

2007 Youth Survey: Community Presentation - Questions and Answers

Answers provided by T/ESD and ARCH

1. The trend data showed improvements at grade 10. What are your hypotheses about the causes of these improvements?

The trend data for 10th graders is encouraging. These students are 11th graders in the current school year. While we cannot determine a precise “cause and effect” relationship with any one intervention, we might hypothesize that these results are at least partially related to the cumulative effect of the instructional programs that students are exposed to beginning in their earliest school experience. These include instruction through the health curriculum and the developmental guidance program about substance abuse. This is supplemented and reinforced by multiple exposures to strategies for pro-social skills, making healthy and safe choices, problem-solving and responding to peer pressure. The protective factors in the home and community may also be contributing to this trend. As measured by the PA Youth Survey, these include family and community opportunities and rewards for prosocial involvement, family attachment and belief in the moral order.

2. Was information provided about the frequency of use of substances?

Frequency of use data was provided for alcohol, marijuana and inhalants. The data for frequency of alcohol use is provided below.

Past 30-day frequency of alcohol use:

# of occasions in the past month	6 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	12 th
0	98%	90%	79%	71%	32%
1 or 2	1.6%	6.0%	13%	16%	29%
3 to 5	.2%	3.3%	5.2%	6.6%	23.7%
6 to9	0%	.3%	2%	3%	7.4%
10 or more	0	1%	1.2%	3.1%	1.5%

Past 30-day frequency of marijuana use:

# of occasions in the past month	6 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	12 th
0	100%	98%	94%	88%	61.6%
1 or 2	0	.8%	3.4%	4%	15.5%
3 to 5	0	.5%	.7%	4%	6.6%
6 to9	0	0%	.7%	1.1%	4.8%
10 or more	0	0%	1.2%	3.2%	11.5%

For the frequency of inhalant use in the past 30 days, 98% or more of students reported no use.

3. What is the theory as to why T/E has higher levels in survey (for 12th)?

There is research showing that youth in affluent communities have high rates of substance use and that substance use is significantly linked with depressive and anxiety symptoms, suggesting an attempt to self-medicate. It was also found that among suburban boys, high substance use is linked with popularity with peers.

Some theories as to why there is higher anxiety, depression, and substance use among suburban, affluent youth include achievement pressures and isolation. One theory is that affluent youth are often pressured to excel at multiple academic and extracurricular pursuits. Rates of depression, anxiety and substance use were found to be higher among those youth whose parents overemphasized their accomplishments, valuing them disproportionately more than their personal character. Isolation (both emotional and literal) may come from the erosion of family time together because of the demands of affluent parents' careers and children's after-school activities. In addition, in upper-middle-class families, secondary school students are often left home alone for several hours, with parents believing this promotes self-sufficiency. Interestingly, it was found that eating dinner with at least one parent on most nights predicted better adjustment and school performance, in both high and low income youth.

4. What percentage of surveys was removed/disqualified?

For the District, all but 82 students across all grades (4.1%) completed valid surveys.

5. What is the total population of 12 graders in T/E?

In 2007, the official October 1 enrollment report shows 501 students in 12th grade. This is the group that took the survey in November 2007.

6. How do the responses of TE youth to the “symptoms of depression” questions compare to the general population at these ages?

We can compare the TE Youth Survey results to those published in the county and the state report. When compared to the statewide results, local youth report slightly lower rates of symptoms of depression. Local youth report very similar rates when compared to other youth in Chester County.

The state results can be found at:

<http://www.pccd.state.pa.us/pccd/cwp/view.asp?A=1430&Q=575550>

The county results can be found at: <http://dsf.chesco.org/chesco/site/default.asp>

7. Why did the program on November 10 have two parts, one dealing with the results of the substance abuse survey and one about resiliency? How are these two topics connected?

It is well established that factors in the community and the family can either reduce the likelihood (protective factors) or increase the likelihood (risk factors) that students will engage in risky behavior. One of the risk factors identified in our local results is that of “family conflict.” The topic of resiliency in the family addresses strategies that families can

use to promote a positive climate within the family and help family members respond to difficult and stressful situations in a healthy and productive way.

8. **Did the survey only test public school students? Were private schools, parochial schools, charter schools and home-school students included? If not, why not?**

The survey has been limited to the public school district and the two (2) Centers for Arts and Technologies due to the financial cost and associated resources needed to conduct and administer the survey.

9. **OK, some students are doing drugs. What other options are there for diversions and “entertainment” for youth growing up in this area?**

Parents need never accept the line, “there is nothing better to do.” Our community is filled with opportunities. Networking with friends and neighbors can extend the following list:

- Township sponsored recreational sports leagues for multiple sports accept all players.
- Local theatres offer theatre workshops and related opportunities.
- Private teachers of music, voice, and dance are available. Music departments in each school can provide a list.
- Many youth follow their interest in music to form “Garage Bands.”
- The art department of each local school can give many suggestions about local ways to pursue an interest in art.
- Parks, YMCAs and a myriad of spas (by membership) offer work out facilities and fitness classes.
- Bike riding, hiking, skate boarding are all available nearby.
- Faith-based organizations have youth groups with a smorgasbord of opportunities for joining in fun activities and participating in service opportunities. Most youth groups will take anyone who wants to participate—one does not need to be a “member” of a particular church or synagogue.
- There are many ways that youth can be engaged in “giving back” to their community. . .volunteering, coaching or assistant coaching, mentoring, big brother/ big sister, scouts, etc. There are many organizations that would welcome teens as volunteers.
- Many youth say they just want a place to “hang” with their friends. Providing simple snacks and a room for kids to gather, under the clear understanding that parents will be home and monitoring the activities, is always an option.
- Renting movies, playing cards and board games, or just talking with one another can fit the bill.
- Life is not all television and videogames; promote creativity and ‘healthy’ activities. This list is only a beginning. The sky is the limit. Our youth are creative and articulate and can express their ideas and “wants” clearly.

10. **How can the school and community change parental attitudes and behavior other than offering educational opportunities?**

ARCH: Parents who talk with other parents, especially parents of their own children’s friends can exchange very useful information. Parents are encouraged to talk with one another and share parenting strategies with one another. SAFEHOMES leadership guides are available in each school in the TE School District. (Please talk to PTO Leadership in your child’s school about this program.) These are binders filled with useful information that can help a

neighborhood group of parents organize, network and communicate regularly with one another. When parents of middle-school aged youth are clear about their expectations and are on the “same page” as the parents of their children’s friends, the consistency and clarity can go a long way in preventing opportunities for kids to drink or use as they get older. Setting clear guidelines and boundaries for behavior in the middle school years can help keep children safe in the high school years.

The Party Guidelines Pledge is another means parents can use to stay connected with other like-minded families. The Party Guidelines Check List can be found on the ARCH website, http://www.archcares.org/party_guideline.htm.

Taking these ideas one step farther, prevention minded parents should be willing to do whatever it takes to prevent their own children and their children’s friends from using drugs. That means making a phone call to a parent of another child if you see or hear anything which makes you suspect drugs might be an issue. That also means calling the police (or anonymous tip line) if a party is going on in your neighborhood and you have reason to suspect underage drinking. As a parent, and a community member, one can take a strong stand against underage drinking and drug use of any kind. As a parent known for one’s clear position, you can advocate for prevention in community settings and contribute to a community norm that underage drinking is not acceptable.

Drug use and abuse is possible with any child. A parent who thinks it can’t happen to his or her own child, is already flirting with denial. It can happen, and one needs to be vigilant in paying attention to one’s children to be prepared for any signs. Then, be willing to act promptly and swiftly if needed.

- 11. As a parent, I am aware of pressure my 15 year old tries to apply to get me to let her do things that I don’t really feel comfortable with. For example, she uses the line, “everyone else’s parents let them. . .” She would rather not attend a party, than have me make a phone call to check on the plans of the party host and his/her parents.**

ARCH: Our children need us to be parents. Parents who are trying to win a popularity contest or want to be their child’s “friend” are not being effective parents. A child’s job in growing up and discovering who he/she is includes times of rebellion, limit-testing, and experimenting. Parents are needed to hold firm to certain behavioral expectations for which there are no negotiations. Underage drinking and any drug use is one such non-negotiable line.

- 12. Now we have seen the results of the 2007 Youth Survey, and we have seen the comparative data with previous surveys in Tredyffrin and Easttown. Now what?**

ARCH: Make a personal commitment to learn whatever you can about alcohol, tobacco and other drug use among youth. There are several websites that are helpful resources of reliable information:

www.theantidrug.com

<http://www.drugfree.org/>

<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>

<http://www.alcoholscreening.org/>

Children are curious about ‘adult’ behaviors. Being a role model and ‘walking the talk’ about drugs and alcohol is often easier said than done. Excessive or irresponsible use of alcohol by a parent or older sibling may send a ‘mixed message’ to younger family members.

Stay alert. Know the early warning signs. Some warning signs are:

- Fatigue
- Repeated health complaints
- Red and glazed eyes
- Lasting cough
- Personality changes
- Sudden mood swings
- Depression

Attend a community ARCH meeting and find a place to get involved. Our meetings are open to everyone. Here are the dates of the upcoming meetings:

- Wednesday, December 17, 2008 8:45-10:00 AM
- Wednesday, January 28, 2009 8:45-10:00 AM
- Wednesday, February 25, 2009 8:45-10:00 AM
- Wednesday, March 18, 2009 8:45-10:00 AM
- Wednesday, April 22, 2009 8:45-10:00 AM
- Wednesday, May 27, 2009 8:45-10:00 AM

All Meetings held at:
T/E School District Administration Offices
West Valley Business Center
940 West Valley Road, Suite 1700
Wayne, PA 19087

www.ARCHcares.org