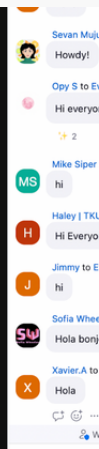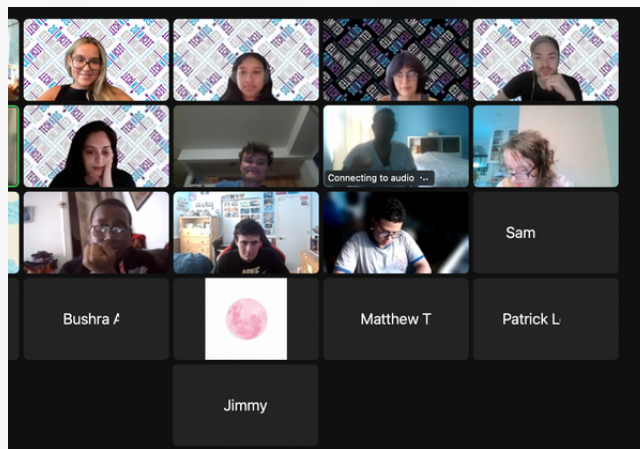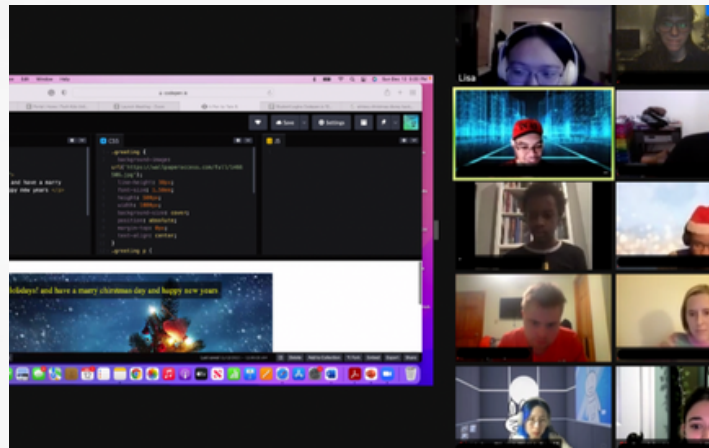# TECH KIDS UNLIMITED
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2023 EVALUATION REPORT

Tech Kids Unlimited: 2023 Program Evaluation

In 2023 TKU worked with Dr. Ariana Ricco, a developmental psychologist and independent evaluator with a specialty in autism and technology to evaluate all programs. 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 10- 24** 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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TECH PROGRAMS

Summer Workshops

In the Summer of 2023, TKU offered 4 weeks of in-person and 3 weeks of online workshops. Students chose from morning and/or afternoon workshops, which ran for 2.5 hours from Monday through Friday. **Workshop themes included Coding with Javascript, Coding and Art, Game Design Lab, and DIY Gadgets.** Data was collected from 76 students.. Students completed the survey each Friday, at the end of each workshop, to share their experiences. At the end of the summer, parents were surveyed about student strengths, challenges, successes, and skill improvements.

Student Survey Results

According to students' own reports at the end of each week:
- 84% of students felt they enjoyed their experience at the workshop
- 75% of students felt they would like to return to TKU in the future
- **71% of students felt that they improved their computer skills after one week**
- 49% of students felt they got better at working with others after one week
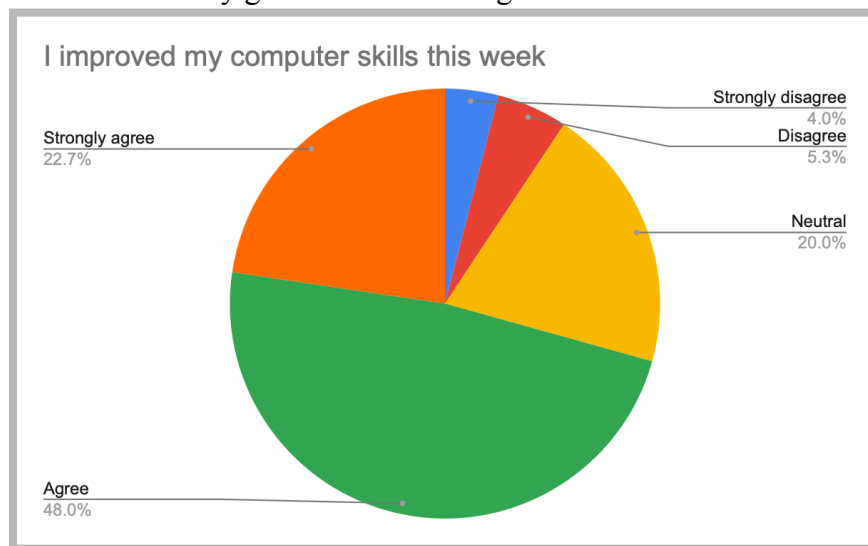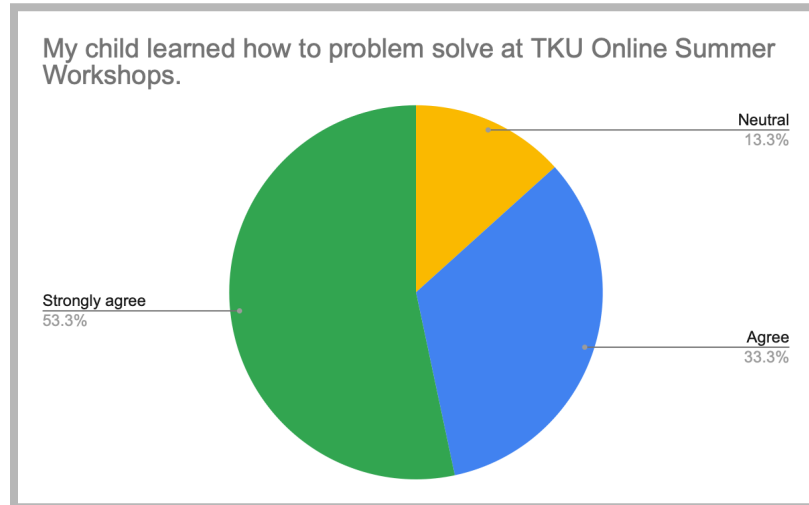

Parent Feedback on their Child's Growth

According to parent surveys:
- **87% of parents said their child learned problem solving skills**
- 87% of parents said their child gained confidence in themselves
- 80% of parents said their child gained technology skills
- 66% of parents said their child gained social-emotional skills

"K had such a great time during his first week of camp that he ended up attending ALL the summer workshops. We received

helpful updates from TKU social workers and we were delighted to discover that there are other outstanding TKU programs that will help him with future employment." - Parent of K., Age 23

My child learned how to problem solve at TKU Online Summer Workshops.

Neutral
13.3%
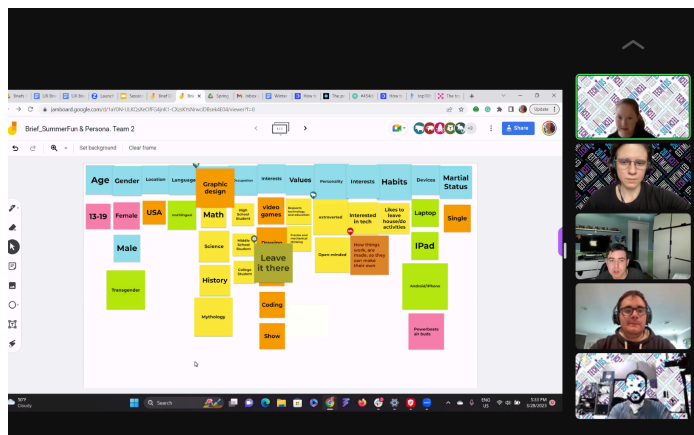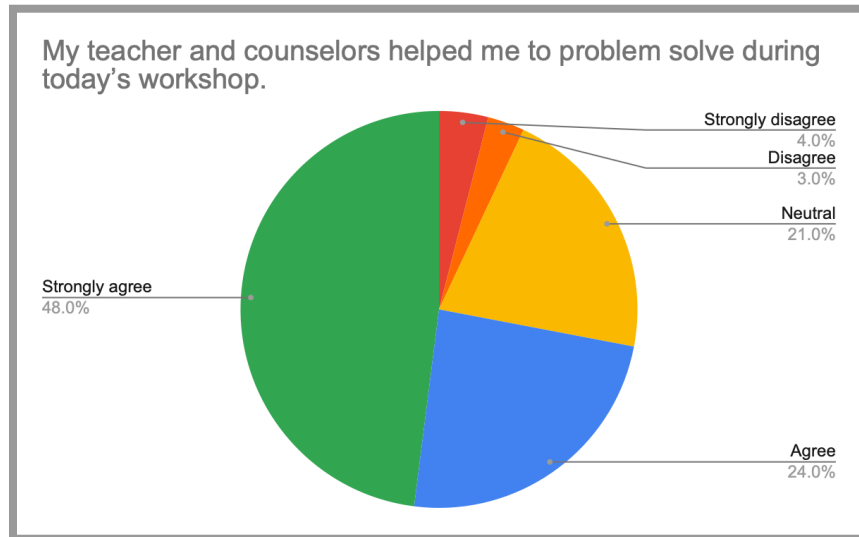
Strongly agree
53.3%

Agree
33.3%

"TKU was a place where **we knew neurodivergence would be welcomed and staff would know how to work with learning differences. We don't have to explain ourselves** *or make excuses like we usually have to during the school year. It was a relief."* - Parent of J., Age 7

Sunday Workshops

TKU offered 2 hour Sunday workshops twice a month throughout the school year. **Workshops focused on topics like game design, digital citizenship, AI, graphic design, and music production** giving students the opportunity to explore and refine their interests and affinities. Data was collected in the Spring and Fall from 101 students.

- 82% of students reported that they would like to return to another Sunday Workshop in the future
- **71% of students said their teachers and/or counselors helped them to solve a problem during a Sunday workshop**
- 65% of students said that they improved their computer skills after a Sunday Workshop
- 64% of students said they gained skills to help them get a job

My teacher and counselors helped me to problem solve during today's workshop.

- Strongly disagree 4.0%
- Disagree 3.0%
- Neutral 21.0%
- Strongly agree 48.0%
- Agree 24.0%

TKU Digital Agency

Spring, Summer & Fall 2023

Digital Agency is an online afterschool program for young people ages 14-24.; This unique program mimics a real creative agency workplace and participants must have advanced tech skills. **The focus of this program was on completing digital projects for real clients and all participants were given an honorarium for their contributions.**
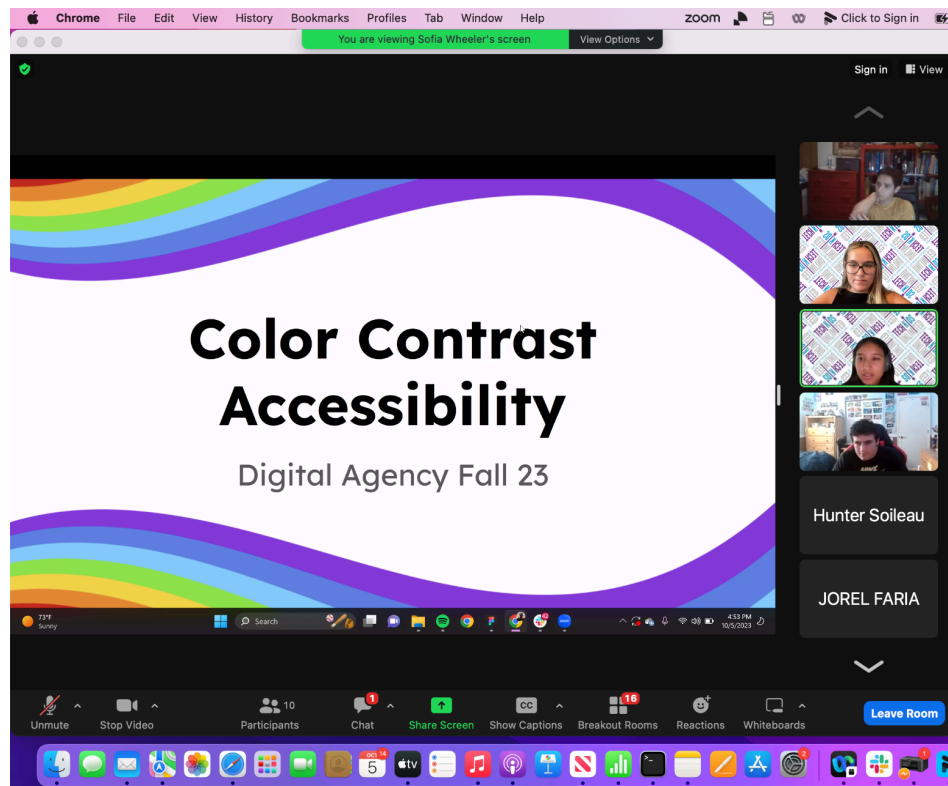

Students Said:

*Digital Agency truly lets me express myself. It wasn't just about following instructions or tutorials; **I felt valued and actively involved in the discussion.** Digital Agency made me feel appreciated and involved in the discussion. It felt great for my ideas to be accepted and used for our client. - N., Age 13*

*"Digital Agency **was a fun place where I could feel less stressed about everything** that was going on around me" - J., Age 16*

*"**Digital Agency has allowed me to develop skills** that I do not think I would have been able to get elsewhere." - O., Age 25*

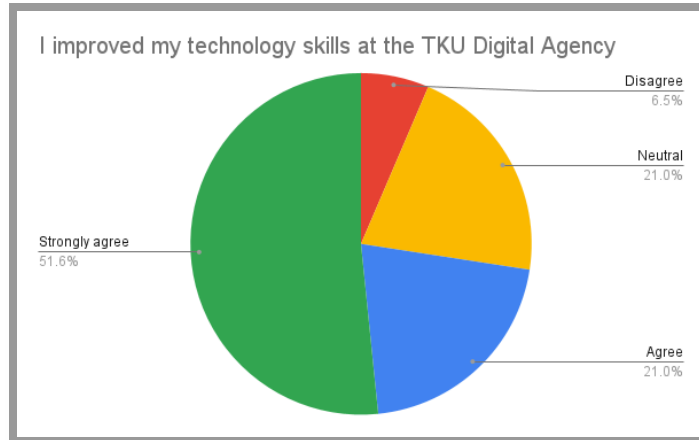## Participant Feedback and Survey Data

Participating students were surveyed at the end of their cohort in June, September, and December. 62 Digital Agency participants completed the survey.
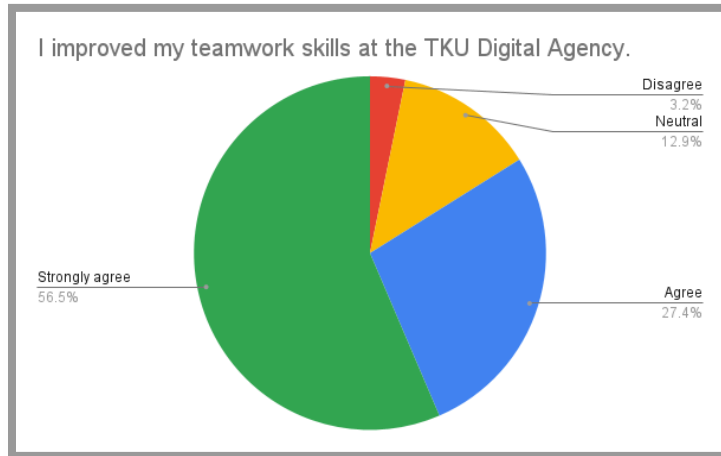
Most Digital Agency participants said **they improved their teamwork skills** after a semester working with the agency (83.8%).
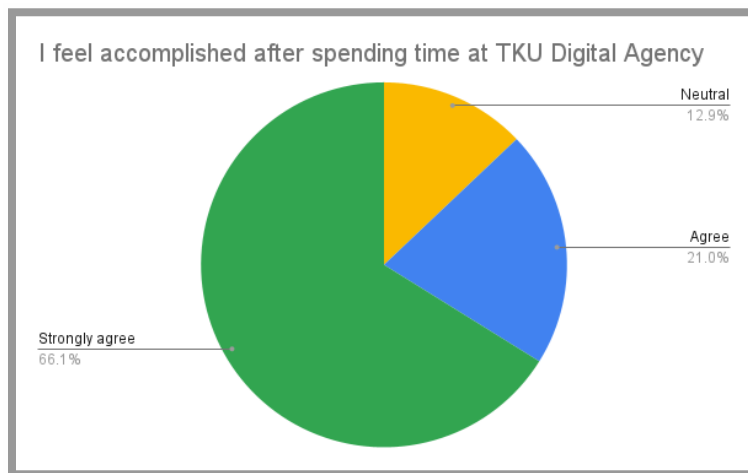
Most **participants felt accomplished (87%) and engaged (87%) while working on client projects** in the Digital Agency.

I improved my technology skills at the TKU Digital Agency

Disagree 6.5%
Neutral 21.0%
Strongly agree 51.6%
Agree 21.0%

Participants also felt that they improved their technology (82.3%) and graphic design skills (77.4%) after spending time in the Digital Agency.

Creative Tech Internship (CTI)

CTI is an academic-year internship that meets weekly on Fridays from September to June. Interns ages 17 to 24 apply for this full-day program.**The program has 2 classrooms, one online and one in-person, each with a full complement of staff. Interns work on a range of projects to develop tech and media literacy skills and hear from guest speakers in tech fields.** A social worker supports the students with social emotional learning. Many students receive school credit for this internship program, which acts as a bridge between school and the workplace. This year projects included creating video games to enter the Games for Change competition and creating videos for the Marvels of Media autistic film competition at the Museum of the Moving Image.

Students Said:

How do you think this internship prepared you to get a job?
- *"**It prepared me to get a job** by having me meet different types of new people."*
- *"It helped me know what a full work day is like."*
- *"This really **helped me gain a lot of experience** and my supervisors helped me a lot".*

What did you learn about yourself as an intern this year?
- *"I learned that jobs can be exhausting, and I should take breaks if I feel I need one. I also found that **taking notes helps me be sure that I am paying attention to what is happening.**"*

Career Readiness Internship Summer Program (CRISP)

Now in its fourth year, CRISP is a 6-week invite-only summer internship program for students ages 18 to 24. Students must have attended TKU programs for at least one-year to be invited to CRISP. Interns work 3 days a week at a worksite matched to their skills and interests. Interns also spend time each week with social workers learning career readiness skills such as interviewing, portfolio and resume building, time management, workplace etiquette and more. Guest lecturers speak about career choices.

Students worked on a **range of technology projects: creating social media, working on salesforce and data, updating websites, researching, and checking website info,** etc. This program is free; students received a stipend. Some students received the stipend through participation in a partnership with SYEP & Expand Ed.

In-person and remote interns participated in a workshop led by a CRISP social worker.

*"My biggest takeaway was that to **do what you love** even if that changes throughout your life." - C., Age 17*

Students Said:

When asked "What did you learn as a CRISP intern?" interns noted:

- *"**I learned more tips on getting a job**, as well as working as a team with others."*
- *"**I learned about the various ways to be professional** and ways to contact your boss or supervisor."*
- *"**I learned how to use Excel and how to act in a workplace**."*

Level Up Tech

Level Up Tech classes are **a series of career-ready workshops designed to help students ages 14 to 24 achieve their goals by giving them the specific skill sets** they need to start exploring employment in a particular aspect of a tech field. Class topics were: video editing, UX & accessibility design, social media marketing and more. Level Up was a 6-8 week intensive 2 ½ hour session offered online and in-person.
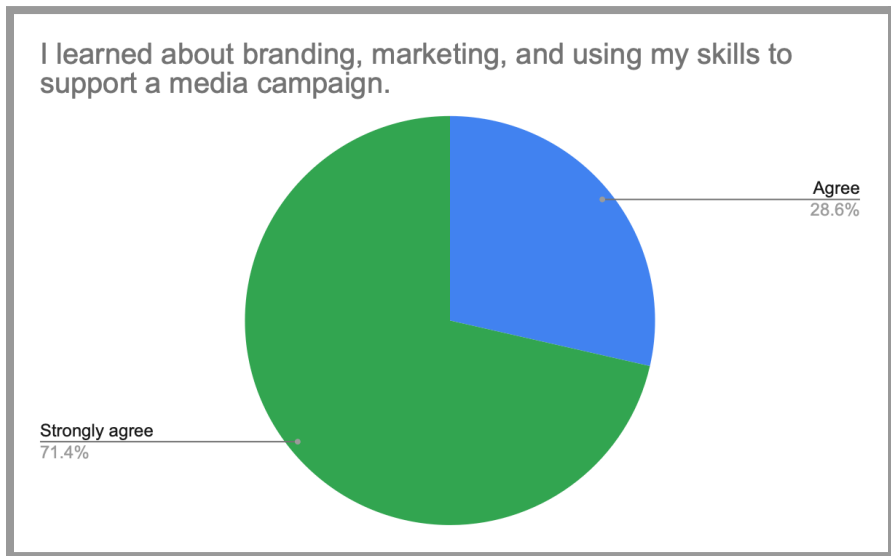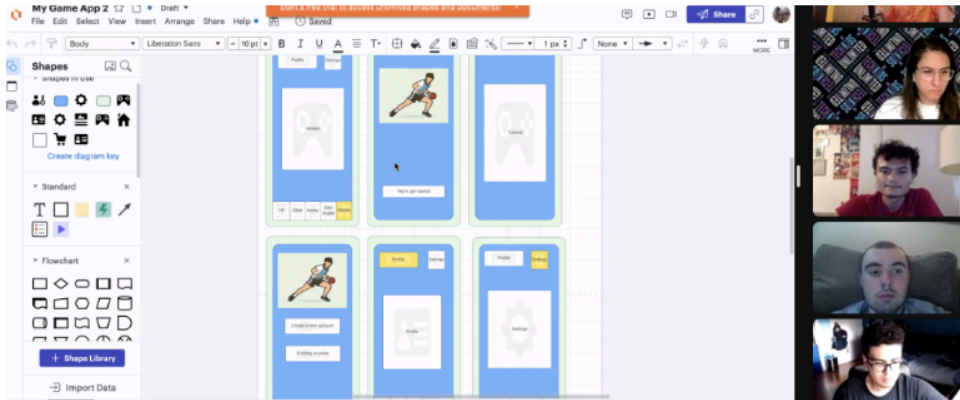
All students agreed that they **learned about branding, marketing and using their skills to support a media campaign**. Students also all agreed that they learned skills **to help them get a job** at Level Up.
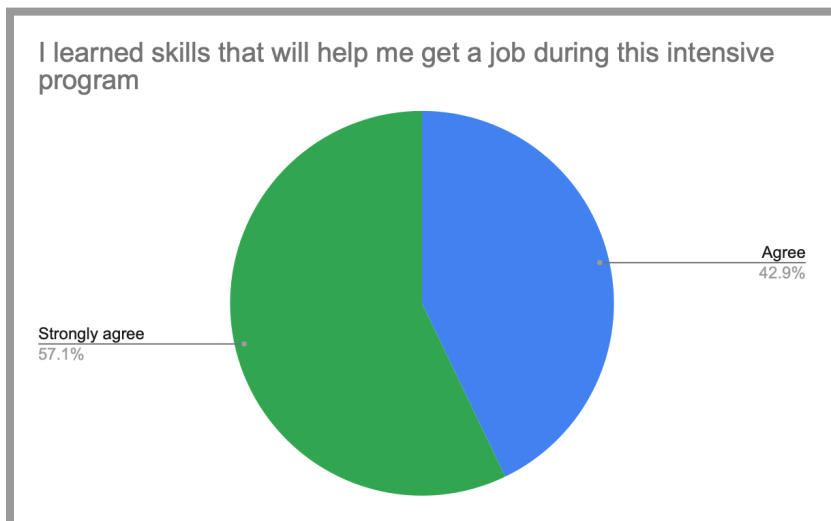
*"I really enjoyed being able to use CapCut and use my own photos. I **was then able to make my own unique creations!**"- I., Age 15*

Accessibility and UX Intensive, Spring 2023

Spring 2023, TKU hosted a 5-week intensive program to teach foundational skills of web accessibility and user experience to 14 students. The program was designed **to prepare students with real-world skills to jumpstart their path into the workforce**. Students worked on creative projects to showcase their skills and there was an emphasis on problem-solving, teamwork, and constructive feedback.
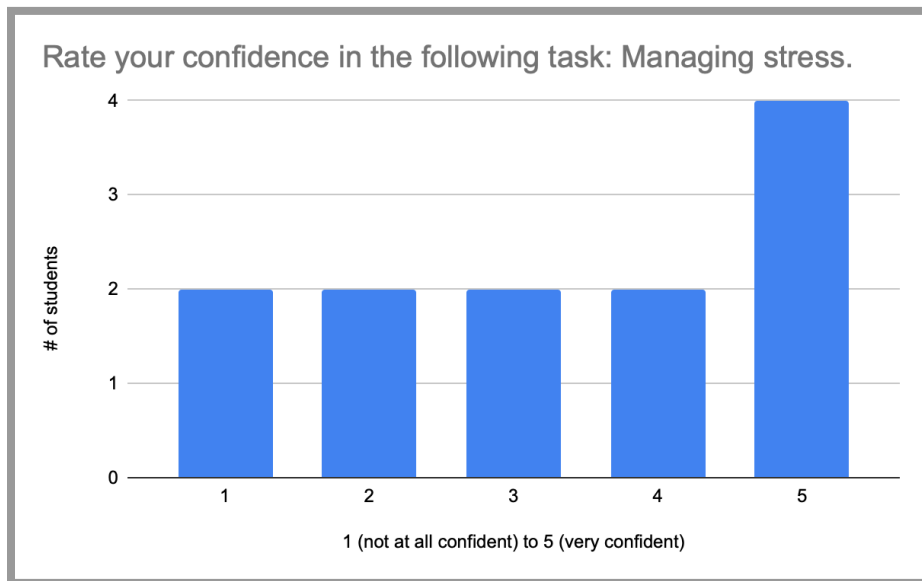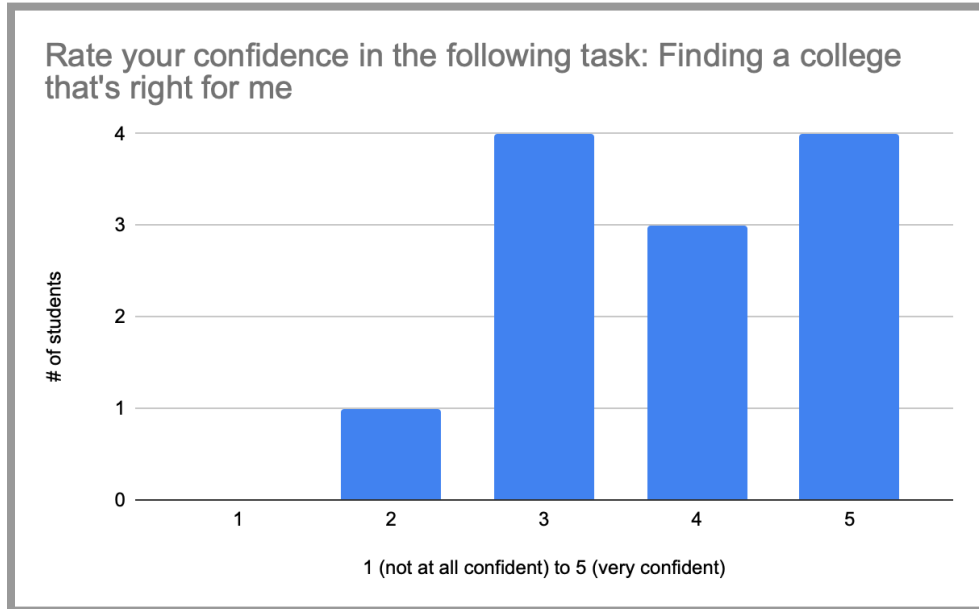

I gained more knowledge of UX and Web Accessibility principles.

Strongly agree
25.0%

Agree
75.0%
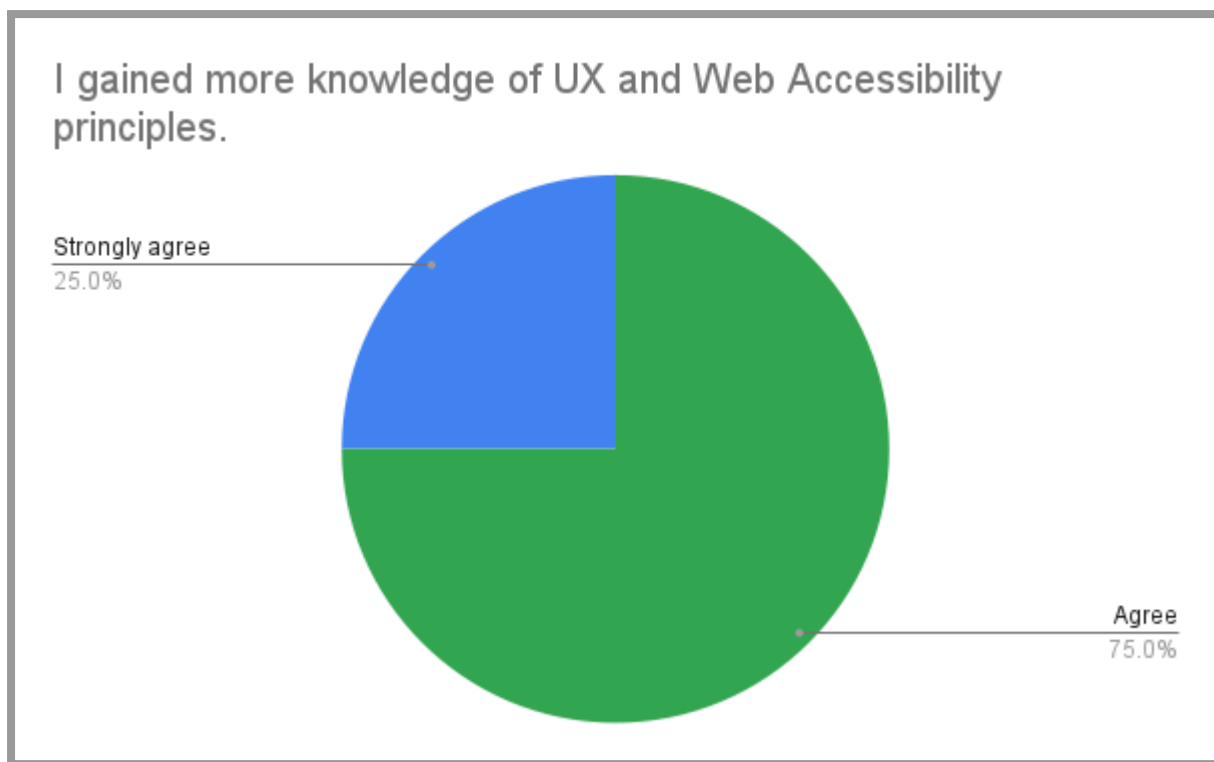
*"I really liked having the opportunity to design an idea for an application and **to meet people that have similar interests** to me."* - M., Age 20

College Access Program (CAP)

The College Access Program targets high school students in 9th to 11th grades. **CAP provides a supportive environment for students to explore college options and build college readiness**

skills. This is an 8-week online program offered in Fall and Spring. Topics include: college experience expectations, identity development, social skills, and self-advocacy.

The CAP program was offered in both the Spring and Fall and a total of 12 participants responded to the feedback survey:

Rate your confidence in the following task: Finding a college that's right for me
1 (not at all confident) to 5 (very confident)

Rate your confidence in the following task: Managing stress.
1 (not at all confident) to 5 (very confident)

Students said:

- *"This program is a good place to get ideas for what to expect in college, and just **to socialize with others and have a fun time**."*

11

- *"I feel very comfortable in this program because a lot of the kids here share similar interests as me, which I'm insecure about because I'm afraid of being judged for my interests. **Being around people who have the same interests as me makes me feel safe and at home.**"*
- *"I would say the most helpful topic was knowing what to expect from college, and **learning how to socialize with people**, whether it be making new friends, or dating (that topic was awkward, but it'll probably be helpful), etc."*

AI for All Minds Hackathon

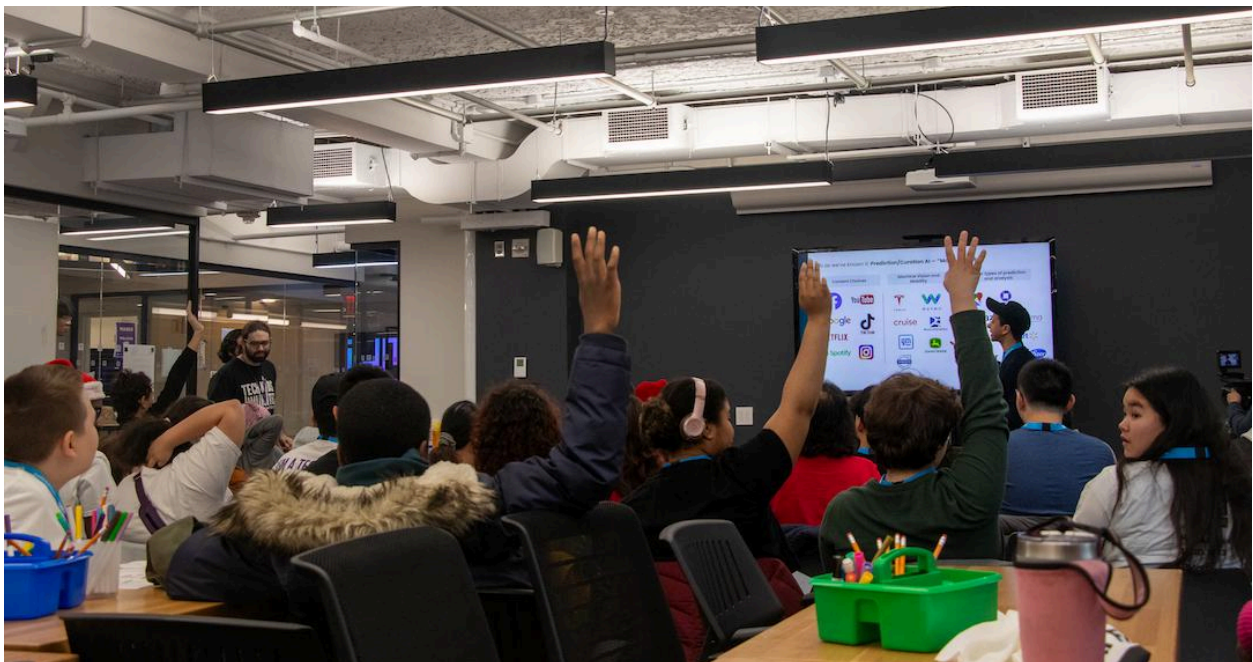## "AI for All Minds: Exploring Tech's Potential"

In December, 64 students attended the "AI for All Minds: Exploring Tech's Potential" Hackathon. Students explored the world of Artificial Intelligence in this project-based event. They learned about the ethics of AI and how it can be used for accessibility, and then visited different stations where they used AI for art, music, animation, and more.

I felt comfortable sharing my ideas at the Hackathon.

- Neutral 21.4%
- Strongly agree 35.7%
- Agree 42.9%
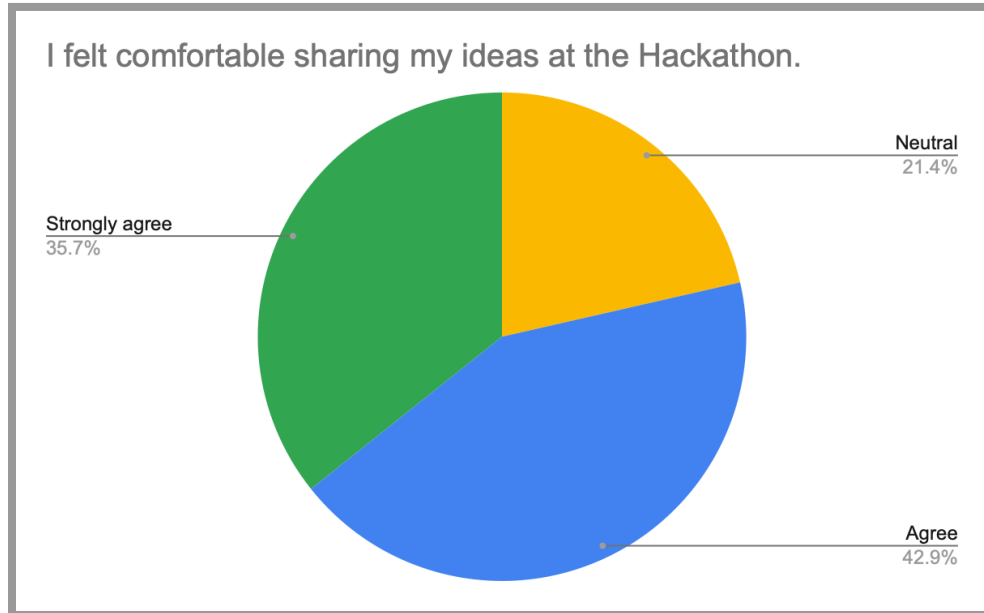
"I loved the various activities at this Hackathon like animating your drawing."

Narratives and Testimonials from Students and Parents

Students

● *"If it wasn't for TKU I would probably not see myself doing anything like the projects that we have completed. **I really appreciate TKU for opening my eyes and showing me new things about life.**" - J., Age 19*

● ***"Without TKU, I would have probably just been sitting around playing video games all day**. TKU is the reason I truly feel like I should attend college. **I have learned different skills that brightened my future**."--A., Age 18*

● *"This week was really fun and I enjoyed being here a lot. We could interact with others in the meeting and not just work independently. Using the Canva app on Friday is what was my favorite part about this week. **It was really exciting to try out my creativity** and share them using just one app." - I., Age 10*

● *"**I learned how to code and how to make friends.**" - J., Age 11*

● *"I learned more about how to make websites! Prior to this camp, I knew how to use HTML and CSS to make basic websites, but I **finally have professional software that I love to use and is free that I will continue to use!**" - C., Age 13*

Parents

● *"**TKU is a great place for your child.** Helping all students understand various tech topics with care and compassion is great. All of the social workers and teachers will help your child meet their fullest potential." - Parent of T,. Age 17*

● *"**My son thrived in your program and was enthusiastic about increasing his skills** in each summer workshop. He felt respected by the staff & **his self-esteem improved** as a result." - Parent of K., Age 23*

● *" My son loves TKU, the friends he makes helps him out with the tasks he learns, the mentors help him out with finding the right college and **the programs he takes really makes him happy.**" - Parent of A., Age 20*

● *"**My son felt so safe, comfortable and loved. He didn't feel judged or not seen. I loved that it definitely boosted his confidence**." - Parent of H., Age 11*

For more information, contact info@techkidsunlimited.org