

About Bret Harte High teens

When they're making smart choices

...and when they're not

CHKS

*2003 Data from
California Healthy
Kids Survey*

Data collected from previous Bret Harte Health surveys give parents and the community important information about Bret Harte teens, including what they think about and what they do when it comes to smoking, drinking alcohol, other drug use and violence. This information is available as a result of our district's implementation of the 2003 California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), which gathered responses from 228 local students in 9th and 11th grades as well as all students in the alternative education programs, including continuation and necessary small schools.

This document highlights the survey's key findings. Because of the small sample size- 57% of 9th graders, and 51% of 11th graders- school data may not be representative. (60% is considered representative.)

Tobacco use by local teens continues to decline

The good news is that tobacco use has decreased sharply among teens at Bret Harte over the last 7 years. In 1999, 58% of students surveyed reported trying tobacco in their lifetime, compared with only 25% in 2003. (*School Health Survey, 1999-00 Summary Results*, Heather O'Brophy.) Despite these encouraging signs, young people are still using tobacco products regularly- 6% of 9th graders, and 22% of 11th graders.

Compared with peers across the state, Bret Harte data is lower, but alternative school students appear to be smoking comparable to state averages. While still lower than the state and national average, parents should start early and take an active role in ensuring that their teens are not smoking.

Alcohol use is above state average for juniors

For BH teens, alcohol is the drug most commonly used on a regular basis. While 9th graders fall below the state and national averages, by their junior year they are well above the state and national average.

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Question: During the past 30 days did you drink alcohol (glass)?

Grade	Bret Harte Avg.	State Avg.	National Avg.
9 th	28%	29%	41%
11 th	62%	41%	49%

This rate has remained nearly unchanged since 1999, when 44% of students reported drinking 1 or greater drinks in the previous two weeks. The average in 2003 is 45% reporting 1 or more in the previous 30 days.

Marijuana use has decreased and is below state average

The number of regular* tobacco users roughly equals the number of regular marijuana users in 9th and 11 grades at BH. (*Regularly is defined as having smoked within the last 30 days.) Marijuana is used slightly less frequently at BH than in the state as a whole. The average in 1999 was 37% reported using in the previous 30 days. In 2003 the average dropped to 15.5%.

Question: During the past 30 days did you smoke marijuana?

Grade	Bret Harte Average	State Average	National Average
9 th	9%	13%	19%
11 th	22%	23%	26%

High-risk behaviors

Of particular concern are the high-risk behaviors that can occur in association with teen alcohol and other drug use. BH students exceeded the statewide average in all the areas of high-risk behavior listed in the chart below. It's important to remember that, because of their physical and neurological state of development and vulnerability to peer influence, teens are more at risk than adults when using alcohol and marijuana. Young people need support and guidance, especially when faced with the need to control impulses and make smart choices. Parents and educators can help by opening lines of communication and setting clear boundaries.

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<i>The percentage of students who report....</i>	Bret Harte 9 th	Bret Harte 11 th	State 9 th	State 11 th
• Ever being drunk or sick from drinking?	25	62	22	43
• Ever being high on drugs?	17	47	23	40
• Binge drinking in the past 30 days? (5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row, within a couple of hours)	19	48	13	26
• Ever driven a car when you had been drinking alcohol, or been in a car driven by a friend when he or she had been drinking?	26	42	19	27

Feeling safe- what students report about safety, violence harassment, and gangs

Bret Harte upperclassmen feel safer on their campus than other students in the state, and as freshmen grow up, they feel safer at BH. More than half of the student population feels safe at school.

The majority of students have never had property stolen or damaged on school property in the last 12 months. Most students have not been in a physical fight. (For freshmen it's not clear if this is at Bret Harte or their previous school.)

More than 90 of surveyed students have neither carried a gun to school, or any other weapon. The risks associated with weapons at school are grave, and more information is needed to understand why some youth are bringing weapons to school, and ultimately, how to eliminate weapons on campus. In Peer Court hearings concerning bringing knives on campus, the juries noted they usually perceive a knife to be a *tool* rather than a *weapon*. The majority of students disapprove of bringing a weapon to school.

Freshmen are more likely to experience hate-crime harassment than peers across the state, although it is not clear from the data how much of this happens at the Bret Harte campus.

Regarding gang activity, 94% of 9th and 11th graders report they have never belonged to a gang.

Percentage of those who report:	Bret Harte 9 th	Bret Harte 11 th	State 9 th	State 11 th
Feel <i>very safe</i> at school	9	22	14	16
Feel <i>safe</i> or <i>very safe</i> at school	56	65	not available	not available
Have never had property damaged or stolen on school property in the last 12 months*	65	71	not available	not available
Have never been in a physical fight on school property in the past 12 months*	85	91	77	82
Carried a weapon one or more times, other than a gun, on school property in the past 12 months*	8	7	not available	not available
Carried a gun on school property in the past 12 months*	4	1	not available	not available
<i>Some</i> or <i>a lot</i> of disapproval for carrying a weapon to school by peers	85	88	not available	not available
How many times on school property were you harassed or bullied for any of the 5 hate-crime reasons on school property in the last 12 months*?	34	26	24	24

* For freshmen, "past 12 months" will reflect activity in their 8th grade school.

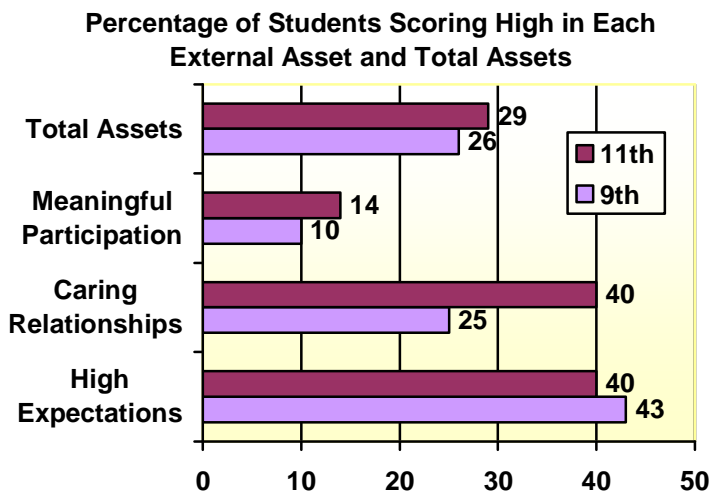
Relationships and opportunities help develop strengths

Knowing that positive strengths by teens is just as important as identifying unsafe or unhealthy behaviors, the CHKS asks about the emotional and community support and personal skills- collectively termed assets- that are associated with positive youth developments.

In assessing school environment, the fall 2003 data showed room for much improvement, although the district is performing comparable or slightly better than others in the state. To that end As a result, Mr. Rosander began a more thorough assessment process last year to understand how and where the school environment was falling short. He interviewed groups of students through all grade levels, focusing particularly on last year's juniors who would become this year's leaders for the school, and would help lead the way on school environment. He discussed changes to curriculum and the type of coursework offered in the BH program with staff and community members. He identified strategies that would specifically target increasing these 3 vital external assets:

1. Caring relationships in the school environment
2. High expectations in the school environment
3. Meaningful participation in the school environment

The data from 2003 showed room for much improvement in school assets.



The chart above illustrates the proportion of students scoring **high** for each of these protective factors in the school environment, as well as total perceived school assets. Resilience research clearly documents the power of teachers and schools to tip the scale from risk to resilience for children and youth. Even among children growing up in overwhelmingly negative conditions, researchers have found that 70-80% of them have demonstrated healthy adjustment and achievement when schools are sensitive to them and their burdens and provide supportive activities.¹

¹ Garbarino, JI, Dubrow, N., Kostelny, K., and Pardo, C. (1002). *Children in Danger: Coping with the Consequences of Community Violence*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, p.121 and *Healthy Kids Survey, Key Findings Bret Harte Union High School District Fall 2003*, p.11.

Trends in suspension data

In most areas, suspensions have been dropping. In looking at annual Discipline Report, suspensions for drug and alcohol related offenses have steadily declined, along with weapons and threats, harassment, assault and battery. In this category, the drop has been dramatic from 2001 until the present. Fighting increased last year, and was the first year since 99-2000 the school did not have a formal peer mediation training program in place. Harassment has remained low, dropping to zero suspensions last year along with threats, weapons, and assault and battery.

The next survey is in September 2005

This year the *Healthy Kids Survey* will be again be given the week of September 19, 2005. We will begin to assess whether changes in creating a more positive, user-sensitive school climate will have an impact on assets as well as risk behavior.

To improve meaningful participation in school, the least positive asset, Mr. Rosander and staff are looking for ways to involve greater number of students in leading and planning activities, helping decide things like class activities and rule, and doing things that make a difference. Giving teens opportunities to participate in meaningful school activities can increase their motivation and enhance their ability to learn.

We are also implementing a new curriculum that includes lessons beyond freshmen requirements on drug prevention. We will be providing more staff training on how to address illegal substance use prevention in the classroom, and well as teaming with the health department, other schools, hospital, and community agencies to address the substance abuse issues prevalent throughout the county.