



## **Business Plan for the Expansion of Discover You™: A Program by The ROCK Center for Youth Development**

### **Discover You™ Executive Summary**

Based in Midland, Michigan, The ROCK (Reaching Our Community Kids) Center for Youth Development (“The ROCK”) is a teen-focused impact organization that helps youth succeed and thrive. The ROCK advances its mission through the operation of three umbrella programs - Grounded (after-school), Unplugged (out-of-school), and Discover You™ (in-school and organized venues).

Discover You™ is a program that helps students successfully forge their futures and gives them the tools they need to develop positive life skills and strong character traits. It is a ROCK-authored and copywritten, curriculum-based program that focuses on the whole youth, social and emotional learning, intrinsic motivation, resilience, and 21st-century job skills. Discover You™ addresses significant problems facing today’s youth including bullying, suicide, and substance abuse as well as ultimately improving community outcomes by reducing crime, lost labor market benefits, and the resource burden of future social services needed.

Since the program’s inception in 2010, Discover You™ has successfully served over 25,000 youth in the Great Lakes Bay Region. This was accomplished through partnerships with over 45 schools and juvenile detention centers. The program has yielded excellent outcomes demonstrated through both independent evaluations as well as Discover You™-administered survey results from teachers, staff, and the participants themselves. The need has been identified for the expansion of this program throughout the state of Michigan. Additional funding is necessary to meet that need.

The funding will be used to finance the geographic expansion of the program across the 85 counties in Michigan. Funding will be used for start-up costs during Discover You’s™ initial three-year launch period including compensation for additional staff, direct program costs, awareness and education, and incremental back-office expenses related to the program’s much larger footprint.



## The Problem

Adolescence is a period of profound physical, emotional, and mental development, when youth make near-irrevocable choices that can follow them into adulthood affecting themselves, their families, communities, and the world. Adolescence is confusing, challenging, and difficult to navigate, all at a time when youth are expected to envision and plan for their future. Often young people lack the skills they need to manage change, overcome obstacles, or struggle well. They may be equipped academically, yet be socially and emotionally vulnerable.

The current landscape of racial and civil unrest, the global pandemic, and economic uncertainty adds to the immediate demand for [Discover You™](#). Professionals in education and mental health are citing the critical need for social and emotional programs that include a focus on overall mental health.

Key challenges that today's youths face include:

- **Depression:** afflicts one in eight adolescents and young adults;
- **Substance and/or alcohol abuse:** 5.4% of youth between the ages of 12 and 17 report having a substance or alcohol abuse problem;
- **Suicide:** the second leading cause of death in youth and young adults between the age of 10 to 34;
- **Bullying:** 55% of teens report bullying being a major problem;
- **Gangs:** one-third of teens report gangs being a major problem.

These statistics are pre-COVID and experts are anticipating 30% increases in the categories of depression, substance/alcohol abuse, and suicide.

Additionally, secondary impacts that negatively affect the community are fed by the fallout of youths not coping well with these challenges or engaging in risky behaviors. Some of these community impacts include:

- **Increased school dropout rates:** 12% of students drop out of high school;
- **Higher levels of crime:** high school dropouts are 8x more likely to commit crimes and go to jail;
- **Higher levels of juvenile incarceration:** nationally the annual estimated cost is between \$8-\$21 million.

Fortunately, the negative effects can be mitigated by timely and appropriate measures of intervention. Fostering character development, building resilience and fortitude to combat negative influences, increasing self-worth, and providing tools for youth to envision life goals and map a pathway to achieve real results, can produce positive outcomes including:

- **Higher employment:** high school graduates are more likely to be employed, generate higher taxable income, and produce jobs;
- **Thriving behaviors:** youth are more likely to succeed in school and overcome adversity;
- **Pro-social behaviors:** youth are more likely to value diversity and avoid risky behaviors.



## Discover You™ The Solution

*"[Discover You™] helped me know that I matter and play an important role in this world... someone's friend, someone's daughter, someone's student. I am glad that this program came into my life, or I would've kept thinking bad thoughts."*

- Discover You™ participant

Discover You™ is a train-and-go, strength-based solution which addresses foundational skill-building including resilience, critical thinking, growth mindset, respect, valuing others, self-worth, diversity, inclusion, forgiveness, conflict resolution, relationship skills, courage, leadership, communication, and much more. The skills students gain in Discover You™ create a preventative foundation that acts as a tier-one mental health solution as well as aids in the prevention of suicide and bullying. Discover You™ helps to combat the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and supports a trauma-informed care environment.

Discover You's™ offers unique and customizable sub-programs targeting young people from the 6th through the 12th grades and early post-secondary education levels. The curriculum is delivered in the classroom during the school day, or in other organized venues such as detention centers or out-of-school time programs. Led by a certified coach, the programs vary in length from 18-30 hours and can be delivered in a variety of ways to meet the needs of the organization and its population.

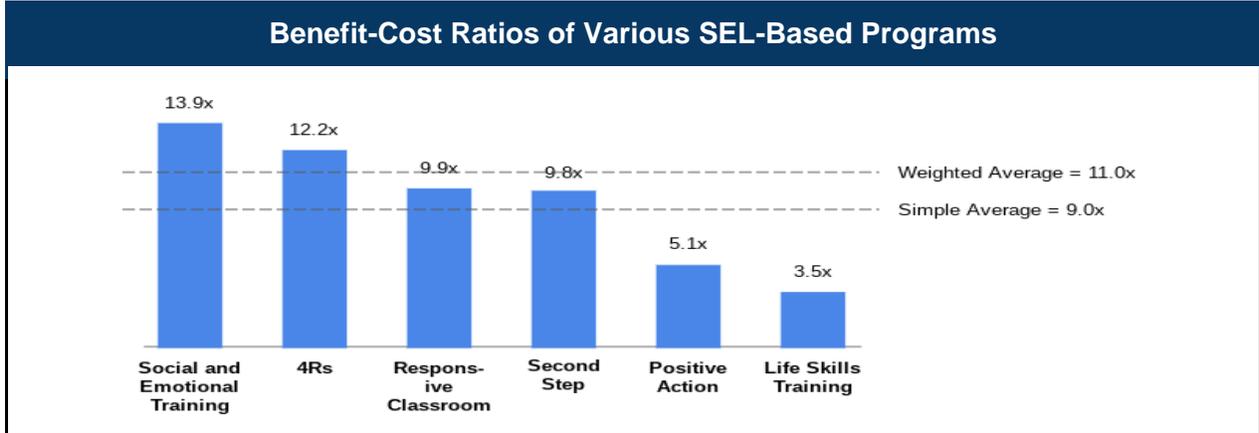
As educators clamber to adapt to the changing post-COVID landscape they require an easy and sustainable solution to address the social and emotional needs of their students. Discover You™ provides those solutions.

Discover You™ is built upon methodologies demonstrated to improve the lives of youth: social and emotional learning, positive psychology, and the Developmental Assets framework. Elements of these respected approaches are integrated into every program area.

### Social and Emotional Learning

Social and Emotional Learning ("SEL") is the process through which youth and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Studies show that youth who participate in SEL programs have increased academic performance and more positive attitudes and social behaviors. In fact, one study shows that on average for every \$1 spent on SEL programs, the interventions generate \$11 in return with further upside from benefits that were not quantifiable in the studies.



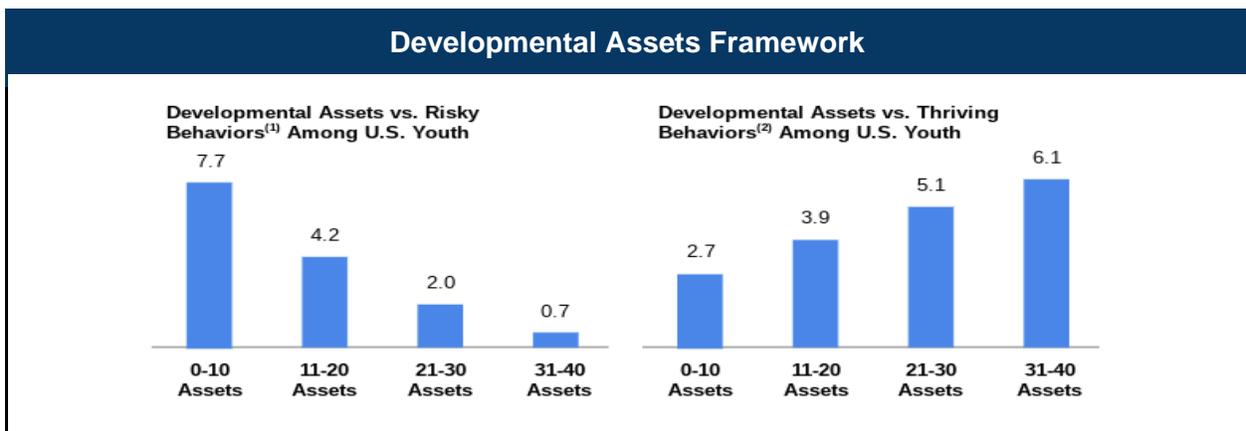
Source: *The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning*, Belfield, et. al. (2015)

### Positive Psychology

The science of positive psychology studies the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive. It is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, cultivate what is best within themselves, and enhance their experiences of love, work, and play. When combining academics with character development, young people become the leaders of their own life paths, armed with practical wisdom to make good choices, overcome adversity, lead happy lives, and positively contribute to society.

### Developmental Assets Framework

Developmental Assets are positive characteristics and support systems that are essential to healthy psychological and social development in both childhood and adolescence. The Search Institute has identified 40 assets that influence young people’s developmental trajectories, protect them from negative outcomes, and help them become productive, caring, responsible adults.



*Risky behaviors include alcohol, tobacco, inhalants, marijuana, other drug use, driving and alcohol, sexual intercourse, anti-social behavior, violence, school truancy, gambling, eating disorders, depression, and attempted suicide.*

*Thriving behaviors include succeeding in school, helping others, valuing diversity, maintaining good health, exhibiting leadership, resisting danger, delaying gratification, and overcoming adversity.*



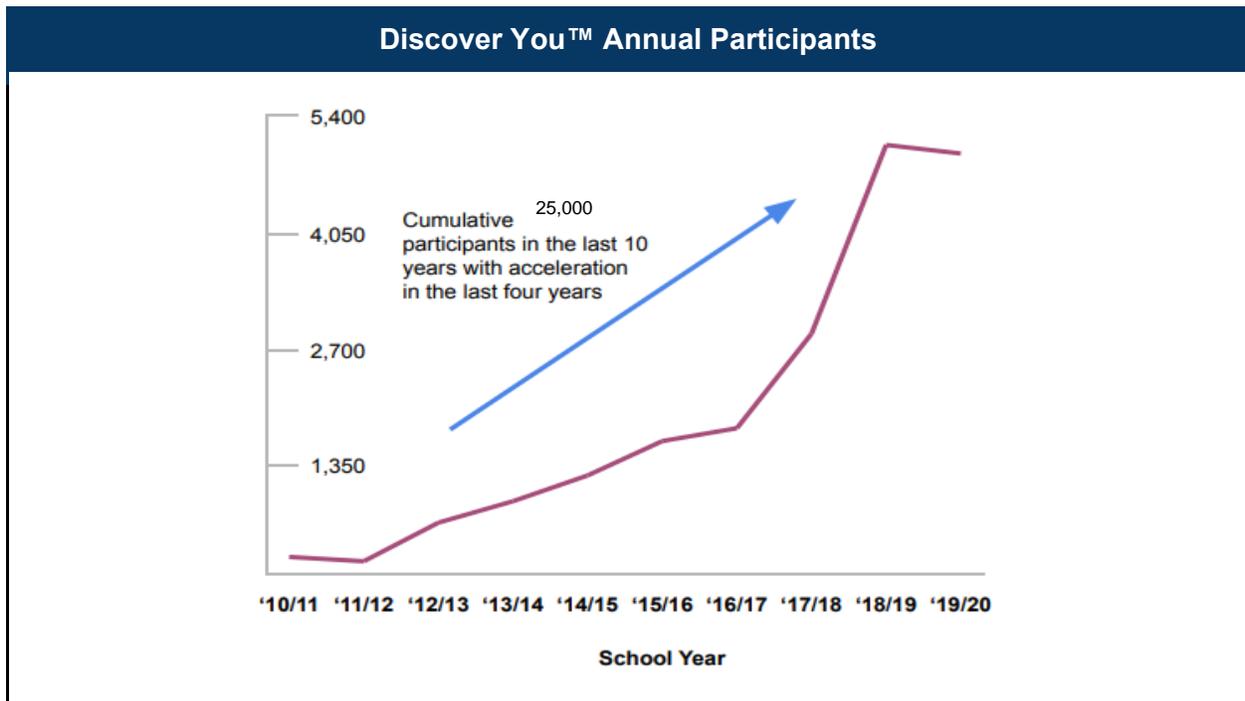
## Proof of Concept

To date, **Discover You™** has been available to schools and other youth organizations in the Great Lakes Bay Region of Michigan state. Located in the central portion of Michigan's lower peninsula, the GLBR consists of Arenac, Bay, Clare, Gladwin, Gratiot, Isabella, Midland, and Saginaw Counties.

Through local outreach efforts, **Discover You™** has been offered at schools and detention centers with over 25,000 youth participants cumulatively since 2010. In 2019 alone, the program had 5,000+ participants.

The significant and immediate growth was made possible by the investment of one grantor, the Dow Corning Foundation. That expansion provided critical information to the future scaling of **Discover You™** including

- high product demand as all available spots were filled immediately by schools leaving a wait list;
- the ability to work effectively and generate similar outcomes in diverse populations,
- the infra-structure of **Discover You™** is adaptable to scale.







### International Expansion: Global Market

Given the universality of human psychology, the [Discover You™](#) curriculum is relevant across the globe. For example, the adoption of SEL programs can be found in countries and continents worldwide including Australia, South America (e.g. Brazil), Asia (e.g. Japan and China), and Europe (e.g. most of the European Union). Additionally, according to the Search Institute, their Developmental Assets framework is one of the most frequently cited and widely utilized frameworks in positive youth development worldwide. [Discover You™](#) believes that the ubiquitous adoption of these tools confirms their demand for high-quality, proven, and impactful programs.



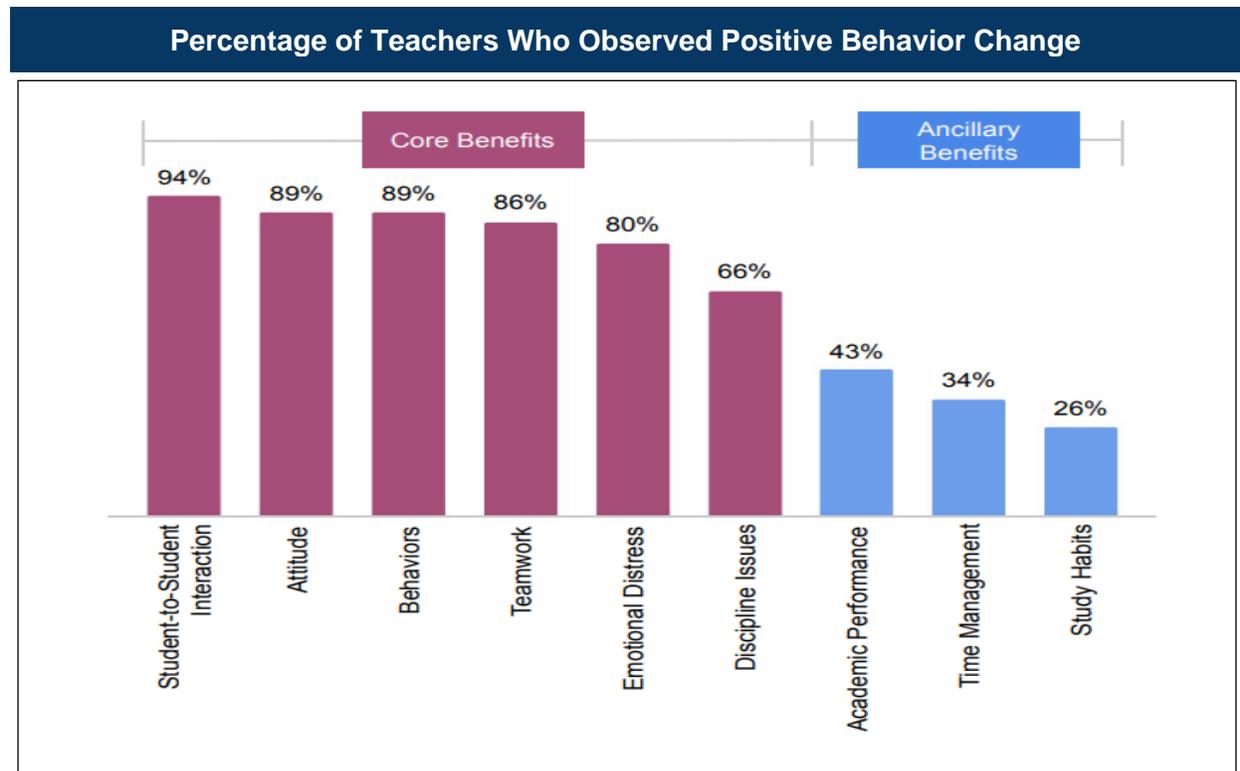
## Discover You™ The Results

Discover You™ has been field-tested with over 25,000 participants since its creation in 2010. Both Discover You™ as well as independent parties have measured and documented the efficacy of the program through numerous tests and surveys.

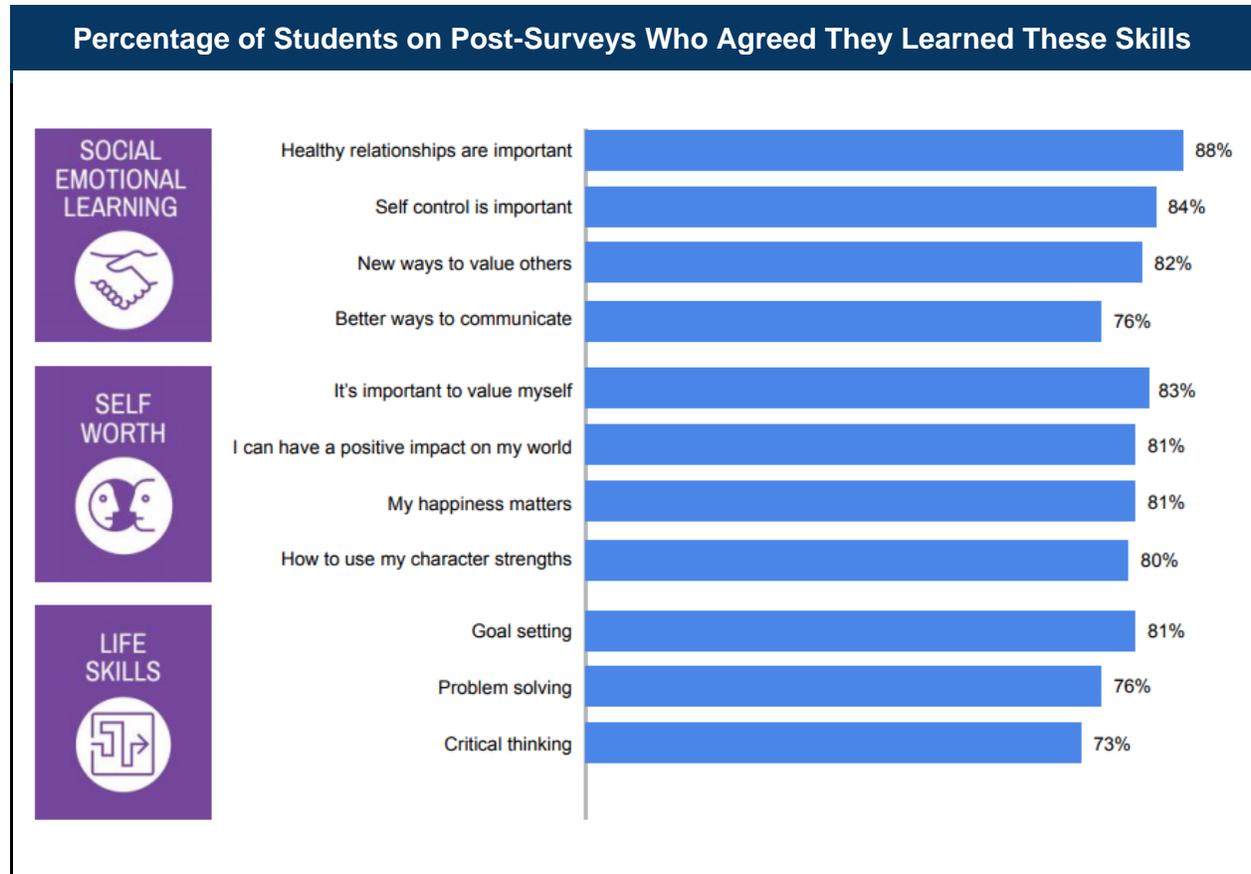
### Discover You™ Post-Program Surveys

Discover You™ conducts post-program surveys of both the teachers/staff and the youth participants in order to tabulate how beneficial each group believes the curriculum is overall and across multiple criteria.

The results of 2018/2019 school year teachers/staff survey are below with 100% agreeing that the program is worth the time invested. Across six behavioral and emotional measures, on average 86% agreed the program was effective. A meaningful number of teachers and staff also agreed that the program provided ancillary benefits in the form of enhanced academic performance, time management, and study habits.



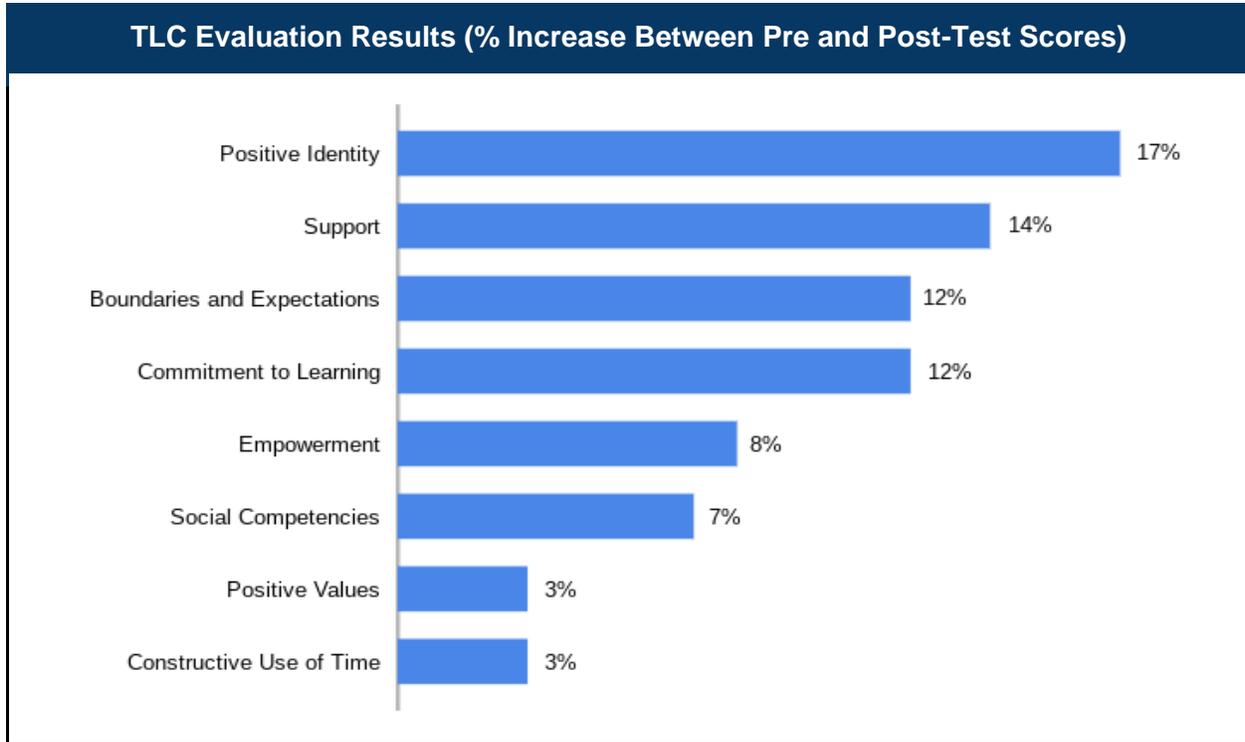
The results of the 2018/2019 school year student participant survey are below with 90% of participants rating the program 4 or 5 out of a possible 5.



Independent Party Testing

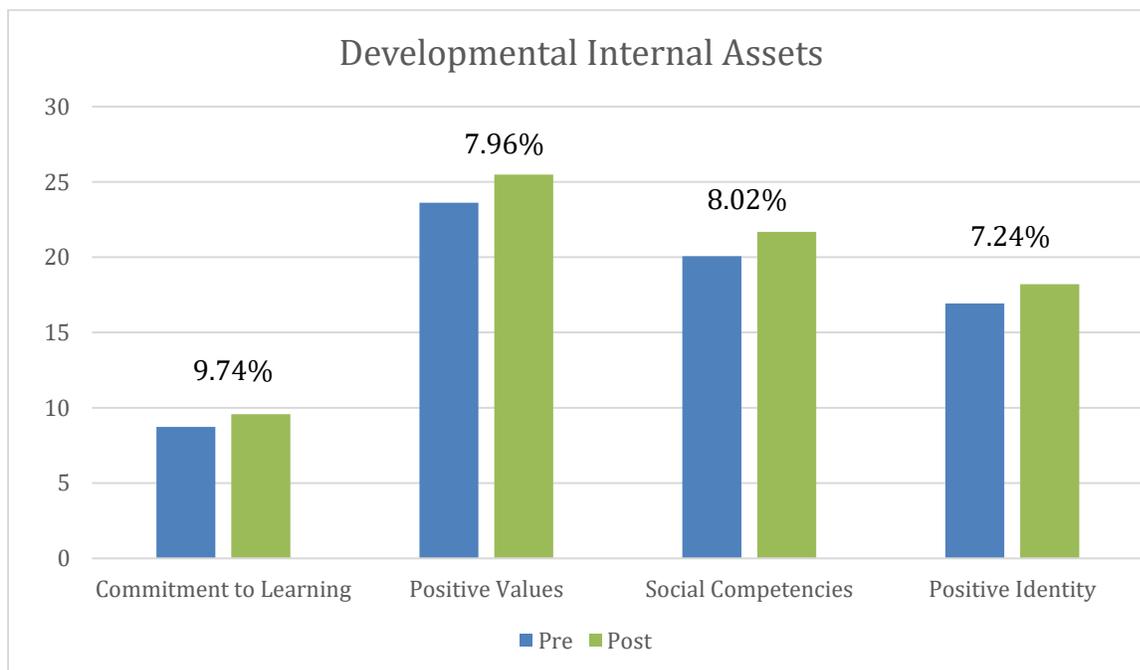
The Legacy Center for Community Success (“TLC”) is a not-for-profit organization located in Midland, MI whose mission includes the rigorous measurement of programs that address outside-the-classroom **factors that** impede student learning and development. TLC conducted evaluations of sub-programs under [Discover You™](#) to measure the level of participants’ Developmental Assets before and after the completion of the program. The evaluations found statistically significant increases in Developmental Assets across all (eight of eight) categories, concluding that “students are more likely to feel supported and valued, build friendships, to be motivated and do well in school, as well as having a higher self-esteem after participating in the program.”

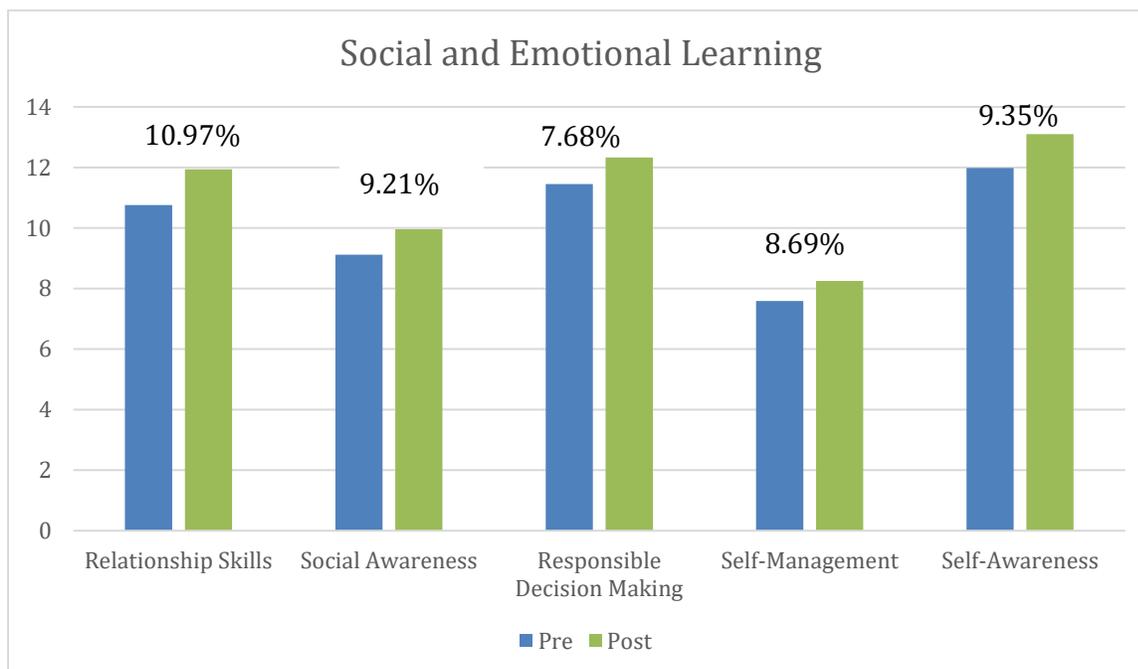
The table below outlines the percentage increase in Developmental Assets for one sub-program of Discover You™.





The tables below indicate a significant percentage increase in 13 key categories for participants in Discover You™.





Additionally, an evaluation of [Discover You™](#) conducted by Southern Methodist University located in University Park, TX, covering five years of pre and post-survey results across 4,220 participants, also validates the efficacy of the program. The evaluation found that the programs were “...meaningful and successful. Participants of these programs achieved skills and development beyond school. It is definitely worth expanding these programs to more schools, counties, and even nationwide.”

Lastly, [Discover You™](#) has an ongoing seven-year relationship with the University of Pennsylvania and its Masters of Applied Positive Psychology program (the home of Positive Psychology). [Discover You™](#) has been in a service-learning project for three consecutive years where students have researched and professors have endorsed the science behind [Discover You™](#) programs.



## About The ROCK

The ROCK, formally known as Reaching Our Community Kids, is an independent, inclusive IRS 501(c)(3)-designated not-for-profit organization that provides character and social and emotional skills education, out-of-school time programs, and community-based activities for middle and high school students.

Founded in 2001 in Midland, MI, The ROCK's primary audience was originally and continues to be 6th through 12th-grade students. The original set of programs was provided at the physical address located at 2300 E. Gordonville Rd. consisting of after-school and weekend programs. These original programs were eventually bundled and integrated together to become The ROCK Grounded. In 2006, The ROCK introduced its Unplugged umbrella program to provide quality, community-wide events. In 2010, The ROCK created a new curriculum called Exposure and held its inaugural class with 12 students on location. Subsequently in 2018, The ROCK rebranded Exposure to become [Discover You™](#).

The ROCK is a trusted partner in youth development and an advocate for teens. The ROCK programs are proven to help young people develop the assets they need to be confident, self-reliant adults.

The ROCK partners with parents, schools and other organizations to offer mentoring, emotional support, academic assistance, and positive role models for students, all in safe, non-judgmental settings.

The ROCK's staff and volunteers are caring adults whose first priority is the students' well-being. Adults are available to listen, learn, and laugh along with program participants, helping them to create lasting bonds and lifelong skills.





**Beverlee Wenzel**, President and CEO, The ROCK Center for Youth Development and Discover You™



Beverlee Wenzel is the President and CEO of The ROCK Center for Youth Development and Discover You™, a social and emotional intelligence and character development program for secondary and post-secondary students. Wenzel is an active speaker, presenter, facilitator, and coach, providing professional development, workshops, and keynotes to adults and youth; a Certified Public Manager (Saginaw Valley State University), Certified Fundraising Manager (Lily Fundraising School), an Applied Positive Psychology Practitioner, co-author *The Certificate in Creating Wellbeing* and *The Certificate in Applied Positive Psychology*, and Change Leader.

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