

GETTING TO 'Y'

Youth Bring Meaning to Their YRBS Data 2021-22



Empowering Youth through Data & Dialogue

The 2021-2022 school year was full of challenges for youth and adults who were faced with learning, health and mental health impacts of a long pandemic on top of economic, social and political unrest. In the midst of this, Getting to 'Y' (GTY) teams from Vermont, New Hampshire and the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma immersed themselves in youth empowerment, with youth taking

action to create change in partnership with supportive adults. Not only did teams begin all of their work by mapping and celebrating the innumerable assets in their schools and community, but after identifying and exploring areas of concern in their local Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)*, they focused their work on improving youth resilience.

The GTY year was full of connection, empowerment, caring, and a sense of agency. Teams celebrated and built on what IS working as they took steps to improve youth well-being. That is what hope is all about.

Thank you GTY teams!

*Unless otherwise noted, teams reviewed the 2019 Supervisory Union or School District YRBS report for their age group.

Hartford Memorial Middle School and Hartford High School

Hartford, Vermont

Teams from Hartford Middle and High School came together at a custom GTY training in October to learn how to run Getting to 'Y' in their school, with support from the [Hartford Community Coalition](#). After the training, the high school GTY group met to review their YRBS data, identifying electronic vapor product, alcohol, and prescription drug use as concerns at their school. The work of this small, but diverse and engaged group, helped inform the community coalition as well as to guide and move coalition

work. They anticipate a fun GTY kick-off in the fall to create awareness and improvement of these metrics at HHS.

A dedicated and representative group of 15 sixth, seventh and eighth grade students assembled weekly from December through March to analyze their middle school data to find assets and strengths already present in the community, and to create action steps to address areas of concern. The middle school team decided to focus on improving mental health and developed a project to make the school



Hartford team

bathrooms a kinder and more uplifting space, given that is where students sometimes end up when they are feeling overwhelmed and stressed. The GTY team removed graffiti, painted walls, added motivational and uplifting messages, provided mental health information and resources, and more. Their Community Dialogue on May 25 included a small, but engaged, group who were eager to contribute to solutions, particularly around suicide statistics and mental health. The team ended the year with some great new ideas to continue their work on improving mental health and reducing suicide risk.



Hartford Community Dialogue Event

STRENGTHS

63%
of middle school students played on at least one sports team in the past year.

94%
of middle school students ate dinner with at least one parent or other adult family member 2+ days in the past week.

94%
of middle school students think their parents or guardians feel it would be wrong or very wrong for the student to use electronic vapor products.

44%
of high school students ever drank alcohol.

72%
of sexually active high school students used a condom during last sexual intercourse.

CONCERNS

 **27%**
of middle school students ever seriously thought about killing themselves and **10%** have tried to kill themselves.

 **44%**
of high school students ever drank alcohol.

 **37%**
of high school students ever used an electronic vapor product.

 **8%**
of high school students ever took pain medication without a doctor's prescription or differently than how a doctor told them to use it.

Milton High School

Milton, Vermont

The Milton High School Student Council completed their second year of GTY work, focusing on continuing action steps and awareness around the priorities set in their school YRBS data the previous year. They started the year by presenting their YRBS findings at a faculty meeting and submitting a report to the school board. After a virtual session with 'year 2' peers from Thetford, the Milton team built the following interventions and programming over the course of the year to positively impact their YRBS data:

- Club Fair in December with the goal of increasing a sense of belonging for all students at their school.
- Chain of Support advisory activity where all advisory groups created a Chain of Support with positive messages embedded within each ring to build cohesiveness and support for all students.
- First Call information was given to all advisory groups to increase awareness of mental health supports and emergency services.
- First Call Staff Training where the county crisis service provided staff with training about the signs of suicide and how to positively impact students who need support.
- Suicide Awareness table at basketball home games.



Milton team members

- Suicide prevention resource table during a mental health assembly.
- Participation in the Milton Inclusion Festival.

STRENGTHS



85%

of Milton High School students describe their grades as As or Bs.



49%

of those who use tobacco products tried to quit during the past year.



83%

reported that there is at least one teacher or other adult in their school that they can talk to if they have a problem.

CONCERNS



23%

of Milton High School students report someone has ever done sexual things to them that they did not want.



Only

31%

strongly agree or agree that their school has clear rules and consequences for behavior.



16%

made a plan about how they would attempt suicide in the past year.



12%

of Milton students were threatened or injured with a weapon on school property in the past 30 days.

Mt. Anthony Union Middle School

Bennington, Vermont

The Youth Leadership Group (YLG) is a youth coalition with the goal of encouraging healthy behaviors and supporting and improving the school and broader community. The YLG is a partnership between the school and the [Alliance for Community Transformations \(ACT\)](#), a substance misuse prevention organization focused on supporting healthy youth in the Bennington region. At their Data Analysis Retreat, which was co-facilitated by YLG member, Lucy, who had participated in GTY the previous year, the YLG reviewed middle school level Bennington County 2019 YRBS data and 2021 Core Measures Survey. After identifying assets, strengths and areas for improvement, they took action in partnership with ACT! They hosted a successful in-person Community Dialogue Event where they discussed their work and hosted Miss Vermont 2022 and Mount Anthony alum, Alexina Federhen, who spoke about youth mental health and shared her own personal experience. Other interventions included:

- Weekly Wellness Announcements: YLG shared a quote that inspires positivity paired with a wellness tip with the goal of reminding peers that they matter and are part of a community that cares about them.
- Bulletin Boards: YLG focused on promoting positive messages and sharing resources around topics such as celebrating friendship, how specific substances impact brain development and mental health, quit resources

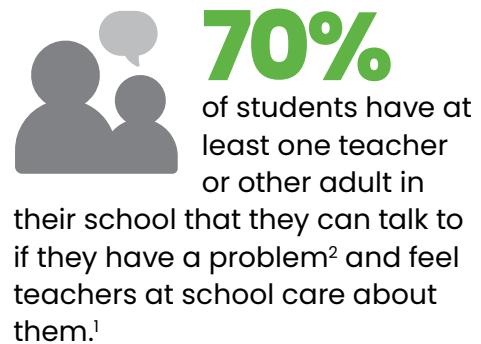


Mount Anthony Data Analysis Retreat

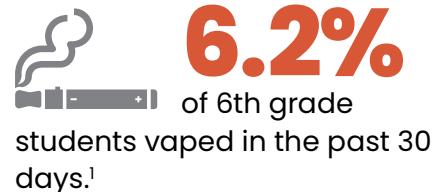
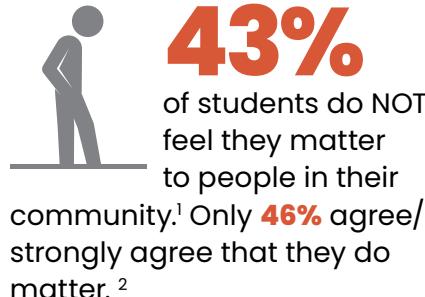
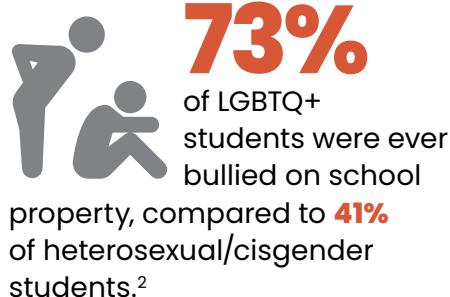
for vaping, suicide prevention lifelines and websites, and a Pride-themed board to celebrate different gender identities and sexual orientations.

- Sunshine Boxes: YLG continued to distribute Sunshine Boxes to over 100 students monthly. The project was started by last year's group and provides take-home boxes that contain activities and mental health and substance use prevention resources for teens.
- ACT Bennington supported the YLG priorities with regular social media posts on topics identified by YLG data analysis.

STRENGTHS



CONCERNS



¹ Core Measures Survey

² YRBS

Sheldon Middle School

Sheldon, Vermont

The Sheldon Vermont Kids Against Tobacco (VKAT) group joined other middle school teams for an in-person training event in October. They shared some of their successes and experiences from previous GTY efforts. For example, they had previously identified the low percentage of middle school students who were asked if they smoked by a doctor, dentist or nurse as a priority area. The team wrote letters to health and dental providers in their area to

explain the importance of asking youth about tobacco use and were gratified to see that the percentage increased in their more recent YRBS report! Although the team was not able to organize a full data analysis retreat this year, they continue to incorporate YRBS data into their leadership and prevention work and hope to explore their 2021 data in the coming school year.



Sheldon team members

St. Johnsbury School

St. Johnsbury, Vermont

The St Johnsbury Vermont Kids Against Tobacco group (VKAT) joined GTY with support from the [North-eastern Vermont Regional Hospital Prevention Partnerships](#) (NVRH). After a custom orientation to GTY, VKAT recruited peers and then hosted a Data Analysis Retreat, where the larger group reviewed their school district middle school YRBS data. They also created an Asset Web to identify and celebrate supports and opportunities that promote resilience, building on community mapping they had done earlier with NVRH. The priorities, root causes and action ideas the students identified in their data helped guide the work of the VKAT group, the Student Council and NVRH prevention work!



St. Johnsbury Data Analysis Retreat

STRENGTHS



Only
3%

have ever used a prescription drug without a doctor's prescription or differently than how a doctor told them to use it.



94%
feel their

parents or guardians would think it wrong or very wrong for them to use electronic vapor products.



87%
think it is

wrong or very wrong for someone their age to use vaping devices.



36%

walk or ride a bike to school at least once per week when weather permits.

CONCERN



22%

of middle school students have ever seriously thought about killing themselves.



20%

have done something to purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die.



31%

think it would be easy to get alcohol if they wanted to.

Thetford Academy Middle School

Thetford, Vermont

With only one returning member this year (the rest had moved on to high school), the Thetford middle school team started their second GTY year by attending a training in Montpelier to learn about GTY. They then led the entire seventh grade through a review of the Orange County Middle School 2019 YRBS data, mapping assets and identifying strengths and areas of concern in their data. They hosted a successful Community Dialogue Event in March to share their ideas and get input on their action plans. The team took on important work throughout the year, stimulating discussion and taking action. They infused all of their work with fun, finding time to incorporate an impromptu dance at their Community Dialogue Event and playing games and bonding as a team during their regular meetings. The GTY team grew over the course of the year with new members joining to help make a difference while having fun. Accomplishments this year included:

- NAMI Connect Suicide Prevention training for all TA staff.
- Feedback for MAPP on vape-free promo items.
- Partnered with the WISE organization around gender-based violence prevention.
- VT Health Department Focus Group to provide input on 2023 YRBS questions.



Thetford Academy Middle School team

- Presentation at the Green Peak Alliance prevention network.
- 3 GTY students presented at VT Superintendents Association Conference on "Reimagining Wellness in Schools".
- Planned for Sticker Shock Campaign.
- GTY end-of-year celebration.
- Had fun with conversation, games and LOTS of DONUTS!

STRENGTHS



98%

of students usually or always wear a seatbelt.



63%

of students describe their grades as mostly As or Bs.



88%

of students feel that their parents or guardians think it is wrong or very wrong to use electronic vapor products.

CONCERNS



7%

of students have had sexual intercourse.



60%

of LGBTQ+ students have done something to purposely hurt themselves without wanting to die.



75%

of LGBTQ+ students don't feel they matter to people in their community.



20%

of students have ever seriously thought about killing themselves.



41%

of students say if they wanted to get alcohol, it would be easy or sort of easy to get some.

Thetford Academy High School

Thetford, Vermont

The Thetford Academy High School team kicked off their second year of GTY work by meeting with peers from Milton High School to share action ideas and support each other as 'year 2 GTY teams'. The Thetford team was made up of both returning and new members who met regularly to plan and take action to address the priorities they had identified the previous year when they, and their peers, analyzed the 2019 Thetford Academy High School YRBS data. Through their advocacy and thoughtful use of data, their school became much more aware of important issues covered by the YRBS, and of the 'root causes' behind the data. For example, club and activity options expanded dramatically based on the GTY team's focus on increasing resilience factors to reduce suicide risk. Starting from strengths, they built more avenues for connection, belonging and engagement. The team had a busy and productive year and included the following projects:

- Survey on club and activity needs then organized a club fair.
- Suicide Prevention Video message.
- Video explaining the importance of YRBS data as students prepared to take the 2021 survey.
- Sunshine Boxes and Bags distributed in November, January and May.
- Feedback for MAPP on vape-free promo items.



Thetford Academy High School team

- Wrote a grant for Mental Health Check-In supplies.
- Implemented Mental Health Check-Ins in advisories.
- School-wide drug and alcohol fact Kahoot!
- Advisory activity of planting flowers with positive messages and placing them around campus.
- VT Health Department Focus Group to provide input on 2023 YRBS questions.
- Presentation at the Green Peak Alliance prevention network.
- GTY end-of-year celebration.
- Team building through regular check-ins, games, and LOTS of DONUTS!

STRENGTHS



52%

of students think it is wrong or very wrong for someone their age to use electronic vapor products.



53%

of students think it is wrong or very wrong for someone their age to drink alcohol and **47%** think it is wrong or very wrong to use marijuana.



60%

of sexually active students used pills, an IUD or implant, or a shot, patch, or birth control ring.

CONCERNS



5%

of students attempted suicide in the past year.



Only **60%**

of students agree or strongly agree that in their community, they feel like they matter to people.



3%

of students have ever slept away from home because they were kicked out or abandoned.

Vergennes Union Middle School

Vergennes, Vermont

The Student Response Team (SRT) is a group of seventh and eighth grade students who met once a week to talk about and take action to make positive changes in their school community. After learning about GTY with other middle schools at the fall training day, they hosted a productive data analysis retreat in December, with around 20 students attending. In addition to creating a visual list of 'assets' in the school and community, they set priorities based on their Addison Northwest School District YRBS data which then guided the SRT's work during the rest of the school year. The SRT shared their work with the [United Way of Addison County](#) (UWAC) prevention coalition and also participated in the Vergennes Middle School Mental Health Matters community event. The students created a powerful [film](#) focusing on mental health and suicide prevention which was shared at the community event and through social media. During the second half of the year, they put their efforts into learning about and educating peers about physical and mental health impacts of caffeine and created posters with the help of UWAC. Some members of the SRT GTY team also volunteered to review



Vergennes team

and provide input to the Vermont Department of Health to ensure that youth voice is included in the upcoming 2023 YRBS questionnaire!

STRENGTHS



99%

of students usually or always wear a seatbelt.



94%

of students ate dinner at home with at least one parent or other adult family member on two or more days in the past week.



78%

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

CONCERNS



13%

of students ever seriously thought about killing themselves; **7%** ever made a plan; **5%** ever tried to kill themselves.



7%

of students drank alcohol before age 11.



Only

40%

of students think they greatly risk harming themselves if they use electronic vapor products regularly.

Moultonborough Academy

Carroll County, New Hampshire

With support from the [Bureau of Student Wellness](#), a leadership team of 8 students and their advisor formed a GTY Core Team in January! They participated in hybrid training to learn about GTY and then organized and led their own Data Analysis Retreat with 22 of their peers in February. The representative group of youth mapped assets, reviewed their high school YRBS data, worked on root cause and solution ideas and had fun getting to know each other. After working with peers to set data priorities, the Core Team hosted a virtual Community Dialogue Event to share ideas and get more input on assets, root causes and resources. They then moved to action to improve areas they had identified in the data and were able to accomplish many interventions during the spring:

- Wrote letters to NH legislators about proposed changes to the YRBS (HB 1639). The bill proposed to make the YRBS an "opt-in" instead of "opt-out" in NH.
- Created a Healthy Minds, Healthy Lives wellness club for students in grades 6-12 to teach stress management strategies and engage in activities beneficial to mental wellness.
- Created displays of resources from local mental health and other agencies that provide support and services for domestic and sexual violence and substance misuse.



Moultonborough Data Analysis Retreat

- Connected the Starting Point education coordinator with health teachers and other staff/teachers regarding services and support around domestic and sexual violence.
- Recruited peers to join them in an upcoming Connect Youth Leader suicide prevention program through NAMI-NH.
- Provided free developmentally-appropriate self-defense classes (with local police volunteers) to middle and high school students as enrichment opportunities.
- Arranged for a motivational speaker for middle and high school students.
- The GTY team plans to continue and expand on their work in the coming school year!

STRENGTHS



82%

of students described their grades in school as mostly As and Bs during the past year.



64%

of students were physically active at least 60 minutes per day on 5 or more days in the past week.



30%

of students got 8 or more hours of sleep on an average school night.

CONCERNS



12%

of students who date experienced physical dating violence during the past year.



21%

of students seriously considered attempting suicide during the past year.



31%

of students think it would be very easy to obtain marijuana if they wanted to and **7.6%** think it would be very easy to obtain prescription drugs without a prescription.

Newfound Regional High School & Plymouth Regional High School

Central New Hampshire

In November, two Central New Hampshire schools joined UP for Learning youth and adult facilitators for the first-ever GTY experience in New Hampshire! The training was sponsored by [Communities for Alcohol- and Drug-free Youth \(CADY\)](#) and brought together 29 students from the PRHS OSSIEE group, CADY Youth Advisory and Advocacy Council, the NRHS Student Athletic Advisory Team and the Tapply-Thompson Community Center Youth Advisory Council. Each team reviewed their school's most recent YRBS data to identify strengths to celebrate and concerns to address as well as root causes and solution ideas. They also created 'Asset Webs' to map the many supports in each school community.

The teams then took action! One student used her school's YRBS data for her senior project to raise awareness about the top priorities. She also facilitated a mini GTY event for younger students at her school. Students from the NRHS teams submitted powerful testimony to the NH Senate Education Committee relative to a YRBS bill (see [NRHS Getting to Y Youth Testimony](#)), highlighting their own use of YRBS data to understand issues and create solutions. GTY students prepared and taught engaging healthy relationship lessons at local elementary schools focusing on healthy and supportive friendships. To address their mental health concerns, a GTY team created a resource board for Mental Health Awareness Month, spotlighting stress triggers for teens, community resources, and healthy coping strategies, including "Self-Care Bingo" and "Ways to Manage Stress." They also implemented a School Vacation Week Mental Health Awareness activity for elementary school students at the local community center which included a three-day Mental Health Fair that raised awareness about the signs of mental health issues and how to take care of "feelings, thoughts and actions". These inspiring teams plan to continue their GTY work in the fall, create more interventions and analyze new 2021 YRBS data.



Newfound Regional students testifying for the NH State Senate Education Committee



Newfound and Plymouth teams at the GTY training

STRENGTHS

84% / 90%
of NRHS/PRHS students reported that their parents or guardians would think it would be wrong or very wrong for them to have 1-2 drinks of alcohol nearly every day.



54%
of sexually active NRHS students used a condom during their last sexual intercourse.



98%
of sexually active PRHS students did NOT drink alcohol before their last sexual intercourse.

CONCERNS

9% / 11%
of PRHS/NRHS students were ever physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they did not want to.



17%
of PRHS students were binge drinking during the past 30 days.



44%
of NRHS students felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for 2+ weeks in a row that they stopped doing some usual activities.



13%
of NRHS students tried marijuana for the first time before age 13.

Tahlequah High School

Oklahoma, Cherokee Nation

In partnership with the [Cherokee Nation Public Health Department](#), students in Oklahoma's Tahlequah High School joined GTY this year! Seven student council members and their advisor volunteered to take the lead as the Getting to 'Y' Core Team. Over the course of several weeks in December, the Core Team worked with UP for Learning staff and epidemiologists from the Cherokee Nation Public Health Department to lead a larger group of peers through analysis of their local YRBS data. The students created a Circle of Courage to document existing assets in their school and community, then reviewed their region's 2019 YRBS report to decide what they feel is important to celebrate and what to improve. After identifying strengths and concerns about youth health and well-being, the group thought about root

causes for their concern areas and brainstormed possible solutions.

The Core Team then presented their work at the B.E.S.T. (Bringing Everyone's Strengths Together) Community Coalition Annual Meeting, sharing their data priorities and gathering input and ideas from community members. The Coalition was so impressed with the students' work that they invited them to join the Coalition and to attend future meetings and offered funding to help the GTY group implement action steps.

The Tahlequah Core Team incorporated the ideas they gathered from peers and community members to develop and implement interventions to improve youth well-being

over the course of the spring semester. The Tahlequah GTY Core Team created action plans based on the input of their peers and community members. Cherokee Nation Behavioral Health experts and Tahlequah High School health and prevention specialists have provided resources and information to help the students develop posters, posts and fliers and to deliver a spring and summer social media messages to raise awareness of school, regional, tribal and national mental health supports available to youth, and to de-stigmatize mental health support. The Cherokee Nation Public Health Department will continue their partnership with UP for Learning with a goal of bringing Getting to 'Y' to more schools next year. The Tahlequah youth leaders plan to add other interventions in the fall and will help UP for Learning train other schools in GTY!



Presenting at the B.E.S.T. annual meeting

Right, Tahlequah Data Analysis Retreat;
below, students speaking with Oklahoma
State Representative Bob Ed Culver



STRENGTHS



50% of high school students who used tobacco products tried to quit using all products during the year before the survey.



81% of high school students described their grades in school as mostly As or Bs during the year before the survey.



53% of high school students played on at least one sports team during the year before the survey.

CONCERNS



22% of high school students seriously considered attempting suicide during the year before the survey.



37% of high school students felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for 2+ weeks in a row during the year before the survey that they stopped doing some usual activities.



58% of high school students ever used an electronic vapor product.

Getting to 'Y' in Elementary Schools

School Climate Survey Data

In addition to the middle and high schools who participated in Getting to 'Y', nine school teams used the GTY model to engage youth in grades 4 through 8. These students worked with their school climate survey data to inspire dialogue and action. Congratulations to the following schools for taking on this important work:

- **Castleton Elementary School**
- **Castleton Village School**
- **Fair Haven Grade School**
- **Hardwick Elementary School**
- **Lakeview Elementary School**
- **Middletown Springs Elementary School**
- **Poultney Elementary School**
- **Wolcott Elementary School**
- **Woodbury Elementary School**



Lakeview Elementary team



Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning

Learn more about Getting to 'Y' and other UP for Learning initiatives at upforlearning.org or contact:

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SPECIAL THANKS to **GTY Youth Facilitators**
Layliana Benjamin (left) and Margaret Smallwood (right) of Thetford Academy.

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