

## Program Report 2015-2016 for Peekskill School District

### Introduction

Michael Arterberry, the Founder and Executive Director of the Youth Voices Center, Inc., a non-profit organization which has the sole purpose of improving the lives of young people, is also the creator of the Power of Peace program. The Power of Peace program was introduced to Westchester County, NY and surrounding areas in 2005. The results of the Power of Peace program for Fall 2015 are presented in this report. The implementation of the program took place in twelve cycles during the months of September – January. Ten cycles took place at Peekskill High School while the remaining two took place at the Summit Alternative School.

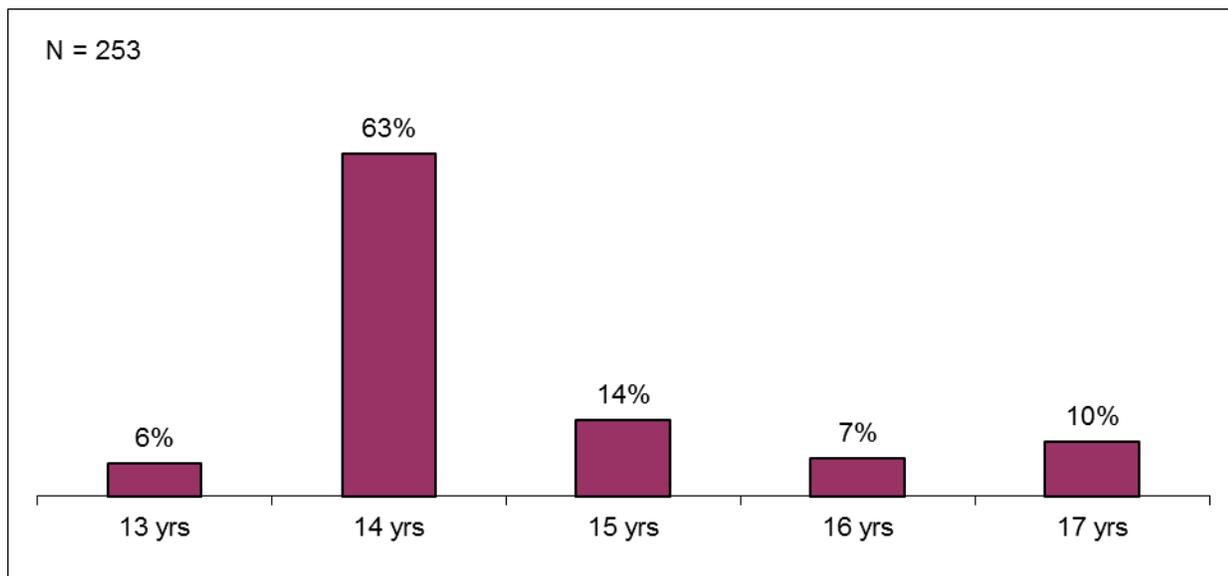
### Program Description

Power of Peace is a succession of experiential workshops, with a focus on conflict resolution and anti-violence, designed to enable young people to use their voices to express their concerns, fears and dreams within a safe environment. The workshops address the issues that youth confront daily, the components of which include: positive youth development, leadership, conflict resolution, team work and collaboration, decision making, respect for others and self, and diversity.

### Demographics

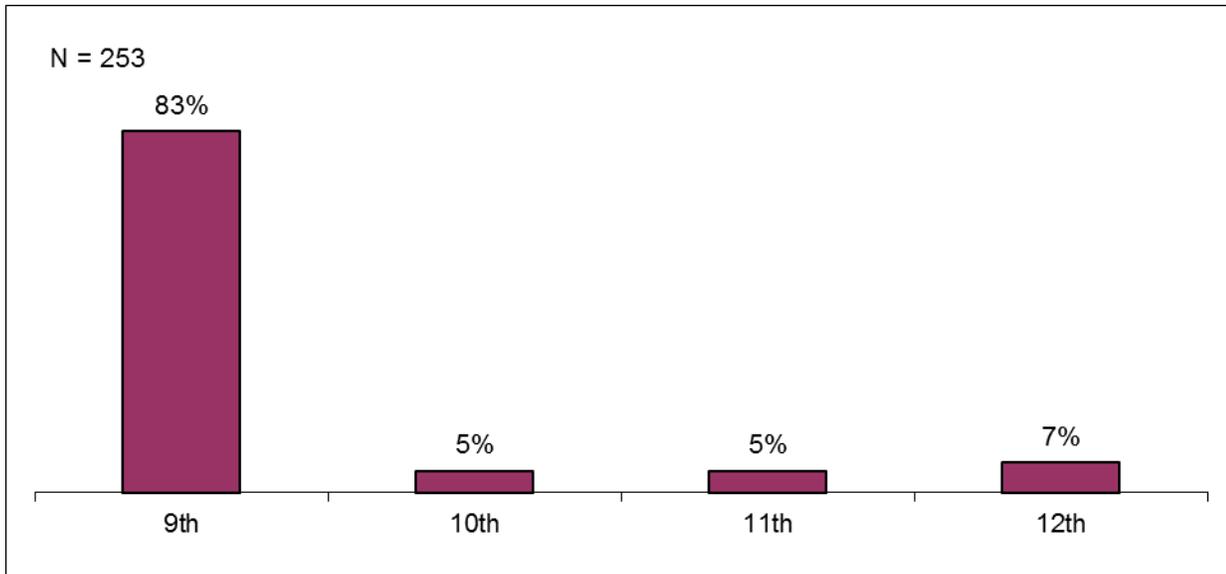
There were 253 students who participated in the 2-day Power of Peace workshops. The student group was comprised of 130 boys (51%) and 123 girls (49%) in grades 9 through 12 and ranging in age from 13– 17. There were 28 adult participants as well. Distributions for age, grade and ethnicity are presented in the charts listed below.

### Age



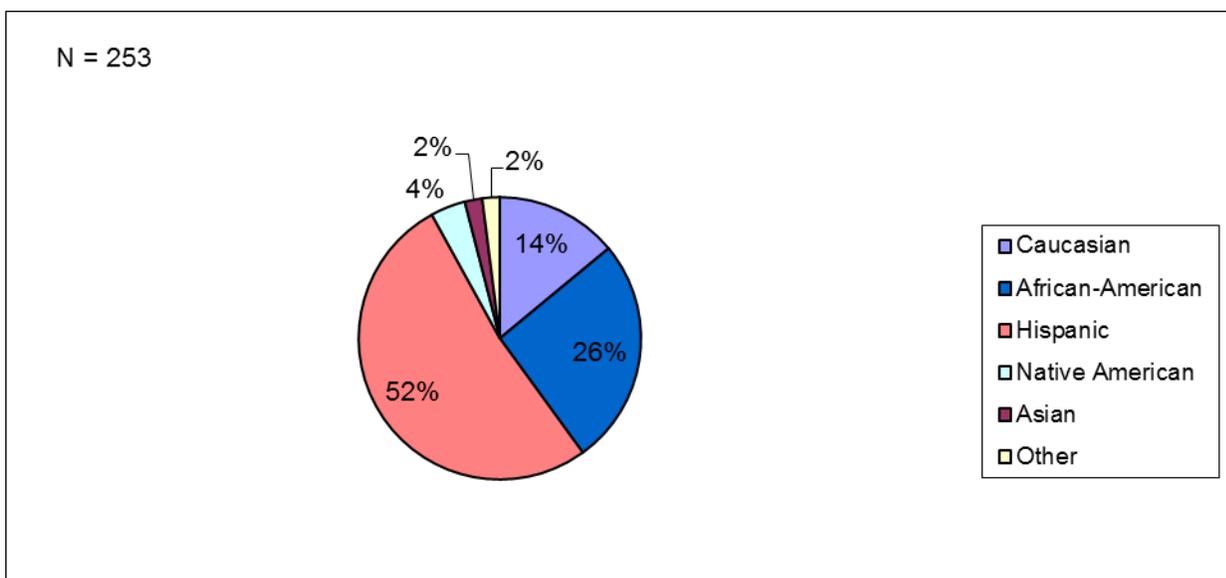
The vast majority (nearly two-thirds) of the participants were age 14.

## Grade



The majority (83%) of participants were in the 9th grade.

## Ethnicity



Over half (52%) of participants identified their ethnicity as Hispanic, followed by a quarter (26%) who identified their ethnicity as African-American.

## Program Evaluation

A six statement pre-survey and a seven statement post-survey, designed by Creative Solutions Consultation Services, LLC, were administered to assess the effectiveness of the program. Students were asked to complete the pre-survey prior to the start of the first workshop and asked to complete the post-survey at the end of the second workshop. Of the 253 participants, 100% completed the pre-survey while 90% completed the post-survey.

**Quantitative:** Responses to statements were on a five point likert scale ranging from 5 = "Yes, definitely," 4 = "Mostly," 3 = "Sometimes," 2 = "Not Really," to 1 = "No, Never."

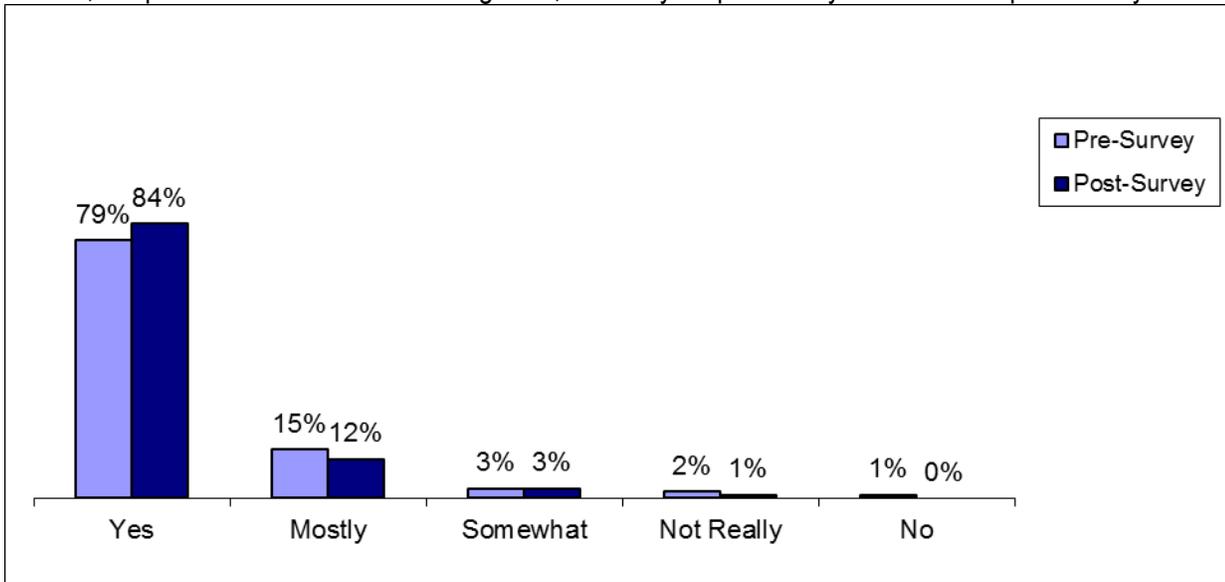
**Qualitative:** Two questions asking for feedback about the program were included on the post-survey regarding a) how participants felt about the Power of Peace experience and b) ways to improve the program in the future.

**Results**

From pre-survey to post-survey, positive changes in attitudes were seen on all six the items.

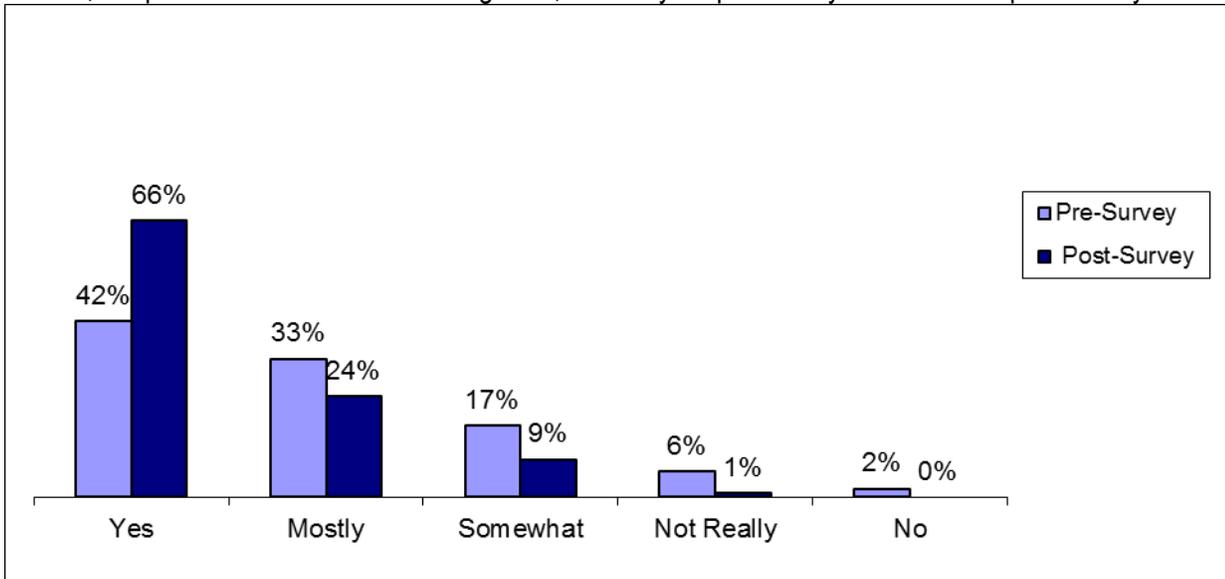
**Item 1: I respect myself.**

Overall, the percent of students answering “Yes, definitely” at pre-survey = 79% and at post-survey = 84%.



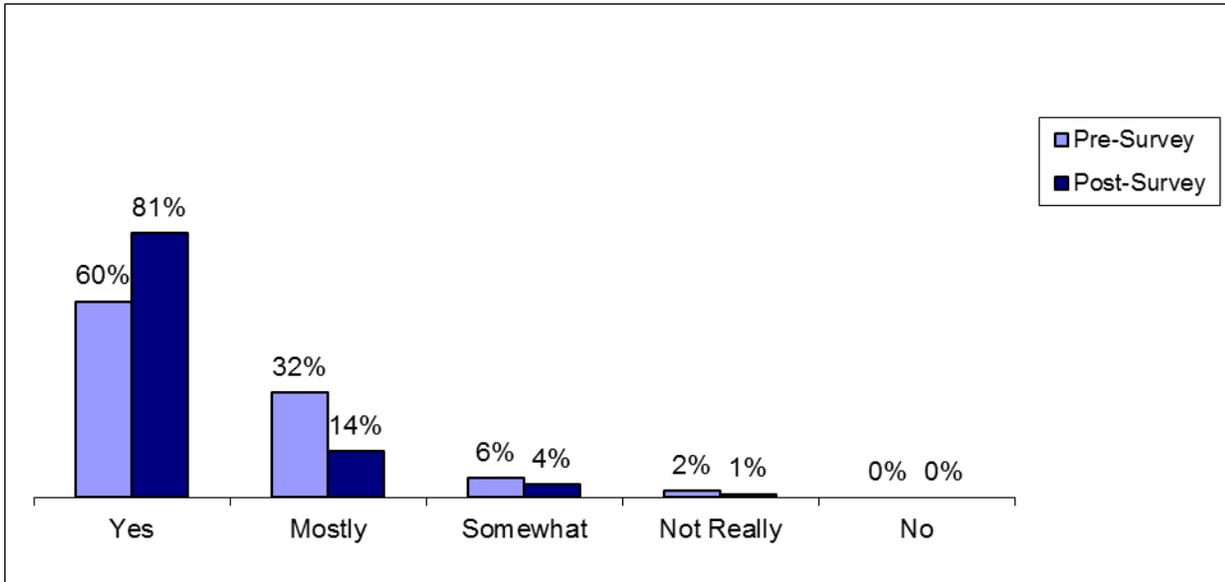
**Item 2: I am willing to talk to a student different from me.**

Overall, the percent of students answering “Yes, definitely” at pre-survey = 42% and at post-survey = 66%.



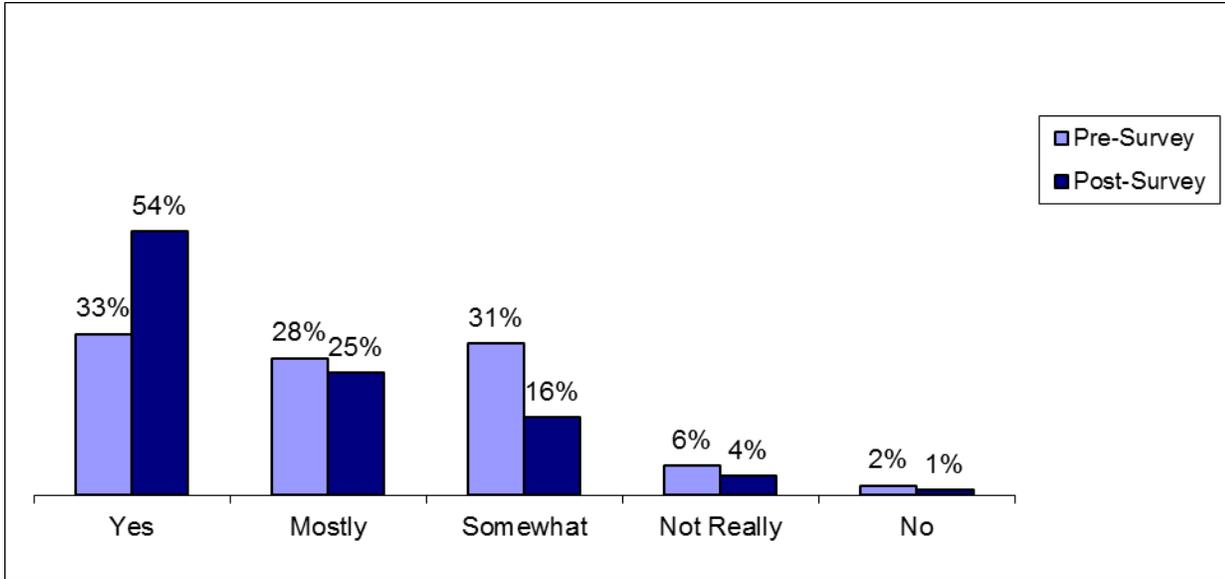
**Item 3: I respect students different from me.**

Overall, the percent of students answering “Yes, definitely” at pre-survey = 60% and at post-survey = 81%.



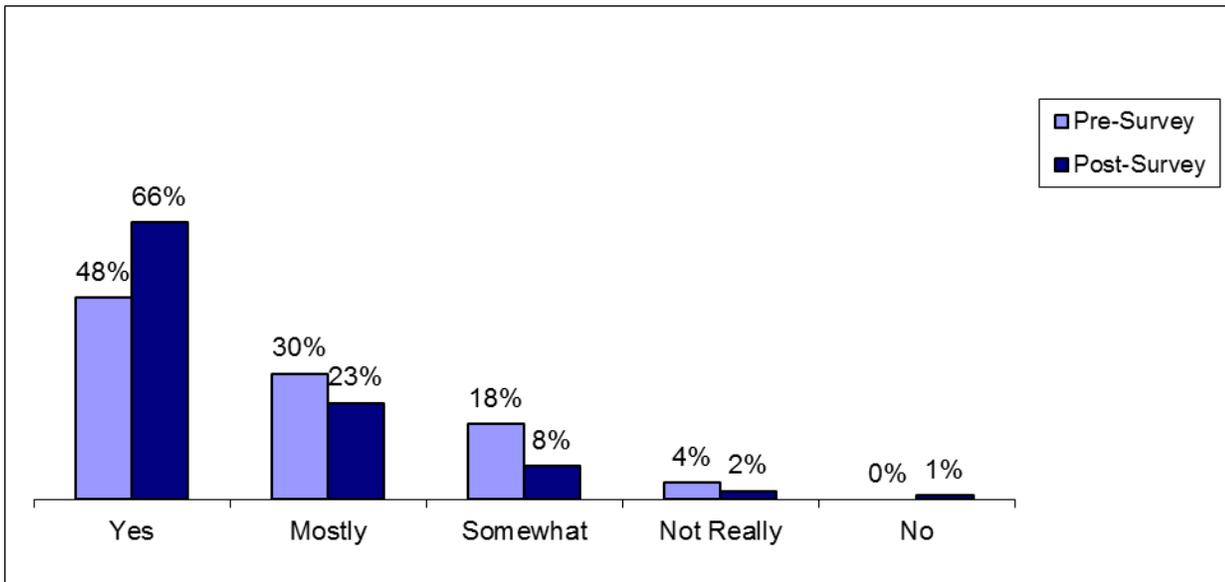
**Item 4: I believe violence will not resolve conflict.**

Overall, the percent of students answering “Yes, definitely” at pre-survey = 33% and at post-survey = 54%.



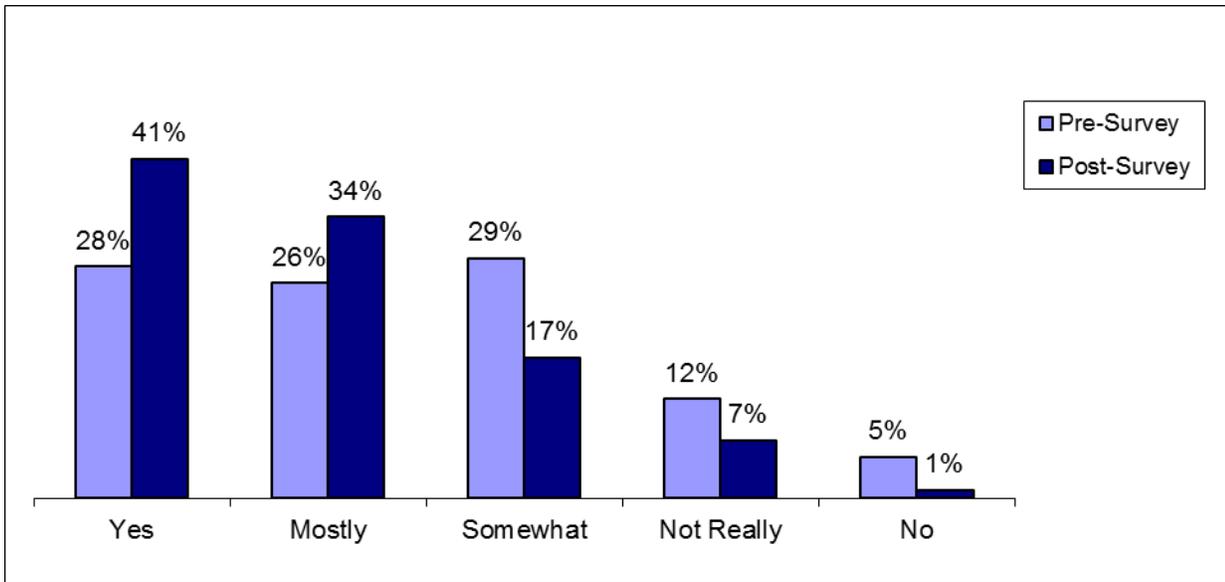
**Item 5: I am aware of alternatives to violence.**

Overall, the percent of students answering “Yes, definitely” at pre-survey = 48% and at post-survey = 66%.



**Item 6: I think I know how other people see me.**

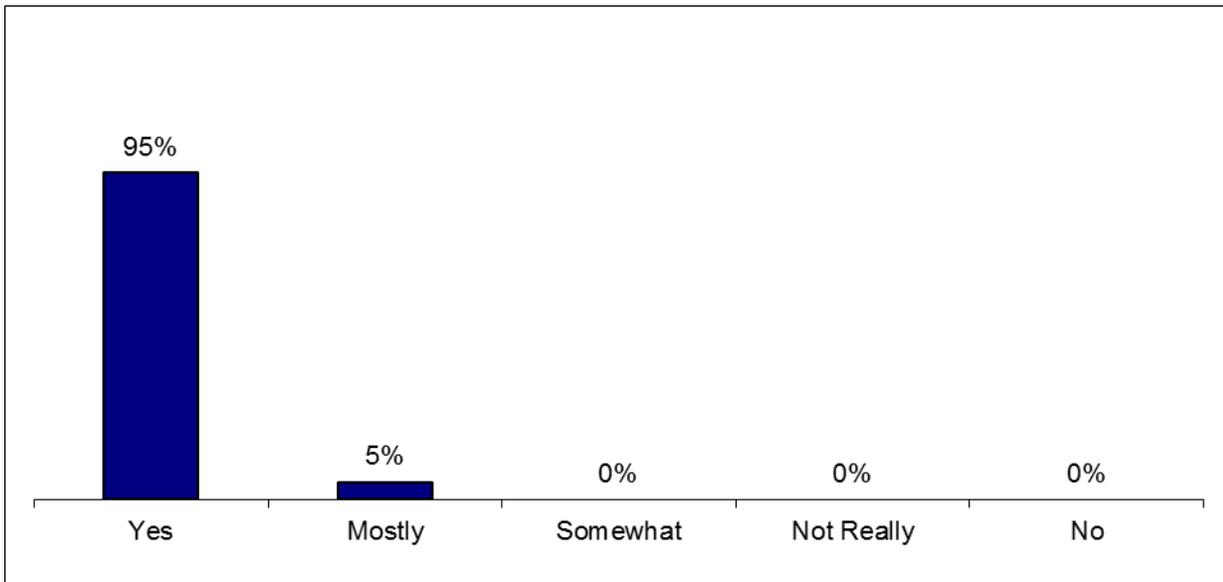
Overall, the percent of students answering “Yes, definitely” at pre-survey = 28% and at post-survey = 41%.



In addition to the six previous items listed, the three items listed below were included in the post-survey.

**Item 7: I think it's a good idea for other students in my school to attend the Power of Peace workshops.**

The vast majority, 95% of the participants answered "Yes, definitely."



**Item 8: Please tell us how you feel about Power of Peace**

Of the 253 students who completed the post-survey, 97% of them took the time to comment on how they felt about the Power of Peace experience. The feedback received was overwhelmingly positive.

Quotes from participants include:

- Power of Peace is a great opportunity to show others how you feel and to discover things that you'd never thought were in someone.*
- Power of Peace has made me look at things differently. It made me feel more confident and more careful about how I speak or view others.*
- I feel that it's a good program for people to let all your feelings out and see you are not the only one struggling.*
- Power of Peace helped changed my view on life.*
- I feel that it is a great way to learn other students' situations*
- I like it! It was my first time here and it made me realize things I wouldn't or couldn't realize on my own.*
- I feel like it's a good program because it helps you express your feelings to people you never talk to before.*
- Power of Peace helped open people's minds and care more about our fellow people*
- I feel that it is a very good program. It really helps you solve your problems*
- It was cool. I learned a lot of new things and I had a good time*
- Power of Peace taught me ways to express myself*
- Power of Peace has helped me come out of my shell. I can also relate to others in a new way*
- Power of Peace is a place where it is safe to express themselves*
- Now I feel good about myself and other people*
- P.O.P. is a program that lets us know what my fellow classmates go through at let us know more about them then we did before*
- Power of Peace is a nice way to let out what people have inside without a worry that other people will find out or judge them.*
- Power of Peace really helped us bond with our classmates which otherwise wouldn't have happened*

*Power of Peace is something that every school should have because it made me realize how I really feel  
Power of Peace allowed me to say things that had bothered me. I am glad I attended. It helped me a lot. I needed something like this.*

*I enjoyed the Power of Peace experience because I learned there are some things I take for granted and need to look for in my friends.*

*I think that it is a good opportunity for all kids to get a glimpse of what others go through outside of school and relate to them better.*

*I believe that Power of Peace is an amazing program. I wish I could do this once a week. I truly believe that I will be able to work through and handle my problems differently. I hope to do something as inspirational as this one day. It really helps.*

*I feel it's a good way for young students and people to learn how to be able to get all the negativity out of their heads.*

*It was definitely an encouraging program. It helped to let all your feelings out and not keep everything locked up. It let us get to know each other better too!*

*Power of Peace really taught me important emotional and mental obstacles that we've encountered. I feel great about the program.*

*I like Power of Peace because I got to actually get to know people and I got to look at people in a different way.*

*I loved Power of Peace. It helped me get in touch with my inner self.*

*It made me change my perspectives on life and on people*

*Power of Peace gave me a better understanding of what people go through. I hope that my sister can do this program when she moves up to the high school*

*It is an amazing program and it really interacts with the kids and makes kids feel powerful and that they can change the world.*

*Power of Peace is amazing and fun and a good way for kids to learn to get together and not bully. It was great and fun and I can't wait to do it again*

*I really liked Power of Peace, it was a really good way for me to connect and learn about people I knew nothing about until now*

*It is the best because it creates a bond with students that can never be broken.*

*It was great and gave me another perspective on life*

*Power of Peace is really fun and it is a safe place where you can express your feelings.*

*I feel like Power of Peace made me feel more attached to my classmates*

*It was a fun time, made some friends and can't wait to be back. I feel more relieved from things on my mind*

*Power of Peace helped me realize everyone has a story to tell.*

**Adult** – A great opportunity for students to interact/share with other students and faculty

**Adult** – Excellent program; great balance of activities (play, discuss, share); very worthwhile for adults and students

**Adult** – I feel it was a very useful program to help our students mature with self-acceptance

**Adult** – Not knowing much about the program coming in I was very much impressed. With the group we had it was obvious they were different. It took a while but you did eventually manage to allow some of them to finally let go. I'm confident that will happen even more so in the 2<sup>nd</sup> session

**Adult** – It is very useful in building bonds with students

**Adult** – Great Program, Excellent Activities, keeps students on task, allows us to learn more about our students

**Adult** – It is a wonderful program. I am very happy that all of the 9<sup>th</sup> grades got to attend

**Adult** – I feel like it's a great program. I'm sorry our students had trouble focusing, but I feel like they had some genuinely thoughtful moments, which in and of itself is great for them.

**Adult** – I think it is a wonderful program for the students to come together and see that all have some of the same issues and circumstances but they can work through it. They are not alone. There are people who can help and understand.

## **Item 9: Please tell us what we could do to improve Power of Peace**

Of the 253 students who completed the post-survey, 91% of them took the time to comment on improving the Power of Peace experience. The majority of the respondents indicated that they could think of nothing that would improve the Power of Peace program. Among the comments suggesting ways to improve the program the following were listed:

*Have it more than once a year*

*There should be a longer free time period*

*Make it a bit longer*

*More activities*

*Perhaps Mike could do a workshop just for faculty members*

*Make it more than 2 days, make it 4 days*

*More time in the fun activities and learning more about people*

*Make it worldwide*

*Have it every Monday*

*Get us up and moving more*

*I think that there should be more bathroom breaks and more time to talk about how you feel*

*Let kids decide what they want to do*

*Everybody should share about their backgrounds and how they feel*

*Make it longer for 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Make it for 2 days just like the senior high*

*More games / More workshops*

*Have more activities that help us love ourselves*

*Try to add more activities that deal with the emotions of an individual*

*Just wish it could be more often.*

*Please make more interactive activities*

*Adult – more information for the students on future thinking and circumstance. For example, we should let them know that the future will get better*

*Bring a speaker system in the 2<sup>nd</sup> session*

*Add more music and art because kids express themselves in different ways*

*Do an activity with the ball*

*The only thing I could think of is if we actually saw a video of examples from other perspectives*

*Maybe you can request teachers who regularly work with the kids. I know and love these kids but perhaps their behavior would have been different with one of their classroom teachers*

## **Discussion**

The one statement indicating the greatest change in attitude from pre-survey to post-survey: Item 2: I am willing to talk to a student different from me (an increase of 24%). The one statement indicating the least change in attitude from pre-survey to post-survey was Item 1: I respect myself. (an increase of 5%).

## **Conclusion**

The results presented in this report indicate that the Power of Peace program did have a positive effect in changing student attitudes in from pre-survey to post-survey. These results are primarily limited by the fact that this was not an empirical study. Without follow up measures, it is impossible to know the extent to which any attitudinal changes will be sustained.