



Career and Leadership Development Academy

CLDA Report

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About CLDA

CLDA is a program in collaboration with all New Hanover (NHC) County Schools to provide NHC middle school students with career experiences and exploration and education on leadership. This is a free 10-month program for students to explore potential career interests, learn professional skills, and experience new opportunities.



Overview

Goal of Program

The goal of the program is to expose students to a range of careers and jobs in the Wilmington area, provide leadership training, and allow the opportunity to connect and learn from each other.

Strengths

The most impactful aspects of CLDA have been job exposure, increasing student self-confidence and social skills, opportunities for mentorship, and offering career connections as well as educational information.

Limitations

Based on all of the data provided, students have struggled conceptualizing leadership, recalling specific skills introduced by mentors and speakers, and establishing the connection between jobs and education. It remains unclear whether and how educational trajectories influence students career perceptions.

With the future inclusion of all 7th graders, should consider inclusion of students who with disability status, language barriers, etc. Also consider issues balancing the program with school as well as extracurricular activities.

Reccomendations

We suggest providing workshops on leadership either prior, during, or after the program. We also recommend that the students tour colleges/universities, that speakers orient their speeches to CLDA focused topics, provide self-reflection assignments after speeches/field trips, and better communication between parents and program staff. We also include suggestions on improving data collection to better analyze the efficacy as the program grows.

Strengths of Program

This program intends to improve skills such as (but are not limited to) leadership, self-confidence, communication, public speaking, and critical thinking. These are lifelong individual skills which are important in personal and professional growth.

This program motivated students to join sports teams and academic/social clubs because they felt they could continue to improve their leadership skills. Most mentioned learned skills include: communication, teamwork, public speaking, self-confidence, and social skills.

An additional strength is that it offers "behind-the-scenes" or immersive experiences in job sites and job exposure to careers in Wilmington, de-bunks pre-existing notions of professions and careers, offers a differing perspective to various fields of work, and provides mentorship and career-oriented discussions with field professionals. For example, 23% of students enjoyed hospitality best, which included jobs such as hotel staff, 46% healthcare -mostly nursing- and 31% film including jobs such as production and film making.



Areas of Improvement

One of the main focuses of this program is learning leadership, but it is the largest parts of the program that needs improvement. Leadership as a concept is not connecting/clicking with students as they are not understanding the qualities of a leader and what leadership is and ultimately are not being prepared in this section of the program.

Additionally, there are many areas of improvement in terms of data collection in **initial interviews, feedback forms, and the program applications and exit surveys.**

After synthesizing the data from the first year of the CLDA program as well as from early material on the 8th grade mentor program, it was found that the majority of this program was about job exposure and lacked in teaching and expanding knowledge on leadership as well as obtaining skills for the workforce.

To improve the quality of program:

Consider the following recommendations within the different sections of this report:

Career Exposure
Leadership
Initial Interviews
Feedback Forms
Counselor

Blog Posts
Program Applications and Exit Surveys
Education & Careers
Student Preparedness

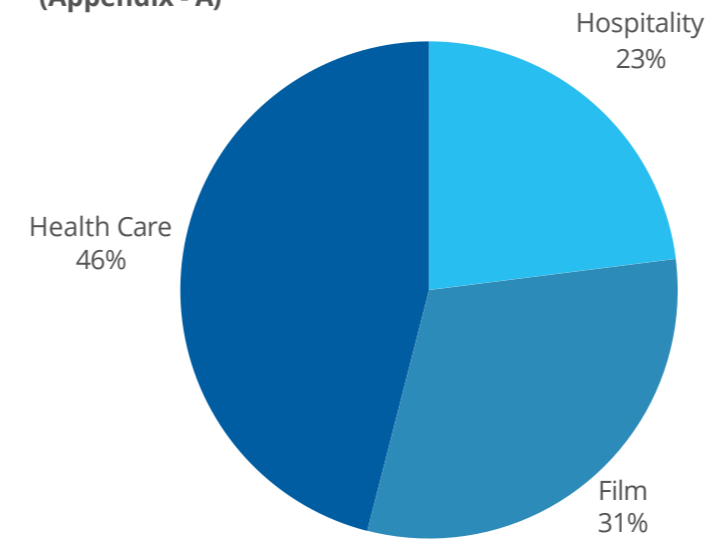


Career Exposure

The strongest part of this program is the ability for students to experience a number of different careers, learn about new careers they had never heard of, or increase their knowledge of other careers they might be more excited to learn about it. They experienced careers from life sciences, warehouse, real estate, healthcare, hospitality, digital tech, and manufacturing.

This program educates students on careers by explaining many different jobs within each field of work, rather than just the fields themselves or the typical jobs that come to mind (eg. doctor, nurse, teacher, artist, astronaut etc.), which provides a realistic and larger understanding of the workforce.

Figure 1. Students' Favorite Careers After Program (Appendix - A)



"Thank you for giving us these amazing experiences!"

"I'm so thankful for being able to experience all of this. Thank you for this opportunity!"

"That was the best field trip!"



Career Exposure cont...

- ◆ Based on the presented data, students were exposed to seven different industries.
- ◆ Although some of these industries include higher education, during speeches students did not seem to be encouraged to pursue Bachelors, Master's, or Doctoral degrees and are not establishing clear connections about college or higher education. Figure 2 holds the minimum educational requirements for jobs within those industries.
- ◆ We recommend that presenters and adult mentors should be clear that different jobs have different requirements, but that they are all attainable for the students. They should focus on growth mindset as a model for students on how they can achieve their career goals.
- ◆ We believe it is important to show the students that higher education is attainable by anyone and what resources they need to meet these goals. We recommend Career/Field trip speakers orient their briefs toward leadership/other aspects CLDA is concerned with.
 - Consider incorporating 1-2 activities planned to keep students engaged at each field site. Students retained information better and were more excited about career exposures that included active and engaged practices like hospitality.

Consider collecting information on students interested in higher education and see how that changes at the end of the program. How many students have considered higher education in initial interviews? What percentage of jobs are students interested in with higher education requirements at the end of the program?

Figure 2. Job Industry of Career Exposure by Education Requirements (Appendix - A)



“I think that you don't have to leave Wilmington to find your dream job, because most jobs are accessible here in Wilmington.”

“Now that I have participated in CLDA I have thought of much more careers than I expected and because of CLDA I found 2 jobs I would like to [peruse].”



Leadership

Improving leadership skills is one of the goals of the CLDA program, but it is also the weakest point based on the data we analyzed.

- ◆ The students are not understanding and/or conceptualizing leadership, and are lacking explicit demonstration of leadership skills.
- ◆ Students recall specific skills learned by mentors, yet students are unable to establish clear connections of how skills apply to leadership.

Consider workshops on leadership, encouraging growth mindset, including self-reflection assessments oriented towards leadership ability/skills.



Manufacturing and Clean Energy Day Blog (Class of 2023)

A unified definition is needed, as the concept of leadership can be interpreted in **various** ways. This would be **beneficial** for having students learn a unified definition and practice using this concept in their own experiences

- ◆ After each session/field trip students should meet to discuss what leadership skills were utilized in the career that day
 - The program should also work to defining what types of skills and characteristics are leadership traits
- ◆ It was found that students have demonstrated a difficulty in applying lessons from work sites.

For example, guest speakers present advice on not being afraid to be proactive, yet students within blogs were **not able** to apply lessons to leadership, but **rather recited information**. By having students apply these lessons, it will allow a practice in recognizing leadership skills within the workplace.

“

“Problem solving is helpful because that is a good skill to have when you need help or having trouble doing something.”

“I improved on my communication skills these past few months. I've learned how to speak up for myself and others. I've been able to get my grades up in math by communicating what I need.”

”

Initial Interviews

Initial interviews are conducted by volunteers and are highly likely to be first experiences of interviews in these students lives, so they should be structured in terms of learning as well as professionalism. Original interviews were conducted by many people and answers were handwritten.

To improve the quality of initial interviews:

Students should receive immediate feedback after the concluded interview, with any *constructive* and *helpful* feedback on interviewee performance. Interviews should be conducted in person. Handwriting needs to be written clear in order to understand in terms of data collection. After interviews are conducted, interviewers should take notes to avoid misunderstanding due to handwriting. And it should be considered that one individual should conduct all interviews per school, to keep note taking and data collection consistent.

Consider the following Interview Questions:

1. What kind of careers do you know about?
2. What kind of careers are you interested in learning more about?
3. What type of job would you see yourself most happy doing?
4. What types of jobs do your parents have? Do you want to work in the same field as them?
5. Would you rather work at a desk or be moving?
- 6. How do you define leadership?**
7. Based on that, who do you see as a leader in your life?
8. What interests you about Wilmington, NC?
9. What are your goals after high school? Do you want to go into the work force, attend a local community college, 4-year university, a trade school program?
10. Why should we choose you for this program?
11. Was parental influence a factor in applying for this program?
12. The Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring the CLDP research project. Have you ever heard of the Chamber of Commerce, and if you have, can you tell me what you know about them?



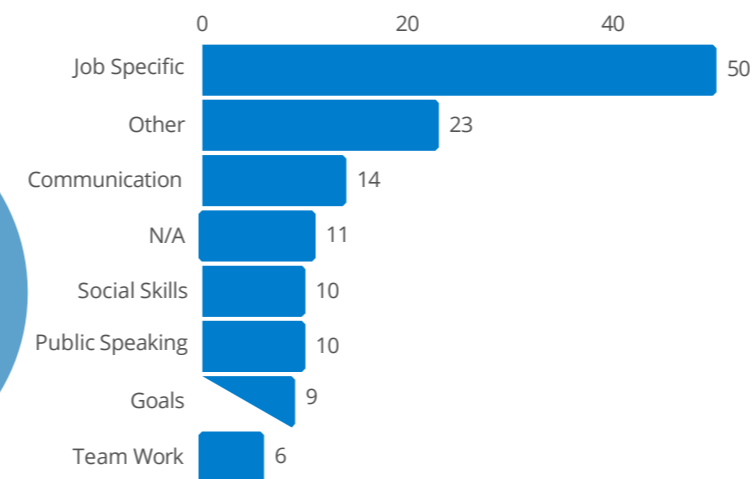
Feedback Forms

Feedback forms were survey questions asked to students **after each session** of tours/field trips.

Original questions asked included:

1. What were students' favorite careers?
2. What did students learn?
3. What comments or suggestions did students make?

Figure 3. Learned Skills After Sessions (Appendix - A)



There may be a lack of connection as students must answer questions after a session of **many** tours/field trips. We recommend asking questions after **EACH** field trip/tour as a debrief, immediately after completion so the information is fresh in their minds and they can reflect on what they experienced.

All questions must be answered for these forms, it should not be accepted that a student doesn't answer the questions presented to them. If they don't know what the question means, it is **up to the counselor to elaborate** to assist them.

The following questions should be considered for feedback forms in order to get more beneficial and thoughtful answers from students, that will represent the important aspects of their experience.

1. What did you learn at [NAME HERE] that was different than our previous tour?
2. What education credentials do you need for [JOB HERE]?
3. What was your favorite part of this field trip? Why?
4. What was your favorite career in session [enter # of session here]? Why?
5. What are your comments on suggestions?
6. What did you like about lunch?

Counselors

The **counselors and supervisors are the most important part of the program**, they should be **trained properly, collect data correctly**, and always have the students **best interest in the forefront**.

Additionally, when collecting data with asking students questions, counselors must elaborate on the questions they are asking students, as they might not understand the question and resort to not answering. Recording "**I don't know**" as a student's answer should not be acceptable, this provides support that counselors need training and need to further elaborate what is being asked of the students throughout EVERY aspect of this organization.

Counselors/supervisors should always be considering the following:

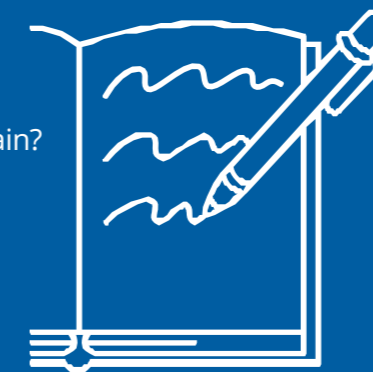
1. Are students interested in what they are learning?
2. Are students learning about new careers?
3. Are they seeking leadership positions/careers?
4. Are students understanding what leadership/leading is?
5. Are all students engaged?
6. Are students gaining 'leadership' experiences?

Feedback from Counselors

To ensure the field trips/tours are beneficial for these students, counselors should collect information on the experience as well. Consider requiring counselors to take notes on each tour and what is being presented to the students:

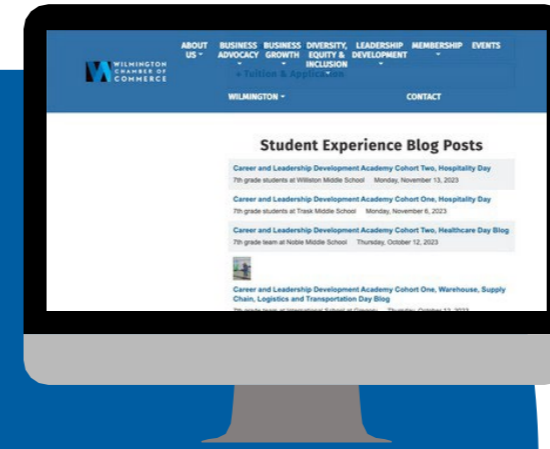
questions could include but are not limited to:

1. Are they discussing educational requirements?
2. What are the tones when discussing different levels of jobs?
3. Are they making it seem as their job is too difficult or too easy to obtain?
4. What skills are needed in the career?
5. What do the tours consist of?
6. What activities are present?
7. What are the students reactions?
8. Are all students being included?
9. Are the students engaged?
10. How is leadership being presented throughout the career tour?
11. How are these students learning about leadership?
12. What are other concerns/suggestions about the field trip?



Blog Posts

The blog posts are writings students created on their experiences at different careers in Wilmington and are located on the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce webpage. Similarities between students written blogs included descriptions of tours on the organizations they visited, what guest speakers they heard from, and what they learned or found interesting about the experience. They also included information on the types of careers and business sectors and professionalism in the workplace.

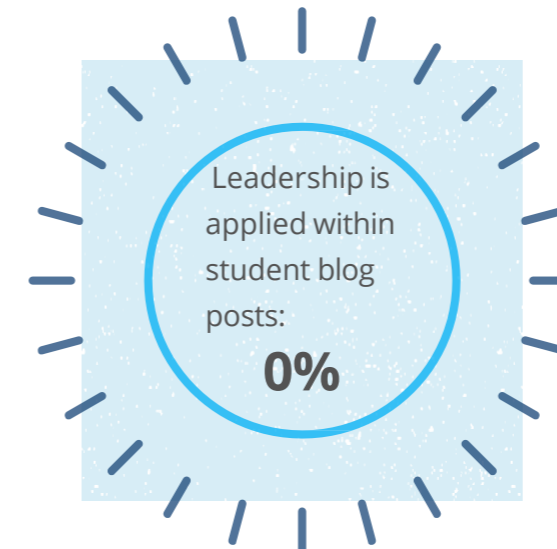


Suggested areas of improvement

- ◆ Enthusiasm is encouraged but published blogs should also practice professionalism
- ◆ Counselors should check formatting and grammar before publishing (counselors should not make changes where blogs are not recognized as written by 7th graders). Too much advising in blog posts or final presentations skews the way we collect and analyze student data.

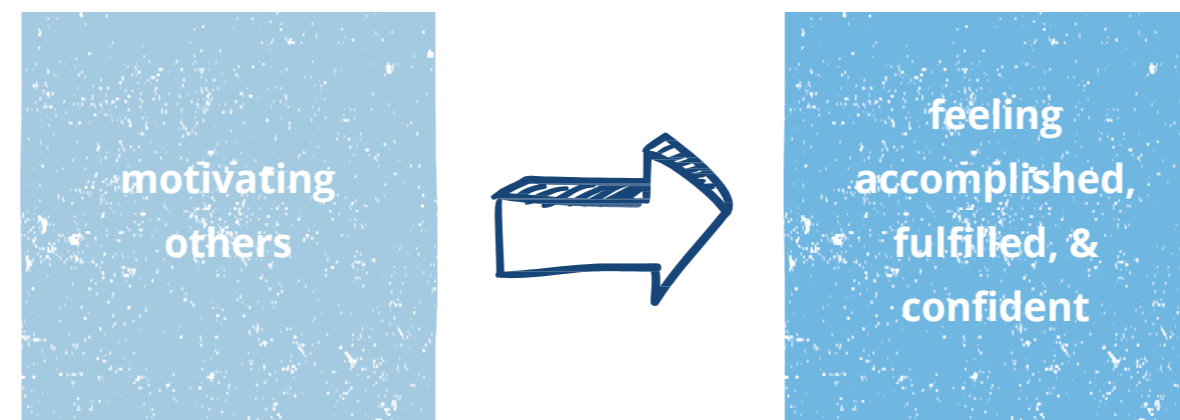


- ◆ All blog posts should follow specific formatted structure:
 1. Give a description of the career/job you experienced today.
 2. What did you learn today?
 3. What guest speakers did you hear from?
 4. What skills did you learn?
 5. What are your takeaways?



Program Applications & Exit Surveys

- ◆ The data in relation to the success of the program is inconclusive given that we only had one year of data to evaluate and some of the data collection practices limited analytic power.
- ◆ The students did not understand the context of the questions asked in the program applications (PA). For instance, they did not set expectations for skills, rather they expressed what they thought they already had accomplished.
- ◆ Overall, it was found that these students did not understand the purpose of the program. From the application to the exit surveys, majority of students changed their understanding of the rewards of gaining leadership skills:



- ◆ It is important to note that there was a shift from helping others to feeling good about self in these surveys. Additionally, students were not enthusiastic in their exit survey on their understanding of leadership. Most students stated the exact same wordings, which causes questions on if there was a push of narrative.

Program Application & Exit Surveys Continued...

There is a need to for set questions within these surveys in order to see growth over time.

Original Questions Asked:

Program Applications:

1. Birth Year (why was this asked?)
2. Club/Activities
3. Most rewarding aspect of being a leader
4. Special Skills

Exit Surveys:

1. New Clubs
2. Most rewarding/challenging aspect of being a leader
3. Special Skills
4. Jobs in Wilmington

Consider the following:

Program Applications:

1. Club/Activities/Extracurriculars
2. What is a leader/leadership in your own words?
3. What skills do you have that could be present in the classroom/at work?
4. What jobs do you know about that are located in Wilmington, NC?
5. What jobs are you most interested in?

Exit Surveys:

1. New Clubs/Extracurriculars
2. What is a leader/leadership in your own words?
3. What skills have you obtained after completing this program?
4. What jobs do you know about that are located in Wilmington, NC?
5. What jobs are you most interested in?

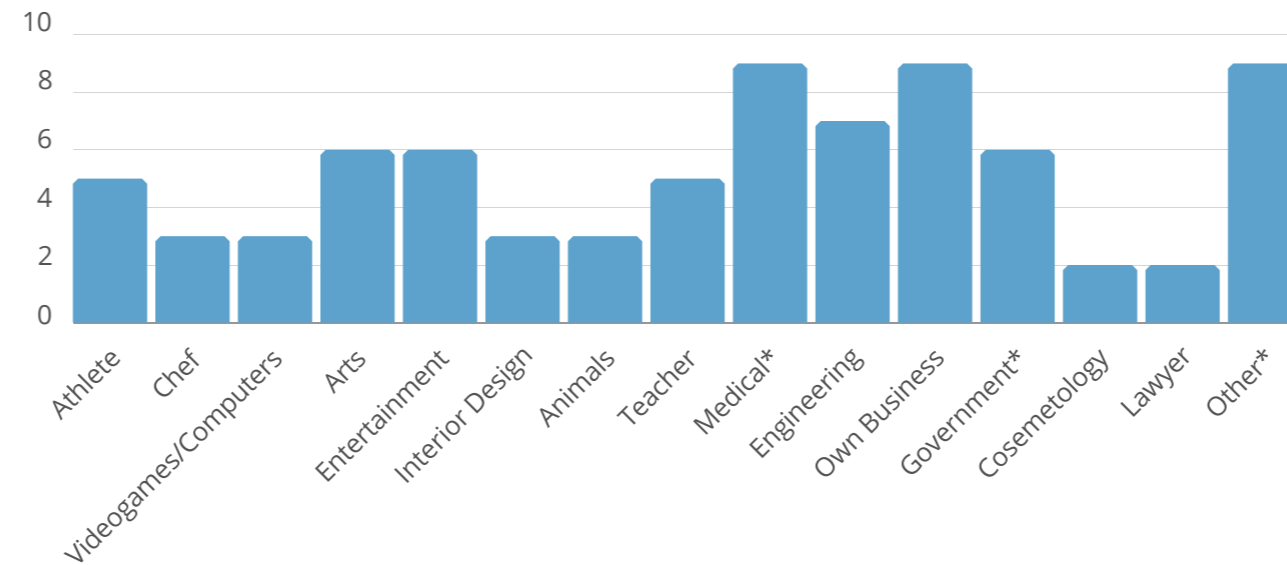
In order to see the growth of the leadership aspect of this program, data should also be collected on **how students define leadership** and how that changed by the end of the program. In order for these two aspects of data collection to be beneficial, questions should remain consistent to correctly calculate and analyze student growth (or lack of).

Other Considerations

Education & Careers

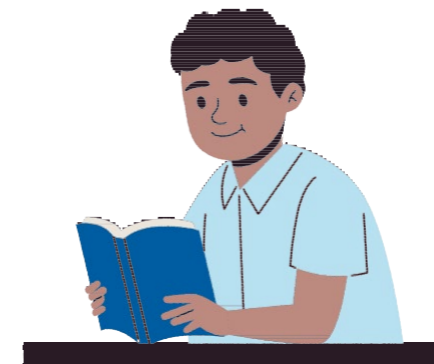
- ◆ Based on students initial interests in different careers (via initial interview or program application answers), consider changing some field trips to those that they would be interesting in learning about. Keep a couple spaces open for every round of students to be able to fill in with field trips that students choose.
- ◆ Consider more discussion on all types of jobs, those that require all types of education, positive conversations and attitudes around education as well as trade schools. There should be a positive light on all types of careers and biases should not be present. Also consider conversations around government careers. (e.g., what if the chamber itself was one of the field trips)?
- ◆ Take students on tours of different college/universities so that these students could imagine themselves there & understand what it means to attend.
 - Consider sessions on Associates degrees, Certificate Programs, and Training

Figure 4. Students' Initial Career Interests (Appendix B)



Student Preparedness

- ◆ Program may benefit with older age group (i.e. 8th or 9th grade).
 - Age group reflects having difficulty forming connections between applying concept of leadership to job sites, and further applying to lessons learned or their own experiences.
 - The pandemic has caused many students to be years behind in their education and may need questions to be elaborated more clearly to receive an appropriate response
 - Students are young (i.e. 11-13 years old) and may not be in professional mindset
- ◆ Prepare students by teaching skills in note-taking and listening skills to absorb information they are taught in professional environments.
 - This will help prepare students to directly learn how careers and job sites value the skill of leadership and clarifies any confusion for students.
- ◆ Age group (i.e., 11-13 years old) present a difficult time conceptualizing career-oriented aspects of leadership, its importance in the workplace, and generally present a lack of focus on setting goals towards career pathways. This age group is just *beginning* to reason and think abstractly.
 - Interests reflect a surface-level depth, students do not appear to internalize the benefits of the CLDA program.
 - Understanding concepts like leadership is beyond the scope of 7th graders.



Tip

- ◆ We suggest using a teacher-parent communication application such as Bloomz, Class Dojo, ClassTag, or GroupMe
 - Before all field trips, a staff member should send out an announcement 1-2 days prior that includes any necessary information, such as the location and time of the field trip, along with any dress code requirements.



8th Grade Mentorship

Strengths

- ◆ Program has allowed students the opportunity to learn about job industries they now find interesting such as healthcare, film, hospitality, and engineering.
- ◆ Program increased students' overall confidence in speaking and connecting with others.
- ◆ Students stated they felt joy in seeing others succeed, and were inspired to help other students.

Figure 7. Grades of 6th graders (Ap. C)

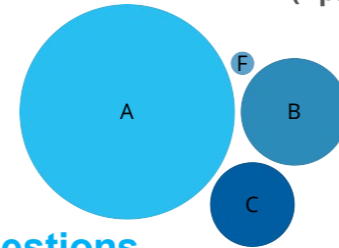
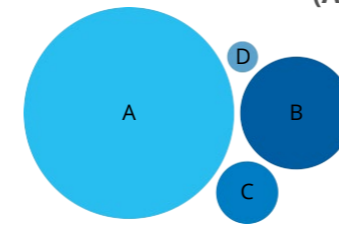


Figure 8. Grades of 7th graders (Ap. C)



Suggestions

- ◆ Based on students' grades, some students may have struggled with balancing school and the program.
 - Providing time management lessons and stress intervention may help boost these skills.
- ◆ Consider that learning must be scaled to the audience.
- ◆ Based on the parents' demographics that were provided, there seems to be less students with lower socio-economic status.
 - These students could benefit from the program as they may not be able to participate in sports and other activities.
- ◆ Consider how parents' social and professional networks influence students' opportunities.

Figure 5. Race/Ethnicity (Ap. C)

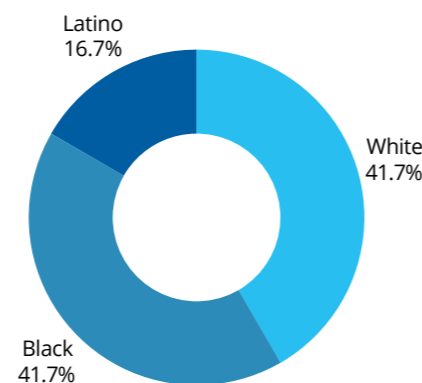
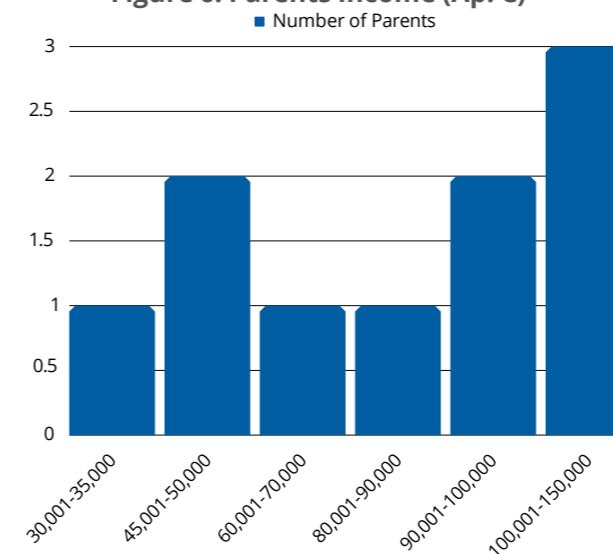


Figure 6. Parents Income (Ap. C)



Conclusion

We included strengths, limitations, and recommendations regarding initial interviews feedback forms, blog posts, program applications and exit surveys, counselors, career exposure, leadership, student preparedness, and 8th grade mentors.

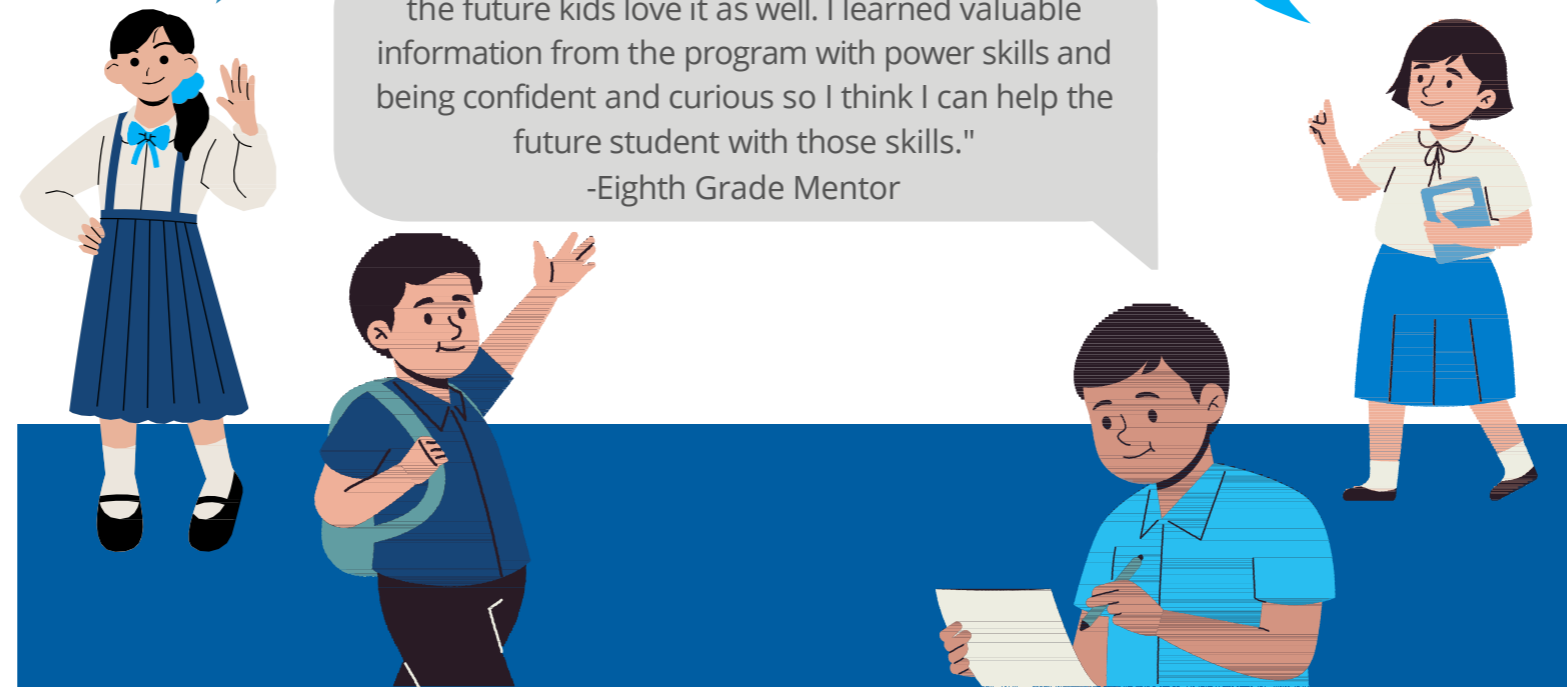
Overall the program excels at career and job exposure but may need some improvements in leadership conceptualization and data collection.

With these improvements, the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce CLDA program can be successful and beneficial to students all around Wilmington!

"Being a mentor. . .gives me a opportunity to help out with kids that have questions or needs extra support with something. I can relate with the kids that are a little more timid because I'm that kid. I understand what is going through there head." -Eighth Grade Mentor

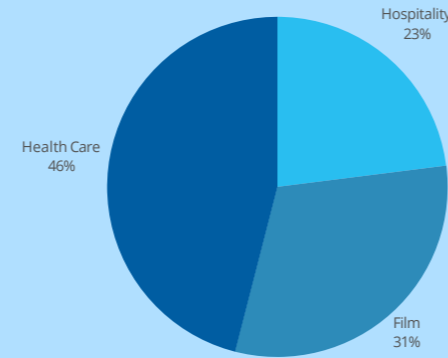
"By participating in the CLDA program this year, I learned a lot about being a leader in my school and how it relates to all of the possibilities of being a future leader in our community." -Eighth Grade Mentor

"I loved being a student, and being a mentor I can help the future kids love it as well. I learned valuable information from the program with power skills and being confident and curious so I think I can help the future student with those skills." -Eighth Grade Mentor



APPENDIX - A

Figure 1. Pie Chart of Students' Favorite Careers after Program



This pie chart is of students new favorite careers after the exposure to different careers. 23% of students liked hospitality best, which included jobs such as hotel staff, 46% healthcare-mostly nursing- and 31% film including jobs such as production and film making.

Important to **reference figure 4**. Students' favorite jobs seemed to change to only the careers picked for tours. There seems to be a narrative that is only focusing on certain careers and changing kids minds on favorite careers based on ones exposed to.

This table includes the job industries students toured and the educational requirements associated.

While we know all fields cannot be covered, consider implementing other industries as well such as government jobs, food/culinary arts, entertainment, etc.

A list of ALL jobs in Wilmington with their educational requirements can be obtained upon request.

Figure 2. Job Industry of Career Exposure by Education Requirements

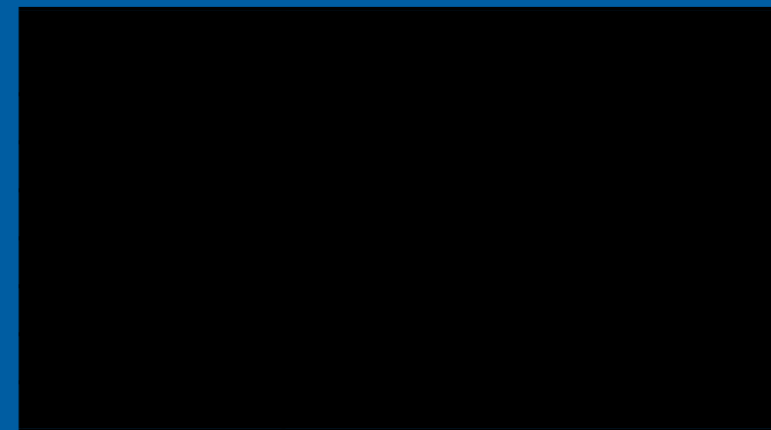
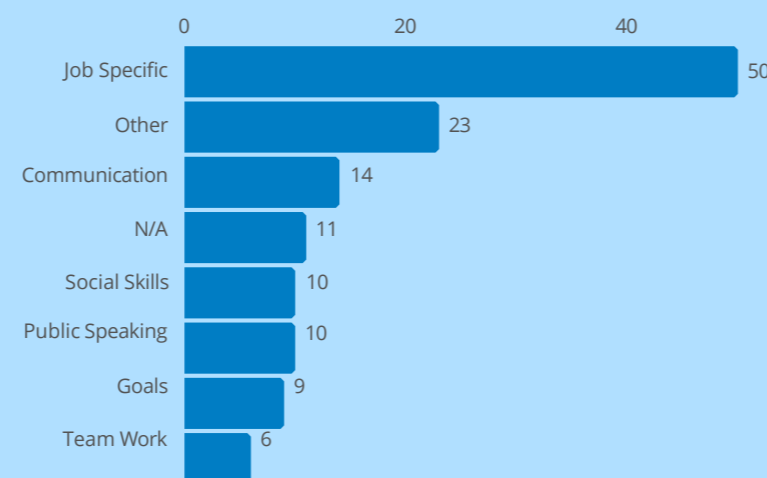


Figure 3. Bar Chart of Learned Skills after Tour Sessions - Feedback Forms



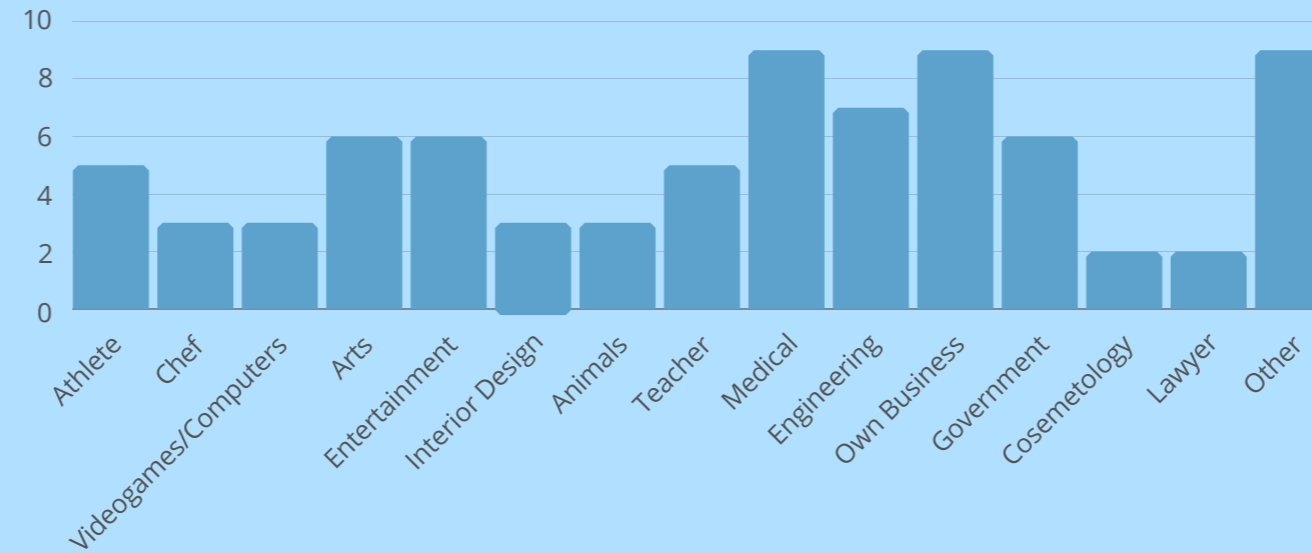
Other: How to dress
 Job Specific: 50/30/20 rule, credit, complex banking, container ships, logistics, how to grow a business, how a hotel works, architecture, VR and 3D models, how to build a city, how to use Tallo, respiratory therapy, how medication is processed, rehabilitation, how many nurses there are, stunt man, and production.
 N/A: Students either did not fill out this part of the survey or were not part of the field trip.

Some students answers were coded into one or more categories

N= Varies for each session

APPENDIX - B

Figure 4. Bar Chart of Students' Career Interests from Initial Interviews



Medical included:
doctor, surgeon, nurse, dentist

Government related included:
politician, president, activist, military

Other Category:
mathematician, accountant,
fastfood, chemist, ontology,
psychology, delivery, not sure yet

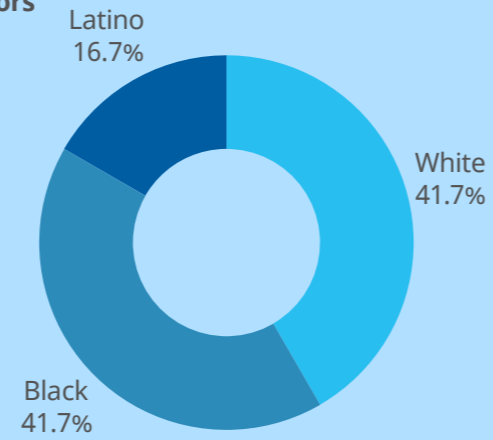
Out of the 41 interviews, 21.9% students stated their career interests were in medical, 21.9% own their own business, and 21.9% chose careers in the other (stated to the left). 5% were interested in being a lawyer, 5% in cosmetology, 7% chef/food, 7% tech related, 7% interior design, and 7% animal related. The second highest responses included 17.1% in engineering, and 14.6% for categories art, entertainment, and government.

Some students answers were coded into one or more categories, >100%
N=41

Are students within the CLDA program exposed to knowledge regarding pathways to higher education to work in careers they identified interest?

APPENDIX - C

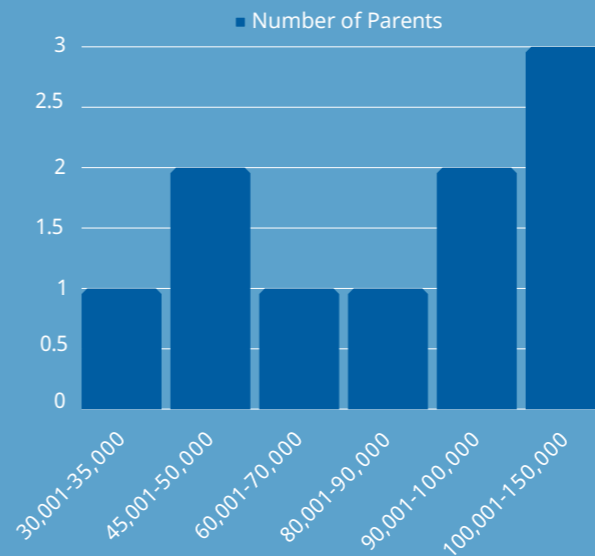
Figure 5. Donut Chart of Race & Ethnicity of Parents of 8th Grade Mentors



Based on the 8th grade parents' demographics, 5 families identified as White, 5 families identified as Black, and 2 families identified as Latino.

N=11

Figure 6. Bar Chart of Parents of 8th Grade Mentors Income



Based on the 8th grade parents' demographics, majority of families had a higher socioeconomic status (3). **N=10**

Figure 7. Grades of 6th graders

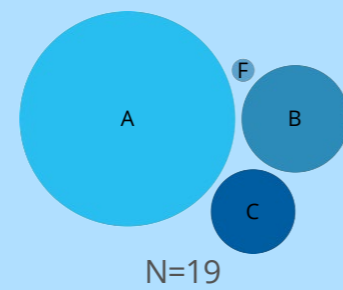
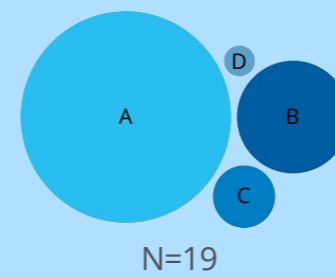


Figure 8. Grades of 7th graders



Based on 8th grade mentors grades, majority of students received A's in 6th and 7th grade. However, one student in particular struggled balancing the program and school.

APPENDIX - D. Synthesis

Written by Sarah Blake

Initial Interview Synthesis: The students were confident, comfortable, and properly prepared for their initial interviews. Some students were not given feedback on their interviews, but overall the performance of the children were positive and very mature. The majority of students applied to the program to gain new experiences, and identified a range of career fields they are interested in joining. The subject interests in students are about 50/50 between art subjects and STEM subjects (no code information available to 100% confirm), though the most-identified career field of choice was music- and art-related, with technology-related fields being the least-identified. The majority of students identified a family member as a leader in their life, next being school leaders (such as teachers). Both parents and school staff/counselors were identified as being the reason for applying for some students.

Blog Posts Synthesis: The students appeared to have thoroughly enjoyed the field trips to each destination and learned about different relative career fields through touring facilities and hearing from employees and guest speakers. Students' blog posts are detailed and show their enthusiasm about the field trip, as well as what they learned about the career field. Students learned about different skills such as group collaboration and communication, empathy, and job skills like professional dress codes.

Final Presentation Synthesis: Students were able to identify many new skills and experiences that they learned from the CLDA program such as: new career fields, connections, benefits of the program, 8th grade mentorship; but leadership identification and conceptualization is lacking. Students are able to identify leadership skills, but do not appear to understand what leadership is. The program provides extensive exposure of different career/job fields to the students, and they are able to relay the information they learned from the field trips and the speakers from each job field about different careers. The presentations are either done very well or need improvement. Such presentations such as from Noble have clearly had a lot of time spent on it and relays information about their experiences from the program; whereas presentations such as from Myrtle Grove had errors. For a program that is to put emphasis on leadership development, leadership is not clearly conceptualized as one of the learning points from the students as they do describing jobs/careers.

Feedback Forms Synthesis: Most of the students were able to identify a favorite career from each field trip, very few did not respond or did not identify a specific career that was their favorite. When asked about what they had learned, it appears that most students reported learning some sort of skill that may not be specific to the field trip, but that is fluid to the real world (e.g., communication, empathy vs. sympathy, professional work attire, etc.). Additional comments were mainly reporting about the students' approval for lunch that day, but also comments about enjoying the field trips, besides the one student who had a "horrible" experience in Session 6. There was not much depth in making an analysis from the feedback forms.

APPENDIX - E. Synthesis

Midpoint-Analysis Synthesis: The biggest strength identified in the program is the exposure that students have gained to different career/job opportunities in a variety of fields that they might not have known about previously through field trips. Field trips and job/career exposure were also identified as the most impactful elements of the program, followed by learning new skills and networking. These strengths and impactful elements are supported by data from the initial interviews, feedback forms, blog posts, and final presentations that highlight these field trip experiences by students and what they were able to experience from them. The least impactful element of the program identified was the element of “leadership” that the students were supposed to learn as one of the main objectives/goals of the program. There was no conceptualization or demonstration of leadership identified by the students, which shows they lack understanding of leadership. It is recommended that the program should be aware of the way that students perceive the program’s usefulness and improve the way they teach leadership to the students in a way they can understand what it means. The program should continue but should change the way that it functions through a greater emphasis on learning and conceptualizing leadership, providing more information on fields outside of trades that require higher education, and better data collection techniques.

Program Applications & Exit Surveys Synthesis: In the program applications, most students reported being pre-engaged in clubs or activities, mostly sports. Many students expected to learn interpersonal and leadership skills throughout the program, and that learning these skills and being able to demonstrate leadership would be the most rewarding aspect of the program, such as helping and motivating others. In the exit surveys, most students had joined new clubs or activities, mostly sports – again – but a significant number of students did not join any new clubs or activities. The most rewarding aspect of being a leader to the students was learning new skills like self-confidence, public speaking, and communication, but found that the responsibilities that come with being a leader and setting an example of leadership was the most challenging. It was difficult to analyze the expected skill attainment to the newly attained skills because the program application asked students about skills they already possessed, not what they expected to learn. Overall, our class found that the data in relation to the success of the program is inconclusive and that we were not provided with adequate information and confusing data as a result of data collection methods. Program applications and exit interviews were not conducted in similar ways that allow for clear data analyzation. It is important to note that a key aspect and goal of the program is to teach students about leadership, but they do not seem to have a clear understanding or conceptualization of leadership.