

Maryland Youth Advisory Council
Harford County Community Conversation
August 1, 2016
Abingdon Branch Library
4:00 – 6:00 pm

The Hand, the Head, the Heart Exercise

- This exercise allows the group to recognize its strengths and assets and think about how those assets can be used to address community issues.
- The Hand identifies the strong skills of the individuals. The skills include:
 - Basketball I
 - Retail
 - Writing II
 - Crafts
 - Math and Science I
 - Art I
- The Head identifies the special knowledge held by the individuals. The knowledge include:
 - History I
 - CPR
 - Biology I
 - Psychology
 - Community
 - Technology
 - Sociology
 - STEM
 - Culture
 - Lifesaving/lifeguarding
- The Heart identifies the passions of the individuals. The passions include:
 - Breast cancer
 - Community Action
 - Politics
 - STEM
 - Mental health
 - Religion
 - Addiction I
 - Equality
 - Therapy I
 - Changing the world
 - Basketball I

Community Conversation

Assets and Strengths in Harford County		
Teamwork Aberdeen Proving Grounds – Military resources Magnet schools Good education Public libraries Boys and Girls Clubs	The Y Parks Rich History – War of 1812 MYAC Alumni Cal Ripkin – hometown heroes and champions Farmer’s Markets/Agriculture	Churches Housing for homeless Pet Shelters LUNA Houses – no kill animal shelters Sports teams and athletics

Problems/Issues in the Community		
Bullying IIII Pay-to-play sports II Depression Suicide I Mental health IIIIII	Stereotyping (racial/background) School fights/drug violence IIII Better sports funding and facilities I Teacher raise freeze I	Police brutality II Sexism I School inequality III Littering/cigarette butts I

Prioritized Issue Areas
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mental Health 2. Bullying/School Violence 3. School Inequality 4. Police Brutality/Pay-to-Play Sports 5. Sexism/Suicide /Sports funding and Facilities/Littering/Teacher Pay Freeze 6. Depression/Stereotyping

Causes of Mental Health Issues

- Substance abuse
 - Exposure to drugs at a younger age
- Stress and anxiety
 - home life
 - peer pressure
 - school
 - pressure to be perfect
 - high expectations
 - workload
 - parent pressure to succeed
- Paranoid
- Depression
- Lack of opportunities for help
 - school counselors break your trust and gossip
 - counselors don't provide equal attention to full student population
 - not knowing what to do about your depression
- Stigma
- Lack of information
- Bullying

Causes of Bullying

- Teachers/Counselors not following through with the Bully Box
- No follow through on dealing with bullies (all talk no action)
- When youth reach out about bullying –don't get the right help and that help is given makes youth feel hopeless
- Adults making you relive the experience the bullying and discuss it in front of the person who caused the bullying makes it harder to share
- Adults don't understand the gravity of some issues over other issues.
- Teachers aren't LGBTQ friendly
- Older teachers don't know how to handle newer issues that students have
 - Don't know what the consequences for teachers are
 - Teachers should be educated on issues of students and emphasize professionalism

Causes of School Inequality

- Funding for magnet programs and not the rest of school
- Schools have unequal funding or opportunity based on student/family/community wealth
 - Property tax paying for schools
- LGBTQ welcoming school environments are not equal
- Schools with unequal facilities
- Not districting schools so that the system is free from monetary influence
- Reputation of schools

Solutions for Bullying

- Regulation of the Bully Box in schools
 - Check at least once a week
 - Give a quick response
 - Be discrete with students
- Teacher education/training
 - As related to LGBTQ issues

- Consequences when a teacher bullies
- Anonymous ways to report teachers and bullies
- Restore faith in the system
 - Transparency in the process
 - Have safe ways to report incidents
- Proactive not reactive
- More up-to-date education for students and teachers
- Student-led talks
- PSA's/Testimonials mad by students about bullying

Allies in Addressing Bullying

- Maryland Youth Advisory Council
- Student Governments
- Anti-bullying organizations
- PTAs
- Harford County Youth Commission
- Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Center (SARC)
- School Resource Officer
- Student Member of the Board of Education
- HCASC/MASC

Targets and Demands in Addressing Bullying

- Peers/students – do not bully, stand up and support others, get informed about bullying
- Parents – advocate for children, instill values in kids, provide support at home
- Principals/Headmasters – enforce bullying policies, do not bully, do not allow bullying in school, have public forums and assemblies for students to share
- Superintendent/Board of Education Members – Listen to students, develop and enforce strong and transparent policies
- Teachers/School Administrators – get informed about the issues, hire less biased teachers
- County Council/Commission – leverage funding to support programs and response to bullying
- Elected Officials – bring the voice of Harford County to the larger conversation; provide accountability to schools and the Board of Education; make policy change; engage youth!

Action Plan to Address Bullying

- Strengthen the role of counselors in checking and responding to the Bully Box in schools
- Start Rachel's Challenges and providing mentoring programs for youth
- Meet with the Board of Education about the experiences of bullying
- Meet with Principals about implementing better policies and procedures
- Student-led meetings and forums to organize youth
- Form Gay Straight Alliances in schools