

Report on the Well-Being of Watertown Youth

Results of the 2009 Watertown Youth Risk Behavior Survey & Youth Needs Assessment



Prepared by the Watertown Youth Coalition
August 2010





Please visit our web site at
www.watertownyouthcoalition.org
for printable copy of the
Developmental Assets
which can be posted on your
refrigerator as a reminder of the
strengths of young people!



Additional information about
The Search Institute's®
Developmental Assets can be
found online at
www.search-institute.org.



*"Children are the world's most
valuable resource and its best
hope for the future."*

John F. Kennedy



**The Watertown Youth Coalition has
compiled the following data in this
report through the
[Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#)
administered in spring of 2009.**

**The data shows a variety of
information about Watertown Youth that reveals
both positive and negative aspects of their lives
and how the information connects.**

**The following list of
["Developmental Assets"](#)
is often referred to by Public Health and Mental
Health professionals as a guide to understanding
Adolescence and what helps young people grow up
healthy, caring, and responsible.**

40 Developmental Assets® for Adolescents (ages 12-18)

Search Institute® has identified the following building blocks of healthy development—known as **Developmental Assets®**—that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

EXTERNAL ASSETS



SUPPORT

1. **Family Support** | Family life provides high levels of love and support.
2. **Positive Family Communication** | Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
3. **Other Adult Relationships** | Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
4. **Caring Neighborhood** | Young person experiences caring neighbors.
5. **Caring School Climate** | School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. **Parent Involvement in Schooling** | Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the child succeed in school.



EMPOWERMENT

7. **Community Values Youth** | Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
8. **Youth as Resources** | Young people are given useful roles in the community.
9. **Service to Others** | Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
10. **Safety** | Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.



BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS

11. **Family Boundaries** | Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
12. **School Boundaries** | School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. **Neighborhood Boundaries** | Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
14. **Adult Role Models** | Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. **Positive Peer Influence** | Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
16. **High Expectations** | Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.



CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME

17. **Creative Activities** | Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
18. **Youth Programs** | Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.
19. **Religious Community** | Young person spends one hour or more per week in activities in a religious institution.
20. **Time at Home** | Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

INTERNAL ASSETS



COMMITMENT TO LEARNING

21. **Achievement Motivation** | Young person is motivated to do well in school.
22. **School Engagement** | Young person is actively engaged in learning.
23. **Homework** | Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
24. **Bonding to School** | Young person cares about her or his school.
25. **Reading for Pleasure** | Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.



POSITIVE VALUES

26. **Caring** | Young Person places high value on helping other people.
27. **Equality and Social Justice** | Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
28. **Integrity** | Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
29. **Honesty** | Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
30. **Responsibility** | Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
31. **Restraint** | Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.



SOCIAL COMPETENCIES

32. **Planning and Decision Making** | Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
33. **Interpersonal Competence** | Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
34. **Cultural Competence** | Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
35. **Resistance Skills** | Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
36. **Peaceful Conflict Resolution** | Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.



POSITIVE IDENTITY

37. **Personal Power** | Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
38. **Self-Esteem** | Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
39. **Sense of Purpose** | Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
40. **Positive View of Personal Future** | Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.



Who We Are

The Watertown Youth Coalition (WYC) is a community coalition of youth, parents, educators, law enforcement, health professionals, clergy, and local business owners committed to fostering healthy and positive life styles among Watertown youth.

Our Mission

The mission of the WYC is to enhance the abilities of children, teens, parents and the community to in-crease healthy decision-making and decrease unhealthy risky behaviors.



Watertown Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the WYC Youth Needs Assessment

Since 1998, the Watertown Youth Coalition (WYC) has partnered with Watertown High School and Watertown Middle School to administer the Watertown Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), a school-based survey used to identify priority health-risk behaviors among youth and young adults. The anonymous written survey drafted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and given nationally looks at a range of behaviors including: alcohol, tobacco and other drug use; behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence; unsafe sex; unhealthy dieting; and physical inactivity. The Watertown Youth Coalition, along with its community partners, have used the results to information to inform its mission and to promote programs that support, challenge, and expect the highest from our youth.

In 2007, the Watertown Youth Coalition developed the WYC Youth Needs Assessment as a complement to the YRBS. This supplemental survey allowed us to deepen our knowledge of the behaviors engaged in by Watertown youth by enriching the existing data and providing some context for understanding these behaviors. The WYC Youth Needs Assessment explores the challenges that students' face, how to best to engage youth, and ways in which adults can support their teens.

Together, the YRBS and the WYC Youth Needs Assessment serve as the foundation for the work of the Watertown Youth Coalition and guide our mission and goals.

Our Story: 2009

In April 2009, 572 Watertown High School and 471 Watertown Middle School students participated in the Watertown Youth Risk Behavior Survey: 410 Watertown High School and 439 Watertown Middle School students participated in the WYC Needs Assessment Survey. *The Report on the Well-Being of Watertown Youth* shares what youth have told us are the greatest challenges facing them today: **Alcohol and Other Drugs; Academic Stress; Peer Pressure & Bullying; and Body Image**. This report is framed to explore each of these challenges, identify some of the risk behaviors associated with each challenge, illustrate what the Watertown Youth Coalition is doing to address these challenges, and offer ways in which the entire community can play a pivotal role in supporting Watertown youth.



Look for this symbol throughout the report for helpful ideas on how we as parents and other caring adults can help.

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

Alcohol is the most commonly used drug by youth in the United States and is often associated with other substance use. Persistent use may lead to academic difficulties, health-related problems, poor peer relationships, or involvement with the juvenile justice system. In addition, there are consequences for family members, the community, and the entire society. Prevention efforts to reduce or prevent teen alcohol and other drug use can greatly increase the likelihood of physically, emotionally, and socially healthy youth.

Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

High School Results

More than 54% of Watertown High School students reported that alcohol and other drugs is the greatest challenge they face, reflecting an increase from 2007 where drugs and alcohol was reported as the second-most reported challenge.

ALCOHOL

- 65.8% reported that they had ever tried alcohol; **down significantly** from 71.5% in 2008
- 44.9% reported having at least one alcoholic beverage in the past 30 days; **down significantly** from 51.1% in 2008
- 32.5% reported binge drinking (drinking five or more alcoholic beverages within a span of two hours); down slightly from 35.9% in 2008
- 67% of students believe it would be easy to get alcohol

OTHER DRUGS

- 10.6% reported ever using someone else's prescription medication to get high; down from 12.2% in 2008
- 31.1% reported using marijuana in the past 30 days; up slightly from 27.2% in 2008
- 55.3% believe marijuana is easy to get; up slightly 52.9% in 2008
- 16.6% reported ever sniffing or breathing inhalants; **up significantly** 11.6% in 2009

Middle School Results

Watertown Middle School students also reported that alcohol and other drugs is the biggest challenge they face, reflecting a noticeable jump from 2007 where alcohol and drugs were reported as the second-most challenging issue.

From 2008 to 2009, alcohol and other drug use increased overall in the Middle School with 39.8% reporting that this was their greatest challenge.

ALCOHOL

- 11% reported drinking in the past 30 days; **up significantly** from 6.9% in 2008
- 29.3% reported ever trying alcohol; **up significantly** from 23.5% in 2008

OTHER DRUGS

- 6.2% reported ever trying marijuana; **up significantly** from 10% in 2008
- 6.8% reported ever using cocaine **nearly doubled** from 3.6% in 2008
- 14.3% reported ever trying inhalants; **up significantly** from 7.9% in 2008
- 6.1 % reported ever using over-the-counter medication; **up from** 5.4% in 2008
- 6.7% reported using someone else's prescription medication ever to get high; **up from** 4.9% in 2008

Who's At Risk?

High school students at the **highest risk** of using cigarettes*, alcohol, and other drugs are those who:

- Do not talk to their parents about their problems
- Reported past 30-day use of diet pills to lose weight
- Played on at least one sports team in the past 12 months

Middle school students at the **highest risk** of using cigarettes*, alcohol, and other drugs are those who:

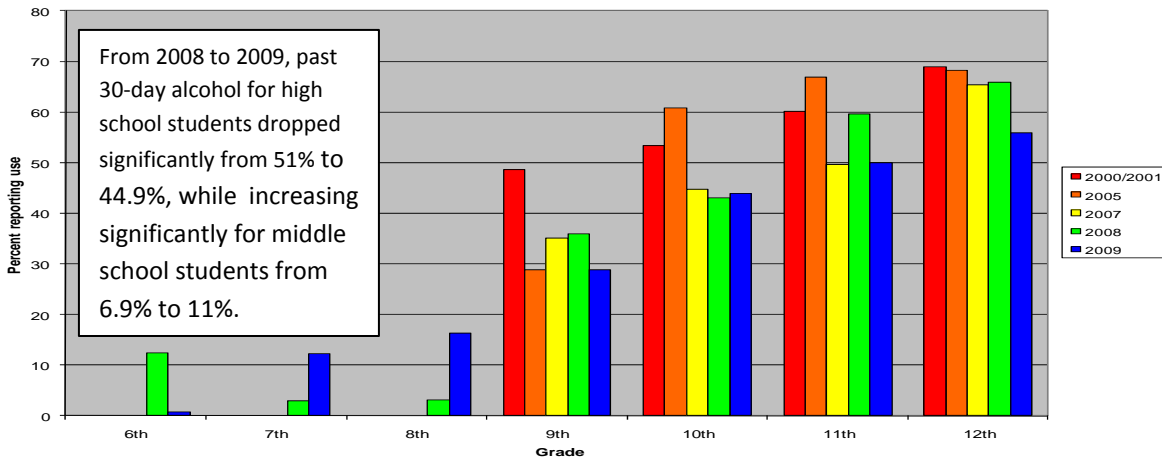
- Do not talk to their parents about their problems.
- Reported past 30-day use of diet pills to lose weight

Unlike high school students, we found that participation in at least one sports team by middle school students in the past 12 months had little correlation on drug and alcohol use.

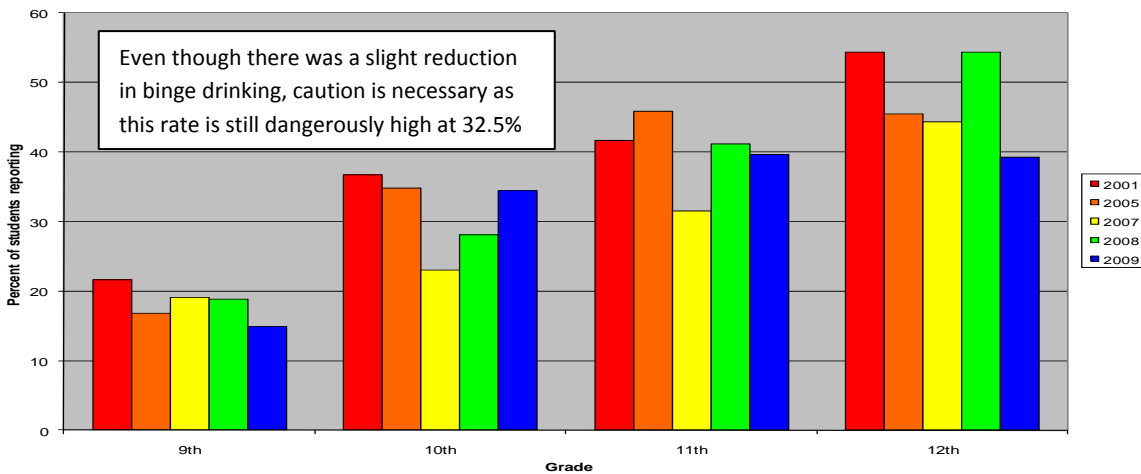
Trends

The YRBS helps the WYC identify patterns in risky behaviors by tracking the data over many years. With this information, the Coalition can follow specific behaviors over time and work with parents, youth, schools, law enforcement and the larger community to increase awareness and education on these issues in an effort to reverse negative trends and stimulate positive change.

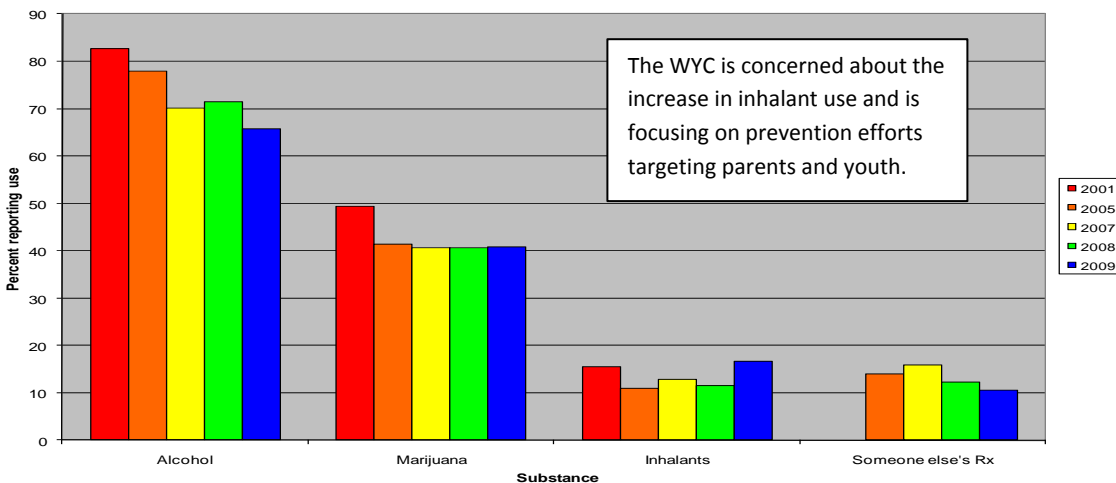
Past 30 days alcohol use by grade



Past 30 day binge drinking by grade



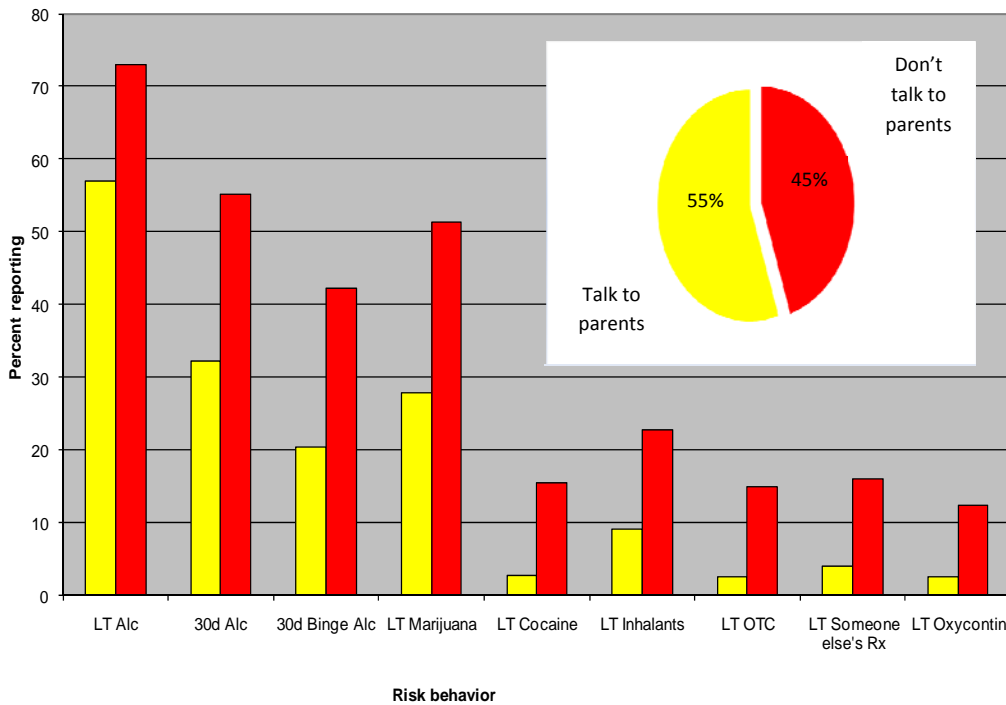
Trends in Substance Use



Parent Connectedness & Substance Abuse

Parent connectedness encompasses many things; however in this report it is defined as children going to their parents when they have a problem and having a discussion about the issue.

Relationship between Parental Connectedness and Selected Risk Behaviors
Watertown High School



The #1 way parents can increase the likelihood of their teen avoiding risky behaviors is by talking with them.



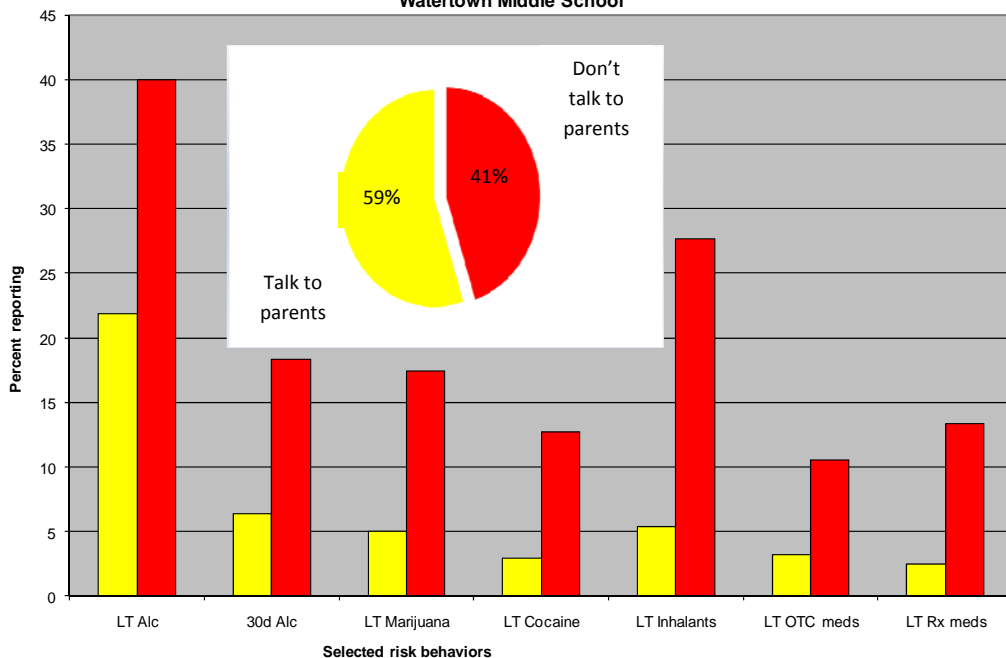
Research shows that kids who learn about the risks of alcohol and other drugs from their parents are up to 50% less likely to use. By talking to your kids about drugs & alcohol, you can help them make better choices and live safer, healthier lives.

www.timetotalk.org



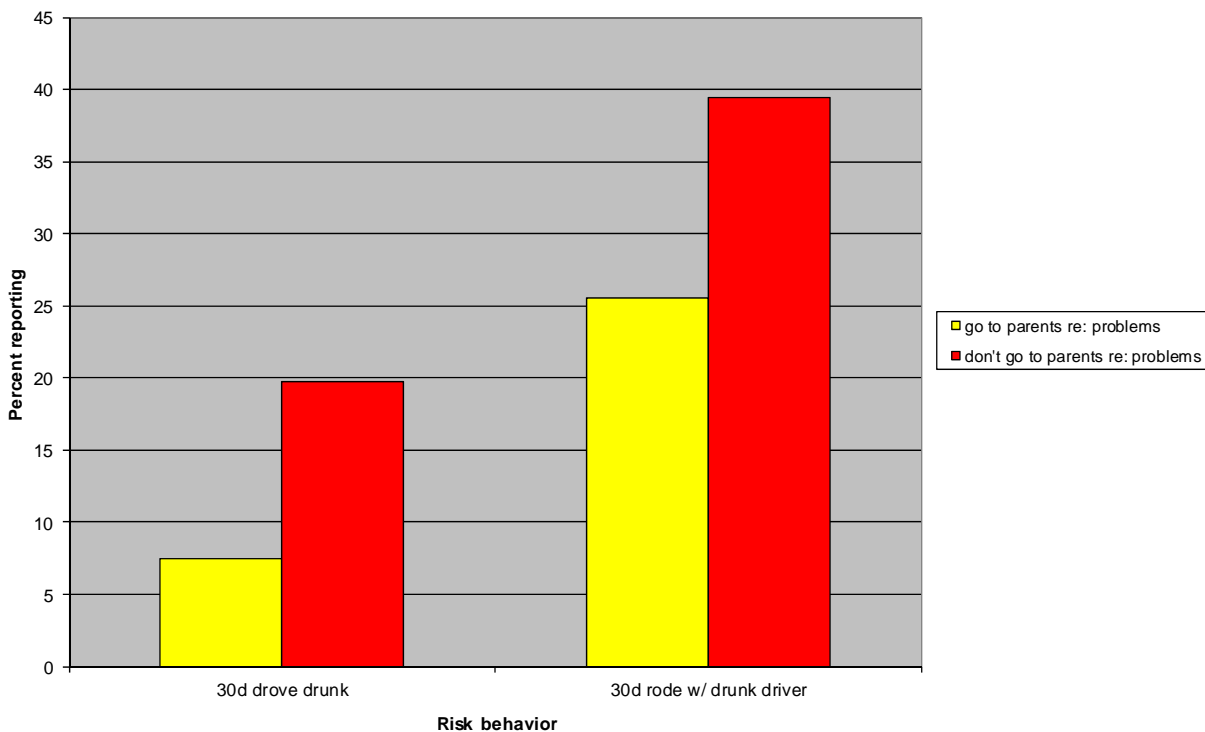
Watertown students who reports going to their parents with problems show significantly lower rates of all risky behaviors surveyed!

Relationship between Parental Connectedness and Selected Risk Behaviors
Watertown Middle School



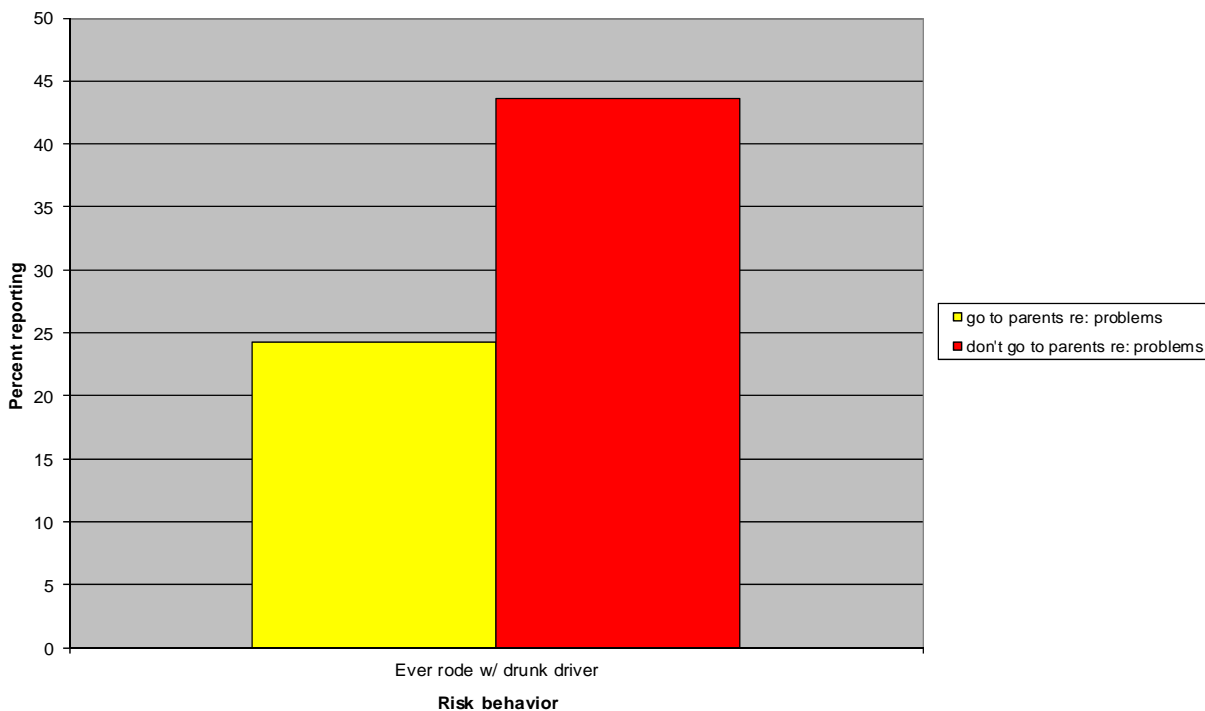
Watertown High School

Relationship between Parental Connectedness and Selected Risk Behaviors



Watertown Middle School

Relationship between Parental Connectedness and Selected Risk Behavior



It's never too late to begin talking with your child. Start by creating routine opportunities for parent and child communication: on the way to piano lessons, while raking the yard, during a game of catch. These are all great times to connect with your teen. Another great time? Family dinners. Research supports that eating together as a family has a positive effect on kids making healthy choices.

| Children who frequently have dinner with their parents: | What can parents do? |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Are more likely to get better grades in school✓ Are more likely to say they have an excellent relationship with their parents✓ Find it easier to talk with their parents about personal things✓ Are less likely to smoke, drink, or use other drugs✓ Are less likely to have friends who smoke, drink, or use other drugs | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Make a regular date with your kids✓ Let them know how important they are to you✓ Listen to what they have to say✓ Validate their feeling without a judgment; you are empowering them to continue talking to you✓ Approach concern with education or advice to encourage continued discussion and problem-solving✓ Include your children in finding solutions to problems✓ Parents need to take care of themselves to best help their children. |



Getting started can be difficult



Key points for parents: Parents are the experts & know their children best. All families can benefit from new strategies and re-learning opportunities.

We would like to offer some scenarios about what this could look like at different developmental stages:

In Grade School:

If you are already discussing how to make good food choices with your children and they are getting the concept of healthy food equals healthy body then you have already begun talking to your child about how and why we make choices that benefit us.

Middle and High School:

As they grow and change you can use the same concepts you used with food choices to discuss drugs and alcohol. Know **the facts** & use them. If your children here sound reasoning they are more likely to listen. Just say NO is not affective because there is no explanation in "Just Say NO"

The Facts ~The Explanation

Looking into Brain Development:

Dr. Marissa Silveri of Harvard Medical School, McClellan Hospital and other affiliations says,

"How many of you have heard the phrase, what were you thinking?" Silveri asked a gathering at a youth health forum at Hingham High School on April 13. (she also said this on March 9 at Watertown Middle School)

She said teens don't always consider the consequences of a bad choice because the frontal lobe of their brain has not fully developed as they are maturing. "It's a period of vulnerability," Silveri said. "The brain is getting better and smarter, but it is easily impaired."

She said this weakness is especially sensitive to alcohol and drug abuse by teens.

"Alcohol and drugs can impair how the brain develops," Silveri said. "It can impair the brain's decision making."

She said a community wide effort is needed to discourage teens from drinking alcohol to prevent the frontal lobe of their brain from being damaged.

"Studies show that 40 percent of the teens who begin drinking alcohol before age 13 will abuse alcohol," Silveri said. "If they wait until age 16 to drink, the percentage of youths that will abuse alcohol drops to 30 percent, and if you were to wait until age 21, the percentage that will abuse alcohol drops to 10 percent."

She said the frontal lobe of the brain does not fully mature until ages 20 and 22.

"The longer you wait to drink, it will help brain development," Silveri said.

Source:

By Ed Baker

GateHouse News Service

Posted Apr 16, 2009 @ 03:49 PM

☺ Educating yourself about the real benefits for your child staying alcohol free until at least 21 and drug free always and then imparting that knowledge when they can comprehend it.

Good Modeling:

If you admit when you have made an error and can apologize to your child when you have misspoken or displayed negative behavior then you model responsible behavior. Being accountable is very important and can be a great way to teach forgiveness for others and self. "I forgive myself and I ask that you forgive me too"

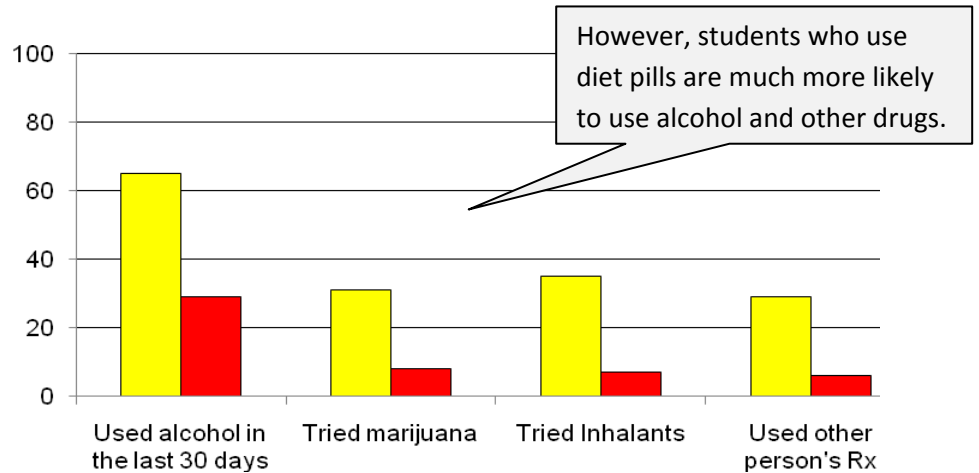
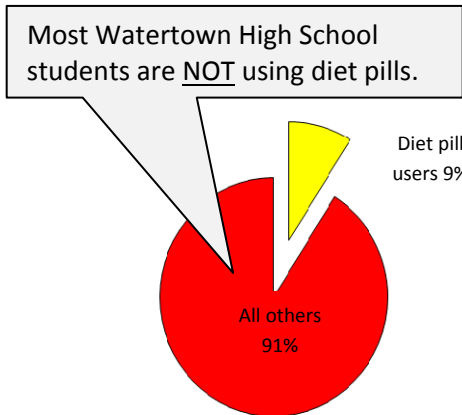
Nobody is perfect:

If you are supporting your child by comparing the life lessons they have with ones you might have had they feel you trust them with information; choosing memories that represent resolutions with positive and negative consequences are best to talk about to show the balance we strike with the decisions we make each step of the way.

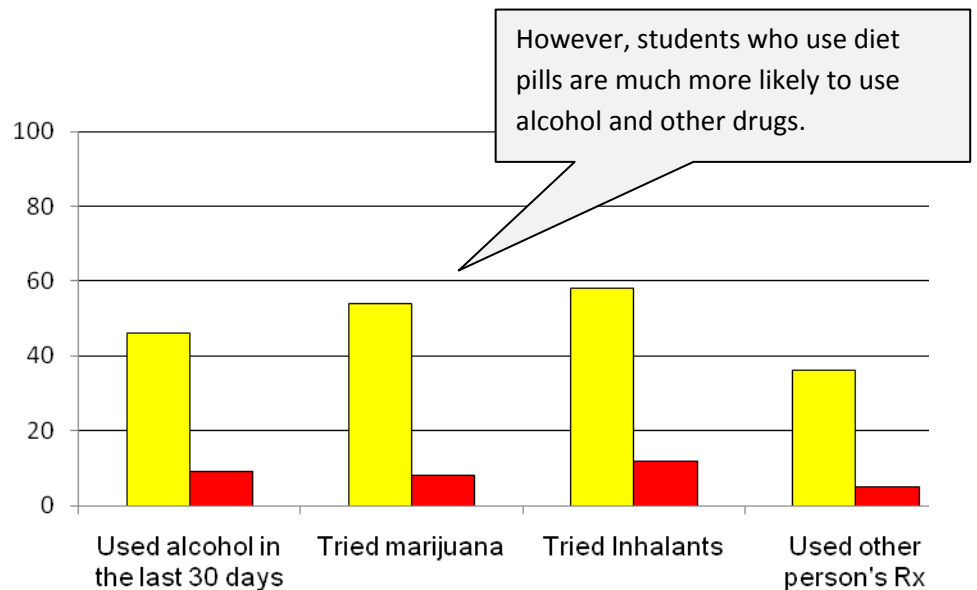
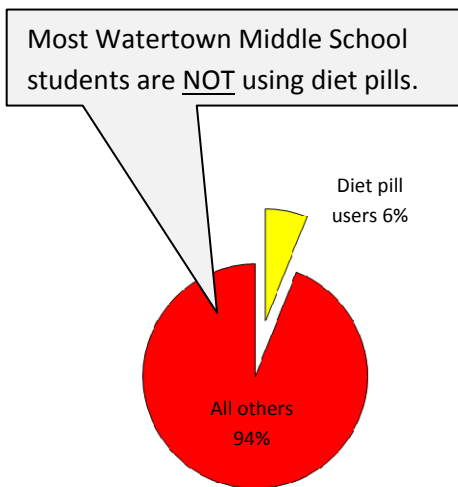
Diet Pills & Substance Abuse

Although students taking diet pills represent 9% of the high school students and 6% of the middle school students they account for a much higher percentage of the substance users.

**Watertown High School:
Diet pill users and substance use**



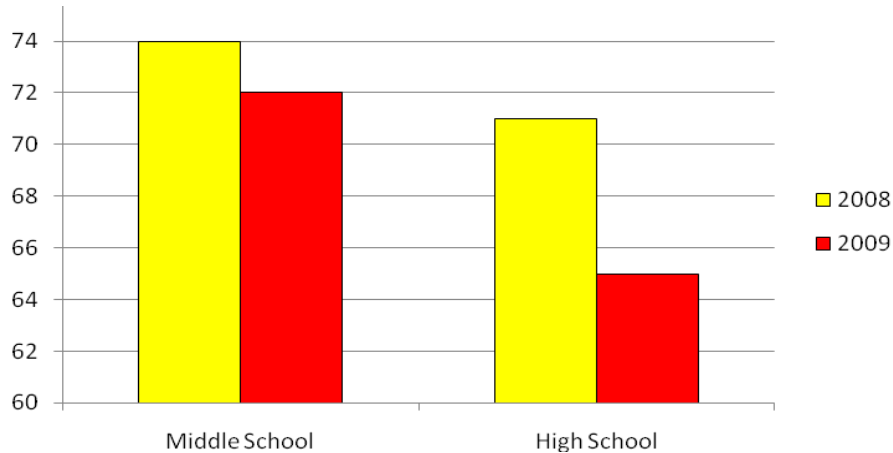
**Watertown Middle School:
Diet pill users and substance use**



Sports & Substance Abuse

In 2009, fewer Watertown High School and Middle School students reported participating in at least one sports team in the past 12 months than the year before. In fact, the results show a slight drop for Middle School students and a significant drop for High School students.

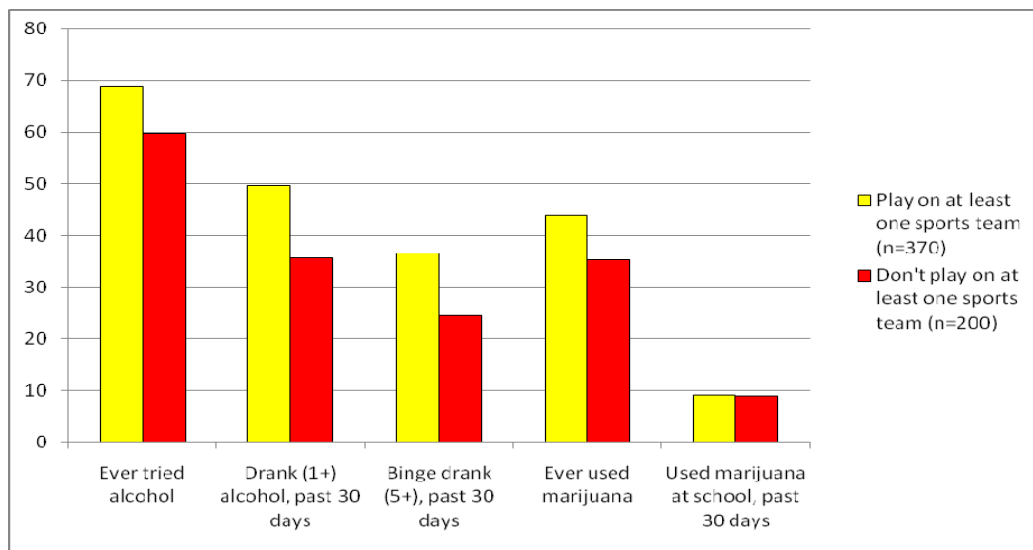
**Watertown High School and Middle School:
Participation on at Least One Sport Team**



High School Results

Of high school students who played at least one sport:

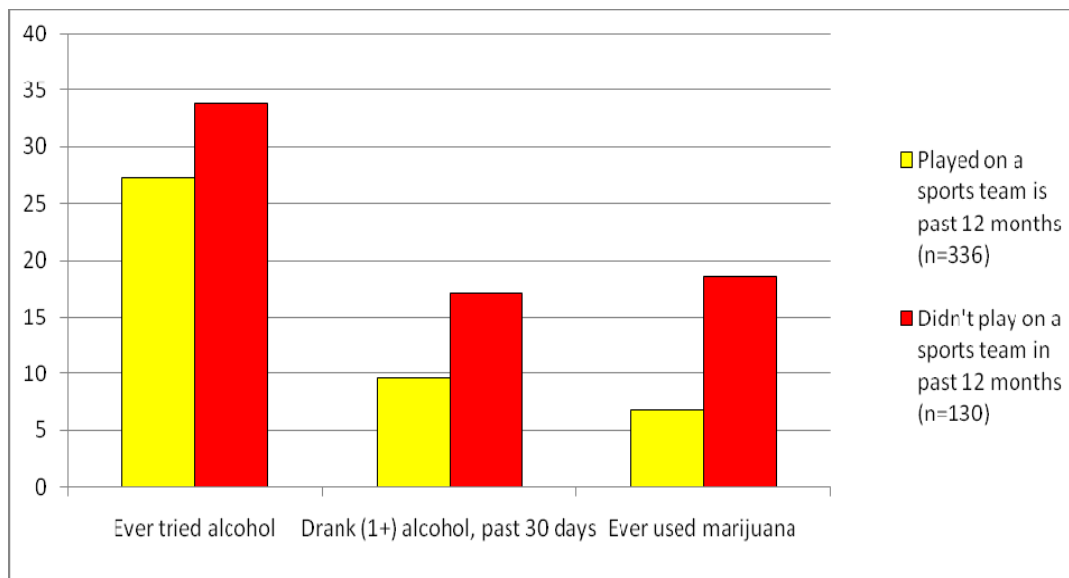
- 68% reported ever trying alcohol vs. 59.8% of students who did not play on at least one sports team
- 49.6% reported drinking at least one alcohol beverage in the past 30 days vs. 35.7% of students who did not play on at least one sports team
- 36.6% reported binge drinking in the past 30 days vs. 24.6% of students who did not play on at least one sports team
- 43.8% reported ever using marijuana vs. 35.2% of students who did not play on at least one sports team



Middle School Results

Of middle school students who played at least one sport:

- 27.2% reported ever trying alcohol vs. 33.8% of those who do not play on at least one sports team
- 9.6% reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days vs. 17.1% who did not play on at least one sports team
- 6.9% reported ever trying marijuana vs. 18.5% who did not play on at least one sports team



Sports and Substance Abuse: A delicate balance

In researching sports and alcohol use the YRBS uncovered some surprising information.

- We found that WHS student's who played 1 sport showed elevated levels of drinking when compared to their non-sports playing counterparts

Further research is needed, yet it is possible that **elevated drinking levels among sport players could be related to the mixed age grouping of high school athletics**, with 9th graders having a much lower level of alcohol use than 12th graders. As younger players spend time with **older players who drink in higher percentages and who also could be in a better position to provide alcohol, may contribute to higher levels of drinking**. Additionally, younger students typically look up to **older students as role models** and often emulate their behavior.

- 9th grade students who drank alcohol in past 30 days from survey date: (n=154) 28.6%
- 12th grade students who drank alcohol in past 30 days from survey date (n=102) 55.9%

A Delicate Balance:

Research shows that **middle school children involved in organized sports reported higher overall self-esteem** and were judged by their teachers to be **more socially skilled and less shy and withdrawn**. They also found that 13-year-old boys who had been involved with a sport during the past year were less likely to report having experimented with marijuana than 13-year-old boys who had not played a sport during the prior year. *Maureen Weiss, PhD, University of Oregon*



Even though there are some issues of elevated alcohol use associated with students who report being on at least one sports team **we do not intend to say that Team Sports are a negative choice**. Each individual can choose what makes most sense for them. **It is on parents, coaches and other adults in the community to educate the youth and monitor their involvement**. If you know the risk you can ramp up on the protective factors and help your child or a child you have some influence on to avoid the risky behaviors.



Talk to your child! If you are letting your child know that there are going to be times that they will be disappointed and they look at why and discuss how it feels to them, you are preparing them for the realities in life. Honesty in the assessment of any of life's trials and tribulations is a great way to support your child in future decision making.

Encourage your daughters as well as your sons to enter competitions. Whether they're involved in sports, writing, debate, music, art or drama, science, math, or the many additional competitions available, **they can learn the exhilaration of winning, the advantages of collaborating with a team, and most of all, that no one wins all the time.**

Dr. Sylvia Rimm says, Encourage healthy competition. Music, art, and sports contests abound. Talented children should have opportunities to enter such competitions to measure their talents and skills against others. Moving to higher levels of competition gradually permits them to raise the bar without feeling discouraged.

It's a healthy choice! Over half of all children aged 5–14 years are spending more time watching television and videos than in the school classroom. The overwhelming competitor for physical activity is screen time — television, video games, cinema and texting. Every extra hour of sport reduces screen time by 20–24 minutes. During the critical window period (between school and dinner), children are three to four times more likely to be in front of a screen than playing sport. Physical education and sport also build health activity habits that **encourage life-long participation in physical activity.**

Sports Can Be Too Much Of A Good Thing

Dr. Sylvia Rimm says:

Involvement in sports causes problems for kids mainly when it becomes "too much of a good thing." When sports participation is prioritized as more important than learning by either parent, or when children spend too much of their time watching sports on TV, little time is left to develop academic competence or other interests. When kids assume they can become professional athletes without a realistic sense of the skill and practice required or the competition they'll meet, they give up learning and close doors to other opportunities for themselves. When sports are enjoyed in a balanced way and do not take over children's lives, they have great potential for making contributions to lifelong achievement.

For information on Academic Stress related to sports involvement, please see Page # 24 & 25.

Other Contributing Factors of Substance Abuse

*The likelihood for a person to participate in a risky behavior is often influenced by environmental factors; that is, aspects that are external to the individual. Environmental factors are often shaped by community norms or beliefs about a particular behavior or activity. The 2009 YRBS survey results indicate that **Perception of Harm and Access** are both contributing factors to the rates of Watertown youth substance use.*

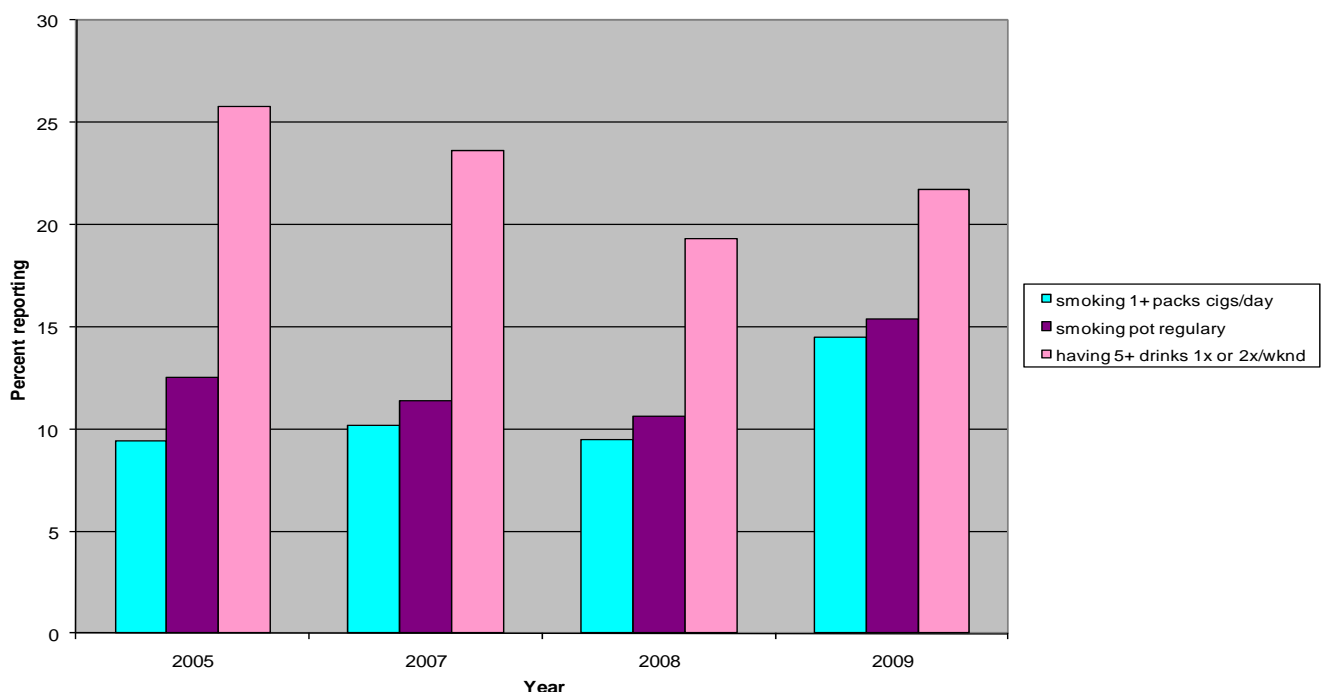
Perception of Harm

Perception of harm refers to the belief that engaging in a certain behavior or activity will have a negative cost. The media, policy enforcement, and education & awareness efforts play a pivotal role in how teens perceive the level of harm around substance use. Youth are particularly vulnerable to underestimating the potential negative long-term consequences.

Perception of harm was a considerable risk for Middle School students' rate of cigarette and marijuana use:

- 14.5% of Middle School students reported that smoking a pack or more of cigarettes per day causes little to no risk of physical harm; **up** from 9.5% in 2008.
- 15.4% of Middle School students report that smoking marijuana regularly causes little to no risk of physical harm; **up** from 10.6% in 2008.

Watertown Middle School
Perception of little to no risk of physical harm by year



Access

Access refers to where and how teens get alcohol and other drugs. The Watertown Youth Coalition uses community organizing strategies designed to change policies and practices of major community institutions to reduce access to alcohol and other drugs. Research shows that when access to alcohol is limited, the rates of youth drinking decrease. See the next page on how WYC's Talk It Up/Lock It Up social marketing campaign helped to make this happen in Watertown!

Where are Watertown youth getting cigarettes?

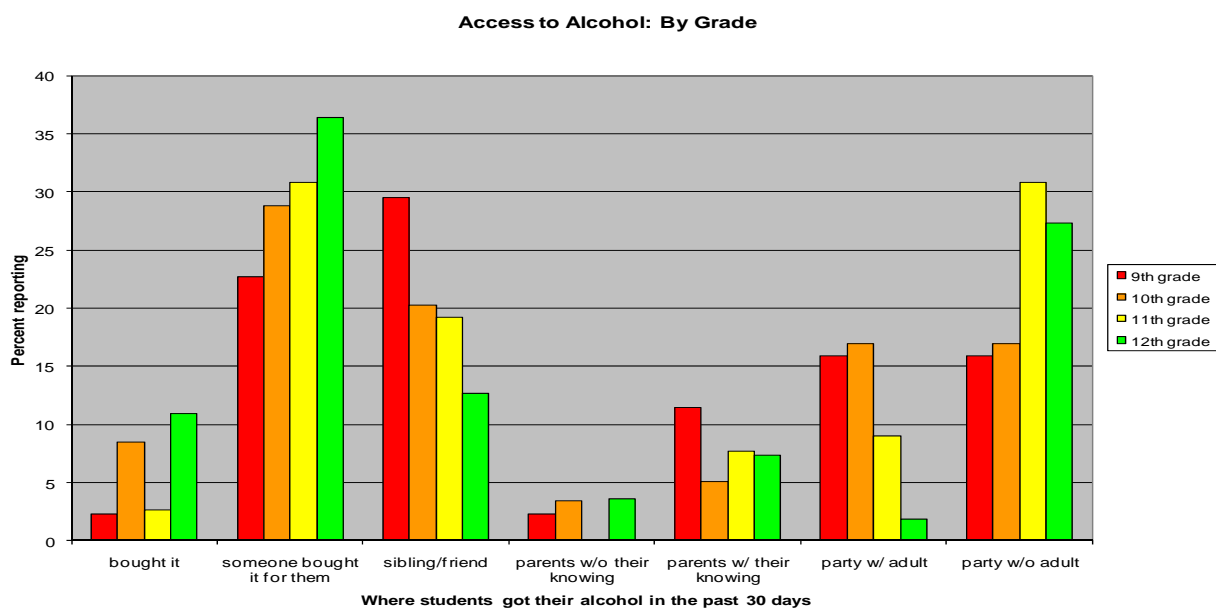
1. Buying them in a store
2. Bumping them from friends
3. Giving money to someone to buy cigarettes for them

Where are Watertown High School kids getting alcohol?

1. Getting someone else to buy it for them
2. At a party where no adult was present
3. From a sibling or friend
4. At home without their parents'/guardians' knowledge

Where are Watertown Middle School kids getting alcohol?

1. From home, either with or without their parents'/guardians' knowledge
2. Bought it themselves
3. Got it at a party where no adult was present



What the Watertown Youth Coalition has been doing to address some of these issues and trends in the data

The work of The Watertown Youth Coalition - Peer Leader Members, Adult Residents and Key Stakeholders: Wayside Youth & Family Support Network, Watertown Police Department, Watertown Public Schools, Watertown Health Department, Harvard Vanguard, Town Council, Watertown Public School Parent Teacher Organizations have all worked together to create the following marketing strategies.

Social Marketing, Perception of Harm, and Access

Social marketing is a strategy used by communities designed to promote a social concern, raise awareness about a community issue, or to increase knowledge about the benefits of adopting a new behavior. The Watertown Youth Coalition has developed several successful social marketing campaigns targeting parents to address perception of harm and access issues around teen alcohol and other drug use.

Talk It Up/Lock It Up

In 2007, Watertown YRBS data indicated that teens were primarily getting alcohol from their parents' or guardians' home, with or without their parents' knowledge. The Watertown Youth Coalition created TIU/LIU to send a message to parents that they can play a pivotal role in reducing teen drinking by closely monitoring the alcohol within their own home AND by talking with their teen about not drinking. In 2009, the percentage of teens reporting getting alcohol from home without their parents' knowledge had dropped to 2% from 20.5% and the percentage of teens reporting getting alcohol from home with their parents' knowledge had dropped to 7.3% from 13.2%.

Is The Alcohol In Your Home
**EASY FOR
KIDS TO GET?**

**KEEP ALCOHOL
OUT OF
KIDS' HANDS**

**TALK IT UP!
LOCK IT UP!**
Everyone wins when kids don't drink.

For more information on keeping the alcohol in your home out of kids' hands, call 617.926.3600 or email wyco@waysideyouth.org

We are changing thinking about underage drinking

Printed by Bureau of Substance Abuse Services, Massachusetts Department of Public Health

ALCOHOL ADS
are talking to your kids
ARE YOU?

**TALK TO
YOUR KIDS
ABOUT NOT
DRINKING**

**TALK IT UP!
LOCK IT UP!**
Everyone wins when kids don't drink

For more information about talking with your kids about not drinking call 617.926.3600

We are changing thinking about underage drinking

It's On You!

In 2006, the Watertown Youth Coalition *It's on You!* Targeting all adults 21+. The campaign was collaboration between police and schools to increase consistent enforcement of alcohol policies among youth and included a sticker initiative in package stores to educate buyers on the consequences of buying for those under 21. The campaign also addressed the perception that alcohol is not harmful for young people; in fact delaying alcohol use significantly decreases the likelihood of dependence. In 2009, the percentage of kids reporting that they got someone else to buy alcohol for them had dropped to 12.9% from 32.4% when the campaign started.

**Buying for someone
UNDER 21?**

CAN YOU HANDLE **arrest** **\$2,000 in fines** **lawsuits** **?**

**Your I.D.
Your responsibility.**

**it's on
YOU.**

WWW.ITSONYOU.ORG
A message from the Watertown Police Department and the Watertown Youth Coalition.

For every year an adolescent delays using alcohol, the odds of lifelong dependence decrease by 15%

You might want to think twice before buying him that first drink.

When you buy alcohol for minors, **YOU** are responsible for the consequences. Even if you can pay the fines of up to \$2,000, stomach a year in prison, and deal with thousands of dollars more in civil suits, you still have to deal with the fact that you were the one in charge. You made the decision to break the law, so you have to face the consequences. **You are the adult.**

When you buy alcohol for minors, the responsibility falls ON YOU.

**it's on
YOU.**

WWW.ITSONYOU.ORG
Sponsored by Wayside Multi-Service Center and The Watertown Youth Coalition



How We Can Help

In the home

- Have we said it enough? Talk to your kids about everything. It's okay if you have quiet kids, even a few words can make a big difference for a child.
- Listen to your kids. Take time to have meals together, do activities, watch a family movie, read the same book together and just listen.
- Model good habits within the home
- Talk with your kids about not drinking
- Communicate clear expectations to your teen about alcohol and other drugs
- Do not provide alcohol to your teen or their friends in your home or at parties (Social Host Liability)
- Limit access to alcohol by locking it up and monitor the alcohol in your home

At school

- Encourage sports team to include alcohol prevention and education in their programs
- Encourage sports teams to create positive mentoring relationships between older and younger players
- Encourage school administration to listen to and include young people in their process
- Advocate for school policies that promote welcoming and positive school culture
- Advocate for school policies that set equal standard for all students

In the community

- Allow your child to develop positive relationships with other trusted adults
- Encourage local government to listen to and include young people in their process
- Support server training for bars and restaurants to reduce underage alcohol use
- Support local enforcement policies designed to protect youth from harm

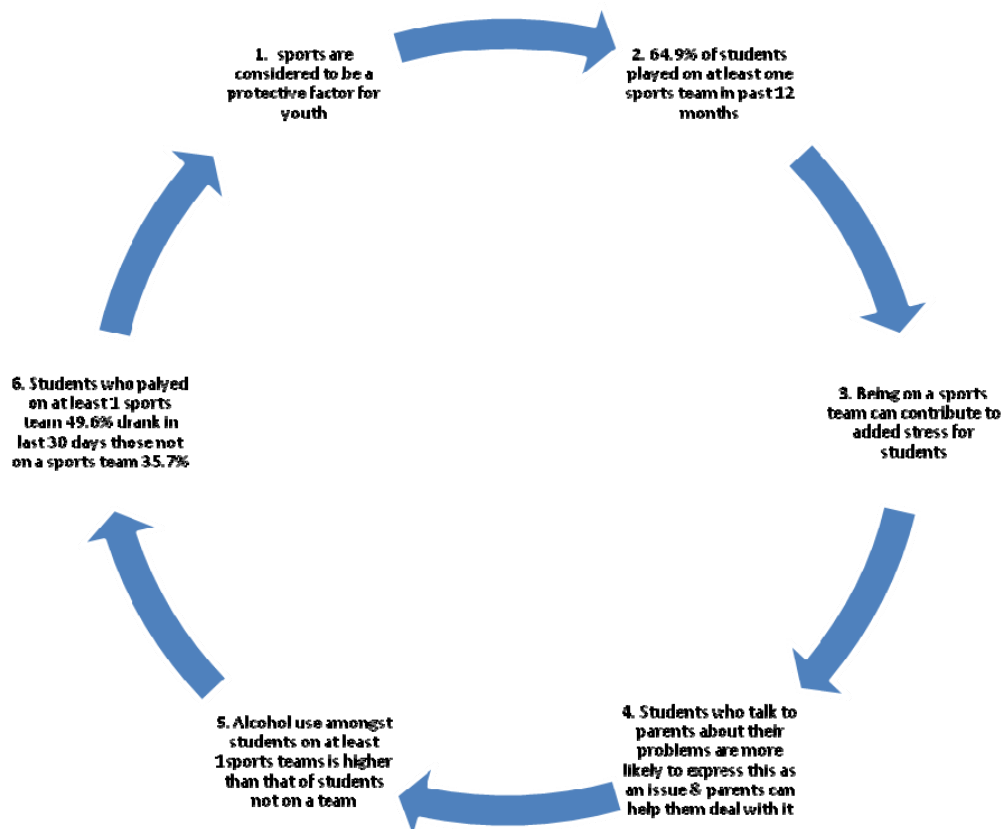
Academic Stress

"Teachers often pile on assignments at around the same time, especially at the end of each term when they try to squeeze things in."
Watertown High School Student, 2010

Current research shows that academic achievement is negatively correlated with alcohol use. The more poorly students perform in school the more likely is that they will use alcohol or vice versa. We know that high levels of academic stress can lead to high levels of, suicide, depression, drug use and behavioral problems.
Kostelecky 2005

Overall, Watertown middle and high school students reported academic stress as the second greatest challenge they face. Whereas slightly fewer WHS students identified academic stress as their greatest challenge this year (47%) than last year (50.3%), significantly fewer WMS students identified academic stress as their greatest challenge this year (38.3%) than the year before (55.1%).

Research shows that if young people are struggling academically and involved in sports they are at higher risk for substance abuse.



The Big Picture

If participating in team sports can contribute to academic stress, it is notable that when academic stress fell from the top spot among the high school students' biggest challenges in 2008 to the second spot of biggest challenges in 2009, so did the number of students who reported playing on at least one sports team. It is also notable that as the number of students who reported playing on at least one sports team dropped, so did the amount of reported drinking in which the students engaged. However, drugs and alcohol are still named by the students as their biggest challenge. This means that there is another factor that made the students select it as their biggest challenge.

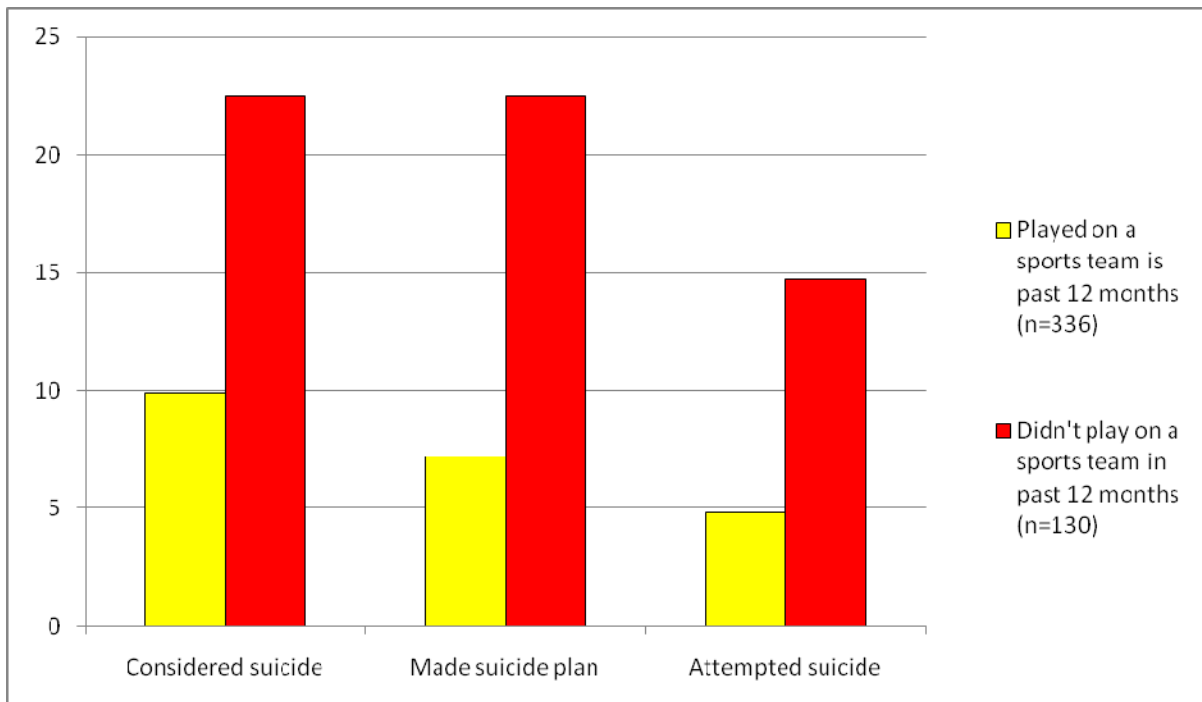
Peter Kreiner of The Schneider Institute at Brandeis University and the evaluator for Watertown Youth Coalition who evaluated the Youth Risk Behavior Survey from Watertown says,

"It may be that the increased focus on prevention of Drug and alcohol use present in the schools and community is highlighting the topic in their lives and giving it higher status for concern."

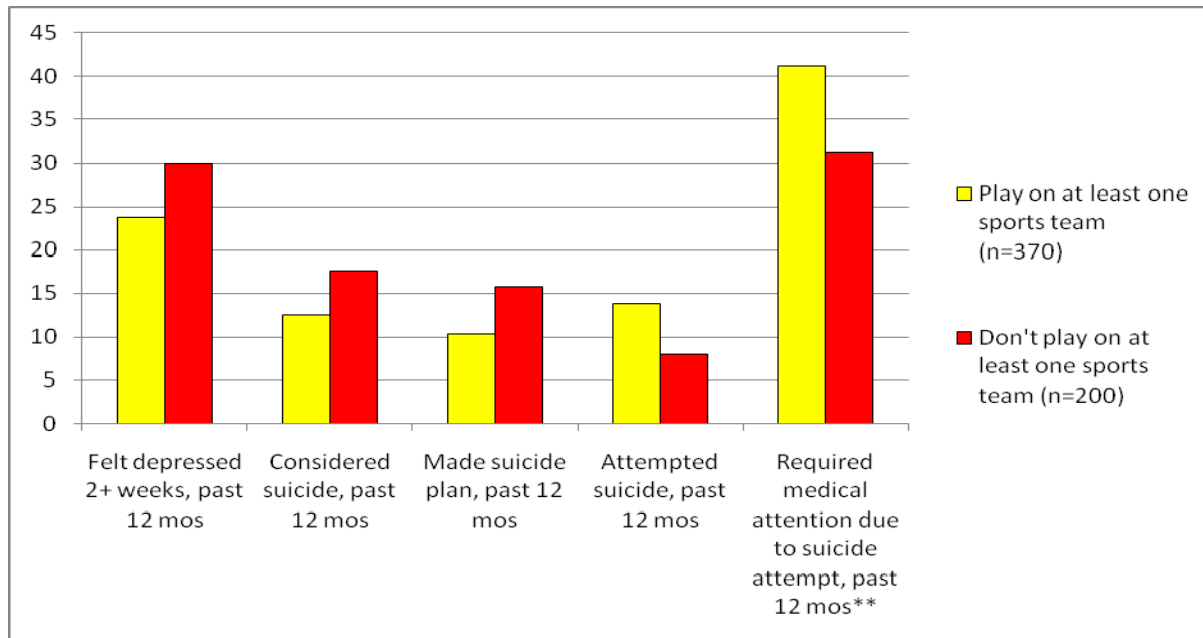
- Students may not be partaking in drugs and alcohol but rather working harder not to
- Students may have a heightened awareness of others having challenges with Alcohol and other drugs therefore raising their level of concern

Sports, Depression and Suicidal Thinking

Watertown High School 2009
Sports and Suicide



Watertown Middle School 2009 Sports, Depression and Suicide



What's going on here?

As you can see from the charts, sports are *effective in reducing a child's levels of depression and suicidal thinking*. We also see that *male sports players are more likely to attempt suicide or require medical attention as a result of a suicide attempt*. This Watertown data is supported by national research conducted by Dr. Kathleen Miller, PhD, University at Buffalo. (Sabo, Miller, Melnick and Barnes, 2005)

When we look at the data it is important to note that when surveyed, *middle school students report that sports are actually protective in all areas and sports players show lower rates of substance use, depression and suicidality. It is important to look at all sides of the data.*

Balancing the information

- "We know that numerous research studies suggest that **physical exercise can reduce symptoms of depression for physiological reasons** (e.g increased Serotonin).
- Participation in **sports gives kids access to a supportive social network of peers, coaches, and others who can both reinforce positive self-perceptions and provide a mental-health safety net.** Playing on a team offers positive feedback and emotional support that can help buffer against depression and thoughts of suicide.
- **Organized sports are a resource that provide kids with coping skills, social connection, and personal empowerment.** "Children learn to set goals, "rub some dirt on it" when they get injured or experience discomfort, and carry through with a game plan even when faced with setbacks. These are skills that may simultaneously (1) buffer against depression or suicidal thinking, and (2) but may also decrease a child's awareness and expression of depressed feelings" (K. Miller, 2010)



What can parents do?

- **Encourage your child to play team sports, all evidence suggests that sports involvement reduces a variety of risk factors and fosters healthy development** in children by broadening social networks and providing positive adult and community support.

It is important to **pay extra attention to a depressed male athlete. Parents can help their child to express sad or depressed feelings and encourage them to look for words to describe difficult feelings.** Alert pediatricians immediately if you believe your child is sad or depressed. Finally, **as always, listen and talk to your kids.**

Again... we are not advocating that anyone eliminate sports involvement as a tool to reduce academic stress, we are asking people to look at the data as a way to increase awareness about possible stressors in youth's lives and support them in choices that will help them achieve success in all areas.

Is your child at risk? Look for ...

- Family Isolation: long periods on their room or away from family
- Social Isolation; few friends or social engagements
- forgetfulness or difficulty paying attention in school
- Excessive frustration in completing homework
- Refusal to complete homework
- Hiding assignments, academic difficulty until school contacts parent
- Friends who are using alcohol and drugs



How we can help?

- Listen very carefully to a young person, try to use very few words
- Talk to young people, find out what is bothering them
- Help young people to organize and prioritize their work
- Encourage them to talk to other trusted adults, guidance teachers, etc.
- Help young people to focus on the positive and what they can achieve rather than say, "I can't"
- Encourage youth by acknowledging hard work, not always focusing on the end result

Peer Pressure & Bullying

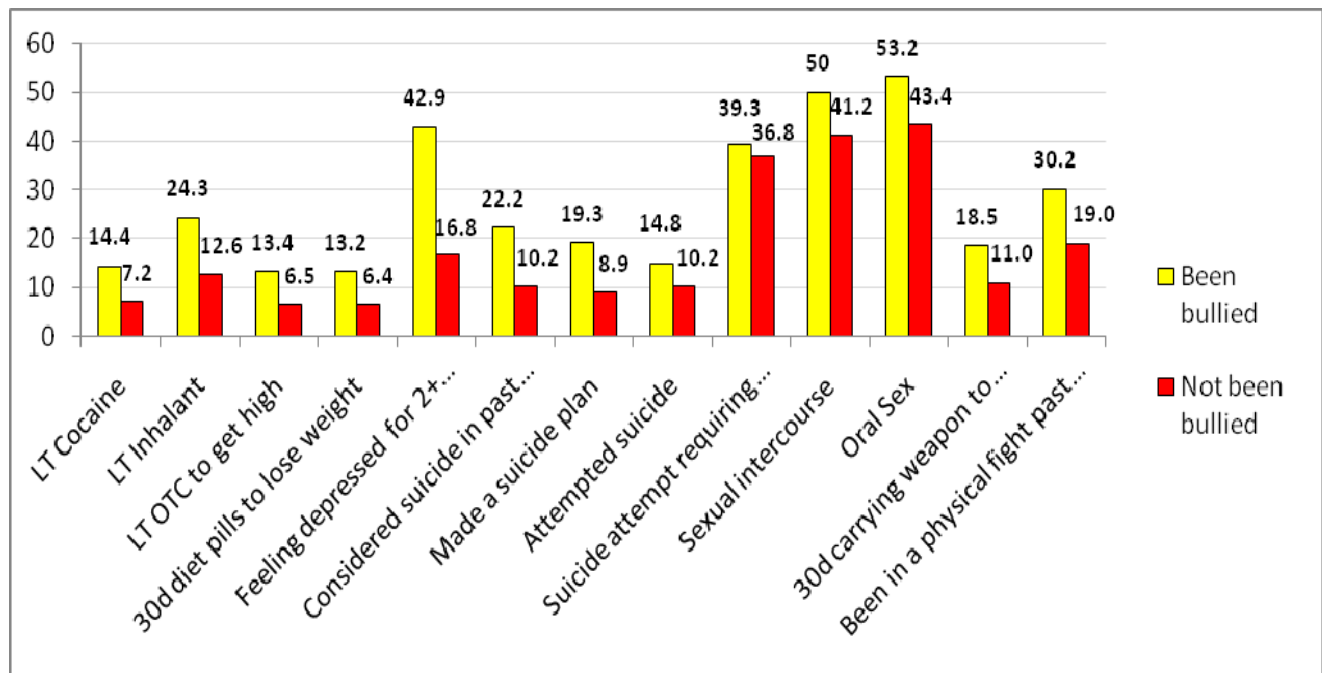
Definition of Bullying as used in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey:

When 1 or more students tease, threaten, spread rumors about, hit, shove, or hurt another student over and over again. It is not bullying when 2 students of about the same strength or power argue or fight or tease each other in a friendly way. This is the description we use to ask if a student is experiencing Bullying. This includes physical, verbal, over the internet, through texting, voice mail, damaging belongings, stealing and spreading rumors.

High School Results

Overall, Watertown High School students report that Peer Pressure and Bullying is the third greatest challenge.

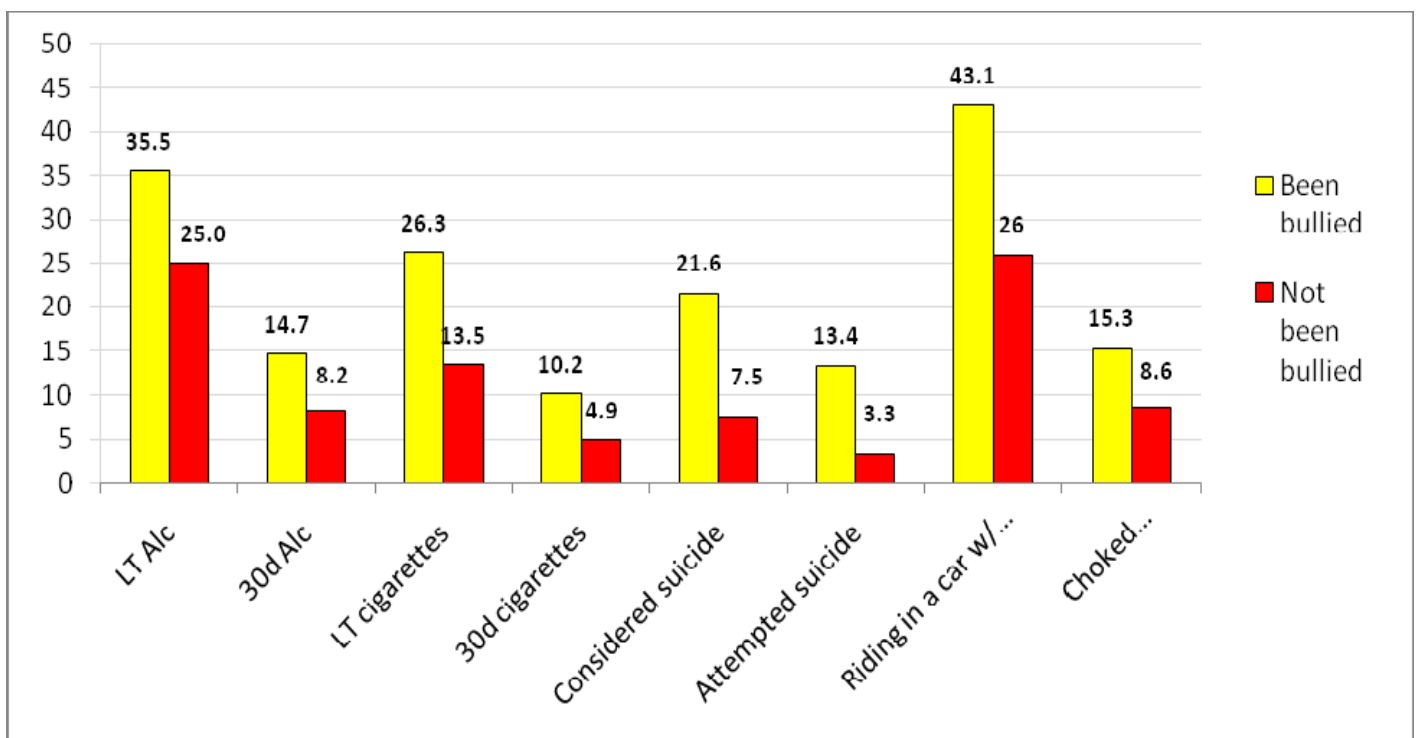
- 26.4% report peer pressure/bullying as their greatest challenge, **up slightly** from 24% in 2007.
- 33.6% reported ever having been bullied or harassed, **up slightly** from 31.1% in 2008.
- Students who reported being bullied or harassed also reported more drug use, higher rates of depression and suicidality, having sex, carrying a weapon in the past 30 days, and more use of diet pills to lose weight in the past 30 days.



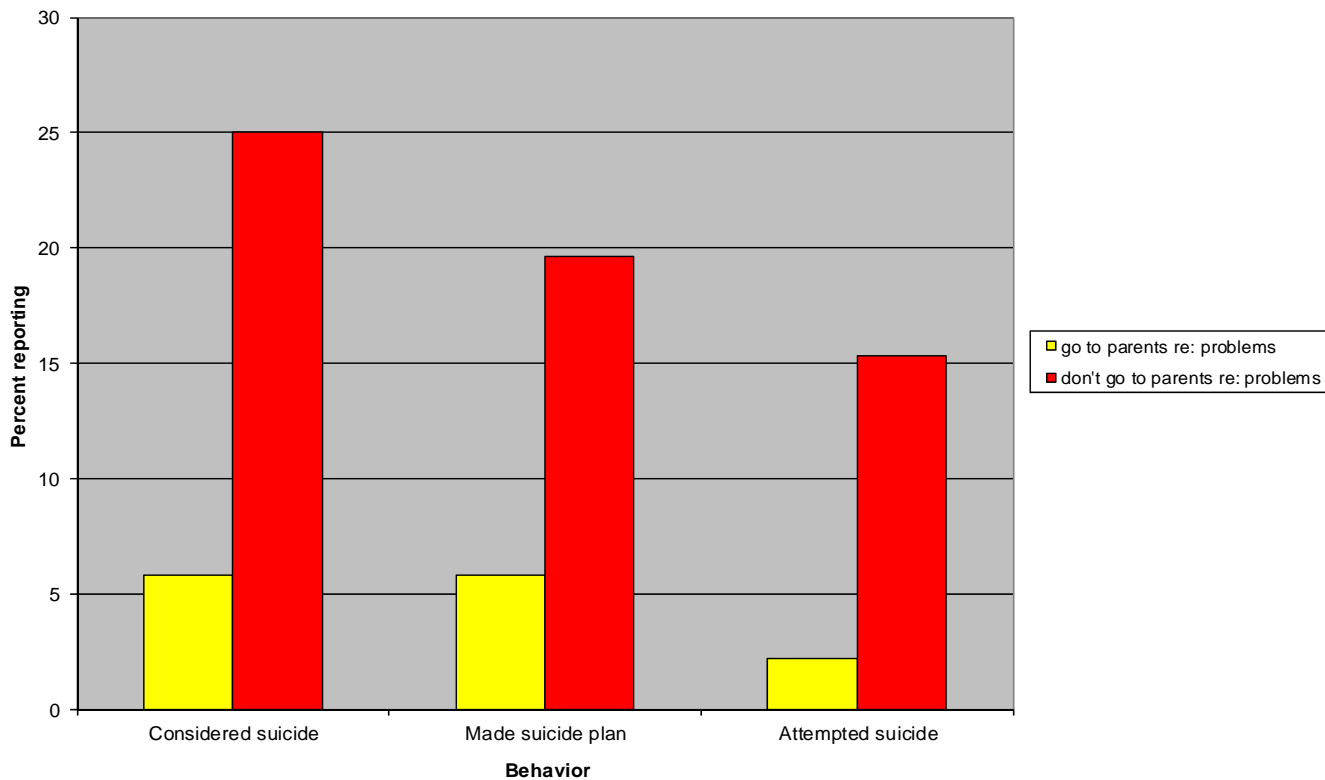
Middle School Results

Overall, Watertown Middle School students also report that Peer Pressure and Bullying as their third greatest challenge.

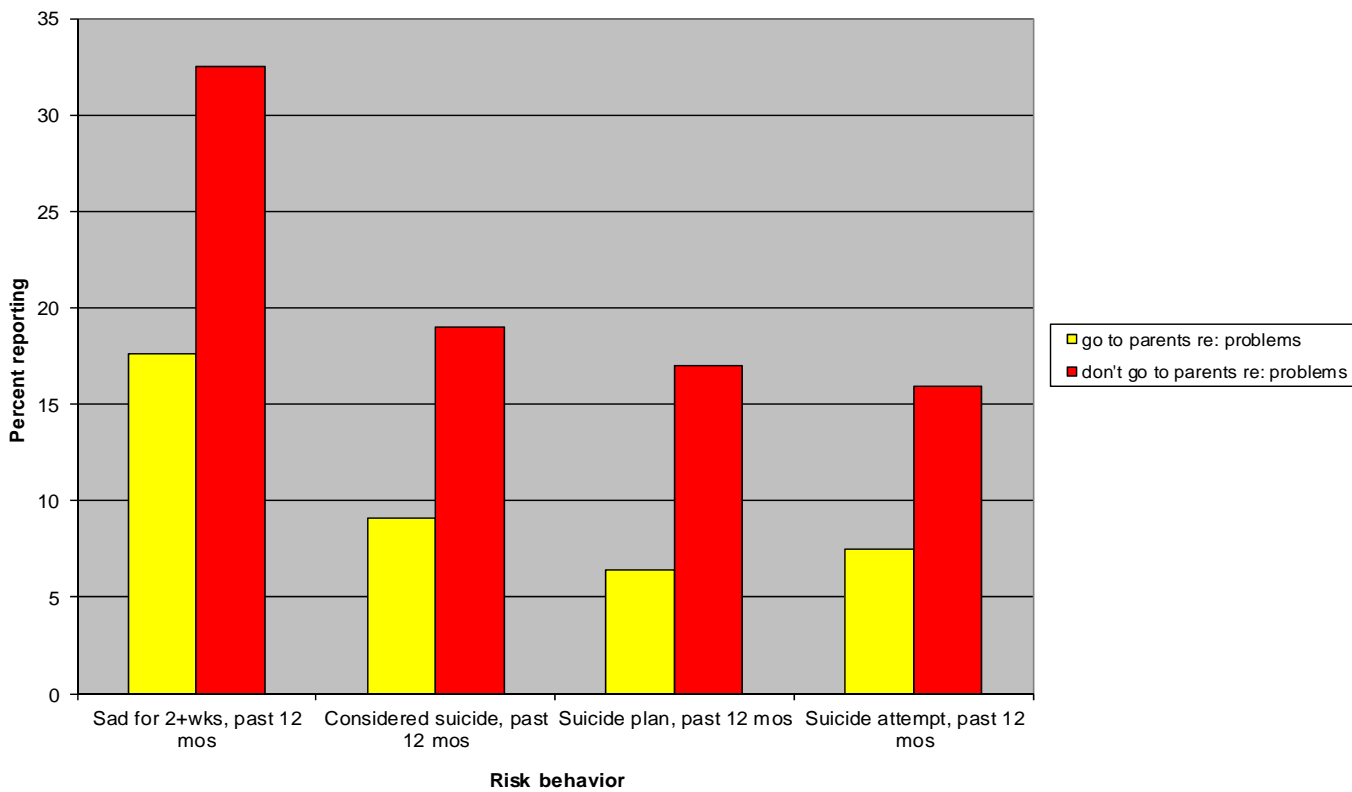
- 36.1% report peer pressure/bullying as their greatest challenge, **up significantly** from 28.5% in 2007.
- 41.3% reported ever having been bullied, **up significantly** from 32.5% in 2008.
- Students who reported being bullied were also shown to be at **higher risk** for smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, suicidality, riding in a car with a driver who had been drinking, and being in physical fights.



**Relationship between Parental Connectedness and Suicidality
Watertown Middle School**



**Relationship between Parental Connectedness and Depression
Watertown High School**





What Parents and other trusted adults can do?

If your child is having difficulty with another child, friend or sibling and you ask that they each talk about what is happening and how they feel about the issue then they are learning the invaluable skill of conflict resolution, offer them options for cooling off time, talking time and solution time, support ideas even when you think they are not the best solution, this will assist your child in learning through experience and owning the results, there are always back up plans & if the first approach is not the right one others can be employed!

Suicidal behaviors in association with being bullied

If you are in Middle School and bullied you are at least twice as likely to consider, make a plan or attempt suicide 189 or 41% of Watertown Middle School students report being bullied or harassed:

- 40 students considered suicide (22%)
 - 35 students made a plan (19%)
 - 25 students attempted suicide (13%)
-

269 or 59% of Watertown Middle School students report NOT being bullied or harassed

- 20 students considered suicide (7.5%)
- 17 students made a plan (6%)
- 9 students attempted (3%)

If you in High school and bullied the percentages show you are also at increased risk for suicidal behaviors. 189 or 33% of Watertown High School students report being bullied or harassed:

- 42 students considered suicide (22%)
 - 36 students made a plan (19%)
 - 28 students attempted suicide (15%)
-

374 or 67% of students report not being bullied or harassed:

- 38 students considered suicide (10%)
- 33 students made a plan to commit suicide (9%)
- 38 students attempted suicide (10%)

This is a complex set of statistics in that Bullying is related to many areas of a student's life and the results of being bullied have concerning implications. If a student is experiencing bullying or harassment and they do not talk to their parents about their problems the results will inevitably be more discouraging. Academic Stress might rise and set other risk taking into action. We cannot look at any one of these results in isolation and that is why we have chosen to look at the four major categories of challenges for Watertown Youth in conjunction with one another.

Please take time to look at your own child, student, sister, brother, friend in the same way we have by looking at each area of this person's life and asking:

? Is he or she talking to anyone specifically a parent?

? Is he or she playing a sport and If so is he or she overly concerned about body image?

? Is he or she finding the schedule of practice and school overwhelming?

These questions along with looking for other indicators as stated on previous pages (i.e. isolating themselves, not wanting to go to school) will help you decide if the person you are concerned about or inquiring about is in need of support.

Some data about different groups at higher risk

High School Results

Alcohol and Other Drugs

*Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Queer (LGBQ) students are at a statistically **significant higher risk** than heterosexual students for:*

- 30 day Binge drinking
- 30 day marijuana
- Life Time use of cocaine
- Life Time use of inhalants
- Life Time use of Over The Counter Meds
- Life Time use of someone else's Rx Meds
- Life Time use of Oxycontin

*Caucasian students are at a statistically **significant higher risk** than Asian students for:*

- Life Time Alcohol use
- 30 Day Past Use Day Binge

Safety and Violence

*LGBQ students are at a statistically **significant higher risk** than Heterosexual students for:*

- 30 Day Past carrying a weapon
- 30 Day Past carrying a gun
- 30 Day Past carrying a weapon to school
- Life Time physically forced to have sex

Middle School Results

Alcohol and Other Drugs

*Black/African American students are at a statistically **significant higher risk** than Caucasian students for:*

- Life Time Cigarette use
- 30 Day past Cigarette use
- Life Time Alcohol Use
- 30 Day Past Alcohol Use
- Life Time Marijuana Use
- Life Time Cocaine Use
- Life Time Inhalant Use
- Life Time use of over The Counter Drugs
- Life Time Use of someone else's Rx Meds

*Black/African American students are at a statistically **significant higher risk** than Caucasian students for:*

- Ever Been Bullied

*Black/African American students are at a statistically **significant higher risk** than Hispanic/Latino students and Caucasian students for:*

- Ever carrying a weapon

Clearly this data points to areas we can look at to support in each of the schools. Work can be done across all differences in sexuality, ethnicity and race to support each individual in feeling safe and having resources to make healthy choices for themselves. School and parents supporting each other and the larger community supporting each sector of the community getting the resources and attention they need to prosper is the ideal goal.

What the Community is doing to work against bullying behaviors and towards increased acceptance for all:

The Watertown Public Schools have and will continue to implement The Diversity Team at the Middle School and are planning on implementing the “Caring School Communities” at the Elementary Schools Academic year 2010-2011. All schools will have support from the State of Massachusetts in upholding new “Anti-Bullying legislation” and the Middle and High School faculty and staff will be creating the best practices for enhancing and sustaining a positive school culture that is welcoming of all students and families.

Some other points of interest and concern related to Bullying and Peer Pressure from the high school results:

- Students who reported being bullied are twice as likely to have reported past 30-day use of diet pills to lose weight (13.2%) than those who do not report being bullied (6.4%)

*This is noteworthy, especially when it is taken into account that only 9.1% of the student body overall reported having used diet pills in the past 30 days to lose weight.

- 33.6% of students reported in 2009 ever having been bullied: (N)
 - 32.6% of the girls (n)
 - 34.8% of the boys (n)
- 63.4% of the girls who reported ever being bullied also reported trying to lose weight
- 11.9% of the girls who reported ever being bullied and trying to lose weight also reported past 30-day use of diet pills to do it
- 34.4% of the boys who reported ever being bullied also reported trying to lose weight and 12% of the boys who reported ever being bullied and reported trying to lose weight also reported past 30-day use of diet pills to do it. This shows that in the high school, **body image is not just an issue for the girls**

Body Image

Today parents are faced with vast amounts of often conflicting information about health, nutrition and obesity, while at the same time countless media images market unhealthy body sizes to children and adults. With this in mind it is important to recognize that Watertown middle and high school students listed body image as a top area of concern. Negative body image can lead to eating disorders, depression, anxiety, substance abuse and abuse of over the counter diet medications and steroids.

High School Results

Students at Watertown High School named body image as their fourth biggest challenge, down significantly from 2007.

- 64.9% of students reported **playing on at least one sports team** in the past 12 months **dropped significantly** from 70.9% in 2008
- 9.1% of students reported **using diet pills** in the past 30 days to lose weight **rose slightly** from 7% in 2008

Middle School Results

Students at the middle school also named body image their fourth biggest challenge, as they did the year previously.

- 5.5% of students reported ever using diet pills to lose weight **increased significantly** from 2.9% in 2008.
- 12.7 of students reported not exercising for at least 60 minutes a day in the seven days before the survey **increased significantly** from 7.9% in 2008.
- 94.7% of students who go to a physical education class at least once in an average school week **dropped significantly** from 97.8% in 2008.

Diet Pills & Body Image

Although students taking diet pills represent 9% of the high school students and 6% of the middle school students they account for a much higher percentage of substance users.

Symptoms of negative body image and eating disorders

- Child makes negative statements about their body and/or physical features
- Child often negatively compares their body to others
- Often feels depressed or sad
- Anxious, perfectionism, or highly self-critical
- Dieting even when child is thin or emaciated
- Excessive or compulsive exercising
- Intense fear of becoming fat
- Rapid weight loss, which the person may try to conceal with loose clothing
- Strange eating habits, such as avoiding meals, eating in secret, monitoring every bite of food, or eating only certain foods in small amounts
- Unusual interest in food



What can parents do?

- Remind your child that people come in all shapes and sizes
- Talk with children if you hear concerning comments
- Emphasize the importance of having a strong, healthy body
- Encourage children to develop talents or interests. e.g. drama, dance, art
- Emphasize all that their bodies can do and accomplish walking, running, jumping
- Encourage healthy moderation in eating and exercising
- Don't create "bad or off limits" foods, encourage balance in eating
- Never criticize your own body in front of children (try not to do it at all!)
- Model healthy eating and exercise
- Contact a pediatrician if you are concerned about your child

What youth are already doing!

Be a Better You (BABY) Social Norms campaign

Social Norms marketing is an environmental strategy used in public health campaigns to counter misperceptions about behaviors. Research has found that the perceived levels almost always exceed the actual behavior.

In 2008, the Watertown Youth Coalition Peer Leaders created the BABY social norms campaign targeting high school students to address risky behaviors surveyed in the YRBS. The Peer Leaders developed a series of flyers which were posted throughout the school to raise awareness about issues such as binge drinking, drinking and driving, and marijuana use. These two flyers were used to communicate accurate healthy messages about weight and other body image issues.

DID YOU KNOW?

70% of Watertown High School Students think they are overweight when only small percentages actually are **overweight.**

Be a BETTER YOU!

PROMOTING POSITIVE ACTIONS.

Be a Better You! is a campaign of the Watertown Youth Coalition through Wayside Youth and Family Support Network. Funding is provided by the U.S. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention Drug Free Communities Support and Stop Grants and the MA Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services.

DID YOU KNOW?

Exercise makes you happier

Recent research has revealed that exercise reduces depression and anxiety

Be a BETTER YOU!

PROMOTING POSITIVE ACTIONS.

Source: Diel et al. Exercise: The dose on its role in health, mental health, disease prevention, and productivity. Primary Care: Clinics in Office Practice. 2006; 35:803.

Be a Better You is a campaign of the Watertown Youth Coalition through Wayside Youth and Family Support Network. Funding is provided by the U.S. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention Drug Free Communities Support and Stop Grants and the MA Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services.

Summary

The Watertown Youth Coalition is proud to release the 2009 Watertown Youth Risk Behavior Executive Summary. This summary is community collaboration between Watertown agencies, parents and young people and concerned residents. Some highlights of data and conclusions in this summary include:

- ***Children who are bullied are at higher risk of substance abuse, depression and physical fighting.*** Now that we have solid data to back up our understanding of bullying it seems that ***a comprehensive community approach to bullying which provides support to bullies as well as bullied children will serve to create a safer environment in which all children can learn and grow.***
- **Middle school students' use of alcohol and other drugs is elevated** and may warrant further investigation and program planning.
- ***Binge drinking at the high school level remains high, at 32.5%.***
- ***Sports' playing is largely a healthy choice for children but it is important to note that some elevation in substance use and depression does exist for male athletes, particularly those who are experiencing academic difficulties.***
- Parent connection to young people is the most important way we can prevent children from becoming involved in risky behaviors. It is important to remember to: ***listen to your kids, take time to have meals together, do activities, watch a family movie, read the same book together and just listen. Talk to your kids about everything. It's okay if you have quiet kids, even a few words can make a big difference for a child.***

Working to address these issues, the Watertown Youth Coalition implements community wide strategies to educate youth, parents and the community about what the actual risky behaviors are of Watertown youth. For instance, it is important to know that according to the YRBS data, most youth DO NOT use alcohol and other drugs. However, many youth think most youth do use, so it is important for the community to know the truth.

In addition, the WYC partners work collaboratively to block children's access to alcohol. Through the YRBS data we know that many children are able to get others, especially older siblings and friends, to buy alcohol for them or it is served at parties with no adults present. The WYC has created a variety of community education campaigns asking parents to talk to children about alcohol and other drugs, letting young people know that most students do not use and asking young people and adults over age 21 not to buy alcohol for under aged children.

In closing, the WYC seeks to work with different sectors of the Watertown community to help create a safer more positive environment for all community residents.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions, ideas or would like to contribute to the efforts of the Watertown Youth Coalition.

Watertown Youth Coalition Staff:

Laura Kurman, Program Director Wayside Youth & Family Support Network Multi-Service Center

laura_kurman@waysideyouth.org

Stephanie Sunderland-Ramsey, Program Coordinator & Co-Chairperson Watertown Youth Coalition

stephanie_sunderland@waysideyouth.org

Kristin French, Community Organizer, Watertown Youth Coalition

kristin_french@waysideyouth.org

Becket Rhodes, Peer Leadership Advisor, Watertown Youth Coalition

becket_rhodes@waysideyouth.org

Watertown Youth Coalition Steering Committee Members:

Mark Sideris Co-Chairperson Watertown Youth Coalition, President Watertown Town Council, Parent

Debbie Tirrell Parent

Anne Korte Parent

Sarah Stewart Regional Center for Healthier Communities

Christa Caira Peer Leader

Yvonne Louie Peer Leader

Kazuka Kumahara Peer Leader



Watertown Youth Coalition
Wayside Multi Service Center
127 North Beacon Street, Watertown, MA 02472

Phone: 617-926-3600

Fax: 617-926-1027

www.waysideyouth.org

www.watertownyouthcoalition.org