

**2004 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)
With 2000-2004 Comparative Results
Among 8th Grade Students**

Pollard Middle School

Grade 8

INTRODUCTION

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) was developed to monitor the prevalence of health risk behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death and disability among youth and adults in the United States. Because these behaviors are often established during childhood and early adolescence, and because these behaviors are preventable, schools, communities and parents play an important role in monitoring the prevalence of these behaviors and in working towards prevention. The middle school version of the YRBS was later developed to target youth behaviors at a younger age with the goal of preventing or delaying health risk behaviors among this age group. Because YRBS data are more reliable among older middle school students, this survey targeted 8th grade students only. Results will be presented from the 2004 YRBS and compared to responses of 8th grade students from the 2000 and 2003 MS YRBS survey. In some cases, gender differences will also be presented.

The YRBS monitors six categories of priority risk behaviors. Leading causes of mortality and morbidity among all age groups in the United States are related to these six categories. They include:

- 1) Behaviors that result in unintentional injury and violence
- 2) Tobacco use
- 3) Alcohol and other drug use
- 4) Sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy or disease
- 5) Dietary behaviors that result in disease
- 6) Physical inactivity

PURPOSE OF THE YRBS

In 1988, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed the high school version of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The YRBS was developed to be used by state departments of education and local school districts in the following ways (Brener et al, 1995):

- 1) To focus the nation on specific behaviors among youth that cause the most important health problems
- 2) To assess whether those behaviors increase, decrease, or remain the same over time
- 3) To provide comparable data among national, state, and local samples of youth
- 4) To inform the creation and recreation of health programs, in this case, for Needham students

As mentioned above, a second version of the YRBS, more appropriate for middle school age youth was later developed. It was the middle school version of the YRBS that was used to gather the data for this report.

RELIABILITY OF THE YRBS

In an attempt to measure the reliability of the YRBS, Brener et al. (1995) computed a kappa score for each of the self-report items in the original survey. The kappa scores measured test-retest reliability. The higher the percentage of the kappa score assigned to a test item, the more reliable the item (Landis & Koch, 1977).

Kappa Percentages	
Poor	less than 0%
Slight	0% - 20%
Fair	21% - 40%
Moderate	41% - 60%
Substantial	61% - 80%
Almost Perfect	81% - 100%

Although there are no kappa values available for the 2004 middle school survey items, kappa scores from the original test items can be compared with current test items. Available kappa scores will be presented under each section of this report to provide the reader with some insight into the reliability of the test items within that section. The kappa percentages will be contrasted in gray ink and will appear just below the title of each section.

Executive Summary

The results of the 2004 Pollard Middle School YRBS indicate that there have been improvements in most of the risky behavior categories since data was first reported in 2000. This suggests that the messages that are promoted through the K-8 health programs and school wide wellness initiatives are having a positive result. Interestingly, academic data indicate that

MCAS scores have been steadily rising with this class earning the highest 8th grade MCAS scores to date. This supports research that suggests that healthy students are better able and better prepared for learning (Kolbe et. al., 1986; Symons, 1997; Shepard et al., 1984).

The trends found in the 2004 middle school survey are consistent with trends reported in the last Needham High School YRBS (2003) which indicated that risky behaviors among high school students had declined in most categories. These results are welcomed in light of the system's strong commitment to both academic achievement and overall health and well-being. Needham has embraced wellness as one of its three systemwide goals and has developed a K-12 interdisciplinary curriculum for teaching social and emotional skills. Research has found that when faced with difficult decisions, students who have developed and practiced social and emotional skills will make better choices and will be more consistent in their decision making (Elias et al., 1991).

Because participation in risky behaviors can begin in elementary and middle school, it is important to continue to use this survey data as a way of monitoring student behaviors over time. Each individual student may be tempted to participate in these behaviors at different times in their development. Consequently, the Needham Public Schools is committed to developing a comprehensive effort toward preventing students from participating in risky behaviors. The creation of a Comprehensive School Health Committee will help to coordinate individual efforts that currently exist at all three levels (elementary school, middle school and high school).

Highlights from each of the six CDC categories for risky behaviors will be presented here and recommendations for improvement will be discussed. The six categories are: 1) behaviors that result in unintentional injury and violence; 2) tobacco use; 3) alcohol and other drug use; 4) sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy or disease; 5) dietary behaviors that result in disease; and, 6) physical inactivity. Data will be presented in more detail in the body of this report.

Unintentional Injury: This category included questions about behaviors that resulted in accidental occurrences. Included in this category were questions about seat belt use, bicycle helmet use, and riding in a vehicle with someone who had been drinking alcohol.

Seat belt use has been associated with saving lives in motor vehicle accidents. Seventy nine percent of the Pollard Middle School students reported wearing their seat belt. This is down slightly from the 2002 data which showed 81% of middle school students wearing their seat belt. Middle school age students must be encouraged by parents and older siblings to wear their seat belts when riding in a car as a passenger. This will create healthy habits that will increase the odds that they will continue to wear a seat belt later when they become drivers. To help aid this process, the Director of Health & Physical Education will work with the Needham Building and Grounds Department to place signs in areas where parents pick their children up from school to remind both parents and students to "BUCKLE-UP!"

In addition, slightly fewer students reported that they are wearing a helmet when riding a bicycle, roller blading, or skate boarding. The more worrisome finding is that across the history of the survey, less than half of those middle school students who reported that they ride a bicycle wore a helmet, and, around one quarter of those students who reported that they roller blade or skate board wore a helmet. Because head injuries are a leading cause of death in accidents on bicycles, roller blades and skateboards, the Director of Health & Physical Education will work with the Massachusetts Head Injury Prevention Association to learn more about what can be done to encourage helmet use. In addition to skate boarding and roller blading, helmet use should be encouraged in other activities such as skiing, snowboarding, snowmobiling, and riding all terrain vehicles.

There was a nine percentage point decrease in the percentage of students who reported that they have ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol. Because middle school students are not eligible to drive, we know that they are not riding with peers. We do not know if they are riding with older siblings who are under the influence, with parents, or with other adults.

Violence: This category asked students about weapon carrying and physical fighting. Although the 2004 data reveals a slight increase over the 2002 data in the number of students who report that they have carried a weapon (16% and 14% respectively), it also shows a five percentage point decrease from the all time high of 21% reported in 2000. Fewer students reported having been in a physical fight or being injured in a physical fight.

Of particular concern is the number of middle school students who reported that they have carried a weapon (16%). A weapon is defined as a club, knife, or gun. This number was twice as high as the number of high school students who reported in 2003 that they had carried a weapon (8%). Fortunately, school discipline data does not suggest that students are carrying weapons in school. A closer look at the survey question reveals that the data does not specify whether or not students carried a weapon as part of hunting or target practice, or if some students considered a baseball bat when answering this question. A specific question will be added to the next survey (2006) to determine whether or not students are carrying weapons into the middle school and, if so, what types of items they are bringing into the school.

Over the past several years, school violence and terrorism have been pushed to the forefront of our consciousness and, as a result, schools and their communities have developed thoughtful plans and procedures to deal with emergencies. Although any act of violence would devastate our community, equal attention should be given to some of the less dramatic forms of violence that result in individual pain and alienation. Anti-bullying programs have been started in the elementary schools and several programs have been implemented in the middle school to address issues of tolerance. Character education and peer mediation are two good examples. To support these efforts, clear definitions of bullying will be shared with students in their health education classes so that they can better identify when it is occurring and be prepared to report it.

Depression & Suicide: In this category, students were asked questions about suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Data suggest that trends in suicidal thinking, developing a plan, and

actual suicide attempts have decreased among Pollard 8th graders. This is consistent with findings from the 2003 High School YRBS which also shows a decrease in all three of these behaviors. High school data reveal that 13% of students have thought about killing themselves, 11% have made a plan, and 8% have actually attempted suicide. For middle school students, percentages in this category peaked in 2002. The 2004 percentages represent an all time low. Middle school data reveal that 12% of students have thought about killing themselves, 10% have made a plan, and 4% have actually attempted suicide.

Given the recent suicides in our school community, efforts have been made to provide support to teachers, students, and their parents. The Pollard Parent-Teachers Committee (PTC) and the High School PTC sponsored an evening for parents featuring Maria Trozzi from the Good Grief Program. In addition, the Pollard Middle School has worked closely with Riverside Community Health to provide on site counseling and teacher training on identifying troubled students, supporting students through the grief process, and referring students for professional help.

Tobacco Use: This category asked students about their use of cigarettes and other tobacco products. The percentage of 8th grade students who reported that they have tried cigarettes has decreased by eighteen percentage points since the survey was first administered in 2000. In 2000, 27% of eighth grade students had tried a cigarette. In 2004, only 9% reported that they had tried a cigarette. This downward trend is consistent with high school findings. Decreased tobacco use can be attributed to a strong emphasis on antismoking education in the elementary and middle school health education curriculum and to state wide efforts to decrease tobacco use among teens and adults. It should be noted, however, that the elementary health education program in which anti-smoking education was taught has been eliminated. In addition, the money that funded the state wide antismoking campaign has been cut. It will be important to observe whether these reductions will have an effect on the number of students who smoke cigarettes in the future.

The percentage of students who reported they they smoked their first cigarette in elementary school has remained relatively consistent. In 2000, 23% of those who had tried smoking smoked their first cigarette while in elementary school. In 2002, that percentage was 27% and in 2004, it was 24%. This suggests that there are still a number of elementary students who are experimenting with tobacco. Elementary programs, therefore, should continue to deliver an antismoking/antitobacco message to prevent students from using tobacco. The tobacco unit has been eliminated from the elementary health education curriculum to provide students with more time in language arts and math. Because antismoking education is still important, the elementary classroom teachers should assume responsibility. The physical education teachers will support their efforts with posters and a strong antismoking message. Although it is not uncommon for students to experiment with tobacco, it is extremely addicting to young people. It is, therefore, important to work to delay any experimentation with tobacco at all levels, with the hope, that most students will outgrow their curiosity to try cigarette smoking.

A startling fact is that while 9% of eighth grade students report that they have tried a cigarette, 8% report that they are regular smokers. This may signal that there are some students who are

already addicted to tobacco. The Director of Health & Physical Education will meet with the Pollard house administrators to see if disciplinary data suggests that these students are smoking in school. If so, we can begin to identify these students and find ways to help them to quit.

Alcohol and Other Drug Use: In this category, students were asked questions about their use of alcohol and other drugs. The percentage of students who reported that they have had a drink of alcohol has decreased since 2000. This is also true of the number of students who had their first drink in elementary school. Over one hundred 8th grade students, 31%, reported that they have had a drink of alcohol. It should be noted that the survey did not discriminate between a sip of alcohol and a whole drink (such as a whole can of beer), or those who had a drink at home as part of cultural mores. A question will be added to the next middle school survey (2006) to determine if students are drinking for the purpose of getting drunk.

The 2004 Middle School YRBS data is consistent with the 2003 High School YRBS data which reports that of those who had consumed alcohol, 38% had their first drink while in middle school. It is obvious that the middle school years are a time when some students begin to experiment with alcohol. For this reason, strong anti drinking messages are included in the middle school health curriculum. In addition, the Needham Public Schools has applied for a MetroWest Grant to provide a comprehensive community based approach to the issue of teen drinking.

While marijuana use is down significantly at the middle school, fourteen students or 4% reported that they first tried it while in elementary school. Parents of elementary age and middle school age students should be aware that marijuana use among Needham High School students is on the rise. This may result in similar trends among middle school students in the near future. The rise in marijuana use among high school students may be because marijuana is readily available and easy for students to buy. For this reason, a strong anti-drug education message is included in the middle school health curriculum.

The reports of other drug use, cocaine, steroids, glue sniffing, and use of a needle are all fairly consistent with previous data. All have been consistently below 5% with the exception of the use of inhalants which has remained around 7%-8%. The actual number of students who reported using these drugs were: 9 students reported that they have used cocaine; 5 students reported that they have used steroids; 8 students reported that they have used a needle to inject an illegal drug; and 27 students reported that they have sniffed glue. These numbers, although small, represent serious drug use. Students involved with these drugs are in desperate need of help. The Director of Health & Physical Education will contact the Pollard Guidance Counselors and School Nurses to share this data and determine ways that we might be able to identify these students and get them help.

Sexual Behaviors: This category asked students about their sexual activity. The 2004 data suggest that 9% (30 8th grade students) reported that they have had sexual intercourse. Although this is thirty students too many, it represents the lowest percentage across all three of the middle school surveys that we have administered. Seventeen eighth grade students reported that they

have had sexual intercourse with 2 or more partners. Sixty percent of students who have had sexual intercourse (15 students) reported that either they or their partner used a condom. A new question was added to the 2004 survey asking students about their participation in oral sex. This question was included because the popular media has suggested that more and more students are participating in oral sex. Fifteen percent of 8th grade students (approximately 50 individuals) said that they had participated in oral sex. Twenty-two students reported that they have had oral sex with two or more partners.

Although trends indicate that participation in sexual intercourse is down, efforts should continue to bring this figure to zero. Parents are encouraged to talk (and continue to talk) to their children about abstinence from both sexual intercourse and oral sex. The middle school health education program will support this by including parent interviews as part of students' homework assignments. In addition, the elementary schools continue to support this effort with a unit on adolescent development at the end of fifth grade. A close relationship exists between health educators and health services, who share expertise, provide parent education, and provide a more comprehensive approach to sex education at both the elementary and middle schools.

Dietary Behaviors and Weight Control: In this category, students were asked questions about their dietary behaviors and methods of weight control. About half (54%) of all students described themselves as being at about the right weight. One quarter described themselves as being either slightly or very overweight. Over half (61%) exercise to lose weight and 44% eat less food to lose weight. When done in moderation, these methods are considered to be healthy and appropriate ways to lose weight. Some students, however, choose less healthy ways which include going without eating (10%), taking diet pills (2%), and vomiting (5%) after meals. Trends indicate that the use of these unhealthy measures has decreased slightly.

It is important to support school programs that emphasize healthy eating and safe methods for losing weight. Although these topics are included in the middle school health and physical education curriculum, parents and family have a strong influence on students' eating and exercise habits. Parents should take care to model healthy eating and good exercise habits for their children. In addition, families should work together to find creative and fun options for snacks and meals. The school food service program has made great strides towards providing healthy school lunch choices. In addition, the community wide Eat Well/Be Fit committee has done some parent and teacher education in the elementary schools and plans are underway to extend their influence into the middle and high school.

Physical Inactivity: This category asked students to report on their level of participation in physical activity. 2004 data suggest that 78% of students reported that they had participated in vigorous physical activities 3 or more days in the past week and 93% reported that they had participated in physical education classes 2 or 3 days a week. It is not clear as to whether those students reporting that they had participated in vigorous physical activities 3 or more days included their participation in physical education classes. A question will be added to the 2006 middle school survey to ask if students participate in physical activity outside of their physical

education or organized sports programs. Three quarters of all students reported that they participate on a sports team.

The Needham Public Schools continue to support a strong K-12 physical education program. The required physical education program provides students with regular physical activity throughout the school year and teaches students the skills they need to participate in a wide variety of physical activities outside of school.

2004 Pollard Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results (YRBS)
with 2000-2004 Comparisons
GRADE 8

The 2004 Middle School (MS) Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) was administered to 348 8th grade students in April of 2004. Students were surveyed during their regularly scheduled physical education class under the direct supervision of the physical education faculty. The survey was taken in the lecture hall so that students could sit in chairs and at desks. A uniform protocol was followed in which teachers explained that the survey responses would remain anonymous and that students should approach the survey with seriousness and integrity.

The YRBS was first given to Pollard students in 2000 and again in 2002. In both cases, the 7th and 8th grade classes were surveyed. Because research suggests that survey results are more reliable with 8th grade students than with younger middle school students (Brener, et. al. 1995), it was decided to survey only 8th graders in 2004. In an attempt to look at trends, the 2004 survey data will be compared with the 8th grade responses from previous surveys. This will provide us with an opportunity to look back over three sets of data to assess eighth grade students' health risk behaviors over time. This section of this report will present data from the 2004 survey and compare it with the other middle school surveys that we have administered (2000 and 2002). In addition, gender comparisons will be made and current middle school trends will be compared to current high school trends.

The results of the 2004 MS YRBS will be presented using the Center for Disease Control's (CDC's) six categories of risk behaviors, 1) behaviors that result in unintentional injury and violence; 2) tobacco use; 3) alcohol and other drug use; 4) sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy or disease; 5) dietary behaviors that result in disease; and, 6) physical inactivity. As mentioned earlier, these categories represent the leading causes of mortality and morbidity among youth (Brener et al, 1995).

1) Unintentional Injury and Violence

Always wore a seat belt (Kappa = 69.1%)

Always wore a bicycle helmet (Kappa = 50.1%)

Rode with a drinking driver within the past 30 days (Kappa = 61.9%)

	2000	2002	2004
Seat Belt Use	77%	81%	79%
Bike Helmet Use	44%	43%	42%
Roller Blade/Skate Board Helmet Use	25%	27%	18%
Ridden in a Car Driven by Someone Under the Influence of Alcohol	22%	27%	18%

Vehicle Safety:

- Seat Belt Use:** 2004 survey results indicate that 79% of middle school students wore their seat belt either most of the time or all of the time. This represents a decrease from the 81% who reported that they wore a seat belts in 2002. The use of seat belts among middle school students dipped to the lowest percentage (77%) in 2000. In all three reports, females were more likely to wear a seat belt than males. Trends also reveal that the use of seat belts among females has increased over time.
- Helmet Use:** 2004 survey data reveal that, of those middle school students who rode a bicycle, 42% reported that they wore a helmet most of the time or all of the time. Although this represents an all time low for this category, it is only 2 percentage points lower than the all time high score of 44% reported in the 2000 survey. In addition, the use of helmets while roller blading or skate boarding has also declined over time. Females were more likely to wear a helmet while riding a bicycle than males in all three surveys. This may be because females tend to be more cautious while males tend to be risk takers.
- Ridden in a Car Driven by Someone Under the Influence:** 2004 survey data show that 18% of eighth grade students had ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol. This represents an all time low and is down nine percentage points from the 27% high that was reported in 2002. Public campaigns and tough drinking and driving laws have deterred many motorists from driving while under the influence. Statewide media campaigns against drinking and driving may have also served to educate our students about the danger of riding in a car driven by someone under the influence of alcohol. In 2000, more males than females reported that they had ridden in a car driven by someone under the influence. The 2002 and 2004 data, however, show the percentages for males and females to be very close. This suggests that riding in a car driven by someone under the influence of alcohol has become a dangerous behavior for both males and females.

	2000		2002		2004	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Seat Belt Use	81%	71%	85%	78%	86%	75%
Bike Helmet Use	54%	36%	53%	35%	55%	42%
Roller Blade/Skate Board Helmet Use	33%	14%	36%	19%	35%	40%
Ridden in a Car Driven by Someone Under the Influence of Alcohol	18%	25%	57%	56%	22%	20%

F=Female, M=Male

Violence:

Carried weapon \geq 1 day during the past 30 days (Kappa = 76.3%)

Had a physical fight \geq 1 time during the past 12 months (Kappa = 68.2%)

	2000	2002	2004
Weapons	21%	14%	16%
Physical Fights	58%	48%	44%
Fights w/Medical Attention	9%	6%	4%
Bullied/Harassed	-----	19%	19%

- Weapons:** Overall trends indicate that there has been a decrease in reports of eighth grade students carrying a weapon. The 2004 survey data reveal that 16% of students reported that they had carried a weapon (e.g., gun, knife, or club) at least once in the previous 30 days. Of concern is that this is twice the number reported by high school students in 2003. Although some females reported that they had carried a weapon, the majority of students who reported that they had carried a weapon were males. This may be because males are more apt to carry a pocket knife or to engage in sports such as hunting or target shooting.
- Fights:** 2004 survey data indicate that 44% of eighth grade students had been in a physical fight and 4% had been hurt badly enough to require medical attention. Males were more apt to be in physical fights than females. Overall, the 2004 data suggest that, overtime, there has been a slight decline in fighting and in the severity of the incidents. This may be a result of the character education and peer mediation programs that have been implimented at the middle school.

	2000		2002		2004	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Weapons	6%	33%	6%	22%	8%	23%
Physical Fights	37%	76%	30%	66%	19%	68%
Fights w/Medical Attention	4%	13%	3%	9%	2%	6%
Bullied/Harassed	-----	-----	10%	28%	14%	25%

F = Female M = Male

• **Bullying & Harassment:** The 2002 and 2004 surveys asked questions about students' experiences with bullying and harassment. The number of eighth grade students who reported that they felt bullied or harassed most of the time or all of the time remained at 19% in both 2002 and 2004. When asked when bullying and harassment were most likely to occur, students pointed to the sixth grade. When asked where bullying and harassment were most likely to occur, students named the the hallways before and after school, the hallways between classes, and the school cafeteria as the top three locations in both surveys. Bullying in the hallways before and after school has decreased somewhat but the hallways are still primary locations for bullying to occur. Bullying in the cafeteria has also increased. This may be a direct result of the overcrowding conditions of the middle school due to an increase in the number of students.

2002 Order of Places in Which Bullying is most likely to Occur		2004 Order of Places in Which Bullying is most likely to Occur	
Hallways before and after school	37%	Hallways between classes	28%
Hallways between classes	25%	Cafeteria	25%
Cafeteria	12%	Hallways before and after school	22%
Bus	10%	Lockerroom (all boys)	7%
Classroom	8%	Classroom	6%
Locker room (all boys)	7%	Bus	2%
PE Class	1%	PE Class	1%

Although males were more likely to report that they have felt bullied or harassed than females in both surveys, the results may not tell the real story. The terms "bullied" and "harassed" imply a more blatant and aggressive form of aggression. Females can often participate in a subtler, yet equally hurtful form of aggression. Females tend to participate in the hurtful behavior of excluding individuals, talking behind their backs, and shutting people out.

	2002		2004	
	F	M	F	M
To what extent do you feel bullied or harassed	4%	10%	2%	9%

F = Female M = Male

Depression & Suicide:

Considered suicide during the past 12 months (Kappa = 83.8%)

Planned suicide during the past 12 months (Kappa = 77.0%)

Had < 1 suicide attempt during the last 12 months (Kappa = 76.4%)

	2000	2002	2004
Thought about Killing Themselves	18%	20%	12%
Made a Plan	11%	14%	10%
Have Tried	5%	6%	4%

- Suicidal Thoughts and Plans:** The good news is that depression and thoughts of death are on the decline among middle school students. The 2004 data represents the lowest percentages in all three categories. While most eighth grade students reported that they have not had suicidal thoughts, the survey revealed that 12% (42 students) reported that they had, 10% (35 students) reported that they had made a plan, and 4%(13 students) reported that they have tried. This data is consistent with the 2003 high school data which revealed that within the past 12 months, 13% of Needham High School students had thought about killing themselves, 11% had made a plan, and 8% had actually attempted suicide one or more times. Needham High School YRBS data for this category is consistent with statewide data that report that significantly fewer students in 2003 than in previous years seriously considered suicide or made a plan (2003 Massachusetts YRBS Report).

The data reveals that this is a serious issue for both males and females. In 2000 females were more likely to think about killing themselves and make a plan, while in both 2002 and 2004, males were more likely to think about killing themselves and make a plan. Across all three surveys, however, females were more likely to have tried to commit suicide. This may be because females are more likely to use over the counter drugs which are readily available. Males, on the other hand, are more likely to use a firearm, which is not so easily accessible.

	2000		2002		2004	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Thought about Killing Themselves	25%	12%	19%	21%	12%	13%
Made a Plan	16%	6%	12%	16%	9%	11%
Have Tried	8%	3%	7%	5%	5%	3%

F= Female, M=Male

2) Tobacco Use

Ever used cigarettes (Kappa = 83.8%)

Age first smoked whole cigarette < 13 years (Kappa = 68.1%)

Ever smoked cigarettes regularly (Kappa = 86.8%)

	2000	2002	2004
Tried a Cigarette	27%	20%	9%
Regular Cigarette Use	9%	7%	8%
Smokeless Tobacco Use	14%	4%	3%
Recent Cigar Use	13%	8%	4%

- **Tried Cigarettes:** The 2004 survey shows that most (91%) of eighth grade students report that they have not tried a cigarette. This is a significant improvement from previous surveys (73% in 2000 and 80% in 2002). This data is consistent with high school data that indicates that cigarette use among high school students has decreased over time. The high school data also suggests that fewer students are trying cigarettes while in elementary school but, instead, are trying their first cigarette while in middle school.

The 2004 data reveals that of the 9% (31 students) who have tried tried cigarettes, half were female and half were male. Previous surveys revealed that more males were trying cigarettes than females.

- **Regular Cigarette Use:** A startling finding is that although 9% of eighth grade students report that they have tried a cigarette, 8% identify themselves as regular users. This figure has remained relatively consistent over the history of the survey. Although school discipline data does not suggest that students are smoking on school grounds, it would be important to try to identify students who are smoking on a regular basis and help them to quit.
- **Cigars and Smokeless Tobacco:** Use of cigars and smokeless tobacco is also at an all time low among eighth grade students. It should be noted, however, that across all three surveys, more males smoked cigars and used smokeless tobacco than females.

	2000		2002		2004	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Tried a Cigarette	20%	32%	12%	28%	9%	9%
Regular Cigarette Use	6%	11%	6%	9%	9%	8%
Smokeless Tobacco Use	2%	8%	2%	6%	2%	3%
Recent Cigar Use	2%	13%	3%	13%	2%	5%

F=Female, M=Male

3) Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Alcohol:

Age first used alcohol < 13 years (Kappa = 70.9%)

Ever used alcohol (Kappa = 86.0%)

	2000	2002	2004
Have Had Alcohol	40%	37%	31%
First Drank at Age 10 or Younger	37%	30%	21%

- **Alcohol Use:** The percentage of students reporting that they have consumed alcohol has declined over the history of the survey. In 2004, 31% of eighth grade students reported that they have had a drink of alcohol. Of those who had, 21% had their first drink of alcohol while in elementary school.

Males were more likely to have had a drink of alcohol than females in all three surveys and males were also more likely to have had their first drink while in elementary school. This may be because males are willing to take more risks than females.

	2000		2002		2004	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Have Had Alcohol	33%	47%	26%	48%	29%	35%
First Drank at Age 10 or Younger	6%	19%	8%	13%	5%	9%

F= Female, M=Male

Other Drug Use:

Age first used marijuana (Kappa = 69.0%)

Ever used marijuana (Kappa = 87.5%)

Ever used cocaine (Kappa = 72.5%)

Ever used steroids (Kappa = 41.6%)

Ever used injected drugs (Kappa = 14.5%)

	2000	2002	2004
Marijuana Use	16%	12%	9%
Cocaine Use	4%	3%	3%
Inhalants	8%	7%	8%
Steroid Use	2%	1%	1%
Injected an Illegal Drug	2%	2%	2%

- **Marijuana Use:** 2004 data indicate that Marijuana has been used by about 31 students (9%). Although this figure is at an all time low, data reveal that the use of marijuana by males has decreased while the use of marijuana by females has increased. This behavior should be monitored carefully as Needham High School data show an overall increase in marijuana use. The 2003 high school survey data suggest that the percentage of students who have tried marijuana at least once has increased by 22 percentage points since the survey was first conducted in 1993. In addition, the high school data suggest that just under one quarter of students try marijuana for the first time in middle school while another one quarter try it for the first time in high school. School officials will work with the Needham Police Department to monitor marijuana use within the community.
- **Other Drug Use:** Use of cocaine, inhalants, steroids, and needles to inject drugs have all remained low over time. A small number of students, however, are involved with these dangerous drugs. For example, 9 students reported that they have used cocaine, 5 students have used steroids, 8 students have used a needle to inject an illegal drug, and 27 students have sniffed glue. As mentioned earlier, school officials will work to try to identify these students and get them appropriate help.

	2000		2002		2004	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Marijuana Use	7%	24%	7%	16%	10%	8%
Cocaine Use	3%	6%	1%	4%	4%	2%
Inhalants	9%	11%	6%	8%	8%	8%
Steroid Use	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%
Injected an Illegal Drug	2%	3%	1%	3%	3%	2%

F=Female, M= Male

4) Sexual Behaviors

Ever had sexual intercourse (Kappa = 86.9%)

Age first had sexual intercourse < 13 years (Kappa = 71.0%)

Had > lifetime sexual partners (Kappa = 81.4%)

Ever taught about HIV in school (Kappa = 49.1%)

	2000	2002	2004
Abstinence	89%	88%	89%
Sexual Intercourse	12%	13%	9%
Oral Sex	-----	-----	15%
AIDS Education	95%	95%	93%

- **Abstinence:** 2004 data reveal that most 8th grade students, 89%, reported that they have not had sexual intercourse. This percentage has remained relatively consistent over time with females recording a slightly higher percentage for abstinence than males. Most students, 93%, recall having received HIV/AIDS education in school. This curriculum promotes abstinence among middle school age students.

- **Sexual Behavior:** 2004 data suggest that 9% (30 students) reported that they have had sexual intercourse. This percentage is lower than in previous surveys. Of those students who report that they have had sexual intercourse, 60% reported that either they or their partner used a condom. Of deep concern is that 13 students reported that they had sexual intercourse while in elementary school and 17 students reported that they have had sexual intercourse with 2 or more partners.

The 2004 survey asked students about their participation in oral sex. This was asked because popular media has suggested that students are participating in oral sex but do not consider this to be sexual activity. Fifteen percent, or 51 students, reported that they have participated in oral sex. There is no comparison data as this question was not asked in previous surveys. Among those students who reported that they have had oral sex, almost half (22 students) reported that they have had oral sex with 2 or more partners.

When looking at all three middle school surveys, participation in sexual intercourse is at an all time low among eighth grade students. While female sexual activity has remained consistent over time (7% - 8%), male participation in sexual intercourse has dropped from 18% at its highest point in 2002 to 9% in 2004. Males were more likely than females to report that they have participated in oral sex.

	2000		2002		2004	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Abstinence	93%	84%	93%	82%	92%	91%
Sexual Intercourse	7%	16%	8%	18%	8%	9%
Oral Sex	-----	-----	-----	-----	12%	19%
AIDS Education	96%	94%	92%	92%	100%	97%

F=Female, M=Male

5) Dietary Behaviors and Weight Control

Perceive self as overweight (Kappa = 67.2%)

Trying to lose weight (Kappa = 78.7%)

	2000	2002	2004
Describe Self as Right Weight	55%	51%	54%
Describe Self as <u>very</u> Overweight	3%	3%	3%
Describe Self as <u>slightly</u> Overweight	23%	25%	22%
Trying to Lose Weight	40%	40%	39%

- **Weight Perception:** 2004 data showed that about half (54%) of students described themselves as being the right weight. This is consistent with 2003 high school data that reports that 51% of high school students described themselves as being the right weight.

While over half of middle school students describe themselves as being at the right weight, 39% reported that they are trying to lose weight. This focus on losing weight by so many students may be due, in part, to the tremendous pressure that our culture places on being thin. It may also be due to the millions of dollars spent annually by the diet industry to promote fad diets. This pressure seems to be felt more by young girls as almost twice as many females reported that they are trying to lose weight than males across all three surveys.

The number of students who reported that they were trying to lose weight has remained consistent over all three middle school surveys (40%, 40%, and 39%). This data is fairly consistent with 2003 high school data which reports that 43% of high school students are trying to lose weight.

While very few students described themselves as being very overweight, females were more likely to describe themselves as being slightly overweight than males. This could be, in large part, due to the tremendous pressure girls feel to be thin.

	2000		2002		2004	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Describe Self as Right Weight	48%	60%	49%	54%	60%	49%
Describe Self as <u>very</u> Overweight	7%	2%	2%	4%	2%	3%
Describe Self as <u>slightly</u> Overweight	31%	21%	30%	23%	26%	19%
Trying to Lose Weight	56%	25%	52%	27%	56%	24%

F = Female M = Male

Healthy Weight Loss

	2000	2002	2004
Exercise	71%	60%	61%
Eaten Fewer Calories	50%	47%	44%

- Healthy Weight Loss:** 2004 data reveal that more than half, 61% of eighth grade students, reported that they have used exercise to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight. In addition, 44% of students reported that they have eaten less food, fewer calories, or foods low in fat to lose weight or to keep from gaining weight. When done in moderation, these methods are considered to be appropriate ways to control weight. In health and physical education classes, students are taught to stay away from fad diets and instead to use a combination of healthy eating and physical exercise to monitor their weight.

	2000		2002		2004	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Exercise	81%	62%	67%	53%	75%	49%
Eaten Fewer Calories	64%	37%	58%	35%	62%	27%

F=Female, M=Male

Unhealthy Weight Loss

	2000	2002	2004
Gone w/out Eating	16%	11%	10%
Taken Pills/Powders	5%	3%	2%
Vomited/Laxatives	6%	4%	5%

- Unhealthy Weight Loss:** Survey trends indicate that fewer students are choosing extreme and dangerous methods of losing weight. 2004 data suggest that, although some students have practiced unhealthy behaviors in an attempt to lose weight, or to keep from gaining weight, these behaviors have decreased over time. Examples of dangerous behaviors include going without eating, taking pills or powders, vomiting, or using laxatives. When these behaviors are used, females have been more likely to use these more dangerous methods than males. This may indicate that females feel more desperate to lose weight than males.

	2000		2002		2004	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Gone w/out Eating	22%	11%	13%	10%	17%	5%
Taken Pills/Powders	8%	4%	5%	2%	3%	1%
Vomited/Laxatives	12%	1%	5%	3%	7%	2%

F=Female, M=Male

6) Physical Inactivity

Play on school sports team (Kappa = 69.3%)

	2000	2002	2004
Vigorous Activity 3 days +	83%	80%	78%
Physical Education 2-3 days/wk	87%	96%	93%
Sports Teams	78%	73%	75%
Watching Television 3 hrs +	22%	25%	20%

- Vigorous Activity:** 2004 survey data suggest that participation in vigorous physical activity among eighth grade students has decreased over time. This is consistent with national trends that suggest that teens are becoming more sedentary. This is inconsistent, however, with 2003 high school data that suggest that high school students are participating in more physical activity. This may be because there are more opportunities for high school students to participate on athletic teams and to work out at gyms. Almost all students (93%) reported that they are participating in physical education classes 2 – 3 time per week. This is consistent with Pollard Middle School requirements for physical education which provides students with physical education instruction every other day.

Three quarters of eighth grade students reported that they participate on some kind of a sports team. This is consistent the the 2003 high school data. Interestingly, females consistently reported a higher percentage across all three surveys in their participation in vigorous physical activity and in physical education classes while

males reported a higher percentage in their participation on sports teams. This may indicate that females are more willing to participate in a wide variety of different physical activities than males or that there are more opportunities available to females than ever before.

	2000		2002		2004	
	F	M	F	M	F	M
Vigorous Activity	46%	33%	40%	36%	45%	29%
Physical Education	97%	92%	98%	93%	95%	91%
Sports Teams	72%	83%	70%	76%	74%	80%
Watching Television	20%	24%	24%	26%	21%	21%

F= Female, M=Male

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