

# UP FOR LEARNING 2022-23 **ANNUAL REPORT**



**Youth are most successful and empowered when they share their experience and ideas in a respectful setting; in turn, the educational community benefits from their voice and leadership.**

UP for Learning staff understand the impact youth voice has when adult partners value it and use it to power positive change. UP for Learning supports work toward systemic transformation within our partner schools and communities by increasing authentic youth voice in learning and decision-making.

Educational equity is a basic human right and *all* young people deserve a meaningful and engaging education. The heart of our work lies in fostering youth-adult partnership. To truly transform education and drive change, UP uses research-based models to shift the relationship between youth and adults to one of shared ownership and responsibility.

**What does this look like in action? What follows are inspiring stories from the 2022-2023 academic year.**

UP for Learning is growing at an unprecedented rate, partnering with schools and districts to learn more about the social-emotional needs of their school communities after the pandemic and this summer's flooding in Vermont. In a world that increasingly demands resilience at every turn, UP cultivates and creates connection and a sense of belonging with school partners, youth facilitators, staff, and our donors. We know strong relationships drive systemic change. Thank you for sharing our commitment to empowering young people and providing all schools access to our programs.



Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning

# UP By the Numbers

**Number of youth-adult teams:**

**97**

**597** teams since 2008

**Number of schools:**

**113**

**Number of youth leaders:**

**1120**

**5417** leaders since 2008

**284** adults trained

**2** youth voting members of UP's Board of Directors

**5** Youth Program Specialists (high school/college students)

**17** youth trained at UP's first youth onboarding retreat

**8** youth redefining UP's Youth Action Council

**8** youth staff members on Trailblazers, UP's digital magazine

**1,885+** hours of compensated time for UP's Youth Co-Facilitators (about 40% more than in FY22)

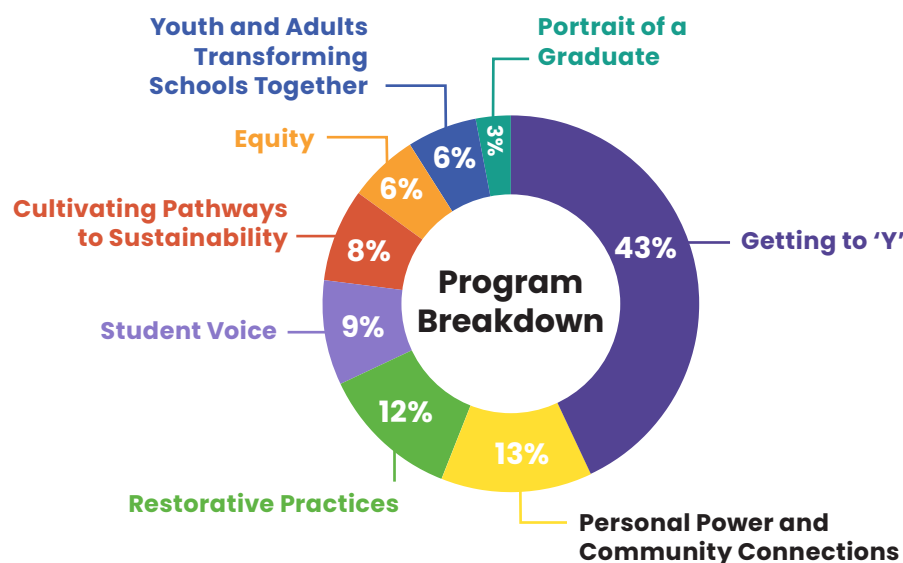
**97** Youth Participatory Action Research projects

**9** monthly virtual racial justice dialogue events led by Vermont and Mississippi youth leaders

Youth who participate in UP's programming report **a strong desire to help their schools meet the needs of all learners.**

They believe school works better when students have a say in what happens. After participating in UP programs, **youth reported higher confidence in sharing their ideas, and a greater sense that those ideas are heard and respected.**

Source: analysis of 2022-2023 pre- to post-survey data from all participants



## Expanding Beyond Vermont



**21 schools**

**19%** of UP schools

**21 teams**

**22%** of UP teams

**40 adults**

**14%** of UP adults

**221 youth**

**20%** of UP youth

"UP for Learning has inspired me to grow and **be the leader I want to see in a school environment**, as well as learn to lead in partnership with other youth and adults."

—Olivia C. 8th grade, Williston Central School



# 2022–23 Stories



*“UP’s understanding and facilitation of youth-adult partnerships – that feel like true partnerships – helped me understand **how powerful working side by side with students can be.** The YAP group UP led at one of our schools for the last two years provided a voice for students who were struggling, connection for youth leaders we were slowly losing . . . leadership skills for those students, and a safe space for students to look forward to.”*

—Virginia Litchfield,  
Burlington Community  
Justice Center

## RESTORATIVE PRACTICES & RE-ENGAGEMENT: BURLINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT, BURLINGTON, VT

UP facilitated three teams in the Burlington School District this year: a restorative practices Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) team at Hunt Middle School, a Youth and Family Engagement Team (YFET) composed of youth and adults from across the district, and a youth-adult team at Burlington High School (Engage BHS). The work at Hunt and with the YFET, funded by a multi-year grant from the Department of Children and Families, is focused on crafting recommendations and action steps to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in discipline data. The Hunt team focused on eliminating hate speech in their community, culminating in a powerful end-of-year presentation to peers about how to build a culture of kindness, and lessons on inclusive language facilitated in their

advisories. The YFET crafted three recommendations to the school board and administration: reduce the high number of suspensions at Hunt Middle School, develop a peer mediation program, and create a suspension review board. Engage BHS, a pilot program this year, explored why youth are feeling disengaged and what changes would deepen their sense of belonging. The team focused on three areas: increasing joy in school, creating a more consistent break policy, and improving student/ staff accountability. The three groups shared their research and recommendations with community members at an end-of-the-year presentation, and created videos about their projects shared with administrators and teachers to kick off this school year.



# 'FROM A CLUB TO A CULTURE': MONUMENT MOUNTAIN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, GREAT BARRINGTON, MA



*"UP for Learning has helped me **step into a leadership role and helped guide me through the process of being a successful facilitator**, providing me with skills I will use for the rest of my time at Monument and unknown situations in the future."*

—Annabel H., 10th Grader,  
Monument Mountain

Monument Mountain has been working with UP for five years creating structures and systems to expand youth-adult partnership in their school community "from a club to a culture." They have developed a Student Adult Advisory Board (SAAB) where 60+ youth and 6+ adults create action projects for change. SAAB streamlined communications across stakeholders with the newly-created Student Square app that accompanies Parent Square app, developed more affinity spaces for students of color, facilitated anti-racism work across advisories, and built better composting and recycling practices in their cafeteria. UP youth facilitators on the team helped create a SAAB Steering Committee, whose task is to develop facilitation agendas for committees, host full group retreats, plan and facilitate professional development and staff engagement opportunities, and ensure meaningful collaboration and connections are happening. This team of ten youth and eight adults will guide the work of the full SAAB this year, further strengthening the strong foundation of youth-adult partnership!



*"UP has helped us create a culture of student and adult partnership, and reminds us that **regrounding in why we do this work is an important precursor for actually doing it.**"*

—Keith Wright, Assistant Principal, Monument Mountain



## ENHANCING YOUTH AGENCY, OWNERSHIP, AND VOICE: NORTH COUNTRY CAREER CENTER, NEWPORT, VT

The Student Voice Team created a safe learning environment and celebrated their identity as a unique part of the educational community. Over years of working together, this youth team has developed a positive sense of agency and ownership, and UP has helped them address concerns and fulfill their hopes. This year, the Center undergoes the 5-year Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment by the Vermont Agency of Education. The assessment will shape the strategic plan of the NCCC, and this year the Student Voice team will serve a key role in the process, bringing their candid, caring approach to the planning process.



## BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP: YOUTH LEADERSHIP LAB, GEORGETOWN, DE

The Youth Leadership Lab (YLL) at the Bryan Allen Stevenson School for Excellence (BASSE) took place over two weeks in July. Bryan Allen Stevenson is a social justice activist, lawyer, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, and author of the book *Just Mercy*. BASSE's core values of "Excellence, Equity, Community, Voice, and Hope" perfectly illustrate the alignment between the school, Stevenson's life work, and UP's own principles. Nine middle school youth and two high school youth facilitators participated in the YLL, focusing on developing leadership skills, as well as designing what Service Learning, Personalized Learning, and the school schedule will look like when the public charter school opens in the Fall of 2024. One of the highlights of the first week was a panel of local leaders who shared their life experiences and understanding of leadership with YLL participants. UP's partnership will continue with the development of a Student Voice Advisory team, which will serve as a foundational pillar of youth-adult partnership at BASSE.



*"UP has helped us reach our goals regarding lifting the prominence of student voice. Students have led staff trainings, helped build community between buildings, and have coached our teachers through learning restorative practices. **UP's respect and knowledge of school systems and their ability to help empower students is second to none.**"*

—Libby Bonesteel, Superintendent,  
Montpelier Roxbury Public Schools



## A SHARED VISION FOR EQUITY: WILLISTON CENTRAL SCHOOL, WILLISTON, VT

Williston Central School created a diverse youth-adult team of 5th-8th graders to develop a shared definition and vision for equity and a foundational understanding of restorative practices. They completed a review of the discipline practices at their school, helped to complete an equity audit of their curriculum, brainstormed ways to embed more cross-team connection time, and organized a school-wide event that highlighted historical and contemporary Black activists, followed by youth-facilitated circles. Williston Central School continues work

on their restorative practice foundation by adding a peer mediation process. They will also engage more teachers in equity audits to ensure a representative curriculum. Williston is a powerful team fully dedicated to social justice and school transformation. Their work to build sustainable and equitable practices in their community is inspiring.



## A COMMUNITY-CREATED PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE: LAMOILLE SOUTH SUPERVISORY UNION, VT

A cross-district team made up of students, teachers, families, board members, the superintendent, and community members created a Portrait of a Graduate that identifies the essential characteristics, skills, and experiences Lamoille South Supervisory Union (LSSU) students need to thrive in the 21st century. This powerful youth-adult team participated in the Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) process through a series of retreats, data collection activities that reached over 2000 people, and community engagement events. By gathering insights and perspectives from various stakeholders and analyzing the data collected, the team ultimately created a comprehensive Portrait of a Graduate reflecting the aspirations and values of the LSSU community. With a commitment of moving from “poster to practice”, the district intends to create an environment that equips graduates with the necessary qualities for success in a rapidly evolving world.



*“The work with UP was **an amazing and rewarding experience!** I was able to collaborate with amazing adults and students. UP helped me improve my communication skills and improve my confidence working with people I do not know well.”*





## USING DATA TO IMPROVE YOUTH HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: GETTING TO 'Y'

A record number of teams enrolled in Getting to 'Y' this year, anxious to review the 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey data (YRBS) — the first nationwide snapshot of youth wellness since before the COVID-19 pandemic. GTY teams in Vermont, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma worked with this new data, generated dialogue about ways to improve youth well-being, and took action to make their schools and communities better. Many GTY teams were supported by local prevention coalitions, bringing deeper opportunities for youth-adult partnership.

*"UP for Learning has been fundamental in leading our school community toward **stronger relationships, student agency, and a restorative approach**. We are thankful for their collective work and for the individual expertise that has been a welcome part of our growth as a school community."*

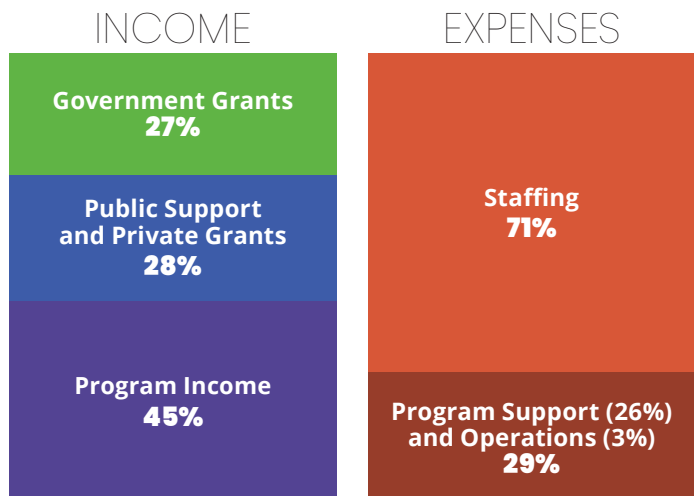
—Kate, School Counselor, Wolcott Elementary School

## RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM: P2C2, WOLCOTT, VT

The fifth grade class at Wolcott Elementary School participated in the Personal Power and Community Connections (P2C2) program this year, identifying strengths and concerns in their school's climate data. In partnership with the Lamoille Restorative Center, UP facilitated professional development sessions for Wolcott's staff, focused on elements of restorative practices, including positive relationships, communication, culture, and incorporating brain science supporting these practices. One of Wolcott's fifth grade teachers brought back this brain science learning to her students, and incorporated it into the action plan the class created to address their concerns. The class created a survey to help students identify when they are dysregulated and what they need to be ready to learn. We are so excited to see how teachers and students are applying restorative practices and brain science in the elementary school classroom!



## 2022-2023 FINANCIALS



## UP's Commitment to Anti-Racism

UP will continue deepening and strengthening our organization's anti-racist policies and practices as we work towards educational equity and justice. UP staff created an action plan for achieving and regularly evaluating our commitment to creating and sustaining inclusive practices in our work and we hold ourselves accountable to combat systemic racism. We commit to continuing to listen, change and grow.

*I have supported UP for Learning since its inception. **Their transformational work in education is systemic, collaborative, and intergenerational.** It's fun to watch them grow UP!*

—Trish Alley, President, The Wisdom Connection, Inc.

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## Core Values and Beliefs

Our fundamental value is to **SEEK EQUITY & JUSTICE.**

We believe that **educational equity is a human right.** All young people have the right to a meaningful and engaging education. **In order to pursue this aim, we are guided by these principles and values...**

### SHARE RESPONSIBILITY

Learning and change must be transparent and must be driven by adults and youth as equal partners.

### START FROM STRENGTHS

Youth and adults have the wisdom and capacity to orchestrate change. Beginning with what's working provides hope and energizes a community to embrace change.

### SEEK EQUITY & JUSTICE

### CREATE OPEN DIALOGUE

Deep conversation is central to changing school cultures. When systems are designed for youth to be engaged as full partners with equal value, the work of school transformation can occur by creating a shared vision for education and the learning process.

### EMPLOY DATA TO DRIVE CHANGE

Research is a vitally important way to build credibility between youth and adults. When a community works together to make meaning of their own data, they are strengthened by what they learn and emboldened to take action.

**Empowering youth and adults to reimagine & transform education together**

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