



About BYM

"Be On Your Mental" is the final community project that blossomed out of Findlay House Global's 15-session, learn-by-doing youth leadership academy: Y.O.U.R. Kent County.

After a period focused on exploring how our understanding of power, generational stories, and ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) intersect, Y.O.U.R. Kent County Student Leaders designed a community project that addresses the "mentality" that currently drives and influences high-risk behavior among Kent County youth.

A group of 35 Kent County high schoolers collaborated together to create, "Be On Your Mental"—a double entendre meant to express the importance of maintaining a focus on your mental health ("Be on", by being aware and able to acknowledge your emotions); as well as the fact that your current mindset ("mental") doesn't have to define you! You can go "beyond" your current mentality and create a new and better reality if you are willing to get past a wrong mindset.

MISSION

"Be On Your Mental" (BYM) is a cross age mentoring program, targeting KCMS 8th graders (the mentees) and facilitated by KCHS 10th-12th graders (the mentors). BYM seeks to help 8th graders (primarily)—and their parents (secondarily)—have an easier transition from middle school to high school. The program helps 8th graders deal with the challenges they face by teaching them leadership skills, instilling positive coping habits, and pairing them with a high school mentor who is ready and willing to relate to them on their level on a bi-weekly basis in large group time and one-to-one time.

100%

of YLA student leaders reported that they felt like they contributed to the final program.

Situational Analysis

Kent County Local Management Board identified student behavioral health as a priority area in their FY23-FY25 Community Plan for Children, Youth, & Families.

In the four years before the COVID-19 pandemic, the rates of anxiety and depression in Kent County Middle and High School students increased by nine percent (9%).

Kent County Public Schools performed twice the number of suicide ideation assessments in the 2021-2022 school year compared to the 2020-2021 school year, and Black students were 1.2 times more likely to struggle with anxiety and depression than their White counterparts (See the [KCLMB 2023-2025 Community Plan](#)).

The median age in Kent County is 48 years old. Young people, ages 5 - 19, make up approximately 17% of the 19,456 people who call Kent County home.

Kent County High School had 558 students enrolled during the 2021 - 2022 school year. Of those students, approximately 51.6% were eligible for free or reduced lunch. Approximately 61% of the student population was identified as White and 20% as Black, 11% as Hispanic, and less than 8% identifying as either Asian, American Indian, or Two or More Races.

As we prepared to engage students and narrow down the areas of focus for behavioral health we created a 2-minute survey that we asked adults (Parents, Teachers, and Administrators) to complete. We received 22 responses. During our time of engagement with students we shared similar questions with them as part of a gut check activity to either validate or challenge the findings.

The top behavioral health challenges were nearly identical on both the parent and student responses, with only Shyness and Depression switched for second place:

- **Anxiety** (Adults 85% | Students 90%)
- **Shyness/Withdrawn** (Adults 75% | Students 65%)
- **Depression** (Adults 65% | Students 70%)
- **Loneliness** (Adults 50% | Students 55%)

Both adults (41.67%) and students (75%) agreed that an in-school intervention would be best. Adults volunteered that information in their response to an open-ended question, whereas students responded to a closed-ended question that asked their preference for in-school vs. out of school.

The first-hand data we collected also revealed that younger students (57% of high school freshmen surveyed) prefer to talk to someone their age that they don't know well than a trusted adult or an adult they didn't know well.

Program Outline

Target Audience	Primary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rising Freshman (8th Graders in Kent County) Secondary <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents of 8th graders
Existing Situation	YLA Student Leaders noted that the transition from middle school to high school is already challenging. These challenges are exacerbated by a mindset that includes a need for attention/validation and a desire to fit in. This often leads youth in middle school engaging in high risk behavior including drug abuse/addiction, sexual activity, self-harm, and dealing with anger.
Ideal Situation	An easier transition for rising freshmen. 8th graders are mentored by high school peers. Incoming Freshmen are equipped with healthy and positive coping mechanisms, are confident in their identity and don't feel the need to seek out validation through engaging in high risk behavior.
Youth-Designed Key Performance Indicators	Communication Objective <ul style="list-style-type: none">• By May 2024, all KCMS 8th graders have heard of "Be On Your Mental" (BYM) and the BYM peer mentorship program has consistently engaged 15 KCMS students who attend 60% of BYM meetings. Behavioral Objective <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase self-confidence, the ability to communicate with trusted adults and peers, and the ability to cope using positive behaviors among rising freshman (8th graders) as evidenced by a decrease in suicide ideation assessments, and an increase in self-initiated guidance/counselor visits among 9th graders by May 2025.
Recommended Baseline Monitoring and Evaluation Methods	Short-Term <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Taking attendance at each meeting and/or session• Documenting communication efforts, including social media posts Long-Term (May 2024 and May 2025) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Documenting number of suicide ideation assessments among 9th graders• Documenting number of self-initiated guidance/counselor visits among 9th graders

Program Structure

In order to outline the program and determine the structure, student leaders reviewed several different existing programs and program components, including: R Labs (of South Africa), Big Brother Big Sisters High School Teen Mentoring, California Friday Night Live Mentoring Program, and CAMP - cross age mentoring program.

A survey tool was used to determine a final program structure.

A cross-age peer mentoring program that lasts through-out the school year (“two semesters”) was selected by 100% of student participants.

The structure outlined here is based on components that were selected by a minimum majority vote of what the student leaders felt would be most effective, and therefore best.

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES	TIME COMMITMENT
8th grade Mentee	Attend regular mentoring meetings	Two Semesters
Parent	Gives permission for participation, Ensures mentee and/or mentor attends BYM meetings; attends parent meeting or BYM events to learn about the program and give feedback	Events-based (30 min. - 4 hr.)
Mentor (Grade 10-12)	Complete mentor training; attend all BYM meetings; create an appropriate, mutual and respectful relationship with mentee; hangout with 8th grade mentee; talk about specific leadership topics; participate with mentee in the community project	Two Semesters
BYM Advisor/Point of Contact	An adult on-site at KCHS who maintains oversight of the program; liaises with KCMS; and assists Lead Mentors with recruiting participants and annual evaluation	Two Semesters
Training Coach/ Curriculum Co-Writer	A person and/or firm that would co-write the program curriculum in conjunction with the *Lead Mentors* and would train mentors to effectively lead large group sessions and one-to-one meetings based on the curriculum	Up to One Month (Training & Curriculum Co-Writing)

BYM Program Structure

In the first year, *Lead Mentors* would refer to Graduates of the 2022-2023 Youth Leadership Academy who helped design the BYM program. In any subsequent years, a Lead Mentor would be a second or third year BYM Mentor. In addition to regular Mentor Responsibilities, Lead Mentor would also assist with routine management tasks and assist other Mentors with questions or conflicts.

5 W's

Who. What. Where. When. Why.

WHO

- Roles outlined on the previous page

WHAT

- Cross-age mentoring that includes Program Curriculum and Mentor Training Sessions with a Training Coach

WHERE

- At Kent County High School, exact location to be determined

WHEN

- During school hours, exact time to be determined

WHY

- Address the "mentality" that currently drives high-risk behavior among Kent County 8th Graders

ONE-TIME

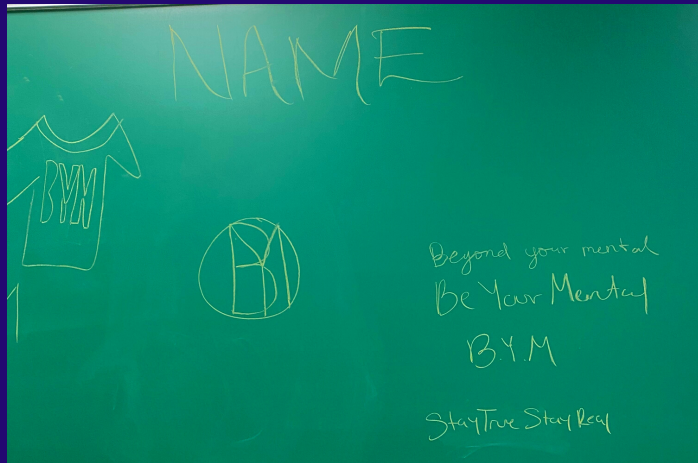
The activities below were identified as one-time activities needed each year of the program.

- Curriculum Writing/Development with Training Coach
- Week-long, Mentor Training Sessions with Training Coach

ON-GOING

The activities below were identified as on-going during each year of the program.

- Bi-weekly, 30-minute long session for Mentors
 - Planning with BYM Advisor
- Content Creation
 - Social Media Posts and Updates
- Bi-weekly, 1-hour long mentoring session
 - Curriculum/Lessons
 - One-to-one time
 - Large Group Time



What's Next For BYM?

YLA students and our project team are proud of the foundation that has been laid for the BYM program through this student-led design process. As the program moves from design to implementation**, enthusiasm and intrigue remain.

We asked student leaders what their concerns were as BYM moves into the implementation phase. And the question on everyone's mind was -

Will it be successful?

Some students wondered if the work they did would be taken seriously. Others were worried that the program would end prematurely and would not continue. They also questioned whether or not they would continue to be included as contributors in the implementation process.

We believe BYM can and will be successful!

Based on our own experience implementing the YLA, and the feedback we received from Parents during the Art Works™ event, there is still room to maximize the potential impact of the BYM program.

Optimizing BYM—and its potential for behavioral health transformation—will require the full support of the Kent County community, including:

- interested and invested parents advocating for the program
- administrative buy-in from the KCHS and KCMS for a more seamless experience
- referrals from related government agencies (e.g. Social Services)
- and, continuing to consult with BYM student leaders.

**An RFP for implementation issued by the Kent County Local Management Board is forthcoming.

Recommendations

REMEDIAL ACTION RECOMMENDED	TIMELINE	METRICS	RESPONSIBLE ENTITY
ACTIONS TO ADDRESS CURRENT IMPEDIMENTS			
Impediment #1: Lack of School Administration and Parent Awareness; Goal #1: Increase Efforts to Disseminate Program Information and Improve Awareness			
KCLMB will partner with KCPS to achieve BYM program awareness goals and participation, including access to parent/guardian contact information (i.e. email, phone number) and names of students with .	2023-2024	Parent Contact Information, School Reports	KCLMB, KCPS
Use of all KCPS media outlets, such as the radio and social media, to promote BYM. The KCHS and KCMS will also use parent newsletter to provide program information.	2023-2024	Newsletter & social media posts	KCPS
Promote BYM during internal, administrative meetings.	2023-2024	Meeting Minutes	KCHS
Include BYM program information on the KCPS KCHS and KCMS web pages and a direct link to a BYM sign up for parents and students who want more information	2023-2024	Web page links & stats	KCPS
Require that students who participate (Mentors and mentees) have a signed permission slips from a parent or guardian to make them aware of the BYM program	2023-2024	Signed permission slips	BYM Implementer/Advisor
Impediment #2: Inadequate access to information for Spanish-speaking families Goal #2: Improve access to information			
Provide BYM program information in other languages. Also, include text that "information can be provided in other languages for persons with Limited English Proficiency or persons with disabilities if requested."	2023-2024	Marketing information	BYM Implementer/Advisor
Impediment #3: Potential Discouragement to Participate because of overlapping and similar programs; and limited funding Goal #3: Review existing programs and combine similar programs to ensure greater impact and to extend program life and funding			
Consider the implications of accommodating students by reviewing existing programs at school and within the community, and potentially combining programs with the same goals and/or standards	2023-2024	Number of existing and available programs	KCLMB, Existing KCLMB partners, especially KCPS
Involve behavioral health agencies to work with students and the community to address participation and funding concerns.	2023-2024	Number of behavioral health agency partners	BYM Implementer, KCLMB

Stakeholder Map

STAKEHOLDER NAME	WEBSITE	IMPACT (Is their level of influence High, Medium, or Low?)	HOW COULD/WILL THE STAKEHOLDER INFLUENCE THE PROGRAM ?
KCLMB	https://www.kentcounty.com/personal-services/family-support/kent-county-local-management-board	HIGH	Will fund implementation of the BYM program, has deep connections to the community and can make helpful introductions
Kent County Public Schools	https://www.kent.k12.md.us/Default.aspx	HIGH	Has the ability to approve or reject the dissemination of program information to parents and students - controls multiple channels that parents and students rely on for information; can approve implementation as part of the school day and opening of student contact and behavioral records
Kent County Parents	https://kcpssos.com/	HIGH	The support of parents will directly impact the number of students (both MS and HS) who are able to consistently engage in the BYM program. Parents can also advocate for the program through word-of-mouth.
Kent County High School	https://www.kent.k12.md.us/KCHS.aspx	HIGH	Administration has student records with parent contact information and has the ability to affect the consistency of the program in regards to time and location during school hours.
BYM Student Leaders		HIGH	Student leaders have already laid a solid foundation and they are ready and willing to do the required work "on the ground" if they feel heard and seen and believe their contribution is valuable. Incentives, like payment or service hours are a plus.
Kent County Middle School	https://www.kent.k12.md.us/KCMS.aspx	MEDIUM	Administration has student records with parent contact information and behavioral notes and can assist by recommending/targeting 8th graders for the program.
Kent County Health Department	https://kenthd.org/	LOW	Is invested in Children and Adolescent Behavioral health and may have wraparound services that could be of use and overlapping programs
Kent County Department of Social Services	https://dhs.maryland.gov/local-offices/kent-county/	MEDIUM	Could potentially recommend/target 8th graders for the program based on the Department's records.
Mid Shore Behavioral Health or other agencies	https://midshorebehavioralhealth.org/	LOW	Could be potential partners for deep diving into mental health topics

About FHG

Findlay House Global, LLC.

Findlay House Global, LLC. (FHG) provides Community Development and Communications consulting services to governments and non-governmental organizations. Powered by a vision to see underserved peoples leading the discussion on community development, **we collaborate with communities to assist them in providing community solutions.**

FHG facilitated our Y.O.U.R. Development™ youth leadership academy (YLA) program at Kent County High School in conjunction with the Kent County Local Management Board.

Our work mobilizes people—in targeted communities—towards ownership of development processes through education and collaboration. Thus, increasing the effectiveness and sustainability of community development projects, programs, and services.

The work of community development is meant to improve the quality of life for members of targeted communities and improve outcomes (including behavioral and mental health outcomes) by addressing social determinants (e.g. factors such as affordable housing, good jobs, access to information, nutritious food, and quality education, and safe neighborhoods). Good health equally contributes to a community's social and economic development.

FHG consistently works through an equity lens and utilizes trauma-informed approaches in our community collaboration and community development work.

Each member of the FHG YLA Workshop Facilitator Team holds a certificate in:

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Early Trauma
- Trauma Informed Care for Youth Workers
- Principles of Psychological First Aid
- Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
- Embedding an Equity and Inclusion Lens

Findlay House Global, LLC. (FHG) is a WBENC and SBA certified woman-owned business enterprise (WBE).

