

STUDENT PROFILE

Non-School Influences on Academic Achievement:

Despite the enormous emphasis on promoting academic achievement, there has been relatively little investigation in South Carolina of influences other than school that determine the interests, potential, and performance of the students. In research studies, family and other non-school factors have routinely been shown to correlate with academic performance. Despite the fact that educators and others often explain poor academic performance by family, community, and cultural circumstances, these factors are not typically studied. Educators probably feel that they are not in a good position to change these external influences nearly as well as they can improve academic performance through working directly with students. This “direct” rather than “indirect” (family-school-community) approach deserves more investigation, especially since the external influences are so powerful.

One way to initiate such an investigation is to look at some evidence regarding the correlation between external factors and academic performance. There are several sources of data on the relationship between “external” factors and school achievement. For example, state testing data is routinely reported for subgroups. The PACT results for 2003-04 in grades six to eight for math showed the following rates of “below basic”: 39.5% free and reduced lunch – vs.- 16.5% full pay, 17.2% White-vs-39.5% African-American, 59.2% disabled – vs. - 21.1% non-disabled, 29.4% male – vs. – 26.3% female, and 53.6 % LEP – vs. – 31.6% non-LEP. A more revealing analysis by the Budget and Control Board’s Office of Research and Statistics found very high rates of below basic in SY’02 for elementary and middle grades students with special health care needs and with socio-economic disadvantages. For SY’02, the study found that students with special health care needs, constituting 29% of middle graders, had twice the rate of below basic than did the students without special healthcare needs.

2001-02 PACT Grades 6-8		
	% Below Basic in Reading	% Below Basic in Math
Children without special healthcare needs	22%	30%
Children with special healthcare needs	47%	55%

Children with Special Healthcare Needs Subgroups	% Below Basic in Reading	% Below Basic in Math	% of CSHCN	% of All Children
Mental disorders	54%	63%	46%	13%
Adjustment reactions	46%	57%	10%	3%
Depression	48%	60%	6%	2%
Conduct disorder	57%	67%	6%	2%
Emotional disturbances	58%	68%	9%	3%
Hyperkinetic syndrome of childhood	55%	61%	22%	6%
Reading disorders	62%	70%	8%	2%
Developmental, speech or language disorders	65%	72%	8%	2%
Mild mental retardation	69%	83%	4%	1%
Respiratory system (Asthma)	40%	50%	16%	5%
Metabolic and Endocrine Disorders	41%	53%	11%	3%
SDE Special Ed Students	50%	55%	22%	6%
Mentally Handicap	66%	81%	2%	1%
Learning Disability	54%	58%	14%	4%
Speech Handicap	42%	44%	7%	2%

(Source: Office of Research and Statistics)

For SY'02 the same analysis was done for students with either social and economic disadvantages or special healthcare needs. The results showed that all groups with significant economic, social and health conditions had rates of below basic PACT performance approaching or more than double the rates of students without disadvantages.

2001-02 PACT Below Basic for Middle Grades (6th-8th)	School Year	% in Reading	% in Math
All Students (100%)	2001-02	29.3%	37.2%
Students without Socioeconomic Needs (57.1%) *	2001-02	18.4%	25.2%
Free & Reduced Lunch (49.4%)	2001-02	42.6%	51.7%
Medicaid	2000-01	44.1%	53.5%
Medicaid (40.0%)	2001-02	44.1%	53.5%
DSS-Abuse/Neglect	2000-01	47.2%	57.6%
DSS-Abuse/Neglect (0.8%)	2001-02	46.9%	57.9%
Food Stamps	2000-01	48.3%	57.3%
Food Stamps (22.9%)	2001-02	47.3%	56.1%
TANF	2000-01	50.7%	59.1%
TANF (4.8%)	2001-02	50.2%	58.6%
Foster Care	2000-01	48.5%	61.9%
Foster Care (0.7%)	2001-02	48.3%	62.1%
DMH	2000-01	52.3%	62.1%
DMH (4.8%)	2001-02	53.4%	62.5%
DJJ	2000-01	56.9%	66.2%
DJJ (3.1%)	2001-02	54.3%	62.4%

* Needs include all listed subgroups except F/R Lunch
 (Source: Office of Research and Statistics)

Middle School Students	Without Socioeconomic Needs		With Socioeconomic Needs		With Special Health Care Needs	
2001-02 PACT Below Basic/ Gender-Ethnicity Groups	% in Reading	% in Math	% in Reading	% in Math	% in Reading	% in Math
All	18.4%	25.2%	43.9%	53.3%	46.9%	55.4%
Male	23.1%	26.5%	50.2%	54.6%	51.6%	55.9%
Female	13.4%	23.9%	37.2%	51.8%	40.4%	54.9%
White	12.7%	18.3%	32.2%	40.1%	36.5%	43.2%
Non-White	32.2%	42.2%	50.1%	60.4%	55.7%	65.7%
White Male	16.7%	19.0%	37.9%	40.5%	40.9%	42.7%
White Female	8.6%	17.5%	26.0%	39.5%	30.1%	43.9%
Non-White Male	39.3%	45.1%	56.9%	62.3%	60.8%	67.2%
Non-White Female	24.9%	39.3%	43.1%	58.3%	48.8%	63.9%

(Source: Office of Research and Statistics)

Another source of evidence regarding the impact of out-of-school influences on academic achievement is the National Assessment of Educational Progress. NAEP data for 8th graders in South Carolina in 1998 and 2003 showed a strong correlation between family literacy and reading scores.

Father's education: (2003)

Did not finish high school (11%)

High School graduate (24%)

Some education post high school (16%)

Graduated college (29%)

Don't know

All students

**Reading
Score**

250

255

264

267

250

258

**Number of types of reading materials in home (newspapers,
encyclopedia, magazine, 25+ books):** (1998)

0 to 2 (21%)

3 (32%)

4 (46%)

All students

**Reading
Score**

238

253

264

255

Number of books in home: (2003)

0 to 10 (12%)

**Reading
Score**

239

11 to 25 (22%)	249
26 to 100 (38%)	259
Over 100 (28%)	273

Discussed things studied at school with someone at home: (1998)	Reading Score
Almost everyday (39%)	259
1 to 2 times a week (29%)	257
1 to 2 times a month (12%)	256
Never or hardly ever (20%)	245

Watch TV or videotapes outside of school on a school day: (2003)	Reading Score
None (3%)	256
1 hour or less (17%)	266
2 to 3 hours (37%)	263
4 to 5 hours (22%)	260
6 or more hours (21%)	243

A final study of the special circumstances of students related to and in some cases playing a significant causal role for poor academic performance is the SY'02 survey of alcohol and drug use. The survey asked about usual grades in school as well as about risk behaviors. The results do not prove that substance use or the other risk behaviors cause poor grades. However, the strong association emphasizes the significant differences in attitudes, habits, and peer influences for students with high versus low grades.

Usual GPA in the Past Year	A	B	C	D	F	Total	F - A	F/A
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In the past month, % who responded they have

drank alcohol	9.8	15.3	20.6	22.9	28.5	16.4	18.7	2.9
smoked	6.4	11.8	19.0	24.4	32.2	14.0	25.8	5.1
smoked marijuana	3.0	5.6	10.3	14.4	21.9	7.4	18.9	7.2
binge drank (drank 5 or more drinks on 1 occasion)	2.9	5.1	8.8	11.4	19.8	6.5	16.8	6.7
smoked marijuana 1 or more joints when smoking	2.3	4.0	7.7	11.2	19.0	5.6	16.7	8.3
binge drank 3 or more days in last month	1.3	1.4	3.1	4.1	10.0	2.3	8.7	7.8
smoked marijuana 3 or more joints when smoking	1.2	1.7	3.6	5.4	12.4	2.7	11.2	10.0
smoked half pack or more per day	1.1	1.6	3.2	5.2	13.4	2.5	12.2	11.7

In the past year, % who responded they have

been in a physical fight with someone	23.0	31.1	36.8	38.9	43.1	31.7	20.1	1.9
received detention or in-school suspension	20.5	31.8	40.9	43.1	49.0	33.0	28.5	2.4
felt sad/hopeless nearly every day for 2 wks or more	14.5	18.3	20.2	21.4	24.7	18.4	10.2	1.7
carried a handgun or knife for self-defense	8.2	11.4	15.4	19.0	25.9	12.7	17.7	3.2
stolen anything worth more than \$5	6.2	9.6	13.9	16.0	23.0	10.8	16.8	3.7
seriously considered attempting suicide	5.9	7.7	8.9	10.4	14.7	8.0	8.7	2.5
been hit by your boyfriend or girlfriend on purpose	5.5	7.4	9.7	11.0	15.2	8.1	9.7	2.8
been suspended (out of school)	5.1	10.2	18.3	23.6	30.1	12.7	25.0	5.9
hit your boyfriend or girlfriend on purpose	5.0	7.4	8.6	9.0	11.5	7.4	6.5	2.3
skipped 1 or more whole days of school	4.9	6.9	10.5	13.4	19.9	8.2	15.0	4.1
had an motor vehicle accident	3.4	3.8	5.2	5.7	10.6	4.4	7.2	3.1
carried a handgun or knife for use as a weapon	2.8	4.0	6.8	8.5	14.1	5.1	11.3	5.0
been involved in a fight after using alcohol/drugs	2.3	3.5	6.5	9.4	15.6	4.8	13.3	6.8
been arrested and booked on a charge	1.7	2.5	4.7	6.9	13.7	3.5	12.0	8.3
received a traffic ticket	1.2	1.2	1.8	2.6	5.4	1.6	4.2	4.5

(Source: 2001-02 DAODAS South Carolina Survey)

The data on socio-economic status, health, and risk-taking differences that correlate with academic performance suggest that in order for more students to reach state minimum academic standards or the proficiency goal of No Child Left Behind, South Carolina must address the family, community, cultural, health and other non-school problems that contribute to poor academic performance. More succinctly, it is unlikely that improved academic instruction alone will enable low-performing students to reach state and national standards. It is not reasonable to expect schools to reach academic standards without better support from family, community, health, business, media and other sectors in reducing the non-school impediments to higher academic achievement.

An Incomplete Profile of Attitudes, Activities, and Well-Being of Middle Grades Students: Unfortunately, there has never been a comprehensive assessment of the attitudes, experiences, and well-being or problems that the 167,000 middle grades students bring with them to school. The fact that no one collects such information routinely is revealing in itself. Most successful organizations try to learn as much as possible about their customers. Not so with schools. Elementary school teachers know each of their students intimately, based on 180 days of face-to-face contact for seven or more hours. Middle grades teachers have a less intimate relationship with their students, since they serve 100-150 rather than 20-30. Moreover, the educators know their customers only as

participants in the school environment. Regrettably, they do not record much data about the students as people. Thus, stereotypes abound. Problem descriptions are seen by some, especially people outside the schools, as excuses for low achievement by schools. However, the data presented in this report are indicators of problems associated with poor academic performance. Most of these are problems that must be prevented through family and community support and by better relationships at school rather than through improved instruction. The following data present an imperfect but revealing profile of South Carolina middle grades students during their early adolescent years. The sources of the data are noted as follows:

- a) NCHS: 2003 National Survey of Children's Health responses of a random sample of South Carolina parents of 11-14 year olds
- b) SS: 2003/04 Student Survey of all middle grades students
- c) PS: 2003/04 Parent Survey of many parents of middle grades students
- d) TS: 2003/04 Teacher Survey of all teachers in middle grades schools
- e) CTC: Communities That Care Survey responses in three counties for middle grades students during 2003 and 2004
- f) DAODAS: 2001/02 Survey of Public School/Students Concerning Attitudes and Behaviors Related to the Use of Alcohol, Tobacco, and other Drugs
- g) CSS: Carnegie School Survey responses of students in 17 low income middle grades schools in 1997/98
- h) CST: Carnegie School Survey responses of teachers in 17 low income middle grades schools in 1997/98
- i) ORS: Office of Research & Statistics of SC Budget & Control Board
- j) NAEP: National Assessment of Educational Progress for 8th grade in 1998, 2002, & 2003

A) STUDENT ACADEMIC ATTITUDES AND PERFORMANCE:

Middle grade students express a strong belief in the importance of education. Those surveyed in the 17 low income schools stated high expectations for their academic prospects. Expecting to go to college were 73% of students on free and reduced lunch and 83% from middle income families. However, they say that their teachers expect 13 – 15% fewer students to be college-bound. Their teachers estimated that only 48% of free and reduced lunch students have the potential to graduate from college, as compared with 78% of middle income students. The grades received by these students reflect the same socio-economic differences: 53% of middle income students get mostly B's and A's as compared with only 28% of free and reduced lunch students. By comparison, 49% of lower income students got C's, D's, and F's, as compared with 27% of middle income students. Their teachers report that one-quarter of white middle school students perform below grade level, as compared with 48% of minority students. The teachers and students cited several problems that may have caused the poor performance, for example, the greater failure of lower income students to complete their school assignments: 36% of free and reduced lunch students versus 21% middle income students, according to their teachers. Moreover, 18% of students reported that they skipped an average of 2.6 days of school in a month, thus failing their most essential assignment: to show up for school. The teachers of students in the 17 low income schools identified the percentage of students having significant problems with learning: 33% were underachieving (19% serious and 14% moderate problem), and 30% had trouble learning academic subjects (17% serious, 13% moderate); these may have been caused by student deficiencies cited by their teachers: 34% poor work habits (22% serious, 12% moderate), 29% poorly

motivated to achieve (18% serious, 11% moderate), 26% poor concentration/limited attention (14% serious, 12% moderate), and 22% difficulty following directions (12% serious, 10% moderate).

DATA FOR MIDDLE GRADES AND EARLY ADOLESCENTS:

- Student ratings of the importance of school learning to later life: Very/Quite 83.5%, Fairly 10.6, Slightly/Not At All 6.0%. (Source: CTC)

% Responding "Definitely or Probably" Will: (Source: CSS)

Graduate from High School	Student	Parent	Teacher
F/R LUNCH	85	84	68
FULL PAY LUNCH	91	92	80
Go To College			
F/R LUNCH	73	75	58
FULL PAY LUNCH	83	84	70

- Teacher rating of students' academic potential to graduate from a 4-yr college or more: F/R Lunch 27%, Full Paid Lunch 60%. (Source: CST)

Students' Usual Grades: (Source: CST)

Lunch Status/Grades	A's & B's or B's	B's & C's	C's or Below
F/R	28	23	49
Full Paid	53	21	27

- Teacher rating of % students below grade level: White 24%, Black 48%. (Source: CST)
- Teacher report of % of students not completing their school assignments: F/R Lunch 36%, Full Paid Lunch 21%. (Source: CST)

Students Learning Problems (Source: CST)	% Of Teachers Responding....		
Types of Learning Difficulty Behaviors of Students	Moderate Problem	Serious Problem	Combined
Underachieving	14	19	33
Poor work habits	12	22	34
Poor concentration, limited attention	12	14	26
Difficulty following directions	10	12	22
Poorly motivated to achieve	11	18	29
Learning academic subjects	13	17	30

- Number of days absent in past month: 0 = 43%, 1 – 2 = 35%, 3 – 4 = 14%, 5 – 10 = 6%, 11+ = 2%. (Source: NAEP)
- What kind of reader are you? Very Good 27%, Good 35%, Average 34%, Poor 4%. (Source: NAEP)

B) LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:

While 39-48% of students express positive feelings about being in school, 35% are ambivalent, and 17 – 27% say they hate or seldom/never enjoy school. However, in the three counties survey, 46% say their courses are quite interesting, 35% fairly interesting, and only 19% dull; however, on the statewide survey, 48% of middle grades students disagreed that their classes are interesting or fun. The pressure of doing middle grades work was a “big problem” for one third of students and at least somewhat of or a big problem for 50–60% in the 17 lower income schools. On the statewide survey, 41% of all students disagreed that “students in their school believe they can do good work; and 30% were “not satisfied with the learning environment at their school.”

DATA FOR MIDDLE GRADES AND EARLY ADOLESCENTS:

- 27% of students responded they often/always hate being in school. (Source: CTC)

Students responded they... (Source: CTC)	Never	Seldom	Combined
Enjoy being in school	6.9%	9.9%	16.8%
Feel assigned schoolwork is meaningful or important	4.8%	7.3%	12.1%
Try to do their best work in school	0.7%	2.1%	2.8%

- Students responded their courses are: Very/Quite Interesting 45.5%, Fairly Interesting 35.2%, Slightly/Very Dull 19.3%. (Source: CTC)

Students feel they (their): (Source: CSS)	No! (%)	No (%)	Combined %
school lets their parents know when they do something well	22.9	29.8	52.7
are asked by teacher to work on special classroom projects	14.7	28.9	43.6
are praised by their teachers for hard work in school	13.5	25.5	39.0
are noticed by teachers for doing a good job and told so	8.5	15.9	24.4
have lots of chances to talk with teacher one-on-one	6.7	15.9	22.6
have lots of chances to be part of class discussion and activities	6.2	16.0	22.2

School/Academic Pressures

% of students feel... (Source: CSS)	Somewhat of a Problem	A Big Problem	Combined
Trying to get good grades	23	37	60
Having too much homework	23	34	57
Being bored	23	33	56
Teachers expecting too much	24	29	53
Having a hard teacher(s)	25	25	50
Pressure of expectations from parents to do well in school	20	22	42
Not understanding class work	31	20	51

Not getting along with teacher(s)	23	20	43
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- Number of pages you must read in school and for homework per day: 5 or less = 27%, 6 – 10 = 28%, 11 – 15 = 16%, 20+ = 19%. (Source: NAEP)

Learning Environment - Student Survey Responses (Source: SS)	Disagree (%)
My classes are interesting and fun.	48.3
Students at my school believe they can do good work.	41.1
I am satisfied with the learning environment in my school.	29.6
My teachers praise students when they do good work.	28.6
My teachers spend enough time helping me learn.	25.2
The textbooks and workbooks I use at my school really help me to learn.	24.2
My teachers do a good job teaching me mathematics.	16.0
My classes are challenging (not too easy; they make me think).	15.2
My teachers help students when they do not understand something.	14.2
My teachers do a good job teaching me English language arts.	12.9
My teachers want me to understand what I am learning, not just remember facts.	11.3
My teachers expect students to learn.	4.6
My teachers expect students to behave.	4.4

Learning Environment – Parent Survey Responses (Source: PS)	Disagree (%)
I am satisfied with the learning environment at my child's school.	20.1
My child's teachers provide extra help when my child needs it.	19.6
My child's school has high expectations for student learning.	9.8
My child's teachers give homework that helps my child learn.	9.2
My child's teachers encourage my child to learn.	8.3

Learning Environment – Teacher Survey Responses (Source: TS)	Disagree (%)
Students at my school are motivated and interested in learning.	27.5
I am satisfied with the learning environment in my school.	17.7
There is a sufficient amount of classroom time allocated to instruction in essential skills.	9.3
My school offers effective programs for students with disabilities.	8.0

- My friends make fun of people who try to do really well in school: Strongly agree 9%, Agree 18%, Disagree 41%, Strongly disagree 32%. (Source: NAEP)
- I have friends I can talk to if I need help with a school assignment: Strongly agree 48%, Agree 41%, Disagree 5%, Strongly disagree 5%. (Source: NAEP)

C) SCHOOL CLIMATE:

All the surveys surfaced wide concern with student behavior. On the statewide student survey, 61% of middle grades students disagreed that “students behave well in class”; 25% of teachers expressed the same opinion. Behavior in hallways, in the lunchroom, and on school grounds was reported as a concern by 35% of teachers but by 63% of students. In the 17 lower income schools, only 30% reported that “positive peer interactions take place most of the time”, while 30% also reported that “negative peer interactions take place” most of the time. Problem behavior in class was further analyzed by teachers in the 17 schools. They judged that 20% of students were “disruptive in class” and “disturb others while they are working”; and that 15% fell into each of the following: “fidgety with difficulty sitting still”, “constantly seeking attention”, and “defiant, obstinate, and stubborn”. Not surprisingly, students in these 17 schools on free or reduced lunch reported that in a year: 57% had been sent to the principal, 37% placed into in-school suspension, and 27% suspended from school at least once. Some experienced those disciplinary consequences multiple times: 17% of the disadvantaged students were sent to the principal, 7% into in-school suspension, and 5% suspended from school five or more times. From the student’s viewpoint in these 17 schools, they expressed problems (big problems in parenthesis) with life in their schools: 41% (18%) “not getting along with students”, 33% (16%) “fighting or having problems with friends”, 24% (12%) “prejudice from students”, 26% (14%) “prejudice from teachers”, 21% (10%) “not being part of the popular group of students.”, and 15% (8%) “having few or no friends.”

These poor interpersonal relations were further expressed by 22.5% of students statewide saying they do not “feel safe at school before and after school hours,” and 17% do not “feel safe at my school during the school day.” The frequency of safety problems was quantified in the 17 low income schools: while 42% of students said they at least one time experienced “fear of being hurt or bothered at school”, for 3 or more times it was 14%, and for 6 or more times it was 7%. Moreover, in these schools those “experiencing actual violence at school” were 12% at least once, 5% three or more times, and 2% six or more times.

The other critical area of relationships is between students and teachers. On the statewide survey, 38% of students disagreed that “students and teachers get along well at my school”; only 6% of teachers expressed similar concern. Furthermore, 22% of students did not agree that “teachers work together to help students at my school.” In the 17 low income schools, 14% of students said that “prejudice from teachers” was a big problem and an additional 12% rated it somewhat of a problem. As a consequence, many students expressed reluctance to confide in their teachers. In the 17 schools, 44% of students would never or hardly ever “go to teachers about a personal problem”, 27% sometimes and only 29% most of the time or always. The lack of trust for adults at school was expressed vividly in the statewide DAODAS survey. Many students reported that they would not tell an adult about the following: 33% if they “heard a student threaten to harm someone”, 23% if they “saw a student with a hand gun at school” (also 25% “with a knife” and 34% “with drugs”).

DATA FOR MIDDLE GRADES AND EARLY ADOLESCENTS:

Social and Physical Environment: Student Survey Responses (Source: SS)	Disagree (%)
Students at my school behave well in the hallways, in the lunchroom, and on school grounds.	63.3
Students at my school behave well in class.	60.8
The bathrooms at my school are kept clean.	54.4
Teachers and students get along well with each other at my school.	38.1
Students from different backgrounds get along well at my school.	34.9
The rules about how students should behave in my school are fair.	31.7
I feel safe at my school before and after school hours.	22.5

Teachers work together to help students at my school.	21.9
I feel safe at my school during the school day.	16.8
Students at my school know the rules and what happens when students break the rules.	16.1
The rules for behavior are enforced at my school.	14.6
I feel safe going to or coming from my school.	13.9

Student Climate Perceptions: (Source: CSS)	Most of the time	Sometimes
Teachers provide support	10%	90%
Students show commitment	10%	90%
Positive student interactions take place	30%	70%
Negative peer interactions take place	30%	70%
Disciplinary harshness	50%	50%
Clear rules and behavior expectations	90%	10%

Social and Physical Environment: Teacher Survey Responses (Source: TS)	Disagree (%)
Students at my school behave well in the hallways, in the lunchroom, and on school grounds.	35.2
The rules for behavior are enforced at my school.	24.9
Students at my school behave well in class.	24.7
The bathrooms at my school are kept clean.	16.7
Rules and consequences for behavior are clear to students.	16.3
Students from different backgrounds get along well at my school.	10.8
Teachers and students get along well with each other at my school.	5.6

Teacher Satisfaction Ratings (Source: CST)	% Neutral	% Dissatisfied
Parent/Community Support and Involvement	20	80
Student Behavior	50	50

% of Students with Problem Behaviors as Rated By Teachers: (Source: CST)

Aggressive/Acting-Out Behaviors	Moderate Problem (%)	Serious or Very Serious Problem (%)	Combined %
Disturbs Others While They Are Working	9	11	20
Disruptive in Class	11	9	20
Fidgety, Difficulty Sitting Still	8	7	15
Defiant, Obstinate, Stubborn	6	9	15
Constantly Seeks Attention	7	8	15
Overly Aggressive To Peers (Fights)	4	5	9

Social and Physical Environment: Parent Survey Responses (Source: PS)	Disagree (%)
Students at my child's school are well behaved.	46.1

My child's school treats all students fairly.	33.7
My child's teachers care about my child as an individual.	17.3
My child feels safe at school.	14.0

Discipline

One or More Times during this year students were disciplined: (Source: CSS)

Lunch Type	Sent to principal	Received in-school suspensions	Received out-of-school suspensions
% F/R	57	37	27
% Full Paid	41	21	14

Student Perception of Social Support from... (Source: CSS)

	High (%)	Intermediate (%)
Teachers	10	90
Family	60	40

- Student willingness to go to teachers about a personal problem: Never/Hardly Ever 44%, Sometimes 27%, Most of Time/Always 29%. (Source: CSS)

% Who Likely Would Be To Tell an Adult If:	Not Likely		Very Unlikely		Not Likely/ Very Unlikely	
	6th Grade	8th Grade	6th Grade	8th Grade	6th Grade	8th Grade
you heard a student threaten to harm someone at school?	11.8	20.5	14.5	19.7	26.3	40.2
you saw a student with a handgun at school?	6.4	7.0	17.7	13.6	24.1	20.6
you saw a student with a knife at school?	7.7	11.6	16.3	14.0	24.0	25.6
you heard a rumor that a student had a handgun at school?	12.1	18.8	18.2	17.2	30.3	36.0
you saw a student with drugs at school?	9.1	20.4	18.2	21.6	27.3	42.0
you heard a rumor that a student had drugs at school?	13.6	26.0	19.2	25.8	32.8	51.8
you saw a student with alcohol at school?	9.7	21.8	19.5	24.2	29.2	46.0
you heard a rumor that a student had alcohol at school?	13.9	26.6	21.0	28.7	34.9	55.3

Social/Peer Pressure: % of students responding that they are... (Source: CSS)

	Somewhat of a Problem	A Big Problem	Combined
Not getting along with other students	23	18	41
Fighting or having problems with friends	17	16	33
Being bothered by older students	12	10	22

Not being a part of the popular group of students	11	10	21
Having few or no friends	7	8	15
Having trouble making new friends	9	6	15
Experiencing prejudice from students	12	12	24
Experiencing prejudice from teachers	12	14	26

Personal Safety/Health: % of students responding that they are... (Source: CSS)

	Somewhat of a Problem	A Big Problem	Combined
Getting things stolen	15	20	35
Dealing with gangs	6	7	13
Getting beaten up	4	4	8

Social Safety: Experiences on way to, from, or at school: (Source: CSS)

	% Responding...		
	1-2 Times	3 or More Times	Combined %
Fear of being hurt/bothered at school	28	14	42
Experience of robbery at school	29	14	43
Experience of actual violence at school	7	5	12
Offered drugs at school	9	8	17

D) PERSONALITY AND TEMPERAMENT:

Brief descriptions are available from parents, teachers, and students. These constitute a very limited and imperfect sketch of students as individual people. On the NSCH survey, parents reported that 19% of their middle grades children “argue too much” (12.5% always and 6.8% usually). Parents described 9% as usually or always “stubborn, sullen, or irritable”, 4% as “disobedient”, 2% as “bullies, is mean or cruel”, and 3% as “withdrawn and not involved with others” or “feels worthless or inferior”. However, their teachers described 7–8% of students as “unhappy, depressed, sad, withdrawn, shy, timid, and not expressing feelings” and 4–5% as “anxious, worried, nervous, frightened, or tense”. As for students in the 3 county CTC survey, a very high percentage expressed negative self-concept or depression: 36% “think I am no good at all”, 28% “think life is not worth it”, 27% “think I am a failure”, and 52% “felt depressed or sad most days, even if feeling okay sometimes”.

DATA FOR MIDDLE GRADES AND EARLY ADOLESCENTS:

Parent Description of Child’s Behavior: (Source: NSCH)	Usually (%)	Always (%)	Combined %
Argues too much	5.5	14.5	20.0
Is stubborn, sullen, or irritable	4.6	6.1	10.7
Is disobedient	1.8	3.6	5.4
Is withdrawn and not involved with others	1.8	1.1	2.9
Feels worthless or inferior	1.7	2.5	4.2

Bullies; is mean or cruel	0.4	1.6	2.0
Is unhappy, sad, or depressed	1.3	0.9	2.2

Parent Description of Child's Behavior: (Source: NSCH)	Never (%)	Sometimes (%)	Combined %
Tries to resolve conflicts with classmates, family, friends	3.4	33.3	36.7
Tries to understand other people's feelings	1.3	26.7	28.0
Gets along well with other children	0.5	14.2	14.7
Shows respect for teachers and neighbors	0.1	10.7	10.8

% of Students with Problem Behavior as Rated by Teachers: (Source: CST)

Moody/Shy/Withdrawn Behaviors	Moderate Problem (%)	Serious Problem (%)	Combined %
Does not express feelings	5	3	8
Unhappy, depressed, sad	4	3	7
Withdrawn	4	3	7
Shy/timid	4	3	7
Anxious, worried	3	2	5
Nervous, frightened, tense	2	2	4

Self-Esteem/Depression Behaviors: (Source: CTC)	%yes	%YES!	Combined %
Felt depressed or sad most days, even if feeling okay sometimes	30.4	21.9	52.3
Think I am no good at all	23.1	12.8	35.9
Think life is not worth it	17.8	10.4	28.3
Think I am a failure	14.1	7.6	21.7

E) PARENTAL CONCERNS ABOUT CHILD: (Source: NSCH)

In the NSCH survey, parents (76% are mothers, 17% fathers, and 7% other family members) rated their concerns about their children. Given the negative self-esteem, the expressed depressive feelings, and the problems experienced by youth at school, it is not surprising that parents reported having “a lot of concern”: 49% about “child’s achievements”, 42% about “child’s self-esteem”, 39% about “how child copes with stress”, 30% about “child’s learning difficulties”, 23% about “child’s depression or anxiety”, and 22% about “child’s being bullied by classmates”.

F) STUDENT CHARACTER AND POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTAL OUTCOMES:

It is painful to report that very little has been collected about the strengths of young adolescents. This neglect seems truly unfortunate since there is ample evidence that good character, values, and habits determine the success of people in work and life pursuits more than mastery of academic standards. A telling reminder of the importance of “who you are” rather than “what you know” was reported by a State Chamber of Commerce survey of employers. When asked what things they look for in hiring entry-level workers, the employers expressed the following priorities: The top five were (1) Integrity/Honesty, (2) Being Responsible, (3) Participating as a Team Member, (4) Knowing How To Learn, and (5) Listening. The next ten priorities were (6) Self-Esteem, (7) Reasoning, (8) Reading, (9) Self-Management, (10) Interpreting & Communicating Information, (11) Problem Solving, (12) Social Skills, (13) Arithmetic, (14) Serving

Clients/Customers, and (15) Time Allocation. The order of priorities for categories of skills was: (1) Personal Qualities, (2) Thinking Skills, (3) Interpersonal Skills, (4) Basic Math & Reading Skills, and (5) Information & Technology Skills.

Given the strong emphasis on good character, ethics, and interpersonal skills demanded by employers, most middle school students in the three county survey articulated positive attitudes and behaviors. However, significant numbers did not report such positive attitudes, and it is impossible to know how many fail to act in accordance with their stated values. Approximately 1 in 5 said they: “think it is okay to cheat sometimes at school” (18.5%), “ignore rules to get my way” (23%), “do the opposite of what people tell me, just to get them mad” (20%); and almost one in four disagree that “it is important to be honest with parents, even if they become upset and punish you” (23%). Roughly 1 in 10 condoned stealing: “think it is okay to take something without asking, if you can get away with it: (6.9%) and “steal something worth more than \$5” (8.4% a little bit wrong and 2.7% not wrong at all). Fighting seems to raise fewer ethical scruples: 51% “think it is alright to beat people up if they start a fight” and 22% say it is only a little bit wrong (16%) or not wrong at all (6%) to “pick a fight with someone”.

DATA FOR MIDDLE GRADES AND EARLY ADOLESCENTS:

Character and Ethics

- 50.7% of students think it’s all right to beat people up if they start a fight.
- 22.9% of students do not agree that it is important to be honest with parents, even if they become upset and punish you.
- 18.4% of students think it’s okay to cheat sometimes at school.
- 6.9% of students feel it’s okay to take something without asking if you can get away with it.
- 22.8% of students think they ignore rules to get their way.
- 19.6% of students think they do the opposite of what people tell me, just to get them mad.

Think I have done in the last year...	
What makes me feel good, no matter what	42.2%
Crazy things even if they are a little dangerous	26.5%
Something dangerous because someone dared me to do it	15.7%

How wrong to: (Source: CTC)	A Little Bit Wrong	Not Wrong At All	Combined
Pick a fight with someone	16.1%	6.1%	22.2%
Steal something worth more than \$5	8.4%	2.7%	11.1%
Stay away from school when parents think you are at school	6.7%	3.0%	9.7%

G) FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS: (Source: Parent Response in NSCH unless otherwise noted)

On the NSCH survey, parents reported the number of other children living in the household with their middle school child: none 40%, one 37%, two 17%, three or more 16%. The middle schoolers were: 40% the only child, 29% the oldest, 25% second oldest, and 5% third or more oldest.

Parents report close relationships with their middle school children: 86% very close, 13.7% somewhat close, and 0.4% not very close. They report “sharing ideas and talking about things that matter”: 74% very well, 24% somewhat well, and 1.5% not very well. Seventy-five percent reported eating a family meal together 4 or more days a week, including 46% 6 or 7 days; 7% reported meals 0 or 1 day and 18% 2 or 3. Eighty percent said they had met all or most of their child’s friends, 18% some and only 1.3% none. Sixty-six percent said they always or usually “attended events that their child is or friends participated in”, 14% sometimes, and 20% never.

The student viewpoint of family relationships was reported in the three county survey. Most students had positive relationships. Those who did not were: 14% and 31% “did not feel very close to mother and to father” respectively; 29% and 48% did not “share thoughts and feelings with mother and with father” respectively; 11% and 23% did not “enjoy spending time with mother and with father” respectively. Furthermore, 21% of student did not agree that “my parents give me lots of chances to do fun things with them”, and 34% did not agree that “my parents ask me what I think before most family decisions affecting me are made”. Most students felt that family rules were well-established and that their parents monitored their activities consistently. Only 15% disagreed that “the rules in my family are clear”; 13% disagreed that “when I am not at home, one of my parents knows where I am and whom I am with”; and 25% disagreed that “if you skipped school, you would be caught by your parents”. Most youth received positive reinforcement from their parents. The exceptions were: 8% never or almost never and 19% sometimes “my parents notice when I am doing a good job and let me know about it”; 9% never or almost never and 18% sometimes “your parents tell you they’re proud of you for something you’ve done.”

Some of the other things at home that bothered young adolescents in the 17 low income schools were: work responsibilities, including “doing household chores (20% somewhat of a problem and 23% a big problem), “taking care of younger brothers and sisters (13% somewhat, 16% big); “trouble with parents over how you spend your time after school” (15% somewhat, 15% big); “not having enough money” (13% somewhat, 17% big); “not having breakfast” (9% somewhat, 10% big); “not having nice clothes to wear” (8% somewhat, 8% big); and “no good place at home to do school work” (8% somewhat, 8% big).

DATA FOR MIDDLE GRADES AND EARLY ADOLESCENTS:

- Number of other children in household: 0 = 23.3%, 1 = 40.0%, 2 = 23.2%, 3 or More = 13.6%.
- Age position of child: Only Child 23.3%, Oldest Child 36.0%, 2nd Oldest Child 31.7%, Other 9.0%.
- Parent’s relationship (Closeness) with child: Very 84.3%, Somewhat 15.2%, Not Very 0.5%.
- Parent and child share ideas and talk about things that matter: Very Well 73.9, Somewhat 23.9%, Not Very Well 2.1%.
- Number of days family ate meal together in past week: 0-1 = 8.5%, 2-3 = 17.3%, 4 or More = 74.2%.
- Parent felt in past month child was harder to care for than most children of same age: Never 65.6%, Sometimes 23.4%, Usually/Always 11.0%.

- Parent angry with child in past month: Never 25.1%, Sometimes 70.0%, Usually/Always 4.9%.
- Parent has met how many friends of child: All/Most 77.2%, Some 21.4%, None 1.4%.
- Parent attended events that child or friends participated in during the past year: Never 3.9%, Sometimes 18.1%, Usually/Always 78.1%.

Students' Comments & Feelings (Source: CTC)	% NO!	% No	Combined %
Do you feel very close to your mother?	7.4	6.5	13.9
Do you feel very close to your father?	18.3	13.1	31.4
Do you share your thoughts and feelings with your mother?	12.9	16.3	29.2
Do you share your thoughts and feelings with you father?	28.3	19.9	48.2
If I had a personal problem, I could ask my mom or dad for help.	9.2	8.6	17.8
My parents ask me what I think before most family decisions affecting me are made.	15.3	18.7	34.0
Do you enjoy spending time with your mother?	5.8	5.6	11.4
Do you enjoy spending time with your father?	15.5	7.3	22.8
My parents give me lots of chances to do fun things with them.	8.3	12.3	20.6
My parents ask if I've gotten my homework done.	5.4	5.8	11.2
Would your parents know if you had not come home on time?	7.7	8.4	16.1
The rules in my family are clear.	7.1	8.2	15.2
My family has clear rules about alcohol and drug use.	9.2	6.8	16.0
When I am not at home, one of my parents knows where I am and whom I am with.	6.6	6.4	13.0
If you drank some beer or wine or liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin) without your parents' permission, would your parents catch you?	20.7	15.1	35.8
If you carried a handgun without your parent's permission, would your parents catch you?	14.6	6.9	21.5
If you skipped school, would your parents catch you?	15.1	9.8	24.9

Student Comments & Feelings (Source: CTC)	% Yes	% YES!	Combined %
People in my family have serious arguments.	16.0	14.1	30.1
We argue about the same things in my family over and over.	20.8	16.0	36.8
People in my family often insult or yell at each other.	22.1	15.3	37.4

Student Comments & Feelings (Source: CTC)	Never or Almost Never	Sometimes
My parents notice when I am doing a good job and let me know about it.	8.1	19.4
How often do your parents tell you they're proud of you for something you've done?	8.8	17.7

Family/Economic Stress Items (Source: CSS)	% of students responding that the item/problem...		
	Somewhat of a Problem	A Big Problem	Combined
Doing household chores	20	23	43
Having to take care of younger brother(s) sister(s)	13	18	31
Too many people relying on you at home	13	16	29
Trouble with parents/guardians over how you spend your time after school	15	15	30

Not having enough money	13	17	30
Not having breakfast	9	10	19
Not having nice clothes to wear	8	8	16
Not good place at home to do school work	8	8	16

- # of times you changed homes since kindergarten: 0 = 30.2%, 1-2 = 34.5%, 3-4 = 18.8%, 5 or More = 16.5%. (Source: CTC)
- # of times you changed schools since kindergarten : 0 = 20.9%, 1-2 = 38.0%, 3-4 = 26.7%, 5 or More = 14.4%. (Source: CTC) (Including changing from elementary to middle school)
- Discuss things studied at school with someone at home: Almost everyday 39%, 1-2 times a week 29%, 1-2 times a month 12%, Never or hardly ever 20%. (Source: NAEP)
- Parents know if you finish your homework every day: Usually 8%, Sometimes 18%, Hardly ever 68%, Not sure 5%. (Source: NAEP)
- Father's education: Did not finish high school 14%, H.S. graduate 30%, Some Post H.S. education 20%, Graduated college 36%. (Source:NAEP)

% of Families who receive: (Source: NAEP)	Yes	No	Don't Know
Newspapers 4+ times/week	47	41	13
Magazines regularly	70	24	5
Encyclopedia in home	85	11	4
Atlas in home	71	20	9
25+ books in home	88	7	5

- # of types of reading materials in home (newspapers, encyclopedia, magazines, 25+ books): 0-2 = 21%, 3 = 32%, 4 = 46%. (Source: NAEP)
- # of books in home: 0-10 = 12%, 11-25 = 22%, 26-100 = 38%, Over 100 = 28%. (Source: NAEP)

H) HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS

Many teachers complain about the lack of parental participation at school or home in their children's education. On the statewide survey, 37% of teachers disagreed that "parents attend school meetings and other school events", 23% disagreed that "parents attend conferences requested by teachers"; 20% disagreed that "parents cooperate regarding discipline problems"; 19% disagreed that "parents support instructional decisions regarding their children", and 16.5% disagreed that "parents understand the school's instructional programs". Unfortunately, this tells us only how many teachers are dissatisfied, not how many parents do or don't do the things the teachers want. More information was provided for the 17 low income schools by both teachers and students. The teachers said they had no contact with 24% of parents, very little with 29%, some with 29%, and quite a bit or a great deal with 17%. Further, 43% of teachers said that under 10% of parents attended "regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences", 31% said 11 – 30%, 15% said 31 – 50%, and 11% said over half the parents attended. The teachers also reported "how concerned parents seem about students' education": 8% not at all, 17% not very much, 34% somewhat, 41% quite, and

15% very. The situation described by the teachers is that they do not have contact with half the parents, but that they believe only one quarter of parents do not care much or at all about their children's' education; i.e. that half of those not seen do indeed care about their children's education.

The teachers' opinions alone would be inconclusive, especially about parents they don't see. Fortunately, the students provided similar information. They reported whether their parents never or hardly ever engaged in education-supporting activities: the unengaged parents were: 33% "talk about why school subjects are important in the real world", 25% "talk to you about different careers or jobs you can have", 36% talk to you about how you are getting along with teachers", 21% "help you with your homework", 17% "make sure you do your homework assignments", 18% "reward you when you do well in school", 18% "talk to you about how you can improve your school work", 41% "talk to your teachers about how you are doing in school", 54% "go to school activities or meetings", 45% "talk to you about stories in the news", 49% "take you to the library", and 41% "play games with you where you have to think to win". Low income students were more likely than middle income students to report that their parents discuss careers and the importance of school but less likely to go to school meetings and activities or to discuss how their children were getting along at school with teachers and other students. The same proportion of lower income students as middle income students said their parents monitored or helped with homework; however, what types of help the students received were not reported.

DATA FOR MIDDLE GRADES AND EARLY ADOLESCENTS

Home-School Relations: Parent Survey Responses (Source: PS)	Disagree (%)
My child's teachers contact me to say good things about my child	55.7
My child's teachers invite me to visit my child's classrooms during the day.	51.9
My child's school considers changes based on what parents say.	46.9
My child's teachers tell me how I can help my child learn.	42.9
My child's school includes me in decision-making.	38.5
My child's school gives me information about what my child should be learning in school.	28.1
I am satisfied with home-school relations at my child's school.	27.1
My child's school schedules activities at times that I can attend.	23.2
My child's school returns my phone calls or e-mails promptly.	23.0
The principal at my child's school is available and welcoming.	16.1

Home-School Relations: Student Survey Responses (Source: SS)	Disagree (%)
Parents at my school know their children's homework assignments	40.1
My school informs parents about school programs and activities.	19.3
My parent helps me with my homework when I need it.	15.5
My parent knows what I am expected to learn in school.	11.2
My parent knows how well I am doing in school.	7.8
Parents are welcomed at my school.	7.4

Home-School Relations: Teacher Survey Responses (Source: TS)	Disagree (%)
Parents attend school meetings and other school events.	36.7
I am satisfied with home-school relations.	35.2
Parents at my school are interested in their children's schoolwork.	28.6
Parents attend conferences requested by teachers at my school.	23.4
Parents at my school cooperate regarding discipline problems.	20.1
Parents at my school support instructional decisions regarding their children.	18.8
Parents at my school understand the school's instructional programs.	16.5
Parents at my school are aware of school policies.	8.1
Parents at my school know about school activities.	7.5

- Number of regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences (other than for problems) in a year: (Source: CST)

None	1	2	3-4	Monthly or more
17%	12%	24%	36%	12%

- % of students for whom their teachers reporting parents attending regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences: (Source: CST)

	0-10	11-30	31-50	50+
Overall (%)	43	31	15	11

- Contact teachers have with students' parents: None/Very Little 53%, Some 29%, Quite A Bit/A Great Deal 17%. (Source: CST)
- How concerned parents seem about students' education: Not at all/Not Very Much 25%, Somewhat 34%. Quite/Very 41%. (Source: CST)

% of Students say their parents never or hardly ever do the following: (Source: CSS)

Talk About Future and Interactions with Students and Teachers at School	
Talk to you about why school subjects are important for the "real" world	33
Talk to you about different careers or jobs that you can have	25
Check and/or Help with School Work	
Help you with your homework	21
Make sure that you do your homework assignments	17
Ask About and/or Reward School Work	
Reward you when you do well in school	18
Talk to you about how you can improve your school work	18
Talk to your teacher(s) about how you are doing in school	41
Engage in Educational Enrichment Support	
Go to school activities or meetings (PTA, sports events, dances, parent workshops, etc.)	54

% of teachers by the number of their meetings each week with parents to discuss student needs or concerns: (Source: CST)

None	One to Two	3 or More
18%	65%	17%

D) RISK BEHAVIORS:

Students tend to agree that friends are quite influential regarding their risk-taking. In the statewide DAODAS survey, 34% of 6th graders and 38% of 8th graders said that their friends and a lot or great influence about using alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs, also 9% and 15% respectively for moderate influence. Fewer see this peer pressure a problem: only 8% cite pressure from friends to smoke, drink, or use drugs as a big problem and 7% as somewhat of a problem. Surprisingly, parents are cited by 8th graders as the strongest influence (42% a lot or great influence), than friends (38%), fear of the law (38%), and religious beliefs (37%), finally siblings (31%), teachers (30%), music (27%), TV and movies (27%), and commercials (26%).

In the three county survey, students say that their parents are strongly opposed to risk-taking behaviors: drinking alcohol regularly (85% very wrong, 9% wrong, 6% a little or not wrong), smoking cigarettes (87%, 8%, 5%), smoking marijuana (94%, 4%, 3%), stealing anything over \$5 (91%, 6%, 3%), picking a fight (72%, 16%, 12%). The parents have not been entirely successful in selling their views because the same students report that their siblings engage in risk-taking: 31% drinking alcohol, 29% smoking cigarettes, and 15.5% smoking marijuana. Also 32% have someone in their “family who has ever had “a severe alcohol or drug problem”.

The middle grades are a critical time in the development of risk-taking. Though small numbers of students have initiated their risk-taking during elementary school, many initiate their habits during the middle grade years. (Source: DAODAS)

DATA FOR MIDDLE GRADES AND EARLY ADOLESCENTS

% of Students by Grade Ever Having:	6th	7th	8th	9th	12th
Smoked cigarettes	21.4	32.5	42.2	49.1	55.5
Drunk alcohol	29.8	40.7	52.3	61.7	74.2
Used any illicit drug	10.5	16.0	24.2	33.0	45.5
Gotten high on a drug	4.0	8.6	15.1	23.1	33.4

% of Students by Grade in Last 30 Days Having:	6th	7th	8th	9th	12th
Smoked cigarettes	8.2	14.1	19.7	25.0	27.5
Smoked 1 or more per day	3.8	7.6	12.0	18.4	21.8
Drunk alcohol	9.6	15.8	23.9	32.1	41.8
3 or more drinks per occasion	1.8	3.5	6.9	13.0	25.0
Binge drinking	3.3	5.9	9.5	15.1	23.1
Binge drinking weekly or more often	1.0	1.9	3.1	5.5	10.3
Smoked marijuana	3.1	6.7	11.6	18.2	20.7

The middle grades are a period in which many students experiment with a variety of risk behaviors and during which the numbers of youth engaging in risk-taking increases from very few in the 6th grade to significant numbers whose frequency and intensity of risk-taking have escalated by the 8th grade. These students then enlist large numbers of other risk-takers during high school. Risk behaviors take many forms other than substance use, including violence,

criminality, violation of school rules, depression, self-harm, and sex. Most of these behaviors increase in prevalence during middle school; during high school some behaviors continue to increase while others decline somewhat.

In the past 12 months have you:	Grade in School						
	6th	7th	8 th	9th	10th	11 th	12 th
	Col%	Col%	Col%	Col%	Col%	Col%	Col%
Carried a hand gun or knife as a weapon	3.8	5.1	6.0	7.3	7.1	6.7	6.4
Been in a fight with someone	29.9	33.4	34.8	30.4	25.6	22.3	18.1
Hit your boyfriend or girlfriend	6.9	7.5	8.2	8.8	9.9	9.8	10.0
Cut one or more school days	5.6	7.9	11.2	15.3	20.0	25.5	30.1
Received detention or in-school suspension	26.8	35.8	39.6	36.9	34.0	30.1	25.1
Been suspended from school	9.6	13.8	15.8	15.9	14.1	11.8	10.4
Stolen anything worth more than \$5	8.0	11.0	13.9	14.3	13.8	12.9	11.9
Been arrested and booked	2.2	3.6	4.4	5.5	4.7	4.2	4.6
Felt hopeless for two weeks or more	16.7	19.0	21.5	22.5	22.6	21.7	20.4
Seriously considered attempting suicide	5.5	8.2	10.6	11.4	10.4	9.5	8.4

(Source: DAODAS)

There are important differences across gender and race groups in their risk-taking habits. White males are more likely to drink very heavily and to carry hand guns or knives for self-defense. African-American females are least likely to smoke cigarettes or use drugs but most likely to hit boyfriends and girlfriends. White females are most likely to consider or attempt suicide. African-American males are most likely to carry hand guns and knives as weapons, to be suspended from school, to be arrested, and to engage in early, frequent and multiple-partner sex. During the middle grades, the groups most likely to have engaged in risk-behaviors during a year are:

- carrying a hand gun or knife for self-defense: White Males (22.5%).
- carrying a hand gun or knife as a weapon: African-American Males (9.0%).
- been in a fight: African-American Males (41.4%); White Males (40.1%).
- hitting their boyfriend or girlfriend: African-American Females (17.7%).
- been hit by their boyfriend or girlfriend: African-American Males (15%); African-American Females (9.5%).
- received detention or in-school suspension: African-American Males (41.6%); White Males (38.1%).
- been suspended from school: African-American Males 24.0%.
- stolen anything worth more than \$5: African American Males; (14.2%) White Males (12.9%).
- been arrested and booked: African-American Males (5.7%); White Males (3.9%).
- felt hopeless for two weeks or more: African-American Females (22.0%); White Females (21.8%).
- seriously considered attempting suicide: White Females (9.6%); African-American Females (6.8%).
- initiating sexual intercourse before age 13: African-American Males (35.0%); African-American Females (9.6%); White Males (8.0%); White Females (4.0%).

Risk Behaviors Participated in During Past 12 Months	White Male		White Female		African-American Male		African-American Female		Total		Total Grades (7-12)
	Middle School	High School	Middle School	High School	Middle School	High School	Middle School	High School	Middle School	High School	
Carried a hand gun or knife for self defense	22.5%	26.1%	5.3%	6.3%	14.6%	20.2%	5.0%	7.6%	12.2%	14.9%	13.7%
Carried a hand gun or knife as a weapon	6.8%	9.4%	1.3%	1.6%	9.0%	13.9%	3.0%	5.0%	4.8%	6.9%	5.9%
Been in a fight with someone	40.1%	31.3%	18.5%	16.2%	41.4%	31.9%	29.4%	22.4%	31.7%	24.9%	28.0%
Hit your boyfriend or girlfriend	2.0%	1.6%	6.9%	10.0%	5.7%	4.9%	17.7%	24.2%	7.4%	9.7%	8.7%
Been hit by your boyfriend or girlfriend	7.1%	6.1%	6.1%	8.5%	11.5%	9.7%	9.5%	10.6%	8.1%	8.5%	8.3%
Received detention or in-school suspension	38.1%	37.3%	22.4%	25.0%	41.6%	37.6%	34.3%	30.7%	33.3%	32.1%	32.7%
Been suspended from school	12.9%	13.9%	5.2%	7.2%	24.0%	22.6%	14.8%	15.4%	13.1%	13.8%	13.5%
Stolen anything worth more than \$5	12.9%	17.6%	6.9%	10.7%	14.2%	15.6%	8.5%	8.4%	10.4%	13.1%	11.9%
Had an accident when driving	NA	14.3%	NA	12.6%	NA	7.7%	NA	6.3%	NA	11.0%	NA
Been arrested and booked	3.9%	6.1%	1.5%	2.7%	5.7%	8.1%	2.2%	2.9%	3.2%	4.7%	4.0%
Felt hopeless for two weeks or more	14.8%	15.9%	21.8%	29.0%	14.0%	13.3%	22.0%	24.8%	18.2%	21.4%	19.9%
Seriously considered attempting suicide	6.9%	8.4%	9.6%	14.3%	5.5%	5.4%	6.8%	8.7%	7.4%	9.7%	8.7%

Perceived influence of friends about using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs: (Source: DAODAS)

	Little to None	Moderate	A Lot or Great
6 th Grade	58.8%	9.2%	34.1%
8 th Grade	46.3%	15.4%	38.2%

Influence on 8th graders about using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs: (Source: DAODAS)

	Little or No	Moderate	A Lot or Great
Parents	46.7%	11.2%	42.1%
Fear of law enforcement	52.4%	9.5%	38.2%
Friends	46.3%	15.4%	38.2%
Religious beliefs	55.3%	8.2%	36.6%
Brothers and sisters	56.9%	12.1%	31.0%
Teachers	59.7%	10.1%	30.2%
TV and movies	61.1%	12.9%	26.8%
Music	62.1%	11.3%	26.6%

Commercials

61.8%

12.5%

25.8%

Risk-taking of 4 Best Friends for Students who Did and Did Not Engage in the Risk-taking: (Source: CTC)

	Of respondents who DID NOT engage in risk behavior, the % who had:		Of respondents who DID engage in risk behavior, the % who had:	
	0 friends who engaged	4 friends who engaged	0 friends who engaged	4 friends who engaged
Suspended	51.9	7.9	12.2	34.2
Carried handgun	94.5	0.7	27.0	18.0
Sold drugs	92.2	1.1	20.0	28.2
Stole motor vehicle	94.3	0.6	33.3	17.3
Been arrested	86.7	1.0	20.7	22.8
Belonged to a gang	88.3	1.4	22.7	36.5

	Of respondents who DID NOT engage in risk behavior, the % who had:		Of respondents who DID engage in risk behavior but NOT in past 30 days, the % who had:		Of respondents who DID engage in risk behavior in past 30 days, the % who had:	
	0 friends who engaged	4 friends who engaged	0 friends who engaged	4 friends who engaged	0 friends who engaged	4 friends who engaged
Smoked cigarettes	79.7	3.1	38.3	12.7	11.4	40.9
Drank alcohol	81.8	2.2	49.1	12.1	15.9	37.1
Used marijuana	90.1	1.5	20.1	26.9	7.7	45.2

% who replied their brothers or sisters have: (Source: CTC)

	Yes (%)	No (%)	% who don't have brothers or sisters
Drunk beer, wine or hard liquor (for example, vodka, whiskey, or gin)?	31.1	64.9	3.9
Smoked marijuana?	15.5	80.8	3.7
Smoked cigarettes?	28.9	66.9	4.2
Taken a handgun to school?	2.2	94.0	3.8
Been suspended or expelled from school?	35.7	60.1	4.2

- 32% of youth have responded that someone in their family had a severe alcohol or drug problem. (Source: CTC)

J) HEALTH:

On the NSCH, 22% of parents reported a lot of concern about “child’s eating disorders.” Based on the height and weight they reported, 18% of their middle school children were overweight and another 19% at risk for being overweight. The parents reported the following health problems of their children: 4.3% whose overall health is fair or poor, 8.5% limited in ability to do what youth of same age can do, 23% having emotional, concentration, or behavior difficulties or not able to get along with others (3% severe, 11% moderate), 4% having severe health conditions and 16% having moderate conditions. Health professionals have told parents their children have the following conditions: 15.8% asthma of whom 6.8% have had an attack in last year; 12.6% ADD/ADHD with 8.2% taking medication for it; 5% depression or anxiety, and 6.6% with behavioral or conduct disorders. In the last year, 18.3% went to the emergency room, including 5.6% more than once; 8% went because of an accident. Most have insurance and a routine source of primary care; however, 16.6% do not have a personal doctor or nurse, and 8% never or only sometimes got needed care from their personal doctor or nurse for illness or injury as soon as they wanted it.

DATA FOR MIDDLE GRADES AND EARLY ADOLESCENTS:

- 14% have been described by a doctor, health professional or teacher as having a learning disability.
- 14% are overweight and another 19% at risk of being overweight.
- 30% did not visit their personal doctor or nurse for preventive care within the last year.

Number of nights got enough sleep: (Source: NSCH)

0 and 1	1.8%
2 and 3	4.0%
4 and 5	5.1%
6 and 7	89.1%

Hours of sleep per night typically: (Source: CSS)

Five or six	24.0%
Seven	21.0%
Eight	32.0%
Nine or more	23.0%

K) CHILD’S ACTIVITIES: (Source: NSCH unless otherwise noted)

For 180 days a year, middle school takes up one-third of the youth’s day; sleep another third or less; and other things the remainder. For the entire year, school takes up less than one-quarter of hours awake. Where do the other three-quarters go? Do non-school hours contribute to or undercut learning and academic achievement? There has been too little investigation of these questions. The Carnegie Corporation of New York explored the out-of-school hours in A Matter of Time. There has been no similar publication for early adolescents in South Carolina. Some data from surveys helps explore these questions for middle school students in our state. Students in the 17 low income schools reported that 30% of them were never home alone after school in weekdays, 41% were home alone some but less than 10 hours, and 29% were home alone 10 hours or more.

Were these youth spending their time in positive activities? Educators hope their students are reading for pleasure or doing their homework. Parents in the NSCH reported that on an average school day 19% of their children did no pleasure reading, 37% read up to 30 minutes, 29% read 31 – 60 minutes, and 17% read over an hour. Students in the 17 low income schools reported that in the 6th grade, 21% read no books for pleasure in the last three months, 24% read one or two, 20% read three or four, and 36% read five or more; 8th graders cut back on their reading: 32% 0 books, 30% 1 – 2, 12% 3 – 4, and 20% 5 or more. In the

same schools 6th grade students reported that for school they read books other than textbooks: 18% none, 29% 1 – 2, 25% 3 – 4, 28% 5 or more; in the 8th grade: 25% none, 35% 1 – 2, 21% 3 – 4, 19% 5 or more. As for homework, middle grades students in the 17 low income schools reported in a typical school night, 38% spent less than 30 minutes doing homework, 42% 30 – 60 minutes, 14% 1 – 2 hours, and 6% 2 hours or more. On the weekends, 66% spent less than 30 minutes, 21% 30 – 60 minutes, 15% 1 – 2 hours, and 4% 2 hours or more. Notably, their teachers reported assigning twice as much homework as the students reported doing.

So where was the time going? Parents responded to the NSCH survey that their early adolescent children used the computer for pleasure on a school day: 19% none, 33% under an hour, 29% 1 – 2 hours, and 19% more than 2 hours. The parents also reported that their children watched TV or videos or played video games: 65 none, 43% an hour or less, 32% 1 – 2 hours, 19% over two hours. Students in the 17 low income schools reported spending much more time on TV, video games, and computers: 11% none, 24% less than one hour, 24% 1 – 3 hours, 41% more than 3 hours.

When not watching TV, playing video games, or on the computer, some students were engaged in organized leisure activities. Parents reported on the NSCH that 48% of their early adolescents engaged no days in the past week in organized sports, clubs, or activities, 17% one day, 14% 2 days, 13% 3 or 4 days, and 8% 5 or more days. Over the past year, parents reported that 59% of their middle school youth had been involved in team sports or sports lessons, and 60% in organizations like scouts, boys/girls clubs, or religious groups. Also some youth ages 12 – 14 worked for pay: 8% for 1 – 5 hours per week and 3% for 6 or more hours. Many youth also attended religious services, usually on the weekend: 9% none, 19% less than weekly, and 72% weekly or more.

DATA FOR MIDDLE GRADES AND EARLY ADOLESCENTS:

- Home alone after school per week: None = 30%, Some but under 10 hr. = 41%, Over 10 hr. = 29%. (Source: CSS)
- Reading for pleasure by number of hours in average school day: 0 = 17%, ½ or Less = 51%, ½ to 1 = 30%, Over 1 = 19%.
- Books read outside of school in past month: None = 25%, 1-2 = 41%, 3-4 = 21%, 5 or more = 12%. (Source: NAEP).

▪ Books read (not as school work) in last 3 months (Source: CSS)

	<u>0</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>3-4</u>	<u>5-6</u>	<u>7 or more</u>
6 th Grade	21%	24%	20%	13%	23%
8 th Grade	32%	30%	12%	9%	11%

▪ Books (other than text books) read in last 3 months for school (Source: CSS)

	<u>0</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>3-4</u>	<u>5-6</u>	<u>7 or more</u>
6 th Grade	18%	29%	25%	10%	18%
8 th Grade	25%	35%	21%	9%	10%

- Have a computer at home that you use: Yes 86%, No 14%. (Source: NAEP)
- Using computer for other than school in hours on average school day: 0 = 22%, Less than 1 = 31%, 1 = 29, 2 = 11%, Over 2 = 8%.
- Use computer for school work: Almost everyday 13%, 1-2 times a week 24%, 1-2 times a month 28%, Never or hardly ever 35%. (Source: NAEP)

- Watch TV or videos or play video games in number of hours on an average school day: 0 = 24%, Less than 1 = 37%, 1 = 19%, 2 = 7%, 3 or more = 14%.
- Hours watching TV or videotapes outside of school hours: None = 3%, 1 or less = 17%, 2 or 3 = 37%, 4 or 5 = 22%, 6 or more = 21%. (Source: NAEP).
- TV or computer/video games: number of hours on average school days: 0 = 10%, Less than 1 = 24%, 1 - 3 = 24%, Over 3 = 42%. (Source: CSS)
- Homework hours on weeknight: Under ½ = 38%, ½ to 1 = 42%, Over 1 = 20%. (Source: CSS)
- Homework hours each weekend: Under ½ = 66%, ½ to 1 = 21%, Over 1 = 12%. (Source: CSS)
- Child attended religious service: None 8%, Some but less than weekly 19%, Weekly or more often 73%.
- Worked for pay (age 12-14) by number of hours per week: 0 = 74%, 1-5 = 8%, 6-10 = 4%, Over 10 = 15%.
- Number of days involved in organized sports, clubs, or activities in the past week: 0 = 37%, 1-2 = 36%, Over 2 = 27%.

L) NEIGHBORHOOD:

Other than leisure and religious activities, the neighborhood environments in which youth live affect their development. In the three county survey, 72% of middle grade youth report they “like their neighborhood”, while 28% do not; 32% would “like to get out of the neighborhood” and “would not miss it if they left.” While 47.5% said “there are lots of adults in the neighborhood I could talk to about something important, over half disagreed. The disconnectedness of many youth was reflected in the fact that 47% said there were not “people in my neighborhood who are proud of me when I do something” and 64% said that “neighbors do not notice when I am doing a good job and let me know”. Moreover, 32% say they do not “feel safe in my neighborhood”; 35% that their neighborhood can be described by fights, 24% by crime and drug sellers, and 11% by lots of empty or abandoned buildings. In the NSCH 86 – 90% of parents agreed that “in the neighborhood people help each other”, and “watch out for each other’s children” and “there are people they can count on”; however, 50.5% agreed that “there are people who might be a bad influence on my child”.

DATA FOR MIDDLE GRADES AND EARLY ADOLESCENTS:

Student Responses	% No!	% No	Combined %
I like my neighborhood.	17.7	10.2	27.9
If I had to move, I would miss the neighborhood I now live in.	19.7	12.2	31.9
There are people in my neighborhood who encourage me to do my best.	24.7	15.9	40.6
My neighbors notice when I am doing a good job and let me know.	40.6	23.8	64.4
There are people in my neighborhood who are proud of me when I do something well.	28.2	18.5	46.7
There are lots of adults in my neighborhood that I could talk to about something important.	30.8	21.5	52.3

- 33.5% of students responded they would like to get out of their neighborhood. (Source: CTC)

Parent Responses	Somewhat Disagree	Definitely Disagree	Combined
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People in neighborhood watch out for each other's children	6.4%	4.7%	11.1%
There are people I can count on in the neighborhood	5.6%	7.3%	12.9%

- 52.0% of parents responded there are people who might be a bad influence on my child. (Source: NSCH)

OUTLINE:

- A. Academic attitudes and potential**
- B. Learning environment**
- C. School climate**
- D. Personality and temperament**
- E. Parental concerns**
- F. Character and positive developmental outcomes**
- G. Family**
- H. Home-school relations**
- I. Risk behaviors**
- J. Health**
- K. Out-of-school activities**
- L. Neighborhood**

PROFILE OF MIDDLE GRADES STUDENTS

- One-half of all students with special healthcare needs score below basic, while only one-fourth without such needs test below basic.
- One-half of all the students below basic have special healthcare needs.
- Students who got Fs compared with those who got As were:
 - Three times more likely to have drunk alcohol in the last month
 - Five times more likely to have smoked in the last month
 - Seven times more likely to have smoked marijuana in the last month
 - Seven times more likely to binge drink in the last month
 - Ten times more likely to have smoked marijuana three days or more in the last month
 - Twelve times more likely to have smoked a half pack or more per day in the last month
- Teachers in high poverty schools rated students (percentage of all students):

	Moderate Problem	Serious Problem	Combined Problem
✓ Underachieving	14	19	33
✓ Poor work habits	12	22	34
✓ Poorly motivated to achieve	11	18	29
✓ Poor concentration, limited attention	12	14	26

- Percentage of all students who disagree with the following:

61%	Students behave well in class.
48%	My classes are interesting and fun.
41%	Students at my school believe they can do good work.
38%	Teachers and students get along well with each other at my school.
35%	Students from different backgrounds get along well at my school.
30%	I am satisfied with the learning environment at my school.
29%	My teachers praise students when they do good work.
25%	My teachers spend enough time helping me to learn.

- Percentage of parents who are concerned a lot about their 11-14 year olds':

49%	Achievement
39%	Self-esteem
36%	Coping with stress
27%	Learning difficulties
20%	Depression or anxiety
19%	Being bullied by classmates

- Percentage of students who do not:

14%	Feel close to mom.
31%	Feel close to dad.
29%	Share thoughts & feelings with mom.
48%	Share thoughts & feelings with dad.
18%	Could not ask mom or dad for help regarding a personal problem.

- Percentage of parents who disagree with the following about home-school relations:

56%	My child's teachers contact me to say good things about my child.
52%	My child's teachers invite me to visit my child's classroom during the day.
47%	My child's school considers changes based on what parents say.
43%	My child's teachers tell me how I can help my child learn.
16%	The principal at my child's school is available and welcoming.
27%	I am satisfied with home-school relations at my child's school.

- Percentage of students in low income schools who said their parents never or hardly ever:

33%	Talk to you about why school subjects are important for the "real world".
25%	Talk to you about different careers or jobs you can have.
21%	Help you with your homework.
17%	Make sure you do your homework assignments.
18%	Reward you when you do well in school.
18%	Talk to you about how you can improve your school work.
41%	Talk to your teachers about how you are doing in school.
54%	Go to school activities or meetings (PTA, sports events, dances, parent workshops).

- Percentage of students who in the past month:

	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
Smoked cigarettes	8%	14%	20%
Smoked one or more per day	4%	8%	12%
Drank alcohol	10%	16%	24%
Binge drinking	3%	6%	10%
Smoked marijuana	3%	7%	12%

- Percentage of students in the past year:

	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
Carried a handgun or knife as a weapon.	4%	5%	6%
Been in a fight with someone.	30%	33%	35%
Received detention or in-school suspension.	27%	36%	40%
Been suspended from school.	10%	14%	16%
Stolen anything worth more than \$5.00.	8%	11%	14%
Felt hopeless for two weeks or more.	17%	19%	22%
Seriously considered attempting suicide.	6%	8%	11%

➤ Percentage of students engaging in various out-of-school activities:

19%	Used computers for other than school two or more hours on an average school day.
13%	Used computer for schoolwork almost everyday (25% one to two times a week).
49%	Watched television or videotapes outside of school hours three or more hours a day (66% African-American, 38% White).
33%	Read three or more books outside of school in the past month (12% five or more books).
26%	Involved in organized sports, clubs, or activities more than two days per week (37% one to two times a week).
75%	Exercised for at least twenty minutes on each of three or more days in the past week that made them breathe hard and sweat.
72%	Attend religious service weekly.

2001-02 PACT Grades 6-8		
	% Below Basic in Reading	% Below Basic in Math
Children without special healthcare needs	22%	30%
Children with special healthcare needs	47%	55%

Children with Special Healthcare Needs Subgroups	% Below Basic in Reading	% Below Basic in Math	% of CSHCN	% of All Children
Mental disorders	54%	63%	46%	13%
Adjustment reactions	46%	57%	10%	3%
Depression	48%	60%	6%	2%
Conduct disorder	57%	67%	6%	2%
Emotional disturbances	58%	68%	9%	3%
Hyperkinetic syndrome of childhood	55%	61%	22%	6%
Reading disorders	62%	70%	8%	2%
Developmental, speech or language disorders	65%	72%	8%	2%
Mild mental retardation	69%	83%	4%	1%
Respiratory system (Asthma)	40%	50%	16%	5%
Metabolic and Endocrine Disorders	41%	53%	11%	3%
SDE Special Ed Students	50%	55%	22%	6%
Mentally Handicap	66%	81%	2%	1%
Learning Disability	54%	58%	14%	4%
Speech Handicap	42%	44%	7%	2%

(Source: Office of Research and Statistics)

Usual GPA in the Past Year	A	B	C	D	F	Total	F - A	F/A
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In the past month, % who responded they have

drank alcohol	9.8	15.3	20.6	22.9	28.5	16.4	18.7	2.9
smoked	6.4	11.8	19.0	24.4	32.2	14.0	25.8	5.1
smoked marijuana	3.0	5.6	10.3	14.4	21.9	7.4	18.9	7.2
binge drank (drank 5 or more drinks on 1 occasion)	2.9	5.1	8.8	11.4	19.8	6.5	16.8	6.7
smoked marijuana 1 or more joints when smoking	2.3	4.0	7.7	11.2	19.0	5.6	16.7	8.3
binge drank 3 or more days in last month	1.3	1.4	3.1	4.1	10.0	2.3	8.7	7.8
smoked marijuana 3 or more joints when smoking	1.2	1.7	3.6	5.4	12.4	2.7	11.2	10.0
smoked half pack or more per day	1.1	1.6	3.2	5.2	13.4	2.5	12.2	11.7

In the past year, % who responded they have

been in a physical fight with someone	23.0	31.1	36.8	38.9	43.1	31.7	20.1	1.9
received detention or in-school suspension	20.5	31.8	40.9	43.1	49.0	33.0	28.5	2.4
felt sad/hopeless nearly every day for 2 wks or more	14.5	18.3	20.2	21.4	24.7	18.4	10.2	1.7
carried a handgun or knife for self-defense	8.2	11.4	15.4	19.0	25.9	12.7	17.7	3.2
stolen anything worth more than \$5	6.2	9.6	13.9	16.0	23.0	10.8	16.8	3.7
seriously considered attempting suicide	5.9	7.7	8.9	10.4	14.7	8.0	8.7	2.5
been hit by your boyfriend or girlfriend on purpose	5.5	7.4	9.7	11.0	15.2	8.1	9.7	2.8
been suspended (out of school)	5.1	10.2	18.3	23.6	30.1	12.7	25.0	5.9
hit your boyfriend or girlfriend on purpose	5.0	7.4	8.6	9.0	11.5	7.4	6.5	2.3
skipped 1 or more whole days of school	4.9	6.9	10.5	13.4	19.9	8.2	15.0	4.1
had an motor vehicle accident	3.4	3.8	5.2	5.7	10.6	4.4	7.2	3.1
carried a handgun or knife for use as a weapon	2.8	4.0	6.8	8.5	14.1	5.1	11.3	5.0
been involved in a fight after using alcohol/drugs	2.3	3.5	6.5	9.4	15.6	4.8	13.3	6.8
been arrested and booked on a charge	1.7	2.5	4.7	6.9	13.7	3.5	12.0	8.3
received a traffic ticket	1.2	1.2	1.8	2.6	5.4	1.6	4.2	4.5

(Source: 2001-02 DAODAS South Carolina Survey)

3ACTIONS REQUIRED TO IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN MIDDLE GRADES

I. Actions to Impact the One-Fourth of Time Spent in School:

Reaching Academic Standards

- ❖ The Legislature must address Judge Cooper's remedy to enable lower income students to master standards in pre-school through third grade so that fewer students will reach MS performing below grade.
- ❖ Schools must train students in study skills and organize instructional time at school to apply these study skills as routine work habits.
- ❖ Consistent positive feedback must be provided to all students, especially the lower achieving, for their effort and their accomplishments and thus foster their desire to achieve.

Academic Support for Educators

- ❖ High quality pre-service and graduate training for middle grades teachers must be developed by universities to achieve the purpose of middle grades certification.
- ❖ Regional academic support organizations are needed to help teachers and administrators align curriculum, textbooks, instruction and assessment to state academic standards.
- ❖ Assistance with faculty strengthening for high poverty schools in terms of:
 - Teacher recruitment;
 - Competitive salaries;
 - Teacher training, development, and mutual support.

II. Actions to Impact the Three-Fourths of Time Away From School:

Out-of-School Activities

- ❖ Because school constitutes less than one-fourth of children's waking hours for the thirteen years from kindergarten through twelfth grade, learning and academic achievement are heavily influenced by how students spend their time away from school. Schools should convene meetings of parents and community organizations to plan diverse opportunities for productive leisure activities.
- ❖ To promote and facilitate collaboration of schools with parents and the community, school districts should be authorized by the Legislature to adopt a family-school community collaboration option for School Improvement Councils. Under this option, SICs would have three component councils: one each of parents, faculty, and school-community representatives. The executive committees of these three councils would constitute the overall SIC. The objective of the councils would be for parents and community to become full partners in raising their children for academic success, personal growth, and habits of healthiness and responsibility.

- ❖ Through closer collaboration, parents and schools can motivate and structure greater investment of time in learning and healthy activities. Too many hours are lost to phone conversations, hanging out with friends, television, and other unproductive activities. Through closer partnership of parents, schools, and community organizations, students can still have as much or more fun but benefit from a lot more exposure to creative learning and growth experiences.

Home-School Relations

- ❖ Schools must engage parents as active partners for individualized guidance and motivation of their children.
- ❖ Home school relations must be organized as a close working partnership, starting with an individualized conference for each student's family early in the first middle school year and sustained each following year. The SICs and parent volunteers should play a major role in this process. Open-house and PTA meetings should be reorganized to carry out serious home-school business, not just going through the motions of a superficial relationship.

Behavior and Character

- ❖ Poor interpersonal relationships and behavior must be overcome by spending time discussing and developing expectations about appropriate ways for students to act and treat others.
- ❖ Teachers and guidance counselors must establish a close relationship with parents to address the personal traits and behaviors of students that deter academic achievement and healthy development.
- ❖ Shaping good character and habits must be practiced as an essential path to success in schoolwork and life. Character development must be more than assembly lectures and become an everyday individualized practice in the classroom, the home, and the community.

Health and Risk Behaviors

- ❖ Each school must have an RN nurse who works closely with primary care providers and with parents to minimize the impact of health problems on academic achievement and overall wellbeing.
- ❖ School is the one opportunity that society has to provide mass education regarding wellness to avoid the consequences of unhealthy habits and risk behaviors. Health education must be infused into the core curriculum from pre-school through high school graduation.
- ❖ The importance of wellness and avoiding risk behaviors should be emphasized through substantial inclusion of health and wellness topics in PACT testing.
- ❖ Prevention of risk behaviors must be pursued through convincing explanations of their consequences for not only health but also academic and career achievement too often compromised by poor lifestyle habits. Engagement of young people in healthy and productive leisure habits can be promoted by family-school-community partnerships.