

GDRSD School Committee Presentation

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Presented by

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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 6th grade, 8th grade, and 9th through 12th 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 **6th grade, 8th grade, and high school in ten public school districts**, including **7,722** students in 6th grade, 8th 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



2022 Emerson YRBS Highlights of Increases

Increased among all grades:

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



2022 Emerson YRBS Highlights of Increases

Increased among 6th graders:

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



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.

- 6th graders, in particular, exhibited many increases in risk behaviors compared to previous years.
- Many 6th 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.



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

- **Sexual harassment**
 - Showed an increase among 6th, 8th, and high school students compared to all previous years.
- **Depression**
 - For those in 8th grade and high school, depression has remained high over the past 2 years, most likely as a result of the pandemic. 6th 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.



Substantial changes among 6th graders

- **Being bullied at school**
 - 6th graders returning from the pandemic are 1.5 times more likely to experience bullying compared to 2020 (up from 11% to 17%)
- **Self-harm**
 - 6th graders are twice as likely to report injuring themselves on purpose compared to 2020 (up from 12% to 24%)
- **Stress from home**
 - 6th 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.
- Most notably, older students are expressing less stress related to the pandemic, indicating a return to a sense of normalcy.



Behaviors and attitudes that have decreased compared to previous years

- **Stress from the pandemic**
 - Compared to 2021, high schoolers showed a significant decrease in stress from the pandemic (down from 42% to 31%).
 - 8th graders also showed a substantial decrease from 28% to 23%.
- **E-cigarettes and vaping**
 - The proportion of high schoolers who vape has decreased from 14% in 2020 to 8% and appears to be on a downward trend.
- **Sending or receiving sexually explicit messages**
 - High schoolers also showed a decrease in sexual messaging, down from 21% in 2020 to 15%, continuing a downward trend.
- **Unmonitored cellphone use**
 - The number of 6th graders who say their parents don't monitor their cellphone use decreased from 45% to 35%.



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 6th and 9th grade and then undergoes a sizable increase around 10th 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 6th grade are more likely to struggle with:
 - Self-harm
 - Being bullied at school
- However, 6th 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
 - 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



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 6th graders, 8th 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.
- 6th graders, in particular, exhibited many increases in risk behaviors compared to previous years.



Substantial increases among Groton-Dunstable 6th 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 8th 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 6th graders

- **Stress due to the pandemic: 5%****



Behaviors and attitudes that have decreased among Groton-Dunstable 8th graders

- **Identifying as overweight: 5%****
- **Spending 6+ hours on screen-time: 5%****
- **Not having a trusted adult at school: 7%****



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, 6th and 8th 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 6th and 9th grade and then undergoes a sizable increase around 10th 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 6th and 8th graders are more likely to deal with:

- Being bullied
- Feeling they don't belong at school
 - This was particularly high among 8th 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

