

# The State of Tompkins County Youth

*A 2012 needs assessment of Tompkins County young people  
from birth to age twenty-four*



*Coordinated and prepared by the Tompkins County Youth Services Department*



*Even a minor event in the life of a child is an event of that child's world and thus a world event.*

*Gaston Bachelard*

Dear Community Member,

During today's challenging economic times, too many families and communities across the country are struggling to make ends meet and to simply do more with less. Yet, amongst the daily bad news are signs of opportunity and strength. Unlike what we see at the state and national level, here in Tompkins County our local employers and local governments are making thoughtful, rational decisions about their operations and budgets as related to our community and in turn, our future.

It has been said time and time again, there is something unique about Tompkins County. This uniqueness is one of the prime reasons that both of us choose to not only make this community a place for our employment, but a place that we can call home.

Together we share with you this report on the State of Youth in Tompkins County. Focused on collaboration among agencies, parents, local government, communities and others, this report looks to define the needs, gaps and strengths of our community as we look to sustain our future through our investment of time and resources into our young people. Committed to not only identifying the current but preparing for the future, the dedicated individuals of the Steering Committee have created this as the ground work for future forums to help imagine what is next for our youth.

We could not be more proud of the Steering Committee and the organizations that supported this assessment and continue to make Tompkins County a place where young people are heard, supported and receive what they need to succeed in school, work and life!

All the Best,



Martha Robertson  
Chair of Tompkins County Legislature



Amie Hendrix  
Director of Tompkins County Youth  
Services Department



## Table of Contents:

Overview of the Needs Assessment	Page 7
Early Development Assessment, Ages 0 - 4	Page 13
Elementary Youth Assessment, Ages 5-9	Page 23
Middle school Youth Assessment, Ages 10-13	Page 33
High School Youth Assessment, Ages 14-18	Page 47
Beyond High School Youth Assessment, Ages 18 - 24	Page 61
Cross Cutting Themes in Tompkins County	Page 73
Glossary & Definitions	Page 89
Index of Resources	Page 95





## OVERVIEW OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

To better assist the Tompkins County Youth Services Department in its mission to invest time, resources, and funding in communities to enable all youth to thrive in school, work and life, a needs assessment is utilized to garner key information. To further the departmental understanding and more fully support the needs of young people this assessment was launched in May of 2011.

### **Purpose of this report**

Charged with identifying priorities for youth in our community, the Tompkins County Youth Services Department strives to understand the needs of the community to assist in maximizing local resources to best support young people. With the assistance and support of various community stakeholders it has proved important to conduct a community-wide needs assessment of the State of Youth in Tompkins County.

To ensure that this needs assessment accurately reflects the various populations of youth within Tompkins County it is important for this process to bring together youth-serving agencies, businesses, school districts, parents and youth to be participants in the process. Members from the various groups became members of the Steering Committee and various other committees as identified throughout this report.



The goal of this report is to examine a number of community and individual risk factors and assets. The report includes data that suggest community and individual strengths and assets, factors that may contribute to academic success or failure, to criminal or non-delinquent behavior, to skill and workforce development, to good health and overall well-being. It identifies current investments in youth, gaps in services, and opportunities to improve community efforts on behalf of young people.

### **Data Sources**

The Steering Committee began the data identification process by determining what information was desirable and then collecting the available data from a variety of sources.

Data used in this report were gathered from a variety of pre-existing reports as well as through local focus groups, discussions with key local informants and community surveys.

The Steering Committee determined that information would be most helpful if it fell into age-specific categories. The committee then formed sub-committees composed of:

- Early Childhood (Ages 0 - 4)
- Elementary School Aged (Ages 5 - 10)
- Middle School Aged (Ages 11 - 14)
- High School Aged (Ages 15 - 18)
- Beyond High School (Ages 18 - 24)

Each committee group was charged with collecting relevant data and placing the data into one of the four following categories:

1. Community Influences
2. School/Educational Influences
3. Family Influences
4. Peer Group/Individual Influences



The committees then gathered the most current information available and, where possible, multiple years of information so any key trends could be noted. Some of the data were gathered from existing reports that had already synthesized the information into findings, while other data were available in “un-interpreted” aggregate form. The most desirable data came from well-researched sources and are Tompkins County specific. In instances where local data are not available, statewide information may be referenced (see data limitations section for more information). A complete listing of data sources used in this report is located in the Index of Resources

To enhance secondary data, additional local data were collected from surveys and conversations. Compilations of these reports are available by request.

### **Data Limitations**



It is important to note that the available data provide an ample opportunity for a good needs analysis. Much of the data compiled in this report came from existing reports or sources provided by or obtained from a variety of sources (i.e. secondary data). This report does contain some “original” research as in survey data developed specifically for this assessment. These data are not significantly scientific but are more qualitative and observational in nature. As a result of the data collection and methods, there are inherent limitations that should be noted. The most obvious limitation is the fact

that any analysis is only as good as the available data. This is not to say that the data provided are not of good quality, but rather there may be specific



information missing. In some instances, the only data available on a particular issue may be in a statewide format. Other limitations include: there is no universal definition to guide data sources; the most recent data from a source may not be as current as desired; multiple years of data might not be available; data are usually presented on an annual basis but may be based on a calendar year, school year or a fiscal year; and data from different sources may not correlate to one another.

### **COMMUNITIES THAT CARE<sup>®</sup>: RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

Data presented in this report are intended to illuminate known critical risk and protective factors impacting the lives of youth in Tompkins County. With roots in the medical field, risk and protective factors have become commonly used among many youth-serving practitioners. For instance, many people are familiar with the risk and protective factors of heart disease (e.g. high blood pressure, high cholesterol, overweight/obesity, smoking, physical activity, low fat and high fiber diet, weight loss, etc.). This report is one step in the process; the needs assessment will identify areas that need to be examined further to more fully understand the implications and determine which actions may need to be taken.

Under the Communities that Care<sup>®</sup> model, data can be divided into categories of risk and protective factors - those characteristics and conditions that can be found in families, peer groups, schools and the larger community/environment. These include items such as:

#### *Families*

- Supervision
- Behavioral expectations
- Boundaries and limits
- Exposure to violence
- Abuse/neglect
- Family discord/conflict
- Substance/alcohol abuse
- Socioeconomic status
- Delinquent/criminal siblings
- Criminal behavior of parents/caregivers

#### *Peer/Individual*

- Engagement in delinquent behavior
- Substance/alcohol use
- Pro-social and positive peer relationships
- Social isolation

### *School*

- Academic achievement
- Attachment to school
- Disciplinary referrals
- Truancy
- Suspensions/expulsions

### *Neighborhood/Community/Environment*

- Economic conditions
- Access to services
- Access to positive/pro-social activities
- Community connectedness
- Community investment in youth
- Criminal activity
- Availability of drugs and firearms

Protective and developmental assets can be found within each of the above mentioned categories and include characteristics of the individual (what the youth does, believes, values, etc.) and the characteristics of the environment in which youth live.



The presence and/or absence of any single risk or protective factor/developmental asset cannot be linked to any specific delinquent or behavioral problem within a community. Rather, it is the accumulation of both the negatives and positives that influence the larger community. For instance, a community with a high number of risk factors present would be more likely to have increased negative or problematic behaviors. Conversely,

in a community with a high number of protective factors, there should be a direct correlation to a reduced number of negative or problematic behaviors. Risk reduction and protective factor enhancement must be combined for a successful community to properly support its young people.

## HOW TO READ THIS ASSESSMENT

This report is organized in a variety of ways. Each age-group has its own section further divided into subgroups based on the Communities that Care<sup>®</sup> model. Each age-group section begins with relevant information about the stage of life and experiences of the age-group. The subgroups of community, education, family, and peer/individual share key data indicators on the wellness of our community. These data points are then highlighted by conversation and other information garnered from the assessment. The age section concludes with the identification of strengths, needs, and gaps for that age.

Following the age-specific sections, an overall assessment of Tompkins County is presented with cross-cutting themes garnered from the data and research. These themes provide insights on how the data can be utilized to assess the needs, gaps and strengths of the community as a whole.

## PROFILE OF TOMPKINS COUNTY



Tompkins County is located in the Finger Lakes Region of New York State. As of the 2010 Census, the population was 101,564. Tompkins County is comprised of the City of Ithaca, Towns of Caroline, Danby, Dryden, Enfield, Groton, Ithaca, Lansing, Newfield, Ulysses and the Villages of Cayuga Heights, Dryden, Groton, Freeville, Lansing, and Trumansburg. There are six public school districts and one charter school within the County: Dryden,

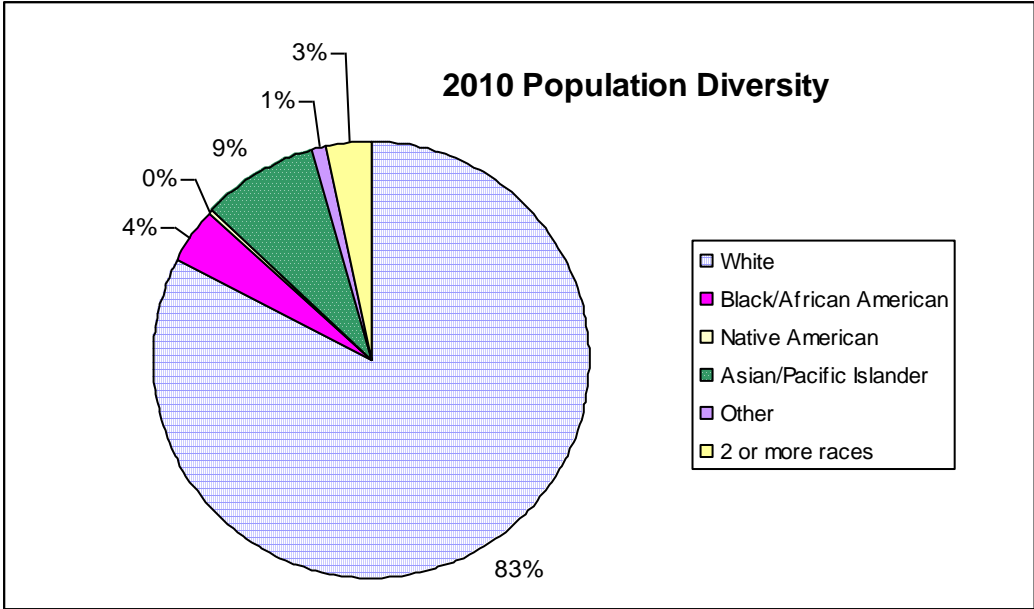
Groton, Ithaca City, Lansing, Newfield, and Trumansburg make up the districts, and New Roots is our charter school. William George Agency is a residential public school district located within Tompkins County: however, for purposes of this report William George Agency has been excluded from most data sets.

### Household

According to the US Census Bureau, Tompkins County consists of 38,446 households with an average household size of 2.27 (2006-10). Over 51% of households consist of families; 8,806 families have children younger than 18. Single households, including those with children under the age of 18, are more likely to be headed by a female than a male.

### Diversity

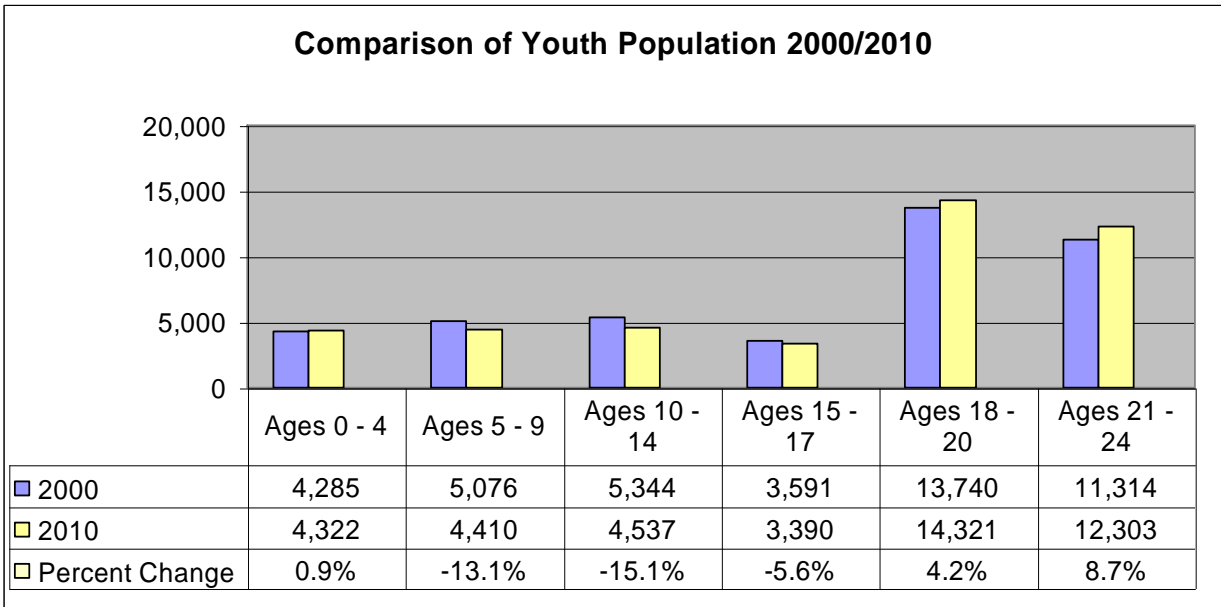
The majority of the Tompkins County population is comprised of people of White/Caucasian descent (83%). The largest minority population within the County is Asian/Pacific Islander. The diversity of Tompkins County has remained fairly consistent over the past ten years.



Source: United States Census 2010

### Youth Population

The youth population (ages 0 - 24) of Tompkins County has held steady since 2000 showing a slight decrease of 0.15%. However, within subgroups greater changes have occurred. The largest population decrease has been experienced in ages 10 - 14 (15%) while the age-grouping experiencing the largest increase is ages 21 - 24. Age groups of 0 - 4 and 18 - 20 have also seen increases in their population size since 2000. According to the 2010 United States Census, the total youth population in Tompkins County for those ages 0 - 24 is 42,283.



Source: United States Census 2010



# Early Childhood Assessment, Ages 0 - 4







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## EARLY CHILDHOOD (Ages 0 - 4)

### What happens during the stage of early development?

This is a period of incredible development for an infant/toddler. During this stage the foundation is being laid for the rest of the child's life.



- The behaviors of babies are affected by the traits they are born with. At this stage babies are aware of activity level, how adaptable or stubborn they are, and how much stimulation they can handle or need.
- Children are developing motor skills and verbal skills. Even though they may not be walking and talking during some of this time, the skills need to be stimulated in order to develop properly.
- During this period infants are developing attachments with their primary caregivers. Stability is critical as it lays the foundation for how the child will feel about future relationships and his or her sense of security.
- Children are extremely sensitive to their surroundings. Toxic environments can seriously compromise an infant's development and can have permanent consequences including reduced and impaired physical and brain function.
- The basic needs of safety, nutrition, sleep, health, housing, stimulation, and nurturing are critical. These basics provide a solid base upon which the entire child's brain, social, emotional and intellectual growth can take place.
- A baby's brain is in continual development. If a child's brain does not receive adequate stimulation at 3 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, and 3 years, specific areas of the brain begin to shut down. This affects a child's long term development.

### Community Well-being

For families with children ages 0 - 4, a key indicator for support from their community may be the ability for the family to find adequate childcare as well as community activities within the community for involvement of children.

#### Childcare

The following tables reflect the availability of childcare as well as the estimated need for care in Tompkins County.

According to the US Census, there are 4,322 children under the age of 5 residing in Tompkins County. Labor force participation

***“Babies are too small to speak for themselves and that makes services to them more vulnerable to budget cuts. But as adults we can choose for them: do we want it to be a compounded loss or a compounded gain for our children?”***

**Director of a Tompkins County  
Youth Serving Organization**

rates of working parents in Tompkins are 69% indicating that there are approximately 2,982 children needing childcare. There is capacity to serve less than half of these children with childcare under our current structure.

There has been a significant increase in the number of regulations placed on childcare providers. These regulations have greatly contributed to the loss of family childcare homes within Tompkins County. Since 2000, the number of family childcare providers has decreased by 60%.

Childcare Centers in Tompkins County		
Ages	Number of Sites (Duplicated)	Capacity
Infants (6 weeks to 18 months)	5	120
Toddlers (18 months to 3 years)	10	226
Preschool (3 to 5 years)	21	665
Head Start Preschool	9	267
<b>Total Capacity:</b> 11 Centers at 16 sites, 7 Head Start Centers, and 19 Pre K School-based classrooms	<b>13</b>	<b>1278</b>

Regulated Childcare Homes		
Type of Care	Number of Homes	Preschool Capacity
Registered Family Childcare	43	245
Licensed Group Family Childcare	34	404
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>649</b>

*Source: Trends and Opportunities: Childcare Data Report Child Development Council 2011*

*Opportunities for Community Involvement*

An electronic survey was conducted by the Needs Assessment Steering Committee of parents throughout Tompkins County. Over 220 parents of children aged 0 - 4 participated in this survey. The parents surveyed felt that the number one strength of Tompkins County was the availability of parks and recreation areas. Parents also felt that having adequate parks and recreation spaces for their children is a top priority for raising their young person.



Other resources that parents identified within Tompkins County included: The Ithaca Youth Bureau Tot Spot Program, Child Development Council Family Support Services, Jillian’s Drawers parenting programs and youth programming, the Tompkins County Library infant reading groups, the Discovery Trail, the

Sciencenter, YMCA, programming offered by Mama Goose, Cornell Cooperative Extension parenting programs and faith-based toddler groups.

Literacy programs continue to grow for young families. The Tompkins Community Action Family Home Library and various Child Development Council Programs provided over 10,000 books and activities to families and classrooms in 2010 and, through collaboration with the Family Reading Partnership, provided an additional 1,591 books and activities for distribution.

**Educational Well-being**

For many youth aged 0 - 4, childcare serves as the educational institution. However, there are public school opportunities available for children who meet the required eligibility standards.

<b>Tompkins County School Enrollment for Ages 3 &amp; 4</b>		
	<b>Number of youth</b>	<b>Percentage of Tompkins County Ages 3 - 4</b>
Enrolled in public school	451	24.2%
Enrolled in private school	507	27.2%
Not enrolled in school	908	48.7%

*Source: US Census 2008-10 American Community Survey 3 year estimates*

<b>Universal Pre-K Enrollment</b>			
<b>District</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>2010-11</b>
County Total	392	411	388

*Source: NYS Department of Education School Report Cards*

As the provider of Head Start and Early Head Start programs in 2010-11, Tompkins Community Action served 389 children and their families in 13 classrooms throughout the county. Head Start and Early Head Start programs provide collaboration with childcare providers and the Ithaca City School District. As a result of programming, children increased their language development; literacy, math and science skills; creative expression; and their social, emotional and physical development.

*“As I look at my infant I am concerned that college will be too expensive to send anyone to.”*

Tompkins Community Action also collaborates with Trumansburg and Groton in Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs. Many families participate in the Home Base option that brings the classroom into the home weekly to support child development and parents/guardians as a child’s first and most important teacher.

**Parent of a Tompkins County Infant**

Throughout the past ten years there has been a substantial increase in the number of youth enrolled in special education programming during pre-school. According to the Tompkins County Health Department's Vital Statistics Report there has been an increase of approximately 100 more youth being placed in special education programming than in the ten years prior.

### Family Well-being

For youth ages 4 and under, the family unit is one of the most important developmental assets. The data below outline key indicators for the success of the young child within his/her family.

In Tompkins County, more than 97% of families with young people under the age of six are able to provide health insurance to their children. However, as of 2008 the mortality rate for youth aged 1 - 4 is slightly higher than that of the rest of New York State.

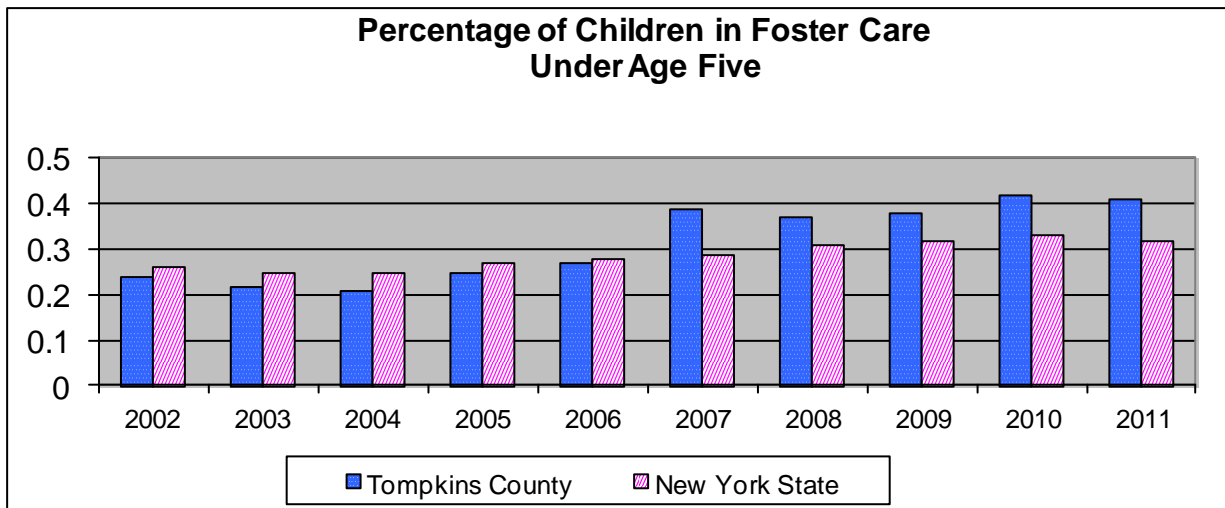
2006-08 Child Mortality Rates			
Child Mortality (per 100,000)	3 year total	Tompkins County rate	NYS rate
1 - 4 years	3	29.7	22.3

*Source: New York State Health Department Vital Statistics*

Tompkins County Health Insurance Coverage for Youth under 6		
Youth with health insurance coverage	4,955	97.5%
Youth with no health insurance coverage	129	2.5%

*Source: 2008-2010 US Census American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates*

New York State has experienced a growth in the foster care system over the past ten years. Like the rest of New York, Tompkins County has also experienced more children entering and remaining in the system. Beginning in 2007, Tompkins County surpassed the New York State rates and has continued to have more children in care than the average across New York.



*Source: New York State Data Center 2012*

### Overall Assessment of Tompkins County Youth Ages 0 - 4

One of the few age groups that is growing, the population of youth aged 0 - 4 within Tompkins County has increased between 2000-10 by 0.86%. The needs for support for parents and young people have been identified in various ways.

Various conversations and electronic surveys were conducted to explore how the data is being seen by parents and youth workers of youth aged 0 - 4. Information below was garnered through: an electronic survey of sixteen youth workers in Tompkins County who provide services to youth aged 0 - 4, an electronic survey of 227 parents of Tompkins County youth aged 0 - 4, and conversations among 10 day care providers from throughout Tompkins County.

#### *Strengths of Tompkins Youth Aged 0 - 4*

Youth workers, childcare providers and parents report that the current cohort of 0 - 4 year olds are better able to use and understand technology than previous cohorts.

Within Tompkins County, parents are satisfied with the parks and recreation spaces available to their young children as well as opportunities for community involvement. Over 98% of parents indicated that the availability of parks and recreation areas is either extremely or very important for rearing their young children. Parents and youth workers did indicate a need for more indoor play areas as well as improved age-appropriate play areas at parks and other recreation locations.

#### *Concerns for Tompkins Youth Aged 0 - 4*

Youth workers and childcare providers indicated that one of the major concerns they have for young people 0 - 4 is a change in the family unit. Families are coming to programming with increasing needs and the feeling of not having enough community support





for raising their children. Following the economic downturn of 2008, families are still recovering and experiencing fiscal constraints. The stress of the lack of financial security is trickling down to the youngest family members.

The Department of Social Services has noted an increase in infants being placed in foster care, with a few planning adoption for newborns through the Department of Social Services. Caseworkers in Tompkins County indicated that families are showing more signs of substance abuse, mental health issues, domestic violence, and lack of life skills support. In addition, many of the parents were in the foster care system themselves as a youth.

Of concern to youth workers serving the 0 - 4 population is the inability of this cohort to focus or complete tasks in ways that children aged 0 - 4 were able to five years ago. While there has been an increase in the ability for children to use and access technology, the new technology is beginning to impact the young people through causing distractions and lack of focus.

Parents and youth workers also identified that they feel that those aged 0 - 4 are more likely to defy adults and those in authority and may lack conflict resolution skills than past members of this age-group.

#### *Potential Gaps in Tompkins County for Youth Aged 0 - 4*

It is no surprise that one of the largest gaps seen in Tompkins County for youth 0 - 4 is that of childcare. As previously indicated the number of young people needing care exceeds the number of formal spaces available. Using the labor force participation rate of working parents with children under the age of five (69%) there are approximately 2,900 children under the age of five who need childcare. Currently there are roughly 1,200 regulated childcare spaces for children of this age. When looking at the non-traditional worker, those who work evenings and weekends, the availability of places for care diminishes even further.

According to the Child Development Council's *2010 Trends and Opportunities: Childcare Data Report*, "Infant and Toddler Care falls even further behind (than school aged care). We have only enough regulated spaces for one out of every three babies. This does not tell the whole story, however. For those with children under the age of three, 32% (of parents) negotiated a longer leave, resigned or found a different job when they couldn't find care."





Discussions with parents, care providers and youth workers also indicated a gap in availability of parental support. This lack of parenting support may also be a link to the increase in foster care placements within Tompkins County.





## Elementary Aged Youth Assessment, Ages 5 - 9





## **HOW TO READ THIS ASSESSMENT**

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Following the age-specific sections, an overall assessment of Tompkins County is presented with cross-cutting themes garnered from the data and research. These themes provide insights on how the data can be utilized to assess the needs, gaps and strengths of the community as a whole.

## ELEMENTARY AGED YOUTH (Ages 5 - 9)



### What happens during the stage between 5 - 9 years old?

The foundations for future learning skills are being laid during these years. Children are becoming competent in new skills. They are beginning to be less focused on themselves and becoming more aware of relationships with others. At this stage there is a great need for the brain to be stimulated with a wide range of experiences in the world.

- Children begin to develop an understanding of others' feelings and are able to have some control over their own feelings.
- Children learn to take turns, to listen for instructions, to be compliant.
- Children have not yet developed the ability to verbalize their feelings and needs and often their behavior is reactive instead of being well thought out.
- They are developing social skills with peers and in groups and need to be around other children in order to further develop these skills.
- Children at this stage begin to develop a clear sense of right and wrong.
- Children of this age are in strong need of parent support as they are developing their sense of self and continued establishment of boundaries.
- Children work towards mastering drawing, reading, writing and sports.
- Repetition of the above activities and sports produces sense of self-confidence.
- At 6 years and 9 years the areas of the brain that do not receive stimulation are shut down. It is critical that children be thinking, talking, reading and using the information they learn in school to continue their development during these years.

### Community Well-being

Youth aged 5 - 9 begin to explore their community through a variety of programs and opportunities. Not unlike youth aged 0 - 4, for families with children ages 5 - 9 a key indicator for support from their community may be the ability for the family to find adequate childcare as well as community activities.

#### *Childcare*

The tables below reflect the availability of childcare as well as the estimated need for care in Tompkins County for families with children aged 5 - 9.



According to the 2010 US Census, there are 4,110 children between the ages of 5 - 9. Labor force participation rates of working parents in Tompkins is 69% implying that there are approximately 2,835 children needing childcare either before or after school. There is capacity to serve less than half of these children with childcare.

There has been a significant increase in the number of regulations placed on childcare providers. These regulations have greatly contributed to the loss of family childcare homes within Tompkins County. Since 2000, the number of family childcare providers has decreased by 60%.

Regulated Childcare Homes		
Type of Care	Number of Homes	School Age Child Capacity
Registered Family Childcare	43	84
Licensed Group Family Childcare	34	112
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>196</b>

*Source: Trends and Opportunities: Childcare Data Report, Child Development Council 2011*

Elementary School Age Childcare (SACC)		
Number of Programs	Number of Programs	Program Capacity
Elementary School Based	12	784
Community Centers	5	360
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>1144</b>

*Source: Trends and Opportunities: Childcare Data Report, Child Development Council 2010*

#### *Opportunities for Community Involvement*

An electronic survey was conducted by the Needs Assessment Steering Committee of parents throughout Tompkins County. Over 265 parents of children aged 5 - 9 participated in this survey. The parents surveyed felt that the number one strength of Tompkins County was the availability of parks and recreation areas. Parents also felt that having adequate parks and recreation spaces for their children is a top priority.

Other valued resources that parents identified within Tompkins County included: The Child Development Council Family Support Services, Jillian's Drawers parenting programs and youth programming, the Tompkins County Library reading groups, the Discovery Trail, the Sciencenter, YMCA, programming offered by Mama Goose, Cornell Cooperative Extension parenting programs, and faith-based toddler groups.

Community supports are a key to the safety of youth within Tompkins County. Below are two charts depicting problem behaviors identified within our



community. The first table highlights the Violent and Disruptive Incidents Reporting (VADIR) as shared by school districts. While the total number of youth being reported via the VADIR system has increased, the total number of incidents has decreased. A VADIR report is completed and submitted to the New York State Department of Education for behaviors such as using or displaying a weapon, insubordination, robbery, sex offense, intimidation, minor altercations, drug possession, etc. More information on the VADIR report can be found in the glossary.

Elementary School Violent and Disruptive Incidents Reporting (VADIR Report) for Tompkins County		
Year	Total Number of Youth	Total Incidents
2008-09	4,379	503
2009-10	4,535	185

Source: New York State Department of Education: VADIR Report

The table below shows the total number of elementary aged youth referred to the Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) program through the Tompkins County Probation Department. Youth are referred to PINS if they are under the age of 18 and they do not attend school, or behave in a way that is dangerous or out of control, or often disobey his or her parents, guardians, or other authorities.

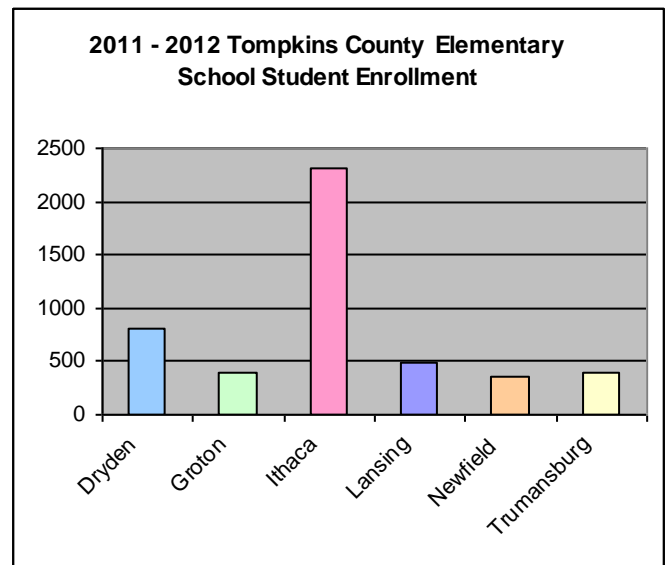
Tompkins County Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) Referrals to Probation Ages 10 & Under							
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Ages 10 & Under	9	6	9	7	2	12	8

Source: Tompkins County Probation Department

### Educational Well-being

During the 2011-12 school year there were 4,777 students enrolled in a Tompkins County public elementary school district. Elementary schools have students from K-5, except in the Trumansburg School District which includes 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in their middle school population. Elementary school students may be aged from 4 - 11 depending on birthdates as well as if the child is held back.

Eighty-five percent of the 282 parents of Tompkins County elementary school-aged youth responding to the February 2012 Needs Assessment Survey indicated that a priority for their young person is quality teaching within the schools. Eighty-two



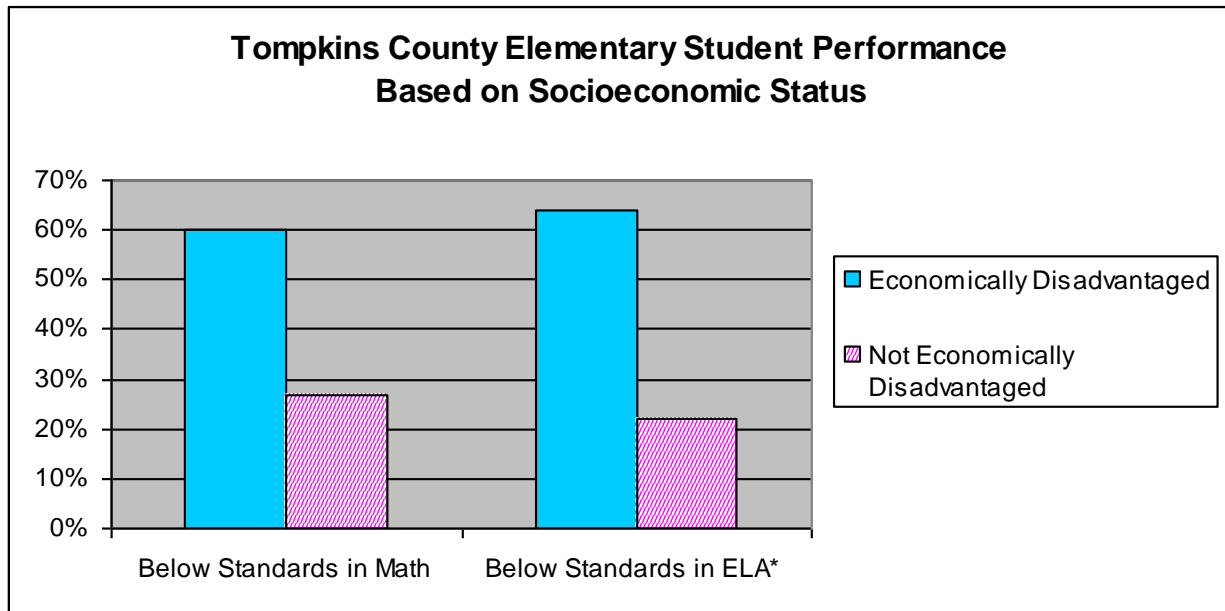
Source: Tompkins Seneca Tioga BOCES

percent of this grouping agreed that they are either satisfied or extremely satisfied with the teaching occurring in their school.

2011-12 Tompkins County Elementary Assessment Scores (Grades 3 - 5)					
Assessment Type	Number of Students	Not Meeting Standards		Meeting / Exceeding Standards	
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
English Language Arts	2,220	9%	29%	56%	6%
Math	2,243	8%	27%	41%	25%

Source: New York State Department of Education School Report Cards

There is a gap between economically disadvantaged and not economically disadvantaged youth in meeting performance standards. Students viewed as economically disadvantaged are those who meet the eligibility requirements for free or reduced lunch. For a family of four during the 2011-12 school year, the monthly income eligibility for reduced lunch is less than \$2,984 and free lunch is less than \$2,097. The following graph indicates the gap in performance among students who are economically disadvantaged as compared to those who are not.



\*ELA = English Language Arts

Source: New York State Department of Education School Report Cards

### Family Well-being

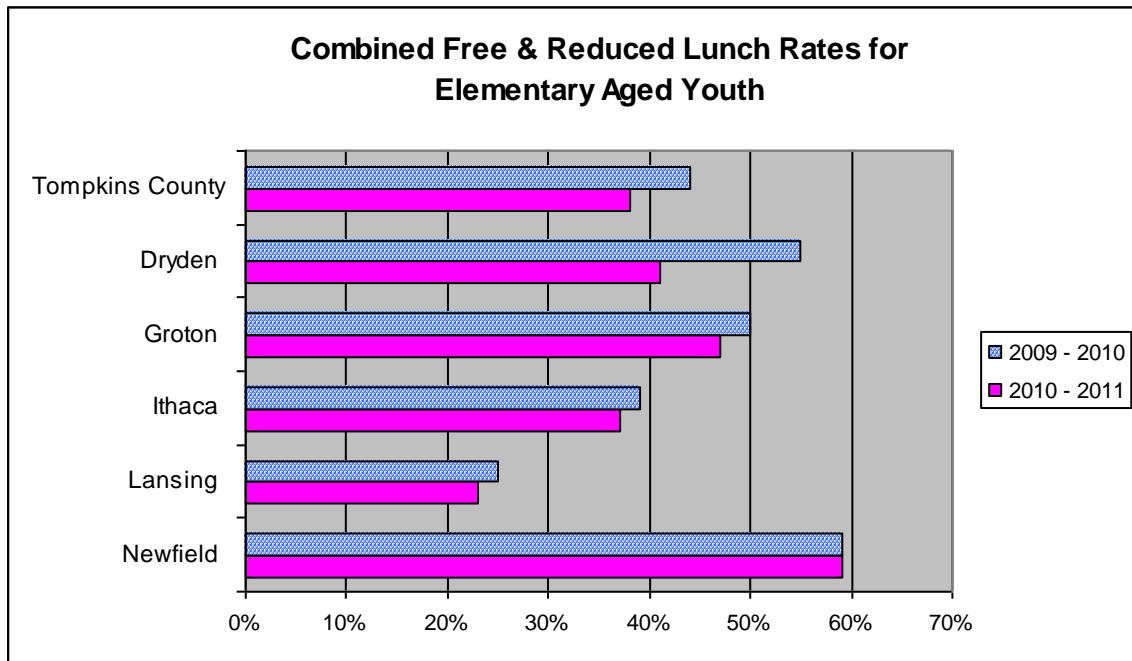
Afterschool providers and youth workers shared their belief that families are currently under very stressing situations which are impacting their young people. During a discussion with afterschool providers, held monthly by the Child Development

*"I would like my children to not have to attend afterschool at school. But I work full time. I feel their days at school are too long."*

Parent of a Tompkins County Elementary School Student

Council, participants indicated that they are seeing elementary aged youth faced with social and emotional complexities which have resulted in increased stress and trauma in their lives. For many families, work hours have changed which means that consistency is not always there, as kids in this age-group need to ensure familial stability.

Afterschool providers also indicated that they have been providing more support to families in the form of basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, school supplies, etc. The need for supplemental food has been increasing over the past five years; however, in 2010-11, a decrease in families participating in free and reduced lunch programs among most school districts was seen.



Source: New York State Department of Education School Report Cards

One additional need noted by parent and guardian respondents to the February 2012 Needs Assessment Survey was for further parental and family engagement within our community.

**Peer/Individual Well-being**

Elementary students are being inundated with technology. The skills associated with running a computer, using a cell phone and perusing a tablet are second nature to young people aged 5 - 9 as technology natives, as some were even born after the advent of the iPhone. This may be why youth workers felt that technology skills showed the greatest increase among youth aged 5 - 9. Utilizing technology our young students are also often able to identify personal interests and spend time pursuing them on their own.

*“Even at a young age our youth are showing leadership - teaching other youth how to complete various activities.”*

**Tompkins County Youth Worker**

However, technology may also be responsible for an area of decreased skill, as indicated by youth workers: focus and task completion. Youth workers, school nurses, afterschool providers and foster care case managers shared a feeling that Tompkins County youth aged 5 - 9 are less focused today than children of the same age five years prior.

### **Overall Assessment of Tompkins County Youth Ages 5 - 9**

The population of youth aged 5 - 9 has decreased by approximately 4% since 2000.

Information below was garnered through: an electronic survey of 64 youth workers in Tompkins County who provide services to youth aged 5 - 9, an electronic survey of 282 parents of Tompkins County youth aged 5 - 9, conversations among 10 youth providers from across Tompkins County, informal conversations with elementary school teachers, and an electronic survey of elementary school principals.

#### *Strengths of Tompkins Youth Aged 5 - 9*

Youth workers indicated that over the past five years youth are more accepting of peers who come from different backgrounds. Youth workers, day care providers, elementary school principals and parents also report that the current cohort of 5 - 9 year olds is better able to use and understand technology than previous cohorts.

*“I would love to have parent workshops, like is done with drugs and college, at elementary level for topics such as sex education, peer pressure, discipline and other relevant issues. As a parent I just need more support.”*

Within Tompkins County, parents are satisfied with the parks and recreation spaces available to their young children as well as opportunities for community involvement. Over 95% of parents indicated that the availability of parks and recreation areas is either extremely or very important for rearing their young children.

**Parent of a Tompkins County Elementary School Student**

#### *Concerns for Tompkins Youth Aged 5 - 9*

Youth workers and day care providers indicated that one of the major concerns they have for young people 5 - 9 is the changing family unit. Families are coming to programming with increasing needs and the feeling of not having enough community support for raising their children. Following the economic downturn of 2008, families are still recovering and experiencing financial constraints. Over the past two years the Recreation Partnership programs have seen an increase in families requesting scholarships for their young program participants.

Of concern to youth workers and principals serving the 5 - 9 population is the inability of this cohort to focus or complete tasks in ways that children aged 5 - 9

were able to five years ago. While there has been an increase in the ability for children to use and access technology the new technology is beginning to impact the young people through causing distractions and lack of focus. One youth provider even indicated that youth as young as age 6 are now appearing at programming with a cell phone in hand.

Parents and youth workers also identified that they feel that those aged 5 - 9 are more likely to defy adults and those in authority and may lack conflict resolution skills than past members of this age-group.

*Potential Gaps in Tompkins County for Youth Aged 5 - 9*

Discussions with parents, childcare providers, school staff, and youth workers indicate there may be a gap in availability of parental support. With changes to the family unit, grandparents and other family members may not be as able to help assist parents as they have in the past. With changing hours of work many parents are experiencing increased stress to find childcare outside of the school hours and traditional work day.

With the increasing use of technology, there has also been a decrease among students participating in outdoor activities. In the last two decades, childhood has moved indoors. Research by the White House Taskforce on Obesity has shown that the average American boy or girl aged 5 - 9, spends just four to seven minutes in unstructured outdoor play each day and more than seven hours each day in front of an electronic screen.









## Middle School Youth Assessment, Ages 10 - 14



## **HOW TO READ THIS ASSESSMENT**

This report is organized in a variety of ways. Each age-group has its own section which is further divided into subgroups based on the Communities that Care<sup>®</sup> model. Each age-group section begins with relevant information about the stage of life and experiences of the age-group. The subgroups of community, education, family, and peer/individual share key data indicators on the wellness of our community. These data points are then highlighted by conversation and other information garnered from the assessment. The age section concludes with the identification of strengths, needs, and gaps for that age.

Following the age-specific sections, an overall assessment of Tompkins County is presented with cross-cutting themes garnered from the data and research. These themes provide insights on how the data can be utilized to assess the needs, gaps and strengths of the community as a whole.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL AGED YOUTH (Ages 10 - 14)

### What happens during this stage?

The period from preadolescence to early adolescence is often turbulent as young people are experiencing rapid physical, emotional, and social development. It is often confusing, sometimes frightening, and rarely easy.

- Children are becoming very aware of how they are perceived within their social network.
- Physical changes are increasingly evident as they mature from a child to a young adult.
- The management of these physical changes, as well as the accompanying hormonal changes, lead to a need for more than eight hours of sleep and more than average amounts of exercise and fresh air.
- Young teens begin to demonstrate more common sense in their thinking and apply principles of formal logic to their world.
- They begin to demand authenticity from the adult world and quickly identify those who are not supporters.
- Middle schoolers have a need to be noticed and cared about as a unique self.
- They need high levels of parental support.
- Young teens also need a peer group which further develops their sense of identity and self and there is an increased interest in spending time with other young adults of similar interests and cultural backgrounds.
- At 12 years and 15 years the areas of the brain that are still not receiving stimulation are shut down. This affects their ongoing development in critical skill areas.

*“I feel that if we could come together as a community and encourage young adults, and even pre-teens, to get involved in their community as apprentices/interns/skilled tradespersons, that their sense of self-worth and their ties to the community would strengthen... Everyone has something they do well, and as a community, we should be invested in helping our youth discover what it is that they love to do and do well, in order to bring out the best in them and, in turn, our community.”*

**Parent of Middle School  
Aged Student**

In Tompkins County, we have seen the largest youth population decline in the 10 - 14 year old population over the past ten years. According to the United States Census 2010, this age group has declined over 15% with a total population of 4,537 young people in Tompkins County.

### Community Well-being

Tompkins County has a variety of resources that service the needs of our 10 - 14 year old population. Though there are resources, there are gaps within our community, not only in resources but also in understanding our youthful counterparts.



In conversations surrounding this needs assessment we found that some adults within Tompkins County are unclear and leery of the middle school youth culture. While many adults are able to understand the physical and sometimes emotional changes of adolescence, the barriers built between the generations are more



visible than they may have been in the past. Our young people are technology natives, born years after the invention of the World Wide Web and cellular technology. Youth culture now thrives on social media and instant connections through the Internet. Gone are days of researching journals and books in the libraries as our youth counterparts can instantly research information via tablets, laptops and cell phones. Adolescents in 2011 look much different than many community members' own adolescent past.

It is clear that the use of technology is only growing as is the need for our young people to utilize this technology in their academic and personal

connections. However, technology is expensive and the burden of expensive technology is often shared across the community, through taxation (for school-purchased equipment) and personal expenses (for personal equipment). The expense of technology widens the gap among families as some families can afford new technology and others simply cannot.

There is an ever increasing demand to cut taxes and services while the cost of provision of even the basic services has increased. These cuts have had an impact on our community. There have been a variety of cuts in programs and services for youth, as well as increased fees for programs and services still being offered. In only the past year, two grant-funded middle school aged after school care programs, with a combined capacity of 205 youth, became inactive due to the loss of funding. Current registered capacity for middle school aged childcare in Tompkins County is 40 students. (Please note that afterschool programs that are operated by schools are not registered by New York State Office of Children and Family Services; according to the Child Care Data Report by the Child Development Council, currently there are three such locations within Tompkins County serving approximately 170 youth).

Middle school Age Child Care in Tompkins County		
Program Type	Number of Programs	Capacity
Registered	1	40
Unregistered	3	170

**Source:** Trends and Opportunities: Child Care Data Report Child Development Council 2011

\*\* Note that afterschool programs operated by the school are not regulated (registered) by New York State Office of Children and Family Services; there are three in Tompkins County, serving approximately 170 youth.

With the surge of information now readily available to our middle school aged population, impacts and stressors of community concerns are now trickling into their world. During focus group discussions with middle school students in Tompkins County, students expressed concern and anxious feelings on a variety of local topics including: a turbulent economy, hydrofracking, a changing environment, and increased gas prices.

While there is room for growth there are also resources in Tompkins County that parents of middle school aged youth identified. Three-hundred and fourteen parents responded to an electronic survey and indicated that they are most satisfied with the parks and recreation areas that are available for their young people.



While satisfied with parks and recreation areas, parents also indicated that there were programming gaps between younger middle school aged children and older middle school aged children. Youth aged 11 and 12 may still utilize traditional summer camps but are aging out of community based sports programs and can not participate in school sports until they are in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Conversely 13 and 14 year-olds (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders) can be involved in school sports but do not want to attend traditional summer camp programs. At this age they are still too young to stay at home and the only available options are expensive specialty camps. Another item mentioned by parents is a lack of opportunities for employment or employment training programs. As youth reached the age of 14 their desire for employment is strong and a natural progression but little is available. Most of the opportunities that exist are as CIT's (counselors-in-training) but this does not appeal to all youth and there are not enough of these slots for youth who would like to participate. There is also heavy competition for part-time employment due to the economy and the rise of the minimum wage. With the potential increase of the minimum wage again this will make it even harder for youth to find employment, especially without training.

During the school year, middle school youth are also faced with decreasing afterschool resources. Due to budget reductions over the past several years, afterschool activities and transportation to activities have decreased. The following table indicates the current level of transportation available for each school district during the afterschool time period.



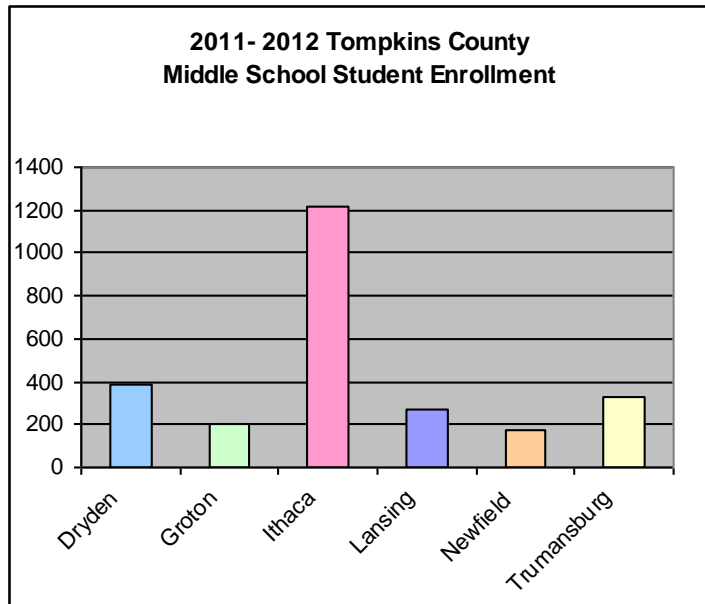
Middle school Late Bus Schedule 2012-13			
School District	Days of Operation	School Dismissal Time	Time of Departure for Late Bus
Dryden	Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs	2:24 PM	3:00 PM
Groton	Tues, Wed, Thurs	2:45 PM	4:15 PM
Ithaca – Boynton	Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs	3:25 PM	4:30 PM
Ithaca – Dewitt	Mon, Tues, Thurs	3:25 PM	4:30 PM
Lansing	Daily	2:11 PM	3:00 PM
Newfield	Mon, Tues, Wed, Thurs	3:00 PM	4:00 PM
Trumansburg	Tues, Thurs	2:45 PM	3:40 PM

Source: School Offices

### Educational Well-being

During the 2010-11 School Year there were 2,674 students enrolled in a Tompkins County public middle school. The Trumansburg School District includes 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in their middle school, while all others encompass 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

There is a gap between economically disadvantaged and not disadvantaged youth in meeting performance standards. Students viewed as economically disadvantaged are those who meet the eligibility requirements for free or reduced lunch. For a family of four during the 2011-12 school year, the monthly income eligibility for reduced lunch is less than \$2,984 and for free lunch is less than \$2,097. The following table graph indicates the gap in performance among students who are economically disadvantaged as compared to those who are not.

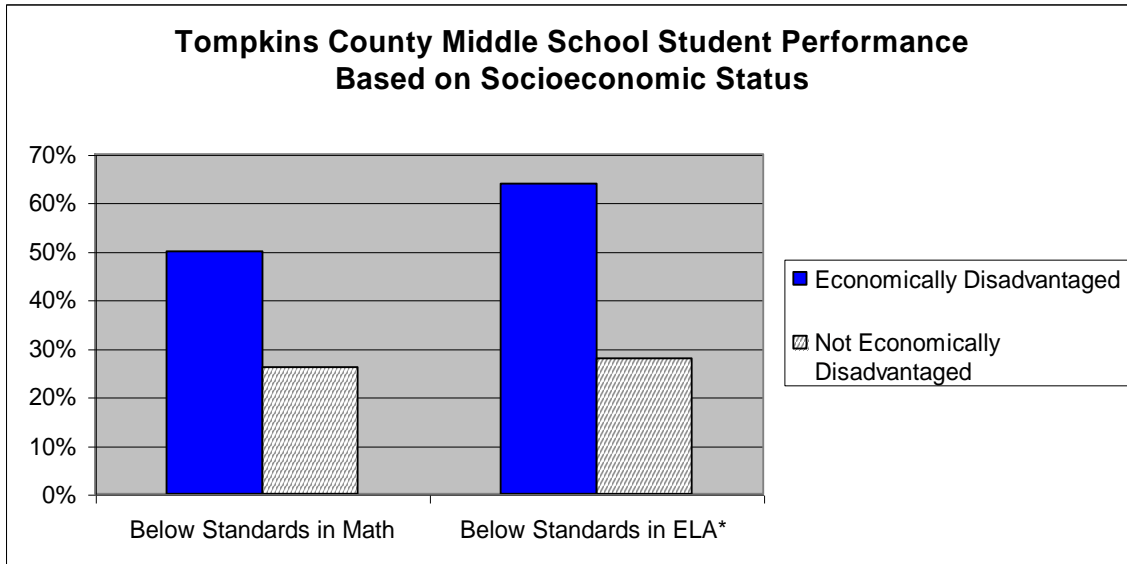


Source: Tompkins Seneca Tioga BOCES

## 2011-12 Tompkins County Middle School Assessment Scores (Grades 6 - 8)

Assessment Type	Number of Students	Not Meeting Standards		Meeting/Exceeding Standards	
		Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
English Language Arts	2,356	6%	32%	57%	6%
Math	2,357	7%	27%	37%	28%

*Source: New York State Department of Education School Report Cards*



*Source: New York State Department of Education School Report Cards*

Needs Assessment Committee members met individually with six of the seven Tompkins County middle school principals in January of 2012 to discuss the youth needs and resources for young people provided by their schools.

Principals shared that as school budgets have declined, programming during and after school has declined as well. To handle the decreasing budgets, staffing has been reduced, class sizes have grown, and the ability to provide peripheral programming outside of that necessary to meet state education requirements continue to be cut. In a time of increasing fiscal constraints, the principals indicated that the districts are seeing an increase in mental health needs of their students. With larger class sizes and less support staff, meeting the growing needs of students is becoming more difficult.

“There is just less smiling in the hallways (at school)”

**Tompkins County Middle School Principal**

Principals also indicated that their staffs are under extreme pressure and stress as they face increased mandates with decreased budgets. Many teachers feel they are no longer able to be as creative as in the past due to pressure created by the standardized state testing. With the new teacher performance reviews

being tied to the standardized test scores, this pressure will increase. The reduction of school budgets has also meant that many teachers are using personal finances to provide school supplies for their students. Not only are teachers facing challenges from the mandates, they also are faced with challenging behaviors by the students. Teachers feel that over the past few years, their focus has shifted from providing educational essentials, like reading and writing, to helping middle school youth with life essentials, such as proper grooming, due to families lacking the personal resources to provide for their student.



Although there are many needs faced by school districts, parents of middle school-aged youth have a strong passion to support their schools and believe that schools are meeting their needs. Parents of middle school aged youth who took the electronic survey in February of 2012 indicated that their number one priority for their student is for a school to have quality teachers and be a safe place. Eighty-nine percent of parents with youth aged 10 - 14, were satisfied with the safety of their schools while only sixty-seven percent indicated that they were satisfied with the quality of teaching in the schools.

As part of the 2010 Youth Development Survey (conducted among students in grades 6 - 12 or 7 - 12 depending on the district) middle school students shared the following:

<b>Tompkins County Middle School Students Indicated that at Their School:</b>	
Teachers notice and tell me when I do a good job	87%
I have a trusted adult who can help with most problems	70%
I often/almost always enjoy being in school	55%
In general, I feel safe at school	39%
School rules are fairly enforced	34%

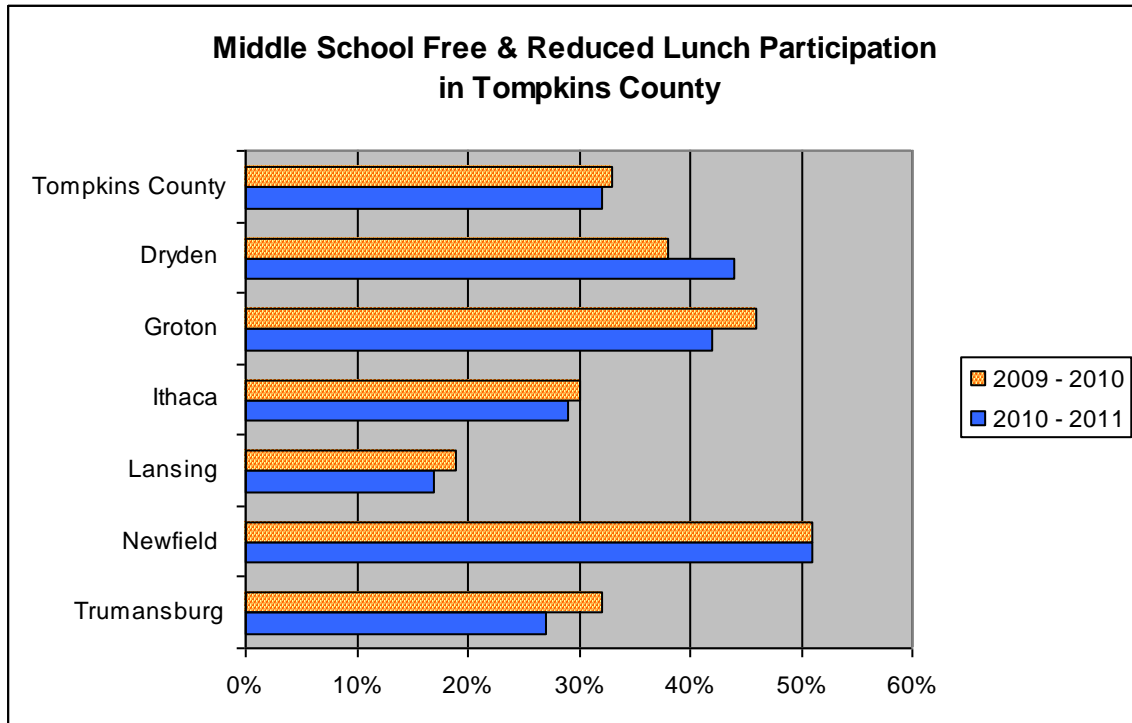
**Source:** Tompkins County Youth Development Survey 2010

Though 89% of parents feel school is a safe place only 39% of middle school students feel safe at school.

### **Family Well-being**

Young people aged 10 - 14 are experiencing rapid growth, both physically and emotionally. During a time of changes, many young people are searching for stability within their family unit. Many families report that they are facing

increased financial struggles. The total number of middle school aged youth who are receiving free and reduced lunches has decreased slightly from 2009 to 2011. Overall, 32% of Tompkins County families took advantage of free or reduced lunches for their middle school child during the 2010-11 school year.



**Source:** New York State Department of Education School Report Cards

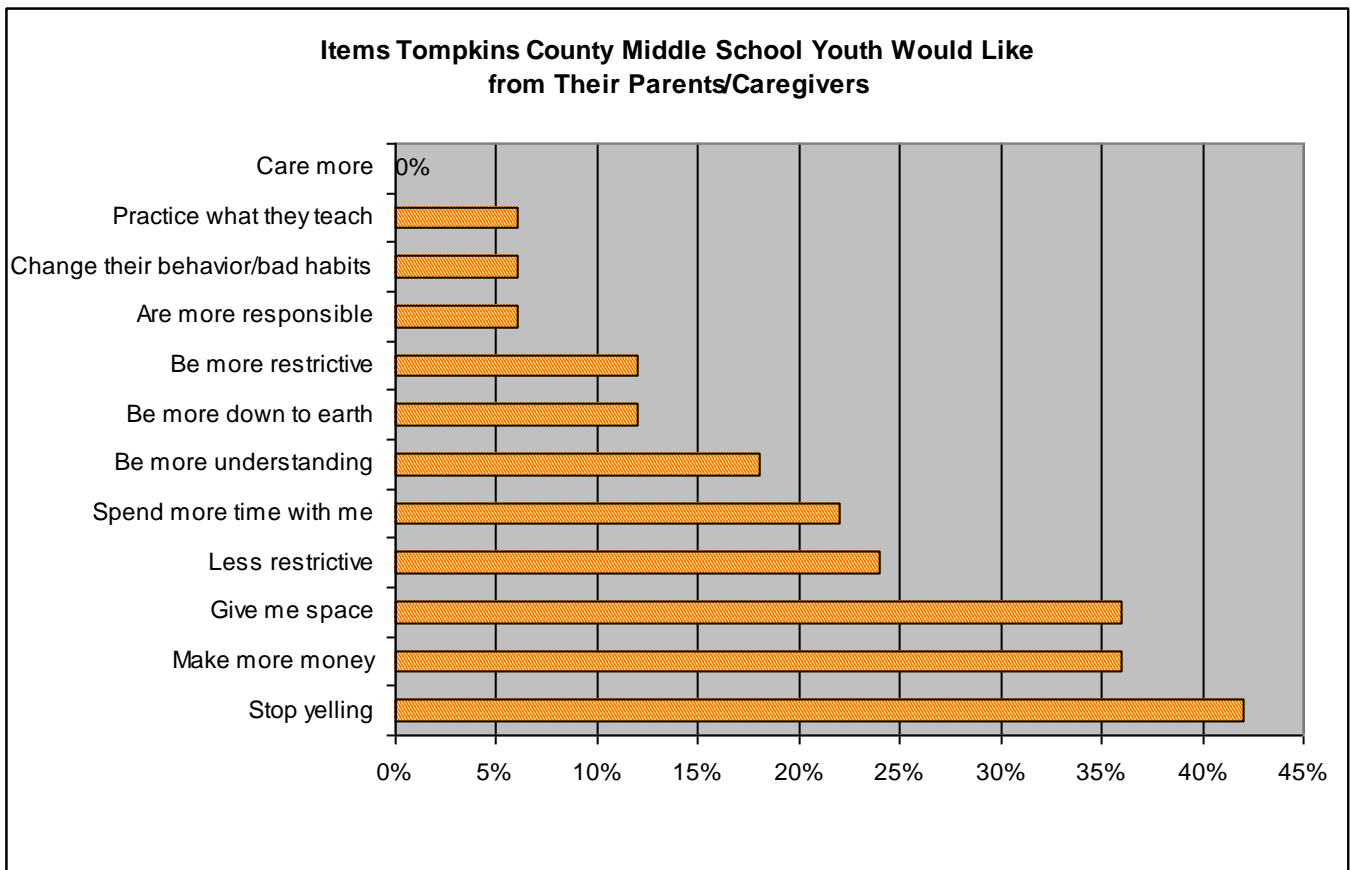
Families are also burdened financially with additional expenses beyond the essentials of food, shelter, and clothing. There is increasing pressure to pay for technology and cell phones; schools are requiring parents to bear the cost of more and more school supplies and athletic uniforms; extracurricular activities are increasing fees; and the cost of afterschool care has risen. At a time developmentally when this age group is becoming more social, parents have to make difficult choices. These include how many activities families can afford to let their middle schoolers participate in and how soon should they stop paying for afterschool care and let their middle schoolers stay at home alone.

Through the 2011 Independent Living Survey Project, a project which interviews homeless or transient youth within Tompkins County, survey respondents indicated that the break in family support often began during the middle school ages. There were a few youth who reported that family life became rough at early elementary ages. However, the majority indicated that between the ages of 12 - 14 the family stressors began to worsen and within two years the youth were looking for another living situation.

Tompkins County youth workers indicated that they have seen an increase in the stress middle school youth are taking on as a result of family concerns. Seventy

percent of the youth workers surveyed shared that they have seen an increase in struggles faced by families with youth ages 10 - 14 as compared with previous middle school cohorts. These struggles include split family units, foster care placement, child abuse, parental unemployment, parental substance abuse, sibling/parent incarceration, and familial economic instability. Middle school youth who were surveyed electronically and through focus groups shared that their families are experiencing increased stress. The number one concern was for their parents or caregivers to stop yelling.

The increased stress placed on the family unit also means that parents need further support. As indicated by the Tompkins County parents' survey, parents are reaching out first to their friends and social networks to find support. Other resources available to parents include: Cornell Cooperative Extension, Child Development Council, Employee Assistance Programming, substance abuse treatment support groups, parenting magazines, the Internet, television programming, social networking sites, faith-based groups and blogging. However, many parents indicated that they did not utilize any parenting resources nor were they aware of resources in the community.



**Source:** Tompkins County Youth Services Department Electronic Survey February 2012



## **Peer/Individual Well-being**

As young people age into the middle school they become more reliant on their peer group than they have ever been before. Youth aged 10 - 14 look beyond their family units to their peers to set expectations and to help further define their behavioral norms.

The culture of middle school aged youth has many distinct characteristics. Young people in this age group are going through significant emotional and physical changes. Once dependent on their family support, they begin to more fully identify with their peers and to seek out social interactions. Within the focus groups conducted by various agencies, it was clear that our middle school youth are reporting that they are unable to socialize with their peers due to an increase in homework as well as other pressures from home and school. With technology at their fingertips young people have found a way to access the social interactions they desire. However, this ability to access peers easily via technology has drawbacks such as increased bullying and limits their ability to develop social skills necessary to become successful.

*“We are strong and take on a lot of things, but we are strong.”*

*Current Tompkins  
County Middle School  
Aged Youth*

Many of the principals, parents, youth workers as well as young people shared that they felt that middle school aged youth need a chance to continue to be kids. This opportunity to be kids seems to be fading as families struggle financially; schools experience increased mandates; and supports, services, and quality programming which are affordable face funding cuts. Resources are needed to ensure that middle school youth have a safe space to explore their peer group and develop social skills.

## **Overall Assessment of Youth Aged 10 - 14**

As of the 2010 Census, there were 4,537 youth aged 10 - 14 in Tompkins County. This is an 18% decrease from the 2000 Census, a loss of 807 young people within the County.

Various conversations and electronic surveys were conducted to explore how the data are being seen by parents, young people and youth workers of those youth aged 10 - 14. Information was garnered through: electronic surveys of ninety-eight youth workers in Tompkins County whom provide services to youth aged 10 - 14, twenty-one youth aged 10 - 14, three-hundred and fourteen parents of Tompkins County youth aged 10 - 14. In addition to surveys conversations with six of the seven Tompkins County middle school principals and five focus groups of youth aged 10 - 14 were held.

Students, youth workers, principals and parents all agree that young people are experiencing increased bullying. In addition there are more platforms for bullying to occur. In the past, bullying behavior occurred primarily at school or during

face-to-face interactions among peers. However, with the influx of technology and changing social interactions, bullying may occur in the homes of youth, after the school day is over and after face to face interactions. This ability for bullying to occur in the homes of young people causes increased stress and anxiety in places that middle school youth had previously found to be safe havens.

#### *Strengths of Tompkins Youth aged 10 - 14*

During focus group sessions, many middle-school youth talked about their involvement in sports, school clubs and after school activities. At a time when the peer group is so important, having access to activities is a strength of our community. While there may be more activities that can help ease transitions, the current activities are important to the young people.

Youth workers and middle school youth felt that there has been growth in acceptance among young people. Over half of the youth workers surveyed felt that they have seen an increase of acceptance among middle school youth for peers with different backgrounds than their own.

Within the community there is a variety of resources that youth workers, parents and middle schoolers identified as being crucial to supporting young people. While transportation and timing of programming may be a barrier, there is a wide array of available resources such as parks, shopping areas, recreation, community libraries, and other youth-centered supportive environments.



Parents, principals, youth workers, and young people noted that there are several community resources and agencies available for assistance such as the Ithaca

Youth Bureau, Greater Ithaca Activities Center, Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Learning Web, Southside Community Center, community halls in rural areas, businesses that value young people such as Purity and Wegmans, as well as a variety of other community resources.

Supportive adults, as a positive protective factor, are a strength in Tompkins County. Through the 2010 Youth Development Survey, 70% of the middle school youth shared that they had a trusted adult in their lives.

#### *Concerns for Tompkins Youth Aged 10 - 14*

Of the 94 Youth Workers surveyed throughout Tompkins County over 45% saw bullying as an increased behavior among middle school students they serve.

Youth workers shared that they felt that current middle school students were more likely to bully others than middle school students five years ago. However, this was not the biggest increase in concern. Seventy-seven percent of youth workers responded that the number one increase has been the inappropriate use of technology by middle school students.

Percentage of Tompkins County Middle School Youth who reported in previous 30 days:	
Someone has said something hurtful to me at school	40%
Someone embarrassed, insulted, harassed or threatened me by an internet posting or text message	7%
I was physically bullied at school	6%

*Source: Tompkins County Youth Development Survey 2010*

The culture of middle school aged youth has many distinct characteristics. Young people in this age group are going through significant emotional and physical changes. Once dependent on their family for support, they begin to more fully identify with their peers and to seek out social interactions. Within the focus groups conducted by various agencies, it was clear that our middle school youth are reporting that they do not have enough time or opportunities to socialize with their peers due to an increase in homework as well as other pressures from home and school. With technology at their fingertips young people have found a way to access the social interactions they desire. This ability to easily access peers also has its drawbacks, such as increased bullying and limiting the youths ability to develop face to face social skills.

Many of the principals, parents, youth workers as well as young people shared that they felt that middle school aged youth need a chance to continue to be kids. This opportunity to be kids seems to be fading as families struggle financially; schools experience increased mandates; and supports, services, and quality programming which are affordable face cuts. Resources are needed to ensure that middle school youth have a safe space to explore their peer group and develop social skills.

During the middle school ages, young people begin to self identify with their peer group rather than their parents or school. It is important for the community to reach out to this group before young people become disconnected with community institutions. This may be done through providing a variety of activities and services meant to engage all types of youth.

#### *Potential Gaps for Tompkins Youth Aged 10 - 14*

Through our data collection process, we were able to determine that there is a slight gap in services for youth aged 11 - 12, who are in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Students at this age are too young to participate in school sports programs, yet often have aged out of other programming. During the after school hours,

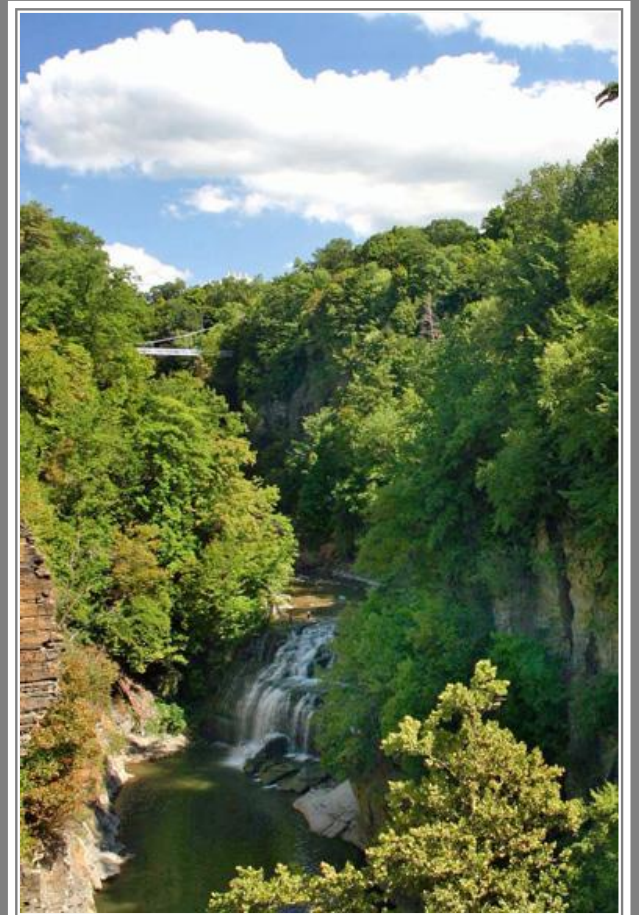
programming and clubs often focus on younger or older students and students in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade may be getting lost in the shuffle.

Parents of this age group are experiencing a gap in services as well. Many of the resources for parents are geared towards parents who have students with increased needs or are younger. The resources that are in the community are not as widely publicized, resulting in many parents not knowing of these activities.





# High School Youth Assessment, Ages 15 - 18





## **HOW TO READ THIS ASSESSMENT**

This report is organized in a variety of ways. Each age-group has its own section which is further divided into subgroups based on the Communities that Care<sup>®</sup> model. Each age-group section begins with relevant information about the stage of life and experiences of the age-group. The subgroups of community, education, family, and peer/individual share key data indicators on the wellness of our community. These data points are then highlighted by conversation and other information garnered from the assessment. The age section concludes with the identification of strengths, needs, and gaps for that age.

Following the age-specific sections, an overall assessment of Tompkins County is presented with cross-cutting themes garnered from the data and research. These themes provide insights on how the data can be utilized to assess the needs, gaps and strengths of the community as a whole.

## HIGH SCHOOL-AGED YOUTH (Ages 15 - 18)

### What happens during this stage?

The high school years are a continuation of the challenges and opportunities provided by early adolescence as youth have increased skills and their interests are extremely varied. However, the stakes during this stage are often higher than others as teenagers spend more and more time alone with their peers. This is a time of high vulnerability for substance abuse, sexual activity, gang activities, and avoidance of school-related activities. During this stage:

- Young people become educated in preparation for the adult world of jobs and responsibilities.
- Youth further identify with their peer group (whether good or bad) which further develops their sense of identity and self.
- Youth are able to develop mutual, respectful relationships with adults and peers.
- Although teenagers often depend more on their peer group, they continue to need parent support, adult mentors, and a positive peer group.
- The teenage brain is still being “wired.” The prefrontal cortex (the section of the brain that weighs outcomes, forms judgments, and controls impulses and emotions) is still being developed. Meanwhile, the part of the brain that seeks pleasure and reward (the nucleus acumens) is fully established in the teen brain.



### Community Well-being

High school-aged youth are more aware of their surroundings than ever before. Expanding outside of the home and peer group is key to students who are between the ages of 15 - 18. Community well-being can be measured in a variety of ways including neighborhood attachment, community organization/disorganization, transitions and mobility, norming of the community around behaviors (i.e. drug use, availability of drugs, etc.), and rewards for youth involvement in the community.

When 79 youth workers who serve high school students from Tompkins County responded to an electronic survey in Fall, 2011, they noted that over the past five years they have seen a general decrease in behaviors associated with

*“Young people need role models. They don’t know what the future could hold for them. They don’t see the endless possibilities. Without seeing, they can’t create goals. They are lost. They must be introduced to wonderful careers that would make a difference and give them a purpose in life.”*

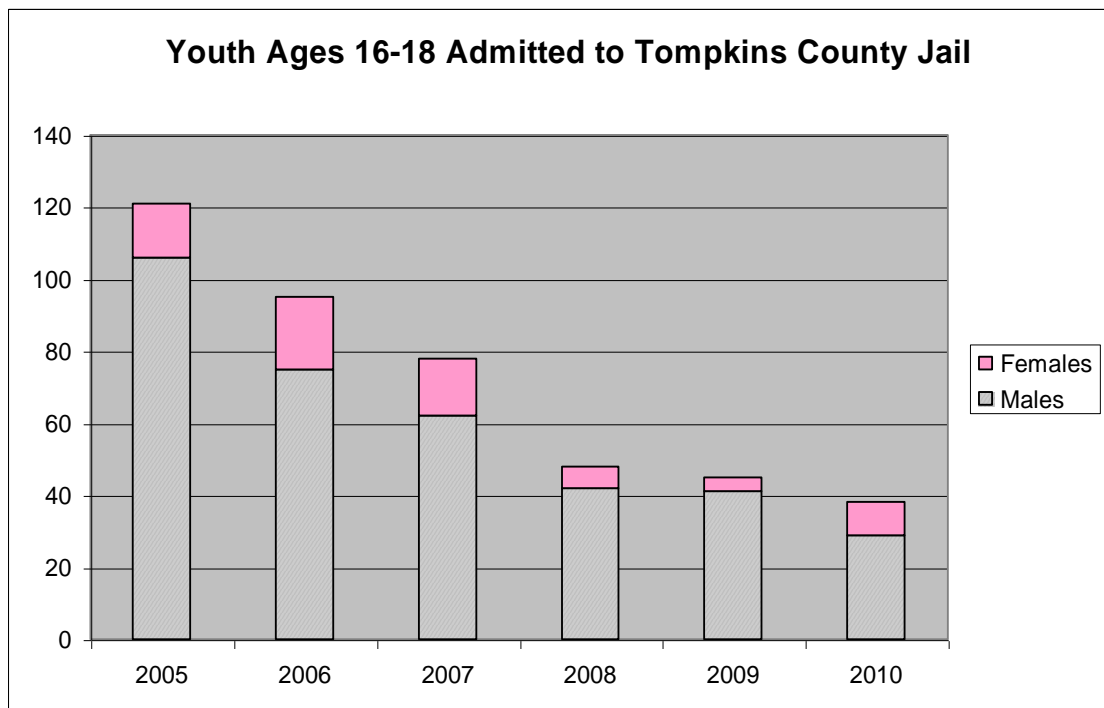
**Tompkins County High School  
Student**

gangs and organized criminal activity among students, a behavior that is often seen in communities in disarray.

Criminal activity among youth has been on a general decline from 2005 - 2011 as seen in the following charts indicating the number of youth being placed in PINS (Persons in Need of Supervision) and number of youth aged 16 - 18 admitted to the Tompkins County Jail. (See glossary for definition and criteria for PINS.)

Tompkins County Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) Referrals to Probation by Age and Year							
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Ages 13-15	102	114	92	79	102	96	105
Ages 16-17	22	45	33	32	52	33	44

**Source:** Tompkins County Probation Department



**Source:** Tompkins County Jail Statistics

The ability for students to find community engagement opportunities such as first-time employment or volunteer work is another measure of community well being. Of the 240 parents who responded to an electronic survey in February of 2012, over a third indicated that their child has had a hard time finding employment opportunities. During focus groups with over 640 high school aged youth, they also noted a lack of job opportunities.

**Parents and youth report youth ages 15 - 18 have difficulty in finding employment because:**

- There are jobs but not enough to meet the demand/lack of employment opportunities for the youth's age.
- Lack of transportation to the workplace or home.
- Online application processes make it difficult for teens to get an interview.
- Most places in the community are accepting applications but not hiring.
- Volunteer positions are filled and adults with degrees are filling typical positions.
- Families are unsure of where to get a centralized list of employment for youth.
- Homework from school is too much to handle with a job.
- Students are busy meeting college requirements by taking courses outside school hours, as well as doing volunteer work and employment internships required by schools.
- Lack of resources for students to receive employment assistance (résumé writing workshops, support on the job, etc.)

*Source: Needs Assessment Electronic Parent Survey, February 2012 & Youth Focus Groups in Tompkins County, Jan. - Mar. 2012*

As highlighted in the bi-annual Youth Development Survey among all Tompkins County schools, there was a slight decrease in job participation as well as a slight increase in volunteering between 2008 and 2010. However, as discussed above, there remains a need for more opportunities within our communities.

<b>Tompkins County High School Employment and Volunteering Experience</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>
In past year, has volunteered / done community service	57%	60%
In past year, spent 3+ hrs / week working at a paid job	30%	26%

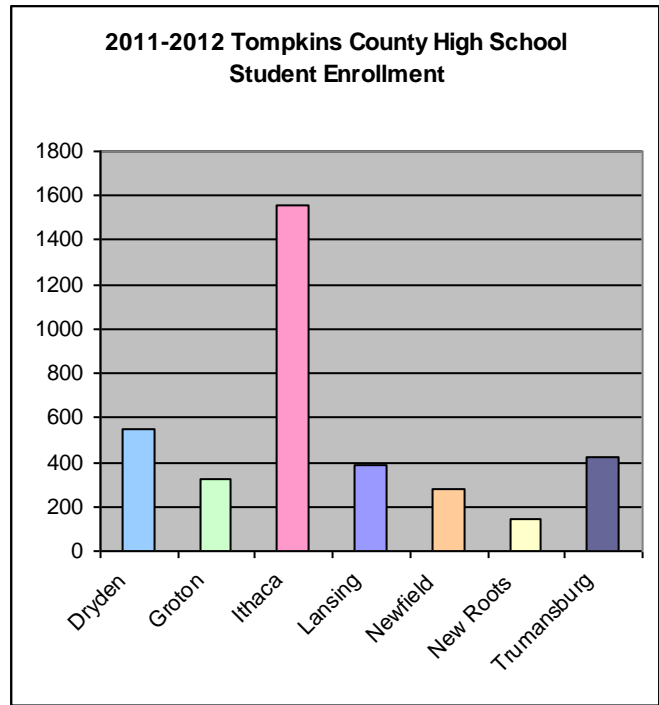
*Source: NYS Youth Development Survey, Tompkins County Results*

**Educational Well-Being**

During the 2011-12 school year there were 3,669 youth enrolled in a Tompkins County public high school (grades 9 - 12).

Ninety-six percent of the 259 parents of Tompkins County high school-aged youth responding through the February 2012 Needs Assessment Survey indicated that their number one priority for their young person is quality teaching within the schools.

Tompkins County and New York State have had continual improvement with regard to four-year graduation rates over the past four years. When evaluating graduation rates, the first step is to understand the definition of a cohort. A cohort is a group of students who enter into high school at the same time, (the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade) with an expectation to graduate in four years. The Graduation Class of 2011 also referred to as the 2007 Cohort, shares an overall graduation rate of 78%. As a result 78 out of every 100 students within Tompkins County graduated within four years; however it also states that one in five students did not graduate within the same time period. Statewide the overall graduation rate of the 2007 cohort is 74%.



Source: Tompkins Seneca Tioga BOCES & New Roots High School

Non-graduates include GED referrals, drop outs and students who are still enrolled in school after the projected four year graduation. Graduation rates plateau following five year outcomes, while non-graduate percentages continue to decline until year six. Students who are still enrolled fall dramatically by 74% from year four to year five while drop outs increase by 21% during the same timeframe.

Tompkins County Cohort Four-Year Outcomes					
Cohort (Graduation Year)	Cohort Count	Graduation Rate		Tompkins County IEP	Tompkins County Drop out, Still enrolled, GED transfer
		New York State	Tompkins County		
2007 (Class of 2011)	947	75%	78%	2%	20%
2006 (Class of 2010)	1,061	73%	80%	1%	18%
2005 (Class of 2009)	986	72%	78%	2%	20%
2004 (Class of 2008)	1,076	71%	75%	2%	22%
2003 (Class of 2007)	990	69%	78%	2%	21%
2002 (Class of 2006)	938	67%	77%	2%	22%



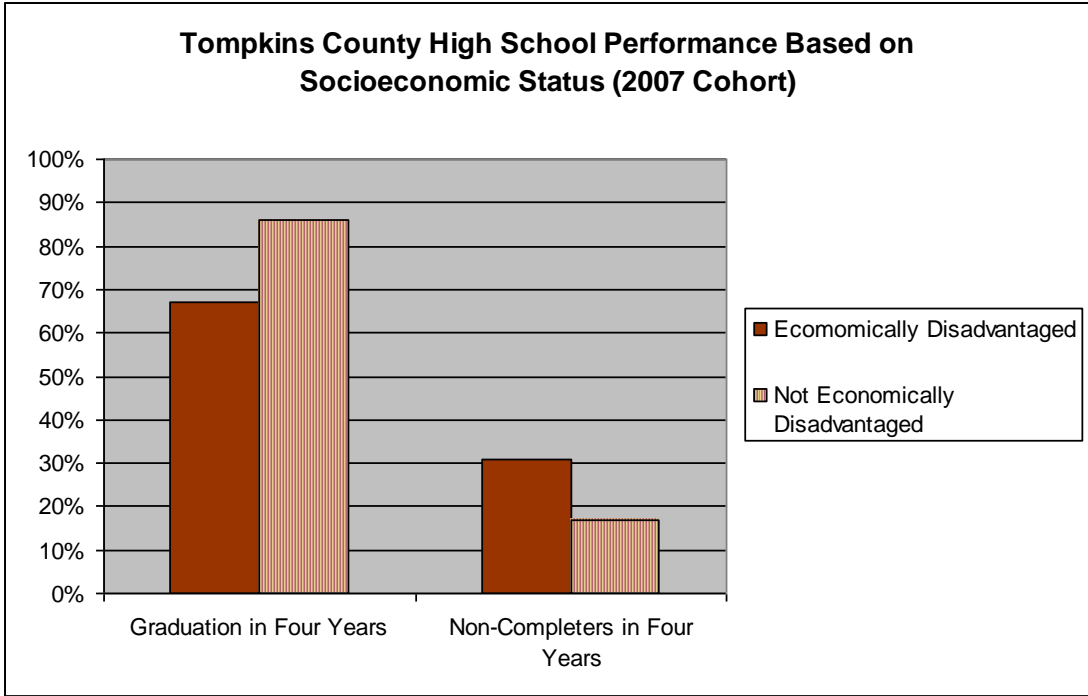
**Post-Secondary Plans of Tompkins County High School Completers\*  
2010-2011**

	4 yr. college	2 yr. college	Military	Employment	Other/ Unknown
Tompkins	50%	34%	2%	8%	6%
NYS	46%	32%	2%	6%	14%

\*High School Completers includes graduates as well as students who receive an individualized education program (IEP) or diploma who are not considered "graduates."

**Source:** NYS Department of Education School Report Cards and Total Cohort Graduation Rate and Enrollment Outcome Summary, District Data

As previously indicated there continues to be a gap between economically disadvantaged and not economically disadvantaged youth in meeting performance standards as they age. Students viewed as economically disadvantaged are those who meet the eligibility requirements for free or reduced lunch. For a family of four during the 2011-12 school year, the monthly income eligibility for reduced lunch is less than \$2,984 and for free lunch is less than \$2,097. The following graph indicates the gap in performance among students who are economically disadvantaged as compared to those who are not and their achievement of a high school diploma.



**Source:** NYS Department of Education School Report Cards

**Family Well-Being**

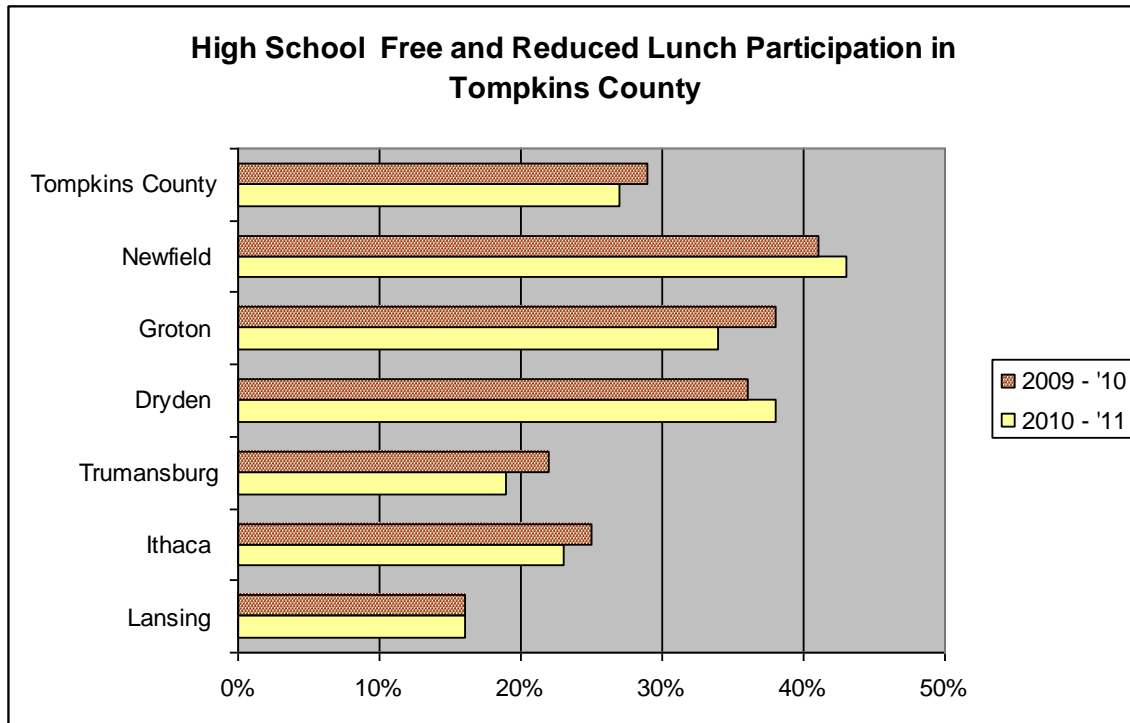
Although as youth progress into young adulthood they may become seemingly less reliant on their family, family well-being is still an important indicator for youth development and success as young adults. Like other age groups, the family's success is often crucial to the success of the young person.

The 79 youth workers electronically surveyed indicated that one need that has shown the biggest increase among youth aged 15-18 in the past five years was that they are experiencing challenges in their family life. This potential need for support from families for their young people as well as support for the families was indicated across all age-groupings.

Although the youth workers indicated that they have seen a change, a large percentage of the youth participants of the Youth Development Survey indicated that they still feel relatively close to their parents and can ask them for help.

<b>Tompkins County High School Students' Connections to Parents</b>	
Feel close to mother	79%
Feel close to father	68%
If had a personal problem could ask mom or dad for help	79%

*Source: 2010 Youth Development Survey, Tompkins County Results*



*Source: New York State Department of Education School Report Cards*

In general, youth aged 15 - 18 tend to participate less regularly than their younger counterparts in free and reduced lunch programs. This does not necessarily mean that families are better off financially as their young person ages, but may suggest that as the young person ages they may be less likely to take advantage of this program.

**Peer/Individual Well-being**

The peer support system is important to the development of our young people. Peer norms and values are further established among the high school aged student than with younger students. During this time, indicators of the well-being of the peer group include: social and anti-social behaviors, rebelliousness, engagement with friends in positive and problem behaviors.

Regarding Tompkins County youth aged 15 - 18, youth workers were split as to whether bullying behavior has increased or decreased. Those surveyed agreed that there have been changes to bullying behaviors due to the influx of technology, types of bullying behaviors, and other factors. However, through focus group discussions with high school youth and from the Youth Development Survey, it is clear that bullying is still occurring.

High School Students' Experience with Bullying	2008	2010
Has been verbally bullied in past month at school	60%	33%
Has been physically bullied in last month at school	9%	7%
In past 12 months, has attacked someone with the idea of seriously hurting them	9%	9%
In past month, has been cyberbullied	10%	10%

*Source: Youth Development Survey, Tompkins County Results*

According to the Communities that Care® model, youth who experience feelings of sadness for long periods of time and who have negative feelings about themselves and life in general are more likely to have problems in school and handling everyday pressures, experience other health issues, and use drugs. Over a quarter of Tompkins County high schoolers reported feeling sad or depressed most days during the previous year.

*“Bullying exists and is happening every day, all around us.”*

**Tompkins County High School Student**

High School Students' Self-Reported Depressive Symptoms	2008	2010
Sometimes I think that life is not worth it.	26%	27%
At times I think I am no good at all.	37%	35%
All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.	14%	15%
In past year, I felt sad or depressed most days.	27%	28%

*Source: Youth Development Survey, Tompkins County Results*

Participation in positive school and community activities helps young people develop skills and avoid risky behavior. Eighty-two percent of Tompkins County high school students said they participate in school-based clubs and activities and 76% participate in community-based clubs and activities (2010 Youth Development Survey). During focus groups, however, many high school youth reported that there are not enough things for them to do or places to hang out in the community.

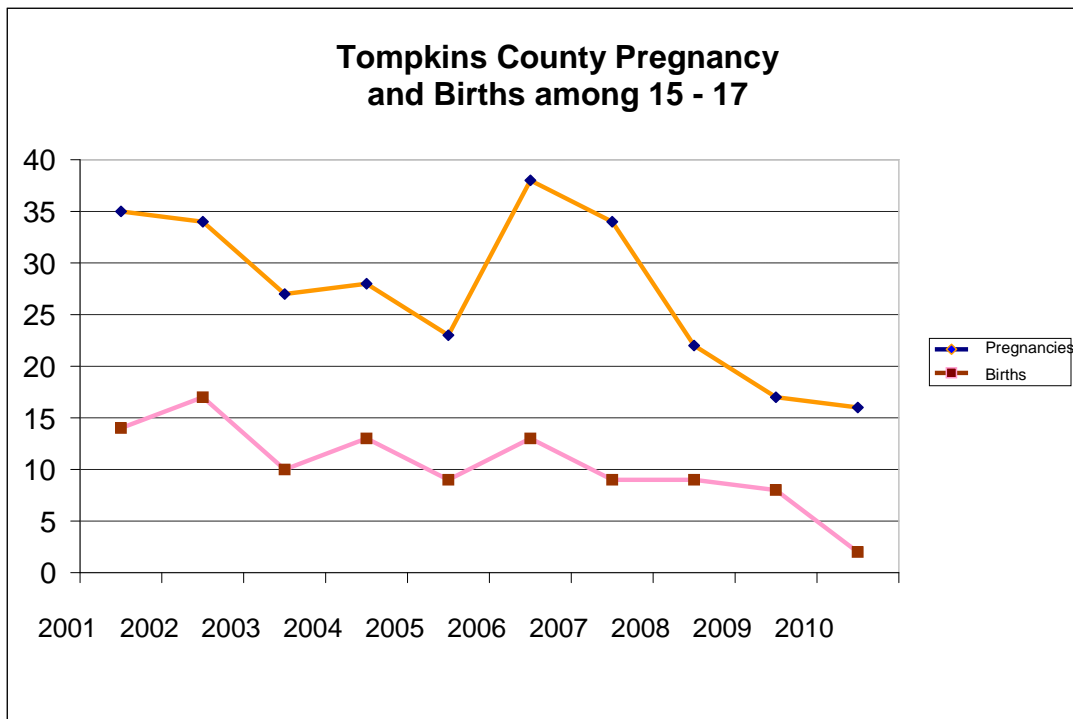
Youth substance use was identified as a problem by law enforcement officials and during focus groups, high school students themselves reported that there is too much drug and alcohol use among their peers, at school, and in the community. Some even went so far as to propose increasing law enforcement around drugs and getting rid of shops in Ithaca that sell drug paraphernalia. Tompkins County 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders have higher rates of alcohol and marijuana use than national peers.

Current (past 30 day) Substance Use of Tompkins High School Students	2008	2010
Alcohol	32%	31%
Marijuana	16%	17%
Cigarettes	8%	8%
Smokeless tobacco	6%	6%
Pharmaceuticals	7%	7%

Current Use – Tompkins & National 10 <sup>th</sup> & 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade Students (2010)	10 <sup>th</sup> Grade		12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	
	Tompkins	National	Tompkins	National
Alcohol	29.4%	28.9%	44.6%	41.2%
Marijuana	17.4%	16.7%	25.7%	21.4%

Source: Youth Development Survey, Tompkins County Results, Monitoring the Future Survey

Tompkins County teens, ages 15 - 17, have lower teen pregnancy and birth rates than teens in most other New York counties. In fact, the pregnancy rate for Tompkins County for this age group is the third lowest in the state and the birth rate is the second lowest.



Source: New York State Health Department Vital Statistics

## **Overall Assessment of Tompkins County Youth Ages 15 - 18**

The 2010 United States Census reports that there were 3,390 15 - 17 year olds in Tompkins County, a loss of approximately 200 young people from the 2000 Census. (We excluded 18 year olds from this count since so many are college students.)

### *Strengths of Tompkins County Youth Aged 15 - 18*

Students and parents indicated that there are many positives things happening within our schools. Youth are able to find caring teachers, have some good course options, and are able to participate in clubs and sports.

Within the community there is a variety of resources that parents and youth identified as being crucial to supporting young people. While transportation may be a barrier, there is a wide array of available resources such as parks, shopping areas, recreation, community libraries, and other youth-centered supportive environments. Many also identified the colleges which bring resources and advantages to the community including programs like TC3's College Now as well as unique learning opportunities such as special guest lecturer series.

Parents, youth workers, teachers and students also noted that there are several community resources and agencies available for assistance such as the Ithaca Youth Bureau, Greater Ithaca Activities Center, Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Learning Web, Southside Community Center, community halls in rural areas, businesses that value young people such as Purity and Wegmans, as well as a variety of other community resources.

Both youth workers and teachers noted that there seems to be fewer verbal putdowns occurring among students in this age-grouping than in the past.

### *Concerns for Tompkins County Youth Aged 15 - 18*

There are concerns that have been identified among our community. Through the Youth Development Survey in Tompkins County we know that use of drugs and alcohol is high among our students. We also know that this use is disruptive in our community and a large number of students wish use was not as prevalent or tolerated.

Many students and parents indicated that they have increasing concern about the future of their young people. There is increasing pressure on students to succeed by going to college. The pressure continues as parents and young people look to the future in hopes for not just good grades but the ability to afford a good college education.

Youth workers and parents are increasingly concerned about violence and bullying among students within Tompkins County. While not as large of a concern among the youth in focus groups, they too mentioned that it is occurring on a continual basis.



As Tompkins County is vast, there are concerns from parents, youth workers and students that services and resources are less available in rural communities. With budgets getting tighter, there has been a decrease in transportation which many stated was already inadequate for the rural communities. This serves as a barrier to youth to access centrally located services, jobs, shopping, and recreation.

Conversations among school staff as well as youth workers indicated that the budgetary cutbacks in recent years within schools and communities have reduced access to needed services and quality teachers/mentors. Not only do these groups feel that quality is not as high as in the past but also that the cutbacks have meant that the teachers and agency staff are not receiving the training they need and emerging topical training (e.g. synthetic drugs) is falling by the wayside. Students noted more practical concerns: school facilities, especially bathrooms, need attention.

#### *Gaps Identified for Tompkins County Youth Aged 15 - 18*

Youth from throughout the county indicated the need for community gathering places for youth to socialize and hang out in a positive environment. Although there may currently be locations for youth to interact and socialize, both youth and youth workers felt that there was a need for additional locations for safe interactions at times when current locations are not in operation. Also, in the rural areas there was a desire for additional community spaces for high school aged youth. A variety of venues were mentioned as were activities to be held there such as a bowling alley, places for dances, coffee shops, and more. The activity did not seem as important as having a space to socialize after school hours.

A second identified gap related to high school youth concerns technology. Adults are not keeping up with new technology. Parents, youth workers and teachers reported wanting more information on how to track and block youth's use of some technology such as cell phones. Technology was identified by youth workers who serve high school students as an increasing distraction for teens. Adults worry that youth may not be aware of potential consequences associated with their use of technology such as impacts on their reputation, potential consequences for posting and/or misrepresenting themselves on social media sites and/or via cell



phones, and the potential impact on college and future career choices.

A final gap concerns youth employment. Parents and teens agree that there is not enough coaching and training available to help young people get and be successful in first-time job experiences and there are not enough accessible jobs for teens.





# Beyond High School Youth Assessment, Ages 18 - 24



## **HOW TO READ THIS ASSESSMENT**

This report is organized in a variety of ways. Each age-group has its own section which is further divided into subgroups based on the Communities that Care<sup>®</sup> model. Each age-group section begins with relevant information about the stage of life and experiences of the age-group. The subgroups of community, education, family, and peer/individual share key data indicators on the wellness of our community. These data points are then highlighted by conversation and other information garnered from the assessment. The age section concludes with the identification of strengths, needs, and gaps for that age.

Following the age-specific sections, an overall assessment of Tompkins County is presented with cross-cutting themes garnered from the data and research. These themes provide insights on how the data can be utilized to assess the needs, gaps and strengths of the community as a whole.



## BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL AGED YOUTH (18 - 24)

### The 18 - 24 Year Old Population in Tompkins County

According to the 2010 United States Census, there are 26,624 youth aged 18 - 24 in Tompkins County. The total estimated of 2010 first and second year students from Cornell and Ithaca College enrolled in Ithaca based programs is 10,238. We are therefore assuming that 16,371 youth aged 18 - 24 live locally in Tompkins County and do not attend either major university. Due to variations in reporting, some information in this section may be noted for youth ages 19 - 24.

Previous needs assessments conducted by the Tompkins County Youth Services Department have not looked specifically at the needs of youth beyond age 20. With research showing that development does not end at 20, the Steering Committee felt it was important to expand our research beyond 20 to 24. As researcher Karen Pittman, from the Forum for Youth Investment noted:

Investments in early childhood are essential to preparing the next generation to succeed—but so too are investments in older youth and young adults...disproportionately caught in the crosshairs of unemployment, under-education and lack of health care. In general, we as a nation invest less in older youth, and the investments we make are more reactive and fragmented. What's more, the data we have about older youth is fragmented; it's harder to get a coherent picture of who this group is because they straddle multiple systems...We need, in short, to pull out the stops to be sure that we're not only investing early but also maintaining those investments to give all young people a chance to be ready for college, work and life by age 21—and successful by 26.

As a community we need to better understand the unique strengths and needs of this older population. In so doing, we will have learned a great deal about how to ensure they have the skills and are ready for “college, work and life”. And the greater awareness we have can lead us to anticipate the needs younger youth will have once they reach this age.

### What happens during this stage?

Later adolescence and young adulthood (18 - 24 years of age) is a crucial period with marked physical, emotional and intellectual changes, as well as changes in social roles, relationships and expectations. All of these are important for the development of the individual and provide the foundation for adulthood.

The MIT Center for Work, Family and Personal Life offers a comprehensive view of



development at this “almost adult” stage.

- The brain undergoes considerable growth and pruning, moving generally from back to front areas of the cerebral cortex.
- At the same time that young adults are experiencing new levels of sophistication in thinking and emotional regulation, their brains are undergoing changes in the areas associated with these functions.
- The most widely studied changes in young adulthood are in the prefrontal cortex, the area behind the forehead is associated with planning, problem-solving, and related tasks. At the same time, the prefrontal cortex communicates more fully and effectively with other parts of the brain, including those that are particularly associated with emotion and impulses, so that all areas of the brain can be better involved in planning and problem-solving.
- The cluster of functions that center in the prefrontal cortex is sometimes called the "executive suite," including calibration of risk and reward, problem-solving, prioritizing, thinking ahead, self-evaluation, long-term planning, and regulation of emotion. It is not that these tasks cannot be done before young adulthood, but rather that it takes less effort, and hence is more likely to happen in young adulthood.
- Fundamentally, what changes in these developmental shifts is not just what people think, but also what they think about. As development unfolds, one can "see" and think about more and more complex phenomena such as abstractions, relationships, and moral problems, offering more and more powerful thinking tools.



Acknowledging these findings, researchers have begun to define young adulthood as its own developmental period, referring to it as "emerging adulthood," "the frontier of adulthood," or, earlier, "the novice phase." Here at the start of the 21st century, researchers are creating a new field around young adulthood, just as, at the turn of the 20th century, researchers defined a new field around adolescence.

## **Community Well-being**

### *Internal Commitments in Work and Relationships*

Young adults form commitments to people, work organizations, communities, and families based on a self-awareness of their own role in making choices, rather than following along out of loyalty to the same values. As Robert Kegan, a noted researcher on adult learning at Harvard University has put it, the kinds of "meaning-making" that are characteristic of young adulthood are rather like using

automatic shift; those more characteristic of older adults are more like manual shift, where one has more understanding of and influence over the mechanisms behind one's decisions.

As mentioned above, many young adults are able to negotiate these developmental changes without marked incident. A more sobering caveat is that some people never fully achieve these milestones at all. Although they occur in young adulthood if all goes well, they are by no means automatic, and they can be delayed or severely limited by a number of circumstances, including mental illness; learning disabilities; frequent use of alcohol or other drugs; and abuse, neglect, deprivation, violence, and other traumas.

*“Employment rates for the nation’s teens and young adults are at post-World War II lows—a true labor market depression and points to the need for expanded employment and work based learning opportunities for young people, closer times between post-secondary education/training and the workplace, and expanded youth apprenticeships. The need has never been greater.”*

Director, Center for Labor  
Market Studies,  
Northeastern University

### *Employment*

Many young adults in Tompkins County want to work. In addition, many need to work in order to assist with ongoing family expenses. The combination of a rural community with two prestigious colleges as major employers creates a unique set of challenges within the community. Specifically, while the unemployment rate is low, the high numbers of workers with Bachelor’s degrees or higher (49% for Tompkins County) flood the job market with over-qualified workers. These workers, not able to secure a high skilled job, turn to the basic skilled jobs, becoming underemployed and underpaid. The domino continues to fall with the basic skilled workers being pushed out of the job market. Tompkins County is fortunate to have several youth employment programs which both teach skills and provide subsidized employment opportunities to youth and young adults.

During 2011 these included:

- Ithaca Youth Bureau Youth Employment Service helped prepare 24 youth aged 18 - 20 by providing them with career education and skills
- The Learning Web Community & Career Exploration & Apprenticeship Program (CCEAP) provided career exploration options and apprenticeships with an adult mentor for 76 youth in a field of their choice
- The Learning Web Youth Outreach Program provided apprenticeships and employment preparation for 152 older youth who were struggling to live independently
- Workforce New York engaged 309 young adults aged 18 - 24 in workforce preparation skill training
- There were 31 Tompkins County Trade Apprenticeships available

### *Troubling Behaviors*

Another measure of community well-being is the amount of young people that are experiencing difficulty resulting in arrest. Juvenile arrests in Tompkins County have remained relatively constant over the past 4 years with an average total of 85. However, this represents an increase of 40% compared to 2006 when only 61 youth over the age of 18 were arrested.

Tompkins County Juvenile Arrests/Criminal Activity					
Year	Total Arrests	Violent Crimes	Percentage of Total	Non-Violent Crimes	Percentage of Total
2006	61	20	33%	41	67%
2007	89	47	53%	42	47%
2008	88	31	35%	57	65%
2009	79	39	49%	40	51%
2010	82	39	48%	43	52%
2011	73	32	44%	41	56%

Breakdown of Violent Crimes							
Year	Murder	Forcible Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Motor Vehicle Theft
2006	0	0	1	5	0	14	0
2007	0	0	3	4	3	36	1
2008	0	0	1	6	6	18	0
2009	0	1	0	11	5	21	1
2010	0	3	1	5	8	22	0
2011	0	0	3	4	5	19	1

Arrests are made according to two categories. Violent crimes include murder, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny and motor vehicle theft. Non-violent crimes include possession of marijuana, weapons, criminal mischief, arson, and simple assault.

**Source:** New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) Uniform Crime/Incident-Based Reporting system as of 6/11

Two hundred and twenty-two young adults aged 18 - 24 were housed in the Tompkins County Jail during 2010. This represents 26% of the total 2010 jail population (843).

### *A Need for Affordable Housing for Young Adults*

One of the key developmental goals for this age group is to move away from home, either to school or on their own. The excessively high rents and the low rental vacancy rates in the City of Ithaca make it difficult for low income residents to compete for housing. The rental rates outside the City of Ithaca are not much better. Young people looking for affordable housing are often forced to rent outside of the city center and even the county. Sixty youth aged 18 - 24 received Section 8 housing support as head of household as of September 2012. Many more are currently on a wait list. In many cases, transportation is poor, thus restricting the ability for the young person to get to a job, access services, and/or



continue their education here in Tompkins County. Without these opportunities they are often unable to compete in the job market

### **Educational Well-being**



Preparing adolescents and young adults to lead productive and prosperous lives as adults is important. This means preparing them with a solid foundation in literacy, numeracy, and thinking skills for responsible citizenship, career development, and lifelong learning.

The majority of youth aged 18 and older in Tompkins County are doing very well as compared to New York State. Likewise, many of Tompkins County youth are prepared for their post high school lives because they received an advanced designation diploma that serves as an indicator for collegiate or career readiness. Beyond the high school degree, collegiate success proves to be difficult for youth who have struggled academically and/or those who have challenging home lives.

For other students attainment of any high school diploma is not possible. These students turn to the General Equivalency Diploma or GED. Overall, New York State (NYS) has a current five-year average of a GED pass rate of 60%. This is the lowest in the nation. Yet, NYS also has the highest access to the GED. It is the only state that offers the GED in English, Spanish, and French, and allows candidates to take the ESL (English as a Second Language) component. The state also leads the nation with the largest number of testing accommodations offered to candidates with disabilities.

Exact information on each student in Tompkins County who is taking the GED is not available. If we utilize the pass rate of New York State, it may be inferred that out of the average 76 Tompkins County youth who study for and sit the exam each year, only 42 youth can realistically be expected to pass the exam. This leaves 34 youth per year without a credible scenario to reach a productive adulthood.

The majority of GED passers report that their motivation for taking the test is to attend college and obtain a degree or certificate. However, for the majority of these young adults (and the adults they grow into), the root problem is not





lack of ability to handle academic subjects, but a mix of unmet personal needs and unsupportive environments at home and at school.

Likewise, a high school diploma does not indicate collegiate success. As indicated by the New York State Chancellor of Education, the Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation measures the minimal requirements for college readiness. A Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation is achieved by students passing with a score of 65 or above on required Regents exams plus Algebra, Geometry, and Algebra2/Trigonometry (or the Math B Exam for 2011 graduates only), an additional Regents Science Exam, and a Regents Foreign Language Exam. Using Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation as a possible measure of college preparedness, we find significant gaps in the readiness of Tompkins County students to be fully prepared for college.

Of the 82% of HS graduates from Tompkins County who plan on attending college, less than half have reached the established aspirational performance measures. This benchmark was initiated by the State Board of Regents as a direct consequence of high remedial rates in New York’s Colleges and is the current scale of college readiness.

2010 College Readiness of Tompkins County Students			
	Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation	High School Completers with College Plans	Difference
Tompkins County	42%	82%	40%

*Source: New York State Department of Education School Report Cards*

A second area of concern lies with the colleges themselves, as costs continue to rise, while graduation rates seem unsettling. Within the SUNY two-year and four-year institutions, two year and four year graduation rates are 13.8% and 48.5% respectively. Counting tuition, meals, and room and board even State Colleges are closing in on \$100,000 over four years.

**Family Well-being**

Parents vary in the extent to which they provide opportunities for young adults to receive the support and overcome the challenges that foster development. The role of parents in young adult development is only just beginning to be studied and appreciated, but it is clear that parents continue to have an important and evolving influence. The following information collected from high school students is still relevant to those youth aged 18 and over and serves as a reminder to the community just how important parents are to those who often bear little resemblance to their childhood selves.



As noted in the High School Section, as youth progress into young adulthood they may become seemingly less reliant on their family; family well-being is still an important indicator for youth development and success as young adults. Similar to other age-groups, the family's success is often crucial to the success of the young person. Of the 80 parents of post high school aged youth responding to the February 2012 Needs Assessment Electronic Survey, many indicated that finding support for their young adult was increasingly difficult within the community. Some pointed to the collegiate pressure placed on students as well as lack of employment opportunities for young people.

### *Community Supports for a Transient Population*

The Independent Living Survey (ILS) Project documents the scope and needs of youth homelessness in Tompkins County. A joint project between the Learning Web, Cornell University and the Tompkins County Youth Services Dept, the ILS was first undertaken in 2004, and repeated in 2007 and 2011 for the Tompkins County Continuum of Care. The 2011 project has released data that, similar to the two previous survey projects, continue to depict a population of young people who exhibit high levels of unhealthy, high-risk behaviors as well as a high degree of vulnerability and victimization in their daily lives. There were 225 youth participants in the 2011 ILS. Of these, half were aged 15 - 20 while the other half were 21 - 25 (The information which follows includes only this older group.) The report information can be found in the appendix.

According to the Independent Living Survey (ILS), amidst the typical issues faced during the transition to adulthood, homeless youth must also deal with crisis connected to their family of origin, the uncertainties and dangers of living without a home, and the responsibilities of supporting oneself. More so than most young adults, a source of sage counsel would be critical in learning how to grow into a healthy adult. Unfortunately, this is not the case. When asked "who do you turn to when you need emotional support or need someone to talk to":

- 19% of respondents indicated that they had no one to turn to. 11% of young people checked only this option, indicating that they never had anyone that they could turn to for support.
- Seventy percent cited friends and 40% cited significant others whom they turned to for support.
- Only 30% said that they turned to a family member (and the choice did not indicate whether or not the family member was an adult), while only 6% said they turned to an adult counselor, teacher, coach, etc.

*"I want to eventually attend college, get promoted at work, save enough money to get a car, also talk to my mom to make things better."*

**Independent Living Survey  
Respondent**

The majority of respondents of the ILS turn to peers for support, other young people with similar backgrounds living on their own with little positive and healthy experience or skills to share with a friend in need. It is therefore very important that youth involved in relationships find the kind of support necessary to keep these connections emotionally and physically healthy. The importance of having someone to talk to appears to be a significant issue especially for the younger respondents, almost 30% of whom identified this as one of their top needs. The desire to be heard is an important message for service providers. Including authentic youth voice in service delivery models will likely attract this population of youth and keep them engaged in programs

### **Overall Assessment of Tompkins County Youth Ages 18 - 24**

#### *Strengths of Tompkins County Youth Aged 18 - 24*

Staff from 9 programs responded electronically specifically on countywide youth/young adult programming for people aged 18 - 24. The youth workers responded with their thoughts and observations of the youth with whom they work as part of their programs. The survey asked respondents to indicate whether various youth/young adult strengths and troubling behaviors had increased, decreased, or stayed the same during the past 5 years.

The respondents felt that:

- Fewer youth/young adults are gang-affiliated than five years prior
- More young adults aged 18 - 24 have positive interactions with youth/young adults from other racial, cultural or economic backgrounds
- Youth are more able to identify personal interests and spend time pursuing these interests

#### *Concerns for Tompkins County Youth Aged 18 - 24*

Parents of youth aged 18 - 24 as well as youth workers were increasingly concerned that these young people are more likely to bully others, act aggressively or are verbally belligerent than youth of the same age cohort five years prior. They also believe that these young people are using more putdowns, hate language, or epithets based on race, sexual orientation, religion, or socio-economic status.

Another concern that was shared among youth workers, college personnel and parents of those 18 - 24 was that they feel that age group members are more likely to defy adult requests, rules, lose temper with adults and peers. In addition there is a lack of understanding of socially accepted standards such as waiting in line, not interrupting, etc.

When talking with youth about these concerning trends they shared that they felt that there is a lack of role models and modeling of behavior that is socially

appropriate. The conversations with the young people also shared that they are concerned that their peers come across as rude and are defiant; however, they also felt that without proper role models it becomes difficult for the appropriate behavior to be modeled.

An increasing concern that was highlighted previously for this age grouping in other community-wide assessments is the lack of employment opportunities. This lack of opportunity has also impacted the ability of these young adults to describe their career goals. Parents as well as youth workers both felt concern about the ability of youth aged 18 - 24 to describe education, life or career goals appropriate for their age.

A final concern highlighted in our research is the lack of familial support for some youth aged 18 - 24. Due to the economic downturn, many families are struggling to make ends meet and having another “adult” in the family to provide more financial support is crucial. This is having an impact on some youth working as opposed to attending school, as they are unable to attend school as well as hold a full time job to help support their families. In some situations youth who may have had previous support from parents or caregivers are now finding themselves on their own as the family unit cannot afford their “adult” child.

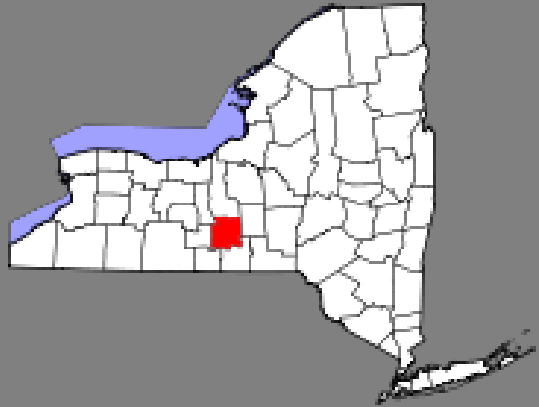
#### *Gaps Identified for Tompkins County Youth Aged 18 - 24*

A major gap identified by the Needs Assessment steering committee is the lack of information on youth aged 18 - 24. While this population is still in the developmental stages which will shape their adult life, they become more transient and are much more difficult to observe and research.

Like the high school aged youth, youth ages 18 - 24 identified the need for community gathering places for youth to socialize and hang out in a positive environment. Although there may currently be locations for youth to interact and socialize, both youth and youth workers felt that there was a need for additional places for safe interactions at times when current ones are not in operation.







# Cross Cutting Themes in Tompkins County





## Cross Cutting Themes

After analyzing the various research, data collected, and conversations it became clear that while some of the strengths, concerns and gaps in needs for youth are age-specific, there were many that crossed the boundaries of age-groupings. This final section includes themes that cut across the age-groupings.

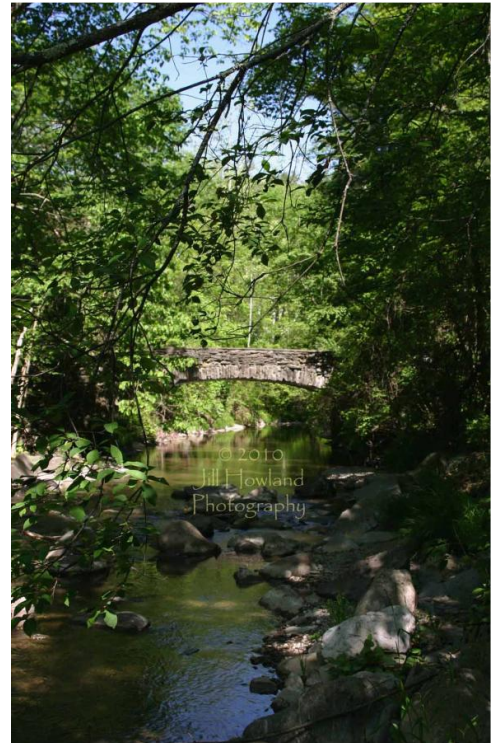
### Cross Cutting Themes: Strengths

#### *Parks & Recreation Areas*

As the local slogan says, "Ithaca is Gorges," and our youth and families in Tompkins County depend on the natural resources to thrive. There are 100+ gorges and waterfalls located within ten miles of downtown Ithaca. Along with the waterfalls, gorges and lakefront, the surrounding county offers access to 28,000 acres of public forestland for hiking, mountain biking and outdoor recreation. Home of four state parks and eight state forests and a variety of town and city parks, Tompkins County offers youth and their families many places to enjoy recreation. Over 90% of the 806 parents surveyed through the February 2012 Youth Needs Assessment Survey felt that the parks and recreation areas within Tompkins County are a priority for supporting their young people. Approximately 80% of these same parents felt that this priority was currently being met.

#### *Abundance of Youth Services and Resources in the Heart of Tompkins County*

Parents, youth workers, and students feel that there are many services in Tompkins County to support the needs of young people and their families. Over 88% of the parents surveyed through the needs assessment survey were able to identify one or more (most often more) resources that they count on to help meet their needs as they raise their child/children. A majority of the resources listed were geographically located in the middle of Tompkins County, in the City and Town of Ithaca.



Similarly, through the 2010 Youth Development Survey, Tompkins County young people say they have chances to participate in positive community activities and the community recognizes and encourages them to do their best. Nearly 80% of the youth surveyed indicated that Tompkins County was a community supportive of youth involvement and 40% believe that they were rewarded for being involved.

*Community Support of our School Districts and Teachers*

Parents and young people overwhelmingly agreed that they depend on their school districts to provide safe learning environments for young people. While there are improvements that can be made, over 87% of the parents who responded to the needs assessment survey indicated that they are generally pleased with their schools and the quality of instruction occurring. Many communities identify their schools as not only an academic center but also a hub for the community. This support from the community to the districts was seen by the passage of all of the proposed 2012-13 school budgets from throughout the county.

*Multiple Educational Opportunities*

Tompkins County is home to a variety of non-public educational institutions. Nearly 400 Tompkins County youth attend school in private institutions. The table below depicts these available schooling options.

<b>2010-11 Tompkins County Youth in Non-Public School Enrollment</b>	
<b>Private Institutions (20)</b>	<b>Tompkins Co</b>
Cascadilla Preparatory School	11
Children's Unit For Treatment & Evaluation	2
Cortland Christian Academy	26
Covenant Love Community School	28
Elizabeth Ann Clune Montessori School Of Ithaca	152
Hillside Children's Center School Enrollment	4
Hillside Children's Center-Varick Campus	7
Holy Family Middle School	1
Immaculate Conception School	55
Ithaca Waldorf School	34
Manlius-Pebble Hill School	2
North Spencer Christian Academy	18
Notre Dame High School	2
Pathfinder Village	1
Peachtown Elementary School	3
Saint Joseph's Villa Of Rochester	1
Saint Mary's School	13
Twin Tiers Christian Academy	12
Victory Christian Academy	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>

In Tompkins County, Elizabeth Ann Clune Montessori School of Ithaca had the largest enrollment with forty percent of all private school enrollees enrolled for the 2010-11 school year.

The number of home schooled students is unknown for a variety of reasons. TST BOCES can provide a glimpse of the total number within Tompkins County which is just about 400 students; however, this number includes Ithaca, Lansing, Dryden, Groton, and *South Seneca* school districts. Newfield and Trumansburg do not use the TST BOCES home schooling service and are not included in this count.

Two additional educational institutions in Tompkins County that serve youth who are residents of not only Tompkins County but surrounding communities are New Roots Charter School and William George Agency for Children's Services. During the 2010 - 2011 academic year New Roots had 115 students enrolled in their school while William George had 195 enrollees.

### **Cross Cutting Themes: Concerns**

#### *Lack of Employment Opportunities for Youth*

According to the Workforce Investment Board of Tompkins County during the middle of the last decade, the national teenage unemployment rate ranged between 14 - 18%. Then the economic downturn occurred and teen unemployment began to rise, peaking at 27% in October, 2009. Since then, the recovery has created more than 1 million new jobs for adults and brought the unemployment rate down to 8.2%. However, there's been no recovery for teens. The national average unemployment rate for teens has remained above 20%.

*“Young people need role models. They don't know what the future could hold for them. They don't see the endless possibilities. Without seeing, they can't create goals. They are lost. They must be introduced to wonderful careers that would make a difference and give them a purpose in life.”*

The current fiscal climate has cost teens valuable employment opportunities, which has significant impacts on many areas of our society. For example, many young people are forced to live longer with parents after they graduate from high school and even college.

**Tompkins County High School Student**

There has been a decline in employment opportunities available for youth following the economic downturn of 2008 here in Tompkins County. With more than 53% of Tompkins County adults ages 25 - 64 holding a bachelor's degree or higher and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistic of current unemployment at 5.9%, many typical “youth” jobs, such as camp counselors, customer service representatives, and retail service providers, are now being held by high-skilled workers. The shift of high-skilled and professionally trained workers taking over first time employment opportunities has left many youth continuing to search for employment opportunities.

Although there is concern about the number of available employment opportunities for youth, there are still services available to help youth find



subsidized employment. A few of these providers include the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth programs, the Youth Employment Services (YES) program of the Ithaca Youth Bureau and municipal subsidized employment through the Municipal Youth Services System. While these programs and a few others are still operational, there has been a general decrease in Tompkins County of over 50% since 2008 in subsidized employment opportunities and programming to teach young people how to prepare for a successful work experience.

A curious result of the unemployment rates among teens is that nationally fewer teens are getting their driver's licenses. Nationally, the Department of Transportation has noted that the number of 18 year-olds earning a driver's license has dropped from 80% to 65% since the 1980s. This is no doubt due to the lack of jobs and the requirement to pay for insurance, car maintenance, and fuel, thus resulting in another barrier to employment – lack of transportation. In addition, the cost for an individual license has increased over time.

#### *Lack of Support for Parents/Caregivers*

The diversity of the family has increased over the past few decades and has led scholars to examine if and how different family forms are associated with different outcomes among the young people. Research has found that each type of family (e.g., married with kids, single-parent with young children, etc.) is associated with different economic, child, and health outcomes. Sara McLanahan and Lynne Casper (2001) explain that past research has found that:

Children who grow up with only one of their parents...are more likely to drop out of high school, to become teenage and single mothers, and to have trouble finding and keeping a steady job in young adulthood, even after adjusting for differences in parents' socioeconomic background.

They clarify, however, that "about half of the disadvantages associated with single parenthood are due to lower incomes [of single parents]. Most of the rest are due to too little parental involvement and supervision and too much residential mobility."

The family unit within Tompkins County has changed. According to the 2011 Trends and Opportunities Child Care Data Report of the Child Development Council, "More and more, we are hearing from households who call for referrals that they live in a non-traditional household. Co-parenting relationships, grandparent caregivers, and two families sharing a household, multiple births, and many more configurations..." Single parent families are on the rise as are multiple families living in one household. According to the 2010 U.S Census, 12.3% of families are spearheaded by a single parent which is a 3% increase from Census 2000. The American Community Survey of 2006-09, shows that over 1,000 grandparents are currently living with their grandchildren under age

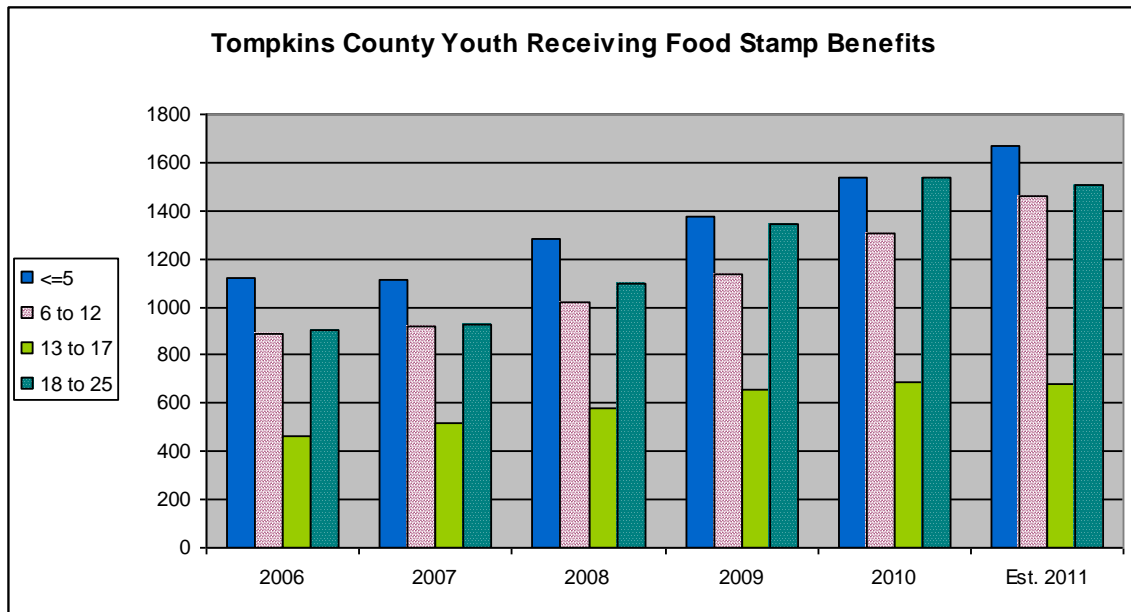
18 and 32% are the primary caregivers for these children. This change in family structure presents new challenges as well as opportunities.

*Financial Hardships Impact Families and Children*

According to the 2011 American Community Survey, within Tompkins County 20.2% of children and youth (ages 0 - 18) are living in poverty. This means that many of our children and families are hungry and lacking the basic necessities. Even with free and reduced lunch programs provided by our schools many youth have empty stomachs. Youth workers, nurses and day care providers shared that some children are exhibiting food-hoarding behaviors such as hiding foods and overindulgence of foods provided. Often food hoarding is directly connected to significant neglect or stress that the child has experienced in consistently having their basic needs for life sustaining food denied or inadequately met. As a result, the child is forced to become prematurely self-reliant in meeting his/her own basic needs.

Families' diminished finances often result in limited access to healthy foods and nutrition education which contribute to poor eating habits, obesity, and diet-related disease like diabetes and poor dental health. Financial stress also results in insufficient resources for health insurance, medications, dental care, eye care as well as primary care. Another impact of financial stress is the increase in substance use and abuse.

There has been an overall increase in the amount of young people receiving Food Stamp benefits, as shown in the chart below.



Source: Tompkins County Department of Social Services

Increasing transportation costs, lack of reliable transportation, and limited public transit make it hard to get to doctor appointments, school functions, and positive afterschool programs. Often a missed appointment results in an office fee that may not be able to be paid, leading to the patient being dropped which further delays check-ups and preventative care.

Families faced with difficult financial situations often find themselves in conflict. During the 2010 Youth Development survey over 40% of the participants identified their families as a family in conflict.

### *Bullying*

Here in Tompkins County youth workers report that they believe that bullying is occurring at a slightly higher rate than it had in the past. This theme emerged across all age groupings. Youth, depending on age, also agree that bullying occurs; however, as youth get older, they report less bullying behavior. Parents surveyed in the Parent Survey do believe bullying exists among all age groups; however, very few parents believe their child may be a bully.

Bullying among young people is a form of youth violence. Although definitions of bullying vary, most agree that bullying includes:

- Attack or intimidation with the intention to cause fear, distress, or harm that is either physical (hitting, punching), verbal (name calling, teasing), or psychological/relational (rumors, social exclusion);
- A real or perceived imbalance of power between the bully and the victim; and
- Repeated attacks or intimidation between the bully and same victim over time.

*“Times are changing. Don’t try to shelter us too much. Let us make our own decisions and learn from our mistakes.”*

**Tompkins County  
High School Student**

Bullying among young people can occur in person or through technology (electronic aggression, or cyberbullying). Electronic aggression is bullying that occurs through social media, e-mail, a chat room, instant messaging, a website, text messaging, or videos or pictures posted on websites or sent through cell phones.

In a 2009 National Youth Risk and Behavior survey, about 20% of high school students reported being bullied on school property in the 12 months preceding the survey. The rates of bullying as identified in the 2010 Tompkins County Youth Development Survey are listed below.

Tompkins Students' Experience with Bullying Behaviors		
In the last month:	Middle school	High School
Someone has said something hurtful to me at school	40%	33%
Someone embarrassed, insulted, harassed or threatened me by an internet posting or text message	7%	10%
I was physically bullied at school	6%	7%

*Source: Youth Development Survey, Tompkins County Results, 2010*

### *Substance Use among Youth*

The information below outlines the percentages of Tompkins County Middle and High School students who indicated that they used the indicated substance within 30 days prior to completing the survey. (The Trumansburg and Groton school districts did not survey their sixth grade students.)

The 2010 Youth Development Survey indicated that alcohol continues to be the most widely used drug among Tompkins County youth. Most students (80%) did not drink alcohol in the 30 days prior to taking the survey. However, 55% of students in grades 6 - 12 have had a full alcoholic drink at least once in their lives, up from 49% in 2008. Comparisons with national peers show higher lifetime and 30-day use for local students in grades 10 and 12. Marijuana is the next most commonly used drug by Tompkins County youth. By 12th grade, 45% of students have tried marijuana at least once and 26% are current users (within the past 30 days). Both of these rates are higher than in 2008 when 34% had tried marijuana and 21% were current users. Current use rates by Tompkins youth exceed national rates for both 10th and 12th grades.

Tobacco use by youth in Tompkins County is lower than that of national peers. Use rates for both cigarettes and smokeless tobacco decreased for most grades since 2008. Overall, 6% of students reported using smokeless tobacco and 8% reported using cigarettes in the past 30 days.

Pharmaceuticals (non-prescription cough and cold medicine and use of any of these prescription drugs without a doctor's order: pain killers, tranquilizers, sedatives, stimulants) are being misused at increasing rates across the country and Tompkins County shows evidence of this trend. The most common type used by local students is prescription pain killers, including dangerous, addictive opioids. While rates may appear low (2% of middle and 6% of high schoolers misused pain killers in the past 30 days), these students have significantly higher use of other substances as well. Misused pain killers are sometimes mixed with alcohol, a dangerous combination. High school students who reported using pharmaceuticals in the past 30 days have double the alcohol use rates (60%) and triple the binge drinking rates (57%) of other high schoolers. Most students who reported pharmaceutical use said they got these drugs for free, often taking them from their home or a friend's or relative's home without asking.

Use rates of other drugs are low among Tompkins County middle & high school students. 30-day use rates of heroin, cocaine, meth, ecstasy, and psychedelics are all below 1%. Inhalant use, more common in younger children due to easy access, peaks at 3% in 9th grade and drops to less than 1% in 12th grade. The survey will be administered in Fall, 2012.

<b>Tompkins County Middle School 30 Day Substance Use Rates by Grade</b>						
<b>Alcohol</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>7</b>		<b>8</b>	
	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>
Tompkins County	4.0%	2.1%	7.2%	4.0%	14.1%	9.5%
National	N/A				15.9%	13.8%
<b>Cigarettes</b>						
Tompkins County	0.8%	0.3%	1.1%	0.9%	2.9%	3.2%
National	N/A				6.8%	7.1%
<b>Smokeless Tobacco</b>						
Tompkins County	0.2%	0.3%	1.1%	0.9%	3.3%	2.1%
National	N/A				3.5%	4.1%
<b>Marijuana</b>						
County	0.1%	0.8%	1.2%	1.3%	4.3%	4.6%
National	N/A				5.8%	8.0%
<b>Pharmaceuticals*</b>						
County	3.1%	1.0%	4.2%	3.0%	5.4%	3.5%

<b>Tompkins County High School 30 Day Substance Use Rates by Grade</b>								
<b>Alcohol</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>10</b>		<b>11</b>		<b>12</b>	
	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>
Tompkins County	19.0%	18.6%	32.6%	29.4%	39.2%	33.9%	42.5%	44.6%
National	N/A		28.8%	28.9%	N/A		43.1%	41.2%
<b>Cigarettes</b>								
Tompkins County	6.9%	5.8%	8.6%	7.4%	10.7%	10.4%	7.5%	10.5%
National	N/A		12.3%	13.6%	N/A		20.4%	19.2%
<b>Smokeless Tobacco</b>								
Tompkins County	3.4%	3.5%	3.9%	5.0%	7.1%	10.0%	6.7%	6.0%
National	N/A		5.0%	7.5%	N/A		6.5%	8.5%
<b>Marijuana</b>								
Tompkins County	10.1%	9.4%	16.4%	17.4%	20.3%	18.8%	20.5%	25.7%
National	N/A		13.8%	16.7%	N/A		19.4%	21.4%
<b>Pharmaceuticals*</b>								
Tompkins County	6.2%	5.0%	6.7%	7.0%	8.9%	8.2%	7.8%	8.7%

\*Any use of prescription pain killer, stimulant, sedative or tranquilizer without a doctor's order or OTC cough or cold medicine to get high

**Source:** "County" data are from the Youth Development Survey, given in fall, 2008 & 2010. 82% participation rate, over 4400 students surveyed each time.

**Source:** "National" data are from the Monitoring the Future Survey



### *Budgetary Reductions in School Districts*

The public school districts have faced tough economic times. Overall the districts have decreased spending on instructional expenditures for general education by \$127 per student from 2008 to 2010, while expenditures on a state and federal level have increased. Instructional expenditures for general education are K-12 expenditures for classroom instruction (excluding special education) plus a proration of building-level administrative and instructional support expenditures. These expenditures include amounts for instruction of students with disabilities in a general education setting. District expenditures, such as transportation, debt service, and district-wide administration, are not included.

<b>District Instructional Expenditures per Student</b>						
<b>District</b>	<b>General Education</b>			<b>Special Education</b>		
	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Dryden	\$8,231	\$8,262	+31	\$22,861	\$22,833	-28
Groton	\$8,723	\$8,511	-212	\$21,480	\$17,038	-4,442
Ithaca	\$10,129	\$9,581	-903	\$18,739	\$19,986	+1,247
Lansing	\$9,825	\$10,728	+903	\$20,378	\$19,707	-671
Newfield	\$7,495	\$7,334	-161	\$16,405	\$16,372	-33
Trumansburg	\$9,046	\$9,505	+459	\$13,916	\$15,592	+ 1,676
Tompkins County	\$9,336	\$9,209	-127	\$18,958	\$19,334	+376
New York State	\$10,874	\$11,105	+231	\$26,551	\$26,888	+337

*Source: New York State Department of Education School Report Cards*

Another result of the decreasing school budgets is a decrease in the number of teachers within Tompkins County. The number of teachers began to decline in 2008 - 09; over the last three years the County has lost 55 teachers or 4.2%.

<b>Number of K-12 Teachers within Tompkins County</b>				
<b>2007-08</b>	<b>2008-09</b>	<b>2009-10</b>	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>Total Four Year Reduction</b>
1,100	1,115	1,091	1,068	-55

*Source: New York State Department of Education School Report Cards*

### *Increasing Mental Health Needs*

Behavioral issues ranging from a lack of social skills, poor manners, and bullying were noted in the various youth worker and school staff conversations. In a nurses' forum conducted in conjunction with the Community Foundation of Tompkins County, the school nurses and licensed nurse practitioners from throughout the county reported that they were seeing increases in anxiety, poor impulse control, self-injuring behaviors (cutting), and acting out.

Nurses at all levels and settings described increased prevalence in diagnoses of ADHD, Reactive Attachment Disorders, Oppositional Defiance Disorders, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Bi-Polar, Post Traumatic Stress, and eating disorders. The

nurses felt that they were also seeing substantial increases in the use of medications in the treatment of these conditions.

More than one in four high school and middle school youth reported in the 2010 Youth Development Survey that they are feeling sad or depressed most days during the past year. These youth reported higher use rates for alcohol, marijuana and pain killers than non-depressed students. They also like school less and are less successful academically. Fewer youth say they have a parent or trusted school adult they could ask for help with their problems than those surveyed in 2008.

Self-Reported Mental Health of Tompkins County Middle and High School Students	
All in all, I am inclined to think I am a failure.	14%
Sometimes I think that life is not worth it.	23%
In the past year, I felt depressed or sad on <u>most</u> days.	27

*Source: Youth Development Survey, Tompkins County Results, 2010*

*Preparation of Youth for Collegiate and Employment Success*

The Board of Regents has adopted more rigorous graduation requirements and is phasing out the Local Diploma option for general education. Students in the class of 2012 are required to pass five Regents exams (in mathematics, science, English, U.S. History, and Global History) at a score of 65 or better and earn all of their required course credits to receive a diploma.

In 2011, local diploma, Individualized Education Program (IEP), drop outs, students still enrolled, and GED transfer students account for 28% of the 2007 Cohort or 262 students. Tompkins County residents who do not graduate from high school have a 355% higher rate of living in poverty than those who graduate. For females the increase in chance of living in poverty is nearly 600% or over 52% of women that do not graduate from high school will live in poverty.

Tompkins County Poverty Rate for Adults (25+) as Related to Education			
Degree Achieved	Poverty Rate	Males	Females
Less than high school diploma	43%	30%	53%
High school diploma or equivalent	12%	15%	9%
Some college or associates degree	10%	7%	12%
Bachelors or higher	10%	9%	10%

*Source: US Census 2010*

There has been a lot of research that attempts to determine “college readiness” for high school graduates. According to the New York State Department of Education, one measure that may be used is the attainment of a Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation. Using this, we discover significant gaps between those planning to attend college and those who are deemed “ready”.

After looking at two different reports the numbers of students receiving an Advanced Designation diploma within Tompkins County are relatively consistent. Forty-eight percent of students who graduated and 39% of all students from the 2007 Cohort, class of 2011, received Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation. Currently there is no mechanism in place to follow students beyond high school and monitor their attainment of collegiate degrees.

**Cross Cutting Themes: Gaps**

*Availability of Care (Daycare & After-School Care)*

In Tompkins County the number of young people needing childcare exceeds the number of formal spaces available for care. Based on the labor force participation rate of Tompkins County parents with children under the age for 5.5 years (69%) there are approximately 3,000 young people in need of care in this age grouping.

In Tompkins County there are only enough regulated spaces for one out of every three infants. For parents with children under the age of 3, 32% negotiated a longer leave, resigned or found a different job when they couldn't find care adequate and/or affordable care. In 2011, the Child Development Council reported that "there were openings in child care centers for infants. Even though the birthrate has been dropping, this change is thought to be a reflection on the poor economy and parent's inability or unwillingness to pay the higher rate of infant care."

There are 1,400 spaces in regulated programs (200 in child care homes) for school aged childcare (SACC). Still, 2,400 elementary age children are not served through formal SACC programs. Availability of regulated middle school afterschool programming dropped in 2011 when two out of three of the programs closed due to funding.

<b>Gap Between Supply and Demand of Regulated Childcare and Afterschool-Care</b>			
	<b>Under 5.5 years (Preschool)</b>	<b>5.5-10 years (Elementary)</b>	<b>11-13 years (Middle school)</b>
Number of Children (2009 Census est.)	4,342	5,611	3,141
Labor Force Participation Rate	69%	69%	69%
Potential Demand	2,995	3,872	2,167
Supply of Regulated Care	1,927	1,340	40
Gap Between Supply and Demand	-1,068	-2,532	-2,127

*Source: Trends and Opportunities: Childcare Data Report Child Development Council 2011*

When there are not enough spaces for care, families may rely on a network of informal care options (family, friends, nannies, nursery schools, etc.) to meet their childcare needs. According to the Needs Assessment survey of parents & the Child Development Council's surveys, more and more parents are utilizing alternative care by working with spouses and partners to alternate work shifts or utilize multiple caregivers to meet their families' needs.

### *Transportation*

Transportation remains a barrier for youth to participate in activities and to secure employment. Over the past three years, school districts have been reducing the number of late buses they operate due to budget reductions. The lack of late buses prevents students who cannot get a ride home from participating in afterschool activities and sports. Currently, there are no school districts that operate 5PM late buses.

Public transportation continues to run along the major routes that feed into Ithaca. For those youth who live more rural areas, getting to bus service is a barrier. Students can access public bus transportation after school to get into Ithaca for services, recreation, and jobs; however, there is little bus transportation out of Ithaca past 7PM. Those youth who can get into Ithaca need to find their own transportation home. This limits many youth from finding employment in the Ithaca urban area.

### *Community based venues for older youth to socialize*

Over one quarter of all the middle and high school aged students with whom the needs assessment steering committee met in focus groups or surveyed electronically indicated that they need places to "hang out" beyond those currently available after school and after hours of typical community center types of activities. This need for places to socialize was verbalized in a variety of ways throughout the assessment.

This gap was also clear among older youth (18 - 24) as many of the locations to socialize for this age group include bars and restaurants. For youth who are under the age of 21, these locations are off limits, leaving these young adults without a positive environment in which to socialize.

### *Technology*

The community and schools have begun to embrace this era of technology. To continue to support young people and our future community it is important to help youth to learn to properly utilize the tools and provide access to these tools for all youth. While communities are making strides to increase broadband, provide equipment to all students and train youth and parents on technology there is still more work to be done.

Technology continues to be increasingly important to the everyday life of young people; cell phones, smart phones, tablets, computers, iPads, iPods, and other

various electronic devices are part of youth culture. Not only are the latest technologies fashionable but it for many they are imperative in the every day life. Computers and keyboarding are introduced as early as kindergarten in some schools in Tompkins County. And according to the Youth Development survey in 2010, 65% of middle school students and 86% of high school students have cell phones. In 2008 only 21% of middle and high school students did not have computers at home with internet access, 21% had only dial up service. Schools have mandatory homework that encourages computer use thus furthering the disadvantages for families without computer and/or internet access. Computers are available in all of the libraries within Tompkins County; however, the length of use times per individual may be limited due to demand.

In a few Tompkins County school districts, tablets with Wi-Fi have been given to some cohorts of students. In these cases much of their school work is completed via the tablet. Allowing all students to have a tablet increases access for those who may not be able to afford a tablet on their own. While school districts are still learning how to manage the devices it is clear that more work needs to be done to help parents learn how to use the device, monitor the device and provide assistance to their children as families learn to manage this technology in a safe and productive way.

*Lack in the Ability for youth to contribute to decision-making process*

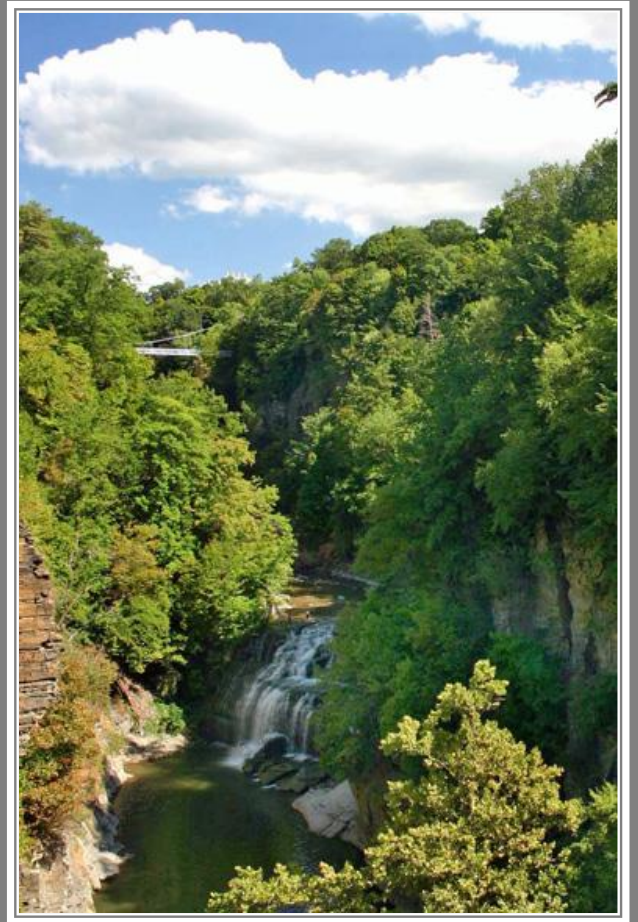
According to the Forum for Youth Investment:

Socially engaged young people have the knowledge that their actions can effect positive change. They possess an awareness and motivation about the need for positive change in their world that is based on knowledge. They have the skills and capacity to make a contribution. They are resourceful, connected and experienced; they know how to access and navigate their ways through different settings and institutions to find and create opportunities to be engaged in purposeful collective action that can lead to positive social change or improvements in conditions for themselves and others.

Many of the young people who were engaged in this needs assessment process felt that they lacked the opportunity to be a part of the decisions being made for them at school and throughout the community. Parents and caregivers also indicated that they would like to see more opportunities for their youth to be involved in the decision making process of those items that impact their young people's lives.







## Youth Services Glossary & Definitions





## YOUTH SERVICES GLOSSARY AND DEFINITIONS

**APM:** *Aspirational Performance Measurement*, This is an advanced designation high school diploma found within New York State.

**ATOD:** *Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs*

**At-risk youth:** The term can be used to describe a wide variety of youth, including: school dropouts; homeless or runaway youth; youth exhibiting self destructive behavior; youth who lack parental support or positive role models; youth at risk of becoming juvenile delinquents; youth in need of safe places, caring adults, and structured activities; and victims of child abuse, domestic violence, or neglect.

**ART:** *Aggression Replacement Training*; was developed to teach participants to replace inappropriate angry behavior with positive skill learning, anger control, and moral reasoning. Participants learn as a group in a classroom format.

**Balanced group:** Unless otherwise indicated balanced groups are a goal of program leaders. A group that has different skills and abilities expose the members to differences and acceptance of same.

**Best Practices:** A method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark.

**BOCES:** *Board of Cooperative Educational Services*; provides shared educational programs and services to school districts within New York state.

**CCHY:** *Community Coalition for Healthy Youth*; a coalition representing agencies, schools, government, businesses, families, and concerned citizens in Tompkins County, all working to reduce substance abuse among middle and high school youth through the use of effective, evidence based programs and practices.

**CHAMPS:** *Child Adolescent Alliance for Mental Health Planning and Services*; group of service providers looking to improve mental health services for youth in Tompkins County.

**Cohort:** A cohort is a group of students who enter into high school at the same time, with an expectation to graduate in four years.

**Communities that Care<sup>®</sup>:** A framework developed by researchers from the University of Washington that identifies risk and protective factors impacting the well-being of youth.

**DAP:** *Dispositional Alternatives Program*; local community-based, family-centered program that provides comprehensive, supportive services to youth aged 7 to 18, and their families. The program targets youth having difficulties at home, school, or in the community. Staff serves as liaisons between the family and the school, court system, and other involved agencies.

**DSS:** *Department of Social Services*; provides or administers the full range of publicly funded social services and cash assistance programs. Families whose income meets state guidelines and who meet other criteria, may be able to receive a subsidy to offset some of their child care costs, food stamps and other care assistance.

**IEP:** *Individualized Education Plan*; designed to meet the unique educational needs of one child, who may have a disability, as defined by federal regulations. The IEP is intended to help children reach educational goals more easily than they otherwise would. School districts are responsible for developing the IEP with input from families, staff & teachers and other medical professionals.

**ILS:** *Independent living survey*

**JD:** *Juvenile Delinquent*; conduct by a youth under the age of 18, characterized by antisocial behavior that is beyond parental control and therefore subject to legal action.

**McKinney Vento Act:** defines “homeless children and youths” as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence.” The program is authorized under Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The program was originally authorized in 1987 and most recently reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act. • Express prohibition against segregating homeless • Requirement for transportation to and from school of origin • Immediate school enrollment requirement –which includes not waiting to enroll a child without immunization or previous academic records

**Monitoring the Future Survey:** A survey given nationally to a sample of 50,000 students in grades 8, 10, and 12 to study their behaviors, attitudes, and values; a project of the University of Michigan.

**Non-Profit 501(c)(3):** commonly referred to as a charitable organization. They may accept donations that are tax exempt and operate exclusively for purposes that are religious, charitable, scientific, testing for public safety, literary, educational, to foster national or international amateur sports competition, to promote the arts, or for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals.

**OCFS:** *New York State Office of Children and Family Services*



**OJJDP:** *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention*; provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization.

**ONDCP:** *Office of National Drug Control Policy*; advises the US President on drug-control issues, coordinates drug-control activities and related funding across the Federal government, and produces the annual National Drug Control Strategy, which outlines Administration efforts to reduce illicit drug use, manufacturing and trafficking, drug-related crime and violence, and drug-related health consequences.

**PINS:** *Person in need of supervision*; a term used to describe youth under the age of eighteen who show a pattern of disobedience, running away, curfew violations, drug or alcohol abuse, violent behavior or severe school truancy who come to the attention of the Juvenile Justice System. Youth who exhibit such behavior may receive from probation assessment, supervision, counseling, evaluation, advocacy, respite housing, or other services—often free of charge. Diversion services are required in most cases. The PINS process works primarily with cases which have already tried other services in the community.

**Recreation:** Any activity whose main purpose is the productive use of leisure time.

**Referral Sources:** A referral source can be anyone who recommends a youth to a program. These include but are not limited to teachers, parents, friends, social workers, probation officers, and guidance counselors.

**RHY:** *Runaway and Homeless Youth*; there is no single definition of the term "runaway youth" or "homeless youth", they include youth with unstable or inadequate housing, i.e., youth who stay at least one night in a place that is not their home because they could not stay at home, ran away from home, did not have a home, and/or stayed at a shelter, outdoors, in a squat, a car or public transportation, under a bridge, or in a temporary arrangement with another person (i.e. couch-surfing). These two groups also include "throw away" youth (defined below) and may include other vulnerable youth populations, such as current and former foster youth and youth with mental health or other issues.

**SAMSHA:** *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*; a federal agency working to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.

**Throwaway Youth:** Term used to describes two types of circumstance: 1) A child who is asked or told to leave home by a parent or other household adult, without adequate alternative care being arranged for the child by a household adult, and with the child out of the household overnight; or 2) A child who is away from home and is prevented from returning home by a parent or other household

adult, without adequate alternative care being arranged for the child by a household adult, and the child is out of the household overnight.

**Tompkins County Legislature:** A board of elected officials who oversee the use of local funding and policy.

**TCYS:** *Tompkins County Youth Services*, a department of County government charged with investing time, resources and funding in communities to enable all youth to thrive in school, work and life.

**VADIR:** *Violent and Disruptive Incidents Report*; An annual report required of schools by the New York State Education Department that summarizes information about offenders and victims, both adult and student, involved in a variety of types of incidents at school, on school property (including buses), or at school functions.

**YAP:** *Youth Advocates Program*; local program that offers alternatives to the incarceration or other institutional placement of young people. YAP's programs, which are offered in juveniles' own communities, are family-focused and strength based.

**YRBS:** *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*; National survey given annually to students in grades 9-12 about violence, substance abuse, diet, obesity and physical activity; a project of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**Youth Services Board:** An advisory group to the County Legislature on youth needs, issues, and funding priorities. Members are appointed by the legislature; each municipality has a representative on the Youth Board, there are some at-large members, and one non-voting Legislator.

**Youth Development:** Any planned and organized activity whose primary purpose is to promote and provide opportunities for youth to gain important life skills that allow them to have meaningful roles in their communities and prepare them for the independence and responsibilities to be successful adults and citizens.



# Index of Resources



## INDEX OF SOURCES

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### **Other Data Sources**

Local school district offices (Dryden, Groton, Ithaca, Lansing, Newfield, Trumansburg)

NYSCCRS Multi State Data Center

New York State Department of Education: VADIR Report:  
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/vadir/vadir-reporting.html>

New York State Department of Education: School Report Cards  
<https://reportcards.nysed.gov/>

New York State Data Center  
<http://www.empire.state.ny.us/NYSDataCenter.html>

New York State Department of Health Vital Statistics  
[http://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/vital\\_statistics/index.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/vital_statistics/index.htm)



New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services  
[www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/](http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/)

New York State Office of Children and Family Services  
<http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/>

New York State Office of Resource and Information Services

United States Census  
<http://www.census.gov/>  
<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

New York State Council on Children and Families Kids' Well-being Indicators  
Clearinghouse  
<http://www.nyskwic.org/>

Tompkins Cortland Community College

Tompkins County Department of Social Services

Tompkins County Health Department 2010 Annual Report  
[http://www.tompkins-co.org/health/pnc/AnnualReport\\_TCHD-2010.pdf](http://www.tompkins-co.org/health/pnc/AnnualReport_TCHD-2010.pdf)

Tompkins County Jail

Tompkins County Probation Department

Tompkins County Youth Development Survey, 2008 & 2010

Tompkins-Seneca-Tioga BOCES

Tompkins Workforce New York  
Agency Reports (Ithaca Youth Bureau, Learning Web)

Families and Work Institute  
<http://www.familiesandwork.org/index.html>

Early Care and Learning Council  
<http://www.earlycareandlearning.org>

Child Development Council Trends and Opportunities of Child Care Data Report  
2011.  
[http://www.childdevelopmentcouncil.org/files/all/trends\\_and\\_opportunities\\_2011\\_data\\_report\\_1.doc](http://www.childdevelopmentcouncil.org/files/all/trends_and_opportunities_2011_data_report_1.doc)

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Independent Living Survey  
<http://www.tompkins-co.org/youth/documents/2011IndependentLivingSurveyProject3FinalReport.pdf>

**Data Collection Specific to the 2012 State of Youth Assessment Conversations:**

Afterschool providers for Elementary Students, January 2012

One-on-one conversations with Middle School Principals, February 2012

Community Foundation and Youth Services Department Listening and Learning Session of School Nurses, April 2011

Department of Social Services Youth Services Unit Staff Meeting, April 2012

Tompkins County Law Enforcement Panel, January 2012

Meeting of Home School Parents, February 2012

Seven Focus Groups of High School Aged Youth, February – March 2012

Focus Groups among Middle School Students, January – March 2012

**Surveys:**

*Parent/Guardian Survey*, Information collected January – March, 2012; 806 Respondents (some with children in more than one age group)

239 Parents of Early Development

282 Elementary Parents

347 Middle School Parents

243 High School Parents

81 Beyond High School Parents

*Survey of Youth Service Agencies and Schools*, information, Fall, 2011; 133 respondents

*Survey of Elementary Principals*, information, December 2011; 9 respondents

## **May 5, 2011 Kick Off - Partner Organizations**

Bridges for Youth and Families  
Cayuga Nature Center  
Community Coalition for Healthy Youth  
Child Development Council  
Community Foundation  
Community School of Music & Arts  
Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Enfield Community Council  
Family and Children's Services - DAP  
Family Life Development Center - Cornell  
Finger Lakes Independence Center  
Franziska Racker Center  
Groton Central School District  
Groton Youth Commission  
Human Services Coalition  
IPEI  
Ithaca City School District  
Ithaca Youth Bureau  
Joblink WFNY  
Mental Health Association in Tompkins County  
Park Foundation  
Planned Parenthood  
Recreation Support Services/IYB  
Rural Youth Services CCE  
Tompkins County Health Department  
The Learning Web  
Tompkins Community Action  
Tompkins County Planning  
Tompkins County Probation  
Tompkins Workforce New York  
Town of Ithaca  
Trumansburg High School  
TST BOCES  
Youth Advocate Programs  
Youth Council – IYB  
Youth Employment Service - IYB

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