

"OUR VOICES MATTER!"

Youth Summit Report Spring 2021

**A collaborative project by the
Tippecanoe Resilience & Recovery
Network - Prevention Committee**

Table of Contents

Introduction of Executive Summary	3
Methodology	5
Findings	6
Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic	6
How has COVID Impacted your School Year? Figure 1	
What Areas of Your Life has COVID Impacted the Most? Figure 2.....	
Stressors	8
Stressors Facing High School Students. Figure 3	
Substance Use	9
Substances Youth are Using. Figure 4	
Substances that You Think are High Risk. Table 5.....	
Recommendations for School Improvement	11
Issues for Youth Schools Need to Pay Attention To. Figure 6	
Specific Things Schools Can Do to Help Students. Figure 7.....	
The Positives of Schools	14
Things Schools are Doing Well for Students. Figure 8.....	
The Mental Health Issues Impacting Youth	15
Mental Health Issues Impacting Youth. Figure 9.....	
Barriers that Stop Youth From Seeking Help	18
Barriers to Asking for Help. Figure 10.....	
The Positives of the Community	19
What the Community Does Well for Youth. Figure 11	
The Community and Youth	20
Things the Community Could Improve for Youth. Figure 12.....	
Coping Mechanisms	22
Ways Youth Cope With Stress. Figure 13.....	
Conclusion	23
Appendix I: Codebook	25
Appendix 2: Coding Breakdown	45

Executive Summary

In April 2021, the Tippecanoe Resilience and Recovery Network – Prevention Subcommittee hosted the third annual “Our Voices Matter” Tippecanoe County Youth Summit in collaboration with community organizations and schools in Tippecanoe and Benton Counties, Indiana.

In the past, the Youth Summit was an in-person event in mid-March with approximately 80 students from various Greater Lafayette-area high schools. The event was originally created as a connector between the community and its’ teenagers, and offered a space for fun, fellowship, and sharing of voices. Community leaders volunteered to serve as moderators of conversations and note takers for recording purposes. For the first two Youth Summit events, the Prevention Subcommittee members used a round-robin format in which students moved from one table to another; the same moderators asked the same questions to each group; and the same note takers took notes for the same questions to promote consistency in recording purposes.

This 2021 Youth Summit was the first summit event held during the COVID-19 pandemic. While the pandemic presented challenges and barriers for our original format in asking questions and recording our conversations with high school students, the Prevention Subcommittee also recognized the importance of continuing to have these meaningful conversations. The hope was to identify how, specifically, the pandemic has affected high school students. The Prevention Subcommittee arranged a detailed plan to safely host virtual summit events at each individual school via Zoom or Google Meet. Approximately 115 students participated in the nine virtual summit events. One moderator and one note taker was assigned to each group of four to six students. The students sat around a table in their individual high schools and shared a computer as they communicated with the remote moderator and note taker. The moderator asked all of the questions, while the note taker took notes for all of the questions. Moderators and note takers were trained in how to ask questions and record conversations in a systematic way. Moderators and note takers included leaders from local community mental health organizations, medical facilities, the United Way, retired educators, Purdue University School of Nursing students, and members of other various community organizations.

Schools who participated in the 2021 Youth Summit included:

Benton Central High School
Central Catholic High School
Elston Alternative School
Faith Christian High School
Harrison High School
Jefferson High School
McCutcheon High School
Oakland High School
West Lafayette High School

The questions that generated discussions for the 2021 Youth Summit included:

1. *How has your school life changed this past year? (virtual, in-person, hybrid, home school)*
2. *Which area of your life has COVID or quarantine impacted the most? home life, social life, work life, mental wellbeing, physical health, school performance, or anything else?*
3. *What do you think are the biggest stressors high school students face today?*
4. *What substances do you think youth are using the most?*
5. *What substances do you think are high risk?*
6. *What issues do you think youth are dealing with that schools need to be paying more attention to?*
7. *What specifically can schools do to help with those issues?*
8. *What do you think schools are doing well to help students?*
9. *What mental health issues do you think impact youth the most? How would you define/describe the mental health issues you have identified?*
10. *What type of barriers stop teenagers from asking for help for themselves or someone they know?*
11. *If you had the chance to sit down with the mayor or county commissioners, why would you tell him/her the community is doing well for you? What would you explain needs to be done more for youth outside of school?*
12. *What ways do you see you or your peers using to cope with stress?*

The note takers took notes on a Google Form, and all notes were collected in a Google Spreadsheet. To encourage open and honest discussion, the note takers did not include any names or other identifying information to maintain anonymity.

It is the plan of the Prevention Committee to sponsor a Parent/Community Summit and Resource Fair in October 2021 to share the results of the 2021 Youth Summit and offer information with parents that may be helpful to them based on these results.

Methodology

School counselors selected up to 15 students who best represented the diversity of their student populations and who would be willing to discuss and answer the questions asked of them by the group moderators. Based on the information collected, it appears the students had a variety of concerns, passions, and coping skills.

The Prevention Subcommittee hosted nine individual summit events during the first two weeks of April 2021. All events were held virtually. The students were divided into groups of four to six students. Each group shared a computer while the moderator and note taker entered the summit event remotely. Moderators were instructed to spend about ten minutes on each question, so all questions could be answered in the allotted amount of time. In a few instances, the groups ran out of time, so not all questions were asked and answered. Between the nine schools, there were 21 groups that answered questions. Notes were recorded within a Google Form.

Like the previous summit events, student responses to each question were organized into themes, following an abbreviated content analysis format. Many questions asked during the 2021 Youth Summit were asked in the two previous years. For comparison purposes, previous themes for these answers were included within the content analysis, and new themes for answers were created as needed. If a previous theme was not mentioned by students this year, the theme was eliminated. For the new questions, the data analysis workgroup determined the appropriate themes based on student responses. Some notes were either unclear or did not pertain to the question and were not included in the analysis. A codebook of themes, including theme definitions and examples, is included in Appendix A. Some student groups gave answers that were only mentioned a handful of times and may be recorded under an “other” category. For these situations, Appendix B includes each theme per question and the total number of student groups who mentioned this theme when answering each question.

Due to the structure and format of the note taking, each theme was recorded only one time per student group answer. For example, if four students in the same group gave the answer “depression” as an issue students are struggling with, the theme of “depression” was only recorded one time. Thus, if an answer was given at least one time, the answer was recorded. The vertical axis on the charts throughout the report shows the name of the themes from student responses, while the horizontal axis represents the number of groups that mentioned a theme at least once. It’s important to note, then, that the bar chart numbers do not represent the number of students that gave the specific answer, but rather the bar chart numbers represent the number of student groups that gave that response at least once throughout the conversation. Each question and its’ results are below.

Findings

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

The Prevention Subcommittee began the 2021 Youth Summit by asking each high school student group, *“How has your school life changed this past year?”* The Prevention Subcommittee asked this question for the first time during the 2021 Youth Summit, for the purpose of identifying how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected high school students. Nearly all 21 student groups discussed that their greatest change and challenge was the transition to online learning during the spring of 2020 when the pandemic began, and the use of online learning during periods that school districts switched abruptly to online learning or during periods of student quarantine during the 2020-2021 school year. One student shared, *“Having to work from e-learning was hard because we had no motivation... we are stuck at home and have no social interaction.”* Other students describe the academic aspect of online classes. One student shared, *“There is a disconnect of not being in the classroom learning environment. Quarantine in the spring of 2020 was a big adjustment... couldn't ask teachers questions as easily and didn't have peers around you... I learn better in person, so my classes weren't as easy for me.”*

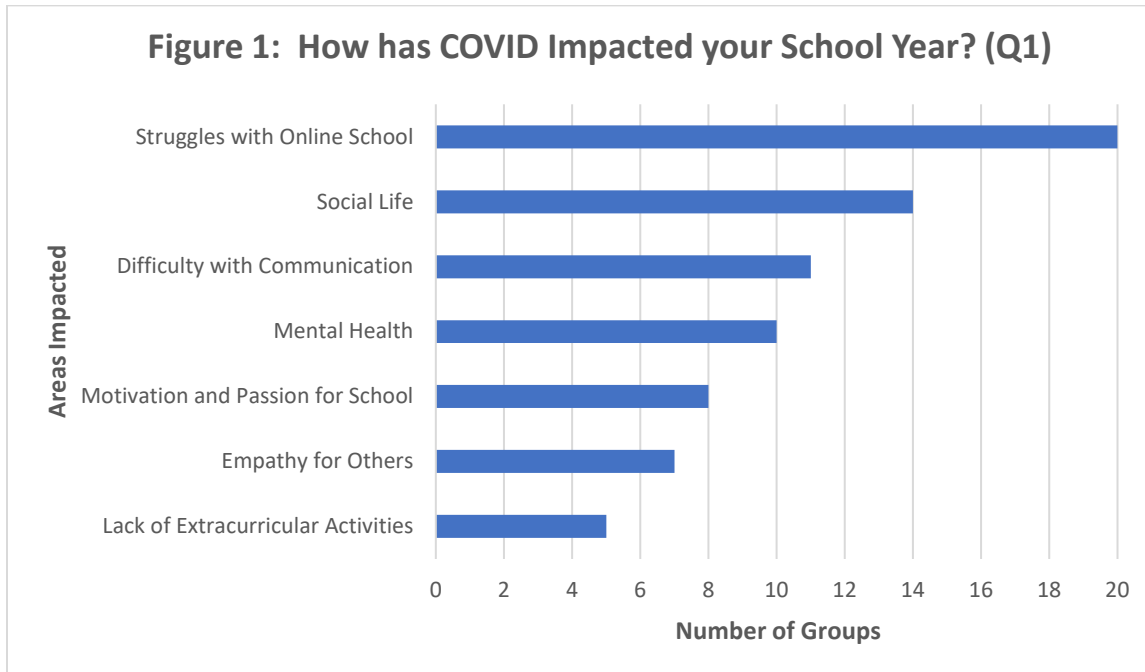
Second, 14 out of 21 student groups stressed the impact that the pandemic had on their social lives, both during quarantine or lockdown, and while in school. During lockdown and quarantine, in most instances, students did not “hang out” with their friends. The time they spent in direct contact with their friends was reduced dramatically and friendships became strained. Many were concerned about contracting the coronavirus and taking it home to vulnerable family members. Although they “talked” via texts, on the phone, and online, their social lives were just not the same and friendships suffered.

Third, 11 out of 21 student groups discussed the difficulty the pandemic had on communication. While in school, students mentioned three main communication challenges: first, their facial masks prevented them from seeing their friends’ faces and smiles; second, students were required to socially distance which meant students could not be close to each other; and third, classroom group and hands-on activities were significantly reduced which challenged students who excel under hands-on learning conditions.

Fourth, 10 out of the 21 student groups indicated that the pandemic impacted their mental health in a negative way. Students reported high levels of stress from online schooling; social distancing; not knowing when or if they are going to be quarantined; and the possibility of returning to school in-person. One student commented, *“As a high school student, you could feel hopeless because of COVID.”*

Lastly, eight out of 21 student groups indicated that their motivation and passion for school had significantly decreased, and five out of 21 students groups discussed the lack of extracurricular activities and its’ impact on their interest in school. More positively, though, seven out of 21 student groups expressed empathy for others. In conversations, students expressed empathy for teachers as they dealt with teaching online; for parents and family members due to financial

constraints; and for peers who did not have access to consistent internet or the ability to print assignments.

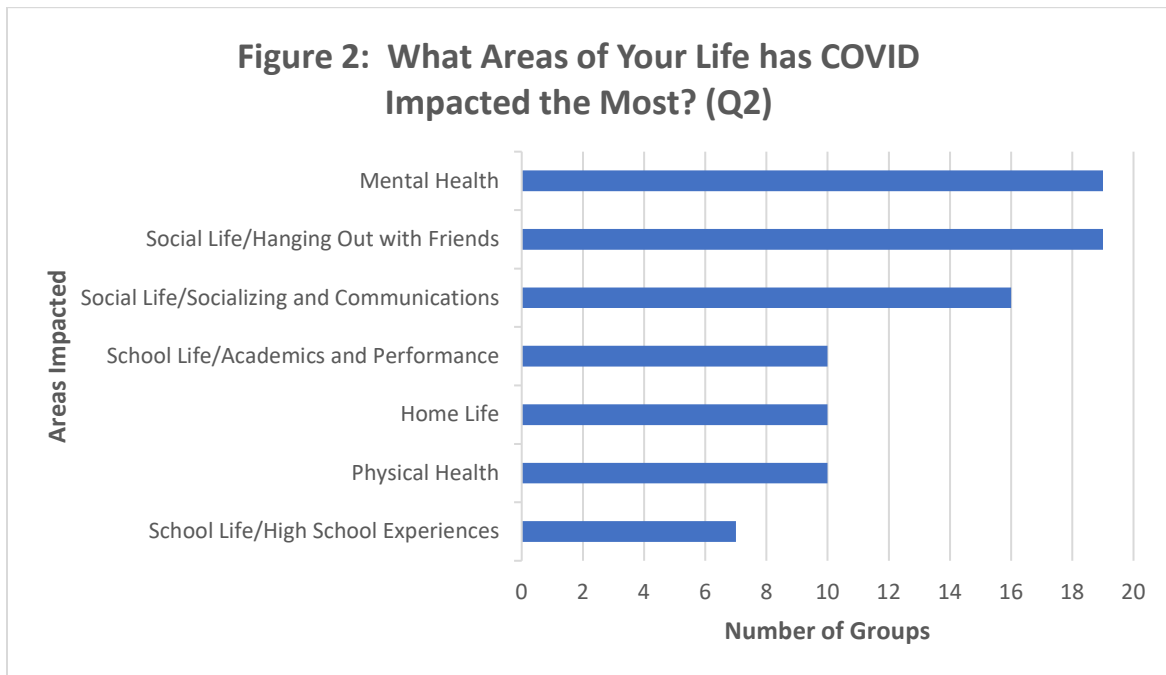


Next, students were asked the question, “Which area of your life has COVID or quarantine impacted the most?” Students were given examples, such as: home life, social life, work life, mental wellbeing, physical health, school performance, or anything else. Overwhelmingly, 19 out of 21 student groups indicated that both their mental health was impacted and that their inability to hang out with friends left them feeling isolated. One student expressed, “My mental health and social life has been severely impacted; going into quarantine has made me more of an introvert.” One group of students shared the following comments: “All of these aspects like social life, school performance, etc. goes back to mental wellbeing”; “Being isolated can make a huge impact on mental health; everything bottles up when you are alone and isolated.” ; and “It was a downward spiral because of no human contact, no conversations in class.”

Next, 16 out of 21 student groups indicated that the pandemic negatively impacted their socialization and communication skills. Students mentioned the challenge and frustration with not feeling able to appropriately “read” others when wearing masks. Others felt that their ability to socialize and have conversations with others was impacted because it required effort to speak with others virtually or at a distance rather than in person.

Additionally, 10 out of 21 student groups felt that the pandemic impacted their physical health; their academic success; and their home lives, in a mixture of both positive and negative ways. For physical health, students often discussed their weight as an indicator of health. Some students reported gaining weight; some students reported losing weight as an outcome of getting the coronavirus; and other students reported losing weight because they exercised more and became healthier. Students also discussed their academic performances in varying ways. Some students saw their grades decline, while others saw their grades improve. Home life was also a

topic that varied between students. Some students found that additional time at home revealed positive family bonding experiences, while other students found this additional time at home brought conflict, unhappiness, and frustration with their families.



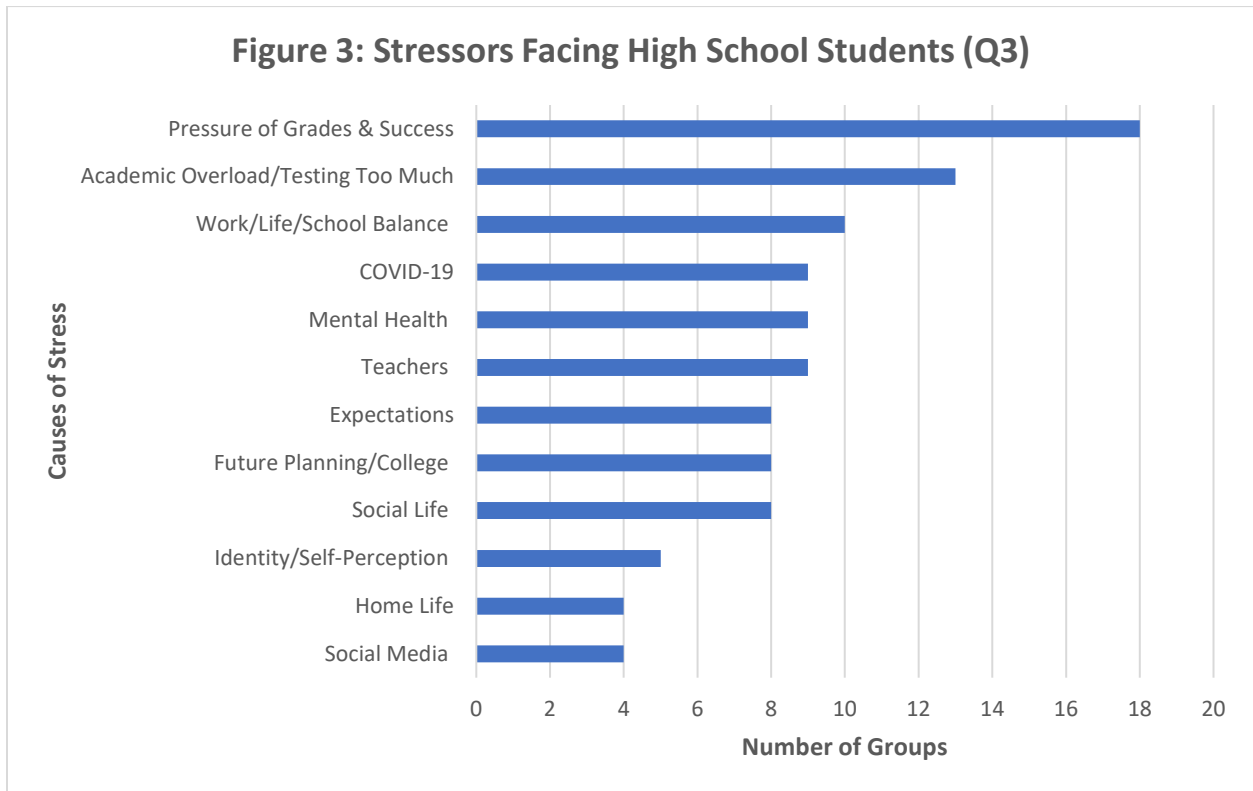
Stressors

Next, the Prevention Subcommittee asked students, “*What do you think are the biggest stressors high school students face today?*” Similar to the findings of the 2020 Youth Summit, high school students stated that school was the prominent stressor in their life. Specifically, though, 18 out of 21 student groups expressed that the pressure of getting good grades and achieving academic success in school was the largest school-specific stressor. Often, students discussed that this academic-related pressure came from their parents, teachers, counselors, and peers, as well as the student themselves.

Next, 13 out of 21 student groups shared that a feeling of “academic overload”, or receiving too much homework or being tested too much, caused students a lot of stress. Students reported often seeing this “academic overload” as: teachers “piling stuff on top” of students; an overwhelming amount of work; and many projects due at the same time.

Additionally, 10 out of 21 student groups shared that achieving a balance between work, school, and life is stressful to them. Students mentioned the difficulty of participating in extracurricular activities and/or working a part-time job, due to the overwhelming amount of homework they need to complete when they get home. Some students reported staying up past midnight on school nights to try to achieve this balance and complete school work.

Lastly, students also mentioned a plethora of other stressors that students experience on a daily or weekly basis, including: the stressors related to the COVID-19 pandemic; the stressors related to their own personal mental health challenges; the stressors of and from school teachers; the stressors from expectations; the stressors related to planning for after graduation or college; the stressors of maintaining a balanced and fulfilling social life; the stressors related to identity and self-perception; the stressors of life at home; and the stressors that come from social media.



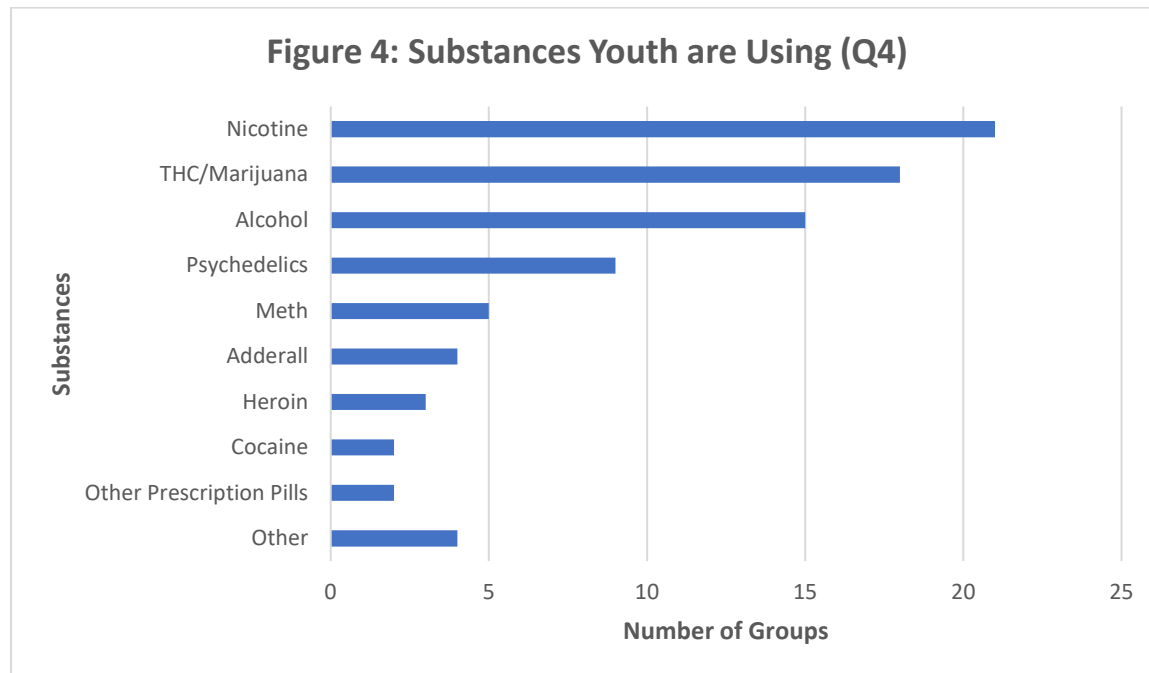
Substance Use

Next, the Prevention Subcommittee asked high schools the question, “*What substances do you think youth are using the most?*” All 21 out of 21 student groups answered this question and offered substances within nine major categories: Nicotine; THC/Marijuana; Alcohol; Psychedelics; Meth; Adderall; Heroin; Cocaine; and Other Prescriptions Pills.

Nicotine is the most common substance reported by high school students. All 21 out of 21 student groups discussed that nicotine is the substance that high school students are using the most. When students discussed nicotine, though, 16 out of 21 student groups referred to nicotine through the vessel of vaping. Second, 18 out of 21 student groups reported THC or marijuana as another substance that youth are using the most. Five out of these 18 student groups specifically reported that high school students are vaping cartridges with THC in them. Third, 15 out of 21

student groups indicated that high school students are drinking alcohol, and five student groups indicated that nicotine, THC or marijuana, and alcohol are easier to access than any other substance. One student stated, “You can get a [vape] pen for like \$20 at the gas station, and they don’t card [you].”

Additionally, nine out of 21 student groups reported that high school students are using psychedelics, such as LSD, acid, or “shrooms.” Other substances that high school students reported that youth are using the most, include: five out of 21 student groups said Meth; four of 21 student groups said Adderall; three out of 21 student groups said Heroin; two out of 21 student groups said Cocaine; and two out of 21 student groups referenced other prescription pills such as Xanax or Opioids. In addition to the nine major categories, high school students referenced four other substances which were combined into the “Other” category. These substances include caffeine, “Molly”, “Angel” (Phencyclidine), and spice.



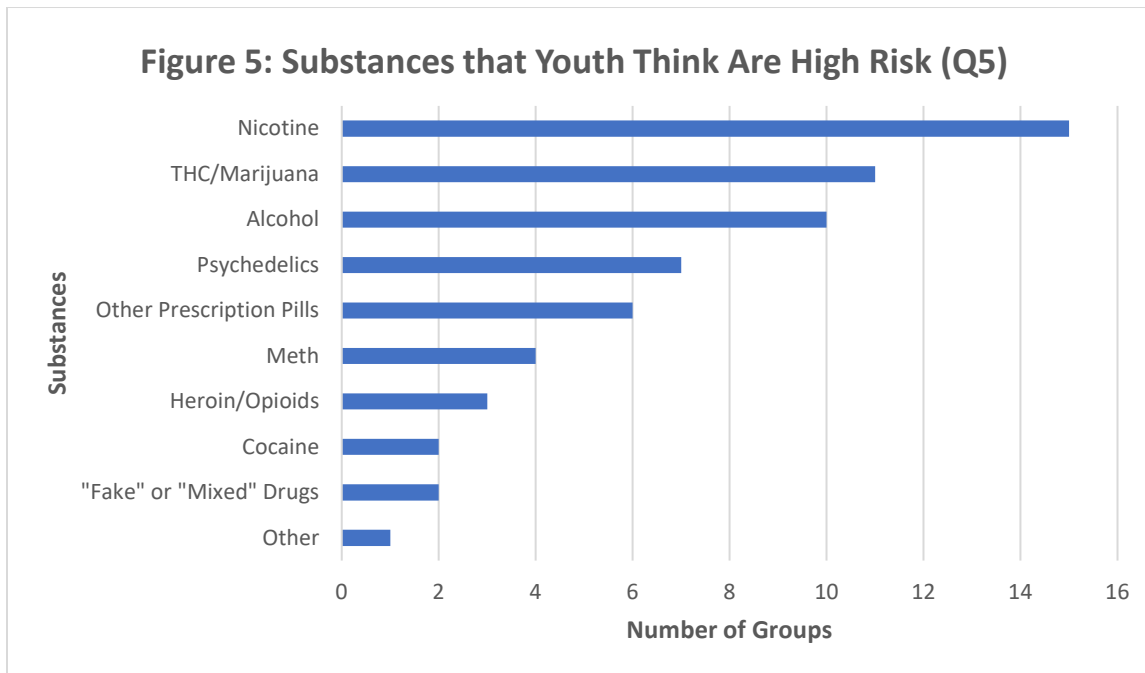
Next, the Prevention Subcommittee asked students the question, “Which substances do you think are high risk?” Twenty-one out of 21 student groups answered this question and offered substances within nine major categories: Nicotine; THC/Marijuana; Alcohol; Psychedelics; Other Prescription Pills; Meth; Heroin/Opioids; Cocaine; and “Fake” or “Mixed” Drugs.

Again, high school students reported that nicotine is the riskiest substance. Fifteen out of 21 groups reported nicotine as a high risk substance, with eleven out of these 15 groups specifically indicated vaping as high risk. This finding aligns with the results of the 2020 Youth Summit, and

suggests that high school students are most commonly using the substance with the highest perceived risk.

Furthermore, 11 out of 21 student groups reported that THC or marijuana is a high risk substance, and 10 out of 21 groups indicated that alcohol is also a high risk substance. This finding aligns, again, with the suggestion that high school students are most commonly using the substances with the highest perceived risk. At least half of the student groups also shared that they are aware that nicotine, marijuana, and alcohol are perceived as high risk substances by high school students, even though they are the substances high school students report youth using the most. Several students referenced how addictive a substance is in addition to the negative health effects it could cause when determining its risk level. As one student stated, *“The more addictive, the higher the risk.”*

Additionally, other substances high school students report as high risk substances, include: seven out of 21 groups said Psychedelics; six out of 21 student groups said other prescription pills; four out of 21 student groups said Meth; three out of 21 student groups said Heroin or Opiates; two out of 21 student groups said Cocaine; two out of 21 student groups said “fake” or “mixed” drugs; and out of 21 student groups said Crack Cocaine, which is added to the “Other” group.



Recommendations For School Improvements

Next, the Prevention Subcommittee began a series of questions regarding school improvements or opportunities. Students were asked the question, *“What issues are youth dealing with that you*

think schools need to be paying more attention to?” All 21 student groups answered this question and gave 10 ideas.

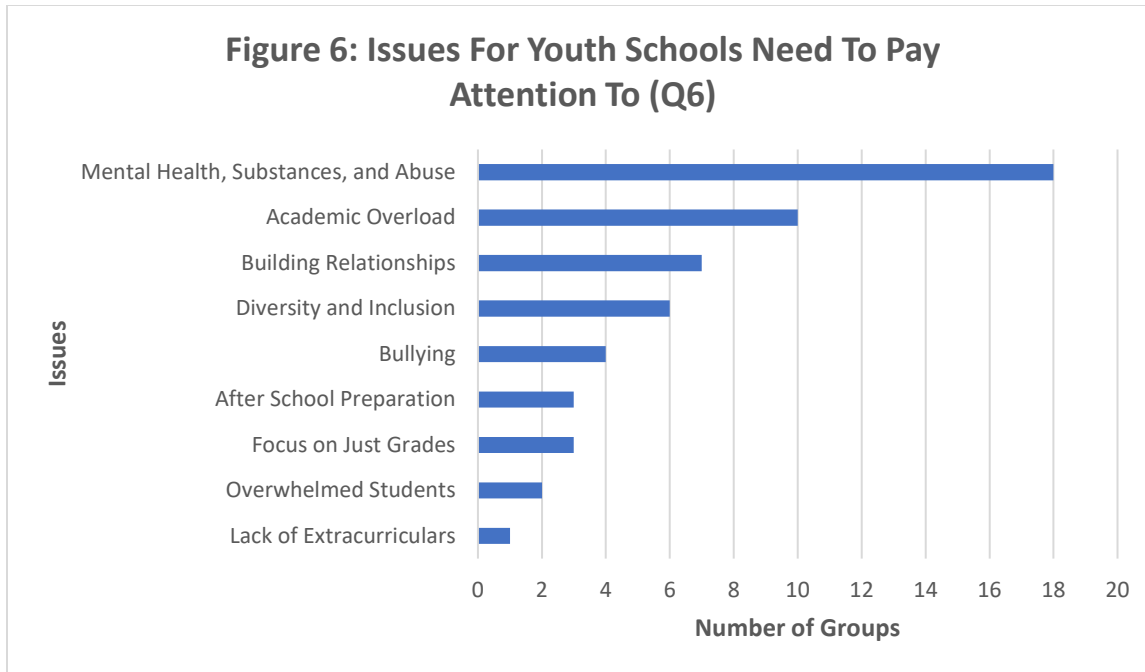
The majority of students (18 out of 21 groups) shared that schools should be paying more attention to mental health, substance use, and abuse. Students explained that schools should focus on students’ “pandemic mental health,” or, in other words, how students are or have been mentally affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, students mentioned that schools should pay more attention to issues related to depression, teen suicide, anxiety, vaping, sexual abuse, and provide solutions (such as, providing more mental health counselors for students at school).

Second, 10 out of 21 student groups discussed that schools should pay more attention to the “academic overload,” or schools assigning too much homework outside of school hours and tests for different classes arranged too closely together. Additionally, seven out of 21 student groups suggested that schools should pay attention to the type of relationships between staff and students. Students shared that they want to build a better, stronger, and more positive relationship with school teachers and staff. One student commented, “*I would want my counselor to just be more interested in me and ask me, ‘are you okay?’*” Many students expressed their desire for school staff to care more deeply about them; build a relationship with them; and recognize each student as an individualized human being with non-academic needs.

Additionally, six out of 21 student groups suggested that schools should pay more attention to diversity and inclusion, specifically as it relates to LGBTQIA+, minority, and low-income students. Students gave examples of times when they noticed diversity and inclusion were not considered, such as for bathroom use, reported bullying of minority or transgender students, and high costs for low-income students. Four out of 21 student groups discussed the need for schools to pay more attention to bullying, specifically, as it relates to in-person and cyber-bullying cases.

Furthermore, four out of 21 student groups suggested that schools should re-envision their disciplinary actions and protocols for students. Students gave examples, such as giving half credit for late assignments or fearing consequences for speaking up about mental health or substance use issues. Three out of 21 student groups suggested that schools should offer more after high school preparation for students to identify their next step after they graduate high school. Students suggested schools could offer learning opportunities to help with this preparation, such as: life skills courses (such as, how taxes work); career preparation courses for students who are not interested in pursuing higher education; and college preparation courses for students who are interested in advancing their education. Three out of 21 student groups expressed that school staff should focus on seeing each individual student as a human being over a “grade,” noting “*schools are focused on our grades and not on how we feel.*” Lastly, two out of 21 student groups shared that schools should pay more attention to youth who feel overwhelmed; and one out of 21 student groups shared that schools should address the lack of diversified extracurricular activities.

Figure 6: Issues For Youth Schools Need To Pay Attention To (Q6)



Students were then asked to identify how, specifically, schools could help with the issues named in the previous question by answering, “*What specifically can schools do to help with those issues?*” Twenty out of 21 student groups answered this question and gave nine ideas.

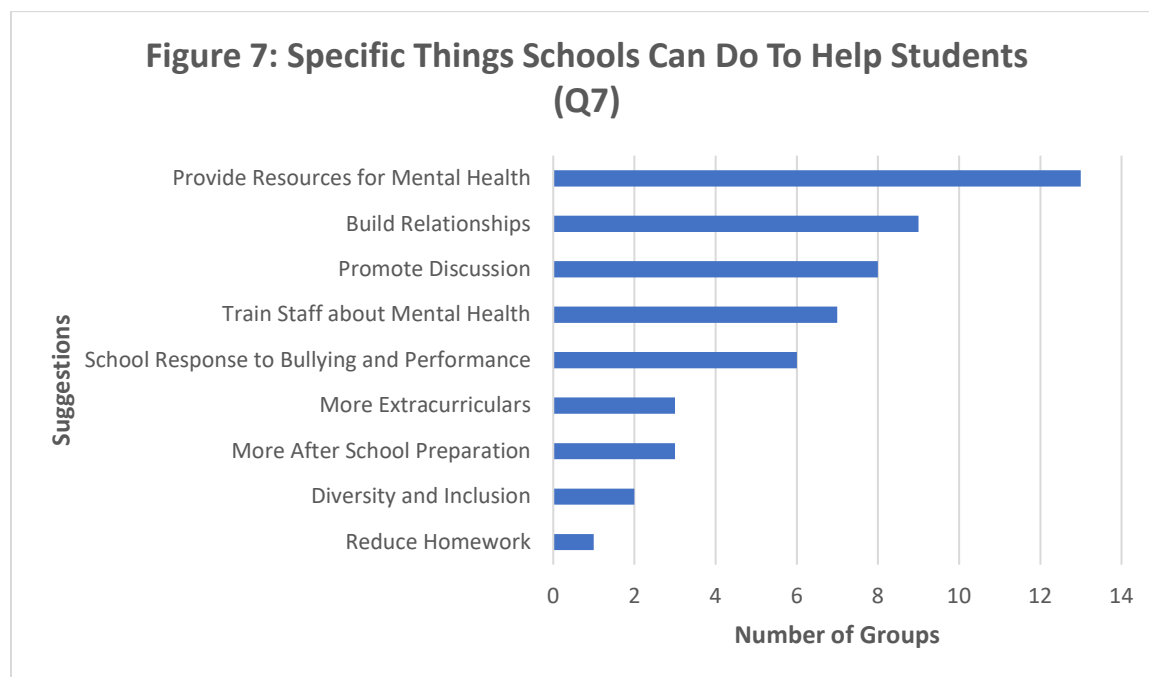
First, 13 out of 20 student groups suggested that schools could provide mental health, substance use, and abuse education and resources to students. Specifically, students gave the following suggestions: offering more mental health counselors; creating mental health days for students and staff; providing resources for students thinking about suicide; and providing education about substances.

Second, nine out of 20 student groups suggested that schools could focus on encouraging teachers and staff to cultivate stronger, better, and more trusting relationships with students. For example, students shared that teachers could work to form a more personal connection with students and “*check in with students and make sure they are doing okay mentally.*” One student commented, “*The most important thing as a teacher is to show that they care about their students.*” Eight out of 20 student groups suggested that schools could promote a more open and honest discussion with students about relevant and real-life topics of mental health, substance use, or bullying. Students suggested that schools could promote this type of discussion by offering support groups; having students from different grade levels be mentors and mentees; starting a program that allows students to write letters with someone back and forth; and allowing students to anonymously post about their problems and talk through them.

Additionally, seven out of 20 student groups suggested that schools could train teachers and counselors about mental health. Students gave ideas, such as training school staff on how to identify students who are struggling with suicidal thoughts or depression warning signs; training school staff on how to build a positive, trusting relationship with students; or training counselors,

specifically, how to have conversations with students about things going on outside of school (such as, asking about a student’s home life, parental challenges, or social life struggles).

Furthermore, six out of 20 student groups suggested that schools re-envision their response to bullying and student performance. Students, specifically, shared that schools could be doing more to encourage inclusive bathrooms for all students and take a stronger stance on bullying or cyberbullying to protect all students. Finally, three out of 20 student groups suggested schools could expand their extracurricular activities; three out of 20 student groups suggested schools could offer more preparation for all types of life after high school (such as, offering classes about taxes, making a doctor’s appointment, paying a mortgage, picking a career path, or picking a college); two out of 20 student groups suggested schools focus on their diversity and inclusion efforts; and one out of 20 student groups suggested schools reduce the amount of homework for students.

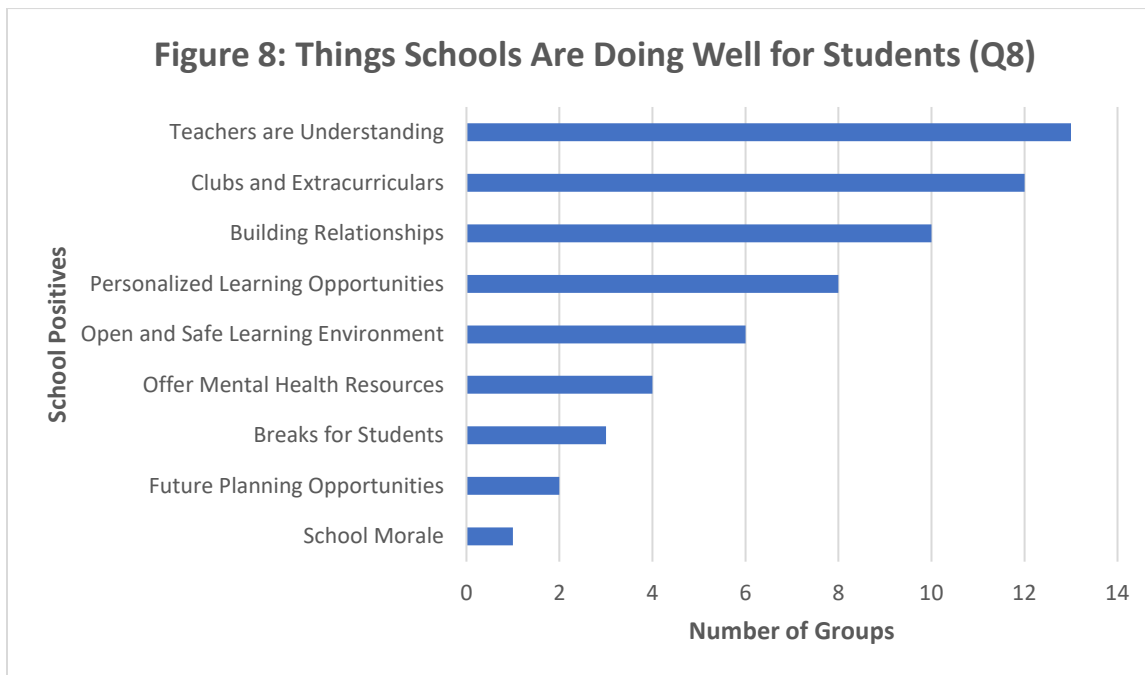


The Positives of Schools

Next, students answered the question, “*What do you think schools are doing well to help students?*” All 21 student groups answered this question, and they offered nine ideas. First, 13 out of 21 student groups said that school teachers are understanding and encouraging. Students shared that, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers have been forgiving with late assignments and generally more understanding for students. Students also gave specific examples of when a teacher went above and beyond for them by staying after school to help students and by offering supportive words. One student shared, “*A teacher told me that I was going to do good things even when no one else tells me this.*”

Second, 12 out of 21 student groups said schools offer clubs and extracurricular activities that really help students thrive. Third, 10 out of 21 student groups said schools work to promote positive relationships between school staff and students. Fourth, eight out of 21 student groups shared that schools provide personalized learning opportunities for students, and these individualized opportunities really help them. Students, specifically, mentioned that the one-on-one learning techniques and technology that is aimed for teens are enjoyed and helpful. Fifth, six out of 21 student groups suggested that schools are creating an open and safe environment for them, and specifically mentioned that school is safe, with no gangs, and is inclusive for LGBTQIA+ students.

Furthermore, four out of 21 student groups mentioned that schools are building awareness of and offering mental health resources for students by discussing mental health needs and promoting mental health counselors. Lastly, three out of 21 student groups mentioned schools are giving students breaks; two out of 21 student groups shared that schools are providing future planning opportunities for students; and one out of 21 student groups shared that schools are encouraging school morale by decorating hallways and having spirit days.

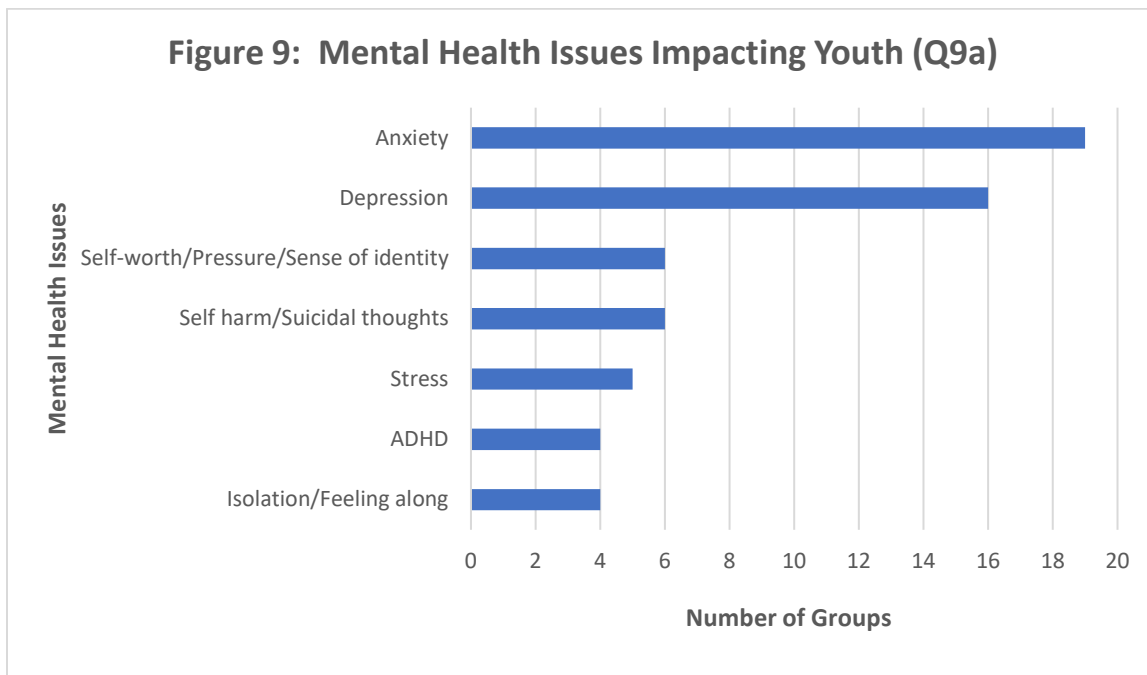


The Mental Health Issues Impacting Youth

Next, the Prevention Subcommittee asked high school students the question, “*What mental health issues impact youth the most?*” This question was one of the few that received a near unanimous response. Nineteen of the 21 student groups indicated anxiety was a major mental health concern for high school students, whether it is social anxiety, situational anxiety, or generalized anxiety disorder. Sixteen out of 21 student groups also mentioned depression as one of the top mental health issues students are facing. These results are consistent with the findings

from both the 2019 and 2020 Youth Summit events, when students overwhelmingly mentioned that they experience or know a peer who experiences depression and/or anxiety.

Furthermore, six out of 21 student groups mentioned that youth are also impacted by issues related to self-worth, pressure, and a sense of identity. Six out of 21 student groups also reported that high school students face issues related to self-harm and suicidal thoughts. Lastly, students also mentioned various other mental health issues, symptoms, or diagnoses that impact youth, including: general stress; Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder or ADHD; isolation or feeling alone; panic attacks; eating disorders; Bipolar Disorder; insomnia; lack of motivation; and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD.



Next, the Prevention Subcommittee asked high school students the question, “How would you define or describe the mental health issues you have identified?” Eighteen out of 21 student groups responded to this question, and not all groups defined all mental health issues they previously identified. Students defined the terms, depression and anxiety, the most, but not all groups provided a thorough definition. Two groups did not feel as though the mental health issues could be appropriately defined, as these terms vary in severity from person to person.

The table below contains the definitions that each student group provided. Each cell represents a different student group and the definition given by high school students.

Table 9a: How would you define/describe the mental health issues you have identified?

Anxiety	Depression
A lot about learning everything; a need to be perfect and amazing at everything	Lack of warmth and motivation
Constant fear of abandonment, causing attachment issues	Struggle to wake up; no motivation
Pressure	Losing willingness to do anything; overwhelmed; everything a big task
Unable to function or perform to your best ability	Like a dark cloud traps you; anger, sadness and emotion
Struggle to breathe/talk; too nervous to do things	Feel empty; being dark and lack of emotion; self-hatred, sense of brokenness; tired; isolated
Accelerated heartrate	Isolating myself, no self-worth, feeling of sadness; no motivation
Voice screaming in your head	Weighted burden; lack of motivation; in a dark hole
Heart beats faster; can't talk/stutter; shake and fidget	Two or more weeks of feeling down
Constant over-worrying thoughts; overthinking; sweaty	Not wanting to get out of bed in the morning
Overwhelming feeling that makes you not want to get out of bed; overthinking making you unmotivated and unfocused	Losing motivation and overwhelmed by the slightest thing like hanging up clothes for laundry feels like a big task
Can't breathe (suffocating), can't talk, feel like crying	
Pressing buttons and getting irritable	

Table 9b: How would you define/describe the mental health issues you have identified?

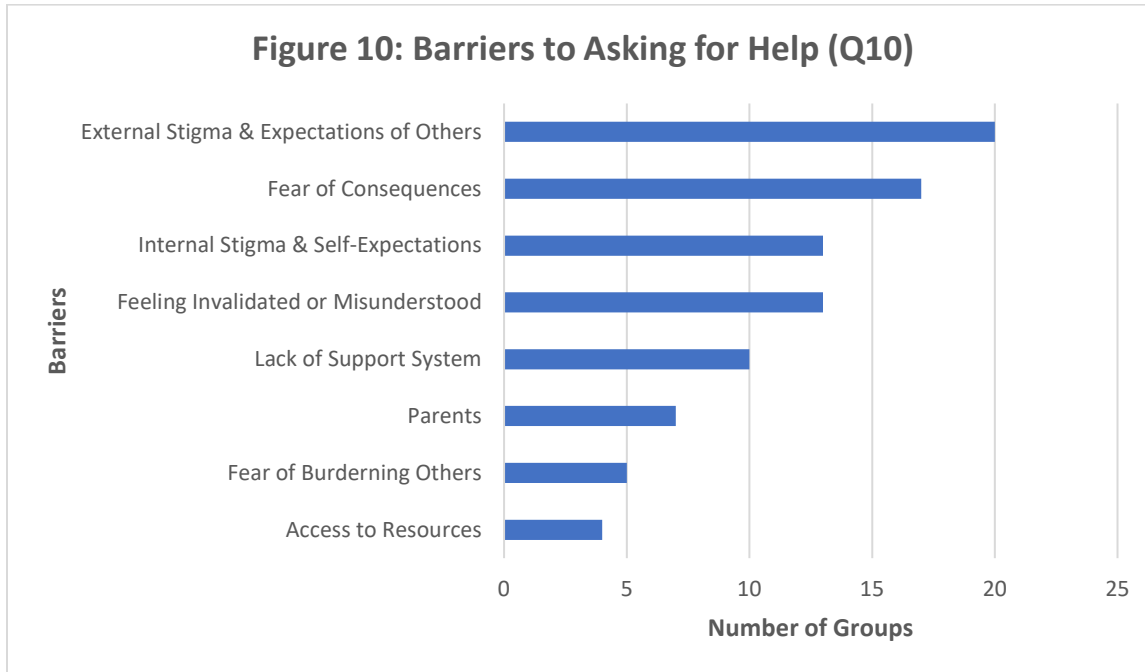
ADHD	Bipolar	Eating Disorder	Suicidal Ideation	Psychosis	PTSD	Schizophrenia
Hard to focus; get lost quickly; easily distracted	Mood changes rapidly	Cycle of binging and then throwing up	No significance, no one will care; die one day and everyone will forget them	Mentally screwed up; someone is watching him; telling himself lie and believe them	Trapped in our minds, thoughts, and emotions	Someone out to get him; fight over things
Can't stay focused; brain moves faster than mouth does (mush mouth)						
Unable to focus						

Barriers That Stop Youth From Seeking Help

Next, the Prevention Subcommittee asked high school students the question, “*What type of barriers stop teenagers from asking for help for themselves or someone they know?*” All 21 student groups were able to answer this question. Students offered barriers within eight major categories: the external stigma and expectations of others; the fear of consequences; the internal stigma and self-expectations; the feeling of being invalidated or misunderstood; the lack of support system; parents; the fear of burdening others; and the lack of access to resources. Nearly all student groups (20 out of 21 groups) indicated that the external stigma and expectations from others in the students’ lives is a significant barrier to ask for help. One student said, “*I don’t ask teachers for help because I think they will judge me.*” Another student shared, “*You don’t want them to see you different.*” Additionally, 17 out of 21 student groups reported a fear of consequences if a student asks for help, such as fearing that people will overshare or that the student will get reported.

Thirteen out of 21 student groups referenced an internal expectation to be perfect due to social media or social image (e.g. gender stereotypes) as a barrier. One student commented, “*The barriers are stereotypes.*” Additionally, 13 out of 21 student groups referenced fearing feeling invalidated or misunderstood if they seek help for any issues or challenges; five out of these groups referenced that their family or parents have or would invalidate or misunderstand the student or their challenges. One student stated, “*I try to describe things to my family, and they tell me to get past it and move on.*”

Lastly, students also mentioned other barriers, such as: a lack of support system; parents; and a fear of burdening others with their individual problems. Four out of 21 student groups also reported and are aware of access issues, such as cost or availability of resources, as a barrier for students or their families. One student mentioned, *"My parents are constantly worried about how long I will have to see a therapist because it costs them so much money."*



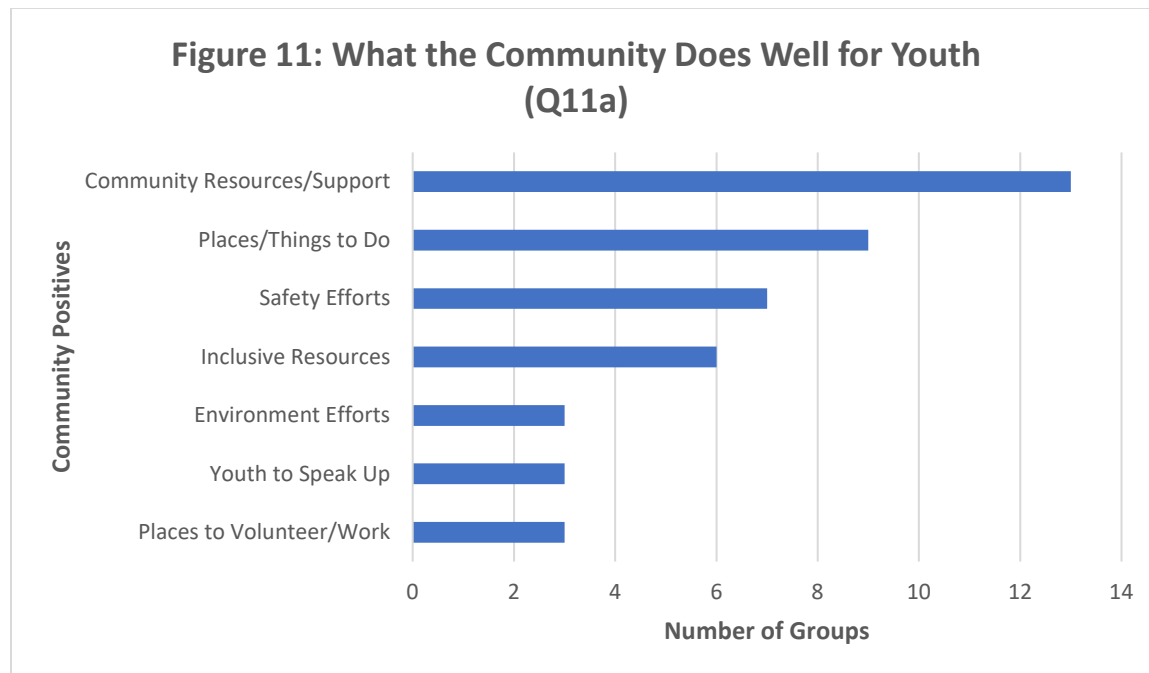
The Positives of the Community

Next, high school students answered the question, *"If you had the chance to sit down with the mayor or county commissioner, what would you tell them the community is doing well for you?"* All 21 groups answered this question. Though, a few groups offered suggestions the community could continue to improve rather than things the community is doing well; these responses were omitted as they did not appropriately answer the question. Nonetheless, students offered suggestions within seven major categories: the community has resources and support efforts; the community has places to go and things to do; the community has safe places; the community has inclusive resources for underrepresented groups; the community focuses on the environment; the community has opportunities for youth to speak up and share their opinions; and the community has places for teens to work and volunteer.

Students offered various ways in which the community is serving youth well, with the majority of student groups (13 out of 21 groups) expressing the idea that the community is exceling in providing community resources and support. Students named "resources" and "support" as organizations who help with mental health; libraries who offer teens help with internet resources; and church or youth groups who offer resources.

Additionally, nine out of 21 groups mentioned that there are places to go and things to do in Tippecanoe County and the surrounding areas, such as walking trails, libraries, community centers, movie theatres, ice rinks, the Farmer’s Market, and art festivals. Seven out of 21 groups expressed satisfaction with the community’s focus on physical safety and mentioned specific services, such as emergency services, blue lights, and safe places. Six out of 21 groups also shared that the community has resources available for underrepresented groups, including minority populations, low-income families, individuals with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ individuals. Students specifically mentioned the community’s focus on providing resources for low-income families who may experience food insecurity or shelter needs and members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Furthermore, three out of 21 student groups mentioned that the community is serving youth well through environmental efforts, or a focus on bettering and taking care of the physical environments (e.g., planting trees or cleaning up litter). Three out of 21 student groups also shared that the community is serving youth well by offering opportunities for youth to speak up and share their voices about things that really matter to them (such as, through this specific Youth Summit). Lastly, two out of 21 student groups also expressed their satisfaction with the availability and opportunity of places to work or volunteer in the community. One student mentioned that it is nice for high school students to be able to get a job if they want one.



The Community and Youth

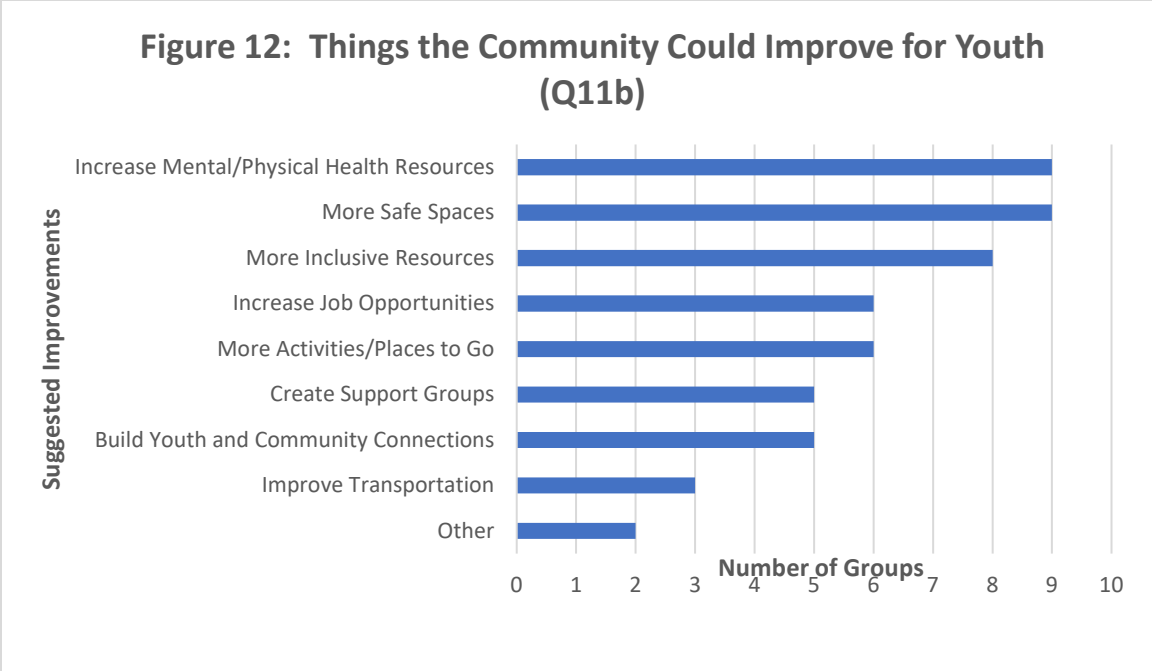
Next, high school students answered the question, “*What would you explain needs to be done more for youth outside of school?*” Twenty out of the 21 groups answered this question. Students offered suggestions within eight major categories: the community should increase resources for mental and physical health; the community should provide more safe spaces; the community

should create more inclusive resources for underrepresented groups; the community should increase job opportunities for teenagers; the community should provide more activities and places for teenagers to go; the community should create support groups for teenagers; the community should build stronger connections between youth and the community; and the community should improve modes of transportation.

Nine out of 20 groups suggested that the community should focus on increasing mental and physical health resources and offered suggestions, such as: the community could increase access to mental health professionals and create more pronounced mental health resources like a crisis line. Similarly, nine out of 20 groups suggested the community focus on providing more safe spaces for youth, especially as it relates to LGBTQIA+ individuals or students who have experienced trauma. Students provided suggestions which include: the community could provide a physical, understanding, and safe space for students to go that offers clothing, food, and other needed supplies.

Additionally, eight out of 20 groups suggested that the community should focus on providing more inclusive resources for underrepresented groups. The student groups specifically suggested that the community should provide more resources for low-income families “*because some students come to school hungry*” as well as more resources to promote diversity awareness in the community. Six out of 20 groups also mentioned that the community could increase job opportunities for teenagers, such as: increasing the amount of jobs that teenagers can apply to or offering more opportunities for teenagers to participate in job training, job shadowing, or trade school options. Six out of 20 groups also shared that the community should focus on creating more activities and places for teenagers to go and socialize. Students offered specific suggestions, such as more town festivals or a community movie night in the park.

Furthermore, five out of 20 groups indicated that the community could build stronger connections between youth and community, such as: by letting teenagers speak publicly about the community or promoting community events more to teenagers. Five out of 20 groups also suggested that the community could create support groups for teenagers to feel connected, heard, talk, and look up to, through mentorship or tutoring programs. Lastly, three out of 20 groups mentioned that the community could improve modes of transportation for youth, such as by creating more sidewalks for teenagers to use.



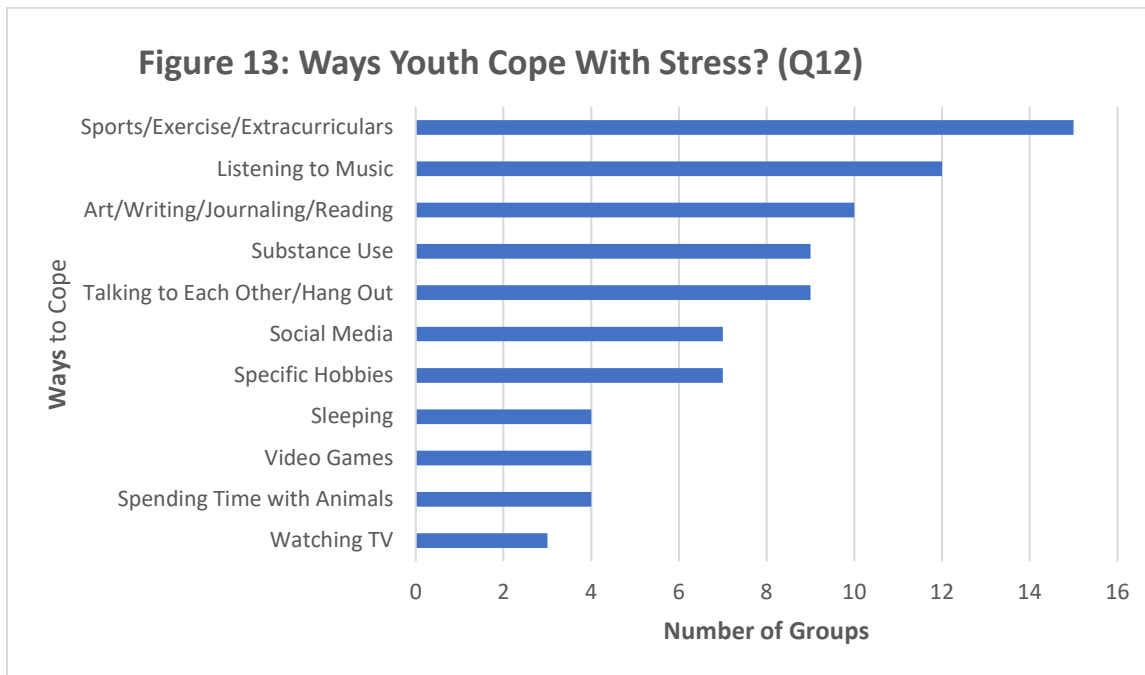
Coping Mechanisms

High school students also answered the question, “*What ways do you see you or your peers using to cope with stress?*” Twenty of the 21 groups answered this question and shared 22 different ideas. The list of the 11 top ways high schools cope with stress are listed in Figure 13 with the full list in the Appendix.

Most commonly, 15 out of 20 student groups reported using sports, extracurricular activities, and exercise to cope with stress. One student commented, “*Sports are a great way to get rid of stress and not think about anything else.*” Next, 12 out of 20 groups shared that students listen to music to cope with stress, and 10 out of 20 groups shared that students cope with stress by immersing in the arts, such as by writing, journaling, reading, painting, or baking.

Additionally, nine out of 20 groups shared that students use substances, such as alcohol, nicotine, marijuana, and vaping to cope with stress in their lives. Nine out of 20 groups also shared that students cope with stress by talking with each other and hanging out with their friends. Seven out of 20 groups mentioned that students scroll through social media to cope with stress, and seven out of 20 groups also mentioned that students participate in specific hobbies to cope with stress, including going shopping, welding, or piercing their ears.

Furthermore, high school students also mentioned a plethora of other coping mechanisms for handling stress, including: playing video games; sleeping; spending time with animals; watching television; engaging in self-harm; working at jobs; procrastinating; eating a lot; engaging in spirituality; punching things; taking time to themselves, alone; lashing out or taking time away from people; participating in family time; and mediating.



Conclusion

The third annual Youth Summit was unique, as it occurred in a combination of virtual, in-person, and separate summit events and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, despite the change in discussion format, the Prevention Subcommittee was able to still connect authentically with high school students across Tippecanoe and Benton Counties and elevate these student voices. Students revealed challenges and opportunities for schools and the community to connect and engage with teenagers to promote the healthiest and most supportive community possible.

The Prevention Subcommittee has listed the top three takeaways from these conversations with high school students including:

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has created distinct challenges for high school students across the community, specifically as it relates to how the pandemic has impacted mental health. Throughout the entirety of the Youth Summit, students often discussed the idea of “pandemic mental health,” or in other words, how students are or have been mentally affected by the pandemic. One student mentioned, *“Being isolated can make a huge impact on mental health; everything bottles up when you are alone and isolated.”* Other students advocated for schools or the community to offer more mental health education and resources such as offering mental health days; providing more mental health counselors for teenagers; encouraging school staff and teachers to get trained on how to identify warning signs of declining mental health; and educating others about depression, anxiety, suicide, or substances for the purpose of getting students help and resources.

2. Similar to the findings of the 2020 Youth Summit, high school students reported using substances they perceive as highest risk. These substances, in order from most used and highest perceived risk include (1) nicotine; (2) THC or marijuana and (3) alcohol. When discussing substances, high school students often offered the idea that students are using nicotine, THC, or marijuana through the vessel of vaping. Student groups even shared that they believed that 65-80% of students vape, but *“that is probably low-balling it.”* Students also offered how they would define if a substance is high risk by stating, *“The more addictive, the higher the risk.”* In this way, high school students identify nicotine, THC or marijuana and alcohol as the most addictive, most commonly used substances by teenagers. Additionally, nine out of 20 groups shared that students use substances, such as alcohol, nicotine, and marijuana, to cope with stress in their lives.
3. Students want to build positive and trusting relationships with adults, teachers, or school staff and desire to openly talk about their personal challenges with these trusting adults. A reoccurring theme throughout the 2021 Youth Summit is the overwhelming desire to have someone a teenager feels comfortable and safe talking to because the teenager wants to talk about their personal challenges with others. Students suggested that schools should encourage teachers and staff to cultivate stronger relationships with students because students want adults to *“check in with students and make sure they are doing okay mentally.”* Students shared a plethora of stressors in their lives and also ways in which to promote needed discussions for and with teenagers such as developing support groups; creating mentor-mentee programs or generating opportunities for teenagers to discuss their problems in an anonymous way (such as through writing letters).

While high school students offered challenges and opportunities for schools, specifically, the Prevention Subcommittee believes that these conversations have revealed ways in which all adults, leaders and community members in the Tippecanoe, Benton, and surrounding counties can help, work with or promote healthier communities for teenagers. For more information about the report or additional items, please consult the Tippecanoe County Resilience & Recovery Network-Prevention Subcommittee or the United Way of Greater Lafayette.

The Prevention Subcommittee would like to thank all volunteers who spent countless hours working on this event and facilitating another successful Youth Summit.

Appendix 1:

This appendix includes the Prevention Subcommittee’s codebook, or way in which the subcommittee categorized, defined and provided examples for major themes within the student group conversations of the 2021 Youth Summit. The codebook is listed in order of questions asked to high school students and is consistent with the findings section within this report.

1. How has your school life changed this past year? (virtual, in-person, hybrid, home school)

- a. 21 groups responded
- b. 6 themes

i. Struggles of Online School (20)

1. Defined: During lockdown, quarantine or when schools deem it appropriate, students attend school online via the computer rather than with in-person school
2. Examples:
 - a. Grades have fallen
 - b. Difficulty getting questions answered because teachers have so many questions to answer
 - c. Some students do not have access to the internet on a continuous basis

ii. Impact on Social Life (14)

1. Defined: The part of a person's time spent doing enjoyable things with others.
2. Examples:
 - a. Could not spend time with friends.
 - b. Not interacting with the same friends in the same way
 - c. Not able to be active in the community/youth groups

iii. Difficulty of Communications (11)

1. Defined: The imparting or exchanging of information or news with others.
2. Examples:
 - a. Masks make it difficult to hear, to read expressions and to see smiles.
 - b. Social distancing makes it difficult for students to interact with each other.
 - c. Students don’t speak up as much while wearing masks.

iv. Impact on Mental Health (10)

1. Defined: A person’s condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being
2. Examples:
 - a. Increased anxiety
 - b. Increased depression
 - c. Increased levels of stress

v. Motivation and Passion for School (8)

1. Defined: The desire, willingness or eagerness of a student to do well in school
2. Examples:
 - a. Student has a reduced interest in school
 - b. Student do not care about his/her grades anymore
 - c. Student lost interest because of lack of clubs/activities

vi. Empathy for Others (7)

1. Defined: The ability to understand and share the feelings of others.
2. Examples:
 - a. Students understand that teachers are in a difficult situation when teaching online
 - b. Students worried about being home, using too much electricity; financial concerns within the home

vii. Lack of extracurricular and other school activities (6)

1. Defined: Due to Covid protocol, schools chose to either reduce or eliminate clubs, extra-curricular and school activities.
2. Examples:
 - a. Student clubs did not meet or have activities
 - b. School dances were not held
 - c. Entire athletic teams had to quarantine because of exposure to COVID.

2. Which area of your life has COVID or quarantine impacted the most? Home life, social life, work life, mental wellbeing, physical health, school performance, or anything else?

- a. 21 groups responded
- b. 7 themes

i. Mental Health (19)

1. Defined: A person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being
2. Examples:
 - a. Increased anxiety
 - b. Increased depression
 - c. Increased self-harm and suicidal thoughts

ii. Social Life/Hanging Out with Friends (19)

1. Defined: The part of a person's time spent doing enjoyable things with friends.
2. Examples:
 - a. During lockdown, students could not spend time with their friends
 - b. While quarantined, students could not spend time with their friends

- c. Student felt isolated over the summer; the entire summer was being alone and not hanging out with friends.

iii. Social Life/Socializing and Communication (16)

1. **Defined:** The part of a person's time spent communicating with friends and peers in ways other than in person interactions.
2. **Examples:**
 - a. Masks make it difficult to read expressions and emotions.
 - b. Students could not communicate with their friends in person; lost interest in communicating virtually.
 - c. Social distancing at school made it difficult to communicate with friends and peers.

iv. School Life/Academics and Performance (10)

1. **Defined:** That part of student life at school that deals with learning and grades.
2. **Examples:**
 - a. Student grades fall due to being quarantined
 - b. Student grades fell during the lockdown and on-line schooling
 - c. Student motivation falls and does not complete assignments

v. Home Life (10)

1. **Defined:** A person's *family*, personal relationships, and *domestic* interactions within a household
2. **Examples:**
 - a. Develop a better relationship with parents and siblings
 - b. Constant fighting and turmoil within the household
 - c. Increased parental stress because of financial concerns

vi. Physical Health (10)

1. **Defined:** The overall physical condition of an individual at a given time
2. **Examples:**
 - a. Gaining weight
 - b. Increasing exercise
 - c. Sleeping too long

vii. School Life/High School Experience (7)

1. **Defined:** That part of student life at school that deals with those things other than learning. This includes things like athletics, extra-curricular activities, prom, graduation and time spent with friends and peers.
2. **Examples:**
 - a. In the spring of 2020, proms and in-person graduations were cancelled.
 - b. Some schools cancelled virtually all clubs and extra-curricular activities during the 2020-2021 school year.

c. Athletics were monitored for Covid spread

3. What do you think are the biggest stressors high school students face today?

a. 21 groups responded

b. 12 themes

i. School – Pressure of Grades & Success (18)

1. Defined: Includes pressure received from parents, teachers/counselors, peers and themselves

2. Examples:

a. “There is a lot of pressure on getting grades”

b. “There is a lot of pressure from parents to be successful and to get good grades”

c. “Grades are so stressful and colleges might not accept me because of my grades being bad”

ii. School – Academic Overload/Testing Too Much (13)

1. Defined: Too much school work and/or testing happening at the same time

2. Examples:

a. “Teachers are piling stuff on top of us”

b. “Overwhelming amount of work”

c. “It is hard to keep up with the work unless you stay up until 3am”

iii. Work/Life/School Balance (10)

1. Defined: Not enough time in the day to successfully complete all activities

2. Examples:

a. “Being a student and time management is stressful because I also have a job, so it is a lot to handle”

b. “Hard to balance everything – work, sport, homework, not enough time in the day for sleep, homework, work, practice”

c. “Balance a lot of things – time with family, friends, church, sports, homework – how to do it all and do it well”

iv. COVID-19 (Total 9)

1. Defined: includes comments related to quarantine, safety concerns and masks

2. Examples:

a. “Feeling covid safe is a big stressor”

b. “Covid quarantining with family can cause more judgement in relation to parents”

c. “If you are working in a group project the moment someone gets quarantined the workload shifts and we have to do so much more work on our own”

v. Mental Health (Total 9)

1. Defined: includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being
2. Examples:
 - a. “Mental illness is a huge stressor in your school and home life”
 - b. “I have anxiety and stress about every little thing”
 - c. “Anxiety levels have increased with an increase of panic attacks as well”

vi. Teachers (Total 9)

1. Defined: Different teaching styles; teacher changes; lack of understanding
2. Examples:
 - a. “Some teachers don’t understand how much homework other teachers give you”
 - b. “Not understanding a teacher’s teaching style is a stressor”
 - c. “Teachers do not realize amount of stress they place on students”

vii. Expectations (Total 8)

1. Defined: a belief that someone will or should achieve something
2. Examples:
 - a. “Teachers are also giving us high expectations and don’t understand that expectations should be lowered this year”
 - b. “Our parents expect a lot out of us and want to see us doing a lot but I think a lot of parent’s don’t understand the stress we are facing”
 - c. “Being expected to get everything done at the same pace everyone else”

viii. Future Planning/College (Total 8)

1. Defined: Making plans for life after high-school
2. Examples:
 - a. “I am nervous about applying for college, grades are so stressful and colleges might not accept me because of my grades being bad”
 - b. “The future of not knowing what you want to do”
 - c. “Applying to colleges is very stressful and when you have a low GPA then it is very stressful and there are no other extracurricular to get your mind off of it”

ix. Social Life (Total 8)

1. Defined: activities you do with other people, for pleasure, when you are not at school or working
2. Examples:
 - a. “Friendships throughout the year can be stressful because you create and break up friendships”
 - b. “We haven’t been able to do anything fun for activities”

- c. “Expected to be happy and get good grades while having a social life”

x. Identity/Self-Perception (Total 5)

- 1. Defined: a person’s view of themselves; characteristics and personality
- 2. Examples:
 - a. “Hard to be yourself because everyone has their own opinions, hard to be you without receiving backlash”
 - b. “Trying to find identity”
 - c. “As part of the LGBTQ community, it’s hard to find place”

xi. Home Life (Total 4)

- 1. Defined: Living situation and environment
- 2. Examples:
 - a. “Demanding parents and abusive household”
 - b. “My dad has been home from work a lot because when his kids get quarantined he has to stay home too. It is hard because he is stressed and my mom doesn’t like putting up with him and they fight a lot”
 - c. “Struggling to focus at home because there are so many distractions”

xii. Social Media (Total 4)

- 1. Defined: interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks
- 2. Examples:
 - a. “People like drama and posting and they talk bad about people, it really affects your mental health if people are talking about you, it gets to you even if you try to not let it”
 - b. “Social media causes a lot of mental stress”
 - c. “Very active on social media and there’s a lot of peer pressure on how you portray yourself”

4. What substances do you think youth are using the most?

- a. 21 groups responded
- b. 10 themes

i. Nicotine (Total 21)

- 1. Defined: Nicotine use.
- 2. Examples:
 - a. Vaping
 - b. Juling
 - c. Cigarettes

ii. THC/Marijuana (18)

- 1. Defined: THC/Marijuana use.
- 2. Examples:

- a. Smoking
 - b. Vaping
- iii. Alcohol (15)**
 - 1. Defined: Alcohol use.
- iv. Psychedelics (9)**
 - 1. Defined: Psychedelic use.
 - 2. Examples:
 - a. LSD
 - b. Acid
 - c. “Shrooms”
- v. Meth (5)**
 - 1. Defined: Methamphetamine use.
- vi. Adderall (4)**
 - 1. Defined: Adderall misuse.
 - 2. Examples:
 - a. Taking more than prescribed.
 - b. Using without a prescription.
 - c. Mixing with other drugs.
- vii. Heroin (3)**
 - 1. Defined: Heroin use.
- viii. Cocaine (2)**
 - 1. Defined: Cocaine use.
- ix. Other Prescription Pills (2)**
 - 1. Other prescription pill misuse.
 - 2. Examples:
 - a. Xanax
- x. Other (4)**
 - 1. Items that did not fit into a theme.
 - 2. Examples:
 - a. Molly
 - b. Caffeine
 - c. Spice

5. Which substances do you think are high risk?

- a. 21 groups responded
- b. 10 themes
 - i. Nicotine (15)**
 - 1. Defined: Nicotine use
 - 2. Examples:
 - a. Vaping
 - b. Cigarettes
 - ii. THC/Marijuana (11)**
 - 1. Defined: THC/Marijuana Use

- iii. **Alcohol (10)**
 - 1. Defined: Alcohol use.
 - iv. **Psychedelics (7)**
 - 1. Defined: Psychedelic use.
 - 2. Examples:
 - a. LSD
 - b. Acid
 - c. “Shrooms”
 - v. **Other Prescription Pills (6)**
 - 1. Defined: Other prescription pill misuse.
 - 2. Examples:
 - a. Xanax
 - b. Pain pills
 - c. Mood stabilizers
 - vi. **Meth (4)**
 - 1. Defined: Methamphetamine use.
 - vii. **Heroin/Opiates (3)**
 - 1. Defined: Heroin or other opioid use.
 - 2. Examples:
 - a. Heroin
 - b. Prescription opioids
 - viii. **Cocaine (2)**
 - 1. Defined: Cocaine use.
 - ix. **“Fake” or “Mixed” Drugs (2)**
 - 1. Defined: substances that have been mixed or “laced” with other drugs.
 - 2. Examples:
 - a. Fake Xanax
 - b. Xanax mixed with fentanyl
 - c. Other mixed substances
 - x. **Other (1)**
 - 1. Defined: items that did not fit into a theme.
 - 2. Examples:
 - a. Crack/Crack Cocaine
6. **What issues are youth dealing with that you think schools need to be paying more attention to?**
- a. 21 groups responded
 - b. 10 themes
 - i. **Mental Health, Substance Use, and Abuse (18)**
 - 1. Defined: schools should focus on mental health issues; substance use issues, and abuse allegations.
 - 2. Examples:
 - a. School should have mental health days

- b. “Pandemic mental health” and how others are mentally affected by the pandemic
 - c. A focus on depression, anxiety, or suicide
 - d. Need for more mental health counselors
 - e. Mental health solutions
 - f. Vaping
 - g. Sexual abuse
- ii. Academic Overload (10)**
- 1. Defined: schools assign too much homework, assignments, or tests.
 - 2. Examples:
 - a. Lessen amount of homework
 - b. “students have lots of homework which creates more stress”
 - c. Too many tests in a row
 - d. “hard to stay motivated with so much homework”
- iii. Building Relationships with Students (7)**
- 1. Defined: students expressed that they want teachers, counselors, or school staff to care about them, form a relationship with them, and recognize the student as a human being with non-academic needs.
 - 2. Examples:
 - a. “sometimes people don’t feel comfortable reaching out themselves and need someone to come to them to realize that there is something wrong”
 - b. “I would want my counselor to just be more interested [in me] and ask me, ‘are you okay?’, [but] they don’t care about how you feel.”
 - c. “Some teachers know students really well but when student behaviors change, they don’t notice at all”
- iv. Diversity and Inclusion (6)**
- 1. Defined: schools should focus on diversity and inclusion efforts for all people, including LGBTQIA+, minority populations, and low-income populations.
 - 2. Examples:
 - a. Inclusion for LGBTQIA+ students with bathroom use and bullying
 - b. Understanding of issues for low-income students, specifically
 - c. Recognition of minority populations and related bullying
- v. Bullying (4)**
- 1. Defined: general bullying.
 - 2. Examples:
 - a. In-person bullying
 - b. Cyber-bullying from social media

vi. Disciplinary Actions (4)

1. Defined: a need to rethink or enact less strict disciplinary actions for students.
2. Examples:
 - a. Students given half credit for late assignments
 - b. If students speak up about mental health or substance use issues, they are judged or have other consequences

vii. After High School Preparation (3)

1. Defined: a need to focus on the next step for students after they graduate from high school
2. Examples
 - a. Life skills, such as how taxes work
 - b. Career preparation efforts
 - c. College preparation efforts

viii. Focusing Solely on Grades (3)

1. Defined: students expressed that school staff sees the student as a “grade” instead of a human being.
2. Examples:
 - a. “schools are focused on our grades and not how we feel”

ix. Youth Feeling Overwhelmed (2)

1. Defined: students expressed feeling generally overwhelmed by school.
2. Examples:
 - a. “when a student is doing bad with grades, it may not be because they don’t care, it may be because they have a lot to do and it can be overwhelming”

x. Lack of Extracurricular Activities (1)

1. Defined: a need to offer more extracurricular activities

7. What specifically can schools do to help with those issues?

- a. 20 groups responded
- b. 9 themes

i. Provide Mental Health, Substance Use, and Abuse Education and Resources (13)

1. Defined: a need to provide education and resources to students about mental health, suicide, substance use, and abuse
2. Examples:
 - a. Offer more mental health counselors
 - b. Create mental health days
 - c. Provide resources for suicidal students
 - d. Provide education about substances

ii. Encourage Teachers and Staff to Cultivate Relationships with Students (9)

1. Defined: a need for school teachers and staff to create a positive, trusting relationship with students
2. Examples:
 - a. Teachers asking how my day was
 - b. Better relationships with teachers
 - c. Teachers need to make a personal connection with students
 - d. To have staff be open and inviting
 - e. “check in with students and make sure they are doing okay mentally”
 - f. “the most important thing as a teacher is to show that they care about their students”
 - g. “there needs to be more connection and communication with each other, rather than just watching a 20-minute lecture every week”

iii. Promote Discussion for Students (8)

1. Defined: a need to encourage open and honest discussion about topics relating to students, such as: mental health, substance use, bullying, etc.
2. Examples:
 - a. Support groups
 - b. “having different grades become mentor and mentees for each other”
 - c. “starting a program that would allow us to write letters to someone where we can just list our concerns and things that are stressing us out and then someone can write back and talk to use that way”
 - d. “allowing us to post something anonymously somewhere to talk about our problems, that way we can keep things confidential so we don’t expose or embarrass ourselves”
 - e. Encourage students to ask questions
 - f. “discussions about things that go on with our daily life, how we feel... real life discussions”

iv. Train Teachers and Counselors about Mental Health (7)

1. Defined: a need to provide teachers and counselors education and training about mental health.
2. Examples:
 - a. Train teachers about how to identify suicidal students or depression warning signs
 - b. Train teachers about how to build relationship with students
 - c. Train counselors, specifically, how to care more about things going on outside of school, like home life, parents, things that happen in our social life that affect school performance

v. Re-Envision School Response to Bullying and Student Performance (6)

1. Defined: a need for school administrators to re-think response to bullying or student performance.
2. Examples:
 - a. Schools can be doing more to encourage inclusive bathrooms
 - b. Schools can take stronger stance on bullying and cyberbullying

vi. Expand Extracurricular Activities (3)

1. Defined: a need to enhance or offer more extracurricular activities

vii. Offer More Preparation Courses for Life after High School (3)

1. Defined: a need to offer more courses that prepare students for life after high school
2. Examples:
 - a. Classes about taxes, how to make a doctors apt, how to raise a family, or how to pay a mortgage.
 - b. Classes about picking a career path
 - c. Classes about picking a college

viii. Focus on Diversity and Inclusion (2)

1. Defined: enhance diversity and inclusion efforts for minority populations and low-income students.
2. Examples:
 - a. Openly talk about different cultures
 - b. Provide resources for people who can't afford them

ix. Reduce Amount of Homework (1)

1. Defined: give less homework to students to complete outside of school hours.

8. What do you think schools are doing well to help students?

- a. 21 groups responded
- b. 9 themes

i. Teachers are Understanding and Encouraging (13)

1. Defined: teachers who are understanding with late assignments, workloads, etc., and are encouraging to the student to keep doing good work.
2. Examples:
 - a. "a teacher told me that I was going to do good things, even when no one else tells me this"
 - b. Teachers encourage you, stay after school to help you
 - c. "a lot of teachers really care"
 - d. "teachers are a lot more understanding about late assignments because of COVID"

ii. Offering Clubs and Extracurricular Activities (12)

1. Defined: schools offer clubs and extracurricular activities for students.
 2. Examples:
 - a. Clubs
 - b. Sports
- iii. Promoting Positive Relationships between School Staff and Students (10)**
1. Defined: students feel that school staff is trying to or already has formed positive, trusting relationships with them.
 2. Examples:
 - a. “I feel like having those teachers you can make those connections with is good, but the only to make it better is if you can make that connection with multiple teachers”
 - b. Teachers take time to make sure we’re okay
 - c. Creating relationships with students, instead of just being there because you have to be
- iv. Providing Personalized Schooling (8)**
1. Defined: offering students a personalized school experience
 2. Examples:
 - a. one-on-one learning
 - b. targeted technology
 - c. treating students as an individual, not a number
- v. Creating an Open and Safe Environment (6)**
1. Defined: offering students an environment that is open, accepting, inclusive, and safe
 2. Examples:
 - a. Safe environment, no gangs
 - b. Inclusive environment for LGBTQIA+ students
- vi. Building Awareness of and Offering Mental Health Resources (4)**
1. Defined: a specific focus on building awareness of mental health and offering mental health resources to students
 2. Examples:
 - a. Discussing mental health needs
 - b. Promoting mental health counselors
- vii. Giving Students Breaks (3)**
1. Defined: a specific focus on giving students a break away from academics
 2. Examples:
 - a. Getting a break from school
- viii. Providing Future Planning Opportunities (2)**
1. Defined: a specific focus on offering opportunities to support path after high school
 2. Examples:

- a. Offering high level courses for college
- b. Options for career paths

ix. Encouraging School Morale (1)

- 1. Defined: a specific focus on boosting student morale
- 2. Examples:
 - a. Decorating hallways
 - b. Having spirit days

9. What mental health issues do you think impact youth the most?

- a. 21 groups responded
- b. 7 themes

i. Anxiety (19)

- 1. Defined: A nervous disorder characterized by a state of excessive uneasiness and apprehension.
- 2. Examples:
 - a. Anxiety regarding getting Covid
 - b. Anxiety regarding getting quarantined
 - c. Anxiety regarding grades, school expectations

ii. Depression (16)

- 1. Defined: A mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest
- 2. Examples:
 - a. Depression due to isolation
 - b. Depression due to on-line school/difficulty learning
 - c. Depression due to stress at home

iii. Self-Worth/Pressure/Sense of Identity (6)

- 1. Defined: The confidence in one's own worth or abilities/the way a person thinks about and views his or her traits, beliefs, and purpose within the world
- 2. Examples:
 - a. A student feels like he/she cannot meet his/her parent's expectations
 - b. A student tries to sort out his/her feelings regarding his/her sexuality
 - c. A student feels the pressure of completing assignments on-line

iv. Self-Harm/Suicidal Thoughts (6)

- 1. Defined: The act of purposely hurting oneself as an emotional coping mechanism or thoughts of or planning suicide.
- 2. Examples:
 - a. Hitting walls
 - b. Taking unprescribed medication to feel better
 - c. Consideration of suicide

v. Stress (5)

1. Defined: A state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.
2. Examples:
 - a. Worries about taking Covid home to family members with health conditions
 - b. Worries about maintaining grades for college admission
 - c. Worries about being quarantined and not attending school

vi. ADHD

1. Defined: Those with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder may have trouble paying attention, controlling impulsive behaviors or be overly active.
2. Examples:
 - a. Struggles with completing homework
 - b. Struggles with paying attention during online school
 - c. Struggles with no hands-on learning

vii. Isolation/Feeling Alone

1. Defined: A state of being or remaining alone or apart from others.
2. Examples:
 - a. During lockdown, students cannot spend time with friends
 - b. During a quarantine, a student is at home while other students are at school.

10. How would you define/describe the mental health issues you have identified?

- a. 18 groups responded (3 groups ran out of time)

11. What type of barriers stop teenagers from asking for help for themselves or someone they know?

- a. 21 groups responded
- b. 8 themes

i. External stigma and expectations of others (20)

1. Defined: perception or standard that others hold youth to.
2. Examples:
 - a. Mental health issues are abnormal
 - b. Needing to be perfect
 - c. Ruining or hurting their reputation

ii. Fear of consequences (17)

1. Defined: fearing consequences of sharing their struggles with other people.
2. Examples:
 - a. Being admitted to a mental health facility or hospital
 - b. Peers bullying them
 - c. Peers, parents, or teachers oversharing the information with other people

iii. Internal stigma and self-expectations (13)

1. Defined: self-perception or standard that youth hold themselves to.

2. Examples:
 - a. Feeling weak for having a problem
 - b. Issues are personal that others should not know about
 - c. Not feeling independent when asking others for help
- iv. Feeling invalidated or misunderstood (13)**
 1. Defined: other people invalidating or downplaying youths' concerns.
 2. Examples:
 - a. Older generations not understanding how social media impacts youth
 - b. Focusing on academic struggles instead of the concern youth disclosed
 - c. People not believing youth when they share their concerns
- v. Lack of support system (10)**
 1. Defined: not having trustworthy, supportive people to share struggles with.
 2. Examples:
 - a. Not trusting people to talk to about their issues
 - b. Not having a support system
 - c. Not having a supportive adult
- vi. Parents (7)**
 1. Defined: expectations or response from parents after telling them about struggles.
 2. Examples:
 - a. Being compared to a sibling or peer
 - b. Parents who don't view mental health as a real problem
 - c. Parents threatening to call emergency services after disclosing problem
- vii. Fear of burdening others (5)**
 1. Defined: youths' perception that they will burden others by sharing their struggles.
 2. Examples:
 - a. Other people have their own things to worry about so they should not share their struggles with them
 - b. Not wanting to burden others
 - c. Pandemic made everyone else's life more difficult, so they can't share their personal struggles with them
- viii. Access to resources (4)**
 1. Defined: lack of ability to access resources for related concerns.
 2. Examples:
 - a. Cost of services
 - b. Finding/identifying services
 - c. Accessing quality services

12. If you had the chance to sit down with the mayor or county commissioner, what would you tell them the community is doing well for you?

- a. 21 groups responded
- b. 8 themes

i. Community Resources and Support (13)

- 1. Defined: resources or support the community offers those who are a part of the community.
- 2. Examples:
 - a. Many organizations who help with mental health
 - b. Library resources
 - c. Church and youth groups

ii. Places to Hang Out and Things to Do (9)

- 1. Defined: students express that there are things to do in the community and places to hang out in the community.
- 2. Examples:
 - a. Farmer's market
 - b. Art festivals
 - c. Ice rinks
 - d. Parks
 - e. Restaurants

iii. Safety Efforts (7)

- 1. Defined: a focus on physical safety measures.
- 2. Examples:
 - a. A lot of emergency services and blue lights
 - b. The Y's Safe Place
 - c. City is safe while walking down street

iv. Inclusive Resources for Underrepresented Groups (6)

- 1. Defined: students express that the community has resources for underrepresented groups, including: minority populations, low-income families, individuals with disabilities, and LGTBQIA+ individuals, specifically.
- 2. Examples:
 - a. Good resources for low-income families
 - b. Community center has food and dinners for people
 - c. Focus on diversity
 - d. Lots of places to get food and clothes
 - e. Resources for LGTBQIA+ people

v. Environmental Efforts (3)

- 1. Defined: a focus on bettering and taking care of the physical environment
- 2. Examples:
 - a. Community is clean with little litter
 - b. Projects for nature and saving the environment

c. Planting trees

vi. Opportunities for Youth to Speak Up (3)

1. Defined: a focus on students feeling like there are opportunities for them to share their voices and speak about things that really matter to them with the community.
2. Examples:
 - a. The Youth Summit, specifically

vii. Places to Work/Volunteer (2)

1. Defined: a focus on students expressing that there are places to work or volunteer in the community.
2. Examples:
 - a. You can get a job if you want one

13. What would you explain needs to be done more for youth outside of school?

- a. 20 groups responded
- b. 9 themes

i. More Mental and Physical Health Resources (9)

1. Defined: a focus specifically on the mental and physical health of the community and a need for more resources and education to support it.
2. Examples:
 - a. Not enough mental health outlets
 - b. Increased access to mental health professionals
 - c. More pronounced mental health resources, like a crisis line

ii. More Safe Environments (9)

1. Defined: a focus on the physical safety for all community members, and especially LGTBQIA+ individuals.
2. Examples:
 - a. A safe place for students to go to
 - b. Somewhere to go that is understanding and trusts students

iii. Improve Inclusive Resources for Underrepresented Groups (8)

1. Defined: students express that the community should improve resources for underrepresented groups, including: minority populations, low-income families, individuals with disabilities, and LGTBQIA+ individuals, specifically.
2. Examples:
 - a. Need more diversity awareness
 - b. “We are not LGTBQ inclusive at all”
 - c. Do more for low-income families “because some students come to school hungry”

iv. Increase Job Opportunities (6)

1. Defined: a focus on increasing access to getting a job in the community, and also preparing for a future job through building workforce skills.

2. Examples:
 - a. There needs to be more jobs closer to the city
 - b. More job shadowing
 - c. More apprenticeships
 - d. A focus on trade schools
- v. More Activities and Things to Do (6)**
 1. Defined: increase variety of things to do and places to go in the community to socialize, have fun, relax, etc.
 2. Examples:
 - a. More places for teens to go
 - b. Town festivals
 - c. A community movie night in the park
- vi. Build Stronger Connections Between Youth and Community (5)**
 1. Defined: a focus on building a bridge between teenagers and the community – and connecting them to what is going on in the community.
 2. Examples:
 - a. Let kids speak about community
 - b. Allow community things be known
- vii. Create Support Groups (5)**
 1. Defined: a focus on support groups for teenagers to feel connected, heard, talk, and look up to.
 2. Examples:
 - a. Mentors
 - b. Role models
 - c. Tutoring
- viii. Improve Modes of Transportation (3)**
 1. Defined: a focus on getting around in the community – whether walking, driving, and commuting, etc.
 2. Examples:
 - a. There needs to be more sidewalks for walking
 - b. Improve transportation
- ix. Other (2)**
 1. Defined: other items that did not fit a category
 2. Examples:
 - a. Improve environment – there’s trash all over.
 - b. Reach teenagers through different social media platforms.

14. What ways do you see you or your peers using to cope with stress?

- a. 20 groups responded
- b. 22 themes
 - i. Playing Sports, Exercising, or Extracurricular Activities (15)**
 - ii. Listening to Music (12)**
 - iii. The Arts (e.g., writing, reading, journaling, painting, baking) (10)**

- iv. Substance Use (9)**
- v. Talk to Each Other or Hang Out with Friends (9)**
- vi. Going on Social Media (7)**
- vii. Other Hobbies (e.g., welding, shopping, piercing ears) (7)**
- viii. Video Games (4)**
- ix. Sleeping (4)**
- x. Spending Time with Animals (4)**
- xi. Watching TV (3)**
- xii. Self-Harm (2)**
- xiii. Jobs or Working (2)**
- xiv. Procrastinating (2)**
- xv. Eating A Lot (2)**
- xvi. Spirituality (2)**
- xvii. Punching Things (2)**
- xviii. Alone Time (2)**
- xix. Lashing Out or Taking Time Away from People (2)**
- xx. Family Time (2)**
- xxi. Meditation (2)**
- xxii. Other (3)**

Appendix 2:

The information in this appendix gives the number of responses for each theme including those with only one response. Remember that the numbers represent the number of groups the theme was mentioned in and not the number of times the theme was mentioned. A group could have mentioned a theme several times but it would only be coded once for that group.

1. *How has your school life changed this past year? (virtual, in-person, hybrid, home school)*

Struggles of online school – 20
Impact on social life – 14
Difficulty of Communication – 11
Impact on Mental Health – 10
Motivation and passion for school – 8
Empathy for others – 7
Lack of extracurricular activities and other school activities – 6
Inability to participate in religious/community activities – 1

2. *Which area of your life has COVID or quarantine impacted the most? home life, social life, work life, mental wellbeing, physical health, school performance, or anything else?*

Mental Health – 19
Social life/hanging out with friends – 19
Social life/socializing and communicating with friends – 16
School life/academics and performance – 10
Home life – 10
Physical health – 10
School life/impacted high school experience – 7
Feeling isolated – 2
No community or religious activities – 1
Financial loss from not working - 1

3. *What do you think are the biggest stressors high school students face today?*

Pressure of Grades & Success – 18
Academic Overload/Testing to Much – 13
Work/Life/School Balance – 10
COVID-19 – 9
Mental Health – 9
Teachers – 9
Expectations – 8
Future Planning/College – 8
Social Life – 8
Identity/Self-perception – 5
Home Life – 4

Social Media – 4

4. *What substances do you think youth are using the most?*

Nicotine – 21
THC/Marijuana – 18
Alcohol – 15
Psychedelics – 9
Meth – 5
Adderall – 4
Heroin – 3
Cocaine – 2
Other Prescription Pills – 2
Caffeine – 1
Molly – 1
Angel (Phencyclidine) – 1
Spice – 1

5. *What substances do you think are high risk?*

Nicotine – 15
THC/Marijuana – 11
Alcohol – 10
Psychedelics – 7
Other Prescription Pills – 6
Meth – 4
Heroin/Opiates – 3
Cocaine – 2
“Fake” or “Mixed” Drugs – 2
Crack Cocaine – 1

6. *What issues do you think youth are dealing with that schools need to be paying more attention to?*

Mental Health, Substance Use, and Abuse – 18
Academic Overload – 10
Building Relationships with Students – 7
Diversity and Inclusion – 6
Bullying – 4
Disciplinary Actions – 4
After High School Preparation – 3
Focusing Solely on Grades – 3
Youth Feeling Overwhelmed – 2
Lack of Extracurricular Activities – 1

7. *What specifically can schools do to help with those issues?*
- Provide Mental Health, Substance Use, and Abuse Education and Resources – 13
 - Encourage Teachers and Staff to Cultivate Relationships with Students – 9
 - Promote Discussion for Students – 8
 - Train Teachers and Counselors about Mental Health – 7
 - Re-Envision School Response to Bullying and Student Performance – 6
 - Expand Extracurricular Activities – 3
 - Offer More Preparation Courses for Life after High School – 3
 - Focus on Diversity and Inclusion – 2
 - Reduce Amount of Homework – 1

8. *What do you think schools are doing well to help students?*

- Teachers are Understanding and Encouraging – 13
- Offering Clubs and Extracurricular Activities – 12
- Promoting Positive Relationships between School Staff and Students – 10
- Providing Personalized Schooling – 8
- Creating an Open and Safe Environment – 6
- Building Awareness of and Offering Mental Health Resources – 4
- Giving Students Breaks – 3
- Providing Future Planning Opportunities – 2
- Encouraging School Morale – 1

9. *What mental health issues do you think impact youth the most?*

- Anxiety – 19
- Depression – 16
- Self-worth/pressure/sense of identity – 6
- Self-harm/suicidal thoughts – 6
- Stress – 5
- ADHD – 4
- Isolation/feeling alone – 4
- Panic attacks – 3
- Eating disorders – 2
- Bipolar Disorder – 2
- Insomnia – 2
- Lack of motivation – 1
- PTSD – 1

10. *How would you define/describe the mental health issues you have identified?*

- Anxiety – 12
- Depression – 10
- ADHD – 3
- Bipolar – 1
- Eating Disorder – 1

Suicidal Ideation – 1
Psychosis – 1
PTSD – 1
Schizophrenia – 1

11. What type of barriers stop teenagers from asking for help for themselves or someone they know?

External stigma and expectations of others – 20
Fear of consequences – 17
Internal stigma and self-expectations – 13
Feeling invalidated or misunderstood – 13
Lack of support system – 10
Parents – 7
Fear of burdening others – 5
Access to resources – 4

12. If you had the chance to sit down with the mayor or county commissioners, why would you tell him/her the community is doing well for you?

Community Resources and Support – 13
Places to Hang Out and Things to Do – 9
Safety Efforts – 7
Inclusive Resources for Underrepresented Groups – 6
Environmental Efforts – 3
Opportunities for Youth to Speak Up – 3
Places to Work and Volunteer – 2

13. What would you explain needs to be done more for youth outside of school?

More Mental and Physical Health Resources – 9
More Safe Environments – 9
Improve Inclusive Resources for Underrepresented Groups – 8
Increase Job Opportunities – 6
More Activities and Things to Do – 6
Build Stronger Connections Between Youth and Community – 5
Create Support Groups – 5
Improve Modes of Transportation – 3
Other – 2

14. What ways do you see you or your peers using to cope with stress?

Playing sports, exercising, or extracurricular activities – 15
Listening to music – 12
The arts (e.g., writing, journaling, reading, painting, baking) – 10
Substance use – 9

Talking to each other and hanging out with friends – 9
Going on social media – 7
Other specific hobbies (e.g., shopping, welding, piercing ears) – 7
Video games – 4
Sleeping – 4
Spending time with animals – 4
Watching TV – 3
Self-harm – 2
Jobs or working – 2
Procrastinating – 2
Eating a lot – 2
Spirituality – 2
Punching things – 2
Alone time – 2
Lashing out or taking time away from people – 2
Family time – 2
Meditation – 2
Other – 3