

GETTING TO 'Y'

Manual

Youth Bring
Meaning to
the Youth Risk
Behavior Survey



Getting to 'Y'
is a program of



Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning

Acknowledgements



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This guide and the Getting to 'Y' (GTY) program were developed in 2007 by Helen Beattie, Founder of UP for Learning, in partnership with Kathryn O'Neill and the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE). Kathryn was one of only a few state YRBS coordinators from across the country who committed to helping students access their own data as a means to shape the health and well being of their schools. Due to her advocacy, GTY received funding support from the AOE through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the first five years of its evolution. This funding source ended in the fall of 2013 due to shifting CDC grant priorities.

Beginning in 2013, the Vermont Department of Health worked closely with UP for Learning and the AOE to ensure the sustainability of GTY. The current Vermont Department of Health strategic plan includes a commitment that all Vermont schools have the opportunity to engage students in analysis of their YRBS data. We would like to thank the Vermont Department of Health for their ongoing support of GTY.

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Finally, UP for Learning would like to thank the youth and adults who have participated in GTY. The countless hours teams have spent organizing, facilitating, and implementing action plans over the years reaffirms the desire and capacity of young people, supported by caring and committed adults, to shape their world for the better.

Table of Contents

part 1 **Basics for Leaders**

- 9** Welcome to Getting to 'Y'!
- 16** Facilitators & leaders
- 17** Further inclusion & opportunity
- 18** Data: Do students tell the truth on the YRBS?
- 20** Data gaps and how to fill them
- 21** Youth make a difference

part 2 **Data Analysis Retreat**

- 25** What is a Data Analysis Retreat?
- 26** Planning your retreat
- 28** Recruitment strategies
- 29** What will we be doing?
- 50** Executive summary
- 51** Tips & tricks from teams

part 3 **Community Dialogue Event & Take Action!**

- 56** What is a Community Dialogue Event?
- 57** What will we be doing?
- 58** Planning your event
- 70** Take action!

part 3 **Building & Sustaining Your GTY Team**

- 74** The group process
- 78** Ideas for momentum building
- 82** Year 2: Keep it going
- 84** Tips from previous participants

appendix 1 **Forms & Templates 87**

appendix 2 **Activities & Protocols 109**



part 1

Basics for Leaders

- 9** Welcome & goals
- 16** Facilitators & leaders
- 17** Further inclusion & opportunity
- 18** Data: Do students tell the truth on the YRBS?
- 20** Data gaps & how to fill them
- 21** Youth make a difference

Welcome to Getting to 'Y'!

Getting to *what now?* Getting to 'Y': Youth Bring Meaning to their Youth Risk Behavior Survey! (GTY). This program is all about including youth voice in how we understand and use public health data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), or similar data sources. The "Y" stands for two things, the "youth" who lead this initiative, and the "why" that they're uncovering under all the statistics.

This manual is to guide you through the core components of the program, and is written for both adult advisors and the youth facilitators that make up your GTY team.

WHAT WILL YOUR TEAM ACCOMPLISH?

- recruit students from your school or community and lead them through a group process to understand and evaluate your local YRBS data
- facilitate discussions with other youth about the strengths and concerns that are discovered in your data
- share your data analysis—the top strengths and concerns your team identifies—with adults in your school and community, and advocate for the changes your team wants to see
- make action plans based on that data and work with your fellow students and adults in your school and community to make them a reality

HOW WILL YOUR TEAM BE IMPACTED?

- learn how to read and understand data and use it to shape your school and community to best serve you and your peers
- gain strong leadership skills, like how to facilitate group discussions, give presentations and manage big projects
- make new friends and connections with youth and adults at your school and in your community
- have the opportunity to make real changes in your school and community, and to improve the health of your fellow students

WHAT IS THE YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY (YRBS)?

The YRBS is a nationwide survey that is completed by youth across the United States every other year for high school students in grades 9-12. Some states use a separate questionnaire to survey middle school students 6-8 as well. The YRBS asks questions about behaviors that risk students' health, such as drinking alcohol, smoking, vaping, and using drugs. The survey also asks questions about "Youth Assets" such as feeling valued by their community, their relationships with parents/caregivers and teachers, and the presence of youth voice in school decision making.

While the federal Center for Disease Control (CDC) requires all YRBS surveys to ask certain questions, each state has the option to add questions that suit their data needs for local use. So, the YRBS survey varies from state to state. We can't include every state's version in this manual, so it will be important to attend your local GTY training to learn about yours.

What can the YRBS tell us, and what can't it tell us?

The YRBS can give us information about what young people are doing, but it can't tell us why they are doing it. That is the "Y" you'll be working towards uncovering. The survey also prioritizes information about groups of students, but contains none on individuals. And while the data can show us trends, it can't predict the future.

What is the purpose of the YRBS?

The YRBS measures the prevalence of behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death, disease, and injury among youth. The YRBS is part of a larger effort to help communities increase the resiliency of young people by reducing high risk behaviors and promoting healthy behaviors.

The YRBS also

- is a good starting point for discussion
- highlights positive norms — most young people are making good choices
- monitors risk behaviors among youth

Who uses the YRBS data?

Many state Departments of Health and Departments of Education use the YRBS to track youth health and resilience, and see any trends — like increases in prescription medicines being used without a prescription, or tobacco use rates going down. School districts use the data to help them write grants and develop programs. Prevention coalitions, organizations committed to implementing preventative measures to protect and increase public health, often use the data to evaluate their communities' needs so that they can adapt their approach. Grant organizations may also use the YRBS results to determine who gets funding for their youth public health programs, which makes it important to a lot of people!

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF GTY?

Every two years students provide us with YRBS data. Getting to 'Y' was developed to give the same students the opportunity to analyze the most recent data, present their conclusions to community members, and engage in advocacy on behalf of their peers and community. ***The ultimate goal of GTY is to make positive change in your school and community.***

How will your team accomplish these goals?

Since the YRBS can only tell us what students are doing, but not why they are doing it, your insightful interpretation of these statistics is incredibly valuable. Students are best able to identify the "why" and come up with a plan for change that really will make a difference. YOU are the experts. You will be suggesting change based on your understanding of the data - not guesses or stereotypes.

More than anything, the YRBS is a starting point for discussion. Looking at the data together and sharing your findings with your communities will help get conversation going about important parts of your lives, provide a way to share your insights with the community, and enlist their help in the changes you have identified.

Outcomes of the program

Outcomes are changes, benefits, or other effects that happen as a result of your work. Outcomes of GTY might be:

- youth and adults in your school and community better understand the YRBS, what it does, and how it is used
- students and adults who participate in GTY gain a deeper understanding about the health issues among their peers and in their school and community
- students learn about data analysis
- student leaders become experienced facilitators
- students connect with school and community groups to form mutually beneficial partnerships
- student-initiated programs are developed at the school and community level that better serve youth
- adult perceptions of youth in the community improve
- youth health indicators in future YRBS surveys improve

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

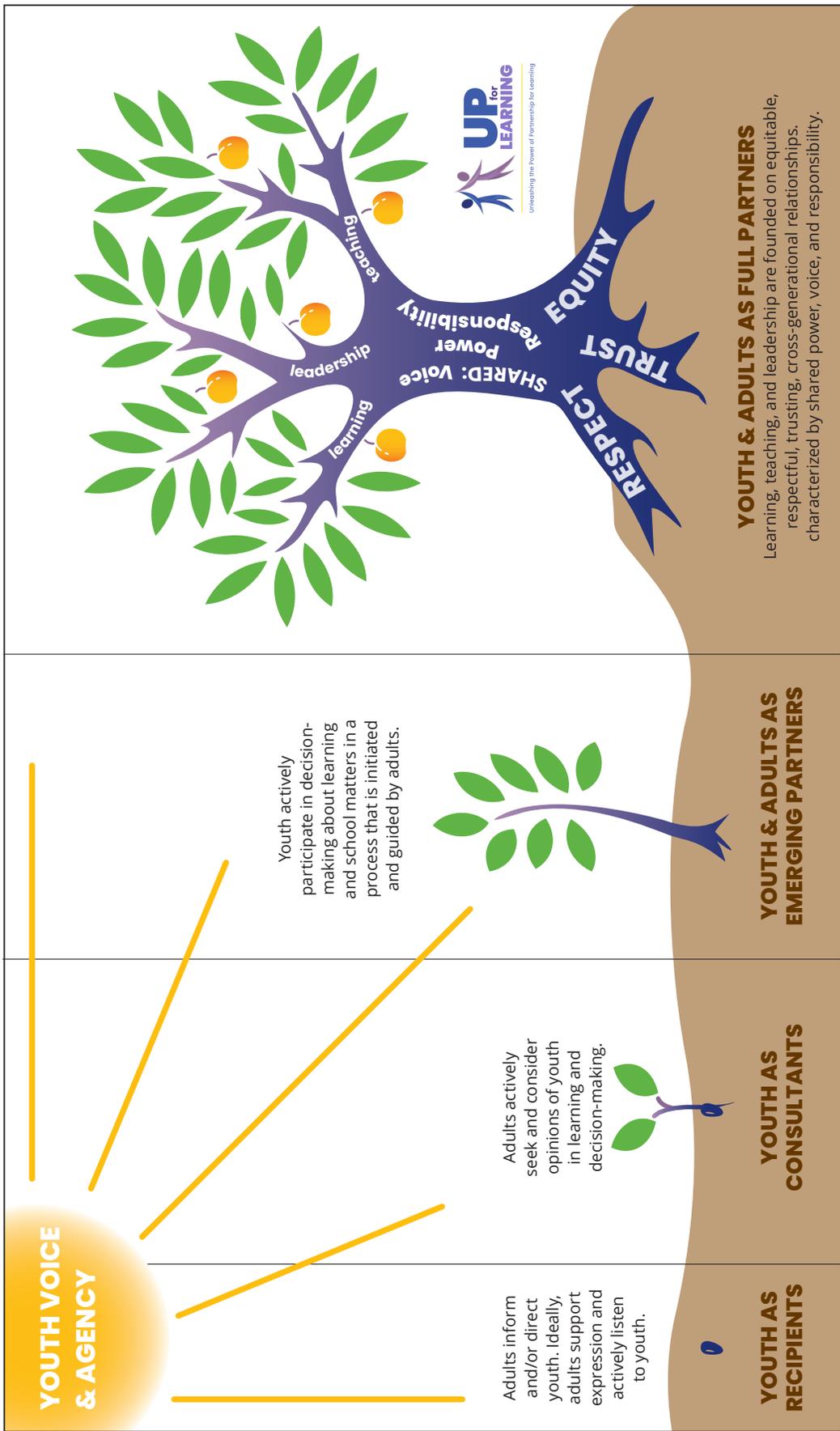
The GTY program is a Positive Youth Development/Youth Participatory Action Research project that is achieved with Youth-Adult Partnership. The main point of GTY is to involve students in analyzing their own health data and to use the data as a starting point to make real change in their community. It is a Positive Youth Development project because it is youth-driven and seeks to achieve equality and equity in youth and adult voice in how policies and programs that affect youth get developed. Finally, the presence of both adults and youth who build a meaningful relationship with each other and combine their strengths to succeed makes GTY a program rooted in Youth-Adult Partnership.

To foster agency and development, we use the *Seed to Tree Youth Engagement Continuum*, a leadership model that supports youth in the process of becoming agents of change. By providing youth with opportunities for meaningful engagement with issues that affect their schools and communities, youth develop skills which are the foundation for sustainable change.

Youth-Adult Partnership

The founding principle of UP for Learning and GTY is developing strong, equitable partnerships between youth and the adults around them. Youth-Adult Partnership (YAP) recognizes that both youth and adults bring valuable strengths to the table that the other does not have. Adults, often educators, bring a wealth of professional expertise to school redesign efforts, a systems level perspective, and a wide array of skills accrued over time. Youth hold a perspective of the learning experience adults cannot fully fathom, and have the wisdom, creativity, and proven capacity to partner in school remodeling efforts, ensuring its integrity. For youth, working closely with adults toward shared goals fosters the skills and confidence for lifelong learning and civic engagement. For adults, working closely with youth creates the opportunity to learn from the insights and unique perspectives of youth, often renewing their professional sense of purpose as they shift teaching toward more student-centered practices. Based on this concept, GTY works best with 1-2 advisors present alongside the youth in any given GTY team.

Seed to Tree



Positive Youth Development

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a framework that outlines the supports young people need in order to be healthy and successful. PYD emphasizes the importance of focusing on strengths instead of risk factors.

The Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, a collaboration of 12 federal departments and agencies that support youth, defines PYD as:

. . . an intentional, pro-social approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances youths' strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths.

Youth Participatory Action Research

Using Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), people try to improve the world by first understanding it and then working to change it. This type of research is based on a cycle of inquiry (asking questions) and action (doing something about it). It's different from traditional research because traditional research doesn't necessarily include an action step.

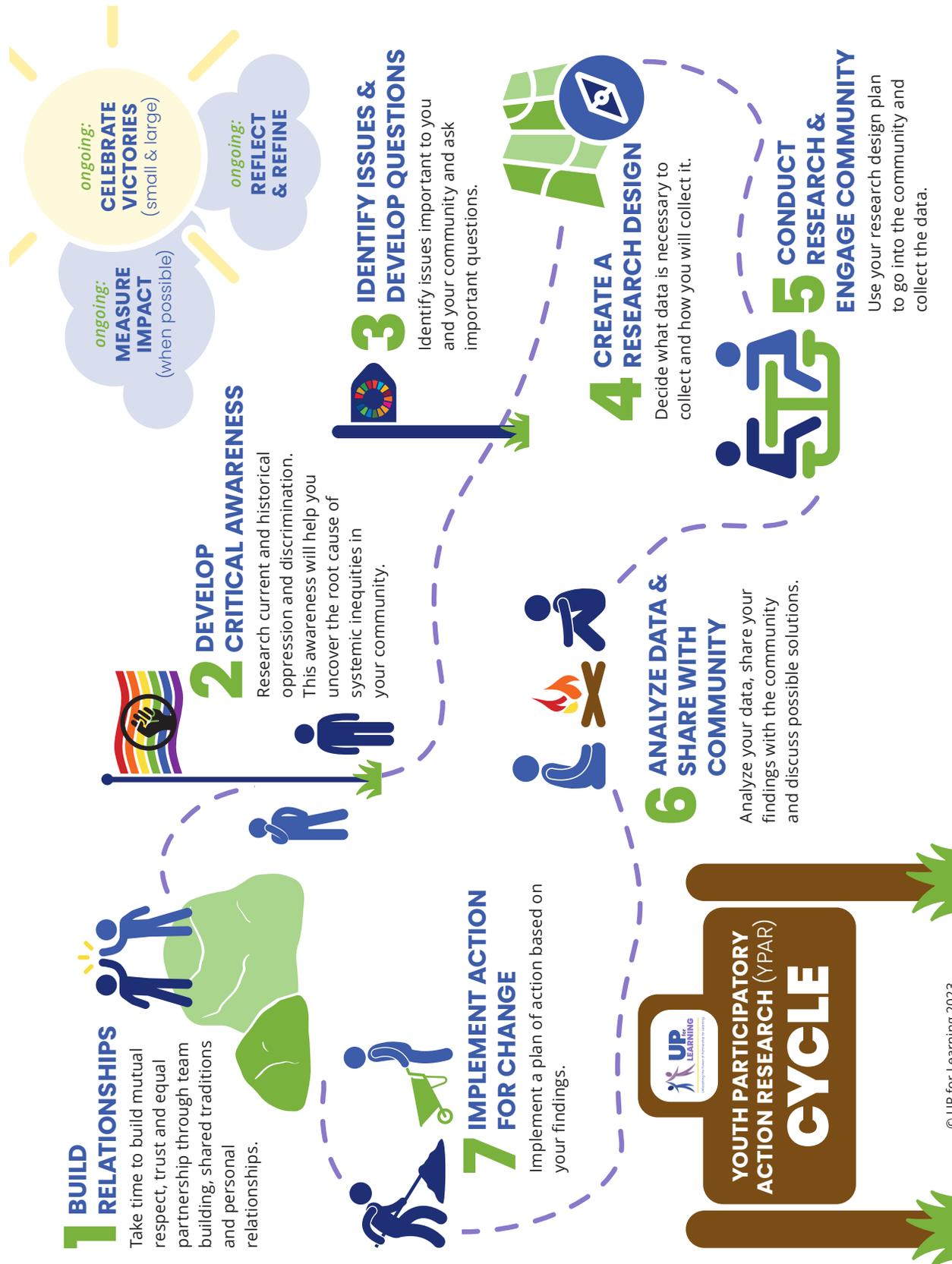
Traditional research also involves passive participants, or "subjects" who provide information, or data, but does not involve them in the analysis or interpretation of the data. In YPAR, the youth who are being researched are the ones who are involved in analyzing the data and putting it into action.

"Action research involves gathering information about an issue or problem, analyzing the findings, and developing practical plans for effecting positive change. . . . Change is expected to happen as a result of the research."

—Matthew Goldwasser, PhD

The process looks like this (see next page):

YPAR Trailmap



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GTY in six steps!

ATTEND TRAINING

1-2 adults and up to 10 students from your school or community attend a Regional Training in the fall and learn how to organize the following events.



CONDUCT THE DATA ANALYSIS RETREAT

Student leaders and up to 20 peers (or more!) they have recruited analyze the YRBS data from their school, district, supervisory union, or county. Leaders will summarize their findings in a short document, called an Executive Summary, with strengths and areas of concern identified during the event.



PLAN AND CONDUCT THE COMMUNITY DIALOGUE EVENT

Share your interpretations of the data with community members, tell them your ideas, get their input, and learn about the resources available around you. Brainstorm action plans together.



FINALIZE A PLAN OF ACTION AND MAKE IT HAPPEN

Meet together to debrief your events, finalize your vision, prioritize next steps, assign tasks, and start making the changes you want to make in your school and community, based on your analysis and discussions.



REFLECT AND CELEBRATE!

Your last GTY meeting will be a celebration! There'll be time to reflect on lessons learned throughout the year and celebrate everything you've done.



KEEP IT MOVING

Get younger students involved during the next year, keep adults who agreed to help involved in realizing action plans, and take a lead role the next time the YRBS is administered at your school, making sure your peers know how important it is. Invite more students to become involved!



TIP: Take pictures through each phase of the action cycle to **document** your work. These photos can be shared with your local paper or school newsletter, and will be featured in UP for Learning's annual Getting to 'Y' newsletter!"



Facilitators & leaders

Conducting the data analysis and the community dialogue event will involve facilitating discussions with students and adults. It can be challenging, but it's an improvable skill!

A facilitator makes sure that progress gets made toward getting the group's task done. They make sure:

- the goal is clear
- the group stays on task
- issues are explored thoroughly before moving on
- progress is tracked and recorded



A facilitator is also responsible for maintaining a safe and supportive process. They ensure that:

- everyone is heard who wants to speak
- differing views are honored and considered
- conflict is identified and addressed in a positive way
- all interactions are respectful

Good facilitation requires using the following strategies:

- co-create group agreements to establish a safe environment
- ask open-ended questions
- watch for verbal and nonverbal cues
- focus on one issue at a time
- summarize what is said and check it out with the group
- restate or paraphrase what you hear someone saying
- help the group stay on task
- stay neutral and nonjudgmental
- model good communication
- seek consensus — see if everyone agrees with what is being said
- don't be afraid of silence—it encourages others to talk

A self assessment for evaluating individual skills in facilitation and a couple of activities to practice are available in [Appendix 2, pages 110–114](#).

Further inclusion & opportunity

Being part of the GTY program will give you the chance to build important skills like speaking up in front of others, leading and working with groups, exploring equity and social justice issues, and taking a project from start to finish. These are skills you can carry with you anywhere — in school, work, and beyond.

You may discover that you're not only building these skills, but also enjoying the process! Here are some ways to keep contributing to change while continuing to grow yourself:

- **Step into leadership roles with your GTY team!** – Volunteer, volunteer, volunteer! Practice makes progress! Continue to build your skills by volunteering to plan and facilitate as much as you can for the Data Analysis Retreat, the Community Dialogue Event, and/or the Action project as time allows.
- **Establish a GTY Club at your school** (if you don't have one already) – Clubs often have access to meeting time, designated spaces, and promotion through a school's appearance on their website. Founding a club with your GTY advisor or school administrator is a great way to guarantee that your work continues after this year. Many teams continue taking action year-after-year, but it takes structure and student leadership to make that happen!
- **Apply to be a Youth Intern with UP** – Your expertise with participating in the GTY program for at least a year can help us improve the materials we give to teams, the training we facilitate, and the monthly meetings we host. Not to mention, UP has plenty of other programs, all focused on equity and elevating and empowering youth voices, that you may have the opportunity to get involved with at your school and beyond.



Data: Do students tell the truth on the YRBS?

Most students tell the truth. Even if some students do not answer honestly, we have confidence in the YRBS data. Here's why:

SURVEY ENVIRONMENT

- Survey administration procedures are designed to protect the confidentiality of schools and the anonymity of students.
- The people who give the survey, usually teachers, are asked not to wander about the classroom while the students are taking the survey.
- Students are told the importance of providing honest answers, that no one will know how they respond, and how the data will be used to improve programs and policies for students.
- Make-ups are done only when the privacy of students can be protected.

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN AND CONTENT

- The YRBS questionnaire is designed to protect the anonymity of students.
- No names or other types of personally identifying information are ever requested.
- Skip patterns (like saying "if your answer is no, then skip to question 3") are not used, to make sure all students complete the questionnaire in about the same amount of time. If skip patterns were used, some students who engaged in few risk behaviors would complete the questionnaire far faster than those who engaged in many risk behaviors. All students are expected to answer every question.
- The YRBS questionnaire has about a sixth-grade reading level. This helps students understand the questions and response options. The total number of questions is kept low to ensure that students have enough time to respond to every question. Questions are written in a straightforward, direct manner and require only one response.

PSYCHOMETRIC TESTING/RESEARCH

- A series of tests have been conducted on the YRBS to understand the quality of the survey and the data it collects.
- Based on data available, the YRBS data appear to be both reliable and valid.
- When the YRBS questionnaire was developed, it was tested in a cognitive laboratory setting, in focus groups, and in regular classrooms among diverse groups of students.
- In 1992, a reliability study was conducted to measure the stability of responses during a two week interval.
- Independent researchers (not associated with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention) have also conducted their own studies and tests using the YRBS questionnaire and similar questions.

COMPARISON OF THE YRBS DATA WITH DATA FROM OTHER SURVEYS

- When the YRBS results are compared to the results from other surveys on the same topics, the results are generally quite similar — particularly when you consider differences in how the survey is administered, how the sample is chosen, and how the questions are worded.

CONSISTENCY OVER TIME

- YRBS results have been fairly consistent since 1990. While the prevalence of some behaviors has increased or decreased significantly over time, most changes have been gradual and in one direction, either up or down, and have not bounced around from year to year.

SUBGROUP DIFFERENCES

- Subgroup differences are logical and have remained generally constant over time. For example, many behaviors like drug use and sexual experience consistently increase by grade, while others like physical fighting consistently decrease by grade. Other behaviors vary consistently by identity factors like gender, race and ethnicity. For instance, as of 2023, female-identifying and LGBTQ+ students were more likely than their peers to engage in most substance use behaviors.*

EDIT CHECKS

- YRBS data are edited for inconsistent responses.
- More than 100 edit checks are conducted on each YRBS data set to remove inconsistent responses. For example, students who report carrying a weapon on school property also must have reported carrying a weapon anywhere. Otherwise, responses to both questions will be deleted. Only a very small percentage of responses to each question are identified as inconsistent and removed from the data sets.
- Questionnaires with only a few valid responses are removed entirely from the data set (though this rarely happens).

LOGIC WITHIN GROUPS OF QUESTION

- Questions on similar topics produce logical responses. For example, more students have thought about attempting suicide than have made a plan to attempt suicide. Fewer still have actually attempted suicide, and very few have made an attempt that resulted in a serious injury.

HEALTH OUTCOMES DATA

- YRBS results are consistent with health outcome data. For example, YRBS data from the past decade indicate that the prevalence of sexual experience is decreasing, and the prevalence of condom use is increasing. During this same time period, decreases in teen pregnancies, teen births, and sexually transmitted disease rates among adolescents also occurred.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Summary & Trends Report: 2013–2023*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2024.

Data gaps and How to fill them

While the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) has plenty of trusted information about youth behaviors, there may still be some gaps in information for your specific school or community that you want to know more about.

FOCUS GROUPS

After your Data Analysis retreat, you might realize that you are missing a valuable perspective. For example, a lack of data around 9th graders, or masculine-identifying individuals, BIPOC students, or athletes. That's when organizing a focus group comes in handy. Conducting a focus group is a great first step for your team to gain more insight and information about your data. You can find more information about organizing a focus group in [Appendix 2, page 120–121!](#)

SCHOOL CLIMATE SURVEYS

Some schools may use their School Climate Survey to assess student, parent/guardian, and school staff perceptions of how the school is doing. You can work with your administrators to gain access to this data, if it has not already been shared with you, to fill in some gaps you might encounter on the YRBS.

LOCAL COMMUNITY SURVEYS

It can be helpful to look at data that your community has already gathered through surveys that happen in your area. Perhaps you took a Community Wellness survey. If you're looking to fill in some data gaps, it's a good idea to talk with local Prevention Coalitions, hospitals, public health centers, and local Department of Health representatives to discover what community surveys they use or administer themselves.

DESIGN A QUESTIONNAIRE

If none of the above areas fill in the gap you're trying to fill in the YRBS data, it's time to create a survey of your own! While you won't have all the checks and verifiability of an official survey, a collection of your school or community's thoughts can meaningfully direct your action project to be more effective. You can find a guide to creating one in our Digital Resource hub, [linked at the beginning of Appendix 1 on page 87!](#)

Filling in data gaps may be something your team decides to do instantly after analyzing the YRBS, or even in the second year of GTY, after you've implemented some action plans and evaluate how much you've done for the community, and what more you can do!

Youth make a difference

Youth CAN make a difference in the health of their community. Never underestimate your ability to make a difference in your school, community and world. Even just one individual can do good and make the world a better place, even if it's just little things like picking up random bits of trash, being kind to someone, visiting an elder, or doing volunteer work.

Now imagine lots of people working toward the same goal. In GTY, you'll have a chance to work with other youth — and adults — who also want to make a difference. When you work together to plan and then act, you can accomplish great things. Flip through this manual and you'll find plenty of examples of just that!

At the end of this project, you'll have a better sense of the issue you want to take on and discover who else in your school and community—both students and adults—share your interest and want to take action.



“Being young is a great advantage, since we see the world from a new perspective and we are not afraid to make radical changes.”

—Greta Thunberg

FEATURED TEAM FROM THE GTY NEWSLETTER

Mount Mansfield Union High School

Jericho, Vermont

The Project All Together Now team at MMUHS has embraced the Getting to 'Y' program as a springboard for informed, in-depth conversations about their community—alongside their community. They began by organizing a collaborative discussion with the MMU Student Assistance Program (SAP) counselor, the Burlington VDH Prevention Consultant, and Project All Together Now staff to review concerns surfaced in the YRBS survey data, as well as other sources like the 2024 All Together Now Feedback Survey and the 2024 Vermont Young Adult Survey.

Building on that foundation, the team used Getting to 'Y' activities to engage a larger group of students in reflecting on the school's Hazing, Harassment, and Bullying Policy. Inspired by what they have learned, the team is eager to follow up with district leadership to co-create next year's activities and continue building a stronger, more inclusive school community.



Mount Mansfield Union High School team members

Sponsored by United Way

Northwest: Our mission is to build a stronger Northwest Vermont by mobilizing our community to improve people's lives. United Way isn't just our name - it's how we work. We bring together individuals, nonprofits, businesses, and government entities to fight for a strong, vibrant, and healthy community. We fight for the education, financial stability and health of every person in Chittenden, Franklin and Grand Isle counties.



Sponsored also by Project All Together Now: Project All Together Now is a youth led nonprofit organization which ded-

icates itself to promote equitable mental health and well being. We are rooted in collaboration across our community, and our mission is to provide resources and support to youth that empower them to thrive. We provide services or activities that are open to all people in the target population for those services or activities, without regard to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, military status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, ancestry, ability, or any category protected by law.



CONCERNS

42% of female-identifying students and **52% of LGBTQ students** reported that their mental health was most of the time or always not good (compared to 19% of male-identifying students and 21% heterosexual/cisgender)

21% of students report that someone has ever done sexual things to them that they did not want (**33% female-identifying** students, **11% of male-identifying** students, **36% LGBTQ** students, **16% heterosexual/cisgender** students)

10% of students would most likely have someone to talk to other than a family member to get help

30% of students don't feel like they matter to their community

part 2

Data Analysis Retreat



- 25** What is a Data Analysis Retreat?
- 26** Planning your retreat
- 28** Recruitment strategies
- 29** What will we be doing?
 - 30** *Get things started*
 - 32** *Find your strength*
 - 34** *Check out the data*
 - 42** *Root out the causes*
 - 43** *Suggest solutions*
 - 45** *Plan for action*
 - 48** *Wrap it all up*
- 50** Executive summary
- 51** Tips & tricks from teams

What is a Data Analysis Retreat?

The Data Analysis Retreat (DAR) is an opportunity for a diverse group of youth and adult participants from your school or community to dig deeply into the YRBS data and figure out what matters. This process, co-facilitated by trained GTY youth and adult facilitators, is an ambitious task for one day. There is a large amount of data and many topics to consider in a short amount of time. Add to that mix the additional challenge that this is a diverse group of students, who often do not know each other, talking about core aspects of their lives.

THE GOALS OF THE DATA ANALYSIS RETREAT ARE:

- To have youth **analyze their school's most recent YRBS data**
- To identify what youth believe are the **top strengths and concerns** in the data
- To discuss **root causes of concern** in the data
- To determine **potential solutions**



OUTCOMES

Outcomes are changes, benefits, or other effects that happen as a result of your work. As outcomes of the Data Analysis Retreat, participants might:

- **Gain a better understanding of the assets and strengths** in their school and community
- **Develop skills** in data analysis and interpretation
- **Challenge their own perceptions** about youth health in their school and community
- **Begin to shape ideas about future actions** to positively impact their community

Planning your retreat

So, you're going to plan an event. There are a lot of things to think about and prepare ahead of time. You'll need to work together to decide on the details of your event. You'll need to think about...

REMEMBER YOUR TRAINING

At training, before your Data Analysis retreat, you'll learn about how to facilitate activities, analyze data with a team, and may even receive materials to use. Review what you learned with your team as you plan the retreat to make your retreat work for your particular region.

LOCATION! LOCATION! LOCATION!

Think about where you want to hold your event. You'll need a space large enough for 25–30 people, with room for everyone to get up and do group activities. It's important that the space is available for your use during the entire event.

Some suggestions:

- a large conference room at a local nonprofit or your school district office
- a big classroom at a local college or university
- a community center
- a conference center or hotel meeting space (expensive, but great if they're available)
- the library

FOOD

Brain work can make you very hungry. It's a good idea to have snacks available throughout the day, and it's a wonderful idea to provide lunch for the retreat. Keep in mind that some people don't eat meat, and others may have food allergies.

PERMISSION

If you hold your retreat during school, you'll need to check with your local school officials (most likely the principal) to make sure students are allowed to attend. Check with a trusted adult at your school to find out what permissions you'll need.

TRANSPORTATION

If you're holding your event off school campus, you'll need to decide how everyone will get there and back home again. Will you bus everyone from the school to the event, then back? Will people need to get a ride or carpool? If you'll need school bus service, plan to arrange for this well in advance of your event.

FIDGETS

Your group will be doing a lot of hard mental work in one day. It's nice to provide fidgets — small objects people can manipulate with their hands — because some people pay attention better when they're moving. Chenille sticks are a great choice.



TIP: *Seems like a lot to remember? Don't worry, there's a planning checklist in Appendix 1, pages 91–93.*



Recruitment strategies

GTY depends on the input from a diverse group of students, but recruiting them can be challenging. While seeking out students to join the data analysis, try to keep in mind what diversity looks like at your school and what perspectives are missing on your team.

Ask yourself:

- Will there be Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) youth at our Data Analysis Retreat?
- Will there be youth with different abilities?
- Will there be youth who have not had a chance to share their wisdom with the community?
- Will there be a mix of genders, grades, and social groups represented at our Data Analysis Retreat?
- Are there a variety of perspectives represented at our Data Analysis Retreat?
- Have we ensured that there are no barriers to participation?

Try to recruit students from a variety of social groups, but don't make recruits feel like they are just filling a quota. Make your invitation to join the analysis event personal. If you are nervous, practice saying it aloud first. It is also a good idea to have a flyer on hand to give them. This can inform them about the basics about the project, and can remind them about it if they forget.

Good example of recruitment



Hi, Sophia. I know we are not really friends, but I had a good time with you in English last year and I was thinking you might be interested in the GTY project. We could use someone with your sense of humor at our data analysis retreat, plus we'll have good food there. Think about it!

Bad example of recruitment



Hey, David, you don't do anything after school. You should come to this GTY event because it'll be good for you to touch some grass, and I'm supposed to bring a whole bunch of people anyway.

OTHER IDEAS & CONSIDERATIONS:

- Ask teachers which students they think would make good recruits. Encourage them to think beyond those who often participate in activities, and to consider any student whose perspective would be valuable and/or who would benefit from getting involved in this project.
- Offer good food and a comfortable setting, preferably off school grounds. Make these the most visible components of your event flyer!
- Check with the principal to make sure they will advocate with the teachers for a "release day" for the students—even if they are struggling in class.
- See if your school can offer community service credit for involvement in the day.
- Send out personal invitations, followed up by a letter that 1) describes the importance of their involvement, and 2) is signed by someone you think the students will respect.

What will we be doing?

A Data Analysis Retreat consists of seven steps. Here they are:



1 GET THINGS STARTED

You start the day by telling everyone **why they're here, what you hope to accomplish** during the retreat, and **why it's important**. You'll also set out group agreements for the day, and ask everyone to agree to be respectful and honest throughout the retreat.



2 FIND YOUR STRENGTH

Too often, people focus on what's wrong with their community or themselves. **Start from strengths**.



3 CHECK OUT THE DATA

You'll help the retreat participants examine the YRBS data. In this activity, groups will look for **things to be proud of and things to be worried about**.



4 ROOT OUT THE CAUSES

You'll help participants identify the **root causes** behind the areas of concern they've found in the data.



5 SUGGEST SOLUTIONS

You'll help participants **brainstorm possible solutions** based on their discussions of root causes.



6 PLAN FOR ACTION

After identifying root causes, the group will draw on individual and community strengths that they've already identified to figure out ways to address those root causes and potentially **solve the problems** they see in the data.



7 WRAP IT ALL UP

It's been a long day. To wrap up, the group will take another look at everything they've accomplished. **Discuss what you've learned, share what you think about it, and celebrate!**

There are also things to do before the retreat and things to do afterward. We'll be looking at all of these in the next pages.

1. Get things started

PREPARE THE AGENDA

Before the event, run through your agenda and make sure everyone knows who's facilitating what, what materials are needed and who's bringing them, and that each activity has enough time allotted. It's a good idea to print copies for all the facilitators to have at the event. There's a sample agenda in [Appendix 1, pages 94–97](#).



TIP: *It's a good idea to practice any part of the agenda that you're facilitating out loud before the event! You can do that in a meeting, with a friend or family member, or by yourself in front of a mirror.*

SET UP THE ROOM

Make sure that there is a place for everyone to sit. It's a good idea to set up the tables in a large circle or in a U shape, so everyone can see each other. Make sure there is enough room for people to stand up and move around, too. Set out any snacks and drinks in an obvious location so that people will have access to them throughout the event.

LAY OUT MATERIALS

Set up for your presentations before people arrive. You'll need these materials:

- name tags
- markers and pens
- chenille sticks or other "fidget" items
- large paper (like newsprint, chart paper, etc.)
- projector equipment for a PowerPoint presentation
- handouts for the day



TIP: *Put handouts together into a folder for each participant a few days before your retreat. It will help keep everything organized for them — and for you!*

GREET EVERYONE

When students arrive, they will need your guidance to know what to do and where to go. Welcome everyone when they come in, show them where the snacks are, and let them know where to sit.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

Once everyone has arrived, you (the student leaders) should welcome them all to the event and introduce yourselves. Let everyone have an opportunity to introduce themselves. Ask people to say their name and pronouns (if they are comfortable sharing), what grade they are in, and something else — like what their favorite food is, or what their name means.

Adding something like this to the introductions will help people begin to feel comfortable in the group, and will also let them express something unique about themselves. Here are some other ideas:

- one place you've always wanted to visit
- one thing that makes you feel happy
- your dream breakfast
- your most interesting hobby
- your goal for the day

ICEBREAKER

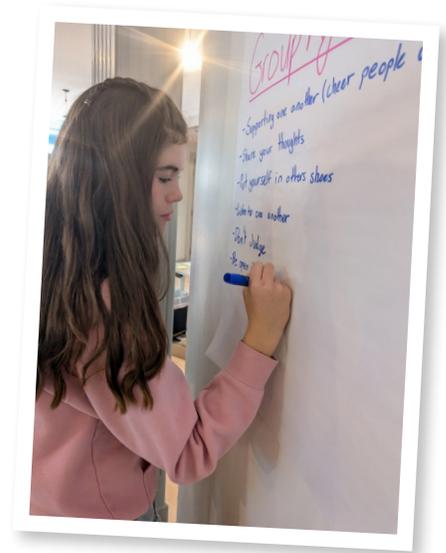
Once everyone is introduced, play a quick icebreaker game. You can find some great icebreaker suggestions in [Appendix 2, starting on page 124](#).

AGENDA & GROUP AGREEMENTS

After your ice breaker activity, it's time to get to work! Go over the day's agenda with the participants and let them know why they are there, and what they will accomplish during the retreat.

You can either go through the Group Agreements protocol on [page 116](#), or to save time, you can draft some group agreements beforehand and have everyone vote on them. The latter is described below.

Go through the rules one by one, and ask the group to show their commitment to them. You can use a "thumbs-up, thumbs-down, thumbs-to-the-side" approach, where everyone gives a thumbs-up if they agree that the rule is something they will do for the day, a thumbs-down if it's not, and a thumb to the side if the person has a question about the rule or wants to talk it through.



If anyone disagrees with a rule, the group should discuss why, and make any changes that are necessary. Reinforce the importance of the dialogue focusing on issues, not people, and why this is critical to creating safety and a productive dialogue. Keep the final version of the rules up on a piece of flipchart paper throughout the day.

There are some sample group agreements in [Appendix 1, page 100](#)

DESCRIBE THE PROJECT

You may want to write down talking points to help you explain the YRBS and the purpose of the day using information from the sections "What is the YRBS?" and "What are the Goals of GTY?" on [pages 9 and 10](#).

2. Find your strength

When thinking about health and wellbeing, it is important to look not only at risk-taking behaviors, but also to include asset factors. Assets are positive attributes that may reduce risk-taking behaviors. These can be external factors like having teachers that really care about you and give you encouragement, or internal factors like having a good sense of humor.

The media tends to focus on only those instances where young people have not made the best choices. They paint a false picture of youth, most of whom make great choices every day. The GTY project provides an opportunity to identify and highlight this fact.

We also know that change based on identifying and building on strengths (not just focusing on what is wrong) is far more likely to be successful. A strengths-based approach instills hope and energizes a community to rally for change.

ACTIVITY: CIRCLE OF COURAGE®

To get your group thinking about the strengths in your school or community, we suggest using the Circle of Courage®. By the end of this activity, you'll have a complete circle of strengths to reflect back on throughout the Data Analysis Retreat.

Setting up

You'll want 4 big pieces of paper all roughly the same size. Line up the four pieces to form a rough square and draw one big circle, cutting off as little of the corners as possible to maximize room for writing inside the circle. You can see an example of the finished project in the pictures. Label each quadrant with the following core values: Mastery, Generosity, Independence, and Belonging.

Tape these circle quadrants up on the wall or on a table in four different places within the room. Place some markers nearby for people to write with.

To help out your participants, it's a good idea to print out the descriptions of each value for them to read at each station. You can find these print outs on [page 115](#).

How it works

The facilitator(s) should provide some context around what the Circle of Courage® is, and where it comes from:

- The Circle of Courage® is a model of youth empowerment supported by contemporary research, the practical wisdom of early youth work pioneers and indigenous philosophies of child care.
- The model contains 4 core values that all people need for healthy development: independence, generosity, mastery, and belonging. The central theme is that a set of shared values must exist in any community to create environments that ultimately benefit everyone. In order to have a healthy life, all four parts of the circle must be in balance. If one piece of the circle is missing, healthy development is not possible.

- Review the 4 core values descriptions below or from the Data Analysis Retreat slides. Possibly invite participants to read the slides.

To run the activity, the facilitator(s) should start by having participants count off 1, 2, 3, 4 around the room. Send each group to one of the 4 core value circle quadrants. Once everyone is settled, give participants their instructions:

- Each group will have five minutes at their stations to write about the ways their school and community support the value at that station.
- Then we will sound the chime and everyone should all move clockwise to the next station.
- Tell them you'll do this four times, until everyone has visited every station.

Don't forget to have someone keep track of time and rotate people every five minutes!

When all participants have visited all four quadrants, have them form a semi-circle around a spot on the wall, floor, or table designated for the circle. Assemble the quadrants into a full circle on the wall. Ask participants to share their opinions about this activity:

- What stood out about this activity?
- Do you see any themes coming up in our Circle of Courage?
- Why might it be important to start work as changemakers by identifying strengths?



3. Check out the data

READING THE REPORT

It's important for you and your retreat participants to know how to interpret what you see in the YRBS report. These next few pages will give you an idea of what you'll find in the report. It's recommended that you use school district or supervisory union (SU) level data when possible, but your county data can be an option if more local data is not available to you.

The way the YRBS looks varies by state because different Health Departments favor different formats and information. Below you'll find a few examples, but keep in mind that yours may look a little different. Don't hesitate to ask your local UP for Learning staff member or Health Department representative for more information.

Sample high school report page (VT)

2023 VERMONT YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY
[union name] High School Results

Unintentional Injuries and Prevention

	VT	SU/SD	F	M	9-10	11-12	LGBTQ	HetCis	BIPOC	WnH	IEP	noIEP
Rarely or never wore a helmet when they rode a bicycle or skateboard or rollerbladed, among those who rode a bicycle or skateboard or rollerbladed, past year	42	21 *	19	24	18	25 +	22	21	.	22	.	19
Had a concussion from playing a sport or being physically active, past year	18	17	17	17	16	18	17	17	.	18	.	15

	VT	SU/SD	F	M	9-10	11-12	LGBTQ	HetCis	Row Percent	WnH	IEP	noIEP
Had at least one sunburn, past year	72	82 *	84	80	81	83	80	83	.	88	.	84
Most of the time or always wear sunscreen when outside for at least one hour	32	41	51	30 *	40	42	45	38	.	42	.	41

. = Too few students to report; from younger students * = Statistical differences between groups; # = Significantly increases/decreases with each grade level; + = Older students significantly different



TIP: This section highlights information in your own SU or county data.



TIP: This indicates that there were too few students in this category to report.

Sample middle school report page (VT)

2023 VERMONT YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY
[Union name] Middle School Results

Unintentional Injuries and Prevention

	VT	SU/SD	F	M	6th	7th	8th	LGBTQ	HetCis	BIPOC	WnH
Rarely or never wore a bicycle helmet, among students who had ridden a bicycle	27	8 *	8	9	.	10	9	10	9	.	6
Rarely or never wore a helmet when rollerblading or skateboarding, among students who used rollerblades or rode a skateboard	30	19 *	15
Had a concussion from playing a sport or being physically active, past year	17	17	11	25 *	12	26	15	12	21	.	17

	VT	SU/SD	F	M	6th	7th	8th	LGBTQ	HetCis	BIPOC	WnH
Had a sunburn, past year	62	69 *	71	66	71	61	75	65	69	.	74
Most of the time or always wear sunscreen	42	56 *	61	51 *	58	58	53	55	57	.	59

. = Too few students to report; * = Statistical differences between groups; # = Significantly increases/decreases with each grade level





TIP: This compares results of Heterosexual/Cisgender (Het/Cis) and LGBTQ+ students.



TIP: This compares results of White, non-Hispanic students (WnH) and Black, Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC).

Physical Inactivity and Unhealthy Dietary Behaviors: Percent of students who spent three or more hours per day on screen time

	Capital		State	
	Percent	95% Confidence Interval	Percent	95% Confidence Interval
Total				
Total	77.1	(74.3 - 79.8)	77.6	(76.7 - 78.6)
Sex				
Female				
Male	78.2	(74.3 - 81.7)	79.4	(78.2 - 80.6)
Race/Ethnicity¹				
American Indian or Alaska Native	-	-	61.0	(47.5 - 73.3)
Asian	-	-	76.1	(70.5 - 81.1)
Black or African American	-	-	73.7	(66.8 - 79.8)
Hispanic/Latino	69.4	(55.4 - 81.3)	76.5	(73.1 - 79.7)
Multiple races	81.5	(68.7 - 90.7)	78.5	(73.7 - 82.8)
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	-	-	-	-
White	77.8	(75.0 - 80.4)	78.2	(77.1 - 79.3)
Grade				
09th				
10th	75.8	(71.0 - 80.2)	77.8	(76.0 - 79.5)
11th	77.5	(73.0 - 81.6)	78.4	(76.4 - 80.3)
12th	76.7	(71.3 - 81.5)	76.7	(74.9 - 78.4)
Academic performance				
A's				
B's	73.1	(69.0 - 76.9)	75.8	(74.3 - 77.4)
C's	79.4	(75.5 - 83.0)	78.8	(77.3 - 80.3)
D's/F's	83.9	(78.0 - 88.7)	79.5	(76.8 - 82.0)
Sexual identity				
Gay, lesbian or bisexual	78.0	(65.0 - 87.9)	82.4	(78.3 - 86.0)
Heterosexual	86.4	(81.6 - 90.4)	83.9	(82.0 - 85.8)
Other/questioning ²	75.0	(71.2 - 78.4)	76.4	(75.2 - 77.6)
	80.7	(71.0 - 88.2)	82.4	(79.6 - 84.9)



TIP: Experts in statistics estimate the exact percentage by using the average of a range. In this report, statisticians are 95% sure the real percentage is within this range (which is really good—100% confidence is nearly impossible in real life). A wider range means statisticians are less certain, often due to factors like mistakes in reporting or unclear questions.

THINKING LIKE A RESEARCHER

GET READY: This is a lot harder than you think!

When analyzing YRBS data, it is important to set aside personal beliefs or expectations about the survey questions. This is an opportunity to understand a wide mix of opinions. The results may be quite different from your own beliefs and experiences — or not. Even if answers seem similar to what you believe, remember it may be for very different reasons!

When looking at relationships between different questions on the YRBS, it is important to remember that because we ask the questions at the same time, we can only ever think of questions as correlated with each other, and never as one causing the other.

For example, students in 12th grade are more likely to report smoking cigarettes than students in 9th grade. Being a 12th-grader does not cause a student to start smoking, rather as students get older, they are more likely to smoke (a correlation).

Why is this so important? Let's think about marijuana use and suicide attempts. Students who use marijuana 10 or more times in the past month are more likely to also report attempting suicide. But, we cannot say that marijuana use causes suicide attempts. It is possible that the suicide attempt caused the marijuana use. Or, it is possible that something we did not measure, like depression, caused both the suicide attempt and the marijuana use. So, when interpreting relationships between questions, remember the difference between correlation and causation!

Correlation: When two or more things or events tend to occur at about the same time and might be associated with each other, but aren't necessarily connected by a cause/effect relationship.

Causation: When one event can be proven to be the direct result of the another event.

THINKING ABOUT EQUITY

You may try your best to recruit a diverse and representative team of students for the Data Analysis Retreat, but hardly ever can we have a perfect representation of our community. Our differences mean that we have different experiences in how we navigate the world, how people treat us, what problems and solutions look like in practice, and so on. It's important that we try to be as unbiased as we can in interpreting the data we look at.

What is equity?

United Way defines equity as “meeting community members where they are by providing resources that are proportionate to what they need to thrive.” (unitedwaynca.org/blog/equity-and-social-justice) But what does that really mean?



If we imagine that everyone in the world was lining up for a race, there'd be a starting line. According to the rules, everyone would line up right behind the starting line and wait for the signal to start running.

Although we assume everyone would be lined up behind the starting line, the truth is that due to circumstance, injustice, oppressive structures, or many other cases outside of one person's control, some people are starting way further back from the starting line than others. Other people may have rushed to get right behind the starting line, but didn't have the time or resources to get good running shoes, and will inevitably fall behind. Some might miss the starting signal, because they have to stop and tie their shoe, and it'd be worse in the long run if they didn't.

Equity means finding a way to bring everyone to the starting line, with everything they need, so that they can participate to the best of their ability and have the opportunity to thrive alongside someone else. It's not about raising certain people up over others, or giving everyone the same help. It's about meeting everyone where they are at.

How do I look at data from an equitable perspective?

The first step is to have as representative of a team as you can possibly have, because the people who experience inequity are going to be the ones who can best identify the gaps and how to address them.

When looking at the data, we should ask ourselves the following questions:

- Which perspectives from your school or community might not be represented in this team?
- How can we consider all students in this work to change schools?
- How are we centering the voices of those most historically oppressed when considering the actions we might want to take to create a healthier and more just world?

ANALYZE!

The data analysis activity is really several activities in one. The data analysis portion of the retreat gives participants an opportunity to examine portions of the YRBS report and determine the strengths and concerns in your school.

Setting up

The YRBS reports separate the data into topic areas — substance use, sexual activity, mental health, and so on. To set up for this activity, post the name of each YRBS topic area at different stations around the room. At each station, provide a pen, pencil or marker, and the YRBS data. You can cut the original report into strips (and label or explain the different sections). Or you can take some time before the event to sort your data into strips using the digital template linked at the beginning of [Appendix 1, at the bottom of page 87](#).

How it works

Have each participant choose the topic they are most interested in, and go stand at that station. (You'll need at least two people per station — if you can't get two or more for a station, don't use that station.) Once everyone is in place, have the groups at each station examine the YRBS data strips there. Each group should go over each question in their report. As a group, they should decide whether this question is a **strength**, a **concern**, or a **neutral**. Tell them to record their decisions onto the strips by writing **S**, **C**, or **N** accordingly.

- **It's a strength if...** the group believes this is a really good thing about your school. It reflects how young people at your school are making good decisions about their health and well-being. This is a statistic you are proud of. Also, it is a strength that may help you ultimately address areas of concern.
- **It's a concern if...** the group believes this is something that really needs to change to improve the health and well-being of young people at your school. It is something that either the students or someone else could influence within the limited time and resources available.
- **It's a neutral if...** the group believes this is not a notable strength, nor is it an area of concern right now. Given limited time and resources, this issue is not a priority for making your school a better place for all young people.

Once each station has labeled all their data, ask them to arrange the strips from their strongest strength to the most concerning concern. Remind everyone that they're looking for the strengths and concerns that are the most surprising, that makes them feel the most proud, or that they find the most troubling and are issues they feel they could impact.

 Question	VT	SU/SD	M	F	WnH	BIPOC	HetCis	LGBTQ+
In your community, you feel like you matter to people	89	95	91	90	91	89	92	90

 Question	VT	SU/SD	M	F	WnH	BIPOC	HetCis	LGBTQ+
There is at least one adult in my school that I can talk to if I have a problem	75	88	89	90	89	87	95	88

 Question	VT	SU/SD	M	F	WnH	BIPOC	HetCis	LGBTQ+
Spend 10 or more hours participating in afterschool activities, typical week	65	66	69	66	66	66	70	60

 Question	VT	SU/SD	M	F	WnH	BIPOC	HetCis	LGBTQ+
Believe school has clear rules and consequences for behavior	75	52	45	50	55	31	54	42

Groups should circle certain statistics on the strip based on whether their strength or concern is related to differences between the state and school district/supervisory union, or connected to gender, race, or LGBTQ+ identity. Sometimes, the whole strip will be a strength or a concern.



REPORTING OUT

This activity builds on the previous one. All groups should still be at their topic stations.

Setting up

Set up for the reporting by putting two big sheets of paper on the wall. Write titles on them: STRENGTHS on one and CONCERNS on the other. You can also have these on slides and type directly into the presented slides as groups report out.

How it works

Ask each group, one at a time, to share their two strongest strengths (the two strips at the top). Always start with strengths! If their dataset was particularly difficult, some groups might only have one to share.

After they share, whoever you have stationed at the two big papers on the wall collect the data strips they read off of and tape them under the strength category. If you're working on slides, have someone type in their data point as they say it out loud.

Once you have all the strengths, go back around the room (in reverse order, if you want!) and ask teams to share their most concerning concerns (the two strips at the bottom of their arrangement).

Finally, number each item on the 'Strengths' list and use letters to label each item on the 'Concerns' list. This will be important for what comes next!



TIP: if you're working on Slides, pre-number and letter the strengths and concerns list so that it'll list them as you go!

STRENGTHS

Question	VT	SU/SD	M	F	WnH	BIPOC	HetCis	LGBTQ+
In your community, you feel like you matter to people	89	95	91	90	91	89	92	90

Question	VT	SU/SD	M	F	WnH	BIPOC	HetCis	LGBTQ+
There is at least one adult in my school that I can talk to if I have a problem	75	88	89	90	89	87	95	88



PRIORITIZING DATA

This next activity is all about prioritizing. From the strengths and concerns identified so far, the participants will be voting on their top three strengths and top three concerns. These will be the focus of the rest of the retreat.

Setting up

This activity continues from the previous one, so the STRENGTHS and CONCERNS posters from the previous activity should still be on display. Make sure each item on each sheet has been numbered or lettered (as described in the previous activity). The numbers will be used in the voting. Also, make sure you have a blank Voting Sheet for every participant. There's a Voting Sheet for copying in [Appendix 1, page 102](#).



TIP: *if you're short on time, use an online live poll to anonymously collect responses faster. Just be sure not to share the results until everyone has answered so that no one feels pressured to choose any one response.*

How it works

If voting on paper, hand out a Voting Sheet to each participant. Tell participants to vote for what they think are the top three strengths and top three concerns from the posters. They vote by writing down the number or letter of the item they're voting for (based on the numbers and letters you wrote on the posters).

- Voting for strengths: Encourage participants to vote for strengths that are most likely to have a significant impact on the concerns already identified.
- Voting for concerns: Encourage participants to vote for concerns they think they can address, given the strengths already identified.
- Given limited time and resources, what strengths and assets can you draw on to help make a difference?

After everyone has voted, collect the Voting Sheets (or have participants bring their Voting Sheets to you) and tally the votes. On the STRENGTHS and CONCERNS posters, circle (or highlight) the top three strengths and top three concerns.



TIP: *If you schedule the vote right before lunch, your leader team can tally up the results while everyone else is eating. That way, everyone will be ready to get right back to work after lunch.*

TIP: *If you have a group with under 20–25 people, and/or need to save time, consider using the Dotmocracy Protocol on [page 136](#) instead!*

4. Root out the causes

Once you have identified your top concerns, the next step in your analysis is to consider what the causes may be: the reasons why. Because we all have limited time and resources, we want to reach down to the root cause of each issue of concern and address that directly when we think about solutions and action plans.

A root cause analysis starts with putting your concern at the top and then brainstorming a range of possible causes for this concern. Check out the example shown here, analyzing a concern about prescription drug use.

ACTIVITY: ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS

Setting up

Take the top three concerns identified by the participants and write each one down at the top of a large piece of paper. Make a t-chart underneath the concern. We'll be writing the root causes on the left side of the t-chart (and saving the other side for later).



TIP: *If you kept the data slips from earlier, you can just tape them to the top of the paper instead of writing them out again!*

Place the papers at stations around the room. You can put them on the wall or set them on top of tables.

You'll also want each station to have colored markers, pens, or some other way for the participants to write on the papers. Brainstorming is about acting fast, so make sure it's easy to write down ideas.

How it works

Option 1: Have participants walk around the room and write their ideas for root causes on the papers at the different stations. To keep things moving, set a time limit at each station, and let people know if they can talk or if you want them to do the activity in silence.

Option 2: Alternatively, create smaller groups and have each group just work on one issue.

A root cause analysis might look like this:



<i>18% of students took prescription pain medicine without a prescription or differently than instructed by a doctor.</i>	
<i>People often have leftover medication in their homes</i>	
<i>Younger students think prescription drug use is common</i>	
<i>Parents are unaware that easy access to pain meds at home can promote use</i>	
<i>Youth don't know dangers of prescription drug abuse</i>	
<i>People don't think pain meds can be addictive</i>	

5. Suggest solutions

Once you have an idea why the issues of concern are happening, you can start thinking about possible solutions — actions you can take or recommendations you can make to change the concerning statistics. The key to brainstorming solutions is to dream big—this is not a time to think about feasibility, but about what could really address the problem at hand.

ACTIVITY: ADD SOLUTIONS TO THE ROOT CAUSES DIAGRAM

Setting up

This activity builds on the previous one. Leave the root causes diagrams in place. Place sticky-notes and make sure there are markers at all of the stations.

How it works

Have your participants go around the room again, stopping at each station and writing down ideas for solutions to the root causes that have been identified. Give participants sticky-notes or paper and tape to add their ideas on the right side of the t-chart, next to whichever cause they are addressing. Note: If you chose the small-group alternative, have them shift from root causes to solutions.

Remember: Solutions might include things students can do themselves and also things they can recommend. They all count as solutions. Don't forget to check your Circle of Courage® for solution ideas.

Brainstorming Solutions: Tell your group to go beyond the poster and assembly!

We want YOU to create lasting change by addressing the root causes of the issues identified in the YRBS data. Solutions should start with big ideas, hopes, and dreams. What would you do if you COULD? How would you change your school for the better? Think BIG! Don't hold back! Remove any barriers or impossibilities in your mind. For now, any idea or suggestion goes! Try not to focus on why you can't do something - only focus on what you want and hope for. No matter how big, radical, or impossible it may seem. Write it down and share it aloud!

While you might need more time to implement some of these ideas, you can work on building capacity towards those big ideas. Perhaps you can't change the policy that school begins at noon, but maybe you can improve the school schedule to be more youth-friendly and accommodating. This is where your 'Monday' plan comes in - the actionable steps you can take now to move towards your 'someday' idea. By breaking down your big idea into manageable steps, you can make it a reality. We'll work on those in the next section.

"What young brains lack in experience they sometimes make up for in idealism. Nothing seems impossible to them."

—Suzanne Collins, author of *The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes*

Sample Root Causes Analysis with Solutions Diagram

18% of students took prescription pain medicine without a prescription or differently than instructed by a doctor.

People often have leftover medication in their homes

Younger students think prescription drug use is common

Parents are unaware that easy access to pain meds at home can promote use

Youth don't know dangers of prescription drug abuse

People don't think pain meds can be addicting

Publicize Rx Take Back events in school announcements

write letters to local dentists and healthcare centers about reducing excess prescriptions

Share stats about how many students are actually using, and how many die

high school students talk to middle school students about this

Educate parents and students about the dangers of use

send home info about how to dispose of old prescriptions

Include prescription drug information in health class

Provide addiction information during open house night

6. Plan for action

Once groups have analyzed the data and identified root causes and potential solutions, the next step is moving to action to address the identified concern. This work can happen at the Data Analysis Retreat if you have time, but you can also start to work on it during your regular GTY meeting time before the Community Dialogue Event.

TYPES OF ACTION

Direct work

For example: talk to peers about an issue of concern. Actually, you've been taking action ever since you started GTY, reshaping how people think about the wisdom and capacity of young people as you roll out this initiative.

Educate others

For example: work with the health teacher to strengthen the part of their curriculum that covers this issue (maybe even share in teaching it); or host a parent/caregiver dialogue night about the issue.

Influence decision makers

For example: work with the police department or another community organization that is already working on the issue.

SETTING SMART GOALS

When you take action, you need to set out with a clear goal in mind. What do you want to accomplish? Setting a clear goal provides a clear marker by which you (and others) can measure your success. This also helps motivate people. Be SMART and consider these five attributes of a good goal:

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Relevant
Timed

Specific

Not “more students will wear seatbelts,” but “the percent of students who report wearing seatbelts will increase from 85% to 95%.”

Measurable

Making the goal specific also helps make it measurable. Is there a way to find out if your action got 90% of students to wear seatbelts?

Attainable

Be realistic about what you can accomplish. Going from 85% to 90% is definitely attainable. Going all the way to 100% is less likely. Note: Having attainable goals doesn't mean dreaming small! It might mean breaking a big goal into smaller steps, or expecting improvement over a longer period of time rather than immediately.

Relevant

Chances are, if the group identified an issue during the Data Analysis Retreat, it is relevant.

Timed

The goal must be timed so that it can be achieved by the group. How long will it take to work on this goal? Two months? A year? Ten years? Knowing your time frame will help you set goals that you will actually be able to accomplish.

ACTIVITY: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER — SMART GOALS

Setting up

This activity will use the same topic stations you created for the Analyze Data activity, so make sure your stations are still in place.

You'll need a blank Plan of Action form for each station. Place them at the stations before the activity begins. You'll find a Plan of Action form for copying in [Appendix 1, page 105](#).

How it works

Point out to the participants which of the topic stations contain the top three concerns, and have them form groups according to which of the concerns they would like to address.

Go over the Plan of Action form with the groups, showing them the five steps to filling out this form. You'll be leading them through the steps one at a time.

Name the issue: Give groups two to three minutes to write down the specific challenge they want to address. Encourage them to be specific! This will help make the action plan stronger.

Set a SMART goal: Next, give groups three to five minutes to set a SMART goal and write it in their Plan of Action.



TIP: Remember to reference your root causes analysis and solutions diagram.

Be SPECIFIC. Just wanting more students to eat more veggies is too vague. A better goal would be to increase the percentage of students eating veggies every day from 16% to a specific higher number.

Picking a percentage also makes the goal MEASURABLE.

The goal should be ATTAINABLE — improving from 16% to 100% would be great, and it would certainly be RELEVANT, but it's not likely to happen in a reasonable amount of TIME. So how about 33% as a goal, and one year as a time frame? That's double the current percent, and a third of your school's students.

Rally your strengths and choose courses of action: Next, give groups one to two minutes to brainstorm possible courses of action to address their concern and which of their strengths can be used to make a course of action happen. This fills in two fields on the Plan of Action at once, because the students' strengths will help them determine which are the best courses of action.



TIP: Remember to reference your root causes analysis and solutions diagram.

Assign activities & set deadlines: Now have the groups fill in the detail portion of the Plan of Action. Encourage them to be as specific as they possibly can be, and give them sufficient time to do this — 15 minutes or more would be good.

- What specific steps do we need to take? Get permission, contact someone, create posters, make an appointment, buy supplies . . .
- Who will be responsible for this step? Specify people by name, one person or several.
- When should this be done? Tomorrow? Next week? May 1? It's important to keep on track.
- What resources will you need? This can be information, supplies, money . . .
- How will you measure the success of this step? This is a very important but often overlooked part of the planning process.

Issue to be addressed	choose an issue			
	Goal	set a goal		
		list strengths		
Steps to be taken	<i>Who will be responsible?</i>	<i>When should this be done?</i>	<i>What resources are needed?</i>	Measure success by:
assign activities & set deadlines				

7. Wrap it all up

By the end of your Data Analysis Retreat, you will have accomplished a lot!

Your group will have:

- Identified strengths in the school and community
- Analyzed data from the YRBS
- Discussed and voted on the top strengths and top concerns in the data
- Determined root causes of the concerns you found
- Identified solutions to the concerns, and possibly made some preliminary plans to ACT

After students finish work on their action plans, you will want to do two things:

INVITE EVERYONE TO PARTICIPATE IN A CLOSING ACTIVITY

This is an opportunity for everyone to reflect on how they felt about the day, what they learned, and what they want to remember. Some ideas:

Snowball

Good for every size of group

Give everyone a piece of paper. (Using lots of different colors for this activity is always fun.) Ask participants to write one thing that they learned or one thing that they want to remember on the paper. Then, have them crumble their papers into balls. When everyone is ready, stand in a circle. Count to three and then gently toss the paper balls into the middle of the circle. Everyone picks up one ball (making sure it's not their own). Then go around the circle and let each person read the one they picked up.

Postcards

Better for small groups, or large groups with extra time

This activity requires some postcards, pictures, magazine cutouts, or some other type of visuals that widely differ from one another. There doesn't have to be any theme between the images—landscapes, animals, people, cities, etc. Place all of the postcards or images in the center of the circle and invite everyone to pick up the one that represents how they feel after today's event. Go around the circle and have each participant share briefly why they chose the card they did and what it says about their experience today.

“Troublemakers” excerpt

Great for large groups and groups short on time.

This text addresses many of the opportunities of being a part of Getting to 'Y.' Try wrapping up your day with a group reading of this text. It's in [Appendix 1, page 101](#).

You can find some additional closing activities on [page 138](#).

ASK EVERYONE TO COMPLETE A QUICK EVALUATION FORM BEFORE THEY LEAVE

The evaluation form will let you and your team know what worked well, and what things you can improve. Someone will need to collect these as people leave. There's a sample evaluation form/exit ticket in [Appendix 1, page 107](#).

CLEAN UP

When everyone has gone, don't forget to clean up the space and arrange the furniture so that the room looks as good as it did when you first arrived.

Executive summary

Sum it up... write it down.

After the Data Analysis Retreat is over, you, the student leaders, will create an executive summary of what everyone discussed and decided. You will share this with other groups, particularly in the Community Dialogue Event.

WHAT IS AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY?

It's just a brief bit of writing that gives an overview of what happened — no more than a page or two. Your executive summary should include:

- A one-paragraph description of what you did — the date, the location, and how many people were there.
- A list of the top strengths and top concerns your participants identified.
- A brief description of some of the root causes the participants discussed, and the actions you plan to take to address your main concerns.

An executive summary is a great way to share a lot of information in a concise, easy-to-understand document. It is a very effective way to share your work with policy makers, like legislators and other elected officials, and with adults who have an interest in youth but who may not have time to read a longer report, like parents/caregivers, teachers, and counselors. It will also be featured in the End of the Year Newsletter alongside all the other GTY teams participating.

You can see a sample of an executive summary in [Appendix 1, page 106](#).



TIP: *It'd be a good idea to type this out digitally so that it's easy to submit to your GTY Program lead for the End of the Year Getting to 'Y' Newsletter!*



Tips & tricks from teams

We asked one high school (HS) and one middle school (MS) GTY team to share what they thought was most important to consider about hosting a DAR. Read through their advice below!

BEFORE THE EVENT:

- Start planning the event with lots of time to spare (Find a checklist on [pages 91–93!](#))
- If you can't have a full day, host a half-day, or a couple of hours. Prioritize analyzing the data and selecting your strengths and concerns together as a large group.
- The GTY DAR Slide template can be helpful—adjust it based on your space, time and needs! (You can find that in our Digital Resource Hub at tinyurl.com/gtyresources).
- Put a lot of focus on recruitment (both teams stressed this!)
 - The HS team invited people from sports, other clubs, and friends.
 - The MS team personally invited other youth to come with them and intentionally looked for people who had different experiences with school than them (e.g., students of diverse backgrounds, genders, races, in different friend groups, etc.)
- Food or other incentives are the best recruitment strategy—have a good food plan and make it a part of the advertising to get people there! (Both teams had pizza, for example).
 - Competition also can work as an incentive model for your core GTY team—Thetford had a gift card for the member that recruited the most people!
- Advertise your event at school assemblies or gatherings and make announcements—do this multiple times leading up to the event and even day of.
 - You may have to explain what GTY and the YRBS is, they may not know or remember.
 - Be sure to tell students this is their chance to have an impact on what actually happens/changes at their school—and that their voice WILL be considered.
- Make flyers and post them everywhere!
 - The format of the flyer matters—make it nice to look at.
 - HS made sure to dedicate a large portion of the flyer to advertising the food present at the event—don't be afraid to do the same if it works!
- You can use a Google Form for those attending to RSVP to help plan how much food to buy.
 - You can also ask participants to put in who recruited them to come to keep track of who is recruiting people—especially if you have an incentive in place for who recruits the most participants!
 - You can streamline this process by putting a QR code to the Google form directly on the flyers you post somewhere where students can use their phones.
- If you can, look at what your group did last year to get some ideas—reflect on what worked and what didn't.

DURING THE EVENT:

- If you can have multiple locations for the day picked out, this can refresh the group and keep them engaged for longer, especially if there's a walk in between!
 - The MS team started their event at school, had lunch at a pizza parlor, and finished their afternoon activities at the public library.
- Be sure to reiterate what GTY and the YRBS is—your participants may not know.
- Remind students that this is their chance to have an impact on what actually happens.
- Go with the flow! There may be issues (low attendance, tech problems, group leaders being absent), but remember that whoever shows up are the right people to have in the room! Teams have led successful Data Analysis Retreats with groups small and large!
- Build in breaks, and read the room to insert breaks as needed. Talk to your fellow facilitators and make changes to your agenda in order to meet the needs of the group.
- Print agendas for your facilitators with a script and assign portions/roles amongst the GTY team to streamline the day and share responsibility.
- Having games planned for some of your breaks can be a great way to energize and refocus your group.
 - The MS team used the YRBS scale activity for one of their games, which doubled as an energizer and an insightful activity for analyzing data later on!
- For data analysis, cut up the data into small strips of paper so that it can move around easily and be analyzed one at a time.
- Invite an UP for Learning or GTY program representative – the MS team appreciated particularly having them share more information about the YRBS with the full group present!
- Group participants in different ways throughout the day. Mix up the approach between counting off groups and letting participants choose their own partners.

AFTER THE EVENT:

- Share your results publicly with the whole school at an assembly or other gathering!
 - The HS team also used that time to promote their upcoming Community Dialogue Event too!
 - This is also a good opportunity to present to faculty or school board meetings.
- Use social media to share stories about your group's work.
- Follow up with participants and encourage them to join your GTY team if they're interested!

FEATURED TEAM FROM THE GTY NEWSLETTER

Vergennes Union Middle School

Vergennes, Vermont

After their Data Analysis Retreat, the Getting to 'Y' team at VUMS agreed that even 1% of students reporting unhealthy behaviors was too many—they felt compelled to do more. To address the challenges they uncovered, the team launched a multi-faceted action plan that includes:

- assessing vaping concerns at the middle school and addressing identified gaps through targeted education,
- developing activities to strengthen student-staff relationships,
- posting positive quotes around the school to uplift and inspire,
- creating an affinity space where students can openly share thoughts and concerns,
- planning a community night focused on consent and boundaries, and
- educating peers on issues related to racism and homophobia.



Vergennes Union Middle School team members

Despite their busy schedules, the team is energized by the impact of their work and is already looking ahead to building on their efforts next year.

STRENGTHS



94%

of VUMS students think it is wrong or very wrong for someone their age to use EVPs



98%

of VUMS students believe that their parents or guardians feel it would be wrong or very wrong for them to use marijuana



74%

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

CONCERNS



3%

of VUMS students have ever tried to kill themselves



9%

of VUMS students report someone has ever done sexual things to them that they did not want



6%

of VUMS students ever saw someone get physically attacked, beaten, stabbed, or shot in their neighborhood

ROOT CAUSES



Students not feeling a sense of belonging or connection at school

Discomfort with communicating boundaries

Challenges with a culture of oppressive jokes about racism, sexism, homophobic, etc.

part 3



Community Dialogue Event & Take Action!

- 56** What is a Community Dialogue Event?
- 57** What will we be doing?
 - 58** *Planning your event*
 - 61** *Advertising & recruiting*
 - 62** *Get things started*
 - 63** *Explore community strengths*
 - 64** *Challenge assumptions & share your analysis*
 - 68** *Plan for action*
 - 69** *Wrap it all up*
- 70** Take action!

What is a Community Dialogue Event?

Your Community Dialogue Event (CDE) is an opportunity to share what you learned at your Data Analysis Retreat and gather input from adult community members. They can offer their opinions about the data and strengths of your community and give you a fresh, multigenerational perspective.

This is also an excellent time to **discover adult assumptions and stereotypes** about young people and put them to rest. Community members will be encouraged by the strengths you have identified and may be pleasantly surprised by much of the positive data.

Your Community Dialogue Event is also an opportunity to **find resources** for your Action Plan. Participants are likely to be inspired by your insights and commitment and some will have access to resources that can help you make changes in your community.

Of equal importance is the impact of **adults witnessing youth facilitators** doing important work with competence and confidence. The process of hosting this event is a powerful demonstration of the desire and capacity of all young people to take more meaningful roles in their schools and in the greater community.

THE GOALS OF THE COMMUNITY DIALOGUE EVENT ARE:

- to share your asset map
- to share the YRBS data analysis results and seek community perspectives
- to expand the root cause analysis by including community member input
- to include community member ideas in crafting solutions and action plans
- to have fun

OUTCOMES

As outcomes of the Community Dialogue Event, participants might:

- gain a better understanding of the assets and strengths in their school and community
- gain a deeper appreciation for issues confronting youth and the desire and ability of young people to address them
- challenge their own perceptions about youth health in their school and community
- contribute to shaping ideas about future actions to positively impact their community

What will we be doing?

A Community Dialogue Event is built around the same seven steps you used in your Data Analysis Retreat. For planning purposes, think of it as an abbreviated version of the data retreat, with a focus on sharing the results of your data retreat and getting community participants invested in your plan of action.

1. GET THINGS STARTED

Start by welcoming everyone, telling them why they're here, what you hope to accomplish during this event, and why it's important. Read the list of icebreakers in [Appendix 2, page 124](#), for some suggested activities.

2. EXPLORE COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

This means engaging everyone in activities to explore the strengths in your community. Read the Exploring Community Strengths section, [page 63](#), for more on this.

3. CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS & SHARE YOUR ANALYSIS

Introduce the YRBS data to participants with the YRBS Scale Activity ([page 64](#)). Then share the Executive Summary you created from your Data Analysis Retreat. Tell community participants what you learned from the YRBS data and the three main concerns you want to focus on.

4. ROOT OUT CAUSES & 5. IDENTIFY SOLUTIONS

Here's where you give participants the opportunity to discuss the main concerns and their potential root causes. Only then do you move toward considering solutions.

6. PLAN FOR ACTION

This is the featured act for your dialogue event — getting people together to talk about solutions and plans.

7. WRAP IT ALL UP

See [page 69](#) on closing activities for how best to celebrate the end of your Community Dialogue Event.



TIP: *What worked for your Data Analysis Retreat? Will it work for this event, too?*

How does it all fit together? Check out the Community Dialogue Event sample agenda in [Appendix 1, pages 98–99](#). There are also things to do before the Community Dialogue Event and things to do afterward. We'll be looking at all of these in the next pages.

Planning your event

The Community Dialogue Event is an opportunity to share all the work you've done with the people in your school and community — especially people who are decision makers. It's also a time to get input from community members and to engage adults as allies to help make your action plans a reality. You need to plan for success here.

WHO WILL YOU INVITE?

Spend some time thinking about who you should invite to your Community Dialogue Event. Who needs to know about what you found in your Data Analysis Retreat? Who has the power to make decisions that affect young people in your community? Who else would want a voice in identifying community/school strengths and concerns? Here are some ideas:

school board members **principals** **teachers** **parents/caregivers** **other students**
chief of police **tribal council members** **health department liaisons** **mayors** **governors**
city councilors **department of education reps** **county commissioners** **PTA members**
nonprofit orgs **doctors & nurses** **reporters & anchors** **state reps** **student government leaders**

LOCATION! LOCATION! LOCATION!

Think about where you want to hold your event. You'll want a place that's large enough for all the people you want to invite, with enough seating and enough room for people to move around and do activities. If you plan to use a slideshow, make sure it has a projector and a screen that you can connect to.

FOOD

Don't forget, food can be a very important part of community meetings. Be sure to budget for enough food and drinks for everyone who might attend. Remember, Vermont teams, that there is a \$250 mini-grant the team advisor can claim for any GTY expense, including for food at your CDE! Decide whether you want to provide a meal or a lot of snacks.

AGENDA

Just like you did for the Data Analysis Retreat, be sure to take some time during your GTY group meeting time to fill in your agenda for the day, assign facilitators, and practice running it through. Have print-outs of the agenda for each facilitator ready for the event.



TIP: Seems like a lot to remember? Don't worry, there's a planning checklist in [Appendix 1, pages 91–93](#).



CONSIDERATIONS FOR A VIRTUAL OR HYBRID EVENT

Although having an in-person event is always preferable, there may be accessibility issues that arise, or unforeseen circumstances. You can certainly run a Community Dialogue Event virtually too with a few adaptations! Here are some things to consider.

Logistics

Account + Meeting Settings:

- Ideally, someone will set up this Zoom* who has a professional account. This is necessary to support the suggested run time of 90 minutes.
- The person who sets up the meeting can establish a number of co-hosts when they create the event. All facilitators should be co-hosts.
- The meeting should not require a passcode. This can make it tricky for some people to log on.
- Host should have the doorbell/meeting entry sound cue on Zoom set so that only hosts can hear it.

General Settings:

- Consider having all participants enter on mute.
- Consider having screen sharing limited to hosts/co-hosts if you don't already have this setting.
- Make sure the chat is open and available to folks.

Facilitator Roles on Zoom

Note – if new to using Zoom or another platform as a host, it's a good idea to have a dress rehearsal with the facilitation team to practice.

- **Hosts:** This duty varies depending on who is facilitating certain pieces of the agenda. In advance of the meeting, anyone who is facilitating should be a Zoom host or co-host in case they need access to controls.
- **Screen Sharers:** It can be helpful to decide ahead of time who will be in charge of screen sharing. They'll have any slides ready to go and feel confident about sharing the screen as well as clearing annotations when needed.
- **Chat Monitors:** It helps a lot to have a couple of folks who are active in the chat. They paste in key instructions when the host mentions those pieces, engage with folks in the chat, and make sure that any questions posed in the chat get answered.
- **Breakout Room Managers:** It is helpful to have someone assigned to create, open, and close breakout rooms. The host, if experienced at this, might choose to do it, but it can be very helpful to have someone else ready to manage these controls.
- **DJ:** Have a playlist ready of upbeat, clean music with positive messages. You'll want 10-12 minutes of music for opening the meeting, 10-12 minutes of music to cover breaks, and a few minutes of music to play as people sign off.
- **Photographer:** It's great to have someone who takes screenshots at key moments in the meeting. The photographer might also prompt everyone to pose for a group photo screenshot at a planned point in the meeting.
- **Attendance Recorder:** Ideally, a team member will make a list of everyone who has attended the meeting along with, if possible, the organization that they represent.

Tools

You'll need to adapt many of the activities you're running for the Zoom space. Find some tips for doing this and some activity suggestions on [page 131](#).

**Free accounts on Zoom can only meet for 40 minutes and may not have access to all these features. You can adapt these instructions for Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, or another platform that's best for your community.*



Advertising & recruiting

Your Community Dialogue Event can only be successful if people attend. Begin promoting it at least two weeks in advance to spread the word. Use creative strategies to encourage participation. Here are some ideas for advertising your event—but don't stop here, you may come up with even more!

USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Tweet about it (#GTY) on X or Bluesky, post it on Snapchat, make Instagram posts or reels, make Tiktoks. Put it up on your Facebook page (remember, community members may still use it even if you don't!). What other social media outlets are popular at your school? Use them.

USE TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Contact your local radio and TV stations and newspapers about promoting your event. Local media outlets often have community calendars or other free opportunities for promoting community events like this. Send out a press release. Write a letter to the editor. Contact your favorite reporter. Your local PBS affiliate and community access channels are also good promotion outlets.

ENGAGE WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

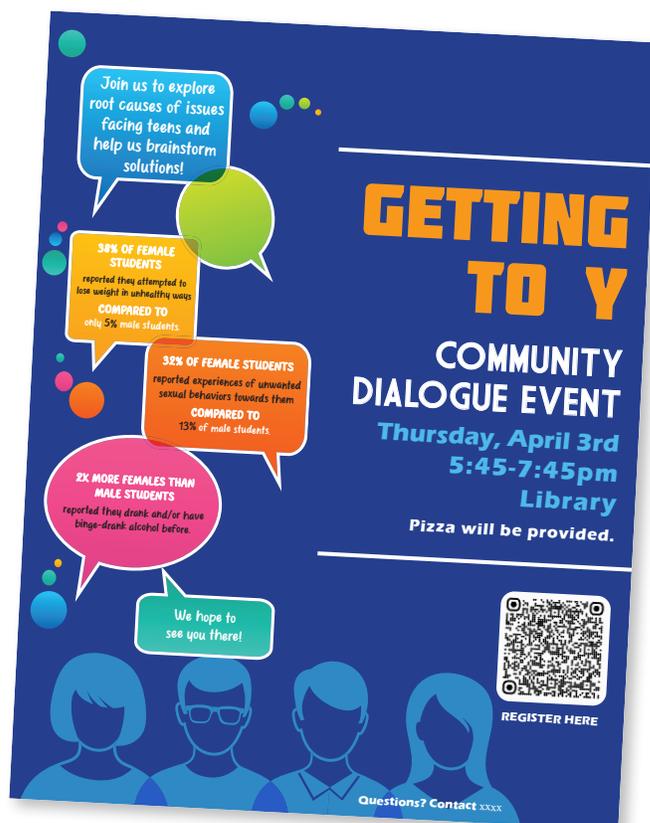
Put flyers or posters up around your school and community. Have students handing out flyers at community meeting spots (post office, recycling center, local libraries, etc.). Work with your local Prevention Coalition to get the word out to those who will definitely be interested. Post about it on Front Porch Forum, or another digital community bulletin board near you.

ENGAGE WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Ask your school to put a notice in the school newsletter or weekly notices to families. Talk to teachers at your school about incorporating participation at the Community Dialogue Event as part of a class project or assignment.

ISSUE PERSONAL INVITATIONS

Never underestimate the power of a personal invitation for getting people to come to an event. Paper invitations are great, and an in-person request can work even better.



Get things started

GREETING & MINGLING

Greeters

Greeting is a very important role. People attending the Community Dialogue Event for the first time may be a bit apprehensive; they are entering the unknown. Your friendliness will put them at ease and help them to relax, setting an open and comfortable tone for the entire event.

Three or four of you should be designated greeters. As people come through the door, welcome them, ask them to fill out a nametag, and direct them to where the rest of the group is.

Everyone

Mix and mingle. Introduce yourself and strike up a conversation with people. Ask them how they heard about the Community Dialogue Event. Ideally everyone who comes will be welcomed by at least one teen and one adult, in addition to the greeters. Avoid clustering up in a group with people you know.

Optional: Consider preparing some conversation posters! Have 1-2 large pieces of papers with a fun question at the top, with markers nearby for people to write in their answers. You can even open the event by identifying themes or lifting up some of the responses left on the page, or use it as a conversation starter when mingling. Some question ideas include:

- Recommend a podcast, tv show, or book to others
- What's something you love about the region that we live in?
- Where's the best place to get fries?
- Place yourself on this DnD alignment chart (this one requires some preparation by drawing the grid and the alignments)
- What's your favorite month of the year and why?

ACTIVITIES

Which icebreakers were successful at your Data Analysis Retreat? Human Bingo? Or perhaps you'd rather start with an energizer, like The Great Finger Grab? Use your experience to guide you in selecting a fun activity to get things going.

You can find details on Human Bingo and other icebreakers in [Appendix 2, page 124](#). Energizers are on [page 134](#)!



TIP: To make things easier, consider putting colored dots, numbers, or shapes on each of the nametags you hand out. When you make small groups later, you can refer to those symbols (Ex: "All with a triangle on your nametag are in Group 1!")

Challenge assumptions & share your analysis

There are two components of this section of your Community Dialogue Event. First, you will lead participants in a YRBS Scale Activity. Then, share what you learned in your Data Analysis Retreat.

It's important at your Community Dialogue Event to challenge your participants' expectations and perceptions of the YRBS data before they have a chance to see the data. Many adults will attend the Community Dialogue Event with very specific ideas about what is important, and with ideas about what the data will look like. A fun game that gently challenges their ideas can help make adults more open to hearing information that may not match their preconceptions.



YRBS SCALE ACTIVITY

Before you let participants look at the YRBS data or share the strengths and concerns you identified at your Data Analysis Retreat, we recommend the YRBS Scale Activity. Here's how to run it:

Setting up

Identify eight or more of the most surprising or controversial or worrisome YRBS statistics for your school or community. Balance strengths and concerns and make sure the actual percentage choices vary (basically, don't have all your statistics between 40%–50%).

Example: The percent of our high school students who said they rarely or never wear a bicycle helmet is 80%. The percentage of students who have ever used cocaine is 12%.

Rephrase the statement so that it's a question, and the statistic is the answer. Write these down on the agenda or place them on slides. (Just make sure the answer is on a separate slide than the question so it doesn't get spoiled). Do this for each statistic.

What % of high school students have ever drank alcohol?

49%

It might also help to have some signs ready or some painter's tape to mark in the room where your scale will be. It's a good idea to at least mark 0%, 50%, and 100%.

How it works

Have participants help you push tables and chairs to the side if needed. Line up everybody shoulder to shoulder from one side of the room to the other. The line doesn't need to be perfect, they'll be moving around anyway.

Instruct the group that you're going to ask a question with an answer that falls between 0 and 100%. They will have a little bit of time to guess what the answer might be, and position themselves somewhere along the line according to their guess. One side of the room will be 0%, the other side will be 100%, the middle of the room will be 50%, and every other number falls between. Point out the signs or painter's tape that denotes those numbers if you have them.

Ask a warm-up question to start (ex: Q: What percentage of Americans drink coffee each day? A: 66%!) and make sure everyone has the hang of it. Once the group is ready, read the first question. Before sharing the answer, ask participants why they chose the number they chose.

REMEMBER: This is a time when biases about youth behavior may come to light. You may not agree with some of what's said. Giving people the time and space to air out these biases will make the activity more impactful afterwards when discussing the answers.

Repeat this method for each question. Once all of the questions are finished, invite people back to their seats and invite them to reflect on what numbers surprised them in the activity, and why.

This activity may lead to a discussion about how to challenge our biases during data analysis. Don't shy away, you're the experts on this! Be prepared to talk and maybe have a slide on how to think like a Researcher and how to think equitably. Maybe even talk about some tips you picked up from your experience during the Data Analysis Retreat.

People may also start to wonder about how true the data from the YRBS might be after the game. Think about preparing some information about the different validity checks that the YRBS goes through to reassure them, which you can find on [pages 18–19!](#)

SHARE THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After you challenge assumptions, it's time to share the Executive Summary from your Data Analysis Retreat. Instead of printing it all out, consider putting it on a poster or into slides. Take some time to describe what you did at your Data Analysis Retreat. Tell participants:

- when you had your retreat, and how many students came
- what data you looked at
- the top three strengths students identified in the data, and why
- the top three concerns students identified in the data, and why

How it works

Introduce the activity. Tell participants they will have an opportunity to see the root causes and potential solutions that youth identified during their Data Analysis Retreat, and they will have the opportunity to add to this work.

Ask participants to count off by threes. Have all the ones move to the first station, the twos to the second, and the threes to the third. Tell participants that they will have five minutes at each station to look at the root causes and solutions that students identified at the Data Analysis Retreat, and to add more if they want to. Mention that they can also star, circle, or check items already on the list to show agreement.

After five minutes, have participants rotate clockwise to the next station. Repeat until all three stations have been visited by all your participants.

When time is up, facilitate a short discussion so participants can share their thoughts with the group. You might ask:

- What do you want to lift up from something someone else wrote down?

Alternate method

Rather than participants rotating through all the concern stations, you might choose to have everyone select one concern that they are most interested in. Allow them about five minutes total to review the root causes and potential solutions, and add to them if they wish.

Plan for action

The next step is to invite community members to help you develop your action plan.

First, share your thinking-to-date by having participants review the action plans you developed during your Data Analysis Retreat (or maybe just offer a broader overview of your plans). You might present slides or give handouts to the entire group. You might choose to have participants split into groups, with a few leaders facilitating action plans for each of the concern areas.

Then, open up the discussion to let participants fine-tune your plan. It can be helpful to structure the feedback into the following activity.



ACTIVITY: WOWS AND WONDERS

The WOWS and WONDERS structure makes it clear that the participants' job is not to redesign your action plan, but rather to strengthen it, in the spirit of a caring partner. As the facilitators, you don't need to respond to the wonders or defend your choices. You are simply soliciting input and will wrap it into subsequent planning.

Setting up

You won't need anything special set up for this activity, but make sure that all participants can see your plan (whether on paper in front of them, written on a board, or projected on a powerpoint) and the GTY team that they're talking to.

How it works

Invite people to offer WOWS, or things they find strong about your chosen actions. You can go about this in a circle, or you can "popcorn" by letting participants volunteer their thoughts when they're ready.

Then give them the opportunity to WONDER about any aspect of the plan. This might include wondering about resources you might not yet have considered or other actions that might also be effective. Again, you can do this in a circle or by popcorning.

Depending on the size of your group, you could conduct this part of the agenda in small groups based on a single concern and action plans related to that one issue.

After the community dialogue event, you will integrate feedback about your action plans into the preliminary plans you developed at your Data Analysis Retreat. The result will be your FINAL ACTION PLAN.

You may find that you have many new and exciting ideas and resources (including people power) to help you implement your action plan.

Wrap it all up

It's important to wrap things up for your Community Dialogue Event with some quick, fun activities that will remind participants why they came and what they've accomplished.

SAMPLE WRAP-UPS

One-Word Whip-Around

Have everybody stand or sit in a circle (this is really important!) and explain that you are closing with a one-word reflection (or very short comment) about the event. Once someone starts, move around the circle.

- Sample Question: How are you leaving today?
- Sample answers: inspired, thoughtful, empowered, etc.

Paper Airplane

Give everyone a piece of paper with the following written at the top:

- Please write a brief thought or comment about one positive thing you learned tonight that you do not want to forget. (Be positive!)

Once everyone seems to have finished writing, create a large circle in an open space. Ask everyone to create the most awesome paper airplane they have ever made ... in the next three minutes. Go through a "NASA count-down" from 10 (10-9-8 etc.); when you get to "blast-off," instruct the group to launch their airplanes. When the planes have landed, ask everyone to go pick up another person's airplane.

Go around the circle, asking each person to read the paper they picked up.

OR: If you don't want to bother with paper airplanes, you can adapt the Snowball activity from the Data Analysis Retreat on [page 48](#) instead.

EXIT TICKETS

Ask everyone to complete a quick Exit Ticket before they leave. This is an opportunity to learn what people liked about your event, what surprised them, and what you could do to make it even better. It's also a good opportunity to collect some contact information from people who may want to work with you on implementing your action plans as you move forward. There's a sample Exit Ticket in [Appendix 1, page 107](#).

CLEAN UP

When everyone has gone, don't forget to clean up the space and arrange the furniture so that the room looks as good as it did when you first arrived.

Take action!

You'll want to meet with your fellow youth leaders soon after the Community Dialogue Event to finalize your action plans and to go over the feedback forms.

It is SO tempting to jump to an action that just "feels right" or a community member is particularly enthused about. Please resist this impulse and go through some simple steps to make sure you are making the BEST decision for your entire group — and school for that matter. You have limited time and resources. Be thoughtful to assure your success.



Once you've completed all this work — analyzed your YRBS data, shared your interpretation with your community, and received their input — it's time to:

RECRUIT other students, teachers, and community members to help make your action plans happen.

MOVE TO ACTION In truth, you have been "taking ACTION" ever since you participated in your Getting to 'Y' training. During this step, you are acting on your data in your executive summary, based on all that you have learned through the data retreat and community dialogue event. You have many more ideas and supporters, now that you have involved key stakeholders in the decision making. Do not hesitate to involve them in your action planning!

DECIDE WHAT ACTION TO TAKE. There are as many actions as there are root causes....more actually! Take your root cause map and from each identified cause, brainstorm ways that cause could be addressed. Check out what other schools have done to address this issue around the country (or world) through internet searches, attending conferences, reading articles or books on the issue, interviewing educational experts, or looking through this manual and the End of Year GTY Newsletter. Creatively brainstorm and consider even "wild ideas." Don't miss this opportunity to "think out of the box"! Generally, there are three options to consider:

- direct work on the issue
- educate others in the community about the issue
- attempt to influence decision-makers regarding the issue

COMPARE ACTION OPTIONS to decide on the right one for your team. What action will most challenge and excite YOUR team is the question. Use the Checklist for Prioritizing Action on [pages 103-104!](#)

CREATE YOUR ACTION PLAN, with details about exactly how you are going to accomplish your goal and assess your success, step-by-step. You can find the Plan of Action form on [page 105](#).

TRACK your progress by conducting your own research (for example, you could survey students at your school during lunch) and monitoring future YRBS survey data.

MENTOR younger students about the ideas you have developed, so they can keep addressing the concerns even after you have graduated.

GET THE WORD OUT. Sign up to present your work at conferences, and ask to present your findings to the students, faculty and staff at your school. Request an opportunity to speak before your school board or city council.

CELEBRATE! At the end of year, remember to gather your group to celebrate the work you did. You can also help your school and community celebrate your work by sending an article with photos to your local paper or school newsletter.



Barre Unified Union School District

Barre, Vermont

The middle and high school teams at BUUSD launched their Getting to 'Y' program with strength and continued to build momentum throughout the year. After their training in November, the team met regularly to analyze their YRBS data and ultimately hosted a successful Community Dialogue Event, drawing 22 participants—including the superintendent, a school board member, and youth from neighboring schools.



Barre team members



In response to their findings, the team is pursuing a range of action strategies, including: working with local businesses to reconsider the placement of substances and substance-related products to reduce visibility and access; launching public awareness campaigns to educate parents on the harms of vaping; reinforcing the school's weapon policy through regular announcements and consistent enforcement; and exploring the installation of metal detectors to enhance school safety.

Sponsored by the Vermont's Project AWARE: The Vermont Department of Mental Health was awarded a 5-year grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for Project AWARE. Vermont Project AWARE is a joint effort between the Agency of Education (AOE) and the Agency of Human Services, Department of Mental Health (AHS/DMH) and three communities to promote ongoing collaboration at the state and local level regarding best practices to increase awareness of mental health issues, enhance wellness and resiliency skills for school age youth, and support system improvements for school based mental health services.



STRENGTHS

School counselors and other student support services

CONCERNS



63% reported easy to get vapes



24% purposely hurt themselves (without wanting to die)

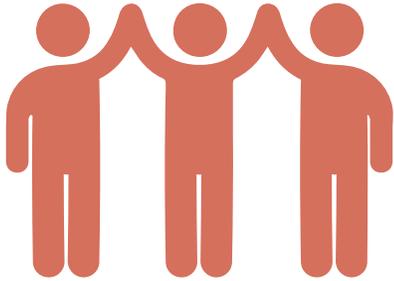


10% threatened/injured with a weapon in the past year

ROOT CAUSES



- Media, challenges in school
- Wanting to feel better
- Mental health challenges
- Seeing something and not saying anything
- Homelessness
- Easy to get online



part 4

Building & Sustaining Your GTY Team

- 74** The group process
- 78** Ideas for momentum building
- 82** Year 2: Keep it going!
- 84** Tips from previous participants

The group process

You'll likely be working with your core GTY team over the course of a year or more. Together, you'll be facing obstacles, triumphs, disagreements and accomplishments. Each team that works together will go through five stages of development and understanding these stages will be important to overcoming challenges your team faces.

These stages were identified and in a model created by the psychologist Dr. Bruce Tuckman. His model explains how a team builds its relationships, develops its skills and efficacy, and how the leadership of that group changes over time. We've adapted his theory to fit the experience of GTY teams.

You will encounter struggles as a team. It's necessary to develop and a good sign that you have an engaged group that values different perspectives equally. With the knowledge of what's coming, you'll be able to address those struggles quickly and effectively so as to maximize the time and resources you spend on completing your goals. Below you'll find some ideas, but remember that each team is different in personality and the most effective solution for you may or may not be listed!





FORMING

To have a group, you first have to form it! New GTY teams usually form at the beginning of the school year and are brought together by the school administration, a prevention organization, or an adult advisor. At this stage, the organization or adult often takes the lead—directing the team, scheduling meetings, and moving preparations forward—since they know the most about the program. For more experienced GTY teams bringing in new members, these responsibilities may instead be taken on by seasoned GTY student leaders.

What might happen	What to do
Overdependence on adult or experienced members to move project forward	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on building up relationships (use some activities at your first few meetings on page 124)• Create opportunities for new members to take on small parts of the agenda (like opening circles or icebreaker activities).• We have a sample agenda for the first meeting on page 88 to help set the tone!• Don't put too much time between events—have your first meeting soon before the training, another one soon after, your Data Analysis Retreat within a month of the training, and your Community Dialogue Event as soon as possible!• Look at the Momentum resource on page 78 for more tips!
Members feel unclear on their roles and commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This will be mostly addressed at the GTY training, but you can also go through your experience with GTY, the core components of the program, or even the manual to be clear and upfront around this right away!• Set clear expectations for how regularly your team will be meeting.• Run Compass Points or another leadership activity to establish how each person can contribute (a value activity may be good too!)• Establish group agreements.



STORMING

After some time, your team will start to feel comfortable enough with each other to start renegotiating their own roles and the overall goals of the team. It'll be a time of abundant ideas, but could also lead to some disharmony. It will be important to recenter the team on your group agreements, shared goals, and shared values. The most experienced members may need to lead the initiative.

What might happen	What to do
Increased disagreement about next steps or ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice patience and be sure to make room for everyone who wants to speak. You may find it helpful to use protocols to facilitate the decision making process in an effective amount of time. You can find some on pages 136-137. • You may need to revisit the group agreements and remind the team of how to disagree respectfully with each other.
Cliquing and/or exclusion of some members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some relationships develop faster than others. Even though you'll be in the depth of GTY work at this point, be sure to make time for small celebrations (like after your DAR!), maintain regular check-ins at each meeting, and make time for the occasional game.



NORMING

At some point, the consistent work your team puts into building relationships and norms transforms into a shared mission and vision. The norming stage emerges when everyone understands their roles, expectations are clear, and the group can pull together and make decisions. Every member of the team shares responsibility for leading meetings and the project. It will feel as if the team has a reliable rhythm of working.

What might happen	What to do
Inequitable division of responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure your team reserves opportunities to participate in different ways and grow their skills at meetings, the Community Dialogue Event, and in your action planning. • Personally invite teammates to step-up by recognizing their strengths, and don't overrely on the first person to speak up!
Getting stuck in the talking phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion is vital to team projects, but multiple consecutive meetings that don't go anywhere can cause a team to lose momentum. As a team, it can be helpful to set internal deadlines for making decisions and putting them to a vote once the conversation grows stale.



PERFORMING

Most teams aim for this stage from the beginning, when the group is at its most effective. There's a strategic plan in place and everyone is behind the plan. Everyone has a say in what's happening, has a part to play, and they're committed to doing so. Team members look after each other and resolve disagreements through established processes they've thoughtfully developed. Visible progress is made towards the goal. Change is happening!



MOURNING-ADJOURNING

Soon enough, your team will find itself at the end of the year. Emotions may be high with the anticipation of summer, the graduation of teammates, the urgency to meet your goals, and the pride for all of the progress you've made. There's a lot to consider about how you wrap up your time together! A good last meeting will:

- Reflect on your work as a team
- Celebrate your accomplishments
- Wrap up reporting responsibilities
- Make a plan for meeting next year and continuing!

We have some protocols and a sample agenda to help you plan it out on [page 108!](#)

Although they're listed in this order, most teams will not have such a linear experience. You'll start with forming, then maybe jump to norming, jump back to storming, to performing, back to norming again, and so on. You'll hit each stage, but perhaps at different times and more than once! It's a normal part of the process and with a little attention and commitment, you all will definitely make the change you want to see happen over time.

Source: Bruce Tuckman 1965 original 'Forming-storming-norming-performing' concept; Alan Chapman 2001-2013 review and code.

Ideas for momentum building

The Getting to 'Y' (GTY) program prioritizes engaging students as change-agents in evidence-based practices proven to sustain further activism and healthier communities. It relies on momentum to keep your team engaged and invested, and thus, the work moving forward.

Keeping the momentum requires consistency and reliability from its members, and regular meeting times to support that. The reality is that not all schools have access to a regular meeting time right away.

Below are resources for GTY teams needing momentum for their project. You'll find a range of implementations for a variety of timelines (short-term, medium and long-term) that help craft a sustainable framework for your team to collaborate moving forward.

CHANGE UP THE ROUTINE

- Invite a guest to your meetings to help brainstorm what to do next, or to speak about work adjacent to yours (like a mental health clinic administrator, your VDH School Liaison, or a non-profit representative)
- Invite your team to meet up in a different room (the auditorium instead of a classroom) or an entirely different place (nearby coffee shop/recreational building, museum, etc.).
- Consider the physical arrangement of the meeting. Does the set-up of the room allow all participants to see everyone else? If not, try meeting in a horseshoe or circle shape.
- Involve more youth as planners and facilitators of your meetings to increase investment and engagement.

INCORPORATE MORE COMMUNITY BUILDERS INTO YOUR TIME

- For some pre-structured ones, check out [page 134](#).
- Don't be afraid to use fun activities, like Kahoot, Jackbox games, or Gartic Phone from time to time (all searchable on Google!). Even just a round or two can be enough to get your team excited!
- If possible, have your youth leaders run the activities and be sure to compete yourself. A GTY team requires both the youth and the adults in partnership in order to be successful!

FOOD!

- Just like how we advise having food for your DARs and CDEs, having food (think snacks!) regularly at GTY meetings is a good way to guarantee youth will show up.
- Consider having a snack sign-up sheet so that different students are responsible for the snacks at each meeting. This both mitigates the cost for the school as well as gives students a chance to share the responsibility for their team's success (you can also consider using your GTY mini grant for these costs and have students pick the type of snack!).

INCLUDE ACCOUNTABILITY TABLES IN YOUR AGENDA

- Being clear about expectations between meetings is a good way to hold your team accountable for whatever they might commit to and motivate them by giving them a clear understanding of what needs to happen next.
- Here’s a tool that we use at the bottom of our agendas in order to track accountability:

Who	What	By When
<i>Apple White / Mallory Bertha</i>	<i>Ask 5 restaurants for supplies donations</i>	<i>Next meeting (11/15)</i>
<i>Sean Higgins / Carol Nesmith</i>	<i>Send email update to faculty</i>	<i>End of week</i>

- As a team, you might fill in the “What” section as you go through the meeting and determine what needs to happen next. Then, at the end of the meeting, have your team sign up for the parts that they are willing to take on.
- Have 2+ students sign up for each task—that way they can hold each other accountable in addition to the team.
- Check in with each person on the accountability table at the start of your next meeting and evaluate what steps are finished and what steps need more support.

SHARE SUCCESS STORIES

- Take some time at your next meeting to remind your team of what you’re working towards! You can include past success stories if you have them, or go through this manual to find examples of UP’s GTY newsletter which features the successes of other teams like yours.

HAVE A REGULAR TIME DURING THE SCHOOL DAY FOR YOUR GTY TEAM TO MEET

- This may require some advocacy to your school for creating a class, a club, or to hosting the meeting during an Advisory period.
- These processes differ from school to school, but you can find a one-pager about the GTY program and objectives that could help on [pages 89–90!](#)
- For further help with advocacy, contact the UP for Learning GTY staff!

CHECK IN ON YOUR “WHY”

- Have a circle discussion and/or dedicate a meeting to discussing why your team is doing this work. You can ask questions like:
 - Why do you want to improve your school/community? What do you hope to change? What impact do you want to have?
- Record what people say somewhere that will be visible at most of your meetings and find time to ground yourselves in that visioning often!
- It might be helpful to consider even creating a mission statement for your GTY club.

REVISIT THE FOUNDATION OF YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP

- The GTY program relies on Youth-Adult Partnership to succeed. Both students and adults may feel hesitant to commit to action when they are unsure of what they should contribute, when they should step back, and when to ask for support.
- Run an activity at one of your meetings to clarify what Youth-Adult Partnership is for your team. You can find one in this manual on [page 117 or 122!](#)
 - Note: To hone in on and refine your team dynamic specifically, consider adapting this resource to focus on your GTY team instead of your school at large.

EXPAND COMMUNICATION

- Oftentimes, students on GTY teams are highly involved individuals that have a lot on their plate. Maintaining consistent and regular communication is key to keeping your team engaged in the consistent work you do.
- Consider implementing a weekly email with notes from the previous meeting/an agenda for the next one, important dates coming up, and/or times that your team can come to the advisor for help with whatever task they are currently working on.
- Consider electing a youth or two on your team to take on communicating with the team, and establish what communications should be sent out between meetings.
- Develop strategies with your team that will help remind people to complete tasks in-between meetings. Examples include:
 - Use the “schedule send” feature in Gmail to send yourself/a team member a reminder email that will appear within a specific timeframe, like 3 days
 - Use Google tasks or another reminder app on your phone
- In addition or in place of email, consider different avenues of professional communication, based on what is allowable within school policies, such as:
 - A club Instagram
 - An announcement channel on Remind (you can set this up to go directly to youths’ cell phones!) or Band
 - A Slack group
 - A Discord server

BREAK INTO ACTION TEAMS

- This can be especially useful if your team wants to accomplish several different tasks at the same time (e.g., planning the DAR, communicating with other students, and collecting additional data).
- Ensure that each action team has a person to report out on their progress, and take time each meeting to hear about what each group is going in order to ensure that you are able to support each other.

CELEBRATE THE SMALL WINS!

- GTY breaks down into 6 steps that create natural breaks in the program for celebrating each one.
- After the DAR and CDE, have a meeting to debrief the events and celebrate your wins! Include some fun at these meetings to doubly community build while you celebrate.
- Be clear about the celebrations that you have planned as soon as you can! They can be an incentive to keep momentum.
- Ideally youth should plan the celebrations to increase excitement and overall interest in the event.
- Besides something like a pizza party or desserts, a celebration could be:
 - A video game/board game night
 - A field trip to a local park during a class
 - Crafting/art time
 - Kickball or another outdoor activity

Year 2: Keep it going

Because the YRBS is taken every two years, new data from your school will be available every other year. In the fall of the year following your Data Analysis and Community Dialogue Event, consider reconvening your GTY group to review your action plan and steps from the previous year and discuss ideas for continuing to create change based on your work. Recruit new members and make a plan for the rest of the year!

Signing up for GTY in an off-data year means you'll get to exercise new skills, such as adding narrative into your data analysis and continuing to build on your previous action plan. Through Advisor meetings and the new training, you'll develop networks to support your next initiatives and give you ideas. What this will look like for each time may differ, but it could include this:

GOALS FOR THE YEAR COULD INCLUDE:

- recruiting new members
- reviewing your work from last year, including the top three concerns, root causes, action plans, and assets
- supporting continued progress on action steps you have already started
- taking action on ideas that you did not have time for last year, but would like to pursue
- getting more information about your topics - attend conferences, continue to talk with teachers and community members
- generating new ideas to extend the progress you made on your priorities
- following up with community helpers to keep them involved
- offering to help promote the importance of the YRBS survey with your peers
- hosting another Community Event to provide an educational opportunity for one of your concern areas AND share updates on your progress



SAMPLE TIMELINE FOR “YEAR 2”

September: Reconvene your leadership group and invite new members.

October: Review executive summary from last year and itemize actions taken and actions needed. Attend the GTY training and participate in the Year 2 track to network with others and brainstorm ideas to pursue this year.

November: Create a plan for follow up action steps using the Plan of Action form on [page 105](#) for new action ideas and any actions that need more work.

December through April: Follow up on action plans.

February or March: Host an evening event to address one of your topics. For example, you could host a speaker who is an expert on your concern area. Begin the night by introducing your team and explaining the work you did with the YRBS data the previous year. Share any new action steps and tell them that this event is a direct result of your work last year which continues this year. Introduce your speaker. At the end of the evening, thank people for attending and tell them that you will be looking at the new YRBS data when it becomes available in the following year and hope that they will stay involved.

May: Hold a final team meeting to review and celebrate your progress! Write a short article for your local paper and school newsletter to share your actions over the year. Think about new members you can recruit for the following year. Make a plan to meet in the fall to prepare for Getting to ‘Y’ with the new YRBS data!



Tips from previous participants

Have the analysis retreat and dialogue event soon after the GTY training day, to keep the momentum going. Long delays make it harder to keep everyone interested. Set your date soon and make it happen.

Make a regular meeting time for your student leaders group to meet and plan the events.

Many schools have found this challenging. It's good to have a clear meeting time set as follow-up after the training session, and make sure everyone on the team commits to being present. Good meeting management will make it easier to successfully plan events.

Make time to act on your findings. This is such an important piece of this project — make something happen because of what you have discovered from the data. You have a powerful voice, because you are speaking from data that come from your whole student body. People will listen to you and want to help. Find like-minded groups or clubs to join your efforts.

Plan how you will track your impact—write your success story. When you make your action plan, figure out how you can measure your success. For example, how many health classes did you visit and how many students were in each one? How many people attended the new girl-power group you started? How many legislators came to your presentations? Setting specific, measurable goals in your action plan is a great idea so you can feel a clear sense of accomplishment at the end of the year (refer back to [page s45–47](#) for how to set SMART goals).

Share your work with as many people and groups as possible. Follow up with school assemblies, newsletter articles, health class presentations, school board presentations, local newspaper articles, etc. Others will be inspired by your efforts and your insights, and often find ways to support your work. Consider sharing your work with your local Vermont Department of Health representative too!

Remember what worked and what didn't, so you can share your tips and your “words of wisdom” next year with the next group of student leaders who will do GTY at your school.

Consider continuing your work with GTY and take more of a leadership role next year. See “Further inclusion and opportunity” on [page 17](#).



FEATURED TEAM FROM THE GTY NEWSLETTER

GTY New Hampshire Replication

New Hampshire



Statewide kickoff

It was a thrill to see six years of partnership and planning with our replication partner, Communities for Alcohol- and Drug-Free Youth (CADY), culminate in the launch of Getting to 'Y' New Hampshire this year. Liz Brochu, GTY NH Project Director at CADY, pursued this effort with energy and passion—rallying education and prevention partners from across the state to build a strong network in support of statewide replication. We also extend our deep appreciation to Jill Burke, Bureau Chief at NH DHHS BDAS, for her leadership in championing the implementation of Getting to 'Y' in New Hampshire and for her tireless work securing critical funding from the state's Department of Health and Human Services to make this transformative work possible.

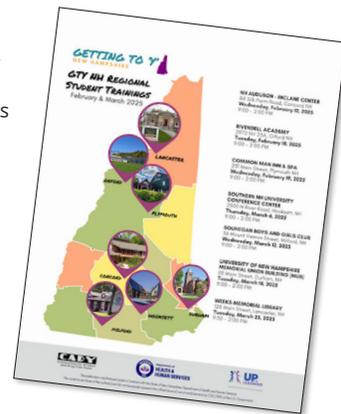
Kicking It Off

Before the official launch of GTY New Hampshire in 2025, several GTY teams were already active across the state—and their experience and insight proved invaluable as we scaled up. Students from Plymouth Regional High School, Moultonborough Academy, Portsmouth High School, and Kearsarge High School delivered inspiring welcome remarks at the GTY NH Statewide Kick-Off Conference and Training Event, held in Concord on January 23, 2025. UP

staff, joined by UP interns Hanae Debo and Mavis Downey from the Thetford Academy GTY team, trained 103 attendees—helping to build momentum, capacity, and enthusiasm for regional GTY school trainings that would take place across the state in the following months.

Regional Trainings

In February and March, GTY NH held seven regional trainings across the state, with UP staff co-facilitating alongside New Hampshire youth and adults trained at the January Kick-Off. We trained 23 teams, 19 of which were new to GTY! The support and collaboration of NH Prevention Professionals and statewide partners were essential in making these regional trainings both possible and successful.



GTY NH By the Numbers

1 Project Kick-Off + Facilitator Training with

103 attendees

7 regional trainings for school teams

23 total teams trained

19 teams new to GTY

182 youth and **48** adults trained in GTY

16 trained co-facilitators (12 youth and 4 adults) worked with UP staff

Getting to 'Y' & Personal Power Community Connections 2024–2025 • 15

appendix 1

Forms & Templates



- 88** First meeting sample agenda
- 89** GTY One Pager
- 91** Event planning checklist
- 94** Data Analysis Retreat sample agenda
- 98** Community Dialogue Event sample agenda
- 100** Sample group agreements
- 101** Troublemakers excerpt printouts
- 102** Voting sheet
- 103** Checklist for prioritizing action
- 105** Plan of Action form
- 106** Sample executive summary
- 107** Exit ticket
- 108** Last meeting sample agenda



DIGITAL RESOURCE HUB

Some digital, fillable versions of these documents can be found at tinyurl.com/gtyresources or if you scan the QR code.

First Meeting Sample Agenda

Time	Agenda	Facilitator
5 min	<p>Opening Circle: Share your name, pronouns if you'd like, grade, and answer the question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a garden full of vegetables, which would you be and why? 	
10 min	<p>Recommended Icebreaker Game: Where the Wind Blows (see this and others on page 124)</p>	
10 min	<p>Make Group Agreements: You can make a list beforehand or use the sample agreements on page 100 and have the group vote on it, or follow the protocol on page 116 to create it together!</p>	
10-15 min	<p>Context: What is GTY?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If relevant: recap what you've done previously • Discuss what the GTY Training is and when you're going • Permission slips 	
5 min	<p>Closing Circle</p>	

Getting to 'Y'

Youth Bring Meaning to Their Own Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Data

Welcome to Getting to 'Y' (GTY)! This program is all about centering youth voice in how we understand and use public health data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), or similar data sources.



Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning

In this program, students will:

- recruit students from their school or community, and lead them in a group process to understand and evaluate your local YRBS data
- facilitate discussions with other youth about the strengths and concerns that they discover in their data
- share their data analysis — the top strengths and concerns they identify — with adults in their school and community, and advocate for the changes they want to see
- make action plans for what they want to see happen, and will work with their fellow students and adults in the school and community to make them a reality



It has been proven that this program will allow students to:

- learn how to read and understand data about the lives of teens and how to use the data to shape their school and community to best serve you and your peers
- gain some great leadership skills, like how to facilitate group discussions, how to give presentations, and how to manage a big project
- make new friends and you will make connections with adults at your school and in your community
- have an opportunity to make real changes in your school and community, and to potentially improve the health of your fellow students

THE PROGRAM IS BROKEN DOWN INTO 6 STEPS:

1. Attend Training Retreat. Lead teacher/adult and student leaders attend project orientation and learn how to organize the Data Analysis Retreat.

2. Conduct the Data Analysis Retreat. Student leaders and the 15–20 peers they have recruited analyze and interpret the YRBS data for their school or community.

3. Plan and Conduct the Community Dialogue Event. The lead team meets to plan what will happen at the dialogue event. At the event, they share interpretations of the data with community members, tell them their ideas, and get their input. Create preliminary action plans.

4. Finalize a Plan of Action and Make it Happen. Student leaders meet to go over preliminary action plans, prioritize next steps, assign tasks, and start making the changes they want to make in the school and community, based on their analysis and discussions.

5. Reflect and Celebrate! Don't forget to save time at the end of the year to sit down with your team to celebrate your successes and identify lessons learned.

6. Keep it Moving. The team gets younger students involved during the next year, keeps adults who agreed to help involved in realizing action plans, and takes a lead role the next time the YRBS is administered at the school.



THE FIRST STEP IS ATTENDING THE TRAINING.

For dates of the next training, contact your GTY Representative. During the training day, participants will...

- build community and connect with students from different schools
- learn about the YRBS and the GTY approach
- review and analyze their own YRBS data through dynamic activities and conversation
- reflect on how their personal identity and experiences influence their perspective on school
- connect their school's data with root causes and potential solutions
- prepare to work as a team to see the project through back at their school

Event planning checklist

Use this checklist when planning your Data Analysis Retreat and Community Dialogue events.

PRE-PLANNING

Secure a **LOCATION** that is big enough for the number of people coming, and one that is comfortable. Remember, you will have several small groups working simultaneously throughout the event, so having enough space and flexibility so groups aren't competing with one another is important. Make sure there is enough wall space, and that you may tape the big newsprint paper on the walls; or have a backup plan, like a whiteboard.

WHERE: first choice: _____ second choice: _____

WHO will be responsible for securing the location?: _____

WHEN do we need to have the location reserved?: _____

COST for the facility? no yes How much? _____

Choose the **DATE** that you will hold the event. Make sure this is far enough in the future so you have enough time to recruit students and get all the necessary permissions, but not so far in the future that you lose steam.

WHEN: first choice: _____ second choice: _____

Find out what **TRANSPORTATION** will be required if you have the event off-campus. If you're in a large school district, it's possible you'll have to arrange for a bus to take everyone from your school to the location of the event.

HOW will we get there? _____

WHO will be responsible for arranging the transportation? _____

WHEN do we need to have the transport arranged? _____

Set aside enough **TIME** for the event. Include time required for transporting everyone to and from the event location. Be sure to include enough breaks and time for lunch.

START time: _____ **END** time: _____

SETUP time: _____ **CLEANUP** time: _____

Find out about any **PERMISSIONS** that will be required to have your retreat. Will you need the principal's approval for people to miss class that day? Will you need parents' permission for students to attend? Work with the adult at your school who is helping with this project to make sure all required permissions are in place before the event!

DO WE NEED PRINCIPAL PERMISSION? yes no

If YES, who will arrange this? _____

DO WE NEED PARENT PERMISSION? yes no

If YES, who will make the forms? _____

If YES, how will you hand them out and make sure you get them back? _____

DO WE WANT TO DOCUMENT AND SHARE PHOTOS OF OUR EVENT? yes no

If YES, who will confirm photo permission for those attending? _____

FOOD & BEVERAGES

Make sure you have enough food — snacks, lunch and drinks — available for everyone throughout the day. If you can, find out if anyone attending has any food allergies or sensitivities so you can plan the menu accordingly.

LUNCH first choice: _____ second choice: _____

WHO will order this? _____ **HOW MUCH** will it cost? _____

SNACKS: _____

WHO will get these? _____ **HOW MUCH** will it cost? _____

DRINKS: _____

WHO will get these? _____ **HOW MUCH** will it cost? _____

PREPARATION

To be sure you get a good **TURNOUT**, decide who you will invite and where you will advertise. Personal invitations followed up with written notes work best, but you may consider getting the word out with fliers or in the school newsletter or local paper.

WHO will you invite? _____

WHERE will you advertise? _____

WHO is responsible for each of the above? _____

Plan your **AGENDA** and assign **ROLES** or a lead person for each section of the agenda. Be sure to rehearse any speaking parts and write up any notes or talking points you need.

SUPPLIES & MATERIALS FOR THE DAY

- Nametags
- Markers
- Pens/pencils for people to write with
- "Fidgets," like chenille sticks or stress balls
- The goals for the day (listed on slides or a large piece of paper taped up)
- Copies of any handouts or activities (for icebreakers/energizers, voting sheets, etc.)
- Statements/Answers for YRBS scale activity
- Tape
- Large paper or giant post-it/sticky pads
- Projector and laptop
- Circle of Courage quadrants & descriptions
- Root Causes and Solution t-charts
- Sign in sheet
- A phone or other device for pictures
- Facilitator agendas and talking points as needed
- Data strips, seperated by topic (Data Analysis Retreat only)
- YRBS data for analysis at each station (Data Analysis Retreat only)
- Action planning sheets (2-4) (Data Analysis Retreat only)
- Executive Summary on slide and/or handouts (Community Dialogue Event only)
- _____
- _____
- _____

Data Analysis Retreat sample facilitator agenda

This template is available for you to copy and add to/adjust as needed for your event. Please add to this to be as specific and detailed as you need. You can include script, themes, etc. depending on what is most useful to your facilitators. Be open to new ideas, feel free to adjust the timing, agenda flow, prompts re: favorite pizza topping vs. favorite band / song perhaps).

Print a copy for each facilitator to have on them during the event. If possible, give each facilitator a clipboard as well.

When	What	Who
8:30am	Arrive / Food / Drinks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials and set up: table with snacks and drinks • Fidgets , etc. Depending on the space, you might need to arrive earlier than this in order to move furniture into the formation that will work best for your plan/group. 	Everyone!
9:00am	Opening Circle / Welcome (introduces opening circle and prompts: Name "Favorite Pizza Topping?" or something else) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials: 	
9:15am	Icebreaker Activity (Look at the Icebreakers section on page 124 for ideas) (You can also use I Matter from page 122 to root everyone in shared values.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials and set up: 	
9:30am	Circle of Courage (page 32) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials and set up: 	
9:50am	Break	
10:00am	Review of Data (Warp Speed) (page 38) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials and set up: 	
10:30am	Break	ALL

When	What	Who
10:40am	Review of Data (Warp Speed) cont. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: 	
11:15am	Report Out <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: 	
11:30am	Vote! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: 	
11:45am	Lunch (You can use this time to count up votes and set up for the next activity.)	
12:15pm	Data Analysis: Root Causes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials and Set up: Markers; Consider using pieces of paper with t-charts—one concern at the top, and groups should write out root causes in the left column. Leave the right column for solutions later on!) 	
12:45pm	Data Analysis: Solutions (but more like hopes and dreams) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials and Set up: 	
1:15pm	Break & Energizer Game (energizers are on page 134!) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials and Set up: 	
1:35pm	Review of Mapped Root Causes, Solutions (thoughts, observations, wonderings . . . what did you notice? What are we missing? Other questions? etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials and Set up: 	
1:50pm	Brainstorm Actions and How (methods on page 45!) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials and Set up: 	
2:20pm	Review and Share Out <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials and Set Up: paper for recording , markers 	

When	What	Who
2:35pm	Planning and Next Steps (Community Dialogue Event) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials and Set Up: Paper, markers 	
2:45pm	Closing / Wrap Up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When is the next meeting date? • Who is in charge of what? 	
3:00pm	Depart!	ALL

DATA ANALYSIS RETREAT / FACILITATOR AGENDA (ABRIDGED)

This is an abridged version of the above agenda that's meant to fit within 2.5 hours if you have a shorter time for your DAR. Adjust as needed.

In this abridged version of the agenda, the step of brainstorming action steps with the team has been cut for time. The team should work on this after this session, possibly as part of a regular meeting time.

When	What	Who
10 min	Welcome & Intro	
15 min	Community Builder (Examples: group juggling, Switch Up, Where the Wind Blows, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials and Set Up 	
15 min	Circle of Courage (To save time, consider the following time schedule: 4 minutes to explain context and the activity, 2 minutes per station for each of the 4 groups, and 3 minutes to discuss themes and debrief about the importance of starting with strengths.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials and Set Up 	
45 min	Warp Speed Data Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials and Set Up 	
15 min	Break (can use this time to count up votes and/or add in an energizer game)	
10 min	Root Causes (To shorten this activity and the next, consider rotating groups 1-2 times instead of through every concern, or having participants choose which concern to go to based on interest and not rotating at all.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials and Set Up 	
10 min	Solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials and Set Up 	
10 min	Closing	

Community Dialogue Event sample facilitator agenda

This template is available for you to copy and add to/adjust as needed for your event. Please add to this to be as specific and detailed as you need. You can include script, themes, etc. depending on what is most useful to your facilitators. Be open to new ideas, feel free to adjust the timing, agenda flow, prompts re: favorite pizza topping vs. favorite band / song perhaps).

Print a copy for each facilitator to have on them during the event. If possible, give each facilitator a clipboard as well.

When	What	Who
3:50pm	Arrive / Food / Drinks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials and set up: table with snacks and drinks • Fidgets , etc. Depending on the space, you might need to arrive earlier than this in order to move furniture into the formation that will work best for your plan/group. • Greet people as they arrive! 	
4:00pm	Opening Circle / Welcome (introduces opening circle and prompts: Name "Favorite Pizza Topping?" or something else) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructions: • Materials: 	
4:05pm	Community Builder (Look in the Icebreaker section for ideas, starting on page 124!) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials: • Instructions: 	
4:20pm	Overview of Getting to 'Y Goals for the evening	
4:25pm	YRBS Scale Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials: • Instructions: 	
4:45pm	Break	

When	What	Who
5:00pm	Share Executive Summary	
5:05pm	Break into small groups to explore concerns/root causes/ solutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials: • Instructions: 	
5:20pm	Action Plans Reviews/ “Wows” & “Wonders” (on page 68) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials: • Instructions: 	
5:50pm	Closing Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials: • Instructions: 	
5:55pm	Exit Ticket (on page 107)	



TIP: This agenda is just one example of what has worked well in other communities. What will work best in your community?



TIP: Make sure to decide ahead of time who will introduce or lead each section of the agenda! You may want to write up some talking points for each leader to use.

Sample Group Agreements

1. Respect each other and the space

2. Be fully present

3. If you wonder, ask (ask the hard questions)

4. Listen for understanding (while withholding judgment)

5. Support each other's learning

6. Speak your truth equitably (knowing it is only part of the truth)

7. Make it safe to take risks

8. Step up/step back

- If you aren't speaking up much, challenge yourself to step up and offer a thought. If you are speaking a lot, step back to allow someone else to contribute.

10. Listen to your body's music (fidget, grab food, move around or step out if needed)

11. Invite and give gentle reminders (if any of us stray from our agreements)

Troublemakers excerpts

Troublemakers: Lessons in Freedom from Young Children at School **by Carla Shalaby**

“But school shouldn’t be preparation for life. For young people, it is life. Young people in America will spend well over a full decade of their lives in school, by law. Their daily life in school is their social and professional world. It isn’t just preparation for it. They demand to matter in that world, every day. These children are saying, ‘We are here now, to be seen.’ For the people they already are, already full human beings, exactly as human as their teachers. No more, and no less. They have things to learn as citizens, and as scholars, and as family members, and they will grow and change and develop and learn. But they are already full human beings, and none of these lessons will make them more so. They already feel, and love, and hurt. They already desire to be entertained, and engaged, and embraced. They already insist on being taken seriously, and cared for deeply. They will not be ignored, and they will not be invisible.”

— *Carla Shalaby, excerpt from Troublemakers: Lessons in Freedom from Young Children at School*

Troublemakers: Lessons in Freedom from Young Children at School **by Carla Shalaby**

“But school shouldn’t be preparation for life. For young people, it is life. Young people in America will spend well over a full decade of their lives in school, by law. Their daily life in school is their social and professional world. It isn’t just preparation for it. They demand to matter in that world, every day. These children are saying, ‘We are here now, to be seen.’ For the people they already are, already full human beings, exactly as human as their teachers. No more, and no less. They have things to learn as citizens, and as scholars, and as family members, and they will grow and change and develop and learn. But they are already full human beings, and none of these lessons will make them more so. They already feel, and love, and hurt. They already desire to be entertained, and engaged, and embraced. They already insist on being taken seriously, and cared for deeply. They will not be ignored, and they will not be invisible.”

— *Carla Shalaby, excerpt from Troublemakers: Lessons in Freedom from Young Children at School*

Voting sheet

Please write the number of the strength and the letter of the concern.
Don't write out the entire description.

TOP 3 STRENGTHS:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

TOP 3 CONCERNS:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

thanks for voting!

thanks for voting!

3. _____

2. _____

1. _____

TOP 3 CONCERNS:

3. _____

2. _____

1. _____

TOP 3 STRENGTHS:

Please write the number of the strength and the letter of the concern.
Don't write out the entire description.

Voting sheet

Checklist for prioritizing action

An action priority will meet most of these criteria. Use this checklist to compare your action possibilities to help you choose the best one(s) for your group. Alternatively, develop your own criteria and chart for setting your direction!

WILL TAKING THIS ACTION...

action #1:
action #2:
action #3:

Compare three possible actions, one column of checkboxes for each, and see which is your best action priority.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | likely result in a real improvement in addressing this concern? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | have a lasting impact? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | be winnable? (within your timeframe and resources) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | be widely and deeply felt? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | be both fun and challenging? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | have a clear timeframe that works for the group? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | give people a sense of their power? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | match our interests, passions, and mission? |

Adapted from: The Midwest Academy 28 E. Jackson Blvd. #605, Chicago IL 60604 www.midwestacademy.com

Blank checklist for prioritizing action: Make your own criteria

Use this checklist to compare your action possibilities to help you choose the best one(s) for your group. Develop your own criteria and chart for setting your direction!

WILL TAKING THIS ACTION...

action #1:	action #2:	action #3:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

Compare three possible actions, one column of checkboxes for each, and see which is your best action priority.

Adapted from: The Midwest Academy 28 E. Jackson Blvd. #605, Chicago IL 60604 www.midwestacademy.com

Plan of Action form

Issue to be addressed	
Goal	
Strengths	
Measure of success	

Steps to be taken	<i>Who will be responsible?</i>	<i>When should this be done?</i>	<i>What resources are needed?</i>

Vermont teams, don't forget about your GTY mini-grant resource if you haven't used it yet!

Sample executive summary

[School name]: Executive Summary

On January 4, a diverse group of 18 seventh and eighth grade students gathered to examine their school's YRBS data for assets already present in the community and start the process of thinking about action steps to address areas of concern. This is an executive summary of their analysis.

AREAS OF STRENGTH

3% of students binge drank (5 or more alcoholic drinks in a row) in the past 30 days (97% of students did NOT binge drink in the past 30 days)

94% of students think it would be wrong or very wrong for someone their age to smoke marijuana

95% of students reported they wear seatbelts while riding in a car

AREAS OF CONCERN

16% of students have seriously thought about suicide

Root Causes:

- Home life: divorce, abuse, substance abuse issues
- School: bullying, stress, lack of coping skills
- Personal: unorganized, lack of confidence, mental health

Proposed Action Steps:

- Create support groups with students and guidance department
- Develop awareness campaign of the warning signs – advertisements, announcements, announcements
- Share resources with the community through partnering with the Parent-Teacher Organization

43% of students were in a room with someone who was smoking cigarettes in the last 7 days

Root Causes:

- Not wanting to offend the smoker
- Not knowing how to ask them politely not to smoke
- Unaware of the affects of secondhand smoke

Proposed Action Steps:

- Hand out informational flyers at sporting events and school concerts
- Talk to local storeowners about placing a pledge/promise sheet in stores where people can sign, pledging not to smoke around children in the car and at home.

51% of students have reported ever being in a physical fight

Root Causes:

- Anger issues
- Lack of supervision
- Issues at home
- Depression

Proposed Action Steps:

- Increased supervision in the halls
- Have teachers and the guidance staff have “check ins” with students to provide students with a place to talk about what’s going on in their lives

Exit ticket

Thank you for participating!

What stood out for you about this event?

What do you suggest could happen differently?

Are you interested in being involved with any of the Action Steps? yes no If yes, which one(s)?

Please provide your name and contact information:

I am a: student parent teacher/staff member other (please describe) _____

One word you would use to best describe this event:

Other thoughts? (use back side if needed)

Exit ticket

Thank you for participating!

What stood out for you about this event?

What do you suggest could happen differently?

Are you interested in being involved with any of the Action Steps? yes no If yes, which one(s)?

Please provide your name and contact information:

I am a: student parent teacher/staff member other (please describe) _____

One word you would use to best describe this event:

Other thoughts? (use back side if needed)

Last Meeting Sample Agenda

Time	Agenda	Facilitator
5 min	Check-in	
15 min	Circle Discussion Protocol (page 137)	
5 min	Take UP Post-survey	
5 min	Next year: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When will we meet?• How do we want to continue?	
10 min	Appreciation Activity: Find some options in the appendix on page 138!	
5 min	Closing Circle	

appendix 2

Activities & Protocols



- 110** Facilitator self-assessment & activity
- 113** Facilitator skills sneak
- 115** Circle of Courage® Printouts
- 116** Group agreements T-chart protocol
- 117** Youth Adult Partnership activity
- 120** Focus Group Guide
- 122** “I Matter” activity
- 124** Icebreakers & community builders
- 134** Energizers
- 136** Dotmocracy Protocol
- 137** Circle Reflection Protocol
- 138** Appreciation Activities

Facilitator Self Assessment & Activity

Setup

Have Facilitator Self Assessments and “I Can Help with That” worksheet printed for each participant (included below).

HOW IT WORKS:

1. Give everyone some time to take the Facilitator Self Assessment.
2. Have everyone identify **one strength** and **one growth area** that they are willing to share with the group. This can be something from the self assessment or something relevant they want to add.
3. Choose a volunteer to go first. This person will stand up in front of the room and share according to the following sentence frames:
 - One of my strengths is _____
 - Something I'd like help working on is _____.
 - If they'd like, they can add in some context/details about what they have shared.
4. Then, someone from the group will say “I can help with that” or “I’m not sure, but I think I can help with that.” That person will then get up and stand next to the person. From there, they will read their strength and growth areas.
5. This process will continue until everyone has someone who they are helping AND someone who is helping them (the group will be standing in a circle). Make a note of who is standing to your left and right.
6. Now, count off by twos in the circle.
 - Review reminders and tips
 - ROUND 1: The 1s will have 10 minutes to help their 2s
 - ROUND 2: After 10 minutes, the 2s will have 10 minutes to help their 1s
7. After each round, give time for people to share nuggets of wisdom they gained from the conversation.

FACILITATOR SELF ASSESSMENT

Here is a list of key characteristics of successful facilitators and leaders. No one person is strong in all areas. Each person builds on strengths while addressing areas requiring growth. Review the list and reflect on those characteristics that are your strengths. Then think about those which will be a challenge for you.

	this is hard for me	I'm OK at this	this is one of my strengths
Good listening skills			
Non-judgmental			
Focused, good eye contact			
Organized and on time			
Patient			
Observant			
Genuinely enthusiastic			
Well prepared, competent			
Confident			
Willing to learn and grow			
Good sense of humor			
Articulate and professional			
Assertive			
Open and friendly			
Able to paraphrase others' words			
Comfortable with conflict			
Comfortable with silences			
Flexible			

I CAN HELP WITH THAT

Step 1: Give your partner time to re-state what they are hoping to get your help with. Remember to actively listen and avoid judgment.

Step 2: Ask any clarifying questions to help you understand your partner and their goal better. You can also say something like, “It sounds like you are looking for help with_____, did I get that correct?”

Step 3: Some sentence stems that could help your conversation:

- “I relate to that because...”
- “Something that helped me was...”
- “One idea you could try is...”
- “Why do you think...”
- “Have you ever thought about...”

Listen Actively. Maintain eye contact, nod, and ask clarifying questions if needed.

Encourage and Validate. Acknowledge their strength and effort. Offer encouragement and remind them that growth takes time.

Share Constructively. If you have experience with their growth area, share tips or strategies that have helped you in a similar situation.

Ask, Don’t Assume. Instead of assuming what they need, ask questions like, “What has worked for you before?” or “How can I best support you?”

Stay Solution-Oriented. Focus on practical and actionable suggestions rather than just discussing challenges.

Be Mindful of Time. Use the 10 minutes wisely. Stay on topic and ensure your partner has space to share and reflect.

Follow Up If Possible. If relevant, check in later to see how things are going. Support doesn’t have to end after the activity.

Facilitators Skills Sneak

Set up:

Write down the audience roles on slips of paper and have something to draw them out of. You can pick and choose which audience roles to include based on your team dynamic. They're described in step 4.

If you have a large group, make sure there's some room for small groups to spread out so that they're not talking over each other.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. We'll take some time to go over the different roles that a facilitator can take on. A facilitator is never only one of these, but will need to use multiple roles for any event they lead:
 - **The Conflict Master:** When someone says something that you and/or the group doesn't agree with or a comment that's completely off topic, (even though it could be a perfectly normal comment), peacefully acknowledge their opinion and move the conversation back to the topic at hand.
 - **Grateful Thanker:** Thank the person for sharing and using their voice and express how much you appreciate them contributing.
 - **The Synthesizer:** Paraphrase, restate, lift-up, or synthesize an idea that was previously stated.
 - **Good Body Language:** Pay attention to the speaker and demonstrate active listening through how you sit and are involved in the discussion.
 - **The Involver:** Ask open-ended questions and bring ideas to the group and check-in to see if everyone is on the same page.
2. Facilitators should demonstrate the activity in small groups, then take volunteers for who wants to practice facilitation!
3. Choose a facilitator for that round.
4. Everyone else will have a role to play too! Go over the following audience roles, and write them down on slips of paper to draw out of a bucket or hat, or anything you have on hand.
 - **Devil's Advocate:** Argues against everyone just for the sake of arguing
 - **Conversation Monopolizer:** Talks about anything and everything, takes up more than their share of time to speak. Often times is very loud and will speak over others
 - **Disengager:** Not interested or engaged in the conversation going on. Maybe the disengager is wandering around the room, doing a completely different activity, or refusing to add to the conversation.
 - **The Besties:** These 2 people are your classic best friends, always talking to one another, giggling about EVERYTHING, always doing/thinking the same thing as their bestie, exclusive towards others etc. (Note that you will need to make sure that both people who play these roles know who each other are.)
 - **Peaceful Participant:** Anyone who is not one of the roles above is a peaceful participant. These people are engaging in a civil conversation.

5. That facilitator will choose a prompt from this list and will pose it to the group.

- What was the last funny video you saw?
- What do you do to get rid of stress?
- What is something you are obsessed with?
- What three words best describe you?
- What would be your perfect weekend?
- What are you going to do this weekend?
- What's the most useful thing you own?
- What's your favorite way to waste time?
- What is something popular now that annoys you?
- Are you very active, or do you prefer to just relax in your free time?
- Who is your oldest friend? Where did you meet them?
- If you had intro music, what song would it be? Why?
- If you opened a business, what kind of business would it be?
- Where is the most beautiful place you have been?
- What's your favorite season? Why?
- What do you bring with you everywhere you go?
- Where is the worst place you have been stuck for a long time?
- If you had to change your name, what would your new name be?
- What smell brings back great memories?
- What weird or useless talent do you have?

6. The group will then discuss the prompt like normal. It's the facilitator's job to work in the roles/strategies listed under step 1.

- The goal is for the facilitator to use all the skills and carry a successful short conversation.
- The goal for the audience is to fulfill their role to give the facilitator practice, but not to overdo it and disregard the facilitator's efforts to reel them into the conversation.

7. Rotate around facilitators in small groups until everyone has had the opportunity to practice facilitating.

Circle of Courage® printouts

INDEPENDENCE

This piece of the circle is about making choices, solving problems, and showing personal responsibility. It means that people trust you because they can rely on you. Native American and First Nations cultures value inner-discipline and trust-worthiness. In these traditions, adults are responsible for mentoring, teaching values, providing feedback, and giving youth opportunities to make choices without forcing them. Independence balances belonging.

BELONGING

This part of the circle is about having healthy connections to other people, and having a sense of emotional connection to groups (clubs, teams, interest groups, family, your school, your tribe, etc). In Native American and First Nations cultures, the community (rather than the family) ensures the survival of the culture. Even if parents die or are not responsible, the tribe is there to support the next generation. Belonging balances independence.

GENEROSITY

This part of the circle is about helping others and making positive contributions to the community. A central goal of Native American child-rearing is to teach the importance of being unselfish and generous. By helping other people, youth can show proof of their worthiness. Generosity balances mastery.

MASTERY

This part of the circle is about having the opportunity to learn new information and skills and gain competence. In Native American cultures, children are taught to carefully observe and listen to those with more experience, and people with greater abilities are seen as models, not competition. The goal of mastery is not to be “better than” others, but to lead by example.

Group Agreements T-chart Protocol

Setup:

You'll need:

- a paper for each participant with a t-chart (either drawn or printed)
- pens or pencils
- a big piece of paper to tape on the wall

HOW IT WORKS:

1. Give participants some context around the activity:
 - Since we'll be meeting regularly to work on this project together, it's important that we have set expectations of how to treat each other. We want everyone to feel a balance of comfort and empowerment in this space. Today, we'll talk about how we want to accomplish that as a group. The list we make today will be posted every time we meet and dictate how we work together from now on.
2. Instruct the team to list values they believe are important for working with a group on the **left side** of the t-chart. Examples might include respecting one another, being kind, engaging, or anything else. Let them work on this individually for about 2 minutes.
3. Once done, instruct everyone to fill in the **right side** of the t-chart with actions that align with each value they wrote down. For example, if someone wrote down "respect," how do they expect this group to respect each other? Maybe it's by giving everyone space to speak or showing up to meetings and events on time? You can write multiple actions for each value. Give them 2 minutes to work on this individually.
4. Next, ask everyone to pair up with someone. Have them compare what they wrote on the right side of the t-chart, the actions. Do they have any similar ones? Make a combined list by crossing off duplicate actions and combining ones that might fit together. Give each pair a couple of minutes to do this.
5. Once everyone is done discussing, have each group report out one action at a time. While they speak, someone should record what's said on a big piece of paper that everyone can see. Instruct groups to cross off an action on their list if another group says it first, so that there are as little repeats as possible.
6. By the end of sharing out, you'll have a full list of group agreements. Ask the group if anything is missing, then discuss and add as needed. Once the group fully agrees to the list, you have your group agreements!
7. To close this activity, take some time as a group to answer the question—how do we hold each other accountable to these agreements?

Youth-Adult Partnership Activity

Seed to Tree Continuum: Nourishing the Seed

The “nourishing the seed” metaphor (seed to tree) is used to ground our understanding of how to build a school culture based on youth-adult partnership. While there is a clear continuum of youth-adult partnership, know that it is free of judgment and that learning and teaching contexts and tasks require different levels of partnership, in varied doses.

Setup:

You'll need copies of the Seed to Tree diagram for participants to reference. Also, make or print signs for each stage (“Sun,” “Soil,” “Seed,” and so on). Including a brief description of each section is a good idea, too. Hang those up around the room with tape or sticky tack.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. First, explain the sections of the metaphor. Facilitators or participants can take turns reading each section.
 - **SUN:** Youth Voice and Agency - these are the rays providing the possibilities to progressively build and deepen youth-adult partnership over time, if the conditions are right.
 - **SOIL:** The soil provides many of the essential nutrients to nourish movement toward partnership.
 - **SEED:** Youth as recipients: Adults inform and/or direct youth. Ideally, adults support expression and actively listen to youth. Decisions are generally done “to and for” youth in this seedling stage. The potential value of youth voice and agency is recognized, but has not yet been provided the nutrients to flourish.
 - **SPROUT:** Youth as consultants: Adults actively seek and consider opinions of youth in learning and decision making. Adults listen to youth during this period of germination of new roles and responsibilities. The seed has been provided the nutrients to begin to grow and develop. Once the seed has found the right conditions, it will secure itself. The first root breaks through the seed, anchoring it and taking in water for the developing plant. Youth begin to understand the value of their input and how to offer it to adults, rooting a new role in their learning experience. Adults begin to better understand the importance of integrating youth perspectives into decisions, honoring and optimizing these new roots.
 - **SAPLING:** Youth and adults as emerging partners: Youth actively participate in a decision making process that is designed and guided by adults. The length of the sapling stage depends on the tree species, but saplings have defining characteristics. For one, they have flexible trunks - mental models of adults and youth are shifting over time. The sapling grows stronger when subjected to the elements, but also appreciates protection and support during this period. A new and deeper root system creates evolving stability and strength. Sprouts also have smoother bark than mature trees. The decision-making process is generally smoother when designed and guided by adults, but may lack the richness of a “rougher” and more negotiated process. An inability to produce fruit or flowers - not yet a fully equitable process

- **MATURE TREE:** Youth & adults as full partners: Learning, teaching, and school leadership are founded on equitable, respectful trusting cross-generational relationships characterized by shared power, voice, and responsibility. A tree becomes mature when it starts producing fruits or flowers. This is when the tree is at its most productive and has realized its full potential. A well developed root system and developed trunk contribute to the strength and resilience of the tree.

2. Next, ask participants to move to the sign in the room where they feel their school is in general on the seed to tree continuum. Ask these questions and get a few volunteers to share out with the whole group:

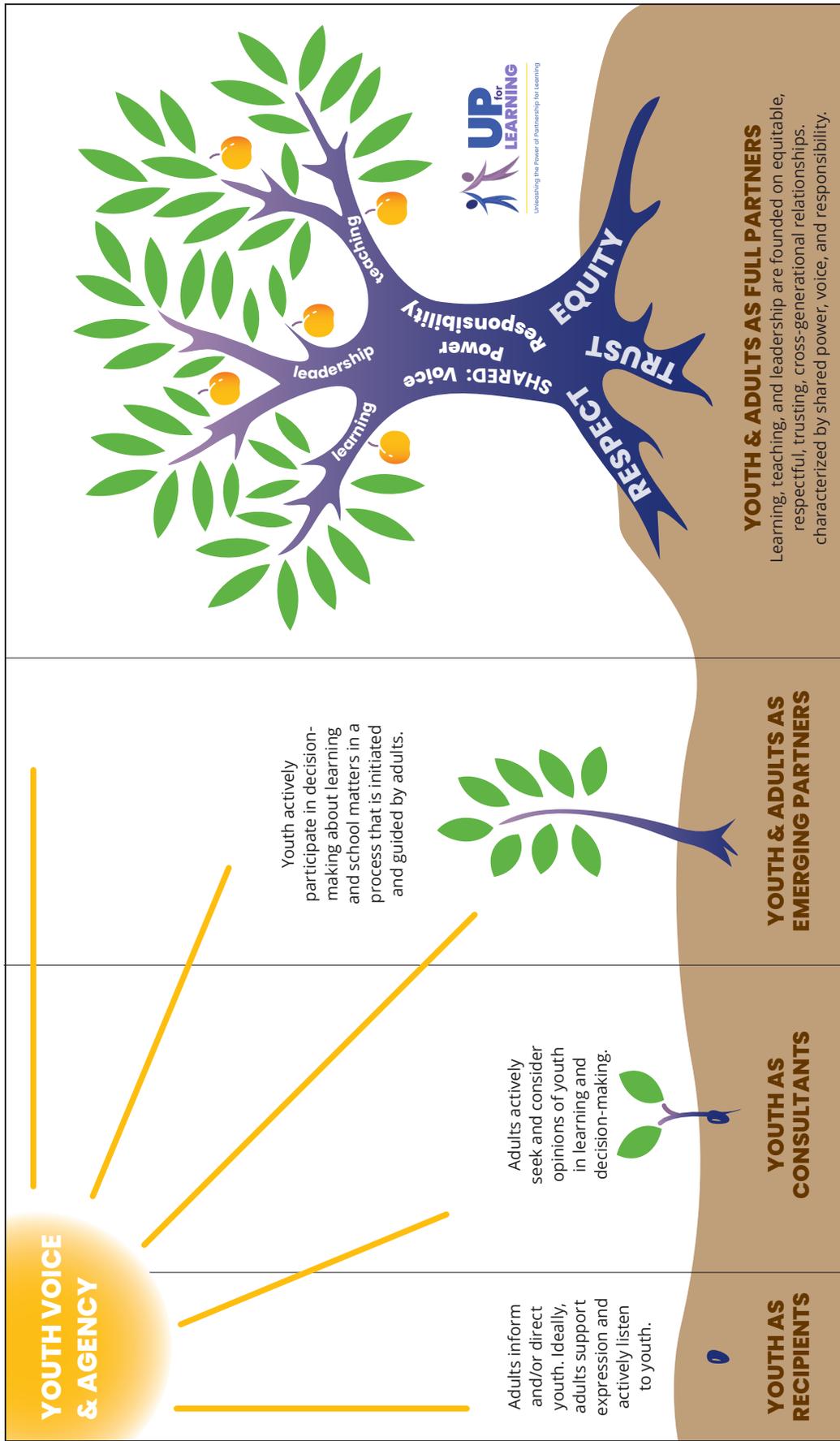
- Turn to a person next to you and share why you are standing where you are.
- Turn to another person and ask what might you or your school need to move further along on the continuum towards more YAP?

3. Finally, it's time for a whole group discussion. Bring everyone together in a big circle or where everyone can otherwise see one another. Lead the group through the following questions:

- What was it like to think about your schools in this way?
- What areas need nurturing as we nourish the seed?
- What can you take away from this activity to help your schools/work?

Once the norms of youth-adult partnership have been established, the capacity of youth as consultants and emerging partners is amplified. There will predictably be discomfort in the process of youth and adults assuming new roles. It is important to have a language to talk about the evolution of the role shifts over time. This graphic may serve as a useful reference point in that process.

SEED TO TREE GRAPHIC



Focus Group Guide

Designate a time and space for your focus group, and carefully recruit only the individuals who can speak to the gaps you're trying to fill.

Since you're asking for their time, it's a good idea to offer some kind of compensation if you can (like gift cards or food).

Perhaps most importantly, be sure to listen carefully to your group and **take good notes**. It's best to appoint two or more notetakers to capture everything. Respect the participants' confidentiality by only taking notes on what is said, not who is saying it or identifying details. Some other things to consider include:

- Avoid dichotomous questions (yes/no)
- Don't ask "why" — take a passive listening role
- Don't let the conversation veer too off topic — use probing and follow-up questions to refocus the conversation

Focus groups are focused discussions. Think of it as just multiple small circle discussion rounds. After introducing everyone and setting the tone for the discussion, your first question should broadly relate to your topic, then use follow-up questions to direct the conversation more specifically. You'll want to design 2-3 neutral, open-ended questions that would lead to an in-depth conversation around your topic. Plan for follow-up questions to get at the point you want to dive deeper into. An example would be:

What are the most serious problems facing families in this community?

- A number of concerns have been mentioned. Think about teens using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. How do these problems compare to the others already mentioned?
- In your community, what is acceptable use of alcohol?
 - By adults?
 - By young people under 21?
- Tell us about the circumstances when teens drink. When and where is it most likely to occur?
- How do you think alcohol is obtained?

Once you've designed some questions, the rest of the agenda should look a little like this:

Time	Agenda	Facilitator
5 min	Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitators introduce themselves • Give context about GTY project 	
5 min	Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of the Focus group • Topics that will be discussed • Encourage to share openly and establish a safe place to do so 	
5 min	Group Agreements Decide on some ground rules. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One one person should speak at a time • All opinions are of equal value in this space • Negative comments are welcome and helpful • No cell phones or outside distractions (fidgets are okay) • Step up, Step back • Limit side conversation to maximize time • Take care of yourself–step out for calls/breaks as needed and grab refreshments 	
20 min	First Topic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad Question with follow-up specific questions 	
20 min	Second Topic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad Question with follow-up specific questions 	
5 min	Thank you & Conclusion	

Source: Peñaloza, Linda J., PhD. *Focus Group Interviewing: Skills and Techniques*. University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center, Division of Prevention and Population Sciences Prevention Research Center.

"I Matter" Activity

This activity is meant to connect participants to the emotional impact of a youth-adult partnership by drawing upon their own life experiences. It's a great opening activity for a larger retreat event.

Setup:

You'll need some large pieces of paper, markers, sticky notes or index cards and writing utensils.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. Start by giving some context to the activity:

- The human desire to feel valued and have a sense that they matter in the world is universal and cross-generational. It is the essence of why the youth-adult partnership paradigm shift is so powerful and needed. This activity draws upon participants' personal experiences. It asks them to recall incidents where their input or voice was either solicited and valued in a decision impacting their lives - or not. The feelings elicited in both scenarios are identified individually and named as a group. These attributes are then related to their school culture, creating an awareness of the degree of alignment with these principles.

2. Ask participants to:

- Think of a time when some decision was being made that would directly impact you, but you were not asked for input. You knew you had important information to share about this decision, but there was no opportunity for you to contribute. You knew this would result in an action that was being done "to" or "for" you - but definitely not "with" you. Spend a 1 minute writing down notes about this incident, recalling it as vividly as possible. WRITE OR DRAW

3. Have participants turn and talk to somebody around them. Ask them to leave out details and focus on identifying feeling words/emotions they felt in that moment.

4. Now, ask participants to:

- Think of a time when some decision was being made that would directly impact you, and your input was actively solicited. You knew you had important information to contribute to the decision. You knew this would result in an action that was being done "with" you rather than "to" or "for" you. Spend 1 minute writing down notes or thinking about this incident, recalling it as vividly as possible. WRITE OR DRAW

5. Have participants turn and talk again. Again, they should focus on identifying feeling words/emotions they felt in the moment.

6. Have the group share 1-3 feeling words. You can popcorn these or go around in a circle to hear from everyone.

7. Create a word cloud with these afterwards while they are sharing their words for the second prompt, or write them on a large piece of paper for everyone to see.

8. Invite participants to gather around the list of words and explain:

- This is at the heart of the WHY of partnership — provoking those feelings (left hand column) when you know your voice matters allows people to be their best selves— to live into their full potential. Our job is to continually create the context that allows this to happen. When engaging in this space, remember those emotions that people feel when their input is actively sought for and valued.



TIP: *If you want to save time, you can go directly to making Group Agreements using these value words as a starting point!*

Icebreakers & community builders

THE WILD WIND BLOWS or WHERE THE WIND BLOWS

Setup: Have the group stand in a circle in which each person has a spot marked in some way (either by an object or a chair that is turned backwards). The facilitator stands in the middle of the circle, with no spot marked for them in the circle.

How it works: The facilitator gives a direction such as “the wild wind blows for anyone who is wearing shoes that tie”. Everyone who has shoes that tie gets up to find a new spot.

Whoever finds themselves still looking for a spot last is the new person in the middle and should pick a new prompt that begins with “the wild wind blows for anyone who...” and state something that is true about them that may be true about others in the group. This can go on for as many rounds as you need!

When to use it: This is a great icebreaking game for any size group!

CONNECTION GAME/ACTIVITY – STEP FORWARD/STEP BACK

Setup: This is an adaptation of “Where the Wind Blows” that can be used with large groups or in spaces where movement is restricted for whatever reason. Invite everyone in the group to stand a circle.

How it works: The facilitator begins by saying something that’s true about themselves, such as “I am a dog person”. If that is also true for you, take a step forward. If the statement is VERY true for you, you can take a big step forward.

The facilitator invites people to look at the choices that people made and then invites people to “step back” into the circle.

After this, the facilitator can invite people to self-select as the person to make a statement and speak as they feel moved/ready. They’ll copy the facilitators pattern of making a statement about themselves and stepping forward, inviting others to step forward, then inviting them to step back. Sample Prompts:

- I am dog person
- I love winter
- I prefer tea over coffee
- I am a procrastinator
- I am a morning person
- I enjoy playing sports

When to use it: Similar to The Wild Wind Blows, this is a great first activity for any size group. It puts less pressure on people to speak up if they don’t want to since there are volunteers to say the next prompt.

SEE YA!

Setup: Have the whole group break up into groups of 4-5 people.

How it works: During each round, the facilitator gives you a prompt. The “winner” of each round says “See ya!” to the group, and rotates clockwise to join another group once time is up. Continue until all of the questions have been asked.

Sample questions:

- Who is wearing the best socks in the group?
- Who has the most siblings in the group?
- Who has the most pets in the group?
- Who travels the longest to get to school/work each day?
- Play rounds of Rock, Paper, Scissors until one person wins
- Who can speak the most languages in the group?
- Who has traveled to the most states?

When to use it: This activity is best for bigger groups, and a great introductory activity.

FOUR CORNERS

Setup: Indicate four corners in the room, whether by pointing or with signs up

How it works: Give the group a series of options. In each round, they need to choose the corner they are most aligned with. Examples include:

- Your favorite snacks are: Sweet, Salty, Spicy, Sour
- Movie genre: Horror, Comedy, Drama, Sci-Fi
- Choose a favorite snow day activity: Sleep, Reading, Being Outside, Movies
- Choose a dessert: Cookie, Pie, Ice Cream, Cake
- Favorite season: Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall

In each round, when people arrive at their corner, give them 1-2 minutes to talk amongst themselves about the common interest/opinion they chose.

When to use it: This is a good introductory activity for bigger groups!

WELL-OILED MACHINE (ALSO CALLED “PARTS OF A MACHINE”)

Setup: You’ll want enough room around for everyone to be moving!

How it works: One volunteer (or facilitator!) begins building a human “machine” by standing in the center or on a stage and making a repetitive motion and corresponding repetitive sound.

One at a time, group members add on to the machine by approaching the existing machine “parts” (people) and adding a new motion and sound to the mix. Participants are encouraged to make all different kinds of movements and sounds and position themselves in different ways, at different levels. Participants are discouraged from touching other people.

At the close of the exercise, facilitator can either invite the machine to slowly shut down for the night or invite people to “peel off” one at a time in the opposite order that they added themselves in the first time around (last person who joined the machine would be the first to peel off).

Variations: The facilitator can invite participants to create the machine in response to a certain prompt. For example, show a machine that makes dreams, or create a happy machine or a stressed machine. The facilitator can also invite an existing group that works together to create a machine that shows how they work together.

Once the machine has been created, the facilitator can give prompts to the “machine” as a whole, such as:

- Speed up production
- Slow down production
- React as though a cog has gotten stuck and jammed up the works

When to use it: This builds a team’s ability to take action together fluidly, and reflects on the team’s response to a prompt. This is a good activity to run after an initial meeting or two to build collaboration.

AFFINITY FLOCKING

Setup: Invite people to stand anywhere at the start of the game.

How it works: Give a series of prompts for which, each time, people in the room should find folks who have the same or a similar answer to them for a given question.

Sample prompts:

- Find people who have the same favorite season as you.
- Find people who have the same favorite color as you.
- Find people who have the same number of siblings as you.
- Find people who have the same favorite amusement park attraction as you.

As people gather in each group, invite them to share with the full room about their response. For example, you can ask the season groups to say which season they are and explain why they think it’s the best season.

When to use it: This game works well for a large group of 25 people or more.

UNCOMMON COMMONALITIES

Setup: Have enough room so that people can spread out! Break people into groups of 3-4.

How it works: Give groups 5 minutes to come up with the most unusual commonality that they can come up with for all members of the group.

- Example: all of you have met a celebrity and talked with them
- Example: all of you have a grandparent who lives in North Carolina

Invite all groups to share out what they came up with! Celebrate the group with the most unusual commonality.

When to use it: This is a quick activity that you can use for any groups of 3+ participants!

WAGON WHEEL

Setup: Divide participants into two groups: an inner circle (which faces outward) and an outer circle (which faces inward).

- Number off 1-2 - create an inside circle (1's) and an outside circle (2's)
- Make sure that every 1 is partnered with a 2

How it works: Each partnership will have 1 min (30 seconds each) to answer a question. When the chime is sounded, the inner or outer circle will rotate to a new partner. Some possible questions include:

- If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?
- If you were given \$10,000, what would you spend it on and why?
- If you could watch your favorite movie now, what would it be?
- What's the weirdest thing you've ever eaten?
- If you could wish one thing to come true this year, what would it be?
- What's your favorite thing to do in the summer?
- If you could have any kind of pet, what would you have and why?
- If you were an animal, what would you be and why?
- If you had to give up one of your senses (hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling, tasting) which would it be and why?
- If you could do your dream job 10 years from now, what would it be and why?
- If you had to be allergic to something, what would it be and why?
- If money and time was no object, what would you be doing right now?
- If you could eat your favorite food now, what would it be?
- If you could learn any skill, what would it be?
- If you were sent to live on a space station for three months and only allowed to bring three personal items with you, what would they be?

Pose a question for participants to discuss with the person facing them. Give the first person 1 minute to respond. Give the second person 1 minute to respond. Before the next question, the inner circle stays in place while the outer circle shifts one to the right.

When to use it: This is best for large groups with a lot of time!

PB & JELLY

Set Up: Make sure you have an area large enough for participants to move freely. The facilitator will need to prepare slips of paper with word associations (see below) and have tape that will hold paper to clothing.

The facilitator should select word pairs such as “peanut butter and jelly”, “ham and eggs”, “paper and pencil”, “Batman and Robin”, etc. and write the words on separate pieces of paper.

How it works: The facilitator should give a piece of paper with one half of a word association on it to each participant and ask them to hold it in front of them. Explain to the participants they will be pairing off by finding the other half of their word association.

The participants are then told to find the other word that complements their words. They may ask each other what their own word is and ask for help around pairings.

Once the pairs have been made, the pairs then are given a few minutes to learn one thing they have in common and one thing that is different (excluding where you currently go to school or live!) The facilitator should participate in a pair if the group has an odd number. If the group is evenly paired, the facilitator should join a pair and participate in the discussion of that group.

When to use it: This is a great activity to get any size group of participants familiar with each other on an individual level!

GROUP JUGGLING

Setup: For this game, you’ll need a small object that’s easy to toss across a circle, like a bean bag or a Koosh.

How it works: To begin, everyone should stand in a circle with a couple of feet in between each person. The facilitator tosses the object to someone across the circle, saying their name as they do so to get their attention. That person then tosses to a new person, saying their name as they toss. This continues until everyone has had the ball and the last person tosses it back to the facilitator, calling their name as they do so.

Once that pattern is established, the group repeats it, aiming to get faster each time. The facilitator or an observer should time the group on a stopwatch.

To add dimension to this and make it a teambuilding challenge as well as a way to learn names, the facilitator can invite the group to set a goal for how fast they think they can go and test it. The facilitator might also invite the group to pause at some point and discuss whether they’d like to try a new strategy.

When to use it: This is a good name game for small groups who are just getting to know each other.

BLANKET NAME GAME

Setup: You'll need a blanket or flat sheet big enough to hide a person head to toe.

How it works: Split the group into two teams. Two people hold up a blanket as a barrier between the two teams. It is important that they can't see each other. In each round, one person from each team stands on the other side of the blanket. The people holding the blanket drop it and the two people facing each other race to say the other person's name first. This can be done just for fun, or as a competition where teams rack up points.

TEAM TALLY

Setup: Divide the group into smaller teams (4-5 people is a good target number and it helps to try to make sure all teams are the same size). Give each team a copy of the Team Tally sheet (available on [page 132](#)) and a pen, but ask them not to look until you say go!

How it works: Let teams know that you will give them 7 minutes to score as many points as possible by following the prompts on the sheet.

When time is up, invite teams to quickly add up their points. Invite teams to stand if not already standing. Auction-style, begin inviting teams to stay standing if they have a certain number of points. For example, begin with inviting teams to stay standing if they have 50 points, then go up in 10-15 point increments from there, until there is just one team standing.

Note: Adapt the scoresheet for various groups as needed to make sure the prompts work well for them.

When to use it: This game works best with a larger group, or at least 12 people.

HUMAN BINGO

Setup: You'll need a copy of the Human Bingo scorecard (see [page 133](#)) and a pen/pencil for every participant.

How it works: Hand out the Human Bingo scorecard, one to each participant. All participants (leaders included!) walk around and have other participants sign the box on the scorecard if they can answer yes to that question. Limit each person to signing two squares per bingo card, to encourage mingling. Keep going until time is up. Cheer for all bingos (a row or column of boxes signed).

When to use it: Great game for any group! Can be used as an icebreaker.

PEOPLE IN MY LIFE

Setup: You just need some people to participate in this one!

How it works: Pair everyone up into groups of 2. Ask each person in the group to take a minute to tell about the person in their life who has had the most positive influence. Tell participants that it's not necessary to name this influential person, but please to briefly share how and why the person influenced their lives.

Optionally, you can have people share out something that their partner said about their positive influence.

When to use it: This activity works best once the group has had a chance to get to know each other. It is a good choice because it allows participants to decide how much they want to share with the group.

QUICK LINE-UPS

Setup: Have participants stand in a line. Designate one end of the line as the "smallest" end and the other as the "largest" end

How it works: Have the group arrange themselves in line by birthday (smallest number to largest number). Have them do this without talking. Next, have them rearrange the line by the last two digits of their phone number (if everyone has a phone) or shoe size, this time without talking or using their hands to indicate numbers. (You can ask them to put their hands behind their backs or in their pockets.)

If your group is particularly trusting and caring with one another, give each person the name of an animal/critter (e.g., cat, horse, monkey, owl, snake, etc.) and have them keep these names secret. Next, tell them to rearrange the line from the smallest animal to the largest with their eyes closed and only making the sound of the animal.

- For the eyes closed version of the game, make sure you emphasize safety issues: take small steps, arms folded at chest height as bumpers, peeking is okay if needed. (You want everyone to be comfortable doing this!) Also, you as the facilitator should watch and make sure there are no accidents or collisions.

When the activity is completed, ask participants how they felt as they solved problems. What did they do well as a group? How can they bring these same skills into their work?

When to use it: This is a fun game for a group that has made initial introductions and spent some time together, but would benefit from some team building.

Icebreakers for Zoom Events

If your event is being held on Zoom, it will be necessary to adapt the activities you use. Here's a couple of suggestions!

CAMERA ON/CAMERA OFF

How it works: Invite all participants to turn their camera off at the start of this activity. Explain that you'll be giving prompts that invite people to turn their cameras on when they hear a statement that is true about them.

If they are not able to have their camera on during this meeting for any reason, then can use the thumbs up meeting reaction as an alternative when it is their turn to turn their camera on. Note that the chat is open and people can comment/add details about their responses in the chat if they wish!

Read this series of statements. Make sure to invite people to turn their cameras off again after each prompt to reset.

Turn your camera on if...

- You went swimming this past summer
- You love dogs
- You love cats
- You discovered a new music artist you like recently
- You enjoy being outdoors
- You like a lot of toppings on your pizza
- You can cook

After the final round, invite folks to all turn their cameras back on.

UNCOMMON COMMONALITIES — ZOOM VERSION

How it works: The facilitator should give instructions. Tell participants they'll have 5 minutes in breakout groups. The task is for groups to come up with at least 3 unusual things that they all have in common. Once done, the group should choose a reporter to share with the whole group what the MOST unusual thing is that their group shares.

- Example: all of you have met a celebrity and talked with them
- Example: all of you have a grandparent who lives in North Carolina

Send everyone to breakout groups of 3-4 for 5 minutes. Afterwards, bring everyone back and have reporters share out from their groups.

Team Tally!

Partner up with a group of 5. Earn points by tallying the things below! Prepare to share out at the end!

Give yourself 5 points if your group has at least one student and at least one adult in it!	
Give yourself 1 point for each different school your group belongs to!	
One point for each person who can share something good that has happened to them today.	
One point each for every animal that lives at your house.	
One point for each time you've gone sledding so far this winter.	
One point for every button on your clothing and accessories with you right now.	
One point for each person who can name a new activity or sport they have tried this past year.	
One point for each person who is the youngest child in their family.	
One point for each person who has gone to a birthday party in the past month. <i>ADD 10 BONUS POINTS if your group sings Happy Birthday out loud right now!</i>	
One point for each person who remembers the name of a song they listened to in the past week.	
One point for each thing beginning with the letter J you can see from where you are standing.	
TOTAL POINTS:	

Human Bingo scorecard

Has the same color eyes as you have	Can speak more than 1 language	Likes the same kind of ice cream as you	Plays a musical instrument	Has the same number of siblings as you
Can wiggle their ears	Plays a sport	Can name all four Ninja turtles	Can name 5 countries	Plays mobile games
Uses the same foot you do when you tap your foot	Does not like chocolate	Cares about their community	Reads for three or more hours a week	Has been on TV, radio, or the news
Has peacefully resolved a conflict	Has stood up for a belief even though it was hard	Has been a positive role model for peers	Loves peanut butter	Can quote from a movie by memory
Has the same type of pet as you	Can ride a skateboard	Has met someone famous	Was born in the same month you were	Has a five-letter first name

Group Energizers

Use these activities to engage participants during a break, or to energize your group and ready them for more action.

THE GREAT FINGER GRAB

Setup: Have the participants stand in a circle.

How it works: Instruct them to put their left hands out flat at waist level. Next, ask them to position their right hands with the index finger about half an inch above the palms of whoever is immediately to their right. On the count of 3, each participant should try to grab the index finger that's posed above their left hand, while avoiding having their own right hand index finger grabbed. When everyone is getting the hang of this, switch hands, so everyone is grabbing with the right hand instead of the left.

If everyone gets good at both sides, try adding in feet! Have participants put their feet out on the right and position their left foot over the foot of the person next to them. They'll have to try to pin their foot and grab their finger at the same time. Make sure to caution people not to stomp on any toes!

SWITCH UP

Setup: Introduce the game as an exercise where people will inevitably make errors. That's okay! It's part of it. Try to let yourself make a mistake and keep going. Throughout the game, unless instructed to do so, you should be walking around the space.

How it works: This game is played in rounds. They occur in the following order:

- Round 1: Invite people to walk around the room in no particular direction. SAY: "When I say stop, you stop. When I say start, you start." Try this a few times.
- Round 2: Say "NOW, when I say start, you stop. When I say stop, you start." Try this a few times until people seem to get the hang of it.
- Round 3: Say "Added to those moves, when I say name, you say your name. When I say clap, you clap." Try this a few times.
- Round 4: Say "NOW, when I say clap, you say your name. When I say name, you clap." Try this a few times.
- Round 5: Say "Added to those moves, when I say jump, you jump. When I say dance, you dance." Try this a few times.
- Round 6: Say "Final round! We're going to put it all together with one change. NOW, when I say jump, you dance. When I say dance, you jump."

Wrap up the game and invite everyone to give themselves a round of applause!

ROCK/PAPER/SCISSORS CHEERLEADER

Setup: You'll want some room for people to spread out into pairs around the room.

How it works: Participants find a partner and play rock/paper/scissors. Whoever wins moves on to play another person and whoever loses becomes the winner's cheerleader. This continues until only two people are left with the rest of the participants cheering them on. Everyone cheers for the final winner.

SOUNDBALL

Setup: Have the group stand in a circle.

How it works: The facilitator makes a sound of some kind and gestures like they are throwing a ball to another person. In order to catch the sound "ball", the person being thrown to should mimic the sound the first person made as they catch. Next, this person who caught the first ball makes a new sound as they pass the "ball" to another player in the circle. That player mimics the sound, throws with a new sound, and so forth, ongoing.

- One rule: any sounds are allowed, but not words.
- Also note: In this game, it is important that the sounds being made are possible for other people to mimic easily. If someone makes a sound that others cannot mimic, it is a good opportunity to pause for reflection.

Dotmocracy Protocol

This protocol is used to take a “pulse” or a “sense of the meeting” and see what priorities are emerging within the group at a given moment. It can also be used for voting!

HOW IT WORKS:

Each participant gets 3 sticker “dots” that they can distribute as “votes” by sticking them next to the the ideas that are standing out to them in some way (the ones we should focus on, the ones we should prioritize right now – whatever prompt is given by facilitators is fine).

They can decide to spread out their dots across 3 ideas or to distribute them differently (all 3 dots on one idea, 2 dots to one idea and 1 dot to another).

Allow the group a few minutes to take in the full scope of ideas available and then invite them to take turns approaching in order to “vote”.

Note to participants whether this is a true vote at this point (that is binding) or, more commonly in this protocol, simply a way to get an idea of where consensus might be developing without necessarily committing to a direction at this point.

You can also invite groups to initial ideas that they find most compelling without giving a strict limit on the number of ideas for them to initial.



TIP: *You can also use sticky notes, pieces of washi tape, or another type of sticker (voting with glitter dinosaurs, anyone?!) as your voting “dots.”*

Circle Reflection Protocol

Setup:

There should be enough room for everyone to gather in a circle. Find a talking piece. It can be a stuffed animal, a koosh, or anything else you have on hand for people to hold. If your team wants to, you should identify a notetaker to record key ideas from the conversation. It might be helpful to have on hand your Executive Summary and action planning tool to read before the circle and ground everyone in the goals you set for this year.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. The facilitator should first provide some context.

- Tell participants that we're using a circle protocol to reflect on our experiences together this year. Introduce the talking piece and explain that you want everyone's voice to be heard. When someone has the talking piece, it's their turn to speak. When you do not have it, it's your turn to listen. You can pass. If you want to pass, it's important to at least hold the talking piece for a pause so you can be engaged in the circle even if you don't speak.

2. Start the protocol by reading the following quote:

"Listening is such a simple act. It requires us to be present, and that takes practice, but we don't have to do anything else. We don't have to advise, or coach, or sound wise. We just have to be willing to sit there and listen." — Margaret J. Wheatley

3. Then, go down the list of questions. Start with 1, allow the talking piece to travel all the way around the circle, then move onto 2 and so on until they've all been answered.

- What's something that you would identify as a success of our team this year? What are you proud of?
- What conditions contributed to our successes?
- Reflect on 1 or 2 key barriers to greater success with our goals.
- What ideas do you have for overcoming these barriers as we look ahead to next year?
- Share a snapshot moment from our time together that was meaningful or memorable for you.

Note: There may be questions that you decide are more important for your team than the ones listed here. These can be adjusted, removed or replaced to work for you.

4. Be sure to thank everyone for their time and thoughts. End the circle protocol by reading the following quote:

"Sane leadership is the unshakeable confidence that people can be generous, creative, and kind. The leader's role is to create the conditions for these qualities to be evoked and utilized to accomplish good work." — Margaret J. Wheatley,

Appreciation Activities

BUS NOTES

Set up: For your materials, gather a stack of cardstock sheets, 8.5x11 or similar, any color. Plain paper can work if cardstock is not available. Have markers and pens or pencils available and one large manilla envelope per person – big enough that the cardstock sheet can be placed inside.

Make materials available on a table. Other tables/desks/flat surfaces will be needed for people to use while writing.

How it works: Have each participant write their name in a noticeable way on one of the pieces of paper. It shouldn't take up too much space, but it should be easy to spot (for example, use a Sharpie for this part). **All team members should participate, including the adults.**

Once everyone is done, people will take turns writing on each other's papers. You have options for how to approach this. You can have people spread their papers throughout the room and people move around the room, marketplace-style, visiting each person's paper and writing on it.

Encourage participants to write messages of appreciation, share memories from the year, or express affection for each person in another way that is right for them.

People do not get to look at their own paper once they've handed it off to the room! They should take them at the end of the session and read them when they're alone. Alternatively, a facilitator can take time at the end of the activity to place each member's sheet inside of a manilla envelope with their name on it and seal it. If participants ask why this is called "Bus Notes", it's because they're meant to be read on the bus on the way home from the last day of school or camp.

With a group with perhaps 15 people or fewer, a variation on the marketplace approach is to have everyone sit in a circle. Each person prepares their sheet with their name on it. Then, they prepare an envelope with their name on it. They hand the envelope to the person to their right, who is responsible for putting their sheet in and sealing it once they have had their turn to write on it. After both the sheet and the envelope have been marked with names, people begin passing sheets to the left and writing on the new ones they receive until everyone has had an opportunity to write on everyone else's sheet. As each person's sheet makes it to the person on their immediate right, that person stops circulation of that sheet, seals it in the envelope, and hands it to the recipient.

When to use it: This is an activity meant to serve as an expression of gratitude and appreciation. It results in a creation of a keepsake of the group's time together. It's a great wrap-up activity after finishing a group project.

GRATITUDE STONES

Set up: You'll need a bucket or basket of mini glass gems (decorative gems/garden stones/vase fillers). Enough to have 3 per participant. Have the group stand in a circle.

How it works: Facilitator passes the basket around the group and invites each participant to select 3 stones from the basket and hold onto them.

Facilitator explains the process the group will follow: each person has the opportunity to give away their stones as tokens of gratitude — one per person. Explain that, at first, the invitation will be for people to share them publicly. One person at a time will share with the full group who they are giving a stone to and why. After sharing, that person approaches the recipient and gives them the stone. Explain that, after a bit, the invitation will change and people will have an opportunity to share stones individually, without the full group as audience.

Facilitator invites people to take a quiet moment or two to consider who they would like to give their stones to, and then opens the floor for people who wish to speak.

After 5-7 minutes, the facilitator can announce that, at this point, we will break the circle formation and anyone can approach anyone else to give them a gratitude stone.

Notes: This activity works best with a larger group (30+ people) that has been in community together for some time. It provides opportunity for group members to share and receive appreciation for individual contributions.

MY CUP IS FULL

Set up: One empty cup of any type is needed. Have the group sit in a circle.

How it works: Facilitator explains the process the group will follow: each person gets a turn holding the cup. The cup is an “anti talking object”; when you are holding it, you must remain silent. While one person is holding the cup, other members of the group can share words of appreciation and celebration. They do not need to raise their hands or go in any order, but rather can jump in as they wish to share. People can choose to speak more than once if they wish. The person holding the cup remains silent and listens to what others wish to share. When the person holding the cup feels that “their cup is full,” they can pass it to the next person. It is entirely up to that person how long they wish to hold the cup; they can pass it quickly or hold onto it for several minutes.

The facilitator can go first, or ask for a volunteer. Once the first person is chosen, begin the pass around the group until everyone's cup “has been filled”.

Adults might be inclined to bow out of having a turn holding the cup, but **it is important that all group members take a turn** and show that everyone deserves appreciation for their efforts.

When to use it: This activity provides opportunity for group members to share and receive appreciation for individual contributions. This activity works best for a smaller group — perhaps 15 or fewer — of people who have been working together for some time. However, it can work well in larger groups where the intention is to appreciate a subset of the larger group, such as graduating seniors or outgoing elected members. In that case, you would identify ahead of time which specific people will be holding the cup and, ideally, have them sit next to each other in the circle to make it easy to pass the cup along.

