Ashton Warner Nanny Academy</i> )	6 (15%)
Institute of Technology/Polytechnic	7 (18%)
Wananga	1 (3%)
Youth training	1 (3%)

## Restrictions

Research shows that males are most often described as inactive due to poor health and females described as inactive due to childcare responsibilities<sup>3</sup>. Despite restrictions to continuing or entering employment and/or a further education/training the alumni also describe ways they are continuing to work towards and plan for their future. 16% (6 of the 37 alumni school leavers) said they were restricted from being employed or attending a course, reasons included:

- Childcare responsibilities (4 or 11%)
- Sickness/injury/disability i.e. wrist surgery (1 or 3%)
- Lack of transport (1 or 3%)

### Childcare Responsibilities

Several of the alumni school leavers (7 of the 39) were currently the primary caregivers of a child or children. In addition to their childcare responsibilities, they also described strategies and plans to continue with or to start employment and/or further education. For example, in addition to caring for a young child or children they were also: attending a full-time further education course; attending school part-time; exploring small business options; looking for a career path and making plans to study when their child starts school.

*“I have a son but am enrolled at school for young parents and have the option to attend once a week if I wish to.” (Alumni, 2-years post-graduation )*

*“I am looking for a further education course or training programme... My son is almost one. I am also hapu with twin boys 😊” (Alumni, 4-years post-graduation )*

*“I am full-time at the Institute of Technology/Polytechnic and ... A mother” (Alumni, 4-years post-graduation )*

*“Stay at home mum but hope to study when my baby starts school” (Alumni, 4-years post-graduation )*

*“Employed, attending university, and mother... To combat this, I have chosen to study from home. This has stopped me from studying further, such as a course away from my hometown and the interruption this will have on my daughter's schooling. It meant finding a job was hard, something that was flexible with day care and school hours, and within my area of expertise.” (Alumni, 9-years post-graduation )*

*“I am a stay at home mother of 2, currently pregnant with our 3rd and exploring our small business options” (Alumni, 9-years post-graduation )*

<sup>3</sup> Society at a Glance 2016 OECD Social Indicators (2016) The NEET challenge: what can be done for jobless and disengaged YOUTH?  
[https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/soc\\_glance-2016-4\\_en.pdf?expires=1581031586&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=3160C3FE455071169B56D15C23DDF13B](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/soc_glance-2016-4_en.pdf?expires=1581031586&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=3160C3FE455071169B56D15C23DDF13B)



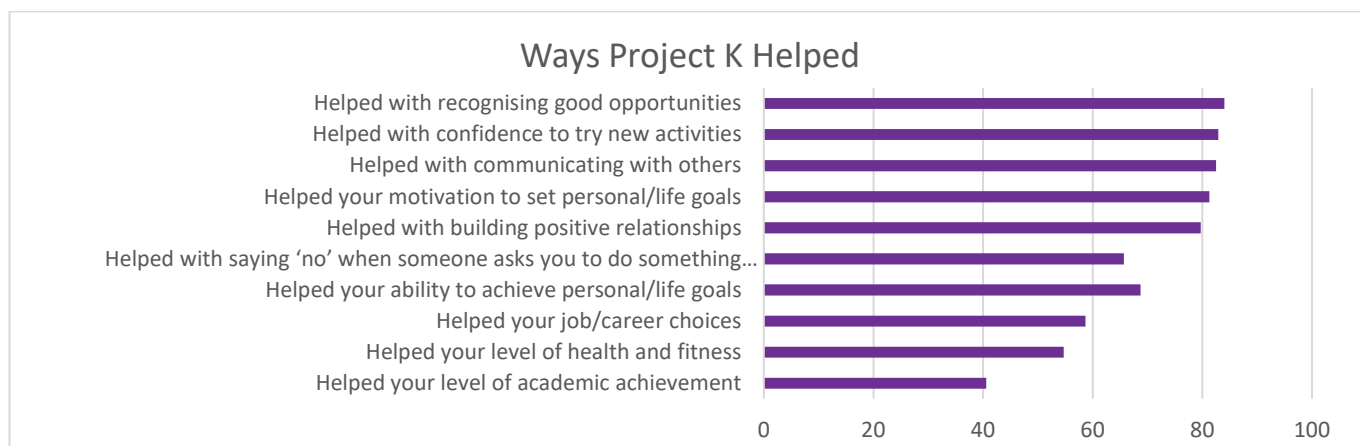
## SECTION B: HOW PROJECT K HELPED

### How Project K helped overall

Participants were given a list of ways Project K can help and asked to rate "how much impact taking part in Project K has helped with the things described below." Each item was scored on a 5-point scale with 1 = Not at all, 2 = A little, 3 = Some, 4 = Quite a lot and 5 = A lot. The percentage of respondents that selected the two highest ratings (4 and 5 indicating a high level of help) were combined and are presented in Graph 1.

Rated the highest by participants, the top three ways that Project K helped were with: 1. recognising good opportunities; 2. confidence to try new activities; and 3. communicating with others. Also, highly rated were that Project K helped participants with their motivation to set personal/life goals and with building positive relationships with others.

**Graph 1.** The ways Project K helped (n = 64), percentage of respondents for combined responses 'Quite a lot' and 'A lot'.



### Relationships

Correlation analyses was used to examine the relationships between the various ways the alumni perceived Project K had helped

- There was significant **very strong** positive relationship between Project K helping with communication with others and helping to build positive relationships ( $r = .84, p = < .001$ ).

Alumni who said Project K had helped to them communicate with others were more likely to say that it helped build positive relationships.

- There were significant **strong** positive relationships between Project K helping with the ability to achieve personal/life goals with job/career choices ( $r = .72, p = \leq .001$ ), recognising good opportunities ( $r = .76, p = \leq .001$ ), building positive relationships ( $r = .67, p = \leq .001$ ), helping with levels of academic achievement ( $r = .62, p = \leq .001$ ), and help saying 'no' when someone asked you to do something against your beliefs ( $r = .61, p = \leq .001$ ).

Alumni who said Project K had helped with the ability to achieve personal/life goals were more likely to say that Project K helped with their job/career choices, recognising good opportunities, building positive relationships, academic achievement, and saying 'no' when someone asked you to do something against their beliefs.

- There were significant **strong** positive relationships between Project K helping with the ability to achieve personal/life goals and the motivation to set personal/life goals ( $r = .74, p = \leq .001$ ).

Alumni who said Project K had helped with the ability to achieve personal/life goals were more likely to say that it helped with their motivation to set personal goals.

- There was a significant **strong** positive relationship between Project K helping with levels of academic achievement ( $r = .61, p = \leq .001$ ), and helping with job/career choices ( $r = .61, p = \leq .001$ ) and helping to say 'no' when someone asked you to do something against your beliefs ( $r = .61, p = \leq .001$ ).

Alumni who said Project K had helped with their academic achievement and job/career choices were more likely to say that it also helped with saying 'no' when someone asks you to do something against their beliefs.

The findings indicate:

- The importance of setting and achieving goals while taking part in Project K. Alumni that said Project K helped them with goal setting and goal achievement also said that Project K helped in many other areas. They were also more likely to recommend Project K for other young people and want to be a mentor in the future.
- Learning to set and achieve goals also helps Project K participants with their academic achievements, job/career choices and to recognise good opportunities.
- Project K helps participants with their communication skills that in turn helps them to build positive relationships.
- Helping participants achieve academically and with their job/career choices may also provide some protection against negative peer pressure.

**\*\* (For this report, as a guide a correlation coefficient greater than 0.8 is considered a *very strong correlation*, between 0.6 and 0.8 is a *strong correlation*, between 0.4 and 0.6 is a *moderate correlation*, between 0.2 and 0.4 is a *weak correlation*; less than 0.2 is considered a *very weak or no correlation*)**

**Table 2** correlations between all variable (n = 55). Highlighted are the strong and very strong positive relationships.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Ability to achieve personal/life goals	-								
2. Level of health and fitness	.35**	-							
3. Job/career choices	.66**	.27	-						
4. Academic achievement	.61**	.41*	.61**	-					
5. Saying 'no' asked to do something against your beliefs	.57**	.17	.45**	.52**	-				
6. Communicating with others	.58**	.22	.46**	.39**	.36*	-			
7. Building positive relationships	.66**	.33	.52**	.48**	.46**	.85**	-		
8. Motivation to set personal/life goals	.73**	.32*	.66**	.62**	.47**	.49**	.52**	-	
9. Confidence to try new activities	.45**	.32	.31*	.22	.25	.48**	.36**	.38**	-
10. Recognising good opportunities	.73**	.20	.42**	.51**	.49**	.57**	.61**	.69**	.69**

## What participants say about Project K

*The remaining questions were completed by 45 of the 55 survey respondents*

Participants were given the option of commenting on five questions. For each question a summary of themes is given followed by examples of verbatim quotes to illustrate the themes:

Gains: "What, if anything, did you gain from your participation in Project K?" (*Comments were given by 84% of survey respondents.*)

Highlights: "What was the highlight of the Project K programme for you?" (*Comments were given by 98% of survey respondents.*)

Improvements: "Do you have any suggestions for improving Project?" (*Comments were given by 78% of survey respondents.*)

Mentor help: "Do you think having a mentor helped you?" (*Comments were given by 78% of survey respondents.*)

Recommend for others: Would you recommend Project K for other young people? (*Comments were given by 64% of survey respondents.*)

### Gains

Previous research has shown:

- Project K is effective at building self-efficacy, resilience, connectedness and increasing wellbeing.
- Project K provides opportunities for mastery experiences (experiences that make a person more capable of handling various situations). By overcoming physical challenges and building bonds with others in their group (outside their comfort zone), participants develop a positive view of themselves and their ability to handle social situations effectively and set and work towards life goals.
- Participation on Project K promotes the Five Cs of Positive Youth Development: Confidence (a positive sense of self-worth and self-efficacy); competence (a positive view of one's actions in specific areas, including social and academic skills); connection (positive bonds with people and institutions); character (a respect for societal and cultural norms, correct behaviours, and integrity) and; caring/compassion (a sense of sympathy and empathy for others). Dr Richard Lerner proposed that developing the Five C's can lead to the 6<sup>th</sup> 'C' Contribution (to self, family, community, and to the institutions of a civil society).

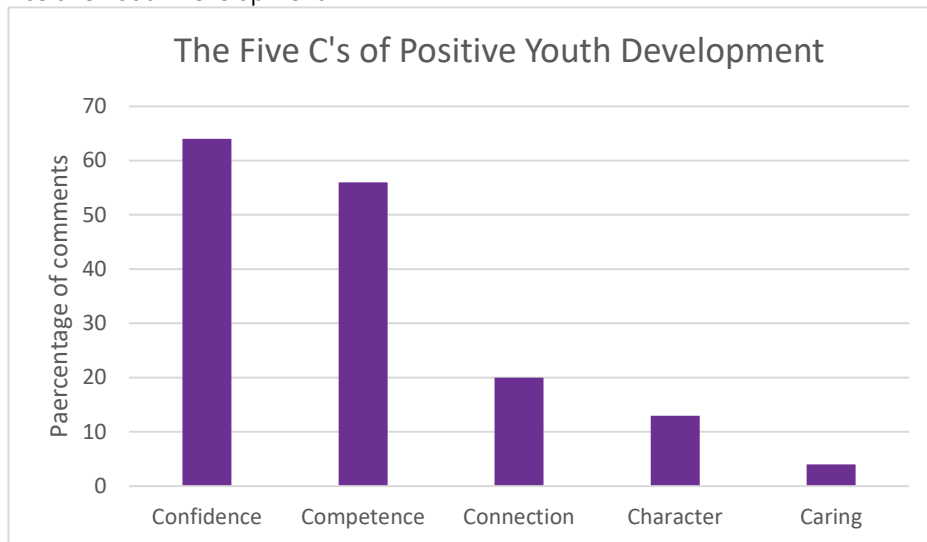
Asked to reflect on their experiences of Project K and what they had gained, participants comments show evidence of gains in confidence, competence and connections, and a few comments also related to gains in caring and character, (see graph 2 below).

Respondents comments indicate that these gains provide a pathway to positive actions in other areas of their life. They also describe developing a more positive and grateful outlook. Evidence shows that experiencing gratitude has emotional, social, career, personality and health benefits that increase wellbeing and encourage future positive contribution<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Ackerman, C. E. (2019) Positive Psychology.com. <https://positivepsychology.com/benefits-gratitude-research-questions/>

**Graph 2.** The percentage of respondent comments related to each of the five C's of Positive Youth Development



*“One of the biggest things for me was my confidence. I feel I now have so much more confidence in my abilities to meet/interact with new people and to ask for help when needed. I’ve come to realise all the opportunities that are out there for me and to have more confidence in my ability to know where I’m heading in life.”*

*“Project K definitely helped boost my confidence and belief in myself. It encouraged me to try new things.”*

*“I gained the ability to set future goals and know that when I put my mind to it, I can achieve anything. Project K gave me the confidence to push through finishing school and work towards my goal of studying for a Bachelor of Business Management.”*

*“Being able to speak my mind. I went to university, which I believe the skills from Project k helped me get there. My determination to find the job I love and to achieve my goals comes from what I was capable of doing in Project K”*

*“I gained a lot from project k. I made a lot of new friends and I was pushed to my limits during the wilderness adventure, but I think that has helped me realise what I am capable of. It also helped me be more motivated in general. Since we were put into a group of people, we didn’t know well it helped me learn the perspectives of different people throughout the school and made me a lot more open to befriending people outside of my usual friend group.”*

*“Project K and the team that led it changed my life in the most positive way. The journey through project K taught me to stand strong in the face of struggles, to always have an open mind and heart. And most of all, it showed me who I wanted to be like, and who I inspire to be like. (Dan Allen)”*

*“I feel that being a part of project K has helped to build confidence in myself and through this I have been able to take new opportunities, I have also been able to build new friendships with people because I don’t shy away as much as I used to.”*

*“Project K allowed me to be more outspoken, growing up I always had people speak for me but now I am able to comfortably speak my mind without feeling like I need someone to hold my hand. I feel more independent as an individual these days, and like I can make my own choices and lead my own life without worrying about what others will think. I can trust I will always choose the right path even if things go wrong, I now understand that it’s just life and I shouldn’t beat myself over things so much... move on and carry on!”*

*“The list is quite long, but confidence is the one that sticks out. Combined with managing people confidence has allowed me to achieve seemingly impossible goals in my refereeing and has significantly aided my development as a referee. I use the confidence gained through Project K on every match as well as people management skills.”*

*“Everything that I did with Project K has helped me make important decisions in my life. It gave me the confidence to pursue my goals and to make them a reality, I am now studying and pursuing my dream career and I don’t think I would be here if it wasn’t for Project K and the support that I got from it all.”*

*“Project K helped me a lot. At first, I didn’t want to do it because I didn’t think it would help me at all. I was shy and not confident in myself when I started but as the project went on, I gained a lot of self-confidence and ability to speak up for myself and others that needed a voice through the others that I did Project K with. We were all in a similar position and becoming close with the others made me realise that we all struggle with something and it’s okay to speak about it. Gained a few close friends who I’m still good friends with now through the project and had a great time on the wilderness part. It really showed everyone that even though we are all very different to each other, we all had something in common and we built trust in each other. I highly recommend doing this and am proud to say that I was a part of Project K. It taught me very valuable life lessons and helped me to help others that went through similar things that I did.”*

*“From Project K I gained more confidence in myself and it helped me not be as shy as I used to be which was a big problem because it stopped me from making relationships whereas now I have the ability to get to know new people and get my foot into new opportunities. I gained friends that I still talk to now and get along with. With my confidence being better it helped me with my job and making new friends making it easier and a happier environment for me.”*

*“I gained the ability for the first time in my life to feel comfortable in my own skin . Then I gained the passion to change the world 🌍”*

*“The ability to keep going even when my mind said I couldn't do it.”*

*“Project K definitely helped me improve my goal setting which I now believe is a vital skill to have.”*

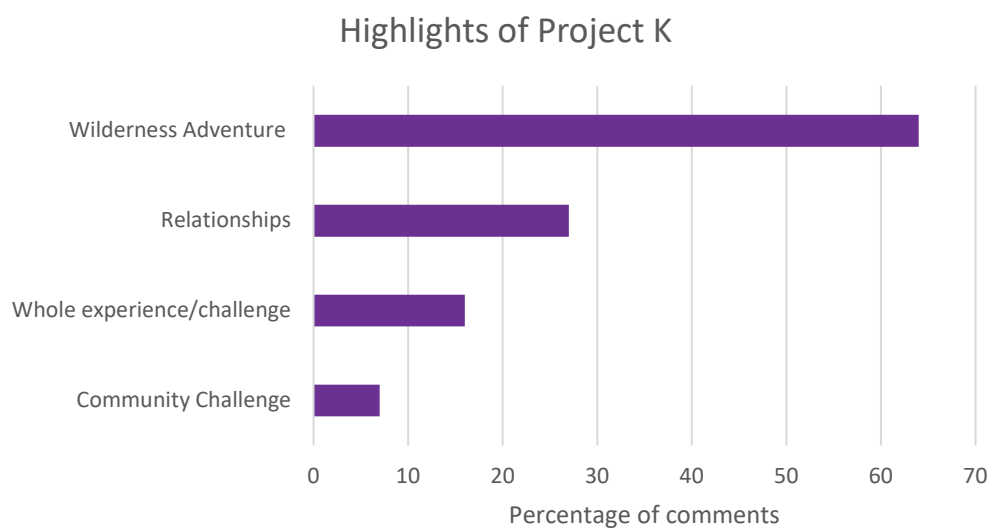
*“Made me realise how lucky I was to have basic amenities such as clean running water, clean clothes, a warm home and how much other people could support me when I needed it. It taught me that when I couldn’t see a way through the hard times, to not give up but keep on trying. It gave me a different outlook on life. The ability to learn more about myself, and how fortunate I am to live in the world I do. It taught me values and allowed me to define my own culture and who I was, and beliefs were strong and valuable to me. It has allowed me to have the ability and strength to pass these down to my own children, things such as a can-do attitude, being grateful, respect and confidence.”*

*“Project k had helped me in many ways such as gaining confidence in speaking to crowds and meeting new people it has also helped me seek knowledge in healthy choices and with this has helped me work towards my goal, being in the army, as I’m in the process of applying and doing testing for that now with a lot of help from project K.”*

*“I think Project K has definitely helped me achieve my goals in life and grow as a person. Project K has made me become a more confident and social person that I never thought I’d be. It has definitely challenged me to try new things/get out of my comfort zone and also to be thankful for what I have in life.”*

## Highlights

**Graph 3.** The percentage of respondent comments that indicated the aspect of Project K as a programme highlight.



The Wilderness Adventure, or an aspect of the Wilderness Adventure, was a programme highlight for many of the respondents. This is expected given the intensity of the experience and the internal and experiential process participants go through. Being isolated in a novel physical environment with a small group of people and no chance of escape, participants face challenges outside their comfort zone, and “the combination of individual and collective accomplishments can reorganise a participants’ outlook and attitude towards themselves, their future, and the world they live in”.<sup>5</sup>

*“Surprisingly the 3 weeks out in the wilderness”*

*“Being fully immersed in nature. I loved being challenged and pushed, it made me realise there is a lot more I can achieve, even if I fail.”*

*“I think that a highlight for me would definitely be while we were in the wilderness, on the first couple of nights we all sat around the fire just talking and all getting along with each other because it meant that we all got comfortable with each other”*

*“The highlight for me was being able to step outside of my comfort zone and gaining more life skills for my future”*

<sup>5</sup> Deane, K. I. & Harré, N (2013) The youth adventure programming model. Journal of Research on Adolescence, 24 (2), 293-308.

*"I think being classed as the unspoken leader was my favourite, I've never been put in a "superior" position before. I've always felt below other feet, and to be a leader and have others follow my lead on day to day activities and listen to my suggestions was healing as it's never been that way for me ever!!!"*

*'I thoroughly enjoyed the wilderness adventure, although maybe not at the time I didn't, but looking back at that point of my life I really needed the fresh air, change of scenery and just pure grounding.'*

*"The no phones part. It allowed me to remember that if I put it down there so many more ways, I can use my time for new opportunities"*

*"The wilderness camp for sure. It was a massive test to see how we all can work together even through the toughest stuff even though we were all strangers. It showed me that even through the most difficult situations that life throws at you, you can push through and better yourself for the future and for the better."*

*"The highlight of Project K was the skydive because it was an opportunity I would not have gotten if I was not in Project K. And the wilderness adventure camp because I still look back on moments and remember where I have been and the fun that I had on that camp."*

*"The wilderness adventure because it showed there is more to life and it taught me to be grateful for what I have as many people don't have or get opportunities like I have had."*

## Improvements

The vast majority of comments revealed that participants did not want any changes as they perceive Project K to be have been a positive experience. A recommendation suggested by a few participants was having more group follow-up meetings (during mentoring and after Project K has ended).

Other suggestions (made by one respondent) were: incorporating Maori culture; adaptations for students with a disability; an inter-regional competition between Project K students from different schools; adaptations to encourage dis-engaged participants to meet with their mentors, and changing the stigma attached to Project K in some schools that may discourage young people from taking part (students may perceive the programme to be for at-risk students).

*"No, I think that the way project K was run was awesome and definitely full of support."*

*"Not that I can think of. We had a few hiccups along the way but that was due to the students and it was all dealt with very well!"*

*"Absolutely not, 10/10 as it is."*

*"No, everything was great for me."*

*"Nope I'd say Project K is great the way it is."*

*"Maybe do some more outdoor activities after getting back from the camp (things that some kids may not have had the opportunity to do. E.g. horse riding) keep the first aid and healthy eating as it's good to have a bit of knowledge on. But even add in some handy work- e.g. go to a work shop for a day and build a small chair to take home."*

*“On going mentorship throughout school, even if it’s on a monthly/termly catch up. It would help to push students to achieve their goals, not only achieve but exceed because they always have someone supporting them in an external role. (Not family/teachers/friends).”*

*“More involvement in mentoring phase”*

*“Just making sure there's good follow up in the mentoring stage.”*

*“Something that could help would be to have more of a follow through at the end of it all.”*

*“When the 'naughty' kids take part in the mentoring, have a target/incentive for them to want to see their mentor. I was just very lucky I gelled with mine so well.”*

*“Everything was great that Project K did. But I do suggest that we have more group sessions to talk about how we are handling Project K. Also doing more physical activities like the mud run and charity work.”*

*“The wilderness adventure makes this program inaccessible to disabled people, as someone who at the time had undiagnosed chronic pain and fatigue, it kinda sucked.”*

*“More inter regional competitions between different schools who have project K . More mentor meet ups between students and mentors all together not just individual mentor meetings . Someone needs to really change the stigma of the way PK looks in schools as I almost didn't participate due to "how it would look"”*

*“Try to adapt to some of the kids more and their situations”*

*“personally, maybe put little Maori things into the course like even just karakia.”*

*“keep in touch with the participants after the experience has finished”*

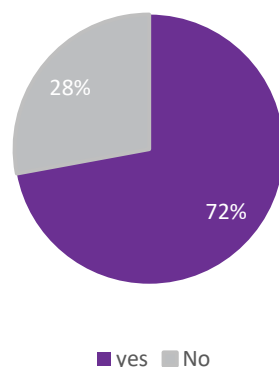
*“More showers! 😊”*

*“More food options lol”*

## Mentor help

**Graph 4.** The percentage of respondent in each category yes/no for whether having a mentor has helped them.

Do You Think Having A Mentor Has Helped You?





The majority (80%) of the comments were positive with participants commenting on ways that having a mentor had helped them. Most participants described how their mentor had been a confidant, advisor and positive role model, and had motivated and inspired them to set and achieve life goals.

*"It gave me the opportunity to speak to an unfamiliar adult which was reassuring for my confidence. I was also able to make another connection with someone in whom I knew I could confide in if I had a problem, I didn't want to tell my family, but I couldn't share with my friends."*

*"Loved having someone to turn to and around to help guide and see what they were achieving to push myself to achieve great things."*

*"I know that my mentor has definitely giving me so much support, it took me a bit to get comfortable with my mentor but now that I am she has been there for me and encouraged me to take new opportunities even if I wasn't sure I would be able to do it, we have been on so many adventures together and we definitely have so many good memories."*

*"Yes, I do believe a mentor helped me, Ayla was my mentor and she was absolutely amazing :)"*

*"My mentor helped and gave me advice whenever I needed like she helped me apply for my first job!"*

*"Having an outsider in your life can be a bit strange, you never know what it is you can or cannot tell. But over time you tend to open up a little more and feel more comfortable to appoint with your mentor then becomes your friend. It took me a while, but I really grew close to my mentor and she was one of the most influential people in my life after Project K. Watching her do her thing as an entrepreneur really inspired me to push for a big goal. I appreciated the long talks, ice cream walks, and opportunities that she had given me! I couldn't be more grateful to have made such a connection with someone."*

*"It did, I loved having one! She was very inspiring, and I found her a very positive role model which was what I needed!"*

*"My mentor helped me so much with setting and achieving goals as well as being there for me with advice as well as learning how to have healthy relationships with adults outside of my normal circles."*

*"Annette taught me valuable life skills at a critical age."*

*"Someone dependable even though I graduated a few years ago. They have so much experience in life which I can tap into at any time."*

*"Under the guide of my mentor I was able to set goals and work towards them and accomplish them. This has helped me to keep setting goals and work towards them even years after Project K finished for me."*

*"After graduation, we still spent a lot of time together and since life has taken us separate ways, we still chat, and plan catch ups when we are in the same towns. Nisha helped me deal with a lot of pent up stuff as a teenager in a healthy way and I am grateful to have her in my life still as such a wonderful friend."*

*"I'm sure it did for some of the kids but as for me I didn't need one. Once I got out of the course, I knew I had to work hard to achieve what I wanted. Plus, I have a very supporting and helpful bunch of family and friends. They served as more of mentors to me."*

*"The mentor part is a great idea, I just didn't have a mentor that caught up with me and helped me much as she was very busy all the time, but the other mentors did great."*

*"From my experience having a mentor was good and throughout the year that I had one the activities and talking was nice although after that it has not done much for me. While Project K is happening, it works well, and it did help me although after the end there was nothing. Which is something that can be worked on. Apart from that Project K will always be something that I am forever grateful for."*

*"In a way it did cause they were like parents but not and made me see things and understand ways of why my parents done certain things."*

*"It was like having an older sister. Someone to talk to. I think the biggest mentor for me was Dan. He has continued to support my journey through life, from being a reference for jobs, to just checking in."*

*"I am happy to say she has really helped and encouraged me throughout the whole program, and I am so thankful to have had a person like her in my life. Sarah and I did a lot of fun things together and she helped me a lot with my school life. She also helped me achieve my goal of getting a job which was nice. I would say Sarah and I would definitely be lifelong friends. I look up to her as a person and she is just the best."*

A small number said that mentoring had not been helpful because: they did not need a mentor as they had adequate adult support, they had not made the most of having a mentor; or their mentor had not committed to regular meetings. However, some of those who did not have a positive mentoring partnership also said that from their observations of the successful mentor partnerships they believe young people can benefit greatly from having a mentor.

*"I think personally it didn't benefit me much. But it could definitely help other young people."*

*"I wish I were more receptive to the mentor portion of the program while I was in it, but that was on me, I guess. I did set and achieve some goals, such as learning how to cook."*

*"My mentor and I never actually met up other than seeing each other at the group meet ups. Although I don't think having a mentor would have been beneficial for me even if we had meet up regularly since I'm an awkward person and it was hard getting along with her."*

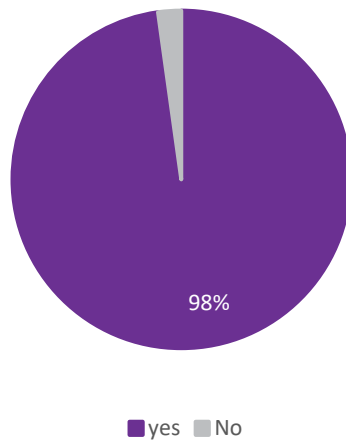
*"The mentor part is a great idea, I just didn't have a mentor that caught up with me and helped me much as she was very busy all the time, but the other mentors did great."*

*"I would say yes but mentor was largely absent dues to things going on in his life."*

## Recommend for others

**Graph 5.** Would you recommend Project K for other young people, percentage of respondents in each category yes/no

Would you recommend Project K for other young people?



Of the almost two-thirds of participants who commented all said they would recommend Project K to other young people. They would recommend Project K because of the positive impact it had on themselves and the opportunities they believe it offers other young people.

Respondents said that among potential gains for participants were increased confidence, help for young people who are struggling in school or with difficult life situations, increased social competence (especially helpful for young people who feel that they do not fit in), and more awareness of the many opportunities that are available to them and how the choices they make now can impact their future lives.

*"During the process I had so many doubts, however looking back on it and the person I was before compared to now I can fully comprehend just how much of an impact Project K has had on me. All positively too. I feel I have become a much brighter, better version of myself and I just wish that everyone got to experience what I did."*

*"Yes, you learn a lot and get good memories from it. Even though at the time I thought some stuff was kinda pointless but looking back it did have an impact."*

*"It's a great experience and really pushes to get you out of a shell or difficult situation you've been dealing with."*

*"I would recommend the Wilderness Adventure. The event was constructed very well. The supervisors were very kind, funny, respectful people making it easier to feel more optimistic about it all. And the trip itself was well executed and a lot of fun to take part in. The Wilderness Adventure helped me create new friendships, learn some outdoor-handy skills, and help me partially in fitness. Personally, I didn't enjoy the other 2 parts nearly as much as part 1 of Project K."*

*"It was super beneficial, and it was also lots of fun."*

*"Yes, it is good for helping people understand more about themselves"*

*"Project K literally changed and saved my life. I can honestly say I may have gone down a bad path. When your young you think you're an adult, and you don't realise the impact your choices will have in your life, in the near and far future."*

*"I would definitely recommend this project K program to anyone looking to come out of there comfort zone, or even if they just want to build up some confidence and make new friends this program helps so much with this, and give you great opportunities"*

*"It builds on someone's personal character and shows that other people are accepting of them."*

*"You either benefit from it or you don't. If you try to get involved, watch everything fall into place, if you wanna stay stuck in your misery then continue to not push. It's up to you if you want to be a better version of yourself, I suggest you walk this path to find it."*

*"Definitely depends on the individual but it was great experience!"*

*"I would 100% recommend this for all young people it is and was a life changing experience for me. Really helpful for kids struggling to fit in."*

*"It is an experience like no other at this point in life. I don't know of another programme that even remotely compares to Project K."*

*"I would recommend it for kids struggling in school and for the ones who don't know what they want to do with their life. Just to realise there are so many ways you can do life and heaps of different opportunities."*

*"It is a great confidence building thing and helps out with life choices and situations that we all have to go through. And for me personally it showed that we are all strong we just need to believe in ourselves more. The younger people are getting more and more shy and afraid to speak up about their problems and themselves, but Project K teaches us that it's okay. I highly recommend project k."*

*'I would definitely recommend Project K for other young people because:*

- 1. The wilderness challenge helped me with my health and fitness, and it felt good to go out of my comfort zone with other students and get through it all together, the camp does bring everyone together even if you don't know them too well.*
- 2. The community challenge was good to get us to see and help out around us.*
- 3. The mentoring was good although for it to work you need to put a lot of effort into it to gain the most from it, which I look back on now and know I could have worked on that.*
- 4. All of the activities bring new challenges and can help students out.*

*"To help them understand and find who they are !!!"*

*"Always and forever I think every child should mandatory do project k and do kiwi can Because it's an amazing opportunity."*

*"Young students who need help getting out of there shell or are having trouble at school would definitely benefit from it."*

*"I do believe project k has benefits, but I also believe that it's very important to note that it does not deal with any underlying cause of a young person's distress in their life. I don't believe that*

*this program helped me deal with my home life, or aspects of my childhood that still affect me to this day, or any of the internalized queerphobia I was subjecting myself to as a trans person which were the major causes of my anxiety and depression as a teen. I also recognize that I guess that isn't the job of project K, but It should be noted that teens aren't just 'not confident' teens are often suffering from abuse, or childhood trauma, or treatment resistant mental illnesses."*

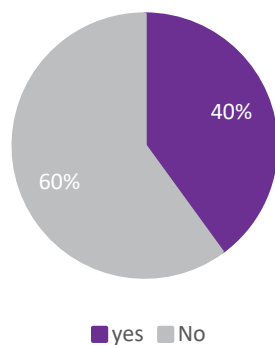
*"It was overall an amazing experience and has many great memories to look back to."*

*"Yes, I would definitely recommend Project K for younger people. It helps people like myself who used to be a shy, insecure girl to now a confident, humble young lady. Project K has helped me a lot with many things. It helps you be thankful for what you have and also to make new friends. To come out of your comfort zone and try new things."*

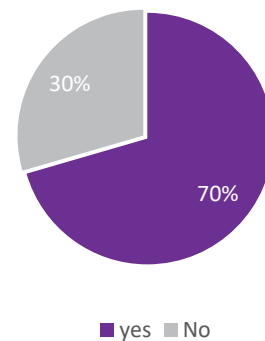
## Post programme contact

**Graph 6, 7 and 8.** The percentage of respondents in each category yes/no for whether participants are still in contact with their mentor and Project K Staff, and whether they would like to be a mentor in the future.

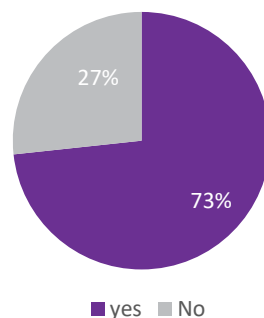
Still in contact with mentor?



Still in contact with Project K staff?



Would you like be a Project K mentor in the future?



The majority of participants are still in contact with Project K staff and a similar number say they would like to be a Project K mentor in the future, a smaller number of participants are still in contact with their mentor.

A Chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between still being in contact with a mentor and still being in contact with any Project K staff, and the extent participants think having a mentor has helped, whether they want to be a Project K mentor in the future, and whether they would recommend Project K for other young people.

The relation between these variables were significant:

- Participants who say their mentor has helped them are more likely to still be in contact with their mentor  $\chi^2(1, N = 43) = 7.68, p = .006$ .
- Participants who want to be a Project K mentor in the future are more likely to still be in contact with Project K staff  $\chi^2(1, N = 44) = 10.92, p = .002$ .

