

Windsor-Essex Youth Opinion Survey

Windsor-Essex County Drug Strategy

May 2011

This survey and report were conducted as part of the work of the Windsor-Essex County Drug Strategy Implementation Group, which is comprised of citizens and organization representatives committed to reducing the harm of substance misuse/abuse in our community. In an effort to address the community priority of youth substance use, the group identified the need to gather local data so that the development of future strategies would be based upon youth identified needs. To accomplish this, a survey of young adolescents was undertaken in an effort to gain insight into the factors which influence their decision to use substances and what youth felt would support them in avoiding/delaying substance use. The outcomes of this survey will be used to guide future prevention strategies. Implementation Group members include representation from the following:

- City of Windsor, Community Development and Health Services
- Windsor Essex County Health Unit
- Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
- Windsor Essex Community Health Centre
- United Way / Centraide Windsor-Essex County
- South Essex Community Council
- Windsor Regional Hospital
- Ontario Provincial Police
- Westover Treatment Centre
- Youth and Family Resource Network
- Women For Sobriety
- Legal Assistance of Windsor
- St. Leonard's House
- Windsor YMCA
- New Beginnings
- Private citizens

The youth survey and report were compiled by the survey coordinator, Carolyn Jenner-Dupuis in consultation with the Implementation Group.

Executive Summary

The Windsor Essex County Drug Strategy Implementation Group was established in May 2009 and has been working on initiatives within four areas: prevention, enforcement, treatment and harm reduction. As part of the prevention initiative, collection of data from local youth was identified as a priority. In the spring 2010, the Windsor Essex County Drug Strategy engaged in a community survey of young adolescents living in Windsor and Essex County in an effort to gather data about their views on substance use. This project was undertaken in an effort to address the community priority of youth substance misuse/abuse, so that the development of future strategies would be based upon the needs identified by local youth. As research suggests that the transition year from Grade 8 to Grade 9 is an “at-risk” year for youth to experiment with alcohol and drugs, youth in grade eight were the target population of the Windsor-Essex Youth Opinion Survey (WEYOS). The survey was developed to capture what youth of this age feel contributes to substance use, what factors prevent young people from trying drugs and alcohol, as well as what they feel the community needs to do to prevent use. In addition to identifying these root causes from the young person’s perspective, the survey also gathered information about risk and protective factors such as parental involvement, peer and neighbourhood influences and coping with stressful events. With the consent of their parents, 619 grade eight students from the Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board participated in the survey in November/December 2010. The Windsor-Essex Youth Opinion Survey obtained some powerful and useful information about the unique views of young adolescents in our community.

Encouraging Findings

- The majority of grade eight students in Windsor-Essex County report no substance use (70.6%).
- Concern of their family finding out was the number one reason youth reported as influencing their decision not to use substances.
- Youth indicated they consider factors such as the risk of addiction, the potential health consequences and the possible impact on future goals, when making decisions about drug and alcohol use.
- The majority of youth use positive coping strategies to deal with stress, such as listening to music and engaging in activities they enjoy. One third of youth report avoiding their problems.
- Grade eight students reported that they most commonly turn to the internet or their parents for information about substances.
- Given their reliance on the internet, it is important that accurate, reliable and safe information be available on websites to youth and their caregivers.
- Survey participants indicated that education about drugs and alcohol should begin early, with age 10 being viewed as the appropriate age to initiate education.
- The young people identified the need for substance use education to be delivered on a regular basis and include strategies which incorporate peer based activities and real life stories/experiences.
- The majority of youth clearly articulated the importance of positive role models in their lives and their need for support from adults, especially their parents.
- Almost all of the youth (82%-90%) feel safe, secure and accepted at school.

- One half to two thirds of youth view their parents as a strong source of support to them and indicate they would turn to them for help with their problems. This represents a critical opportunity for parents/adults to influence young adolescent's decision making.
- Parents need access to the information and the skills required to effectively respond to their adolescent children in a way which promotes healthy decision making and open communication.
- The majority of youth indicated they were involved in some out-of-school activities and recognize the positive benefits of being involved in extra-curricular activities as a method of avoiding substance use.

Issues for Consideration

- The most common reasons identified for trying/using substances is pressure to fit in and being offered substances by a friend. The youth identified the need for education and support in learning to deal with this peer pressure.
- Of the 30% of youth who reported some substance use, 25% have used alcohol and 6.5% have consumed enough alcohol to become drunk.
- Of the youth who reported using more than one substance, almost all of them have used alcohol.
- 25% of youth indicated they have friends who have consumed enough alcohol to become drunk.
- While youth clearly demonstrated understanding the risks associated with regular cigarette smoking, almost half (46.9%) of the youth reported there is little to no risk of harm from regular alcohol use.

- Students also reported that parents/adults are more accepting of youth alcohol consumption and demonstrate less disapproval of alcohol use, compared to other substances.
- Girls more frequently reported experiencing stress as a result of their appearance and were twice as likely to report using substances as method to control their weight.
- The demands of school are a significant stressor in the lives of grade 8 students. Concerns for the future and not having enough free time are also sources of stress for young people.
- Almost 1/5 of the students do not feel they have anyone to turn to for support or help with their problems.
- Youth identified the need for a greater range of community based activities, which are accessible and affordable to all youth.
- The young people also recognize the importance of supervision of recreational activities, to ensure these areas remain safe and drug free.

Implications

The Windsor-Essex Youth Opinion Survey obtained some interesting and useful information about the unique views of young adolescents in our community. Insight into their opinions and perceptions of the factors which underlie their decision to use substances creates an opportunity to build meaningful prevention interventions with a greater likelihood of having a significant impact. The outcomes of this survey provide a solid basis for service planning and priority setting by community members involved in a wide range of activities, including youth service providers, community planners, education providers, enforcement personnel and government decision makers.

The survey findings represent an important opportunity for our community to collectively take action to prevent/delay youth substance use. Interventions must be focused on those issues identified by the young people as most strongly influencing their decision making. This includes strategies for dealing with peer pressure and stress, creating increased opportunities for education and support from adults and developing a greater community response to substance use. In addition, youth recognize the importance of engaging in positive peer activities as a method of avoiding substance use and identified the need for a greater range of accessible and affordable activities in all communities.

As demonstrated by this survey, young people need and want accurate information and caring support to help them deal with the issue of substance use. They are also interested and eager to make their voices heard and willing to put forth the effort to address influential issues when given the opportunity and support to do so. Our community is now challenged with embracing their ideas and developing programs which support the ongoing, healthy development of one of our most valuable resource, our young people.

Index

Executive Summary	Page 3
Introduction	Page 10
History	Page 10
Survey Design	Page 12
Pre-test	Page 14
Sampling Design	Page 15
Participants & Stressors	Page 17
Coping With Stress	Page 18
Sources of Support	Page 20
Substance Use	Page 21
Perception of Risk	Page 22
Reasons for Use	Page 24
Information and Education	Page 27
Decision Making	Page 30
School	Page 32
Involvement in Extra Curricular Activities	Page 33
Role of Family and Adults	Page 35
Peer Influences	Page 39
Role of Community	Page 41
Limitations	Page 42
Encouraging Findings	Page 44
Issues for Consideration	Page 46
Implications	Page 48
References	Page 62

List of Tables/Appendix

1.1	Youth Stressors	Page 18
1.2	Coping Strategies	Page 19
1.3	Support with Stressors	Page 20
2.1	Substance Use	Page 21
2.2	Risk of Regular Substance Use	Page 23
2.3	Reasons for Use	Page 25
2.4	Reasons for Not Using	Page 26
2.5	Sources of Information about Drugs/Alcohol	Page 27
2.6	Age of Education	Page 29
2.7	Helpful in Guiding Decisions about Substances	Page 31
3.1	Experiences at School	Page 32
4.1	Parental Discussions about Risks of Substance Use	Page 37
4.2	Parental Attitude Toward Use	Page 38
Appendix I-Survey Question Sources		Page 51
Appendix II- Question Rationale & Sources		Page 53
Appendix III- Letter to School Principals		Page 56
Appendix IV- Teacher Instructions		Page 58
Appendix V- Letter to Parents		Page 60
Appendix VI- Parental Consent Form		Page 61

Introduction

In response to the community identified need for an organized drug strategy for Windsor and Essex County, a comprehensive framework was developed based upon public forums and meetings with community leaders, service providers and consumers. The Windsor-Essex County Community Drug Strategy framework aims to address the issues of substance use and its prevention which are unique to the Windsor and Essex County area. A *Four Pillars* approach (*prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement*), was adopted to tailor the strategy to best meet the needs of the community, its members and reflect the values of Windsor-Essex County. Under the prevention pillar, need for an organized strategy to prevent youth drug/alcohol use was identified.

History

Ontario has a long history of data collection on youth substance use. Since 1977, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health has been conducting the *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS)* every two years on students across the province in grades 7 through 12. This survey gathers information about student drug use, mental and physical health and engagement in risk taking behaviours. The 2009 OSDUHS reported that the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN), which includes Sarnia/Lambton county, Chatham/Kent county and Windsor-Essex county, had significantly higher levels than the provincial average for alcohol use (82.3 %vs.

69.4%), binge drinking (46.5% vs. 32.9%), hazardous drinking (35.0% vs. 27.5%) and hallucinogen use (9.3% vs. 6.8%).

Prevention strategies have been found to be most effective when focused on the risk/protective factors associated with use. These include parental monitoring and attitude, the role of peer influences, school affiliation and neighbourhood/community factors. In addition, as drug use steadily increases from grades 7 through to grade 12, interventions targeting the younger ages are more likely to prevent/delay the onset of drug experimentation and use. Age of first use has been strongly correlated with a higher incidence of developing substance dependence and addiction issues (OSDUHS, 2009).

In an effort to develop interventions which will prevent and delay youth engagement in substance use, the Windsor-Essex County Drug Strategy undertook a community based survey to gain insight into the needs and views of young people prior to entering high school. The hypothesis was based on the research which suggests that the transition year from grade eight to grade nine is particularly stressful and when a high number of youth begin to experiment with substance use. This survey implementation is also the first phase of a youth substance misuse and mental health prevention project called “This is Me in Grade Nine”, part of the Healthy Communities Fund project. The partners on the project include: Windsor-Essex Community Health Centre, Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board (WECDSB), Centre for

Addiction and Mental Health and the United Way/Centraide Windsor-Essex County. The Windsor-Essex Youth Opinion Survey (WEYOS) was developed to capture what grade eight students feel contributes to substance use, what factors prevent young people from trying drugs and alcohol, as well as what they feel the community needs to do to prevent use. In addition to identifying these root causes from the young person's perspective, the survey also gathered information about risk and protective factors such as parental involvement, peer and neighbourhood influences and coping with stressful events.

Survey Design

A complete and thorough investigation of the current literature related to youth substance use and youth engagement strategies was conducted prior to the survey design. In addition, samples of student surveys from throughout North America, as well as best practice protocols for the prevention of youth substance use, were reviewed. In total, 33 different survey tools and 95 reports, briefs and articles were identified and analyzed. Detailed summaries of the literature review entitled "Annotated Bibliography" and "Windsor Essex Youth Opinion Survey Literature Review" are available independent of this report.

The questionnaire was developed by The Windsor Essex Drug Strategy survey coordinator, in consultation with an advisory committee of project partners as members of the Windsor-Essex County Drug Strategy. The questionnaire contains 23 multiple choice questions and 3 open ended

questions, intended to capture the youth's views of substance use in our community. A Flesch-Kincaid readability analysis scored the questionnaire at a Grade 4.8 reading level and took approximately 30 minutes to complete.

The WEYOS is designed to include the following elements:

- non-identifying demographic information
- information about the influence of stressors and coping techniques
- insight into young people's knowledge of and experience with alcohol and drugs
- youth perceptions of harms related to use, exposure to educational information and factors which influence the decision to use
- risk and protective factors in the family, school, peers and community

The WEYOS is intended to build on the knowledge gained from the OSDUHS student survey. Questions chosen for inclusion in the survey address topics seen as being closely related to the factors which underlie youth decisions to use drugs and alcohol according to the best practice literature. Research focusing on the risk and protective factors which increase the likelihood for teen substance use, suggest the need to focus on five major life domains: individual, family, peer, school, and community (Wisconsin Risk/Protective Matrix). Questions capturing information connected to each of these factors were included in the survey. Other questions on the WEYOS are designed to evaluate factors shown to have a positive influence on youth development. These include the presence of

caring families and other adults, safe schools/neighbourhoods and participation in healthy leisure activities. In addition, some items on the WEYOS questionnaire are included to gather information specific to the Windsor-Essex County community.

Most of the items on the WEYOS questionnaire were derived from previously developed and tested youth surveys. Utilizing questions from established studies provides the advantage of having been previously demonstrated to provide useful information and be easily understood by survey participants. In addition, responses can be compared with data findings in other areas. See Appendix I for details of survey question sources.

Pre-test

To ensure the conciseness and ease of completion, a pre-test of the survey tool was undertaken prior to administration in the schools. Two community youth groups facilitated the survey field test by obtaining parental consent and inviting the survey coordinator to administer the survey to group participants with signed consents. Participants were provided with the same instructions used in the classroom, as well as asked to indicate any areas which were difficult to understand or they felt should be included/excluded from the survey. The feedback obtained indicated that the survey was easily understood by participants and was consistently completed in 20-30 minutes. Minor modifications to question wording were completed prior to administration in the schools.

Sampling Design

Since the transition year from Grade 8 to Grade 9 has been identified as an “at-risk” year for youth to experiment with alcohol and drugs, the target population of the WEYOS are grade eight students living in Windsor and Essex County. Participation was requested from both the public and catholic school boards in Windsor/Essex County. School board officials were provided with a copy of the survey, as well as a supporting document providing a detailed explanation about the questions contained in the survey entitled “Question Rationale & Sources” (see Appendix II). Documentation was reviewed by school board administration, as well as research/ethics committees.

The public school board declined their students’ participation in the survey. Also excluded from participation were students in the French language board (due to limitations of language translation), as well as individuals enrolled in private schools and specialized school placements. In addition, youth not enrolled or attending school were not included in the survey.

After obtaining agreement to participate from the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board (WECDSB), information letters explaining the survey were sent to the principals of the 41 elementary schools explaining the survey and its’ process. Details about the survey administration, obtaining parental consent and the schedule for participation were included. As the survey was administered by the teachers in the classroom, detailed instructions were provided to ensure

standardized instruction and collection protocols were followed (See Appendix III & IV for letter and instruction sheet). 40 of the schools agreed to participate in the survey, representing a 97% participation rate.

Participating schools sent information letters explaining the survey to the parents/guardian of every grade eight student (1674 students in total), with an accompanying consent form (see Appendix V & VI). Parents were invited to contact the survey coordinator or their child's school principal to obtain additional information about the survey. Two parents initiated such contact for clarification.

Surveys were administered in the classrooms during the last week in November and first week of December, 2010. Only students who returned the signed parental consent participated in the survey. Via written and verbal instructions, students were instructed to not write their name or school's name anywhere on the survey. Students placed completed surveys in an envelope, which was sealed prior to being returned to the survey coordinator. No identifying information of the class or school was placed on the sealed envelope. The researcher did not have access to signed parental consents or the names of students, parents or schools which participated, thus preserving the confidentiality of the responses. All results are reported on an aggregated basis only. 619 completed or partially completed surveys were returned, representing a 37% student participation rate.

Participants & Stressors

Survey participants were equally split on gender (50.4% female, 49.4% male), which is fairly consistent with the gender division among WECDSB grade eight student population (47% female, 53% male).

Survey participants were also equitably divided by geographic location of residence in that 45.1% were city of Windsor residents and 54.8% lived in Essex County outside of the city.

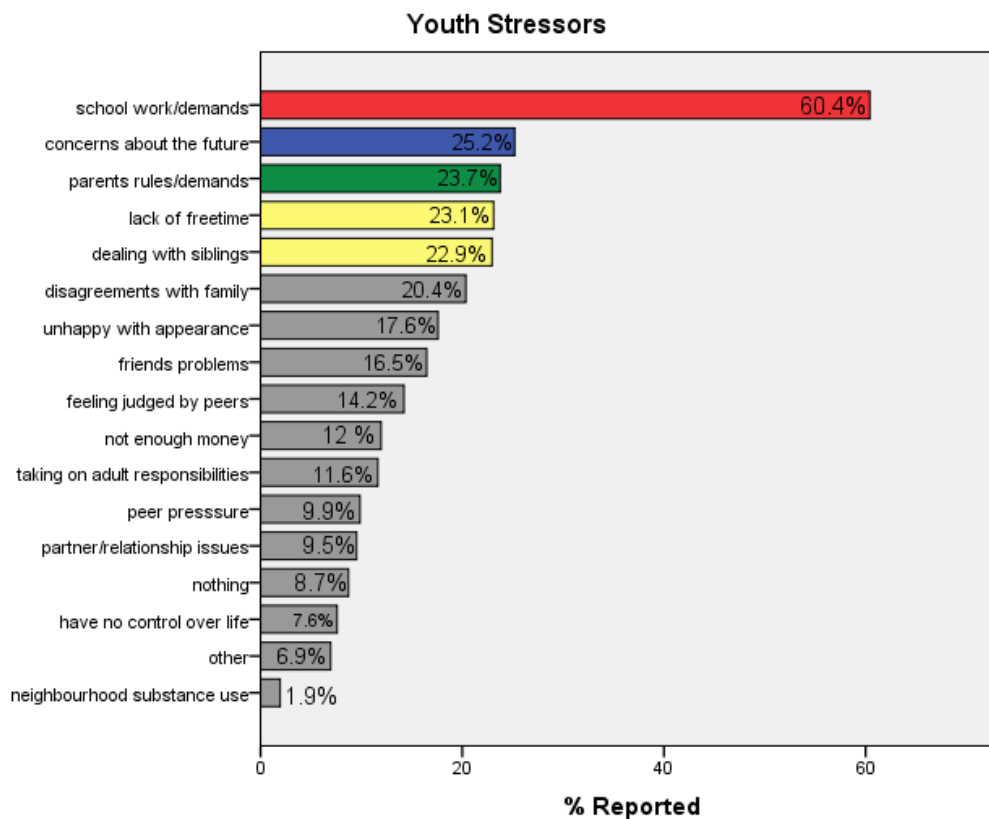
“That kids may use it to escape, get away from life for a while, because believe it or not a kids’ life is hard.”

The majority of students reported experiencing a high amount of stress in their lives. WEYOS survey participants identified the demands of school to be significantly more stressful than all other stressors in their life. School was identified (60.4%) more than twice as often than the next four most frequently reported stressors, including concerns for the future (25.2%), dealing with parents rules/demands (23.7%), dealing with siblings (22.9%) and not having enough free time (23.1%). (See fig. 1.1).

While there were no significant gender differences for the most frequently identified stressors, girls were almost three times more likely to identify appearance and peer pressure to be stressful in their lives than their male counterparts. Conversely, boys were twice as likely to indicate that nothing stresses them.

“They need to know that kids our age in this time do a lot more than they did as a kid. There is a lot more dangers and things to get in trouble for.”

Figure 1.1

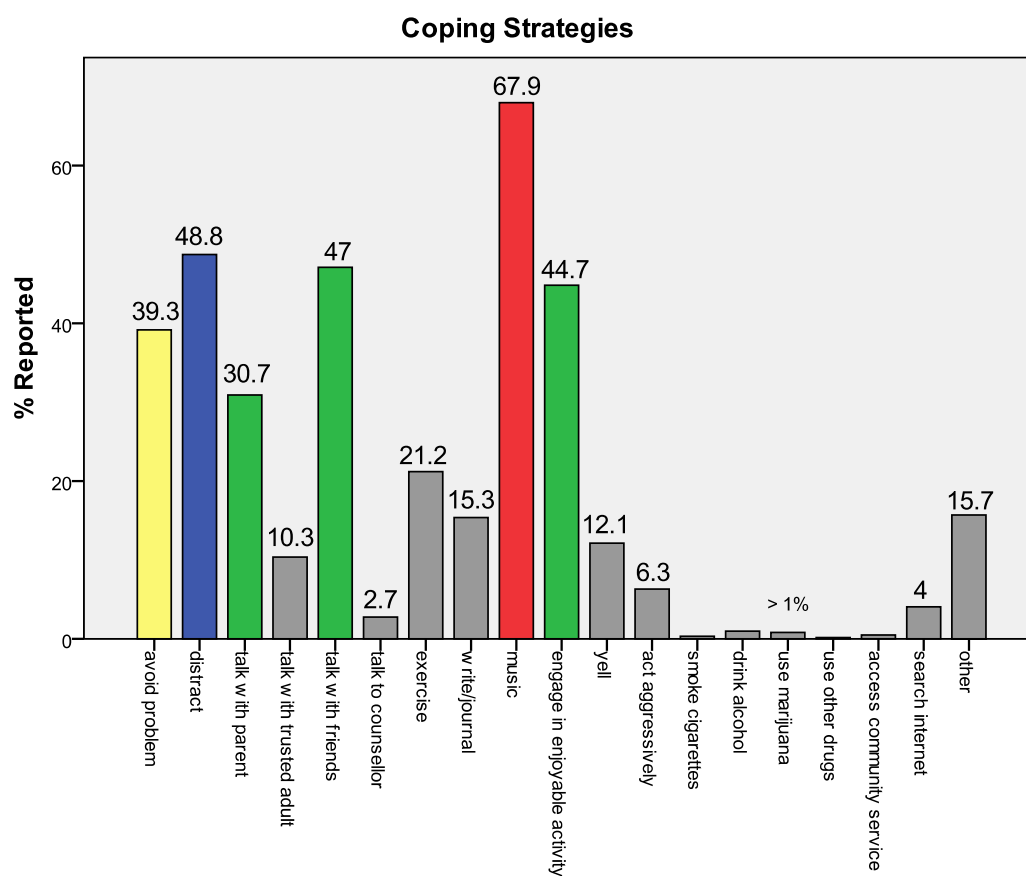


Coping With Stress

To cope with stress, the young people reported using music most often (67.9%), followed by engaging in a distracting activity (48.8%). Talking to friends and parents were also commonly reported (47% & 30.7%). Over 1/3 of the youth indicated they attempt to avoid the problem or pretend it is not present. The use of substances to cope with stress were extremely low (1% or less), however over 10% of youth reported yelling when stressed and 6.3% reported engaging in aggressive behaviour. See

figure 1.2 for details. While both boys and girls reported using all of the coping strategies, girls more frequently indicated they would talk to a counsellor or friend. Additionally, girls were twelve times more likely to report using writing/journaling to help with coping. Boys more commonly reported using aggression to deal with stress.

Figure 1.2



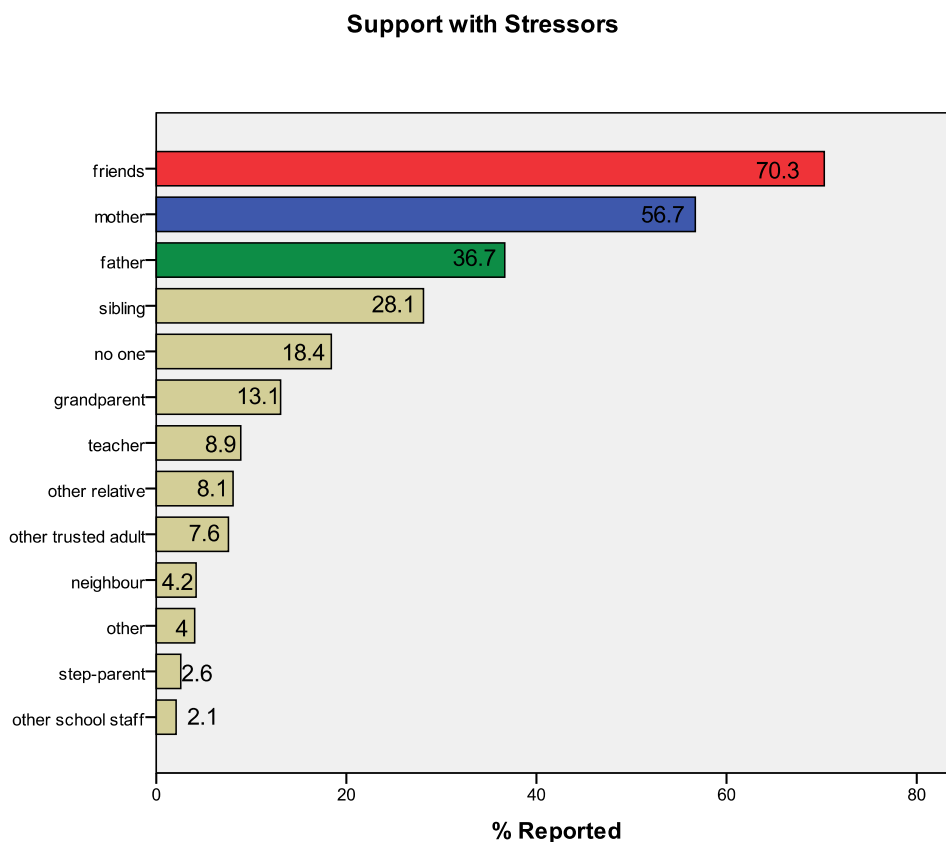
Sources of Support

“People (need) to take kids more seriously and have more free time. No homework (for less stress.”

The majority of the youth surveyed indicated they usually talk to their friends about their problems (70.3%). More than half reported

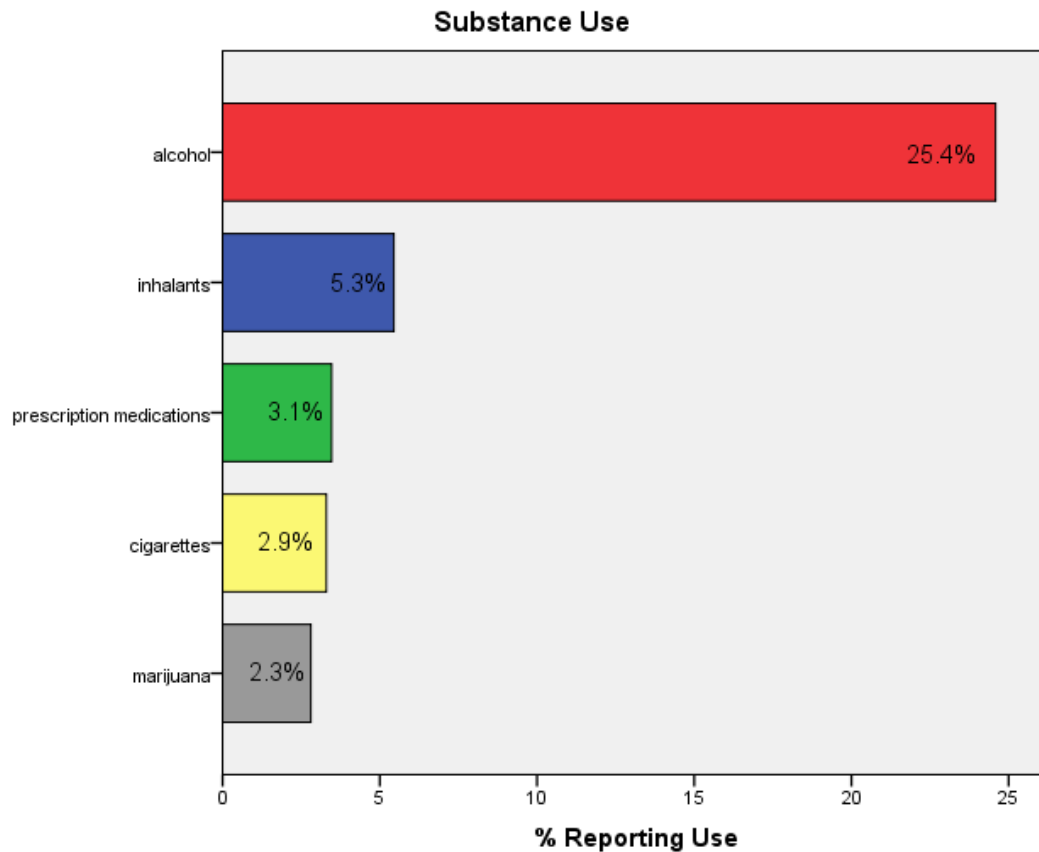
talking to their mother (56.7%), followed by father (36.7%) and sibling (28.1%). Almost 1/5 of survey respondents (18.4%) indicated they have no one to talk to about their problems. See Figure 1.3 for specifics on youth supports.

Figure 1.3



Substance Use

Figure 2.1



The majority of students (70.6%) in Windsor-Essex County reported that they have not used or experimented with any substances. Of those indicated use, the most commonly used substance reported by local youth was alcohol (25.4%). This was followed by inhalant use at 5.3%. Figure 2.1 summarizes the rates of substance use reported by local students.

Of those who use substances, 25.1% reported having used more than one substance. With the exception of one youth, all of those reporting multiple substance use have used alcohol. Additionally, 6.5% of the survey respondents reported having consumed enough alcohol to be drunk.

“We know more about them than most adults think.”

Somewhat different levels of use were reported for males and females, as male levels more frequently indicated using substances than females (28.6% vs. 22.5%). Similar levels of drug/alcohol use were also reported by both city and county youth, with 21.9% of youth living in the city of Windsor and 28.2% of those living elsewhere in Essex County reporting some substance use. The majority of young people in Windsor-Essex County (86.1%) indicated they do not anticipate using drugs or alcohol in the future.

Perception of Risk

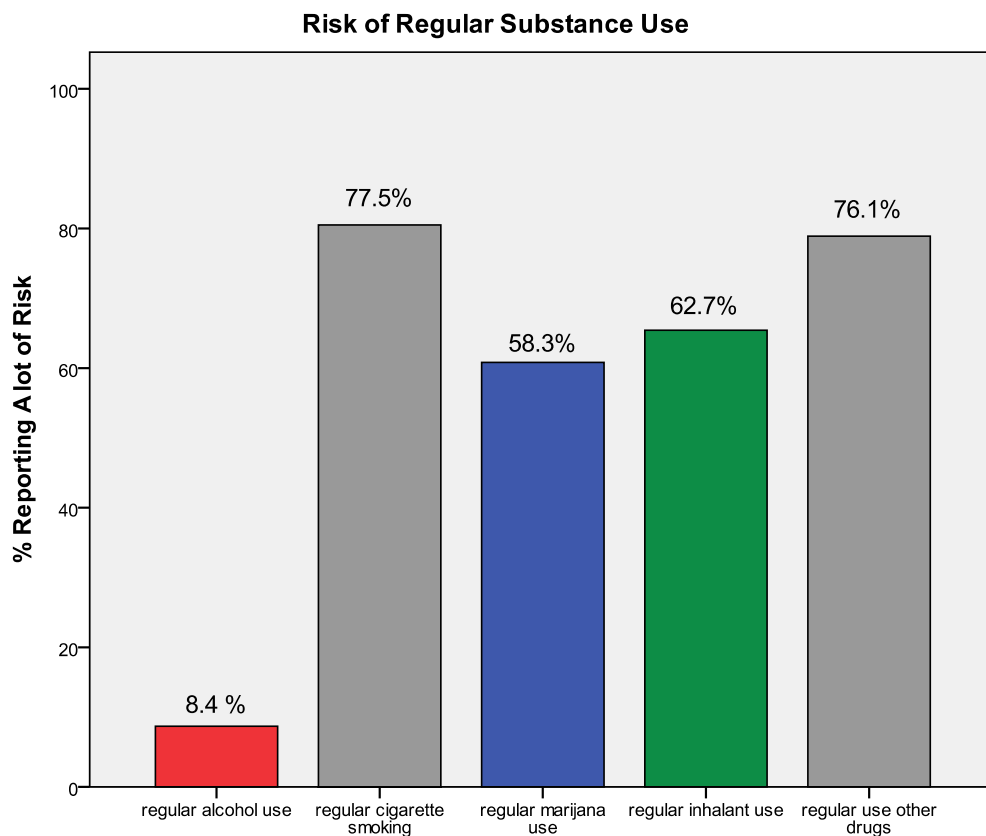
Student’s perceptions of harm from use varies significantly according to the substance. With the exception of alcohol, more than half the students indicated there is potential for significant risk of regular use of all substances (cigarettes 77.5%, marijuana 58.3%, inhalants 62.7% and other drugs 76.1%). While three quarters of the local young people endorsed regular cigarette use as having the potential to cause significant harm, only 8.4% indicated the same level of risk for regular alcohol use. In

“I think they {adults} should know the percent of kids who use drugs...I don’t think alcohol matters too much, unless the kid is drunk and is smashed 24-7, then it’s kinda a deal”

addition, almost half of the students (46.9%) indicated there is little to no risk of harm from regular alcohol use.

This perception of alcohol representing minimal risk is reflected by this student’s feedback, *“I mean a little alcohol isn’t that bad maybe like 2-3 drinks...but more than that, I think is bad.”* Figure 2.2 depicts student’s perceptions of risk of substance use.

Figure 2.2



Reasons for Use

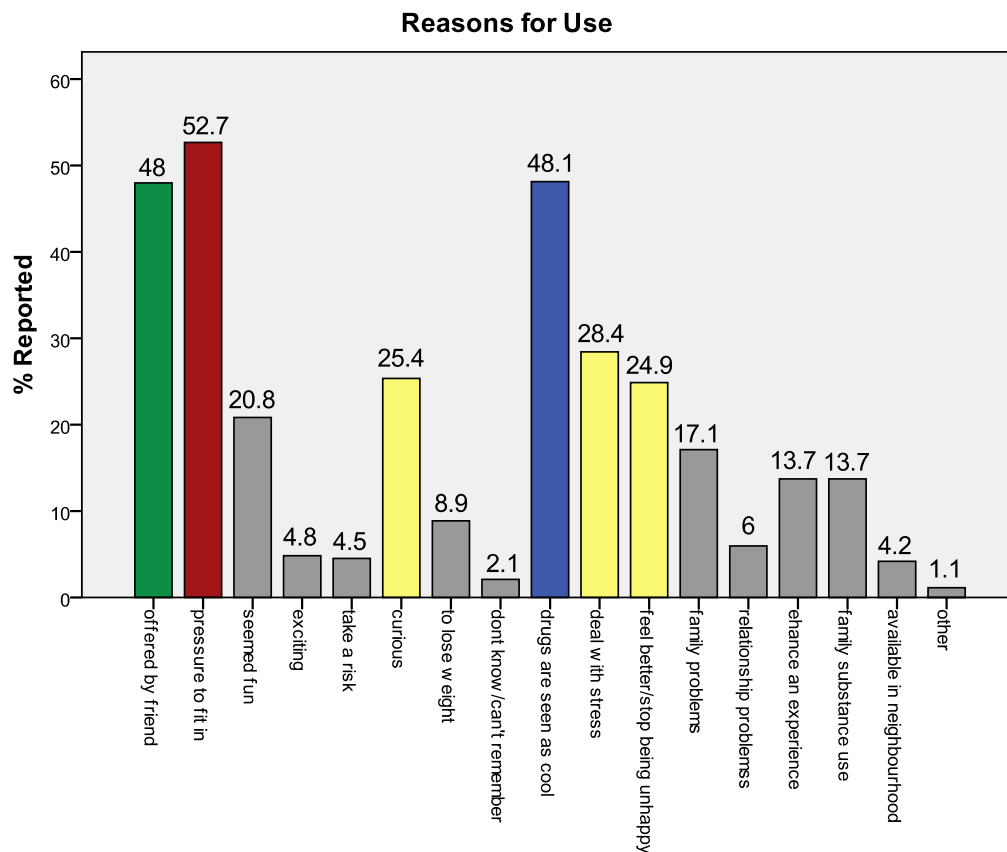
The issue of peer pressure and feeling you have to fit in to be accepted was frequently identified by the young people to be difficult to manage. Half of the students surveyed indicated that feeling pressured to fit in is the number one reason youth choose to use drugs or alcohol.

“(that) despite a lot of the things that we are taught, it’s hard to say no to drugs/alcohol. I think that in order to say no 100% of the time you have to feel confident with who you are.”

A similar proportion reported that being offered substances by a friend and drug use being viewed as cool, as other significant factors in the choice to use. One youth’s comments reflected these concerns *“In my opinion I think to prevent young people from drug abuse by stopping Bullies and peer pressure”*. Although only a small percentage indicated using substances to cope with their stressors, over a quarter of the participants reported that drug and alcohol use does occur as a coping strategy (28.4%). They also indicated that youth use substances to change negative feelings (24.9%) and out of curiosity (25.4%). (See figure 2.3 for complete details of reasons for use.).

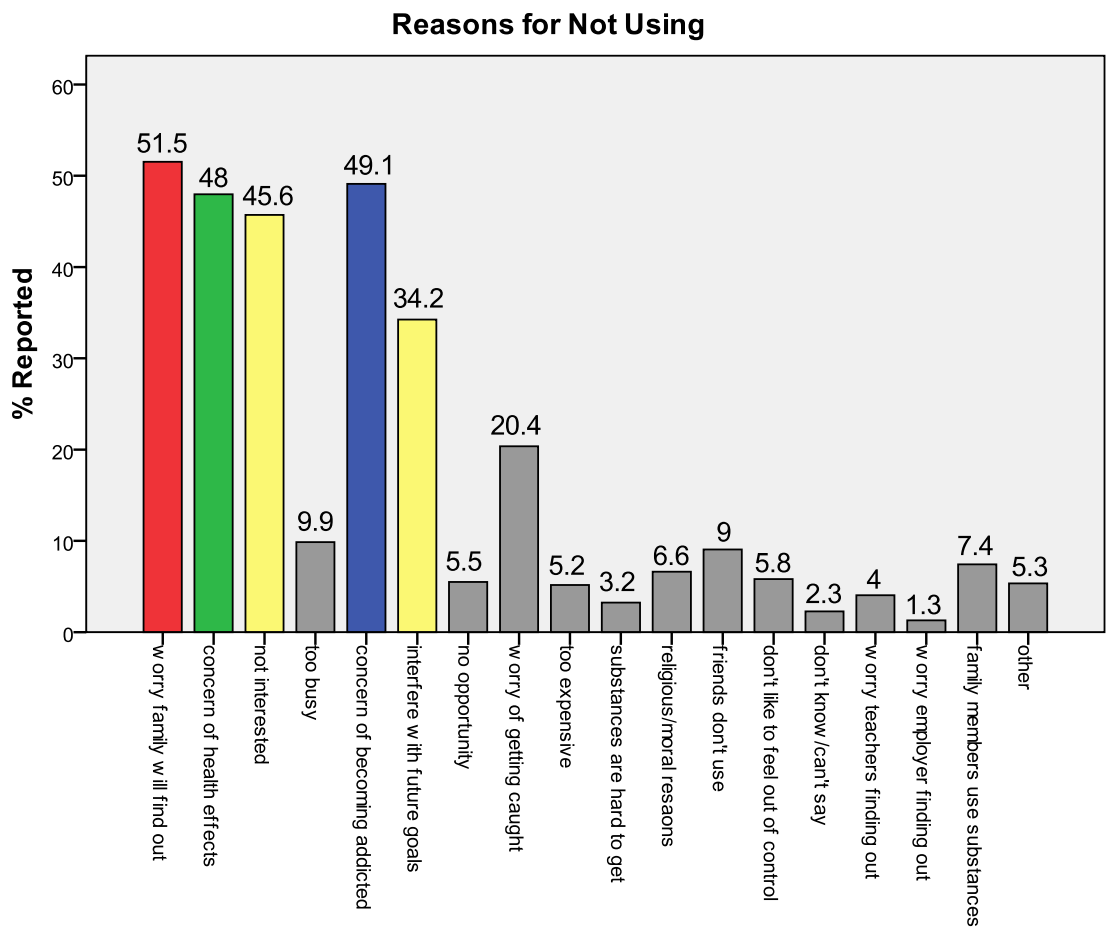
No significant gender differences were identified in the reasons youth reported using drugs or alcohol, however, girls were twice as likely to report not knowing/recalling why substances were used and more frequently indicated using substances as a method to lose weight.

Figure 2.3



The most common reason young people reported for not using substances is concern their family will find out (51.5%). A similar number identified being concerned about the health effects and not wanting to become addicted, as a determining influence in their decision making. A significant proportion (45.6%) reported they are not interested and 34.2% reported that substance use could interfere with their future goals. Figure 2.4 provides a summary of the reasons youth indicated they choose not to use substances. Boys and girls were equally likely to report these factors to influence their decision to use substances.

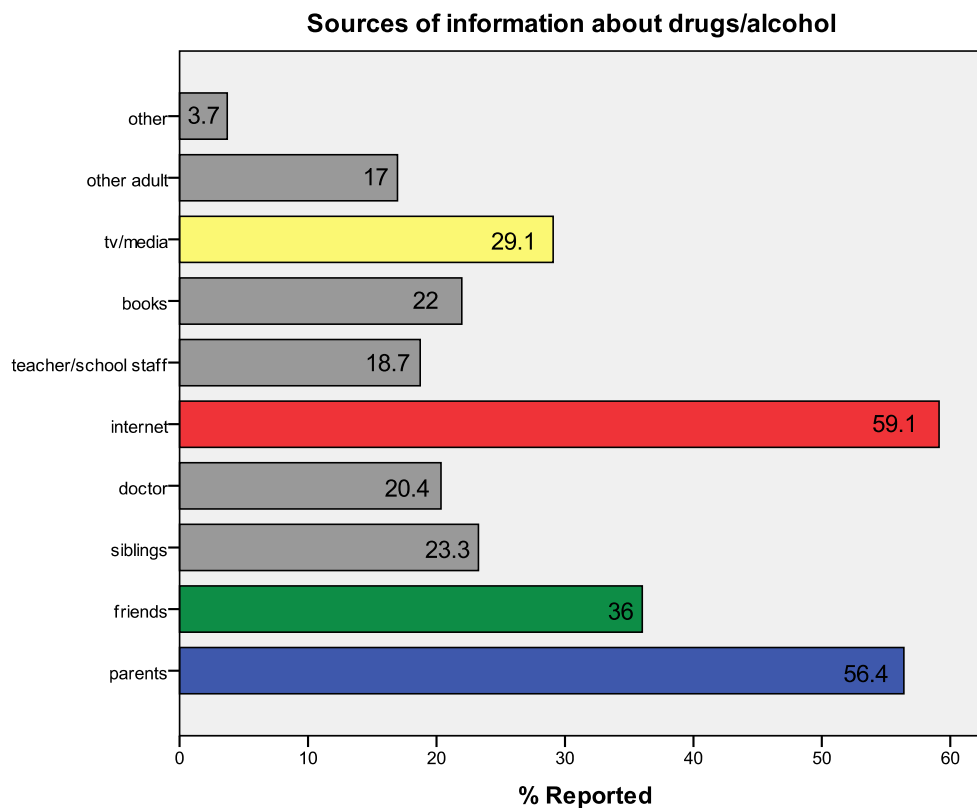
Figure 2.4



Information and Education

To obtain information about drugs and alcohol, students reported they would be most inclined to search the internet (59.1%). Other sources of information included talking to parents (56.4%), talking to friends (36%) and getting information from the television and media (29.1%). Figure 2.5 provides a summary of the sources of information young people indicated they would seek out. No significant gender differences in information sources were identified; however, girls were somewhat more likely to talk to their friends than boys.

Figure 2.5



“They {adults} should know more kids do it then they think and some start at 10 years old.”

Students strongly identified the need for more education aimed at raising awareness about the impacts of using substances. Survey participants indicated the need for education about drugs and alcohol to begin early, with a quarter feeling that 10 years is the appropriate age to initiate education. See figure 2.6 for details.

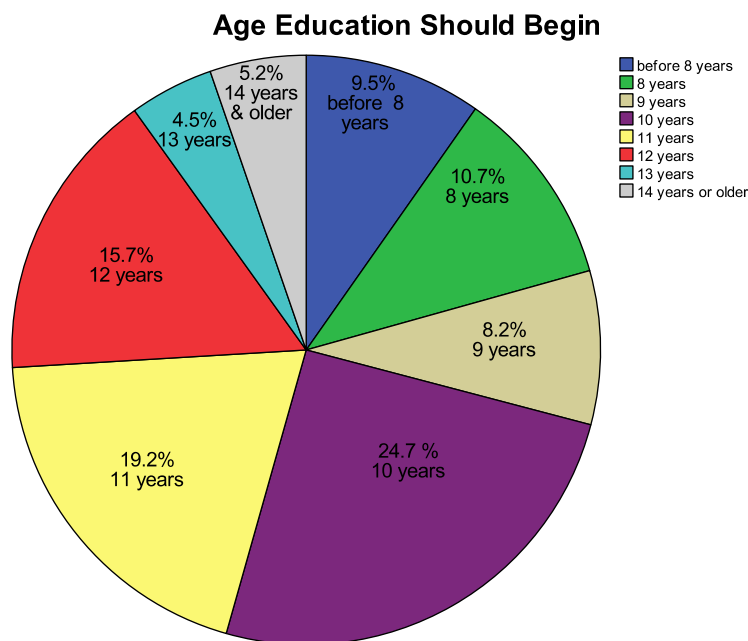
Many students stressed the need for more detailed information presented in a manner which engages them. Students reported that educational presentations could be made more interesting by utilizing guest speakers, such as police, medical personnel and recovering addicts. This was captured by one youth’s comment of *“Hearing stories from real people who have tried it, and not just hearing a bunch of facts from people”*. Students also stressed the need to make presentations interactive and visually stimulating to depict the harms of use. Many students indicated they felt this would result in youth taking the information more seriously and it having a stronger impact. As one student stated *“Show us in a visual what drugs can do, and how to get out of doing drugs. Because we have so many presentations saying DON’T DO DRUGS/SMOKE but we don’t ever hear what the effects are.”*

Many students identified the need for drug and alcohol use to be addressed in an ongoing and consistent manner instead of during single presentations/assemblies. Several students suggested the idea of having an educational program (such as the V.I.P. program); occur in subsequent grades and into high school, with increasing detail at each level. Student

organized and led activities were also frequently reported to be more meaningful and impactful for the youth. One student's comments captured the suggestions of many, *"Sometimes when adults set up something they think will be fun, but nobody likes it. When kids our age set something up, it grabs kids' attention. It's all about making it appealing to kids, and who knows what kids like better than kids"*. Incorporating anti-use messages into the activities most engaged in by young people was also suggested to be effective. Media advertisements, video games, popular music and movies were all suggested as possible venues to reach youth.

"Most kids will still do it if you just tell us 'don't do it because its bad'"

Figure 2.6



Decision Making

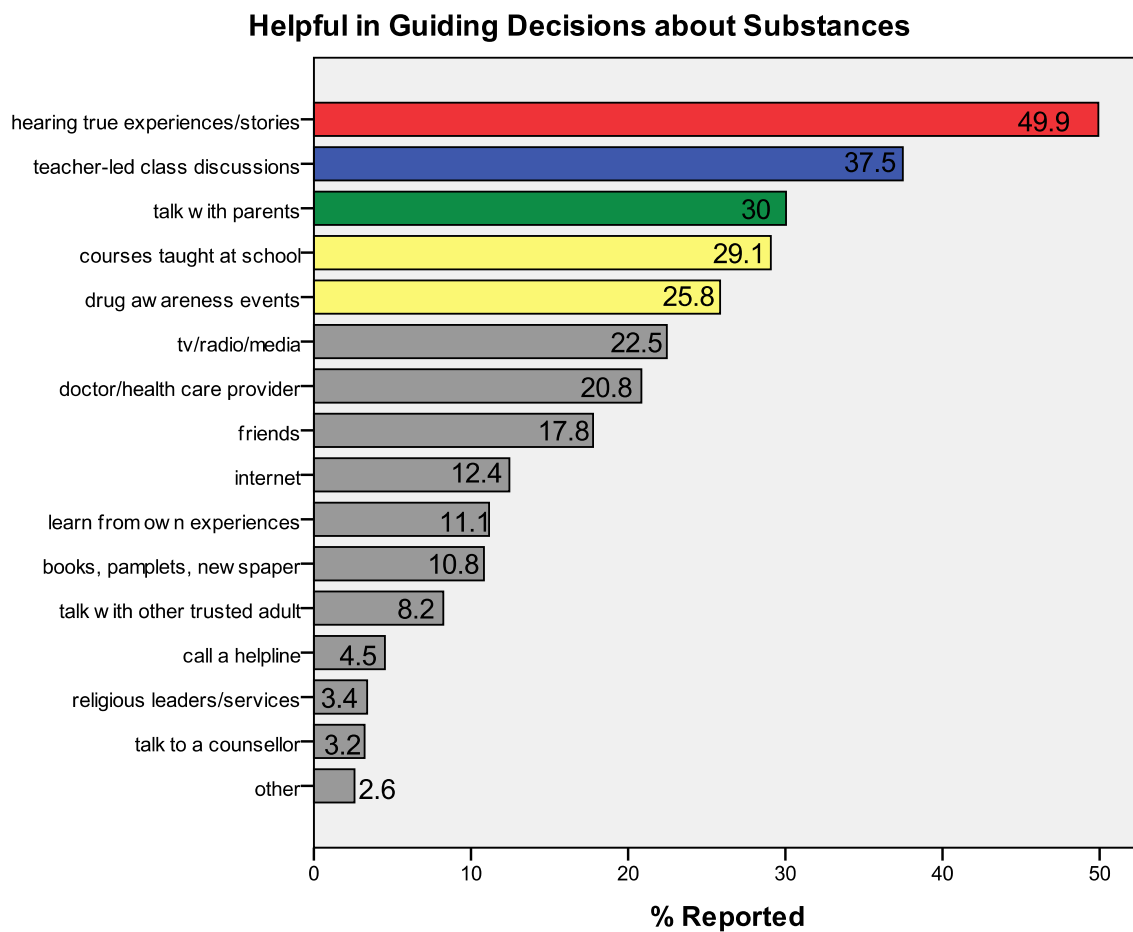
To help guide their decisions about use, half of the youth indicated they would like to hear true stories from people who have used drugs or alcohol. Teacher led in-class discussions (37.5%) and having open talks with parents (30%) were also frequently reported. Additionally, courses taught in school (29.1%) and drug awareness events (25.8%) were identified as helpful in guiding substance use decision making. Figure 2.7 depicts the sources youth indicated as helpful in guiding their decisions to use.

Half of the students surveyed indicated they would seek the assistance of their parents if they or a friend needed help with drug/alcohol abuse. About one quarter indicated they would turn to their friends, followed by a drug counselling centre (18.6%). Talking to someone who has recovered from drug abuse, was also identified as potentially helpful for someone with a substance use problem by 45.2% of students. While no significant gender differences were identified in decision making, boys were twice as likely to indicate that they would seek assistance from a religious leader as their female counterparts.

A small number of the student's surveyed held the strong opinion that drugs and alcohol are a permanent part of our society and efforts to prevent young people from using them cannot be effective. The following student comments reflect this theme, *"No matter what you do kids are going to give into drugs"* and *"I honestly don't think it's possible. I mean*

parents threaten, schools talk about it and it's against the law. What more could possibly be done to prevent kids from doing it? Maybe games, music or things kids do regularly that tell drugs are not a good thing. Other than that, I honestly don't think it'll ever stop, and that saddens me".

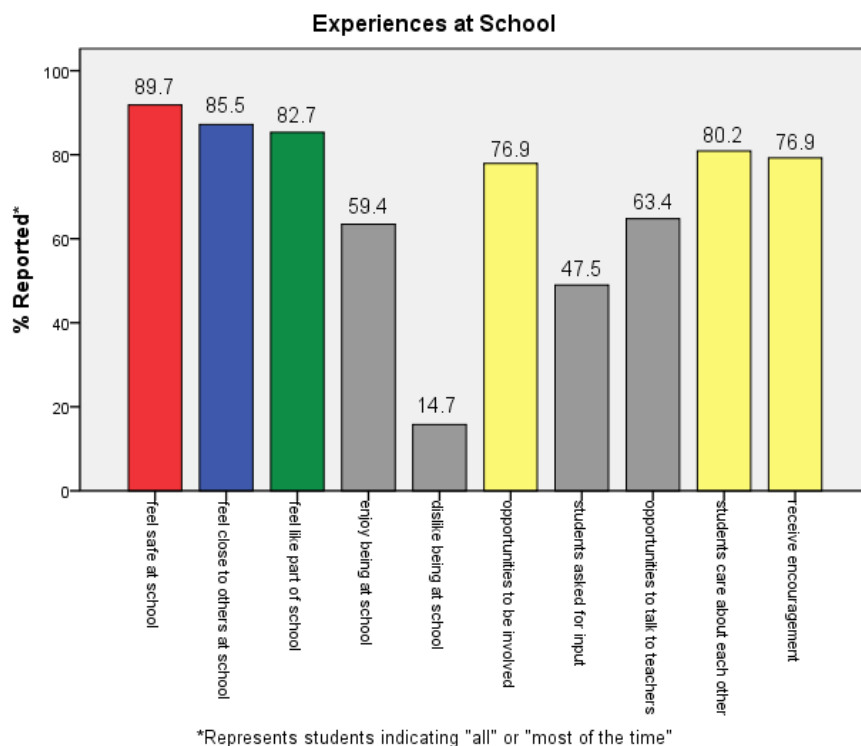
Figure 2.7



School

The vast majority of students report feeling very positive about their schools. Almost 90% report feeling safe the majority of the time and over 82% indicated they feel a part of the school and close to others at the school. The majority also reported receiving a lot of encouragement and have many opportunities to be involved. Just under half of the respondents (47.5%) reported that their input is sought in planning school activities or making school decisions. Figure 3.1 illustrates the feelings of students at school the majority of the time (all or most of the time).

Figure 3.1



Most of the students (73-77%) indicated that their parents demonstrate interest in their school experiences and homework by regularly discussing it with them. About half of those surveyed reported that their parents assist them with their school work or attend school meetings and activities. While 39.6% of students indicated that their parents would be somewhat concerned if they got in trouble at school, only half (49.6%) indicated their parents would be strongly concerned by this. See figure 4.2 for details of perceptions of parental attitudes.

Involvement in Extra Curricular Activities

The majority of youth indicated that they participate in some extra-curricular activities in the evening (70-77%).

“Keep your kids involved in activities inside and outside their school.”

Involvement in activities not connected to school was only slightly more common than participating in school organized activities.

Many students reported being very busy, as almost half of those surveyed reported engaging in out-of-school activities 2-4 times per week.

Approximately one quarter of the students surveyed reported no engagement in structured activities outside of school.

The young people clearly identified the need for more youth based activities in their communities. Suggested activities ranged from sports, the arts, academic and hobby based, and almost all stressed the need for

these activities to be accessible financially, geographically and have practical availability. Many of the youth identified the high cost of sports and other activities, a lack of transportation and unrealistic hours of operation, as barriers to participating in positive groups with others. The need for low cost or free activities was repeatedly suggested. Many of the young people identified a connection between engagement in pro-social activities with their peers and the decision to use drugs and alcohol. One student commented, *“Adults need to know that keeping us busy is the main thing that will save us from drugs and alcohol more than anything else”* and another suggested *“Sports like hockey and soccer prices to play they need to go down. I feel many kids who don’t have much money get into drugs”*.

Role of Family and Adults

“I think they need to know how their children are connected and how they can get to drugs”

The need for greater awareness and involvement of adults, particularly parents, was most frequently identified by the youth as essential in preventing substance use. Many youth indicated the need for parents to be more involved in knowing who their child’s friends are, how they spend their time and where they are when away from home. A significant number also indicated that many youth obtain their substances from home and suggested strategies for restricting youth access to substances. Many suggested that parents/adults need to watch carefully for the signs of substance use and be willing to address this issue. The statement of one surveyed youth captures these thoughts, *“I think adults have no idea what their kids are doing most of the time so I think they need to talk to their kids-it’s the parents job to protect and care.”*

A fundamental part of increased parental/adult involvement reported by the youth was the need for open communication, connection and support.

Almost 2/3 of those surveyed reported they eat dinner with all members of their family on a regular basis (5-7 nights per week). Only a small number (7.3%) reported that they never eat family dinners.

A significant number of students indicated a desire to be able to seek advice and information from adults, without the threat of consequences or loss of freedom. Youth indicated the desire to discuss

“They should know that children just need attention and we need their opinion even if they don’t think so”

issues like substance use with their parents,
but continue to have the freedom to make

“Adults need to think about how they felt when they were teens”

their own choices. Many students suggested that giving consequences to young people for using substances actually results in increased use.

Student comments reflecting this include: *“I think there should be a bigger connection between parents and kids”*, *“That they need to talk to us but don’t push”* and [adults need to know] *“How to help kids with problems without pushing them away because that will make it worse”*.

Parental education about the risks of use varied significantly by substance. While the young people indicated that their parents had spoken with them “some to “a lot” about the risks of cigarettes (70.9%), alcohol (66.5%), marijuana (61%) and other illicit drugs (62.7%), discussions about the risks of prescription medications and inhalants were significantly lower (57.4% and 41.6% respectively). In addition, 30.5% of

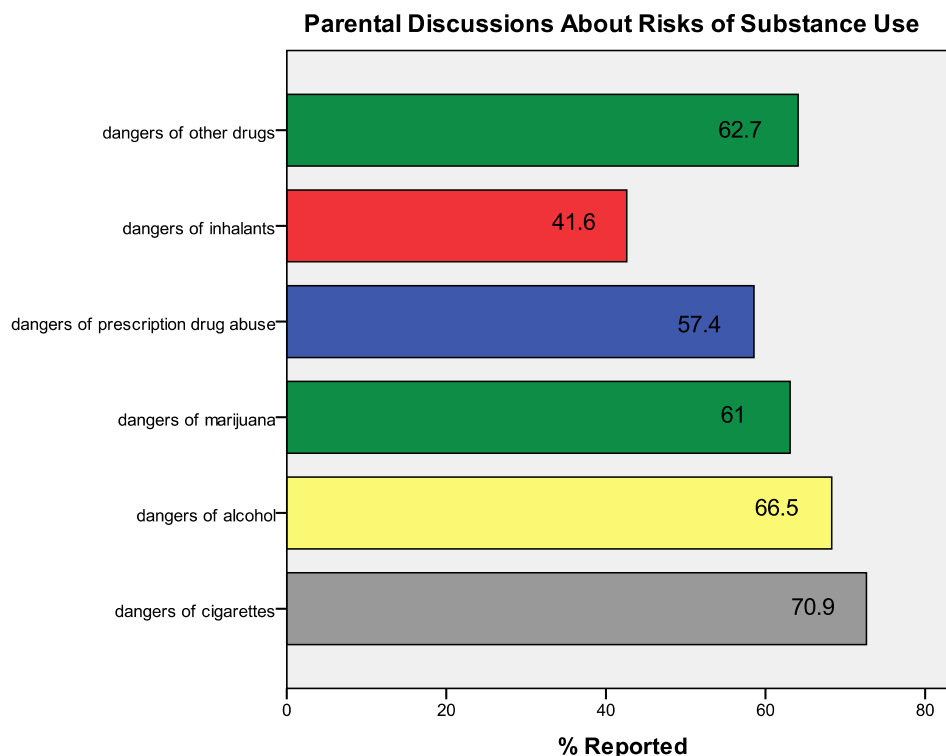
“I feel you should know that people my age use drugs because of the pressures adults put on them”

the youth reported that their parents had not discussed the dangers of inhalant use with them at all. See figure 4.1 for depiction of parental education.

Many students suggested that they need recognition and support with the pressures they face growing up. This student’s feedback captured this belief, *“Adults need to know that kids my age deal with a lot of pressure like trying to fit in, have friends and be normal”*. Many students identified that the expectations and pressures placed on them by adults’ increases their stress and can

contribute to the decision to use. Youth also identified feeling the need for acceptance as they attempt to navigate their teen years. The following student feedback reflects this theme, *“Adults should know that they are partly the reason why kids do drugs. We feel like we’re not good enough. And if you don’t give enough freedom, you will never know what we’re doing.”*

Figure 4.1

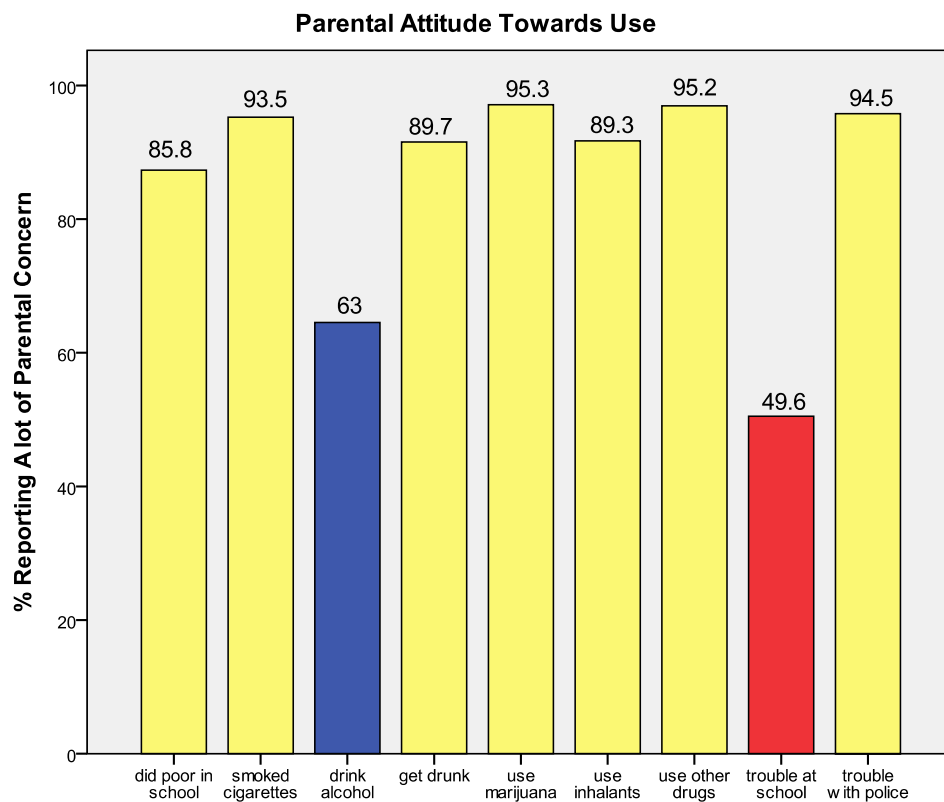


*Represents students who reported "some" or "a lot of discussion"

Youth perception of their parent’s attitude toward substance use reflects that the vast majority (between 89.3%-95.3%) of young people believe their parents would highly disapprove of their using all substances, with the exception of drinking alcohol. The student’s perception of strong

parental disapproval of alcohol use was significantly lower at 63%. Additionally, another 10% indicated their parents would have little or no concern if they drank alcohol. The only notable gender difference in parental disapproval was that boys were 2-3 times more likely to report that their parents would care little or not at all if they consumed enough alcohol to become drunk. See Figure 4.2 for a breakdown of student's perceptions of parental response to substance use.

Figure 4.2



Peer Influences

“As an adolescent, I personally believe that the most dominant reason why teens attempt to do drugs is due to older influences”

The majority of students surveyed recognize the importance of role models in their lives. While many suggested that peers play a significant role in their decision making, a significant number also suggested that people older than them impact on them strongly. The influence of older siblings and family members that use substances strongly impacts their views.

Youth comments capturing this idea included, *“If young people didn’t see people older than them doing it they wouldn’t either”* and *“Adults should be aware that kids have access to drugs and all that stuff more than they think. If they have a problem (addicted to something) their kid probably will have problems. They’re the example and if they’re messed up, so are we.”*

Most of the young people surveyed reported that their friends do not use drugs or alcohol. The majority of youth (between 79.6%-90.5%), reported that none of their friends use cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana, inhalants, prescription drugs or other drugs regularly. Conversely, just over ¼ of those surveyed (28.5%), indicated having friends who have been drunk at some time. Notable gender differences were found in that females were more likely to report that some of their friends drink or get drunk, whereas males more frequently reported that most of their friends engage in these behaviours.

Most of the students surveyed reported that their friends engage in positive lifestyle behaviours, such as participating in organized activities (70.9%) and performing well at school (77.9%). A similar amount indicated that at least some of their friends get into trouble at school (71.9%) and almost 1/3 reported having friends who have been in trouble with the law (30.5%). Boys more frequently indicated that a higher percentage of their friends get into trouble, especially at school. One student's thoughts strongly captured their views of peer and family influences *"Information adults need to know about kids my age and drugs/alcohol is that if you have solid friendships and a good home background that you most likely won't do drugs. If you don't have solid friendships and a good home background the odds of your child doing drugs is pretty high"*.

Role of Community

Many of the student's comments demonstrated awareness that drugs were available in their community and that some youth their age use substances. However, many reflected awareness that substance use is not universal or widespread. As one youth stated *"All of the presentations about us thinking drugs are cool, and that's why we use them are completely wrong. Most of us actually think its stupid and gross."* Many of the students suggested the importance of associating with positive peers as a buffer to negative influences.

"We are aware about sex and drugs and alcohol. There are some who use it, and most that don't. But they are out there. Drugs are everywhere! Parents need to tell us about these things and teach us. That way we won't ever get involved."

"Also we need authority (police) to watch over our parks because that is where people can do drugs and alcohol."

Many students also identified the need for tougher law enforcement, increased police presence and more public restrictions, to be effective in preventing drug and alcohol use. Many identified concern with youth using drugs and alcohol in public places, especially parks, malls and skateboard parks. Many students suggested the need for greater supervision of those areas where youth hang out, particularly by police, and those caught using drugs to receive severe enough consequences to deter others. Many students also suggested the need to place greater restrictions on the sale and availability of cigarettes, alcohol and drug paraphernalia in the community.

Limitations

Before addressing the findings, it is important to point out some of the limitations of the study. Firstly, all of the data is based on self-report by the students. While there is evidence that self-report techniques yield reasonably accurate results when conditions of anonymity are addressed, results may not reflect true rates of student drug use (OSDHUS, 2009). There is in fact some evidence that student self report measures may actually underestimate rates of substance use (OSDHUS, 2009).

A second study limitation is the possible bias of survey respondents. The survey respondents' views may not reflect the experiences and knowledge of those attending other school systems, or those not attending a mainstream school placement. It is unclear how homogeneous the survey respondents are as a result of attending a religiously affiliated school placement. Without the participation of other student populations, questions remain about the generalizability of the study findings across all community youth.

As this survey was designed to capture the views of local youth, it does not meet the criterion of scientific study. Specifically, the survey is not standardized and has not been tested for validity and reliability. Based upon these factors and other differences of survey implementation, such as sampling design, method of administration and participation rates, the results of this community survey are not comparable with other student survey findings.

Finally, the data presented represents a snapshot in time and in the absence of following the same students over time, causal relationships cannot be assumed between variables. Further follow up study would be necessary to determine any correlational or causal relationships between identified factors and long term outcomes.

Despite these limitations, the students surveyed represent a sizable number of similarly aged peers. The student participation rate of this survey is consistent with other community based surveys (Tayes, 2008). Additionally, having reached the targeted sample of over 485 students, a 95% confidence rating was achieved and can be viewed as a reliable representation of the youth of Windsor-Essex County.

Encouraging Findings

- The majority of grade eight students in Windsor-Essex County report no substance use.
- The majority of youth report utilizing positive coping strategies to deal with stress, including using music and engaging in activities they enjoy to distract themselves.
- Although students acknowledge that substances can be used as a method of coping with stress, almost all of the students surveyed do not use substances as a strategy to manage their stressors.
- The majority of students recognize the risk associated with regular substance use.
- Students clearly understand the risks associated with regular cigarette smoking.
- Youth indicated they consider factors such as the risk of addiction, the potential health consequences and the possible impact on future goals, when making decisions about drug and alcohol use, reflecting knowledge of the risks of substance use.
- Concern of their family finding out was the number one reason youth reported as influencing their decision not to use substances.
- One half to two thirds of youth views their parents as a strong source of support to them and indicates they would be most likely to turn to them for help.
- Grade eight students most commonly turn to the internet or their parents for information about substances.

- Survey participants indicated that education about drugs and alcohol should begin early, with age 10 being viewed as the appropriate age to initiate education.
 - The youth identified the need for substance use education to be delivered on a regular basis and include strategies which incorporate peer based activities and real life stories/experiences.
 - Education delivered through teacher-led class discussions was also felt to be beneficial.
 - Almost all of the student's surveyed feel safe, secure and accepted in their school environment.
 - The majority of youth indicated they were involved in some out-of-school activities and recognize the positive benefits this can have on avoiding substance use.
 - The majority of youth clearly articulated the importance of positive role models in their lives and their need for support from adults, especially their parents.
-

Issues for Consideration

- The demands of school are a significant stressor in the lives of grade 8 students.
- Youth also experience considerable stress related to concerns about their future and not having enough free time.
- The use of avoidance to deal with problems/stressors was identified as a coping strategy utilized by over 1/3 of young people.
- Girls more frequently reported experiencing stress as a result of their appearance and were twice as likely to report using substances as method to control their weight.
- Almost 1/5 of the students do not feel they have anyone to turn to for support or help with their problems.
- The most common reasons identified for trying/using substances is pressure to fit in and being offered substances by a friend. The youth identified the need for education and support in learning to deal with this peer pressure.
- Of the 30% of youth who reported some substance use, 25% have used alcohol and 6.5% consumed enough alcohol to become drunk.
- Of the youth who reported using more than one substance, almost all of them have used alcohol.
- Students' understanding of the risks associated with use varies. Almost half (46.9%) of the youth reported there is little to no risk of harm associated with regular alcohol use
- This is significantly lower than their views of risk of all other substances.

- 25% of youth indicated they have friends who have consumed enough alcohol to become drunk.
 - Students also reported that parents/adults are more accepting of youth alcohol consumption and demonstrate less disapproval of alcohol use, compared to other substances.
 - 20% of students have no affiliation with peer activities outside of school.
 - Youth identified the need for a greater range of community based activities, which are accessible and affordable to all youth.
 - The young people also recognize the importance of supervision of recreational activities, to ensure these areas remain safe and drug free.
-

Implications

The Windsor-Essex Youth Opinion Survey obtained some interesting and useful information about the unique views of young adolescents in our community. Insight into their opinions and perceptions of the factors which underlie their decision to use substances creates an opportunity to build meaningful prevention interventions with a greater likelihood of having a significant impact. The outcomes of this survey provide a solid basis for service planning and priority setting by community members involved in a wide range of activities, including youth service providers, community planners, education providers, enforcement personnel and government decision makers.

Findings from the survey support that while some youth in grade eight have experimented with substance use; the majority have not, representing an important opportunity for our community to collectively take action to prevent/delay youth substance use. Interventions must be focused on those issues identified by the young people as most strongly influencing their decision making. This includes strategies for dealing with peer pressure and stress, creating increased opportunities for education and support from adults and developing a greater community response to substance use. In addition, youth recognize the importance of engaging in positive peer activities as a method of avoiding substance use and identified the need for a greater range of accessible and affordable activities in all communities. The young people also recognize the

importance of supervision of recreational activities, to ensure these areas remain safe and drug free. Intervention strategies should include current technology (such as the internet) and reflect student interests, as well as empower youth through their delivery in order to bridge the gap between youth and adults. Programs which are peer designed and led have been shown to be more effective particularly with sensitive issues, such as substance use.

The youth also clearly identified the importance of positive role models and the need for adult nurturance and support in their lives, particularly from their parents. As the majority of grade eight youth would seek out the assistance of their parents to deal with substance use issues and education, adults have an opportunity to significantly influence their decision making. Parents need access to the information and skills needed to effectively respond to their adolescent children in a way which promotes healthy decision making and open communication.

“I read in a magazine that teens have BIG heads and given the opportunity will do so much good.”

This report gives voice to the concerns and needs of young adolescents in our community as they prepare to transition in their education and development. Future longitudinal research of this cohort’s views/attitudes toward substance use as they complete their secondary education would be beneficial to examine the factors which underlie their decision making as they develop. In addition, further research examining the relationship between mental

health and substance use would assist in better understanding the needs of youth in our community.

As demonstrated by this survey, young people need and want accurate information and caring support to help them deal with the issue of substance use. They are also interested and eager to make their voices heard and willing to put forth the effort to address influential issues when given the opportunity and support to do so. Our community is now challenged with embracing their ideas and developing programs which support the ongoing, healthy development of one of our most valuable resource, our young people.

*“Thank you
for letting the
youth express
themselves.”*

Appendix I

Survey Question Sources

The following describes the sources used in developing the WEYOS and references for specific questions. Numbers refer to questions on the WEYOS questionnaire. An asterisk (*) following the question number indicates that modifications have been made to the original question, usually to accommodate differences in the Canadian context, to update language or include localized data.

The Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2009.

This survey began in 1977 and is the longest ongoing school survey in Canada. Every two years, a representative sample of Ontario students in grades 7 to 12 are surveyed to gather information about epidemiological trends in student drug use, mental health, physical activity, and risk behaviour, as well as identifying risk and protective factors.

The OSDUHS was the source for the following questions on the WEYOS: 1, 5*, 17*, 18, 19*

Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors, Search Institute, 2008.

This survey was created to measure the 40 developmental assets youth need to develop by assessing risk behaviours and thriving indicators. Assets are classified as external and internal. Areas of external assets examined include, support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations and constructive use of time. Internal assets include: commitment to learning, positive values, social competency and positive identity.

The Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors was the source for the following WEYOS survey questions: 17*, 19*, 20, 21, 22, 24*, 25*

This is Not a Test: The Vancouver Youth Drug Reporting System, Vancouver Coastal Health, 2006.

The purpose of the Vancouver Youth Drug Survey was to generate useful data on current and emerging alcohol and other drug use trends in youth populations in Vancouver (including vulnerable and hard to reach populations). The survey attempted to examine the developmental pathways that lead youth populations to become involved in harmful drug use and function as an early warning system by identifying areas/issues requiring further investigation.

The Vancouver Drug Reporting System was the source for the following WEYOS survey questions: 9, 10*, 11, 13, and 14*

Risk and Protective Factor Questionnaire for Grades 6-12, Pride Surveys, 2006.
Communities That Care, Pride Surveys.

Pride surveys are intended help local schools measure student alcohol, tobacco and other drug use. In addition, they also measure behaviour on many crucial issues that can affect learning. Survey contains questions related to the risk and protective factors that show the strongest correlation to drug use among students in grades 6 to 12.

The Risk and Protective Factor Questionnaire for Grades 6-12 was the source for the following WEYOS questions: 17*, 25*

The American Drug and Alcohol Survey-short form (ADAS), Rocky Mountain Behavioral Science Institute, 2005.

The ADAS Core Measures Short Form covers the five "core measures" recommended by the [Center for Substance Abuse Prevention](#) for use in prevention efforts. These include questions about marijuana, alcohol, and tobacco use, age of first use, perceptions of harm, availability and disapproval of use. The Adolescent version of the ADAS is intended for students in 6th to 12th grades.

The ADAS was the source for the following WEYOS questions: 7, 23, 24*, 25*

Adolescent Stress Questionnaire (ASQ), Byrne & Mazanov, 2002.

The ASQ is a 31 item instrument measuring seven clearly identifiable dimensions of adolescent stress. Survey is useful in identifying adolescents at risk of health compromising behaviours.

The ASQ was the source for the following WEYOS questions: 3*, 4*.

Confronting Teen Stress, Meeting the Challenge in Baltimore City, Centre for Adolescent Health, 2006.

Confronting teen stress was a study conducted in Baltimore which looked at levels of teen stress and their strategies for coping. This youth led project gathered information from teens (ages 14-15 years), their primary caregivers, and youth service providers on the topic of teen stress.

Confronting Teen Stress was the source for the following WEYOS questions: 3*, 4*.

Additional sources

Questions 2, 6, 8, 12, 15, 16, and 26 were derived from multiple sources, including best practice literature related to youth risk and protective factors and themes presented during youth focus groups conducted in Windsor/Essex County in October, 2009 and May, 2010. These questions address topics of specific interest in Windsor-Essex County, not covered by other surveys.

Appendix II

Windsor-Essex Youth Opinion Survey (WEYOS)

Question Rationale and Sources

What is the Windsor-Essex Youth Opinion Survey?

The Windsor-Essex Youth Opinions Survey (WEYOS) is survey tool designed under the direction of the Windsor-Essex Drug Strategy to capture a picture of local youth's views relating to the use of drugs and alcohol in our community. The questionnaire includes 26 questions aimed at uncovering the "root causes" of substance use from the youth's perspective, so that prevention services can be tailored to best meet the needs of local youth. Research suggests that interventions which focus on youth strengths, assets and resources can be effective in reducing "risk taking" behaviour such as substance use. Information about those protective factors which prevent/delay substance use is also collected through the survey. The questionnaire was developed by The Windsor Essex Drug Strategy Survey Coordinator, in consultation with a committee of community professionals as members of the Windsor-Essex Drug Strategy. This document describes the rationale for the selection of survey topics and provides background information on the sources of questions included in the survey.

Who will participate in the Windsor-Essex Youth Opinion Survey?

Since the transition year from Grade 8 to Grade 9 has been identified as an "at-risk" year for youth to experiment with alcohol and drugs, the survey is targeted to grade eight aged youth. Youth selected as part of a representative community sample will be asked to complete the anonymous, confidential questionnaire. The form can be completed in one class session of approximately 30-45 minutes. The Flesh-Kincaid readability level of the survey is at a grade 4.8. Participation is voluntary and prior parental consent is required.

How were topics selected for the survey?

Questions chosen for inclusion in the survey address topics seen as being closely related to the factors which underlying youth decisions to use drugs and alcohol according to the best practices literature. Ontario has a long history of collecting data regarding adolescent drug use. Since 1977, the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health has conducted a study every two years on students in grades 7-11 entitled the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS). The most recent OSDUHS (2009), found that student drug use in the Erie-St. Clair LIHN (which includes the counties of Essex, Chatham-Kent and Lambton) is significantly higher than the provincial average for smoking, alcohol use, binge drinking, cannabis and other drugs categories (CAMH, 2009).

The WEYOS is intended to build on the knowledge gained from the Ontario student survey to probe more deeply into the factors which underlie or contribute to young people's decisions to use. Research focusing on the risk and protective factors which increase the likelihood for teen substance use, suggest the need to focus on five major life domains: individual, family, peer, school, and community (Wisconsin Risk/Protective Matrix). Questions capturing information connected to each of these factors were

included in the survey. Other questions on the WEYOS are designed to evaluate factors shown to have a positive influence on youth development. These include the presence of caring families and other adults, safe schools/neighbourhoods and participation in healthy leisure activities. In addition, some items on the WEYOS questionnaire are included to gather information specific to the Windsor-Essex County community.

Question Categories

Questions 1-5 (Demographics/Social support)

Solicits information about the influence of stressors and coping techniques in the everyday lives of young people. Basic demographic information is also collected to facilitate variable comparisons.

Questions 6-16 (Alcohol, Drug and Tobacco use)

Drug and alcohol questions are intended to gain information about young people's knowledge of and experience with alcohol and drugs. In addition, youth perceptions of harms related to use, exposure to educational information and factors which influence the decision to use or not use are examined. Youth's views of what would be beneficial are also solicited to aid in determining effective interventions.

Questions 17-20 (School)

Academic achievement and school involvement have been strongly correlated with youth substance use. The survey also examines young people's feelings of belonging and connection to school.

Questions 21-26 (Family, Friends & Neighbourhood)

Home and community environments can have a significant influence on the well-being of young people. Parental involvement and connection can influence a young person's decisions to engage in risk taking behaviour, including drug/alcohol use. Similarly, the peer group a young person identifies with can also impact on their decision to use drugs/alcohol.

Question Sources

Most of the items on the WEYOS questionnaire were derived from previously developed and tested youth surveys. Using questions included in established studies has several advantages:

- 1) questions derived from other sources have demonstrated that they are understood by respondents
- 2) questions have shown that they provide useful information
- 3) responses can be compared with data findings in other areas.

By utilizing a combination of approaches, The Windsor-Essex Drug Strategy has developed a survey tool which will complement but not duplicate other studies and will provide additional information specific to the needs of local youth.

The following standardized surveys were sources for questions contained in the WEYOS. Detailed information about each survey, as well as reference to the specific questions contained in the WEYOS is available upon request.

The Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (2009)

Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors, Search Institute (2008)

This is Not a Test: The Vancouver Youth Drug Reporting System, Vancouver Coastal Health (2006)

Risk and Protective Factor Questionnaire for Grades 6-12, Pride Surveys (2006)
Communities That Care, Pride Surveys

The American Drug and Alcohol Survey-short form (ADAS), Rocky Mountain Behavioral Science Institute (2005)

Adolescent Stress Questionnaire (ASQ), Byrne & Mazanov (2002)

Confronting Teen Stress, Meeting the Challenge in Baltimore City, Centre for Adolescent Health (2006)

Some questions were derived from multiple sources, including best practice literature related to youth risk and protective factors and themes presented during youth focus groups conducted in Windsor/Essex County in October, 2009 and May, 2010. These questions address topics of specific interest in Windsor-Essex County, not covered by other surveys.

Appendix III

November 8, 2010

Dear Elementary Principals:

Since March 2009, the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board has been actively participating on the Windsor-Essex Drug Strategy Implementation Group through Arlene Davis, Vice-Principal, and Safe Schools. In addition, there has been a drug strategy team formed within your Board to address substance misuse issues. There has been excellent collaboration between the Board and community organizations regarding this initiative.

In March 2010, a proposal was submitted by the Windsor Essex Community Health Centre (formerly Teen Health Centre) to the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport's Healthy Communities Fund in partnership with the WECDSB, Centre for Addictions and Mental Health and United Way/Centraide to implement a comprehensive youth drug prevention program including a focus on positive mental health aimed at Grade Nine students. The project was approved for funding in July 2010.

The project has several phases including:

- A youth opinion survey for Grade 8 students
- An elementary and secondary parent and school staff electronic surveys (Under separate correspondence within the next couple of weeks you will receive the links and instructions)
- Focus groups with Grade 9 students
- Design of drug prevention programs within each secondary school

The first phase of the project is the Windsor-Essex Youth Opinion Survey. The survey has been designed to capture youth's perceptions of the root causes of substance use/misuse. Since the overall project is aimed at drug prevention, the target population for the survey is Grade 8 students. Research has indicated that the transition year from elementary to high school has been identified as the year where youth may experiment with alcohol and drugs. The information that the Grade 8 students will provide will guide relevant prevention programs next year.

Accompanying this letter, you will find the following attachments:

- A Question Rationale document which provides detailed information about the survey and the questions contained in it
- One copy of the survey
- A detailed instruction sheet which teachers will use to administer the survey
- **By November 15** you will receive a package that includes the Parent Information letter with attached Parent Consent Form to be provided to every student.

The time line for the process is outlined below:

Parent letter and consent forms sent home	By November 19, 2010
Survey packages sent to school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction letter to teacher • Surveys • Envelope for returns 	By November 19, 2010
Consent forms returned	By November 24, 2010
Teacher's administer survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys are placed into a sealed envelope 	By December 03, 2010

We appreciate your assistance in distributing the consent forms. Completion of the survey is entirely voluntary and all students must have parental consent to participate. If parents have questions or concerns with the survey, they are asked to contact you or myself for clarification. Parents who want to view the survey before providing consent can view it at the school. As parental concern may be a factor in the data outcomes, please record the number of questions/concerns that you receive regarding the survey.

Information collected in the survey is completely confidential and as such, **students names and the school's name will not be identified anywhere on the survey materials or envelopes.** All survey responses will be correlated into one report which will be shared with the WECDSB and will also be available through the Windsor-Essex Drug Strategy team.

When it comes time to implement the survey we ask that all grade eight students at your school complete the survey on the same day. The teacher's instruction sheet provides all the details regarding the survey administration.

Should you have any questions or require assistance with the implementation of the survey, do not hesitate to contact Arlene Davis at 519.253-2481 (x1117) or myself at (519)258-0000 (x1157).

Your school's participation in this important project is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Jenner-Dupuis
Survey Coordinator, Windsor-Essex Drug Strategy

Appendix IV TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Windsor-Essex Youth Opinion Survey

1. Preparing to administer the survey

- Ensure completed parental consent forms have been received for all students completing the survey.
- Students who do not have parental consent can be asked to read or do a quiet activity while the survey is being completed.
- Please write the number of students given surveys to complete as well as the total number of students in your class on the outside of the envelope (i.e., 24 completed/30 students in class. **DO NOT** write the school name on the envelope.)

2. Introduction to the survey

- Please read the following instructions to the group prior to beginning the survey:

"Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Youth Opinion Survey.

This survey asks your opinion about a number of things in your life, including your views on drugs and alcohol use. The purpose of this survey is to find out your ideas of why young people use substances, as well as what you feel is needed in this area.

Some important things you need to know before you complete the survey:

- Participation is voluntary. Only students whose parents have said it is OK to complete the survey will participate.
- The survey is completely **confidential**. This means we will not know who completed the surveys. Please **DO NOT** write your name or school name anywhere on the survey. (Write on blackboard "Do NOT write your name")
- Experience is not necessary to complete the survey and choosing to participate in this survey does **NOT** imply that any of you have used drugs or alcohol.
- The survey is not a test and there are no correct answers.
- Questions can be left blank if you do not understand a question or do not feel comfortable answering.
- The survey can be completed in about 20 - 30 minutes.
- Should questions or concerns arise after completing the survey, please talk to your teacher or school principal.

3. Administering the survey

- Please complete the coding questions on the front page of the survey. This information will help determine how many people complete this type of survey again in grade twelve. This information will not make your answers traceable to you.

- Please use blue or black pen
- Most of the questions are followed by a list of possible answers. Please choose the answer that is right for you and mark an “X” in the box next to it.
- Mark only one box unless the question asks for more than one answer. Please read the questions carefully to determine how many answers to choose.
- To change an answer, put a line through the incorrect answer and put an “X” in the correct box.

(Write the question below on the blackboard to demonstrate how to correctly answer questions and how to correct an answer :)

On weekends, I spend most of my time:

At home

~~X At friend's homes~~

Hanging out in public places like the mall

X Hanging around in my neighbourhood

- When you are done, please place the survey inside the envelope provided.” When all the surveys are in the envelope, the envelope will be sealed and returned to the researchers.”

***END OF VERBAL INSTRUCTIONS

4. Collecting the surveys from students

- Place collection envelope on an isolated table/desk-not near adults or other students.
- Please seal the envelope as soon as all surveys are collected.
- Sealed envelopes are to be forwarded to the school office so they can be placed in school’s currier collection bag.

Appendix V

Windsor-Essex County Youth Opinion Survey

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The Windsor-Essex Youth Opinion Survey is intended to gain insight into young people's views of substance use in our community. In 2009, the provincial survey conducted every two years in Ontario (named the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey), found higher levels of smoking, alcohol, cannabis and other drug use in our area when compared to the rest of the province.

Based upon this, we are interested in hearing what local young people feel influences their decisions to use drugs, alcohol and tobacco and what they feel is needed to help make healthy choices in their lives. We are looking for feedback from 8th grade students/youth, to gain an understanding of the stresses they face at this transitional period in their lives. The information gained will help in future planning of services and programs aimed at preventing adolescent substance use.

Your child has been requested to complete the 26 question **Windsor-Essex Youth Opinion Survey** through his/her class at school. The survey will take between 20 – 30 minutes to complete. The survey asks questions about your child's views and experiences with drugs, alcohol and tobacco. It also asks about other influential areas of life including school, friends, family relationships and community. Your child's participation is strictly voluntary and he/she can withdraw at any time. Your child's participation in the survey does not suggest that he/she has used drugs, alcohol or tobacco. Experience is not necessary to complete the survey.

The survey is completely **Confidential**. Your child's name and his/her school will not be identified or shared. All results will be collated and presented in a final report. Once released, the results will be shared with the WECSDB and also available through the Windsor-Essex Drug Strategy.

Attached you will find a copy of the parental permission form for the youth survey. More details about the questions on the youth survey are on this form. Please complete the parental permission form and return it with your child to school. This will allow him/her to complete the survey at school. Please return the consent forms **by November 24, 2010**.

Please do not hesitate to contact myself or your child's school Principal if you have any questions. We are also interested in receiving the opinions of parents. Within the next couple of weeks you will be provided with a website link so you can complete an electronic survey. Thanks to you and your child for assisting in this important work of preventing substance use in our community.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Jenner-Dupuis
Survey Coordinator, Windsor-Essex Drug Strategy
(519)258-0000, ext. 1157
cjenner@weareunited.com

Appendix VI Parental Consent Form

1. I understand that the purpose of the survey is to help the Windsor-Essex Drug Strategy:
 - To better understand youth opinions regarding substance use.
 - To better understand youth's knowledge of substance use.
 - To better understand the factors which influence youth's decisions to use substances.
 - To gather information which will assist in planning youth-specific substance misuse programs.

2. I understand the survey will ask questions about:
 - stressors which young people may experience
 - knowledge and experiences with various substances (e.g., alcohol, marijuana, tobacco)
 - perceptions about why youth use drugs
 - suggestions of ways to prevent youth substance use

3. I know that my son/daughter's participation in this survey is voluntary and involves the following steps:
 - Completing a paper survey at school. The survey takes approximately 30-45 minutes to complete.
 - The survey is anonymous and does not ask for my son/daughter's name.

4. I know that my son/daughter will not be identified in any project reports or materials.

5. The information from all of the youth surveys completed across Windsor/Essex County will be grouped together. They will not be identified by school. Once available, the findings will be made available from the Windsor-Essex Drug Strategy.

6. My son/daughter is free to not answer any survey questions they feel uncomfortable with.

7. I know that I can ask more about this project if I wish at any time from the drug strategy survey coordinator or my child's Principal.

8. The project has been explained and I understand my son/daughter's role.

I, _____ (please print), agree to provide permission

for my son/daughter, _____ to complete the *Windsor Essex Youth Opinion Survey* as described here.

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Date _____

Contacts:

Survey Coordinator: Carolyn Jenner-Dupuis

(519)258-0000, ext. 1157

cjenner@weareunited.com

References

- Alberta Health Services-Addiction and Mental Health. (2009). The Alberta youth experience survey 2008: technical report. Alberta Health Service; Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
- Paglia-Boak, A., Mann, R., Adlaf, E. & Rehm, J. (2009). Drug use among Ontario Students. *Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey*, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.
- Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Prevention Resources. Data sources for risk factors matrix. National and Wisconsin Data Sources. Accessed at: www.wch.uhs.wisc.edu/13-Eval/13-Eval-main.htm