

# GETTING TO 'Y'



## Youth Bring Meaning to their Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2016-2017

During the 2016-2017 school year, 18 leadership teams of students and teachers from schools across Vermont participated in Getting to 'Y': Youth Bring Meaning to Their Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). This student leadership initiative is a collaborative effort of UP for Learning and the Vermont Department of Health. Over the course of the year, these school teams attended training in data analysis and facilitation, analyzed their YRBS data\*, led community dialogues, and made action plans to strengthen their school and community. This newsletter highlights the work of 14 of these school teams. Four other schools (Coventry Village School, Millers Run, Barnet School and Danville High School) participated in the Getting to 'Y' training and plan to complete the process in the coming school year.

**Congratulations to all of the school teams for a productive year!**

\*Unless otherwise noted, school teams used their respective supervisory union data.

# Canaan Schools

## Canaan, Vermont


Canaan Schools had both a middle school and high school team attend the fall training and then held two separate data analysis retreats. The Canaan seventh and eighth grade students gathered in October to examine the Canaan Middle School YRBS data to identify assets already present in their community and to start the process of thinking about action steps to address their top three areas of concern. Members of Canaan Schools' High School Getting to 'Y' team and OVX club facilitated a full morning Data Analysis Retreat, in which they worked with 12 other students to examine the Canaan High School YRBS data. Together, the high school students considered assets already present in their school and greater community, identified strengths and concerns highlighted by the data, and began thinking about action steps to address primary areas of concern. Over 50 members of the community (parents, teachers, clergy, law enforcement, Department of Health employees, town selectman, and more) later attended Canaan Schools' Community Dialogue Night, facilitated by



Community Dialogue event to understand high school YRBS data led by students representing three different grades.

the students. The group shared many "wonders" and "wows" and expressed great support for the planned actions.


### STRENGTHS identified by the Middle School team



**93%** of students think that their parents would think it is wrong for them to drink alcohol.



**100%** of students think it would be wrong for someone their age to smoke cigarettes.




**93%** of students think it would be wrong for someone their age to smoke marijuana.


### CONCERNS identified by the Middle School team



**14%** of students never participated in 60 minutes of physical activity in the past seven days.



**35%** of students were bullied in the past 30 days, and **68%** were ever bullied.



**14%** of students ever tried cigarettes, even one or two puffs.

# Canaan Schools

## Canaan, Vermont


### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS

#### and Accomplishments: Middle School Team


- Bring concern to staff and school board regarding
  - a) students in band and chorus not having a study hall;
  - b) a policy around limiting the amount of time for homework per subject;
  - c) moving study hall to the end of the day to make time for all classes to do work and see teachers from all 4 classes;
  - d) creating an opportunity for daily physical activity for students in 7th and 8th grade.
- Bring concern to student council regarding other

- activities besides sports teams.
- Program to teach kids with coping skills
- Education to address the difference between joking and bullying
- Bully Box- a box so that someone could anonymously report a bully
- Tobacco education K-6 and 7th and 8th graders
- Getting to Y every 2 years
- Campaign regarding dangers of tobacco via posters, website, PSA, daily notices


### STRENGTHS identified by the High School team



**63%** of students say that they participated in 60 minutes of physical activity at least 3-6 days per week.



**38%** of Canaan High School students think it would be easy to get marijuana, while **62%** of VT high school students think it would be easy to get.




**71%** of Canaan High School students think it is wrong for someone their age to smoke marijuana, while only **56%** of VT high school students think it is wrong.

### CONCERNS identified by the High School team



**7%** of students reported purposefully hurting themselves without wanting to die within the past 12 months.



**37%** of students ever smoked a whole cigarette.

**33%** of students have used electronic vapor products.

**20%** of students have used smokeless tobacco products.

### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS

#### and Accomplishments: High School Team

- Host a community event to discuss concerns
- Create and display public service announcements about healthy relationships, suicide, depression and tobacco use.
- Invite guest speakers to present on topics.

- Educate students, families and community members about the dangers of tobacco use.
- Hold a mock crash and educational event
- Stomp out tobacco
- Participated in the Umatter training
- Celebrate Kick Butts Day
- Hold a Wellness Fair



# Essex High School

## Essex, Vermont

Essex's very active Getting to 'Y' team met bi-weekly ever since the GTY training and was very deliberately constructed to draw students and adults from a number of clubs, peer groups and classes. This provided the team with the opportunity to reach out to a great diversity of students and learn from their expertise. As a result of their attention to recruitment, team problem solving reached beyond the experiences of just those in the room. Rather than host a single Community Dialogue Event, the Essex team shared its process in multiple settings with student groups, faculty, and had a "YRBS Drop-In" Room open during both Fall and Spring Parent Conference Nights.



Essex team making meaning of their data.

### STRENGTHS



**66%**

of students engage in extracurricular activities.



**4%**

of students drove after they had been drinking, down from **10%** in 2013.



**89%**

of sexually active students used a condom or prescription birth control the last time they had sex.

### CONCERNS



**23%**

of students felt sad or hopeless for 2 weeks in a row during the past 12 months (32% female, 15% male).



**21%**

of sexually active students used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sex (16% female, 27% male). Under the Influence = Non-Consensual.



**27%**

of students drank alcohol in the past 30 days (29% female, 25% male).

### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS

#### and Accomplishments

- Engaged in dialogue with the counseling department around issues that counselors can and can't address and concerns that limit student access to Counseling services.
- Created a bulletin board to encourage student engagement by clearly stating what counselors are able to discuss in a confidential manner.
- Designed and held an evening training with the Essex High School peer helpers.
- Presented specific ideas to the health education lead teacher for enhancing aspects of the health curriculum regarding prioritized area of concern.
- Presenters to health classes from community agencies that focus on domestic/relationship violence and sexual abuse.
- A film focused on drug & alcohol use is nearing the final production stage and will be presented in the fall of 2017.
- Pre-prom and graduation prevention awareness posters citing YRBS data promoting positive and responsible decision-making, and statistics showing that the majority of EHS students are making healthy choices.
- Enlist local pediatricians for community outreach/presentation to parents.
- Create Weekly YRBS Facts for announcements.

# Leland and Gray Middle School

## Townshend, Vermont

Leland & Gray's Above the Influence (ATI) group attended the Getting to Y training in the fall, during which time they were trained to interpret and share their school's Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) results. Following this training, those that attended reviewed what they learned with the entire ATI group (12 students). Next, the group led a morning-long retreat during which approximately 20 students and 10 teachers reviewed the school's 2015 High School YRBS results and worked together to identify areas of concern, root causes, and possible solutions. This data retreat was helpful in identifying both areas of concern for Leland & Gray as well as gauging the topics that students and faculty feel mostly strongly about addressing.

The Leland & Gray Getting to Y team then hosted a dialogue with a community group called Community Hope & Action, which formed after a number of tragedies happened in our community. Their mission is to bring people together for food and music each month. This group invited the Getting to 'Y' team



Leland and Gray team at the Getting to 'Y' Training.

to have a dialogue with them about our YRBS results and youth involvement in the community. The dialogue was facilitated by students and included sharing missions, community assets and risk factors impacting student behavior. Potential solutions were also discussed. It was the kick off of a collaboration.

### COMMUNITY STRENGTHS



**Strong theater program at our high school**



**Strong community hub (our local country store)**



**Many farms, swimming holes & parks**



**Strong after school programming**

### CONCERNS



**51%** of girls have ever had sex.



**65%** of high school students have consumed alcohol.



**20%** of students that consumed alcohol in the past 30 days did so on 10 or more of those days.

### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS and Accomplishments

- Meet with guidance department to discuss actions pertaining to student's sexual activity.
- Create a mural to depict community assets.

# Lowell Graded School

## Lowell, Vermont

The Lowell Graded School Getting to 'Y' team and a selection of 6,7,& 8th grade students went to the North Country Career Center in Newport, Vermont to analyze the 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. The core GTY team recruited students for the Data Analysis Retreat based on a survey handed out to every middle schooler with questions about their interests in the GTY team's priorities. They spent the day analyzing the YRBS survey to identify three strengths and three concerns in our immediate community.



Right: Lowell Graded School Getting to 'Y' team in front of the Vermont State House.

### STRENGTHS



**93%** of students think it is wrong to smoke cigarettes.

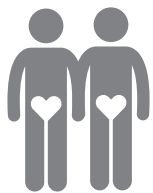


**85%** of students think it is wrong for them to drink alcohol.



**3%** of middle school students have tried to commit suicide.

### CONCERNS



**9%** of students are sexually active.



**Too few students to report** have tried to quit smoking.



**31%** of students have ever ridden in a car with a drunk driver.

### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS and Accomplishments

- A Community Dialogue Night was held during the 2016-2017 school year
- Education on keeping safe and using refusal

- skills—all 7th and 8th grade students practiced refusal skills during the 2016-2017 school year
- More sexual education classes proposed
- Quitting resources outreach planned



# Peoples Academy Middle School

## Morrisville, Vermont

Peoples Academy had two teams that were trained and held separate data analysis retreats at the VFW Lodge in Morrisville where they discussed the results of their own school's 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. After a day of analyzing and thinking about the survey results students came up with strengths and concerns about their school/community. The team has held weekly meetings and had a parent dialogue event and supported a peer-to-peer model with the high school Getting to 'Y' team playing a leadership role in the Middle School team's Parent Dialogue Night and actions.



Peoples Academy Middle School team.

### STRENGTHS identified by the Middle School team



**97%**  
of students think that it is wrong to smoke cigarettes.



**96%**  
of students think that parents think it is wrong for them to smoke marijuana.



**79%**  
of students talk to their parents weekly about school.

### CONCERNS identified by the Middle School team



**7%**  
of students made a suicide plan in the past 12 months.



**51%**  
of students say that they have ever been bullied at school.



**14%**  
of students felt unsafe to go to school in the past 30 days.

### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS and Accomplishments: Middle School Team


→ Attend the Youth Mental Health Summit on Jan. 31 to get a sense of how to help with mental health issues.

- Create a school brochure about bullying. Deliver to students in Teacher Advisories (TA).
- Present to Teachers (In TA) about youth mental health (project and knowledge from youth summit)


# Peoples Academy High School

Morrisville, Vermont


## STRENGTHS identified by the High School team



**71%** of students say they will probably or definitely complete a post high school program




**72%** of students spoke to their parents at least weekly about school.




**92%** of students think that their parents would think it is wrong for them to smoke cigarettes.

## CONCERNS identified by the High School team



**19%** of students were offered, sold or given an illegal drug on school property.



**23%** of students rode with a driver who had been smoking marijuana.



**15%** of students made a suicide plan.

## PROPOSED ACTION STEPS and Accomplishments: High School Team

- Raise awareness of the impact of mental health issues and drug use through a school assembly.
- Work with Drivers Education program to demonstrate impaired driving using "beer goggle" and a golf cart.
- Create and designate an outside counselor that students can talk to about depression and suicide, and develop a contact card.
- Attend the 2017 Youth Mental Health Summit to learn more about youth mental health and the impact of alcohol and drug use.



Peoples Academy High School team at the Getting to 'Y' training.



# Sheldon School

## Sheldon, Vermont

Students in grades 7 & 8 examined and analyzed Franklin Northwest Supervisory Union's YRBS data and voted on key areas of strength and concern to bring forth to their community. In January 2017, 85 students, parents and community members came together for further discussion and to solidify proposed action steps to celebrate our strengths and discuss how to best address areas of concern.



Sheldon Getting to 'Y' year.

### STRENGTHS



**Too few students to report chose to smoke cigarettes in the past 30 days.**



**93%** of students thought their parents/guardians would think it would be wrong for them to smoke marijuana.



**98%** of students have never abused prescription drugs.

### CONCERNS



**43%** of students were in the same room with someone who was smoking in the past 30 days.



**5%** of students have had sexual intercourse.



**23%** of students have ever thought seriously about suicide.

### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS and Accomplishments

- Increase educational/cessation information- online, school events, on buses, ask parents to sign "take it outside" pledges, advertise quit programs at school.
- Work with local store owners about advertising pledge/promise sheets.
- Sexual Abuse Prevention and Health Education Curriculum for grade K-8.
- Hang up informational flyers in Middle School bathrooms.
- Send information home to parents/guardians.
- Offer more afterschool/evening activities for middle school students.
- Prevention/education curriculum in Wellness class.
- Develop awareness campaign of warning signs and crisis information.
- Continue to educate staff and parents on signs and symptoms.

# St. Johnsbury Academy

## St. Johnsbury, Vermont

The St. Johnsbury Academy Getting to Y team held a data retreat with 24 high school students over three days, analyzing Caledonia County student data. The assets that were identified by the students included community and school resources as well as daily Chapel and the school dress code and the many after school clubs, sports and other activities. Despite the sometimes less-than-enthusiastic student perception of morning Chapel meetings and professional appearance, students understood these expectations as providing appropriate boundaries, social competencies and support.

In December, the team presented the results of their student data retreat and engaged in dialogue with members of St. Johnsbury's Drug Abuse Resis-

tance Team (DART), which is comprised of community members and representatives of community-based organizations serving the needs of area youth and adults. The data priorities were discussed in small groups and potential solutions were generated with action steps which will guide the next steps of the Getting to Y team.



St. Johnsbury Academy team members present the findings from the Data Analysis Retreat.

### STRENGTHS



**3%**

of students identify as LBGTO.



**91%**

of students who are having sexual intercourse are using birth control.



**89%**

of students used condoms or some kind of birth control the last time that they had sexual intercourse.

### CONCERNS



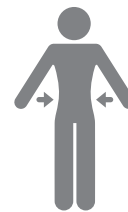
**22%**

of students who are sexually active used alcohol or drugs the last time they had sex.



**7%**

of students have ever been physically forced into sexual intercourse.



**61%**

of female students report they are trying to lose weight.

### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS and Accomplishments

- Educate parents and students about teen drug use and peer pressure and encourage parents to spend more time with children to build stable relationships.
- Create a program with local police to support education around safety plans and designated drivers.
- Lobby for more funding for alcohol/drug resistance programs and revise health curriculum to address concern areas.
- Encourage notes/compliments in public places.
- Form support groups to help those suffering from eating disorders.
- Establish anti-bullying education and social media campaigns around body images, realistic body image and acceptance, sexual assault awareness, anti-victim shaming, substance misuse.

# St. Johnsbury Middle School

## St. Johnsbury, Vermont

A diverse group of 19 St. Johnsbury Middle School students gathered to examine YRBS data from Caledonia County middle school students and identified assets, strengths and concerns. They then hosted a Community Dialogue night which included a dinner and small group activities in a packed gym and engaged the community in designing action steps to address their identified areas of concern. A reporter for the local paper, the Caledonian Record, attended and wrote a news story featuring the team's work, data priorities and success in gathering the community together to engage in dialogue and activities around

the priorities identified by the Getting to 'Y' team. The team has worked with local organizations addressing violence and substance use and have made presentations to the community organizations and Vermont Association of Middle Level Educators conference in Burlington. At the end of the school year the team presented their work and action plans to The St. Johnsbury School Board. 8th graders are leaving their GTY legacy, and 6th graders are already on board for next year. We have 41 new and returning students that have joined the team for next year!

### STRENGTHS



**95%**

of students think their parents would think it is

wrong, or very wrong, for them to smoke cigarettes.



**76%**

of 7th graders and **74%** of 8th graders talk with their parents about school at least weekly.

Students identified **28** community organizations, programs, or people that support their efforts to be independent, share their generosity, help students belong, and contribute to students developing mastery.

### CONCERNS



**12%**

of 8th graders reported drinking

alcohol (other than a few sips) before age 11.



**55%**

of middle school students have been bullied at school.



**26%**

of middle school students reported feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing usual activities in the past year.

### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS and Accomplishments

- Work with our local restorative justice center so we can begin holding circles with middle school students to build safety and skills
- Work with Umbrella, our local violence prevention agency, to offer more support groups for students who are struggling.
- Work with Umatter program to provide public

awareness campaigns and resources for the larger community to raise awareness about mental health and depression.

- Target alcohol use through parent education, communication, rewards programs (such as Wait 21), safe spots and activities for youth that are substance-free.
- Provide bystander intervention training, exercise activities, media literacy and diversity education.



# Stowe Middle School & High School

## Stowe, Vermont



Community gathering at Stowe Middle/High School to discuss substance abuse messaging in a resort town.

The Stowe Middle School Getting to 'Y' group is called the "Making A Difference Stowe" Club (a.k.a. M.A.D.S. Club). These students led a retreat day at the Stoweflake Resort in Stowe for 20 total students to analyze their YRBS data and determine which concerns and assets were to be the focus of this school year. The Stowe High School Getting to 'Y' group, "Bettering Our School Surroundings" Club (a.k.a. B.O.S.S. Club) also led a retreat day at the Stoweflake Resort in Stowe for 21 total students and identified data priorities.

Both clubs met weekly to plan the retreat day, create proposed projects to address top concerns from the retreat day, plan the community dialogue night, and implement proposed projects from the group and community dialogue night. The clubs also facilitated the community dialogue night at the Stowe Middle/High School where they fed and put on a performance for around 80 parents and key stakeholders (i.e. business owners, school board members, newspaper) to discuss their concerns around the risky be-

haviors in their community. The local newspaper, *The Stowe Reporter*, featured the event, which validated the concerns raised by the students.

The attendees were engaged in the small group discussions with the youth to work out how to best support the student body around substance use

messaging in a resort town and how to provide more mental health support to our kids. The students were extremely empowered after this event and felt that they had the attention and concern they were looking for from the adults.



Above, Stowe Middle School Getting to 'Y' team. Right, Stowe High School Getting to 'Y' team.



# Stowe Middle School & High School

## Stowe, Vermont

### STRENGTHS identified by the Middle School team



**97%**  
of students think their parents would think it is wrong to smoke cigarettes.



**94%**  
of students think their parents would think it is wrong to smoke marijuana.



**91%**  
of students talk to their parents about school on a weekly basis.

### CONCERNS identified by the Middle School team



**13%**  
of students have felt so sad or hopeless in the past 2 weeks that they stopped doing usual activities.



**9%**  
of students have made a suicide plan.



Only **51%**  
of students think that people their age are doing physical harm when consuming 5 or more drinks in a weekend.

### STRENGTHS identified by the High School team



**93%**  
of students report earning As and Bs as their typical grades in the past 12 months.



**91%**  
of sexually active students used either a condom or prescription birth control the last time they had sex.

### CONCERNS identified by the High School team



**14%**  
of students were offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property, past 12 months.



**38%**  
of students texted or emailed while driving a car or other vehicle, past 30 days.



**19%**  
of students (**28%** of females) felt sad or hopeless for two weeks in a row, in the past 12 months.

### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS and Accomplishments

- Engage community in dialogue around the messaging of "resort town" and the use and perceptions of alcohol on teens.
- Create a free teen night in Stowe monthly.
- Create a peer counseling program.

- Increase education around accessing mental health.
- Provide more mental health access within school.
- Create a welcoming committee for new students
- Increase education around physical dangers of substance use.
- Provide alternative activities.

# Twin Valley Middle High School

## Whitingham, Vermont

The TVMHS GTY team led a Data Analysis retreat of 16 middle school students in grades 6-8. In February these middle school students then held a Community Dialogue night and hosted 35 parents, teachers and community members to share their analysis and priorities from the WSSU 2015 Middle School Youth Risk Behavior Survey. During the Community Dialogue, an additional action was proposed: to address the issue of students not being able to get out of unsafe or uncomfortable situations, a code word with parents could be established. This would be a word that, when spoken or texted, means "Please come

and get me right away." Students and Dialogue participants were eager to implement this strategy right away. An article was published in the Deerfield Valley News in March about the Community Dialogue.



The TVMHS GTY team.

### STRENGTHS



**Too few students to report** have never smoked a whole cigarette by age 11.



**Too few students to report** never or rarely wear a seatbelt.



The majority of WSSU middle school students think it is wrong or very wrong for someone their age to use substances: **Cigarettes 95%, alcohol 89%, marijuana 91%.**

### CONCERNS



**40%** of females and **14%** of males report they had ever been electronically bullied.



**24%** of students rode in a car with someone who had been drinking.



**9%** of students did not go to school because they felt unsafe in the past 30 days.

### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS and Accomplishments

→ Students partner with the local prevention coalition to disseminate information to parents & youth about establishing a "code word." An article describing the "code word" strategy was put in the DVCP newsletter that is mailed to all parents in the WSSU. Facebook posts about "code word" were posted and students created posters to put around the school with a message: "Have you established your CODE WORD with your parents yet?"

- Students met with WSSU prevention curriculum instructor to advocate for discussion during class about saying "NO" to an unsafe ride. Discussion and role play will be included in the curriculum for students in grades 6-8.
- GTY Group created an Anti-Bullying Bulletin Board at the school in the hallway to the cafeteria.
- An anti-bullying group led by the Student Assistance Counselor implemented activities at the school.
- GTY team members pledged to be good role models for their peers by being positive and kind to their peers.



# Whitcomb Middle School

## Bethel, Vermont

On November 15th, 2016 almost 30 junior and senior high school students went to the Bethel Town Hall to have a data retreat to look at the 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data.



Whitcomb Getting to 'Y' team.

### STRENGTHS



**93%**  
of students don't get into physical fights on school property.



**95%**  
of students haven't had sexual intercourse before age 13.



**93%**  
of students have never tried a flavored tobacco product before age 13.

### CONCERNS



**14%**  
of students (22% of females) have made a suicide plan in the last 12 months.



**76%**  
of students think there is no risk/harm in someone their age smoking marijuana regularly.



**9%**  
of students reported not having gone to school in the last 30 days because they felt unsafe.

### PROPOSED ACTION STEPS and Accomplishments

- U Matter suicide prevention training and implementing student, parent and community education
- teaching more coping skills at school
- More bullying prevention education and education about dangers of social media
- More education for students on the negative im-

pacts of substance use on the developing brain  
→ In May of 2017 staff, faculty and the 7th-12th grade student body watched the movie "Bully" and processed in small groups afterwards. Students in the Getting to Y group felt that bullying was a root cause of at least two of our identified areas of concern and that this would be a good way to start a conversation about it. Students felt that this was a successful event.

# GETTING TO 'Y' manual

**Youth Bring  
Meaning to  
the Youth Risk  
Behavior Survey**



Getting  
to 'Y' is a  
project of  
**UP**  
for Learning

**UP for Learning has a completely updated GTY manual to support this work.** In the manual you will find all the resources, activities and templates needed to move through the GTY process. Check it out at [upforlearning.com/index.php/initiatives/getting-to-y](http://upforlearning.com/index.php/initiatives/getting-to-y)



Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning

*For more information about this initiative, please contact:*

**Sharon Koller, Initiative Coordinator**

UP for Learning

802.373.7594 or [sharon@upforlearning.com](mailto:sharon@upforlearning.com)

**Helen Beattie, Executive Director**

UP for Learning

(802) 472-5127 or [hnbeattie@gmail.com](mailto:hnbeattie@gmail.com)