



## Safe Schools Healthy Students Initiative:

The Waltham Public Schools has conducted the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) with middle and high school students for approximately 10 years. The YRBS was developed by the Centers for Disease Control in 1993. It is respected as a developmentally appropriate and accurate tool. Data can be tracked on the local, state, and national levels. Data from the latest Waltham survey indicated some troubling trends. For example:

- 36% of high school respondents report having attended parties held in Waltham homes where alcohol use by teens is allowed;
- 26% of high school respondents report having engaged in binge drinking;
- 36% of middle school respondents report having been bullied at school within the past year;
- 22% of high school respondent report having been bullied at school within the past year;
- 15% of high school respondents report having attempted suicide.

For more data on the YRBS, see <http://www.walthampublicschools.org/yrb.cfm>.

Working with the Waltham Public Schools, the WPY:

- Convened a Community Summit at Children's Hospital in July 2008;
- Conducted the Healthy Behaviors for Success series for youth and parents at McDevitt Middle School, Kennedy Middle School, and Waltham High School;
- Established the Coalition for Healthy Students, with a mission to work together in the community in a better integrated way to provide resources and support to youth and families around issues identified by recent YRBS data. The Coalition has 3 active subcommittees, each subcommittee addressing short term strategies for identified priority areas:
  - Alcohol use/abuse by teens;
  - Violent behaviors, including bullying and cyber-bullying;
  - Depression related behaviors, including suicidal ideation;
- Leads the **Safe Schools Healthy Students Initiative (SS/HS)**:
  - Engaged a community planner and grant writer to develop a community plan and then secure funding for that plan, to sustain the long-term efforts necessary to make the changes necessary to positively affect the defined priority areas. Planning efforts include interviews, focus groups, surveys, and steering committee planning sessions.

If you are interested in participating on one of the subcommittees of the Coalition for Healthy Students, or on the SS/HS Initiative steering committee, please contact the WPY.

## Safe Schools Healthy Students Chronology:



- Feb. 2008: Youth Risk Behavior Survey administered at WHS and middle schools
- Spring 2008: WPS staff review YRBS data, invite Project INTERFACE and WPY participation; planning for summit to inform community and address priority issues
- July 2008: Community summit held at Children's Hospital, Waltham; over 50 people attend
- Summer and fall 2008: planning to inform community at-large and to develop strategy to address issues (increase protective factors and reduce risk factors)
- October and November 2008: Healthy Behaviors for Success series: meetings at McDevitt & Kennedy Middle Schools and WHS to: share YRBS data; discuss family concerns; inform families about available resources; develop awareness & prevention strategies especially around underage drinking, violent behaviors including bullying and cyber-bullying, and depression-related behaviors including suicidal ideation and attempts.
- Winter 2008-Winter 2010: Action planning continues with broad base of community collaborators; Collaborators identify as Waltham Coalition for Healthy Students; steering committee and 3 action committees form; Mission developed: *to work together in the community in a better integrated way to provide resources and support to youth and families around issues identified by recent YRBS data.* Each committee establishes goals and objectives. Funds are needed to support planning and implementation.
  - Coalition for Healthy Students continues activity:
    - White paper published on WPS Website;
    - Members participate in a panel discussion at Newton Wellesley Hospital;
    - Multiple trainings are held for Waltham High School staff on issues related to student mental health;
    - WHS develops and adopts procedure for dealing with mental health issues;
    - Kennedy Middle School provides anti-bullying programming;
    - Middle School peer mediation program established;
    - Middle School health teachers work with committee to address bullying;
    - WE-TV show is taped to inform community of ongoing activities and resources.
- December 2008: A funding committee is established. With support from Newton Wellesley Hospital, the WPY hires Carl Richardson, Richardson Development, to develop a community plan and apply for federal grant funds to support the plan
- April 2009: **Safe Schools Healthy Students (SS/HS) Initiative** is launched at Linking Education and Business 2009. Purpose: to develop community plan and secure funding for plan implementation. Partners: Waltham Public Schools; Waltham Police Department; Middlesex Partnerships for Youth (designated juvenile justice authority at district attorney's office); Wayside Youth and Family Support Network and Riverside Trauma Center (designated regional mental health providers); Communities United, Inc. (Head Start).

- April – August 2009: WPY worked with an MBA team from the Heller School of Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University, to research and develop An Operational, Strategic, and Marketing Plan for the Coalition for Healthy Students in Waltham; plan is shared with WPY Board of Directors, SS/HS steering committee, and community.
- Spring/summer/fall 2009: Over 50 stakeholder interviews are completed; focus groups are held with youth, immigrant parents, PTO members, and community leaders; surveys are conducted with school guidance and adjustment counselors, health care providers, and early childhood professionals.
- Winter 2009-10: Community need/focus is established: an accessible Integrated Resource Center, open to all youth (start with middle school focus) and families; providing activities and referrals to resources as needed.
- Winter 2009-10: Federal Safe Schools Healthy Students grant RFP delayed until December 2010. WPY secures public-private funding (Waltham Public Schools, AstraZeneca, Waltham West Suburban Chamber of Commerce) to fund three interim federal grant applications to the following programs: Drug Free Communities; Carol White Physical Education; Integration of Mental Health Services.
- Winter 2009-10: As a result of planning work done by the SS/HS Initiative, the Community Engaged Learning Program at Brandeis University is seeking grant funds to support a Brandeis coordinator to recruit, train, and supervise Brandeis student volunteers and interns to provide outreach and programming at the Integrated Resource Center.