

# Clark County Community Foundation

On the Table 2019: Youth Report



## Clark County Youth Participant Report

In March of 2019 students from Baker Intermediate School, Campbell Jr. High School and George Rogers Clark High School participated in On the Table, an initiative promoting open discussions about problems and identifying solutions to improve our schools and communities. This year's topic focused on inclusivity and belonging with conversation prompts centered on creating a welcome community for all residents and visitors. All fifth- and sixth-grade students participated through Related Arts classes, while seventh- through 12th-grade students participated in English and Language Arts classes. It is estimated that more than 4,000 Clark County Public School students contributed to conversations and provided feedback. Notes pages were collected from student groups and a student survey was conducted by national survey companies Public Opinion Strategies and Hart Research Associates. Additional feedback was received from school counselors, staff and administrators. The following pages of this report are based on this collective feedback.

In 2018's On the Table conversations, Clark County youth participants were asked the question "Looking ahead to the next five years or so, do you feel more hopeful or more worried about what the future holds for our community?" Over 72% answered that they felt more worried. The same question was asked in this year's conversations, with 62% of all students feeling more hopeful. The drastic change in position could be due to an increased number of student participants, along with a myriad of other possibilities. Despite identifying the community and school issues outlined below, students, particularly those under age 15, are feeling more confident about the direction our community is heading.

This project was part of On the Table, a national civic engagement initiative supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; it was initially developed by The Chicago Community Trust.

Clark County Community Foundation would like to thank Clark County Public Schools for their partnership on this initiative.

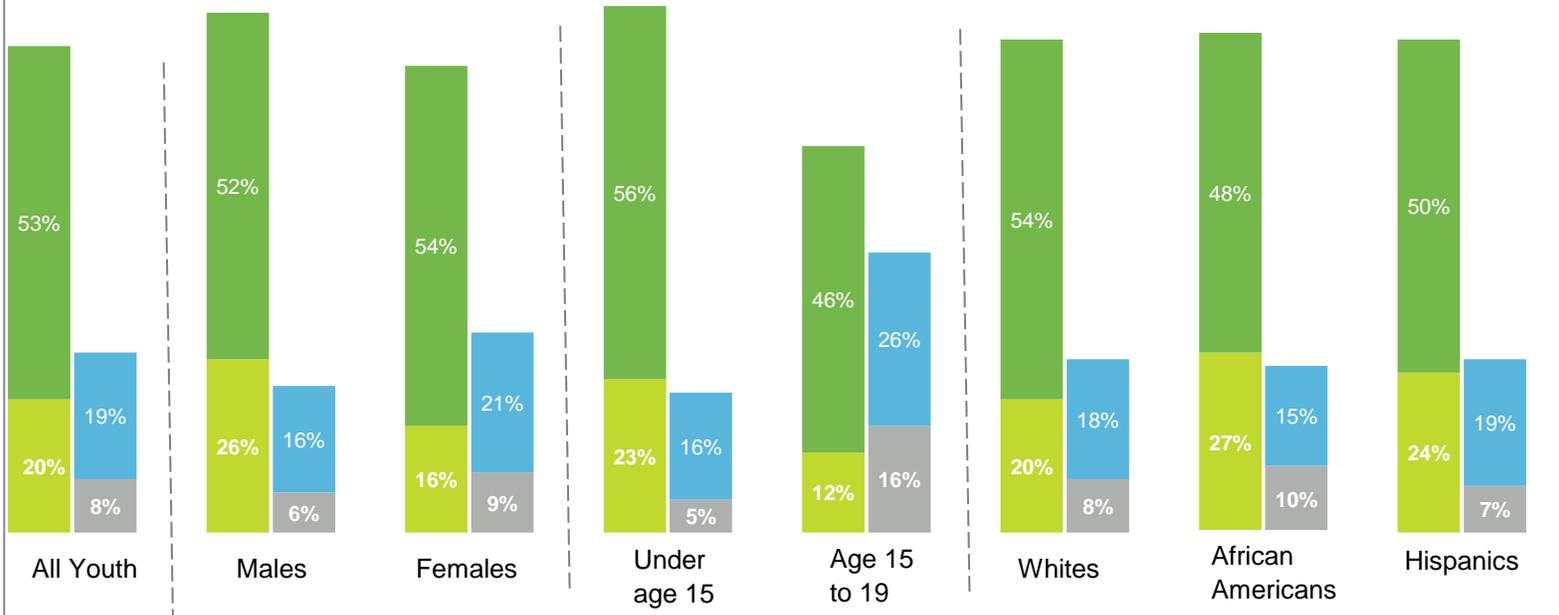
Clark County Community Foundation was established in 1998 by local citizens as a permanent fund dedicated in perpetuity to the well-being of Clark County. Since its inception, the Fund has granted more than \$4 million to benefit charitable projects and causes in Clark County. Clark County Community Foundation is a geographic component fund of Blue Grass Community Foundation.

Questions, comments and concerns regarding this report or the On the Table initiative can be directed to Halee Cunningham, J.D., gift planning officer and deputy counsel, Blue Grass Community Foundation at [halee@bgcf.org](mailto:halee@bgcf.org).

# Community Opportunities

**My community provides opportunities for everyone.**

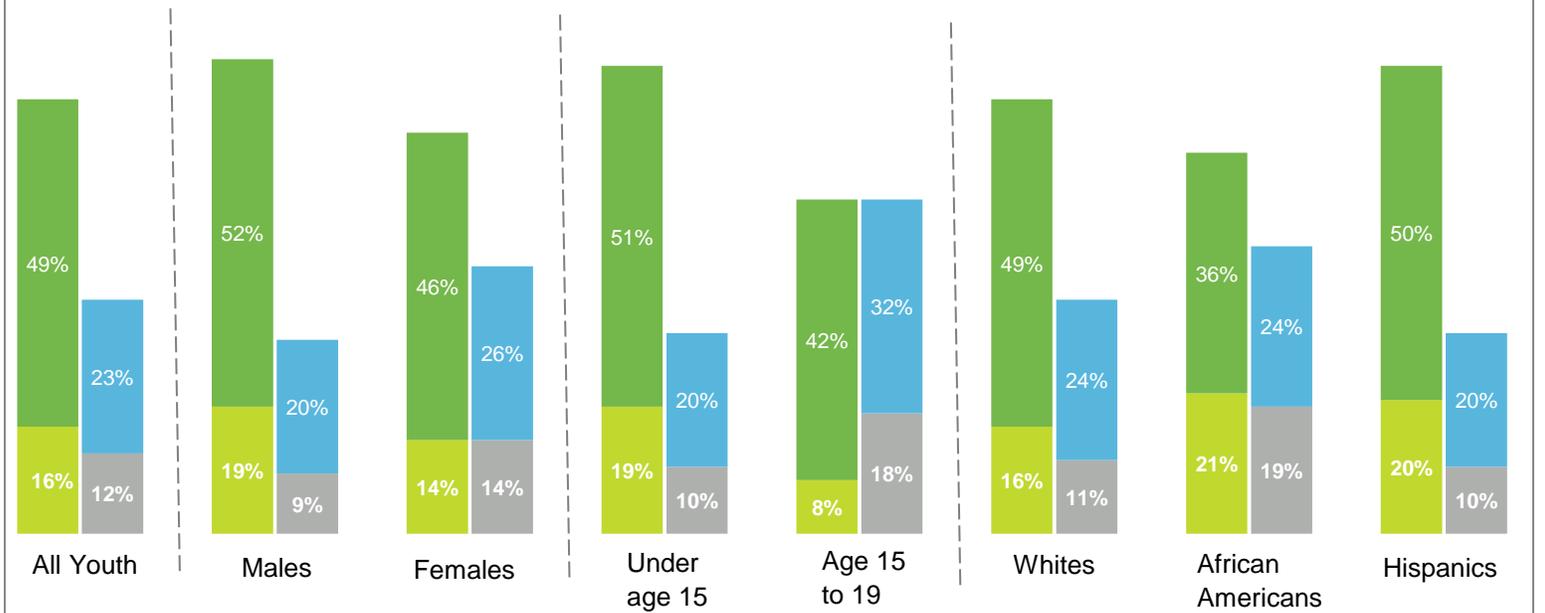
■ Strongly agree 
 ■ Somewhat agree 
 ■ Strongly disagree 
 ■ Somewhat disagree



When asked to respond to the statement “My community provides opportunities for everyone,” students overwhelmingly agreed. Responses to the statement “My community is the perfect place for people like me” were more varied.

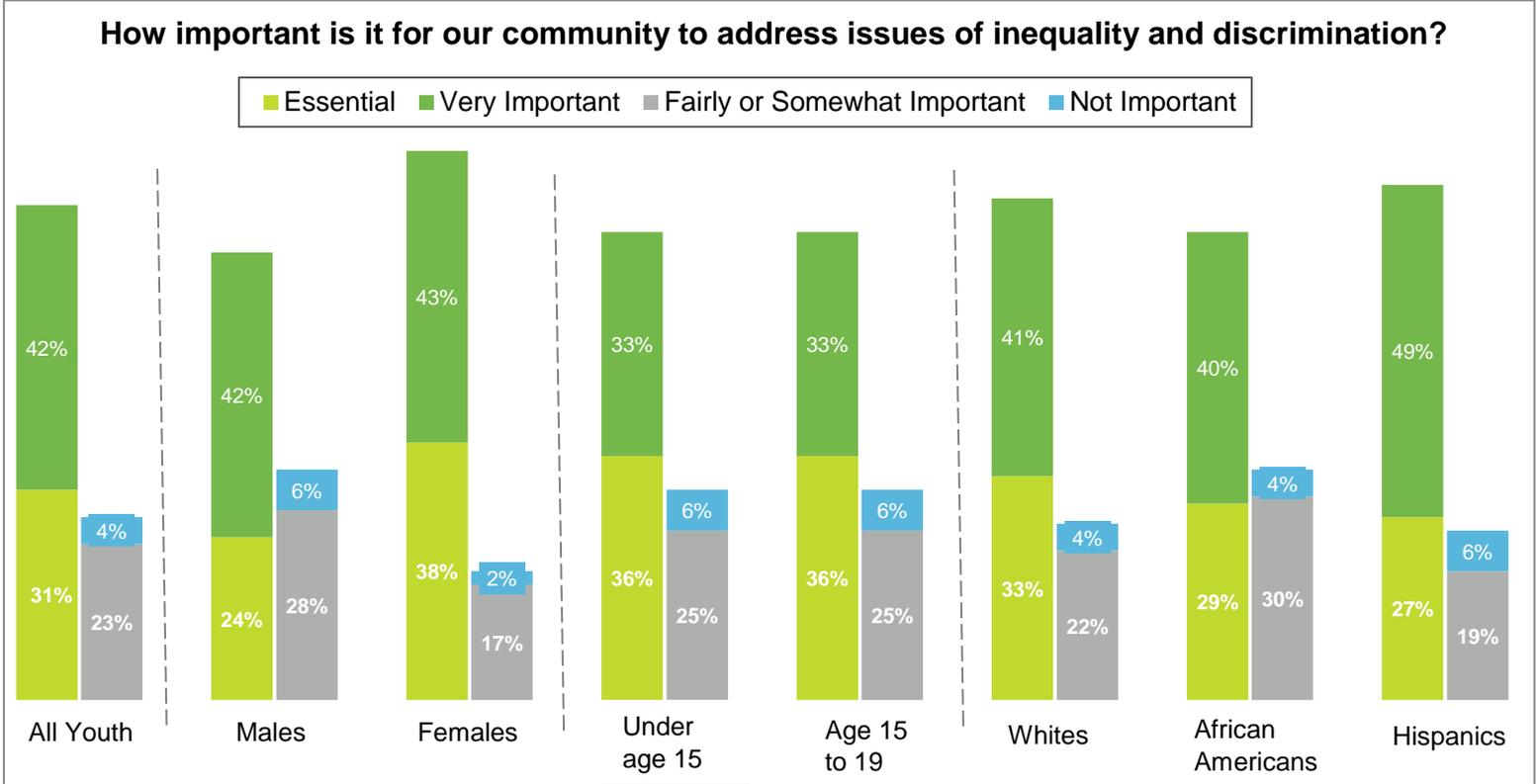
**My community is the perfect place for people like me.**

■ Strongly agree 
 ■ Somewhat agree 
 ■ Strongly disagree 
 ■ Somewhat disagree



# Community Inclusiveness

This year's On the Table focused on creating a more welcoming and inclusive community. This includes having a school system where all students, parents and teachers feel a sense of belonging. A resounding 73% of students responded that it is essential or very important to address issues related to inequality and discrimination within our community as a whole.



When students answered discussion questions about inclusiveness within the schools, responses focused on bullying, leadership and accountability.

Campbell Junior High students specifically noted that “sexual orientation is a big deal” and can lead to additional bullying and harassment by students, while Baker Intermediate students discussed the teasing and mocking of many students in the school’s special needs program. Students at the high school took a different view, stating that the school lacks a sense of community overall. Requests were made for more schoolwide activities like pep-rallies and spirit days. Some students suggested school potlucks or cultural festivals to celebrate the diversity of the student body, potentially leading to more inclusiveness within the school community.

There is a lack of leadership, said one GRC student. Many other students made similar comments regarding a disconnect between administration and students. Student feedback provided comments that administrators should set more of a precedence of inclusiveness. Small acts could go a long way, like having the principals come out of their offices, “that would make them more approachable,” noted the high school students.

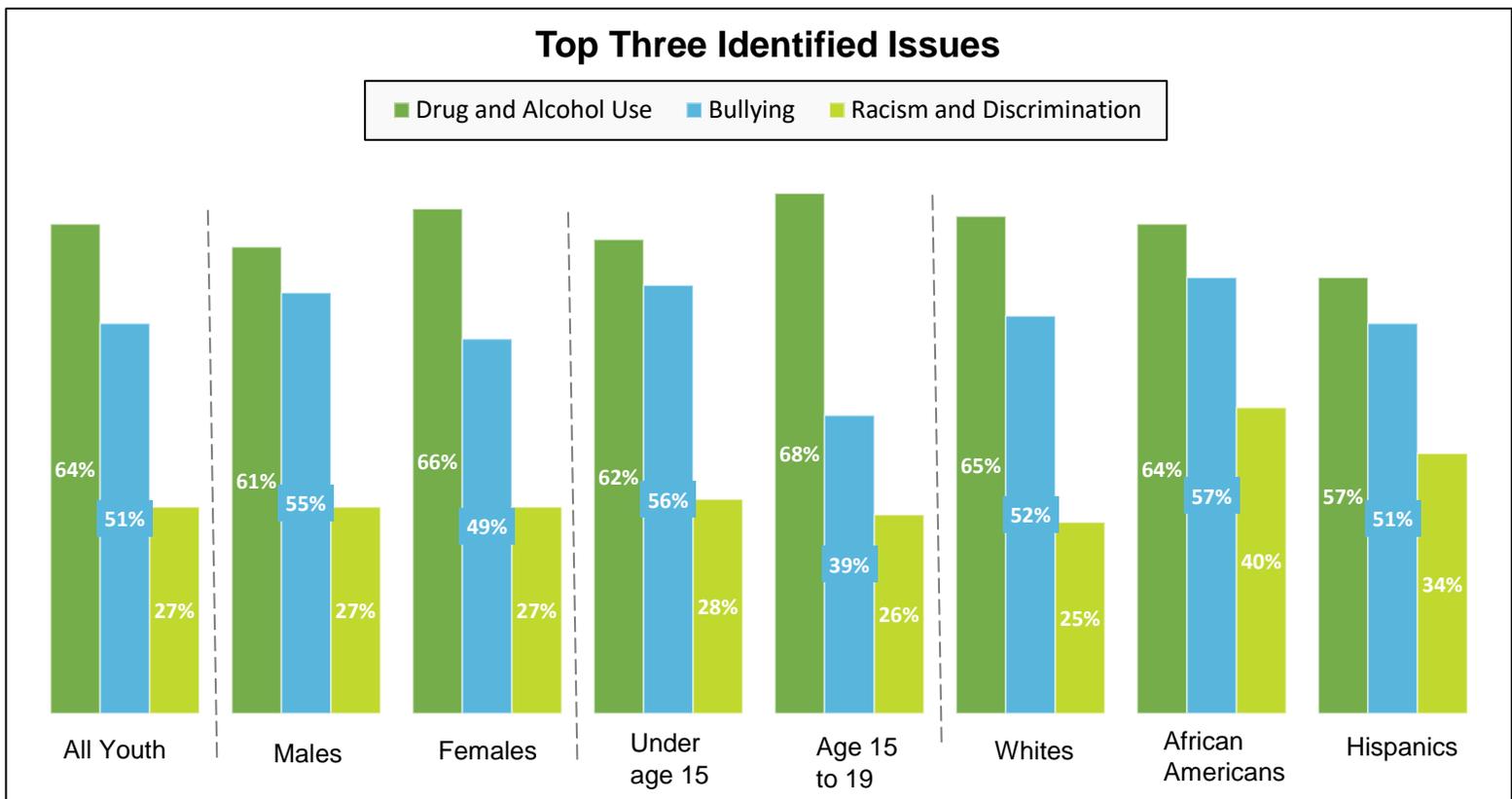
A failure to address issues or enforce consequences can lead to continued problems, noted students at Campbell and GRC. “Teachers never do anything to stop racism or homophobia,” stated one GRC student. Others discussed what they view to be a clear line between who gets in trouble and who

doesn't; discipline is not universally applied to all students, some groups [like athletes] can get away with more, said several high school participants.

Students were also asked where they feel most included, or a sense of community belonging, as compared to where they feel excluded or a sense of danger. A majority of participating students listed their homes and churches or religious institutions as places of safety and belonging. Others listed places like the public library. On the opposite end, many listed downtown Winchester, College Park and the Winchester Wal-Mart parking lot as places they deem dangerous or uninviting. Within the confines of the school, many students said they do not feel welcome on the school bus. Baker and Campbell students noted that recess and lunch are when they feel the loneliest. Several Baker students said that their school feels unwelcoming and "gloomy."

## Identifying Community Issues

When presented with 13 issues facing the community, all students, regardless of gender, age or race identified drug and alcohol use/addiction as the top issue that our community needs to address.



When discussing this in a school context, students at all three participating schools remarked on the heavy use of drugs, alcohol and vaping. Remarkably, most students stated that one of the places they feel most unsafe is the school bathroom. Multiple GRC students discussed drug use and drug deals occurring daily on school grounds, particularly in the bathrooms but also in the hallways. The resource officers never leave the camera room, remarked numerous GRC students. Students aren't afraid of getting caught by the resource officers because they never check the bathrooms, even when the cigarette smoke detectors go off, noted another student. Some students were unaware that more than one resource officer was even stationed at the school because of a lack of visibility within the

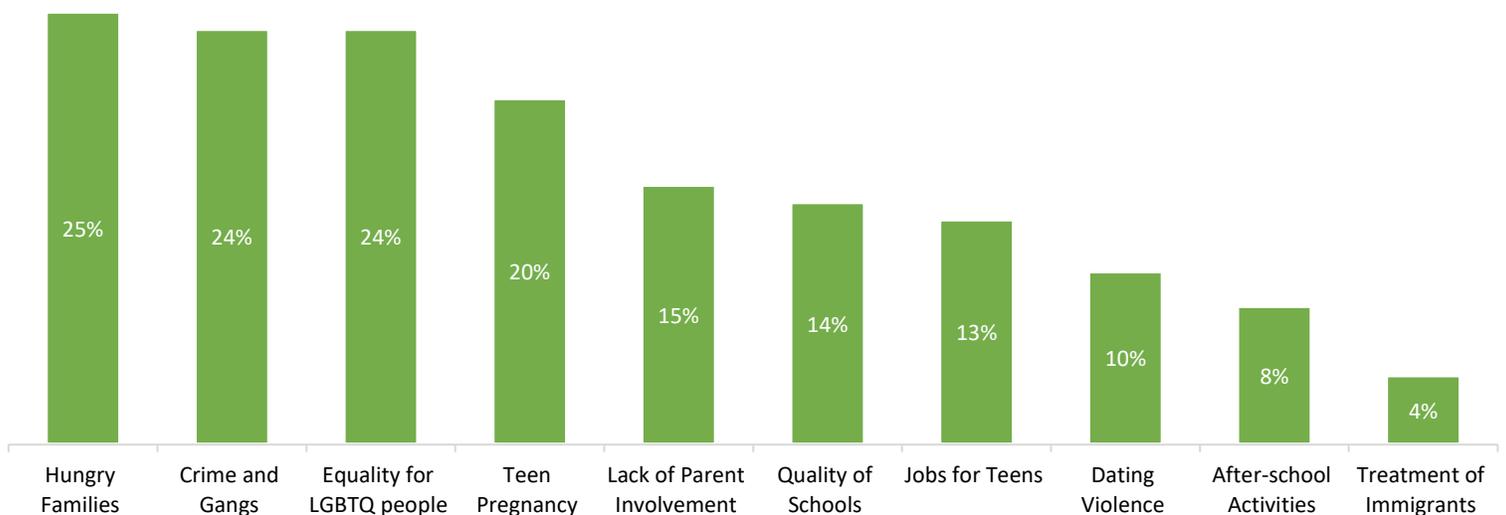
building. More than one student explained that they try not to use the restroom for the entire school day out of fear of witnessing a drug deal or drug usage. It's not just drug use but also alcohol use during the school day. Students remarked that many students come to school drunk or high, or sneak in alcohol and drink during the school day. "If the school found out someone was doing drugs, they wouldn't do anything about it" was the direct sentiment of one GRC student participant.

Students at Campbell and Baker also made numerous comments about vaping on school property. The biggest issues at Campbell are the bathrooms and the bus lot, noted participants. Closer monitoring of the bathrooms and more severe punishment for vaping are needed, said Campbell students. However, more pressing are the issues that come from combining the buses at afternoon dismissal in the Campbell parking lot. The high schoolers are dropped off in the afternoons, and they get off the bus and smoke, get in fights and bully people, said Campbell participants. The high school students won't listen to our teachers because they don't go to school there and don't think they can get in trouble there, stated other Campbell students. One distinctive issue within Campbell that was not an available option for students to select is the sending of nude photographs among students. "Nudes are common," wrote one Campbell student, describing nude photos on social media and text messaging apps, not drugs, as the biggest issue facing their school.

Fifth- and sixth-grade students at Baker noted that vaping does happen in the bathrooms but that they do not report it to teachers out of fear of being labeled a "snitch" or a "tattletale." Teachers should monitor the bathrooms more and talk to kids about not calling others "snitch" if they report vaping stated students.

Additional issues such as school quality, teen pregnancy, jobs and hunger were also ranked.

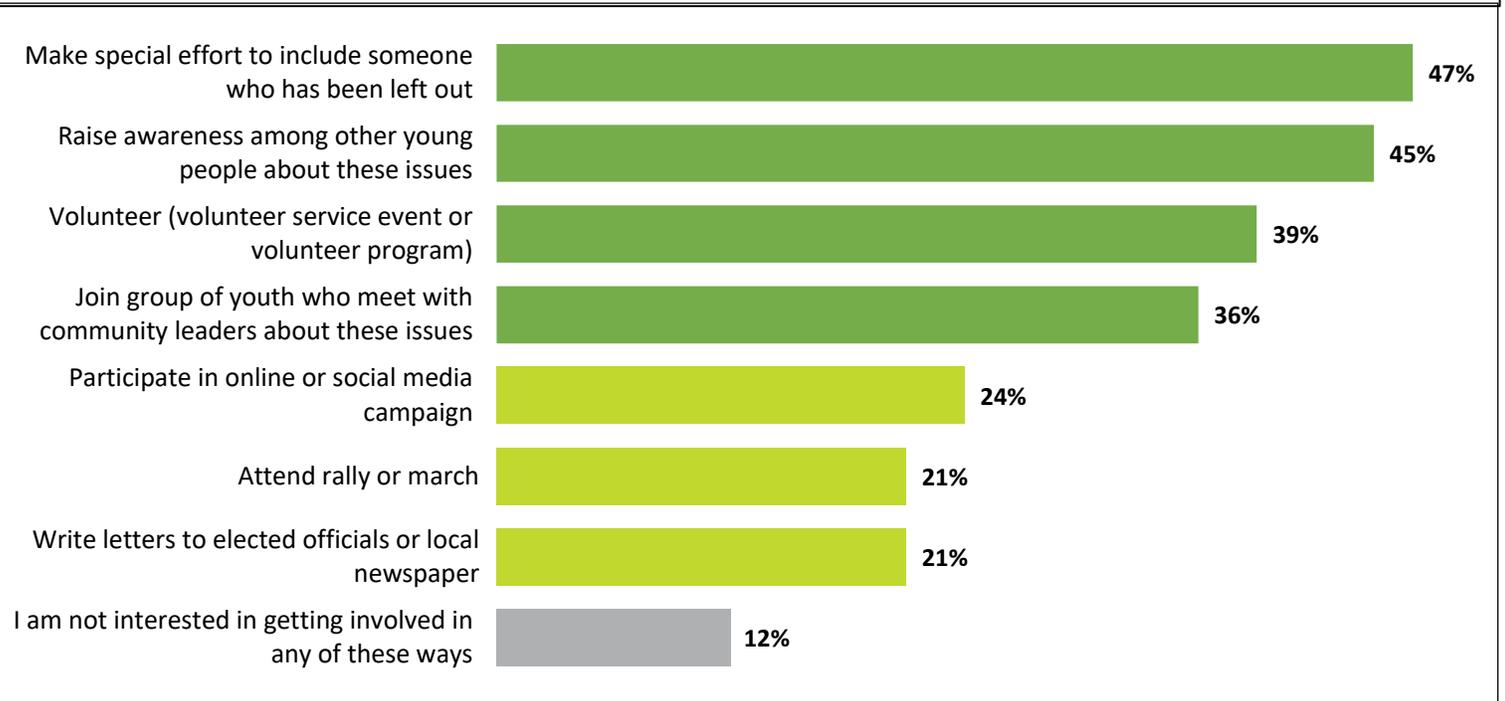
### Additional Issue Rankings from All Youth



## Addressing Identified Issues

Students were provided with eight options to become involved in addressing identified issues and creating a more welcoming and inclusive community. They were asked to select their top three interest areas. The majority focused on including others, advocating amongst their peers and volunteerism.

*THREE ways I would be most interested in getting involved in efforts to encourage discussions about inequality and discrimination and to make our community more welcoming and inclusive:*



When asked whether it is bullying to leave someone out, students had mixed responses, but when asked what to do if they know someone is feeling left out, 47% of all students said they would make a special effort to include someone.

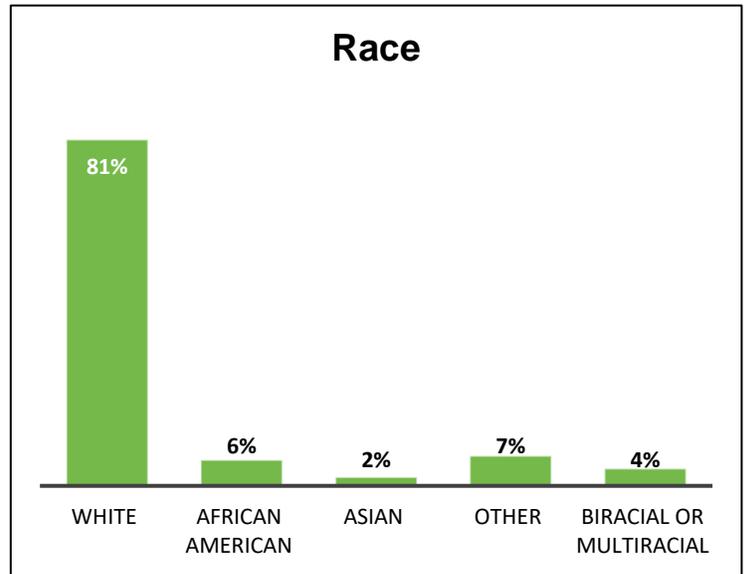
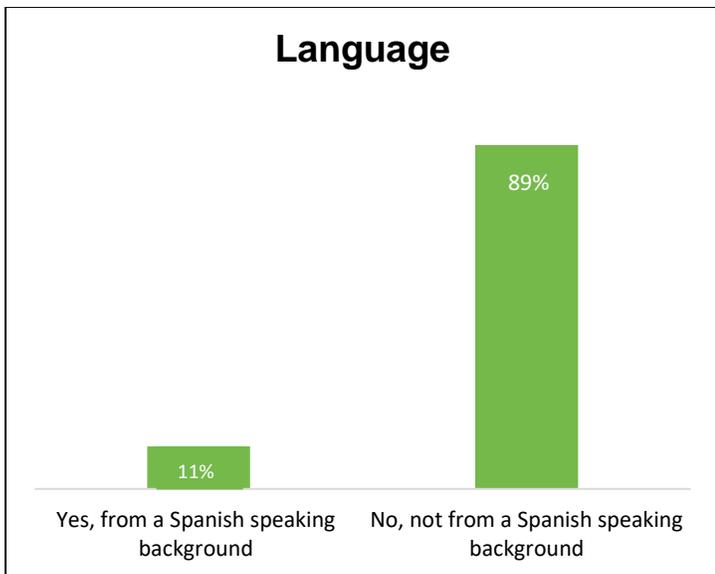
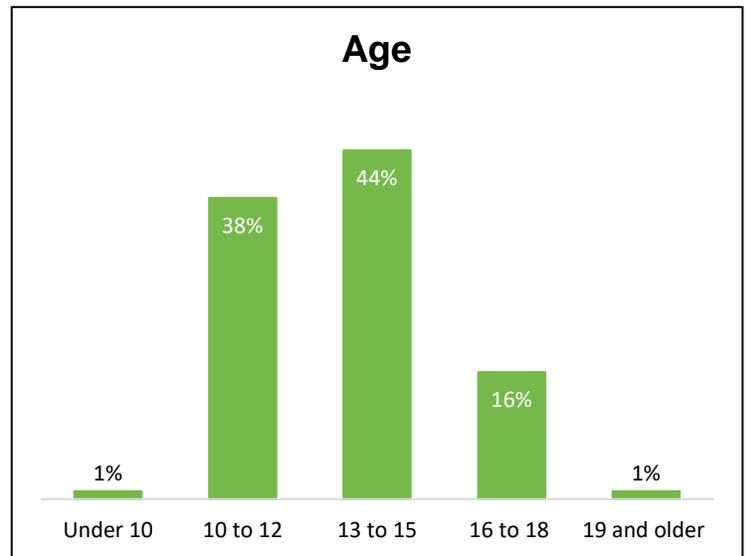
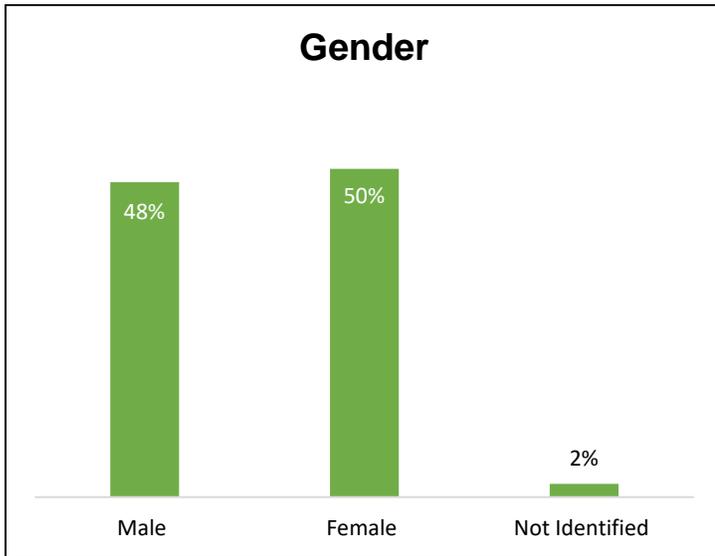
High school students said the best way to include others is to become more involved in clubs or other activities where participants have similar interests. There are not a lot of free in-school opportunities for students, said some. A lot of kids have issues paying for afterschool activities or getting transportation after school hours, so they don't get to participate, noted others. Students shared that if more clubs were offered during in-school club days or if they got to choose their advisory class based on interest groups, more kids could find ways to get involved. A lot of clubs currently offered are based on grades. "Just because you don't have a 4.0 doesn't mean you don't want to be involved," said one participant. It would also be helpful to have more opportunities like this (On the Table) for students to be able to share their ideas and voices, stated others. Counselors should also be more available for students to speak to when they do feel left out or lonely. One student proposed keeping the same counselor for all four years. This could help create more of a student-counselor bond, particularly for those students who do not regularly meet with a counselor or would not feel comfortable meeting with a counselor whom they have never met.

Campbell students echoed the same remarks regarding the need for additional in-school clubs and activities. They also stated that teachers and counselors should provide additional lessons specifically on dealing with bullying, suicide prevention and feelings of loneliness or helplessness. "We should have more 'what would you do?' questions," said one student, referencing a learning series that students participated in previously. Students also noted a stigma attached with going to the guidance counselor's office. According to participants, other students assume the student is going there to "tattle" on another student or that the student has mental health issues. Providing a more discrete avenue for allowing students to see a counselor could increase the number of students who seek out help.

Baker students also requested additional in-class lessons targeted specifically at how to stop a bully or how to safely intervene if someone is being bullied. Students also requested adding "buddy benches" to their playgrounds. A "buddy bench" is an identified bench where students sit when they are feeling lonely or need a "buddy" to play with. Other students then know to proactively include that student in their activities. Adding sign language classes and other opportunities to discuss inclusion for students with special needs was another suggested solution from Baker participants.

## Data

It is estimated that 4,000 Clark County Public School students participated in 2019's On the Table. Students were requested to complete an online survey following their conversations. More than 1,600 surveys were completed, and more than 340 group notes pages were turned in (groups were made up of six to 10 students). The following charts provide a detailed breakdown of student's self-identified gender, age, race and language.



## Community Summary

Additional On the Table events were held for community members by Clark County Community Foundation, the Clark County Chamber of Commerce, the Winchester Rotary and BCTC Winchester-Clark County Campus. Community members discussed ways to make Winchester and Clark County more welcoming. Common themes and ideas discussed included working with the Chamber of Commerce on newcomer welcome baskets or creating a welcoming team to assist new residents. Improvements to downtown were praised, with notes that additional changes are still needed, particularly focused on walkability, accessibility and increased safety. One priority is the creation of a safe walkable and bikeable community, particularly for children.

Participants noted that racial and socio-economic biases are present throughout the community, with many noting the divide in county versus city. Others discussed the “good ole’ boy” system that is in place within the local government, with the need to be part of that crowd to get anything accomplished. Many community members would like to see churches and civic organizations increase their community outreach to create a feeling of invitation as compared to exclusion or judgement. Finally, one participant noted that there is a way for everyone to contribute to a more welcoming and inclusive community: “Extend a hand. Start a conversation.”