

Empowering Our Youth Through Building Assets

A Community Conversation

October 16, 2025



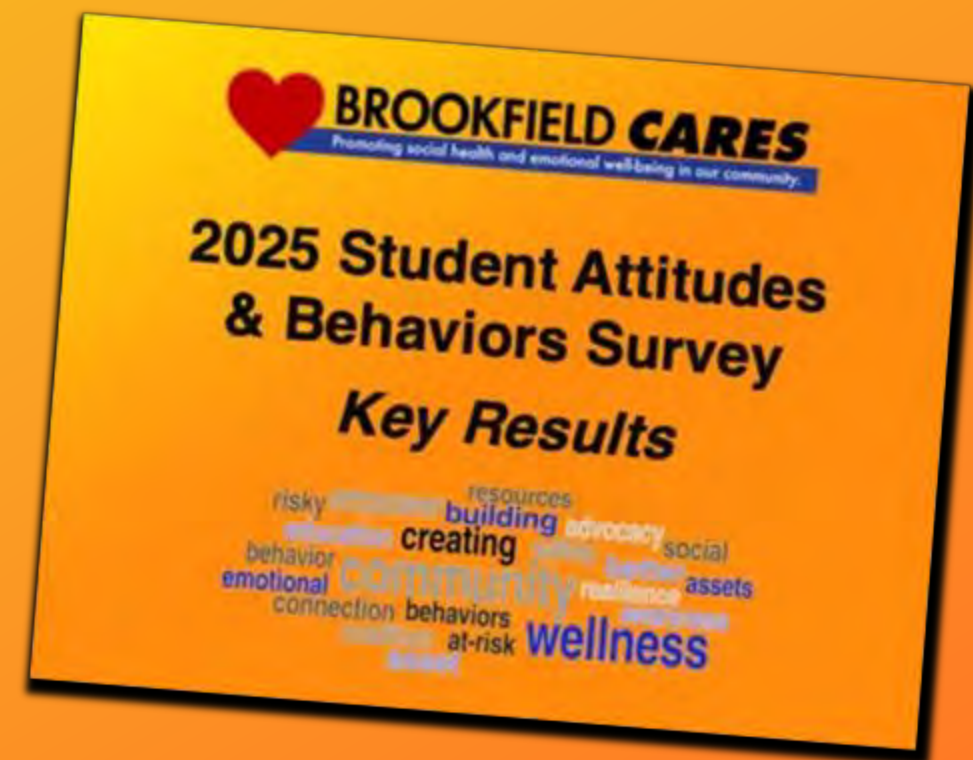
BROOKFIELD CARES

Promoting social health and emotional well-being in our community.

Tonight's Focus

In February of 2025, Brookfield public school students in grades 8–12 participated in a survey that provided detailed information on their attitudes and behaviors in a wide variety of areas. The results were presented to the town and discussed at a Board of Selectmen meeting and again at a Board of Education meeting.

The focus of tonight's Community Conversation will be on how we can collectively build the developmental relationships with our youth that research shows will foster thriving behaviors and lessen high-risk behavior patterns.



Who We Are

BROOKFIELD CARES is a non-profit volunteer community-based organization dedicated to creating awareness and positive change around the issues of substance misuse, depression, suicide, and other mental health concerns.

We do this by engaging with all members of the community to reduce harmful behaviors, destigmatize mental health issues, and promote and support healthy choices.

Who We Are

BROOKFIELD CARES work is funded through donations from the town of Brookfield and individuals, and by grants for specific projects from the organizations depicted here.



SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration



We thank the Brookfield Public Schools for their strong and ongoing support.



Search Institute

Search Institute is an independent, non-profit organization that studies and works to strengthen youth success in schools, youth programs, families, and communities.

They are the creators of the Attitudes & Behaviors Survey (reliable, valid and totally anonymous assessment of the strengths, supports, and social-emotional factors essential for young people's success in school and life). This is the survey we use.

Overview and History

First administered in 2009, last fall was the seventh time we've collaborated with the schools to survey students using the Search Institute Attitudes and Behaviors Survey.

Our overarching goal is to understand youth perspective on strengths, supports, risky behaviors, and thriving indicators within their lives.

The Survey's Acceptance

- Of the 25 Local Prevention Councils in our region (**BROOKFIELD CARES** is an LPC), 14 have utilized the Attitudes and Behaviors Survey in some fashion since 2019, including New Milford and Bethel.
- Over 6-million students have taken the survey nationwide in thousands of schools.

What are 'assets'?

The Attitudes and Behaviors Survey focuses on **developmental assets**. These are research-based, positive experiences and qualities that influence young people's development, helping them become caring, responsible, and productive adults.

Assets are the building blocks of healthy development, and it is our job as a community to help build assets within our children.

Developmental Assets

Search Institute has identified 40 positive supports and strengths that young people need to succeed. These Developmental Assets are reported in 2 ways:

- **External Assets**: positive developmental experiences that families, schools, neighborhoods, community groups, and other youth and family-serving organizations provide young people
- **Internal Assets**: positive commitments, skills and values that form a young person's inner guidance system

Basically ... the more assets a youth has or experiences, the less likely they are to engage in risk-taking behaviors.

Developmental Assets

This framework of **Developmental Assets** identifies a set of skills, experiences, relationships, and behaviors that enable young people to develop into successful and contributing adults.

External Assets

- *Support*
- *Empowerment*
- *Boundaries & Expectations*
- *Constructive Use of Time*

Internal Assets

- *Commitment to Learning*
- *Positive Values*
- *Social Competencies*
- *Positive Identity*

Grade-specific descriptions of the Developmental Assets can be downloaded here:

<https://brookfield-cares.org/wp-content/files/Developmental-Assets.pdf>



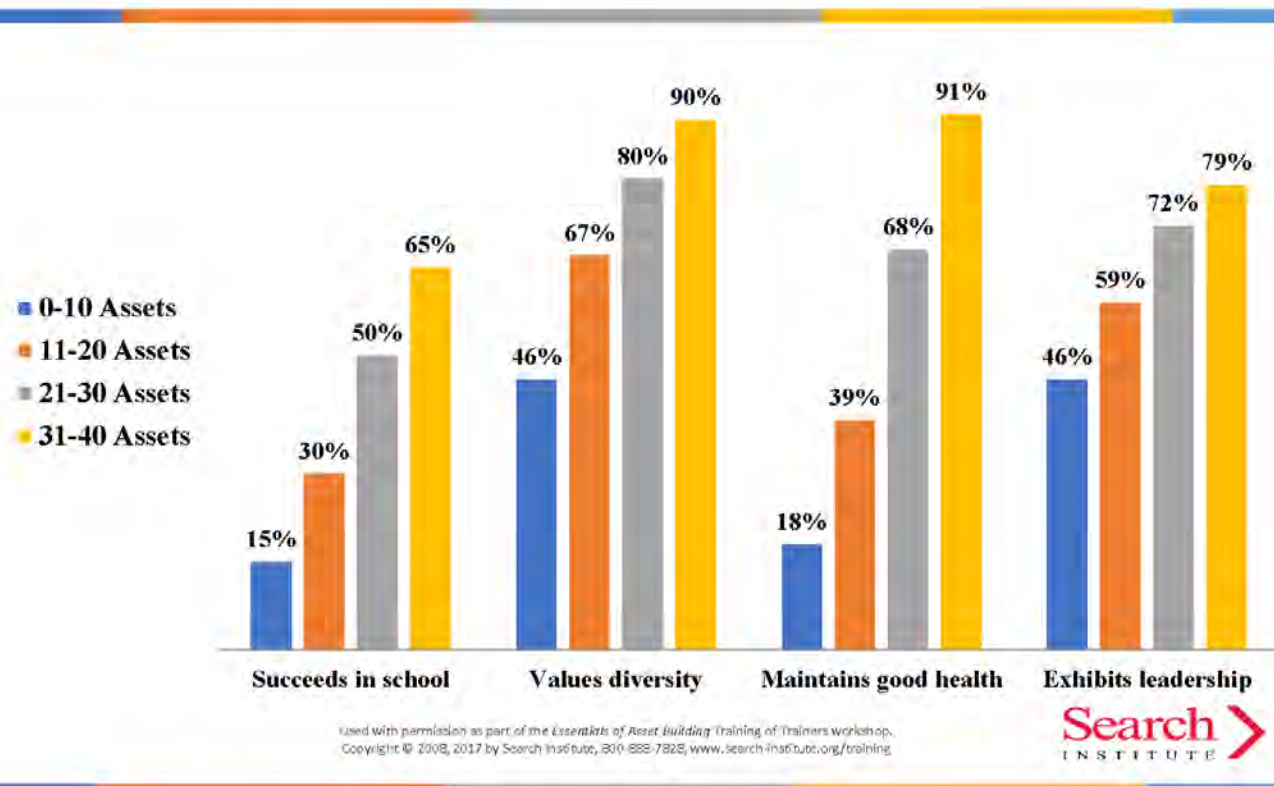
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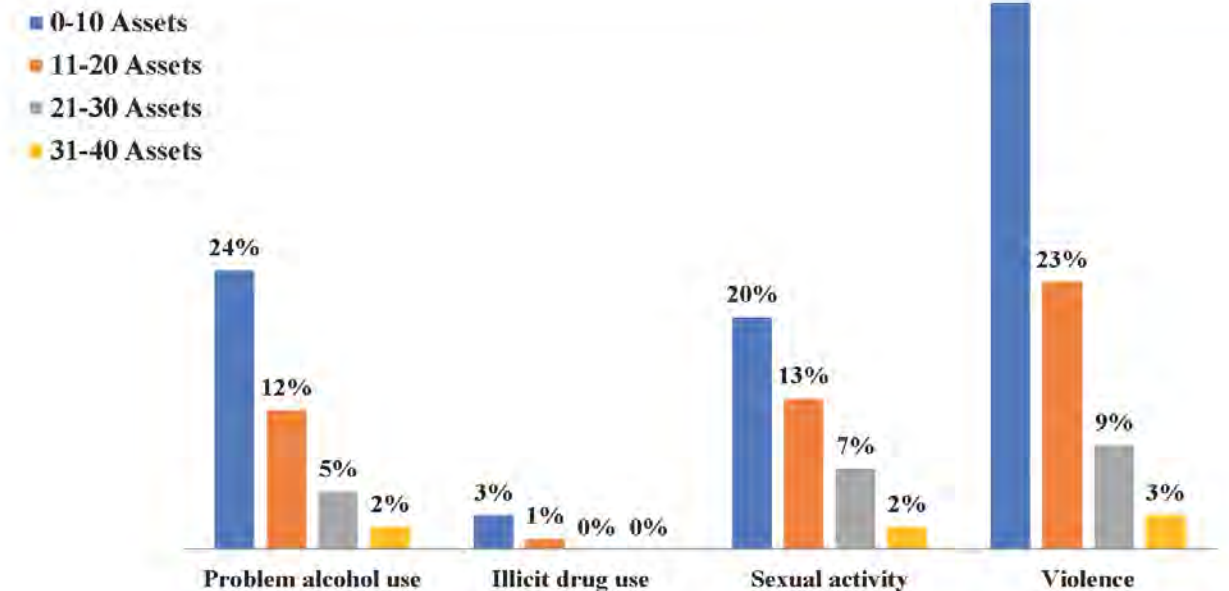
Developmental Assets

Search Institute has found that the more assets youth have the more they thrive and the less likely they are to engage in high-risk behaviors.

Power of Assets to Promote



Power of Assets to Protect

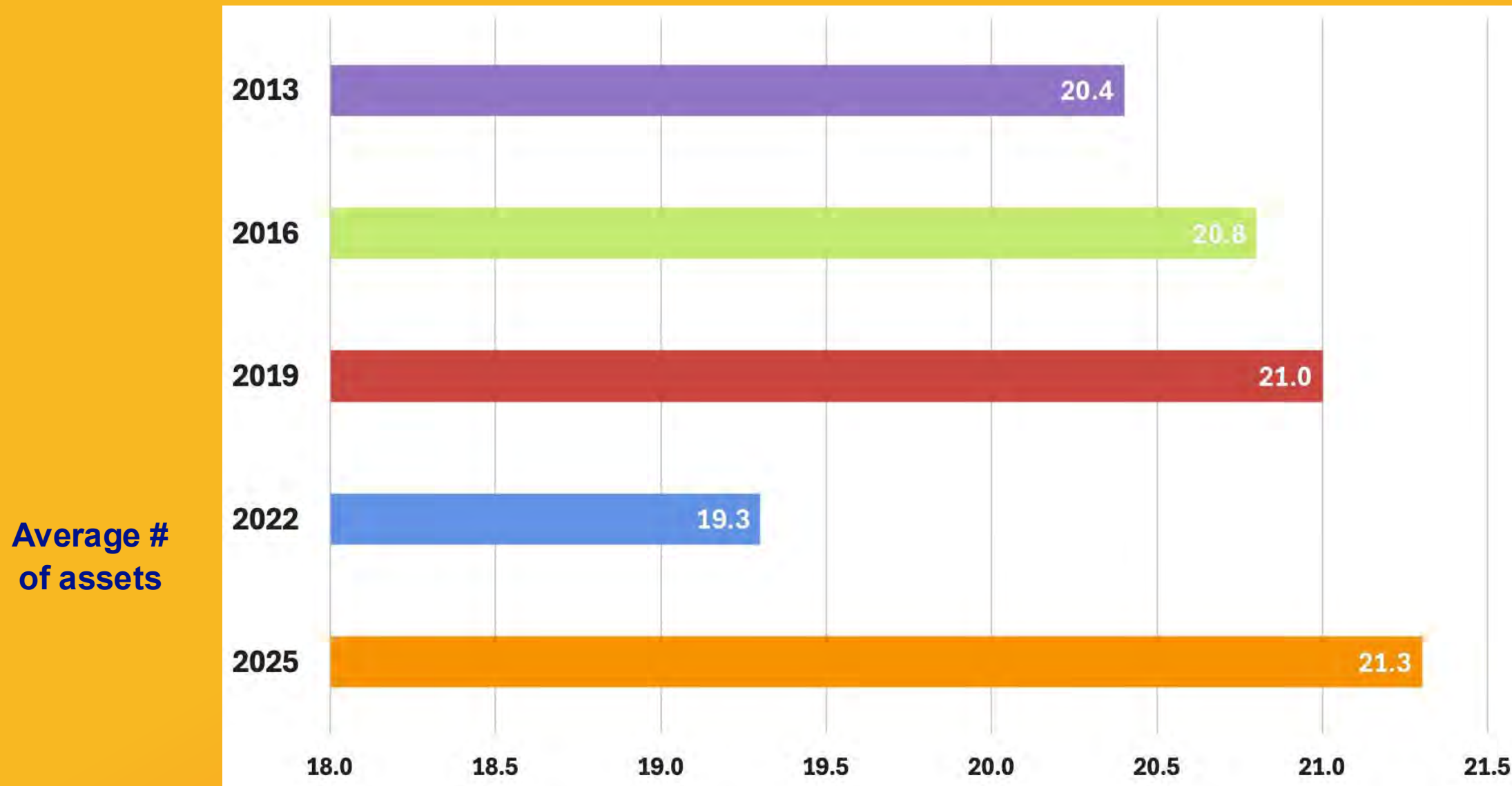


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Search
INSTITUTE

Average Assets in Brookfield Youth

With the exception of Covid, the average number of assets reported by our youth has increased until now.



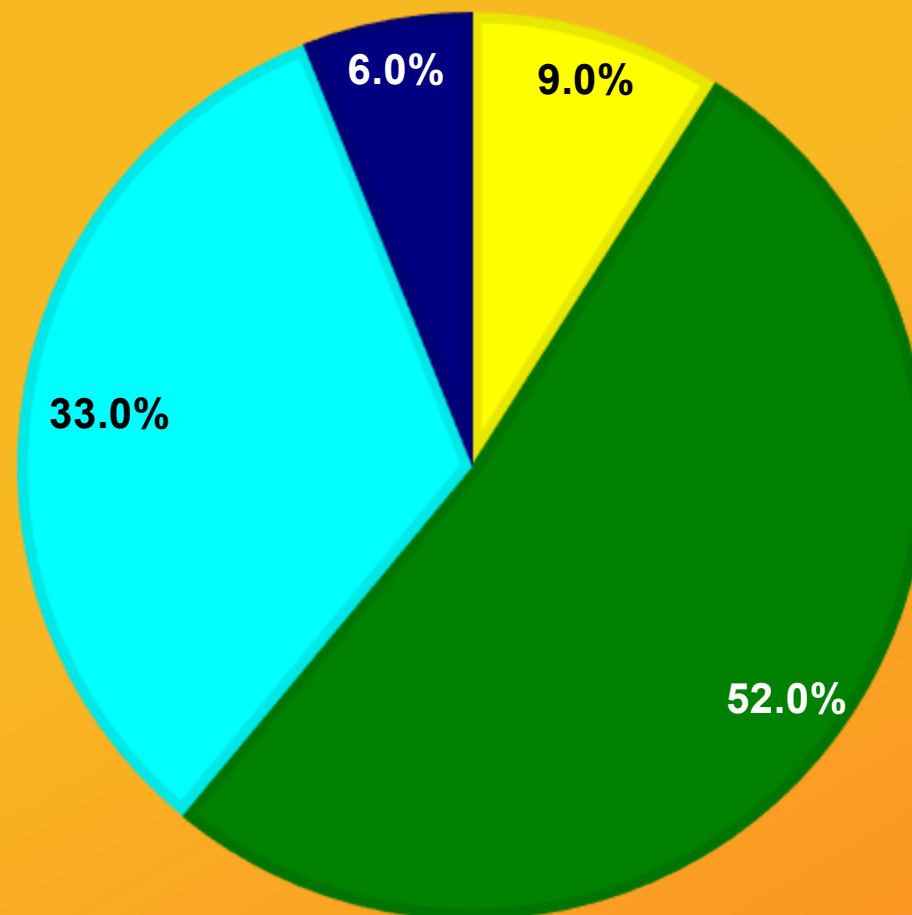
Search Institute reports that the national average was 20.4 in 2022.

Change in Assets

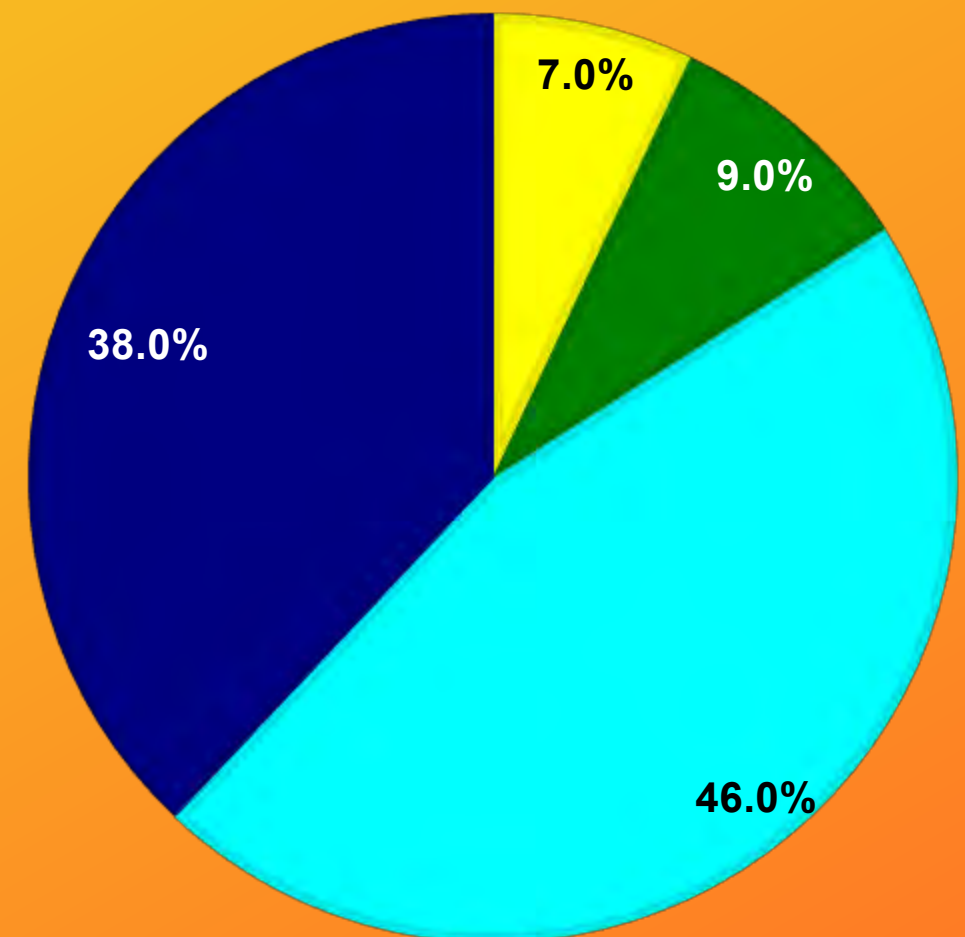
In the past 2 years, the number of Brookfield High School students with 21 or more assets has increased from 80% to 84% — a 4% increase.

2022

0–10 Assets
11–20 Assets
21–30 Assets
31–40 Assets



2025

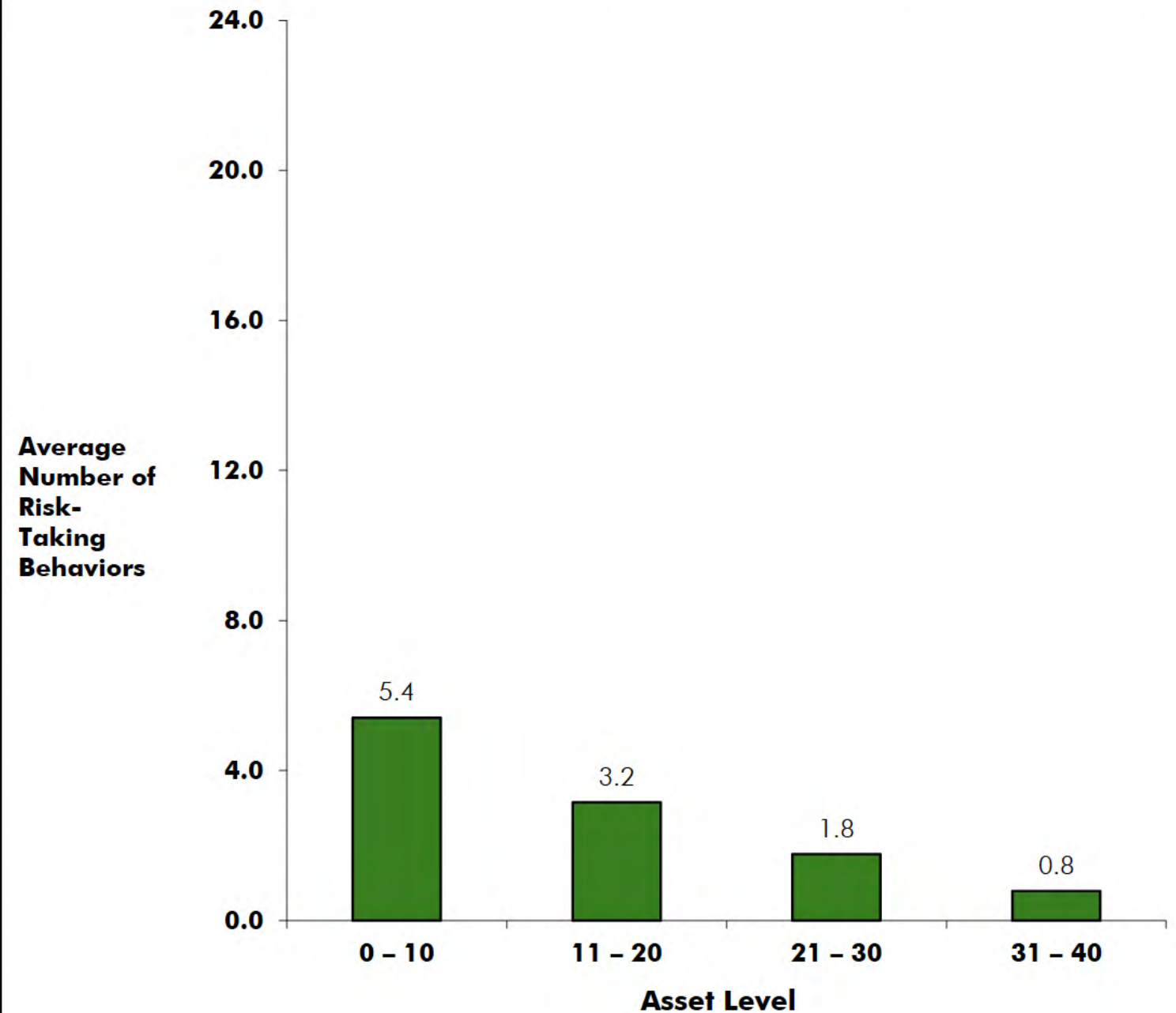


Risk-Taking in Brookfield

**The More
Assets...**

**...The Fewer
Risk-Taking
Behaviors**

Figure 9. Average Number of 24 Risk-Taking Behaviors by Asset Level



Risk-Taking Behaviors

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alcohol use• Vaping• Getting into trouble with police• Illegal drug use• Eating disorders• Carrying a weapon for protection• Driving while drinking• Skipping school | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Binge drinking• Smoking• Hitting another person• Early sexual intercourse• Gambling• Attempting suicide• Vandalism• Depression | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marijuana use• Shoplifting• Hurting another person• Smokeless tobacco use• Using a weapon• Fighting in group• Threatening to cause physical harm• Riding with an impaired driver |
|---|---|---|

What does a Brookfield Youth look like?

Thriving Indicators and Assets	2025
Equality and Social Justice • Places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty	68%
Honesty • Tells the truth even when not easy to	73%
Integrity • Acts on convictions and stands up for beliefs	75%
Cultural Competence • Has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds	54%

All results going forward are what Brookfield youth told us in the most recent Survey.

What does a Brookfield Youth look like?

Thriving Indicators and Assets	2025
Helps Others • Helps friends or neighbors one or more hours per week	75%
Exhibits Leadership • Has been a leader of a group or organization in the last 12 months	68%
Values Diversity • Places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty	68%

The Importance of Peers and Families

Asset / Definition	2025
Positive Peer Influence • Young person's best friends model positive, responsible behavior	84%
Adult Role Models • Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior	42%
Family Support • Family life provides high levels of love and support	81%
Positive Family Communication • Individual and his/her parent(s) communicate positively, and the individual is willing to seek parent(s) advice and counsel	39%
Parent Involvement in Schooling • Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the individual succeed in school	26%

School/Community Value Youth

Asset / Definition	2025
Community Values Youth • Young Person perceives that adults in the community value youth	<u>25%</u>
Youth as Resources • Young people are given useful roles in the community	<u>32%</u>
Caring School Climate • School provides a caring, encouraging environment	<u>33%</u>

School/Community Value Youth

Asset / Definition	2025
Achievement Motivation • Young person is motivated to do well in school	76%
School Engagement • Young person is actively engaged in learning	79%
Bonding to School • Young person cares about his or her school	59%

What our children say

Students tell us we are ***strongest*** in the following Assets:

Asset #	Name	% Reporting Assets
15	Positive peer influence	83
22	School engagement	82
1	Family support	81
21	Achievement motivation	77
28	Integrity	76
30	Responsibility	75
20	Time at home	74
29	Honesty	73

What our children say

Students tell us we are ***weakest*** in the following Assets:

Asset		% Reporting Assets
#	Name	
25	Reading for pleasure	17
17	Creative activities	18
7	Community values youth	24
6	Parent involvement in schooling	24
8	Youth (children) as resources	31
13	Neighborhood boundaries	33
5	Caring school climate	34
4	Caring neighborhood	31

Current Behaviors

Category	Definition	% Reporting Risk Taking Behaviors	
		Whisconier Middle School	Brookfield High School
Gambling	Gambled once or more in the last 12 months	22%	25%
Illicit Drug Use	Used heroin or other narcotics multiple times in the last 12 months	0%	1%
Violence	Threatened physical harm to someone once or more in the last 12 months	14%	14%

Current Behaviors

Category	Definition	% Reporting Risk Taking Behaviors	
		Whisconier Middle School	Brookfield High School
Anti-Social Behavior	Has been involved in 3 or more incidents of shoplifting, trouble with police, or vandalism in the last 12 months	16%	15%
Violence	Has engaged in 3 or more acts of fighting, hitting, injuring a person, carrying or using a weapon, or threatening physical harm in the last 12 months	5%	9%

2025 Deep Dive: *Anti-Social & Violent Behavior*

Behavior			% Reporting Risk Taking Behaviors	
			WMS	BHS
Anti-Social			Once or more in the last 12 months	Once or more in the last 12 months
Shoplifting			7%	14%
Vandalism			11%	8%
Police			7%	8%
Violence				
Hit someone			20%	14%
Hurt someone			12%	6%
Weapon use			3%	3%
Group fight			12%	8%
Weapon carry			7%	10%
Threatened harm			14%	14%



Current Behaviors

Category	Definition	% Reporting Risk Taking Behaviors	
		Whisconier Middle School	Brookfield High School
Eating Disorder	Has engaged in bulimic or anorexic behavior	19%	22%
Depression	Felt sad or depressed most of the time in the last month	18%	16%
Attempted Suicide	Has attempted suicide one or more times	13%	11%

Alcohol Use

Category / Definition	Grades		
	8 th	10 th	12 th
Alcohol Usage • Used alcohol once or more in last 30 days	4%	13%	30%
“Being Drunk” • Got drunk once or more in the last 2 weeks	1%	7%	9%
Driving While Intoxicated • Drove after drinking once or more in last 12 months	0%	2%	9%
Passenger • Rode (once or more in last 12 months) with a driver who had been drinking*	17%	14%	18%

* It is reasonable to think that a portion of Middle School results may reference adults driving.

Category	Definition	Whisconier Middle School	Brookfield High School
Alcohol	Past 30-Day Use	2%	17%
	Perception of Risk	89%	87%
	Perception of Parental Disapproval	99%	95%
	Perception of Peer Disapproval	94%	82%
Marijuana	Past 30-Day Use	0%	8%
	Perception of Risk	86%	70%
	Perception of Parental Disapproval	96%	93%
	Perception of Peer Disapproval	93%	73%
Prescription Drugs not prescribed to you	Past 30-Day Use	2%	2%
	Perception of Risk	93%	93%
	Perception of Parental Disapproval	98%	97%
	Perception of Peer Disapproval	91%	90%

Male/Female Perspective

Often, responses to the survey are similar for males and females – but there are notable differences. Here are the assets with the widest gaps in each school.

Whisconier Middle School		
Asset	M	F
Sense of purpose	81%	51%
Caring neighborhood	56%	31%
Religious community	53%	31%
Safety	54%	33%
Positive family communication	51%	33%
School boundaries	80%	62%

Brookfield High School		
Asset	M	F
Safety	74%	46%
Achievement motivation	65%	88%
Interpersonal competence	35%	57%
Planning and decision making	32%	52%
Homework	38%	57%
Equality and social justice	58%	77%

More points of note

- 8% of 8th grade students at WMS and 70% of students in all grades at BHS reported attending parties in the past year where other kids their age were drinking.
- 24% of WMS and 22% of BHS students have gambled (bought lottery tickets or tabs, bet money on sports teams or card games. etc.).
- 81% of WMS and 77% of BHS students use a computer, cell phone, or tablet to email, play games, surf the web, message, or text with friends for 2 hours or more a day.
- 61% of WMS and 59% of BHS students watch 2 or more hours of TV or videos each school day.

When to raise conversations

Our students are also giving us clear guidance on when to have conversations or when to introduce topics into Health curriculum.

Category	% Reporting Risk Taking Behaviors				
	Whisconier Middle School	Brookfield High School			
	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th
Percent of students that has had sexual intercourse once or more	1%	11%	9%	19%	31%
Percent of those students that seldom or never used birth control	50%	40%	36%	23%	17%

Vaping

This year — for the third time — the Survey included questions on vaping, and for the first time – Zyn.

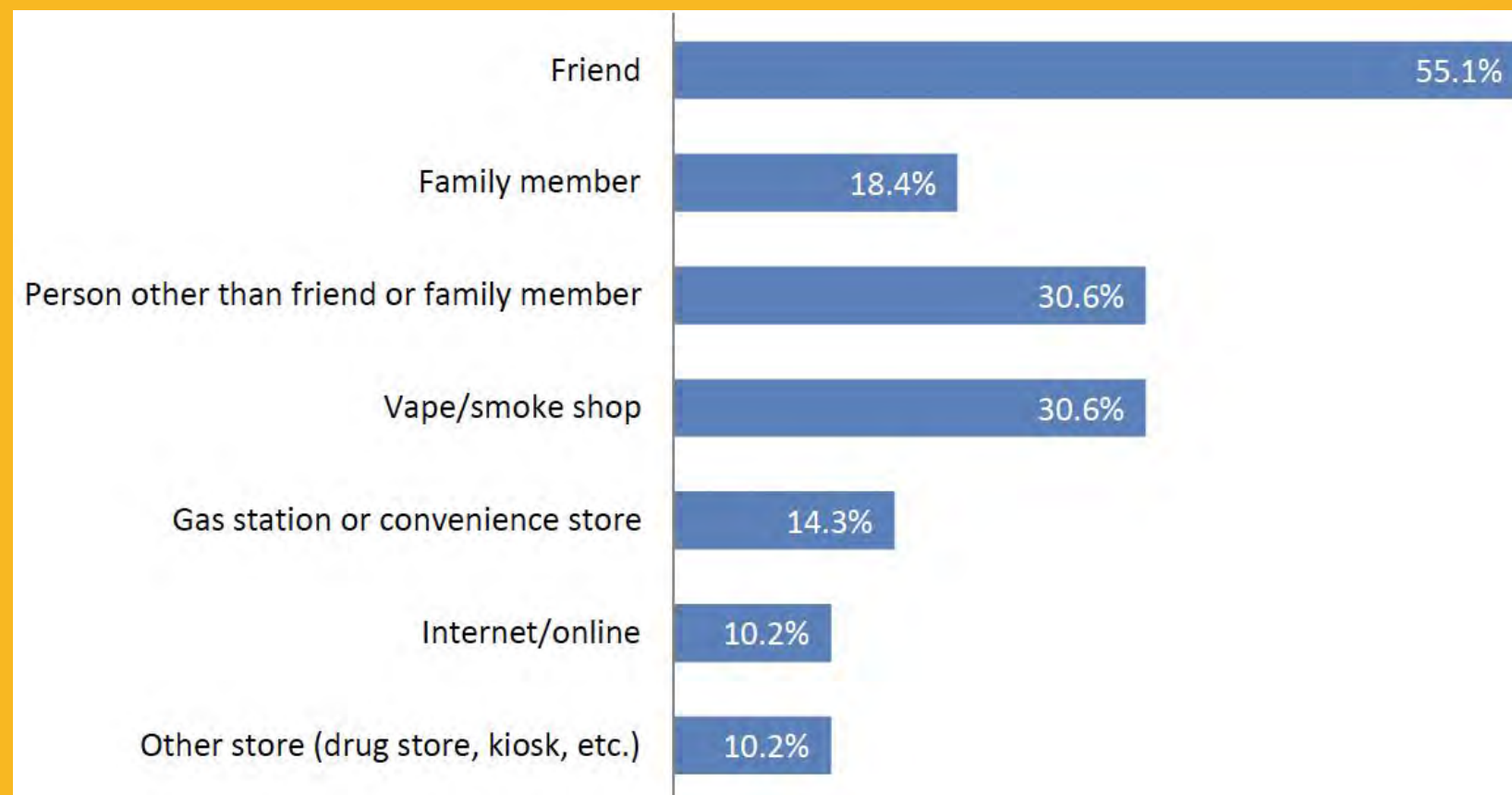
	Whisconier Middle School	Brookfield High School
	2025	2025
Used a vaping device in the past 30 days	2%	10%
Perceived risk of vaping is moderate to great	0%	80%
Used Zyn device in the past 30 days	0%	4%
Perceived risk of using Zyn is moderate to great	86%	75%

Observation: Vaping continues to be a key focal point for **BROOKFIELD CARES**, where we annually receive state grants specifically targeted to address this issue. But Zyn is emerging as a real concern

Vaping

Our high schoolers tell us they get their vaping devices from a variety of sources.

Grades 9–12



Note: On 12/20/2019 a federal law known as ***Tobacco 21*** became effective that made it illegal for a retailer to sell any tobacco product—including cigarettes, cigars, and e-cigarettes—to anyone under 21. The new federal minimum age of sale applies to all retail establishments and persons with no exceptions.

Safety

This year — for the second time — the Survey included questions on safety.

Whisconier Middle School	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
• I feel safe at school.*	19%	53%	21%	5%	2%
• I understand the safety protocols (fire, lockdown, etc.) at my school in case of an emergency.	44%	46%	6%	3%	1%
Brookfield High School	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
• I feel safe at school.	20%	55%	17%	6%	3%
• I understand the safety protocols (fire, lockdown, etc.) at my school in case of an emergency.	34%	51%	7%	1%	2%

* We recommend discussion to understand the nature of the perceived threat.

Online behavior

We also asked — for the second time — questions about online behavior.

Whisconier Middle School		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
• Experienced mean behavior online or on social media?		31%	20%	25%	13%	12%
• Been mean to others online or on social media?		24%	26%	11%	7%	3%
Brookfield High School		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
• Experienced mean behavior online or on social media?		39%	21%	21%	12%	7%
• Been mean to others online or on social media?		62%	18%	11%	4%	5%

What have we learned?

We've learned that talking to youth and listening to their concerns is the best way to build assets and reduce harmful behaviors.

What can we do?

Everyone has a valuable role to play in nurturing healthy youth.

We do this by strengthening our Students' Assets through building Developmental Relationships.

What are Developmental Relationships

Developmental relationships are close connections with adults, near-peers, and peers that help young people cultivate their abilities to shape their own lives, build resilience, and thrive.

Building Developmental Relationships with Youth

- **Express Care:** Show them that they matter to others.
- **Challenge Growth:** Push them to keep getting better.
- **Provide Support:** Help them complete tasks and achieve goals.
- **Share Power:** Treat them with respect and give them a say.
- **Expand Possibilities:** Connect them with people and places that broaden their world.

As a Neighbor or Caring Adult

Get involved

- Coach Youth Sports
- Volunteer in the community
- Include parents and youth on projects
- Demonstrate the Developmental Assets

As an Organization/Business

- Highlight, develop, expand, and support programs designed to build assets (for ALL populations)
- Provide meaningful opportunities for young people to contribute to the lives of others
- Ensure Cultural Competency and inclusive practices
- Develop employee policies that encourage asset building in youth
 - Flexible work schedules
 - Promoting youth development programs

As a Parent or Family Member

- Consistently model (and talk about your family's values and priorities)
- Regularly including all children in:
 - Your family projects around the house
 - Recreational activities of all kinds
 - Community service projects
- Post a list of the developmental assets and talk to children about them
 - Ask teens for suggestions of ways to strengthen their assets as well as your own

As a Young Person

- **Challenge yourself**
 - Develop a new interest on your own
 - Play a sport
 - Learn an instrument
 - Get involved in youth programming
- **Strike up a conversation with an adult you admire, see adults as informal mentors**
- **Look for opportunities to build relationships with younger children through community service projects, tutoring, or baby-sitting**

Special Thanks

We thank the **Brookfield Youth Commission** for its help in announcing the survey to students. We also thank them for their invaluable feedback on how to improve the administration of the survey in future years during lively and positive discussion at a Youth Commission meeting that **BROOKFIELD CARES** was invited to attend.



Brookfield Youth Commission

Advocacy • Information • Representation • Inclusion



BROOKFIELD CARES
Promoting social health and emotional well-being in our community.

The conversation begins

- Breakout discussions will center on how we as a Community can strengthen Assets in our youth.
- Go to the discussion group indicated by the color of your folder.
- Moderators will rotate through all groups, so everyone can participate in discussions on all topics.
- We'll take 30 minutes for conversation then reconvene for a recap.

Group Discussion

Ground Rules

- 1) Be a respectful and active listener, open to new ideas.
- 2) Give everyone an opportunity to speak.
- 3) Honor confidentiality for all.
- 4) Focus on possible ***community*** solutions.
- 5) Please silence your cell phones.

If individual help is needed, please reach out to a member of BROOKFIELD CARES after the meeting.

Remember we are all here on common ground, the same team, to help our youth thrive in our community.

Recap

Presentation of Asset-building ideas discussed in the Community Conversation sessions.

Finally, **BROOKFIELD CARES** would like to thank all Brookfielders who took the time tonight and participated in this most worthwhile project.



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