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# Alcohol & Youth

## A Learning Supports Data Tool

Iowa Department of Education • Revised February 2007

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Funding provided by the U.S. Department of Education through Grants to States to Improve Management of Drug and Violence Prevention Programs (Q184R040004)



State of Iowa  
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## **Web-Sites**

Iowa Department of Education / [www.iowa.gov/educate](http://www.iowa.gov/educate)

Iowa Youth Survey / [www.iowayouthsurvey.org](http://www.iowayouthsurvey.org)

Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development / [www.icyd.org](http://www.icyd.org)

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# What?

## What is the problem with alcohol and youth?

Youth who use alcohol are at a much greater risk for problems related to behavior, juvenile delinquency, school performance, unintentional injury, and future substance dependence (alcoholism).

### The Case for Talking about Alcohol

Every day students are bombarded with messages about alcohol. The information comes from many different sources: school, parents, friends, television, music, and magazines. Sometimes there is so much information, it's hard for students to figure out what is true and what is not. As students face the decision of whether to drink or not, knowing all the facts can steer them in the right direction. Choosing not to drink may be a difficult decision, but it is the safest and healthiest decision to make. Underage drinkers risk not only their own health and well-being, they can also hurt their family, friends, and their future.

### What Can Alcohol Use Lead to?

- ❖ **Violence**—Alcohol clouds judgement and reasonable thinking, sometimes leading to violence. A significant proportion of violent crimes among students, including rape, robbery and assault, have been shown to involve alcohol. A survey of college administrators indicates that more than half of campus incidents, ranging from violent behavior to property damage, were directly related to alcohol use.
- ❖ **Other injuries**—Because alcohol impairs the coordination and judgement necessary for everyday activities, it is involved in a high percentage of falls, drownings, burns, other injuries, and accidental deaths.
- ❖ **Emotional Problems**—Alcohol makes emotions stronger. Negative feelings, including stress, loneliness, and hopelessness often become worse when people drink alcohol. Emotionally troubled youth who drink heavily are at a higher risk for attempted suicide.
- ❖ **Stress**—Drinking alcohol to deal with pressures from parents, teachers, friends, coaches, brothers, and sisters only increases the stress.
- ❖ **Overdose**—Consuming too much alcohol over a short period of time can cause death from alcohol poisoning.
- ❖ **Health Issues**—Alcohol clouds judgement which can lead to risky sexual behavior, sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned pregnancy, or HIV/AIDS.

## Some Facts about Alcohol and Driving

According to the Iowa Department of Public Safety, traffic crashes are the number one killer of Iowa's children and young adults, and many of these crashes are caused by alcohol impairment. From 2001 to 2004:

- ❖ 439 Iowans died in crashes because someone was drinking, drunk, or otherwise impaired and about 36% of the deaths were youth between the ages of 15 and 24
- ❖ Nearly 6,200 Iowans were injured in alcohol related crashes and more than 37% of them were between the ages of 15 and 24

It is also estimated that underage drinkers in Iowa consume over 26% of all alcohol consumed in the state, totaling \$245 million in sales. At the same time, the problems and costs associated with Iowa underage drinking total about \$650 million.

## Alcohol and Misperceptions

Not all students use alcohol. Unfortunately, many students misperceive the habits of their peers and then model their own behavior based on those misperceptions. Many students assume that their friends are drinking more often, and consuming more alcohol, than they actually are. This is largely because heavy drinkers are typically the ones that get noticed most at parties and talked about later.

Alcohol can create pervasive and devastating problems for youth, misperceptions can exceed the prevalence and severity of actual use. These misperceptions fuel the problem behavior—students end up believing their distorted perceptions of their peers and adapt their own behavior beyond what they would otherwise do. As a result, the perception of heavier alcohol consumption becomes a partially self-fulfilling prophecy—problem use actually does become more widespread as some students drink at higher levels because they incorrectly perceive that such behavior conforms to that of their peers.

# So What?

## What does your data say about youth and alcohol?

### Where to Find Your Data - The Iowa Youth Survey

Most likely, youth in your area participate in the Iowa Youth Survey (IYS). The IYS is a voluntary survey given to 6th, 8th, and 11th graders on a three-year cycle, most recently in the fall of 2005. The IYS is the most comprehensive data source for those interested in understanding youth alcohol use in the state of Iowa. It contains questions about students' environment and conditions, behavior, knowledge and awareness, and perceptions and attitudes around substance use, safety and violence, and relationships with others.

### Constructs Represented in The IYS

The 2005 IYS is comprised of 190 questions. Many of these questions can be grouped together to form constructs that summarize important concepts in the data. Below is a list of the 34 constructs covered in the 2005 survey. Constructs that are bold and italic contain questions related to alcohol.

Positive family relationships	Suicide risk
Family involvement and support	<b><i>Current alcohol use</i></b>
Parental/guardian boundaries	Current tobacco use
<b><i>Positive parental/guardian norms</i></b>	Current illegal drug use
<b><i>School expectations/boundaries</i></b>	<b><i>Substance use risk awareness</i></b>
Safe school environment	Violent/aggressive behavior
School perceived to be safe*	Gambling
School student/staff support	Helping others*
<b><i>Positive student norms</i></b>	Empathy
<b><i>Social pressure to use substances</i></b>	Self-confidence
<b><i>Positive community adult norms</i></b>	Self-esteem*
<b><i>Positive community peer norms</i></b>	Acceptance of diversity
<b><i>Youth access to substances limited</i></b>	<b><i>Positive values</i></b>
Safe neighborhood	Peer pressure resistance*
Supportive neighborhood	Commitment to school/learning
<b><i>Alcohol/drug free places available*</i></b>	Positive work ethic*
Bullying	Adults stop bullying*

\*Construct contains only one item.



## Alcohol Questions on the IYS

There are 21 questions on the IYS that are explicitly alcohol related. They can be broken down into four different categories:

- 1) environment and conditions / short-term
- 2) behavior / short-term
- 3) knowledge and awareness / long-term
- 4) perceptions and attitudes / long-term

Notice that “environment” and “conditions and behaviors” represent factors that are usually more short-term and are more quickly affected by intervention. On the other hand, “knowledge and awareness” and “perceptions and attitudes” represent more long-term ideas that may take time to affect.

### Questions Related to Students’ Environment and Conditions

- ❖ How much do you agree or disagree that there are people living in your home who have a serious alcohol or drug problem?
- ❖ In your neighborhood or community, how difficult do you think it would be for a kid your age to get alcoholic beverages (beer, wine or liquor)?
- ❖ How much do you agree or disagree that there are enough places for kids your age to go that are alcohol and drug free?

### Questions Related to Students’ Behavior

- ❖ How old were you (if ever) when you first drank (more than a few sips) of alcohol (beer, wine, liquor)?
- ❖ During the last 30 days, on how many days did you have 5 or more drinks of alcohol (glasses, bottles or cans of beer; glasses of wine, liquor, mixed drinks) in a row, that is within a couple of hours?
- ❖ In the last 30 days, how many times have you driven a car or other motor vehicle after using any amount of alcohol or other drugs?
- ❖ In the past 30 days, on how many days have you had at least one drink of alcohol (glass, bottle or can of beer; glass of wine, liquor or mixed drink)?
- ❖ In the past 12 months, how often have you used alcohol or other illegal drugs on school property?

### Questions Related to Students' Knowledge and Awareness

- ❖ Do you feel you are currently dependent (hooked) on alcohol (beer, wine, liquor)?
- ❖ How much do you agree or disagree that it is against your values to use alcohol and drugs as a teenager?
- ❖ How much do you risk harming yourself (physically or otherwise) if you drink 3 or more drinks (glasses, cans or bottles of beer; glasses of wine, liquor or mixed drinks) of alcohol nearly every day?

### Questions Related to Students' Perceptions and Attitudes

- ❖ Thinking of your best friends, how wrong would most of them feel it would be for you to:
  - drink beer, wine or hard liquor (for example vodka, whiskey, gin)?
  - go to a party where kids under 21 were using alcohol?
- ❖ Would you be more or less likely to be popular (respected or cool) with the other students in your school, if you drank alcoholic beverages?
- ❖ How much do you agree or disagree that in your school, students caught drinking, smoking, or using an illegal drug are not allowed to participate in any extracurricular activities?
- ❖ How wrong would most of the students in your school (not just your best friends) feel it would be for you to:
  - drink beer, wine or hard liquor (for example vodka, whiskey, gin)?
  - go to a party where kids under 21 were using alcohol?
- ❖ How wrong would your parents/guardians feel it would be for you to:
  - drink beer, wine or hard liquor (for example vodka, whiskey, gin) without their permission?
  - go to a party where kids under 21 were using alcohol?
- ❖ How wrong would most adults in your neighborhood and/or community feel it would be for you to:
  - drink beer, wine or hard liquor (for example vodka, whiskey, gin)?
  - go to a party where kids under 21 were using alcohol?

## Areas of Concern in State-Level Data

When considering the state-level IYS alcohol data, some important areas of concern emerge. The table below displays the questions where at least 25% of participants at the state level gave undesirable responses. After you have analyzed your local data, use the final column in the table to write your own local results related to these questions. Are these areas of concern to you at the local level also?

### Questions Where 25% or More of 2005 Statewide Participants Gave an Undesireable Response

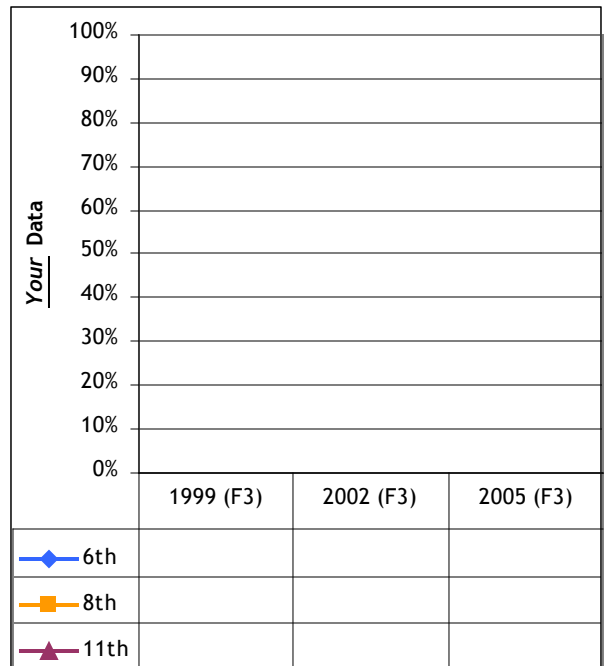
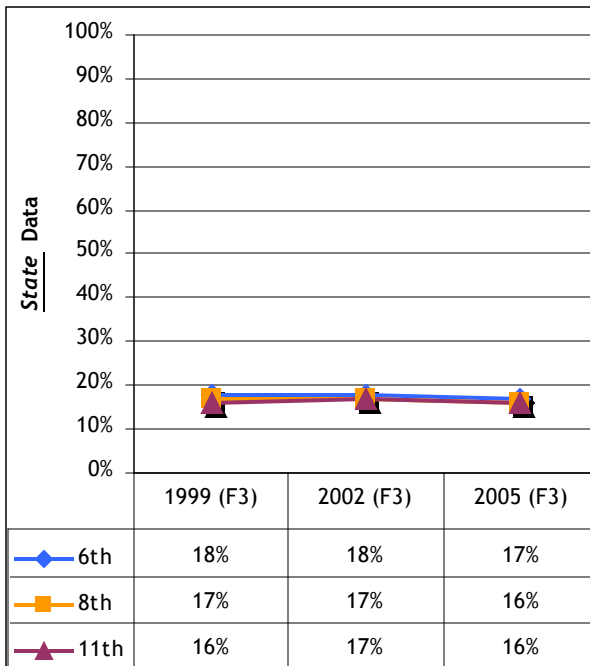
Question	Grade	2005 State Level Result	2005 Local Level Result
Percentage of students who think it would be easy or very easy to get alcoholic beverages in their neighborhood or community (G2) - Environment/Conditions	8th	38%	
	11th	74%	
Percentage of students who disagree or strongly disagree that there are enough places to go that are alcohol and drug free (G21) - Environment/Conditions	11th	33%	
Percentage of students who had 5 or more drinks of alcohol on any day during the last 30 days (B25) - Behavior	11th	32%	
Percentage of students who have had at least one drink of alcohol in the past 30 days (B29) - Behavior	11th	41%	
Percentage of students who disagree or strongly disagree that it is against their values to use alcohol and drugs as a teenager (C11) - Knowledge/Awareness	11th	45%	
Percentage of students who report their best friends would not think it was wrong at all for them to drink alcohol (D1) - Perceptions/Attitudes	11th	39%	
Percentage of students who report their best friends would not think it was wrong at all for them to go to a party where kids under 21 were using alcohol (D7) - Perceptions/Attitudes	11th	41%	
Percentage of students who report they would be more or a lot more popular with other students if they drank alcoholic beverages (D10) - Perceptions/Attitudes	11th	35%	
Percentage of students who report the students in their school would not think it was wrong at all for them to drink alcohol (E7) - Perceptions/Attitudes	11th	44%	
Percentage of students who report the students in their school would not think it was wrong at all for them to go to a party where kids under 21 were using alcohol (E13) - Perceptions/Attitudes	11th	46%	

# State and Local Trend Data

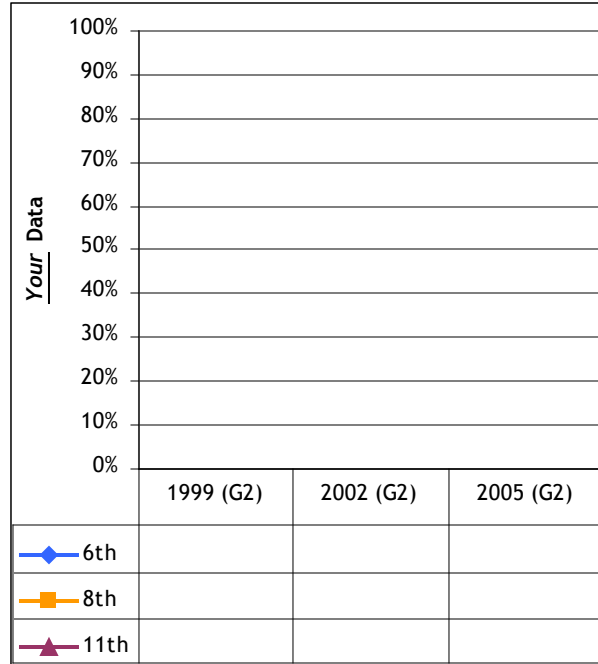
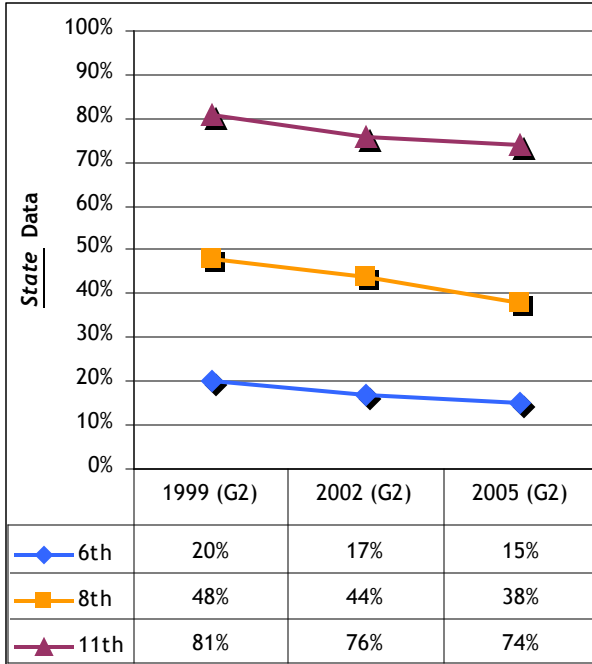
The following charts display state level trend data for all of the questions on the IYS related to alcohol. Next to the state results, use the blank charts to insert your local data into. If local results for any particular question at any grade level are different (more than 5 percentage points higher or lower) than the state average, this may be an area that warrants further investigation.

## Results Related to Environment and Conditions

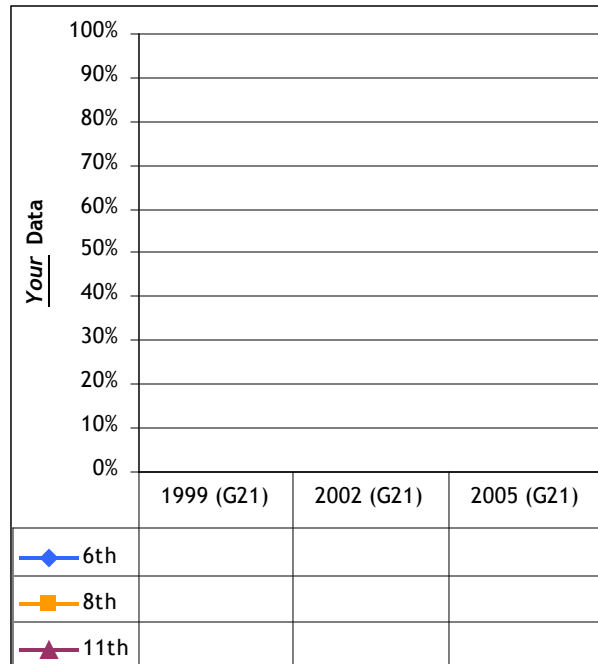
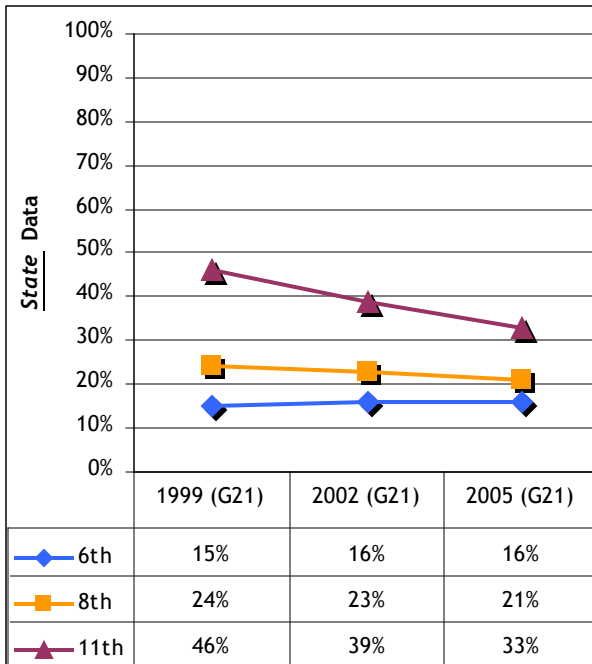
*Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that there are people living in their home who have a serious alcohol or drug problem*



**Percentage of students who think it would be easy or very easy to get alcoholic beverages in their neighborhood or community**

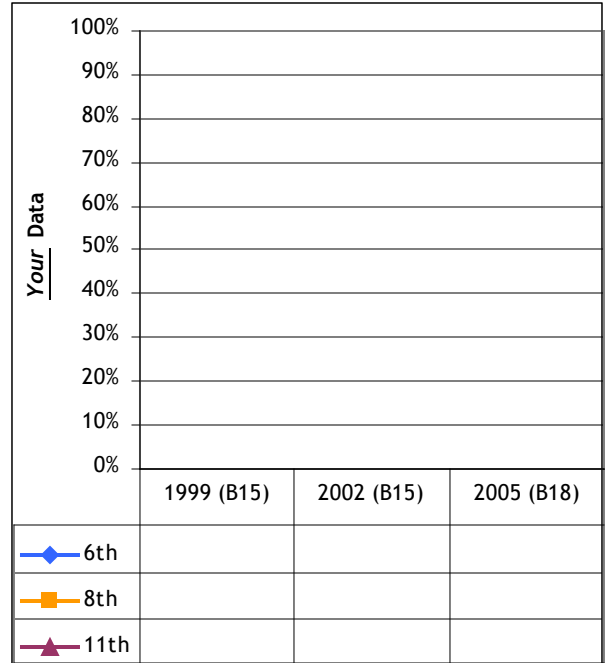
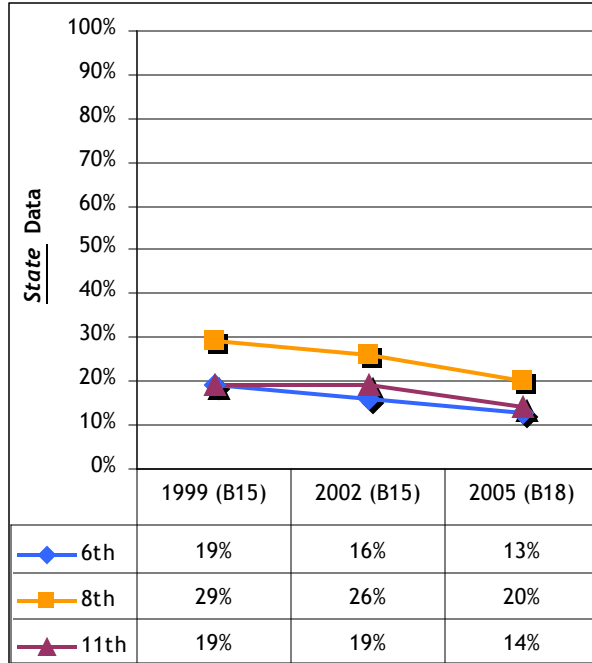


**Percentage of students who disagree or strongly disagree that there are enough places to go that are alcohol and drug free**

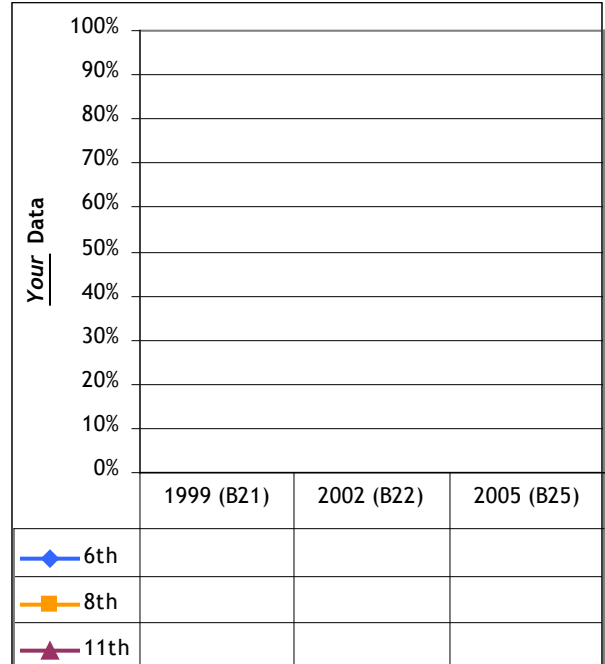
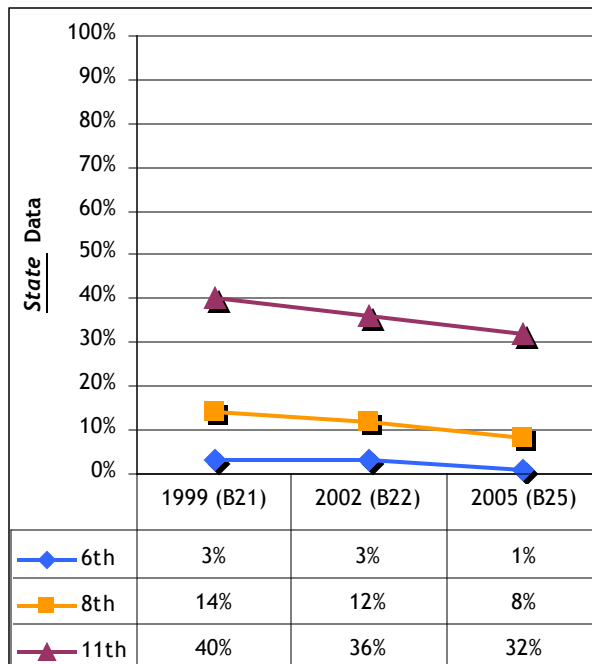


## Results Related to Behavior

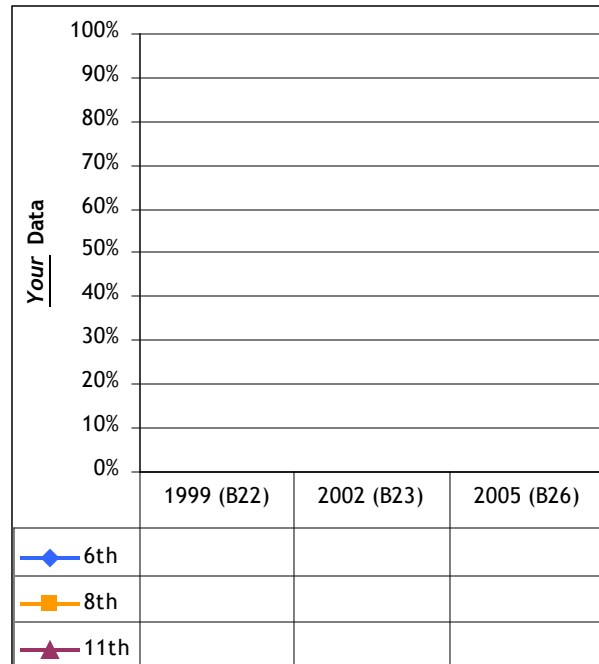
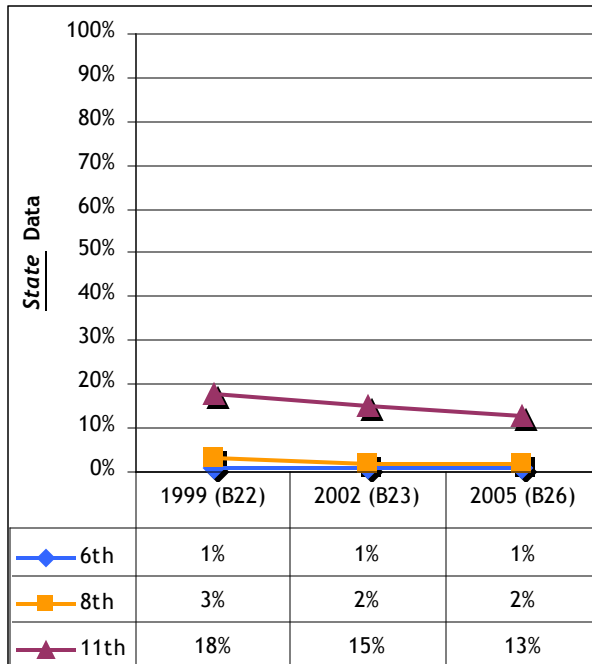
**Percentage of students who were 12 or younger when they first drank (more than a few sips) of alcohol (beer, wine, liquor)**



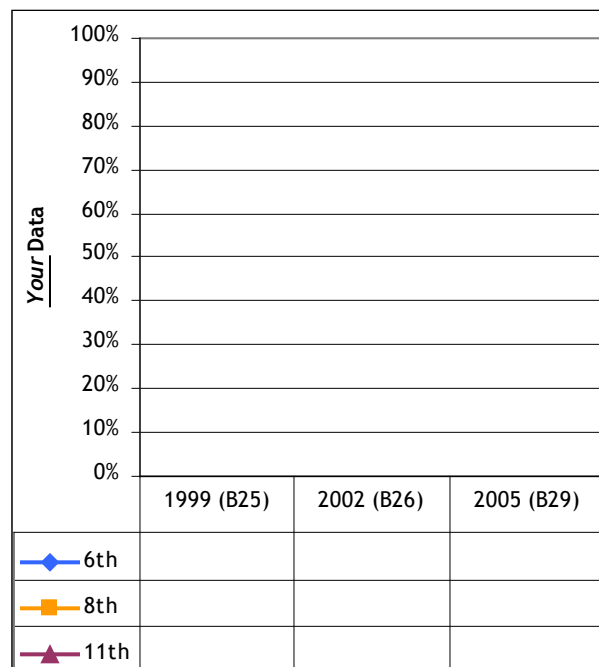
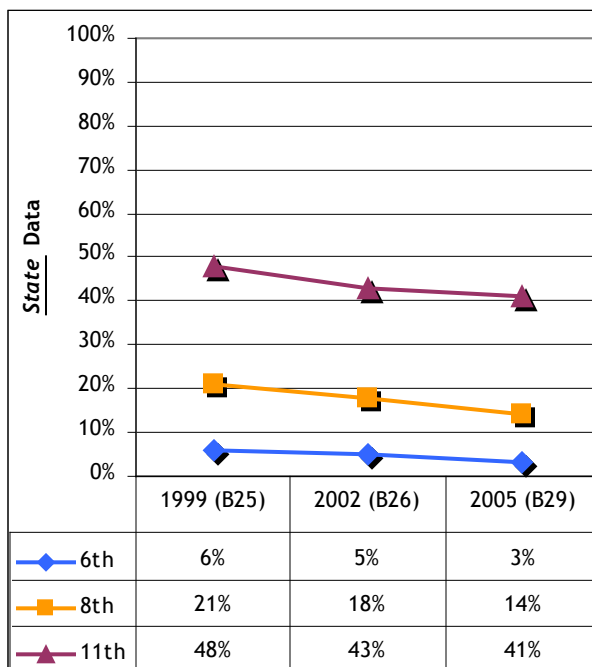
**Percentage of students who had 5 or more drinks of alcohol on any day during the past 30 days**



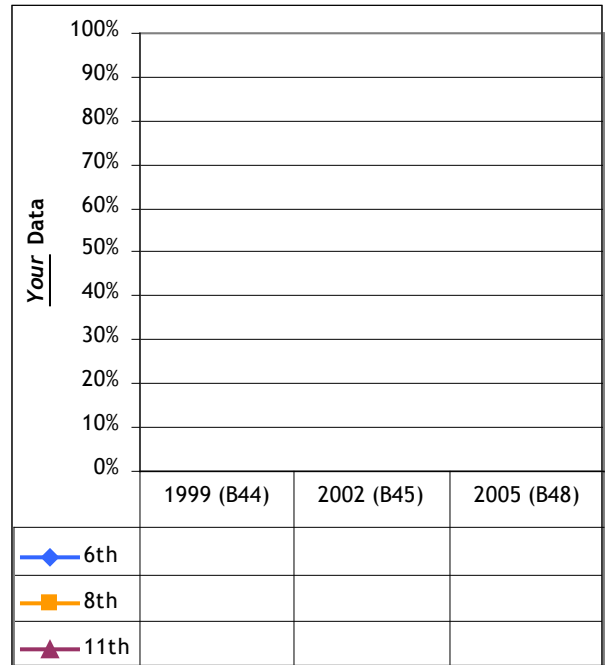
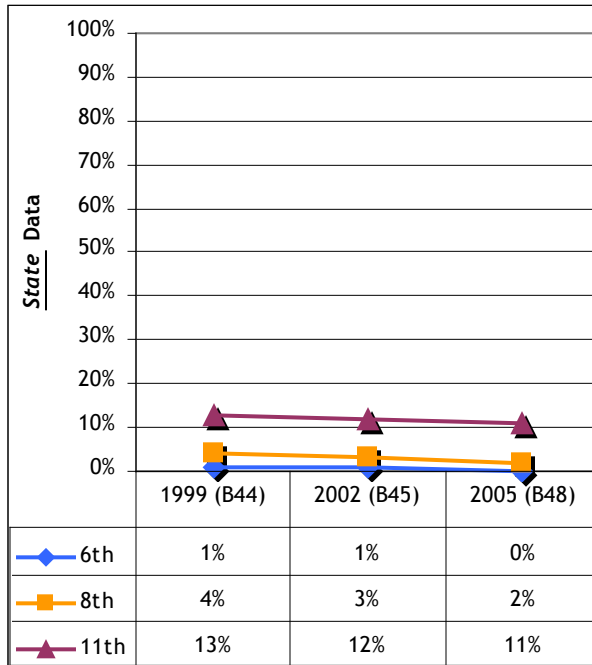
**Percentage of students who have driven a motor vehicle after using alcohol or other drugs on any day during the last 30 days**



**Percentage of students who have had at least one drink of alcohol in the past 30 days**

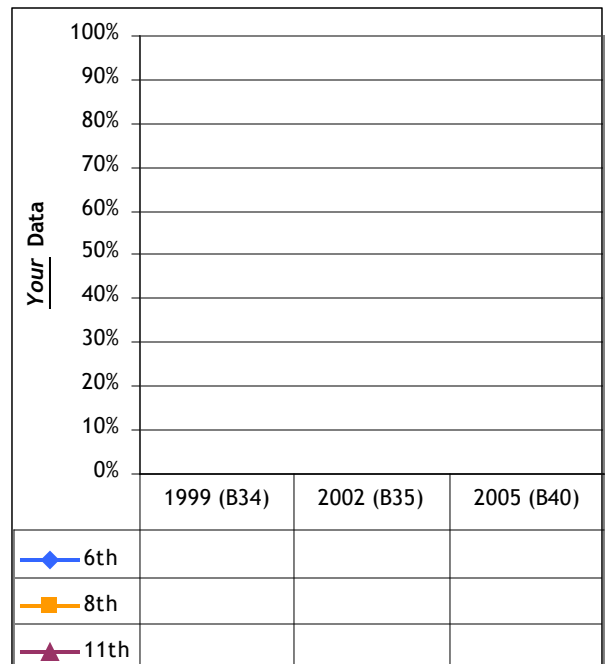
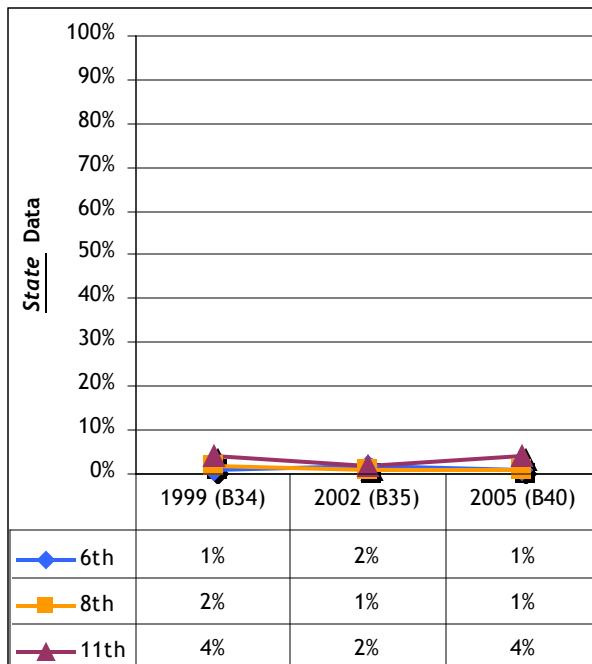


**Percentage of students who have used alcohol or other illegal drugs on school property in the past 12 months**



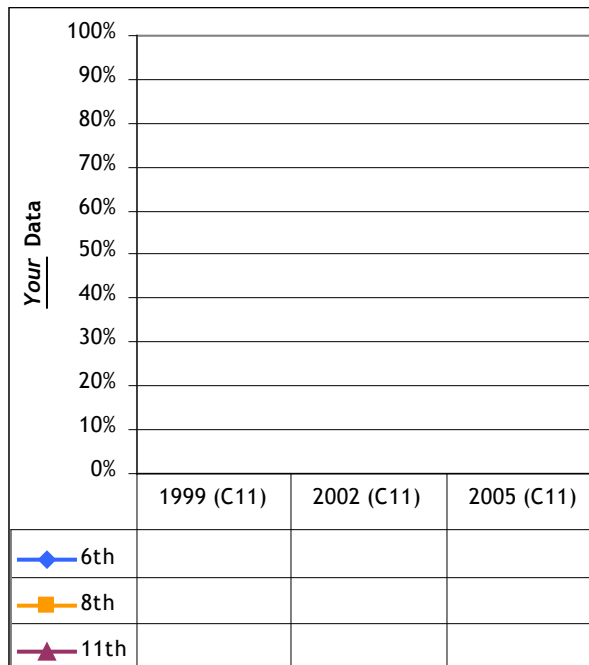
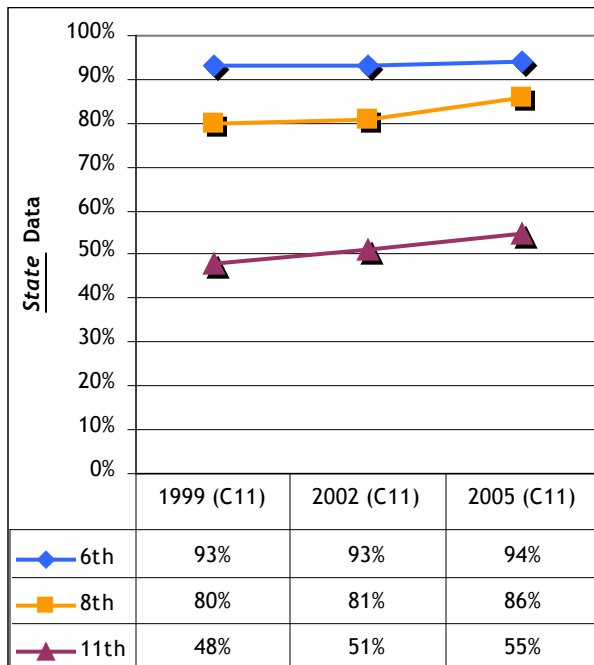
**Results Related to Knowledge and Awareness**

**Percentage of students who feel they are currently dependent on alcohol**

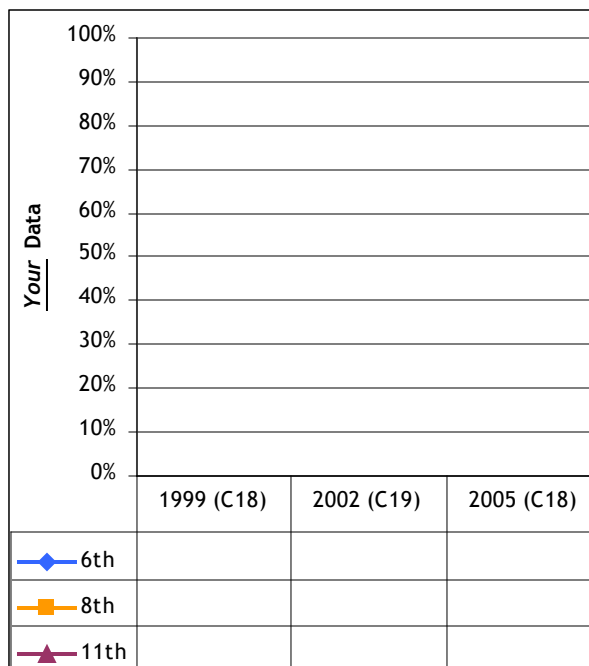
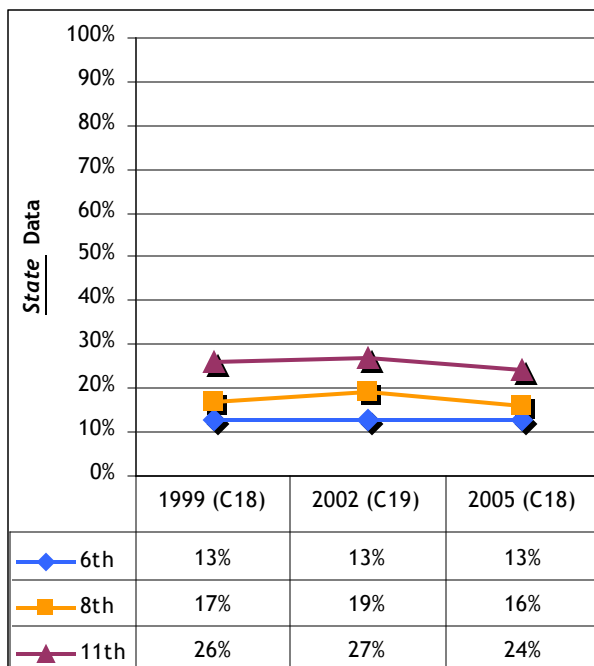




**Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that it is against their values to use alcohol and drugs as a teenager**

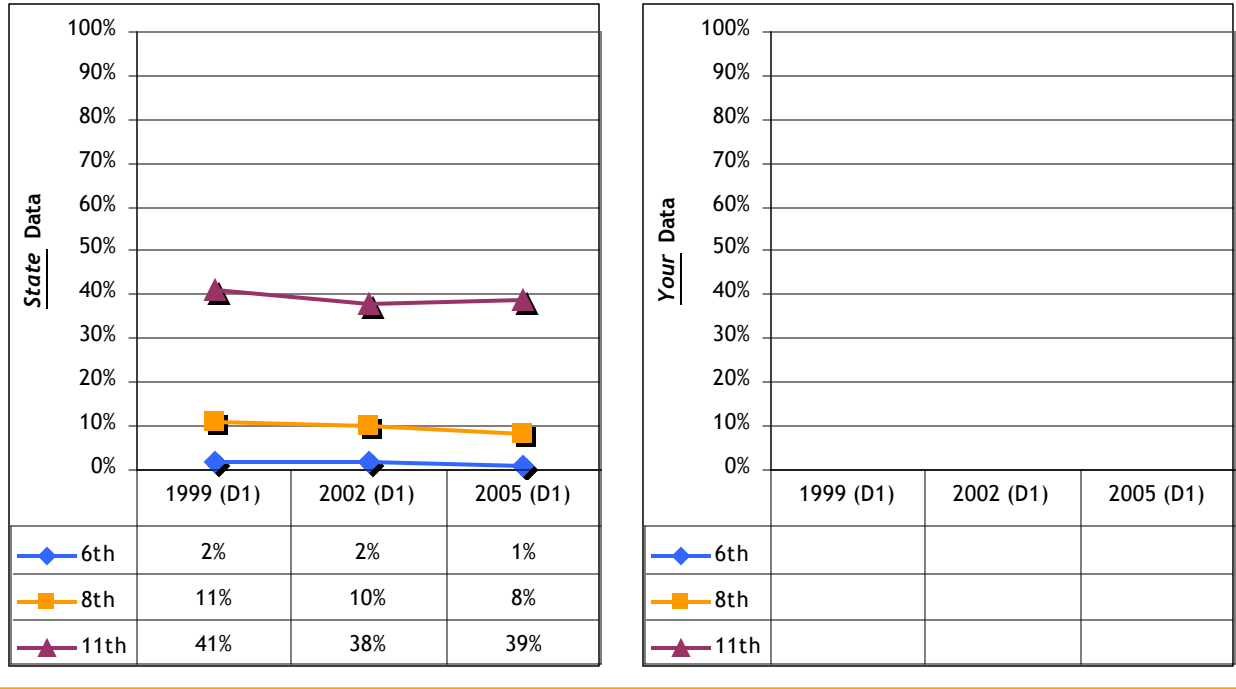


**Percentage of students who think there is a slight or no risk of harming themselves if they drink 3 or more drinks of alcohol nearly every day**

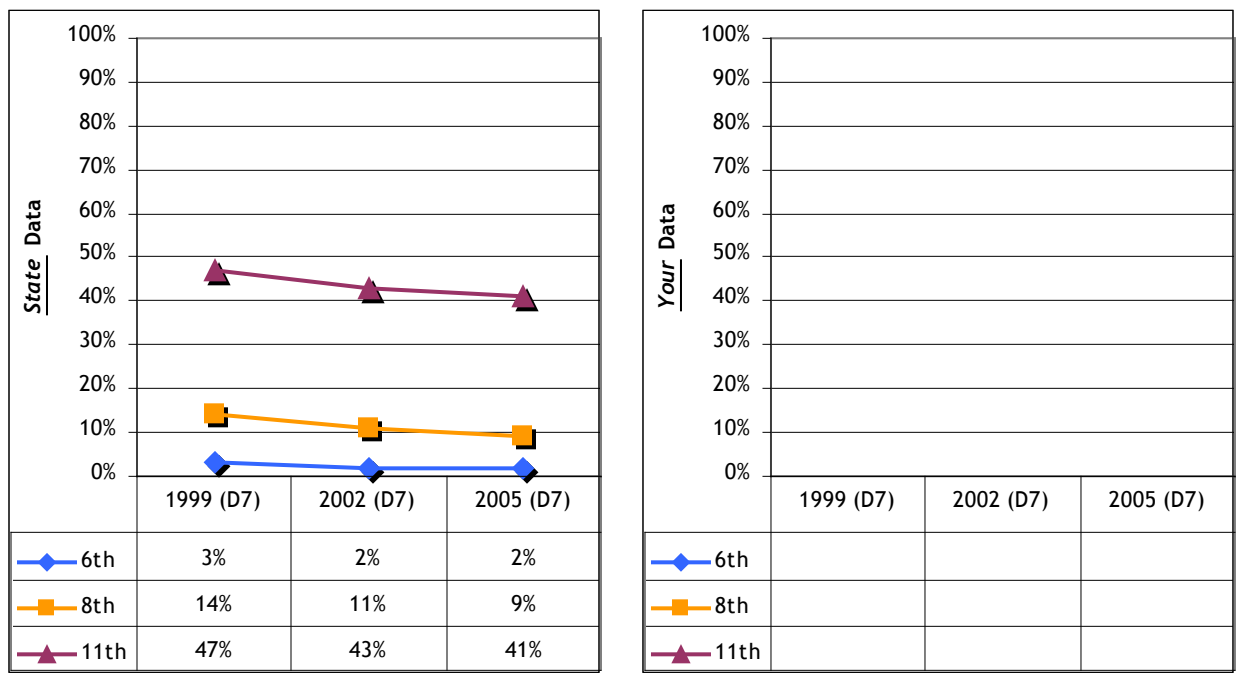


## Results Related to Perceptions and Attitudes

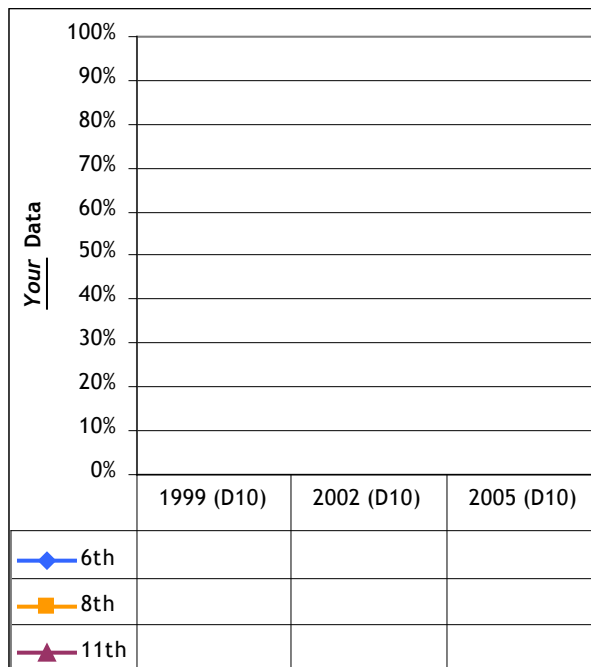
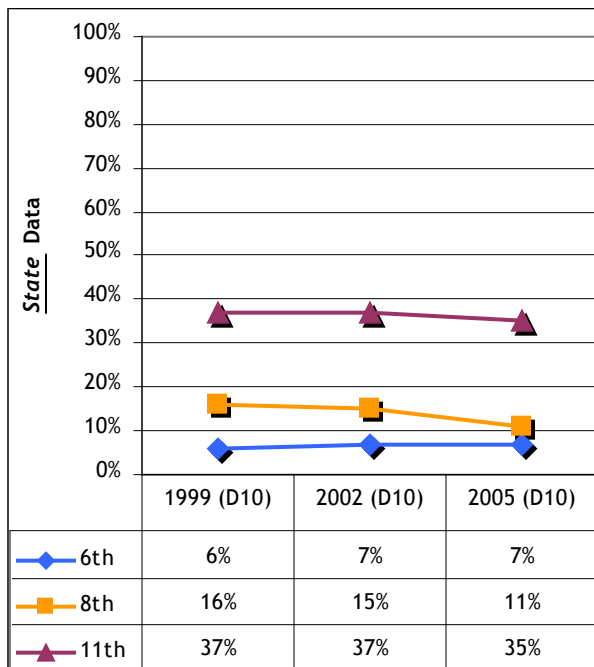
**Percentage of students who report their best friends would not think it was wrong at all for them to drink alcohol**



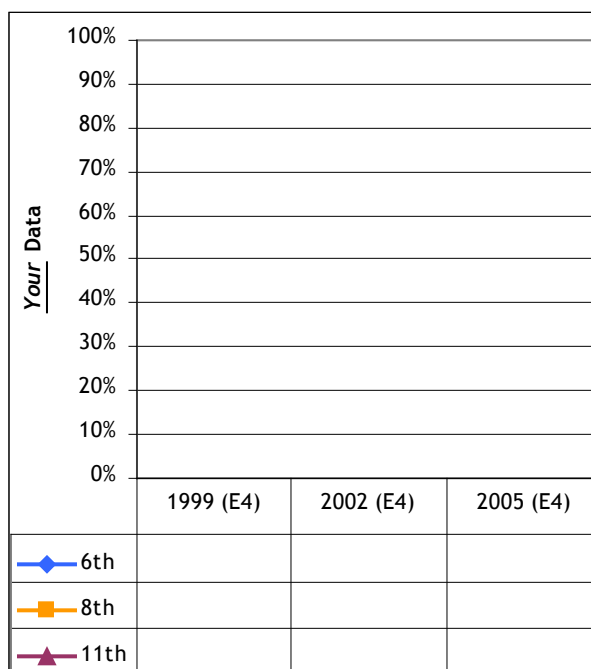
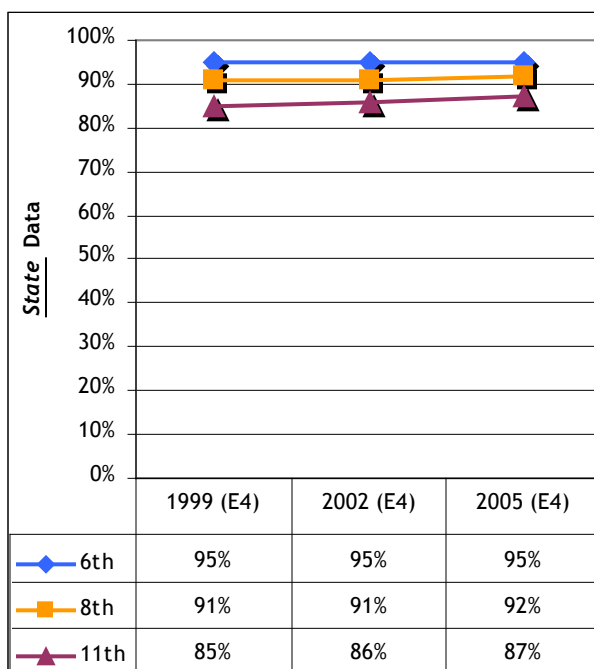
**Percentage of students who report their best friends would not think it was wrong at all for them to go to a party where kids under 21 were using alcohol**



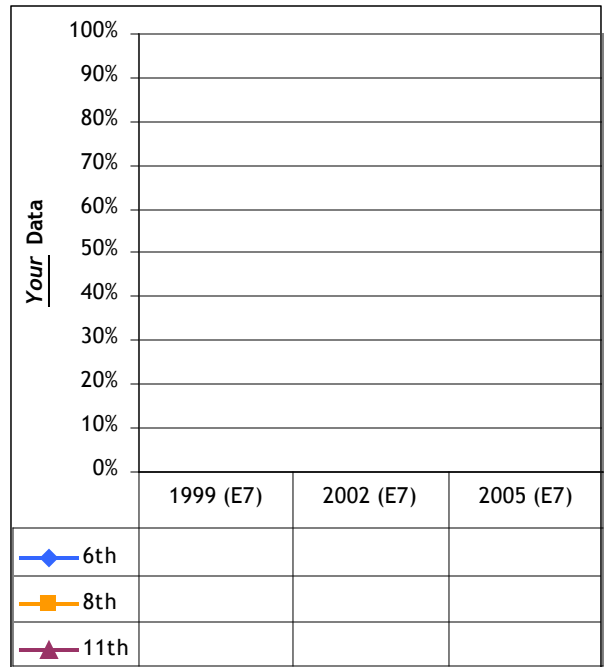
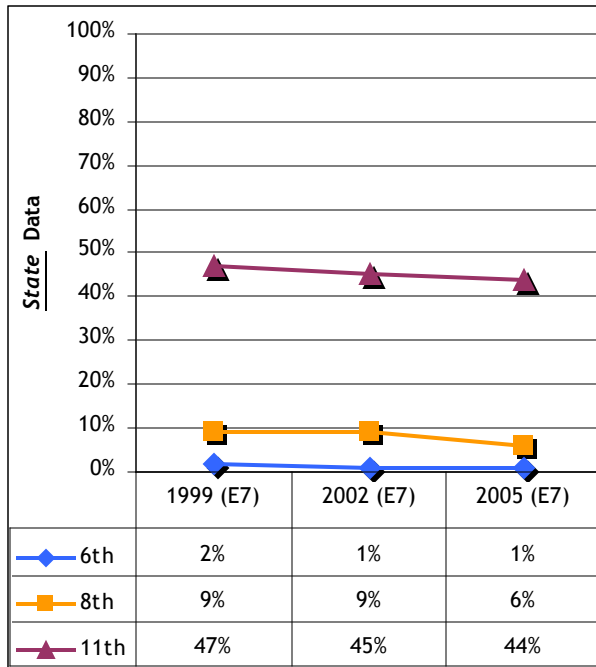
**Percentage of students who report they would be more or a lot more popular with other students if they drank alcoholic beverages**



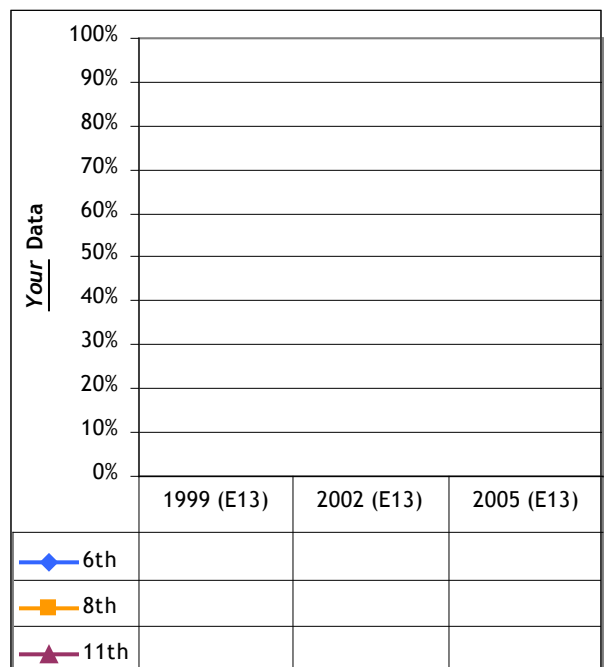
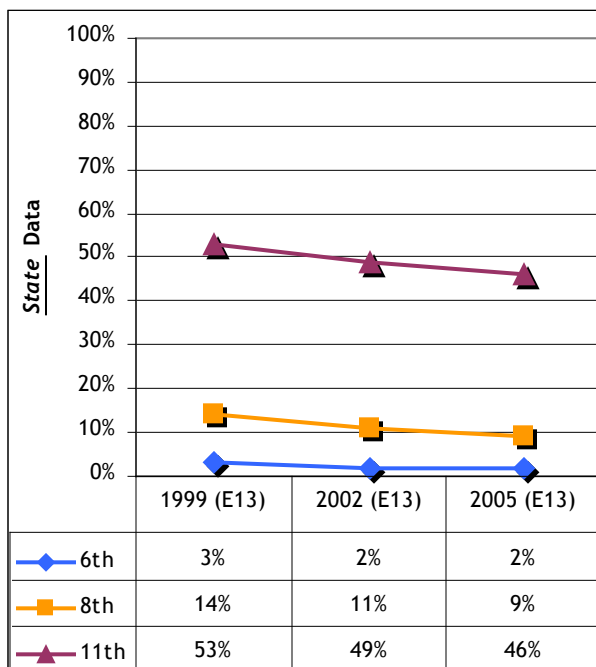
**Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that students caught drinking, smoking, or using an illegal drug are not allowed to participate in any extracurricular activities**



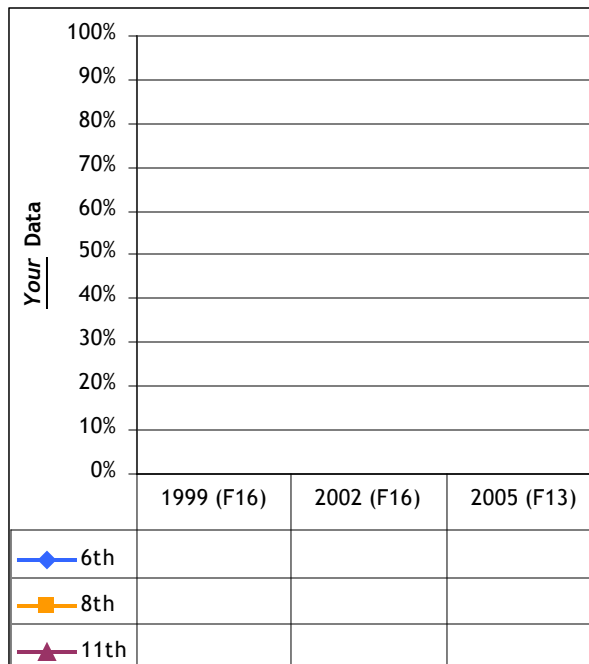
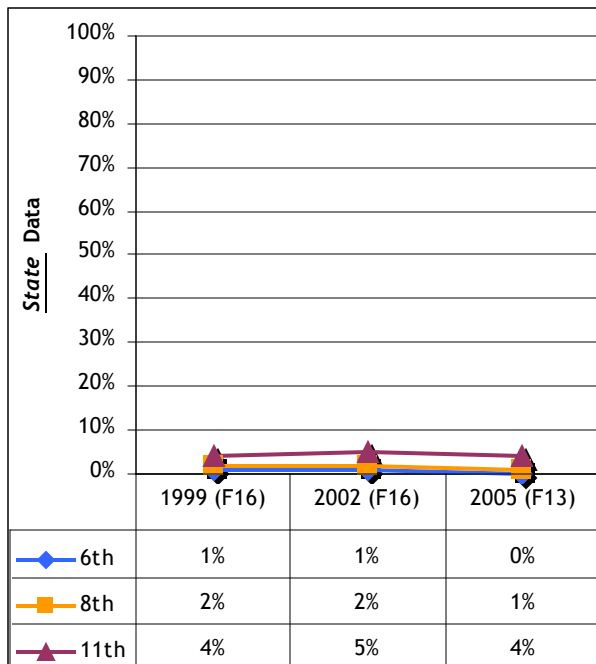
**Percentage of students who report the students in their school would not think it was wrong at all for them to drink alcohol**



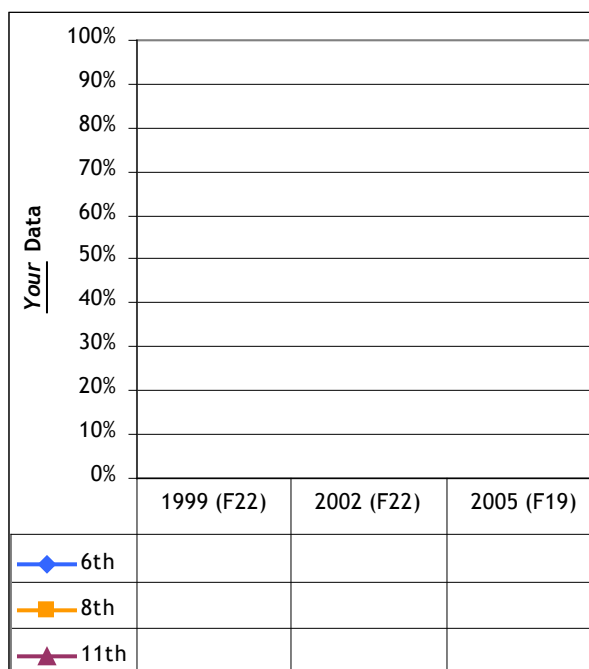
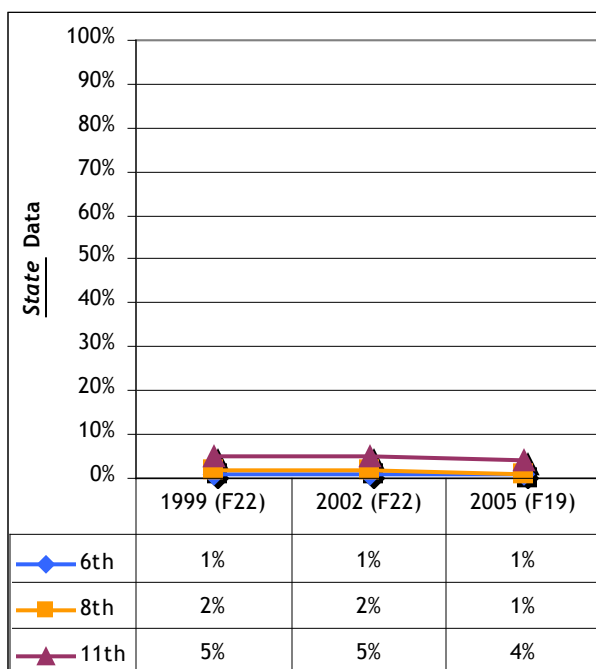
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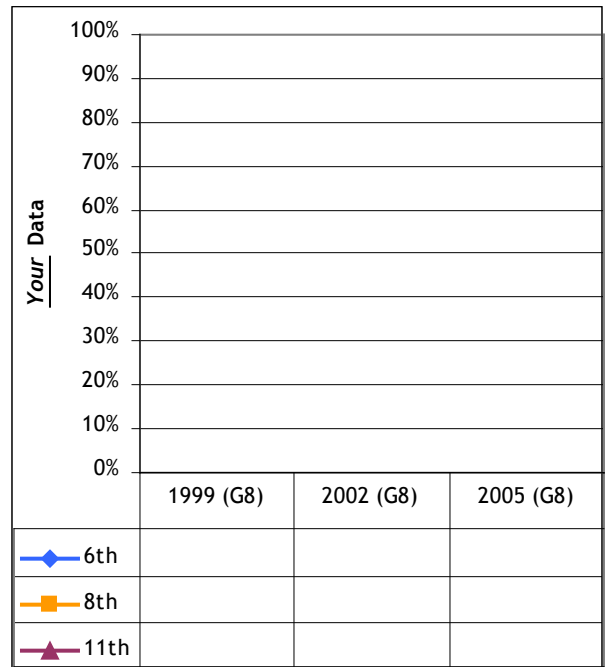
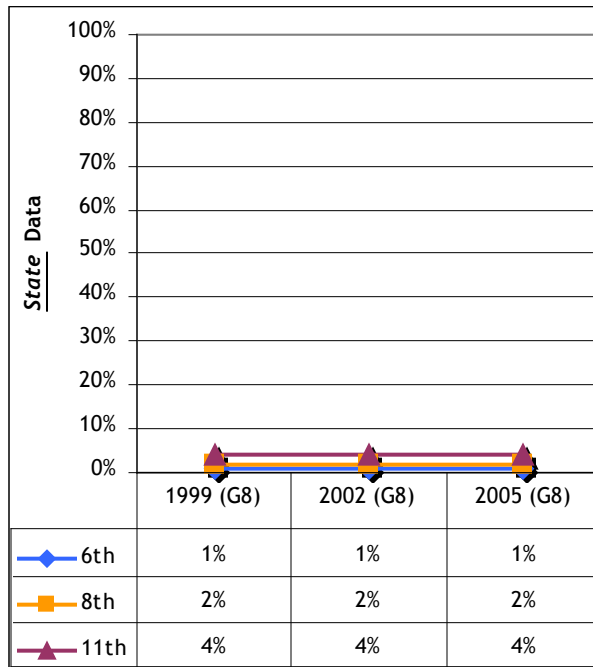
**Percentage of students who report that their parents would not think it was wrong at all for them to drink alcohol without their permission**



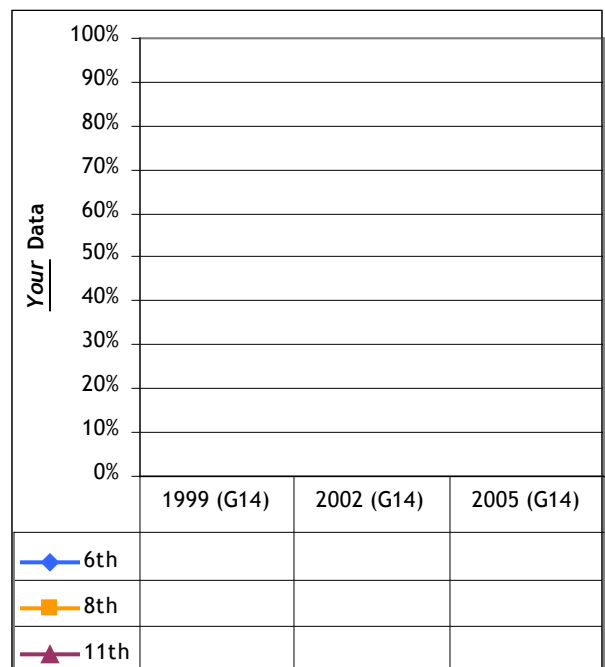
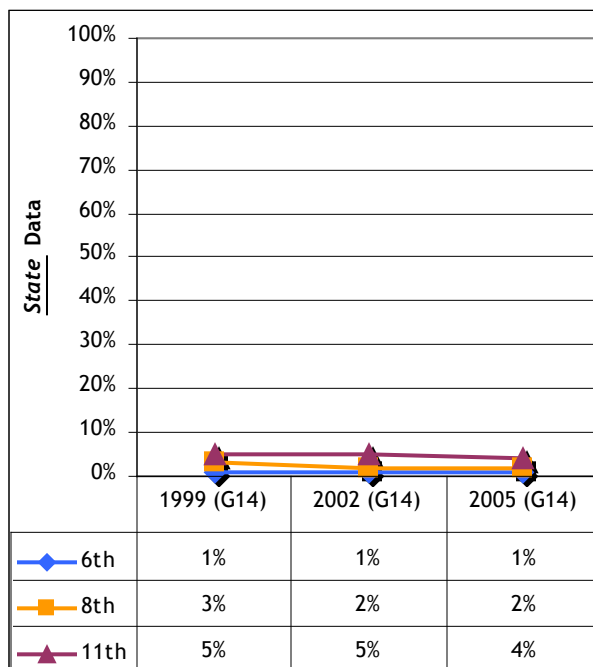
**Percentage of students who report that their parents would not think it was wrong at all for them to go to a party where kids under 21 were using alcohol**



**Percentage of students who report that most adults in their community would not think it was wrong at all for them to drink alcohol**



**Percentage of students who report that most adults in their community would not think it was wrong at all for them to go to a party where kids under 21 were using alcohol**



## **Guide for Discussion about IYS Trend Data**

The following questions are designed to facilitate a broad discussion with stakeholders about local alcohol trend data.

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1. What additional data sources may be useful in helping you understand your local IYS alcohol data?
2. What in particular concerns you about your trend data? How will the trendline continue in the future if you maintain current programming? Is this trend acceptable? If not, how would you prefer the trendline to look in the future?
3. What have you already done to address alcohol-related issues in your area?
4. What does the research say will improve youth alcohol-related issues?

5. Based on your data, what do you propose to do in the future to address alcohol-related issues in your area? (Include at least one low-cost/no-cost idea). See the following “Now What?” section for ideas.
  
6. Who will your partners be? Who else is concerned about these issues? What resources do you need? How could you spend existing resources more effectively?
  
7. How will you know that the youth in your area are better off?
  
8. Is there additional information you will need to collect to monitor your progress and verify that your plan is effective?



# Now What?

## What can parents do to help students with alcohol issues?

Consider the Following Action Steps...

- ❖ Talk to your kids about alcohol and the law.
- ❖ Know the effects of alcohol on a teenager's body so you can explain why you want them to wait until age 21 to decide whether or not to drink.
- ❖ Know your child's friends and get to know their parents. Talk to them about your family's rules. If all parents set the same curfew and have similar rules, one adolescent is not singled out for teasing.
- ❖ Establish limits and stick to them. Set curfews. Say "no" when necessary and don't apologize for it. Trust your decisions—kids want and need to know what their limits are.
- ❖ It is important for kids to know you will be awake, waiting to talk with them when they return home.
- ❖ Set a good example. If you drink alcohol as soon as you come home from work, take medication with alcohol, or drive after you have had a drink, you can expect your child to do the same thing. Remember, your kids do as you do!
- ❖ Plan alcohol-free parties with your teen. Make sure it is understood that you will be home and available if there is a problem. If they are going to a party at someone else's house, call those parents and confirm the invitation. Make sure they are as responsible as you. Ask if parents plan to supervise the party or if alcohol is permitted. If the party is not supervised, chances are alcohol will be present.
- ❖ Give kids the information they need to know to abide by the laws. Discuss how to refuse alcohol or refuse a ride with an impaired driver.
- ❖ Be a positive role model!

# Now What?

## What can administrators do to help students with alcohol issues?

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Consider the Following Action Steps...

- ❖ Assess student drinking to determine the extent of the problem. Use the data you have available from the Iowa Youth Survey.
- ❖ Find out which factors may be contributing to student drinking in your school or community.
- ❖ Determine what steps, if any, are being taken within your school/district to help young people resist the pressure to drink.
- ❖ Educate parents about underage alcohol use.
- ❖ Develop an active partnership with the families of your students.
- ❖ Implement school policies prohibiting alcohol use on school grounds.
- ❖ Take a whole-school approach to alcohol. Ensure messages delivered in the classroom are reflected during other school sponsored activities.
- ❖ Ensure policies are in place to inform school practice in alcohol education. This includes incident management and processes for supporting and, where appropriate, referring those who develop problem drinking (students, staff, personal use and other people's).
- ❖ Provide well-planned alcohol education as part of the school program, starting early and developing it across all key stages.
- ❖ Involve students, staff, parents, members of the community and local services in developing the alcohol education curriculum and whole-school approaches to alcohol.
- ❖ Recognize that alcohol is different from other drugs—it is legal, socially acceptable, a legitimate form of entertainment for adults, widely available, and seen as a 'rite of passage' for young people. These factors complicate the situation.
- ❖ Be a positive role model!

# Now What?

## What can teachers do to help students with alcohol issues?

Consider the Following Action Steps...

- ❖ Create a positive classroom environment where students feel comfortable approaching you, expressing feelings, and asking questions.
- ❖ Believe you can make a difference.
- ❖ Provide your students with factual information about alcohol. Find ways to integrate accurate information about alcohol into your classroom lessons and discussions.
- ❖ Encourage your students to use critical thinking skills to make healthy decisions and express themselves effectively.
- ❖ Provide families and caregivers with factual information about alcohol and help families learn to communicate more effectively with each other.
- ❖ Give all students an opportunity to talk—the quiet ones often have questions to ask but feel they do not get to share them. Listen to the words being communicated, but also be aware of the non-verbal communication that accompanies these words.
- ❖ Listen by paying attention, listen without interrupting, judging, and giving advice. Communication takes time; giving advice often short-circuits the process.
- ❖ Watch for the warning signs of childhood drinking—mood changes, school behavior problems, rebelling against family rules, switching friends along with a reluctance to get to know new friends, a “nothing matters” attitude, sloppy appearance, smelling alcohol on the student, and physical or mental problems including slurred speech.
- ❖ Be a positive role model!

# Now What?

## What can coaches do to help students with alcohol issues?

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Consider the Following Action Steps...

- ❖ Encourage participation in athletics by making your team an integral and exciting part of school or community life.
- ❖ Clearly express your expectation that players will not use alcohol.
- ❖ Ensure that your players know the risks of alcohol use, especially those that affect athletic performance and their future.
- ❖ Emphasize the benefits of participating in sports, particularly benefits that young people care about, including getting the respect of their peers and setting a good example for others.
- ❖ Make sure your players know that alcohol use among preteens and early teens (ages 11 to 14) is a “fringe” behavior.
- ❖ Encourage athletes to set personal goals and assist them in making progress toward those goals.
- ❖ Have older players reinforce the idea that “cool” kids don’t use alcohol—they disapprove of alcohol.
- ❖ Help young people to develop appropriate decision making skills.
- ❖ Let players know that they can talk to you about their fears and concerns regarding alcohol use.
- ❖ Develop meaningful relationships with the young people you coach.
- ❖ Be a positive role model!

