GDRSD School Committee Presentation September 28, 2022 Presented by Jill Greene Director of Student Services

# Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

Spring 2022

**Summary of Findings and Next Steps** 



# Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)

### 2022 Emerson YRBS Overview

Since 1997, Emerson Hospital and select public school districts within Emerson Hospital's service area have collaborated to conduct the biannual **Emerson Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).** The YRBS is a comprehensive survey of students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade on topics ranging from mental health and resiliency to technology habits, stress, body image, social media, bullying, and substance use.

Groton Dunstable has participated since 2002.



# 2022 Emerson YRBS Methodology

- A census of students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and high school in ten public school districts, including 7,722 students in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 8<sup>th</sup> grade and high school who completed an online survey in March, 2022.
- Questionnaires are age-appropriate and based on the Massachusetts YRBS and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention versions.
- Students participating in the Emerson YRBS are guaranteed **confidentiality**. Identifying information about students is not kept, and results are only reported in grouped form, with no way of identifying individuals.
- Of the 10,021 students enrolled in participating school districts in March, 2022, 77% responded to the survey. The remaining students were either absent on the days the surveys were conducted, their parents/guardians opted for them not to participate, they submitted a blank survey (indicating refusal to participate), or the survey was not administered due to some technical challenges.

### **Students Participating in 2022 Emerson YRBS**

	Total Surveyed	6th Grade	8th Grade	High School
2022 TOTAL:	7,722	1,498	1,527	4,684
Acton-Boxborough Regional School District	1,848	384	322	1,139
Ayer Shirley Regional School District	421	95	123	202
Bedford Public Schools	1,115	180	191	744
Concord-Carlisle High School/Concord Public Schools	993	174	171	644
Carlisle Middle School/Carlisle Public Schools	128	53	75	0
Groton-Dunstable Regional School District	657	117	142	398
The Bromfield School (Harvard Public Schools)	442	74	82	285
Littleton High School/Littleton Public Schools	586	126	125	334
Maynard Public Schools	430	85	80	265
Nashoba Regional School District	1,102	210	216	673





2022 Emerson YRBS Overview

# **Overall Summary of Findings**





## Aggregate

## 2022 Emerson YRBS Highlights of Increases

Increased among all grades:

- Sexual harassment
- Stress and depression
- Self-harm
- Suicide attempts





## Aggregate

## 2022 Emerson YRBS Highlights of Increases

Increased among 6th graders:

- Being bullied at school
- Self-harm
- Stress from home





## Aggregate

### 2022 Emerson YRBS Highlights of Decreases

Decreased among all grades:

- Stress from the pandemic
- Substance use: E-cigarettes, Marijuana, Alcohol
- Sending or receiving sexually explicit messages
- Unmonitored cellphone use



# As 2022 marks a return to the classroom after the pandemic, it also marks a return and increase of some risk behaviors and attitudes.

- This year posed unique challenges for students compared to previous years, as many students are returning to the classroom from the pandemic.
- As students readjust to interacting with their peers more frequently, they are also exhibiting increases in risk behaviors compared to previous years.



# Behaviors and attitudes that demonstrate an overall increase compared to previous years

### Sexual harassment

Showed an increase among 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and high school students compared to all previous years.

### **Depression**

For those in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and high school, depression has remained high over the past 2 years, most likely as a result of the pandemic. 6<sup>th</sup> graders showed a particularly large increase this year.

### **Follow through in suicide attempts**

 Compared to previous years, the proportion of students who attempted suicide out of those who made a plan showed a substantial increase.

- 6<sup>th</sup> graders, in particular, exhibited many increases in risk behaviors compared to previous years.
- Many 6<sup>th</sup> graders are returning to school for the first time as middle schoolers, exposing them to a much different environment with a new set of challenges.

## Substantial changes among 6<sup>th</sup> graders

### Being bullied at school

 6<sup>th</sup> graders returning from the pandemic are 1.5 times more likely to experience bullying compared to 2020 (up from 11% to 17%)

### **Self-harm**

 6<sup>th</sup> graders are twice as likely to report injuring themselves on purpose compared to 2020 (up from 12% to 24%)

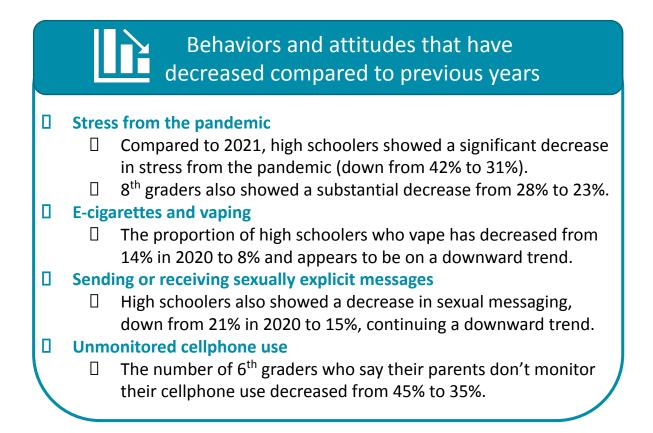
### **Stress from home**

6<sup>th</sup> graders are also 1.5 times more likely to report stress from home compared to 2020 and 2021 (up from 14% to 22%)



# However, this year also saw some substantial decreases in risky attitudes and behaviors.

- **Compared to previous years, students also exhibited a shift away from certain attitudes and behaviors.**
- **I** Most notably, older students are expressing less stress related to the pandemic, indicating a return to a sense of normalcy.





# As students mature, they show a tendency to engage in more risky behaviors and have lower levels of parental involvement.

- As can be expected, there are stark differences in risky behavior based on grade, with younger and older students dealing with different problems and finding different ways to cope.
- For many of these risk behaviors, rate of incidence slowly increases between 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade and then undergoes a sizable increase around 10<sup>th</sup> grade, indicating that as students physically mature, they open themselves up to several more potentially harmful behaviors and stressors.
- Compared to students in higher grade levels, those in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade are more likely to struggle with:
  - Self-harm
  - Being bullied at school
- However, 6<sup>th</sup> graders also report having more protection against certain risks including:
  - Greater trust in teachers to stop bullying
  - More sleep at night
  - More parental involvement in phone and social media use



- As students reach higher grade levels, they are much more likely to engage in several risky behaviors, including:
  - Sexual harassment
  - Sexual messaging, sexual intercourse, and pornography
  - □ Alcohol, e-cigarette, and marijuana use
  - Depression
  - **Given Suicide consideration**
- Additionally, these students indicate being under more stress from their academic workload, the COVID-19 pandemic, and home



2022 Emerson YRBS Overview

# Groton-Dunstable Summary of Findings





## **Groton Dunstable**

### 2022 Emerson YRBS Overview

Groton-Dunstable Regional School District has participated in the Emerson YRBS since 2002. In 2020, Groton-Dunstable was not able to survey high school students due to the Pandemic. This report presents findings for Groton-Dunstable 6<sup>th</sup> graders, 8<sup>th</sup> graders, and high school students. Groton-Dunstable students from these grades are also included in the aggregate for all districts for 2022. For this year, Groton-Dunstable students did not answer questions about sexual intercourse, sexual harassment, pornography, or messaging with sexual content.



# As 2022 begins a return to the classroom after the pandemic, it also marks a return and increase of some risk behaviors and attitudes.

- This year posed unique challenges for students compared to previous years, as many were returning to classroom settings for the first time since the pandemic.
- As students readjust to interacting with their peers more frequently, they are also exhibiting increases in risk behaviors compared to previous years.
- 6<sup>th</sup> graders, in particular, exhibited many increases in risk behaviors compared to previous years.



Substantial increases among Groton-Dunstable 6<sup>th</sup> graders.

Being cyberbullied: 5%\*\*

Self-harm: 6%\*\*

Stress from pressure at home: 11%\*\*

Spending 4+ hours on social media: 5%\*\*

Substantial increases among Groton-Dunstable 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

- Being bullied at school: 14%\*
- Being cyberbullied: 6%\*\*
- Trying to lose weight: 9%\*\*



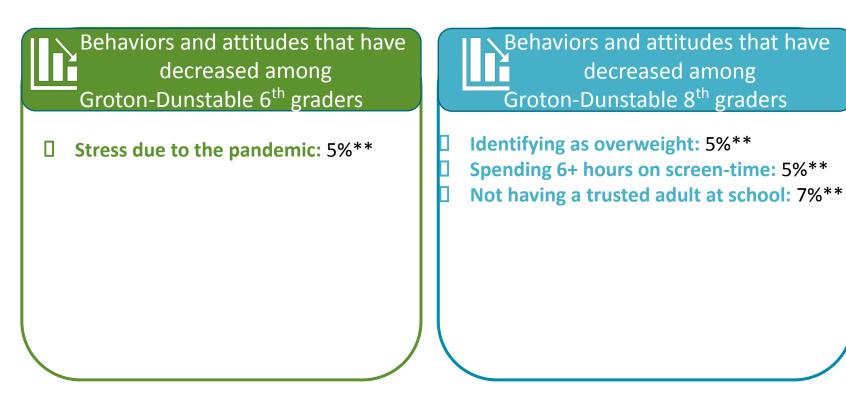
Substantial increases among Groton-Dunstable high schoolers

**Binge drinking:** 15%\*\*



# However, this year also saw some substantial decreases in risky attitudes and behaviors.

- **Compared to previous years, students also exhibited a shift away from certain attitudes and behaviors.**
- Notably, older students are experiencing less depression, self-harm, suicide ideation, and stress from the pandemic, indicating a return to a sense of normalcy from COVID.



Behaviors and attitudes that have decreased among Groton-Dunstable high schoolers

- Depression: 7%\*\*
- **Self-harm:** 7%\*\*
- **Suicide consideration:** 6%\*\*
- Alcohol consumption: 6%\*\*
- **Unhealthy dieting:** 5%\*\*
- Risky situations from online behavior: 10%\*\*
- **Stress due to the pandemic:** 7%\*\*



# Although many risk behaviors and attitudes increase with age, 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders showed many areas of vulnerability.

- As can be expected, there are stark differences in risky behavior based on grade, with younger and older students dealing with different problems and finding different ways to cope.
- For many of these risk behaviors, rate of incidence slowly increases between 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade and then undergoes a sizable increase around 10<sup>th</sup> grade, indicating that as students physically mature, they open themselves up to several more potentially harmful behaviors and stressors.
- Compared to students in higher grade levels,
  Groton-Dunstable 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders are
  more likely to deal with:
  - **Being bullied**
  - **Feeling they don't belong at school** 
    - This was particularly high among
      8<sup>th</sup> graders
- However, these students also report having more protection against certain risks including:
  - More sleep at night
  - More parental involvement in phone and social media use

- As students reach higher grade levels, they are much more likely to engage in several risky behaviors, including:
  - **Alcohol, e-cigarette, and marijuana use**
  - **Depression**
- Additionally, these students indicate being under more stress from their academic workload, the COVID-19 pandemic, and home.



# **Groton Dunstable - Action Steps**

Review of finding reports by...

- Coordinator Team
- Admin Team
- Designated Educators

Data source for grant writing





## **Groton Dunstable - Action Steps**

Crosswalk with other data sources (e.g., VOCAL) to inform health and wellness priorities, resource allocation, educational content, and professional development planning

Inform current initiatives including Responsive Classroom, Advisory, World of Difference, Care Solace, Bullying Prevention and Intervention, community and family partnerships

