

GETTING TO 'Y'



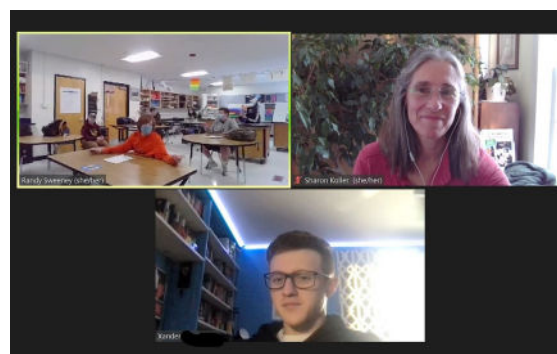
Thetford Academy high school GTY team leading a Community Dialogue Event.

Youth Bring Meaning to their Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2020-21

The 2020-2021 school year brought many firsts to schools, communities, and Getting to 'Y' (GTY) teams as we all navigated a full year of pandemic.

As schools struggled to balance public health concerns with the social, emotional and educational needs of youth, a small but mighty group of GTY teams rallied to engage with each other and their school communities to bring meaning to their health data, focus on creating actionable change, and increase connections through their work. These teams worked with UP for Learning to create individualized

plans for training and coaching, utilizing a mix of virtual and in-person platforms which often included real-time adaptations in schedules and platforms as public health realities changed. The UP for Learning Youth Facilitators rose to the occasion, with 6 different GTY alums making time in their schedules to co-facilitate the many customized training sessions to help school teams.



Congratulations to all the youth and adults who took the lead in using data and dialogue to raise awareness and improve youth health and well-being through their GTY work this year!

Mill River Union High School

North Clarendon, Vermont

The Mill River High School team led their data analysis during the 2019-2020 school year and shared their findings and priorities with the district Equity and Wellness Committees. Before they could implement action, the pandemic closed their school building. Although many of the original Core Team graduated in June 2020, the remaining members and their advisor reinvigorated the Mill River Interact Club to continue their GTY work despite the ongoing challenges of remote meetings. This year, the team decided to address the feelings of hopelessness and sadness they had discovered by reviewing their 2017 school data. Although survey data is not yet available for 2020-2021, they felt that issues around depression had worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic. They began implementation of the *Why You Matter* multi-year project (adapted from Chelsea High School, MI) to provide students with a sense of community while highlighting how their individualism contributes to that community. Through English class, students were presented with a lesson to help them articulate their own unique importance in the world by writing one sentence about why they matter. Afterward, many students were photographed holding their state-



Mill River Why You Matter project.

ments. The photos will be included in the yearbook and are on display in the school lobby. This program also identifies students who may be struggling with issues of self-worth so that teachers can refer them to the school counseling office for support. The Mill River Interact Club team presented their work so far to the school administration and plans to continue with their action plan in the coming years.

STRENGTHS



Only **3%** of MRU high school students drove a car after drinking alcohol (increased to **8%** in 2019).



82% have at least one teacher or other adult in school that they can talk to if they have a problem (decreased to **72%** in 2019).

CONCERNS



27% of MRU high school students (up to **38%** in 2019) felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks or more in a row that they stopped doing some of their usual activities in the past year.



24% (up to **38%** in 2019) said that someone had done sexual things to them that they did not want.



17% (up to **23%** in 2019) had been offered, given or sold drugs at school.

Milton High School

Milton, Vermont

The Milton High School Student Council is an open-enrollment club where youth volunteers use their leadership role to improve the school. This year, the Student Council chose to participate in Getting to 'Y' to use data to guide their work. Eleven members and their advisors attended a fully virtual training in November. The team then co-facilitated a remote data analysis retreat with peers to identify existing supports in their school and community and reviewed the 2019 Milton High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey report. The group agreed on 3 strengths to celebrate in their data and 4 concern areas that they felt were most important to address.

They presented their priorities to the School Board and Administration, and also plan to share their ideas with faculty and staff to increase problem-solving around their areas of concern. Their work with the YRBS



Milton Student Council members at their first in-person meeting — in June!

data will help guide Student Council priorities going forward. Ideas for next year include: sexual violence prevention presentations in advisories; examination of health curriculum to include more consent information; training for staff on how to respond to issues; strengthening the restorative practices model; surveying students about which school rules are unclear; mental health screenings and check ins; creating a calming room in school; increasing counseling resources; conflict resolution training; peer mediation and conflict resolution not linked to discipline.

STRENGTHS



85%
of Milton High School students describe their

grades as As or Bs.



49%
of those who use tobacco products tried to quit

during the past year (higher than statewide 44%).



83%
reported that there is at least one

teacher or other adult in their school that they can talk to if they have a problem (higher than statewide 78%).

CONCERNS



23%
of Milton

High School students report someone has ever done sexual things to them that they did not want, compared to 18% statewide.



Only
31%

strongly agree or agree that their school has clear rules and consequences for behavior (much lower than statewide 56%).



16%
made a plan

about how they would attempt suicide in the past year (pre-Covid), which is higher than the statewide percentage.



12%
of Milton

students were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property in the 30 days before the survey, higher than 7% statewide.

Mt. Anthony Union Middle School

Bennington, Vermont

After a virtual recruitment process, a group of about a dozen Mount Anthony Union Middle School (MAUMS) students formed their Getting to 'Y' team. At MAUMS the group is called "The Youth Leadership Group" (YLG) and is supported by the MAUMS Prevention Coordinator and ACT Bennington, the Southshore Substance Misuse prevention coalition. The main goal of the YLG is to make their school and community a healthier place. Because of the pandemic, their team meetings and events were fully virtual throughout the year. In the Fall, they attended a virtual training with UP for Learning youth and adult experts to learn about GTY and how to analyze the 2019 Bennington County Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data to identify existing supports and strengths in their community and to pinpoint risk factors. The team continued to meet weekly to narrow down their focus for the year. They decided to plan action around substance abuse and suicide prevention. Based on the data, they had a special focus on supporting LGBTQ students. The YLG took action by creating social media posts to highlight data facts paired with supportive messages and youth specific substance use and suicide prevention resources. They also created FREE Sunshine Boxes for youth to take home which included printed versions of the social media messages (YRBS data facts; positive



Mount Anthony team photo.

affirmations & resources) and fun activities. In May, the group wrapped up their work by inviting their community to hear and discuss their work in a virtual Community Dialogue Evening. They presented their priorities based on the 2019 Bennington County YRBS, and shared the work they have been doing to improve youth health and well-being. A video of their presentation is available at youtu.be/Qcl4ibupApM.

STRENGTHS



70%

of Bennington County middle

school students have at least one teacher or other adult in their school that they can talk to if they have a problem.



90%

of Bennington County students chose NOT to use

electronic vapor products in the past month.

90%

of Bennington County middle school students think that their parents or guardians feel it would be wrong or very wrong for the student to use electronic vapor products, alcohol or marijuana.

CONCERNS



25%

of Bennington County middle school

students felt sad or hopeless during the past year.



50%

of Bennington County middle

school students identifying as **LGBTQ** have ever seriously thought about killing themselves.



10%

of Bennington County middle

school students have ever tried marijuana products.

Peoples Academy Middle Level

Morrisville, Vermont

Despite ongoing pandemic challenges and restrictions, a core group of 8th grade youth worked with their new Student Assistance Program Counselor to learn about and implement GTY. The group learned facilitation and data analysis skills during a custom session with UP for Learning youth and adult trainers. The 8th grade team then planned and led a data analysis retreat with a larger group of middle school students through examination of their 2019 Lamoille County middle school Youth Risk Behavior Survey data to identify areas of health and well-being to work on improving. After the data analysis, the 5th grade participants were energized to take leadership in implementing actions based on their work. Middle school advisories held discussions of the data priorities and brainstormed ways to help improve the areas of concern. Because bullying was a primary concern in the data, the group focused on increasing connection and kindness in the middle school. They created a video and ran a Kindness Campaign, which included a Kindness Challenge and Kindness and Compliments Tear-and-Share activity. The group hopes to continue their work next year.



Adriana Verzilli, Kebonna Jenkins, and Alice Belanger presenting the Kindness Challenge.

STRENGTHS



86%
of Lamoille
County middle
school students

think it is wrong or very wrong
for someone their age to use
electronic vapor products.



93%
responded that
their parents or
guardians feel it

would be wrong or very wrong
for the student to use electronic
vapor products.



71%
played on at least
one sports team
this past year.

CONCERNS



45%
of Lamoille County middle
school students were ever bullied
on school property.



21%
ever seriously thought about killing
themselves, which is higher than
the state average.

Thetford Academy Middle School

Thetford, Vermont

Thetford Academy organized their first-ever GTY teams this year. In the middle school, six youth joined with their Student Assistance Counselor to learn about GTY and then organized their own data analysis retreat. The group blended in-person and remote meetings throughout the year, learned many new technology tools and made sure to have fun together. In December, the team led the entire 8th grade through an analysis of their 2019 county YRBS data. The GTY team presented and led activities using Google Meets, while their peers participated in their classroom pods. After voting on top strengths and concerns as a whole group, the GTY team planned and led a successful 2-part remote Community Dialogue Event, where they shared their work with school and community members, collaborated to add to their list of existing activities and opportunities that support young people at Thetford Academy, and also got ideas on how to improve things. This dynamic GTY team then moved to action! The group decided to focus first on their mental health concerns and has planned a teacher/staff training for fall about how to best support students in need. They have also planned an Open Gym event in the fall to help increase connec-

tion and healthy activities. They created and shared coping strategies and resources through posters in the student lounge, flyers around the school, InSTALLments, and information in Sunshine Boxes, which were inspired by a meeting with the Mount Anthony GTY team. They ended the year with a celebration of their accomplishments and plan to continue their important work in the fall. Special thanks to Thetford team member Layliana for putting in extra time to meet with youth from Alaska and to present at the national 2021 Annual Conference on Adolescent Health.



Thetford Academy Middle School team.

STRENGTHS



91%

of Orange County

middle school students mostly or always wear a helmet when skiing or snowboarding.



98%

mostly or always wear a seatbelt.



76%

drank water 1x per day;

68% 2x per day; 54% 2x per day.



63%

report that they get

mostly As and Bs in school.

CONCERNS



20%

of Orange County middle school students ever

seriously thought about killing themselves.



20%

have ever done something to purposely hurt

themselves without wanting to die.



23%

ever drank alcohol.

Thetford Academy High School

Thetford, Vermont

A dedicated group of eight Thetford Academy youth from grades 9 to 12, along with their Student Assistance Counselor, ran an effective GTY group this year, overcoming pandemic challenges to meet weekly and host data analysis and community events through a mix of remote and in-person platforms. The team attended remote training with UP for Learning, then planned and led a data analysis event with a larger group of high school volunteers. Using numerous remote tools, they presented data, led breakout room discussions of priorities, did root cause analysis of their concern areas, and mapped existing assets in the Thetford community. In February, they hosted a Zoom event to share their work with community members and school administrators and staff. From these meetings came many good conversations about strengths and supports and new ideas for ways to improve youth health and well-being. The GTY team set up a resource area in the student lounge to provide information on many mental health, wellness and safety topics. They will maintain this support resource next fall and have also begun planning to increase club and after school access next year. The team raised awareness about im-



Thetford Academy High School team.

portant issues, had fun, and accomplished a lot during this challenging pandemic year!

Two Thetford High School team members made the extra commitment of reaching out to other states. Margaret met with youth from Alaska to talk about youth leadership, and Elliott presented GTY information at the national 2021 Annual Conference on Adolescent Health.

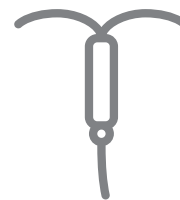
STRENGTHS



52%
of Thetford Academy high school students think it is wrong or very wrong for someone their age to use electronic vapor products.



53%
of students think it is wrong or very wrong for someone their age to drink alcohol and **47%** think it is wrong or very wrong to use marijuana.



21%
of sexually active students used an IUD (e.g., Mirena or ParaGard) or implant and **60%** used birth control pills, an IUD or implant, or a shot, patch, or birth control ring.

CONCERNS



5%
of Thetford Academy high school students attempted suicide in the past year.



Only **60%**
of students agree or strongly agree that in their community, they feel like they matter to people.



3%
of students have ever slept away from home because they were kicked out or abandoned.

Vergennes Union Middle School

Vergennes, Vermont

Two groups of Vergennes Union Middle School students participated in GTY as part of a 7th grade exploratory class this year! The 6-week class was co-led by a youth-adult team that included the School Counselor, the district Health and Wellness Coordinator, and UP for Learning GTY experts. One member of the facilitation team was a Vergennes High School senior who was part of his school's GTY team in middle and high school, and then became an UP for Learning state-wide facilitator and trainer.

During their class, the students first explored the idea and factors that contribute to a sense of 'agency' – believing in and having the skills to create change in your own life and the world around you. They then worked together to create a Circle of Courage which documented many things in their school and community that support young people to be healthy and well. Each class then delved into their school Youth Risk Behavior Survey data to analyze the responses from their middle school peers and compare the results to state-wide responses. After deciding their top priorities in the

data and discussing root causes and solution ideas as a class, students broke into small groups to choose and implement an action to either support and elevate areas of strength or to address areas of concern.

Some students worked with Womensafe and then hung customized informational fliers about sexual harassment around the school. Other students created posters with information about vaping and alcohol use. One group created a PowerPoint presentation and then visited morning meeting advisory groups to share information and encourage discussions around the risks of alcohol use. Two groups created posters which they hung around the school to celebrate the strengths they found in the VUMS data and to highlight the many things that currently help young people to be healthy in Addison County. Others created educational games and videos around alcohol and vaping information. The two groups accomplished a lot in their 6-week classes and raised awareness about YRBS priorities throughout the middle school!

STRENGTHS



of Vergennes Union Middle School students think their parents or guardians feel it is wrong or very wrong for their student to use marijuana, higher than the state rate of 92%.



tried cigarettes for the first time before age 11, lower than Vermont's average of 3%.

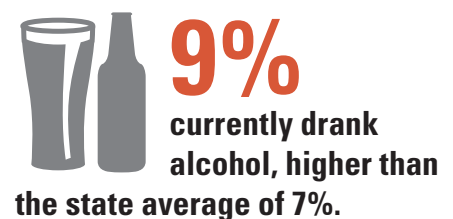
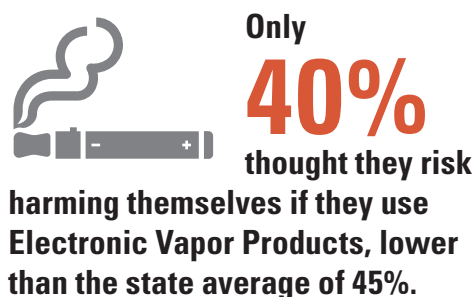
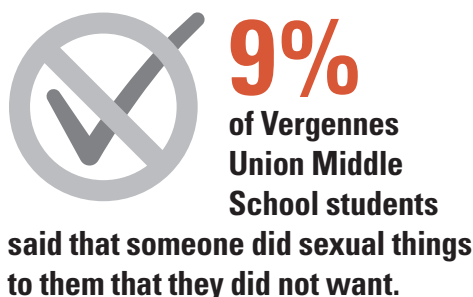


play on at least one sports team.



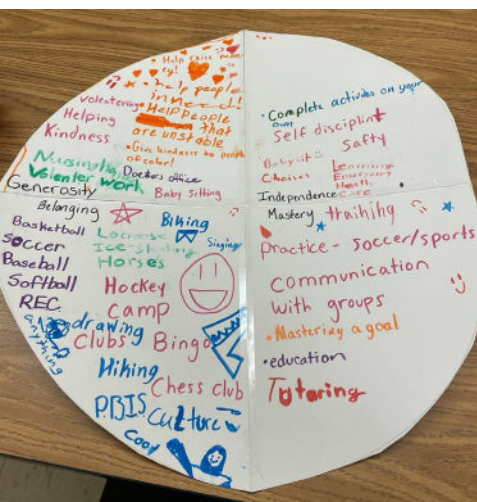
describe their grades in school as mostly A's and B's, higher than the state average of 66%.

CONCERNS



Getting to 'Y' in Elementary Schools

In addition to the middle and high schools who participated in Getting to 'Y' through the generous support of the Vermont Health Department, seven elementary school teams joined GTY through a grant from the Vermont Agency of Education. The youth on these teams ranged in age from 4th to 8th grade and focused on different data sources, but all followed the model of youth identifying existing strengths in their community, bringing meaning to their own data and using that data to inspire dialogue and action.



that support youth in their school and community and the 5th grade class helped with ideas for a new peer mentoring program.

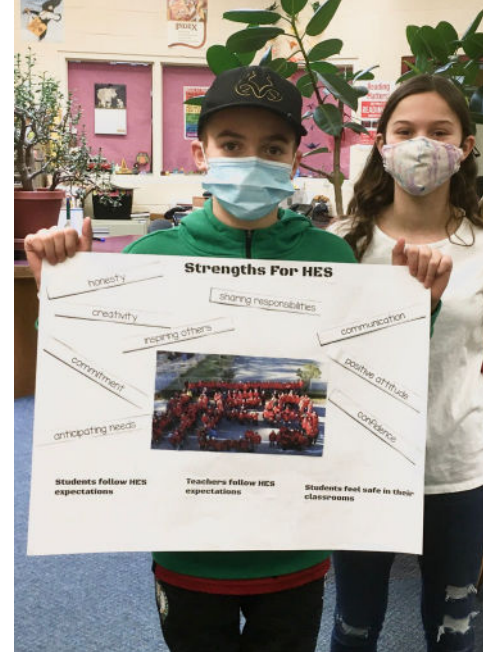
Fair Haven Grade School's

7th and 8th grade Youth Leadership group analyzed their local YRBS data and coordinated their work with the Vermont Youth Project. They shared their insights and priorities with school and community groups and took leadership in building youth health.



Hardwick Elementary School formed a leadership team of 6th grade volunteers with their guidance counselor. The group helped their 6th grade peers

review their school climate survey data and chose to focus on celebrating school strengths and improving bus safety and enjoyment of school. They met with their principal, created PBIS initiatives, held classroom discussions, made posters (pictured above) and bought recess equipment.



Lakeview Elementary School recruited a leadership team from their 4th–6th grade classroom. This team co-led the rest of the class through their school climate survey data. The team then worked on improving school climate through student-delivered announcements, recognition items, school spirit wristbands and creating the *Lakeview Times* magazine to share their data and celebrate things that make Lakeview great.



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Woodbury Elementary School's entire 5th and 6th grade worked with UP for Learning youth and adults to analyze their school climate survey data and identify existing supports through the Circle of Courage. They created posters to celebrate strengths and assets, purchased books for their class library and formed a Student Council that will meet next year to work on school improvement.

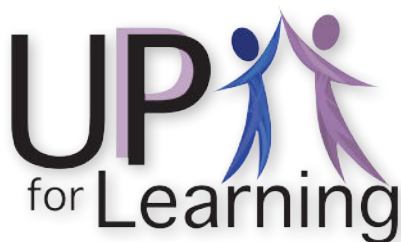


Wells Village School's new Student Council used their climate survey data to guide their work for the



year. They identified strengths and were concerned about peers not enjoying school. They focused on adding fun and connection to the school day through a bulletin board display with weekly riddles and a bingo game and prizes. The Student Council, and their peers, also explored ways to build community as a group and as individuals.

Middletown Springs Elementary School 5th and 6th grade Student Council members met virtually with UP for Learning youth and adults to review their school climate survey and choose priorities to work on. They focused on celebrating school strengths with a "Wizards Work Together" bulletin board and wrote a newsletter article. To help make learning more fun and create more choices in learning, they partnered with VINS to create educational Make and Take kits which were available, along with lessons, to each class in the school.



Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning

Learn more about Getting to 'Y' and other UP for Learning initiatives at upforlearning.org or contact:

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