

CHAPTER 10

Perceptions of School and Community

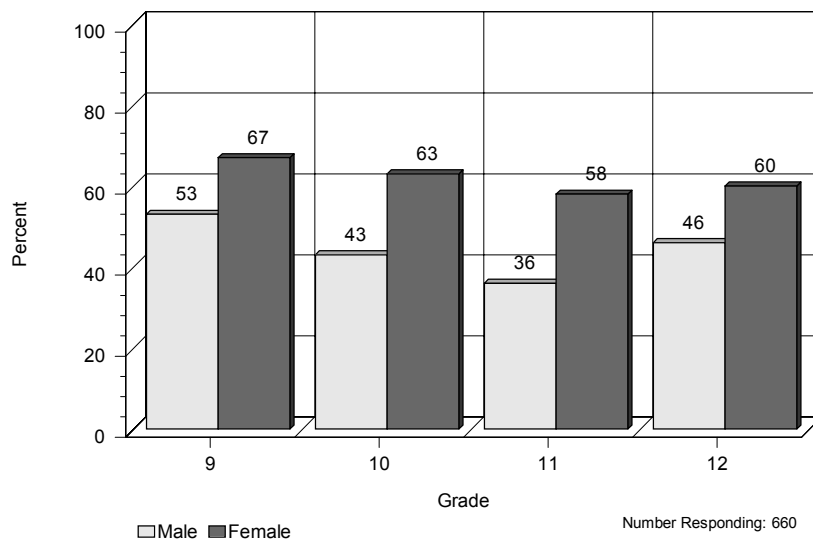
Adolescents spend an increasingly greater amount of time away from home as they get older. A majority of their time is spent in school and in the broader community. It is important for adolescents to be connected to these environments and to feel there are meaningful opportunities for them to explore and practice their emerging abilities. Adolescents are more at risk for problem behaviors if they have low grades and/or drop out of school. In New Hampshire, almost 1 in 10 teens over the age of 15 are not in school, at work, or in the armed services (Terry & Hall, 1996). These teens are called “idle teens.”

Likewise, adolescents with a large amount of free time may be more vulnerable to engaging in risky behaviors such as drug use and early sexual intercourse. Knowing adolescents’ perceptions of their school and community can help adults better understand teen motivations and behaviors. For example, adolescents who are more committed to school and involved in prosocial activities are less likely to engage in risky behaviors because they perceive there is more to lose from such behaviors (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992; Dryfoos, 1990; Elster, Lamb and Taveré, 1987; Mensch and Kandel, 1988).

Perceptions of School

We asked students to respond to the statement “*I enjoy going to school.*” Fifty-three percent (53%) of all youth checked “*agree*” or “*strongly agree*”. Overall, females reported more agreement with the statement than males (males, 44%; females, 62%). Figure 10-1 shows the responses by grade and gender.

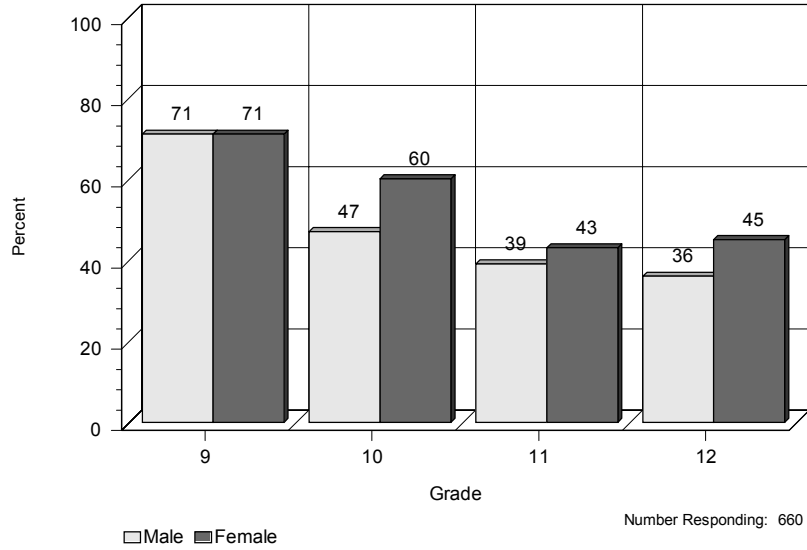
Figure 10-1: Enjoy Going to School
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by Grade and Gender)



Note: Due to rounding, some graphs may not total 100%.

Figure 10-2 displays the percentage of students by grade and gender who “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statement “The rules in my school are enforced fairly.” Overall, 52% of students reported they felt the rules were enforced fairly (males, 49%; females, 56%).

Figure 10-2: School Rules Enforced Fairly
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by Grade and Gender)



Students were also asked whether or not they believed they were getting a “good, high quality education at my school.” Figure 10-3 shows that seventy-eight percent (78%) of students checked “agree” or “strongly agree” (males, 75%; females, 81%).

Figure 10-3: Good Quality Education
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by Grade and Gender)

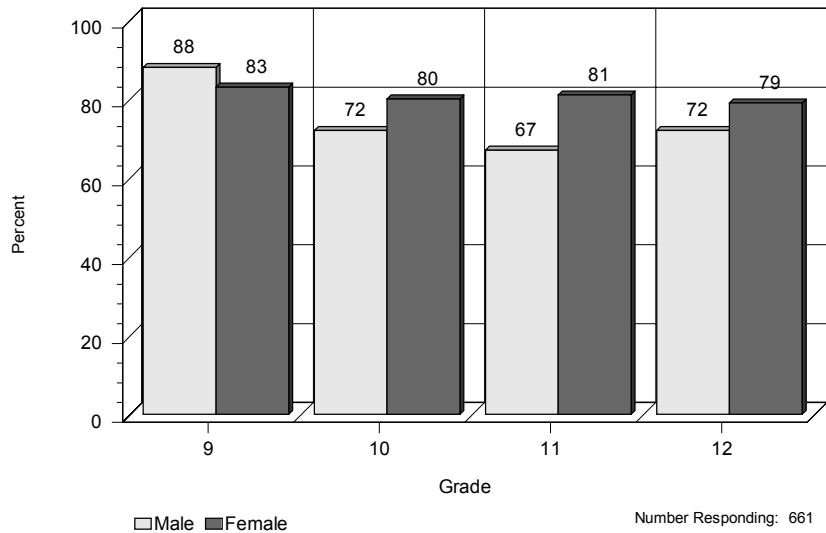
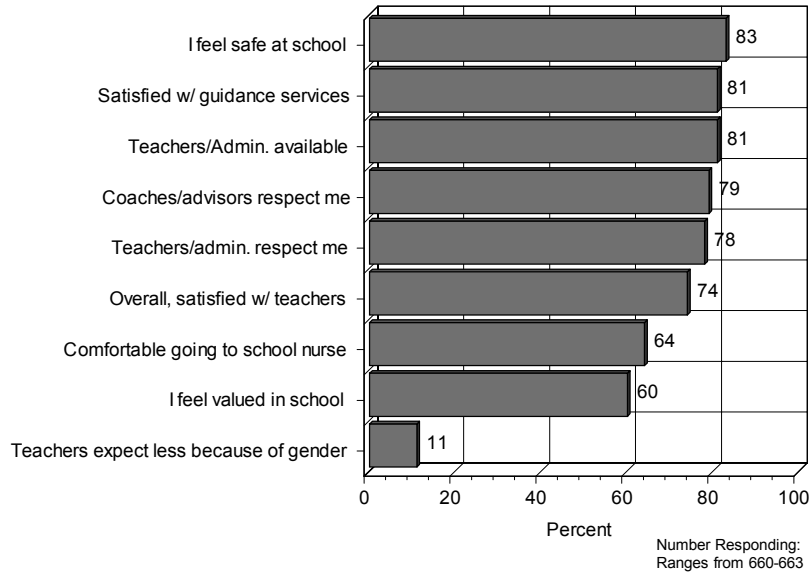


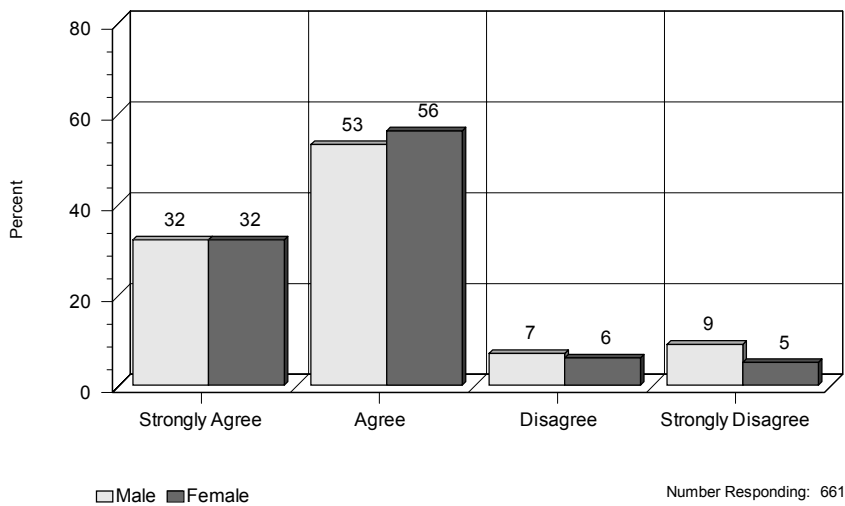
Figure 10-4 shows that overall, students are satisfied with teachers and other school staff and the services they receive. More than half “*strongly agreed*” or “*agree*” they feel valued in the school community.

Figure 10-4: Student Satisfaction with School Staff & Services
(Strongly Agree or Agree)



Over three-quarters of the students “*strongly agree*” or “*agree*” that they get a fair chance to participate in theatre and/or music programs at school. Figure 10-5 shows the responses by gender.

Figure 10-5: Teens' Feelings About Getting a Fair Chance to Participate in Theater and/or Music Programs
(By Gender)



Students were asked to respond to the statement “I believe I am given a fair chance to participate in sports.” Figure 10-6 shows that the majority of students “agree” or “strongly agree” with this statement.

Figure 10-6: Teens' Feelings About Getting a Fair Chance to Participate in Sports

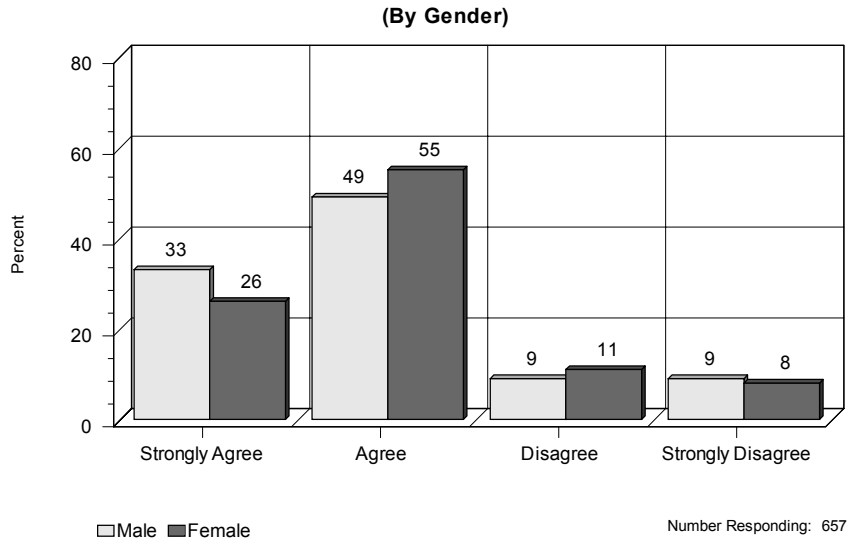
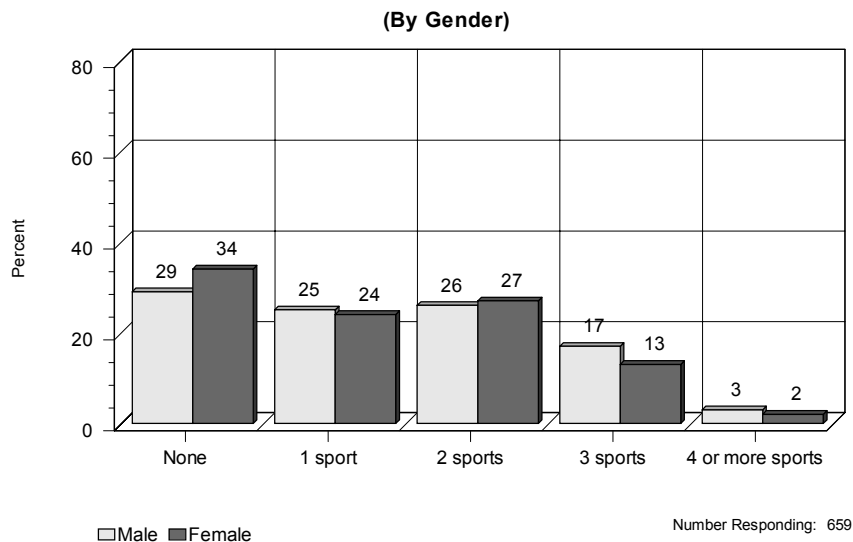


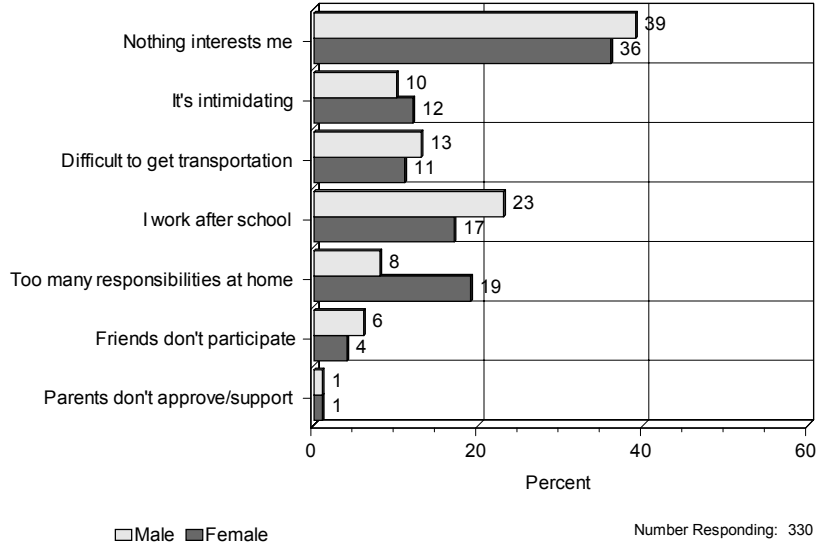
Figure 10-7 shows that about two-thirds of the students report that they plan to try out for one or more sports during the school year.

Figure 10-7: Number of Competitive Sports Teens Plan to Participate in During Year



When students were asked why they did not participate in extracurricular activities, of those who did not participate, the greatest percentage gave the reason that nothing interested them. Figure 10-8 shows the responses by gender.

Figure 10-8: Why Teens Don't Participate in Extracurricular Activities
 (Of Those Who Don't Participate, by Gender)



Future Plans and Career Plans

When students were asked if they felt they would drop out of school before completing high school, 5% answered “strongly agree” or “agree” (males, 5%; females, 5%). Of course, those high school students who have already dropped out are not reflected in these percentages. Figure 10-9 shows those who “strongly agree” or “agree” they will drop out before they complete high school by grade and gender.

Figure 10-9: Teens Who Feel They Will Drop Out Before They Complete High School

(Strongly Agree or Agree, by Grade and Gender)

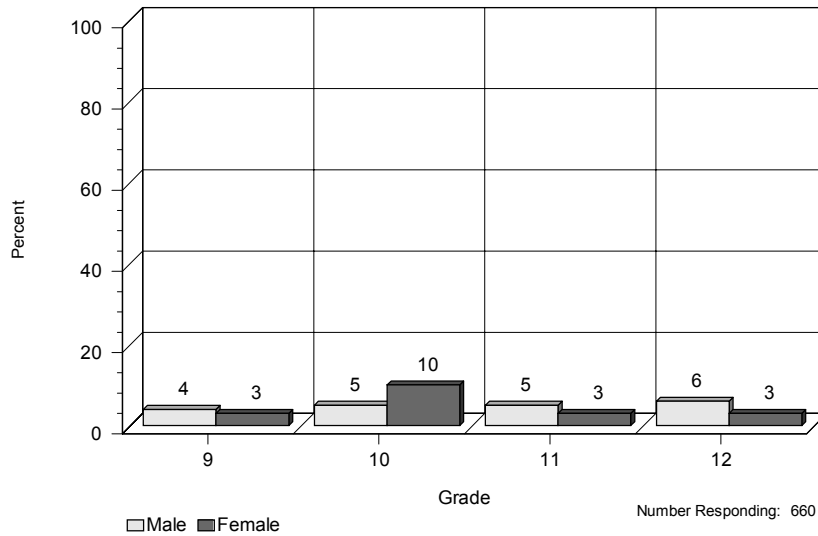
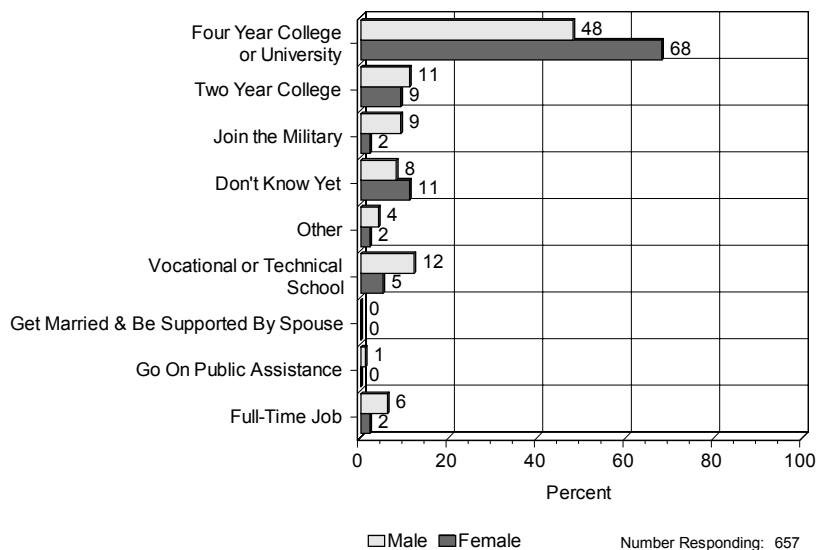


Figure 10-10 shows what teens report their future plans will be. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of students think they will “Go to a 4-year college or university”. More males than females chose vocational or technical school as a future option (males, 10%; females, 5%). More females than males thought they would attend a 4-year college after high school (males, 48%; females, 68%).

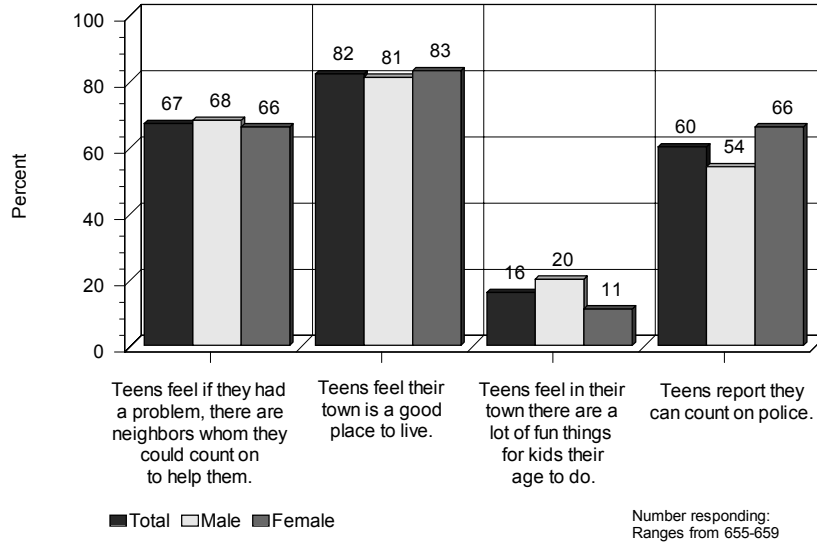
Figure 10-10: Future Plans After High School
(By Gender)



Perceptions of Community

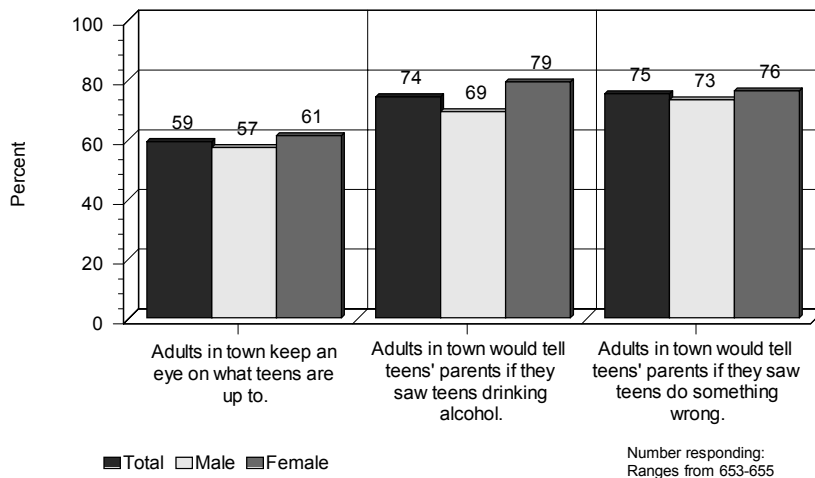
Neighborhood Support. Figure 10-11 shows what students reported about their community. Sixty-seven percent (67%) reported there are neighbors they can count on if they are in trouble and need help. Although 82% felt their town is a good place to live, only 16% thought there are a lot of fun things for kids their age to do.

Figure 10-11: Neighborhood Support
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by Gender)



Neighborhood Monitoring. As shown in Figure 10-12, about half of the students reported that adults in town keep an eye on what teens are up to. Almost three-quarters (74%) of the students reported that adults in town would tell their parents if they saw teens drinking alcohol. Seventy-five percent (75%) felt that if they were to do something wrong, adults in town would tell their parents.

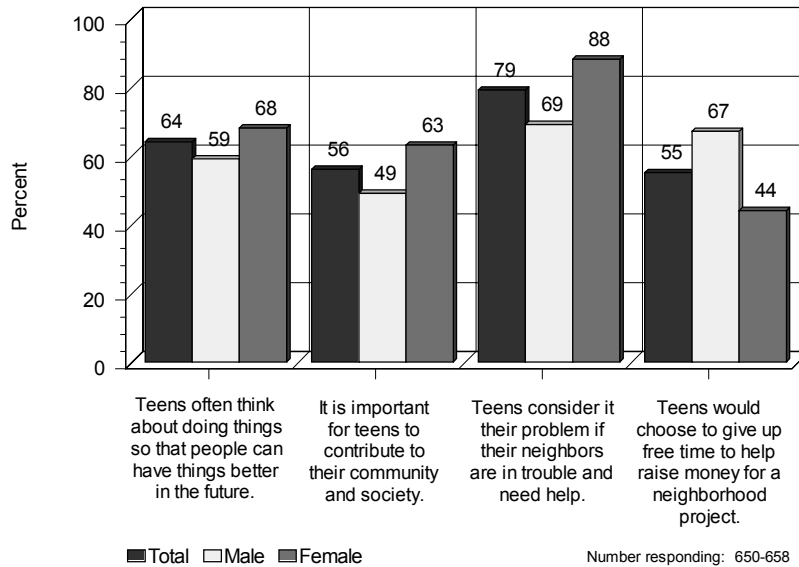
Figure 10-12: Neighborhood Monitoring
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by Gender)



Social Responsibility

Many teens have a well-developed sense of social responsibility toward their community. Almost two-thirds (64%) reported they often think about doing things “...so that people can have things better in the future.” Fifty-six percent (56%) said they feel it is important to contribute to their community and society. Almost four out of five students (79%) said they consider it their problem if their neighbors are in trouble and need help. Fifty-five percent (55%) would give up their own free time in order to help raise money for a neighborhood project . Figure 10-13 shows the results by gender.

Figure 10-13: Social Responsibility
(Strongly Agree or Agree, by Gender)



Presentation Of Comparable Data

In this section, Pemi-Baker School District data are compared with other data from *Tapping Into Teen Concerns, Perceptions and Behavior: 2000-2001 Multi-Community Report* published by the Teen Assessment Project (TAP).

The *Tapping Into Teen Concerns, Perceptions and Behavior: 2000-2001 Multi-Community Report* is a multi-community report based on ten school districts surveyed from January 2000 through October 2001 (Teen Assessment Project, 2002). These data represent 9458 teens from five different counties around the state – Carroll, Cheshire, Coos, Grafton, and Hillsborough. Due to the nature of this project, however, the survey process is not random. Therefore, results cannot be generalized to the population of New Hampshire teens.

**Table 10-1: Perceptions of School And Community
(Grades 9-12)**

| Behavior | TAP¹ Multi-Community 2000-2001 % | TAP Pemi-Baker 2002 % |
|---|--|--|
| Percent who checked “agree” or “strongly agree” with statement. | | |
| School | | |
| “I enjoy going to school.” | 53 | 53 |
| “I believe I am getting a good, high quality education at my school.” | 62 | 78 |
| “I will probably drop out before I complete high school.” | 6 | 5 |
| Community | | |
| “My town is a good place to live.” | 76 | 82 |
| “In my town there are a lot of fun things for kids my age to do.” | 19 | 16 |
| “Adults in my neighborhood or community keep an eye on what teens are up to.” | 52 | 59 |
| Youth Social Responsibility | | |
| “It is important to me to contribute to my community and society.” | 61 | 56 |
| “I often think about doing things so people can have things better in the future.” | 66 | 64 |
| Teens would choose to give up free time to help raise money for a neighborhood project. | 46 | 55 |
| Teens would consider it their problem if neighbors are in trouble and need help. | 79 | 79 |

¹ Teen Assessment Project, 2002.