

# Washington County Minnesota Student Survey Trends Report: 1998-2010



*Behaviors, Attitudes and Perceptions of Washington County  
6th, 9th and 12th Graders from 1998-2010*

Prepared by the Washington County Department of Public Health and Environment and the  
Minnesota Student Survey Workgroup of the  
Chemical Health Action Collaborative in Washington County  
March 2011

## **In Appreciation**

We are indebted to the teachers, Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) coordinators and superintendents across Washington County and the state who agreed to support the administration of the student survey in the spring of 2010. We especially thank the students who shared information on their attitudes, beliefs and behaviors with us through this survey.

We urge you to share these findings with your communities—with students and families, with your school team of educators and staff, administrators and school board members, public health and social services staff, law enforcement and others who work with youth to improve the school and community environments in which youth learn, grow and develop.

# Table of Contents

Washington County 2010 Survey Trends: Summary of Findings .....	4
2010 Executive Summary .....	6
Introduction .....	8
Demographics.....	10
Academics and School Connectedness .....	11
Perceptions of School Safety .....	12
Violent and Anti-Social Behavior .....	14
Family, Sexual and Dating Violence .....	15
Mental Health .....	17
Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drugs.....	21
Physical Activity and Nutrition .....	28
Sexual Behavior .....	31
Family Connectedness.....	33
Technical Notes .....	35
Acknowledgments .....	36

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# Washington County 2010 Survey Trends: Summary of Findings

The following is a summary of the Washington County results of the Minnesota Student Survey:

## Positive Trends

- *Academic Achievement* is high;
- *Schools* are perceived as safe;
- *Violent behaviors* such as being threatened, experiencing or perpetrating violence, and damaging property continued to decrease;
- *Feeling connected* to family was expressed by most students;
- *Alcohol use* significantly declined between 1998 and 2010 for all three grades yet one-fifth of 9<sup>th</sup> and 43% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders drank in the last 30 days;
- *Binge drinking* among 12<sup>th</sup> graders showed a notable decrease after many years of stability. However, there is still concern with one-fourth of 12<sup>th</sup> graders binge drinking;
- *Smoking* showed a strong downward trend with the lowest rates ever reported in the history of the MN Student Survey;
- *Seatbelt use* has increased significantly since 1998;
- *Thoughts and attempts of suicide* have decreased since 1998;
- *Driving after using alcohol or drugs* has seen a steady decrease over time. However, one out of five county 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported drinking and driving in the last year; and
- *Riding with friends* after using alcohol or drugs has decreased. However one-third of 12<sup>th</sup> graders and 14% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders reported riding with someone in the last year.

## Ongoing Challenges

- There is a consistent percentage of students who are facing significant issues including:
  - ◇ being a victim or witness of family violence;
  - ◇ sexual abuse by a family member or someone outside the family;
  - ◇ dating violence or sexual assault while dating;
  - ◇ feeling hopeless or discouraged;
  - ◇ family alcohol or drug use problems; and
  - ◇ having thoughts or attempts of suicide.
- *Physical activity* levels have remained steady for all grades. However, less than half of students report being physically active;
- *Marijuana use* is virtually unchanged. Students view marijuana use as less risky than drinking;
- *Fruit and vegetable consumption* is low with less than one-fourth of students eating 5+ servings of fruits and vegetables each day; and
- *Sexual activity* has declined. However, the percentage of youth who are talking with every partner about STDs has declined among sexually active students. On a positive note, there has been an increase in condom use.

## Community Based Efforts in Washington County

The following community efforts are actively addressing the challenges facing youth in the county:

### Community Initiatives

- County-wide Community Coalitions:
  - ◇ Chemical Health Action Collaborative
  - ◇ Mental Wellness Initiative in Washington County
  - ◇ Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP)
- Local community coalitions focusing on issues such as chemical health, suicide, healthy youth development and violence prevention; and
- Safe & Sober Campaigns and Drinking & Driving Prevention.

### School Based Initiatives

- Suicide Prevention and Yellow Ribbon campaign;
- Depression screening;
- Safe prom and graduation campaigns;
- Bullying and violence prevention programs;
- Mentoring programs;
- Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD);
- Police liaison officers in schools;
- Narcotics dogs in schools;
- Teen Center in Forest Lake and Mahtomedi; and
- Wellness Center in Stillwater Schools.

## 2010 Executive Summary

Continued administration of the Minnesota Student Survey for the past 21 years provides educators, prevention program staff, administrators, community members and youth with an opportunity to identify trends in the prevalence of behaviors and attitudes of young people. Further examination of these trends offers us a chance to begin to determine where prevention programming and messages appear to be working and where our efforts have yet to result in positive change.

The Minnesota Student Survey includes questions about a wide variety of youth behaviors, including risk behaviors such as alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) use, violence and sexual activity, as well as positive behaviors and connection to family, school and community. This report highlights some key indicators across many areas of interest, including academics and school connectedness, school safety and violence, mental health, alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD), sexual behavior and family structure.

The 2010 administration of the student survey had a more racially and ethnically diverse student response than ever before, reflecting the continued changes in Minnesota's student population. Participation in the 2010 survey by districts was again quite high in the state and all districts in Washington County participated. We continue to strive for better participation by our 12th graders.

In Washington County there is cause for commendation because many of the positive or protective behaviors students engage in have continued to increase in prevalence since the last administration of the survey three years ago. In addition, many of the unhealthy or risky behaviors students engage in have continued to decrease in prevalence.

In the area of academics and school

connectedness, there was continued good news, with a high percentage of students who have plans to go to college. Students reported a high sense of safety at school and a decreased number of physical confrontations. Students reported continued decreases in destroying property and physically abusing others. Unfortunately, there has not been much change in the percentage of students who experience family violence or sexual assault.

When other health behaviors are examined, results show that reported seatbelt use also continued to increase. Reported levels of physical activity increased for 9th and 12th graders, while remaining stable for 6th graders. Fruit and vegetable consumption has remained unchanged, with only about one in five 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders and one-fourth of 6<sup>th</sup> graders reporting eating five or more servings yesterday.

In the area of alcohol and tobacco, there were overall positive results. Various measures of cigarette smoking and alcohol drinking showed a continued downward trend, except on some measures where the prevalence among 6th graders was already very low. Even with this overall improvement, in 2010, more than six out of 10 high school seniors still reported drinking alcoholic beverages during the past year. One-fourth of them reported binge drinking at least once in the past two weeks. One in five seniors reported driving after using alcohol or drugs and one-third reported riding with someone who had been drinking or using drugs.

Marijuana use in the past year was unchanged. Over three in 10 high school seniors reported using marijuana in the past year.

There has been little change in the percentage of students reporting that they feel discouraged or hopeless in the past 30 days (extremely so or quite a bit). In addition, there has been little change in the percentage of students reporting

suicide attempts in the past year. Finally, there has been little change in the percentage of students in all three grades reporting that alcohol or drug use by family members has repeatedly caused problems.

There is a slight decrease this year in the percentage of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students reporting that they have ever had sex. Ninth grade rates have remained unchanged with one in five reporting that they have had sex. The percentage of both 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders reporting that they have talked with their partner(s) about STDs or HIV has remained unchanged. Sexually active students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade report increased use of condoms while 12<sup>th</sup> grade rates remained the same. Students reported continued high levels of caring by their parents, as well as in their ability to talk with their mother or father about problems.

### **Reflections from the data**

**The positive health behavior changes that have been made and sustained over time are cause for commendation.**

Youth, families, schools and community agency staff can take credit for significant improvements in everyday physical health and positive decisions made by youth demonstrated through this survey. The public needs to understand many voices speaking the same prevention messages in many venues over time made a significant difference for youth today and will in the future.

**Washington County and the State must continue to support intensive and comprehensive evidence-based prevention efforts that involve parents, communities, schools and public agencies working together to promote healthier behaviors by youth.**

Our county and the state have made major

investments in prevention programming that are now showing results. It is essential that current partnerships and coalitions be sustained and that new ones be created to ensure that existing effective practices and programs in schools and community settings be sustained. These groups must continue to promote the understanding and use of a common framework for prevention.

**Efforts must continue to focus both on preventing younger students from initiating unhealthy behaviors and in helping older students change already adopted risky behaviors.**

Preventing problems early is the mantra for many working in health promotion. But the Minnesota Student Survey reveals still unacceptably high levels of high-risk behaviors by some youth, as well as unchanging or slightly increasing levels of behaviors of concern.

**The wealth of information provided by young people through the Minnesota Student Survey provides an opportunity for more research and analysis by state agencies, school districts, counties and others.**

The opportunity that lies before us is not only to use current resources for further investigation but also to find additional resources for more extensive analysis of data. Issues that beg consideration include analysis of the associations between various protective and risk factors including how these factors interact with academics, examination of gender differences in the experiences and attitudes of youth, and understanding transitions made between elementary, middle/junior high and high schools.

*The challenge before us is to use the information we have received from youth to explore, explain and expand what works to support youth in Washington County and Minnesota families, schools and communities.*

# Introduction

## About the Minnesota Student Survey

The Minnesota Student Survey provides students, parents and their communities a dynamic vehicle for on-going communication about issues vital to the health, safety and academic success of youth. It is a valuable tool for school districts, county agencies and state agencies in planning meaningful and effective ways of supporting students and families.

The survey asks students questions about their activities, opinions, behaviors and experiences. It includes questions on an array of issues - substance abuse (tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs), school climate, violence and safety concerns, healthy eating, out-of-school activities, connections with school and family, and many other topics. At the senior high level, questions are also asked about gambling and sexual activity.

The survey is administered every three years to 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in the regular public elementary and secondary schools, charter schools, and tribal schools. It is also offered to students from all grade levels in alternative learning centers and to youth in juvenile correctional facilities. Findings for the alternative learning centers and correctional facilities are reported separately.

The survey data set is used by many for both planning and evaluation. Local Public Health agencies, school district leaders and educators, community coalitions, and community and social services agencies use the results in planning and evaluation for school and community initiatives and prevention programming. It has been used by state agencies to monitor trends in health and risk behaviors, design and adjust programming to meet the current and anticipated needs of youth, apply for funding for statewide initiatives

and assist schools and communities in efficient planning and implementation of education programs.

## Survey Administration

The 2010 Minnesota Student Survey is a collaboration between Minnesota schools and four state agencies – the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health, Human Services and Public Safety. The four state agencies work together to implement, analyze, report and fund the initiative. Local schools, school districts and correctional facilities handled the administration of the survey.

Providing parents with the opportunity to view the survey and determine their child's participation has been the standard practice in administering the survey. Parents were informed about the survey in advance by each local school. The Minnesota Department of Education provided school district coordinators with sample parental consent letters in English, Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Cambodian, Laotian and Russian. Parents could choose not to have their children participate. Students themselves could decline to take the survey, or if they took the survey, they could skip any question or stop at any point. Surveys were anonymous; no names or identifying code numbers were used on the survey booklets. Answers cannot be traced to an individual.

## School District and Student Participation

The survey is optional on the part of school districts, but the majority have chosen to participate in the state. All schools in Washington County have participated since 1995. Aside from school decisions, student participation is also affected by illness, truancy, schedule conflicts, and parent or student refusal. In Washington County in 2010, 2,359 of all 6th



grade students in regular public schools, 2,478 of 9th grade students and 1,714 of 12th grade students participated. In 2010, approximately 2.4% of surveys were omitted from the final data set of 130,908 in the state because gender was missing or response patterns were frequently inconsistent or highly improbable.

### Standard Tables

This trends report is located on the Washington County Department of Public Health and Environment website at: [www.co.washington.mn.us/publichealth](http://www.co.washington.mn.us/publichealth) under Health Data. See Minnesota Student Survey 2010.

County level tables for 2004, 2007 and 2010 are located at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/mss/countytables/index.cfm>

Statewide standard tables showing the responses to each survey question have been prepared and are available on several state agency websites. There are separate statewide tables for regular public schools, alternative learning centers, and juvenile correctional facilities. Each participating school district received a set of tables showing results for its district.

The county, region and state tables are available at the following websites:

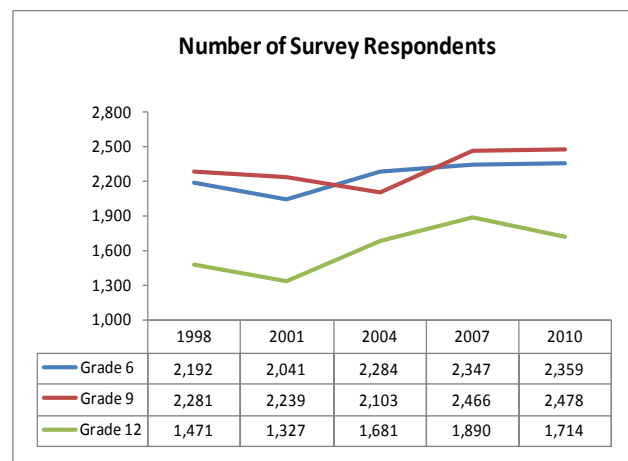
- [www.education.state.mn.us](http://www.education.state.mn.us)
- [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/mss/](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/mss/)
- [www.dhs.state.mn.us/mss](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/mss)
- [www.dps.state.mn.us/ojp](http://www.dps.state.mn.us/ojp)

### Trends Report

This report focuses on several protective and risk factors that impact youth today. Since many of the same questions have been asked at each survey administration, comparisons can be made across time to determine whether the behaviors

have increased or decreased in the middle/junior high and high school populations.

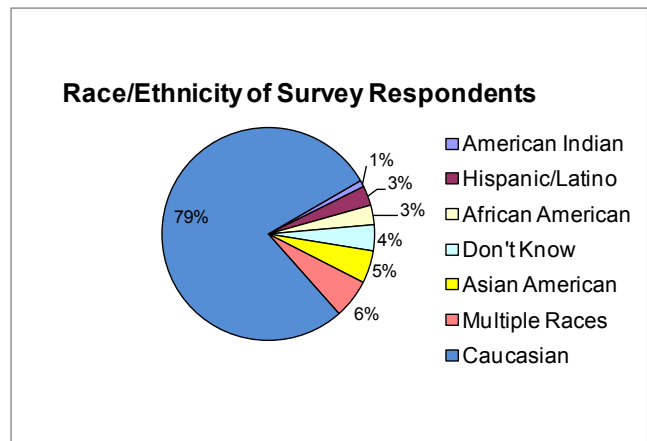
Note that this report reflects the needs and perspectives of students in regular public schools in Washington County beginning in 1998. Washington County data includes the school districts of District 831 (Forest Lake), District 832 (Mahtomedi), District 833 (South Washington County), and District 834 (Stillwater). District 622 (North St Paul/Maplewood/Oakdale) and District 624 (White Bear Lake Schools) are included in Ramsey County Data. However, students who are enrolled in a wide range of alternative learning programs/centers designed to meet their unique learning, working and social needs and youth living in juvenile justice facilities are not included in the trends report. A separate report on the findings of students in non-traditional learning environments is also available.



# Demographics

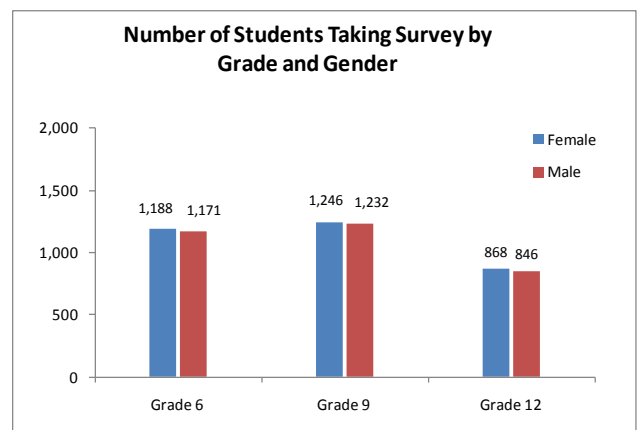
## Race and Ethnicity

Since 1995, the Minnesota Student Survey has asked a question regarding race and ethnicity allowing students to mark more than one racial or ethnic identity. For Washington County, 79% of students taking the survey in 2010 indicated White only, 5% indicated Asian American only and 3% indicated Black or African American only. Three percent of respondents indicated Hispanic only, and 1% indicated American Indian only. Six percent of students marked two or more racial/ethnic groups.



## Gender

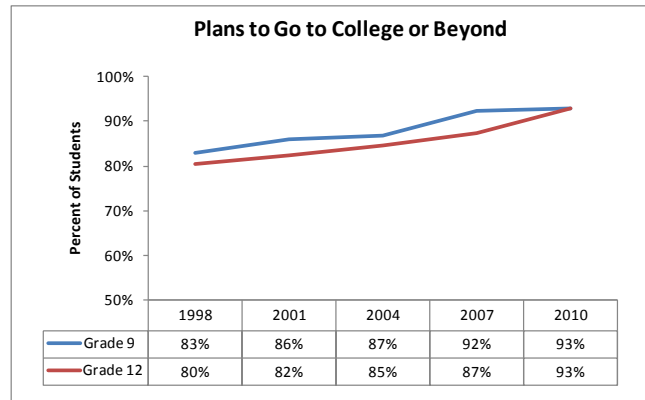
In each year, county students responding to the survey have been evenly divided between males and females. In 2010, 49.6% of the students were male and 50.4% were female.



# Academics and School Connectedness

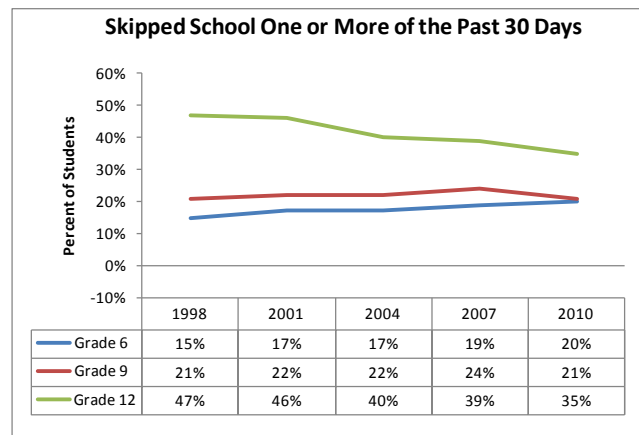
## Plans to Go To College

Over time, students' plans to go to college have been consistently high. Both 9th and 12th grade students have had a steady upward trend, with 93% currently reporting intentions to continue their education after high school.



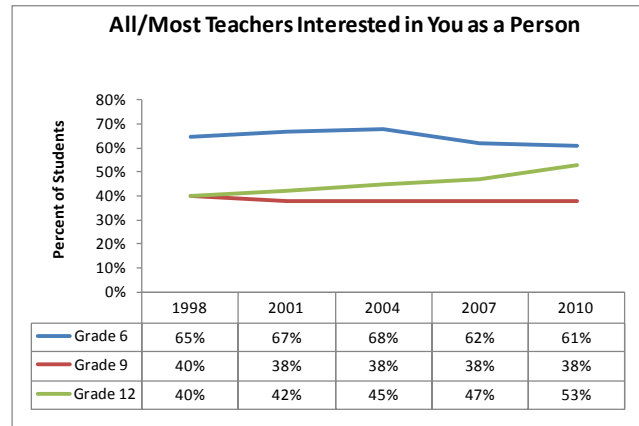
## Skipping School

In 2010, one-fifth of 6th graders (20%) and 9th graders (21%), as well as more than one-third of 12th graders (35%), reported skipping school one or more days in the past 30 days. While the proportion of older students who reported past month delinquency has decreased over time, especially among high school seniors since 1998, it has gradually increased among 6th graders from 15% in 1998 to 20% in 2010.



## Teachers Are Interested In You

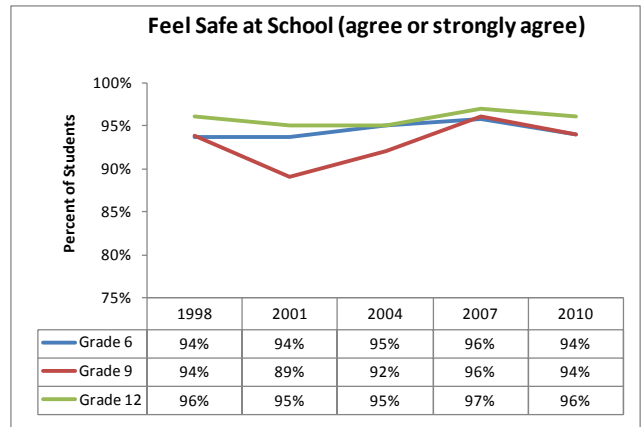
Feeling connected to educators is an important protective factor when it comes to school achievement. Student perceptions of whether teachers are interested in them as individuals have been relatively level over the years for 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders while increasing for 12<sup>th</sup> graders. In 2010, about six in 10 6th graders, almost four out of 10 9th graders and a little over one-half of 12th grade students feel that all or most teachers are interested in them as people.



# Perceptions of School Safety

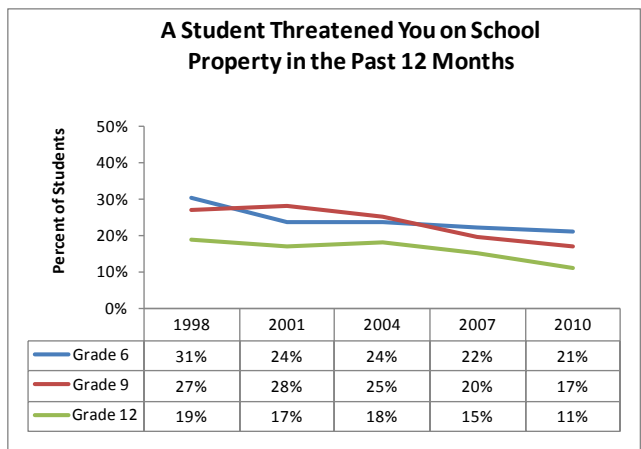
## Feel Safe at School

A high percentage of students in 6th, 9th, and 12th grades have consistently reported feeling safe at school. This trend has remained constant. In 2010, more than 94% of students in 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade and 96% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported feeling safe at school.



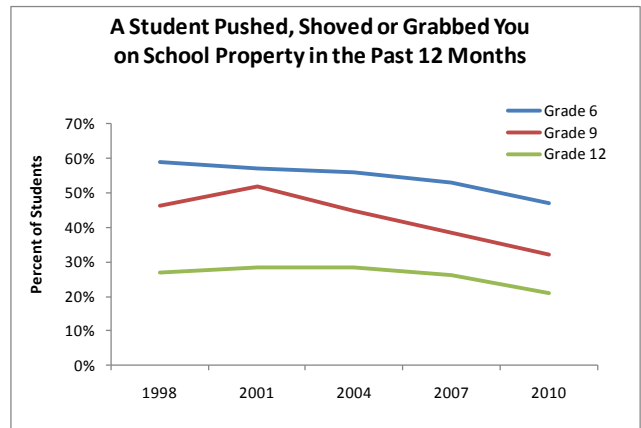
## Student Threatened You on School Property

In 2010, all students reported a continued decrease in reports that they had been threatened on school property. Reports by 12th graders decreased from 19% in 1998 to 11% in 2010, the lowest rate to date.



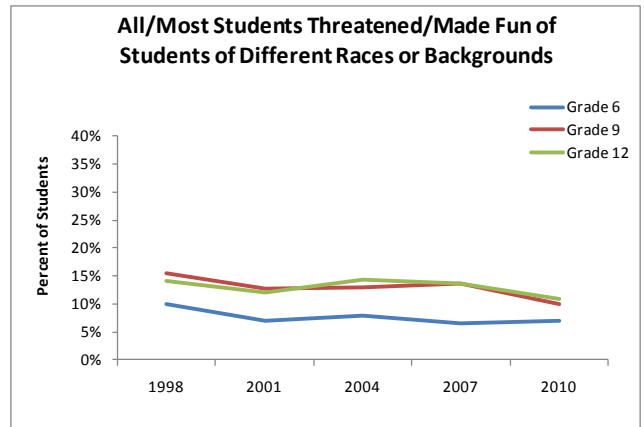
## Student Pushed, Shoved or Grabbed You

Since 1998, consistently decreasing percentages of students in 6th grade reported that a student pushed, shoved or grabbed them on school property in the past year. In addition, for both 9<sup>th</sup> and 12th graders, there has been a downward trend since 1998. The 2010 data show the lowest percentages to date across all three grades.



## Threatened or Made Fun of Others

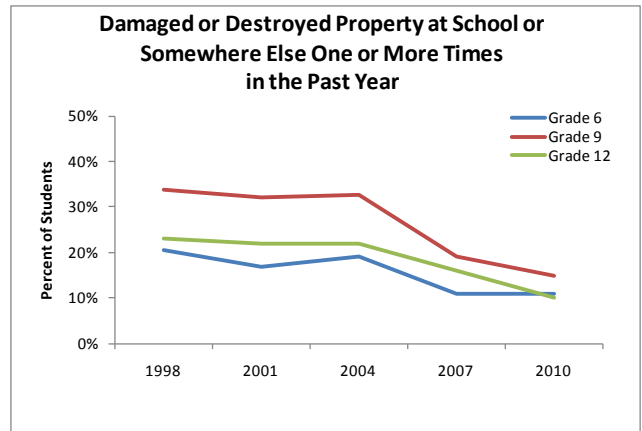
The perception that students in their school have threatened or made fun of students of different races or backgrounds has decreased slightly since 1998. In 2010, 10% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders and 11% of 12th graders reported that all or most students in their school have threatened or made fun of students of different races or background. The percentage among 6th graders remained relatively constant at around 7% since 2001.



# Violent and Anti-Social Behavior

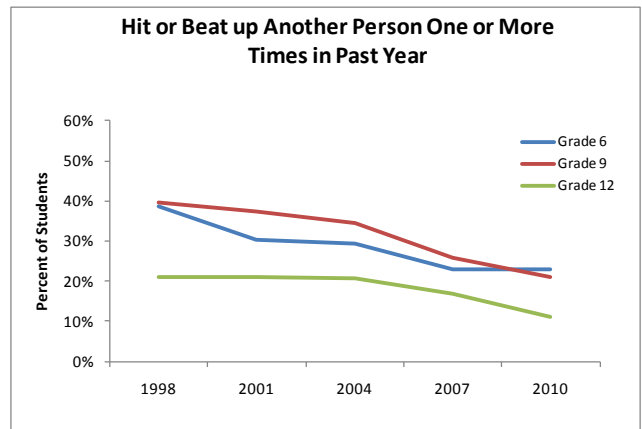
## Damaged or Destroyed Property

The percentage of students reporting that they damaged or destroyed property one or more times in the past year has steadily decreased over time, with rates being cut in half for all grades since 1998. While 9th graders continue to report the highest percentage of this behavior, they also had the biggest decrease between 1998 and 2010, from 34% to 15%.



## Hit or beat up another person

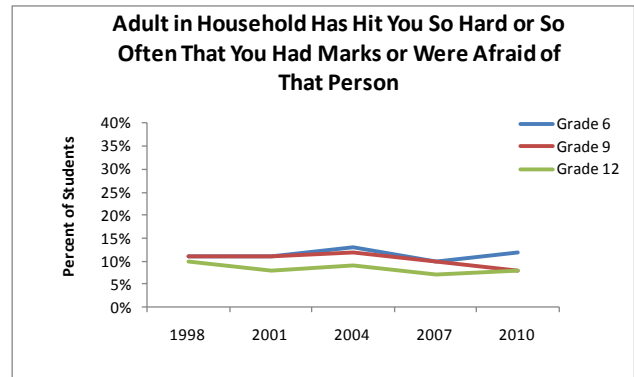
The percentage of students reporting that they hit or beat up another person in the past year has also decreased consistently over time. Overall, 12<sup>th</sup> graders were the least likely to report this behavior (11%) in 2010, while nearly one-fourth of 6th graders reported engaging in this behavior.



# Family, Sexual and Dating Violence

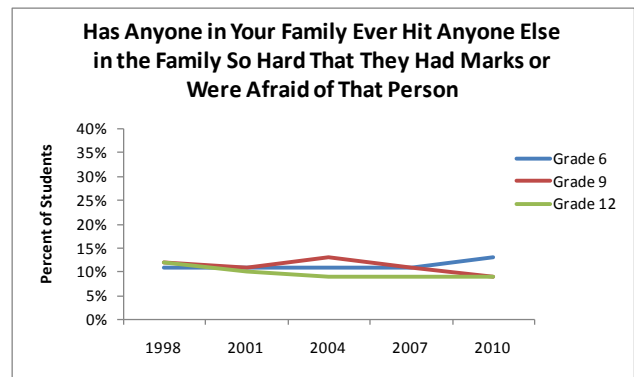
## Victim of Family Violence

The number of students that reported that a family member hit them so hard or so often that they had marks or were afraid of that person has been stable since 1998. Eight percent of 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders and 12% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders reported being a victim of family violence.



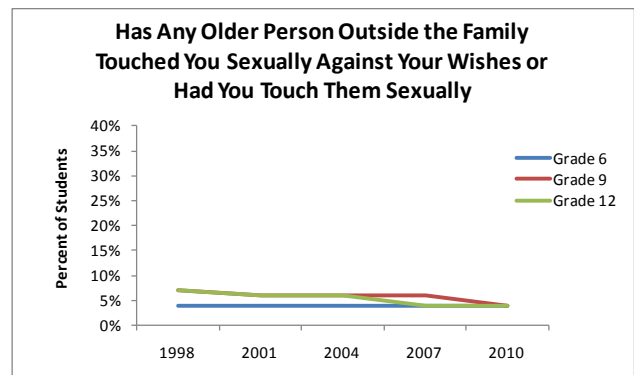
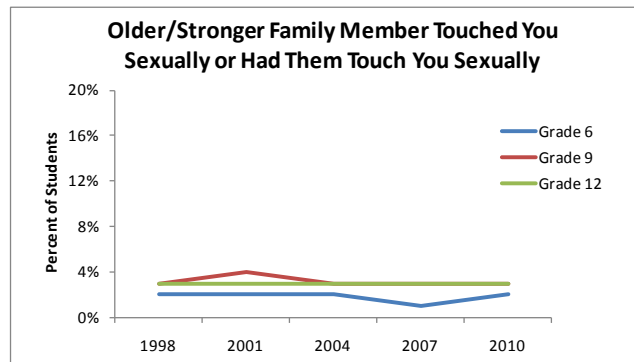
## Witness of Family Violence

The percentage of students who report being a witness of family violence have remained relatively unchanged. Nine percent of 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders and 13% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders reported that a family member hit someone else in the family so hard they had marks or were afraid of that person.



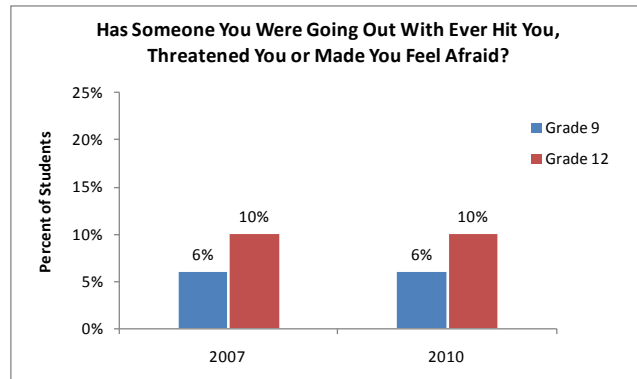
## Sexual Abuse Within the Home or by Someone Outside the Home

The percentage of students who reported that an older or stronger member of their family touched them sexually or had them touch them sexually has remained unchanged over time, with between 2-3% of 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders reporting this since 1998. Similarly, the percentage of students who reported that someone outside the family has done so has also remained unchanged over time, with 4% of 6<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders reporting this in 2010.



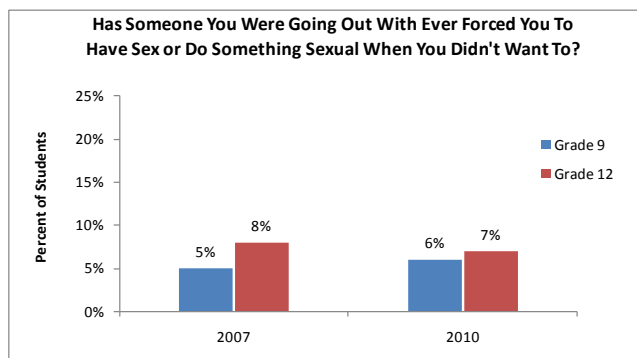
### Dating Physical Violence

Six percent of 9<sup>th</sup> graders and 10% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders report that someone they were going out with “hit you, hurt you, threatened you or made you feel afraid”. These rates were unchanged since 2007 when the question was first asked in the survey.



### Dating Sexual Violence

A little over one out of 20 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported that someone they were going out with forced them to have sex or do something sexually that they did not want to in 2010.





# Mental Health

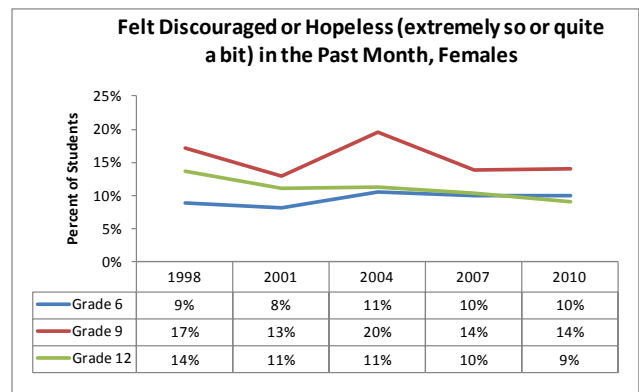
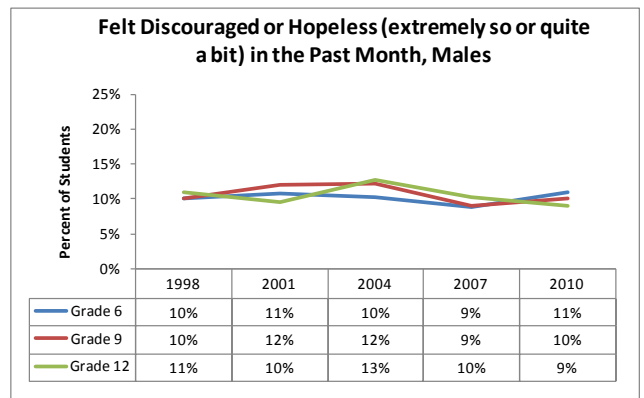
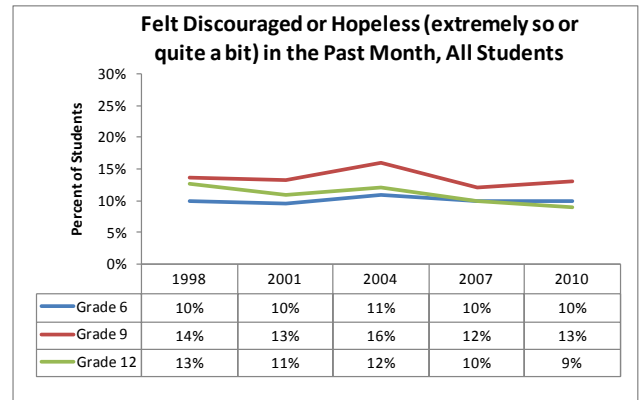
Academic success requires students to be engaged in learning and have high expectations of making progress. A variety of emotional and social concerns can interrupt, distract or otherwise disturb learners, making the school experience frustrating and hindering academic achievement. In addition, negative experiences in school may also impact a student’s mental health.

## Feeling Discouraged or Hopeless

Ninth graders’ responses to feeling discouraged or hopeless in the past month continue to be slightly higher than the other two grades in recent years. Rates for all three grades measured have remained consistent.

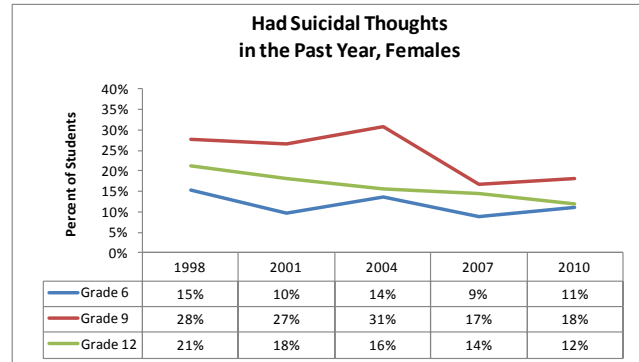
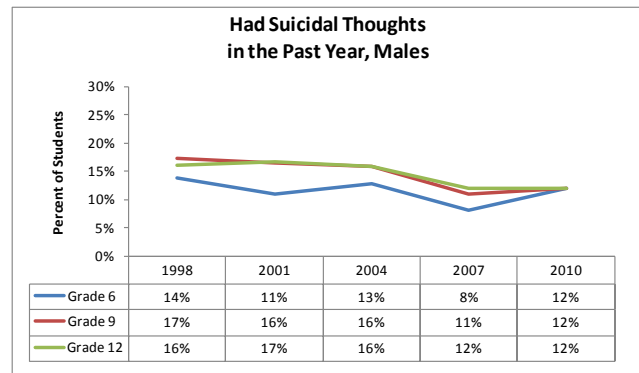
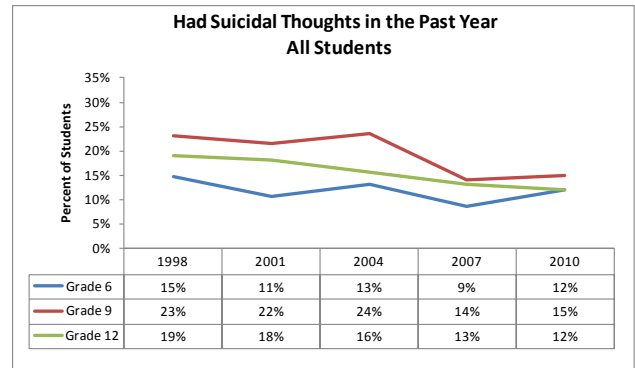
Males had very similar rates for all grade levels and across time, at around 10%. Females showed dramatic differences, with rates for 6th grade females steady and 9th graders at 14%.

Between 1998 and 2010, 12th grade females have reported a decrease of 5 percentage points in feelings of discouragement or hopelessness, while 9th grade females reported a 3 percentage point decrease.



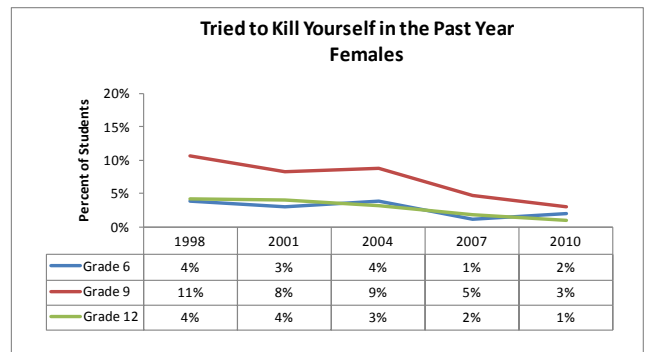
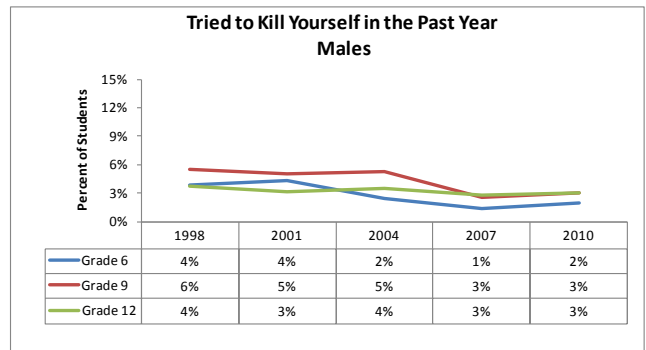
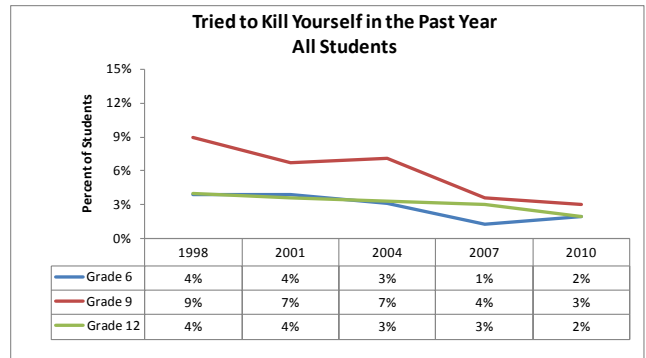
## Suicidal Thoughts

The percentage of youth reporting suicidal thoughts decreased for every grade level between 1998 and 2010. Ninth grade girls continued to report the highest rates of suicidal ideation (18%), followed by 12th grade girls (12%). Sixth, 9th and 12th grade males followed at 12% for all three grades.



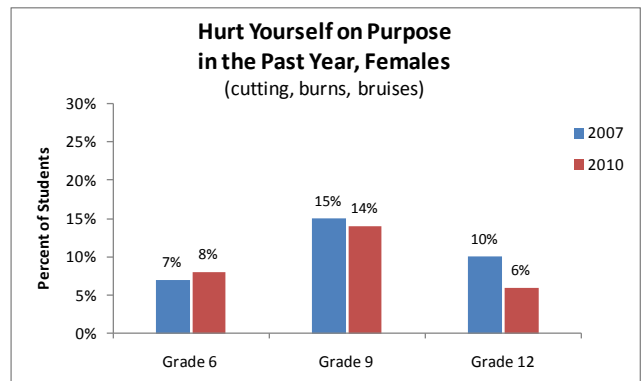
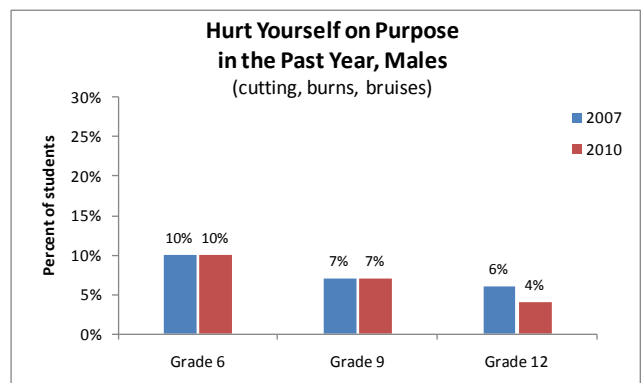
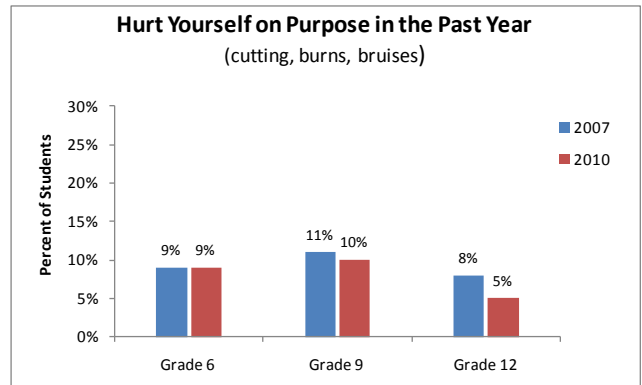
## Suicide Attempts

A smaller percentage of young people attempted suicide than experienced suicidal ideation. Suicide attempt rates between 2007 and 2010 remained consistent for all ages and genders at about 2-3%.



## Self Injury

When asked if they had ever hurt themselves on purpose in the past year (cutting, burns or bruises), 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade rates remained the same from 2007 to 2010, with about one out of 10 students reporting this. There was a slight decrease for 12<sup>th</sup> graders from 8% to 5%. Ninth grade girls reported higher rates of self injury than all other grades and years.

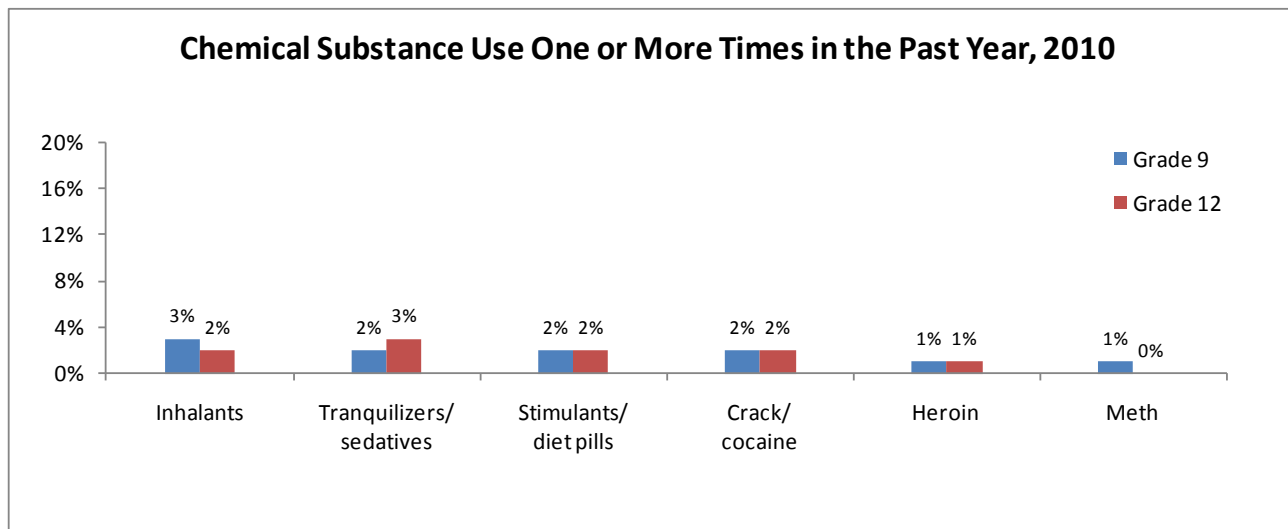
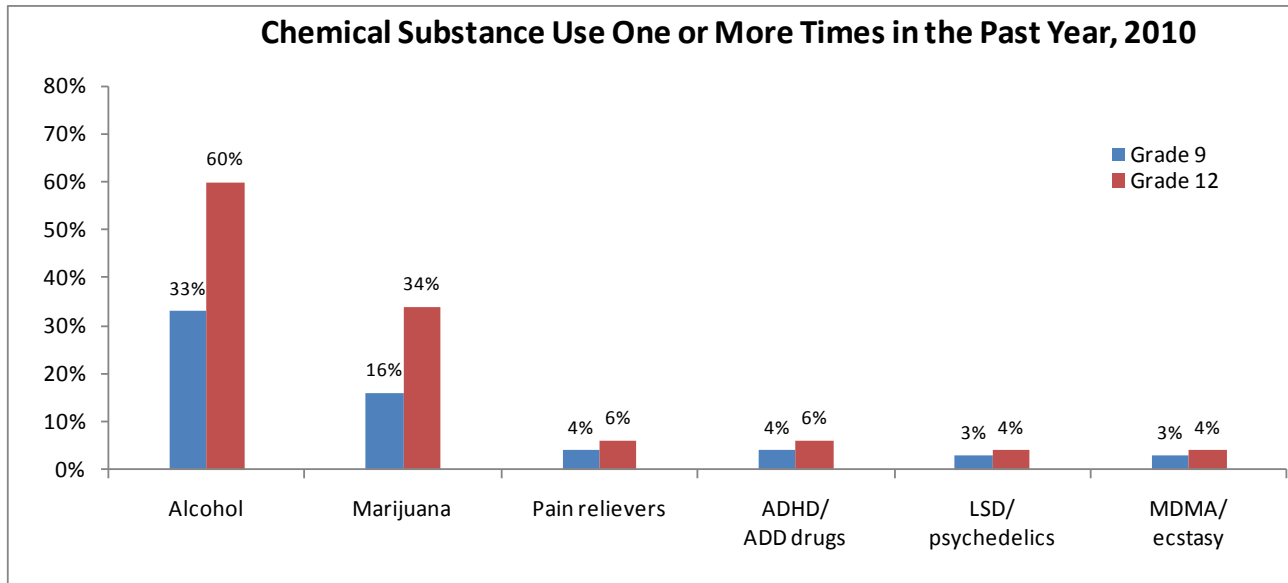


# Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drugs

## Across Substances

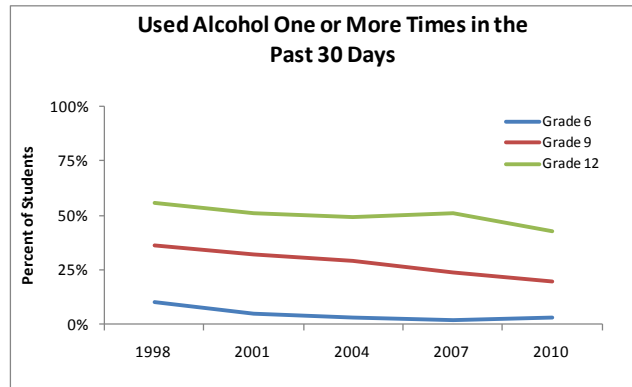
The prevalence of substance use in 2010 among 9th and 12th graders was compared across substances based on students' reports of use during the last 12 months. Sixth graders were asked only about a subset of the substances and were excluded from this comparison.

Alcohol was used by a larger percentage of youth (33% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders and 60% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders) than any other substances in 2010. Marijuana was the second most used substance with 16% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders and 34% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reporting its use. Various prescription drugs (pain relievers, such as OxyContin and Vicodin, and ADHD drugs, such as Ritalin) were reported as the next most used substances by both 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Across all the substances, a higher percentage of 12<sup>th</sup> graders than 9<sup>th</sup> graders reported using them except inhalants, which were more popular among 9<sup>th</sup> graders than 12<sup>th</sup> graders.



## Alcohol Use Past 30 Days

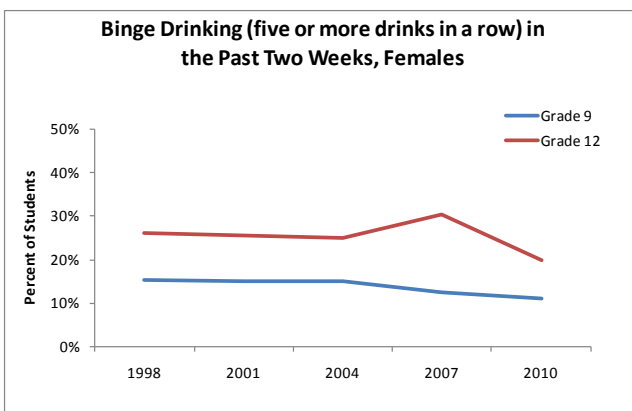
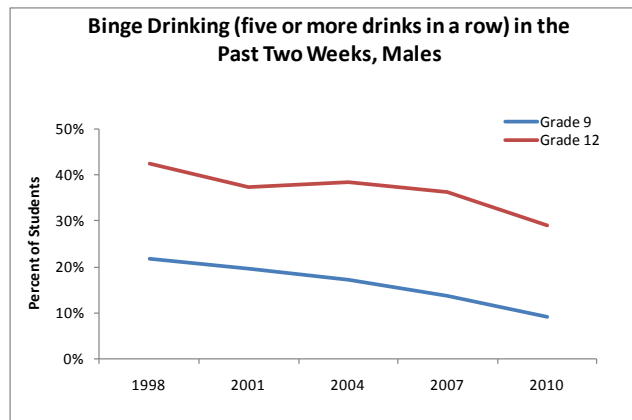
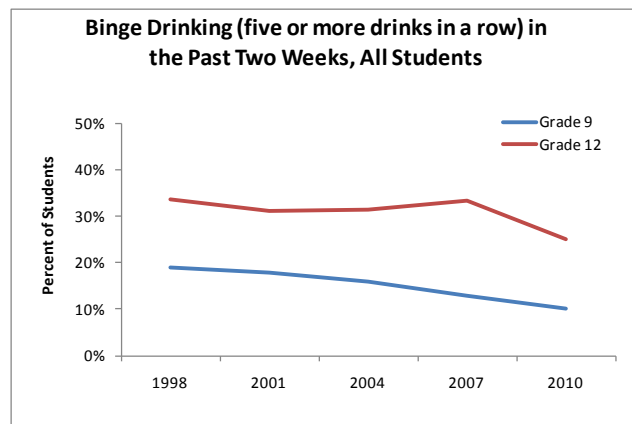
The percentage of students who reported having alcoholic beverages one or more times in the past 30 days shows an overall downward trend across all three grades since 1998. From 1998 to 2010, 6th grade use has declined from 10% to 3%, 9th grade use declined from 36% to 20% and 12th grade use from 56% to 43%.



## Binge Drinking

Binge drinking (five or more drinks in a row in the past two weeks) by students continues to decline. In 2010, both males and females in each grade reported the lowest levels of binge drinking since 1998. For both 9th and 12th graders, the prevalence of binge drinking has been steadily decreasing since the late 1990s, and reached the lowest rate in 2010, with 10% of 9th graders and 25% of 12th graders reporting it. Binge drinking was more prevalent among males than females across the years.

Between 2007 and 2010, males in 9th and 12th grades reported a decrease in binge drinking behavior. While historically, there has been no steady downward trend seen for female students, there was a decrease for 12th grade females between 2007 and 2010, from 36% to 20%.



## Tobacco Use

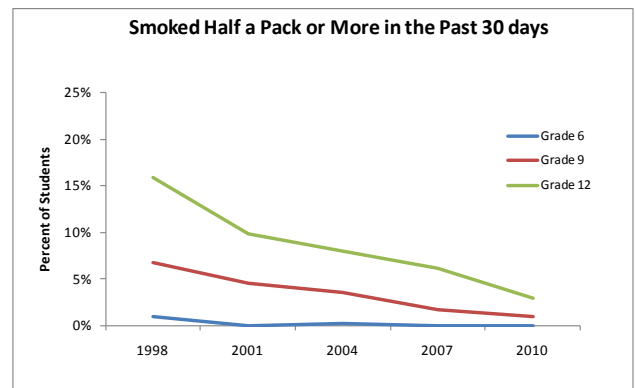
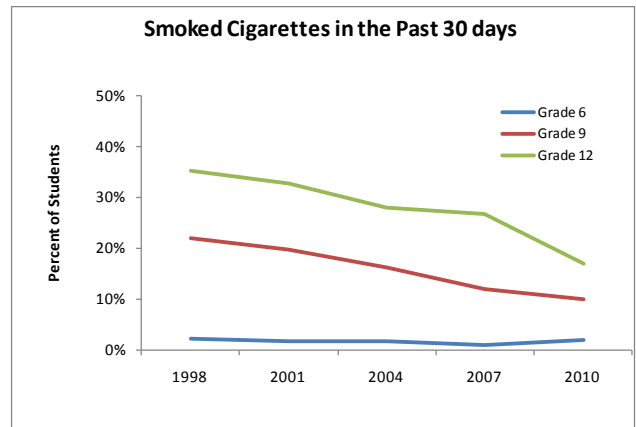
### Recent Use (previous 30 days)

Cigarette smoking during the past 30 days continued a downward trend among 9th and 12th graders. In 2010, less than one in five 12th graders (17%) and one in 10 9th graders (10%) reported smoking cigarettes in the past month. These are the lowest rates reported in the history of the Minnesota Student Survey.

The smoking rate has been cut in half for 9th and 12th graders since 1998. The 9th grade rates dropped from 22% to 10% and 12th grade dropped from 35% in 1998 to 17% in 2010. The 9th and 12th grade smoking rates declined slightly between 1998 and 2001, then started declining precipitously.

### Heavy Use

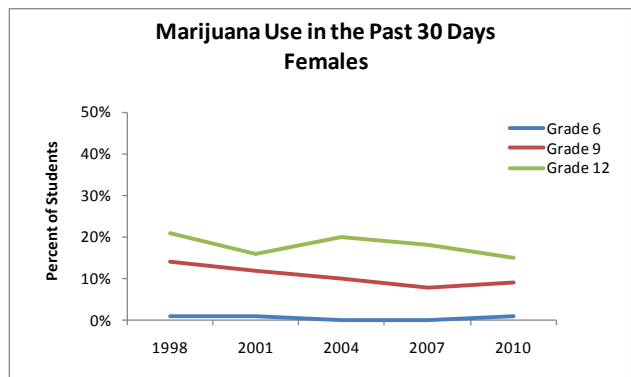
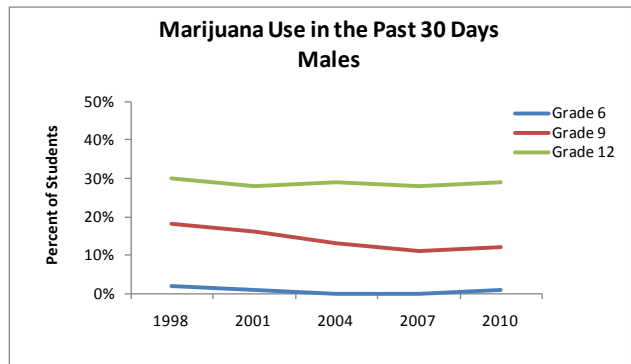
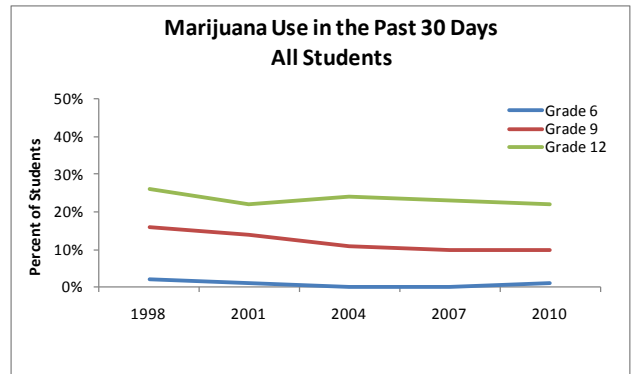
Heavy cigarette smoking (half a pack or more per day in the past 30 days) also declined among Washington County students. Heavy cigarette smoking decreased steadily and reached the lowest rates across all grades and genders in 2010. Zero percent of 6th graders, 1% of 9th graders and 3% of 12th graders reported smoking heavily.



## Marijuana Use

Marijuana use in the past 30 days among high school seniors has remained unchanged with around one in four reporting this since 1998. On the other hand, marijuana use among 9th graders has been slowly declining, from 16% in 1998 to 10% in 2010. It has remained relatively steady among 6th graders, around 1% since 1998.

Marijuana use is more prevalent among male students than female students in all grades and years. In 9th grade, both male and female students showed a steady declining trend since 1998. Twelfth grade male rates have not changed since 1998, with about one-third of males reporting this. Twelfth grade female rates declined slightly from 21% in 1998 to 15% in 2010.





## Substance Use and Motor Vehicles

### Driving with Friends

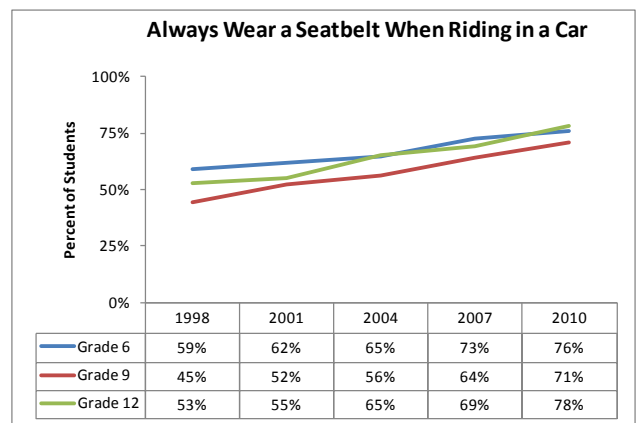
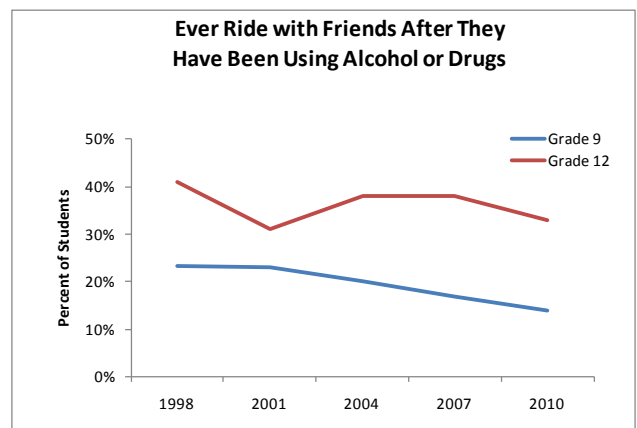
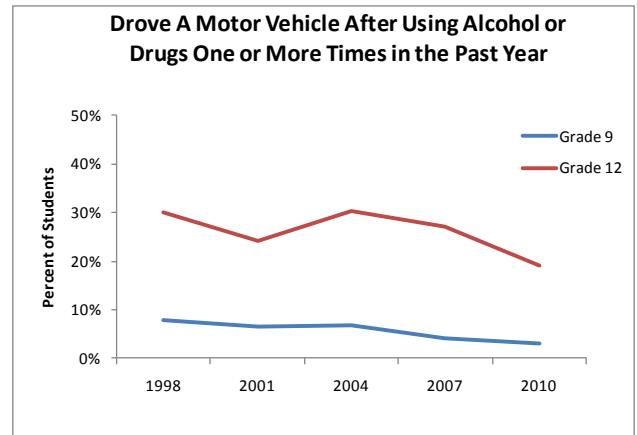
Driving motor vehicles after using alcohol or drugs, or riding with a friend who has been using alcohol or other drugs, is a serious safety issue. Washington County students have shown improvement in this behavior over the years. The percentage of students who reported such risky behaviors decreased gradually since 1998, showing the lowest rates in 2010. In 2010, 12th graders reported an 11 percentage point decrease of students who drove motor vehicles after using alcohol or drugs from 30% in 1998 to 19%.

### Riding with Friends

Fewer 12th graders also reported riding with friends who had been using substances, with an 8 percentage point decrease between 1998 and 2010. Although only a small proportion of 9<sup>th</sup> graders (3%) reported driving after using alcohol or other drugs (probably due to lack of a driver's license), 14% of 9th graders reported riding with others who had been using alcohol or other drugs in 2010.

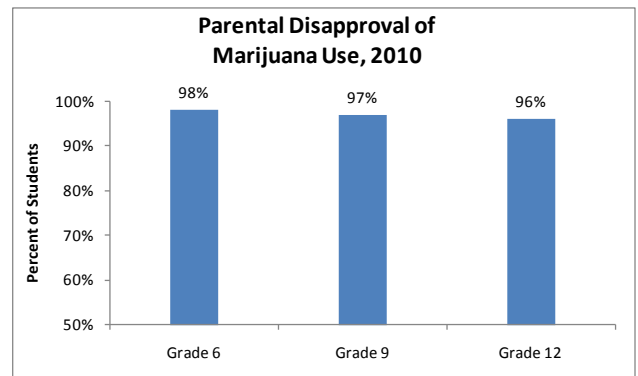
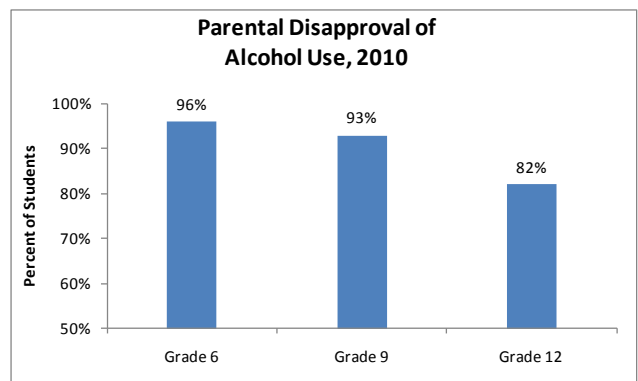
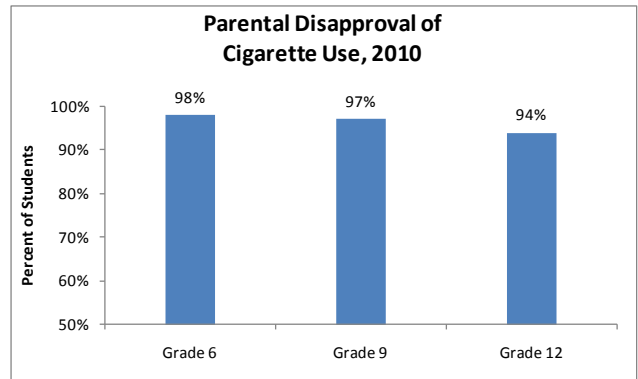
### Seatbelt Use

One measure of behavior that reduces injury is consistently wearing a seatbelt when riding in a car. Students in all three grades increased their reported rate of always using a seatbelt while riding in a car. Ninth and 12th graders reported the most dramatic increase, with more than a 25 percentage point increase for students in 2010 reporting they always wear a seatbelt compared to 1998. Sixth graders reported a 17 percentage point increase between 1998 and 2010.



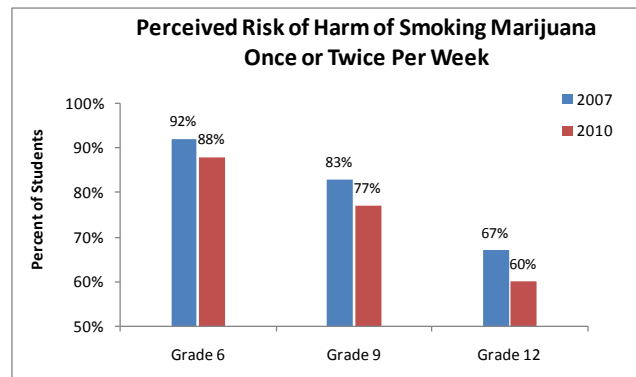
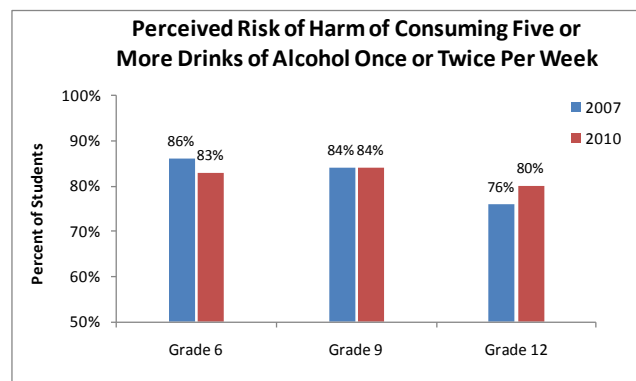
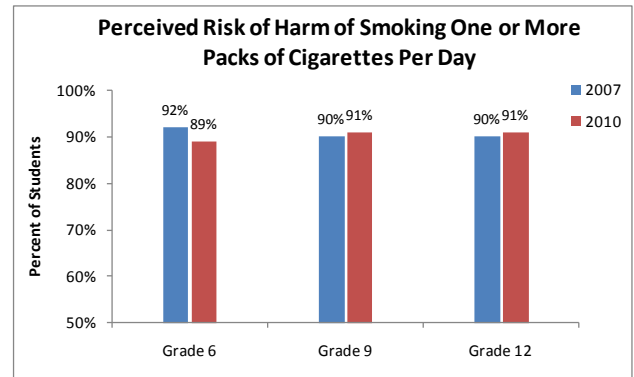
## Parental Disapproval of Cigarette, Alcohol or Marijuana Use

Students were asked “how do you think your parents or guardians would feel if you smoked cigarettes, smoked marijuana or used alcohol?” The percentage who thought that their parents would disapprove or strongly disapprove was highest for marijuana, followed by cigarette use and then alcohol use for all grades. Twelfth graders had the lowest rate with 82% indicating their parents would disapprove or strongly disapprove if they used alcohol.



## Perceived Risk of Harm of Cigarette, Alcohol or Marijuana Use

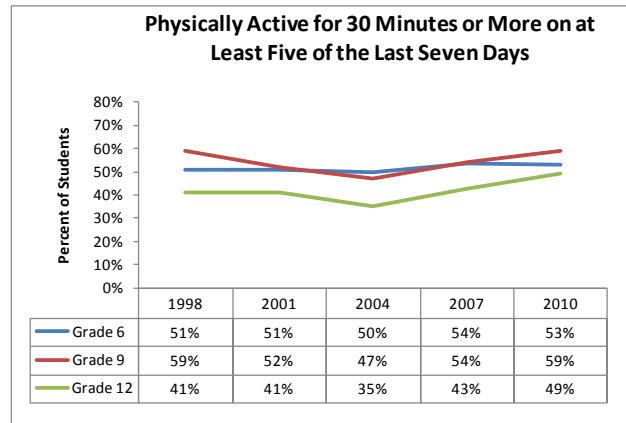
Students indicated that there was more of a moderate or great risk of harming themselves by smoking one or more packs of cigarettes per day, as compared to alcohol or marijuana use. The majority of 6<sup>th</sup> (83%) and 9<sup>th</sup> (84%) graders felt that there was moderate or great risk of consuming five or more drinks of alcohol once or twice per week. Slightly fewer 12<sup>th</sup> graders felt it was less risky, with four out of five indicating moderate or great risk. In comparison, a very low percentage of 12<sup>th</sup> graders (60%) thought that people risk harming themselves if they smoke marijuana once or twice per week. Sixth graders were most concerned at 88% and 9<sup>th</sup> graders at 77%.



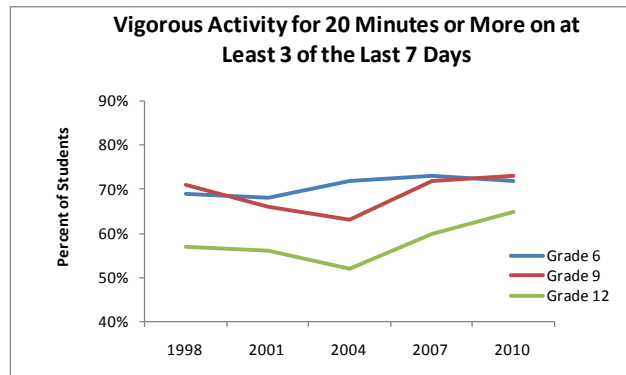
# Physical Activity and Nutrition

## Physical Fitness

Physically fit youth and adults have better concentration, motivation and stamina. Measured since 1998, physical activity for 30 minutes a day at least five days per week stayed fairly level for students of all grades in 2010. Sixth graders reported physical activity at a rate a little over 50%. Ninth graders reported a rate of 59%. Twelfth grade students reported the biggest increase in this level of exercise, from 41% in 1998 to 49% in 2010.

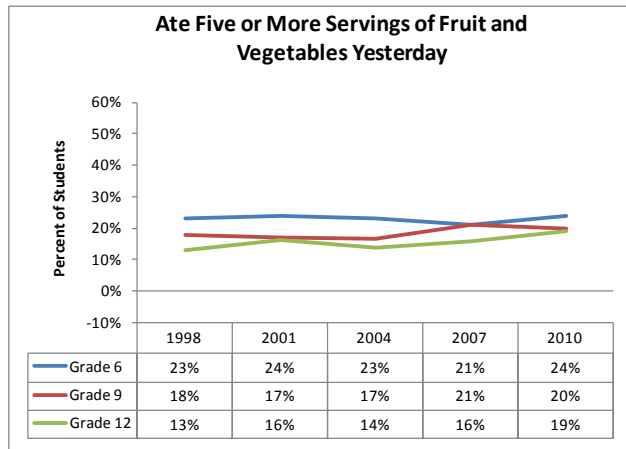


Vigorous activity for twenty minutes or more on at least three of the last seven days has remained relatively stable for 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders since 1998, averaging around 69% - 71%. Vigorous activity levels for 12<sup>th</sup> grade students have increased slightly, from 57% in 1998 to 65% in 2010.



## Nutrition

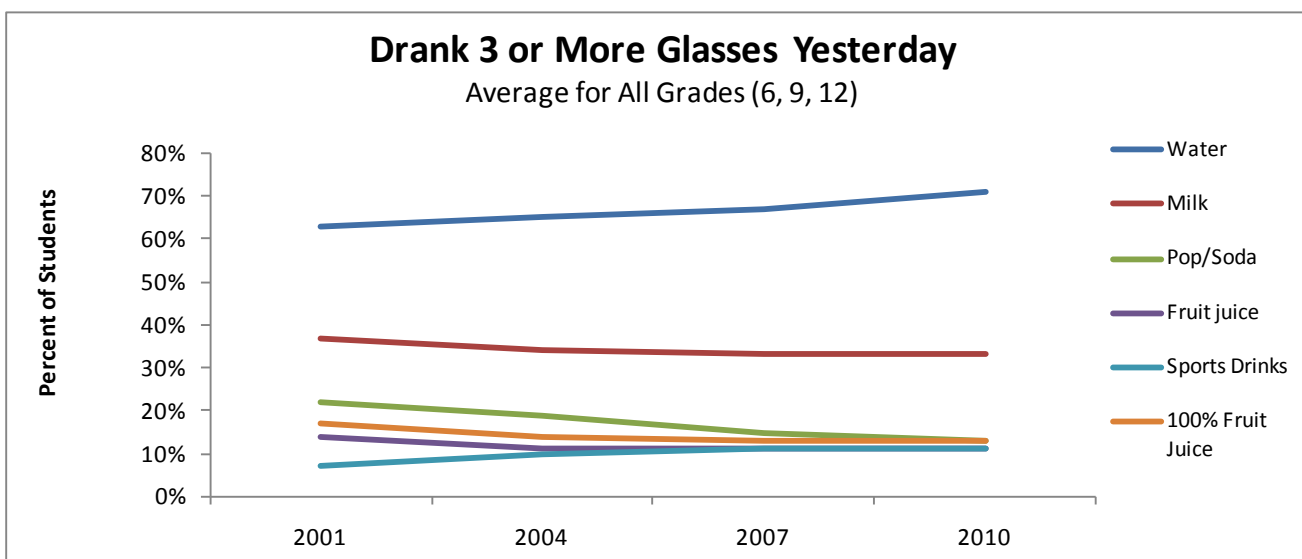
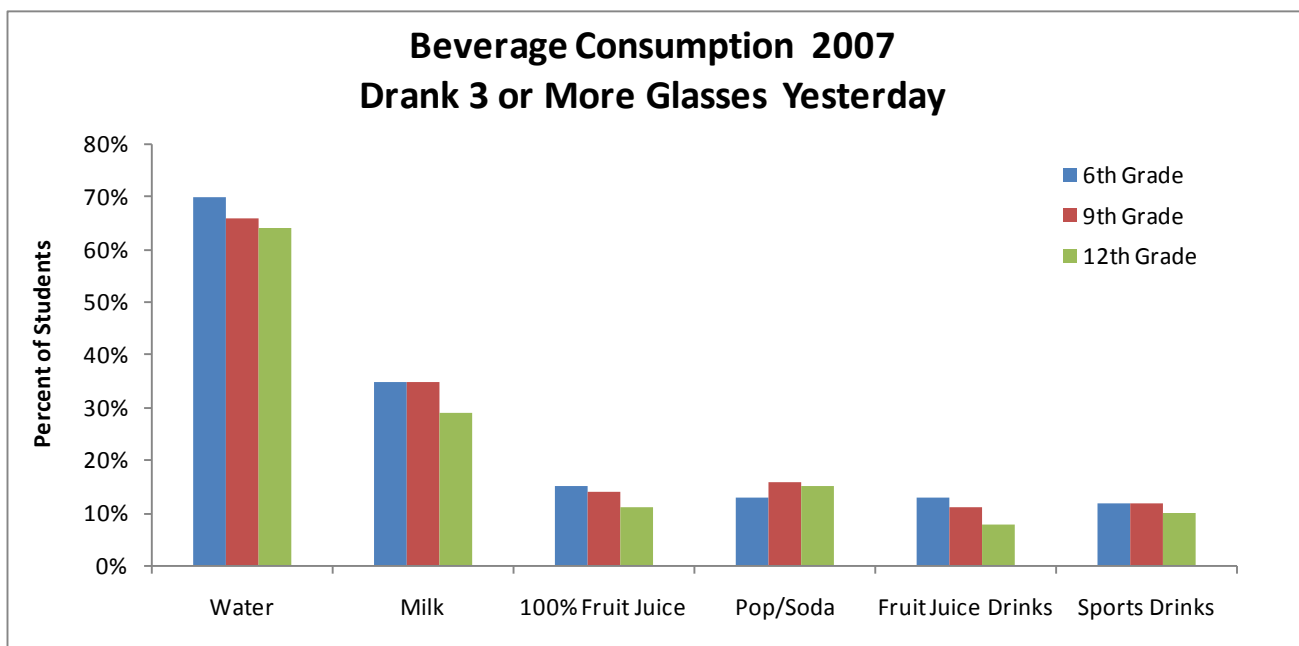
Another health standard is eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day. The trend has remained stable with only about one in four 6th graders reporting consuming the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables in the day prior to the survey administration. Yet, this was the best of the rates reported, with 9th graders reporting only a rate of 20% and 12<sup>th</sup> graders reporting a rate of 19% meeting this nutrition standard.



## Beverage Consumption

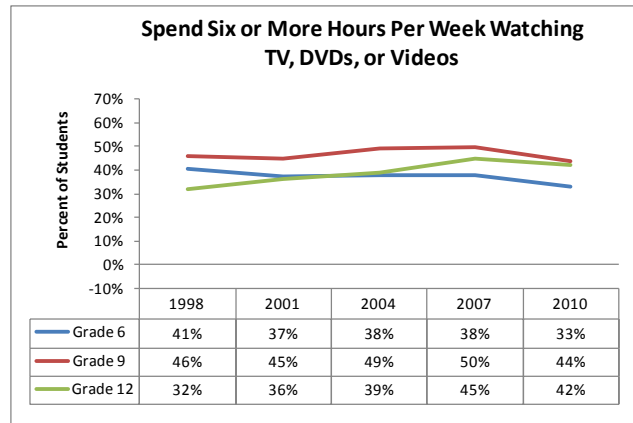
In 2001, the Minnesota Student Survey began to ask students about their consumption of pop or soda, sports drinks and other beverages. Between 2004 and 2010, consumption of sports drinks remained stable with about 11% of students reporting this.

The number of students reporting three or more drinks of pop or soda on the previous day has continued to decline. A little over one in five students reported drinking pop or soda in 2001, while in 2010 this rate decreased to 13%. During this same period of time, water intake increased from 63% to 71%.



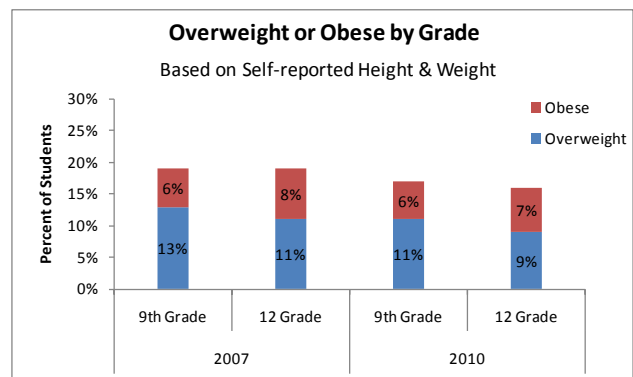
## Screen Time

Over time, the reported rates of students spending six or more hours per week in front of a screen – watching TV, DVDs or videos – have not changed much. Since 1998, the percentage of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students who report spending six or more hours per week watching TV, DVDs or videos has declined gradually, while the percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> graders has remained about the same. Twelfth grade students are the only grade level that has reported a gradual increase.



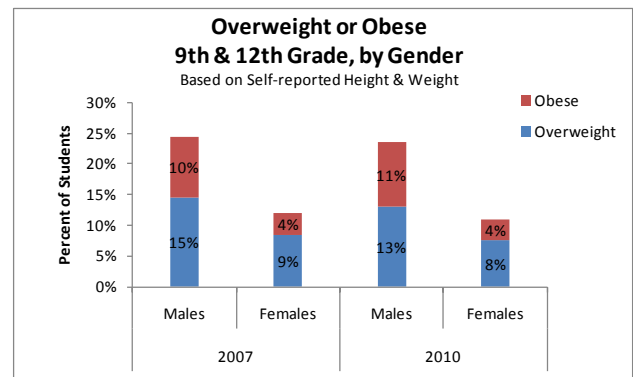
## Overweight or Obese

This was a newer question that was asked in 2007 of 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders. Based on students' self reported height and weight, their Body Mass Index (BMI)\* was calculated. Body Mass Index (BMI) is used to express the relationship of weight-to-height. Overweight and obesity are generally caused by an ongoing imbalance in the body's energy intake and expenditure. The following charts show the percentage of students who are obese or overweight based on their self reported height and weight.



## Overweight or Obese by Grade

In 2007, 19% of 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported being overweight or obese. Slightly less reported this in 2010, with 17% of 9<sup>th</sup> and 16% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders indicating that they were overweight or obese.



## Overweight or Obese by Gender

When gender is taken into account, differences begin to appear. For 12<sup>th</sup> graders in 2010, males were almost twice as likely to report being overweight or obese (22%) as compared to females (12%).

\* BMI is calculated using weight in kilograms and height in meters (i.e., weight/height). Overweight is defined as a BMI between 25 and 29.9 and obese as a BMI of 30 or higher. Among youth, BMI is plotted using sex-specific BMI-for-age growth charts. These charts generate a percentile relative to growth patterns of children in the United States. "Overweight" means having a BMI at or above the 85th percentile for age and sex but less than the 95th percentile, and "Obese" means having a BMI at or above the 95th percentile.

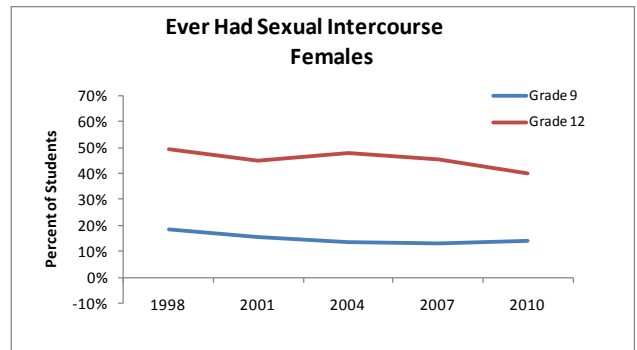
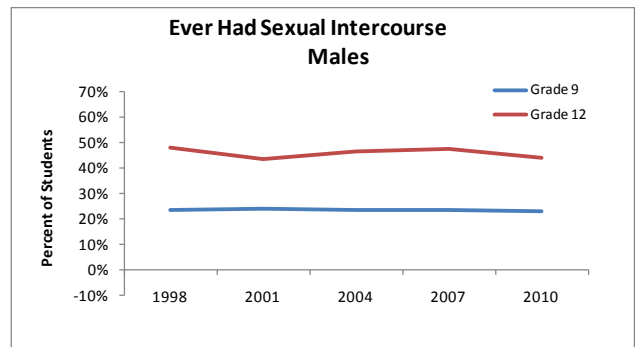
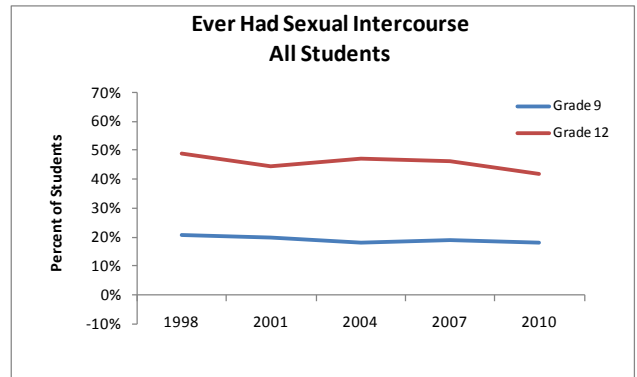
# Sexual Behavior

## Sexual Intercourse

The percentage of students who report having engaged in sexual intercourse has remained relatively consistent since 1998. There was a slight decrease for 12<sup>th</sup> graders from 49% in 1998 to 42% in 2010 which is the lowest level reported to date.

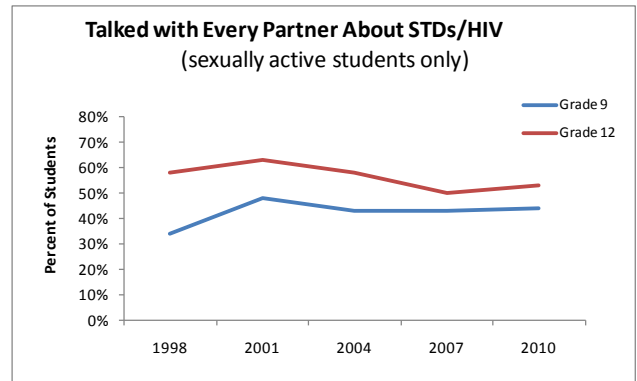
For 9th grade males, the percentage who reported having engaged in sexual intercourse has remained about the same, about 23%. The percentage of 9th grade girls engaging in sexual intercourse decreased slightly, from 18% in 1998 to 14% in 2010.

Reported sexual activity among 12th grade males and females remained steady between 1998 and 2007, with a little less than half reporting sexual activity. There was a decrease for both males and females from 2007 to 2010. Males reported a decrease from 48% to 44% and females reported a decrease from 45% to 40%. These are some of the lowest levels reported to date.



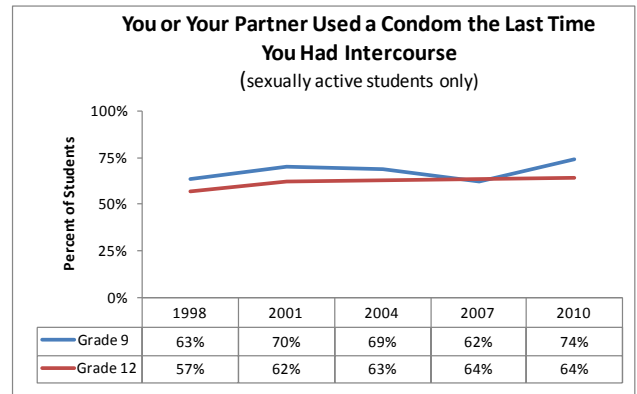
### Talking with Partner about STDs/HIV

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, a greater percentage of sexually active students reported having talked with their sexual partner about protection from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS. However, this percentage has remained the same for 9<sup>th</sup> graders since 2004 and has been at a little over half for 12th graders in both 2007 and 2010.



### Condom Use

Over the long term, more sexually active students reported the use of condoms in 2010 than in 1998. There was a 12 percentage point increase for 9<sup>th</sup> graders, from 62% in 2007 to 74% in 2010. Twelfth grade has remained relatively consistent, with about two-thirds of students reporting condom use since 2001.





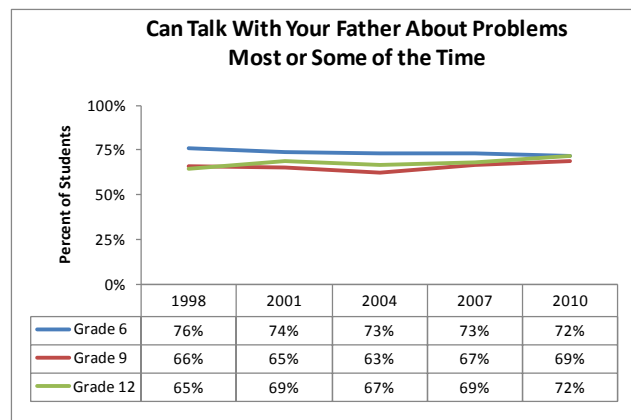
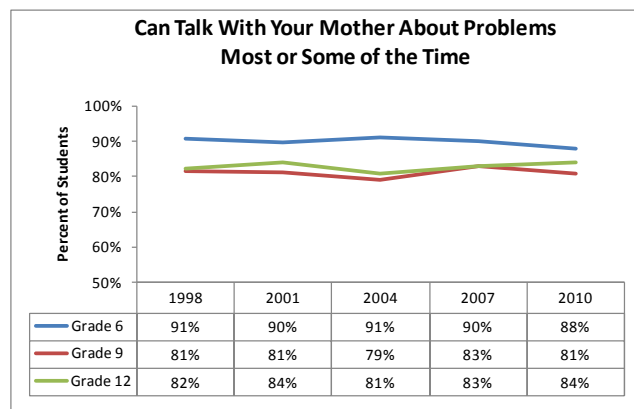
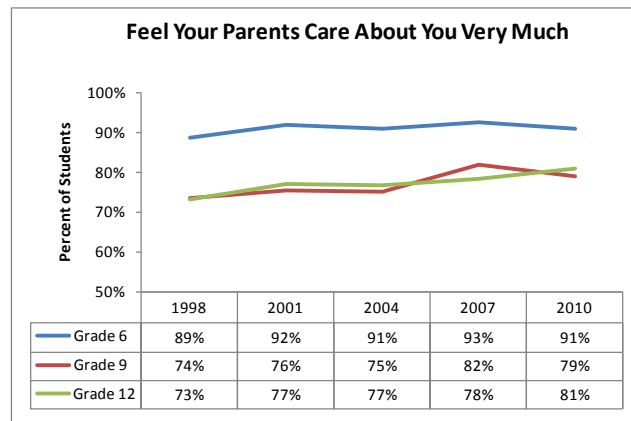
# Family Connectedness

## Relationships with Parents

Reports of positive relationships between youth and their parents have been consistently high over time, especially for younger students. Nine out of 10 students in 6th grade say that their parents care about them very much. About eight out of 10 9<sup>th</sup> and 12th graders give their parents the same high mark.

Regarding communication with parents, students in all grades are more likely to report their mothers being more approachable than their fathers. Nearly nine out of 10 6<sup>th</sup> graders report that they can talk to their mothers most or some of the time. Seven out of 10 report that they can talk to their fathers most or some of the time.

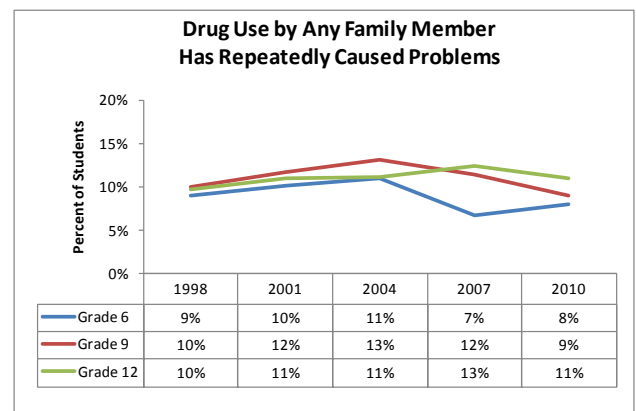
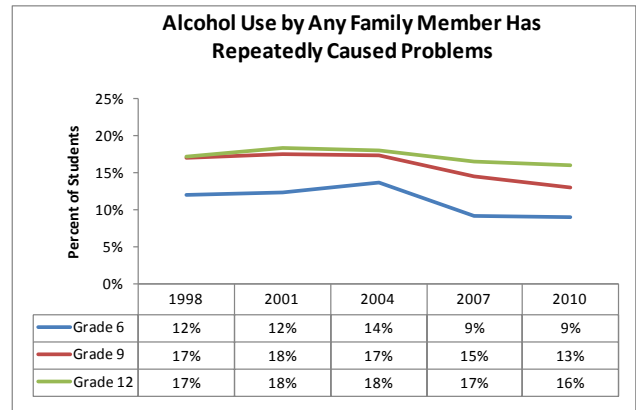
Fewer 9th and 12th graders state that they can talk with their mothers than do 6th graders. A little over eight in 10 students in both 9th and 12th grade report that they can talk to their mothers most or some of the time, while about seven out of 10 report that they can talk to their fathers.



## Alcohol and Drug Use by Family Members

Students are in no way immune to trouble in their families. One question on the survey asks if alcohol use by any family member has repeatedly caused family, health, job or legal problems. Nine percent of 6<sup>th</sup>, 13% of 9<sup>th</sup> and 16% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students reported such problems in 2010.

The same question was asked about repeated consequences of drug use by anyone in the family. Rates have stayed relatively stable for students in all three grades over the years, with close to 10% of students reporting this.



# Technical Notes

## County Data

County School District Superintendents granted permission to the Washington County Department of Public Health and Environment to collect and analyze district Minnesota School Survey (MSS) results. Data was provided to the Washington County Department of Public Health and Environment upon request to the Department of Education and to the Department of Health. The county trend data in this booklet consists of data from participating schools in the following school districts: District 831 (Forest Lake), District 832 (Mahtomedi), District 833 (South Washington County) and District 834 (Stillwater). District 622 (North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale) data is compiled with Ramsey County data. Data is presented from the following school survey periods: 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2010. The trend data is compiled from all schools participating in the survey during each of those years. A weighting procedure was not used to determine county trend data.

## Do Students Tell the Truth?

One question sometimes raised about student surveys is whether students' responses are honest and accurate. Researchers use a variety of data analysis techniques to examine the likely accuracy of surveys and these were applied to the student survey as well. Surveys with numerous inconsistencies or improbable answers were excluded from data analysis. On a state level in 2010, for example, 1.2% of all surveys were removed because of a pattern of inconsistent and/or improbable answers. Another 1.6% of surveys were not used because the question on gender was not answered.

The majority of students exhibit patterns of responses that are reasonable and consistent across similar questions. In addition, as results have demonstrated, percentages for many

answers are consistent over time across the five Minnesota Student Survey administrations studied for this report. Such similarities are likely to occur only if the survey responses reflect the actual perceptions of Minnesota and county youth; it is extremely unlikely that these patterns could be replicated by chance over time. Furthermore, the survey findings are often consistent with findings in similar states and with national trend lines of increasing or decreasing behaviors.

This combination of individual response patterns, plausible relationships among answers, consistency over time within the state, and consistency with other research and with national studies, all attest to the overall credibility of student responses.

## Data Links

The "Washington County Minnesota Student Survey Trends Report: 1998 – 2010" can be found online at: [www.co.washington.mn.us/publichealth](http://www.co.washington.mn.us/publichealth) under Health Data. See Minnesota Student Survey 2010.

The complete state "Minnesota Student Survey 1992-2010 Trends Report" can be found on the Minnesota Department of Health website at: [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/mss/](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/mss/)

State trend data and reports are available in alternative formats to individuals with disabilities by calling (651) 582-8452. TTY users can call through Minnesota Relay at (800) 627-3529. For Speech-to- Speech, call (877) 627-3848. For additional assistance with legal rights and protections for equal access to human services programs, contact your agency's ADA coordinator.

## Acknowledgments

We are indebted to all of the students who responded to the survey, as well as parents, the school boards, administrators, Minnesota Student Survey coordinators and Safe and Drug Free Schools coordinators, and teachers.

The “Washington County Minnesota Student Survey Trends Report: 1998-2010” report was adapted from the state trend report written by the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Human Services and Minnesota Department of Public Safety.

### **Washington County Minnesota Student Survey Workgroup**

A special thank you to the following members of the Washington County Minnesota Student Survey Workgroup of the Chemical Health Action Collaborative in Washington County for their help in coordinating the MSS within their districts:

- Carolyn Carr Latady, Forest Lake Schools
- Lisa Hoogheem, North St Paul/Maplewood/Oakdale Schools
- Jill Kiltie, South Washington County Schools
- Mary Messler, Stillwater Schools
- Christopher Moore, Mahtomedi Schools

Washington County MSS Team:

- Stephanie Lenartz, Washington County Department of Public Health and Environment
- Cathy Mackiewicz, Washington County Department of Public Health and Environment

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For more information call (651) 430-6655.

