

# Impact at a Glance

## Building Resilience Skills: Student Counsellor Program at YMCA Wanakita

2025



Shine On



### Building Tomorrow's Leaders Today

Each summer at YMCA Wanakita, the Student Counsellor (SC) Leadership Program helps young people discover their strengths, develop confidence, and learn what it takes to become future counsellors and community leaders. The SC program provides:

- Opportunities to practice responsibility, teamwork, and decision-making
- Mentorship from experienced staff
- Real leadership moments with younger campers
- A structured pathway: SC Year 1 → SC Year 2 → Counsellor roles

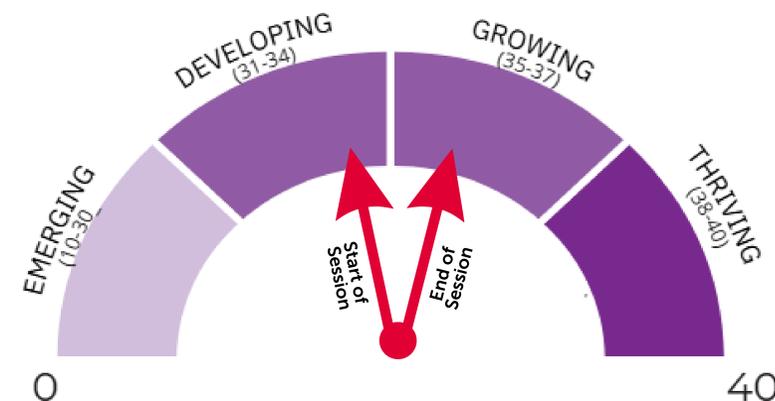
In 2025, as part of our Annual Operating Plan, we measured how the program supports a key developmental outcome: resilience.

### Resilience is Growing

Using the Resilience Scale for Children™ (40-point), participants completed a short survey at the start and end of their session.

Across **98 Student Counsellors** who completed both surveys, resilience improved from an average of **34.9** (developing range) to **35.9** (growing range).

Resilience Scale for Children™:  
(Wagnild, 2014):



### In Their Own Words

Participants shared why they joined the SC program and what they gained. Their voices offer a powerful window into the program's impact:

"I'd like to get my certifications as soon as possible for better job opportunities."

"I came to make friends and learn new skills."

"To figure out what kind of leader I am and how to improve."

"I am interested in learning and acquiring new leadership skills."

"I want to be a counsellor one day — this program helps me grow."

"I absolutely love the camp environment and helping others."

"I love Wanakita and I want to be a counsellor."



## The Evidence Behind the Impact

Resilience gains were especially notable among returning participants:

- Year 2: +1.67 points

- Year 1: +0.52 points

This pattern suggests that leadership growth compounds over time — the more time youth spend in leadership roles, the stronger their confidence and coping skills become.

The improvements in both groups suggests that young people in the SC program are learning how to adapt to challenges, connect with others, and build confidence — essential skills for leadership at camp and beyond.

## With Thanks...

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Student Counsellors who shared their feedback and the dedicated YMCA staff who help make the Student Counsellor program possible.

## What Helps Resilience Grow?

From participant comments and program design, several ingredients stand out:

1. **Real Leadership Practice** : Year 2 participants take on more responsibility, problem-solving, and role-modeling — experiences that strengthen confidence.
2. **Supportive Relationship** : Strong bonds with peers and staff help youth feel safe to take risks, try new things, and learn from mistakes.
3. **Progressive Skill-Building** : The two-year SC pathway lets participants deepen their skills, apply feedback, and see themselves as leaders in the making.
4. **Connection to Camp Community** : Many youth describe Wanakita as a second home — a place where they feel included, energized, and inspired to grow.