

MAYNARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



To: All Staff
From: Daniel Mayer, Assistant Superintendent
Date: February 5, 2009
Subject: Youth Risk Behavior Survey Findings

Below are the findings from 2008 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. The behaviors fall into the following categories: safety, violence, suicide, tobacco use, alcohol use, drug use, gambling, HIV/AIDS education, sexual behavior, dietary behavior, and physical activity.

Students in grades 6 through 12 have responded every other year to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey since the 1999-2000 school year.

The Maynard Public Schools collects these data to help the entire community protect and educate our children. The data inform parents and community members and also guide the schools in refining the content of our health, wellness, and physical education curriculum.

The analyses below present some of the most important findings from the March 2008 administration of the survey and earlier surveys; a more detailed report is posted on the curriculum section of our website.

The findings are split into three broad categories: “positive trends,” “negative trends,” and “no or minimal change.” It is important to note that while “positive trends” are worth celebrating, a positive trend does not imply satisfaction with the current level of any risk behavior. To keep our children healthy and safe educators, parents, and community members will need to continually pay attention to all of these risk areas.

Positive Trends:

Over the past several administrations of the survey we have seen consistent decreases in the following risky behaviors:

- **Tobacco use:** The percent recently smoking a cigarette dropped from 17 to 11 in grade 8 and 23 to 19 in grades 9-12
- **Alcohol consumption:** The percent recently drinking alcohol dropped from 32 to 23 in grade 8 and 47 to 36 in grades 9-12. Binge drinking in grades 9-12 dropped from 36 to 22 percent
- **Drug use:** The percent recently smoking marijuana dropped from 15 to 6 in grade 8 and 27 to 18 in grades 9-12
- **Bullying:** The percent being bullied at school dropped from 38 to 31 in grade 8 and 35 to 28 percent in grades 9-12.

- **Riding in a car without wearing a seatbelt:** The percent of grades 9-12 students rarely or never wearing a seatbelt declined from 20 to 13 percent
- **Riding with an impaired driver:** The percent of grades 9-12 students riding in a car with an impaired minor driving the car declined from 45 to 16 percent
- **Watching TV:** The percent watching three or more hours a day of TV decreased from 38 to 32 in grade 8 and 35 to 28 in grades 9-12
- **Skipping breakfast:** The percent skipping breakfast decreased from 38 to 24 in grade 8 and 51 to 40 in grades 9-12

Negative Trends:

Over the past several administrations of the survey we have seen consistent increases in the following risky behaviors:

- **Sleep:** The percent sleeping seven or fewer in increased from 34 to 48 in grade 8 and 54 to 68 in grades 9-12
- **Smoking cigars:** The percent recently smoking a cigar or cigarillo increased from 11 to 18 in grades 9-12
- **Suicidal impulses:** The percent seriously considering suicide increased slightly over a two year period from 8 to 14 in grade 8 and 7 to 12 in grades 9-12

No or Minimal Change:

Over the past seven years we have seen no or minimal changes in the following risky behaviors:

- **Sexual activity:** Since 2002, the percent of grade 9-12 students reporting ever had sexual intercourse stayed flat at about 38-40 percent and has risen slightly in grade 8 from 22 to 27 percent
- **Dating violence:** Since 2002, the percent of grade 9-12 students reporting ever experiencing dating violence has stayed flat at about 8 percent and declined slightly in grade 8 and now stands at 5 percent
- **Carrying of weapons:** Since 2002, the percent of grade 9-12 students reporting carrying a weapon on school property has stayed flat at about 5 percent and risen slightly in grade 8 from 7 to and 9 percent
- **Less exercise:** The percent not engaging in vigorous physical activity has stayed flat at about 32 percent in grade 8 and 35 percent grades 9-12