
CHAPTER 2

Administration of the Teen Assessment Project

This report is the result of collaboration of the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension with the Newfound Area School District and the Lin-Wood/Newfound/Pemi-Baker Community Coalition. The project was approved by the Newfound Area School Board.

The Teen Assessment Project is a comprehensive, community-based research, education and community mobilization program involving six phases:

- community coalition development or enhancement
- survey development and implementation
- analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of survey results
- youth, parent, school and community educational efforts
- community strategy development, action planning, and implementation of strategic plan
- project impact evaluation

Dr. Stephen Small of the University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension, originator of the Teen Assessment Project, developed and compiled a question bank of 475 possible questions to assess teen attitudes and worries, future aspirations, alcohol and other drug abuse, sexuality, use of time, diversity and perceived discrimination, personal safety, violence and delinquency, health, interactions with peers, perceptions of parental behavior and monitoring, family relationships and values, perceptions of school and neighborhood monitoring and support. Charlotte Cross and other collaborators have since added to this question bank which now offers 836 questions for review. In 2002 the Newfound Area School District decided to use the TAP survey used by the Pemi-Baker School District. The Pemi-Baker TAP committee had used the question bank to select the 160 items included in the survey. Some questions had been developed locally to reflect community concerns. The final survey was reviewed by the Teen Assessment Project Director and approved for use by the UNH Institutional Review Board.

The community was informed about the project through articles written in school and community newspapers. A letter, which included passive consent notification, was sent to all parents of 7th to 12th graders. Prior to the survey date, parents were able to review the survey at several locations. On the day of the survey students could choose not to participate. Students also could skip any question they did not want to answer.

Teachers were trained in survey administration procedures. Teachers remained in the room to maintain a positive classroom climate. A script with specific instructions was read by the survey administrators to maintain consistency among the classrooms. In order to ensure accurate and honest responses, a number of steps were taken. The anonymity of youth was protected. Names were not

placed on survey booklets or response sheets. Teachers were instructed not to walk around the classroom while students completed the survey. Each student placed her/his own response sheet into a special envelope for the classroom. Response forms were scanned and the data analyzed at the University of New Hampshire. In this report, youth responses were combined to prevent identification of individual responses.

The survey was administered on March 6, 2003 at the Newfound Memorial Middle School and the Newfound Regional High School. Parents of 18 students did not allow their children to participate in the survey. Answer sheets for 630 students were collected. Response forms were examined for obvious patterns and scribbles; 15 unusable response forms were removed. Five consistency/exaggerator checks were run on these data resulting in the removal of 24 forms. Examples of consistency/exaggerator checks include: students who reported that they used daily all drugs listed, students who reported time use activities none or all of the time; or students who reported on one question that they did not use alcohol and then reported on another that they engaged in binge drinking. Nine (9) forms were eliminated due to a response of “*Not at all honest*” on the question “*How honest were you in doing this survey*”. Three (3) response forms were eliminated due to missing gender data. Thus, this report is based on the responses of 579 students or approximately 83% of the total population of 700 Newfound Area middle school and high school students.

This report speaks for youth collectively to give us a picture of the status of many Newfound Area School District teens. It is our hope it will be useful in educational and community planning, aid in stimulating program and policy review and modifications, help securing funding and resources, and lead to changes in attitudes and behaviors that strengthen assets/protective factors in local youth, families, schools and the community.