



THE IMPACT OF BGC CANADA

**A participatory, qualitative study of the impact
of 17 BGC Clubs across Canada**

2022-2023

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ABOUT BGC CANADA

For over 120 years, BGC Canada (formerly Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada) has been creating opportunities for millions of Canadian kids and teens. As Canada's largest child and youth serving charitable and community services organization, our Clubs open their doors to young people of all ages and their families at 736 locations nationwide. During out-of-school hours in small and large cities, and rural and Indigenous communities, our trained staff and volunteers provide programs and services that help young people realize positive outcomes in self-expression, academics, healthy living, physical activity, job readiness, mental health, social development, leadership, and more. The vision of BGC is for all children and youth to discover and achieve their dreams and grow up to be healthy, successful, and active participants in society. Opportunity changes everything.

LEARNING AND IMPACT PROJECT

The purpose of the BGC Canada Learning and Impact Project is to prove and improve the impact of Clubs across Canada, individually and collectively, through evaluation. To evaluate the effectiveness of Clubs in achieving the impact they intend, the national movement has embarked on a multi-year project to build the capacity of individual Clubs as well as the national federation of Clubs to collect data on the effects of the Club experience on the lives of children and youth. The project began in 2022 with the first deployment of an annual national outcomes survey. The results of the 2022 Member Survey are available in the [2022 National Member Survey Report](#). In the fall of 2022, 17 Clubs engaged in qualitative data collection through one-on-one interviews with Club children and youth. Another cohort of Clubs will be invited to participate in the qualitative work of the project in the fall of 2023.

Qualitative Methodology

To engage in the qualitative part of the project, 17 BGC Clubs used a standard interview protocol to interview 375 children and youth who participate in the Club. The interview protocol was focused on four areas of intended impact: Positive Relationships, Lifelong Learning, Healthy Living, and Leadership Skills. During the fall of 2022, teams from each of the participating Clubs were trained in qualitative interviewing, data collection, and data analysis. Each Club identified a purposeful stratified sample of their Club participants and then conducted interviews. Most interviewers captured data through a voice-to-transcription application. Each interviewer used a two-step analysis process to identify insights and themes from the interview data. The 17 Club teams identified findings from their Club interviews. This report is a summary of the findings from the full data corpus of the 375 interviews with children and youth.

Project Scope

In the fall 2022 qualitative cohort of the Learning and Impact Project, Club staff interviewed 375 Club members. A review of the literature indicates that the BGC Canada Learning and Impact Project is already one of the largest qualitative studies of children and youth using in-depth interviews in Canada.

PART 1: THE IMPACT OF BGC CLUBS

A meta-analysis of the findings from the 17 participating Clubs reveals insights into the kind and quality of impact realized in the lives of children and youth who participate in Clubs. The following represent some of the most salient insights from the complement of interviews conducted in the fall of 2022.

Healthy Living

Active: I am more physically active

Kids at Clubs talk about the difference the Club has made in the level of activity in their lives. Instead of isolation and inactivity, Clubs invite kids to step into experiences and to be physically active. It gets them off the chair and moving. It gives kids the freedom to run and explore, to play and to be outside, to move and to exercise their bodies. This gives kids confidence and pride and contributes to a healthy pattern of life. It provides them with a healthy, positive mindset.

"Being at the Club helps clear my mind when we do activities, At the Club when we're doing physical activities and I'm sad it makes me think of something different."

"I can drop kick a soccer ball across the entire field. I never thought I could do that."

"If I went home after school, I would just sit on the couch and watch tv but at the Club I get to run and play."

"I am confident in myself and creating healthy habits."

Nutrition: I have healthier eating habits

Among the healthy habits encouraged by the Club is that of nutritional eating. Kids are given the opportunity through the Club to experience healthy food and to make healthy choices about food. They know more about healthy food. They know about the effects of the food choices they make. They try new, healthy foods at the Club and discover what they enjoy. They gain a taste for what is nutritious. And they are encouraged to build better habits of nutrition that will keep them healthy as they grow and develop and establish eating patterns for the rest of their lives.

"It's good for you and like, you have like a healthier body, and you get energized more."

"It's food for our brains not just our tummies."

"Kid Food Nation and healthy foods at snack time help me make better choices at home."

"Eating healthy makes me feel happy and makes my body feel better."

Self-care: I am able to care for myself better

Some of the kids who were interviewed spoke of the impact of Clubs on their ability to take care of themselves. For some, this meant developing self-care strategies that changed how they processed their own emotions. They learned how to take time to manage their emotions before engaging in communication. They were able to develop positive coping strategies and avoid negative coping strategies. They knew more about how to access help when they needed it. They learned to be kind to themselves. Their experience at the Club improved their ability to care for their own mental, emotional, social, and physical health.

“Before I was working with BGC, I was definitely not in a good space. I learned that my health matters. I started taking care of myself a lot more and treating myself better.”

“Being able to work through some things and have more patience and kindness for myself helped me be more kind to others.”

“I have really started prioritizing myself and not putting myself in dangerous situations... I’ve definitely been an overall actually happier person and I feel like someone people would want to be around.”

Resilience: I am able to do okay when things get hard

One of the most significant tasks of growing up is to develop the ability to handle difficulty with resilience. Through their experience at the Club, kids are able to recognize their emotional state and are better able to self-regulate or seek help. Kids describe learning skills to handle their emotions of anxiety, worry, fear, stress, and discomfort. They develop the ability to be okay when they are feeling sad or anxious. And when they need help, they are able to practice seeking support from others at the Club, both peers and caring adults.

“[I’ve learned] to close my eyes, think good thoughts. Breathe in, breathe out... hug something that means something to me.”

“[I’ve learned] not to fight. That it's not okay to be yelling. It's not okay to scream. It's not okay to push people, and it's not okay for people to push you.”

“I am noticing changes in social interactions that people see things differently. Instead of getting mad, I ask for clarity as opposed to arguing.”

Leadership Skills

Agency: I can shape my future

In a BGC Club, kids have the opportunity to make choices, explore their choices, and consider the impact of those choices on their lives. They try activities they have never done before. They explore what they like and dislike in a safe and supportive environment. In this way, they come to understand their strengths and areas for growth. They develop a sense of being an agent of their own lives, being able to make and follow through on decisions instead of simply receiving the decisions of others. This builds in kids the strength and poise to be able to create the kind of lives they desire to have.

“The Club has given me an idea of what I could potentially do...people actually helped me see things one step at a time and I was able to see more clearly goals for my future.”

“You can explore a lot of different things [at the Club]. It teaches you what you're interested in or not interested in. It's a place where you are taken care of, can do fun activities, and learn very important skills.”

“Club gives me a clearer view on what lifestyle choices to make, what kind of life I want to have.”

Role modelling: I can have a positive influence on someone else

Through the Club, kids realize they can have a positive impact on others. This can be a profound shift in identity and mindset for some. They begin to see themselves as leaders. They begin to anticipate the kind of positive influence they can be. This develops in them a care for others, a commitment to altruism, a concern for the welfare of others, and a consideration for the growth and development of others. The environment in Clubs fosters this perspective and Club staff encourage this posture and develop these skills in kids. In time, kids begin to take the initiative to reach out and positively influence others on their own.

“I learned the younger ones don't have as much skill, but you still have to try to help them understand.”

“I am a leader with helping out kids younger than me.”

“It feels awesome to help someone and see them able to do it. After you help them [it] is like [em]powering.”

Self-expression: I can now be me

Interviews reveal that kids experience a level of acceptance at the Club that helps them step into their identity freely and express themselves truly. Differences are not only accepted, they are celebrated at the Club. This means that kids are able to enjoy each other and themselves in all the diversity they bring to the Club. The Club provides kids a place to inhabit their uniqueness without fear and with expectation of acceptance and appreciation. This experience unleashes the unique potential of kids.

"I can be myself at the Club. I'm weird. I used to hide it, but not anymore."

**"You should have seen me when I first started [the Club].
I was like a mouse and scared to speak. Now, look at me!"**

"I like that I can be me, I don't have to feel weird about it."

Cooperation: I can work better with others

Along with conflict resolution, kids are learning how to play and work with others. They do activities with others at the Club, and what they learn as they engage with others are lessons they can practice in any interaction with another person. This develops critical skills of cooperation, necessary for a successful life. They learn how to accept the ideas of others. They learn how to work within rules and boundaries. What they learn at the Club, they can take and apply at school and home.

"I work better with others when I listen to others."

"I've learned to respect the rules and others."

"I learn more when I listen to other people's ideas."

**"If you are leading then definitely get other people's opinion and stuff
even though you're leading. Everyone's opinion still matters."**

Positive Relationships

Friendship: I have positive relationships

Positive relationships are key to a healthy childhood. The data show that BGC Clubs are an environment where positive relationships are intentionally developed and nurtured. Kids are quick to speak of the quality of the relationships they experience at the Club and the impact of those relationships on their lives. The Club is a place to develop meaningful connections with positive people of all ages. It takes kids from a place of isolation and disconnection, a place of loneliness and relational instability, and it gives kids an opportunity to forge relationships that matter. And through the forging of relationships, develop critical relational skills that will serve them well for the rest of their lives and set them on a trajectory of social health and resilience. Clubs help kids build healthy relationships with people unlike them, engendering empathy.

"I'm not shy anymore... I'm really good at making friends."

"I had separation anxiety when I was younger, the Club helps me cope with this; my friends help me at the Club."

"When I was younger, I felt there was only a small group of kids that I could trust, but now I've grown to be more trustworthy around different groups."

"It's better to be friends with people who are different than you, you learn from people who are different than you."

Conflict resolution: I have the skills to navigate tough moments with people

Data from the qualitative interviews with kids reveal that kids are developing and practicing conflict resolution skills at the Club. They learn how to listen, how to speak productively to others when they are upset, how to de-escalate tense situations, and how to navigate the complexity of interpersonal challenges. They see conflict resolution modelled at the Club. They are guided by adult staff, learning lessons from the adults who help them. They are encouraged to find techniques to manage their own emotions during a conflict as well as productively and sensitively handle the emotions of others. These skills are essential components to a successful life. They are being developed in and through the Club.

"[I've learned to] ask for help when words don't work, use a calm voice, understand others' temper, keep calm, keep hands to self, and explain feelings."

"I don't engage in arguing with them. I used to run away if I argued with someone but I don't do that anymore because of the Club."

"I would help my friends the same way I know how to calm down, telling them to take a break, or go for a walk."

"When I get horribly mad...I like to breathe and drink water."

Identity: I value who I am

The interview data show that the Club experience provides kids with a sense of worthiness, self-value, and self-respect. The messages they receive from adults and peers alike help to shape an image of themselves that becomes part of their narrative about themselves. This positive sense of self provides them with security, identity, and confidence in who they are and who they are becoming. It helps them accept and value themselves during a time of life when the development of a sense of self is a critical developmental task.

"Through BGC I was able to find who I truly was, I overcame being just 'the kid who was bullied' and became someone I wanted to be. I've become stronger and I found my strength, this is all because of BGC."

"Before you can really love someone else, you have to love yourself and BGC helped me do that."

"I've realized that I deserve a good life."

"I'm happy [with] who I am."

"It really helped me realize that I am valuable as a person and that people do care about me."

"My self-esteem is better. I see myself differently."

"I know my worth and know what I want in relationships...I know what I'm willing to tolerate from others. I have a small but better friend group."

Belonging: I fit in with a group of people who care about me

Kids who were interviewed spoke clearly of the sense of belonging they find when they are at the Club. They are accepted. They experience the care of others, from peers to adults. They are surrounded by people and in an environment that provides them with a sense of safety and security. They know they belong. And for some, the Club is one of the rare places where they experience a true and authentic sense of belonging. Kids who attend Clubs not only experience belonging for themselves, but they learn how to provide a sense of belonging for others.

"I like being here because I get treated as if I'm part of a family here."

"If you're having a good or bad day, there is always a pal around to talk to about it. This makes me feel safe and I know they care because they remember to ask me the next day about it."

"I have a circle of support. On a bad day, I know there will be friends I can count on at a club."

"I feel I am more able to be myself here, it's way easier."

LIFELONG LEARNING

Exploration: I am excited to try new things

Clubs not only provide kids with new opportunities, but encourage kids to explore, to stretch themselves, to step into new activities, develop new skills, and expand their range of experience. Trying new things is a critical function of growing up. At the Club, kids report being positively impacted by the enriched environment and persistent encouragement to explore new skills, aptitudes, and opportunities. The interviews reveal that the Club is often the first place that kids are introduced to new activities and often the first time they are willing to try something new. The opportunities are designed to promote curiosity and learning in a safe and supportive environment. The experience of exploring and learning something new builds confidence, curiosity, grit, and an excitement about learning in kids that develops habits of lifelong learning.

"The best thing that I have learned at the Club was how to throw a frisbee. It took me a little bit to get the hang of frisbee and the staff kept encouraging me. Now I play frisbee with my mom and dad. It is so fun."

"I worry less about having nothing to do. I feel like I have more to do for the rest of my life."

"I tried making sushi at the Club and I liked it!"

"You can explore a lot of different things [at the Club]. It teaches you what you're interested in or not interested in. It's a place where you are taken care of, can do fun activities, and learn very important skills."

Goal setting: I have a dream for my future

The experience of the Club allows kids to envision a future that will be meaningful and enjoyable for them. Some of them have set goals for personal growth and development as a result of their time at the Club. Others have had an experience that has put them in touch with a passion in their life that they would like to pursue. Others find the support they receive and the confidence they experience provide an opportunity for them to dream about a future.

"I believe that the Club will help me achieve better grades and support my goal of becoming a chef."

"My goal is to develop empathy, self-awareness, and gratitude."

"It helped me make good choices in life because now I at least somewhat have a direction in what I want to do."

"I want to become a leader when I am older and work at the Club."

Challenge: I am confident in my ability to face problems

One of the themes emerging from the qualitative interviews is the realization for kids that they are developing the ability navigate difficult situations that once seemed impossible. They see problem-solving modelled for them at Club. In particular, they realize that the socio-emotional challenges they face can be faced with skill, poise, emotional self-regulation, and confidence. They learn how to communicate when they feel uncomfortable and how to listen to the discomfort of others. They gain communication skills that enable them to face challenges with others productively.

“I’ve learned that if I am calm, there’s a high chance the other person will stay calm.”

“I’ve learned that you need time apart from someone to have a good time with them.”

“I want to improve on my reaction to things now, like thinking before I do things.”

**“Being with BGC made me take things that I learned and put them into everyday actions.
It became part of how I acted and not how I thought.”**

PART 2: THE APPROACH OF BGC CLUBS

The interview data surfaced themes not only about what impact was happening, but how it was happening. The following themes represent features of the approach of BGC that appear to be creating positive outcomes, many of which align with the Common Features of the BGC Model for Success.

Opportunities to explore

One of the strongest and most distinct findings from the national qualitative data is the power of trying something new for kids. Clubs give kids the chance to expand their experiences by doing activities and being exposed to new ideas, new people, and new experiences. This enriched environment broadens and deepens the learning of kids. It helps them gain new perspectives. It gives them a sense of confidence. It promotes curiosity in a safe and supportive environment. Having first experiences within the environment of Clubs promotes greater involvement in other areas of their lives as kids gain the desire and confidence to try new things outside of Clubs.

Exploring interests

Not only do kids feel like they have the opportunity to try new things at the Clubs, but more importantly, they feel encouraged to find the right fit for them. They talk about doing things that they never had the opportunity to try until coming to the Club. They are also given time for free play to explore their interests and pursue their imagination, all within the supportive structure of programming with staff.

Engaging challenges

At Clubs, kids are encouraged to step out of their comfort zone through activities such as climbing the rock wall or participating in "open mic" night. These challenges allow kids to exercise new and nascent capacities and discover skills, aptitudes, and interests that were previously undiscovered.

Learning that is fun

The Club is a place where learning is fun. Kids experience joy and catch the excitement of learning at the Club.

"When trying new things at BGC I know I can try my best and still feel included by staff."

"[There's] always fun things to do at BGC. There's everything to do."

"There are lots of activities to keep busy at the Club."

"I see other people doing fun things so I want to try."

"I like that I can learn something new all the time."

Providing a safe and welcoming place

The Club is a place where kids feel safe and secure to be themselves. Interviewees reported feeling accepted and comfortable in the Club. They are encouraged to celebrate each other and the uniqueness of each other. Different perspectives, backgrounds, and cultures are honoured. The staff of Clubs work hard to help kids feel safe emotionally and physically. Providing kids with an experience of true, authentic, meaningful community is a catalyst for impact. The kind of community curated in and through Clubs give kids the experience of belonging and acceptance.

Being accepting and inclusive

At the Club, kids can show up as they are with no pressure or expectation to put on a front or pretend to be someone they are not. It does not matter if they are happy or sad, optimistic or discouraged, hopeful or glum. At the Club they experience acceptance, empathy, care, and understanding. Through the experience of acceptance, many kids find their way to a greater sense of wellbeing. Regardless of features that might make them feel excluded in other places, kids report being appreciated for their uniqueness instead of excluded because of their differences.

"I don't have to put on a mask or do anything different, I'm just being myself."

"I like that I can be me, I don't have to feel weird about it."

"Nobody is the same as me, everybody has their own unique culture...I don't want anybody in the world to be the same as me, I want everybody else to be unique."

"No one judges you in this place...You feel accepted here."

"At BGC everyone is allowed to be who they are."

**"For a long time, I was the one who was always seen as different.
Everyone is different. I feel happy here."**

"I identify as bisexual, but at home I don't have a family who makes me feel comfortable to discuss this. Then the [Club] was suggested. A year later, the leader who brought me in could not believe how far my social skills have come."

"The Club has provided me with a community."

"It feels nice to know people like me here. I feel safe."

**"'Welcomed' is the one word that I can use to describe my experience.
Super welcomed by everybody."**

"I always see kindness when I come here, people showing kindness to people they don't even know."

"I don't feel so alone, it just gets lonely when I don't come to the Club."

Relationship-based

Adults who care

The data show the influence of the staff on kids is undeniably significant. The relationships that are developed with staff provide a supportive scaffolding for their development. The influence of the staff can be seen in many areas of the members' experiences. At the Club, kids experience the power of a loving, caring, attentive adult in their life. The quality of this relationship is transformational for kids. Leaders believe in kids. They see the potential in kids. They support, give advice, encourage, and bring the best out of kids.

"Here the leaders say, 'come on you can do it' and then I believe in myself a bit more and I can do it."

"It makes me feel better by seeing you [a staff member] here."

"It makes me so happy to be here. The people who work here are meaningful and energetic."

"Favorite staff? Wait, I have lots of favourites!"

"I got such positive feedback... It's nice because I don't get to hear it elsewhere."

Friendships that matter

Experiencing a consistent and dependable environment filled with positive relationships and healthy friendships is developmental for kids. The constancy of a positive social environment shapes kids in ways no other experience can. Kids experience a powerful sense of belonging and integrate those experiences into their identity and outlook, both for the present and the future. The impact of having friendships that matter is seen in a wide variety of areas of human development: self-esteem, confidence, resilience, sense of self, stability, positivity, and more.

"I got such positive feedback... It's nice because I don't get to hear it elsewhere."

"Sometimes I get upset about something and when I come to the program, where I know my friends are going to be here, or there is usually something here that is going to make it not so bad. I don't ever come here and get upset about being here."

"People (at the Club) care about you and don't want you to be sad all the time."

Taking teachable moments

Many kids, especially in the intermediate age groups, spoke about how they enjoy learning positive social skills such as respecting others, even when they are facing discipline. There are opportunities through the activities and programs of Clubs for leaders to provide helpful reflection, insight, and guidance for kids. They find opportunities in the moment, and in-the-moment learning opportunities are often profoundly effective because the feedback loops are tight and the opportunity to practice learning is immediate.

"The staff help remind me to breathe."

"Staff at BGC gives us more than one chance to learn from our mistakes, they will help even three or four times to make sure we understand."

"The leaders help me solve problems."

"The leaders are nice, supportive and help me when I'm upset."

Gaining confidence through routines

The consistency and reliability of Clubs in the lives of kids provide them with the kind of routines that provide a sense of grounding, rootedness, and buoyancy. The structure promotes safety and security. The predictability of the kind of experience they will have when they come to the Club allows kids to relax and be themselves. It fosters a sense of safety and security. For some who experience unstable or fearful environments in other contexts of their lives, having the trusted presence and structure of Clubs provides the emotional and social scaffolding kids need to thrive during the developmental years.

"One thing I always like about going to camp and stuff is it gets me into a routine. It gets me back to sleeping at night, waking up at a decent time, and eating three balanced meals a day."

PART 3: AREAS FOR IMPROVING THE IMPACT OF BGC CLUBS

Clubs that participated in the qualitative study of impact identified areas in need of improving for the future. These are the common themes from among the interview data:

Voice and choice

Although many interviewees reported that the opportunity to make choices in the Club helped them develop their interests and agency, some expressed a desire for greater choice. They envisioned being more involved in the decision-making in the Club and the planning of programs for the Club. They had a desire to have greater say in what was happening around them.

More options

Given the array of possibilities for activities for kids, some expressed a desire for expanded options, particularly activities focused on critical skill development for older youth, like job searching, interview skills, resume writing and other life skills. Some desired more specialized sport programs focused on particular athletic skills. These were voiced as a desire to be able to continue to grow and be challenged through the years of involvement in the Club.

Intentional learning

For some among the interviewees, there was a sense that the Club experience was not yet intentional enough to maximize the learning potential. Whether it was academic learning or skill learning, they voiced a desire for greater attention to purposeful development. For example, the data show that in some cases, Clubs could have more impact on members' academic success in after-school settings by providing greater attention to the design of the learning experience. Another possibility revealed through the interviews is to include more facilitation of goal setting with members in areas of their interest. In any case, the Club's ability to provide an environment filled with appropriate and intentional experiences that challenge the children and youth will increase and amplify the impact of the Club experience.

Confidence in their leadership

Kids are gaining the capacity and heart for being a positive influence for others, but they lack confidence in their identity as leaders. They feel free to be themselves but find it difficult to be confident embracing a role of a leader or describing their influence with others as leadership. Some are unable to describe their interaction with others as leadership even while they are demonstrating the actions of a leader.

Consistency of staff

Since the staff relationship with the student is vital and profoundly instrumental in realizing impact in the lives of kids, turnover in staff undermines the quality of relationships that need to be formed. Staffing turnover impacts members. Turnover of staff, especially part-time, has more impact on members than expected. Some kids reported that when staff formed a relational bond and rapport with them and then left, it was a difficult experience. And then when new staff came, they did not always understand the culture.

PART 4: THE RESPONSES OF BGC CLUBS

In response to the findings, each participating Club identified a number of responses and recommendations. The following is a summary of the primary areas of application.

Relationships

Many of the responses focused on building, enhancing, and maintaining the quality of relationships in the Club.

Focus on relationship-building within Clubs

- Strengthen the context to create meaningful relationships.
- Create more shared group experiences – field trips and small group activities.
- Use small groups to foster relationship-building.
- Experiment with big buddy or pen pal programs
- Develop strategies to maintain relationships for the long term, even after participants move on.
- Provide the support needed for staff to connect with participants over an extended period of time through both conversations and experiences.
- Ensure that Club staff and participants are provided with several different opportunities to build and strengthen relationships on a regular basis.

Increase intentional mentoring

- Develop and implement a follow-up or “see it through” plan to have mentors/program facilitators check in with Club participants on their progress and growth or challenges to see how we can further support them and their goals.
- Create mentoring relationships (with staff or older youth) to provide additional checkpoints.

Teach social skills

- Promote more opportunities to grow those existing relationships via group chats on what makes healthy relationships and what an unhealthy relationship may look like.
- More programming that focuses on healthy relationships for younger kids
- Programming on developing boundaries and how to communicate them.

Build connections with kids to the community

- Utilize strong existing relationships and connections between staff and participants to encourage participants to be active in community development.
- Implement a participant-driven community day event.
- Increase opportunities for service to the community.

Environment

A substantial portion of the responses of Clubs related to the environment that is created within the Club experience.

Maximize the impact of the safe place

- We are seeing that this connection of safe places does better in programs that run more often, having programs that run more often can help establish this safe space.
- Take a deeper look at what contributes to participants feeling safe and secure, and openly utilize them as tools to continue to foster that feeling of safety in other programs.

- Teach the values that are modelled at the Club.
- Provide learning opportunities to promote respect and kindness.
- Support transition from child care programs to youth development programs.
- Add in elements of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion programming across all programs to increase cultural competency.

Exposure to diversity

- Bring in planned resources and activities, but also encourage members themselves to “show and tell” their cultures, experiences, and perspectives. Highlight more cuisines in our snacks.
- Invite cultural guests, knowledge keepers and/or artists to come share with children and youth at our Club.
- Offer more culture-specific programming.
- Develop more partnerships with diverse organizations (LGBTQ, BLM, etc)
- Teach more multiculturalism through programs.
- Develop programming to include presentations from youth to youth on acceptance, diversity, and inclusion through a format like “youth Toastmasters”.

Nurture the culture of values

- Providing more and new safe spaces for difficult discussions and conversations to occur whether in small group settings or one on one.
- Continue to role model self-acceptance and create a safe environment for members to express themselves.
- Continue to provide activities that promote diversity and self-acceptance.

Challenge

A significant set of responses from Clubs focused on the ways Clubs encourage children and youth to step into new opportunities and challenge themselves.

Promote opportunities for youth leadership

- Introduce more opportunities for youth to see themselves as leaders in interactions with our younger members (e.g. helping with activities, or serving snack in the kitchen).
- Pair older youth with younger children and have them read together.
- Recognize, highlight and celebrate when a child “steps up to the plate”, takes on a challenge or a mentorship/leadership role.
- Be more intentional with language around leadership.
- Develop leadership roles within programs to help participants view themselves as leaders and become aware of the positive influence they can have on others.
- Highlight leadership skills from a young age to help lay that foundation as Club participants get older and evolve their roles within the Club.
- Provide opportunities for children to mentor and lead in their regularly attended programs and programs across the Club. For example, have a peer-run program/with staff supervision/support available.
- Provide additional initiatives for participants to develop leadership skills (i.e. Reading Buddies, Youth-led programming for children)
- Establish organization/community partners that facilitate leadership-based programming and market to our participants.
- Offer opportunities for older members to mentor/support younger members through problem-solving.

Provide opportunities for challenges and goal-setting

- Offer more programming for children and youth to move them out of their comfort zone.
- Hold mock interviews where youth can learn how to go through the interviewing process. This will improve confidence and communicative skills in hopes to providing more opportunities and more confidence going into those opportunities.
- Strengthen our efforts to encourage Club participants to try new things and challenge themselves and build staff capacity for consistent feedback to all members.
- Encourage goal setting and create opportunities for kids to experience success.
- Re-develop our past goal setting time capsule curriculums for kids Club, and start running it again.
- Challenge youth to plan grocery lists; work within a budget; follow nutritional guidelines; *and* coordinate as a team. This overlaps with leadership, self-sufficiency, food security, and life skills.
- Introduce themes to after-school groups to promote learning. For example, computer coding, digital design, and art classes.
- Encourage kids to try new things, and move outside their comfort zone.

Provide opportunity for kids to have choice and shape their experience

- Provide more opportunity for participant involvement in program development on a continuous basis.
- Opportunities for participants to be involved in program choice and content.
- Offer opportunities for participants to take on observation/supportive roles to improve already existing programs and develop new programs utilizing their skills and knowledge as a tool.
- Youth-driven opportunities - listen to understand, hear what they want, and implement.
- Creating new curriculums to better facilitate choice, and structure.
- Allow the kids to contribute new ideas for games and projects and activities.
- Encouraging youth ownership of leadership within existing programs (supporting program delivery, cooking, cleaning space). Building in recognition, acknowledgment, encouragement, and teamwork for these opportunities (individual and collective point system).

Impact-driven programming

As Club staff considered their responses to the qualitative data, many reflected on the need for increased attentiveness to how Club programming was intentionally supporting outcomes.

Improve trauma-informed programming

- Provide more sufficient training for our staff in trauma-informed learning as well as mental health first aid. Providing training for our staff in these areas can help our staff facilitate resilience and self-awareness in our children and youth.
- Take a deeper look at what contributes to participants feeling safe and secure, and openly utilize them as tools to continue to foster that feeling of safety in other programs.
- Incorporate trauma-informed practice into behavioural management trainings .
- Establish trauma-informed practices that feed into programming.
- Increase staff training to better prepare them to adjust to post-Pandemic behaviours, including suicide prevention.

Increase our capacity to build mental health

- Build more specialized programming for self-awareness and growth, such as mental health programming.
- Teach and have our participants learn how to cope, grow, and be self-aware of their mental well-being.

Focus on building resiliency and self-regulation

- Integrate more daily routines into all our Club programming to assist in more structure, reliability, and to build a platform for forming resiliency.
- Programming for children and youth that is tailored towards self-regulation.

Develop training to build skills conflict resolution skills

- Launch the new behaviour management training that teaches staff more direct conflict resolution
- Facilitate subliminally-based conflict resolution programming.
- Provide more resources for staff to help encourage socialization with those who struggle.

Sharpen our role in increasing school readiness

- Have a conversation around the questions on education with school readiness - what is our role in school readiness?
- Re-aligning with Raise the Grade as well as our new definition of school readiness?
- Partnerships with school districts- to communicate school readiness and the role we play.

Increase practices of emotional self-regulation

- Implement intentional approach to activities around emotional regulation, connecting to wider themes, specific to their developmental ages and group dynamics. Stress balls, "interoception," and body awareness exercises are some examples of activities.
- Introduce "social stories," whereby children write their own narrative to go alongside a storyboard with photos of themselves, outlining how they respond when upset.
- Introduce "mindfulness minutes" as a transitional activity (e.g. before meals or outdoor time), or as a strategy when staff notice that kids are dis-regulated.

Focus on development social skills

- Create programming that encourages children and youth to express feelings to others in a constructive way.
- Activities that work on problem solving and conflict resolution so that children and youth have an opportunity to practice these skills.

Provide outdoor activities

- Continue offering varied physical activity.
- Help children and youth make connections between physical activity and success in other areas of life (ex: what is being done with Bounce Back League)
- Include physical activity that encourages other aspects of health like nutrition.
- Intentionally including more physical activity in programming and engaging participants in reflective questions, noting the impact of physical activity on mood, stress, and overall wellness.
- Linking physical activity and mental wellness during program delivery
- Intervention programs to provide more choice with the types of physical activities.
- Continuing to engage members in daily unstructured play in Prevention programs.

Pursue creative ways to teach habits of good nutrition

- Cooking classes to encourage healthy eating.
- Finding ways to make nutritious snacks without a kitchen.
- Program for family education sessions on nutrition
- Allow opportunities for participants to take an active role in snack preparation, discussions and activities surrounding food choices.

Provide programming to encourage exploration

- Offer a variety of activities to encourage new opportunities.
- Create programming around children's interests to build interest in trying new experiences.
- Consider implementing a "yes day" where children plan the entirety of the day from beginning to end.

Be continuously learning and improvement programs

- Highlight our successes while at the same time taking the time to see where there is room for improvement and growth.
- See what is working in certain programs that can be transferred over to others that might benefit from strategies and ideas that we find work in other areas.

Staff

Since the data revealed the importance of having quality, consistent, and engaged staff, many responses from Clubs related to the recruitment and development of staff.

Promote staff growth and development

- Develop a reference guide to help staff mirror what we want to see in our participants, and to educate or act as a gentle reminder on how to help manage situations.
- Actively and intentionally use more experienced staff to mentor other staff in empathy/conflict resolution/behaviour management skills and strategies.
- Encourage staff to take part in extracurricular activities, training opportunities, and pursue academic or athletic goals.

Train staff in mental and emotional health and self-regulation

- Provide staff with training and resources for mental health.
- Encourage daily check-ins with children.
- Educating our staff to further understand different behavioral models for each child and how to implement them on an individual basis.
- Training staff on self-regulation for children and youth
- Training for staff to have better emotional intelligence.
- Continue to provide staff training about self-regulation.
- Have self-regulation teaching tools available for all staff in break out rooms.

Strengthen longevity of staff

- Keep building leaders' skillsets through training opportunities.
- Pay a competitive wage to reduce turnover.

Develop staff awareness of impact

- Bring findings and share broadly with staff about their impact.
- Front loading staff before they start working.

Model diversity

- Continue to hire and recruit diverse leaders, reflective of our membership.
- Intentionally work to increase the diversity of Club staff, including increasing the number of male and gender-diverse program facilitators.

CONCLUSION

The qualitative study of this magnitude, focused on listening to the experiences and impact of 375 children and youth engaged in BGC Clubs across Canada, is a significant achievement. The participatory nature of the study meant that teams of staff from 17 Clubs were trained in interview technique and qualitative analysis to be able to implement a credible self-study of the impact of Clubs. This report represents some of the most significant themes emerging from the findings represented in each of the 17 Clubs reports of impact.

In addition to collecting qualitative data from children and youth, the interviewees were able to model listening to their members. Through the process of interviewing, they deepened relationships with children and youth, provided opportunity for children and youth to reflect on their own growth and put voice to their own development, and created an environment where the experiences of children and youth are valued and centered. The value of this qualitative project was not just in the collection and analysis of interview data, as significant as that was, but was also in the co-benefit of engaging children and youth in an intentional conversation about the quality of change they were experiencing through Clubs.

The findings reveal that Clubs are having a remarkable impact in the areas of positive relationships, healthy living, lifelong learning, and leadership development. When children and youth reflect on the impact they are experiencing through Club, they consistently and clearly speak of the many ways Club is developing their sense of self, their ability to relate well to others, their socio-emotional development, their character, resilience, optimism, courage, empathy, and influence. The data are clear: Clubs are having a profoundly positive impact in the lives of children and youth.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BGC Clubs

BGC Canada would like to acknowledge the 17 Clubs that participated in the 2022 qualitative study:

- | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| BGC Battlefords | BGC Hamilton-Halton | BGC South East |
| BGC Durham | BGC Kawarthas | BGC South Vancouver Island |
| BGC Eastview | BGC Okanagan | BGC Strathcona County |
| BGC Fort McMurray | BGC Ottawa | BGC Wetaskiwin |
| BGC Greater Halifax | BGC Red Deer | BGC Whitecourt |
| BGC Greater Saint John | BGC South Coast BC | |

Dialogues in Action

BGC Canada would also like to acknowledge our evaluation partner in the Learning and Impact Project. Thank you for guiding us in our work to prove and improve the impact of the Club experience.