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I am Olivia and this is Bradley and we are freshmen at Vergennes Union High School.

Olivia- When I first started my youth rights work with Vermont Afterschool, I didn't know what I was getting into. But soon after my first meeting, I knew that the work I would be doing with my fellow council members was extremely important, and was creating valuable experiences for me and my peers. The work I am participating in for the Youth Council is a part of my "Third Space." The third space for youth is everywhere that is not home and not school. Young people spend lots of time outside of their homes and outside of school. This "third space" is an important place for us to get what we need as we grow up. For example, in my third space are things like the CADCA substance abuse prevention conference I attended last week in Washington DC, the school sponsored rowing team I am part of, singing in the All-state chorus, and the after-school and summer classes I have attended through my school's FUSION after school program. As an upcoming sophomore, I have to start thinking about colleges and pursuing a career in my chosen field. The third space provides a time to do extracurricular activities such as volunteer work and academic opportunities that will set me apart on my resume.

Bradley- Unfortunately, it is getting harder for kids to experience the third space and just be kids, because of the stress that is being put on them in school, society and even at home where their families face financial strains. And immense amounts of homework affect many of my peers. No matter how much information you throw at youth about time management, there will still be many conflicts. Because the teenage brain needs more rest and is already getting enough stimulation, time management isn't a teen's top priority. The third space can be taken up by sports, arts, academics, and many other exceptional opportunities. That is why our afterschool programs are so important. They provide students with an easy access third space that allows them to gain all the social and academic aspects of life that they want, and also gives them an easy way to work with an adult to manage their time and make time for the Third Space. Youth want and need what we all want and need. To be happy and healthy, and to enjoy being young.