



S.O. What! Literacy, Life Skills, and Character Education Curriculum
Program Evaluation for the
Shelby County Schools Youth Violence Intervention Initiative

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Executive Summary

The S.O. What! Program addresses youth violence by helping students understand themselves and their challenges, have compassion for others, evaluate their choices along with consequences, and focus on post-secondary options that fit their interests.

The program consists of a 14-lesson curriculum including a capstone project which is facilitated through a trainer (educator at the school and a S.O. What! coordinator), the S.O. What! Literacy, Life Skills, and Character Education, workbook and the non-fiction text by local author and national speaker, Summer Owens. Through the program, students are able to learn new grade appropriate vocabulary words, participate in group discussions, improve their comprehension skills, and be actively engaged in a relatable book that motivates students to continue reading. The goals of the program are to help students face their challenges, overcome obstacles, and set themselves up for success while improving literacy and academic performance.

In order to assess if the goals were achieved, a participant evaluation survey was administered to participants. The evaluation survey was designed based on Kirkpatrick's four levels of training evaluation. The evaluation survey includes reaction level data, while focusing on behavioral and learning impacts in the program participants. Due to the evaluation being completed only after the program, behavioral and learning impacts must be interpreted with caution. Attempts were made to signify behavioral changes without the use of a pre-test. This report outlines the results of the program. The program evaluation consisted of 42 questions. A majority of the questions were multiple choice, with some open-ended questions and a matrix. All of the multiple choice questions were on a 5 point Likert scale either 1 representing Strong Disagree and 5 representing strongly Agree, or 1 representing Very Unlikely and 5 representing Very Likely.

Seven schools participated in the S.O. What! Program, accounting for over 500 student participants. Because of school schedules, student transfers, and other variables, not all schools nor all students participated in every aspect of the program. However, this evaluation seeks to demonstrate the impact of any involvement in the program. A total of 307 students completed the S.O. What! Program evaluation. 27 of the responses were deleted from evaluation due to careless responding or not completing the survey. Ages ranged from 10 to 15 ($M=12.53$, $SD=1.61$). Participants were primarily female (62%).

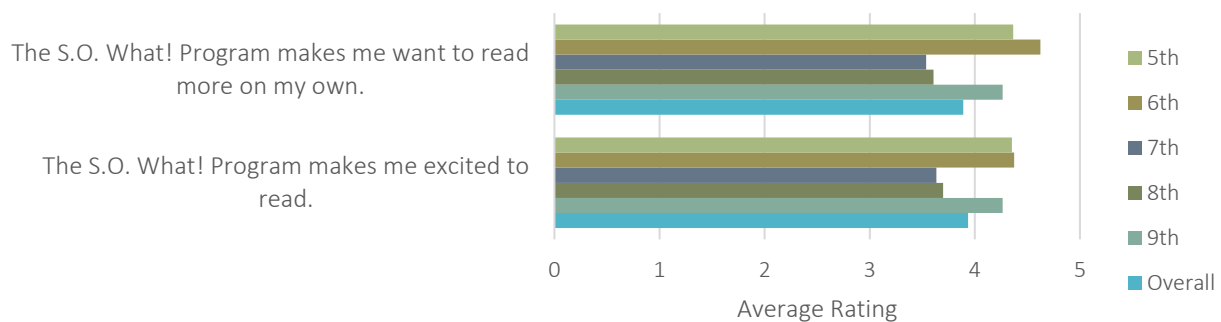
Overall, students had a strong positive reaction to the program. Along with teaching important life skills, the S.O. What! Program encouraged positive behavioral changes. For example, 69% of participants reported they were less likely to engage in bullying as a result of the program. Additionally, students understanding of how their actions impact others increased. This behavioral change suggests that the program encourages students to think about the outcomes of their actions and could potentially prevent violent actions. Students were also more motivated to work hard in school and had a higher interest in reading after taking the program.

All in all, the S.O. What! Program provides a method for students to learn more about the impact of their actions, how to be resilient during difficult times, and influences positive behavioral changes. The evaluations from the program participants and the facilitators indicates the goals of the program were achieved.

Literacy

One of the goals of the program was to increase student literacy. The results of the program showed that participating in the S.O. What! Program made students more excited to read and encouraged students to read more on their own. Students were also motivated to try harder in school after completing the program. Of note, technical difficulties prevented the majority of 6th grade students from answering the 3 questions regarding literacy and college preparation. Therefore, the eight 6th grade responses should be interpreted with caution as they may not be representative of the entire sample.

Looking across gender differences, male and female participants answered the question regarding reading on their own significantly differently with females having an average rating of 4.06 and males having an average rating of 3.73 ($t=2.21, p=.03$). Excitement to read was also significantly different, for females (4.06) and males (3.64, $t=2.81, p=.006$).



		Grade Level					
		Overall	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th
<i>Because of the S.O. What! Program, I will be _____ to try harder in school.</i>	Very Unlikely	1			1		
	Unlikely	3			2	1	
	Neither	13	4		6	4	3
	Likely	68	14	3	24	40	4
	Very Likely	162	57	5	48	66	5

*Count of frequency

What was the most important lesson you learned from this program?

“To read and be confident in myself”

-Simora

“I like to read your book. You taught me how to calm down because I have ADHD.”

-Craig

College Preparation

The S.O. What! Program also discusses future plans. Overall, 94% of students reported they plan to graduate from high school. Further, 91% were likely to go to college. Roughly 28% plan on attending a trade school. The program appears to increase motivation for academic achievements.

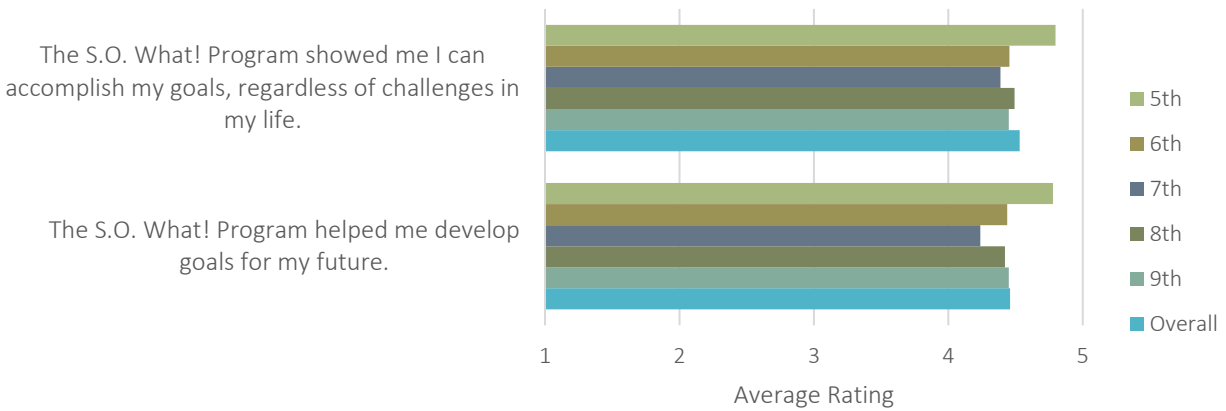
Give an example of something you learned that will you apply in your life.

“Get my grades up and go to college”

-Dashia

Goal-Setting

As a result of the program, students across all grade levels were more likely to develop goals. Specifically, 90% of participants were more likely to set goals for themselves. Upon reviewing the qualitative comments, many of these goals revolved around graduating high school or attending college. There was not a significant difference across grade levels or gender.



		Grade Level					
		Overall	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th
<i>Because of the S.O. What! Program, I will be ___ to develop a plan for my future.</i>	Very Unlikely	7		1	5	1	
	Unlikely	1					1
	Neither	16	1	2	6	7	
	Likely	72	15	9	27	18	3
	Very Likely	166	56	21	39	35	15
<i>Because of the S.O. What! Program, I will be ___ to set goals for myself.</i>	Very Unlikely	3			2	1	
	Unlikely	1			1		
	Neither	16	2	2	8	3	1
	Likely	75	16	13	22	18	6
	Very Likely	165	53	18	44	38	12

*Count of frequency

Give an example of something you learned that you will apply in your life.

“This program motivates me to go hard because I know how easily something can get in the way to try and stop me from my goals”

- Deanna

“Like in summers book, she told the readers people told her she couldn’t do it, but she proved them wrong and I choose to prove them wrong.”

-Jessica

“By setting a goal that I will get through school”

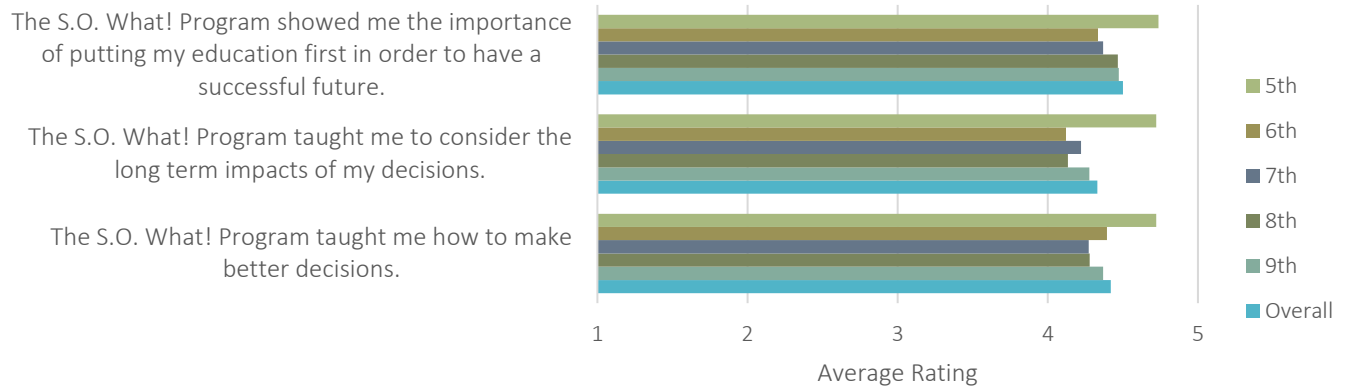
- Mary

“Set goals for yourself so you can be successful”

- Justin

Decision-Making

The evaluation provided support that the program taught students how to make better decisions and taught students to consider implications of their decisions. 88% of students agreed the program taught them to consider long-term impacts of their decisions. This behavior change can help students think through their options before making decisions.



		Overall	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th
<i>Because of the S.O. What! Program, I will be ___ to take responsibility for my actions.</i>	Very Unlikely	2			1		1
	Unlikely	1			1		
	Neither	18		3	8	5	2
	Likely	87	20	13	28	21	5
	Very Likely	155	52	17	39	36	11
<i>Because of the S.O. What! Program, I will be ___ to consider outcomes before taking action.</i>	Very Unlikely	1			1		
	Unlikely	5		1	4		
	Neither	22	1	3	7	8	3
	Likely	99	20	16	29	27	7
	Very Likely	133	50	15	34	25	9
<i>Because of the S.O. What! Program, I will be ___ to consider the results of my behavior before acting.</i>	Very Unlikely	6	1	2	1	1	1
	Unlikely	5			4	1	
	Neither	24	3	2	10	6	3
	Likely	95	24	15	32	20	4
	Very Likely	111	41	14	22	23	11

*Count of frequency

Give an example of something you learned that you will apply in your life.

“That if you make the wrong choice it could lead to severe consequences”

-Ka'Meriyli

“To consider the impact of my behavior before doing something”

-Khlia

How do you think this training will impact your life?

“I learned to make good decisions”

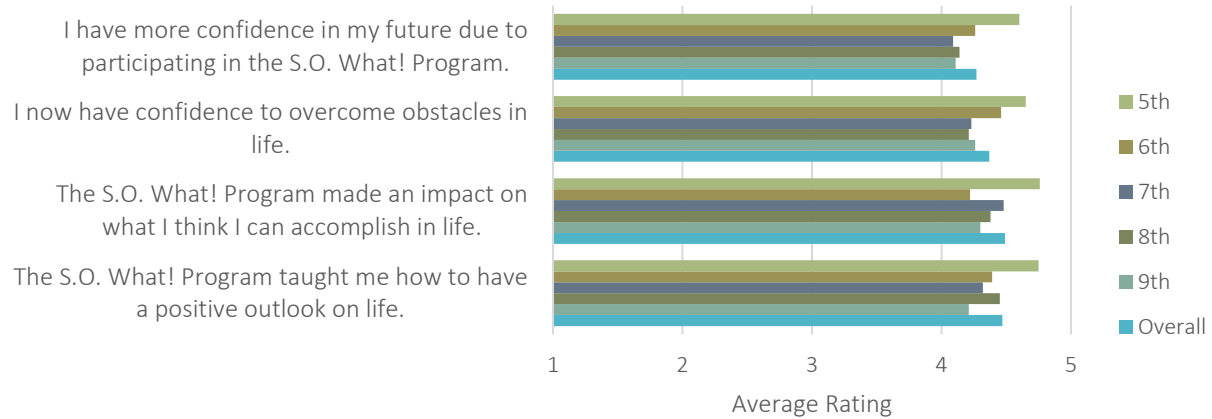
-Makiyah

“A mistake can change your life and you have to be careful”

-Audreauna

Resiliency

92% of participants agreed the program made an impact on what they perceive they can accomplish. Being able to accomplish more in life appeared to be an impactful lesson on the students. Multiple students mentioned being able to bounce back or remain positive as a key take away from the program.



Give an example of something you learned that will apply in your life.

"Never give up on life no matter what happens"

- Jamaya

"I learned that even though you are going through tough obstacles and challenges, you are still able to accomplish them"

- Makayla B.

How do you think this training will impact your life?

"It showed that no matter what you go through you can overcome"

- Kiara

"To try hardest to accomplish things that get hard and to never give up no matter what"

- Darrinysha

"You can overcome all obstacles"

- Jordan

"It helped and showed me to fight even when you're down"

- Idarrius

What was the most important lesson you learned from the program?

"I think the book influences me to realize that no matter what comes along you can overcome"

- Kelsey

"No matter what you go through, you can always learn and make changes."

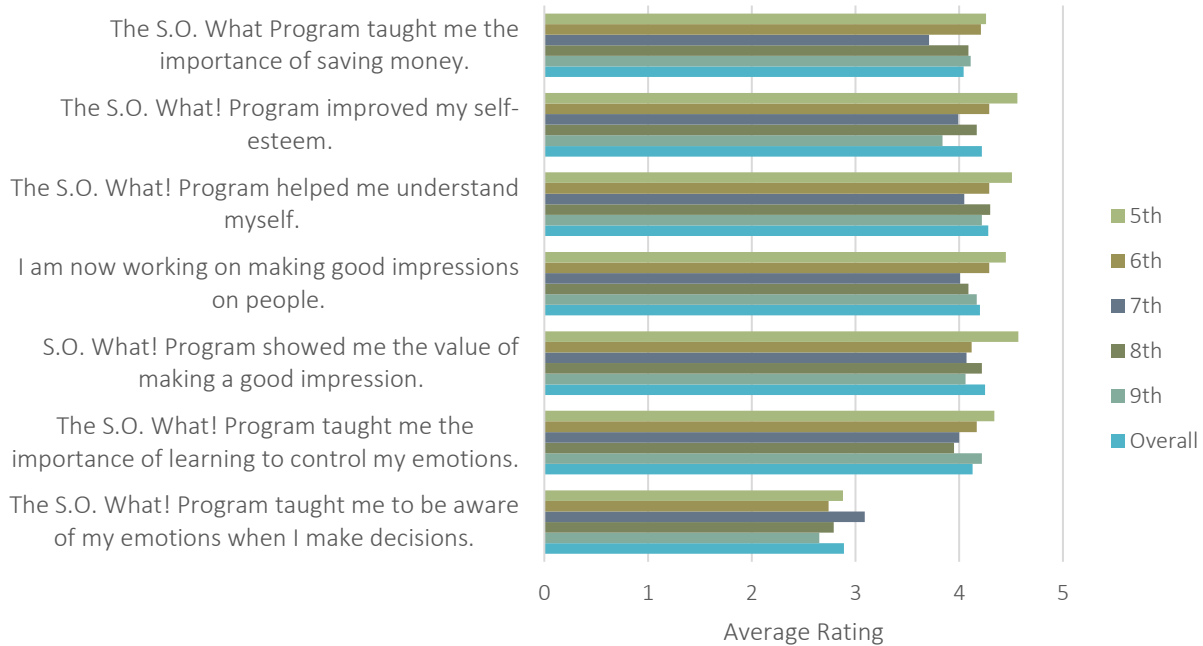
- Alyssa

"Learn how to bounce back from bad decisions"

- Howard

Life Skills

The program taught life skills including money management, self-confidence, managing emotions and making good impressions. 80% of participants reported the program improved their self-esteem. Not only did self-esteem increase, the evaluation supports that students were more aware of how important being able to control your emotions is in different situations. Being able to control emotions through adolescent years can help further prepare students for their future and prevent violent behavior.



How do you think this training will impact your life?

"It will impact my life because I learned that you have to save money for things you want."

- Kenya

"It will help me have a better life."

- Mariah

What was the most important lesson you learned from the program?

"To block out what others say. Their opinions don't matter and I shouldn't care what their opinions are."

- Chandra

"If you make mistake you need to learn from them"

- Jamie

"To control your emotions. Always ask for help when you need it."

- Fatimata

Violence Prevention

The program shared the experience that the author had with being bullied in order to motivate students to change their behavior around bullying. 69% of participants were less likely to bully as a result of the program. Further, 79% were more likely to speak up when they saw someone being bullied. Many of the students went as far as providing qualitative comments regarding how they would handle a bully. The implications of reducing bullying further support the success of the program.

		Grade Level					
		Overall	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th
<i>Because of the S.O. What! Program, I am ___ to participate in bullying.</i>	Very Unlikely	138	49	11	37	32	10
	Unlikely	34	5	10	10	7	2
	Neither	20	5	3	6	4	2
	Likely	25	5	5	8	5	2
	Very Likely	32	9	4	10	7	2
<i>Because of the S.O. What! Program, I am ___ to speak up when I see bullying.</i>	Very Unlikely	10	2		2	4	2
	Unlikely	6	1	1	4		
	Neither	36	3	6	16	15	4
	Likely	66	16	13	19	28	3
	Very Likely	130	48	14	29	54	9

*Count of frequency

Give an example of something you learned that you will apply in your life.

"I learned to not bully and I will not laugh at somebody getting bullied"

- Jasmine

"I learned that people are going to always judge you so just keep it pushing."

- Kasey

"Don't let what other people think of you get in your head"

-Marcell

"Don't listen to bullying and keep doing your life"

- Makayla

"Don't judge other people, treat people how you wanna be treated"

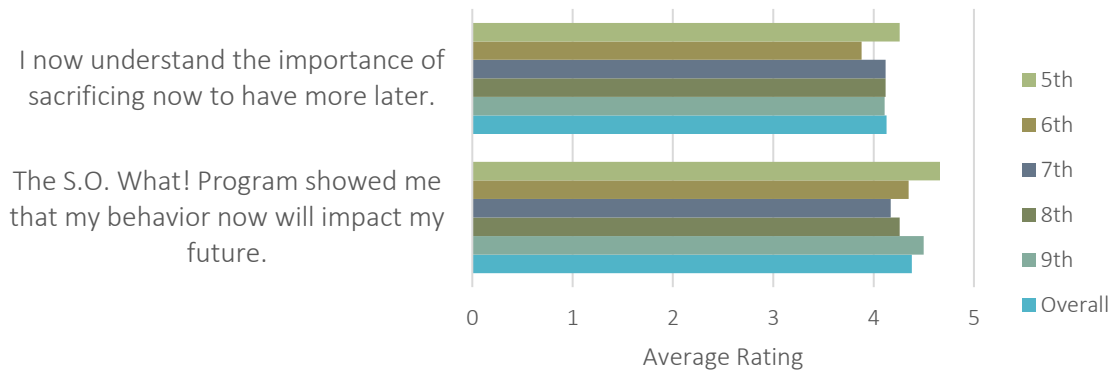
- Arianna

"To be respectful to my teachers"

-Arizi

Delayed Gratification

Through the program, students are shown that you can sacrifice now in order to have more later. The evaluation showed that after completing the program, students were more likely to consider how their behavior now impacts their future. As a result of the program, 87% of respondents reported the program showed that their behavior now will impact their future.



How do you think this training will impact your life?

"It will help me make better decisions in the long run"

- Jonathan

"I learned that nothing in this world is going to be easy"

- Devonte

What was the most important lesson you learned from the program?

"To work harder in school to plan what's best for my future"

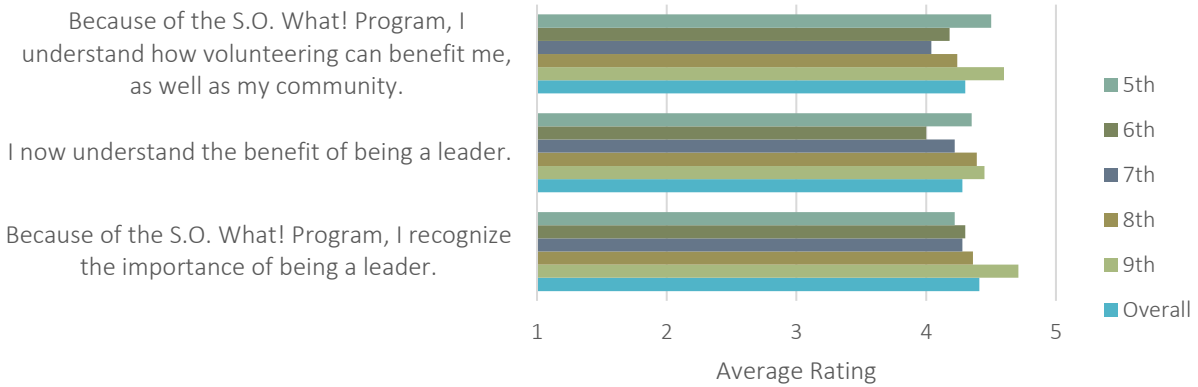
- Trinity

"That planning now can help you achieve your goals in the long run"

- Senynia

Community Involvement

81% of participants were more likely to volunteer in their communities, and 82% were more likely to get involved in school organizations. The program also emphasized the importance of leadership.



		Grade Level					
		Overall	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th
<i>Because of the S.O. What! Program, I am _____ to get involved in school organizations</i>	Very Unlikely	5	1		3	1	
	Unlikely	6	2		3		1
	Neither	31	2	5	10	10	4
	Likely	80	19	13	23	21	4
	Very Likely	117	44	15	31	18	9
<i>Because of the S.O. What! Program, I am _____ to volunteer or give back to my community</i>	Very Unlikely	4			3	1	
	Unlikely	4				2	2
	Neither	36	4	5	15	10	2
	Likely	83	25	13	25	16	4
	Very Likely	113	41	15	27	20	10

*Count of frequency

Give an example of something you learned that will apply in your life.

“To give back to my community”

- Jacquese

“When you become a volunteer it helps you become a better person in life”

-Danisha

How do you think this training will impact your life?

“To be a leader in my life”

- Darrion

“I learned that when you volunteer in things in life it can better you as a person and can improve you skilled as in meeting people”

- Shandrilya

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities Acquired

The final section of the evaluation included a matrix in which participants rated themselves on different dimensions before and after the training. While the evaluation was completed only after the program, the data behind the chart suggests that students were still able to gather new skills as a result of the program. A pre and posttest to control for threats to validity should be conducted to further solidify these results. The results are depicted in the table below.

One of the biggest self-reported improvements was in bouncing back from difficult times. Consequences of sexual activity was one of the lowest rated items that participants had knowledge of prior to the training. After completing the training, participants' knowledge of the consequences of sexual activity increased to an average rating of 4.12.



Facilitator Evaluation

Along with evaluations completed by the students, the program facilitators at each school completed an evaluation of the program. As shown in the table below, facilitators had a strong positive reaction to the program. 80% of the facilitators agreed the program made a positive impact on the behavior of students. Further, 100% agreed the program should be implemented in more schools.

What impact do you think the curriculum has made on your students' attitudes?

"I've been a firm believer in the impact of the book/curriculum for students since its' conception. I know from experience with students that it impacts their belief, hope social, emotional well-being especially our at-risk students."

- *Ebony S., Adolescent Parenting Program*

- "Opened their eyes to similar experience that they may be facing in their own lives. They see that they are not alone in facing difficult life challenges."

- *John W., Cummings Elementary School*

"I think the book has made students think about others' feelings. I think it has made them re-think why and how others may feel."

- *Zandra H., Cummings Elementary School*

"Several students would come to me in confidence about conflicts they were having with other students and would reference statements from the book on how to be positive (especially from Lessons Learned)."

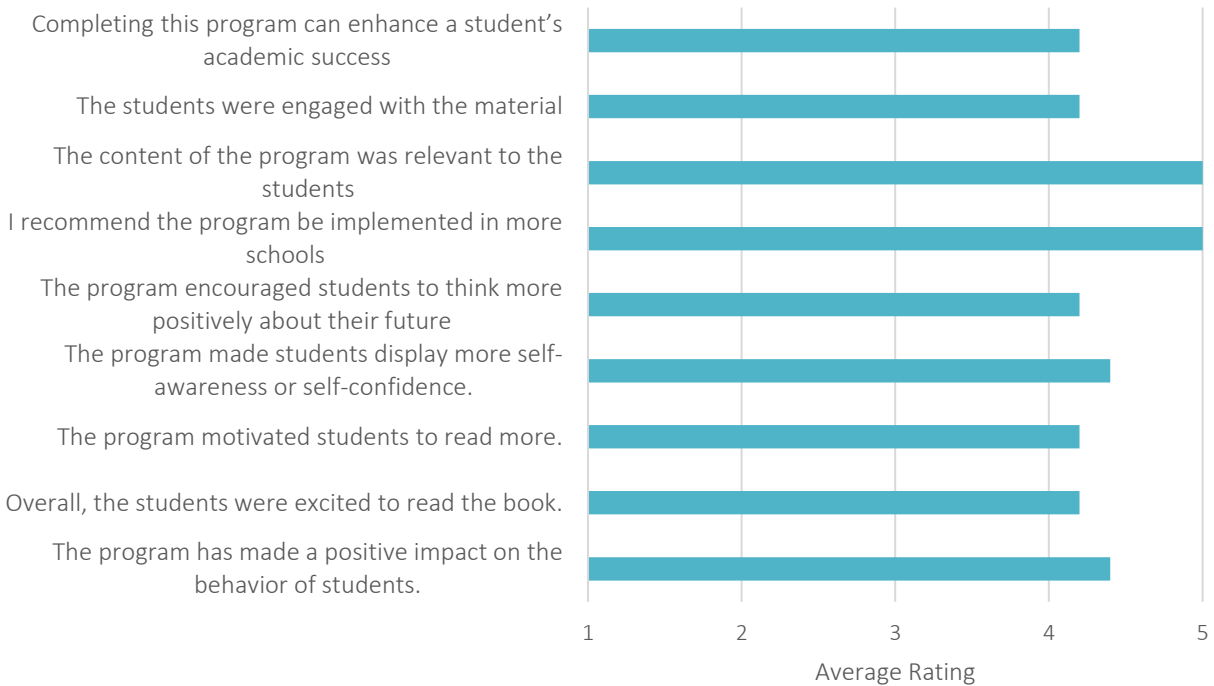
- *Shelia C., Holmes Road Elementary School*

"Several students now show maturity when thinking and speaking about their future

- *Josef W., Douglas High School*

"The students did understand what impact sex have on the physical & emotional being. A lot of kids opened up about their sexual encounters."

-*Breana H. Douglas High School*



What impact do you think the curriculum has made on your student's academics?

"I believe the curriculum has motivated students to read. I believe the small group setting gave those who are reluctant readers the confidence needed to read. It also encouraged fluent readers to continue reading."

- Ebony S., Adolescent Parenting Program

"Increased interest in reading and an appreciation of using writing to express yourself and to organize your thoughts."

- John W., Cummings Elementary School

"I think the book has made students think about others' feelings. I think it has made them re-think why and how others may feel."

- Zandra H., Cummings Elementary School

"Students became more engaged in reading. A few students would stumble over words but after a few book club meetings their reading became more fluent. The vocabulary is very rich and really helped students get a real world understanding of the terminology."

- Shelia C., Holmes Road Elementary School

"This book has increased students reading stamina. Most students were slow readers, but having to read chapters in a night has help prepare them to read paragraphs for TN-ready assessment."

The students like to read what they want not what they are interested in."

- Josef W., Douglas High School

What feedback, comments, or concerns do you have with the program?

"Overall a wonderful program that reaches students who may be in need of guidance now or in the future."

- John W., Cummings Elementary School

"Great program overall. The curriculum was self-explanatory and easy to use."

- Zandra H., Cummings Elementary School

"Keep working to get this program incorporated in all SCS schools. Your message and story is truly helpful for this generation of students."

- Josef W., Douglas High School

Overall Evaluation

As shown in each segment of the evaluation, the S.O. What! Program received positive reactions from program participants. Not only was the reactionary level data positive, the behavioral and knowledge level data was also positive. Although there are relevant threats to validity as the method of evaluation was not pre/post-test, the evaluation indicates that behavior did change and knowledge was acquired. Taken together, the facilitator evaluation and participant evaluation support that the S.O. What! Program is influential for boys and girls in 5th through 12th grade.