

Brown County Needs Assessment Study

Final Report

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Introduction

In 1999-2000, at the request and sponsorship of the *Tracy Family Foundation*, the Illinois Rural Families Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign undertook a study of important issues and needs facing families in Brown County, Illinois. Over 60 youth and adult residents of Brown County participated in the study.

The primary data collection strategy used in this assessment was concept mapping (Trochim, 1989a, 1989b). Concept mapping allows a group of participants to generate ideas related to a topic, and then organize and prioritize those ideas. The results of the concept mapping process are presented in an empirically-based graphical summary—the ‘concept map’— that displays participants’ original ideas about the topic along with a collective portrait of participants’ views of the relationships among ideas and the importance of each idea.

The topic area addressed in this study was important issues, challenges, concerns, and needs facing Brown County youth and families. In Phase 1 of this study, Brown County residents participated in small discussion groups where they generated and discussed needs of Brown County youth and families. The study facilitator condensed and summarized these ideas into a set of 98 brief statements, listed in Appendix B. In Phase 2, participants sorted these 98 statements into categories based on which ideas they saw as most similar in meaning. Participants also rated the importance of each need within Brown County.

Participants’ sorting and rating data was analyzed using multivariate statistical techniques that resulted in an empirically-based summary of all participants’ data in the “concept map” displayed on page 6 of this report. Interpretation of this map is provided in the results section of this report, after a description of the methods used in the brainstorming (Phase 1) and structured data collection (Phase 2) phases of the study. A brief conclusion section ends the report.

Method

Phase 1: Brainstorming Session

Phase 1 Participants. To generate a list of potential participants to recruit for the study, the study facilitator elicited nominations from Tracy family members living in Brown County. Nominations were used to generate a list of local community leaders, parents, and youth (13 years old and older) to be recruited into the study. Attempts were made to ensure that the list represented youth and adults from all sectors of the county and diverse groups within the community.

Descriptions of the study, invitations to participate, and consent forms were sent to potential participants' home addresses, and a series of follow-up letters and phone calls were used to increase response rates. Teens under the age of 18 had to provide a signed parental consent form before participating.

Fifty letters were sent to potential Phase 1 participant households. Approximately 70% of these households responded, with a 50% acceptance rate. Once the relatively low response rate was noted, and follow up phone calls failed to generate sufficient additional participants, attempts were made to recruit multiple participants from interested households. A total of 44 people signed up to attend a session (32 adults and 8 youth), with approximately 50% of confirmed respondents attending their scheduled session

(18 adults and 4 youth). The final sample for Phase 1 of the study included 18 adults and four youth from 15 households.

Participants appeared to represent a diverse cross section of Brown County residents. Participants ranged in age from 14 to over 60. Geographically, participants came from towns across the county including Buckhorn, Morellville, Mt. Sterling, Timewell, and Versailles. Participants held a large number of roles in the community including high school students, parents, youth group leaders, elected officials, business leaders, and law enforcement, social service, and school personnel.

The goal of the recruiting process in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the study was to maximize the inclusiveness of the participant sample. While we cannot say whether the results presented here also represent the viewpoints of people who were not included in the study because they were not invited or because they decided not to participate¹, we can say that the overall study included over 60 participants from diverse stakeholder groups concerned with and involved in the issues being discussed. Results presented here systematically and accurately portray the viewpoints of this group of participants at the particular time period when the data was collected. The study provided an important and informed group of participants living in Brown County with the opportunity to think through and discuss their views of important needs in the county, and this report provides a systematic and accurate representation of these viewpoints.

Phase 1 Process. A series of focus groups and individual interviews were held with Phase 1 participants, with teens and adults participating in separate sessions. In each discussion group and interview, participants were asked to generate short statements in response to the following prompt: "What are the important issues, concerns, problems or needs facing youth and their families in this county?" For purposes of answering this question, participants were asked to define "youth" as the age range from age ten to age twenty. Participants were encouraged to think broadly about community and family issues that might impact this age group. The study facilitator took notes on large sheets of newsprint during the sessions, actively soliciting participants' feedback on the wording and content of statements.

Approximately 300 needs statements were initially generated from the focus group discussions and individual interviews. To condense this list to a more manageable length, the study facilitator eliminated redundant statements, combined or rephrased statements expressing similar ideas, and created summary statements where a general theme appeared underlie a number of more specific statements. Eight additional community leaders and service providers from Brown County were asked to review the condensed list of 117 statements, and additional statements were added or deleted based on their feedback. In addition, six university-affiliated faculty, graduate students, and Extension staff with expertise in rural affairs also reviewed the list; six additional needs were added to the list based on these experts' opinions about needs that might be expected in rural counties similar to Brown County. The final list included 98 need statements.

Phase 2 Method

Phase 2 Participants. All participants who from Phase 1 of the study were invited to participate in Phase 2. After repeated phone calls and letters, 71% of Phase 1 participants completed Phase 2. A group of 8 additional participants were identified from the list of potential Phase 1 participants who had expressed interest in the study but were unable to attend a discussion group. Other potential participants

¹ The inclusiveness issue is highlighted by the fact that teen participants specifically talked about how only certain social groups from the high school were represented in their discussion groups. However, it is important to note that contrary to many studies, teen voices were included in the study.

were identified through a major employer in the county. Brown County residents working in three divisions of Dot Foods, Inc. were given the opportunity to participate during work time, and 30 participants were recruited through this strategy. A final two participants were Tracy family members under the age of 21. In total, 55 participants completed data collection in Phase 2 (44 adults, 10 teens, and 1 participant who did not provide age information). Of the 53 participants in Phase 2 who reported their town of residence, 3 lived in Versailles, 6 in Timewell, 1 in Buckhorn, and 43 in Mt. Sterling.

Phase 2 Process. Data collection for this phase of this study involved structured sorting and rating tasks. Using either a computer interface or paper-and pencil materials, participants sorted the set of 98 needs statements generated in Phase 1 into categories, or 'piles,' that they felt were similar in meaning. Participants also assigned a descriptive summary label to each of their categories. After sorting all statements, participants rated the importance of each statement. Specifically, participants were asked to rate, "How important is it in this community to take concrete actions to address the need represented by each statement, relative to all of the other on the list?" A total of 19 participants (4 teens and 15 adults) completed both the sorting and the rating tasks, and 36 additional participants (6 teens, 29 adults, 1 unknown) completed the importance ratings only.

Results

Overall Clusters

To generate the concept map, multivariate statistical techniques² were used to combine all participants' sorting data, resulting in a set of coordinates for each statement. Coordinates were used to represent each statement as a point on a two-dimensional map. Ideas that were sorted more frequently into the same piles by participants are closer to one another on the map. In other words, statements that participants saw as closer to each other in meaning are drawn closer together in geographical space on the map. Additional statistical techniques³ were used assign each statement to a category or cluster of statements most similar to each other in meaning. On the concept map, boundaries are drawn around all of the statements belonging to the same cluster. Wherever possible, labels generated by the original participants were used to label the final clusters. In certain cases, cluster labels were generated by combining participants' labels and in one case (Promoting Development of All Youth), a new label was generated by the study facilitator.

² Specifically, multidimensional scaling

³ Specifically, cluster analysis. The exact number of clusters can range from 2 to 20 or more; choosing how many clusters should be used to represent the data is a judgment call based on the coherence and specificity of the resulting clusters.

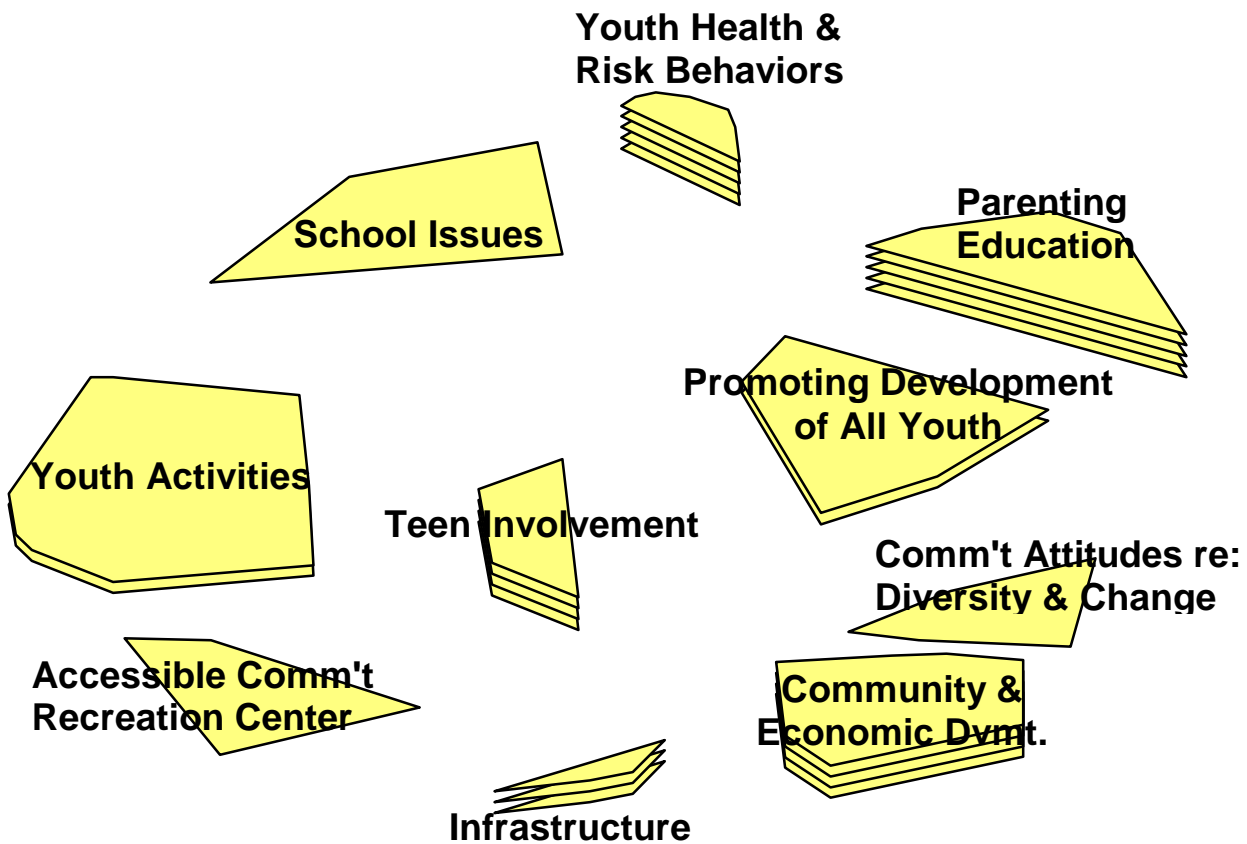


Figure 1. Cluster map resulting from a ten-cluster solution, with importance ratings indicated by the relative height of each cluster.

The set of 98 needs statements in this study appeared to be best described by ten clusters. Figure 1 presents the resulting cluster concept map. General information about the clusters is provided in this section, followed by more detailed information about the content of each specific cluster in the next section.

The spatial layout of the clusters presented in the map provides some information about participants' views of the relationships among clusters (in other words, how needs areas are related to one another). Note that clusters to the top and right of the concept map are related to individual and family issues, while clusters to the bottom of the map are related to community issues. Topics related to adult-centered issues tend to be located on the right side of the map, while clusters relating to youth concerns are located on the left side of the map. The clusters of Teen Involvement and Promoting Development of All Youth appear near the center of the map, providing a bridge between adult and youth topics. The central placement of these clusters may reflect the fact that these issues relate to how youth are treated by and involved in the broader (adult) community.

Participants' views of the importance of each cluster are also represented in Figure 1. Importance ratings are represented by height, with more important clusters represented by higher stacks of layers. Clusters could receive from one to five layers. To determine how many layers each cluster received, the range from the lowest average cluster rating to the highest average rating was divided into quintiles, and each cluster was assigned to a quintile based on its average score. Clusters in the lowest quintile are depicted with one layer, those in the second quintile

with two layers, etc. The clusters and their importance scores are listed in Table 1, ranked in order from highest importance to lowest.

Although depicting average cluster ratings in this way provides valuable information about relative rankings, it is important to keep in mind that all of these rankings fell within a relatively narrow range. As can be seen in Table 1, the average importance rating for all clusters fell between 3 *somewhat important* and 4 *important* (on a scale that ranged from 1 *relatively less important* to 5 *very important*). These relatively high importance ratings are not surprising given that participants originally mentioned needs to be included in the study precisely because they were thought to be important needs; participants were not likely to mention needs that were not seen as important. Thus, clusters in the lowest quintiles should not be regarded as unimportant, only as relatively less important than higher clusters.

A second point to keep in mind is that the average importance score represented by the height of each cluster is the average of all of the individual items in that cluster. The importance ratings for each individual item are presented in list form in Appendix A and graphically in Figure 2 (next page), where the height of each cluster again represents the clusters' overall average importance ratings, and each items' individual importance score is also represented by 'points' with one to five layers. Thus the height of each cluster represents the importance for the overall cluster, while the height of each item represents the relative importance of each item.

Table 1. Clusters in the Concept Map Ranked in Order of Importance

<u>Cluster Name</u>	<u>Importance Rating</u>	<u>Quintile</u>
Parenting Education	3.81	5
Youth Health & Risk Behaviors	3.74	5
Teen Involvement	3.59	4
Community & Economic Development	3.58	4
Infrastructure	3.45	3
Promoting the Development of All Youth	3.36	2
Youth Activities	3.32	2
Accessible Community/Recreation Ctr.	3.16	1
Community Attitudes toward Diversity & Change	3.16	1
School Issues	3.16	1

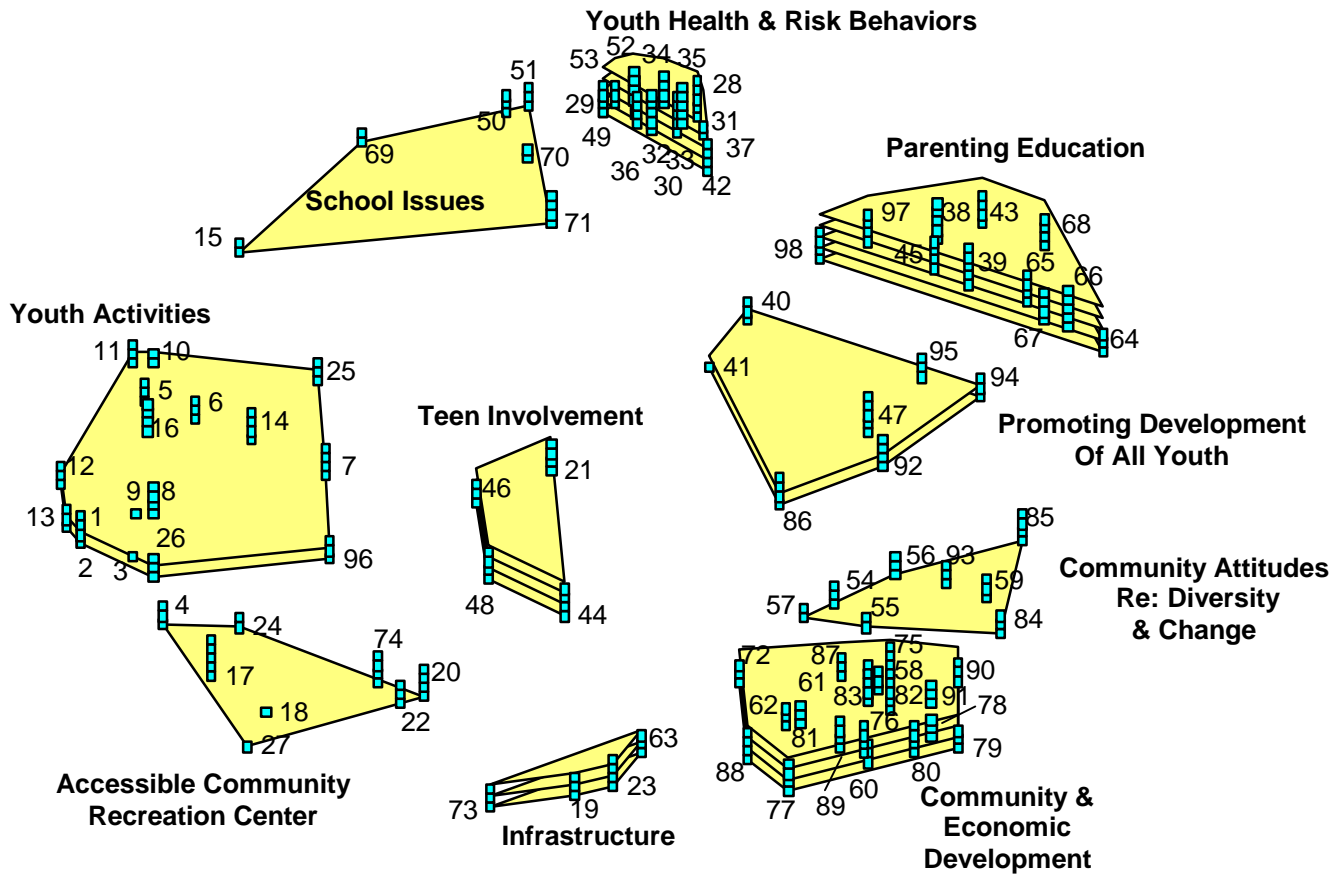


Figure 2. Concept map with item importance ratings. Note #17, an item with an individually high importance rating in a cluster with a relatively low overall average. (Individual items are keyed to their item numbers in Appendix B.)

Figure 2 provides an example of a situation in which an individual item received a relatively high importance score, not reflected in the overall cluster rating. Item #17, “need an athletic center, YMCA, community center-type facility,” is located in the Accessible Community Recreation Center cluster. This item received the fourth highest importance rating in the entire set of 98 statements (4.15 on a scale from 1 to 5; see Appendix A). However, because this item is clustered with other less important items, the overall cluster to which it belongs is among the clusters with lowest overall importance average. This may obscure how important participants felt a community center to be.

Item Analysis:

Detailed Information about Each Cluster's Content

To provide more detailed information about the specific content of each cluster, statements belonging to each cluster are listed on the next several pages. Items in each cluster are listed in a table under the overall cluster label, along with a general summary of the cluster. Each table provides the item number, the specific wording of the item, and the importance rating for that individual item. Items are listed in order of their importance rating within the cluster.

Examining specific items within each cluster can provide the reader with a better understanding of the meaning of each of the overall clusters portrayed on the concept map. Individual items also provide ideas for targeted programs or highlight specific needs that can be targeted with strategic programs.

Cluster #1: Parenting Education

Average Importance Rating: 3.81

The cluster with the highest overall importance rating was the Parenting Education cluster. Items in this cluster appear to represent issues that participants felt were central to family life and parenting. This set of needs focuses on adult behaviors and attitudes that participants felt need to change. The cluster includes problematic attitudes such as parental apathy, and adults' condoning and/or modeling risk behaviors such as alcohol use. Strategies to address improve parenting (e.g., parent education) also appear here. Issues related to both teen and adult drinking appear to be most important within this cluster.

The Parenting Education Cluster

<i>Item #</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Importance Rating</i>
38	Need to change adult attitudes toward teen drinking: too many adults 'look the other way' or model irresponsible drinking	4.28
39	Too many adults drink and drive	4.04
66	Parents need to teach the importance of family and community involvement, especially through role modeling	4.02
67	Families need to communicate more about their kids, from coordinating rides to knowing where kids are	3.89
97	Need strategies to address/prevent domestic violence and child abuse / neglect	3.87
45	Need more dialog and respect between youth and adults that goes both ways	3.81
43	Need to prevent irresponsible parenting by providing parent education at an early age	3.80
98	Need strategies to address effects of divorce on kids	3.76
65	Need more parent involvement in schools	3.65
64	Parents and kids have a hard time communicating and hearing each other	3.61
68	Parental apathy by some parents	3.15

Cluster #2: Youth Health and Risk Behaviors

Average Importance Rating: 3.74

In contrast to the Parent Education cluster, statements in the Youth Health and Risk Behavior cluster include concerns about teen-centered problem behaviors and health issues. Items included in this cluster address teen sexuality, substance use, and mental health issues. Alcohol use appears to be a particularly important concern, with high teen drinking rates, and teenage drinking and driving receiving the highest importance ratings within this cluster (and among the highest importance ratings of all statements in the study; see Appendix A). Another theme that appears in this cluster is low levels of social support available to some teens (i.e., teens who are labeled, teens who do not have supportive adults to talk to).

The Youth Health and Risk Behaviors Cluster

<i>Item #</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Importance Rating</i>
29	Rates of alcohol use among teens is very high	4.37
30	Too many teens drink and drive	4.28
28	Too much cigarette smoking among youth	4.07
31	Some teens are experimenting with drug use	4.04
32	Low self-esteem / depression among teens	3.87
33	Teenage sexual activity	3.85
42	Some teens do not have anyone who cares about them and who will listen to them	3.81
36	Teens use too much profanity/ abusive language	3.70
52	Some kids get labeled before having a chance to prove themselves based on name, social standing, who their parents are	3.64
35	Some girls have eating disorders and/or body image problems	3.52
53	Kids' popularity depends too much on status symbols, such as wearing the right clothes	3.49
34	Teen pregnancy	3.46
49	Some kids look down on others who are less popular or less fortunate	3.44
37	Physical fighting among youth	2.85

Cluster #3: Teen Involvement

Average Importance Rating: 3.59

Statements in the Teen Involvement cluster represent themes of involving youth in community affairs and ensuring that they have a meaningful voice in the community. Opportunities for teens to be involved were seen as important both because these opportunities are intrinsically meaningful to youth, and because they provide a means to the end of promoting increased civic responsibility among young people. This cluster appears to provide a bridge from areas of the map more representative of teen concerns to areas more representative of broader community (adult) issues. The item rated most important in this cluster addresses providing more opportunities for teen involvement.

Statements in the Teen Involvement Cluster

<i>Item #</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Importance Rating</i>
46	Need opportunities for teens to contribute to the community that also benefit them because they are fun or pay money	3.44
48	Need more awards that are inclusive and not dependent on sports involvement, e.g., Biggest fan award or volunteer awards	3.54
21	Need more adults to volunteer to work with teens	3.57
44	Need to include youth in the community so they see it as their community	3.80

Cluster #4: Community & Economic Development

Average Importance Rating: 3.58

This cluster includes a number of quite diverse issues related to the economic and social well being of the community as a whole. The fact that these items were mentioned in a study of youth and family needs, and the fact that they received relatively high ratings, may suggest that participants felt that overall community quality of life was an important aspect of youth and family quality of life.

For purposes of this table, the overall category was divided into two subcategories representing two themes (these subcategories are not represented on the concept map). The first subcategory includes a number of specific economic development issues, many of which reflect a need to attract new residents to the county and the need for economic growth. The second subcategory appears to represent themes of strengthening a positive community identity within the county and promoting the county to others. These two subcategories are not entirely distinct; statements in one subcategory could easily be assigned to the other. The fact that these two topics appeared in the same overall cluster may indicate that participants saw a unique community identity as key to economic growth and saw economic and social issues as highly interrelated.

Statements in the Community & Economic Development Cluster

Item #	<i>Subcategory A: Economic Development</i>	
76	Need to do things to encourage people to live here versus live elsewhere and drive here to work	4.09
75	The county needs to grow by attracting new families while retaining positive aspects of a small town environment	3.94
82	Need to stop losing dollars to other towns and find ways to draw in outside dollars	3.94
83	Need to encourage support for local businesses	3.81
80	The county needs to diversify its economic base	3.53
87	Not enough young people are staying in or returning to the community	3.46
91	Need a lower tax base to be competitive with housing costs in nearby communities	3.41
90	Need a mechanism for helping create new adequate, affordable housing	3.39
78	Economy of county is shifting away from agriculture based economy with no clear replacement for those types of jobs	3.35
79	Need to find ways to make family farms more profitable	3.30
58	Some parts of the community resist change efforts for fear of increased taxes	3.20

Cluster #4: Statements in the Community and Economic Development Cluster, continued

<i>Item #</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Importance Rating</i>
	<i>Subcategory B: Community Identity & County Promotion</i>	
88	Need part-time and summer jobs for youth that are gainful	3.91
77	Need to emphasize/promote the existing resources in Brown Co. (e.g., Golf course, basketball league, airport, pool)	3.81
81	Need to add shops that offer value or local flavor (to counter the loss of small retail businesses, especially on Main Street)	3.78
89	Need to fix run-down areas of the county & improve community aesthetics	3.76
72	To help attract new families, local schools need ways to promote existing strengths (e.g., Video, web page)	3.39
60	Need to plan around & build a central Brown County identity or competition b/t towns will prevent wise use of resources	3.31
62	Community needs to find reachable goals to focus community energy and get a feeling of accomplishment	3.30
61	Need more of a sense of community and community pride	3.26

Cluster #5: Infrastructure

Average Importance Rating: 3.45

Statements in the Infrastructure cluster are fairly specific improvements or additions to local facilities or needs for personnel. Presumably these resources could be used to support a number of different types of outreach programs. The two most important items in this cluster addressed finding ways to fund programs without raising taxes, and finding a catalyst person or organization to coordinate local programs.

Statements in the Infrastructure Cluster

<i>Item #</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Importance Rating</i>
23	Need ways to fund youth & community programs without raising local taxes	3.92
63	Need to locate a catalyst person or organization to coordinate volunteer opportunities and community programs and make things happen	3.42
19	Public library needs better, larger facilities	3.35
73	Need more distance learning programs	3.11

Cluster #6: Promoting Development of All Youth

Average Importance Rating: 3.36

This cluster is one of the more diverse in the map, and may not be easily interpretable with a single label. The cluster does include items related to issues facing families and youth with special needs (e.g., single parent families and families in need) as well as issues that influence all youth (e.g., countering negative media influences on youth; curfew hour that would apply to all youth). The cluster may represent a set of issues that must be dealt with at a community level to ensure that all children are raised in healthy environments. The title Promoting Development of All Youth is a suggestion from the study facilitator; examining the specific items in the cluster may give the reader ideas for other summarizing themes. The most important items in this cluster related to recognizing and including all youth, and providing youth with job skills.

Statements in the Promoting Development of All Youth Cluster

<i>Item #</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Importance Rating</i>
47	Need ways to accept, recognize, and appreciate everyone, including people who are not accepted/popular	3.96
86	Many kids are not getting the skills they need for 'the new economy'	3.78
92	Need anonymous ways of meeting families' needs (e.g., Outreach center that accepts used, useable items for families in need)	3.54
40	Need to counter or reduce negative media influence on youth	3.37
95	Need to help families in need learn about and get access to the services that are available to them	3.35
94	Need to provide more support for single parent families	3.24
41	Need an earlier curfew hour for youth	2.26

Cluster #7: Youth Activities

Average Importance Rating: 3.32

This cluster includes a number of quite diverse issues related to needed Youth Activities. For purposes of this table, the overall category was divided into two subcategories representing two themes (the subcategories are not represented on the concept map). The first subcategory includes a list of desirable characteristics of youth activities in general, as well as a list of programs with broad appeal. The second subcategory includes a list of programs that might appeal to groups with particular interests. These two subcategories are not entirely distinct; certain statements in one subcategory could easily be assigned to the other. The most important items in the cluster were more activities for youth (with some indication that enough sports activities were available and other types of activities are needed), and the need for programs to constructively fill students' free time before and after school.

Statements in the Youth Activities Cluster

<i>Item #</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Importance Rating</i>
	<i>Subcategory: General Youth Programs</i>	
2	Need more activities for youth that are not sports-related	3.74
1	Need more activities for youth that are available year-round	3.70
8	Need programs that provide positive male/female role models for kids (e.g., Big Brother, Big Sister)	3.67
12	Need a series of cultural events that will appeal to youth (steel band, choir, arts groups, summer theater company)	3.15
13	Need more opportunities for arts and music classes/performances outside of school	3.09
26	Need transportation to activities for kids without it (e.g., Kids in outlying towns, kids whose parents work long shifts)	3.08
9	Need a movie night that would be inexpensive	2.57
3	Need more organized sports for all ages during summer, with professional instruction & opportunities to compete	2.52
	<i>Subcategory: Special Interest Youth Programs</i>	
7	Need inexpensive morning, after school, and summer child care & latchkey programs that offer tutoring/ homework time	3.72
16	Need a public place where teens can have downtime & socialize, buy snacks, play games, do homework, access web & email	3.59
14	Need programs where teens can provide service to others, e.g. Help older folks do chores or mentor younger children	3.54

Cluster #7: Statements in the Youth Activities Cluster, (Continued)

5	Need to have more activities just for older teens, and keep these separate from younger kids	3.44
25	Need formal roles for teens to be involved in community affairs, relay their concerns (e.g., Non-voting seat on school board)	3.41
11	Need activities for teens not reached by existing programs, e.g. Teens interested in mechanics, hunting, fishing	3.39
6	Need to find out reasons why some kids are not involved and to develop ways to promote their involvement	3.37
96	Need "coat closets" in school where teachers can find winter clothing for kids whose clothing is not warm enough	3.35
10	Need more church activities for teens where everyone is accepted (adult leadership is important)	3.09

Cluster #8: Accessible Community/Recreation Center

Average Importance Rating: 3.16

The Accessible Community Recreation Center cluster includes the need for a community center with recreational facilities, specific programs, and opportunities for youth, as well as the need to make this center (and other youth programs) accessible to all youth. The most important needs were for a community center facility (one of the most important needs in the entire study, just behind the need to address drinking issues in the county; see Appendix A), as well as the need for a coordinating group to plan for such a facility.

Statements in the Accessible Community/Recreation Center Cluster

<i>Item #</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Importance Rating</i>
17	Need an athletic center, YMCA, community center-type facility	4.15
20	Need a coordinating group to plan for a youth/community center (one that includes youth)	3.63
74	Need place where all kids can interact with new technology/computers, e.g., Computer college	3.58
22	Need to create staff position(s) for youth programs (cannot rely exclusively on volunteers or they will burn out)	3.43
4	Need to find ways to make programs and activities accessible for kids living in towns other than Mt. Sterling	3.11
26	Need transportation to activities for kids without it (e.g., Kids living in outlying towns, kids whose parents work long shifts)	3.08
24	Need to coordinate events so older and younger kids' activities don't compete	2.81
27	Need more car pooling sign ups	2.36
18	Need lighted tennis courts	2.24

Cluster #9: Community Attitudes Toward Diversity and Change

Average Importance Rating: 3.16

The Community Attitudes toward Diversity and Change cluster describes issues facing disadvantaged families in the county, as well as the need to find community practices that do not exclude any families. The most important items address financial needs of working families and the existence of community divisions.

Statements in the Community Attitudes Toward Diversity and Change Cluster

<i>Item #</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Importance Rating</i>
85	Many families are working but not making enough money to make ends meet	3.57
54	There are many divisions in the community (e.g., Based on economic/social group; attitude to change; newcomer vs. Insider)	3.26
59	There is sometimes a lack of recognition of the need for change; attitudes of "we never had that when I was a kid"	3.24
84	There are not enough full time jobs available in the county that match local workers' existing skills	3.17
56	Need to develop language and attitudes that are inclusive rather than exclusive	3.17
93	The county has a large elderly population	3.15
55	Community is not very welcoming to new residents (and potential residents)	3.00
57	The same people show up at games, activities, community events; need more involvement from broader population	2.76

Cluster # 10: School Issues

Average Importance Rating: 3.16

The final category describes a variety of issues related to students' experience of school: school climate, relationships with teachers, and academic stress. This cluster is ranked of lowest importance overall, probably because many more adults than youth participated in this sample and adults were less likely to rank these issues as highly important than were youth (see the following section for a comparison of youth and adult ratings for this and all other clusters). In this cluster, the most important issues were related to students' academic performance, while the most representative issues address youth culture at school.

It may be useful to note a theme concerning community social climate underlying both this cluster and the Community Attitudes Towards Diversity and Change cluster. Although participants viewed these topics as distinct (as indicated by the clusters being spaced far apart on the cluster map), the issue of dealing with diversity and accepting differences appears to be a concern in both. It is possible that the school can be considered a microcosm of social dynamics in the broader community, and both youth and adults would need to work together in order to improve this aspect of community life.

Statements in the School Issues Cluster

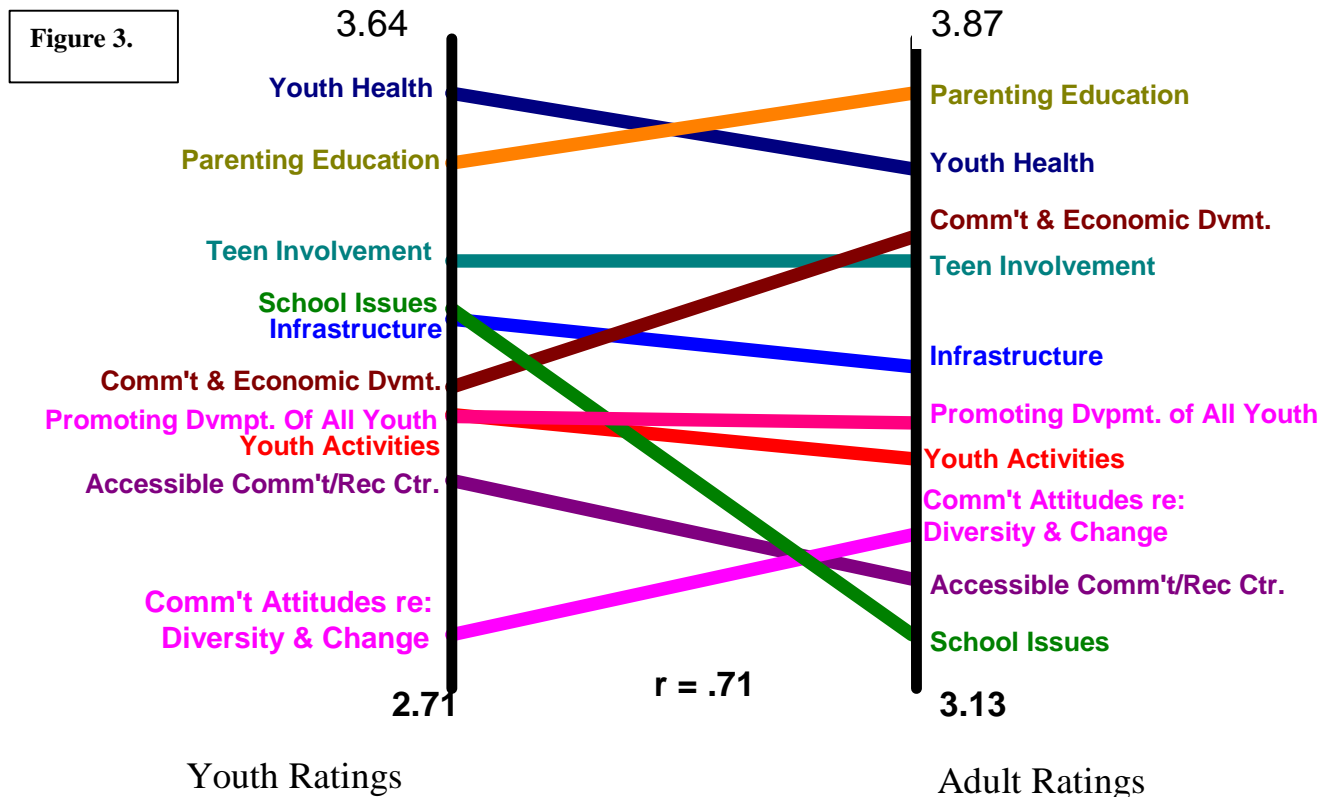
<i>Item #</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Importance Rating</i>
71	Need to raise expectations for students' academic performance	3.62
50	There are too many put downs at school	3.36
51	There is a lot of tension b/t groups at the high school (e.g., Kids from different schools, popular/less popular kids)	3.28
70	Need to find ways to help students cope with stress from school, especially during finals	3.00
15	Need a program where older teens help junior high kids learn about high school before they get there	2.85
69	Teachers at the high school frequently don't give the study time students are supposed to have in 80 minute classes	2.83

Comparisons of Youth and Adults' Importance Ratings

This section compares importance ratings made by teens and young adults (i.e., participants 21 years of age and younger; N= 10), to importance ratings made by adults (i.e., participants over 21 years of age; N=44). This comparison was made to examine whether there was substantial consensus among community members about a topic, as well as where there may have been differences in perspective.

Figure 3 displays these comparisons graphically. In this graph, teens' average importance ratings for each cluster are rank ordered on the right side of the graph, and adults' average ratings are rank ordered on the left. Colored lines connect teens' ratings for each cluster to the corresponding adult ratings on the right. The angle of these lines provides information about the concordance or discordance of youth and adult ratings. Lines that traverse straight across indicate that teens and adults made relatively equal ratings of importance for that cluster. Lines that are angled indicate a discrepancy between youth and adult ratings. The stronger the angle of the line, the more teens and adults disagreed about the importance of a cluster.

There appears to be substantial agreement between these groups about the three most important areas of need: Youth Health and Risk Behaviors, Parenting Education, and Teen Involvement. Some disagreement emerges for the remaining clusters. Perhaps not surprisingly, youth rate school issues as more important than adults (school issues are 4th most important for youth but are ranked 10th for adults), while adults rate community and economic development issues as more important than youth (economic development issues are 6th on the youth list but 3rd for adults).



Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to identify and map key issues facing Brown County youth and families, and to obtain information about Brown County residents' views of the relative importance of different types of needs. Participants in this study articulated a number of specific concerns and needs, as well as ideas for actions that could be taken to address these needs. Important issues included:

- Teen health and risk behaviors, especially drinking: Issues related to teen drinking--teen alcohol use, adult attitudes towards teen drinking, teen drinking and driving--were rated as the top three most important out of all of the specific needs identified in this study. Teen smoking and teen drug use were also rated as important issues within the county. Youth and adults agreed that this category was one of the top two most important areas of need within Brown County.
- Parenting education: Issues related to Parenting Education were also important in the view of both teen and adult participants. Within this category, the need to address adult behaviors and attitudes towards alcohol, and the need for parents to teach and role-model the importance of community involvement, were rated as especially important.
- Youth center/community center: This item belonged to a category with a number of relatively less important items, resulting in a low importance score for the overall category. However, the specific item describing the need for a youth/community center was ranked among the top 5 of all items in the study, and discussions with participants also revealed a great deal of interest and enthusiasm supporting the idea of building a youth center in the county.
- School issues: Although this issues did not rate highly overall, it was rated very important by youth participants. This category included items related to academic achievement and performance as well as attitudes towards diversity in youth culture. Attitudes towards diversity and change among adults emerged in a separate category but shared similarities with the issues raised in this category.
- Community and economic development: Issues related to community and economic growth and development were also rated as important by participants, especially adults. This category included needs for strategies to build the population base in the county and improving business and job opportunities.

It is interesting to note potential interrelationships among the needs identified in this study. For example, efforts by youth and adults to work together to build a youth center might help address issues such as teen alienation and disengagement that can sometimes underlie drinking and other risk behaviors. At the same time, these community building efforts might help to increase resources and amenities that attract new residents to the county. Further, positive experiences working together towards shared goals might potentially result in other beneficial outcomes for the social climate of the community. As in most community efforts, the process of working together may be the most important community-building product.

SUMMARY

In summary, this research provides the Tracy Family Foundation and all community residents with an easily understandable, visually-oriented representation of the perceived needs of local youth and families. It is hoped that these results suggest concrete programs that will help improve the lives of youth and families in Brown County, Illinois.

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Appendix A. Needs Statements Ranked by Importance

Item #	Statement (Appendix A)	Item Importance Rating	Cluster
29	Rates of alcohol use among teens is very high	4.37	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
38	Need to change adult attitudes toward teen drinking-too many adults 'look the other way' or model irresponsible drinking	4.28	Parental Education
30	Too many teens drink and drive	4.28	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
17	Need an athletic center, YMCA, community center-type facility	4.15	Accessible Community Ctr.
76	Need to do things to encourage people to live here versus live elsewhere and drive here to work	4.09	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
28	Too much cigarette smoking among youth	4.07	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
39	Too many adults drink and drive	4.04	Parental Education
31	Some teens are experimenting with drug use	4.04	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
66	Parents need to teach the importance of family and community involvement, especially through role modeling	4.02	Parental Education
47	Need ways to accept, recognize, and appreciate everyone, including people who are not accepted/popular	3.96	Promoting Dvmt. Of All Youth
82	Need to stop losing dollars to other towns and find ways to draw in outside dollars	3.94	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
75	The county needs to grow by attracting new families while retaining positive aspects of a small town environment	3.94	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
23	Need ways to fund youth & community programs without raising local taxes	3.92	Infrastructure
88	Need part-time and summer jobs for youth that are gainful	3.91	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
67	Families need to communicate more about their kids, from coordinating rides to knowing where kids are	3.89	Parental Education
97	Need strategies to address/prevent domestic violence and child abuse / neglect	3.87	Parental Education
32	Low self-esteem / depression among teens	3.87	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
33	Teenage sexual activity	3.85	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
77	Need to emphasize/promote the existing resources in Brown Co. (e.g., Golf course, basketball league, airport, pool)	3.81	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
83	Need to encourage support for local businesses	3.81	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
45	Need more dialog and respect between youth and adults that goes both ways	3.81	Parental Education
42	Some teens do not have anyone who cares about them and who will listen to them	3.81	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
43	Need to prevent irresponsible parenting by providing parent education at an early age	3.80	Parental Education

Item #	Statement (Appendix A)	Item Importance Rating	Cluster
44	Need to include youth in the community so they see it as their community	3.80	Teen Involvement
81	Need to add shops that offer value or local flavor (to counter the loss of small retail businesses, esp. On Main Street)	3.78	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
86	Many kids are not getting the skills they need for 'the new economy'	3.78	Promoting Dvmt. Of All Youth
89	Need to fix run-down areas of the county & improve community aesthetics	3.76	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
98	Need strategies to address effects of divorce on kids	3.76	Parental Education
2	Need more activities for youth that are not sports-related	3.74	Youth Activities
7	Need inexpensive morning, after school, and summer child care & latchkey programs that offer tutoring/ homework time	3.72	Youth Activities
1	Need more activities for youth that are available year-round	3.70	Youth Activities
36	Teens use too much profanity/ abusive language	3.70	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
8	Need programs that provide positive male/female role models for kids (e.g., Big Brother, Big Sister)	3.67	Youth Activities
65	Need more parent involvement in schools	3.65	Parental Education
52	Some kids get labeled before having a chance to prove themselves based on name, social standing, who their parents are	3.64	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
20	Need a coordinating group to plan for a youth/community center (one that includes youth)	3.63	Accessible Community Ctr.
71	Need to raise expectations for students' academic performance	3.62	School Related Issues
68	Parents and kids have a hard time communicating and hearing each other	3.61	Parental Education
16	Need a public place where teens can have downtime & socialize, buy snacks, play games, do homework, access web & email	3.59	Youth Activities
74	Need place where all kids can interact with new technology/computers, e.g., Computer college	3.58	Accessible Community Ctr.
85	Many families are working but not making enough money to make ends meet	3.57	Community Attitudes re: Diversity & Change
21	Need more adults to volunteer to work with teens	3.57	Teen Involvement
92	Need anonymous ways of meeting families' needs (e.g., Outreach ctr. That accepts used, useable items for families in need)	3.54	Promoting Dvmt. Of All Youth
48	Need more awards that are inclusive and not dependent on sports involvement, e.g., Biggest fan award or volunteer awards	3.54	Teen Involvement
14	Need programs where teens can provide service to others, e.g. Help older folks do chores or mentor younger children	3.54	Youth Activities
80	The county needs to diversify its economic base	3.53	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
35	Some girls have eating disorders and/or body image problems	3.52	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
53	Kids' popularity depends too much on status symbols, such as wearing the right clothes	3.49	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
87	Not enough young people are staying in or returning to the community	3.46	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
34	Teen pregnancy	3.46	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors

Item #	Statement (Appendix A)	Item Importance Rating	Cluster
46	Need opportunities for teens to contribute to the Community that also benefit them because they are fun or pay money	3.44	Teen Involvement
5	Need to have more activities just for older teens, and keep these separate from younger kids	3.44	Youth Activities
49	Some kids look down on others who are less popular or less fortunate	3.44	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
22	Need to create staff position(s) for youth programs (cannot rely exclusively on volunteers or they will burn out)	3.43	Accessible Community Ctr.
63	Need to locate a catalyst to coordinate volunteer opportunities and community programs and make things happen	3.42	Infrastructure
91	Need a lower tax base to be competitive with housing costs in nearby communities	3.41	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
25	Need formal roles for teens to be involved in Community affairs, relay their concerns (e.g., Non-voting seat on school board)	3.41	Youth Activities
72	To help attract new families, local schools need ways to promote existing strengths (e.g., Video, web page)	3.39	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
90	Need a mechanism for helping create new adequate, affordable housing	3.39	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
11	Need activities for teens not reached by existing programs, e.g. Teens interested in mechanics, hunting, fishing	3.39	Youth Activities
40	Need to counter or reduce negative media influence on youth	3.37	Promoting Dvmt. Of All Youth
6	Need to find out reasons why some kids are not involved and to develop ways to promote their involvement	3.37	Youth Activities
50	There are too many put downs at school	3.36	School Related Issues
78	Economy of county is shifting away from agriculture based economy with no clear replacement for those types of jobs	3.35	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
19	Public library needs better, larger facilities	3.35	Infrastructure
95	Need to help families in need learn about and get access to the services that are available to them	3.35	Promoting Dvmt. Of All Youth
96	Need "coat closets" in school where teachers can find winter clothing for kids whose clothing is not warm enough	3.35	Youth Activities
60	Need to plan around & build a central Brown County identity or competition b/t towns will prevent wise use of resources	3.31	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
62	Community needs to find reachable goals to focus community energy and get a feeling of accomplishment	3.30	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
79	Need to find ways to make family farms more profitable	3.30	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
51	There is a lot of tension b/t groups at the high school (e.g., Kids from different schools, popular/less popular kids)	3.28	School Related Issues
61	Need more of a sense of community and community pride	3.26	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
54	There are many divisions in the community (e.g., Based on economic/social group; attitude to change; newcomer v. Insider)	3.26	Community Attitudes Re: Diversity and Change
59	There is sometimes a lack of recognition of the need for change; attitudes of "we never had that when I was a kid"	3.24	Community Attitudes Re: Diversity and Change
94	Need to provide more support for single parent families	3.24	Promoting Dvmt. Of All Youth

Item #	Statement (Appendix A)	Item Importance Rating	Cluster
58	Some parts of the community resist change efforts for fear of increased taxes	3.20	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
56	Need to develop language and attitudes that are inclusive rather than exclusive	3.17	Community Attitudes Re: Diversity and Change
84	There are not enough full time jobs available in the county that match local workers' existing skills	3.17	Community Attitudes Re: Diversity and Change
64	Parental apathy by some parents	3.15	Parental Education
93	The county has a large elderly population	3.15	Community Attitudes Re: Diversity and Change
12	Need a series of cultural events that will appeal to youth (steel band, choir, arts groups, summer theater company)	3.15	Youth Activities
4	Need to find ways to make programs and activities accessible for kids living in towns other than Mt. Sterling	3.11	Accessible Community Ctr.
73	Need more distance learning programs	3.11	Infrastructure
13	Need more opportunities for arts and music classes/performances outside of school	3.09	Youth Activities
10	Need more church activities for teens where everyone is accepted (adult leadership is important)	3.09	Youth Activities
26	Need transportation to activities for kids without it (e.g., Kids in outlying towns, kids whose parents work long shifts)	3.08	Accessible Community Ctr.
55	Community is not very welcoming to new residents (and potential residents)	3.00	Community Attitudes Re: Diversity and Change
70	Need to find ways to help students cope with stress from school, especially during finals	3.00	School Related Issues
15	Need a program where older teens help junior high kids learn about high school before they get there	2.85	School Related Issues
37	Physical fighting among youth	2.85	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
69	Teachers at the high school frequently don't give the study time students are supposed to have in 80 minute classes	2.83	School Related Issues
24	Need to coordinate events so older and younger kids' activities don't compete	2.81	Accessible Community Ctr.
57	The same people show up at games, activities, community events; need more involvement from broader population	2.76	Community Attitudes Re: Diversity and Change
9	Need a movie night that would be inexpensive	2.57	Youth Activities
3	Need more organized sports for all ages during summer, with professional instruction & opportunities to compete	2.52	Youth Activities
27	Need more car pooling sign ups	2.36	Accessible Community Ctr.
41	Need an earlier curfew hour for youth	2.26	Promoting Dvmt. Of All Youth
18	Need lighted tennis courts	2.24	Accessible Community Ctr.

Appendix B: Items Listed by Item Number

Item #	Statement – (Appendix B)	Cluster
1	Need more activities for youth that are available year-round	Youth Activities
2	Need more activities for youth that are not sports-related	Youth Activities
3	Need more organized sports for all ages during summer, with professional instruction & opportunities to compete	Youth Activities
4	Need to find ways to make programs and activities accessible for kids living in towns other than Mt. Sterling	Accessible Community Ctr.
5	Need to have more activities just for older teens, and keep these separate from younger kids	Youth Activities
6	Need to find out reasons why some kids are not involved and to develop ways to promote their involvement	Youth Activities
7	Need inexpensive morning, after school, and summer child care & latchkey programs that offer tutoring/ homework time	Youth Activities
8	Need programs that provide positive male/female role models for kids (e.g., Big Brother, Big Sister)	Youth Activities
9	Need a movie night that would be inexpensive	Youth Activities
10	Need more church activities for teens where everyone is accepted (adult leadership is important)	Youth Activities
11	Need activities for teens not reached by existing programs, e.g. Teens interested in mechanics, hunting, fishing	Youth Activities
12	Need a series of cultural events that will appeal to youth (steel band, choir, arts groups, summer theater company)	Youth Activities
13	Need more opportunities for arts and music classes/performances outside of school	Youth Activities
14	Need programs where teens can provide service to others, e.g. Help older folks do chores or mentor younger children	Youth Activities
15	Need a program where older teens help junior high kids learn about high school before they get there	School Issues
16	Need a public place where teens can have downtime & socialize, buy snacks, play games, do homework, access web & email	Youth Activities
17	Need an athletic center, YMCA, community center-type facility	Accessible Community Ctr.
18	Need lighted tennis courts	Accessible Community Ctr.
19	Public library needs better, larger facilities	Infrastructure
20	Need a coordinating group to plan for a youth/community center (one that includes youth)	Accessible Community Ctr.
21	Need more adults to volunteer to work with teens	Teen Involvement
22	Need to create staff position(s) for youth programs (cannot rely exclusively on volunteers or they will burn out)	Accessible Community Ctr.
23	Need ways to fund youth & community programs without raising local taxes	Infrastructure
24	Need to coordinate events so older and younger kids' activities don't compete	Accessible Community Ctr.
25	Need formal roles for teens to be involved in Community affairs, relay their concerns (e.g., Non-voting seat on school board)	Youth Activities
26	Need transportation to activities for kids without it (e.g., Kids in outlying towns, kids whose parents work long shifts)	Accessible Community Ctr.
27	Need more car pooling sign ups	Accessible Community Ctr.
28	Too much cigarette smoking among youth	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors

Item #	Statement – (Appendix B)	Cluster
29	Rates of alcohol use among teens is very high	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
30	Too many teens drink and drive	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
31	Some teens are experimenting with drug use	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
32	Low self-esteem / depression among teens	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
33	Teenage sexual activity	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
34	Teen pregnancy	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
35	Some girls have eating disorders and/or body image problems	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
36	Teens use too much profanity/ abusive language	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
37	Physical fighting among youth	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
38	Need to change adult attitudes toward teen drinking-too many adults 'look the other way' or model irresponsible drinking	Parental Education
39	Too many adults drink and drive	Parental Education
40	Need to counter or reduce negative media influence on youth	Promoting Dvmt. Of All Youth
41	Need an earlier curfew hour for youth	Promoting Dvmt. Of All Youth
42	Some teens do not have anyone who cares about them and who will listen to them	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
43	Need to prevent irresponsible parenting by providing parent education at an early age	Parental Education
44	Need to include youth in the community so they see it as their community	Teen Involvement
45	Need more dialog and respect between youth and adults that goes both ways	Parental Education
46	Need opportunities for teens to contribute to the Community that also benefit them because they are fun or pay money	Teen Involvement
47	Need ways to accept, recognize, and appreciate everyone, including people who are not accepted/popular	Promoting Dvmt. Of All Youth
48	Need more awards that are inclusive and not dependent on sports involvement, e.g., Biggest fan award or volunteer awards	Teen Involvement
49	Some kids look down on others who are less popular or less fortunate	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
50	There are too many put downs at school	School Related Issues
51	There is a lot of tension b/t groups at the high school (e.g., Kids from different schools, popular/less popular kids)	School Related Issues
52	Some kids get labeled before having a chance to prove themselves based on name, social standing, who their parents are	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
53	Kids' popularity depends too much on status symbols, such as wearing the right clothes	Youth Health & Problem Behaviors
54	There are many divisions in the community (e.g., Based on economic/social group; attitude to change; newcomer v. Insider)	Community Attitudes Re: Diversity and Change
55	Community is not very welcoming to new residents (and potential residents)	Community Attitudes Re: Diversity and Change
56	Need to develop language and attitudes that are inclusive rather than exclusive	Community Attitudes Re: Diversity and Change

Item #	Statement – (Appendix B)	Cluster
57	The same people show up at games, activities, community events; need more involvement from broader population	Community Attitudes Re: Diversity and Change
58	Some parts of the community resist change efforts for fear of increased taxes	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
59	There is sometimes a lack of recognition of the need for change; attitudes of "we never had that when I was a kid"	Community Attitudes Re: Diversity and Change
60	Need to plan around & build a central Brown County identity or competition b/t towns will prevent wise use of resources	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
61	Need more of a sense of community and community pride	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
62	Community needs to find reachable goals to focus community energy and get a feeling of accomplishment	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
63	Need to locate a catalyst to coordinate volunteer opportunities and community programs and make things happen	Infrastructure
64	Parental apathy by some parents	Parental Education
65	Need more parent involvement in schools	Parental Education
66	Parents need to teach the importance of family and community involvement, especially through role modeling	Parental Education
67	Families need to communicate more about their kids, from coordinating rides to knowing where kids are	Parental Education
68	Parents and kids have a hard time communicating and hearing each other	Parental Education
69	Teachers at the high school frequently don't give the study time students are supposed to have in 80 minute classes	School Related Issues
70	Need to find ways to help students cope with stress from school, especially during finals	School Related Issues
71	Need to raise expectations for students' academic performance	School Related Issues
72	To help attract new families, local schools need ways to promote existing strengths (e.g., Video, web page)	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
73	Need more distance learning programs	Infrastructure
74	Need place where all kids can interact with new technology/computers, e.g., Computer college	Accessible Community/Rec Ctr.
75	The county needs to grow by attracting new families while retaining positive aspects of a small town environment	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
76	Need to do things to encourage people to live here versus live elsewhere and drive here to work	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
77	Need to emphasize/promote the existing resources in Brown Co. (e.g., Golf course, basketball league, airport, pool)	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
78	Economy of county is shifting away from agriculture based economy with no clear replacement for those types of jobs	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
79	Need to find ways to make family farms more profitable	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
80	The county needs to diversify its economic base	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
81	Need to add shops that offer value or local flavor (to counter the loss of small retail businesses, esp. On Main Street)	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
82	Need to stop losing dollars to other towns and find ways to draw in outside dollars	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
83	Need to encourage support for local businesses	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
84	There are not enough full time jobs available in the county that match local workers' existing skills	Community Attitudes Re: Diversity and Change

Item #	Statement – (Appendix B)	Cluster
85	Many families are working but not making enough money to make ends meet	Community Attitudes Re: Diversity and Change
86	Many kids are not getting the skills they need for 'the new economy'	Promoting Dvmt. Of All Youth
87	Not enough young people are staying in or returning to the community	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
88	Need part-time and summer jobs for youth that are gainful	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
89	Need to fix run-down areas of the county & improve community aesthetics	Community & Economic Dvmt (County Identity)
90	Need a mechanism for helping create new adequate, affordable housing	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
91	Need a lower tax base to be competitive with housing costs in nearby communities	Community & Economic Dvmt (Economic Issues)
92	Need anonymous ways of meeting families' needs (e.g., Outreach ctr. That accepts used, useable items for families in need)	Promoting Dvmt. Of All Youth
93	The county has a large elderly population	Community Attitudes Re: Diversity and Change
94	Need to provide more support for single parent families	Promoting Dvmt. Of All Youth
95	Need to help families in need learn about and get access to the services that are available to them	Promoting Dvmt. Of All Youth
96	Need "coat closets" in school where teachers can find winter clothing for kids whose clothing is not warm enough	Youth Activities
97	Need strategies to address/prevent domestic violence and child abuse / neglect	Parental Education
98	Need strategies to address effects of divorce on kids	Parental Education