

UP FOR LEARNING 2023-24 ANNUAL REPORT



UP's Annual Report celebrates how we empower young people to become active changemakers that strengthen communities and enhance civic wellbeing.

As you read, you'll learn how:

- UP equips youth-adult teams with the critical skills to tackle complex challenges—using data to bridge differences, elevating unheard voices, and embracing diverse perspectives to drive innovative solutions.
- Our new Youth Intern Program nurtures young leaders and prepares them not only to excel in their career pathways but also to spearhead change in their communities.
- UP and youth partners co-create projects that transform school cultures into environments that fiercely advocate for educational equity as a fundamental human right.
- By embedding youth-adult collaboration from elementary through high school, UP helps districts elevate collective decision-making as the cornerstone of a sustainable, equitable, and just future.

Thank you for standing with us in this mission to uplift and empower young changemakers. Your support—along with the dedication of our schools, donors, and community partners—enables UP to collaborate with more school teams and youth facilitators. Together, we provide opportunities for young people to shape their futures as leaders, social innovators, global citizens, and essential contributors to the workforce. UP remains steadfast in its commitment to work with all schools, regardless of their financial capacity, while carefully expanding our programs and ensuring sustainability amidst the impacts of inflation.



Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning

UP By the Numbers

Number of youth-adult teams:

103

613 teams since 2008

Number of schools:

97

Number of youth leaders:

1401

6818 leaders since 2008

299 Adults trained

4 youth voting members on UP's Board of Directors

12 Youth Program Specialists (high school/post secondary college students)

4:48 length of the video "What Does Equity Mean to You?" created by the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) members

4 youth staff members on Trailblazers, UP's digital magazine

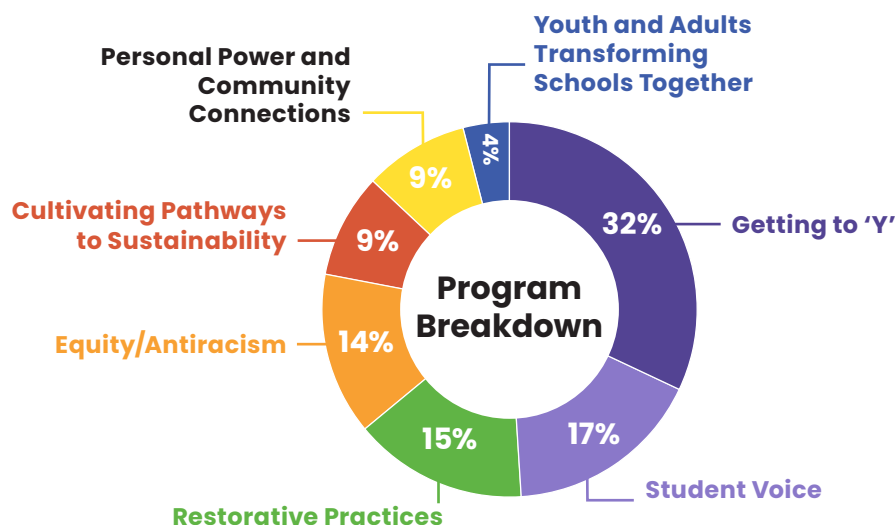
1950+ hours of compensated time for UP's Youth Co-Facilitators

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

12 Prevention Coalitions Supporting Getting to 'Y' teams

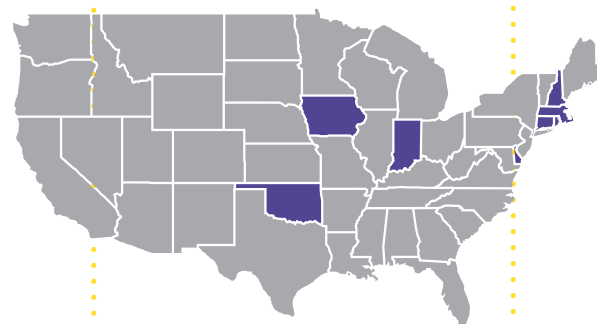
Participants in UP's programming shared a strong desire to **make their school better**, a deep belief that **schools should meet the needs of all learners**, and a recognition that **students should be involved in decisions about their school**. Over the course of the year, **participants showed growth in their ability to use data to advocate for change** in their schools.

Source: Participant data from pre- and post-surveys in FY24.



Expanding Beyond Vermont

Massachusetts, Delaware, New Hampshire, Indiana, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Iowa & Cherokee Nation, OK



29 schools

28% of UP schools

32 teams

31% of UP teams

54 adults

18% of UP adults

278 youth

20% of UP youth

According to UP for Learning's participant surveys:

35% of participants identify as **Black, Indigenous, and people of color**.

30% of participants identify as **male**

24% of participants identify as members of the **LGBTQIA+ community**

23% of participants indicated that they receive support at school through an **IEP or 504 plan**.

2023–24 Stories



ALL PHOTOS THIS PAGE: ANDREW MCCELLAN

*"Working with UP for Learning helped us significantly deepen our Youth Civic Health Survey project. They have such expertise with facilitating youth feedback and I so appreciate their partnership. Incorporating youth voice in our civic engagement work is a top priority and **working with UP made it easy, fun, and impactful!**"*

—Sarah Copeland Hanzas,
VT Secretary of State

GROUNDBREAKING ANALYSIS OF VERMONT YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

This spring, UP for Learning, in partnership with the Vermont Secretary of State's Office and University of Vermont (UVM) Center for Rural Studies, launched an ambitious project to create Vermont's first-ever Civic Health Index. With UP's leadership, Vermont will be the first state to incorporate middle and high school voices, providing a more comprehensive picture of the state's civic health and insights on how to strengthen it. This report explores key indicators of civic engagement—such as voter registration and turnout, social connectedness, volunteerism, and trust in media and government.

As part of this effort, UP organized and co-facilitated a one-day gathering at the Vermont State House with 40 youth from six schools. These young leaders examined the 2,523 responses from students in grades 7-12 to 23 survey questions covering topics like how youth access and share news, how they engage with their communities, and their perspectives on voting and advocacy around local, national, and global issues. Using the data as a guide, the group explored deep questions, such as:

- Why is youth civic engagement important?
- What motivates or discourages youth from becoming more involved civically?
- What barriers prevent all youth from engaging in civic activities?
- What assumptions or misconceptions might adults hold about youth participation in civic spaces?

For this group, the central question is: *How can adults better support youth engagement?* The full Civic Health Index report will be released in December 2024. UP envisions future opportunities to work with schools and communities to discuss the findings, develop action plans, and create environments where youth feel both valued and empowered to contribute.



SPOTLIGHT: The Youth Internship Program

In the following stories, youth who have been shaped by their time with UP tell their stories—how their leadership, insights, and experiences have prepared them to be bold, innovative changemakers in their communities and beyond. These stories serve as examples of how youth come to UP and how their experiences shape their futures, setting them on a path of empowerment and engagement. These stories also show why UP has dedicated resources to establish the Youth Internship Program (YIP). **This program is a true embodiment of youth-adult partnership, designed to evolve as youth and adults learn and grow together.**

This program is first and foremost an educational experience. The goal-setting, mentoring, and opportunities for greater responsibility are designed to engage youth deeply in UP's programming, foster their growth as changemakers, and embody successful youth-adult partnership. The stories you'll read here showcase the journeys of five youth UP interns. They show the ways youth find UP, deepen their relationship with the work, and incorporate the lessons learned into decision-making about their futures.

KENNY NORWOOD,

UP's newest Youth Program Specialist (YPS), started his collaboration with UP in 2024 when UP partnered with United Way Delaware. As an intern with United



Way Delaware, he participated in the Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) project through which UP led members of Delaware's Black Student Unions. Originally from New Castle, DE, Kenny's experiences with the United Way, Leading Youth through Empowerment (LYTE), and the Bank of America Student Leaders program have developed his commitment to bridging educational gaps for low-income people of color. He believes in "building students from the ground up. I found the similarities and differences between how LYTE and UP do that exciting."

Kenny is passionate about providing pathways to education, helping people however he can, and uplifting marginalized communities, especially

through policy. He is now a junior at Trinity College in Hartford, CT, studying political science and American Studies. He hopes to attend law school after graduating.

"For me, uplifting other people is a big motivator, common sense. We need to do more to help."

ANA LINDERT-BOYES started as a participant in the Transforming School Culture through Restorative Practices program at Twinfield Union School in 2018 as a ninth grader. She developed into a co-facilitator and then a Youth Program Specialist (YPS). While enrolled in Early College at Goddard College, Ana worked with a variety of schools and programs with UP. She currently attends Boston University's Wheelock College of Education and Human Development, balancing her studies with continuing work at UP during summers and when her schedule permits. She plans to graduate in 2026, aiming for a career in education.

"The journey to be a YPS from where I started in 2018 has been



Ana and the facilitation team talking about the School Safety Dialogues

foundational and integral to my growth as a person and on my school choice and education major. Part of my identity has grown with me at UP; UP has been a constant. The work brings me great joy, especially in person, as an outlet for my passions and interests."

"It's been cool to grow with the organization, Ana says. "When I started, the Youth Program Specialist role wasn't a thing; the YAC [Youth Action Council] wasn't a thing. Now, we have regular meetings where all YPSs share how they are actively involved in different ways. It's great to see UP stay true to its mission."

JACOBY SOTER

joined UP as a Youth Program Specialist as part of the inaugural class of the new Youth Intern Program (YIP). Jacoby is passionate about fostering collaboration between youth and adults and hopes his work will inspire others to explore and get excited about the impact of youth-adult partnerships in education. His 2022-2023 Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together (YATST) team helped increase youth attendance at school board meetings. In August 2023, he joined his local school board; together with district administrators, he advocates for authentic student voice.



EVELYN MONJE joined UP for Learning in January 2021 as the first Youth Program Specialist. At the time, she was a senior at Winooski High School and enrolled in Early College at the Community College of Vermont. Evelyn brought her commitment to Antiracism and equity to her work with the new Winooski Antiracism Steering Committee (ARSC). Through UP, she honed her skills as a facilitator and practitioner of Restorative Practices.

Evelyn continued her involvement with the Winooski ARSC and UP while pursuing a degree in Social Work

at the University of Vermont (UVM). During her senior year at UVM, she combined her experiences as a camp counselor at Bread and Butter Farm, which she had been since high school, with her work at UP to pilot a social work program at the South Burlington Public Library.

In fall 2024, Evelyn began a Master's in Social Work at Simmons College and joined UP's Board of Directors. UP continues to benefit from Evelyn's diverse experiences as she embarks on a new chapter with the organization. Evelyn continues to lean into her experiences as a facilitator and engaged presence as she brings her UP knowledge and magic to the classroom and her new internship offering clinical Outpatient Therapy.

"Now I'm leaning into a field that's all about caring for others in the best way possible. I have loved all my roles in summer camps, facilitation training, and after-school programs. That joy has led me to where I am now, and I can't wait to continue exploring this profession."

"We have the opportunity to talk about other things now, like an equity policy, for our district," he says. "District-wide administration needs to see the work we do must be done together. Youth-driven change with adults to fully support them is the only way to make meaningful change."

Currently a junior at Bellows Free Academy in St. Albans, Jacoby is interested in pursuing studies in social sciences and Spanish, with a long-term goal of working in the White House.

"From my personal experience, I think UP as an organization is summed up in the Youth Intern Program. UP's resources will drive more youth to want to make more meaningful change."

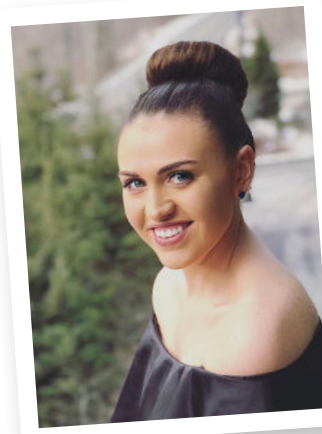
MICHELLE MASERONI

co-facilitated Getting to 'Y' in 2010 as a ninth grader at Otter Valley Union High School. After two years of school-based GTY work, she began co-leading statewide trainings. She later attended the University of Vermont (UVM), where she majored in Health and Educational Policy, with double minors in Special Education and Educational and Cultural Diversity.

Michelle joined UP's Board of Directors in 2016. During her time with the Adolescent and Young Adult National Information Center and the Health Resources and Services Administration, she worked with colleagues to improve patient-provider relationships in healthcare. She is passionate about bridging the gap between health and education and advocating for youth to have a voice in their health and wellness decisions.

After college, Michelle moved to Boston to work in the legal tech field. She now lives in Dallas, Texas with her husband and remains on UP's Board of Directors.

"As a freshman in high school, I knew Getting to 'Y' would positively impact my school, but I had no idea it would foster a passion that turned into a lifelong ambition of mine. I am so honored to still be able to take part in an organization that does so much good for the world of education!"



ELEVATING AND EXPANDING YOUTH VOICE IN DELAWARE

UP has been instrumental in advancing Delaware Department of Education's goal to elevate and empower student voice. Over three years, UP has by deepened and expanded on groundbreaking work in Brandywine School District (BSD) and the newly opened Bryan Allen Stevenson School of Excellence (BASSE).

In BSD's high schools—Mount Pleasant, Brandywine, and Concord—UP's youth facilitators lead Student Voice Advisories (SVAs) that focus on fostering continuous student feedback, building youth-adult partnerships, and ensuring students have representation in decision-making spaces. These advisories prioritize student agency and action to improve educational and equity outcomes.

At the middle school level, nine students were trained in leadership and facilitation to lead these SVAs, which will officially launch during the 2024-2025 school year.

UP staff traveled to Georgetown, DE, for the second summer of supporting

youth leadership at the Bryan Allen Stevenson School of Excellence (BASSE). As part of planning for the school's opening in August 2024, UP has brought together middle school youth and BASSE staff to design practices and policies to align with school values.

The powerful design thinking around what school *can* look and feel like keeps both youth and adults engaged, empowering them to reimagine and transform their schools.

Supported by the Longwood Foundation



TWIN VALLEY MIDDLE HIGH SCHOOL: MOVING THE NEEDLE ON EQUITY AND BELONGING

Using Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), the Twin Valley Youth-Adult Partnership (YAP) team revised commitments to implementing Restorative Practices, initially set in 2019, to better address the school community's emerging concerns. The team planned to:

- Enhance student-led assemblies by partnering with the new Director of Climate, Inclusion, and Belonging.
- Facilitate community-building activities inspired by shared readings from *This Book Is Anti-Racist* by Tiffany Jewell.
- Use climate survey data to identify shared priorities between students and staff, and collaborating with the school's JEDI Team (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) and GESA (Gender Equality Student Association) to build momentum.



A highlight of the year was the May Belonging Day, during which the YAP team led impactful lessons on equity, culturally sustaining practices, and justice. A group of 7th and 8th graders planned a lesson on microaggressions that they led for middle and high school students. They picked out common microaggressions heard in their school and led conversations and role playing activities about how to identify and stop this behavior. The success of this event sparked a strong interest in expanding these activities to reach a larger, community-wide audience.

Supported by the Windham Foundation

"The Youth-Adult Partnership has been a powerful way for students and faculty to truly hear one another's voices and start to build an understanding of what our community needs. The goal of YAP is to explore ways in which we can make Twin Valley Middle High School an increasingly welcoming and inclusive space for ALL."

—former TVMHS Principal Anna Roth, quoted in the *Brattleboro Reformer*

NH REPLICATES **GETTING TO 'Y'** STATE-WIDE

A new statewide replication of UP's Getting to 'Y' (GTY) program will begin in New Hampshire this fall. Led by UP's NH prevention partner, Communities for Alcohol- and Drug-free Youth (CADY) with funding from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), UP and CADY will plan seven regional GTY trainings for school-based and prevention coalition leaders who will work with youth-adult teams this year. Additionally, a Train the Trainer event will be hosted to develop future team leaders.

When GTY was recognized as a Best Practice by the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP) in 2020, federal funding became available to support its replication. New Hampshire schools, districts, and prevention partners in New Hampshire have participated since UP began in 2008. Discussions about this statewide initiative started in 2019. By 2023-2024, out of 248 youth trained in GTY, 124 were from New Hampshire.

This innovative, positive youth development initiative empowers youth to identify what matters most to them in their own Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) data,

*"Getting to 'Y' consistently **drives outcomes and empowers the youth voice like I have never seen before.** GTY shows how instrumental the Youth Risk Behavior Survey is, and how powerful the youth voice is in mobilizing change."*

— Elizabeth Brochu, Senior Director of Training, Education, and Programs, Substance Misuse Prevention Coordinator, CADY, Inc.

engage peers and adults in community dialogue, and take action to improve youth health and wellness.

With an existing GTY network and UP's strong partnership with CADY, the future of GTY in New Hampshire looks promising!



DISTRICT-WIDE COMMITMENT TO **YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP** STARTS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

One of UP's strategic goals is to better understand the outcomes of embedding youth-adult partnership programs district-wide, spanning elementary, middle, and high schools. UP had programming in nearly every school in the Greater Rutland County Supervisory Union during 2023-2024. Four elementary schools participated in Personal Power & Community Connections (P2C2), seven middle and high schools had Getting to 'Y' teams, and one high school focused on Restorative Practices.

The P2C2 teams held three retreats and worked with their classroom teachers to analyze their school's climate data, understand root causes, and plan action to celebrate strengths and address concerns. Some of the outcomes of this work were:

- **Discussing what makes a data point a strength or concern.** Wells Village's 4th grade team deliberated over the data point "I feel safe at school." While a strong majority said yes, they labeled it a concern because of the few who said no.



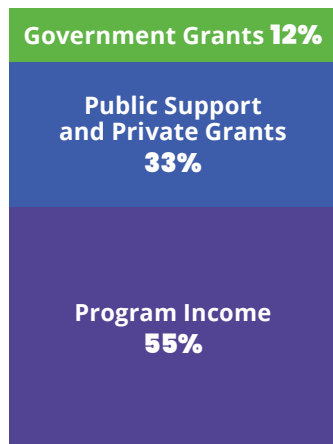
- **Sharing their findings.** Proctor's students presented their root cause analysis to 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders, culminating in a discussion around the questions: "What are ways you can help our school stay a safe, kind, and fun place?"
- **Connecting to curriculum.** In West Rutland School, the 5th grade team explored how data analysis and community-building apply to broader life contexts as applied to their US government unit.
- **Challenging their capacity.** Half of the Middletown Springs combined 5th/6th grade had participated in P2C2 in 2022. They tracked school climate data across four years and noted strengths and concerns emerging over time.

Through the P2C2 process, youth and adults develop empathy and connection with their broader school community while learning to nurture their own skills and increase collective agency.

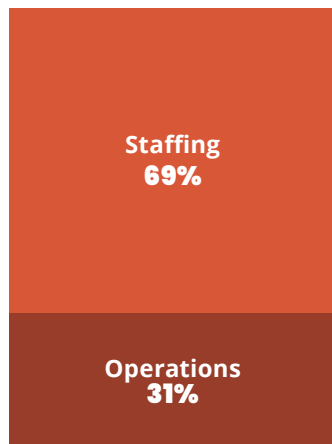
Supported by the Johnson Family Foundation

2023-2024 FINANCIALS

INCOME



EXPENSES



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.

DONATE to support our work!

Reading a paper copy? Look for a donation envelope tucked in these pages, or go to upforlearning.org and click "donate."

"When I was a sophomore in high school, I participated as a student facilitator in YATST. It was probably the most impactful experience I had as a student and definitely **fueled my desire to do more student/teacher advocacy work** and what I am passionate about today. It feels pretty special to now be on the other side of it and see more aspiring students lead."

—community partner, VSAC



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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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..



Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning



OUR VISION for the FUTURE... is educational equity for every student.

\$100,000+

Builds UP for Learning's capacity to create equity and justice through innovation and collaboration.

\$75,000

Underwrites UP's work with one school district, creating real change and a culture shift across all schools within the system.

\$50,000

Promotes UP's work in one school over several years, increasing the likelihood that the entire school will develop a practice of student-centered learning.

\$25,000

Signature Sponsor of the Youth Internship Program (YIP).

\$10,000

Communicates the capacity of youth and their accomplishments as innovators and leaders through the development of new resources and materials, social media, and program-specific videos.

\$5,000

Supports projects undertaken by the Youth Action Council for one year.

\$1,000

Gives a youth leader the opportunity to take part in the Youth Action Council, sharing their experience on state, regional, and national platforms.

\$500

Allows UP Faculty to travel to one national conference to increase awareness of UP and its impacts.

\$250, \$100, \$50, \$25

Every gift helps to support UP for Learning's important programs and the growing number of youth facilitators working to make change in their community.