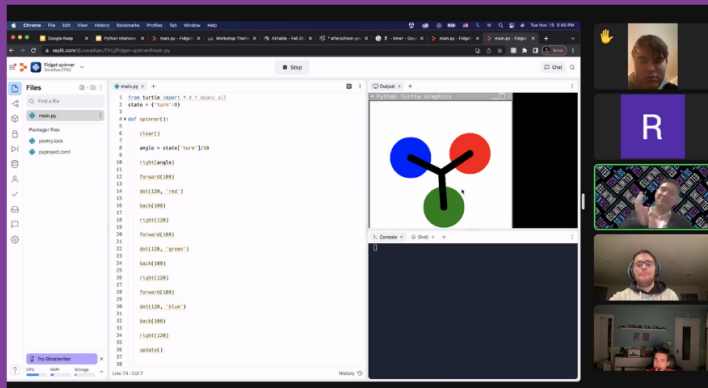# TECH KIDS UNLIMITED

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Evaluation Report 2022

Tech Kids Unlimited: 2022 Program Evaluation

Tech Kids Unlimited (TKU) evaluates all programming annually in conjunction with Dr. Ariana Ricco, a developmental psychologist and independent evaluator. Dr. Riccio has worked with TKU since 2016 to design data collection measures that capture participant growth in both **technology learning and social and emotional growth.** TKU **serves a diverse population of students ages 7-22** with **various challenges such as autism, ADHD, nonverbal learning disabilities, auditory and sensory processing difficulties, and executive functioning.**

Words used by TKU students to describe their experiences.
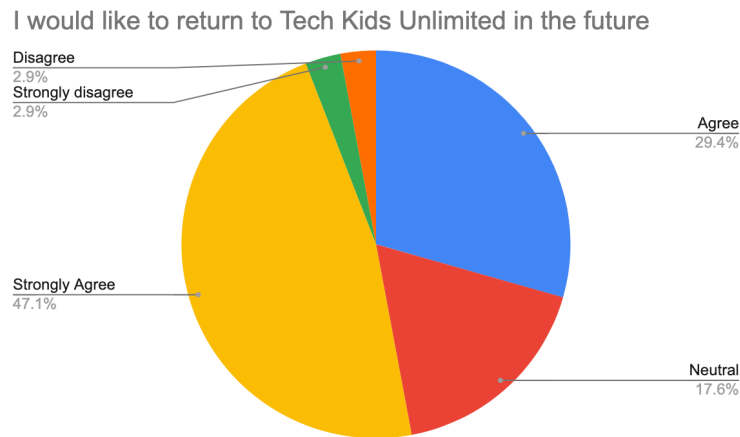
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Summer Workshops

TKU offered fully online workshops for a second summer due to Covid. Students chose from morning or afternoon workshops, which ran for 2.5 hours a day Monday through Friday. Workshop themes included Digital Animation, Data & Design, Making Art with Artificial Intelligence, and Podcasting, among others. Data was collected on a total of 34 students in Summer 2022. Overall, 71 individual seats were filled in all workshops. Students completed the survey each Friday to share their experiences. **Parents were surveyed about student strengths, challenges, successes, and skill improvements** at the end of the summer.

Student Survey Results

According to students' own reports at the end of each week:
- 47% of students felt they got better at working with others after a week
- 50% of students felt they learned skills that will help them get a job
- 76.5% of students felt they would like to return to TKU in the future
- **88.2% of students felt they enjoyed their experience at the TKU online workshop**

I would like to return to Tech Kids Unlimited in the future

Disagree 2.9%
Strongly disagree 2.9%
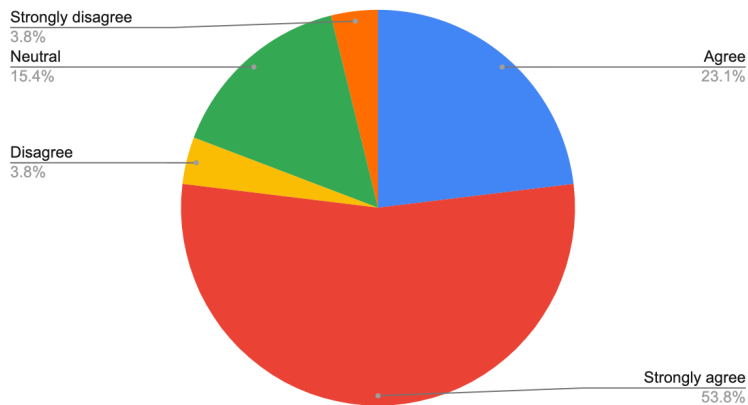Agree 29.4%
Strongly Agree 47.1%
Neutral 17.6%

Parent Feedback on their Child's Growth

According to the parent surveys at the end of the summer:
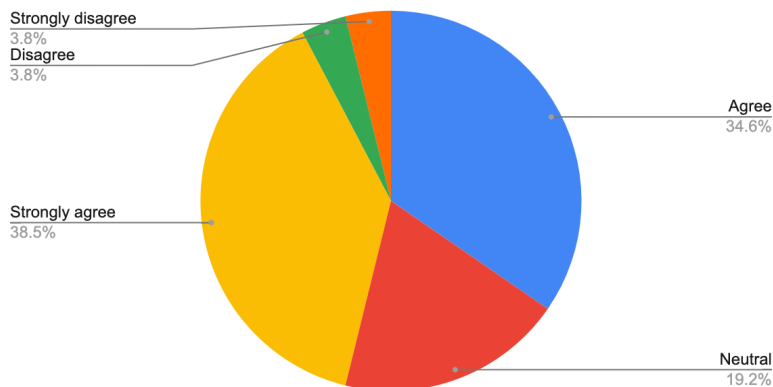- **77% of parents said their child gained technology skills**

*"I want to thank you and the organization for all that you have done for my son. Not just the scholarship and the internship, but the fact that **he was allowed to be himself and grow**." - Parent of A., Age 18*

My child gained technology skills at TKU Summer Workshops

Strongly disagree
3.8%

Neutral
15.4%

Disagree
3.8%

Agree
23.1%

Strongly agree
53.8%

- 62% of parents said their child gained social-emotional skills
- 65% of parents said their child learned problem solving skills
- **73% of parents said their child gained confidence in themselves**

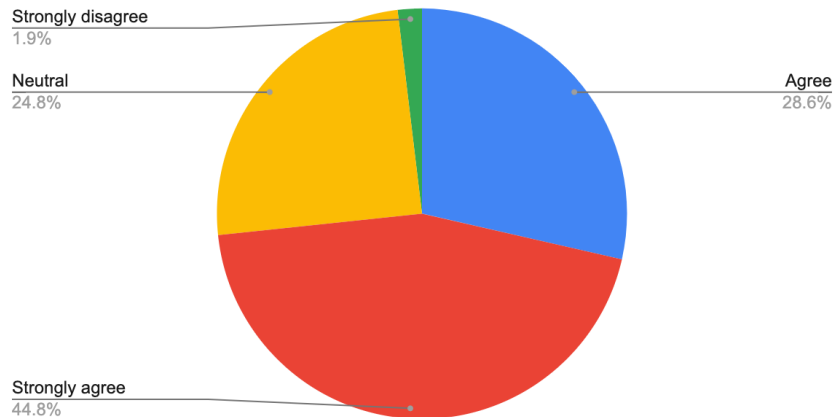## My child gained confidence in themselves at TKU Summer Workshops.

Strongly disagree
3.8%

Disagree
3.8%

Agree
34.6%

Strongly agree
38.5%

Neutral
19.2%

*"I really liked this summer workshop. **Everyone encouraged each other and gave positive feedback.** The staff and counselors were very helpful and understanding and I felt like the zoom was an overall cool and fun experience." - J., Age 14*

Sunday Workshops

Tech Kids Unlimited offered 2-hour Sunday workshops, 2-3 times a month, throughout the school year. **Workshops focused on topics like memes, pixel art, photo editing, video editing, animation, and music making** giving students the opportunity to explore and refine their interests and affinities. Data was collected in the Spring and Fall 2022 from 105 students.
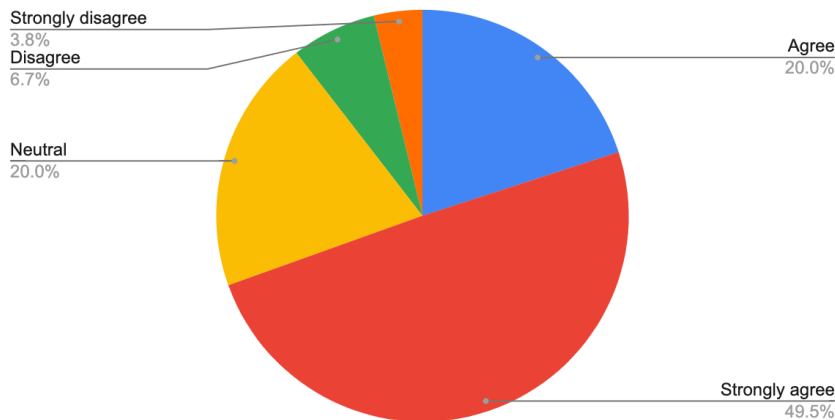
● **73% of students said that they improved their technology skills after a Sunday Workshop**

I improved my computer skills at today's TKU Sunday workshop

Strongly disagree
1.9%

Neutral
24.8%

Agree
28.6%

Strongly agree
44.8%

● 53% of students said they felt connected to other students
● 59% of students felt they got better at working with others
● 70% of students said they gained skills to help them get a job
● **87% of students reported that they would like to return to another Sunday Workshop in the future**

I learned skills that will help me get a job at today's TKU Sunday workshop

Strongly disagree
3.8%

Disagree
6.7%

Neutral
20.0%

Agree
20.0%

Strongly agree
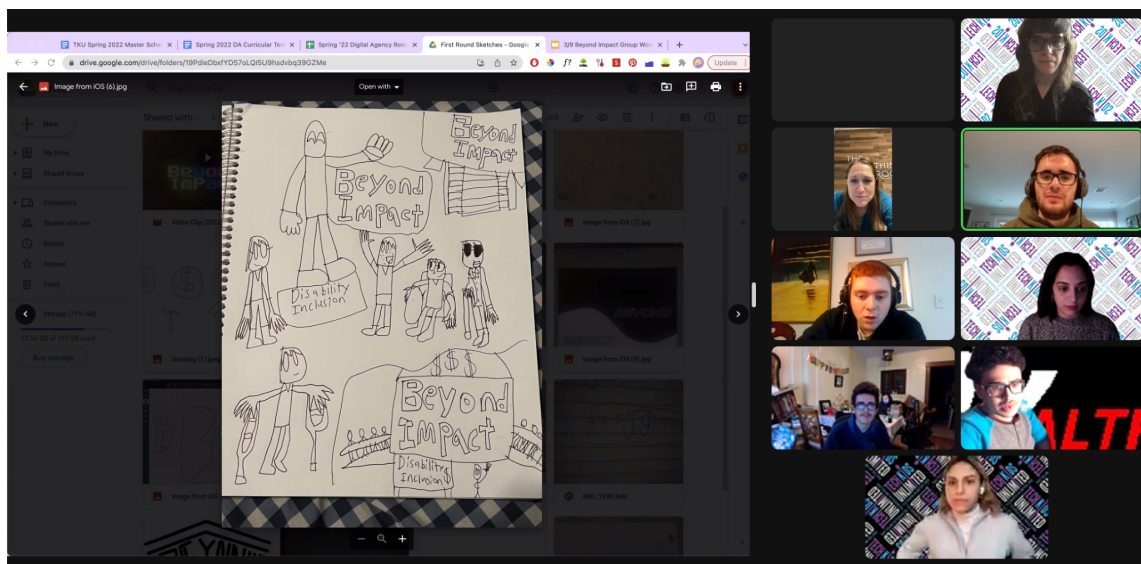49.5%

CAREER LADDER INITIATIVE

TKU Digital Agency

Spring, Summer & Fall 2022

The Digital Agency (DA) is an after school program for teens/young adults that mimics a real workplace. A total of 60 spots were offered in the DA across the Spring, Summer, and Fall with nine students repeating their involvement with the agency throughout the year. **The focus of this program was on completing digital projects for real clients and all participants were paid a stipend for their contributions.**

In the Spring 2022 cycle, 27 agency members created a new logo for *Beyond Impact*, an HR company, working collaboratively with peers and the client. The DA was also hired to create a new, modernized website for *Red Light Green Light Learning Services*. Using SquareSpace, the designers created a new website with six main pages: Home, Our Services, About Us, Testimonials, Resources, and Contact Us. In addition to the website design, the DA designers created accompanying illustrations to showcase the learning services offered by the client, in a simplistic and compelling style.

Students Said:
"I liked the collaboration and the feedback we give and get from clients. I also appreciate the friendly workspace." - D., Age 17

Students shared their sketches for a new logo design.

In Summer 2022, twenty students created a series of digital empowerment videos for their Infosys Pathfinders portal. The videos focused on topics including digital privacy, recognizing scams and misinformation, and digital etiquette for workplace communication. The audience for the series were neurodiverse teens and young adults approaching the transition to adulthood. **Lessons were broken down into five units and included information about best practices for engaging in online spaces as a**

job seeker or employee. The topics were safeguarding privacy and boundary-setting, understanding your digital footprint, and recognizing scams and misinformation.
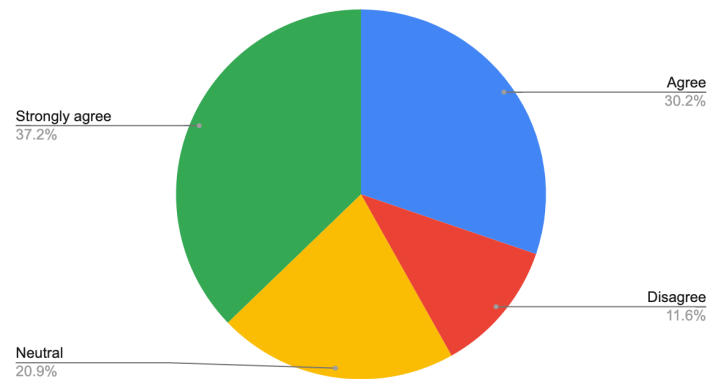
Students Said:
"I like the design aspect of it [Digital Agency]. It lets me unleash my creative mind. I like that it is almost a real job. We even get paid for it at the end!" - A., Age 18

Participant Feedback and Survey Data
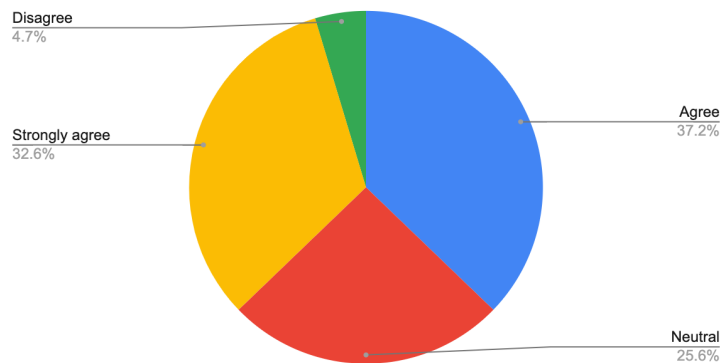Participating students were surveyed at the end of their cohort in June, September, and December. 43 Digital Agency participants completed the survey.

I improved my teamwork skills at the TKU Digital Agency.

Agree
30.2%

Strongly agree
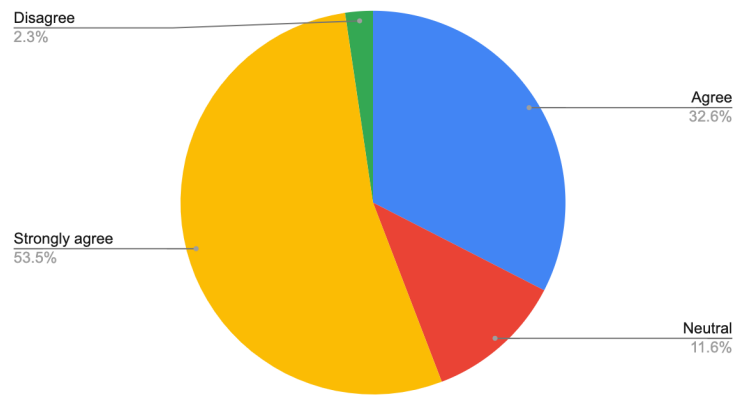37.2%

Disagree
11.6%

Neutral
20.9%

Most Digital Agency participants said they improved their teamwork skills after a semester working with the agency (67.4%).

After this experience, I can see myself working in the tech industry

Disagree
4.7%

Strongly agree
32.6%

Agree
37.2%

Neutral
25.6%

Most **participants felt they could see themselves working in the tech industry** after their experience in the Digital Agency (69.8%).

I feel accomplished after spending time at TKU Digital Agency

Disagree
2.3%

Agree
32.6%

Strongly agree
53.5%

Neutral
11.6%

Participants reported feeling accomplished after spending time in the Digital Agency (86.1%).

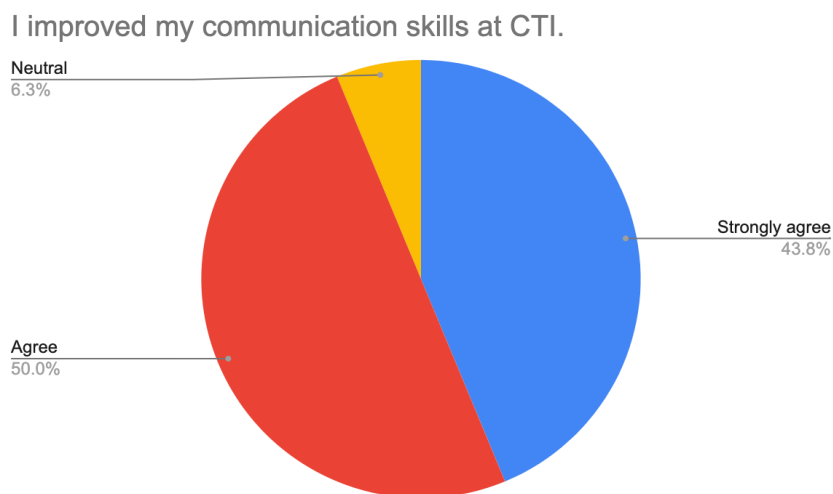<h1 style="text-align:center">CAREER LADDER INITIATIVE</h1>

<h2 style="text-align:center">Creative Tech Internship (CTI)</h2>

The Creative Tech Internship (CTI) program (launched in 2017) enrolled a cohort of 23 interns this academic year. **This program acts as a bridge between school experiences and workplace environments. Interns learn soft skills while working in a mock office environment, learning new technology and practicing social-emotional and transitional life skills.** Students are supported by a social worker who assists in learning appropriate workplace behaviors, managing interpersonal relationships, and organizing numerous tasks on schedule.

I improved my communication skills at CTI.

Neutral 6.3%
Strongly agree 43.8%
Agree 50.0%

Students Said:
(A summary of 2022 CTI interns interviewed via a focus group conducted by the evaluator.)

When you reflect on the internship, what accomplishments do you feel proud of?
- *"I feel **proud to have been able to create my first podcast** and help clients with my tech skills."*
- *"I've developed new skills to create a podcast like mixing and creating music recording. **I've gained skills in using design tools** to create visually appealing greeting cards. I've also learned new skills for creating and designing a game."*
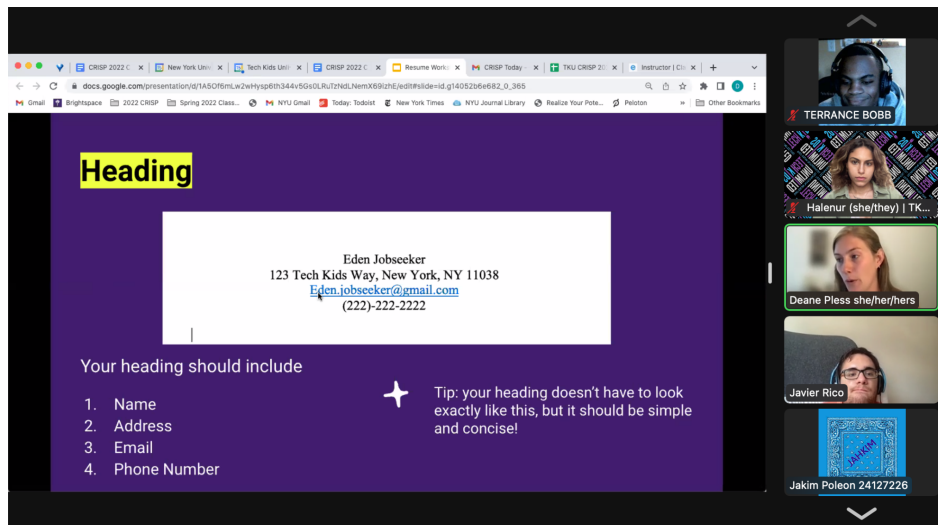
What did you learn about yourself as an intern this year?
- *"I learned that I need to be more of an active listener to build good working relationships. I also **learned that I like to share my completed work more than my work that is in progress**."*
- *"I was **able to try out different programs that do different things (coding, image editing, sprite art)** and learned things I do like and don't like about those programs."*
- *"I learned that **I have the potential to make a difference in the IT sector** and that I need to do better at letting staff know when I am not feeling well."*

CAREER LADDER INITIATIVE

Career Readiness Internship Summer Program: CRISP

Now in its third year, the Career Readiness Internship Summer Program (CRISP) is a **fully immersive work-based learning internship program** for advanced TKU students to start to prepare them to enter the workforce. In Summer 2022, TKU placed **20 interns at 20 worksites** ranging from corporate placements to small businesses to non-profit organizations. TKU students worked on a range of technology projects including **creating social media, working on salesforce and data, updating websites, researching and checking website info,** and more. Building on the We-Work model of co-working space, TKU provided a space at NYU Tandon in Brooklyn for 6 interns and supporting staff to work together for the summer for those students who didn't want to work from home if they had an online work site.
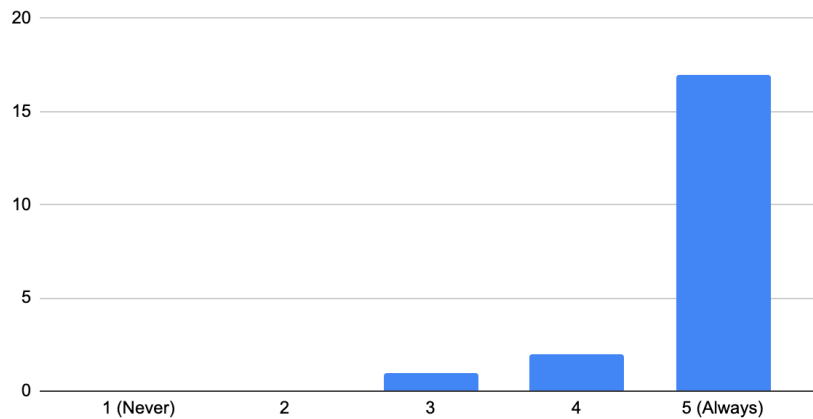

Interns participated in a resume-building workshop led by a CRISP social worker.

*"I've always enjoyed the coding aspect of TKU but **I've also enjoyed learning what I want to do when I'm older**." - C., Age 17*
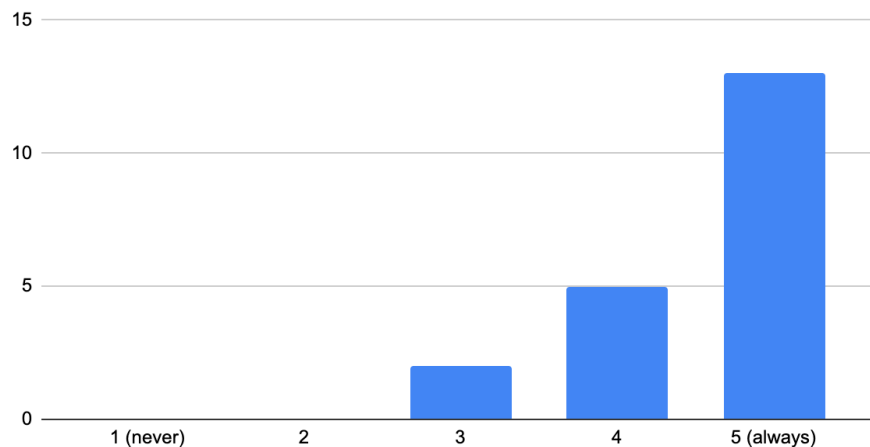
- Interns felt **their work was valued by their supervisors:**

Do you feel that your work was valued/appreciated by your supervisor?

- Interns indicated that CRISP prepared them to achieve career goals:

Did this internship provide experiences that will help prepare you to achieve your career goals?

Students Said:
When asked "How do you feel you have grown over the past 5 weeks?" interns noted:
- *"I feel **I have grown more confident in myself**, and **I feel more ready for the workplace**."*
- *"I have increased my stamina and I have also grown into a stronger person. The reason I feel this way is because I haven't needed to do a job site for 5 hours a day 3 days a week before this experience ... ever. [This internship] was worth as much as a high school day. Even though it did feel tedious at times, **it felt worth it because it helped prepare me for growing into a responsible adult**."*
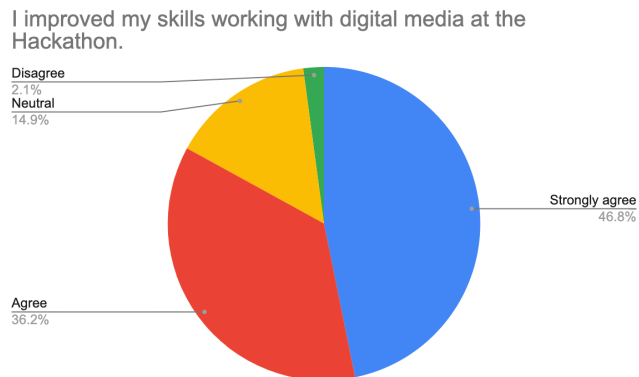
Additional Programs

Hackathons

Tech Kids Unlimited held two day-long Hackathon events for youth, tweens, and teen/young adults in March and December 2022.

"Tech for Good: Small Actions for Big Goals"

In March, 80 students attended the "Tech for Good: Small Actions for Big Goals" online Hackathon supported by InfoSys Foundation USA. The day was inspired by the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals, aimed at addressing the global issues of education, health, poverty, and climate change. Students explored ways to contribute to global initiatives using digital tools. Survey participants reported enjoying the focus on sustainability and noted they felt empowered to share their ideas during the program and use their skills to make a difference.
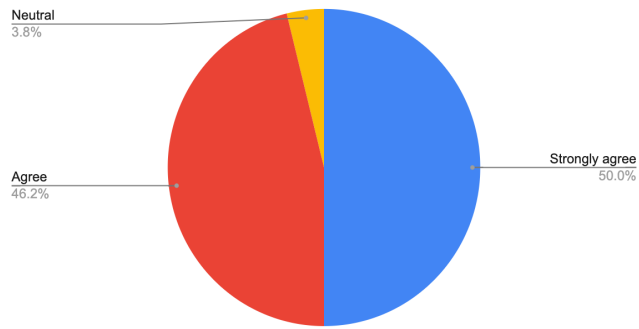

I improved my skills working with digital media at the Hackathon.

Disagree 2.1%
Neutral 14.9%
Strongly agree 46.8%
Agree 36.2%

"Feeding the Future: Fighting Food Insecurity with Tech"

In December 2022, TKU hosted its first ever hybrid Hackathon event. Sponsored by Nutrien, participants learned how to make podcasts and video games to bring awareness to the issues of food insecurity and waste. In total, 75 students attended online and in-person. Students heard from exciting guest speakers in the industry. They shared overwhelmingly positive feedback about this event and reported learning important new information about food insecurity, a critical issue facing the world. When surveyed, 92% of participants reported that they would like to attend a TKU event like this in the future.

*"I think that going through the CRISP experience will significantly increase my chances of getting a job. **I also feel very proud of making the website** although it wasn't easy."- R., Age 16*

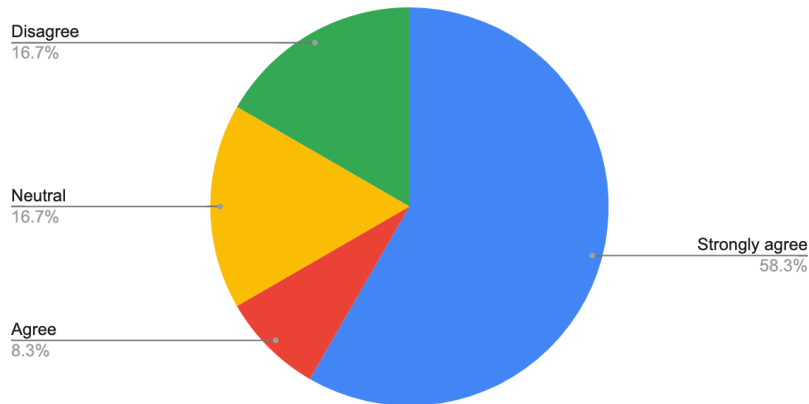I feel I can use my tech skills to address important issues after attending this Hackathon.
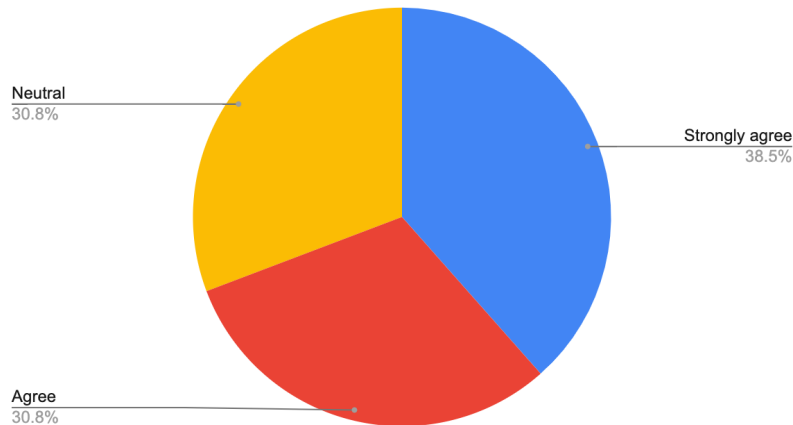
<u>JavaScript 5-Week Intensive</u>

In Fall 2022, TKU hosted a 5-week intensive program to teach foundational JavaScript skills to 18 students. The program was designed **to prepare students with real-world coding skills to jumpstart their path into higher ed and the workforce**. Students worked on creative projects to showcase their skills and there was an emphasis on problem-solving.

I improved my debugging and troubleshooting skills in this intensive program

- Disagree 16.7%
- Neutral 16.7%
- Agree 8.3%
- Strongly agree 58.3%

I improved my Javascript coding skills in this intensive program
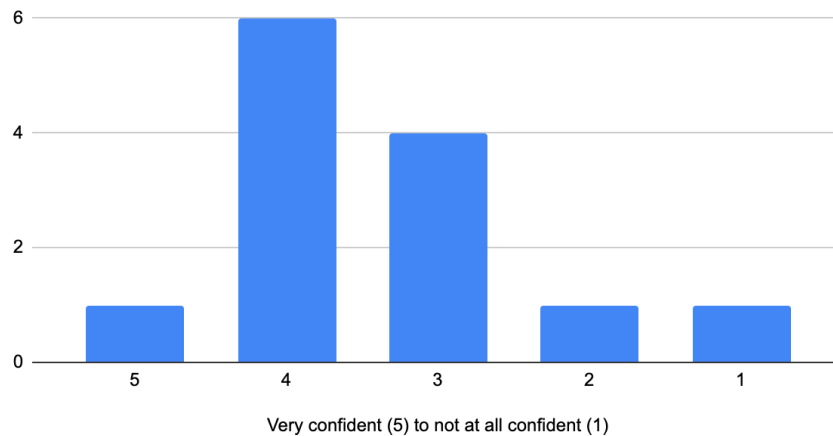
- Neutral 30.8%
- Strongly agree 38.5%
- Agree 30.8%

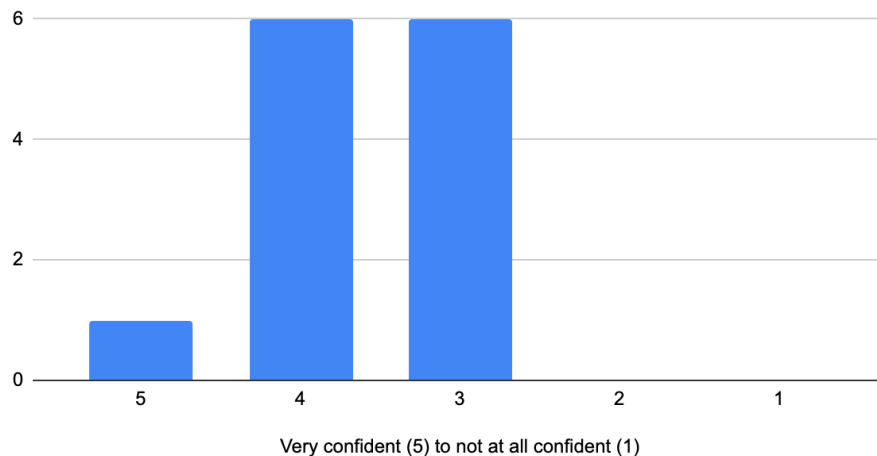*"I really liked this workshop. **Everyone encouraged each other and gave positive feedback.**"* - J., Age 14

College Access Program

The TKU College Access Program (CAP) provides a supportive environment for students to explore college options and build college readiness skills. The CAP program was offered in the Spring and met online on select Friday afternoons for 7 weeks, 1.5 hours per session. **The CAP program focused on topics including managing stress, self-advocacy and receiving accommodations, social life at college, choosing a college major, and choosing a college that's right for you.** 13 out of the 15 CAP participants completed a post-program survey. Students were asked to rate their confidence in a number of areas.

Rate your confidence in the following task: Finding a college that's right for me

Very confident (5) to not at all confident (1)

Rate your confidence in the following task: Talking to my professors.

Very confident (5) to not at all confident (1)

<u>Narratives and Testimonials from Students and Parents</u>

<u>Students</u>

- *"You guys are the best. **You are supportive and caring to me** and other students"* - T., Age 17

- ***"I thought this was an amazing class!*** *At first I thought this class would be a waste of time. Turns out I found out how to make easy films out of objects that I did not need to go to the store to get. I would like to take more classes like this next year if available!"* - W., Age 11

- *"I liked it! **I learned a lot about making videos and editing them!** (I never knew the first thing about it before.) I learned things like adding images, music and a bunch of other stuff! I had a great time this week."* - T., Age 10

- *"I really liked this summer workshop. **Everyone encouraged each other and gave positive feedback.** The staff and counselors were very helpful and understanding and I felt like the zoom was an overall cool and fun experience."* - J., Age 14

- *"I had a lot of fun! I already knew about some of the things that were being taught, but t**he class gave me prompts that helped me to apply myself and motivated me to be able to expand my creativity in ways I did not think was possible**. I enjoyed interacting with the people in the class, and this experience was a positive one for me."* - P., Age 18

<u>Parents</u>

- *"This was our first class with TKU. I'm usually skeptical about online offerings, but I've been introducing my son to Photoshop and thought this workshop would help. **We had a great experience!** Really happy with the class and we look forward to attending more. Thanks very much!"* - Parent of J., Age 12

- *"My son absolutely loves TKU. **His artistic development has expanded 10-fold since finding you**. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything TKU has done for him artistically."* - Parent of M., Age 20

- *"We would like to thank you very much for all your hard work to empower and support neurodiverse students' lives through computer science and technology skills and to provide the unlimited approach to social and emotional learning for kids with special needs. **J. feels good and is always excited to join the classes. He feels respected and his thoughts and voice matters.** I am very happy and feel supported to have known your organization and that J. has participated and is still participating in the programs that you offer."* - Parent of J., Age 16

For more information, contact info@techkidsunlimited.org