

IMPACT UPDATE



Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning

FEBRUARY 2024

UP for Learning's lasting impact on a school community is creating a sustainable culture where youth and adults share power, voice and responsibility resulting in increased equity and experience with democratic practices at work. Our pre- and post-survey data shows youth engaging with UP feel empowered to make change, both in their own lives and in their communities. These youth will be driven to succeed on their chosen path, to participate in our democracy, and to create a more just and equitable world.

UP's deepening partnerships with district-wide and regional teams allows for systemic change work allowing schools to address the social-emotional needs of youth and adults, the push for community action on local and global inequities, and the renewed commitment to flexible pathways to graduation and career development. Based on youth-adult partnership, UP's coaching and facilitation process models key skills needed to solve large, complex problems - using data to find common ground, honing deep listening skills, seeking out unheard voices, and incorporating multiple perspectives to understand complex issues. **Across all of UP's work, we model democratic practices when youth and adults engage in authentic partnerships.**

The outcomes ultimately depend on the strength of the relationships between students, teachers, administrators, families, and community members. UP for Learning supports these networks as they fully engage youth in reimagining and transforming education. UP's Impact Report introduces projects from the 2023-2024 academic year and explores the impact of youth and adults co-designing and co-implementing community change projects. **We invite you to share these successes as this work is only possible with support from you, UP's community of partners, collaborators, and donors.**



UP by the Numbers

July–December 2023

407

hours of compensated time for youth co-facilitators/interns

106

unique youth-adult teams

55

schools partnering with UP

55

youth interns and Youth Action Council members

27

teams with unique projects outside of Vermont

4

racial justice dialogue events led by Vermont and Mississippi youth
(continued from 2020–2021)

3

youth voting members on UP's Board of Directors

21

school district level or regional projects infusing youth-adult partnership

5

state and national conferences where UP youth and staff presented

HOW DOES WORKING IN AUTHENTIC YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP REFLECT TRUE PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY?

*“I love being on a team where everyone is working toward a main goal led by youth and supported by adults. To me **UP For Learning means true partnership can exist in today’s world and beyond.**”*

—Max King, Youth Program Specialist

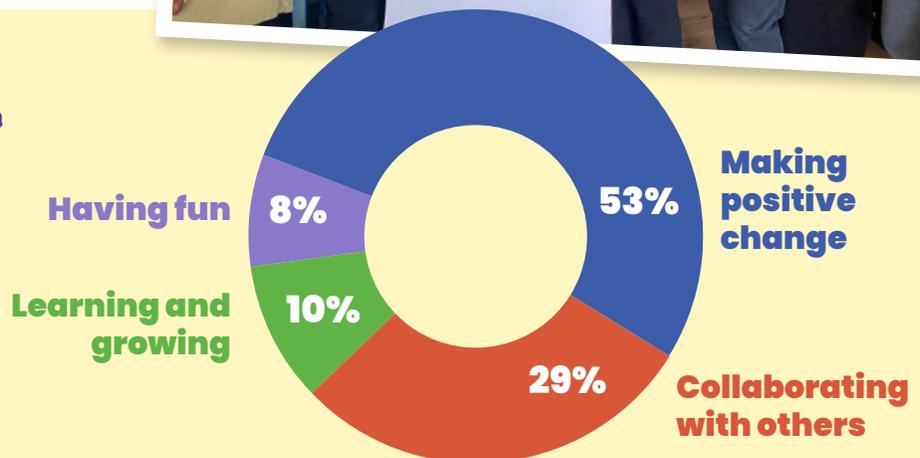
SNAPSHOT #1: UP for Learning has been partnering with the **Winooski School District Antiracism Steering Committee (ARSC)** for four years, working together to implement six antiracist demands approved by the district’s school board in 2020. The ARSC has made substantial progress in achieving the six demands, most recently securing funding from the school board for a part-time Multilingual Mentorship Program Coordinator. This person will recruit community mentors for middle and high school students who speak multiple languages, matching them with trusted adults who understand their experiences in school. The ARSC is made up of middle and high school youth, the superintendent, a school board member, administrators, teachers, and community members. They meet twice a month to take action on the six demands that originated from the Winooski Students for Antiracism (WSA) in 2020. The team is currently focused on the Truth and Reconciliation commission, and putting out a survey to the WSD community to assess the impact/continued need for their work.

SNAPSHOT #2: Mount Pleasant High School (MPHS) in Delaware’s Brandywine School District has been a part of a district-wide building of Student Voice Advisories over the past two years. MPHS’s Zen Den, a mental health space in the school staffed by a social worker, is an incredible example of what is possible when youth and adults work together to advocate, engage with the systems and processes of school, and amplify and elevate youth voice in schools. To fund a social worker and redesign the space, the Student Voice Advisory members applied for grants and created a Donors Choose webpage. This district-wide project includes two other high schools and three middle schools. Thanks to generous multi-year funding from the **Longwood Foundation** and the strong commitment of the Brandywine School District, UP will support all six schools in designing Student Voice Advisories and acting on the feedback received from students.



What are youth excited about?

UP’s pre-survey asked youth to think about what excited them about working with their team. Participants’ responses fell into four main categories, as shown at right.



WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF YOUTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH ON YOUTH AND THEIR COMMUNITY?

*“I value so many things about UP for Learning, but what really stands out to me is **the team’s unwavering commitment to authenticity, their depth of experience in school change efforts, and the intentionality of their facilitation.** In just a few short months, UP has reinvigorated a commitment to student voice and agency within our school and is helping us to collaboratively reimagine what school could be.”*

—Susannah White, RNESU Equity and Engagement Coach

SNAPSHOT #1: The First Branch Unified District has embarked on a process to create a unified identity this year, working hard to honor past traditions and voices while making space for new ones. The team created a mission and vision statement with input from students, adults from the district staff, and community members who responded to the survey. The team hosted a successful community dialogue dinner for more feedback. Their next steps are to co-create a school logo based on the mission and vision with student submissions and community-wide voting.

SNAPSHOT #2: Last year, **Burke Town School’s** entire eighth grade participated in Cultivating Pathways to Sustainability (CPS) and completed projects on campus and in the wider community. Building on this experience, all 7th and 8th graders will complete global goals projects, focusing their efforts on their school community and on integrating important project management skills and group work processes. Projects include planning school-wide meetings, creating mentor/mentee opportunities, tending a community garden created by last year’s CPS Team, building an ice rink, performing dance recitals and a school play, starting a journalism program for the school, and more. These projects highlight global goals in action, the value of embedding this programming into the structure of school, and center around the idea that youth are the “problem solvers of the future.” (Brandon Mazur, Teacher, Burke Town School).



SNAPSHOT #3: This year, nearly forty students and staff from six schools in the **Cherokee Nation** in Oklahoma (which included returning schools Tahlequah, Roland, and Claremore, and new schools Webbers Falls, Locust Grove, and Hulbert) gathered at the Cherokee Nation Outpatient Health Center. Along with partners from **Cherokee Nation Public Health**, students and staff practiced reviewing and analyzing their most recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data to identify strengths and concerns. UP co-facilitated the training with four students from Tahlequah High School. The Cherokee Nation incorporated UP’s Getting to ‘Y’ program into their public health work in 2021 with an aim to increase interest and engagement in the YRBS data among their young people.

*“Working alongside UP for Learning has given me **the most concrete example in my life of making change and impacting the world around me.** It reaffirms my commitment to activism and inspires me to continue helping people. I like the community, collaboration, and dialogue that take place in our retreats. I don’t find it anywhere else in my life. “*

—Eli Shirk, Youth Facilitator, 12th grade, Colchester High School

HOW DOES YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT YOUTH IN ENGAGING IN POSITIVE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY CHANGE?

“WRS’s partnership with UP has positively impacted our students by empowering student voice and a ‘call to action’ within our school community. Students have gained experience with restorative practices, peer leadership, and working with students from across the state. UP has helped positively transform our student’s school experience.”

—Jay Slenker, Principal,
West Rutland School



SNAPSHOT #1: After analyzing their school-wide data, the **Twin Valley MS/HS** youth-adult team is focusing their efforts on addressing the lack of kindness and the increased incidents of bullying and harassment in their community. Their action projects include reading and discussing social justice books with elementary school students and staff, facilitating full school assemblies in the middle-high school, and leading activities around identity with youth and adult groups in their community. With the support of the **Windham Foundation**, the team purchased copies of *This Book is Anti-Racist* by Tiffany Jewell to study together and inform their work moving forward. After each of the team’s sessions, they also co-facilitate a staff meeting to build connections with adults and collaborate on making meaningful and long-lasting change for the whole school community. This structure has provided an avenue for deep youth-adult partnership, not only with the members of the team, but also with the full staff at Twin Valley.



SNAPSHOT #2: Four elementary schools in **Rutland County** — Proctor, West Rutland, Wells Village, and Middletown Springs — have been taking part in the Personal Power and Community Connections (P2C2) program. They have been using school climate data, with whole classes, including teachers, participating in the process and in strengths-based activities such as the Circle of Courage. The

Poultney High School Restorative Practices (RP) Team is focused on incorporating what they learned in two years working with a district-wide team into their own school and building systems and community to better handle incidents of racism and bullying. Their first steps were to create a survey centered around the RP principles of power, healing, belonging and joy. Two youth facilitators who have worked with UP in the past continue to partner with us this year. This work would not be possible without the generous support of **The Johnson Family Foundation**.

Empowering youth and adults to reimagine & transform education together

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Economic Equity and Accessibility

We are committed to ensuring affordable access to our programs, and prioritizing our work with our most economically challenged and underserved schools. UP for Learning is committed to systemic social justice and closing the opportunity gap — ensuring all schools have access to UP's work regardless of their ability to pay.

Thanks to our philanthropic supporters we were able to realize our vision of greater educational equity.



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