

Mt. Pleasant Area

community foundationSM

2014 Isabella County Youth Needs Assessment Results and Talking Points

Youth Advisory Committee: The Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) is comprised of 7th-12th grade students from all schools in Isabella County, and serves as a pivotal agent in the empowerment of youth and in the development of young leaders. The YAC advises the Mt. Pleasant Area Community Foundation's Board of Trustees on the awarding of grants from the Kellogg Youth Fund, an endowment that supports charitable projects and events that benefit the young people of Isabella County. YAC student leaders spend time positively influencing their community while learning about service and civic engagement. The YAC meets at least once per month to review grant applications, to receive leadership and philanthropy training, and to plan community service projects.

Youth Needs Assessment: Every 2-3 years, the YAC surveys 8th and 10th graders of Isabella County to help identify what they see as the greatest needs and problems facing youth in our community. The Youth Needs Assessment Survey helps the YAC determine funding priorities as they review grant applications. The students want to fund programs and services that will best meet the needs identified by youth in Isabella County.

Schools Participating in YAC and in the Youth Needs Assessment:

- Beal City Public Schools
- Sacred Heart Academy
- Mt. Pleasant Public Schools
- Shepherd Public Schools

Respondents:

- 499 students completed online survey
- ages 12-18
- mostly 8th and 10th grade students
- 54% female; 46% male

Most Important Issues Facing Youth Today:

- Overall:
 1. Bullying (personal threats, gossiping, internet harassment, etc.) - 61%
 2. Stress/School Pressure - 52%
 3. Alcohol and drug abuse - 44%
 4. Self-esteem/Respect for self and others - 41%
 5. Depression/suicide/loss - 38%
 6. Family issues (divorce, abuse, finances, etc.) - 37%
- Gender differences:
 - While boys and girls agreed on the top two issues (bullying and stress/school pressure), girls indicated self-esteem/respect for yourself and others (3rd) and depression/suicide/loss (4th) were the next most pressing concerns. Boys were more likely to indicate alcohol and drug abuse (3rd) and family issues (4th) were the next most pressing concerns.
 - 39% of high school boys vs. 18% of high school girls thought smoking/tobacco use was an important issue.
 - 30% of high school girls vs. 13% of high school boys thought cliques were a problem.
- Though not in the top six, 26% of middle school students thought discrimination was an important issue, as compared to just 13% of high school students.

Student Participation in School Related Activities:

- Middle school students:
 1. School team sports - 66%
 2. Fine arts - 37% (slightly more than half the involvement in sports teams)
 3. Study/homework/tutoring - 24%
- High school students:
 1. School team sports - 62%
 2. Study/homework/tutoring - 33%
 3. Community service - 29% (made it into top three, as opposed to middle school)
 4. Fine arts - 28% (less than half the involvement in sports teams)

Student Participation in Non-School Related Activities:

- Overall:
 1. Spending time with friends - 69%
 2. Family activities - 59%
 3. Exercise - 56%
 4. Computer/TV/Video games - 53%
- 33% of students indicated that they spend 17+ hours, on average, per week on non-school related activities.
- Gender differences:
 - 70% of female students vs. 47% of male students indicated participation in family activities.
 - 47% of male students vs. 27% of female students indicated participation in work.
 - 44% of male middle school students vs. 21% of female middle school students indicated they have jobs.
 - 52% of male high school students vs. 35% of female high school students indicated they have jobs.
 - Are these stereotypical gender differences real, or are students more or less likely to indicate participation in these activities based on gender?

Student Time Commitments:

- More than half of all students (54%) said that lack of time is the main reason for not engaging in more after-school or weekend activities. However, 35% of all students said that they were not interested in participating in after-school or weekend activities. How can these students be engaged?
- Overall, there seems to be a shift toward greater involvement and diversity of involvement from middle school to high school (i.e., more time spent on school-related activities, fewer students playing computer/video games/watching TV, more involvement in community service, and more students holding jobs).
- Approximately 80% of students overall said they were busy enough and content with their current level of participation.

What activities should the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) fund?

- Overall:
 1. After-school recreation/social activity programs - 54%
 2. Personal development programs (art, music, fitness, etc.) - 52%
 3. Job development and opportunities - 44%
 4. Leadership activities - 38%
 5. Volunteer programs - 37%
- Though not in the top five, 30% of students noted counseling services as something the YAC should help fund. There was quite a difference among boys and girls in this category. In middle school, for example, 46% of female students vs. 21% of male students indicated a need for counseling services.