

GETTING TO 'Y'

& Personal Power Community Connections

2023–24 presented by UP for Learning



Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning



GTY Recap in Numbers

13 Custom GTY
Trainings

2 Regional GTY
Trainings

42 Total
Teams

19 teams in VT

11 teams in NH

6 teams in MA

6 teams in Cherokee Nation, OK

15 GTY Network
Advisory
Meetings

TOP CONCERNS:

Mental Health (93%)

Violence (30%)

Substance Use (30%)

MOST COMMON ROOT CAUSES:

Stress

Workload

Social / Peer Pressures

**Ease of access to
substances**

**School / Home
Environment**

GETTING TO 'Y'

Youth Bring Meaning to Their Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data

For over a decade, Getting to 'Y' (GTY), an UP for Learning program, has been incorporated into Vermont schools. More recently, GTY grew its reach across New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New Mexico, and the Cherokee Nation, Oklahoma. The program's designation as an evidence-based practice by the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs in 2020 and the Vermont Department of Health has increased not only awareness of the program but access to it too. Public health and prevention coalitions respond to the program's use of the bi-annual Center for Disease Control (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Survey report, a survey often conducted in schools and taken by middle and high school students across the country. Rarely do the very students who provided such rich, informative data see the results. GTY ensures that students not only get this information back but also helps youth understand the reports and make meaning of the data.



This year, youth openly shared their experiences and observations and addressed concerns about the data. They challenged the adult team members to look deeper into the data and explore new ways to collect additional data when there were gaps and questions. Adult advisors openly shared their uncertainty about their role in amplifying and shepherding youth voice and agency. They understood the importance and were eager to champion students, but unsure how and where their wisdom and expertise should be used.

We embarked on a collaborative journey to assess data in a more interactive and engaging manner. We introduced a variety of activities to enhance data analysis and facilitation skills, deepening understanding for both youth and adult partners. Additionally, we provided extra support for teams through restorative practices and other facilitations, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and learning.

We continue to make meaning of what we know from data and lived experiences. Our pursuit of the "why" moves ahead in the most authentic and best way we know how—together.

Thank you for a wonderful year of discovery!

Unless otherwise noted, 2021 YRBS Data was used in partnership with focus groups and interviews as the data was not fresh.

Hartford Memorial Middle School

Hartford, Vermont

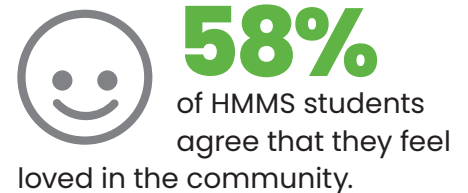
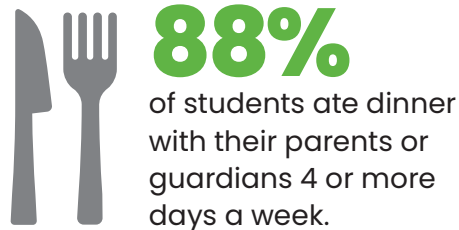
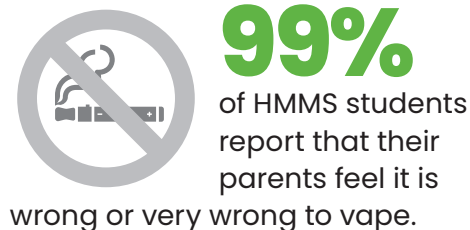
The leadership group pivoted from their original list of concerns and branched out their thinking to create clear consequences for bullying at their school (which they identified as a root cause for students reporting suicidal thoughts, violence, and substance use). The team is purchasing several locking boxes for their school where students can drop a note to report bullying or request help anonymously. This action project will enhance current steps to report bullying and support students. The students worked with their Substance Abuse Professional (SAP), who will hold the box key, and collaborated to design a schedule and process for checking the boxes once a week.

Sponsored by Hartford Community Coalition: A collaborative group of community members designed to support and promote the wellness of individuals and families. Their vision is for Hartford to be a supportive community where people embrace and achieve their personal, professional, emotional, and physical well-being. The coalition acts to reduce the stigma and impact of alcohol and drug use, food insecurity and mental health in support of the development of a healthy, safe, and resilient Hartford.

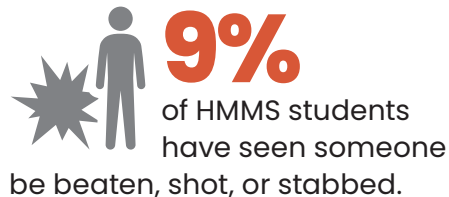
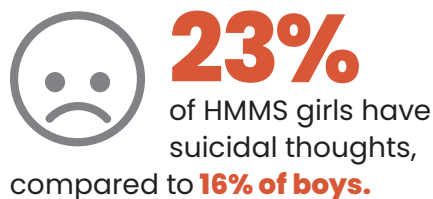


Hartford Memorial Middle School team members

STRENGTHS



CONCERNS



ROOT CAUSES



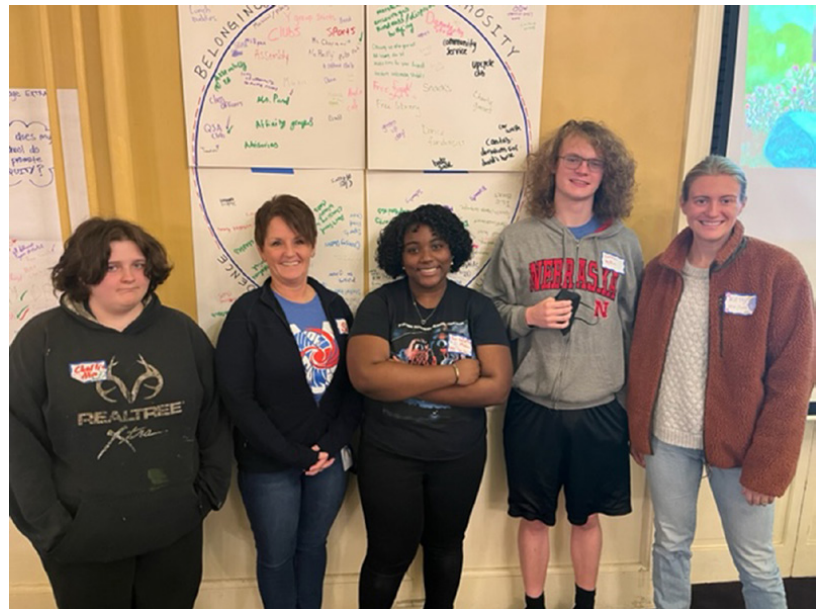
1. Gender stereotypes
2. Body shaming (by both girls and boys)
3. Peer pressure

Hartford High School

Hartford, Vermont

The leadership team focused on creating and sharing messaging to prevent drinking, specifically before and after prom. They designed posters to be hung up at prom, as well as handed out lollipops at the entrance to prom with a simple note attached to discourage drinking. Their choice of lollipops was intentional as this is the “longest lasting” snack in their opinion.

Sponsored by Hartford Community Coalition: A collaborative group of community members designed to support and promote the wellness of individuals and families. Their vision is for Hartford to be a supportive community where people embrace and achieve their personal, professional, emotional, and physical well-being. The coalition acts to reduce the stigma and impact of alcohol and drug use, food insecurity and mental health in support of the development of a healthy, safe, and resilient Hartford.



Hartford High School team members

STRENGTHS



Only **18%** of HHS students have ever smoked a cigarette.



Only **28%** of HHS students report having ever vaped. (We thought this would be higher.)



Only **2%** of HHS students have driven a car while drinking alcohol (compared to **6% statewide**).

CONCERNS



49% of female students have ever drank alcohol; compared to **34% of males**.



10% of female students are currently binge drinking; compared to **3% of males**.



44% of LGBTQ+ students have had unwanted sexual contact; compared to **14% of het/cis students**.

ROOT CAUSES



1. Ease of access and flavors of alcohol
2. Low self-confidence and self-esteem

Thetford Academy High School

Thetford, Vermont

Focusing on the concern of sexual violence, the student leaders worked with WISE (a Lebanon, NH-based organization that aims to end gender-based violence through survivor-centered advocacy, prevention, education, and mobilization for social change) to teach in the 8th and 10th grade classes. GTY students completed the "WISE Words" project (an educational awareness campaign created to inspire conversations between youth and adults), and GTY students delivered presentations at all school assemblies about teen dating violence and prevention. The leadership team invited WISE to the Community Dialogue Event.

The team is working on getting enough school staff trained in Youth Mental Health First Aid so students can be trained in Youth to Youth Mental Health First Aid. GTY students are looking into getting a Hope Squad at their school (a peer-to-peer suicide prevention program). The GTY leadership team also delivered schoolwide presentations during Suicide Prevention Month and Red Ribbon Week.



Thetford Academy team members

STRENGTHS



71%

of TA students reported that they have at least 1 teacher or other adult in their school that they can talk to if they have a problem.



75%

of TA students reported that they are likely to attend a 4 year college or university, a community college, or technical school after high school.



94%

of TA students reported that their parents or guardians feel that it is wrong or very wrong for the student to use electronic vapor products.

CONCERNS



49%

of LGBTQ+ TA students reported that they did something to purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die compared to **16% of heterosexual cisgender students.**



32%

of female TA students report that someone has ever done sexual things to them that they did not want compared to **5% of male students.**



75%

of TA 11-12 grade students said that if they wanted to get electronic vapor products; it would be sort of easy or very easy for them to get some.

ROOT CAUSES



1. Isolation
2. Stigma
3. Media

Mount Anthony Middle School

Bennington, Vermont



YLG team members

The Youth Leadership Group (YLG) focused on youth mental health since that impacts everything else. They came up with the idea of Calm Down Boxes. The Calm Down Box is a tool to help students deal with big or challenging emotions in times of stress, anxiety, or crisis. It contains resources, coping techniques, and supportive fidgets. The Calm Down Boxes are placed where students often go when seeking support, such as the Nurses', Counselors', and Principals' offices. Ultimately, the team hopes to see Calm Down items in all classrooms, so students can access helpful tools to help them focus on schoolwork and feel less anxious.

Additionally, YLG advisors are looking into mental health training programs/curricula specifically for middle school students to teach them to have supportive conversations with peers and how to help classmates get support from adults. The training would also help set up peer support



YLG members presenting at the select board meeting

groups and student-to-student mental health conversations guided by trusted and trained adults. The YLG delivered two major presentations this year: one at the school-wide Family Night and another two weeks later at the Town of Bennington Select Board Meeting. They spoke about the 2021 YRBS and how they prioritized concerns within the data. The group discussed solutions at the school and community levels.

Sponsored by The Alliance For Community Transformations (ACT): A substance misuse prevention coalition focused on supporting Bennington-area youth in making healthy choices. ACT empowers communities to act in collaboration to prevent youth substance use and reduce substance use across all ages and promote greater wellness and long-term health in the greater Bennington area.

CONCERNS



47%

of students were EVER bullied on school property

(56% of female students / 65% of LGBTQ+ students).



27%

of students EVER seriously thought about suicide **(35% of female students / 45% of LGBTQ+ students).**



11%

of students have EVER tried marijuana (cannabis/weed).

ROOT CAUSES



1. Peer pressure
2. Hard time managing stress/challenging feelings
3. Difficult home life

St. Johnsbury Middle School

St. Johnsbury, Vermont

Mary Poppins famously said, "In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun; you find the fun and SNAP! The job's a game!" Not only is this quote appropriate for how the Getting to 'Y' training went at St. Johnsbury Middle School this year, but students who performed *Mary Poppins* in their 2024 musical participated in practicing data analysis perfectly in every way!

Nineteen students in grades 6-8 brainstormed solutions for their school during a warm-up activity, preparing them for implementing GTY. Placing and tending plants throughout the school and student-designed spaces were among some of their ideas.

The team was still determining which final project to implement as the school year came to a close. UP can't wait to see what Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious action projects they design!



St. Johnsbury team members

Sponsored by Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital:
The Northeast Prevention Coalition (NPC) represents Northeast Kingdom communities in support of healthy

choices. Dedicated to preventing substance use, misuse and abuse for all ages, with a specific focus on youth, using a variety of strategic interventions.

Bellows Falls Middle & High School

Bellows Falls, Vermont

MIDDLE SCHOOL: In the spirit of Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Prevention Week Community ice cream social event, students expressed the importance of reducing stress on campus and increasing joy through the power of food. Students handed out over 1,000 cookies to their fellow peers over the course of four days, greeting them at the door with a cookie and a smile for everyone and a kind message of support or inspiration!

HIGH SCHOOL: A new leadership team of high school students from Bellows Falls participated in a combined GTY

fall training with students from the middle school. Students from the middle school GTY team who will be moving on to high school next year plan to pick up this work in the fall to continue GTY in their high school!

Sponsored by The Collaborative: *With the guiding vision that everyone is a part of a healthy, safe, and supportive community and a mission to empower healthy youth, families, and communities, The Collaborative has been operating as a 501c3 nonprofit serving Windham, Windsor, and Bennington counties in Vermont since 1999.*

Randolph Middle School

Randolph, Vermont

The Randolph MS GTY team prioritized their concerns around the mental health data. The leadership team will be investigating the importance of and recommending integrating recess breaks into the daily school schedule.



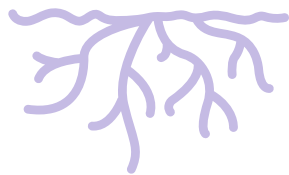
Randolph team members



CONCERNS

Mental health data

ROOT CAUSES



1. Overstimulation
2. Weather
3. Substance use

Fairfax Middle School

Fairfax, Vermont

A new GTY leadership team emerged this year, interested in reducing stress on campus, increasing restorative practices and addressing concerns centered around student engagement. The team will wait for the 2023 data to move forward with determining their action projects.



Fairfax team members

Proctor Middle & High School

Proctor, Vermont

The leadership teams hosted a Cookie Gram for Mental Wellness Day (May 23). The teams purchased sugar cookies with positive affirmations written on them. Examples of sayings are "Dream Big, You Matter, Always look up, You got this, You're important, and You're loved." The leadership team lined the walkway of the school entrance and handed out cookies as the students entered the building. Additionally, the team focused on concerns related to body image and increasing access to resources. As part of their action project, they placed hygiene products in every school bathroom stall.

Thanks to the emphasis on Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), all middle and high schools in the Greater Rutland County Supervisory Union had a youth-adult team examining climate and health data, a strategic plan funded by the school administration.



Team members from Proctor High School, top right, and Middle School, bottom right

CONCERNS



66%

of middle schoolers had a poor self image.



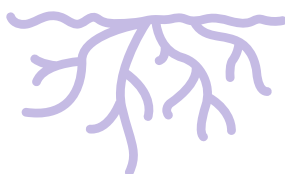
55%

of High School students suffer from mental health issues.



In focus group discussion the group highlighted: both high school and middle school students felt **insecure and unloved**, and had **poor self-esteem**.

ROOT CAUSES



1. Global environment
2. Family and school environments
3. Social pressures

Rutland Town Middle School

Rutland Town, Vermont

The students are currently in the planning phases of designing and creating a break space in the school. This break space will be a designated area where students can relax, take a break, or refocus. It is a long-term project that is anticipated to begin next year.

Thanks to the emphasis on Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), all middle and high schools in the Greater Rutland County Supervisory Union had a youth-adult team examining climate and health data, a strategic plan funded by the school administration.

CONCERNS



11%

of middle school students in the SU have self harmed in the past year.



Rutland Town team members

ROOT CAUSES



1. Stress
2. Workload
3. Pressure



Rutland Town team members attend a regional training day

Vergennes Middle School

Vergennes, Vermont

Kindness Cards: Following the Getting to “Y” retreat, a group of students initiated brainstorming sessions to foster more inclusion. The result was the implementation of kindness cards. These cards, each dedicated to a student, were organized by morning meeting. Students from different meetings wrote kind and nice words about each other, which were then delivered. The aim was to spread positivity and brighten everyone’s day, a small yet impactful step towards a more inclusive school environment.

Feedback on Transition to MS: A group of proactive 7th Graders took the lead in working on suggestions to improve middle school for next year, especially for including rising middle school students. They collated valuable suggestions and met with the

principal, showcasing their active role in shaping their educational environment.

5th & 6th Grade Transition to MS Panels: After surveying 5th and 6th-grade students during UP for Learning retreats, nine 7th graders visited Vergennes Union ES and Ferrisburgh Central School to answer questions from those youth who are preparing to move up next fall.

Presented to the School Board: After the community dialogue event (CDE), the board requested that the group present at their next meeting. Five students participated in this request.

Sponsored by United Way Addison County: Addison County Substance Use and Prevention Coalition is a public



Vergennes team members

health and advocacy coalition comprised of community leaders across health and human service sectors; with the overall mission of improving the health of all residents in Addison County by increasing protective factors, decreasing risk factors, and engaging partners across all sectors.

STRENGTHS



76%

of VUMS students have at least one teacher or other adult in their school that they can talk to if they have a problem, compared to **67% statewide.**



60%

of VUMS students strongly agree or agree that in their community they feel like they matter to people, compared to **55% statewide.**

CONCERNS



15%

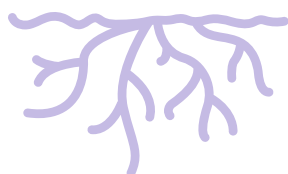
of VUMS students have ever done something to purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die, such as cutting or burning themselves on purpose, compared to **18% statewide.**



10%

of VUMS students ever seriously thought about killing themselves, compared to **18% statewide.**

ROOT CAUSES



social problems • trouble with friends • loneliness • feeling like they (students) don’t belong • stress from work and an overload of school work • low self esteem • mental health, lack of sleep • going through puberty • envy • social media

Kearsarge Middle School

North Sutton, New Hampshire

Sponsored by Greater Sullivan County Public Health

Network: a system of organizations and individuals that work together to identify and address public health challenges in the region. They are a network that understands the value of collaboration and partnership and are committed to building a healthy community together.



Right, Kearsarge Middle School team members

STRENGTHS



96%

of Kearsarge Middle School students have an

adult in their household that tried hard to make sure their basic needs were met.



98%

of Kearsarge Middle School students felt that

their parents felt it is wrong or very wrong for them to smoke tobacco.



97%

of Kearsarge Middle School students felt that

their parents would feel it was wrong for them to use vape products.

CONCERNS



41%

of Kearsarge Middle School students felt

overwhelming stress most or all of the time.



50%

of Kearsarge Middle School students reported being

bullied on school property.

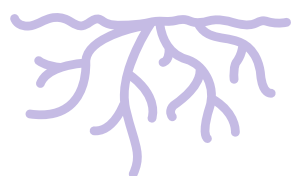


9%

of Kearsarge Middle School students have

ever tried to kill themselves.

ROOT CAUSES



1. Social pressures
2. Self-esteem
3. Family life

Kearsarge High School

North Sutton, New Hampshire

Sponsored by Greater Sullivan County Public Health Network:

a system of organizations and individuals that work together to identify and address public health challenges in the region. They are a network that understands the value of collaboration and partnership and are committed to building a healthy community together.

Right, Kearsarge High School team members



STRENGTHS



82.6%

of Kearsarge High School students

believed their friends feel it would be wrong or very wrong for them to take a prescription drug without a doctor's prescription.



93.7%

of Kearsarge High School students

reported that their parents feel it would be wrong or very wrong for them to take a prescription drug without the doctor's order.



Only

1.3%

of Kearsarge High

School students have slept away from guardians because they were kicked out, ran away, or abandoned (past 30 days).

CONCERNS



51.6%

of Kearsarge High School students

never or rarely got the help they need when they felt sad, empty, hopeless, and anxious.



9.6%

of Kearsarge High School students attempted suicide

in the past year.



41.3%

of Kearsarge High School students reported that

someone they dated tried to control them.

ROOT CAUSES



1. Stress
2. Lack of support
3. Social pressures

Merrimack Valley High School

Penacook, New Hampshire

Student leaders created social media content for Mental Health Awareness Month, including hosting competitions via Kahoot to learn about mental health, dating violence, and bullying. The team set up tables with information about these topics which, encouraged more open conversations about dating, bullying, and mental health with their peers. The tables included informational bags, bracelets, suicide prevention phone numbers, CMHC resources, and community partner information. The GTY team's large event was assisting the middle schoolers with their "Color Run" in May. The run supports the Merrimack Valley School District food pantry. During the event, upper-level students assisted with setting up, interacting with middle school students, and providing informational packets on various mental health-related topics. For all students, suicide prevention and community mental health information was shared on flyers, magnets, and informational bags with local mental health resources.

The team hopes to host a community listening event soon, which will help to gain insight into action plan ideas from

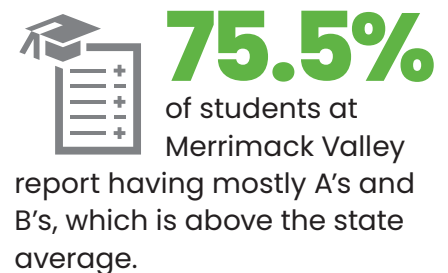
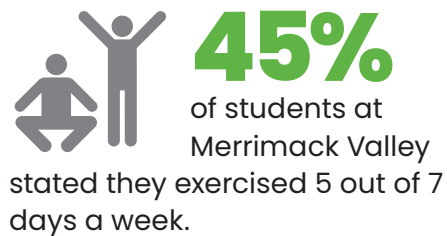


Merrimack Valley High School team members

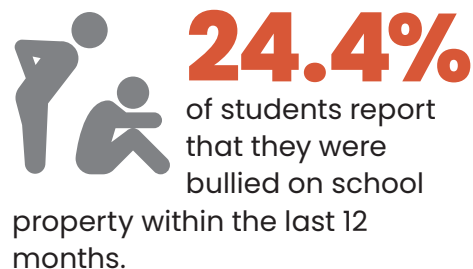
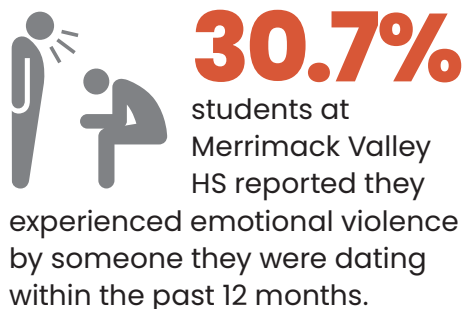
community members. Students will work on this in the coming months, using their recently received 2023 YRBS data.

Sponsored by Granite United Way: *whose mission is to improve the quality of people's lives by bringing together the caring power of communities.*

STRENGTHS



CONCERNS



ROOT CAUSES



1. Waitlist for counselor/therapy in community mental health
2. Social pressures of reporting bullying
3. Social media

Pinkerton Academy

Derry, New Hampshire

To address the teenage epidemic of loneliness and hopelessness, the C-Change team at Pinkerton Academy proposed a room where students can talk with trained peers about some of the troubles in their lives while taking a break from the stressful school environment. This room would be staffed by volunteer students and teachers who must complete a mental health course to aid other students. The room would contain various items such as board games, art supplies, donated snacks and hygiene products, and other activities that can be done to help open up and comfort those who visit and alleviate their stress.

Pinkerton's first-ever Community Dialogue Event was a resounding success, with over 15 community leaders attending and actively participating. The event was a testament to the need for the proposed support room, as students expressed their gratitude for the constructive feedback and unique expertise provided by the attending representatives.

C-Change also pitched its annual action plan to the leadership team at Pinkerton. The teams were happy to share that they are in active conversations with the administra-

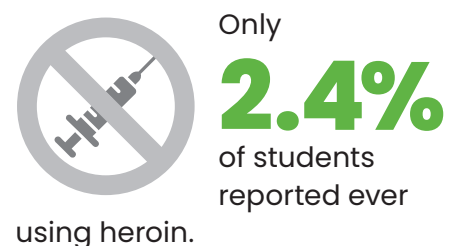
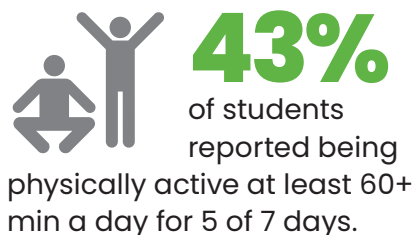


Pinkerton Academy team members

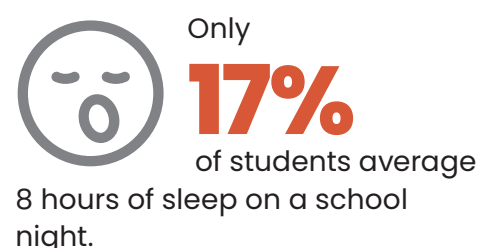
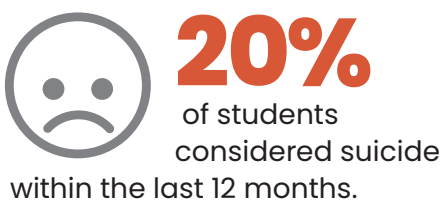
tion on piloting this breakout room sometime next year. Further consideration on logistics, staffing, and training is needed, but the student leaders are excited to implement their action plan soon!

Sponsored by South Central Public Health Network, one of 13 regional networks working to protect and improve public health in New Hampshire. The network has a vision of a region with the healthiest and safest communities in New Hampshire. Their mission is to collaborate with partner agencies to identify public health priorities and to implement solutions that improve health and safety in our communities.

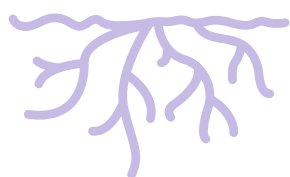
STRENGTHS



CONCERNS



ROOT CAUSES



1. High stress level & workload
2. Sleep deprivation
3. Poor mental health/depression/anxiety/social isolation

CADY Youth Advisory and Advocacy Council

New Hampshire



Multi-school regional event, led by YAAC

In October 2024, the CADY Youth Advisory and Advocacy Council (YAAC) held their second Getting to 'Y' event where multiple youth groups in three NH regions (Plymouth Regional High School, Newfound Regional High School, Lin Wood High, and Inter-Lakes High School) were able to analyze their YRBS data. The YAAC had three top priorities: Youth Vaping, Underage Drinking, and Youth Marijuana misuse. During the 2024 Red Ribbon Week, YAAC leaders hosted a lunch table at Plymouth Regional High School where they raised awareness on alcohol and other drug use through a Q&A activity. The YAAC also collaborated with Plymouth State University and the town of Plymouth to plant bulbs around the traffic circle for the Plant the Promise Red Ribbon Week Campaign. This past spring, to serve as a reminder of the importance and the beauty of living a drug-free life, the red tulips bloomed and the YAAC wrote social media posts to help community members start the conversation.

YAAC leaders were asked to share the youth perspective on vaping for The Partnership@drugfreeNH. YAAC wrote two blog posts in January and February 2024, which were featured on The Partnership@drugfreeNH website and social media. On March 20, the YAAC visited Plymouth State University to record a public service announcement (PSA) on binge drinking. This PSA will play on the local college radio station.

Sponsored by Communities for Alcohol and Drug-Free Youth, CADY, whose mission is to help their local youth make healthy and safe choices by working with schools, parents, youth, and communities to prevent and reduce youth alcohol, tobacco, and other substance use and to promote healthy environments and promising futures.

Portsmouth High School

Portsmouth, New Hampshire

The student leadership team plans to implement more mental and sexual health curricula and possibly an additional health class to increase access and awareness. They will be working with their peers and school staff to determine how they can best support this initiative in the fall of 2024.

Sponsored by Pinetree Institute:

501(c)3 nonprofit based in Eliot, ME, and Portsmouth, NH facilitating a number of approaches to solving one key issue: the long-term effects of trauma on individuals, and the communities in which they live. Childhood trauma, in particular, can have lasting physical, mental, and behavioral health consequences on the adults we become.



Portsmouth High School team members

CONCERNS



57%

of students texted or emailed while driving a car or other vehicle (on at least one day during the past 30 days, among students who drive).



43%

of students never or rarely got the help they need when they felt sad, empty, hopeless, angry, or anxious.



62%

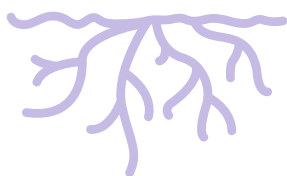
Only of students asked for help before attempting suicide.



26%

of students currently use marijuana.

ROOT CAUSES



1. Fear of parents
2. Lack of education
3. Normalized drug use
4. Not enough resources

Cherokee Nation Oklahoma

Tahlequah, Roland, Claremore, Webbers Falls, Locust Grove & Hulbert High Schools

As year three wraps up in Cherokee Nation, Oklahoma, UP for Learning can't help but reflect on the significant growth and investment from Cherokee Nation Public Health, the schools, and their community of young people! Cherokee Nation Public Health grew its GTY participation by doubling enrollment each year; what began with two schools in three years has effectively reached six! The investment

led to four students from Tahlequah High School expertly co-facilitating the annual GTY training for their school and the other five schools in attendance who gathered at the Cherokee Nation Outpatient Health Center in early December. Due to the YRBS data delay in all states, the six Oklahoma teams will continue their GTY steps in the fall of 2024.



South Shore Technical School

Hanover, Massachusetts

South Shore Technical is working on several different action projects to address concerns and root causes raised by Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) students involved in GTY. The school has changed the nature of detentions by offering additional support from the school's adjustment counselor and supplementing this time to address students' social/emotional needs, addressing the "why" of their behaviors. The school is also working on developing a Peer Mentoring program in which 11th grade students mentor 9th graders in the same "shop" who may be struggling. This spring, peer mentors will provide training to help their peers make good choices and follow the right path throughout their time in high school. SADD students came up with these initiatives in their first year of GTY, so it has been exciting to see their ideas come to life this year.

Sponsored by MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE): After two years of partnering with UP for Learning, what began with the MA Student Advisory Council with the aim to anticipate emerging trends and topics at the state level through meaningful and insightful youth-led action DESE and GTY leadership teams learned what works best for their communities in replicating this program. Evolving from the handful of GTY leadership teams, MA has worked to partner with UP through grant-



South Shore team members

funded opportunities for any approved in-state school or youth-serving partner seeking to drive change through youth participatory action research (YPAR) and with authentic youth-adult partnership. This is an opportunity for districts to own their data and drive change in ways they see as best for their local communities. DESE feels confident that in driving local level change upstream, the ripple effect will impact positive outcomes statewide.

CONCERNS



substance use on
school property

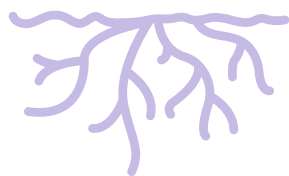


poor
mental health



low perception of
peer disapproval of
marijuana

ROOT CAUSES



1. Peer pressure
2. Lack of tools, resources, or communication skills to get help
3. Risk-taking behaviors among students

Mystic Valley Public Health

Massachusetts

Overall, this first year of the GTY process was a huge success! Students who attended the DARs reported a positive experience, and several participants ended up applying and being accepted to join our regional youth leadership group starting this summer! The group hopes to work with local coalitions to continue shaping their action plans for the next school year. Additionally, the Mystic Valley Public Health coalition is excited to continue the GTY process next year and include more students and communities by conducting a regional training for middle and high school students. After summer planning and the October training, students will be working on projects related to their action plans over the next school year

Sponsored by Mystic Valley Public Health, Medford MA:

The four communities of Melrose, Stoneham, Wakefield, and Reading all participated in the Getting to 'Y' process over the past year.



Mystic Valley Public Health team members

STRENGTHS



high peer
**disapproval of
drug and alcohol
use**



**low rates of
weapon
carrying** by teens



**low rates of
physical fights
and altercations
at school**

CONCERNS



high rates of
students considering
suicide



students choosing
to **drive under the
influence** of alcohol
or other drugs



high rates of
self harm

Melrose High School

Melrose, Massachusetts

GTY event participants listed off a multitude of root causes for these concerns including school stress, lack of access to resources, peer pressure, fear of getting in trouble, bullying, and lack of healthy coping mechanisms.

To address these concerns, participants came up with the following potential actions: establishing positive coping mechanisms, raising awareness of available mental and physical health resources, raising awareness for ride-share services and designated drivers, and working to decrease stigma around mental health.

Wakefield High School

Wakefield, Massachusetts

Wakefield students hosted a Kahoot on youth health based on YRBS data for all students in 9th and 10th grade. Based on the results of this Kahoot, students focused on the issues of bullying and sleep in their communities. To address the concern of sleep, youth leaders hosted a school-wide presentation during morning block about healthy sleep habits and have worked on advocating for later school start times. To address bullying, youth leaders are creating video presentations on anti-bullying for the school and trying to change student norms and perspectives so that they take anti-bullying measures more seriously.

Reading High School

Reading, Massachusetts

Reading used their Data Analysis Retreat (DAR) event as a way to help train their new youth leadership team. Through the event, regional youth leaders were able to walk students through reading and analyzing YRBS data and how to conduct DARs and CDEs in the future. One of the Reading leaders shared: "I believe this meeting was very helpful to guide us in following through with our

goal: training the leaders of today to train the leaders of tomorrow. There was not only very valuable information, but I also felt that it gave our group the exposure to what a presentation such as the one we saw would contain, and how we would go about presenting it. Overall [it was] very helpful, and it helped me believe that Rocket Leaders can accomplish something like this in future years."

Stoneham High School

Stoneham, Massachusetts

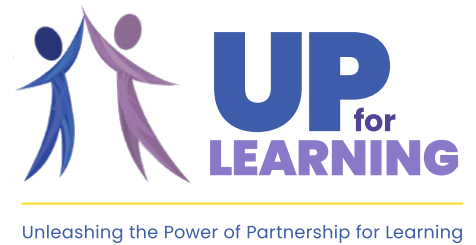
Stoneham participants highlighted a number of assets in their community, especially within the school. Students identified the following assets within their schools as things that promote youth health: FLEX block periods where students can choose various activities to participate in, a strong and compassionate school staff, high availability of extracurriculars, community norms surrounding school environment and parent involvement, and diversity within the school.

The Stoneham community identified that some weaknesses in their community included challenges with dating culture, gender equity, and the local political environment.

To address these weaknesses, the following potential actions were identified:

- 1) implementing feminist ideologies and theories in classroom settings,
- 2) raising awareness for gender equity and women's rights by participating in community events around the issue,
- 3) teaching safe dating skills, including how to use dating apps safely,
- 4) building dating-related skills such as communication and conflict resolution,
- 5) raising awareness about healthy relationships, and
- 6) advocating for important teen-health topics such as bullying and mental health to local lawmakers.

All of our teams are deeply dedicated to youth voice and equity. However, not all of our teams were able to provide a summary of their progress. We want to acknowledge their commitment to healthier, happier communities and thank them for their participation this year.



A huge thank you to these teams:

**Poultney
Middle School,
VT**

**West Rutland
High School,
VT**



**Poultney
High School, VT**



**West Rutland Middle
School, VT**



**Windsor Middle/High
School, VT**



**Sanborn Middle and
High School, NH**

GTY & P2C2 Events

2024 Vermont Association for Middle Level Education (VAMLE) Conference

On Tuesday, March 12th, middle school students from all over the state gathered at Champlain College in Burlington, VT. The conference is held each year in March, and its goal is to amplify and develop student leadership in planning for school change. The theme of this year's conference was "Creating Communities of Equity & Respect," and each workshop provided related content and activities.



Hartford's middle school GTY leadership team

Youth from Hartford Middle School's Getting to 'Y' team facilitated workshop sessions that were designed as a mini-data analysis retreat with information from their school's YRBS data. The three youth facilitators, who are new to Getting to 'Y', did a terrific job leading the group through the activities, and audience members commented that they felt excited about what they might do to take action in their own communities.

Community Anti Drug Coalition of America (CADCA) Youth Leadership Summit, National Harbor, Maryland

At this annual national conference, Greater Sullivan County Public Health Network representatives featured the Kearsarge Middle School GTY team in a poster presentation about the successful implementation of the GTY Program in just one year. Dartmouth representative Deryn Smith shared the importance of providing youth voice to express their student needs, which resulted in the administration restructuring their school schedule to provide more breaks for students to help with their high rates of overwhelming stress; they brought in a peer tutor program, started suicide prevention training in the school, and more.



*"GTY has been a great avenue to **connect with schools** where we didn't previously have strong connections!"*

—Deryn Smith, Community Health Partnership Coordinator,
Population Health Substance Misuse Prevention Coordinator,
Greater Sullivan County Public Health Network

P2C2 Recap in Numbers

465

youth

30

adult
leaders

4

returning
teams

6

new teams

15

UP
youth co-
facilitators

34

retreats

Personal Power & Community Connections (P2C2)

Personal Power and Community Connections (P2C2) guides youth-adult teams to use an asset-based approach to identify strengths and opportunities in their learning environment. Geared towards upper elementary grades, teams analyze school climate data with two goals: to celebrate their strengths and to brainstorm actions to improve their areas of concern. Youth and adults explore their personal power to make change by increasing their own understanding of mind-sets, values, and identities. They build community connections by gaining empathy for and connection with their broader school community. All team members have an opportunity to practice problem solving methods, effective communication strategies, and relationship skills. This foundation helps to establish youth as change agents, community members, and critical thinkers.



Concord Middle School

Concord, Vermont

Concord Middle School has continued their work with P2C2 this year. The team meets weekly as a team and monthly with UP for Learning with a focus on increasing emotional and physical safety at school. Eighth grade youth facilitators are supporting leading meetings this year. Throughout the year the team plans several activities to increase a sense of belonging and enjoyment of school. All middle school students at Concord take a school climate survey multiple times per year. The student council analyzed data from the survey and found top strengths and concerns. The top strengths they found were: "My school sets clear rules for behaviors" and "I feel successful at school." The top concerns they identified were: "School is where I feel safe" and "My teachers can teach us all because my peers and I make good choices regularly." In order to find out more about what could increase student safety, the student council created an additional survey asking "What would make you feel emotionally safe at school?" "What would make you feel physically safe at school?" and "What creates a good learning environment for you?" After finding the themes in these answers the student council will



Concord Middle School team members

share them with school staff and create recommendations for next year. The team also presented at a Kingdom East district-wide gathering for middle school students held in February at St. Johnsbury Academy!

Roxbury Village School & Union Elementary School

Roxbury & Montpelier, Vermont

Roxbury Elementary and Union Elementary are engaging in P2C2 again this year focusing on the transition from fourth grade to middle school. Main Street Middle School students participate and co-facilitate the retreats. During the first two retreats the team engaged in a chalk talk with the questions: "What are you excited about as you transition to middle school?" "What are you nervous about?" and "What questions do you have?" Using the notes from this activity, current middle school students participated in an informal panel at the second retreat and shared their perspectives and experiences with current fourth graders. With mixed teams of fourth graders and middle school students, the group engaged in a Design Challenge. Each team member considered their own contributions to the team as well as how to negotiate different ideas and perspectives and come to a compromise. At the last retreat in May, the group participated in community building circles as a way to continue building relationships and practice circle keeping skills.



Roxbury and Union team members

First Branch Unified Union

Chelsea & Tunbridge, Vermont

First Branch is a recently unified school district inside of White River Supervisory Union. There is a campus in Chelsea serving the middle school and pre-K students and a campus in Tunbridge which serves students in kindergarten through 4th grade. Earlier this year, the youth-adult team created a community-inclusive data collection process to craft their new mission and vision statement. The team then partnered with the school's art teacher to create a design process for each class in grades K-8 to revisit the school's mission and vision statements, then brainstorm colors, words, images and symbols for a new visual representation. Community members, students and school staff then voted on the visual, and a graphic designer will make the selected design a reality. The final part of the team's work will be to celebrate the chosen mascot and logo and share the results with the school and wider community.



First Branch team members

Vergennes Union Elementary School

Vergennes, Vermont



Vergennes team members

This was the first year for Vergennes Union Elementary School's P2C2 team. The team of 20 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders worked alongside teachers and administrators from their school to review student climate survey data and implement change projects focused on addressing specific data points. In particular, the team focused on data around students being able to express their emotions clearly, students supporting others in learning, and students' respectful behavior to each other. Their action plan includes the creation of a dedicated space for students to connect on the playground, as well as a school-wide suggestion box for students to share their questions, feelings, and concerns. Along with this work, the team also spent time connecting as a group, playing games and laughing together.

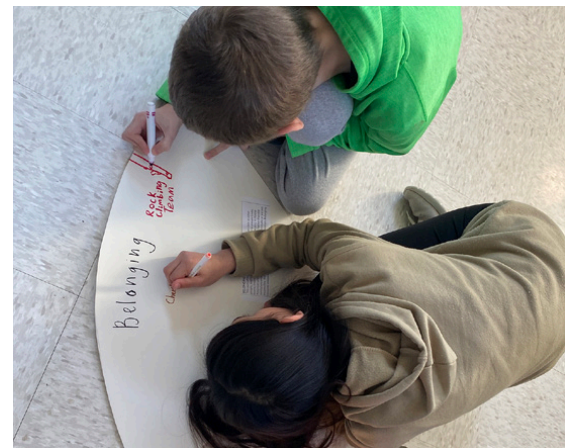
Four elementary schools in the **Greater Rutland County Supervisory Union** — Middletown Springs, Proctor, Wells Village, and West Rutland — took part in P2C2 throughout this winter and spring. They used school climate data, with whole classes, including teachers, participating in the process and in strengths-based activities such as the Circle of Courage. UP met with each group three times during which classes looked at data to better understand their strengths and concerns and discussed action plans for addressing both. Action plans were designed to be no-cost, inclusive of their whole community, and completed within 60 days by the class, with support from their teachers and administrators. Here is what the process looked like in the four schools:

Middletown Springs Elementary

Middletown Springs, Vermont

The current sixth graders at Middletown Springs had participated in P2C2 last year, so this group had strong leadership around their data analysis. Interestingly, their school climate data set tracked answers over four surveys going back to 2021. Looking at change over time, they identified their strength to celebrate as “My school wants me to do well.” Their ideas to celebrate (field days, teachers vs. students dodgeball, and teacher appreciation) were based on noted root causes such as teachers being supportive and the school recognizing accomplishments. Their concern was “Students in my class behave so teachers can teach.” After a difficult conversation about the root causes, they determined a follow-up survey would be useful.

Right, Middletown Springs members working on the Circle of Courage



Proctor Elementary School

Proctor, Vermont



Proctor team members presenting to younger students

Proctor Elementary’s sixth grade presented their findings to third, fourth, and fifth graders. They explained their data analysis process and how they identified a strength, “My school wants me to do well,” and a concern, “Students in my class behave so teachers can teach.” They finished their presentation by asking the question “What are ways you can help our school stay a safe, kind, and fun place?” The sixth grade celebrated their successful presentation with free time outside.

Wells Village School

Wells, Vermont

Wells Village School fourth graders celebrated the strength, “I feel like I do well in school” and discussed the concern, “I feel safe in school.” They compiled a long list of ways their school made them feel like they did well, and designed many celebratory plans to embellish existing all-school events. They talked about how they wanted everyone in their school to feel happy and excited like they were “going to a party or getting a puppy.” They wanted to increase feelings of safety by increasing respect and sportsmanship and finding ways for all students to enjoy games, learning, and outside time.



Wells team members

West Rutland Elementary

West Rutland, Vermont



West Rutland team members in conversation

One of the fifth grade teachers wrote about the P2C2 outcomes: “Since our last UP for Learning class we have been working on strengthening our classroom community. We have been connecting what we are doing in the classroom to our United States government studies. My students are beginning to see how all of the strategies you taught are applied throughout life.” This group identified their strength as, “Someone greets you when you arrive at school” and their concern as not enough students feeling that “they have positive relationships in school.” One of the Getting to ‘Y’ team members co-facilitated with staff, which strengthened the sense of community and belonging. The teacher commits to “... taking the time to do this work earlier in the year, [so] my students will have more opportunities to develop their social skills and use them to benefit the community.”

Ferrisburgh Central School

Ferrisburgh, Vermont

In a custom version of P2C2, FCS adult leaders and the entire FCS 5th and 6th grade students worked collaboratively to address the upcoming middle school transition, which will for the first time absorb students from FCS and Vergennes Union Elementary School in the the Vergennes Union Middle School. This meant that not only are 6th grade students preparing to graduate to middle school, but 5th grade students will be joining them.

Students and staff collected data about their feelings and thoughts about the transition, analyzed the data, and hosted an amazing youth and family engagement night where ten Ferrisburgh students stepped into roles as facilitators alongside administrators and teachers from FCS and VUMS. After dinner, the students shared their work, led an icebreaker game, and facilitated breakout con-



Ferrisburgh team members

versations with the participants. Over 70 youth and adults turned out to discuss topics around the middle school

transition, such as technology use, relationships, and responsibilities.



GTY youth facilitators in Cherokee Nation, OK



Thank you

to all of our schools and the organizations and coalitions who sponsored their work.



Thank you to the **Johnson Family Foundation** and to the **Vermont Department of Health**: Division of Substance Use Programs (DSU) and Division of Family and Child Health (FCH) for their continuing support of GTY and P2C2 in Vermont.

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Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning

GTY and P2C2 are UP for Learning programs.
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