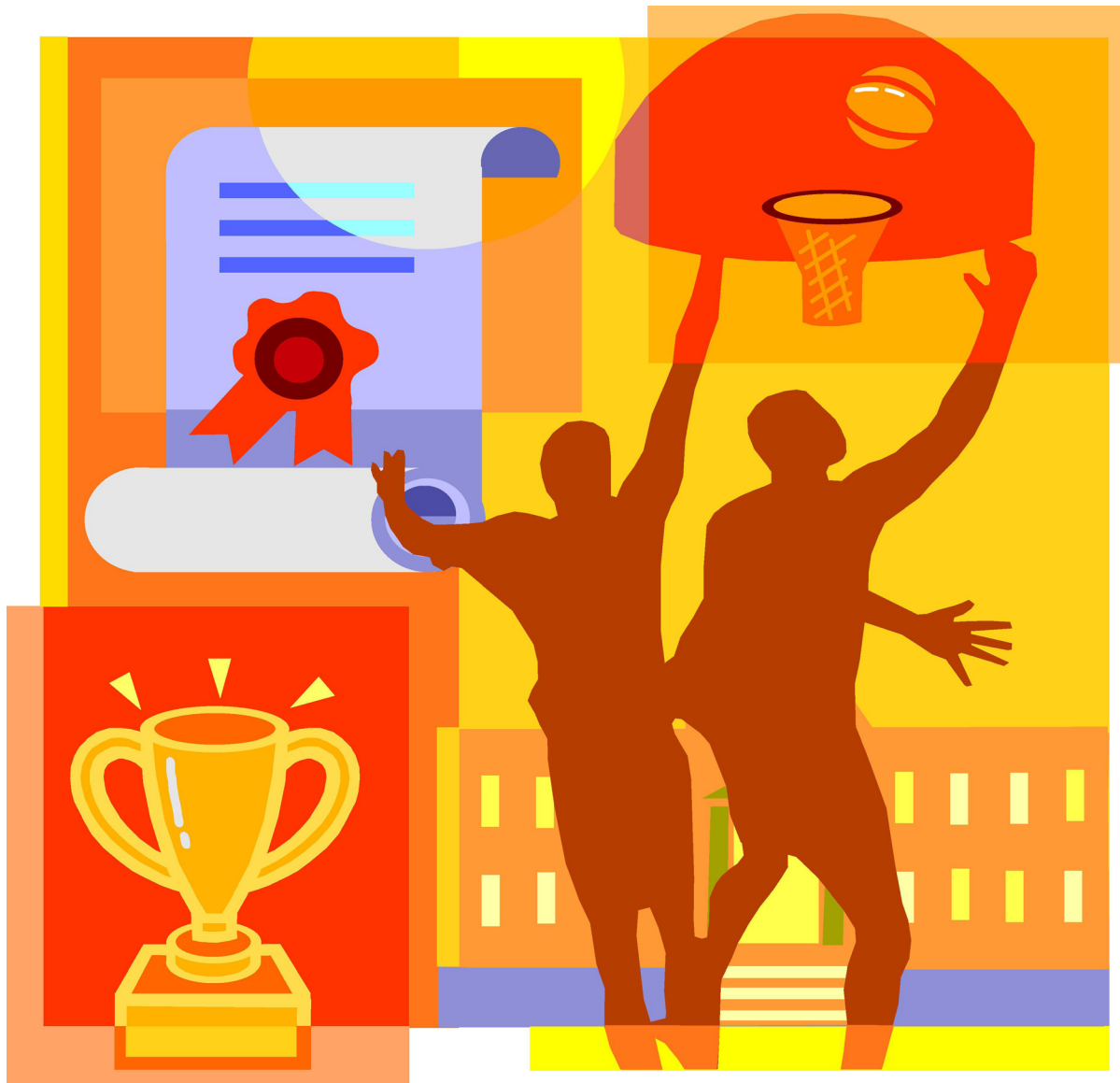

Community Connection

A Learning Supports Data Tool

Iowa Department of Education • June 2007



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

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Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

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Web-Sites

Iowa Department of Education / www.iowa.gov/educate

Iowa Youth Survey / www.iowayouthsurvey.org

Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development / www.icyd.org

Other Learning Supports Data Tools

Alcohol and Youth - Revised February, 2007

School Climate and Connection - Revised February, 2007

Risky Behavior and Bullying - Revised February, 2007

Tobacco and Youth - June, 2007

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Table of Contents

WHAT? - What Is Community Connection?

What is Community Connection?	3
How is Iowa Promoting Community Connection?	3
A Case for Building Community Connection	5
Current Thoughts about Community Connection	6

SO WHAT? - What Does Your Data Say about Community Connection and Youth?

Where to Find your Data	7
Constructs Represented in The IYS	7
Community Connection Questions on the IYS	8
Areas of Concern in State-Level Data	9
State and Local Trend Data	
Results Related to Youth Engagement	11
Results Related to Safe Neighborhood	12
Results Related to Supportive Neighborhood/Community	13
Results Related to Community Adult Norms	17
Results Related to Access to Substances	21
Guide For Discussion about IYS Trend Data	25

NOW WHAT?

What Can Neighbors Do to Help Youth with Community Connection?	27
What Can Youth Do to Help with Community Connection?	28
What Can Everyone Do to Help Youth with Community Connection?	29
What Can Administrators/School Boards Do to Help Youth with Community Connection?	30
What Can Merchants and Youth Employers Do to Help Youth with Community Connection?	31
What Can Media Do to Help Youth with Community Connection?	32
What Can Other Community Groups Do to Help Youth with Community Connection?	33

What?

What is community connection?

“Iowans benefit when all youth are engaged and contributing in their communities. Experiences and connections children and youth have growing up affect their success in school, in work and in life.”¹ Since the vision of “engagement and contribution” is related both to the education and socialization of our youth, schools, families, and neighborhoods must work together to intentionally promote the well-being, resilience, and protective factors of youth and their families.

Research affirms what generations of Americans have regarded as common sense wisdom: in order for children to become successful adults who contribute to society, children need the compounded effect of basic, essential resources in their lives.² Parents are the first and most important providers of developmental resources, but they are far from the only ones. Other adults, schools, and communities all have key roles to play.

When youth are valued members of the community, they are viewed as “resources” rather than “problems to be fixed”. They are given responsibilities, are involved in relevant, engaging and respected activities, have a voice and choice, make decisions, plan, and are allowed ownership and leadership roles.

Much of the source for positive developmental influences comes from adults outside young people’s own families. This includes adults with whom they have a formal relationship such as teachers, but also those with whom they have informal relationships, such as neighbors.

When many adults demonstrate their respect and appreciation of children and youth and when they actively seek to get to know them, the community becomes more welcoming and more growth-enhancing for children and youth.

How is Iowa Promoting Community Connection?

The Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development and the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Services have joined forces to adopt the America’s Promise Framework to mobilize our state to build the character and competence of children and youth through positive youth development initiatives. In December of 2004, Governor Tom Vilsack announced that Iowa had been designated a State of Promise. **Iowa’s Promise is an intentional effort to communicate a common and powerful message to Iowans about the importance and value of providing children and youth with the services, opportunities, and supports they need to succeed.**³

Positive Youth Development is a process that prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities that helps them gain skills and competencies. Youth leadership is part of

that process. In order to control and direct their own lives based on informed decisions, all youth need to develop social competencies, build supportive relationships, engage in the community, and establish independence.⁴

America’s Promise Framework says “Every child deserves a chance to succeed. That is America’s Promise. It will take all of us working together to make that possible.”⁵

Research shows—and experience proves—that children need five fundamental resources in order to thrive. The five research-driven and experience-proven essentials that all children need in their lives are⁶:

Caring adults: Every child and youth needs and deserves support and guidance from caring adults in their families, schools, and communities. This includes ongoing, secure relationships with parents and other family adults, as well as multiple and consistent formal and informal positive relationships with teachers, mentors, coaches, youth volunteers, and neighbors.

Safe Places and Constructive Use of Time: Every child and youth needs and deserves to be physically and emotionally safe everywhere they are—from the actual places of families, schools, neighborhoods, and communities to the virtual places of media—and to have an appropriate balance of structured, supervised activities and unstructured, unscheduled time.

A Healthy Start and Healthy Development: Every child and youth needs and deserves healthy bodies, healthy minds, and healthful habits and choices resulting from regular health care and needed treatment, good nutrition and exercise, comprehensive knowledge and skills, and role models of physical and psychological health.

Effective Education for Marketable Skills and Lifelong Learning: Every child and youth needs and deserves the intellectual development, motivation, and personal social-emotional and cultural skills needed for successful work and lifelong learning in a diverse nation. This should be a result of having quality learning environments, challenging expectations, and consistent formal and informal guidance and mentoring.

Opportunities to Make a Difference Through Helping Others: Every child and youth needs and deserves the chance to make a difference—in their families, schools, communities, nations, and world—through having models of caring behavior, awareness of the needs of others, a sense of personal responsibility to contribute to larger society, and opportunities for volunteering, leadership, and service.

A Case for Building Community Connection

The following information is quoted from, [A Report from America's Promise Alliance: Every Child, Every Promise: Turning Failure Into Action.](#)⁷

Research demonstrates that chances of success are greatly increased (and the risks of failure greatly mitigated) when a child receives a critical mass of developmental resources. Moreover, children need the compounded effect of these developmental resources in their lives to thrive and be successful.

We find in our research that children who enjoy the sustained and cumulative benefit of having at least four of the five Promises across various contexts of their lives are much more likely to be academically successful, civically engaged, and socially competent, regardless of their race or family income.

Academic Achievement: *Teens and younger children with four or more of these five developmental resources are more than twice as likely to work up to their abilities and to get mostly A's in school, as compared to teens and younger children with one or fewer of the developmental resources in their lives. The presence of The Promises also eliminates disparities in school attendance between White and African-American and Hispanic 12- to 17-year olds, as well as between 12- to 17-year olds from higher and lower income families.*

Volunteering: *Young people with four or all five of The Promises are 40% more likely to volunteer in their communities than those with just one or none of The Promises.*

Avoiding Violence: *Teens who receive four or five of The Promises are nearly twice as likely to refrain from using violence compared to teens with only one or fewer core resources.*

Social Competence: *Teens who receive four or five of The Promises are nearly two-thirds more likely than those with zero or one of The Promises to be generous, respectful, and empathetic, and resolve conflicts calmly. Younger children with four or five of The Promises are twice as likely to be socially competent than their peers with zero or one of The Promises.*

Just as The Five Promises have cumulative, mutually reinforcing effects, so does the lack of them. The combined effects of low-income, poor quality housing, high crime, and discrimination of all kinds are not easy to overcome. Simply having more caring adults or better after-school activities—as critical as these resources are—by themselves may not enable our most deeply disadvantaged young people to surmount the obstacles to success. But we have seen that when these resources are sufficiently present in a young person's life, they have a profound effect on changing the chance of that young person's success.

Current Thoughts about Community Connection

Addressing children’s multiple needs means more than improving school alone, or only supporting parents. Children are the products of all of their environments: home, schools, neighborhoods, and communities. These influences are mutually reinforcing.

Most adults, when asked, say that it is very important to have positive engagement with unrelated young people. Yet only a small minority of adults consistently does so in ways that can promote young people’s well-being. This small percentage of adults is engaged in meaningful conversations with youth—conversations where there is active expression of caring and provision of support. These adults intentionally build a functionally helpful relationship with youth that is maintained over time.

The real work and actual delivery of services, opportunities, and supports for youth development takes place in communities and neighborhoods. Communities can increase their commitment to youth development and demand better supports for all young people. Yet, much of the energy for such “big change” efforts comes from the informal, small actions taken by one individual at a time in his or her daily life.

-
1. Fulfilling Iowa’s Promise: Iowa Youth Development Strategic Plan, 2007-2010. Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development. Cover
 2. Keeping America’s Promise to Children and Youth. A Search Institute-Child Trends Report on the Results of the America’s Promise National Telephone Polls of Children, Teenagers, and Parents. Final Revised Report, April 2006. Search Institute Team, Peter C. Scales, Ph.D. et al and Child Trends Team, Kristin A. Moore, Ph.D. et al
 3. Iowa’s Promise Website. Who We Are. 2007
 4. Paving the Way to Work: A Guide to Career-Focused Mentoring for Youth with Disabilities. National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth Institute for Educational Leadership. Chapter 1: An Overview of Career Focused Mentoring Programs, Page 5
 5. America’s Promise Website. Who We Are. 2007
 6. Keeping America’s Promises To Children and Youth.
 7. Every Child Every Promise: Turning Failure Into Action. A Report From America’s Promise Alliance. First Biennial Report. 2007

So What?

What does your data say about community connection and youth?

Where to Find Your Data

The Iowa Youth Survey (IYS) is a voluntary survey given to 6th, 8th, and 11th graders on a three-year cycle, most recently in the fall of 2005. Most school districts (359) and students (98,246) in the state participated in the survey in 2005. The IYS is a comprehensive data source for those interested in understanding youth's behaviors and perceptions in relation to substance use, violence, and relationships with others. The survey relies on students to read and honestly answer each question, but the data from 1999, 2002, and 2005 is quite consistent. Also, to safeguard the validity of the survey results, each survey proceeds through a series of validity checks and is not included in the analysis if it fails these checks.

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 community connection.

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

Community Connection Questions on the IYS

There are 26 questions on the IYS that are related to community connection. They can be broken down into the following five categories:

Questions Related to Youth Engagement

- ❖ On average during the school year, how many hours per week do you spend helping friends, neighbors, or others (including volunteer activities)?
- ❖ On average during the school year, how many hours per week do you spend participating in activities outside of school (sports, music, 4-H, Scouts, clubs, etc.)?

Questions Related to Safe Neighborhood

- ❖ How much do you agree or disagree that your neighborhood is a safe place to live?
- ❖ How much do you agree or disagree that in your neighborhood there are lots of fights, crime, or illegal drugs?

Questions Related to Supportive Neighborhood/Community

- ❖ How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following statements is true:
 - If someone in my neighborhood or community saw me do something wrong, they would tell one of my parents (or adults who lives with me).
 - Adults in my community care about people my age.
 - My neighbors get along well with each other.
 - There are enough places for kids my age to go that are alcohol and drug free.
 - Adults in my neighborhood or community let me know they are proud of me when I do something well.
 - Adults in my neighborhood or community help me when I need help.
 - Adults in my neighborhood or community spend time talking with me.

Questions Related to Community Adult Norms

- ❖ 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)?
 - Smoke cigarettes?
 - Smoke marijuana?
 - Use any illegal drugs other than alcohol, cigarettes or marijuana?
 - Start a physical fight with someone?
 - Carry a gun, knife, club or other weapon to school?
 - Go to a party where kids under 21 were using alcohol?
 - Go to a party where kids were using drugs?

Questions Related to Access to Substances

- ❖ In your neighborhood or community, how difficult do you think it would be for a kid your age to get:
 - cigarettes?
 - alcoholic beverages (beer, wine or liquor)?
 - marijuana (pot, grass, hash, bud, weed)?
 - methamphetamines (crank, ice)?
 - amphetamines other than methamphetamines (like stimulants, uppers, speed)?
 - any other illegal drug (cocaine, etc.)?
 - a handgun?

Areas of Concern in State-Level Data

When considering the state-level IYS community connection data, some important areas of concern emerge. The table on the next page 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 Undesirable Response

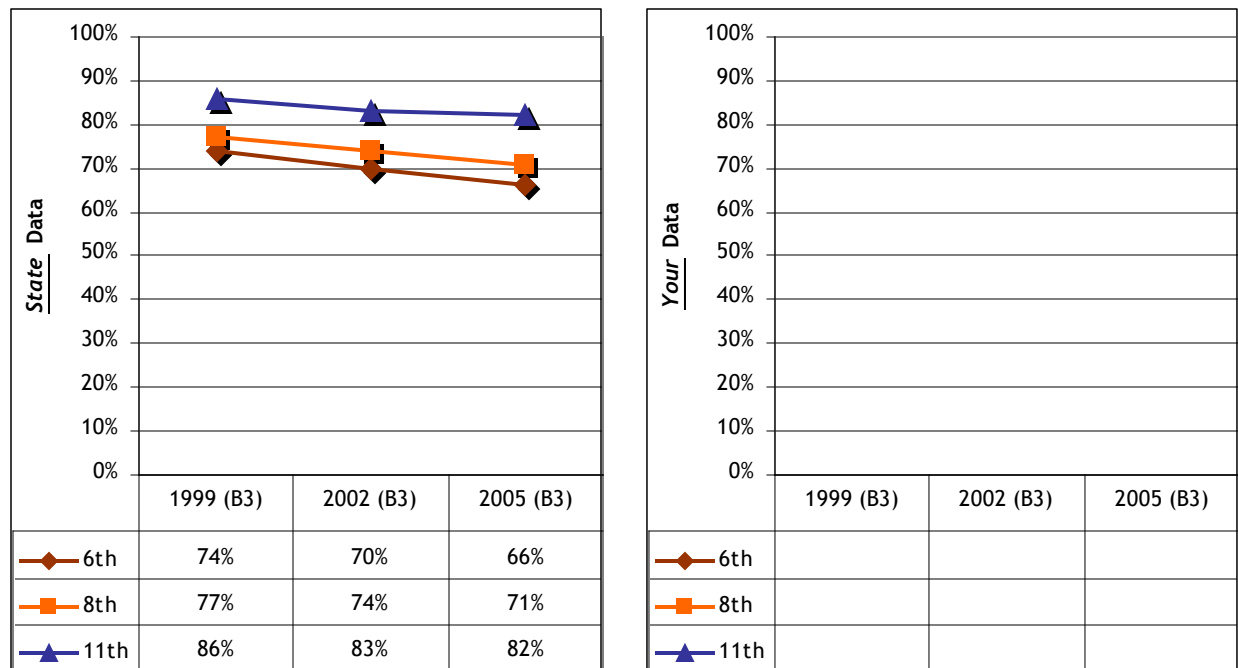
Question	Grade	2005 State Result	2005 Local Result
Percentage of students who help friends, neighbors or others less than 1 hour a week during the school year (B3) - Youth Engagement	6th	34%	
	8th	29%	
Percentage of students who participate in activities outside of school less than 1 hour a week during the school year (B5) - Youth Engagement	6th	28%	
	8th	34%	
	11th	38%	
Percentage of students who disagree or strongly disagree that if someone in their neighborhood or community saw them do something wrong, they would tell one of their parents (G18) - Supportive Neighborhood/Community	11th	25%	
Percentage of students who disagree or strongly disagree that adults in their community care about people their age (G19) - Supportive Neighborhood/Community	11th	29%	
Percentage of students who disagree or strongly disagree that there are enough places for kids their age to go that are alcohol and drug free (G21) - Supportive Neighborhood/Community	11th	33%	
Percentage of students who disagree or strongly disagree that adults in their neighborhood or community let them know they are proud of them when they do something well (G22) - Supportive Neighborhood/Community	8th	35%	
	11th	44%	
Percentage of students who disagree or strongly disagree that adults in their neighborhood or community help them when they need help (G23) - Supportive Neighborhood/Community	8th	29%	
	11th	37%	
Percentage of students who disagree or strongly disagree that adults in their neighborhood or community spend time talking with them (G24) - Supportive Neighborhood/Community	6th	29%	
	8th	40%	
	11th	43%	
Percentage of students who report it would be easy or very easy for a kid their age to get cigarettes (G1) - Access to Substances	8th	31%	
	11th	69%	
Percentage of students who report it would be easy or very easy for a kid their age to get alcoholic beverages (G2) - Access to Substances	8th	38%	
	11th	74%	

State and Local Trend Data

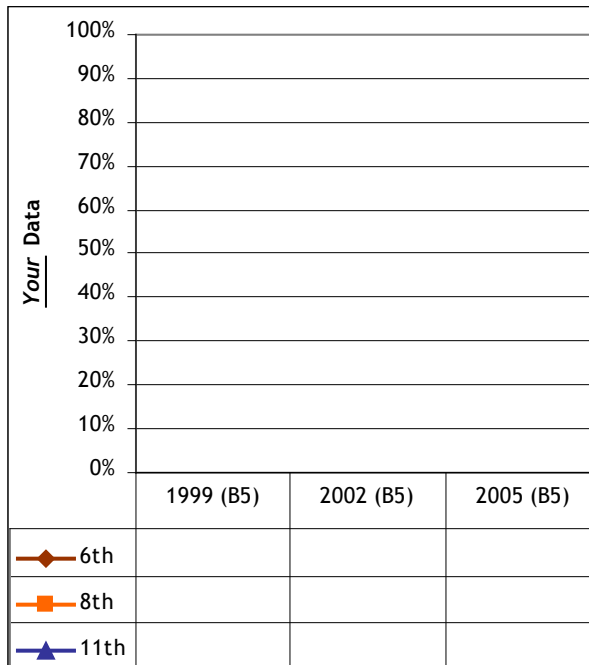
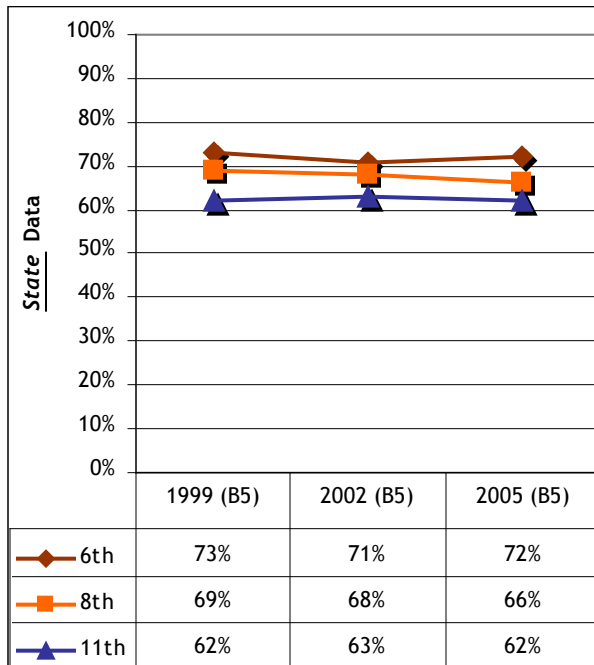
The following charts display state level trend data for all of the questions on the IYS related to community connection. Next to the state results, use the blank charts to insert your local data. If local results for any particular question at any grade level are different (more than 5 percentage points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

Results Related to Youth Engagement

Percentage of students who help friends, neighbors, or others one or more hours per week during the school year

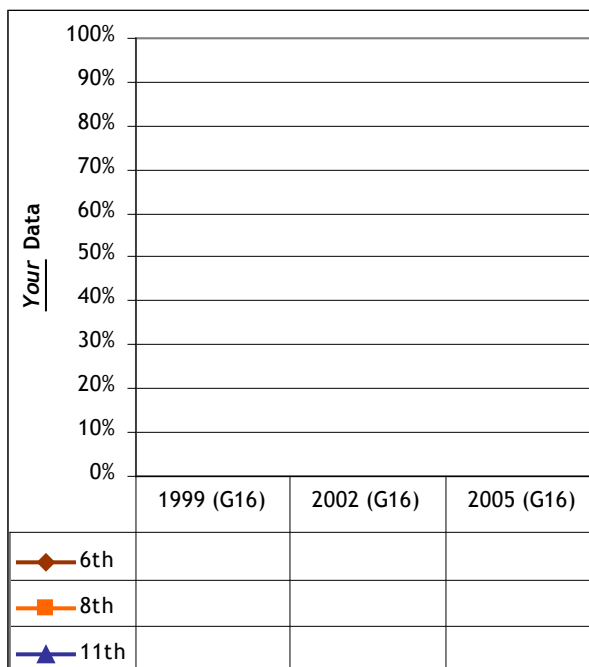
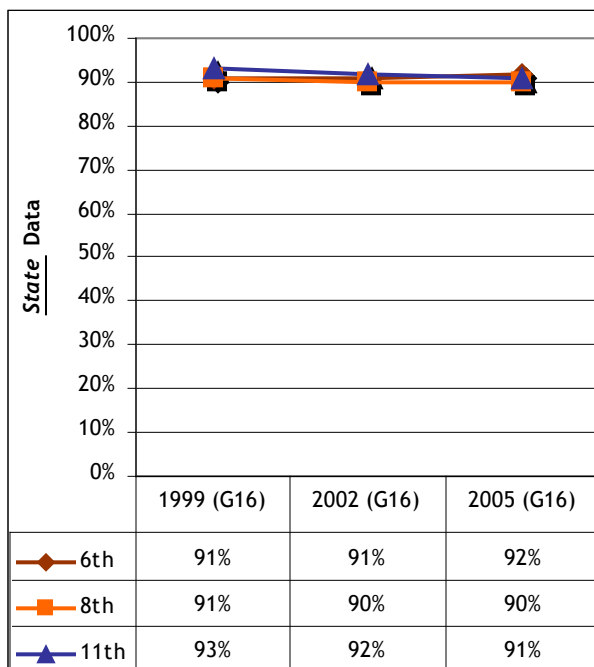


Percentage of students who participate in activities outside of school an average of one or more hours per week during the school year

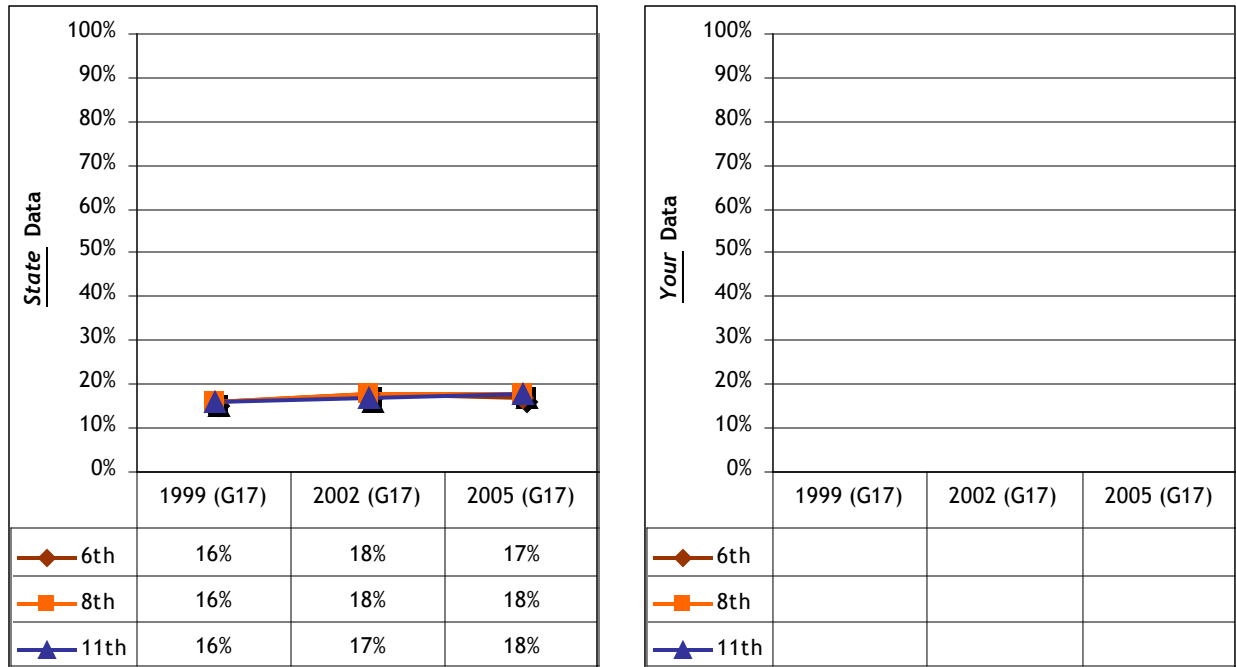


Results Related to Safe Neighborhood

Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that their neighborhood is a safe place to live

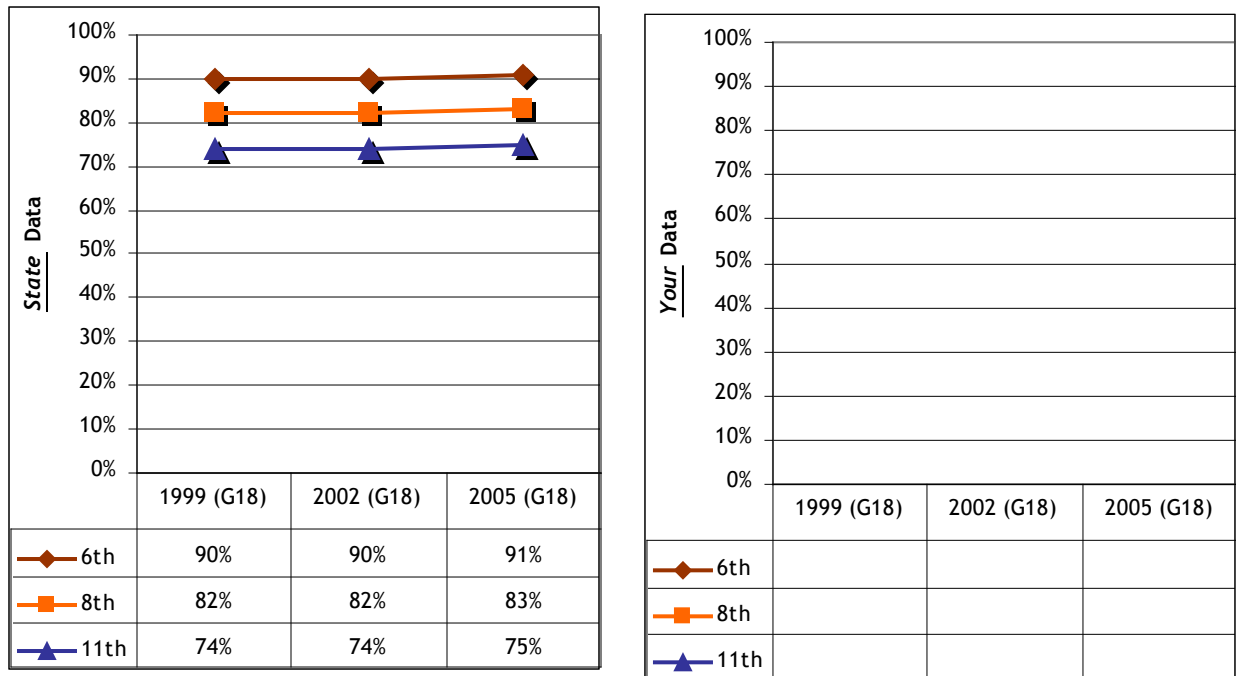


Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that in their neighborhood there are a lot of fights, crime, or illegal drugs

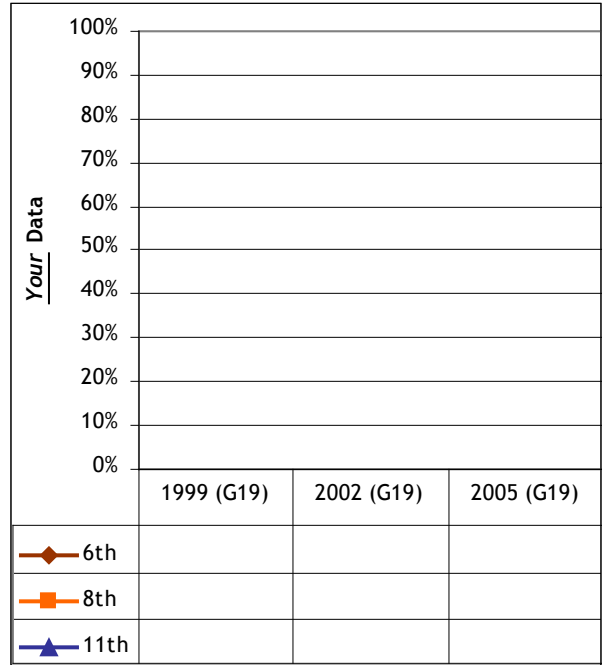
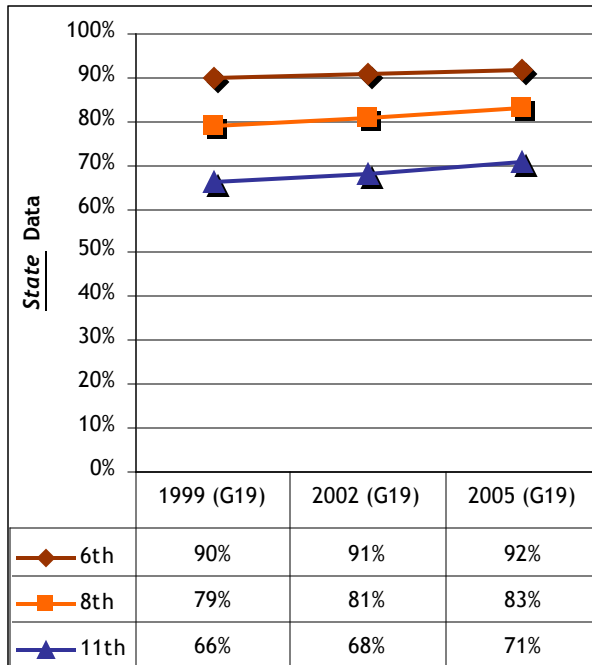


Results Related to Supportive Neighborhood/Community

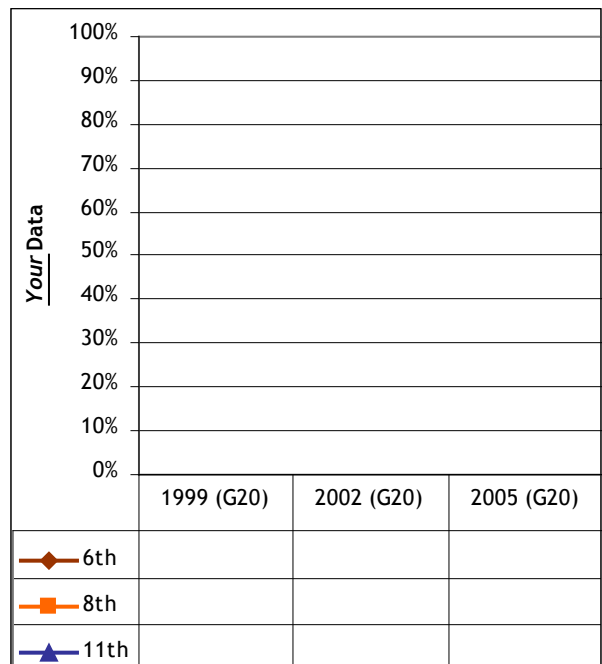
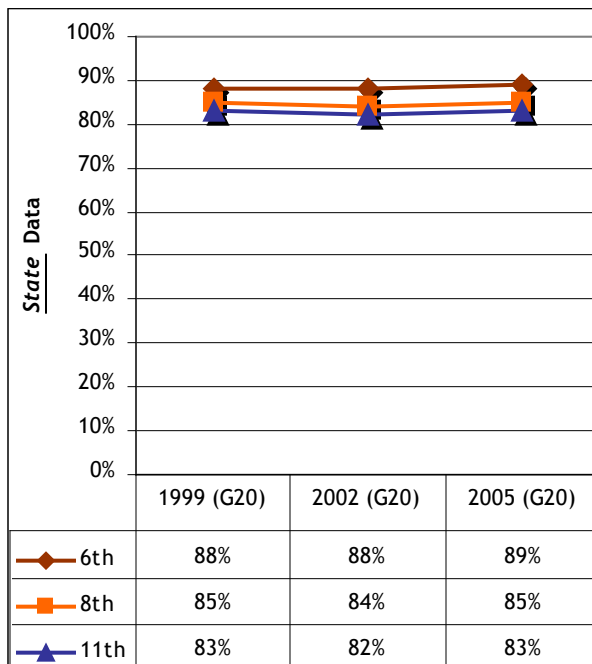
Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that if someone in their neighborhood or community saw them do something wrong, they would tell one of their parents



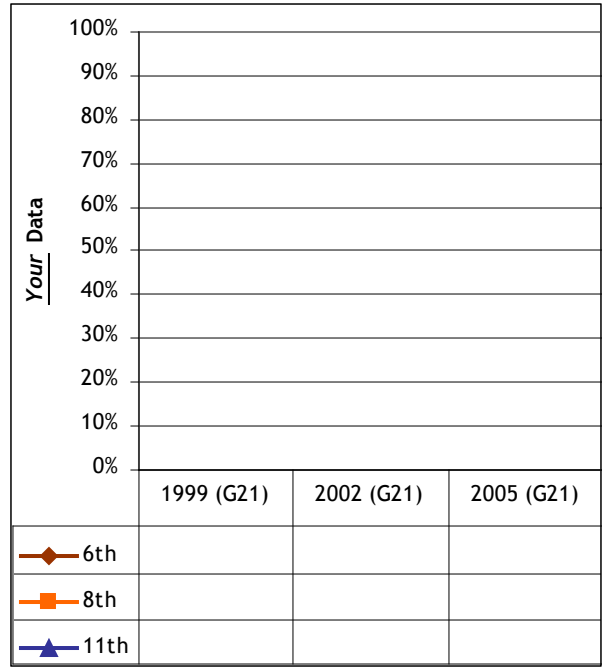
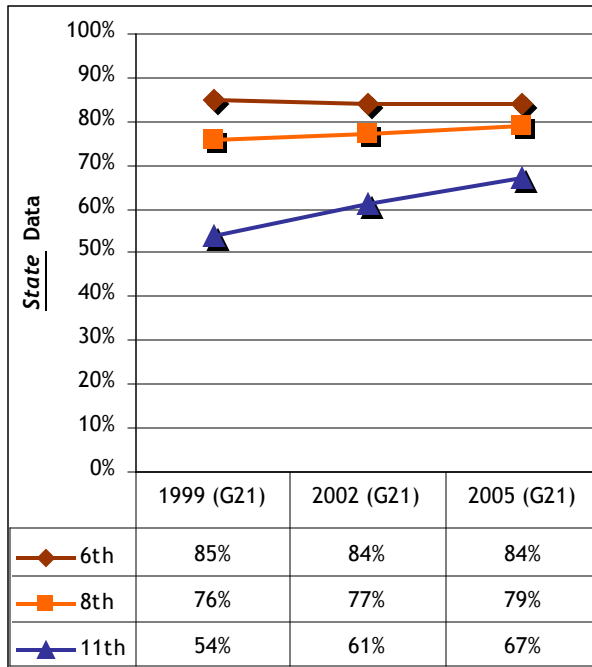
Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that adults in their community care about people their age



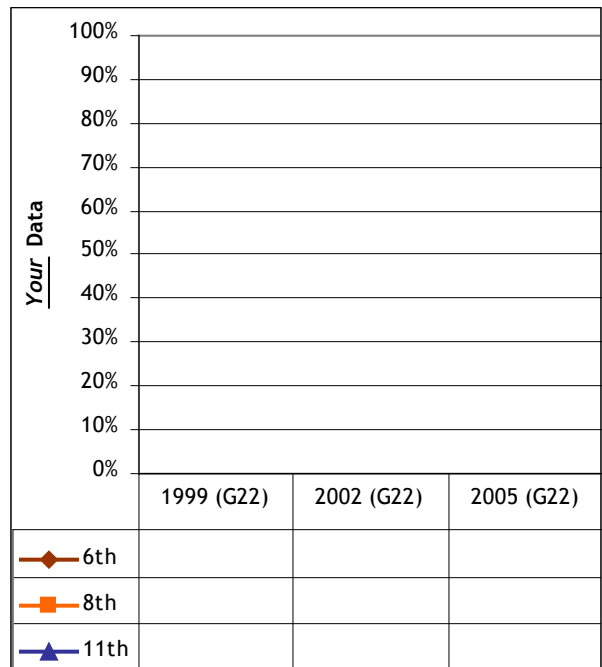
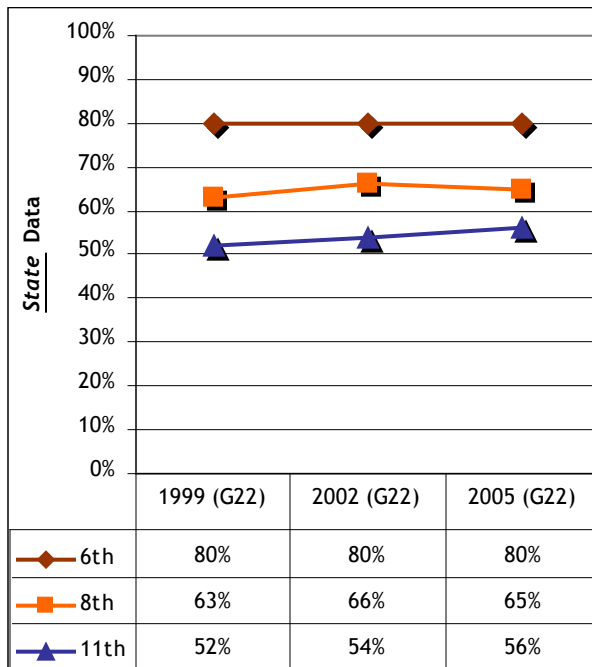
Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that their neighbors get along well with each other



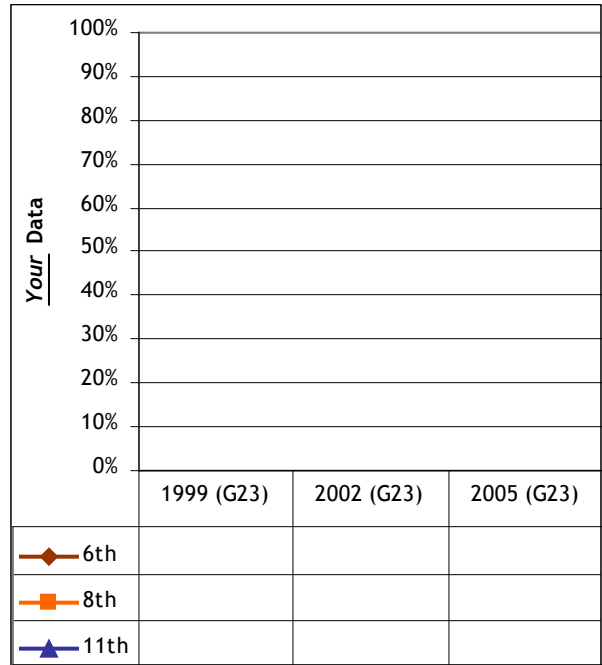
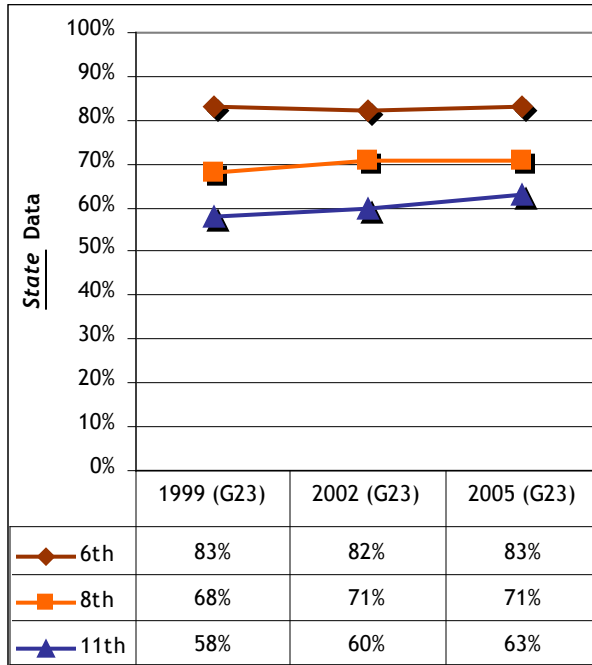
Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that there are enough places for kids their age to go that are alcohol and drug free



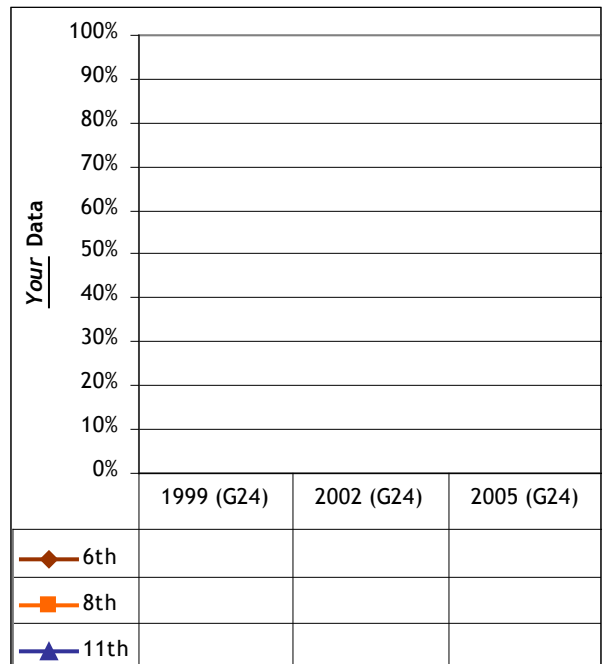
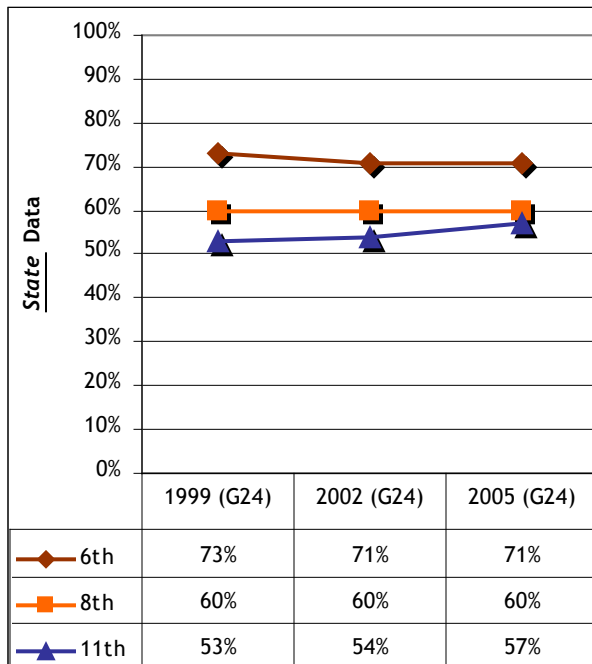
Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that adults in their neighborhood or community let them know they are proud of them when they do something well



Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that the adults in their neighborhood or community help them when they need help

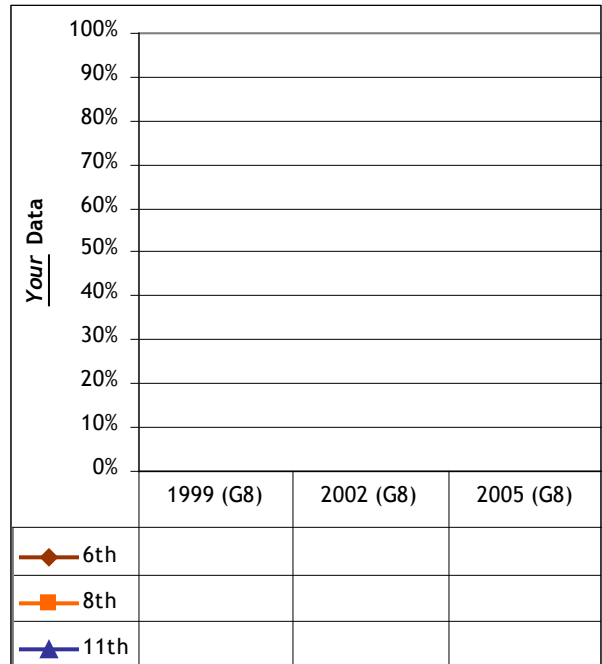
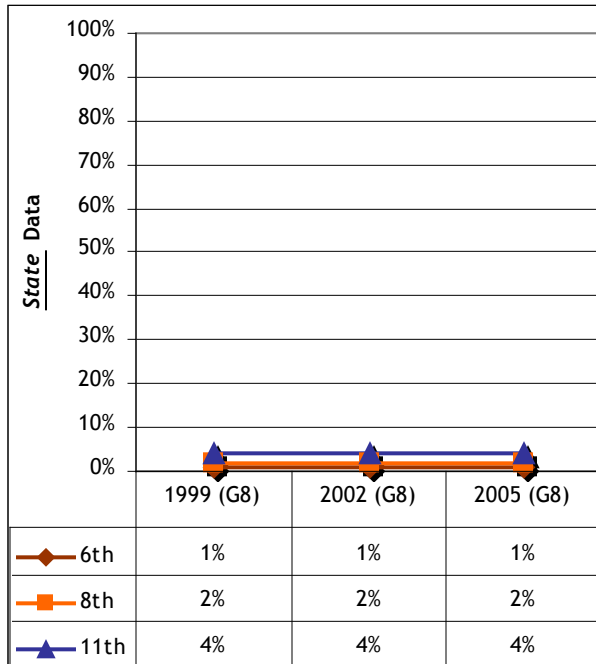


Percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that adults in their neighborhood or community spend time talking with them

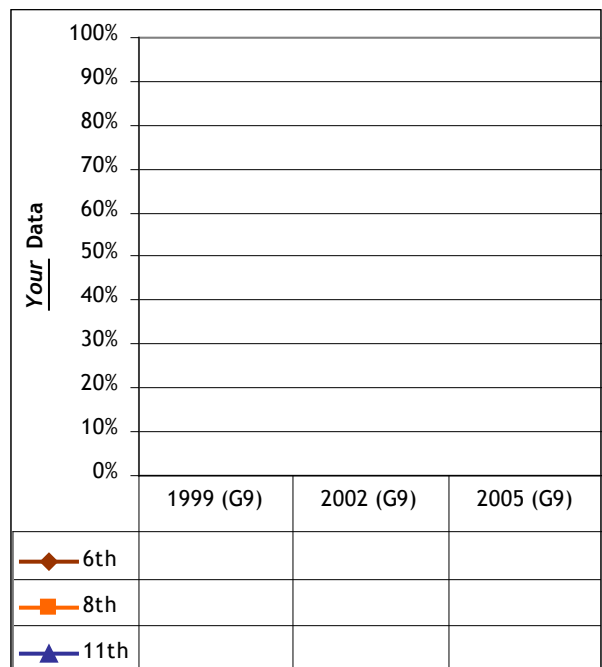
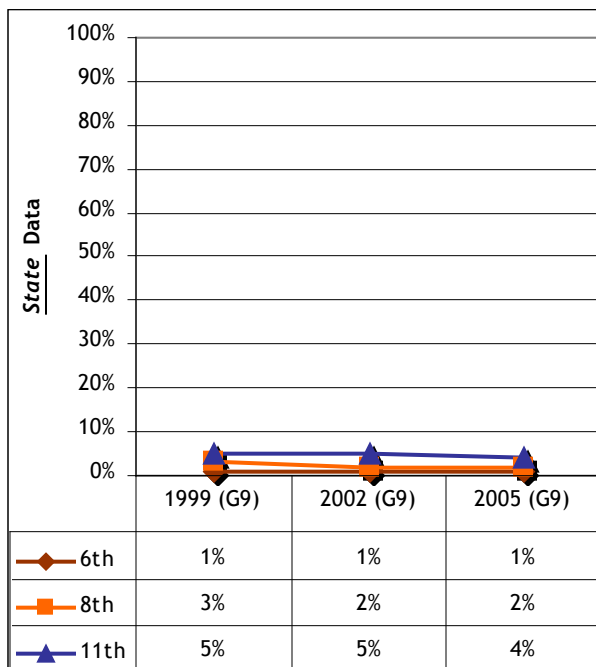


Results Related to Community Adult Norms

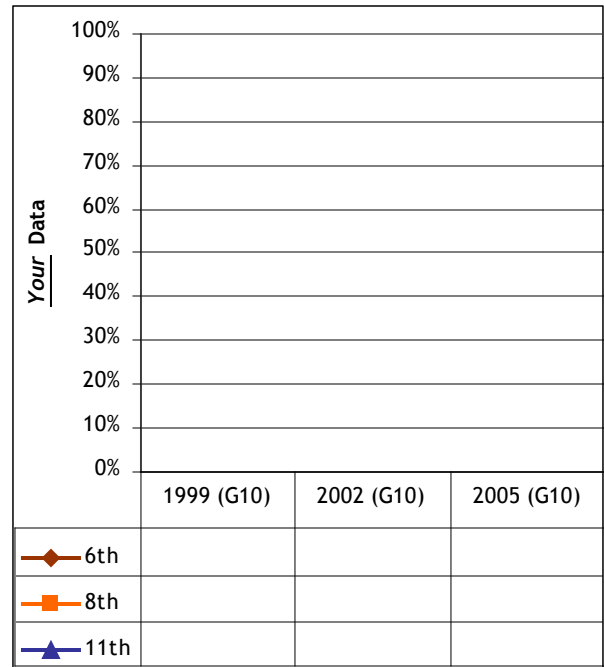
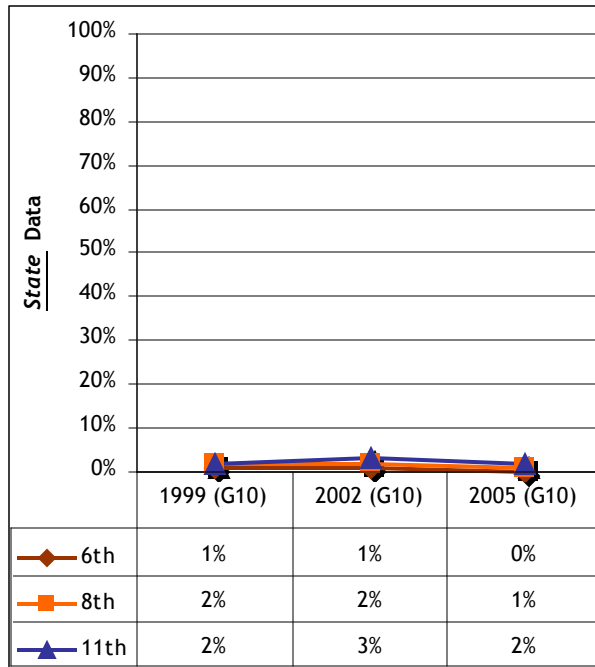
Percentage of students who report most adults in their neighborhood and/or community would not think it was wrong at all for them to drink alcohol



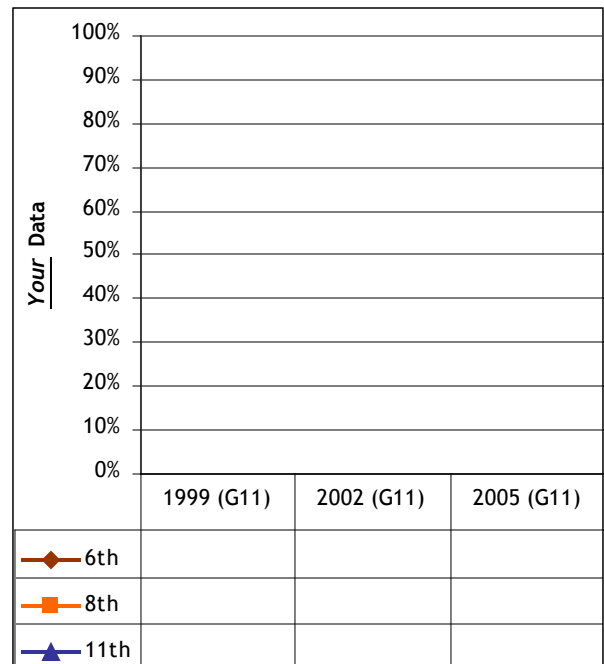
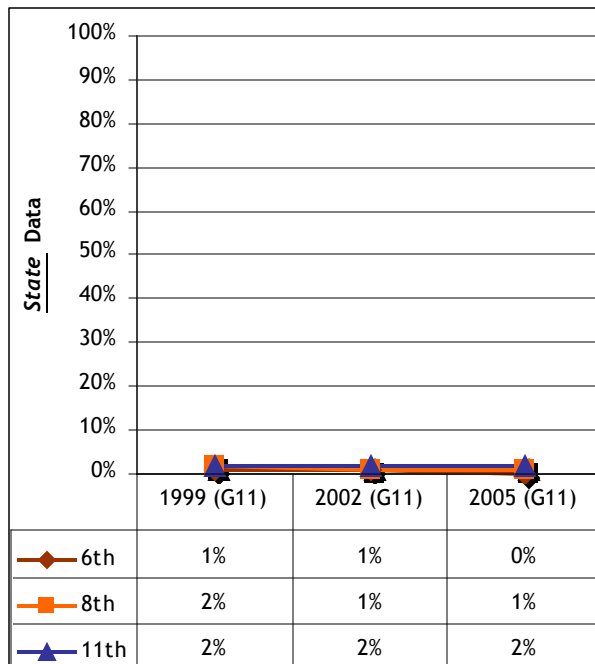
Percentage of students who report most adults in their neighborhood and/or community would not think it was wrong at all for them to smoke cigarettes



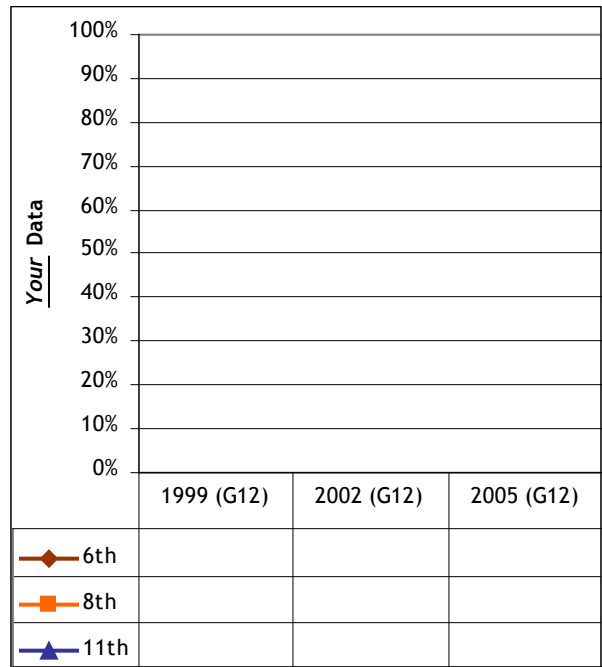
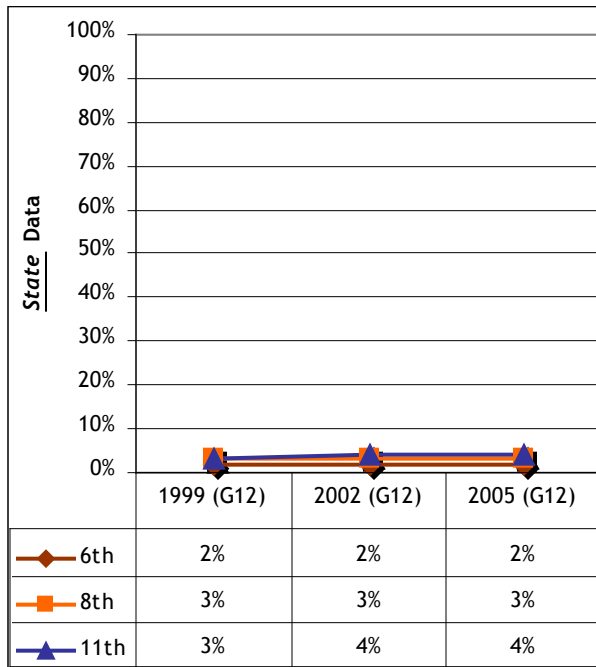
Percentage of students who report that most adults in their neighborhood and/or community would not think it was wrong at all for them to smoke marijuana



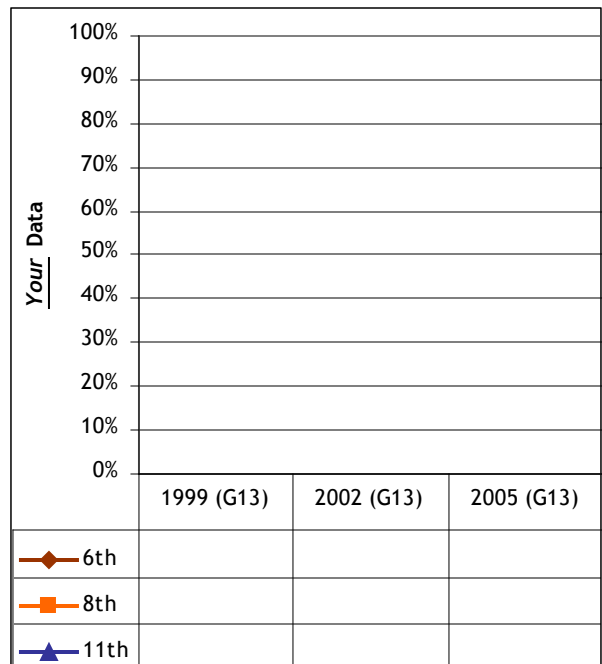
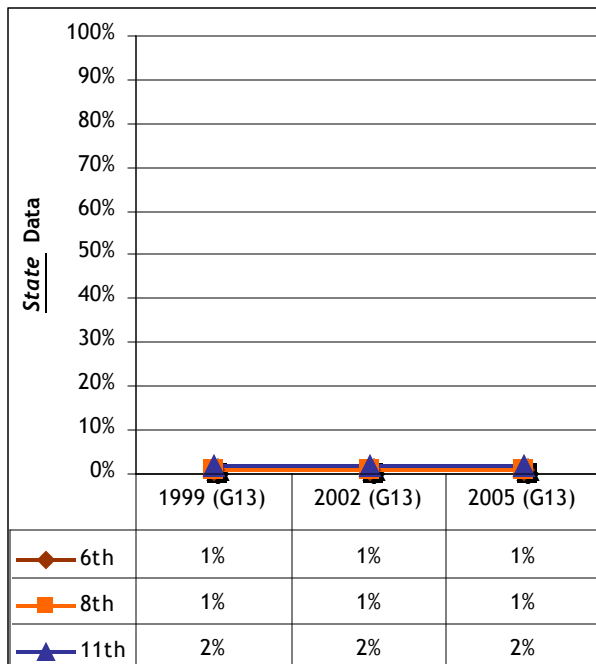
Percentage of students who report that most adults in their neighborhood and/or community would not think it was wrong at all for them to use any illegal drug other than alcohol, cigarettes, or marijuana



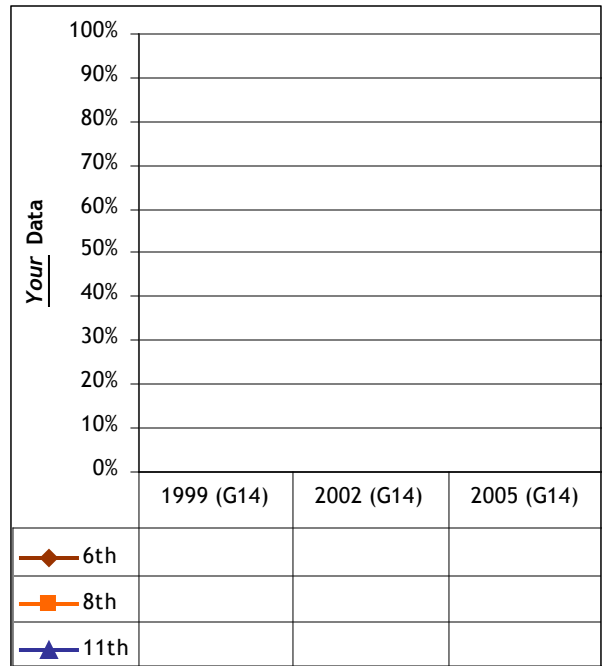
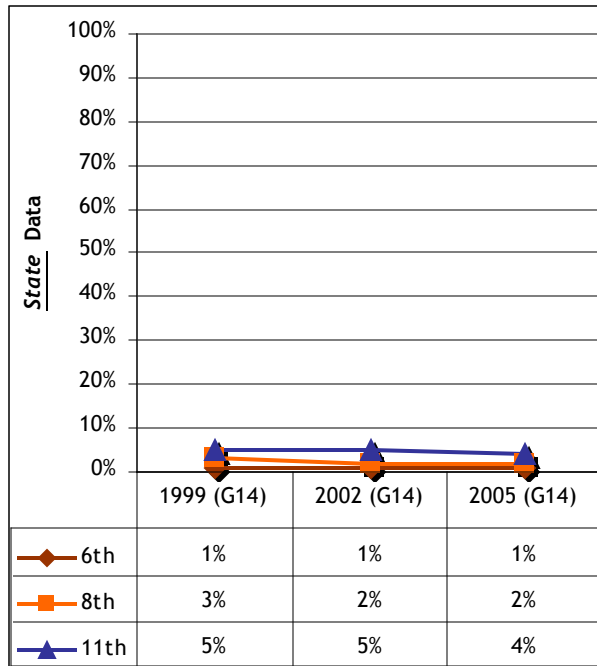
Percentage of students who report that most adults in their neighborhood and/or community would not think it was wrong at all for them to start a physical fight with someone



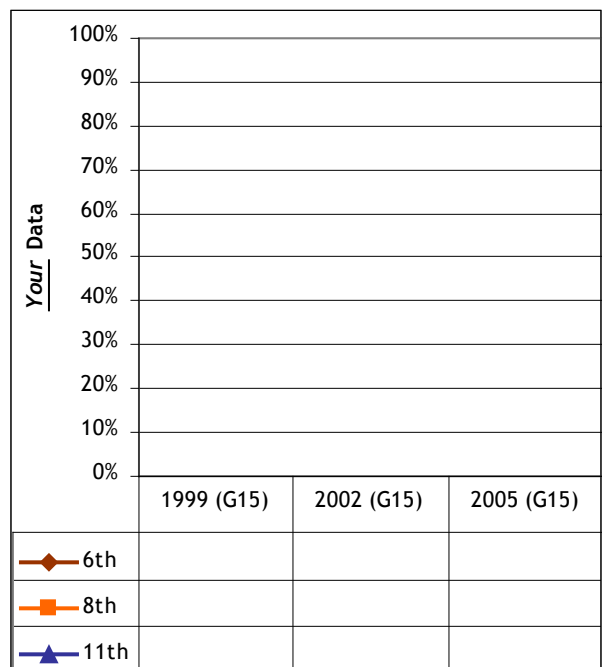
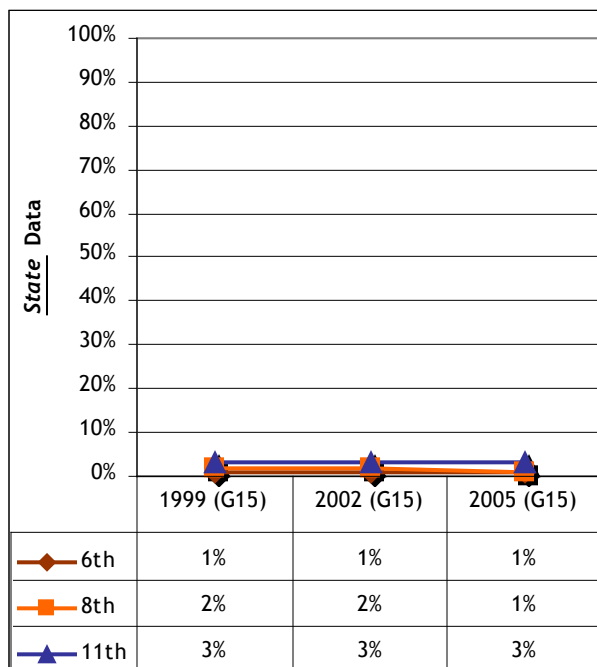
Percentage of students who report that most adults in their neighborhood and/or community would not think it was wrong at all for them to carry a gun, knife, club, or other weapon to school



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

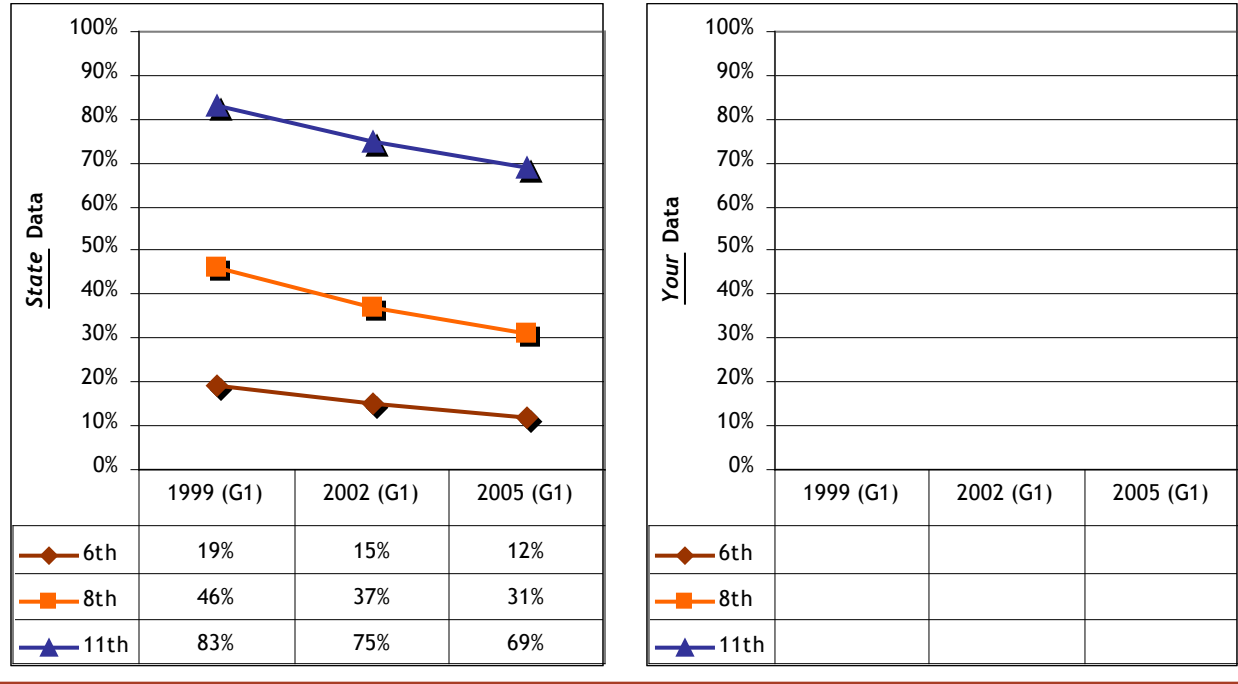


Percentage of students who report that most adults in their neighborhood and/or community would not think it was wrong at all for them to go to a party where kids were using drugs

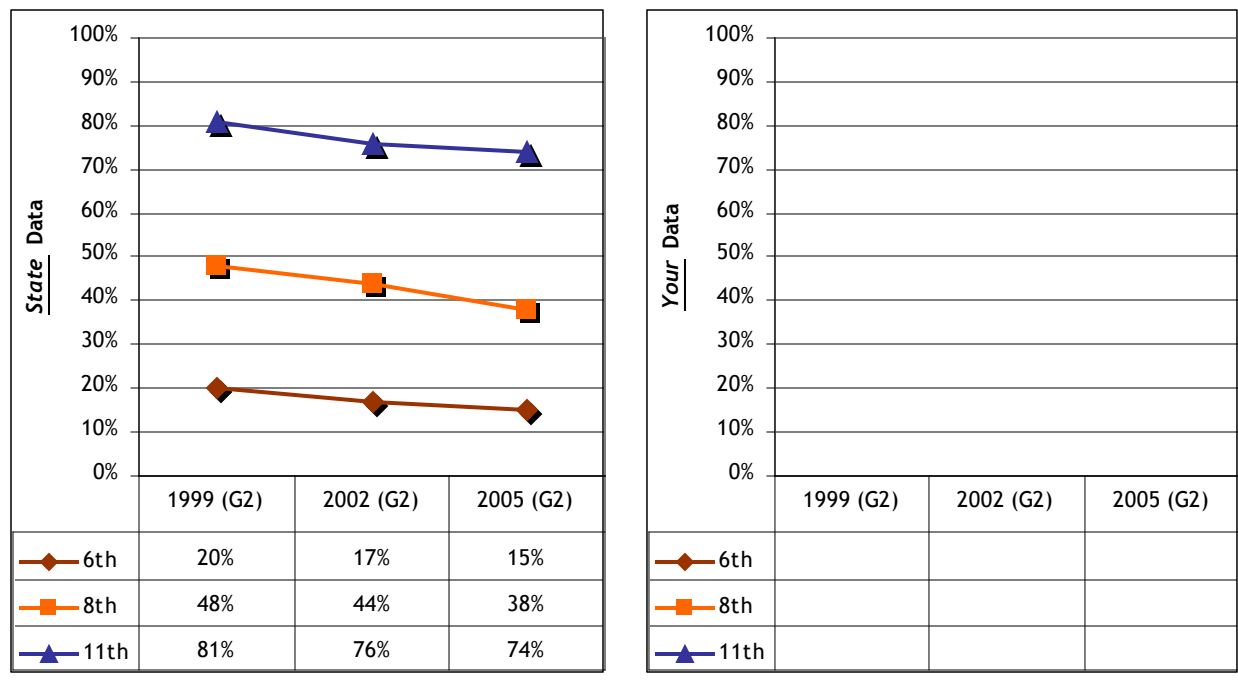


Results Related to Access to Substances

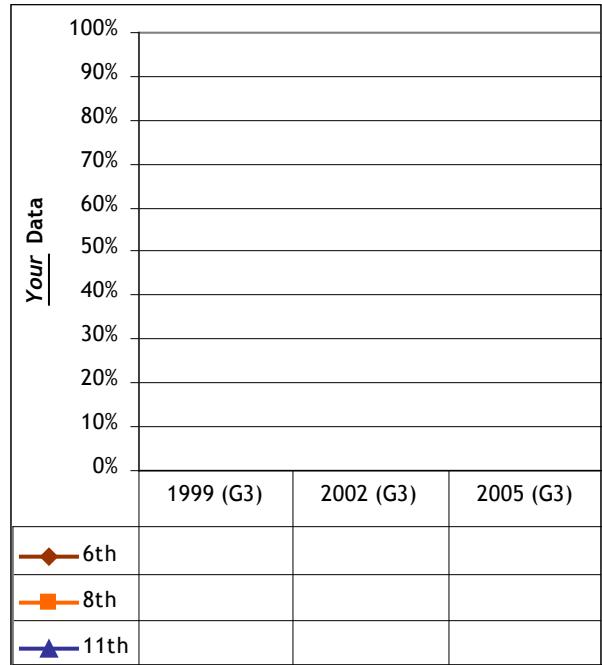
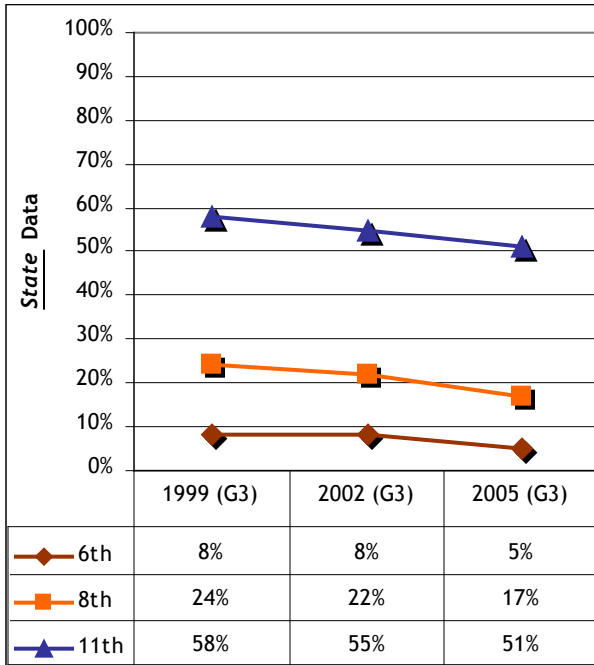
Percentage of students who report that it would be easy or very easy for a kid their age to get cigarettes



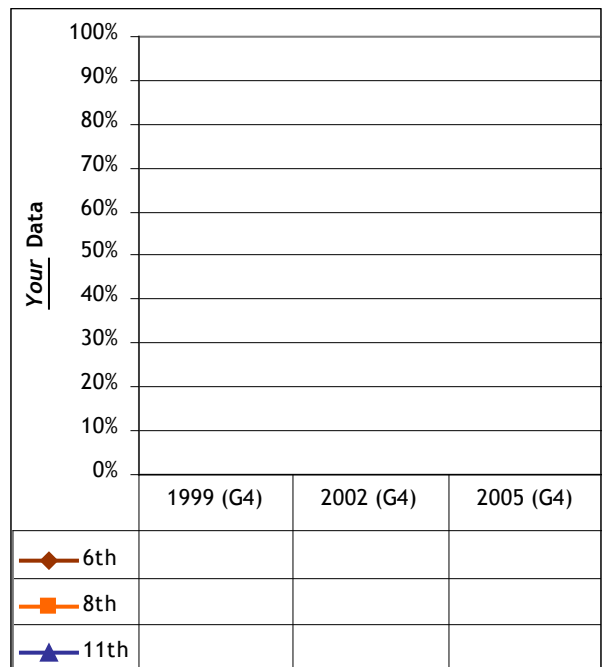
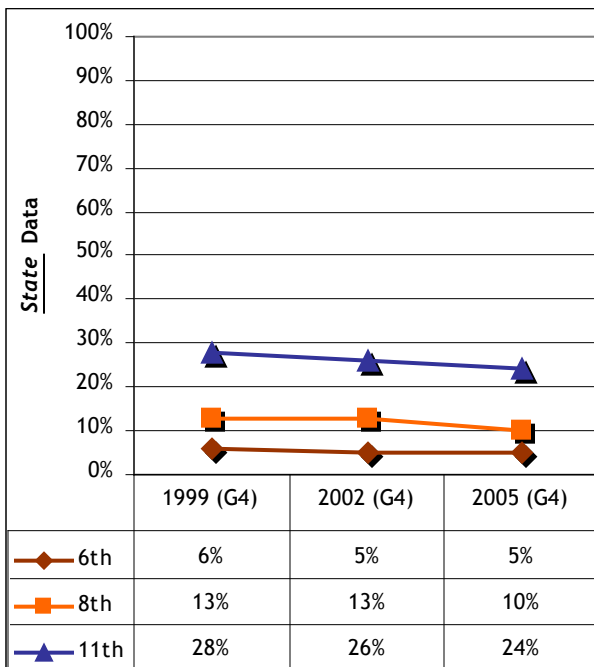
Percentage of students who report that it would be easy or very easy for a kid their age to get alcoholic beverages



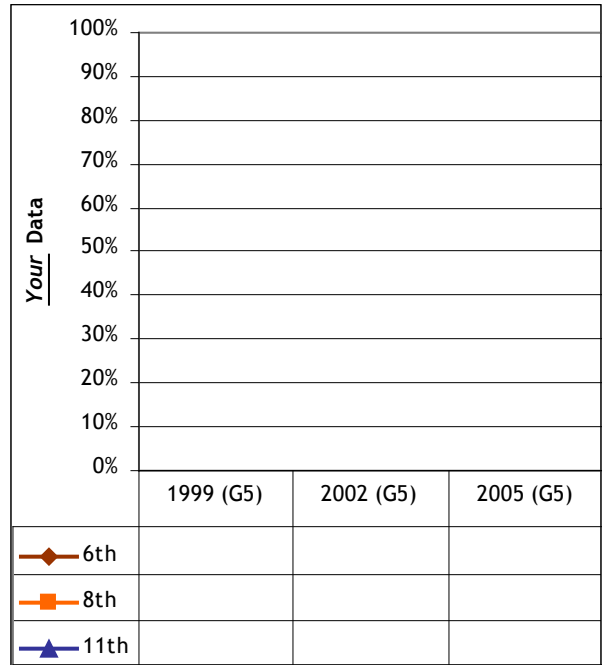
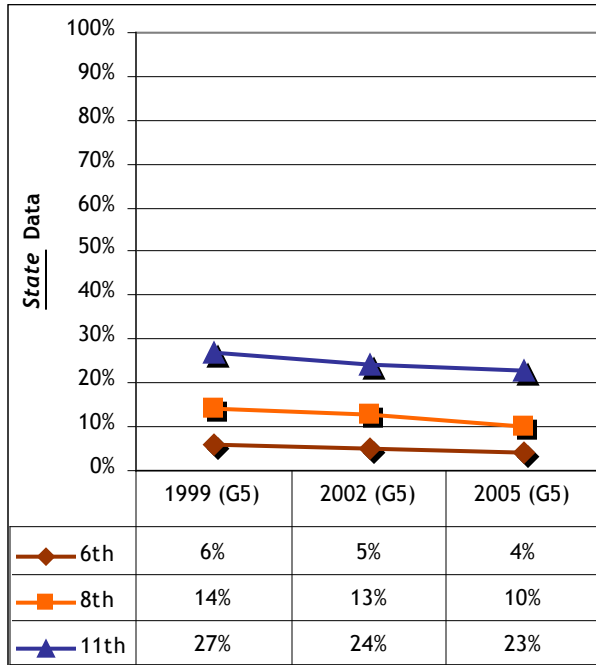
Percentage of students who report that it would be easy or very easy for a kid their age to get marijuana



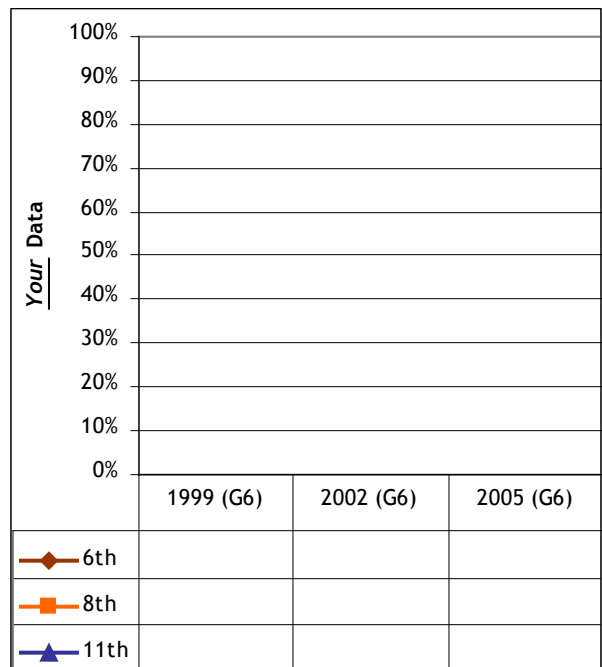
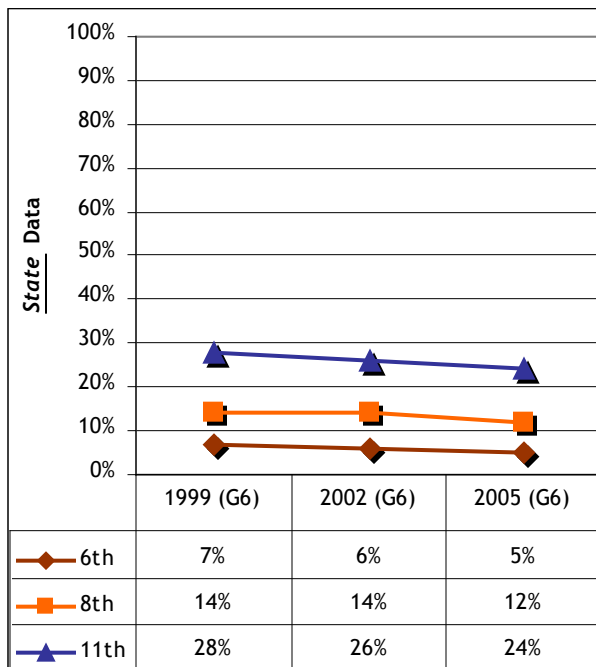
Percentage of students who report that it would be easy or very easy for a kid their age to get methamphetamines



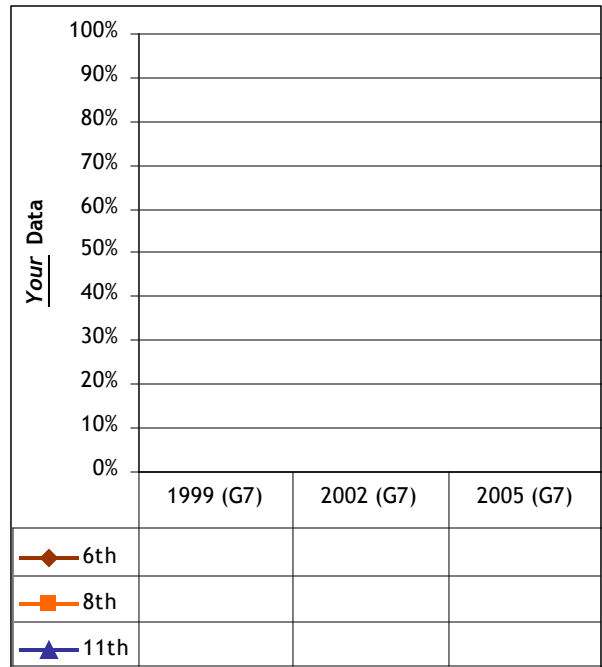
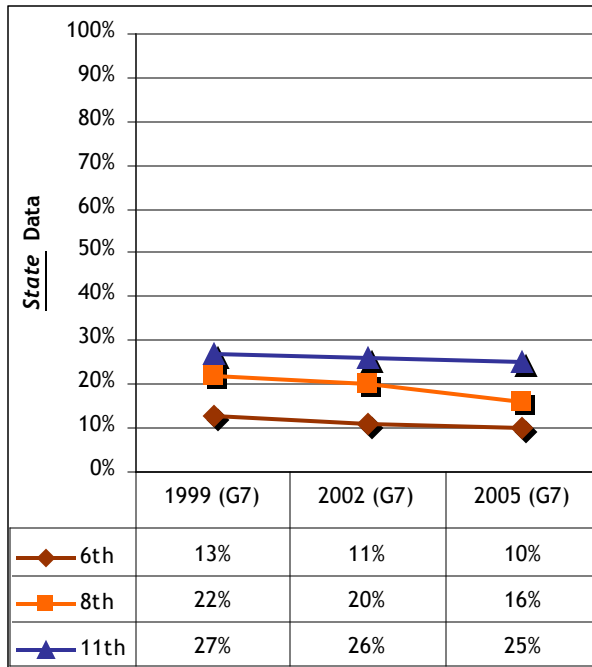
Percentage of students who report that it would be easy or very easy for a kid their age to get amphetamines other than methamphetamines



Percentage of students who report that it would be easy or very easy for a kid their age to get any other illegal drug



Percentage of students who report that it would be easy or very easy for a kid their age to get a handgun



5. Based on your data, what do you propose to do in the future to address community connection-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 neighbors do to help youth with community connection?

Consider the Following Action Steps...

- ❖ Get to know your neighbors—adults, children and youth.
- ❖ Learn the names of children and teenagers who live near you or who work in shops or community centers you frequent. Greet them by name.
- ❖ Model a positive, healthy lifestyle. This includes finding peaceful ways to resolve conflicts, being motivated to achieve, and advocating and working for equality and social justice.
- ❖ Support local efforts to provide safe spaces for young people to meet and spend time together.
- ❖ Expect young people to behave responsibly. Let them know what you expect from them before there is trouble.
- ❖ Take time to play or talk with young people who live near you or work with you.
- ❖ Commit to at least one act of positive youth development every day.
- ❖ Support efforts to create or expand opportunities for children and youth to participate in teams, clubs, and organizations.
- ❖ Build at least one informal, ongoing, caring relationship with a child or adolescent.
- ❖ Examine your attitudes about children and youth. See young people as resources rather than as problems.
- ❖ Thank people who work with children and youth (teachers, youth group leaders, social service providers, clergy, and others).
- ❖ Look out for the children and youth around you. Help keep them safe. Report dangerous and inappropriate behaviors to parents, school officials, or law enforcement officers.
- ❖ Get involved in volunteer efforts with children and youth. You can find these through local schools, youth-serving organization, congregations, parks and recreation programs, and other community-based organizations.
- ❖ Talk about important issues in the community, nation, and world with young people.
- ❖ Ask youth for their opinions.

Now What?

What can youth do to help with community connection?

Consider the Following Action Steps...

- ❖ Learn the names of your neighbors (including adults, children and other teenagers). Ask one of your parents to introduce you to neighbors you don't know.
- ❖ Sample a variety of experiences and activities in music, theatre, art, and athletics at school and in your community.
- ❖ Participate in at least one club, group, team, or sport—or find something creative that appeals to you like acting or music.
- ❖ Get to know an adult you admire.
- ❖ Replace put-downs with affirmations.
- ❖ Write a note to or call one of the main asset-builders in your life. Thank her or him for making a difference in your life.
- ❖ Go out of your way to greet your neighbors.
- ❖ Think of your best friends. Do they build you up or drag you down? How do they build assets for you? How do you build assets for them?
- ❖ Volunteer at a local nursing home, community center, or animal hospital.
- ❖ Take a conflict mediation course.
- ❖ Start a book club with friends and read just for fun.
- ❖ Practice different ways of saying no when people try to get you to do things that you don't really want to do.
- ❖ If you have a part-time job during the school year, limit your work schedule to allow time for schoolwork and for doing things with family and friends.
- ❖ Discuss with young people in your neighborhood what's good about where you live. Also discuss ways you could help improve the neighborhood.
- ❖ Even if your family provides a warm, caring, supportive place to grow, also seek support from adults in your school, community organizations, or congregation.
- ❖ Make new neighbors feel welcomed and introduce yourself to young people new to the neighborhood.

Now What?

What can everyone do to help youth with community connection?

Consider the Following Action Steps...

- ❖ Speak well of children to other adults. If you hear people making negative generalizations about young people, don't let them get away with it.
- ❖ Ask your friends about the children and youth in their lives. If you have a chance to meet those young people, tell your friends what you like most about them.
- ❖ Reach out to children and youth in your extended family, whether they are your grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, grandnieces, grandnephews, or other relatives. Send a letter, visit, call them, or invite them to your home. Let them know your door is open if they want or need you.
- ❖ Start a "Round Robin" letter for your neighborhood or extended family. Write a brief personal update, include a picture or two, and send it to one person. That person does the same thing and sends it to the next person, who adds their contributions. The letter keeps going around (getting thicker and thicker) until everyone has seen all the entries. Encourage young children to enclose pictures they've drawn or a tape-recorded message.
- ❖ Introduce yourself to the children and youth who live near you. Learn their names and greet them when you see them.
- ❖ Make spending time with children and youth part of your routine. If you take a daily walk, greet young people you see along the way. When you're at the grocery store, smile at the young children and say "hi" to them.
- ❖ Spend time with young people, doing things you enjoy. If you like to crochet, teach a young neighbor. If you like to tinker with cars, talk with the automotive teacher at a high school about volunteering in a class.
- ❖ Volunteer at a child-care center, school, or congregational youth program.

Now What?

What can administrators/school boards do to help youth with community connection?

Consider the Following Action Steps...

- ❖ Take advantage of opportunities to collaborate and/or coordinate with community organizations around positive youth development.
- ❖ Get to know your community. What resources are available to help support children and youth and their families in or near your community?
- ❖ If your school or community has a positive youth development initiative, paint the logo on buses, create a banner to hang on school buildings, or run messages about the initiative on the school marquee. Inform parents through your newsletter and on your website.
- ❖ Recruit community groups and individuals to mentor youth or to act as volunteers in your schools/classrooms.
- ❖ Thank staff, students, parents and community volunteers whenever you see them building assets.
- ❖ Include students on interview teams for personnel selection. Students can provide tours to informally assess candidates and/or take part in the official interview.
- ❖ Include students on your school improvement management teams, disciplinary teams, and other working groups.
- ❖ Include students in analyzing, presenting and discussing the district's Iowa Youth Survey, and other data.
- ❖ Provide agendas and calendars for students to help them with planning and decision-making.
- ❖ Make extracurricular activities like theatre, sports, clubs and academic teams a priority.
- ❖ Seek learning opportunities that take students out into the community and bring community resources into the classroom as well.
- ❖ Provide necessary support to ensure that opportunities are available to ALL students.
- ❖ Provide outreach and support for vulnerable populations to become involved.

Now What?

What can merchants and youth employers do to help youth with community connection?

Consider the Following Action Steps...

Merchants

- ❖ Treat all customers with respect.
- ❖ Learn the names of repeat customers of all ages.
- ❖ Wear a name tag with your first name on it.
- ❖ If you advertise, consider using part of your advertising space to celebrate children, youth, and families.
- ❖ Set boundaries for store behavior and merchandise returns and post them.
- ❖ Find ways to promote the asset-building projects of young people.
- ❖ Donate unsold items to a local shelter, free store, or other organizations that serve children.

Youth Employers

- ❖ Encourage the development of basic skills such as writing, reading, mathematics, science, technology, and communication. Show how these skills are important in your organization.
- ❖ Take a personal interest in your young employees.
- ❖ Teach young people the skills you need them to perform by modeling and explaining those skills.
- ❖ Tell young people what you expect them to do and how you expect them to act when they are working. When they act inappropriately or make mistakes, correct them gently while showing them appropriate alternatives for the future.
- ❖ Give young employees a lot of feedback.
- ❖ Point out the positive values and beliefs of your organization.
- ❖ Provide adequate support for employees. This includes orientation, training, supervision, criticism, and praise. For many young people, the job with your organization is their first work experience. Many do not know what to expect. Give them the big picture about what your organization does as well as the details of their jobs.
- ❖ Offer young people opportunities for advancement within the company.
- ❖ Be clear about how young people can spend their time when work is slow. One fast-food restaurant gives employees time to do homework during their work shift.
- ❖ Most young people have a strong desire to please the adults around them. Don't exploit this. Teach young people how to take personal pride in their work.

Now What?

What can media do to help youth with community connection?

Consider the Following Action Steps...

- ❖ Recognize your role in creating a community climate in which children and youth are valued, cared for, and supported.
- ❖ Balance negative stories about youth with positive coverage of young people and their contributions.
- ❖ Pay attention to the sometimes hidden stories of people giving their time, energy, and creativity to improve the lives of children and youth.
- ❖ When covering stories that involve youth, interview young people. Give young people their own voice through newspaper sections, television shows, or radio programs run by young people.
- ❖ Develop a “youth poll”. Survey young people on community issues such as curfew, adult attitudes towards youth, or alcohol and other drug use. Base a story or series on the results.
- ❖ In analyzing trends, policies, and legislation, emphasize their potential long-term impact on young people in your stories.
- ❖ Encourage students to tour and learn about media outlets.
- ❖ Develop an internship or mentoring program for students interested in media careers.
- ❖ Provide a strong electoral voice on behalf of issues that relate to children, families, and positive youth development.

Now What?

What can other community groups do to help youth with community connection?

Consider the Following Action Steps...

Service Clubs and Fraternal Organizations

- ❖ Use your access to many sectors in the community to promote, inform, and support positive youth development in your community. Work to create new ventures that are creative and make a difference for children and youth in your community.
- ❖ Sponsor intergenerational community events, such as community-wide picnics and ice cream socials.
- ❖ Encourage members to find ways to build youth assets through their own professional affiliations.
- ❖ Invite youth speakers to come and talk about what it's like to be a young person in your community.
- ❖ If you have an international focus and connections, use them as an opportunity to build cross-cultural relationships and to explore multiculturalism.
- ❖ Encourage members to be mentors or to do volunteer activities through schools and/or youth-serving organizations.
- ❖ Recognize and publicize outstanding asset builders in the community.
- ❖ Encourage youth to become junior members of your organization and include youth in your decision-making structure.

Congregations

- ❖ If your community has a positive youth development initiative, get involved. If there isn't one, take a leadership role in getting one started.
- ❖ Provide a variety of educational opportunities for all ages. Create interactive, intergenerational sessions that encourage younger people to connect with older people.
- ❖ Provide opportunities for young people to volunteer in the community.
- ❖ Reinforce positive values and morals. Talk with young people about why these are an important part of your faith tradition.
- ❖ Plan ways for families and other intergenerational groups to spend time together, such as having a weekly or monthly meal, picnics, dances, concerts or sports tournaments.
- ❖ Collaborate with other congregations and youth-based organizations.
- ❖ Provide responsible, meaningful roles for youth.

