

# SPIRIT

Missouri School-based Substance Abuse Prevention  
Intervention and Resources Initiative

## Thirteenth Year Report

2014-2015

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Missouri Department of Mental Health  
Division of Behavioral Health

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction – An Overview of the SPIRIT Project

The School-based Prevention Intervention and Resources Initiative (SPIRIT) is a substance abuse prevention project sponsored by the Missouri Department of Mental Health (DMH), Division of Behavioral Health (DBH). SPIRIT was launched in 2002 in an effort to prevent the use of alcohol and other drugs and incidents of violence in high-risk school districts. The project also aims to improve overall school performance as a result of these preventative efforts. This report highlights the impact of the SPIRIT project in its thirteenth year which was implemented during the school year beginning in the fall of 2014 and ending in the spring of 2015.

SPIRIT currently operates in four sites serving six school districts across the state, including Carthage R-IX, Knox Co. R-1, New Madrid Co. R-1, Ritenour, Charleston R-I and Scotland Co. R-I. Scotland Co. R-I was new to the SPIRIT program this year, and their findings will be reported in a separate report. Therefore, this year's aggregate report includes findings from five districts (Carthage R-IX, Charleston R-I, Knox Co. R-1, New Madrid Co. R-1, and Ritenour). At the time of their induction into SPIRIT, each school district served a high-risk student population characterized by: 1) more than 60% of students receiving free/reduced lunch; 2) standardized test scores below state average; 3) alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use above state average; 4) graduation rates lower than the state average; and 5) a high number of referrals to juvenile authorities. The individual needs of each district vary as do the demographics, such as the size of the population, the average student/teacher ratio, race/ethnicity distribution, location, resources and community setting (e.g., urban or rural). The approximate enrollment in SPIRIT in Year 1 was 3,900. Enrollment in the thirteenth year has grown to 8,031 students in kindergarten through the ninth grade.

In the SPIRIT implementation model, a prevention agency is paired with each participating school district. Prevention specialists from the agencies, referred to as "providers" in this report, assist in facilitating evidence-based substance abuse and violence prevention programs, help to identify and respond to additional needs of some students for selective or indicated services, provide screening and referral services upon request, and offer resources and technical assistance as needed. Each district and school determines whether prevention specialists or classroom teachers implement the prevention programs. Thus, who implements the program varies by site and occasionally by school within each district.

All prevention programs implemented are evidence-based and are listed on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices (NREPP). Each participating district has identified specific behavioral challenges within their student population, such as bullying, aggressive behavior and substance use, and particular prevention programs are selected to address these issues. Some changes have been made in the programs implemented as a response to changing or further identification of needs of the school or district.

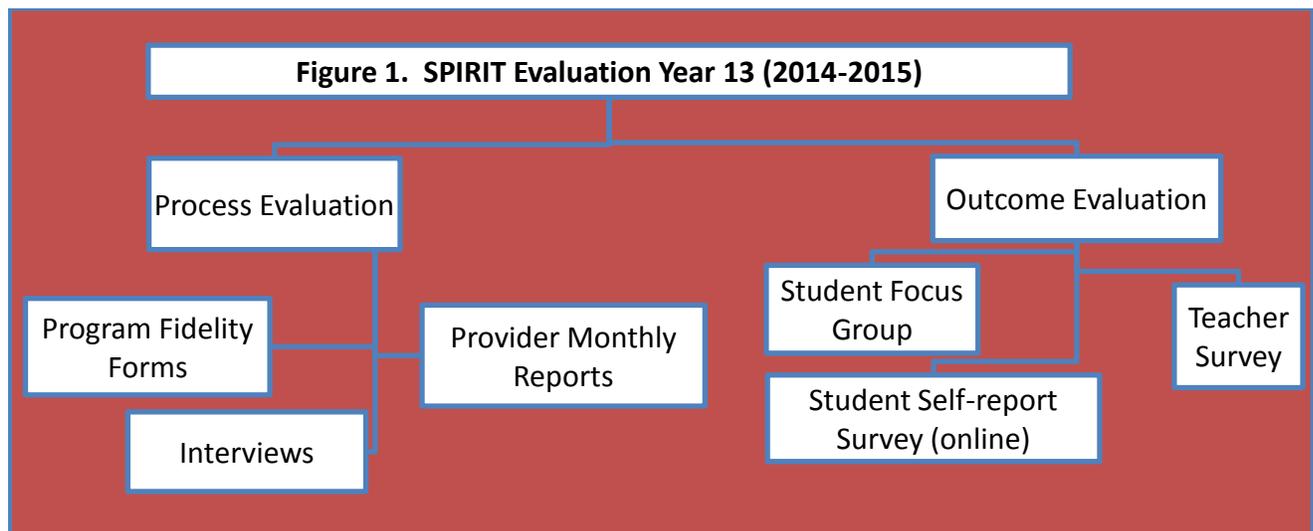
Programs implemented in SPIRIT year thirteen included PeaceBuilders or Second Step in the elementary schools (supplemented by Too Good for Drugs in some districts), Second Step or Too Good for Drugs in the middle schools and Too Good for Drugs or Project Towards No Drug Abuse in the high schools.

**Evaluation.** Annual evaluation of the SPIRIT program is conducted by the Missouri Institute of Mental Health (MIMH) at the University of Missouri St. Louis (UMSL). The evaluation includes an annual student survey, interviews with SPIRIT providers and school administrators, review of monthly reports submitted by the provider agencies, and analysis of program fidelity from forms documenting program implementation submitted by program implementers (Figure 1).

The self-report online survey completed by students in the 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades includes questions about substance use, attitudes toward substance use and perceived risk of use, aggression and problem behaviors, school performance and attitudes toward school, individual protective factors and perceptions of SPIRIT effectiveness. This information is used to assess the degree to which the main goals of the program are being met. One site with limited computer access in its elementary schools continues to complete surveys via paper and pencil.

Throughout this report, SPIRIT student responses are compared to samples of Missouri and U.S. youth. Data for Missouri youth were drawn from the 2014 Missouri Student Survey (MSS), a statewide survey of 6<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> grade students attending public schools. The U.S. sample was drawn from youth who participated in the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH).

All grade K-9 students attending schools in which SPIRIT is implemented receive prevention programming (n = 8,031 in the 2014-2015 school year). In order to participate in the evaluation, however, students must be in the 4<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grades and have parental consent. The consent rates vary by district, but across all SPIRIT sites 90.3% of all students eligible to participate in the evaluation were consented in Year 13. Each consented student was assigned a unique identification code used each year of their participation in order to match and track responses over time while maintaining confidentiality.



## Summary of Outcome Findings

### SPIRIT Substance Use

- Alcohol is the most commonly used drug among SPIRIT youth, followed by marijuana and cigarettes. In the 30 days prior to completing the survey, 8.2% reported having consumed alcohol, 4.2% used marijuana and 3.2% smoked cigarettes. Lifetime rates of other drugs, including prescription drugs, inhalants, methamphetamines and ecstasy were much lower than lifetime rates of alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana.
- The percentage of youth in the 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades who reported using cigarettes or alcohol in the past 30 days has declined steadily since 2011. The percent of past month marijuana users increased from 2013 to 2014 but returned to 2011 rates in 2015.
- Cigarettes:
  - SPIRIT youth had lower rates of cigarette use than Missouri and U.S. samples of youth.
  - Age of first use for SPIRIT youth was lower than that of the Missouri sample.
  - 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade females were slightly more likely to report 30-day use of cigarettes than males in middle school (6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup>) and 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - The percent of youth who report 30-day cigarette use triples from 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grade to 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Alcohol:
  - SPIRIT youth had higher rates of alcohol use in the past 30 days than the Missouri sample of youth, but lower rates of alcohol use in the past 30 days than the U.S. sample of youth.
  - The age of initiation of alcohol use was slightly lower among males than among females.
  - Males were more likely than females to report 30-day alcohol use in 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grades, but females were slightly more likely than males to report 30-day alcohol use in middle school (6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup>) and 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - Like cigarettes, alcohol use rises among 9<sup>th</sup> graders; use is approximately twice as high compared to youth in 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grades.
- Marijuana:
  - Lifetime and 30 day marijuana use among SPIRIT youth was higher than among Missouri youth, but lower than the U.S. as a whole.
  - On average, SPIRIT youth who had used marijuana in their lifetime began use at a slightly younger age than those in the Missouri sample.
  - 30 day marijuana use among 9<sup>th</sup> grade youth is four times the use rates of 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grade youth; there are no sex differences in use.

Table 1. SPIRIT, Missouri and U.S. Drug Use Comparisons (6 <sup>th</sup> –9 <sup>th</sup> Grade)				
		SPIRIT <sup>4</sup>	Missouri <sup>5</sup>	U.S. <sup>6</sup>
Cigarettes	Lifetime use	10.9	12.0	17.1
	Past month (30-day)	3.2	4.5	5.6
	Age of initiation	10.8	11.47	n/a
Alcohol	Lifetime use <sup>7</sup>	28.8	---	---
	Past month (30-day)	8.2	7.1	11.6
	Age of initiation	10.79	n/a	n/a
Marijuana	Lifetime use	10.4	7.3	17.6
	Past month (30-day)	4.2	3.7	7.1
	Age of initiation	12.49	12.54	n/a

### Lifetime and Past Month Substance Use over Time

This report presents data over five years for SPIRIT participants since 2011.

- Cigarettes:
  - The percentage of youth in the 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades that reported trying cigarettes during their lifetime has steadily declined from 18.8% in 2011 to 10.9% in 2015.
  - The percentage of youth in the 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades that reported using cigarettes in the past month has steadily declined from 6.0% in 2011 to 3.2% in 2015.
- Alcohol:
  - The percentage of youth in the 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades that reported trying alcohol during their lifetime has declined steadily from 41.2% in 2012 to 28.8% in 2015.
  - The past month use of alcohol was reported by fewer youth in 2015 (8.2%) than in any previous year.
- Marijuana:
  - The percent of 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> graders who tried marijuana in their lifetime has fluctuated across time. Most recently, there was a decrease between 2014 and 2015.
  - The percent of past month marijuana users in the 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades increased from 2013 to 2014, losing much of the drop that occurred between 2012 and 2013. There was a slight drop between 2014 and 2015.

Table 2. Estimates of SPIRIT Lifetime and 30-day Substance Use (6 <sup>th</sup> –9 <sup>th</sup> Grade), 2011-2015										
	2011		2012		2013		2014		2015	
	30 Day	Lifetime								
Cigarettes	5.1	18.8	4.7	15.9	4.3	15.6	4.2	12.5	3.2	10.9
Alcohol	12.2	38.3	10.3	41.2	9.7	37.8	8.3	31.7	8.2	28.8
Marijuana	6.0	11.8	4.9	14.7	4.0	10.0	5.4	10.9	4.2	10.4

<sup>4</sup> SPIRIT, spring 2015, 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grade, n = 3,590 (average age = 12.15); note: there were no 9<sup>th</sup> grade youth participating from the Knox Co. or Charleston School Districts.

<sup>5</sup> Missouri Student Survey (MSS) 2014, weighted data set, 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grade, n = 44,710 (average age = 13.45)

<sup>6</sup> National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2013), 12-17 years of age, n = 17,736

<sup>7</sup> The SPIRIT survey lifetime alcohol use question was worded differently from the MSS and NSDUH; thus comparison data have not been included in this report. SPIRIT students were asked “how old were you the first time you had more than a sip or two of alcohol”. The Missouri and U.S. questionnaires included more specific instructions: “by a ‘drink,’ we mean a can or bottle of beer, a glass of wine or a wine cooler, a shot of liquor, or a mixed drink with liquor in it.” SPIRIT youth were not instructed to only count those times when they consumed an entire drink, but rather anything more than a sip or two.

## Substance Use Extent and Circumstances

- Binge Drinking
  - A total of 3.2% of all youth in the 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades reported binge drinking.
  - Binge drinking among 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade youth has decreased steadily since 2011.
- Drunk or High at School
  - Among all 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade youth, 3% reported being drunk or high at school in the past three months.
  - The number of youth who reported going to school drunk or high in the past three months decreased between 2011 and 2013, but increased between 2013 and 2014. In 2015, there was a drop back to pre-2014 levels.
- Riding with a Drunk Driver
  - Among all 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> youth, 12.8% reported riding in a vehicle with a driver who had been drinking. Among lifetime alcohol users, 26.4% reported riding in a vehicle with a driver who had been drinking. Among 30-day alcohol users, 41.9% reported riding in a vehicle with a driver who had been drinking.

## Attitudes toward Substance Use

- Positive Attitudes towards Substance Use:
  - More than nine out of ten students in grades 4–9 did not think smoking made them look cool or more grown-up or let them have more fun.
  - Positive attitudes toward cigarette and alcohol use have consistently decreased since 2011; however, more youth in 2014 and 2015 believed that smoking makes you look grown-up than in 2013 (5.5% vs 3.5%).
- Substance Use Norms:
  - Most youth agreed that adults were more likely to use cigarettes and alcohol than teenagers, but thought that teenagers were slightly more likely to use marijuana.
  - Youth in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade were more likely than younger students to think that most teenagers used alcohol and marijuana, but they were less likely than younger students to think most teenagers used cigarettes.
  - Younger (4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup>) grade students were more likely than older students to believe adults use cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana.
  - Females were more likely than males to think that most teenagers and adults use cigarettes, marijuana and alcohol.
- Substance Use Intentions:
  - About a quarter of students in grades 4–9 agreed that they might use alcohol in the future, versus less than 1 in 10 for marijuana and less than 1 in 20 for cigarettes.
  - The intention to use alcohol decreased from 2011 to 2014, but increased slightly in 2015.
  - The largest increase in intention to use occurs between the middle and high school grades. Twice as many youth in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade indicated they might use marijuana (18.4%) compared to youth in 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grade (6.7%).

- Risk of Harm from Substance Use:
  - Over two-thirds of all students in grades 4-9 thought cigarettes and alcohol posed a moderate or great risk. About three-quarters of youth thought using marijuana was risky.
  - More than 8 in 10 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> graders thought the use of ecstasy, methamphetamine, inhalants, and prescription drugs without a prescription posed a moderate to great risk, with use of methamphetamine perceived as the most risky.
  - Younger students (4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grades) believed cigarettes were less risky than older students, whereas older students (9th grade) perceived marijuana as less risky than younger students.
  - The percentage of youth who think using marijuana is risky increased slightly between 2014 and 2015, and marijuana is still seen as more risky than alcohol or cigarettes.
  
- Disapproving Attitudes towards Substance Use:
  - Over 90% of youth in the 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades thought use of ecstasy, methamphetamine, inhalants, and prescription drugs without a prescription was wrong or very wrong; and about two-thirds of students thought the use of alcohol was either wrong or very wrong.
  - As grade level increased, students were less likely to consider the use of substances to be wrong.
  - Females are more likely than males to believe using substances is wrong. The one exception is alcohol; while females in 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grades are more likely to believe using alcohol is wrong than males, by 6th grade females and males are equally likely to believe using alcohol is wrong.
  - The percentage of youth who thought cigarette, alcohol, or marijuana use was wrong or very wrong has remained relatively consistent from 2011 to 2015.

## **Problem Behavior**

- Approximately 40% of youth in the 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade reported being harassed or bullied within the past three months.
- Students who reported they had been bullied or harassed at least one time in the past three months were more likely to report engaging in and experiencing almost every aggressive and problem behavior more frequently than those who had not been bullied.
- Very few youth (less than 1 in 20) reported using the internet or a cell phone to embarrass or hurt another student, or conversely, being harassed by another student by internet or cell phone.
- A very small percentage of youth (less than 3%) reported using a weapon to threaten or bully another or having a weapon used against them in a similar manner.
- The percentage of youth who reported making fun of others increased with age, whereas spreading of lies and rumors decreased.
- Older youth were less likely to report that others physically assaulted them than younger youth. By 9<sup>th</sup> grade, youth were more likely to report physically assaulting someone else than having been assaulted.
- Males were more likely than females to report making fun of or physically assaulting others and were also more likely to report being physically assaulted. Females were more likely to report that

they were made fun of by others or had rumors spread about them. Males and females were just about as likely to report that they spread rumors or lies about other kids at school.

- The percentage of students who report physically assaulting others or being physically assaulted has decreased substantially since 2011. Furthermore, fewer students were afraid of being beaten up in 2015 compared to 2011.

## School Performance

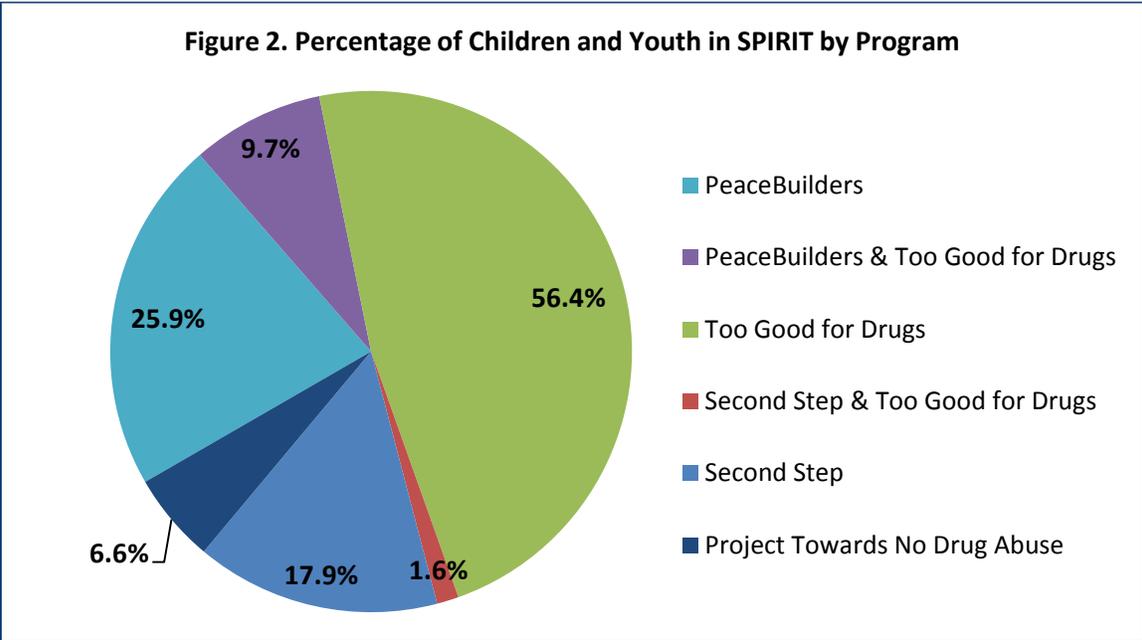
- Grades, Attendance, and Disciplinary Incidents:
  - Most students reported their average grades last school year were either A's or B's, similar to last year. While there were no sex differences in reported grades for youth in 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades, among 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade students a greater percentage of females than males reported receiving mostly A's or B's.
  - When asked how many whole days of school were missed in the past 30 days because they skipped or cut, slightly more students in 2014 reported missing at least one day as compared to students in 2015. Female students in 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades were most likely to skip school.
  - Similar to 2014, in 2015 approximately a quarter of students reported being sent to the office for disciplinary reasons in the past three months. Males were more likely than females to be sent to the office, but males in 9<sup>th</sup> grade were less likely than males in younger grades.
  - Slightly less than 1 in 6 students reported receiving in-school suspension or detentions. The percent of youth receiving in-school suspensions and detentions doubles for males and quadruples for females between 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade and 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - Approximately 5.1% of students received an out-of-school suspension. As with other disciplinary actions, males were more likely than females to have received an out-of-school suspension.
- Attitudes towards School:
  - The large majority (85%) of students reported feeling safe at school. By and large attitudes toward school were positive; youth were least likely to agree that teachers treat them fairly, though about three-quarters did agree with this statement.
  - In general, the higher the grade level the less positive youth felt toward school. Happiness at school and feeling safe at school steadily decreased at each grade level.
- Perceptions of Program Effectiveness:
  - The large majority of students (84.2%) responded that they liked the SPIRIT program at least a little.
  - Similar to responses in previous years, youth were most likely to report that the program helped them with resistance skills and that the time spent on the program was helpful.
  - Students thought the program was least effective in helping others be nicer to them, with only slightly over half agreeing with that statement.
  - In general, as grade level increased youth were less likely to be satisfied with the program and to think it was effective; the largest drop in perceived effectiveness occurred at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level.
  - Females were more likely than males to like the program and believe it helps them with resistance skills. Males were more likely than females to believe other kids are nicer to them because of the program.

## Protective Factors

- Empathy:
  - About three-quarters of youth reported strong levels of empathy. Males were less likely to report being empathic than females.
  - Empathy declined as grade levels increased, with 9<sup>th</sup> graders being the least empathic; empathy dropped more for males than females.
  
- Decision-making:
  - About 8 in 10 youth believe they make good decisions, though fewer (about 6 in 10) report that they often or always stop to think about their choices, how their choices affect others, and the consequences of their choices before making a decision.
  - Fewer than half of students answered “often” or “always” to every decision-making question. For young grades (4-5 and 6–8) females reported better decision-making skills than males, though by 9<sup>th</sup> grade males reported better decision-making skills than females.
  
- Caring Adults:
  - The large majority (about 9 out of 10) of youth indicated that they had a caring adult in their lives at either school or home; caring adults were more likely to be located at their home than at school.
  - About three-quarters of students “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that there were caring adults both at home and at school that they could go to if something was bothering them or if they had something to say.
  - The percent of females reporting positive adult support is higher than males in 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grade, but by 9<sup>th</sup> grade drops to an equal level with males. In contrast, the percent of males reporting positive adult support drops only slightly as they age.

# Chapter 1—The SPIRIT Programs

As in previous years, information about program implementation was collected from interviews with prevention providers and school administrators, monthly reports from the prevention provider agencies, and fidelity forms completed by teachers of the evidence-based prevention programs selected to meet the needs of each district. Following are brief descriptions of information gathered from these sources.



## Participating School Districts

**Carthage.** In the Carthage School District, PeaceBuilders was taught by prevention specialists from the provider agency in all five elementary schools (K–4<sup>th</sup> grade) and in the middle school (5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> grade). In the middle school, Too Good for Drugs supplemented PeaceBuilders. The Too Good for Drugs program was used as the curriculum for 7<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> grade Health and Physical Education Classes.

PeaceBuilders is a school climate program built on five basic principles that provide a common language that is used by everyone in the school community. These principles are: (1) praise people (2) avoid put-downs, (3) seek wise people as advisors and friends, (4) notice and correct hurts we cause, and (5) right wrongs. Use of the PeaceBuilder pledge each day reinforces these concepts and the flexibility of the curriculum allows the prevention specialists to creatively build lessons around issues that are particularly relevant to specific classrooms or to the school as a whole. Over the years, principals have cited the strength of having the common language of PeaceBuilders as a powerful tool in creating understanding within the school community, whether in relation to disciplinary actions or praise.

Too Good for Drugs, another evidence-based prevention program, supplemented PeaceBuilders in the middle school in order to provide more specific alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) information and to teach resistance skills to the students.

The prevention specialists at Carthage have used creative ways to teach students about the application of principles presented in the curricula. A specially focused Peace Week has been organized this year, when students in Kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade celebrated peace at school, at home and all around the world by planting Seeds of Peace Flowers. The event was featured in the community newspaper. In addition, a poster contest on stopping bullying was held to emphasize the importance of making wise choices.

**Knox.** In Knox School District, classroom teachers and prevention specialists coordinated implementation of PeaceBuilders in the elementary school (K–5<sup>th</sup> grade). Prevention specialists also taught Second Step in the middle school (6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grade). A mentoring program for high school freshmen has been continued this year in an attempt to reduce the number of students dropping out of school. In addition, a preventive intervention for selective and indicated populations has been implemented this year (Curriculum Based Support Group). Prevention specialists meet with small groups of students who are at high-risk for behavioral and health problems including substance use, delinquency and violence. The district also has implemented Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and finds that this program interfaces well with SPIRIT.

Prevention specialists have been actively involved with community members and organizations in support of the prevention efforts related to SPIRIT. Events like Donuts for Dads and Muffins for Moms have continued to be supported by the community.

**New Madrid and Charleston.** SPIRIT was implemented in all three elementary schools (K–5<sup>th</sup> grade) in the New Madrid School District. The program was also implemented in the middle school (6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grade) and to 9<sup>th</sup> grade students at the high school. A prevention specialist from the provider agency taught PeaceBuilders at the elementary schools, and classroom teachers reinforced the lessons. School-wide activities, such as reciting the PeaceBuilder pledge reinforced the PeaceBuilder message. A prevention specialist taught Second Step at the middle school and Project Towards No Drug Abuse to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students at the high school. To strengthen the impact of the substance use prevention messages of the primary curriculum at each school level, supplemental lessons are provided.

SPIRIT prevention specialists have worked with teachers in each of the schools to create events and innovative activities to reinforce SPIRIT. In the elementary schools, for instance, both students and teachers are recognized and given awards as PeaceBuilders to provide incentive to the children to use the skills they are learning through the program. The providers also offer activities to parents to involve them in understanding and reinforcing the programs. At the beginning of the school year, abbreviated lessons from SPIRIT were even offered to parents to help them understand more about the goals of SPIRIT and the specific programs provided.

**Ritenour.** In the Ritenour School District, prevention specialists implemented programming in all six elementary schools (4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grade), both middle schools (6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grade), and with 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in the high school. Second Step was taught in the elementary schools with supplements from Too Good for Drugs. Too Good for Drugs was taught in the two middle schools and the high school. Additionally, the

prevention specialists provide materials to the teachers so that they are able to reinforce the lessons from the curriculum, therefore increasing the effectiveness of the messages that have been taught.

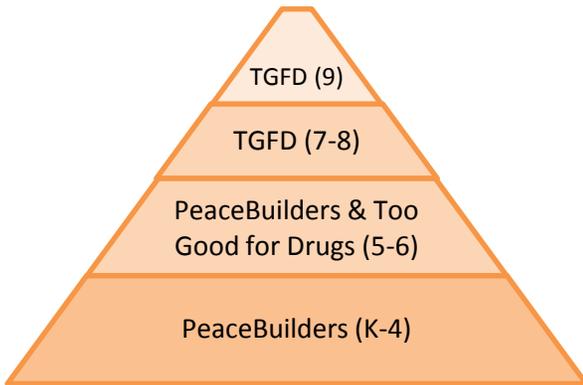
## Fidelity Documentation and Interviews

Fidelity forms documenting implementation details were completed by each program implementer. The number of students, the specific curriculum lesson taught, the number of minutes, and the frequency of implementation were recorded as were any changes that the teacher made to the lessons (lengthened, shortened, material added, made more age or culturally appropriate). The most frequent modifications made this year were the addition of approved supplemental substance use prevention materials from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) to programs.

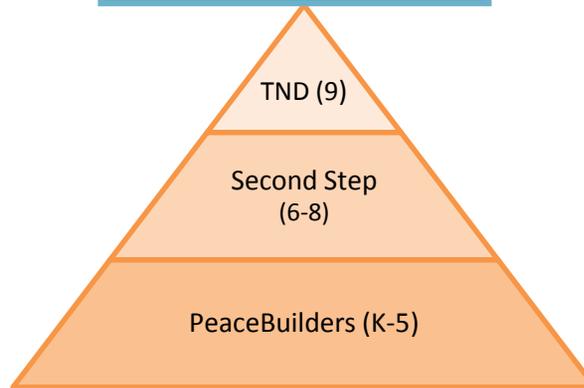
The following figure displays the prevention program being implemented in each district and grade level.

Figure 3. Program Implementation by Site, Year 13 (2014-2015)

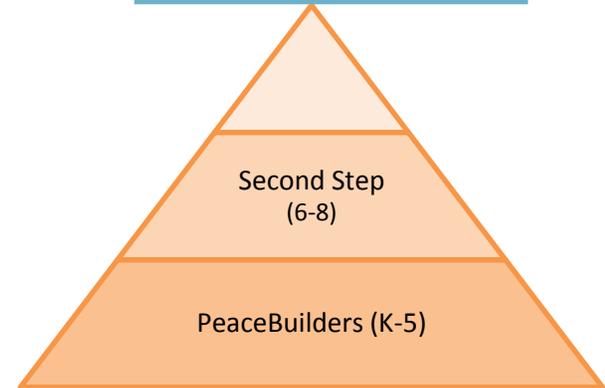
**Carthage**



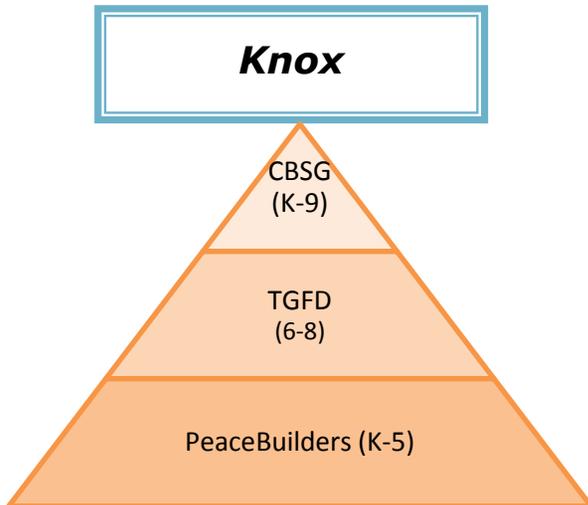
**New Madrid**



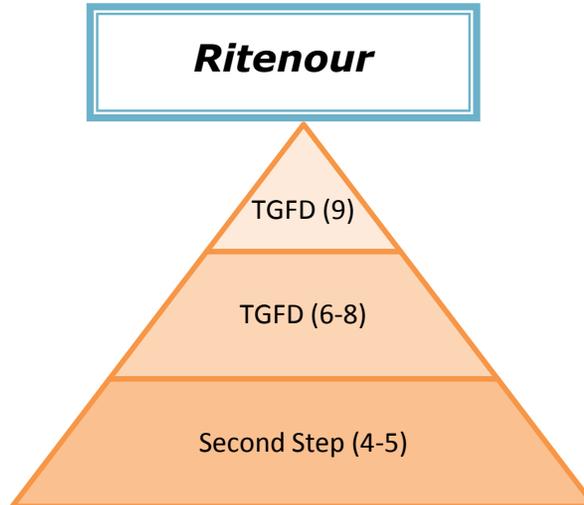
**Charleston**



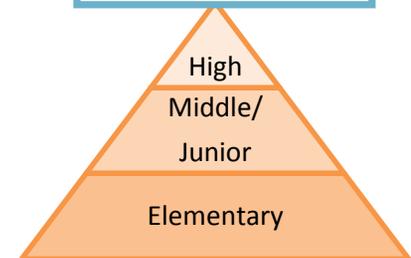
**Knox**



**Ritenour**



**School Level**

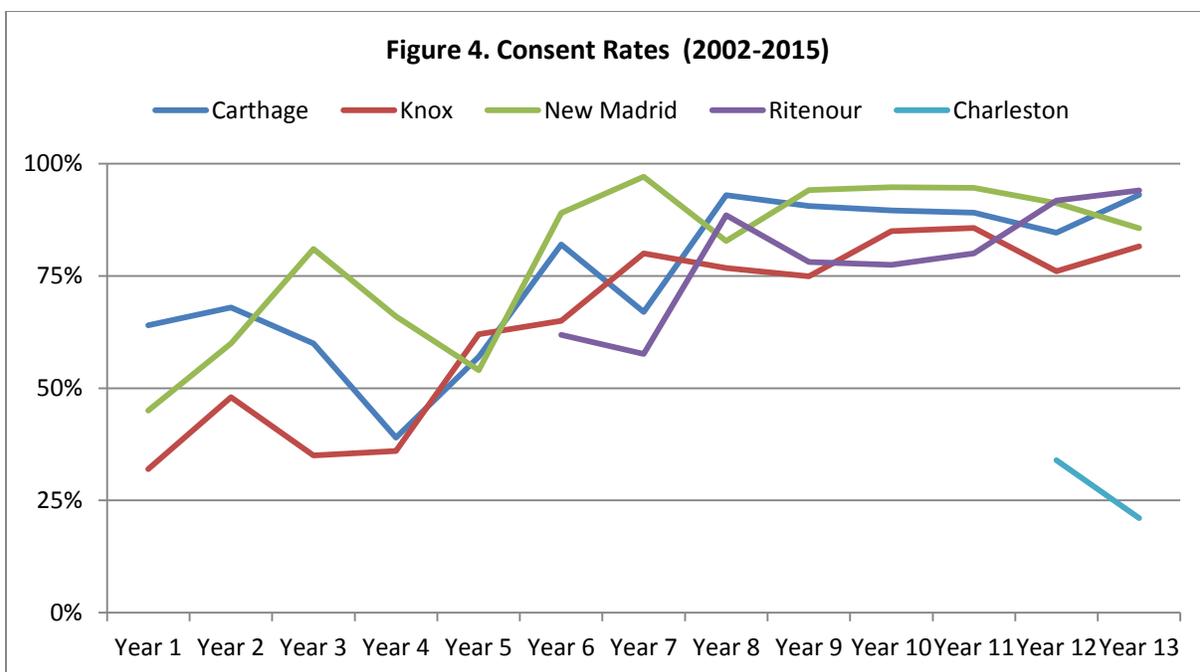


TND: Project Towards No Drug Abuse  
 TGFD: Too Good for Drugs  
 CBSG: Curriculum Based Support Group

## Chapter 2—Sample Selection and Demographics

In Year 13, 8,031<sup>5</sup> students in kindergarten through ninth grades (K-9) received prevention programming through SPIRIT. However, only students in grades 4-9 who received parental consent and assented to participate were eligible to be included in the evaluation.

Of the 5,500<sup>6</sup> 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade students who were eligible to participate in the evaluation, 4,967<sup>7</sup> received parental consent, which increased the consent rate from 88.5% in Year 12 to 90.3% in Year 13. All five school districts had a consent rate above 75%.



### Sample Weighting

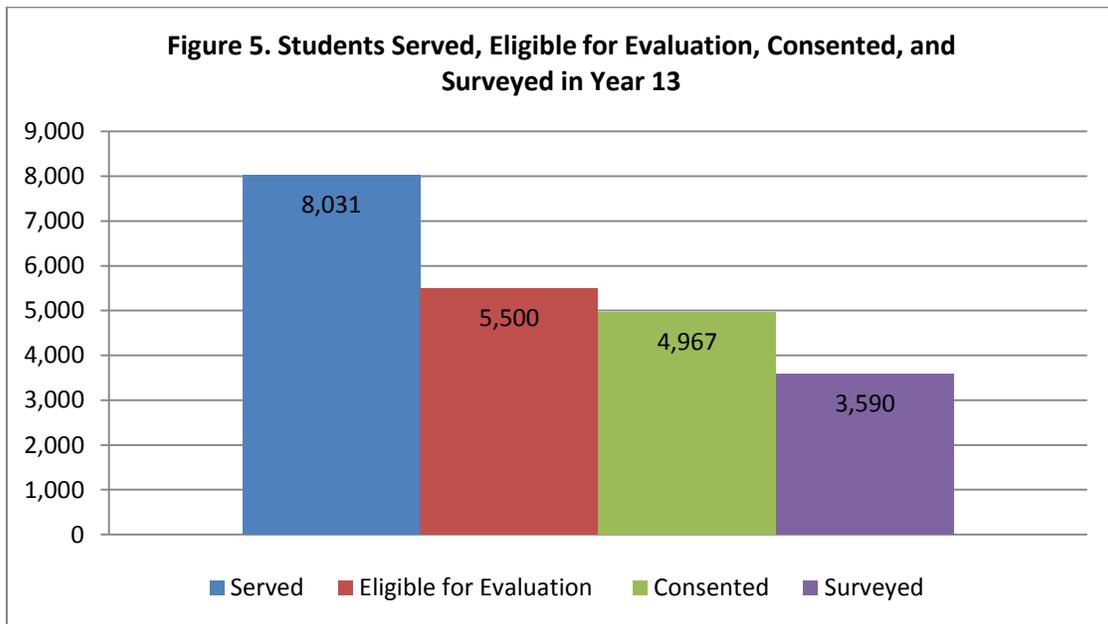
Of the 4,967 students who received parental consent to participate in the evaluation, 3,590 completed a survey. According to enrollment numbers reported by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), approximately 5,942 students grades 4-9 were enrolled in SPIRIT-participating school districts in 2014-2015. Due to sampling bias, the actual students surveyed ( $n = 3,590$ ) may not be representative of the students in the total school population ( $n = 5,942$ ). To address this potential bias, for each district, the sample was weighted to match DESE enrollment numbers. Weighting accounted for

<sup>5</sup> This number includes all students in all SPIRIT school districts (Carthage, Charleston, Knox, New Madrid, Ritenour, and Scotland). Because Scotland was new to the SPIRIT program this year, this district will not be included in any other analyses. Their findings will be reported in a separate report.

<sup>6</sup> There were no 9<sup>th</sup> grade youth participating from the Knox Co. School District. As a result, those students are not included in the calculation of students who were eligible to participate in the evaluation.

<sup>7</sup> There were no 9<sup>th</sup> grade youth participating from the Knox Co. School District. As a result, those students are not included in the calculation of consented students.

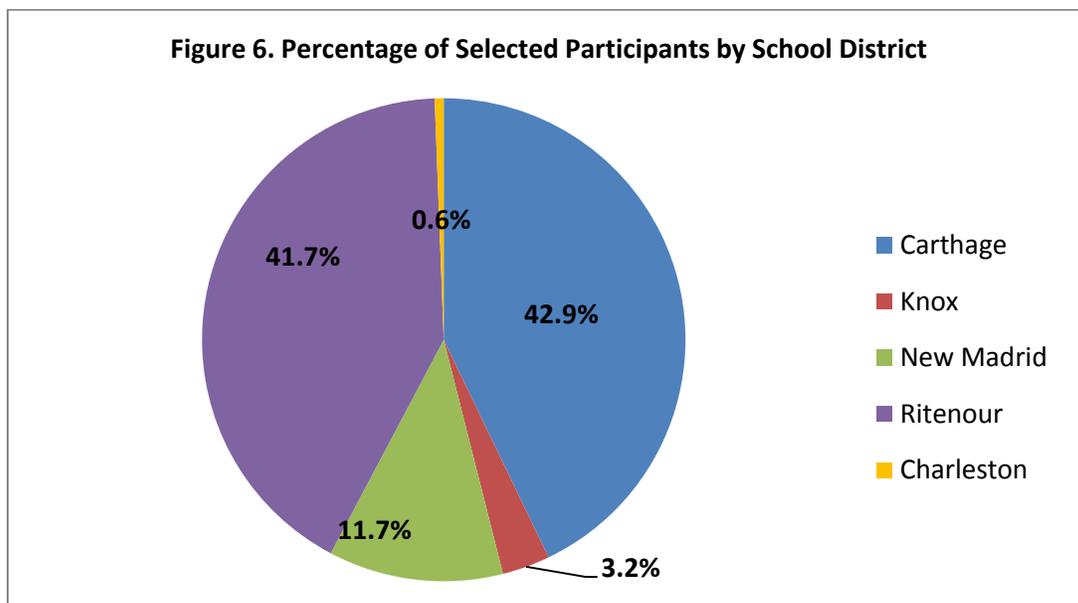
differences in enrollment based on school building, sex, and grade level, thus the resultant weighted sample should be reflective of the population of SPIRIT as a whole.



### Demographic Distributions of the Evaluation Sample

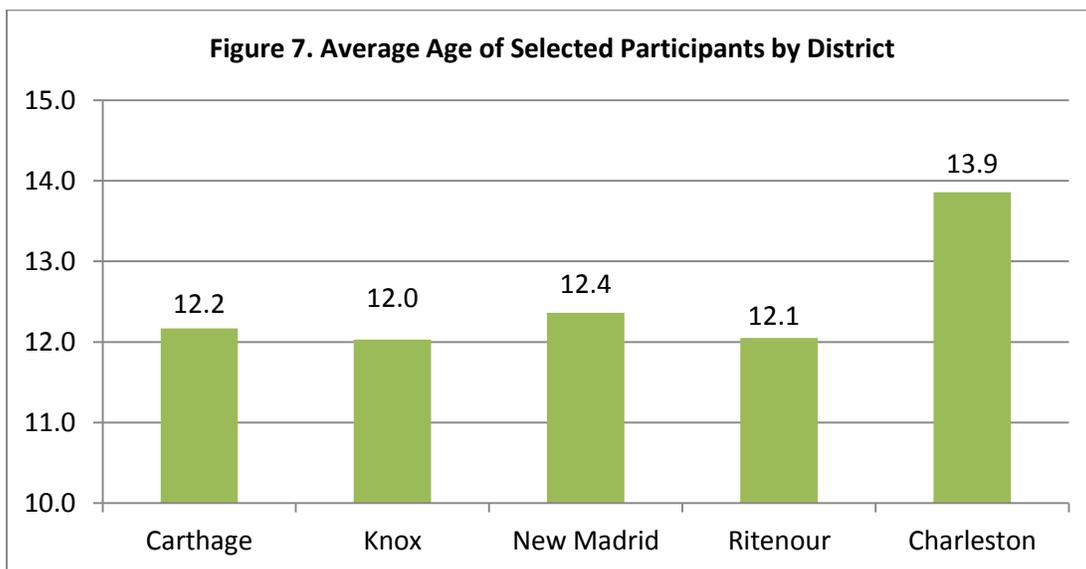
#### Participants by School District

Due to the small size of the Charleston School District, this district accounted for the smallest percentage of students surveyed (0.6%).



## Participant Ages

The average age of the participants ranges from 12.0 to 13.9 years of age.



## Race and Ethnicity of Participants

The racial and ethnic profiles of each district were distinct from one another. The majority of youth in the Knox Co. School District were White (93.0%), but every other district has a variant demographic. The Carthage School District is mostly White (90.7%) with a large Hispanic/Latino (30.7%) population. The New Madrid School District is mostly White (64.5%) and Black (30.0%). The Ritenour School District is the most diverse, with almost equal percentages of White (42.9%) and Black (40.4%) students, and some Latino (15.8%) representation as well.

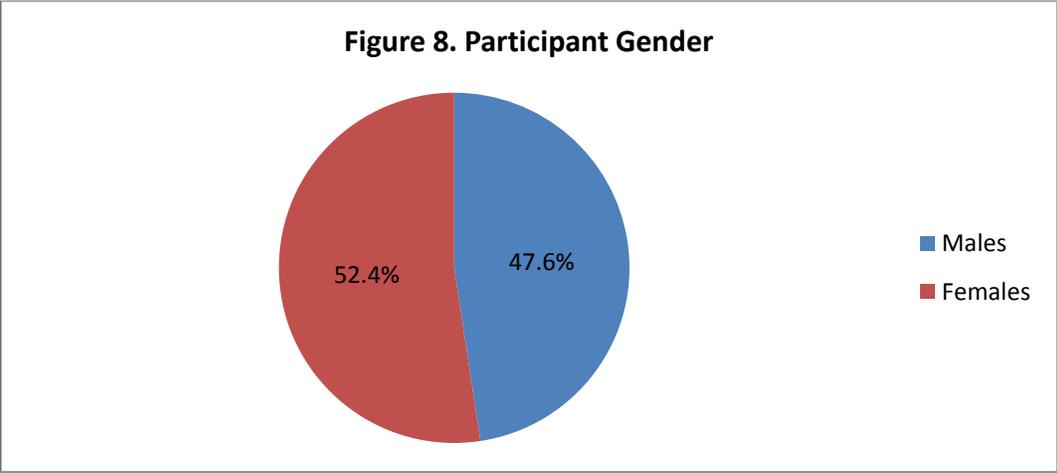
**Table 3. Race and Ethnicity of Selected Participants by District**

	Carthage	Knox	New Madrid	Ritenour	Charleston
Hispanic/Latino (of any race)	30.7	1.8	2.1	15.8	4.8
Race:					
White/Caucasian	63.1	93.0	64.5	42.9	33.3
Black/African-American	5.7	1.8	30.0	40.4	66.7
Native American/Alaskan Native	6.3	5.3	3.3	4.5	4.8
Asian	1.2	0.9	0.2	3.1	4.8
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1.1	0.9	0.7	0.9	0.0

Note: Students were allowed to choose more than one option for race, so percentages will not equal 100.

# Participant Gender

The SPIRIT sample was comprised of slightly more females than males.



# Chapter 3—Substance Use

The following chapter presents self-reported use of substances by youth in the 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades. The percentage of users among particular grade levels are generally reported by the following grade groups: 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup>. Wherever possible, substance use of students in the SPIRIT program was compared to use among youth of similar age or grade levels as reported in the 2014 MSS and the 2013 NSDUH.

## Lifetime Substance Use

Students in 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grades were asked whether they had *ever*, even once, smoked part or all of a cigarette, had more than a sip of alcohol, or used marijuana. Students in the 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade were asked how old they were the first time they smoked part or all of a cigarette, had more than a sip or two of alcohol, used marijuana or a variety of other drugs.

**Lifetime Substance Use Comparisons with State and National Samples (Table 4).** Among the 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade SPIRIT sample, a slightly smaller percentage of youth had smoked cigarettes in their lifetime than youth in Missouri and U.S. use was even higher. The use of marijuana in one’s lifetime was higher among SPIRIT youth compared to the Missouri sample but lower than the U.S. sample. However, a smaller percentage of SPIRIT youth had used inhalants than both others in Missouri and the U.S. Moreover, fewer youth in SPIRIT used prescription drugs without a prescription than their counterparts elsewhere in Missouri.

	<b>SPIRIT Total<sup>8</sup></b>	<b>MO<sup>9</sup></b>	<b>U.S.<sup>10</sup></b>
Cigarettes	10.9	12.0	17.1
Alcohol (more than a sip) <sup>11</sup>	28.8	---	---
Alcohol (once or twice a month)	6.2	---	---
Marijuana	10.4	7.3	17.6
Ecstasy	1.3	---	---
Methamphetamine	1.0	0.4	---
Inhalants	1.9	3.1	5.8
Prescription Drugs without Rx	2.9	5.3	---

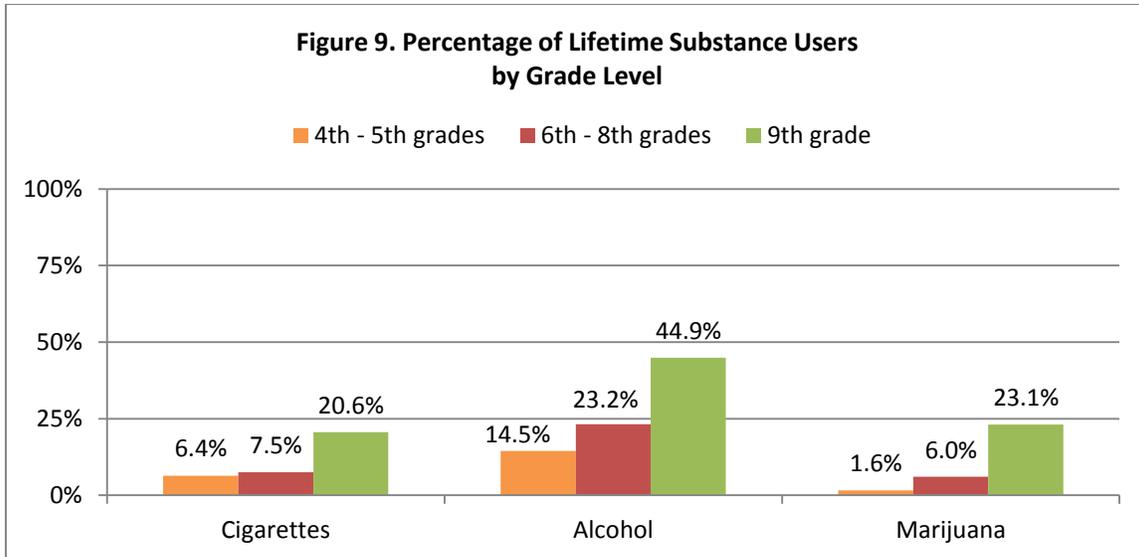
<sup>8</sup> SPIRIT, spring 2015, 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grade, n = 3,590 (average age = 12.15); note: there were no 9<sup>th</sup> grade youth participating from the Knox Co. or Charleston School Districts.

<sup>9</sup> Missouri Student Survey (MSS) 2014 weighted data set, 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grade, n = 44,710 (average age = 13.45)

<sup>10</sup> National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2013), 12-17 years of age, n = 17,736

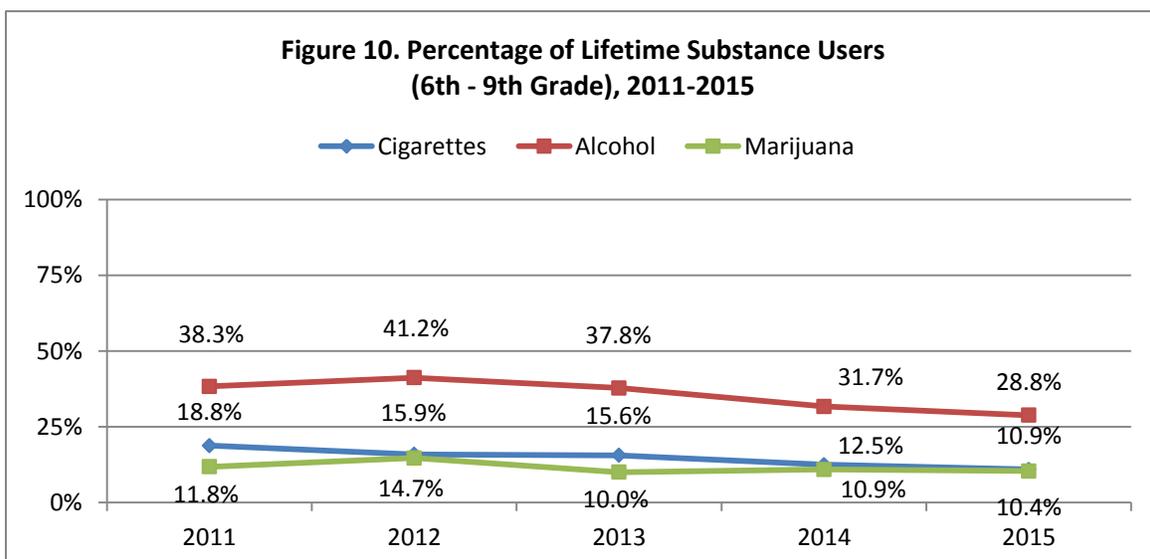
<sup>11</sup> Lifetime alcohol use (more than just a sip) cannot be compared between the SPIRIT, MSS, and NSDUH surveys. Please see footnote 4 for further explanation. Ecstasy also cannot be compared: SPIRIT asks specifically about ecstasy use, whereas the MSS asks about “club drugs”

**Lifetime Substance Use by Grade Level (Figure 9).** The percentage of youth who had used cigarettes, alcohol, or marijuana at least once increased with grade level. The largest increase in cigarette and marijuana users occurred between the middle school (6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup>) and high school (9<sup>th</sup>) grade levels, whereas the percentage of alcohol users increased to a great extent between all grade levels. Among 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, marijuana use is higher than cigarette use.



**Lifetime Substance Use by Sex.** There were no differences between the percentage of males and females who reported having ever used cigarettes, alcohol or marijuana in their lifetime.

**Lifetime Substance Use by Year (Figure 10).** The percentage of youth who had used marijuana remained consistent from 2014 to 2015. However, there was a decrease from 2013 to 2014 in the percentage of youth reporting that they had tried alcohol (more than just a sip) (37.8% to 31.7%) or cigarettes (15.6% to 12.5%) in their lifetime. Over the course of four years, the percentage of cigarette users has decreased dramatically from 18.8% in 2011 to 10.9% in 2015. There has been less change in marijuana use, with the percentage of users only slightly dropping over a four year period.



## Past Month (30-day) Substance Use

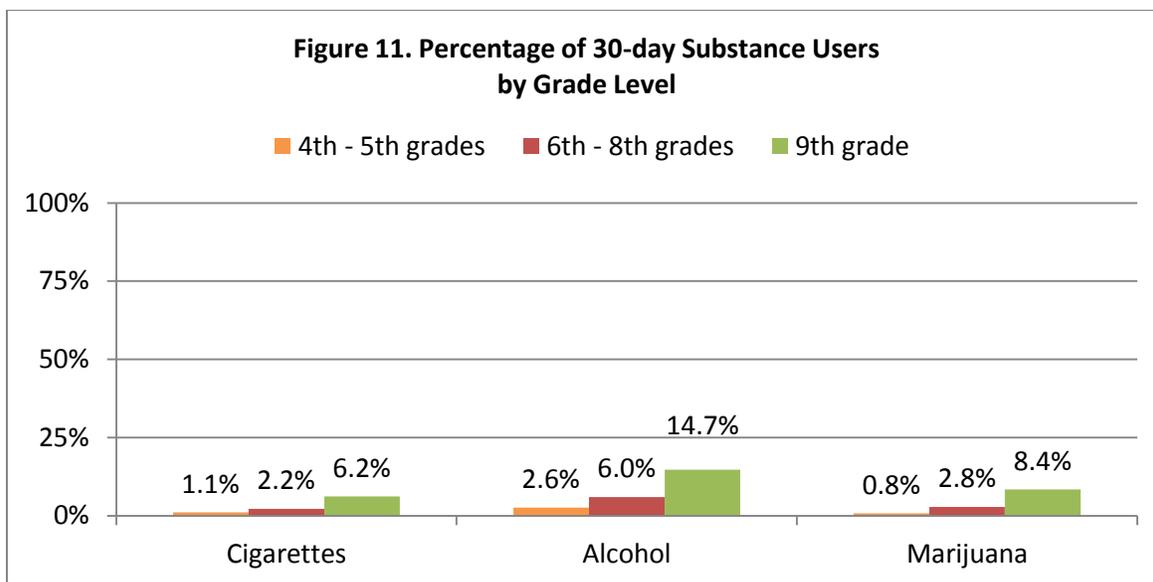
Students in 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade were asked whether they used substances in the month prior to taking the survey. In the selected sample, 2.6% reported smoking a cigarette, 6.4% had consumed alcohol, and 3.1% had used marijuana in the past 30 days.

### 30-day Cigarette, Alcohol and Marijuana Use Comparisons with State and National Samples (Table 5).

A smaller percentage of 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade SPIRIT students used cigarettes in the past 30 days compared to the average student in Missouri or the U.S. The past month use of alcohol did not differ between the SPIRIT and Missouri samples. Marijuana use in the past 30 days was higher among SPIRIT youth compared to Missouri samples, however marijuana use remained lower than U.S. rates.

Table 5. Estimates of SPIRIT, Missouri, and U.S. 30-day Substance Use (6 <sup>th</sup> –9 <sup>th</sup> Grade)			
	SPIRIT Total <sup>12</sup>	MO <sup>13</sup>	U.S. <sup>14</sup>
Cigarettes	3.2	4.5	5.6
Alcohol	8.2	7.1	11.6
Marijuana	4.2	3.7	7.1

**30-day Substance Use by Grade Level (Figure 11).** Thirty-day use of cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana increased by grade level. The greatest increase is among users of alcohol from the middle school to the high school level.



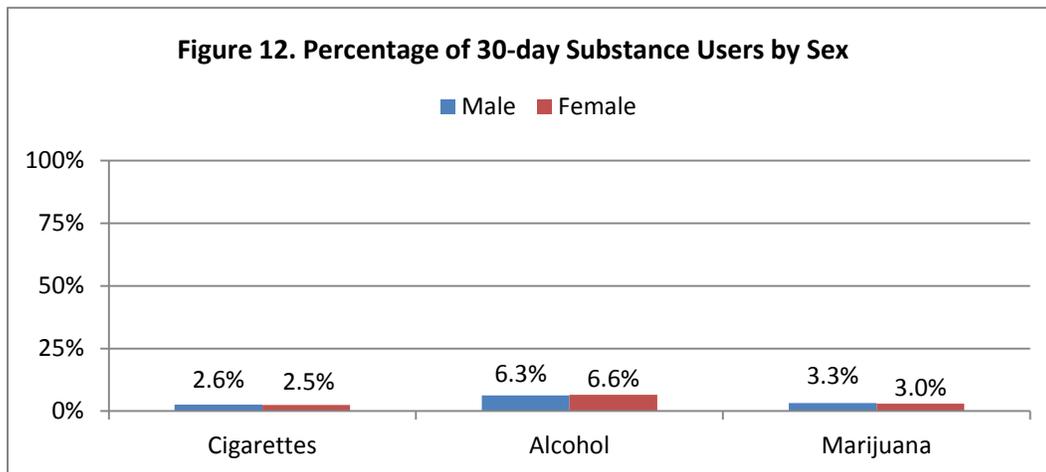
<sup>12</sup> SPIRIT, spring 2015, 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grade, n = 3,590 (average age = 12.15); note: there were no 9<sup>th</sup> grade youth participating from the Knox Co. or Charleston School Districts.

<sup>13</sup> Missouri Student Survey (MSS) 2014, 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grade, n = 44,710 (average age = 13.45)

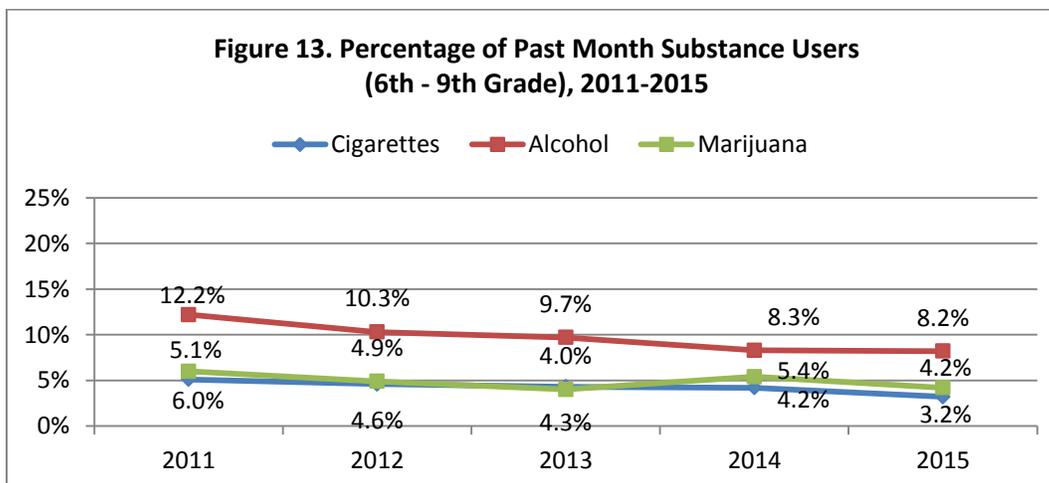
<sup>14</sup> National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2013), 12-17 years of age, n = 17,736

**30-day Substance Use by Sex (Figure 12).** Overall, males (2.6%) and females (2.5%) reported equal use of cigarettes in the past 30 days. Slightly fewer males (6.3%) were reported alcohol use in the past 30 days compared to females (6.6%). Slightly fewer females (3.0%) reported using marijuana in the past 30 days than males (3.3%).

- Slightly more males (2.1%) in the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grades reported using cigarettes in the past 30 days than females (0.1%). Females (3.6%) in grades 6–8 and 9 were more likely to use cigarettes than males (2.9%).
- Males (3.3%) in grades 4–5 were more likely to use alcohol than females (2.0%) in those grades, and females (8.7%) were slightly more likely to use alcohol than males (7.7%) in grades 6–8 and 9.
- Slightly more males (1.5%) in the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grades reported using marijuana in the past 30 days than females (0.1%). Marijuana use did not differ by sex for those in the 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades but females (1.2%) in grades 6–8 and 9 were more likely to use inhalants in the past 30 days than males (0.8%).



**30-day Substance Use by Year (Figure 13).** The percentage of youth in the 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades that reported using cigarettes in the past month has steadily declined from 6.0% in 2011 to 3.2% in 2015. Thirty-day use of alcohol was reported by fewer youth in 2015 than in any previous year. The percent of past month marijuana users increased from 2013 to 2014, returning to pre-2012 rates in 2015.



## Age of Initiation

Students in 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade were asked to indicate how old they were the first time they used alcohol, cigarettes, and other drugs. Inhalant, alcohol and cigarette use started at a younger age than methamphetamine, ecstasy, prescription drug and marijuana use.

**Age of Initiation of Substance Use Comparisons with State Samples (Table 6).** On average, SPIRIT youth who had used cigarettes in their lifetime had first used them at 10.8 years of age, lower than those in the Missouri sample (11.47 years of age). Age of first use of SPIRIT students who had more than a sip of alcohol was 10.79 and for those who had drunk alcohol once or twice a month, 12.31. Age of first use of marijuana over their lifetime, was slightly lower for SPIRIT youth as compared to the Missouri sample (12.49 and 12.54, respectively). Age of initiation of inhalant use for both SPIRIT youth and Missouri youth was roughly the same (10.82 and 10.83, respectively).

Table 6. Comparison Between Estimates of SPIRIT and Missouri Age of Initiation		
	SPIRIT Total <sup>15</sup>	MO <sup>16</sup>
Cigarettes	10.80	11.47
Alcohol (more than a sip) <sup>17</sup>	10.79	---
Alcohol (once or twice a month)	12.31	---
Marijuana	12.49	12.54
Ecstasy	12.80	---
Methamphetamine	11.62	---
Inhalants	10.82	10.83
Prescription Drugs without Rx	11.73	---

**Age of Initiation of Substance Use by Sex (Table 7).** On average, males start using substances at a younger age than their female counterparts. Males begin cigarette use at a younger age than other substances while females begin using alcohol at a younger age.

Table 7. Age of Initiation by Sex		
	Males	Females
Cigarettes	10.71	10.90
Alcohol (more than a sip)	10.43	11.14
Alcohol (once or twice a month)	12.17	12.46
Marijuana	12.11	12.86
Ecstasy <sup>18</sup>	12.25	13.28
Methamphetamine <sup>15</sup>	10.34	12.93
Inhalants	10.49	10.99
Prescription Drugs without Rx	11.09	12.11

<sup>15</sup> SPIRIT, spring 2015, 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grade, n = 3,590 (average age = 12.15); note: there were no 9<sup>th</sup> grade youth participating from the Knox Co. or Charleston School Districts.

<sup>16</sup> Missouri Student Survey (MSS) 2014 weighted data set, 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grade, n = 44,710 (average age = 13.45)

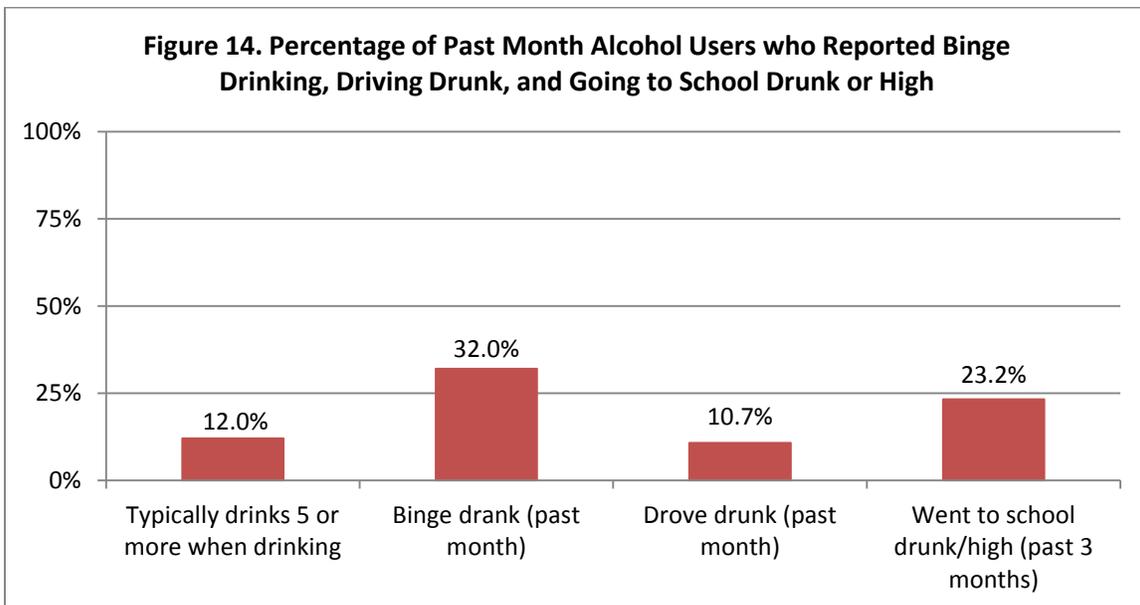
<sup>17</sup> Lifetime alcohol use cannot be compared between the SPIRIT and MSS surveys. Please see footnote 4 for further explanation. Age of initiation questions for ecstasy, methamphetamine, and Rx drugs were not included in the MSS.

<sup>18</sup> Too few females reported using ecstasy or methamphetamines to get an accurate estimate of age of first use.

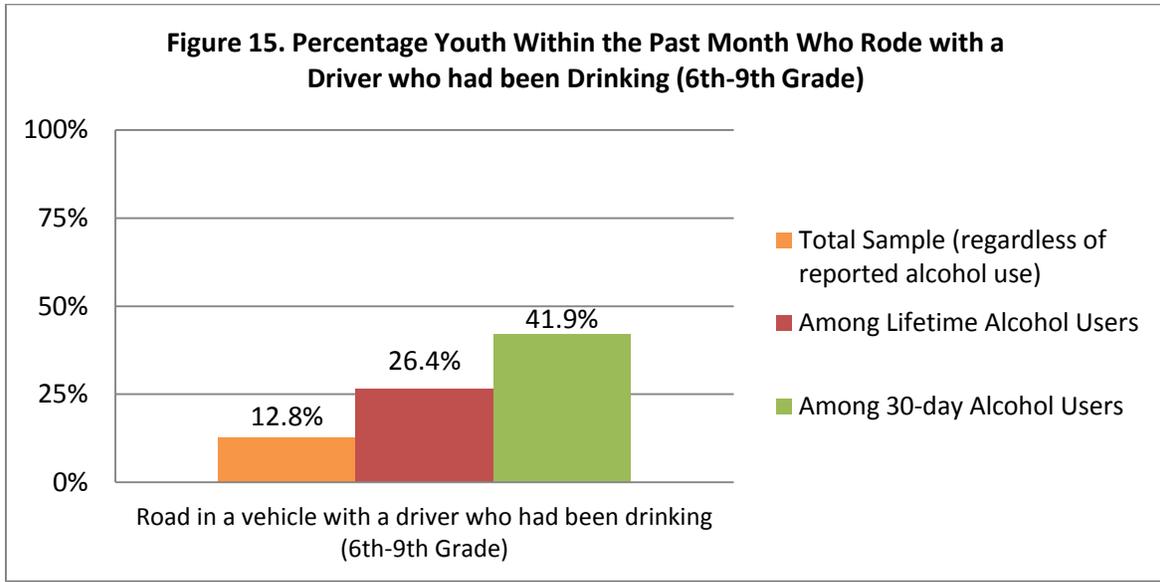
## Substance Use Extent and Circumstances

SPIRIT students in 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade were asked how many cigarettes they smoked, how many drinks they had when they drank, if they binge drank in the past 30 days, if they were drunk or high at school in the past three months, if they rode in a vehicle when the driver was drinking, and whether they drove while drunk.

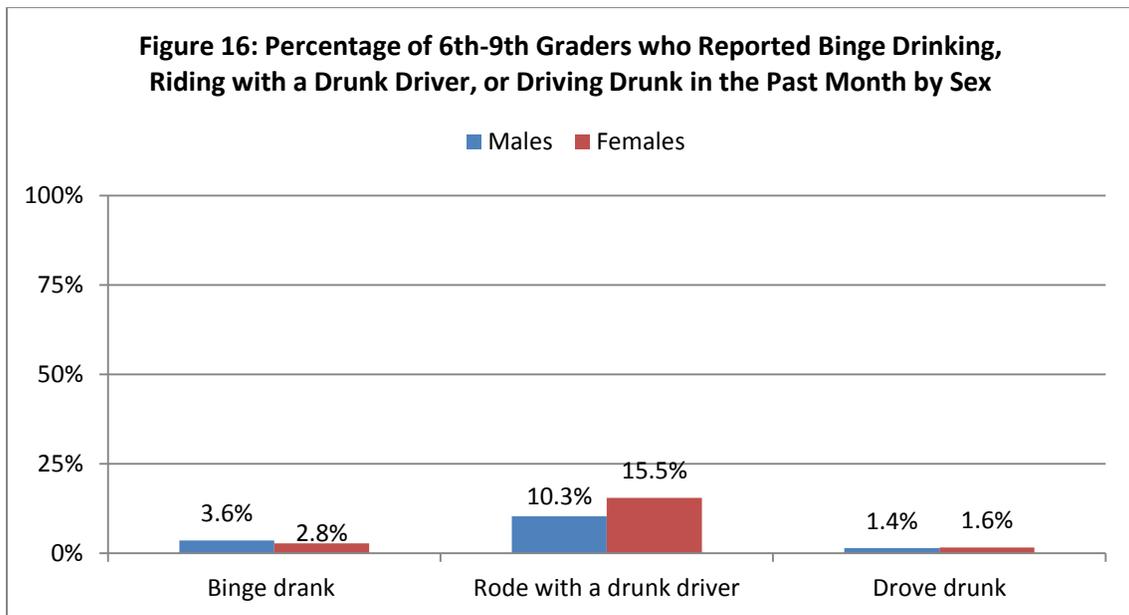
- Of those who reported smoking cigarettes in their lifetime, only about a quarter (26%) reported smoking in the past 30 days. About 6.8% of students who reported smoking in the past month said they smoke half a pack or more a day. Of those who reported smoking in the past month, 10.3% of students said they smoked all 30 days, while 65.7% said they smoked less than 5 days.
- Of those who reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days, 21.6% reported that they do not usually drink and the majority (66.3%) reported usually drinking less than five drinks. The rest (12%) reported that it was typical for them to have five or more drinks on days they drink alcohol.
- Students were asked to report if they had participated in binge drinking. Binge drinking is defined as having five or more drinks on the same occasion in the past 30 days. A total of 3.2% of all 6th–9th grade youth reported binge drinking. Among those who reported having more than a sip of alcohol in their lifetime, 9.1% binge drank in the past 30 days. Binge drinking was reported by 32% of youth who drank any alcohol in the past month.
- Among all 6th–9th grade youth, 3% reported being drunk or high at school in the past three months. However, among youth who reported using alcohol or other drugs in the past month the instances of being drunk or high at school were quite high. For example, 23.2% of past month alcohol users and (39%) of past month marijuana users reported being drunk or high at school in the past three months. Less than a quarter of past month alcohol users reported driving drunk, and 32% reported binge-drinking in the past month (see Figure 14).



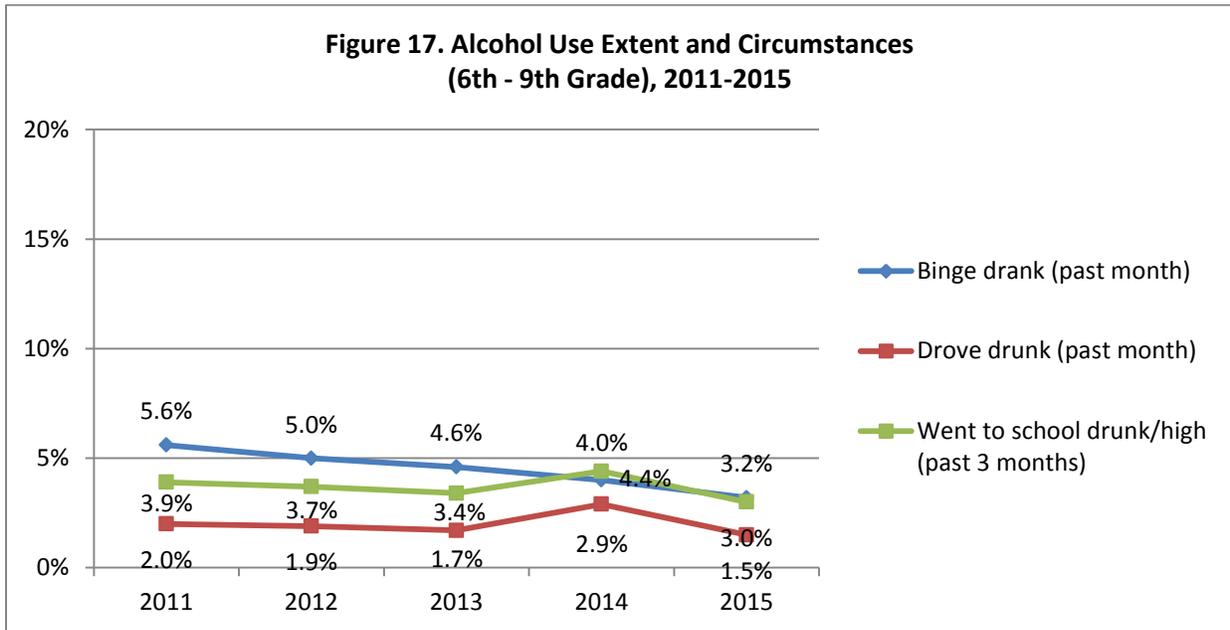
Finally, students were also asked to indicate their experience with drunk driving as a passenger (see Figure 15).



**Substance Use Extent and Circumstances by Sex (Figure 16).** Females are much more likely to ride with a drunk driver than females. Males and females are equally as likely to drive drunk. Males are slightly more likely to binge drink than females.



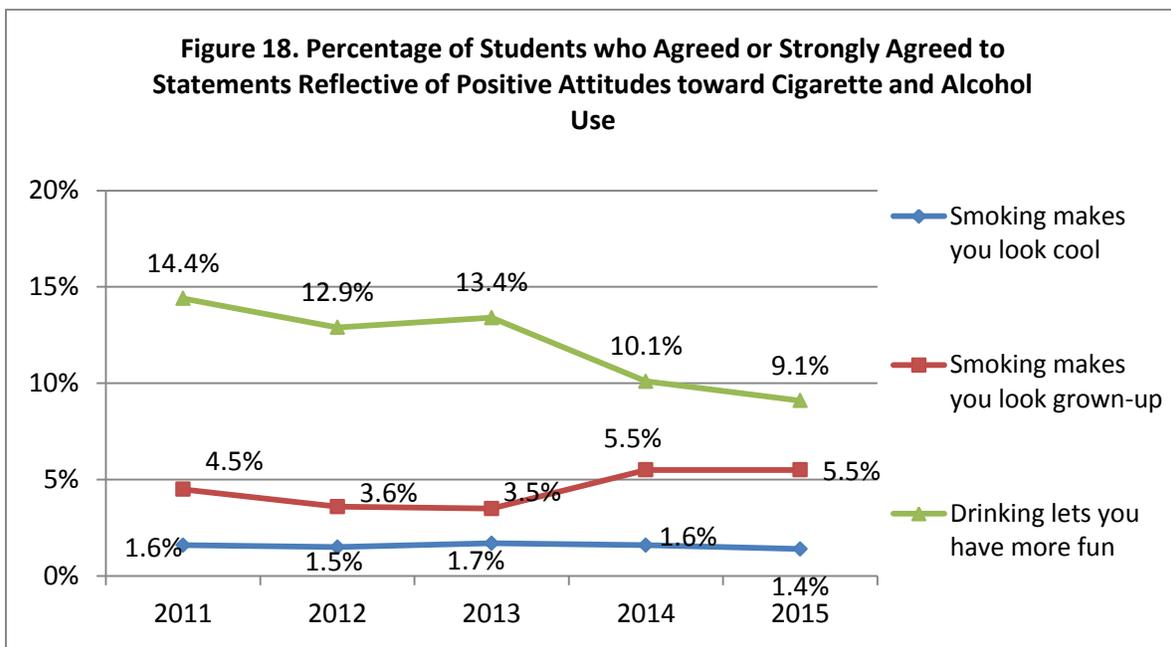
**Substance Use Extent and Circumstances by Year (Figure 17).** The percentage of youth in the 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade who reported binge drinking has decreased from 2011 to 2015 (5.6% to 3.2%). Those reporting driving drunk or going to school either drunk or high decreased from 2014 to 2015 (2.9% to 1.5% and 4.4% to 3.2%, respectively).



## Chapter 4—Substance Use Attitudes

Students in the 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades were asked to report on the extent to which they thought most teenagers and adults used drugs, whether they might use drugs when they were older, how risky drugs were to the health of those who use, and how wrong they thought the use of drugs was (see Figure 18).

- Over 95% of all 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade students had disapproving attitudes toward cigarette use, in that they did not think smoking made them look cool or more grown-up. Most youth (90.9%) did not think that drinking alcohol let them have more fun, although there were more positive attitudes toward alcohol use compared to cigarette use.
- There were fewer youth in 2015 than in 2011 who expressed positive attitudes toward alcohol use. However, there was an increase from 2013 to 2014 in the percent of students who believe that smoking makes you look more grown-up.

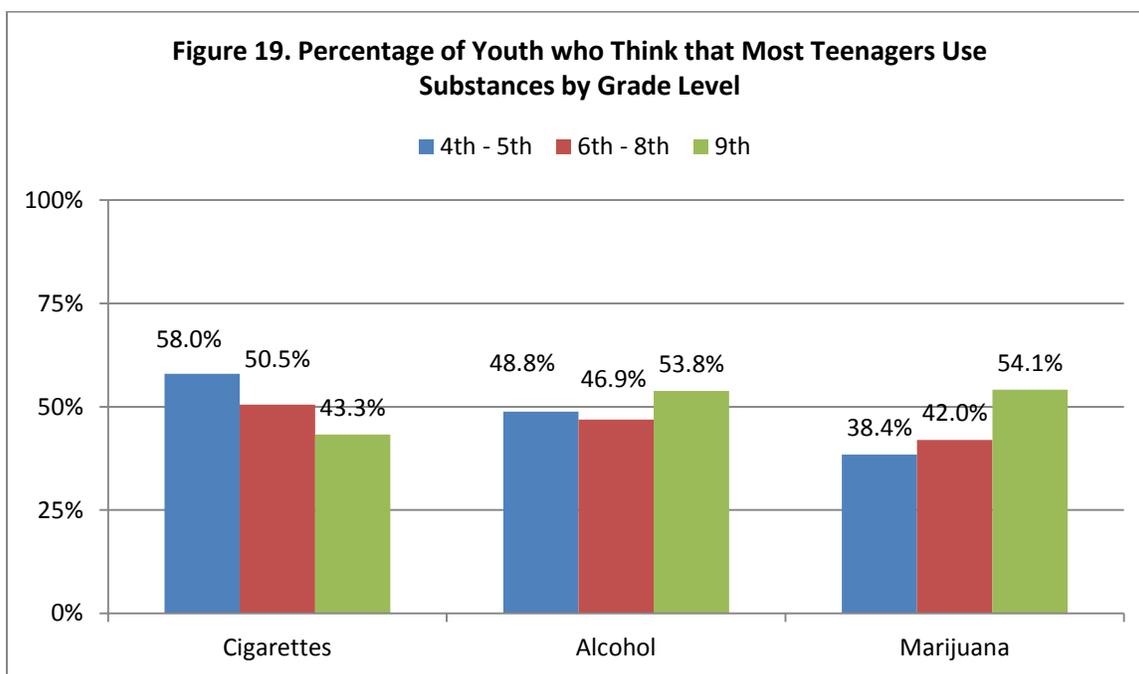


## Substance Use Norms (Table 8)

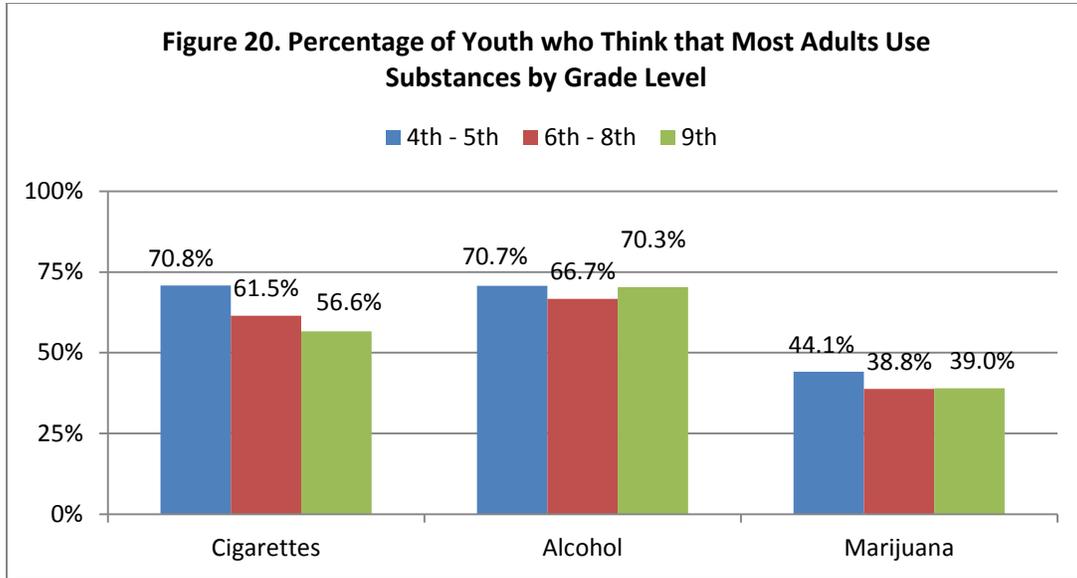
A large percentage of youth (43-51%, depending on the substance) thought that most teenagers used substances. Similarly a large percentage of youth (40-68%) thought that most adults used substances. Youth thought that adults use cigarettes and alcohol more than teenagers, but thought that teenagers were slightly more likely to use marijuana.

Table 8. Youths' Perception of Substance Use among Adults and Teenagers (Response to the statement: Most teenagers/adults use "substance.")					
		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Teenager Use	Cigarettes	24.1	24.3	40.1	11.5
	Alcohol	26.0	25.3	37.9	10.8
	Marijuana	34.0	23.0	31.3	11.7
Adult Use	Cigarettes	17.6	18.8	40.4	23.1
	Alcohol	17.1	14.1	41.9	26.7
	Marijuana	33.2	26.3	27.8	12.6

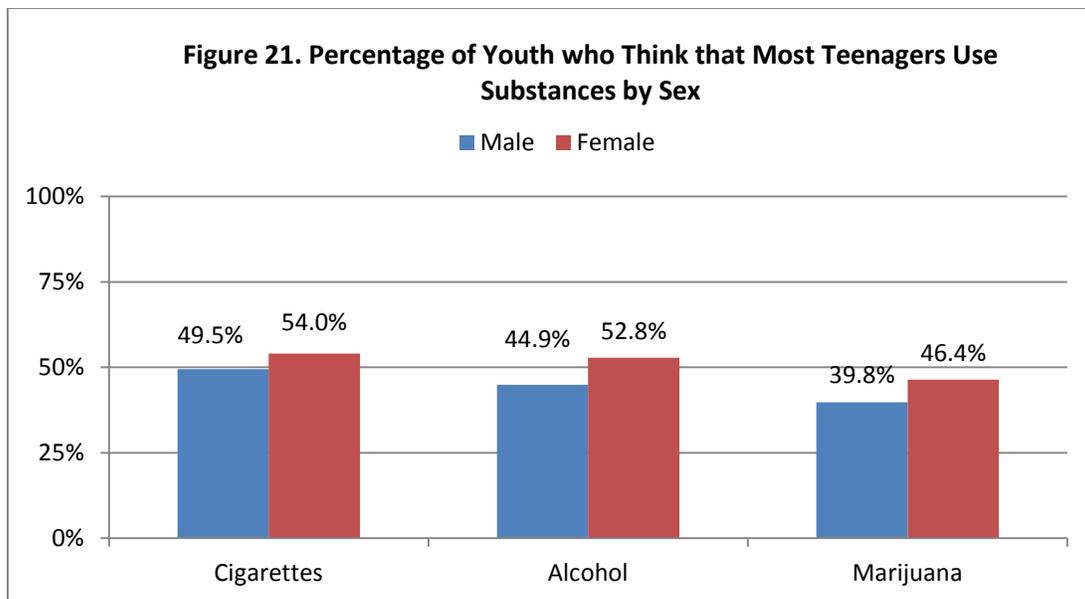
**Substance Use Norms by Grade Level (Teenagers) (Figure 19).** Youth in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade were more likely than younger students to think that most teenagers used alcohol and marijuana. Youth in 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades were more likely to think that most teenagers smoke cigarettes.

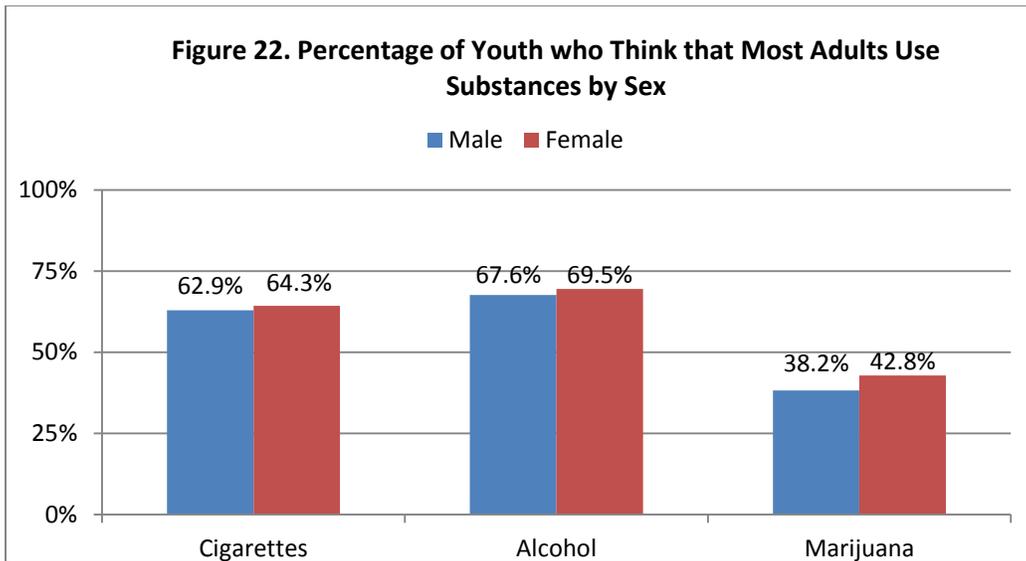


Youth in the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grades were the most likely to think that most adults smoke marijuana. Youth in the 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grades were less likely than all others to think that adults used alcohol or marijuana (Figure 20).



**Substance Use Norms by Sex (Figures 21 and 22).** Females were more likely than males to think that most teenagers use cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana and that most adults use marijuana. Females and males were equally likely to think that most adults use cigarettes and alcohol. Youth were more likely to think that most adults use cigarettes or alcohol than marijuana.





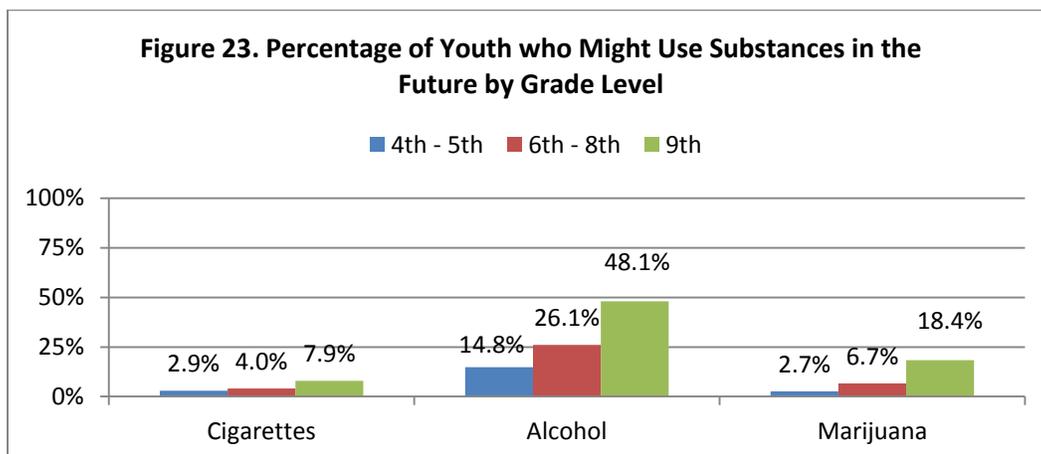
### Substance Use Intentions

Students were most likely to indicate that they might use alcohol in the future compared to cigarettes or marijuana, with 26.4% of 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> graders agreeing with the statement, “I might use alcohol when I get older”. Very few youth reported that they might use cigarettes (4.4%) or marijuana (7.5%) when they get older (See Table 9).

**Table 9. Youths’ Intentions to Use Substances**  
(Response to the statement: I might use “substance” when I get older.)

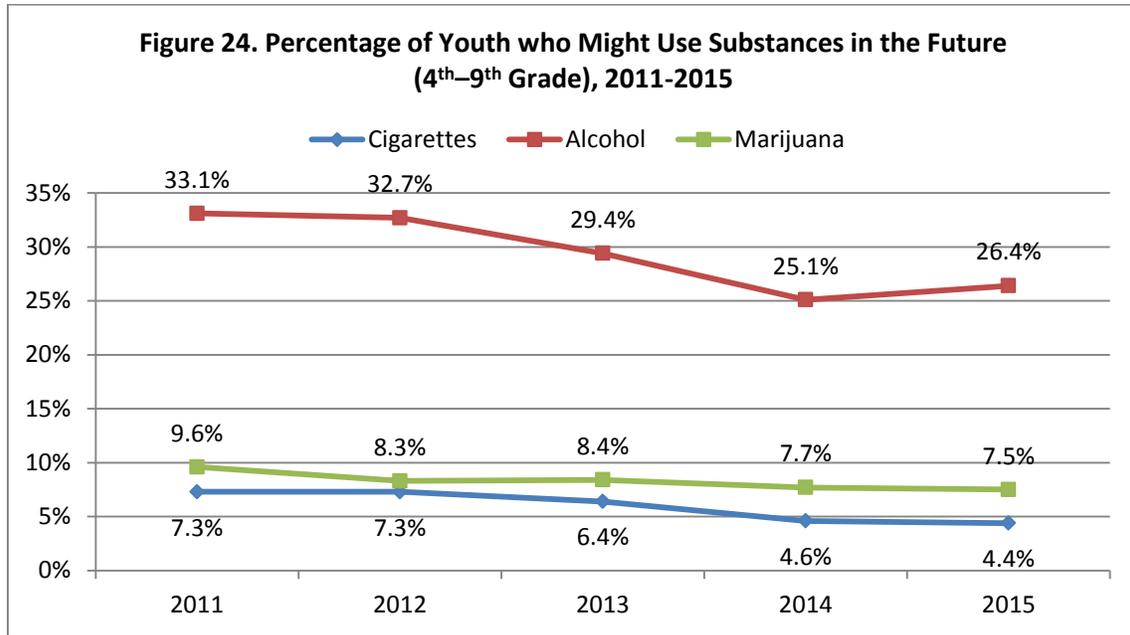
	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
Cigarettes	83.6	12.1	3.3	1.1
Alcohol	56.4	17.2	21.4	5.0
Marijuana	81.9	10.6	5.1	2.4

**Substance Use Intentions by Grade Level (Figure 23).** The largest increase in intentions to use occurred between the middle and high school grade levels. Twice as many youth in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade indicated they might use marijuana than those who indicated they might smoke cigarettes.



**Substance Use Intention by Sex.** Males and females were equally as likely to report that they might use cigarettes, alcohol, or marijuana in the future.

**Substance Use Intentions by Year (Figure 24).** While generally the percentage of youth who might use alcohol has decreased in the past five years, there was a slight increase between 2014 and 2015 (25.1% to 26.4%). There were no changes in intentions to use cigarettes or marijuana.

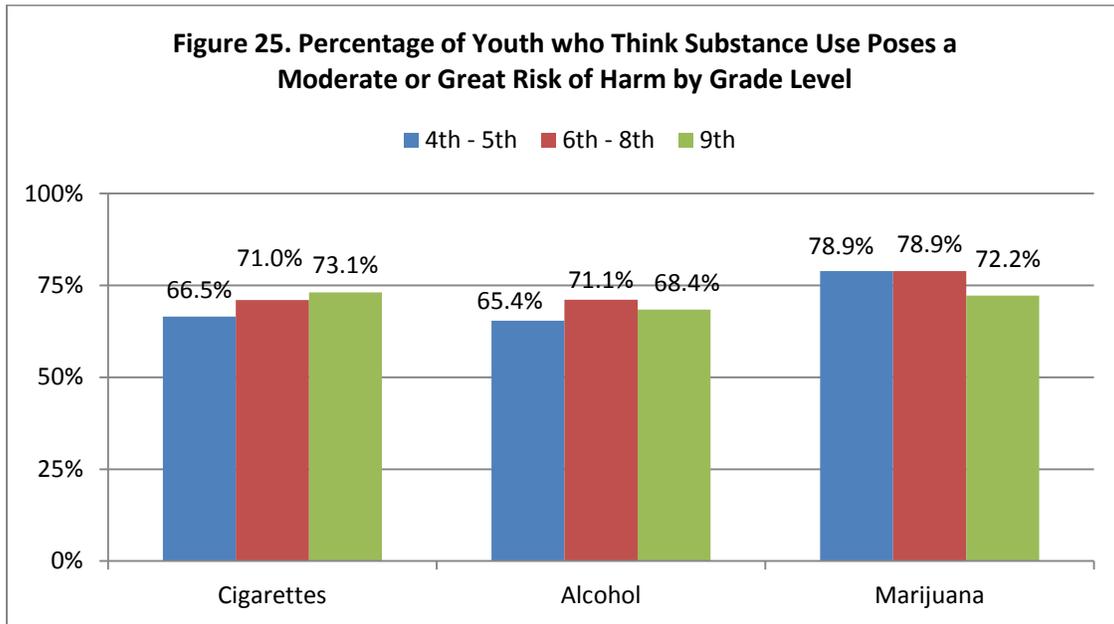


### Risk of Harm from Substance Use (Table 10)

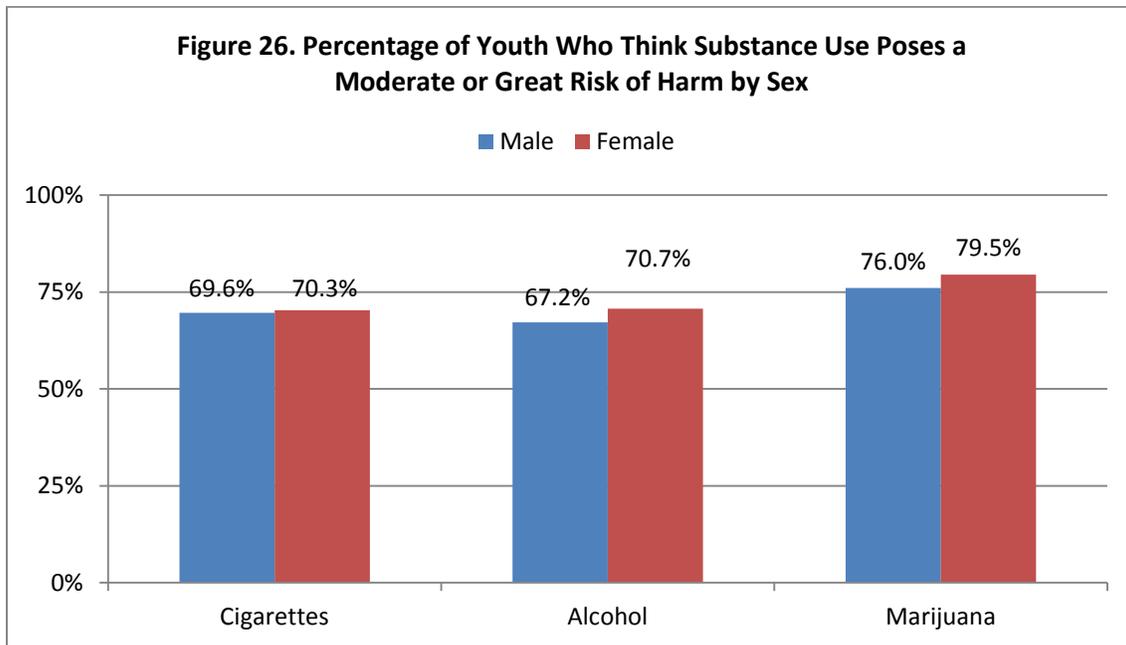
All participating students, in grades 4–9, were asked to indicate how much they thought people risked harming themselves physically, or in other ways, if they used cigarettes, alcohol or marijuana. Youth in grades 6–9 were also asked to report on their perception of the riskiness of other drugs. About two-thirds of students thought that cigarettes and alcohol posed a moderate or great risk if used. A higher percentage of youth thought that using marijuana was risky. Among those in the 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades, the majority thought the use of ecstasy, methamphetamine, inhalants, and prescription drugs without a prescription posed a great risk. The use of methamphetamine was perceived to be most risky.

<b>Table 10. Youths' Perception of Risk of Harm from Using Substances (4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Grade)</b>				
	<b>No Risk</b>	<b>Slight Risk</b>	<b>Moderate Risk</b>	<b>Great Risk</b>
Smoke part or all of a cigarette	11.7	18.4	31.8	38.2
Drink any type of alcohol	10.3	20.8	33.9	35.0
Use Marijuana	12.9	9.4	19.2	58.5
<b>(6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Grade)</b>				
Use ecstasy occasionally	7.8	6.8	21.0	64.4
Use meth occasionally	7.6	3.3	12.7	76.3
Use inhalants	7.5	4.9	20.2	67.5
Use prescription drugs w/out Rx	7.4	4.8	18.9	68.7

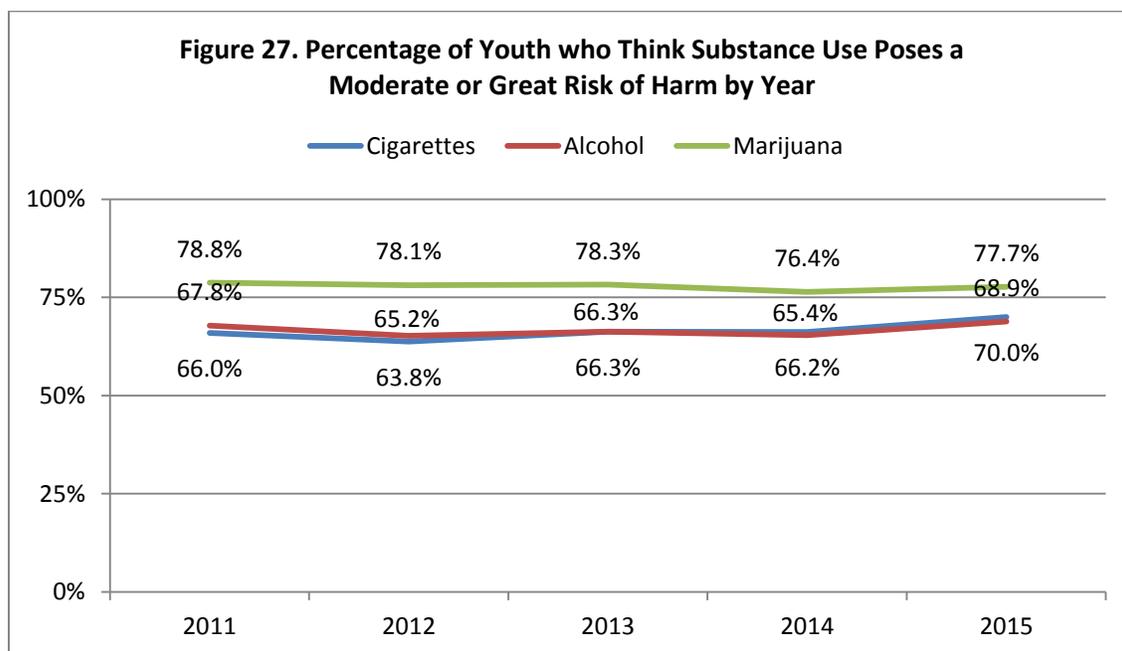
**Risk of Harm by Grade Level (Figure 25).** Fewer younger students (4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grades) than older students believed cigarettes were risky, whereas fewer older students (9<sup>th</sup> grade) than younger students perceived marijuana as risky.



**Risk of Harm by Sex (Figure 26).** A greater percentage of females than males perceived the use of alcohol and marijuana to be risky.



**Risk of Harm by Year (Figure 27).** From 2011 to 2015 the perception of the riskiness associated with using alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana has remained relatively consistent.

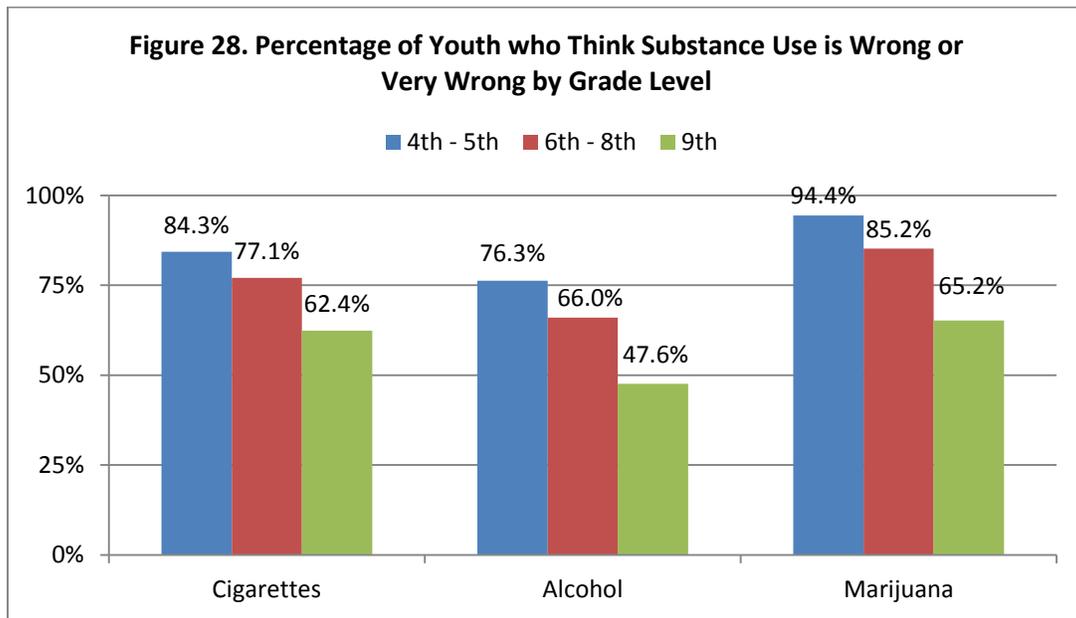


### Disapproving Attitudes toward Substance Use

The majority of SPIRIT youth thought that the use of substances was wrong. Alcohol was considered the most acceptable with only 66% reporting that they thought it was either “wrong” or “very wrong” to drink alcohol. Over 90% of youth in the 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades thought ecstasy, methamphetamine, inhalants, and the use of prescription drugs without a prescription was “wrong” or “very wrong” (see Table 11).

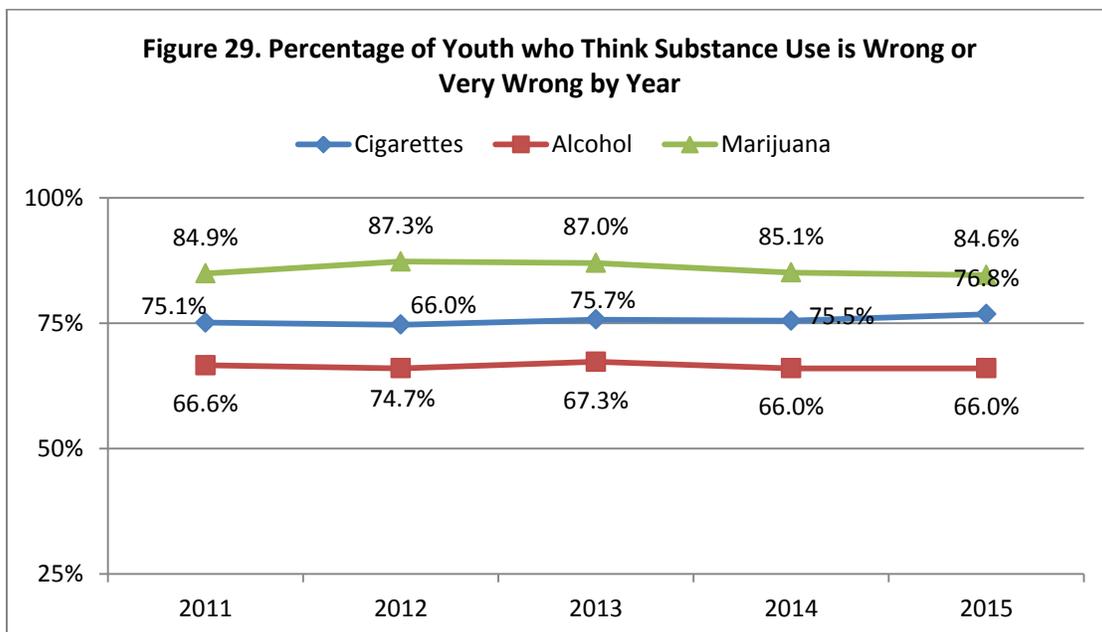
<b>Table 11. Youths’ Perception of Wrongfulness of Substance Use (4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Grade)</b>				
	<b>Not Wrong at All</b>	<b>A Little Bit Wrong</b>	<b>Wrong</b>	<b>Very Wrong</b>
Smoke part or all of a cigarette	7.3	15.9	32.0	44.8
Drink any type of alcohol	10.8	23.2	27.0	39.0
Use Marijuana	6.7	8.7	16.1	68.5
<b>(6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Grade only)</b>				
Use ecstasy occasionally	3.6	5.0	20.1	71.2
Use meth occasionally	3.4	3.3	13.6	79.7
Use inhalants	3.4	4.4	19.3	72.9
Use prescription drugs w/out Rx	3.4	4.4	17.1	75.1

**Disapproving Attitudes by Grade Level (Figure 28).** As grade level increased, students were less likely to consider the use of substances to be wrong. Less than half (47.6%) of those in 9<sup>th</sup> grade thought using alcohol was wrong.



**Disapproving Attitudes by Sex.** In general, females are more likely to think that using substances is wrong than males. The one exception is alcohol. While females in 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grades are more likely to believe using alcohol is wrong than boys, by 6<sup>th</sup> grade females and males are equally likely to believe using alcohol is wrong.

**Disapproving Attitudes by Year (Figure 29).** The percentage of youth with disapproving attitudes toward alcohol use has remained relatively consistent from 2011 to 2015. While the majority of youth think that the use of alcohol is wrong, they are more accepting of its use than cigarettes or marijuana.



## Chapter 5—Problem Behavior

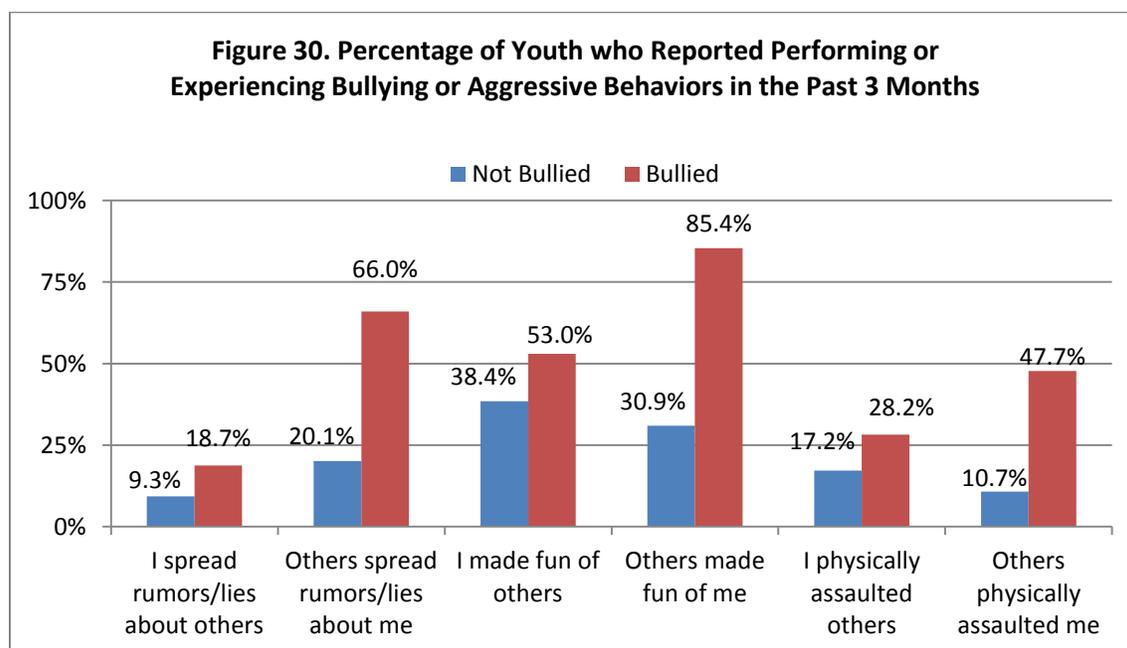
Students in 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades reported the number of times in the past three months they had engaged in aggressive and problem behaviors or were the victims of those behaviors. About 40% of youth in the 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade reported being harassed or bullied within the past three months. Almost none (5%) reported that they were bullied 10 or more times.

A similar percentage of youth reported both making fun of others (44.1%) and being made fun of by others (52.3%). Only 13% of youth reported spreading rumors about others; however a much larger percentage (38.1%) reported others had spread rumors about them.

The percentage of youth who reported being afraid of being beaten up (18.7%) was approximately the same percentage (15.7%) who reported having been in a physical fight in the past three months. A greater percentage of youth reported physically assaulting another student (21.5%) or being assaulted by someone else (25.3%). Physical assault includes hitting, pushing, slapping, kicking and shoving when one is not kidding around.

Very few youth reported using the internet (4.6%) or a cell phone (5.8%) to embarrass or hurt another student or being harassed by another student by internet (8.7%) or cell phone (9.8%). A very small percentage of youth reported using a weapon to threaten or bully another (2.5%) or having a weapon used against them in a similar manner (7.3%).

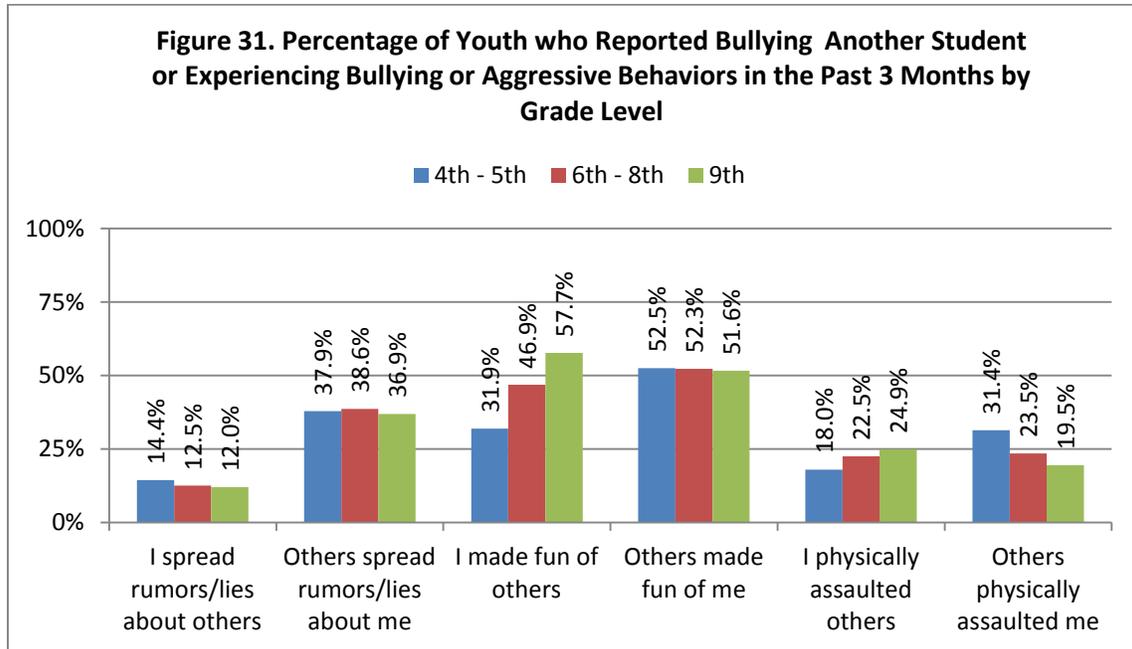
Those who reported they had been bullied or harassed at least one time in the past three months were more likely to report engaging in and experiencing almost every aggressive and problem behavior more frequently than those who had not been bullied (see Figure 30).



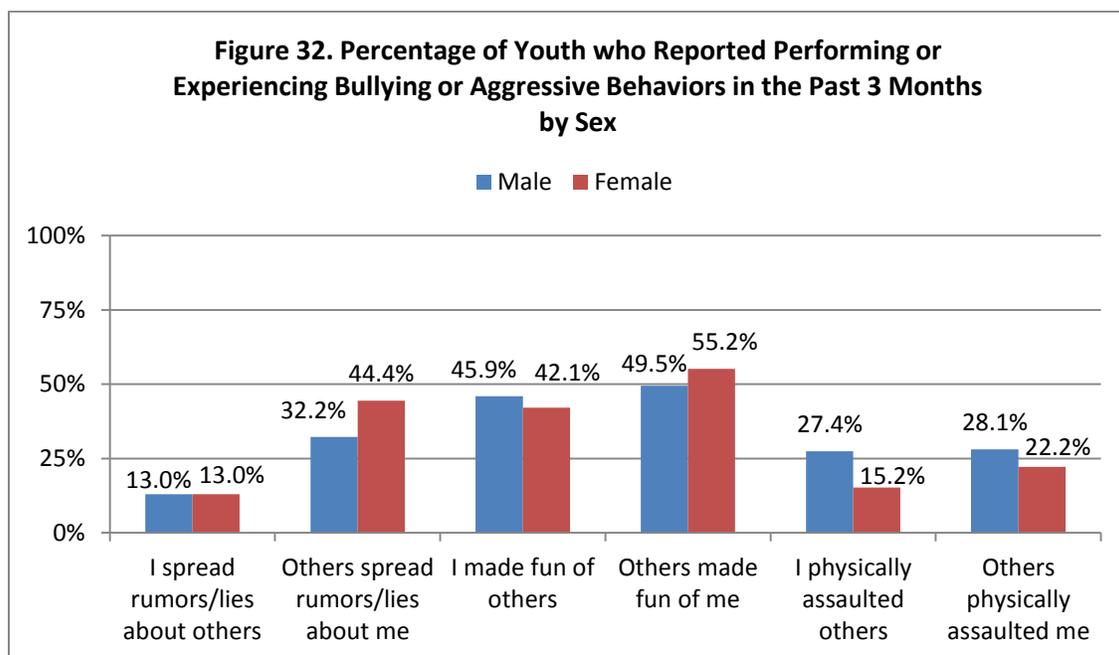
**Table 12. Frequency of Problem Behavior in Past 3 Months (4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Grade)**

	Never	1-2 times	3-5 times	6-9 times	10 or more times
Been harassed or bullied	60.7	22.2	7.6	4.2	5.3
Been afraid of being beaten up	81.3	10.6	3.0	1.4	3.6
<b><i>Emotional/Relational Problem Behavior</i></b>					
Made fun of other people	55.9	28.5	6.3	2.8	6.4
Been made fun of	47.7	26.6	9.8	4.9	10.9
Spread mean rumors or lies about other kids at school	87.0	10.1	1.4	0.6	1.0
Had mean rumors or lies spread about you at school	61.9	21.5	7.3	3.6	5.8
<b><i>Emotional/Relational Problem Behavior through Technology</i></b>					
Used the Internet to post pictures or text that might embarrass or hurt another student	95.4	3.2	0.6	0.2	0.5
Had pictures or text that embarrassed or hurt you posted through the Internet	91.3	5.2	1.5	0.4	1.5
Used a cell phone to send text messages or pictures that might embarrass or hurt another student	94.2	4.0	0.7	0.5	0.5
Had text or picture cell phone messages sent about you that were embarrassing or hurtful	90.2	6.0	1.7	0.7	1.4
<b><i>Physically Aggressive Problem Behavior</i></b>					
Hit/pushed other kids at school when not playing around	78.5	15.3	3.1	1.3	1.7
Been pushed, shoved, slapped, hit or kicked by someone who wasn't just kidding around	74.7	14.1	5.2	2.0	4.0
Been in a physical fight	84.3	11.3	2.7	0.7	1.0
<b><i>Use of weapons to threaten or bully</i></b>					
Used any weapon to threaten or bully someone	97.5	1.5	0.4	0.3	0.5
Been threatened or injured with a weapon, such as a gun, knife, or other weapon	92.7	4.7	0.9	0.4	1.3

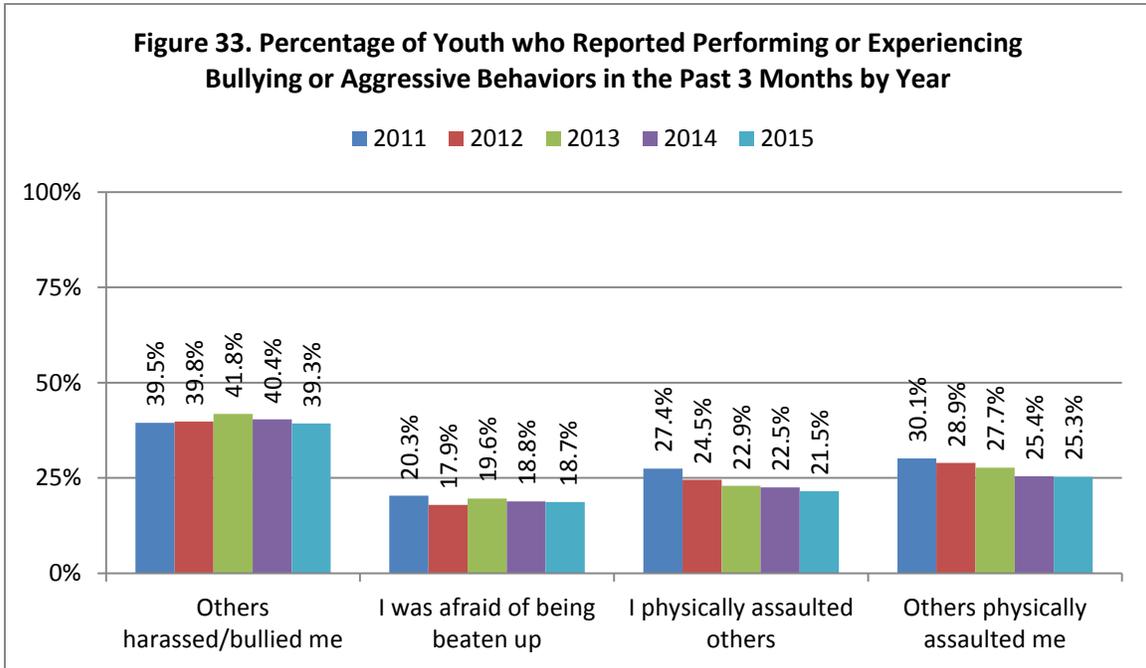
**Problem Behavior by Grade Level (Figure 31).** There is an increase in the percentage of youth who admit to making fun of others as grade levels increase. Youth in grades 4–5 were equally likely compared to older youth to say others made fun of them. Youth in 9<sup>th</sup> grade were less likely to say others spread mean lies or rumors about them. As youth increase in grade level, they are less likely to report that others have physically assaulted them. In fact, by 9<sup>th</sup> grade youth are more likely to report having physically assaulted someone else, than being assaulted themselves.



**Problem Behavior by Sex (Figure 32).** Males were more likely than females to report making fun of or physically assaulting others; they were also more likely to report being physically assaulted. Females were more likely to report that they were made fun of by others or had rumors spread about them. Males and females were just about as likely to report that they spread rumors or lies about other kids at school.



**Problem Behavior by Year (Figure 33).** Between 2011 and 2015, the percentage of students who reported being harassed or bullied in the past three months has remained relatively constant. However, the percentage of students who report physically assaulting others or being physically assaulted has decreased substantially since 2011. Furthermore, fewer students were afraid of being beaten up in 2015 compared to 2011.



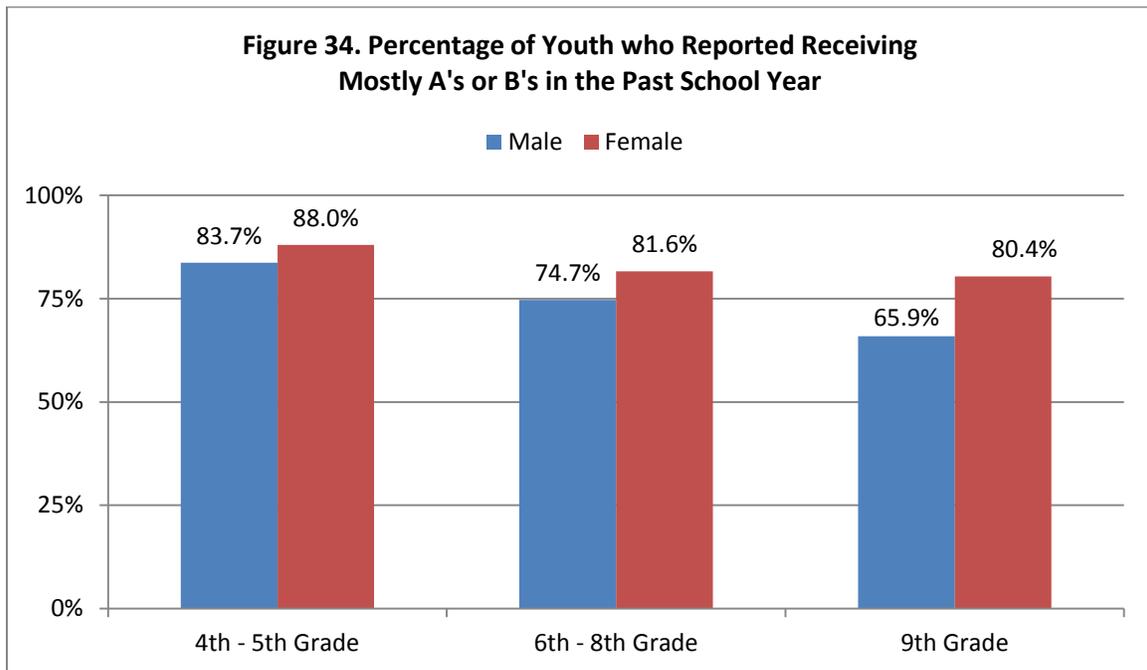
## Chapter 6—School Performance and Attitudes

School performance and attitude data were collected from students in 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade. They were asked to report their average grades, the number of times they skipped school, and the number of times they received discipline in the form of in-school suspension/detention and out-of-school suspension.

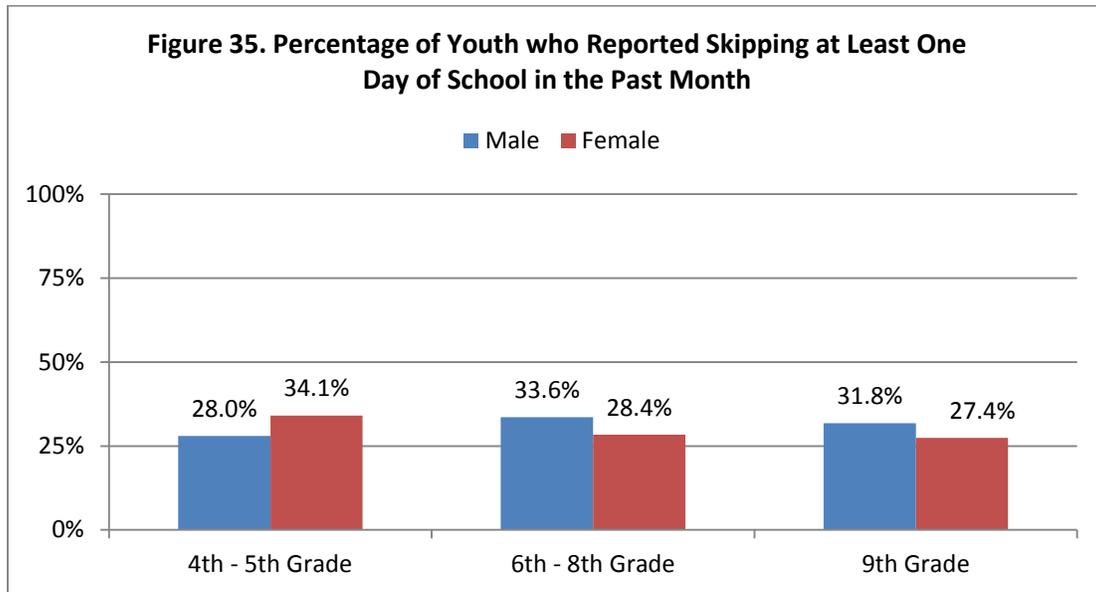
### Grades, Absences, and Disciplinary Incidents

Most students (79.6%) reported their average grades last school year were either A's or B's, a similar percent to last year (79.7%).

- Regardless of grade, a greater percentage of females (83.4%) reported mostly A's or B's than did males (76.0%).
- While the percentage of males and females reporting good grades is similar for 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> graders, females in 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades are more likely to report A's and B's than males (see Figure 34).

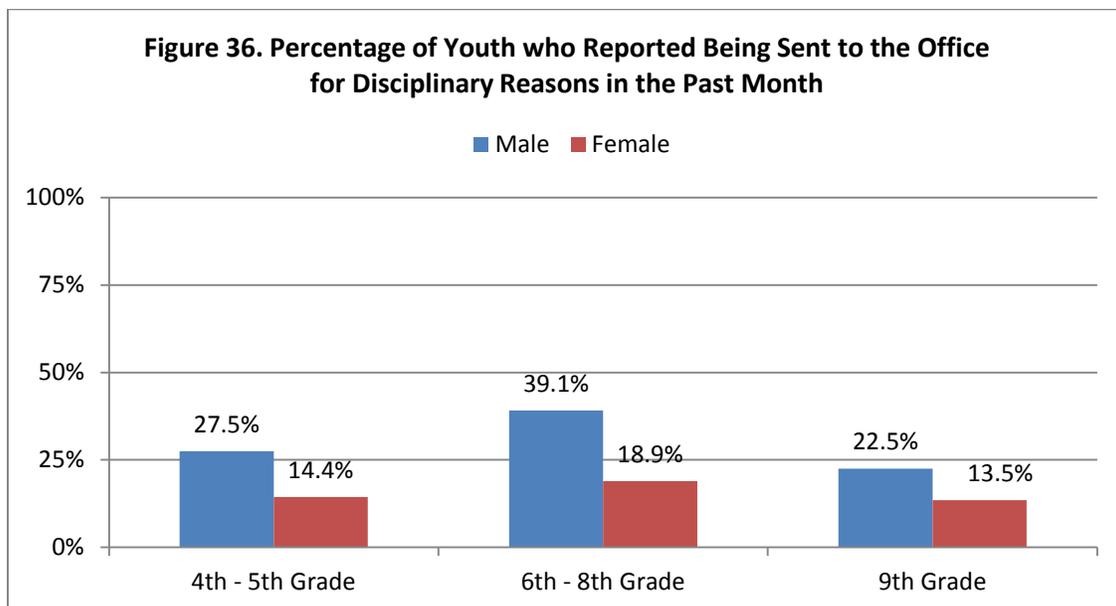


When asked how many whole days of school were missed in the past 30 days because they skipped or cut, 30.8% of students reported missing at least one day, compared to 32.5% in 2014. Over 10% of students reported skipping three or more days. Skipping was most common for female youth in the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grades. Males were more likely to skip school in the 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades than females (see Figure 35 below).

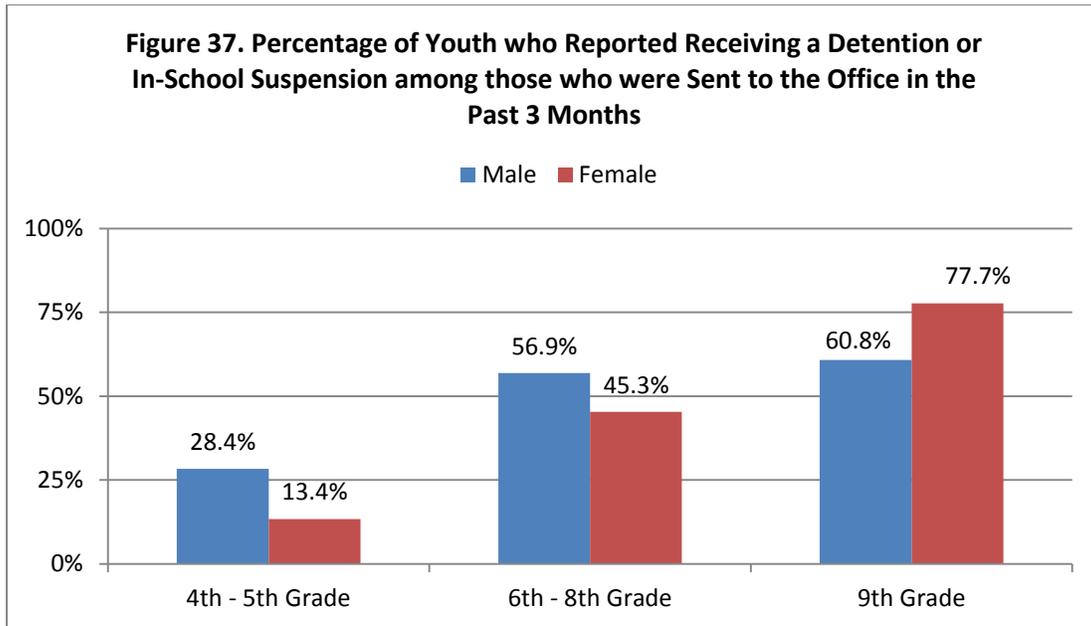


Approximately a quarter (24.8%) of the students reported having been sent to the office for disciplinary reasons in the past three months.

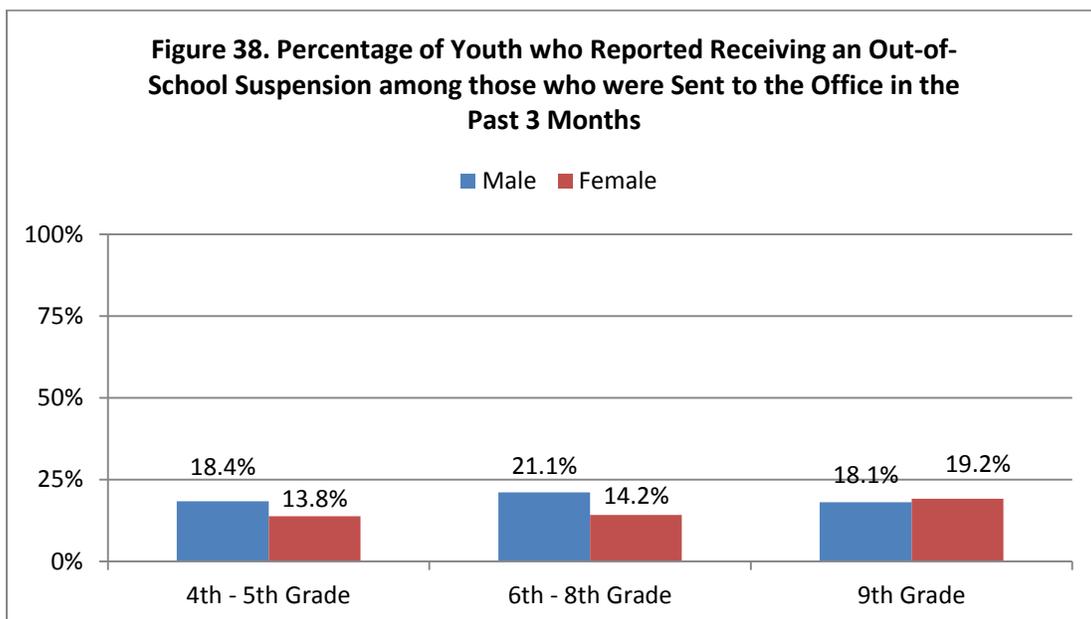
- Regardless of grade level, males (32.6%) were more likely than females (16.5%) to be sent to the office for disciplinary reasons.
- Males in 9<sup>th</sup> grade were less likely to be sent to the office for disciplinary reasons than males in younger grades (see Figure 36 below).



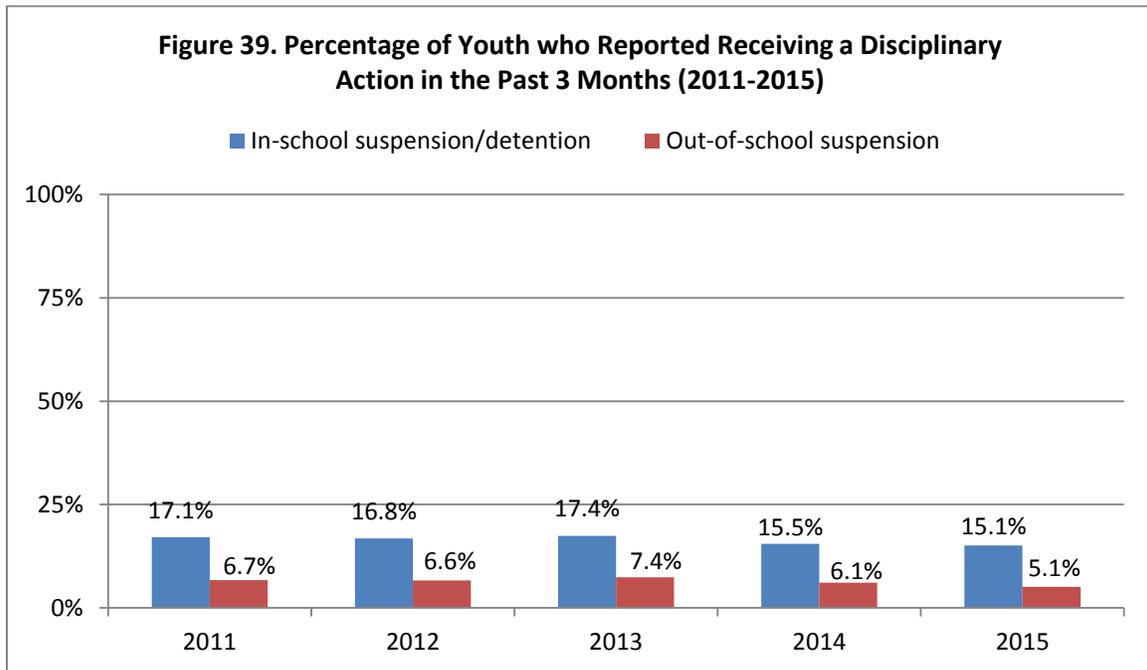
Less than 1 in 6 students (15.1%) reported receiving in-school suspension or detention. Again, males (20.4%) were more likely than females (9.5%) to receive in-school suspensions, regardless of grade level. Among those who were sent to the office in the past three months, the greatest increase in receiving in-school suspensions or detentions occurred between the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grade level and the 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grade level. Females in the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grades were less likely than their male counterparts to receive a detention or in-school suspension if they were sent to the office in the past three months, while females in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade were more likely than males to receive a detention or in-school suspension if sent to the office (see Figure 37).



Approximately 5.1% of students received an out-of-school suspension. Similar to the rate of other disciplinary actions, males (7.2%) were more likely than females (2.8%) to have received an out-of-school suspension. Out-of-school suspensions increased slightly for females as students got older, but remain fairly constant across grade level for males (see Figure 38).



The percentage of youth reporting having received a disciplinary action is trending downward from 2013 to 2015. In 2013, 17.4% of youth reported having received in-school suspension or detention, decreasing to 15.1% in 2015. The out-of-school suspension rate has decreased slightly from 7.4% in 2013 to 5.1% in 2015 (see Figure 39).



## Attitudes toward School

Students in the 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades reported their attitudes toward school by the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements concerning their happiness, safety, and connectedness. The majority of youth responded to each question positively. They were most likely to feel safe going to or from school with 88.4% responding in the affirmative. They were more likely to feel safe going to and from school than at school. Youth were slightly less likely to think that teachers treated them fairly (see Table 13).

**Table 13. Attitudes toward School  
(4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Grade)**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel close to people at this school.	3.7	12.1	58.5	25.6
I am happy to be at this school.	5.9	12.3	50.0	31.7
I feel like I am a part of this school.	4.3	12.5	51.1	32.1
The teachers at this school treat students fairly.	7.1	17.2	49.3	26.5
I feel safe at this school.	4.6	9.7	48.5	37.1
I feel safe going to and from this school.	4.2	7.5	47.8	40.6

**Attitudes toward School by Grade Level.** Overall, students reported positive attitudes toward school. Youth in higher grades were less positive than those in lower grades. Feelings of connectedness and happiness at school and feeling safe at school steadily decreased at each grade level. Feelings of safety going to and from school stayed constant across grade levels (see Table14).

<b>Table 14. Attitudes toward School by Grade Level (Somewhat and Strongly Agree, combined Percentages)</b>			
	<b>4<sup>th</sup>- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>
I feel close to people at this school.	89.9	82.1	79.7
I am happy to be at this school.	87.9	79.2	78.1
I feel like I am a part of this school.	88.3	81.9	78.0
The teachers at this school treat students fairly.	86.1	71.2	70.2
I feel safe at this school.	91.6	84.0	79.4
I feel safe going to and from this school.	90.1	87.5	87.5

**Attitudes toward School by Sex.** Males and females expressed similar attitudes toward school (see Table 15).

<b>Table 15. Attitudes toward School by Sex (Somewhat and Strongly Agree, combined Percentages)</b>		
	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
I feel close to people at this school.	85.5	82.7
I am happy to be at this school.	81.9	81.5
I feel like I am a part of this school.	83.1	83.5
The teachers at this school treat students fairly.	75.4	76.0
I feel safe at this school.	83.9	87.5
I feel safe going to and from this school.	88.1	88.7

## Chapter 7—Program Effectiveness

Students in 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades were asked to report both the extent to which they felt the program was effective and their level of satisfaction with the SPIRIT prevention programs being implemented in their school. When asked if they liked the program, a large majority of students (84.2%) responded that they liked it at least a little. Similar to responses in previous years, youth were most likely to report that the program helped them with resistance skills and that the time spent on the program was helpful. Students thought the program was least effective in helping others be nicer to them, with only slightly over half (52.5%) agreeing with that statement (see Table 16).

**Table 16. Effectiveness of and Satisfaction with SPIRIT  
(4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Grade)**

	No, not at all	No, not much	Yes, a little	Yes, a lot
Did you like the program?	5.8	10.0	41.3	42.9
Did the program teach you what to do when you are angry?	9.6	13.6	32.0	44.9
Do you act better because of the program?	11.4	18.3	35.6	34.7
Did the program help you feel better about yourself?	11.8	15.6	32.8	39.7
Does the program help you to say no to harmful things other kids might want you to do?	8.2	8.8	27.0	56.0
Has the program helped you to get along better with other people?	12.3	17.3	32.6	37.8
Are other kids nicer to you because of the program?	22.3	25.3	28.9	23.6
Was the time spent on the program helpful?	7.9	9.8	35.0	47.4

**Program Effectiveness by Grade Level.** In general, as grade level increased youth were less likely to think the program was effective. The largest drop in perceived effectiveness occurred at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level, particularly regarding the programs' ability to affect relationships and behavior (see Table 17).

<b>Table 17. Effectiveness of and Satisfaction with SPIRIT by Grade Level (Yes, a lot &amp; Yes, a little, combined Percentages)</b>			
	<b>4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> Grade</b>
Did you like the program?	90.8	80.4	82.9
Did the program teach you what to do when you are angry?	85.3	74.5	68.2
Do you act better because of the program?	80.6	67.2	60.4
Did the program help you feel better about yourself?	82.8	69.7	62.2
Does the program help you to say no to harmful things other kids might want you to do?	87.2	82.4	76.7
Has the program helped you to get along better with other people?	83.1	66.2	59.2
Are other kids nicer to you because of the program?	62.8	49.9	40.7
Was the time spent on the program helpful?	89.2	78.8	80.0

**Program Effectiveness by Sex.** In general, males and females felt similarly about the program in terms of its appeal and effectiveness. However, males were more likely than females to think other kids were nicer to them because of the program (see Table 18).

<b>Table 18. Effectiveness of and Satisfaction with SPIRIT by Sex (Yes, a lot &amp; Yes, a little, combined Percentages)</b>		
	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Did you like the program?	81.4	86.9
Did the program teach you what to do when you are angry?	75.2	78.6
Do you act better because of the program?	69.6	70.9
Did the program help you feel better about yourself?	71.6	73.6
Does the program help you to say no to harmful things other kids might want you to do?	81.3	84.7
Has the program helped you to get along better with other people?	70.9	69.8
Are other kids nicer to you because of the program?	55.1	49.6
Was the time spent on the program helpful?	81.2	83.4

# Chapter 8—Protective Factors

Youth who have strong decision-making skills, high levels of empathy, and who feel connected to and cared for by adults in their lives are less likely to act aggressively, bully others, or start using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs<sup>19,20</sup>. These skills and psychological variables are protective factors that form a barrier against these destructive behaviors. Youth in the 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades were asked to report their empathy, decision making skills, and their perception that adults in their life cared about them.

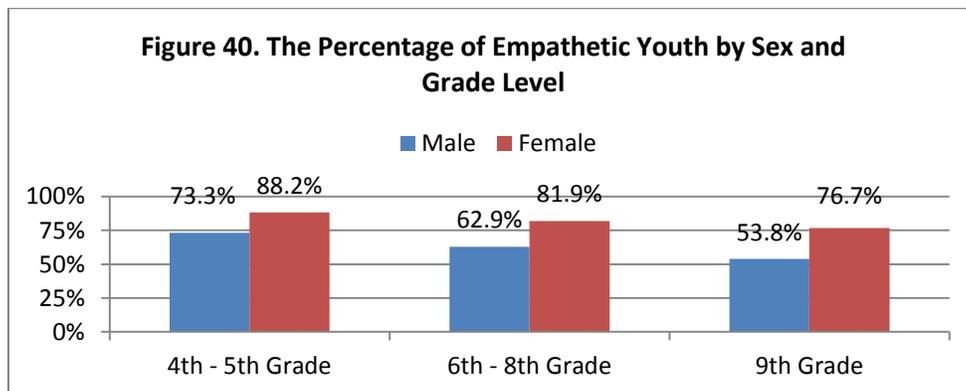
## Empathy

The majority of students reported strong levels of empathy. They reported being sad if witnessing an animal being hurt (88.2%), feeling sad if someone was left out (82.5%), and feeling bad if someone else got their feelings hurt (84.7%) (see Table 19). They were much more likely to strongly agree that they get upset when they see an animal being hurt compared to feeling sad if they see someone left out or bad if they see someone else’s feelings being hurt.

**Table 19. Youth Capacity for Empathy  
(4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Grade)**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It makes me sad if I see someone who is left out.	4.7	12.8	52.7	29.8
I get upset when I see an animal being hurt.	3.8	7.8	30.9	57.3
I feel bad when someone else gets their feelings hurt.	4.3	10.9	48.7	36.0

**Empathy by Sex & Grade Level (Figure 40).** Students who answered “agree” or “strongly agree” to every empathy statement showed a strong level of empathy (73.5%). Regardless of grade level, there were fewer empathetic males (64.7%) than females (83%). The percent of students agreeing to every empathy question dropped as grade levels increased, with 9<sup>th</sup> graders being the least empathetic; empathy dropped more for males than females.



<sup>19</sup> For protective factors in substance use, see Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller (1992). Risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug problems in adolescence and early adulthood: implications for substance abuse prevention. *Psychological Bulletin*, 112, 64-105.

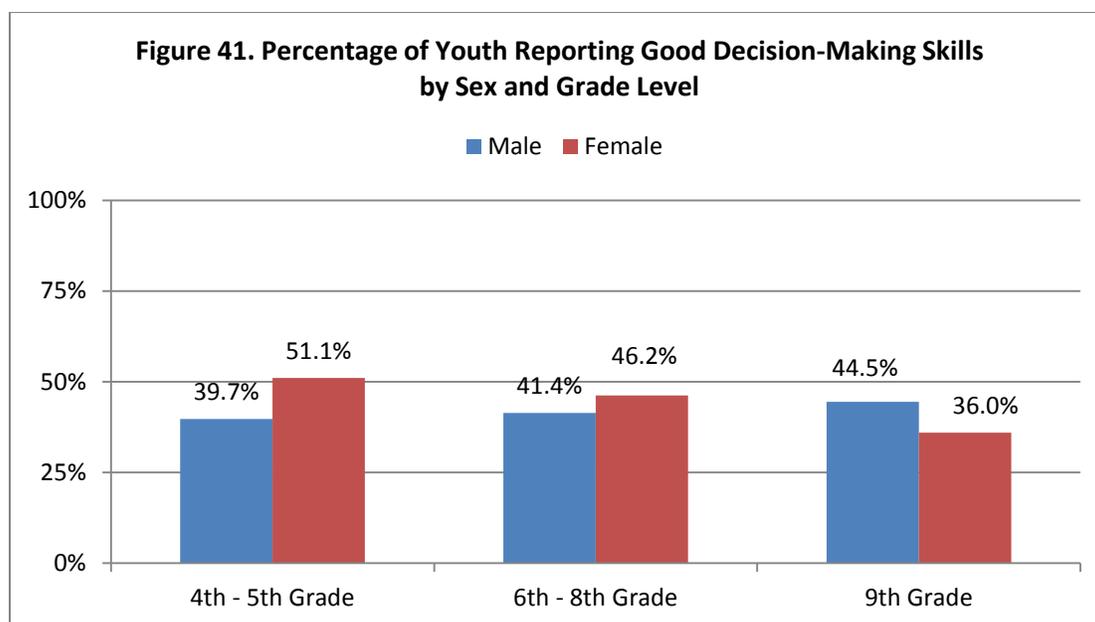
<sup>20</sup> For the relationship between empathy and bullying see Jolliffe and Farrington, (2006). Examining the relationship between low empathy and bullying. *Aggressive Behavior*, 32, 540-550.

## Decision Making

A greater percentage of 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grade youth reported that they made good decisions (80.8%) than thought about their choices (62.1%), how those decisions affect others (63.6%), and the consequences of their decisions (65.2%) (see Table 20).

Table 20. Youth Decision-Making Skills (4 <sup>th</sup> –9 <sup>th</sup> Grade)				
	Never	Sometimes but not Often	Often	All the Time
How often do you stop to think about your choices before you make a decision?	4.4	33.3	47.5	14.6
How often do you stop to think about how your decisions may affect others' feelings?	6.4	29.8	42.5	21.1
How often do you stop to think about all of the things that may happen as a result of your decisions?	5.4	29.2	41.2	24.0
How often do you make good decisions?	2.0	17.0	62.7	18.1

**Decision Making by Sex & Grade Level (Figure 41).** Regardless of grade level, females responded “often” or “all the time” to every decision-making statement slightly more than males. Among youth in the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grades and the 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> grade level, a greater percentage of females than males reported good decision-making skills in all aspects measured. By the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, however, more males reported good decision-making skills than females. Younger females were more likely to report strong decision-making skills than older females.

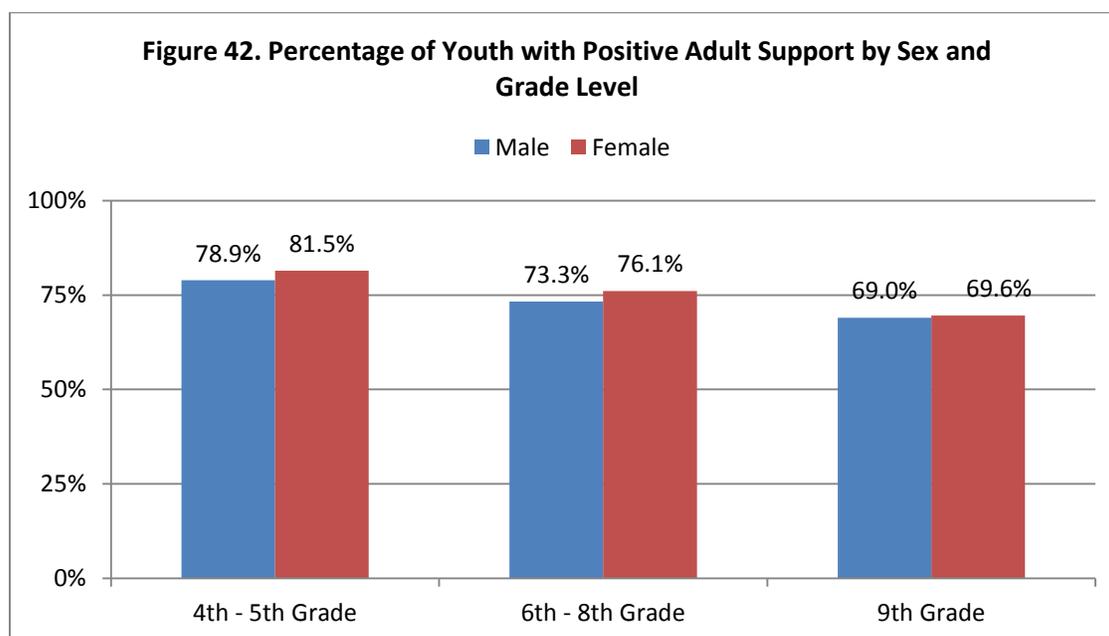


## Caring Adults

Youth in 4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> grades were asked to indicate the extent to which they thought that the adults in their lives, both at school and at home, were supportive of them and listened to them. The majority of students reported the presence of caring adults in their lives. However, a greater percentage of youth reported the presence of caring adults in their home than in school (see Table 21).

<b>Table 21. Presence of Caring Adults (4<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Grade)</b>				
	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
At school, there is a teacher or another adult whom I can go to if something is really bothering me.	5.6	9.4	41.6	43.4
At school, there is a teacher or another adult who listens to me when I have something to say.	4.1	9.2	47.6	39.1
At home, there is a parent or another adult whom I can go to if something is really bothering me.	3.7	4.8	30.4	61.1
At home, there is a parent or another adult who listens to me when I have something to say.	3.8	4.8	33.8	57.6

**Caring Adults by Sex & Grade Level (Figure 42).** The percent of males and females with positive adult support dropped slightly as grade level increased. The percent of females reporting positive adult support is slightly higher than males in all grade levels except the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.



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