

Concord Middle School
Emerson 2008 Youth Risk Survey Results Summary

The Emerson Youth Risk Behavior Survey was given to 199 sixth graders and 172 eighth graders in Concord during the spring, 2008. This survey has been developed by the Health Coordinators in local communities, Mr. James Byrne of Northeast Health Resources, under the direction of Emerson Hospital. The Concord results are compared to the aggregate results (Concord %/Aggregate %) of students from all towns that participated. Collectively, they are Concord, Concord-Carlisle, Acton, Acton-Boxboro, Boxboro, Groton-Dunstable, Littleton, Maynard, and Westford. Summarized below are some of the results.

As a result of YRBS data since 2000, and with partial funding from Emerson Hospital, various representatives from the seven towns who participate in the survey produced a community resource booklet. "*Red Flags and Resources* which is intended to help adults and teens better understand risky behaviors, what they can do to counter them, and how to get help when they need it." The 2008 results that follow are presented in the order of the table of contents in the Red Flags booklet; substance use and abuse, emotional health, relationships and personal safety. If you would like a copy of the *Red Flags and Resources* booklet please call the CPS/CCHS Ripley Administration Office, at 978-341-2490 X 8104.

Note that most students in the Concord Middle School do not participate in risky behaviors. The normative behavior of our middle school students is one of safety. It is well known that the earlier a preteen starts engaging in any of these risky behaviors, the more likely s/he is to continue these behaviors in high school and maybe beyond. Postponing any and all of these risky actions significantly contributes to his/ her safety as an adolescent and young adult.

Risk taking often begins in middle school. Most results at the sixth grade level in Concord were below the aggregate of the other communities but most eighth grade results were higher than the aggregate of the other communities.

Alcohol

It is of concern that Concord preteens and teens in Concord-Carlisle High School drink alcohol at a higher rate than those in the aggregate communities. Our 8th graders are more involved with drinking, attending parties and riding with underage driver who had been drinking than those in the aggregate towns. Take note that in 2008 46% of CCHS students report having had at least one drink of alcohol at least one occasion during the 30 days prior to the survey vs. 38% in aggregate towns.

- Twenty-four eighth graders (14%/12% agg) report having had at least one drink during the month prior to the survey. Take note 28% of the ninth graders report drinking alcohol in the last thirty days
- Twenty-two eighth graders (13%/ 7% agg) report having attended parties held in Concord homes where alcohol use by teens was allowed, either occasionally or frequently, during the year prior to the survey. There is a variation by gender (18% males / 9% females).
- Ten students in sixth grade (.05%/ 3% agg) and fifteen eighth graders (9%/ 8% agg) report having ridden in a car during the past month that was *driven by someone under age 21* who had been drinking alcohol or using other drugs.
- Sixty four male 8th graders (18%) report having had 1 drink of alcohol during the last 30 days, and *attending parties held in homes where alcohol use was allowed*, twice as frequently as females (9%)
- 9% of 8th graders (15) report having *ridden in a car driven by a minor who had been drinking alcohol or using other drugs*. Thirteen (17%) of these 8th graders were males, while three (3%) were females.
- Participation of our 8th grade males far outweighed female participation in all alcohol related experiences.

Students perception of alcohol use by peers

- 16% of eighth graders think that more than 50% of their peers have had at least one drink of alcohol in the thirty days prior to the survey, in actuality only 14% have done so. Traditionally in YRBS surveys perception is considerable higher than actual participation in these risky behaviors. It is interesting to note that this 8th grade class's perception reflects the reality/participation of students consuming alcohol.

Cigarettes

CMS students smoke cigarettes at a higher % than the middle school students from aggregate towns. Smoking cigarettes, a bridge drug, in middle school can indicate that the preteen is beginning to participate in other risky behaviors. Traditionally 6th graders report not smoking but by 8th grade students begin to experiment.

- No 6th graders report having smoked.
- 26 eighth grade students (15 %/13% agg) reported ever having smoked cigarettes.
- 14 of CMS 8th graders (8%/6% agg) smoked at least one cigarette in the 30 days prior to the survey
- Of the 14 8th graders who smoked, 12 of them (85%) reported drinking alcohol within the last 30 days and 13 (92%) of the 14 students also reported smoking marijuana.

Marijuana

Marijuana use is higher by 4% - 5% for 8th graders than students from aggregate towns

- 22 eighth graders (13%/9% agg) report having ever used marijuana
- 19 eighth graders (11% /6%) report having used marijuana during the 30 days prior to the survey.
- One male sixth grader reports ever having used marijuana.

Student's perception of marijuana use by peers

- 15% of eighth graders think that more than 25% of their peers have used marijuana in the last thirty days when in actuality only 11% have done so.

Other Illegal Drugs

In each of the following categories, 8th grade males report using illegal drugs more frequently than females, by at least threefold except for inhalants use, which was double.

- Prescription Drugs- 6% of eighth graders or ten students (females 3% /males 10%) report having used someone else's prescription drugs.
- MDMA- 14 eighth graders (8%/4% agg) report having used MDMA (i.e. ecstasy, "E" "X" at least once in their lives.
- Inhalants- 2 female sixth graders (1%/3% agg) and 14 eighth grade students (8%/8%) report inhalant use (having sniffed available glue, breath contents of spray cans or inhaled paints to get high) during the past month. Males in 8th grade report this activity more frequently than females (females 6%/males10%)

Stress

51 6th graders (26%) and 84 8th graders (49%) report they sometimes feel under stress because of pressure at school. It is concerning to note that 39 8th graders report they feel under stress either most of the time (14%) or always (9%)

Hurt Themselves on Purpose

Concord 8th grade boys report a higher incidence of hurting themselves than 8th grade females (14% males/9% females)

- 19 8th graders (11%/14% agg) report having hurt themselves on purpose, for example cutting, burning or bruising yourself on purpose on at least one occasion during the last twelve months. This behavior is sometimes used to relieve stress.

Suicide

CMS 6th graders report fewer suicide attempts, but Concord Middle schools 8th grade students report a higher number of attempts as students in the aggregate towns

- Eight 6th graders (4%/5% agg) and 24 8th graders (14%/11% agg) report having seriously considered attempting suicide in the last 12 months.
- Fourteen 8th grade respondents (8%/6% agg) report having actually attempted suicide on at least one occasion during the last twelve months.
- Among 8th graders who report attempting suicide 36% (5 respondents) report that such attempt resulted in receiving medical treatment from a doctor or nurse.
- In both of these suicide categories twice as many 8th grade males have had suicidal ideation considered or attempted than females.

Dietary Behavior

CMS 6th grade students report healthier dietary behaviors than students in the aggregate towns.

- Breakfast- Thirty-four 6th graders (17%/15% agg) and thirty-four 8th graders (20%/ 27%) report they eat breakfast on fewer than 5 days prior to survey.
- Diet pills- 5 8th graders (3%/2% agg) report having taken diet pills, powders, or liquids without a doctor's advice in order to lose weight during 30 days prior to the survey
- Laxatives- 7 8th graders (4%/4% agg) report having vomited or taken laxatives in order to lose weight during 30 days prior to the survey

Physical Activity

- Exercise- 107 6th graders (54%/56%) 93 8th graders (54%/60%) report having exercised to lose or keep from gaining weight 30 days prior to survey.
- Physical activity- Both sixth and eighth graders reported having participated in physical activity that made them sweat or breathe hard for at least 20 minutes 3 days weekly. One hundred fifty seven sixth graders (79%/78%) and one hundred forty eight eighth graders (86 %/79%) exercised regularly. Girls are participating in physical activity more than our boys.

Watching TV

- Eighteen sixth graders (9%/15% agg) and twenty-six eighth graders (15%/18% agg) reported watching television for more than three hours daily. In both sixth and eighth grade there is very little variation by gender.

Sleep

- Thirty-two sixth graders (16%/16% agg) and sixty eighth graders (35%/41% agg) reported that they get seven or fewer hours of sleep each night on average.

Bullying and Harassment

- *CMS students, both 6th and 8th graders, report bullying and harassment in 2008 less often than the aggregate towns (17%/24% agg).*
- One sixth of both 6th (34) and 8th graders (29) report having been bullied in school during the twelve months prior to the survey. There is little variation by gender in either grade. Of students who were not bullied, 9% injure themselves on purpose. Among those who were bullied in school there were 21% who injure themselves on purpose
- Of those who reported being bullied, 6% of the sixth grade and 39% of the eighth grade report having seriously considered attempting suicide.
- 12 8th grade students (7%/12% agg) report having been shouted at, sworn at, scared, threatened or insulted by someone they were dating or going out with on at least one occasion during the last year
- 5% of 8th graders (9% agg) report having been sexually harassed by someone in school during twelve months prior to the survey. Females 2%, males 8%.

Sex

More CMS 8th graders report having sex than 8th graders in the aggregate towns

- 21 eighth graders (12%/11% agg) report ever having sexual intercourse. Seventeen male respondents (22%) were more likely to have had this experience than four females (4%).
- Of those who reported ever having used marijuana, 81% report that they ever had sexual intercourse compared to 3% who did not use marijuana
- The 2008 survey included one question on oral sex for the first time. Twenty-one 8th graders (12%) participate in oral sex compared to 11% of aggregate. 17 males (22%) report this experience more than 4 (3%) females.

Gambling

CMS 6th and 8th graders gamble less than students from the aggregate towns

- 20 sixth grade student (10%/14% agg) and 43 eighth grade students (25%/27% agg) report having gambled by betting on the lottery, Keno, sporting events, casino games, cards or racing at least once during the last twelve months of the survey. Male respondents report this behavior more of than females.
- No 6th graders (2%agg) and 7 8th graders (4% /5% agg) report having spent one or more hours on the internet during the past thirty days gambling.

Internet Safety

The CMS 6th graders display a considerably safer approach while on the Internet than the aggregate 6th graders (6%/11%agg)

- 14 6th graders (7%/ 10% agg) and 19 8th graders (11%/18% agg) report having ever given information about themselves over the Internet to someone they have never met other than for purchases. 8th grade males (13%) report having done this more frequently than females (10%).
- Twelve sixth graders (6%/12% agg) and 24 eighth graders (14%/14% agg) report having ever met someone in person with whom they initially had contact over the Internet. Males did it in both grades more than females

Weapons and Drugs on School Property

- Eight CMS 6th graders (4%/7% agg) report having carried any type of weapon during 30 days prior to the survey. Twenty-eight 8th graders (16%/15% agg) report the same.
- Drugs at school- One male 6th grader and 15 eighth graders (9%/6% agg) report having been offered sold or given an illegal drug on school property during the last year.

Summary

Our efforts to reduce stress, bullying, harassment, alcohol and other drug use, including inhalants, will continue to be the focus at the Concord Middle Schools.

By March 2008 92% of the 6th graders (183 students) and 61% of 8th graders (105) report *feeling connected to a teacher/adult at CMS*. The Developmental Asset research indicates the importance of youth feeling connected to a non-family adult as a critical asset for positive emotional growth.