



Watertown Middle School

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May 3, 2011

Dear Watertown Middle School Families,

Since 2001, Watertown Middle School students have been participating in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) that is implemented by the Watertown Public Schools, Watertown Youth Coalition, and Wayside Multiservice Center. Endorsed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the YRBS is distributed to middle and high school students on National and State levels to judge what issues of risk are most prevalent with adolescents in each local community.

The survey helps us here in Watertown in many ways. A number of years ago, the YRBS indicated that Watertown had a problem with teen drinking. A direct result of this data was the town-wide “Talk it up! Lock it up!” campaign designed to curb underage drinking. Recent YRBS surveys have indicated a substantial reduction in teen drinking, although in the last couple of years we have seen some small increases.

The results of our more recent YRBS surveys have opened a lot of eyes. The number of students affected by bullying – particularly cyberbullying – has increased substantially. Furthermore, those students who were bullied reported that they were thinking about suicide three times more frequently than those who were not bullied. This is a very serious issue that we are addressing through our district-wide anti-bullying campaign. Our middle school “Let’s Get Real” curriculum is designed to empower bystanders to stand up to aggressors or get adult help when the situation is over their heads.

Students will be taking the Youth Risk Behavior Survey on Friday May 6th in their homerooms at the beginning of the day. This survey includes questions on tobacco use, alcohol and other drug use, sexual behaviors that might lead to unintended pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease, dietary behaviors, physical activity, and other behaviors associated with intentional or unintentional injuries. The information is completely anonymous and it is used to determine how to prioritize funding to enhance healthy living options for youth and their families.

Parents can have their children opt out of the survey. If you do not want your child to take the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, please detach the form at the bottom of the letter and have your child give it to his or her homeroom teacher on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday. If you are okay with your child taking the survey, you don’t have to send in the form. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

J. Kimo Carter, Principal

 I do not want my child, _____, to take the Youth Risk Behavior Survey Friday May 6th, 2011.

Parent Signature: _____