



2009  
East Stroudsburg Area  
High School

Student Health Risk Behavior  
Survey

*Summary Report*

# Demographics and Methods

## Demographics of Sample (n=1,556)

<b>Gender</b>	
<i>Male</i>	49%
<i>Female</i>	51%
<b>Grade</b>	
<i>9<sup>th</sup></i>	29%
<i>10<sup>th</sup></i>	25%
<i>11<sup>th</sup></i>	25%
<i>12<sup>th</sup></i>	21%
<b>Grade at Entry into ESASD Schools</b>	
<i>Kindergarten</i>	35%
<i>Elementary</i>	23%
<i>Middle School</i>	23%
<i>High School</i>	18%
<b>Race</b>	
<i>Asian</i>	5%
<i>Black/African American</i>	25%
<i>Hispanic/Latino</i>	26%
<i>White</i>	53%
<i>All others</i>	8%

The Weller Health Education Center conducted a comprehensive health risk behavior assessment of the East Stroudsburg Area School District's (ESASD) 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students. This project represents the collaborative efforts of the Weller Center, Penn State University's Center for Organizational Research and Evaluation and East Stroudsburg's teachers, administrators and students. The project was funded by Sanofi Pasteur. The unique survey tool developed through this collaboration investigates student health risk behaviors associated with body weight and physical activity, emotional health, sexual behaviors, drug use and bullying. The results of this survey can inform legislators, policy makers, school administrators and teachers in making decisions about preventive health programming, policies, services and activities. Parents and students can also utilize this data in generating goals for improved health and wellness.

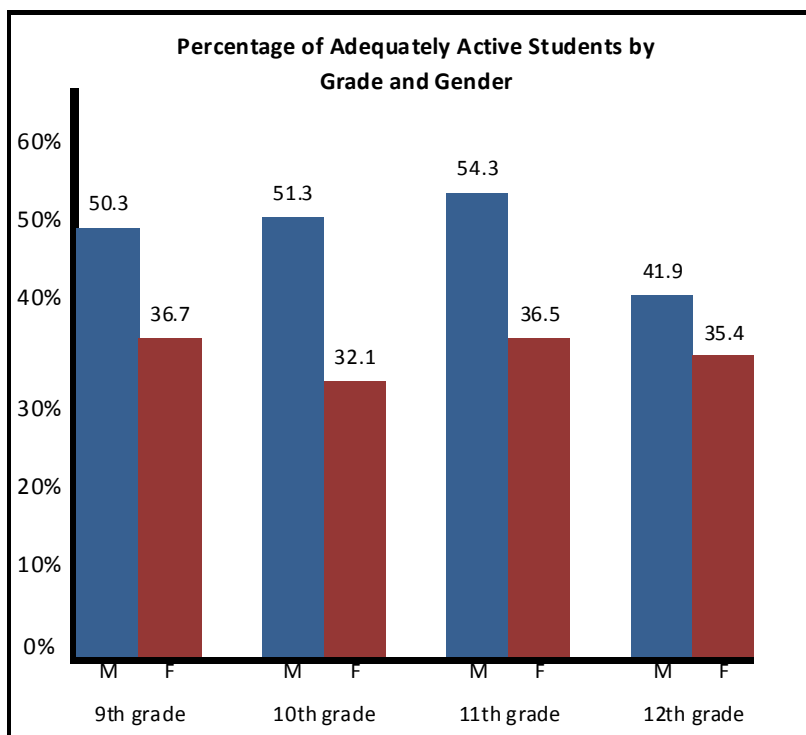
A total of 1,556 valid health risk behavior surveys were collected from a convenience sample of 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders from the East Stroudsburg Area School District during a two week period in March of 2009. Survey completion was voluntary, following passive parental consent.

All national comparisons are drawn from the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) of high school students conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Some comparison data is offered where available as a way to put the data from the East Stroudsburg Area School District in context.

# ***Body Weight/Body Image/Physical Activity***

## *Summary of Survey Findings*

The current national physical activity recommendation of moderate to vigorous physical activity for at least 60 minutes on 5 or more days per week is being met by 42.0% of East Stroudsburg's 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students surveyed. Males (49.9%) are significantly more likely than females (35.2%) to report this level of physical activity. Students in 12<sup>th</sup> grade (38.3%) more likely than those in any other grade to report adequate daily physical activity and Hispanic students (39.9%) are less likely than students identifying as black (42.7%) or white (43.2%) to participate in ample activity. A graph summarizing student self reported physical activity is below.



86.8% of students are actively trying to lose or keep from gaining weight while 9.0% of students report using three or more methods to accomplish this goal. Female students (11.7%) are nearly twice as likely as male students (6.5%) to engage in three or more weight loss/maintenance strategies. Among all respondents, exercise (78%), eating less food and fewer calories (32%) and skipping meals (26%) are the most common means of weight control reported.

73.1% of surveyed students report doing something to gain weight or muscle and 14.4% of respondents report using multiple means to achieve this goal. Males (89.8%) are much more likely than females (57.7%) to report attempting to gain weight or muscle through any means. Additionally, males (23.6%) are more than four times as likely as females (5.6 %) to engage in multiple means of weight or muscle gain. Among all respondents, exercise including lifting weights is the most common means of weight and muscle gain (80%) followed by eating more food and more calories (30%), use of supplements including creatine and protein powders (12%) and use of steroids without a prescription (3%).

The vast majority of students (68%) considered themselves “about the right weight,” a figure that did not vary significantly by grade, gender, or racial /ethnic group. 21% of students report being overweight while 11% self-classified as underweight.

### *National Comparisons*

Nationally, 34.7% of high school students meet the national physical activity recommendations.

- 42% of East Stroudsburg's 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students surveyed meet the national physical activity recommendations.
  - Nationally, 43.7% of males are adequately active compared to 49.9% of East Stroudsburg's 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade's responding males.
  - Nationally, 25.6% of females are adequately active compared to 35.2% of East Stroudsburg's 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade's responding females.

Among high school students from across the country participating in the 2007 YRBS, 45.2% are doing something to lose or keep from gaining weight.

- 86.8% of East Stroudsburg's 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students are actively trying to lose or keep from gaining weight.

### *Discussion*

Significantly more East Stroudsburg Area School District 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students are participating in adequate physical activity than is seen nationally and yet more than half of surveyed students are still insufficiently active. Beyond this, the disparity in rates of activity between male and female students is stark, though it does reflect the national trend. Unlike other similar studies, females reporting adequate physical activity does not decrease across the high school years, rather it remains low throughout this time period relative to male activity levels. Given that exercise provides proven protection against numerous chronic diseases, effort should be paid to increasing opportunities for fitness through the schools and community for all students, particularly for females. Working with students to identify and remove barriers to physical activity and to identify activities of interest that could be offered may foster greater participation and thus improved health.

An alarming number of students report involvement in weight loss and weight maintenance strategies. While maintaining a healthy weight is critical for prevention of many chronic diseases, ideal health requires this maintenance to be completed in a healthy manner. Among the weight loss/maintenance strategies offered to students as responses, only physical activity and eating less could be, in the proper context, considered healthy. Other means including skipping meals, vomiting and the like are not considered healthy means of caring for the body. Students engaging in three or more weight loss or maintenance strategies are engaging in at least one counter-indicated means of adjusting body weight. It is highly likely that some students reporting exercise, eating less food and restricting calories are doing so in a healthy manner yet it is also likely that some practices may be extreme and unwarranted based on BMI-for-Age calculations. Similarly, some students may do well to gain weight and muscle while others may be increasing body mass on their own or in an unhealthy manner. Effort should be taken to ensure that students are garnering weight and dietary advice from doctors, nurses and other medical professionals and that proper guidance and oversight is included in any recommendation to change the body's weight. Coaches, parents, teachers and all adults working closely with students should be made aware of student trends in altering the body and be able to notice significant deviations from ideal, healthful dietary and exercise patterns.

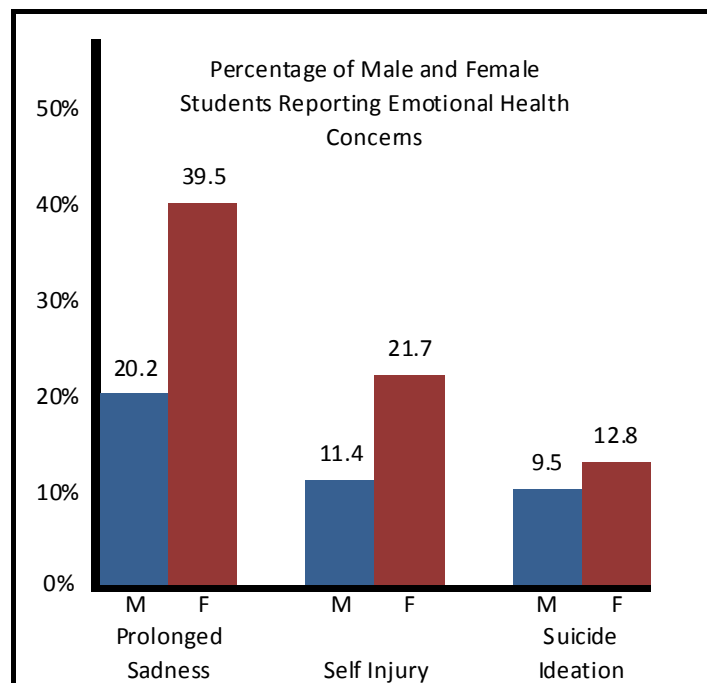
Additionally, these trusted adults should know where to refer a given student for help. The East Stroudsburg Area School District may gain insight into student BMI by reviewing the Pennsylvania Growth Screening data collected annually by school nurses. This data may suggest what percentage of East Stroudsburg's students ought to be attempting to gain or lose weight given their BMI and comparison of these expected numbers to student self reports of behavior may shed further light on what percentage of respondents may be working to enhance or harm their overall health. Unlike other similar studies, gender and race or ethnicity did not play a significant role in the perception of one's body weight so any future activity on this topic would do well to be directed at the school on the whole rather than on specific subgroups. If comparison of this data and BMI calculations indicate students do not accurately perceive their body weight, and the relative health risks body weight conveys, a social norms campaign may be advisable.

# Emotional Health

## Summary of Survey Findings

Overall, nearly a third of students (30%) report feeling so sad or hopeless every day for two weeks that they stopped doing some usual activities. Reviewing the sample by gender, females (39.5%) are two times more likely than males (20.2%) to report prolonged sadness and hopelessness overall. A spike in self-reported depression is evident among 10<sup>th</sup> graders (34.9%). Students self-identified as Hispanic (34.6%) are more likely than white (29.4%) and black students (29.3%) to report prolonged sadness. Additionally, a significant increase in prolonged sadness is reported among students who first entered the East Stroudsburg Area School District in middle or high school (34.3%) compared to those who began in the district as elementary level students (27.0%).

17.0% of students participating in the survey report having ever intentionally cut or injured themselves. Females (21.7%) are two times as likely as males (11.4 %) to report self-injuring. More females than males report self injury at each grade level surveyed. 11% of East Stroudsburg's 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students report having seriously considered attempting suicide in the 12 months prior to the survey, a percentage that remains consistent across all grades surveyed. Females (12.8%) are more likely than males (9.5%) to have seriously contemplated suicide. Reports of both suicide ideation and self injury peak in 10<sup>th</sup> grade and do not vary significantly by race or ethnicity. The graph below summarizes the gender disparity in the emotional health markers surveyed.



Students participating in the survey reported the frequency with which they stress or worry about a given topic. Male respondents (24.1%) reported frequent stress more often than females (20.1%) surrounding performance in athletic and other extracurricular activities though females were more apt to feel frequent stress on every other topic queried. A summary of data for students who often (at least weekly) worry about a given stressor is contained to the right.

<i>Stressor</i>	<i>Overall</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Grades in school	38%	31.1%	45.5%
Money	28%	25.1%	31.7%
Getting into/paying for college	27%	21.6 %	31.7%
Family & home life	34%	25.3%	42.0%
Being out of shape/overweight	22%	13.4%	30.3%
Having enough time for all activities/responsibilities	29%	25.4%	33.1%
Performance in athletic and extracurricular activities	22%	24.1%	20.1%
Relationships & friends	40%	34.4%	45.2%

#### *National Comparison*

28.5% of high school students participating in the 2007 YRBS reported feeling so sad or hopeless almost every day for at least two consecutive weeks that they stopped doing some usual activities.

- 30% of East Stroudsburg’s 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students reported the same.

Nationally, 14.5% of high school students report seriously considering suicide in the 12 months prior to the survey.

- Among East Stroudsburg’s 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade survey participants, 11% have engaged in suicide ideation.

#### *Regional Comparison*

45.2% of students surveyed across Eastern Pennsylvania during the 2006-2007 school year report frequent stress about grades in school.

- 38% of East Stroudsburg respondents report frequent stress about grades in school.

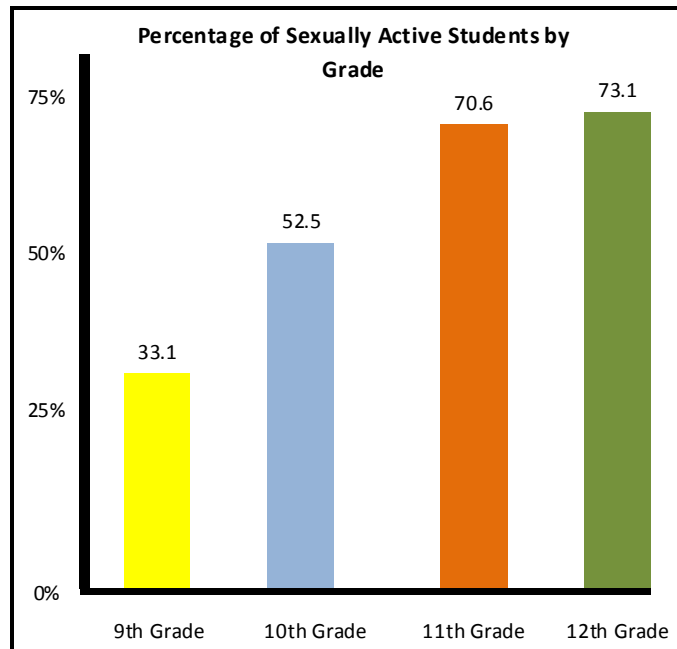
#### *Discussion*

East Stroudsburg students report prolonged sadness lasting beyond two weeks more frequently than is seen nationally. The question defines basic characteristics of depression and thus, highlights that nearly a third of students surveyed could be considered depressed. The data collected reflect the national trend of more females than males reporting suicide ideation. Additionally, while it is not uncommon for females to report higher levels of stress or worry than males, East Stroudsburg’s female respondents do overwhelmingly report frequent stress on multiple topics across all grade levels. Frequent stress, particularly related to multiple stressors, is known to be a risk factor for emotional health and can negatively impact student health overall. Headaches, digestive distress and decreased immune function can all be symptoms of stress contributing to the number of absences from school and decreasing student’s ability to thrive in the classroom. Adults working closely with students may wish to incorporate stress management techniques into work with students and encourage dialogue aimed at problem solving and stress mitigation. Academic performance, relationships/friends and family/home life are the most prevalent sources of frequent stress among students surveyed. Discussion around these topics with students may highlight further areas for intervention, but based on student responses in focus groups and on the survey itself, attention paid to the social dynamic surrounding students is warranted. Unlike other similar studies, the 10<sup>th</sup> grade respondents repeatedly stand out as reporting more challenges to ideal emotional health than their peers in other grades. Specific attention paid to students in this grade level may be warranted. Finally, gender disparity in emotional health is substantial and worthy of focused attention on ways to enhance emotional health among female students moving forward.

# Sexual Behaviors

## Summary of Survey Findings

8% of East Stroudsburg’s 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students report that pressures to participate in a type of sexual activity is very strong. The vast majority of students, 81%, classified pressure to engage in sexual activity as nonexistent or easy to ignore. The most commonly reported intimate behavior reported by survey respondents is kissing (83%), followed by hand to genital contact (62%) and casual sexual relationships or “hooking up” (52%). Participation in all forms of intimate behavior rises with increasing grade. Overall, 54% of students report having had sexual intercourse during their lifetime and the number of sexually active students increases as grade increases, peaking with 73.1% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reporting having engaged in sexual intercourse. This trend is displayed in the graph below.



Among sexually active students, 88.9% report having used some method of preventing pregnancy and 86.7% reported using some method to prevent sexually-transmitted infections (STIs). 63.4% of East Stroudsburg’s sexually active students surveyed report using condoms to prevent pregnancy during their last sexual experience, 20.5% report using, or their partner using, birth control pills and 17.4% used withdrawal. Students reporting use of some means of pregnancy prevention remains steady across 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade respondents. A portion of students are using multiple methods of prevention. A breakdown of student pregnancy prevention strategies by grade are reported in the chart below.

**Manner of Pregnancy Prevention Utilized by Sexually Active Students**

	<i>Something</i>	<i>Birth Control Pills</i>	<i>Condoms</i>	<i>Withdrawal</i>	<i>Other/ Unsure</i>
<i>Grade 9</i>	89.3%	8.1%	55.0%	9.4%	18.8%
<i>Grade 10</i>	88.2%	27.6%	66.0%	16.3%	12.8%
<i>Grade 11</i>	88.5%	17.3%	63.7%	19.1%	9.7%
<i>Grade 12</i>	89.0%	27.0%	68.8%	22.4%	7.6%

Condoms (62.8%) are the most common means of STI prevention among all sexually active students surveyed. 13.3% of sexually active students report having done nothing to prevent STIs during their most recent sexual intercourse. A breakdown of student STI prevention strategies by grade are reported in the chart below.

**Manner of Sexually-Transmitted Infection Prevention Utilized by Sexually Active Students**

	<i>Something</i>	<i>Birth Control Pills</i>	<i>Condoms</i>	<i>Withdrawal</i>	<i>Other/ Unsure</i>
<i>Grade 9</i>	89.3%	7.4%	57.7%	6.0%	17.5%
<i>Grade 10</i>	86.7%	11.8%	66.0%	11.8%	11.3%
<i>Grade 11</i>	86.0%	9.0%	61.9%	10.4%	11.1%
<i>Grade 12</i>	85.2%	11.0%	66.7%	8.0%	8.0%

Among sexually active students, the most commonly reported age of initiation for sexual intercourse is 14 years old (21.3%) followed by 15 years old (20.5%) and 16 years old (15.9%). The vast majority of sexually active students (75.6%) did not consume alcohol or drugs before engaging in sexual activity the last time.

*National Comparisons*

In 2007, 47.8% of high school students from across the country participating in the YRBS reported having had sexual intercourse during their lifetime.

- 54% of East Stroudsburg’s 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students report ever having had sexual intercourse.

Nationally, 61.5% of sexually active high school students report that they or their partner used a condom during their last sexual intercourse.

- 63.4% of East Stroudsburg’s 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade sexually active students surveyed report the same.

16.0% of sexually active high school students across the country reported using (or their partner using) birth control pills to prevent pregnancy prior to their last sexual intercourse.

- 20.5% of the sexually active high school students at East Stroudsburg’s 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade report using (or their partner using) birth control pills to prevent pregnancy prior to their last sexual intercourse.

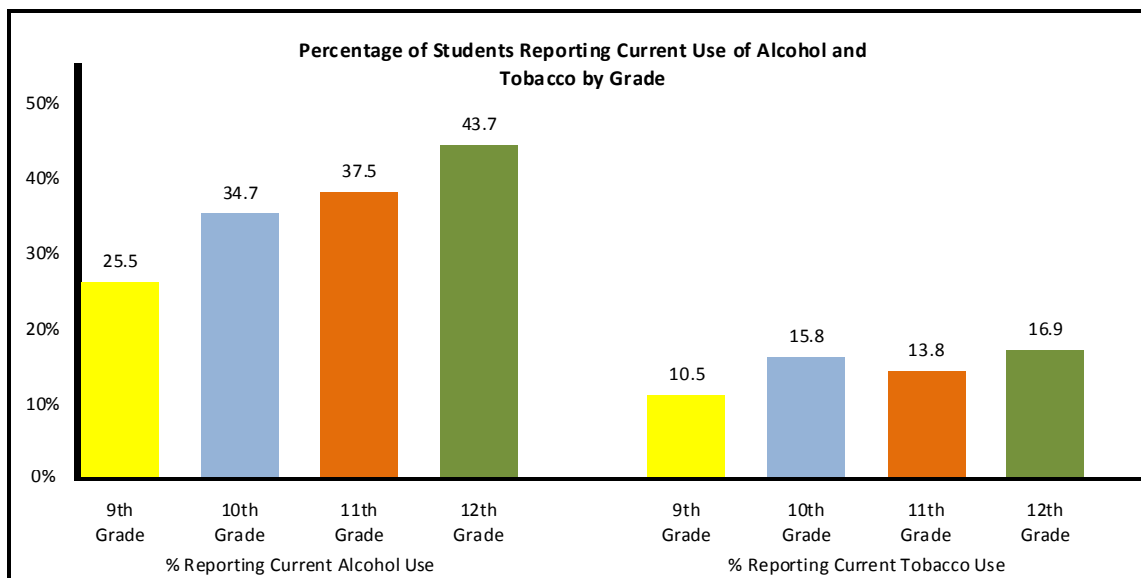
*Discussion*

Older students are significantly more likely than younger students to be sexually active although the pressures to engage in sexual activity appear minimal at all ages. As a group, students participating in this survey are more likely than their peers nationally to be sexually active. The vast majority of sexually active students report making an effort to prevent pregnancy and sexually-transmitted infection though reported use of appropriate prevention is varied. Unlike other similar studies of students in this region, East Stroudsburg students are not engaging in the safer sexual practices of condom use at rates far above what is seen nationally. While most sexually active students report some effort to prevent pregnancy and STI, many are turning to unreliable and unsafe means of prevention. Students reporting use of birth control pills to prevent STI or students reporting the use of withdrawal for any type of prevention do not reflect best practices with respect to prevention of pregnancy and maintenance of reproductive health. Exploration into access, availability and attitudes related to preventive measures may be among the next steps for consideration. Certainly, reducing rates of unintended pregnancy and preventing the spread of disease among students are public health goals shared among schools, health care providers and the community-at-large. Efforts to impact student behavior with respect to intimate contact with others will likely require varied age-appropriate and culturally appropriate curricula and counseling efforts.

# Tobacco/Alcohol/Other Drugs

## Summary of Survey Findings

76% of all students report lifetime use of alcohol and 35% of East Stroudsburg's 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students surveyed report current use (i.e. alcohol consumption within the 30 days prior to the survey). Rates of current use of alcohol increase with grade, peaking among 12<sup>th</sup> grade students where 43.7% of students have used alcohol in the 30 days preceding the survey. Alcohol use does not vary significantly by gender. 29% of all East Stroudsburg students surveyed report having ever smoked a cigarette. Students self-identifying as black (80.7%) are more apt to have never smoked than their Hispanic (70.5%) or white (65.7%) peers. 14% of students surveyed are current smokers having smoked during the 30 days preceding the survey, male and female respondents reported recent smoking at comparable rates. A grade-by-grade distribution of student alcohol and tobacco use is contained in the graph below.



43% of East Stroudsburg's 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students surveyed report having ever ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol or taking drugs. 12<sup>th</sup> grade students (47.5%) are more likely than students in any other grade to have responded as such. Data does not vary significantly by gender and race or ethnicity.

Marijuana is the most common illicit drug used by surveyed students at 29%. Abuse of over-the-counter (OTC) medications is the second most commonly reported drug, used by 10% of students. The table to the right contains student response data for all drugs queried. For all drugs, lifetime use is reported more frequently by male than by female students. The data does not vary significantly by grade with the exception of marijuana where an increase is seen from 9<sup>th</sup> grade (where 17.6% of students have used marijuana) to 12<sup>th</sup> grade (where 35.7% of students have used marijuana). No other variables generated significant differences in the percentage of students reporting use of illicit drugs.

<i>Drug</i>	<i>% of Students Using Drug During Past Month</i>
Huffing	7%
Marijuana	29%
Methamphetamines	5%
Cocaine	5%
Heroin	3%
Ecstasy	5%
LSD	6%
OTC medications	10%
Prescription medication (w/o MD orders)	9%

41% of respondents felt access to illegal drugs including marijuana, cocaine and heroin is 'very easy.' Perceived ease of access increases sharply between 9<sup>th</sup> grade (28.2%) and 12<sup>th</sup> grade (48.5%). 45% of students perceive access to alcohol as being 'very easy' while 51% of students felt the same about access to tobacco.

24% of East Stroudsburg's 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students report having ever been offered an illegal drug on school property. Students in 10<sup>th</sup> grade (28.8%) and 11<sup>th</sup> grade (26.6%) are more likely than those in 9<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade (21.3% respectively) to report being offered an illegal drug on school property.

#### *National Comparisons*

Nationally, 29.1% of high school students have ever ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol or taking drugs.

- 43% of East Stroudsburg's 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students surveyed report the same.

Among 2007 participants in the national YRBS, 25.7% report current smoking (ie: smoking during the 30 days preceding the survey)

- 14% of East Stroudsburg's 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students are current smokers.

Nationally, 44.7% of surveyed high school students report consuming alcohol within the 30 days prior to the survey.

- 35% of East Stroudsburg survey participants report recent use of alcohol.

22.3% of high school students nationwide have been offered an illegal drug on school property during the past year.

- 24% of East Stroudsburg's high school students report being offered an illegal drug on campus within the year preceding the survey.

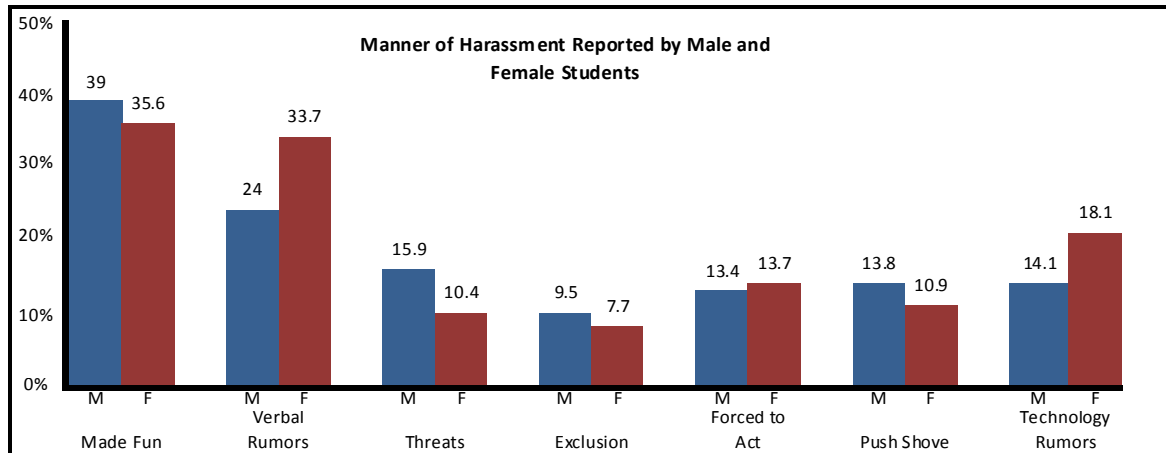
#### *Discussion*

The frequency with which students admit to riding in cars with drunk and drugged drivers poses a serious health risk to students and the greater community thus necessitating follow-up action. Addressing student alcohol use, vehicle use and access to alcohol and cars together will likely involve the collaborative efforts of parents, students, the school, law enforcement and community-at-large.

East Stroudsburg students surveyed are far less likely to smoke tobacco than their peers nationally and the relatively low percentage of current smokers is an encouraging sign for student's long term health. Students surveyed also report alcohol at rates lower than seen nationally overall, and reflect the national trend of increasing use of alcohol with age. Among other drugs surveyed, marijuana is the most prevalent drug of abuse reported by students. Misuse of over-the-counter medication is noted across all grade levels surveyed. Many students report a perceived ease of access to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Access to controlled substances on school campuses is reported by East Stroudsburg students surveyed slightly more frequently than what is seen nationally. Analysis of efforts already in place to combat drugs on school property and initiating any changes necessary to engage in any and all options for drug enforcement and prevention may generate a positive change in addressing this area of health risk. Reduced access and contact with drugs is positively linked with the fostering of increased health and safety on campus. Additionally, drug use among students is repeatedly negatively linked with poor academic performance and crime among other anti-social behaviors. Therefore comprehensive drug control and prevention stands to enhance student performance and attitude-benefits that can extend beyond the school grounds and positively impact the greater community.

# Unwanted Behavior, Bullying, Harassment and Violence

## Summary of Survey Findings



49% of East Stroudsburg’s 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students have been harassed by a fellow student in the year preceding the survey. A graph summarizing the manner in which this harassment is carried out is contained above. Female students are more likely than male students to have been harassed through various means as summarized above though males (9.9%) are more likely to report being frequently harassed (i.e. at least once each week) than are females (6.7%).

Harassment at school (or on the way to/from school) based on weight, clothing or other physical characteristics is the most common specified reason for harassment, identified by 14% of the sample. Harassment based on physical characteristics did not vary significantly based on gender and is reported most often by 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The table to the right displays the percentage of respondents who have been harassed based on a given characteristic.

Basis for Harassment	Overall	Male	Female
Family finances, neighborhood or social class	5%	5.7%	4.9%
Sexual orientation	9%	10.2%	7.2%
Physical characteristics, clothes or hygiene	14%	12.9%	14.2%
Group of friends	10%	9.6%	10.9%
Race or ethnic origin	7%	7.0%	7.3%
Other reasons	18%	15.8%	18.6%

16% of survey participants report not wanting to go to school in the month prior to the survey based on concern for safety at school or on the way to/from school. 10<sup>th</sup> grade students (20.3%) are more likely than students in 11<sup>th</sup> (17.0%), 9<sup>th</sup> (13.9%) or 12<sup>th</sup> grade (13.5%) to express fear about attending school. Female students (18.3%) are more likely than male students (14.0%) to report apprehension about safety in the school setting.

18% of all students surveyed (20.0% of those who are or have been in relationships) report having ever been hit, slapped or physically hurt by a boyfriend/girlfriend on purpose. Males and females report this abuse at comparable rates. 22% of students surveyed (24.8% of those who are or have been in relationships) report having ever been verbally abused by a significant other. 10% of respondents have never been in a relationship. Both physical and verbal abuse increase with increasing grade.

7% of East Stroudsburg's 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students surveyed report carrying a gun in the month preceding the survey, as is shown in the graph at the top of the page. 4% report carrying a gun on school property during this time. 13% of surveyed students have carried a weapon other than a gun in the month leading up to the survey and 7% brought a weapon other than a gun onto school property during this time. Male students (11.8%) report carrying a gun more frequently than do their female counterparts (2.2%) and also report carrying other weapons (19.4%) more often than did female students surveyed (6.0%).

#### *Regional Comparisons*

39.8% of 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students surveyed across Eastern Pennsylvania during the 2006-2007 school year report having been harassed during the twelve months preceding the survey.

- 49% of East Stroudsburg's 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students report the same.

#### *National Comparisons*

Nationwide, 5.5% of students participating in the 2007 YRBS did not attend school in the month prior to the survey for fear about safety at school or on the way to or from school.

- 16% of East Stroudsburg survey participants did not want to attend school in the month prior to the survey out of fear for safety.

9.9% of high school students nationally have been hit, slapped or otherwise physically hurt by a boyfriend/girlfriend.

- 18% of all East Stroudsburg 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade students surveyed have been physically hurt by a boyfriend/girlfriend.

5.5% of high school students nationwide report carrying a gun within 30 days of the 2007 YRBS.

- 7% of East Stroudsburg students surveyed carried a gun in the month prior to their survey.

#### *Discussion*

Harassment and related fears about safety are more prevalent among the East Stroudsburg students surveyed than their peers surveyed nationally and those surveyed within our region. Students reported fears about attending school based on concerns for safety at three times the national average. Given that school attendance is linked closely with academic performance and positive outcomes for students, this finding generates significant concern. Several factors can be contributing to the perceived lack of safety including relatively high rates of peer-to-peer harassment, presence of guns and other weapons in and around the school environment and violence in relationships. With respect to weapons, investigation into routes of access and intended uses of these items can shed light on additional means of reducing this potential risk to student's safety in the school and greater community. In short, there is much room for improvement in generating an atmosphere of safety and comfort known to promote learning and personal growth in a school environment.

## ***Sources of Student Information***

### *Survey findings*

Students completing the survey were asked to identify where they get the majority of their information on health-related topics. Parents (65%) was the most commonly identified source of information on health-related topics followed closely by doctors or other medical professionals (61%), adults at school (49%) and internet/tv/other media (46%). When asked what sources of information are most trusted, doctors is the most common response (71%) followed by parents (61%) and adults at school (45%).

### *Discussion*

In other similar studies, students frequently sought out information from friends, internet and other less reputable sources of information. Already having students turning to ideal sources when seeking health information gives the East Stroudsburg Area School District a distinct advantage in addressing any areas of concern surrounding student health risk behavior. As the East Stroudsburg Area School District moves to address the various health risk behaviors highlighted by this survey, effort should be taken to involve the sources of information trusted by students, namely the medical community, parents and adults in school, and to ensure that a comprehensive approach to overcome student health risk behavior is enacted.

## ***In Closing***

The East Stroudsburg Area School District took an important first step in conducting this comprehensive needs assessment of student health risk behavior. Data generated demonstrate areas of relative strength and areas that may benefit from additional efforts to enhance student health. The students participating in this survey represent a diverse student body with varied personal experiences, cultures and social norms. Significant differences in certain areas of health risk exist between males and females, between students of varying races or ethnicities and between students in different grades. Therefore, the East Stroudsburg Area School District is encouraged to review the data carefully and to consider next steps targeted to the subsets of students as appropriate, rather than a single solution for all areas of concern created for the district-at-large. East Stroudsburg can utilize the findings of this student survey to review curricula timing and course offerings, extracurricular offerings, student support services available, community activities and available community support, and to identify gaps in education or services that can be bridged.