



Getting to "Y":

Students Bring Meaning to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey

“This process makes the data come alive, with students who are engaged in making choices between risky and healthy behaviors. The students doing the analysis were energized by the discussion - pushing beyond the numbers to find their true meaning and exploring the implications of this”.

*Bob McNamara, Past Superintendent
Washington West Supervisory Union*

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Student Analysis project, funded by the Department of Education, is an opportunity for students to take a lead in bringing meaning to their own YRBS data and taking steps to strengthen their school and community based on their findings. There is a wealth of information in this bi-annual report, but what it does not include is a thoughtful and informed analysis of “Y” young people are making either wise or unwise choices, and what students believe would change these statistics for the better.

For the past two years, leadership teams of students and teachers at nine Vermont high schools have participated in this new initiative. These teams have first received training to organize a day retreat to analyze the data, producing a "Student Executive Summary". This executive summary identifies three strengths, three areas of concern and a preliminary plan of action, based on an exploration of root causes of the concerns. They then host a Dialogue Night to share the “Student Executive Summary” with the greater community, and lead meaningful multi-generational discussions. Finally, they combine all that they have learned to frame next steps, which the group implements in second half of the school year.

This newsletter tells the story of the work of the 2009-2010 school sites: Hazen Union High School, Windsor High School, Ottauquechee Community Partnership, and Williston Central School (the first middle school engaged in this effort).



Williston Central School student facilitator, helps build their Asset Web during the analysis retreat.



Lydia Ducharme (initiative Co-coordinator), and Emma Buckley facilitate Hazen Union Dialogue Night

Hazen Union High School Hardwick

Five Hazen Union students organized a very successful full day retreat this fall, having recruited a diverse and committed participant group. Their data analysis findings were:

Strengths:

1. **Adult Support:** 89% of the student body has a supportive adult in their lives.
2. **Academics:** 74% of students have mostly As or Bs
3. **Sexual Safety:** 70% of those sexually active used a condom during recent sexual experience.

Concerns:

1. **Vehicle Safety:** too high of a percentage of students either driving under the influence of alcohol or marijuana or riding with someone under the influence. Also, only 46% of students always wear seat belts.
2. **Drug and Alcohol Use and Availability:** Use of alcohol, tobacco marijuana, particularly in middle school age group is high. It is also easy to get alcohol or marijuana (68% & 50% respectively).
3. **Personal Safety and Well-being:** One out of 5 students has been bullied or bullied another student; 27% felt so hopeless for a 2 week period that they stopped participating in usual activities.

NEXT STEPS....

The Hazen Dialogue Night drew approximately 25 community members of all ages. Some identified next steps are:

- * Participate in a local student prevention coalition initiative, The Image Project to develop media materials about making good choices.
- * Host a follow-up Dialogue Night to continue the discussion, in conjunction with the local prevention coalition.
- * Hold a “Ghost Out Day” with Hazen’s VTLSP group.
- * Raise awareness by posting data around the school.
- * Create a YRBS page on our school’s website which will have links to the data and the the Area Community Prevention Coalition.



YRBS Dialogue Night



Opening Dialogue Night
Activity:
The Data Matching Game

Windsor High School Windsor

The Windsor Team took their retreat data to the Hartland Community Center as a warm-up for their Dialogue Night. They presented their following “Executive Summary”:



Adam Harkness leads panel discussion at a Hartland Community Breakfast held on February 6, 2010 at Damon Hall. **Credit:** Lisa Cowdrev

Strengths:

1. **Family Meal:** 74% of students have had a family meal in the last 7 days.
2. **Adult Support:** 86% of students have a caring adult in their lives.
3. **Nutrition:** 73% of students eat breakfast at least 3 times a week.

Concerns:

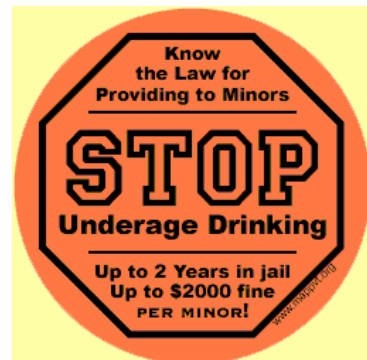
1. **Sexual Activity:** 24% of 8th graders report having had sex.
2. **Alcohol:** 19% of students had at least one alcoholic beverage in the past month.
3. **Access to Alcohol & Drugs:** 41% of students report that it is easy to access drugs, alcohol & tobacco.

NEXT STEPS...

- * Developing Sex Ed Curriculum with the Dean of Students, Nurse and Student Mentors. This curriculum will be implement for 2010-2011 school year, working with Junior High Students
- *Sticker Shock: Stickers Alcoholic Beverages at area retailers about the legal ramifications of providing for minors.



The Sticker Shock Team, with advisor Andy Jackins and O.R. (aka School Resource Officer Doug Roberts), line up in front of the coolers at the Gulf Mini-Mart and Deli in Ascutney. In a whirlwind action that swept through three stores in Ascutney, Windsor, and Brownsville, the team slapped on nearly a thousand stickers!



Ottauquechee Community Partnership Woodstock

From 100's of data points, 17 youth in a November retreat narrowed a focus to 4 concerns and 3 strengths. These concerns were analyzed, root causes explored and community assets reviewed over the course of two dialogue nights, as a start toward action plans.

Strengths:

1. **Adult Support:** 87% of youth feel they have an adult they can go to for help
2. **Adult Norms:** 89% of youth feel their parents do not approve of cigarettes
3. **Body Image:** 60% of youth feel they are about the right weight

Concerns:

1. **Youth Matters:** 52% of youth report “In my community, I feel like I matter to people”.
2. **Sexual Activity:** 25% of eight graders report having had sexual intercourse.
3. **Perceived Risk:** Only 28% of youth think there is great risk in people harming themselves from drinking one or two alcoholic drinks nearly every day.
4. **Access to Drugs:** 39% of youth report being offered, sold or given an illegal drug on school property during the past twelve months.



*Eight students from Woodstock Union High School are learning about social science, and how it applies to their live and their peers' lives.
Jim Grossman*



1. **Youth Matters:** A “stealth campaign” was launched at Woodstock Union High School. A sign with the 48% statistic was posted and left up, and students conducted focus groups in study halls about this data. This was followed up with a large graffiti banner with the statistic and instructions to respond to it (above). The next week a banner with instructions about what to do about this reality was posted. The group will soon share this work with the entire school and community.

2. **Early Sexual activity:** We now have Woodstock Healthy Teens Project, which is a joint venture between OCP and WISE- the organization that deals with sexual violence and educates about relationships and sexuality in the Upper Valley. We now have someone who can work with the community, and particularly youth, about these issues.

3. **Access to Drugs:** Youth wanted to work on policy as a way to support teachers in being able to confront students at school who are using and/or selling substances. Youth are now working with a school board member from the policy committee.

4. **Perceived Risk:** Two seniors have spoken to a middle school parent group about “navigating the high school experience” specifically dealing with the reality that substances are readily available in school/community. A Town Hall event was also held during Alcohol Awareness Month to educate the community.

Williston Central School

Fifteen Williston eighth graders spent a day analyzing their YRBS data. Over 40 community members then participated in a student facilitated Dialogue Night to discuss their YRBS findings:

Strengths:

- 1. Parental Attitude Toward Smoking:** 96% of students “think that their parents think it is *wrong* or *very wrong* for them to smoke cigarettes”.
- 2. Physical Activity:** 91% “participated in physical education classes at least once during an average week”.
- 3. Seat Belt Use:** 79% “always wear a safety belt when riding in a car drive by someone else”.
- 4. Eating with Family:** 85% “ate a meal with all or most of their family members 3 or more days of the past week”.



Concerns:

- 1. Youth Matters:** Only 58% “agree that in my community, I feel like I matter to people”
- 2. Self-Harm:** 10% “purposely hurt themselves (e.g. cut or burned) without wanting to die during the past 12 months”
- 3. Sexual Activity:** 6% reported “first sexual activity prior to age of 13”
- 4. Marijuana & Inhalant Use:** 9% have ever tried marijuana & 12% used inhalants

NEXT STEPS...

- * Train all 8th graders in guidance classes to be “Peer Listeners”
- * “Catch Me If You Can” in acts of kindness week
- * Explore further adoption of PBS model
- * Offer more student access to direction center staff, more interns, more casual time together
 - * Offer parenting classes on building self-esteem in children; Dr. Frankowski program for parents re: sex education in May
 - * VKAT help adapt health curriculum for 8th graders to include: limit setting, abusive relationships and true cost of sexual activity
 - * VKAT workshops on Peer Pressure
 - * Ask teachers to include effects of drugs on the body/brain in science class
 - * Inform parents on how to talk to and keep an eye on their kids so they don’t start
 - * Raise community awareness by talking to the school board about drug use





A special thanks to Lydia Ducharme, Hazen Union Senior, for being the Youth Co-coordinator of the YRBS Getting to “Y” Initiative. Her commitment to this work was inspiring!

FRIDAY, MAY 7
VERMONT COLLEGE of FINE ARTS
MONTPELIER, VT

This is the 9th Annual Vermont Rural Partnership state-wide conference. Youth voice and leadership, and civic engagement are always the theme. Once again, the YRBS Project will be featured in a morning workshop where students share what they have learned and accomplished this year.

For more information about this initiative, feel free to contact the coordinator, Helen Beattie at hnbeattie@gmail.com or 802-472-5127

The YRBS Student Analysis project is made possible by the Vermont Department of Education with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information contact Kate O’Neill at kathryn.oneill@state.vt.us or 802-828-5151.