

2009 Washoe County School District Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results

11/7/2009

Prepared by Telesis Management Consulting
For WCSD Safe & Drug Free Schools



**SAFE & Drug Free
Schools**



Helping our students make
well educated choices
to maintain a safe & drug free
lifestyle.

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Survey Background and Statistics

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) was developed in 1990 to monitor priority health risk behaviors that contribute markedly to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. These behaviors, often established during childhood and early adolescence, include:

- Tobacco use
- Unhealthy dietary behaviors
- Inadequate physical activity
- Alcohol and other drug use
- Sexual behaviors that contribute to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection
- Behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence

The YRBS was designed to:

- Determine the prevalence of health risk behaviors
- Assess whether health risk behaviors increase, decrease, or stay the same over time
- Examine the co-occurrence of health risk behaviors
- Provide comparable national, state, and local data
- Provide comparable data among subpopulations of youth
- Monitor progress toward achieving the Healthy People 2010 objectives and other program indicators

Similar YRBS surveys are issued to youth nationwide, with only the states of Washington, California, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Louisiana choosing not to participate. In Nevada, the YRBS is issued every two years (in odd numbered years), tracking changes in student self-reported behaviors over time. In Washoe County in 2009, 1,844 middle school students and 1,727 high school students participated in the survey. The data shows weighted results and is therefore representative of all students attending school in Washoe County.

For the first time in 2007, Washoe County's YRBS survey was administered after obtaining *passive* parental consent. This means that all youth were to complete the survey unless their parents returned a form asking that they did not participate. This is a change from prior years in which students were only allowed to participate if their parents returned a permission slip (*active* parental consent). It is difficult to ascertain if this change impacted the results of the 2007 and 2009 surveys and therefore changes the reliability of the trends, but it is important to consider that this is a possibility.

Washoe County School District (WCSD) considers the YRBS to be an important tool for monitoring youth behaviors and consequently utilizes the data to drive decision making and programming. A steering committee comprised of administrators, counselors, nurses, school police and teachers uses the survey results to address prevention and intervention initiatives for students, including family engagement and teacher development. As a result, Washoe County hosted a School Safety Summit in April of 2008. A School Climate Survey is in development to track issues surrounding youth safety and behaviors and will be administered in the Spring of 2010, and even more initiatives are planned for the 2009-2010 school year.

Knowing that a universal approach to addressing our youth's needs is required, WCSD administration has a team of professionals working to disseminate the survey results to community nonprofit and service agencies as well as others working to assist our county's youth. Additionally, WCSD contributes the data to community needs assessments, strategic plans and grants. The community works together to address the needs of our Northern Nevada youth, and only through those partnerships do we see systemic and sustainable positive changes.

Washoe County YRBS 2009 Respondent Demographics

Middle School n=1,844

52.6% Female, 47.4% Male

10.5% 6th Grade, 42.7% 7th Grade, 46.1% 8th Grade

34.8% Hispanic or Latino

7.4% American Indian, 6.3% Asian, 6.3% African American, 10.5% Hawaiian/Islander, 67.8% White

High School n=1,727

53.6% Female, 46.4% Male

27.8% 9th Grade, 33.3% 10th Grade, 17.1% 11th Grade, 21.4% 12th Grade

29.0% Hispanic or Latino

3.4% American Indian, 6.6% Asian, 4.6% African American, 6.9% Hawaiian/Islander, 71.6% White

Significant Findings

School/Academic

- The percentage of high school students identifying that their grades are mostly C's, D's, or F's rose steadily from 2001 to 2007 (27.4% in 2001 to 34.0% in 2007), and then declined on the 2009 survey (31.7%) (Chart 3).
- Washoe County's high school students are increasingly missing school without permission (in 2007, 15.1% had missed three or more days in the past month compared to 17.6% in 2009). At the middle school level however, the percentage who missed 3 or more days in the past month declined sharply from 13.8% in 2007 to only 8.1% in 2009 (Chart 2).
- The number of high school students not intending on pursuing a post high school program has risen from 8.0% in 2003 to 11.8% in 2009 (Chart 4).

Safety/Violence/Suicide

- The percentage of high school students who "never", "rarely", or "only sometimes" feel safe and secure in their neighborhood increased steadily from 10.8% in 2001 to 18.9% in 2009. At the middle school level, this number had risen substantially from 16.8% in 2005 to 27.4% in 2007, but then declined considerably to 19.1% on the 2009 survey (Chart 5).
- The percentage of high school students who "never", "rarely", or "only sometimes" feel safe and secure at school has remained consistent since 2003 (around 20%). Great improvements were seen at the middle school level, where the percentage of students who "never", "rarely", or "only sometimes" feel safe and secure at school declined from 29.8% in 2007 to 19.5% in 2009 (Chart 6).
- The percentage of Washoe County middle school students who report that they did not go to school in the past 30 days because they felt unsafe almost doubled from 7.2% in 2005 to 14.1% in 2007, and then declined to 10.3% in 2009 (Chart 7).
- While the percentage of Washoe County high school students reporting gang activity in their school remains virtually unchanged since 2005, this percentage increased from 34.6% in 2007 to 38.3% in 2009 at the middle school level (Chart 8).
- The percentage of Washoe County high school students reporting that they have been in a physical fight in the past 12 months increased slightly every year from 2001 to 2009. The percentage reporting that they were in a physical fight on school property, however, has remained constant from 2003 to 2009. This trend is impossible to assess at the middle school level due to changes in the phrasing of the question and its answers (Charts 11 and 12).
- The percentage of Washoe County high school students reporting that they carried a weapon in the past 30 days increased substantially in 2009 (to 19.5% from 15.2% in 2007), though the percentage who carried a weapon at school remained unchanged. Unfortunately, the percentage of students who were threatened or injured with a weapon at school in the past year has risen steadily each year since 2001. This trend is impossible to assess at the middle school level due to changes in the phrasing of the question and its answers, though the percentage who have ever carried a weapon rose substantially from 35.8% in 2007 to 40.1% in 2009 (Charts 9 and 10).
- A disturbing trend continues in the percentage of high school students who have attempted suicide in the past year. Amongst the Washoe County high school population, this number increased every year from 8.6% in 2001 to 14.6% in 2009. *These results are of concern.* At the

middle school level, from 2007 to 2009 more students report seriously thinking about killing themselves, though less actually tried to kill themselves (Charts 13 and 14).

Alcohol

- The percentage of Washoe County high school students reporting lifetime use of alcohol, declined steadily from 2001 to 2007, but then increased again in 2009. Similarly at the middle school level, the percentage reporting lifetime use of alcohol declined from 2005 to 2007 but then rose again in 2009 (Chart 16).
- The percentage of Washoe County high school students reporting current (30-day) use of alcohol remained fairly consistent from 2007 to 2009, as did the percentage who admit to binge drinking during this time period (Chart 17).
- The percentage of Washoe County high school and middle school students reporting that they first tried alcohol before the age of 13 has remained fairly consistent from 2003 to 2009 (Chart 20).
- The percentage of Washoe County high school students who rode in a car with a driver who had been drinking in the past 30 days increased from 23.5% in 2003 to 30.0% in 2009. The percentage of Washoe County high school students who drove a car while drinking has fluctuated inconsistently from 2001 to 2009 (Charts 18 and 19).

Drugs

- The percentage of Washoe County high school students reporting lifetime use of most drugs declined from 2001 to 2007, and then increased again in 2009.
 - The percentage reporting lifetime use of marijuana increased substantially from 38.9% in 2007 to 47.0% in 2009. In accordance with this, the percentage who acknowledge having used marijuana in the past 30 days rose from 20.9% on the 2007 survey to 27.8% on the 2009 survey (Charts 22 and 24).
 - Lifetime use of cocaine and inhalants increased slightly from 2007 to 2009 (Chart 22).
 - Lifetime use of methamphetamines, after declining substantially from 2005 to 2007 due to concerted community prevention initiatives, increased from 4.9% in 2007 to 7.3% in 2009. This is a significant increase, representing an additional 450 or so high school students district wide who have tried meth (Chart 22).
 - The percentage of high school students who report recreational lifetime use of over-the-counter (OTC) drugs to get high increased from 11.3% on the 2007 survey to 17.8% on the 2009 survey (Chart 22).
 - After having remained consistent from 2003 to 2007, the percentage of high school students who report that they were offered, sold, or given drugs at school in the past year rose from 29.0% in 2007 to 35.7% in 2009. In other words, over a third of Washoe County high school students have been exposed to drugs at school in the past year (Chart 25).
 - Almost one quarter of high school students report having attended school under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the past 12 months (Chart 26).
- The results are more encouraging at the middle school level.
 - Use of marijuana has remained fairly consistent from 2003 to 2009 with approximately 17% of students admitting that they have used this drug (Chart 23).
 - Lifetime use of inhalants has remained steady from 2007 to 2009 (this question was phrased differently prior to 2007) (Chart 23).

- Use of meth, cocaine, and OTC drugs to get high has declined slightly in 2009 (Chart 23).
- The percentage of Washoe County high school students reporting that they first tried marijuana before the age of 13 has remained fairly consistent from 2001 to 2009 at both the high school and middle school levels. Similarly, the percentage of high school students reporting that their parents would approve or wouldn't care if they smoked marijuana has remained mostly unchanged since 2001 (Charts 27 and 29).

Tobacco

- As with use of drugs, use of tobacco amongst Washoe County high school students declined steadily from 2001 to 2007, only to take a considerable jump again in 2009, when 52.0% of students reported a lifetime use of cigarettes (compared to 43.4% in 2007). The percentage reporting past 30-day use of cigarettes also increased from 2007 to 2009 (from 17.3% to 23.2%) (Chart 30 and 31).
- At the middle school level, the results were more encouraging – lifetime use of cigarettes continued to decline, though 30-day use remains unchanged (Chart 30 and 31).
- No identifiable trend can be seen in the percentage of students who first used tobacco before the age of 13; these percentages have remained fairly consistent from 2005 to 2009 (Chart 32).
- A greater percentage of high school students were asked for proof of age when buying cigarettes in a store in the past 30 days; this percentage improved substantially from the 2007 survey (43.9%) to the 2009 survey (53.3%) (Chart 33).

Sexual Behaviors

- After having taken a slight dip in 2007, the percentage of high school students reporting that they have ever had sexual intercourse rose to 52.4% in 2009, marking the first time that this number has exceeded the halfway point. In accordance with this statistic, the percentage who report having had sexual intercourse before the age of 15 has risen slowly from 2003 to 2009 (Chart 35 and 36).
- The percentage of high school students who report having used alcohol or drugs before they had intercourse the last time remains steady at 23.1% (Chart 38).
- After increasing year over year from 2001 to 2007, the percentage of high school students who used a condom the last time they had intercourse declined from 2007 to 2009. The percentage of students who claim to have been pregnant or gotten someone else pregnant followed this trend, increasing from 5.6% in 2007 to 7.0% in 2009. This represents approximately 1,400 students who have been pregnant or gotten someone else pregnant, or approximately 700 pregnancies (Chart 38 and 39).

School/Academic

Chart 1

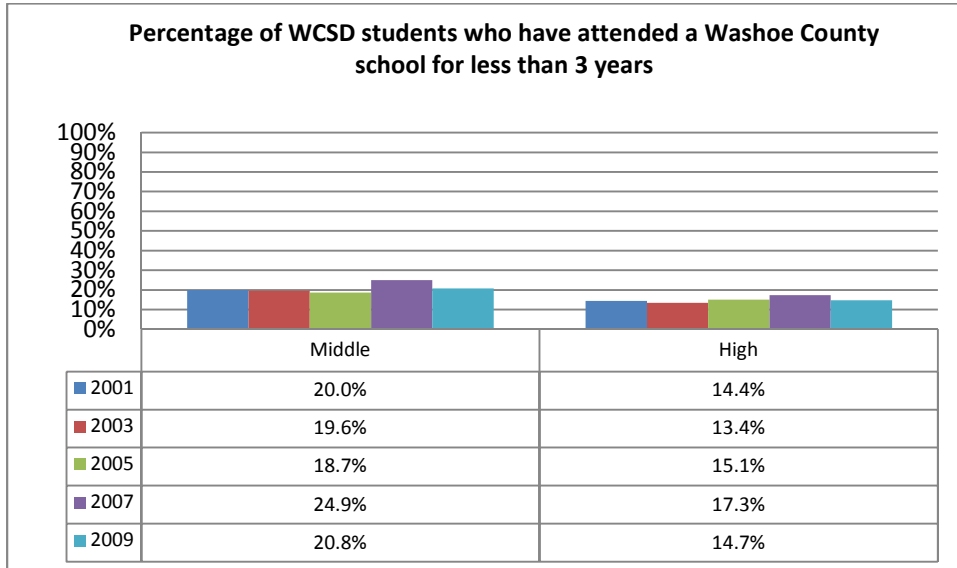
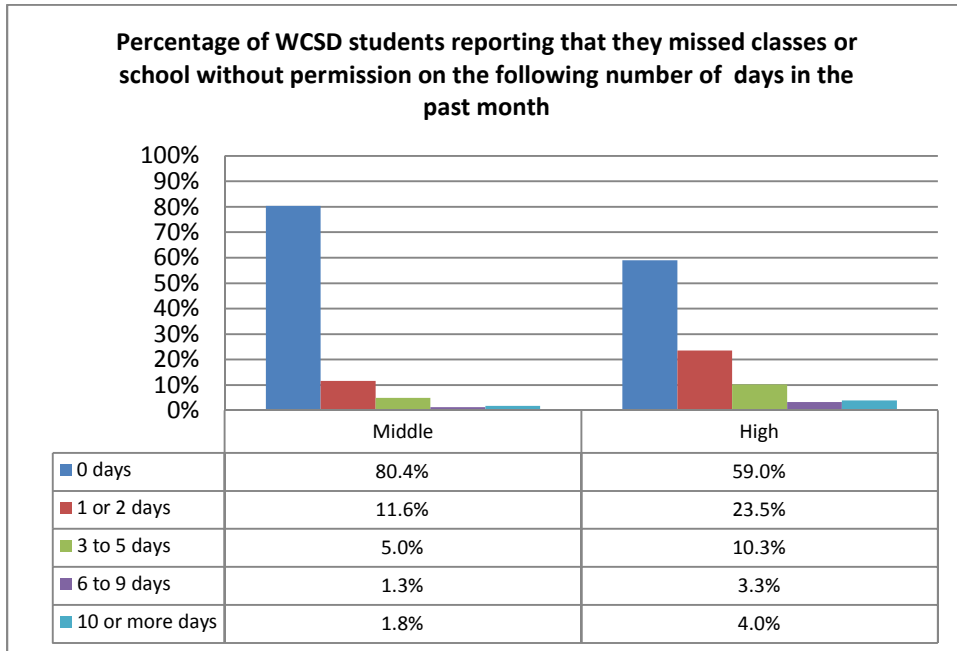


Chart 2



School/Academic, cont'd.

Chart 3

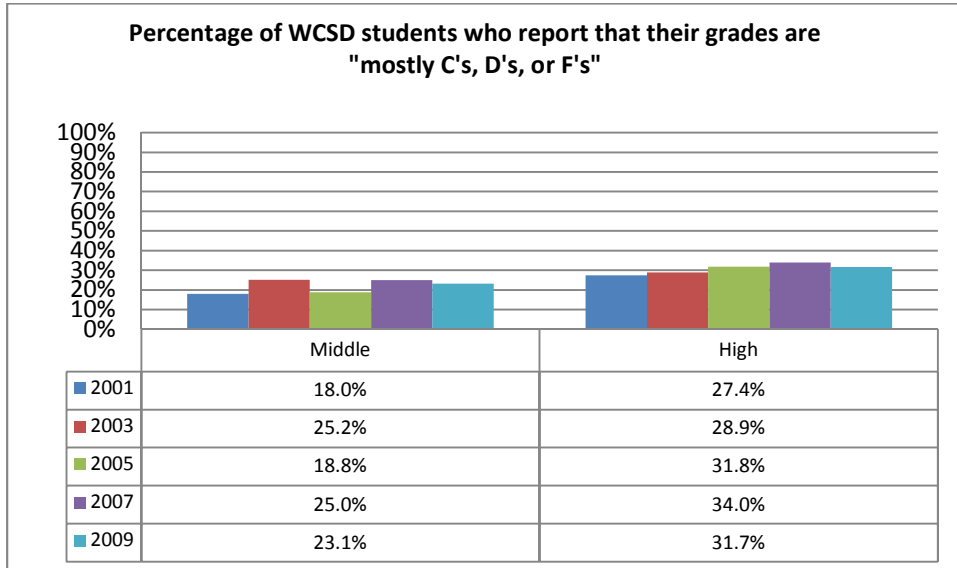
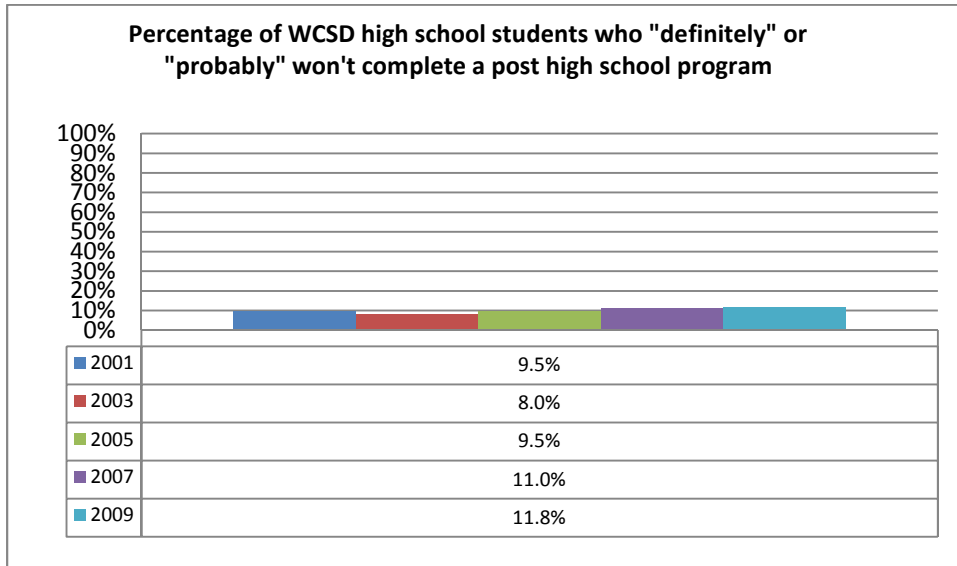


Chart 4



Safety/Violence/Suicide

Chart 5

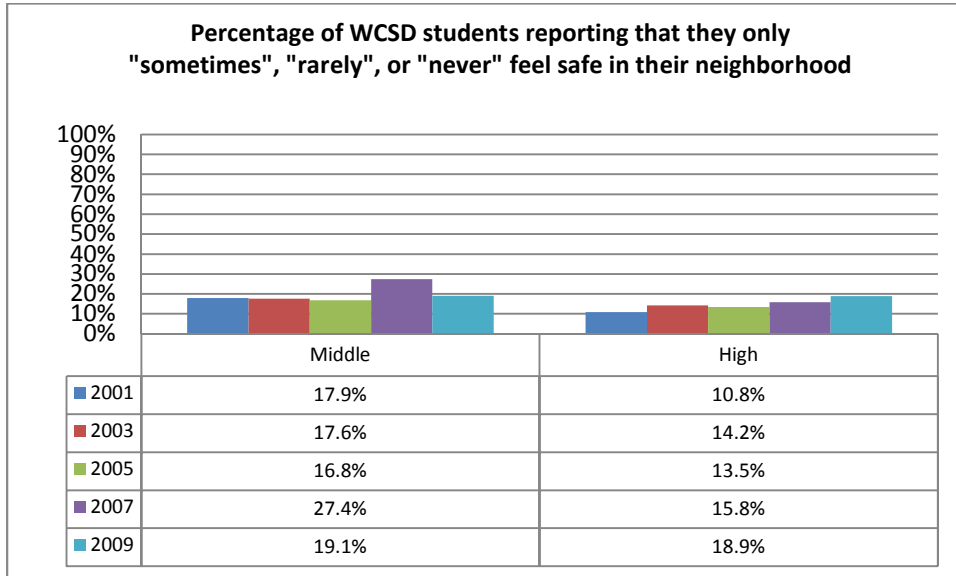
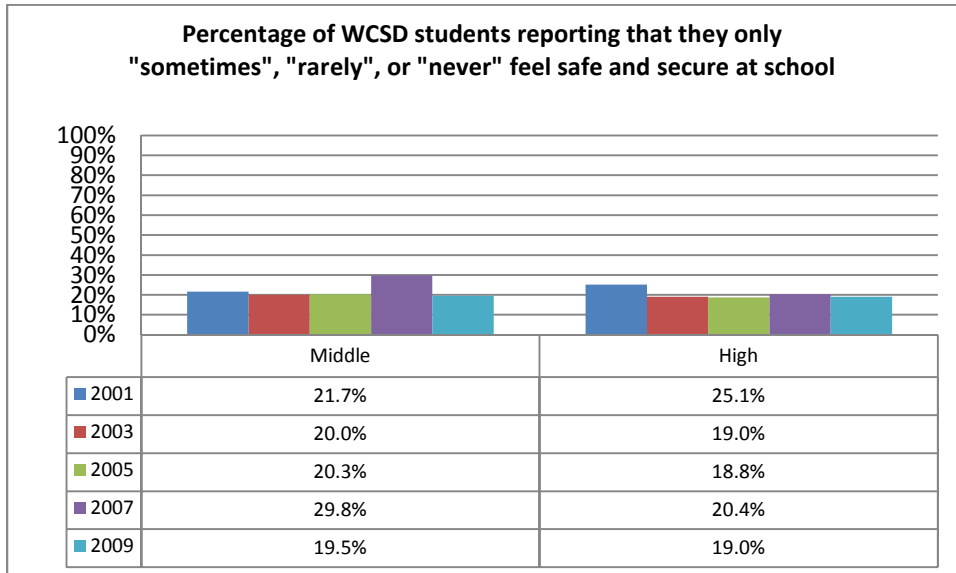


Chart 6



Safety/Violence/Suicide, cont'd.

Chart 7

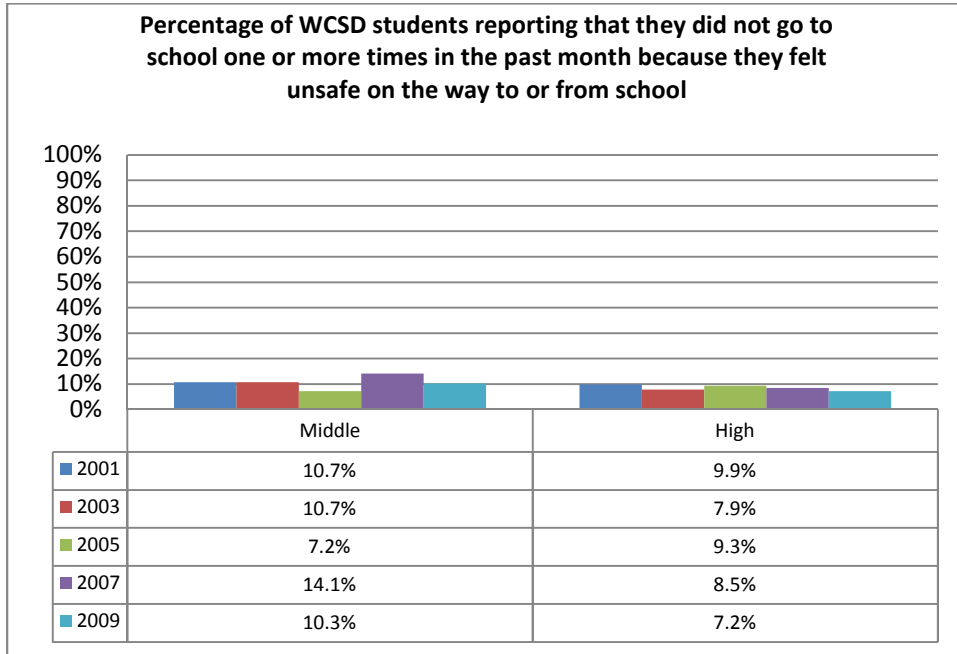
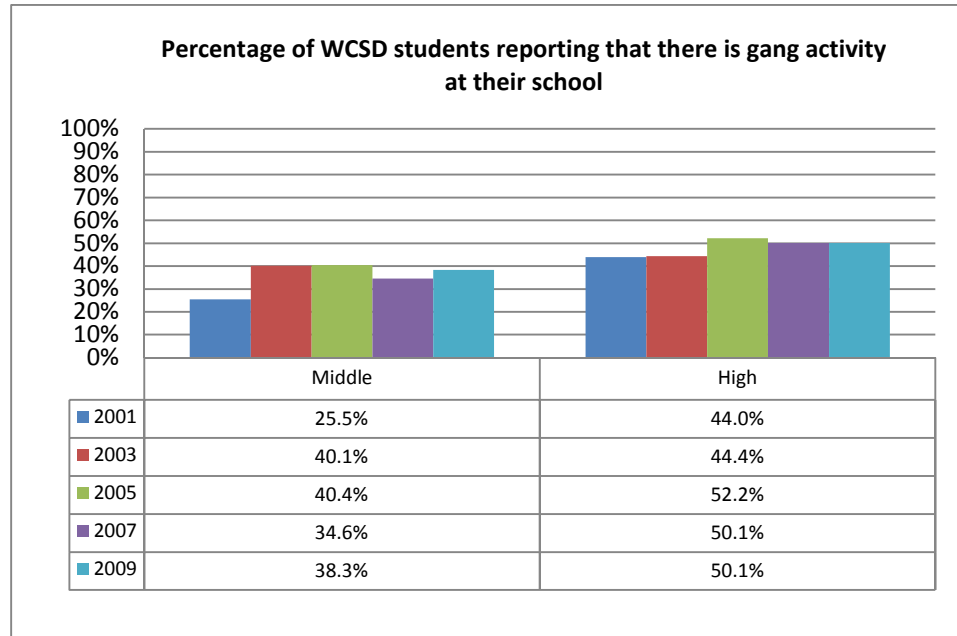


Chart 8



Safety/Violence/Suicide, cont'd.

Chart 9

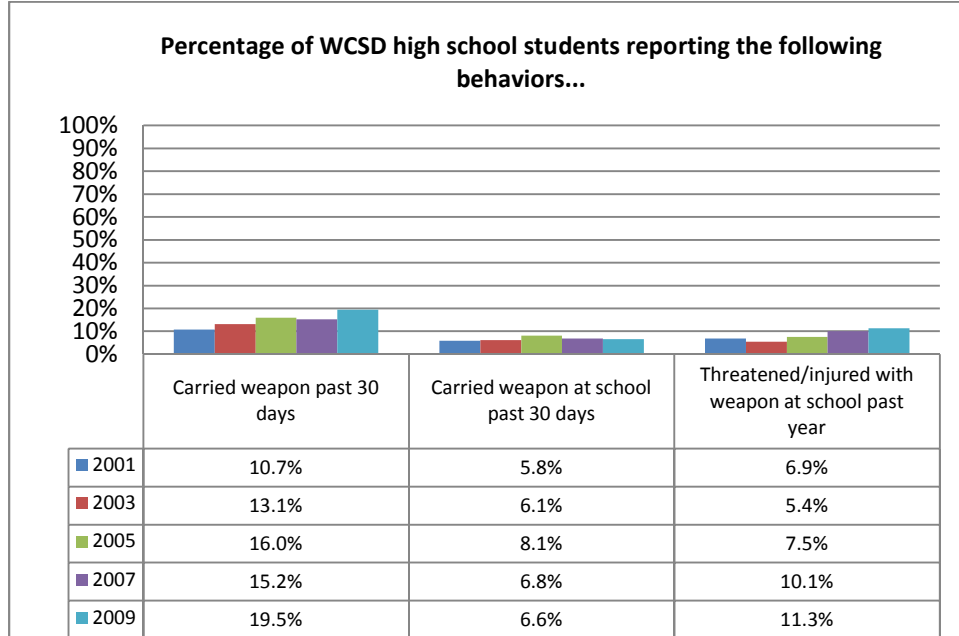
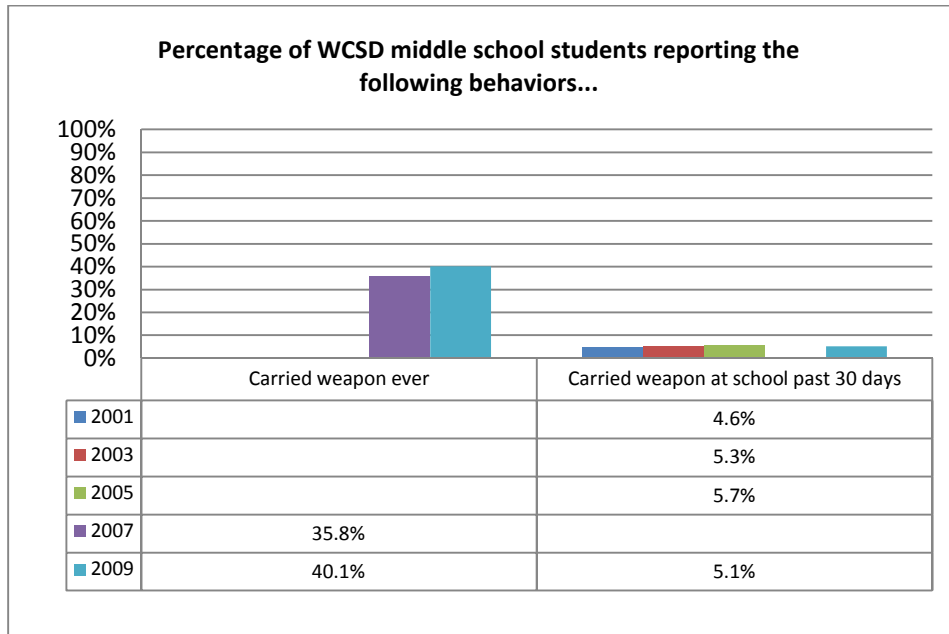


Chart 10



Blank spaces are due to data not being collected in those years

Safety/Violence/Suicide, cont'd.

Chart 11

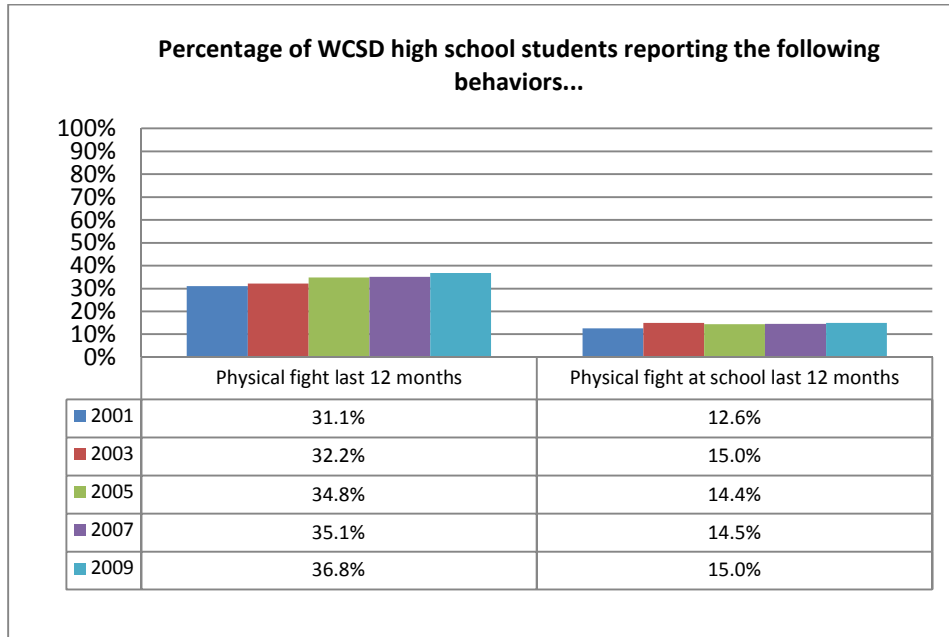
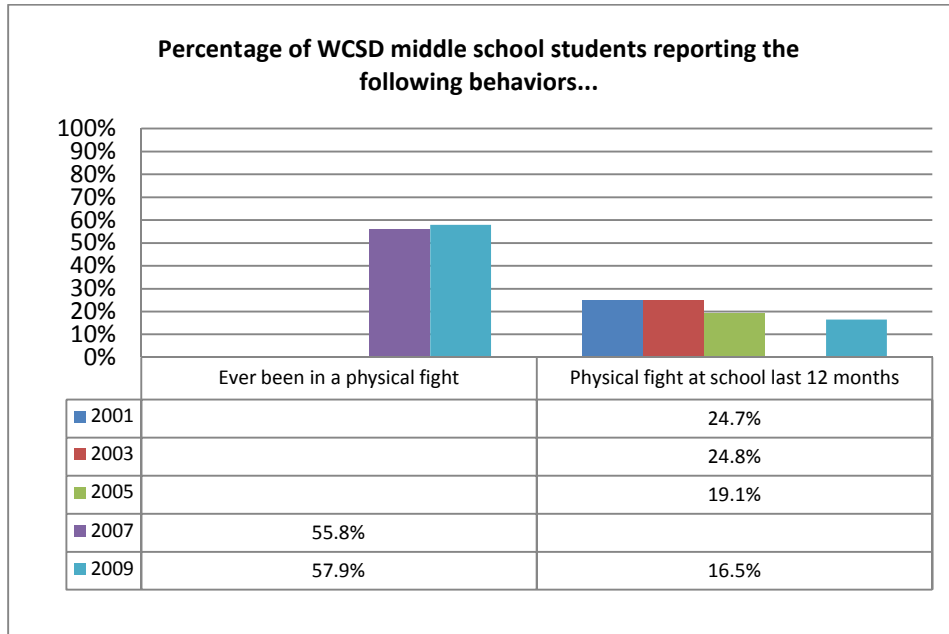


Chart 12



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Safety/Violence/Suicide, cont'd.

Chart 13

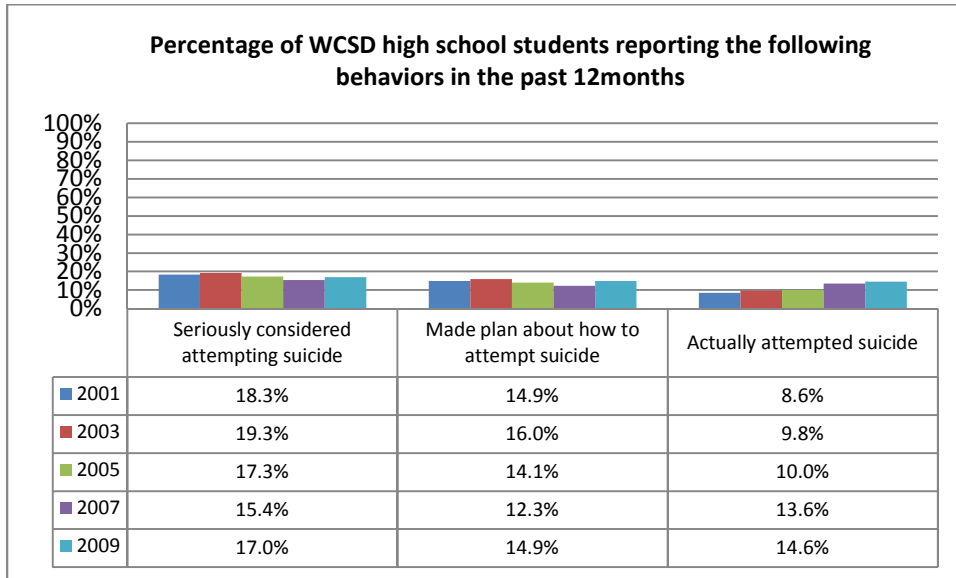
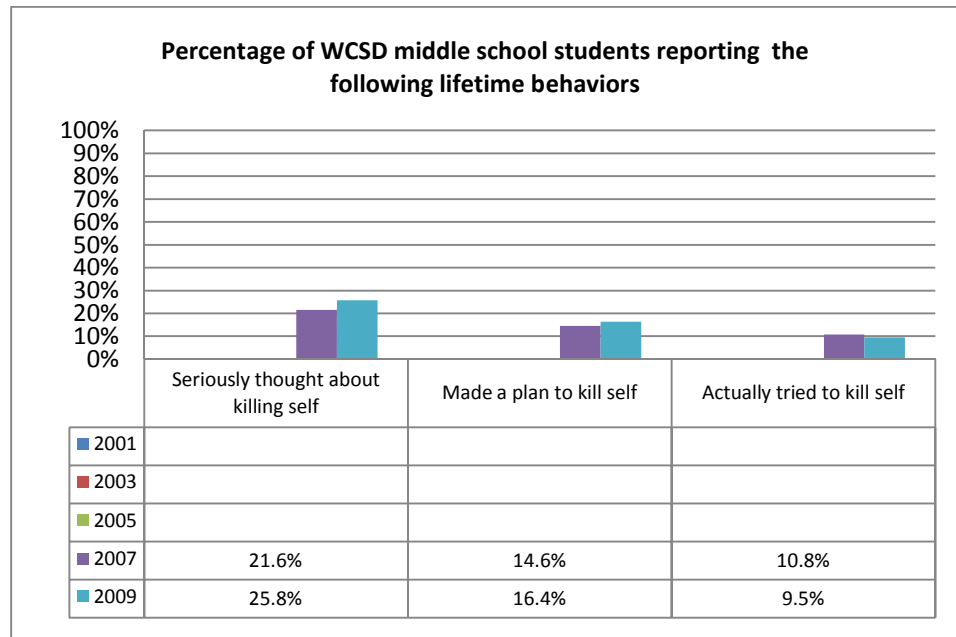


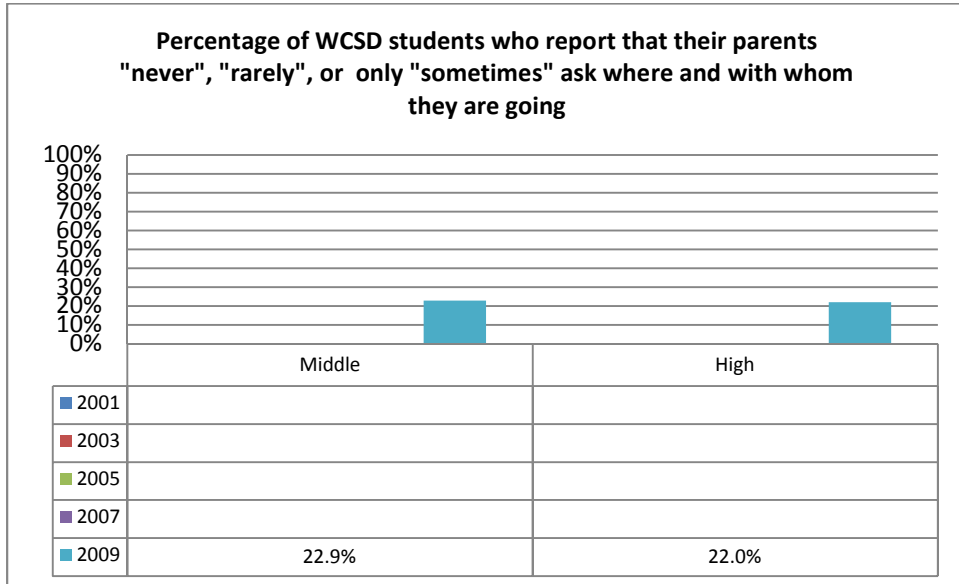
Chart 14



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Safety/Violence/Suicide, cont'd.

Chart 15



Blank spaces are due to data not being collected in those years

Alcohol

Chart 16

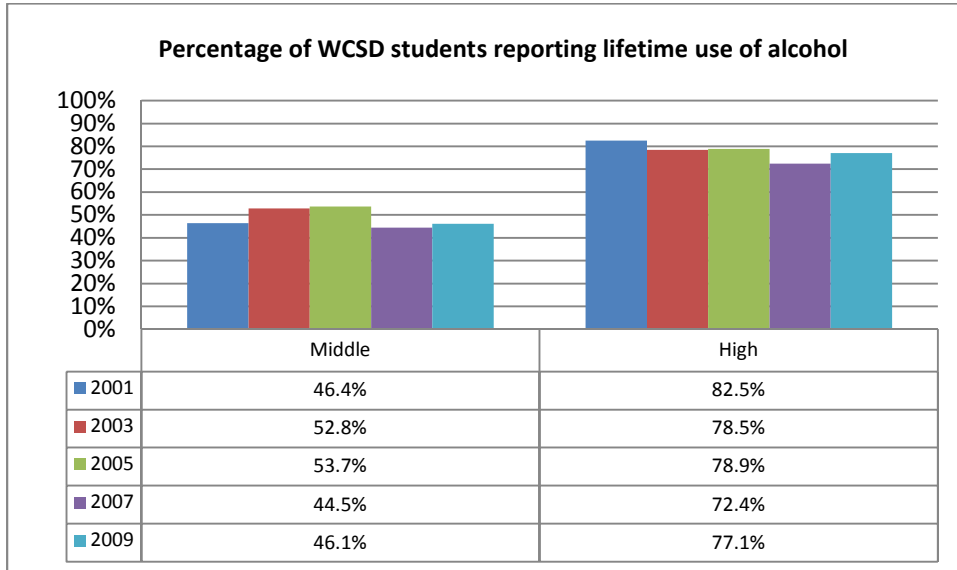
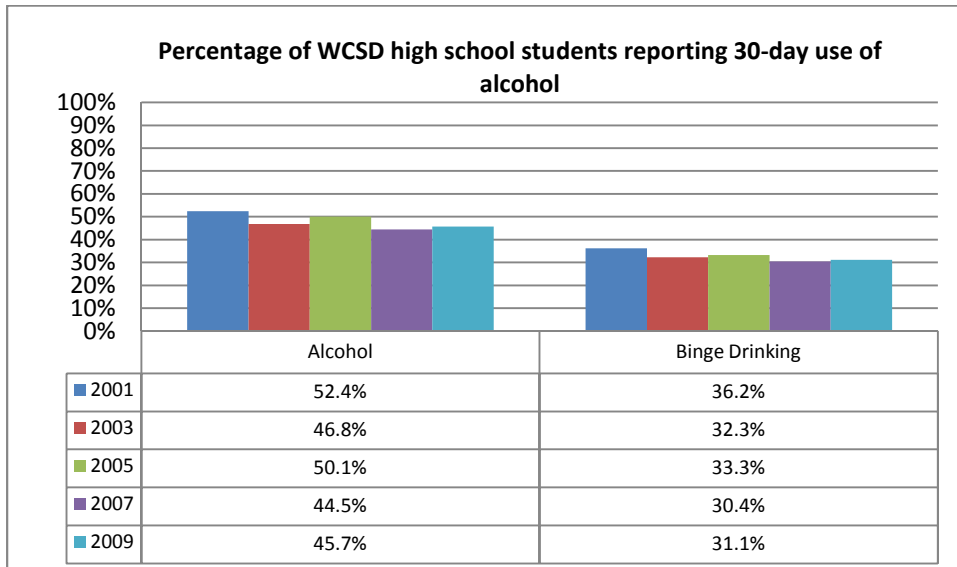


Chart 17



Alcohol, cont'd.

Chart 18

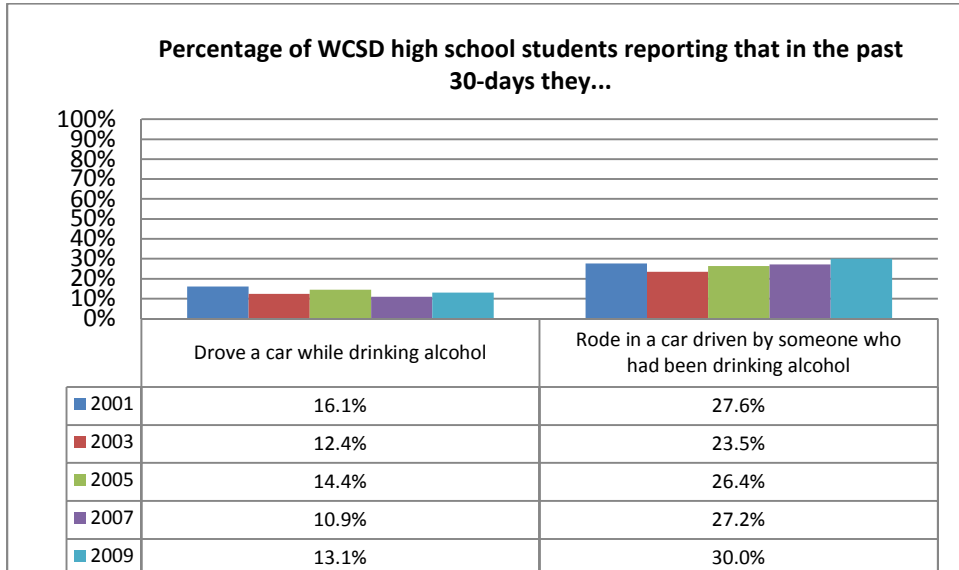
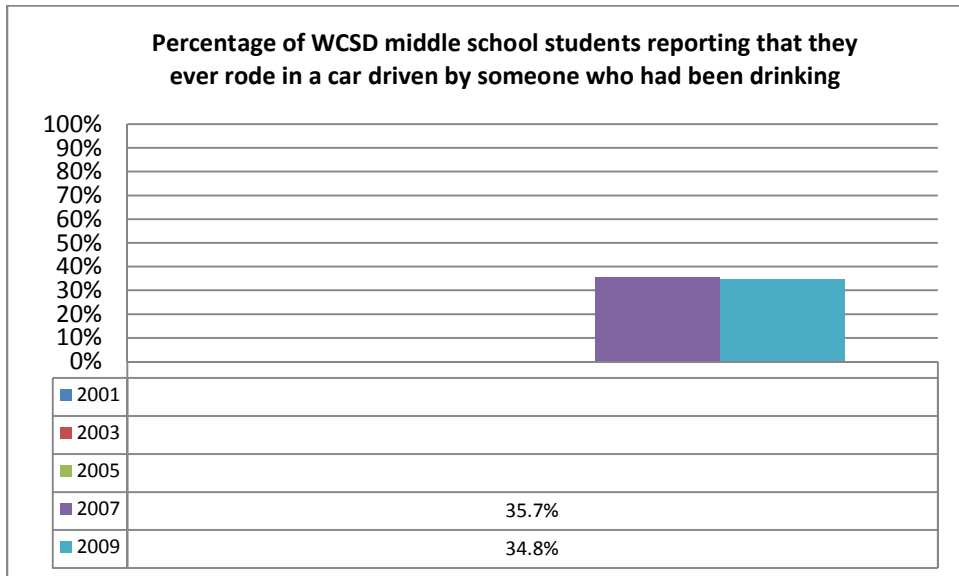


Chart 19



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Alcohol, cont'd.

Chart 20

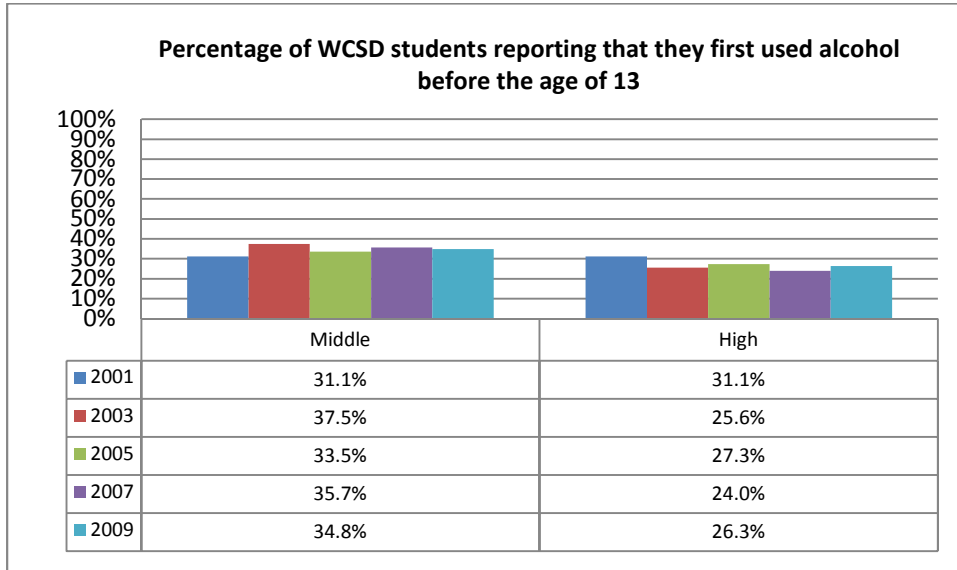
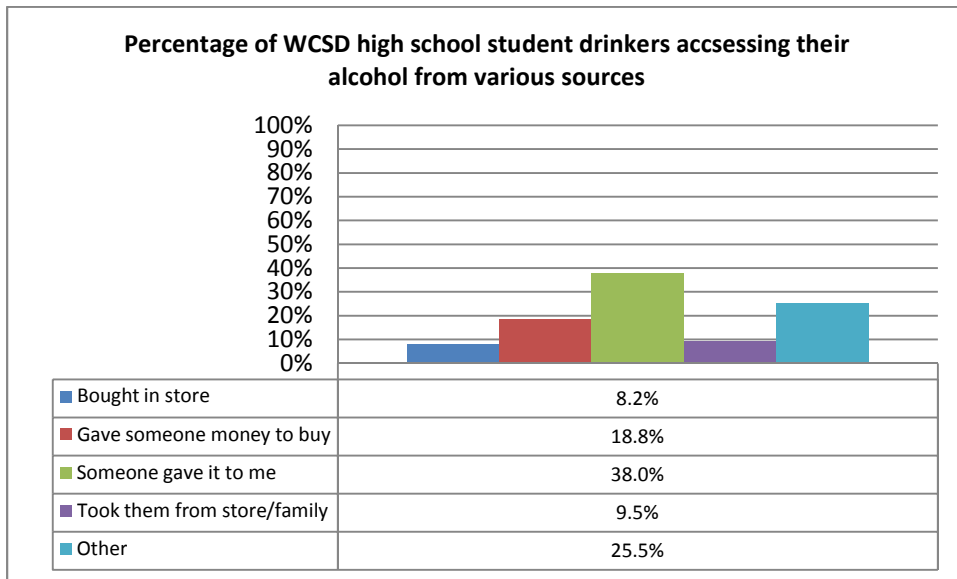


Chart 21



Drugs

Chart 22

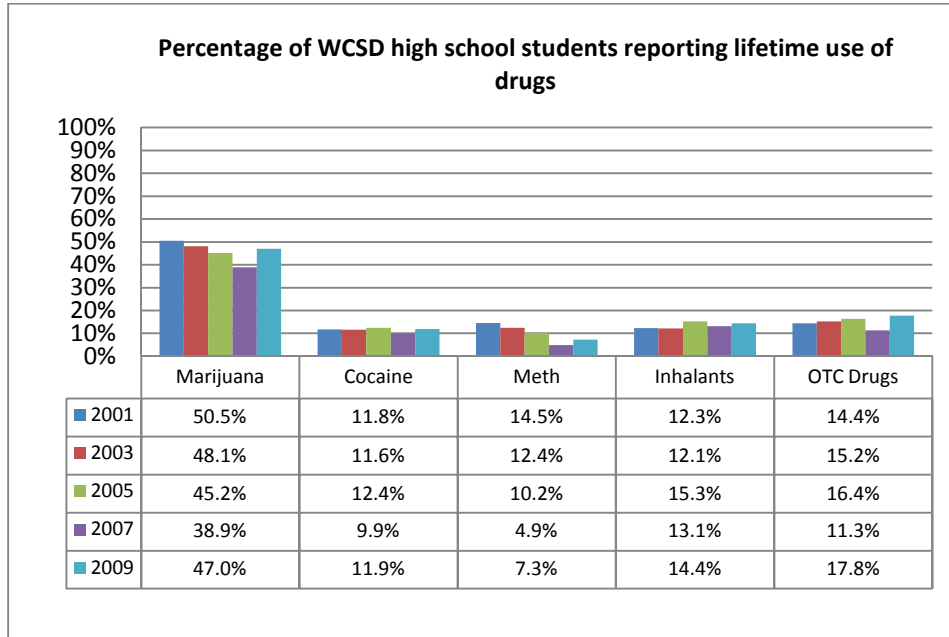
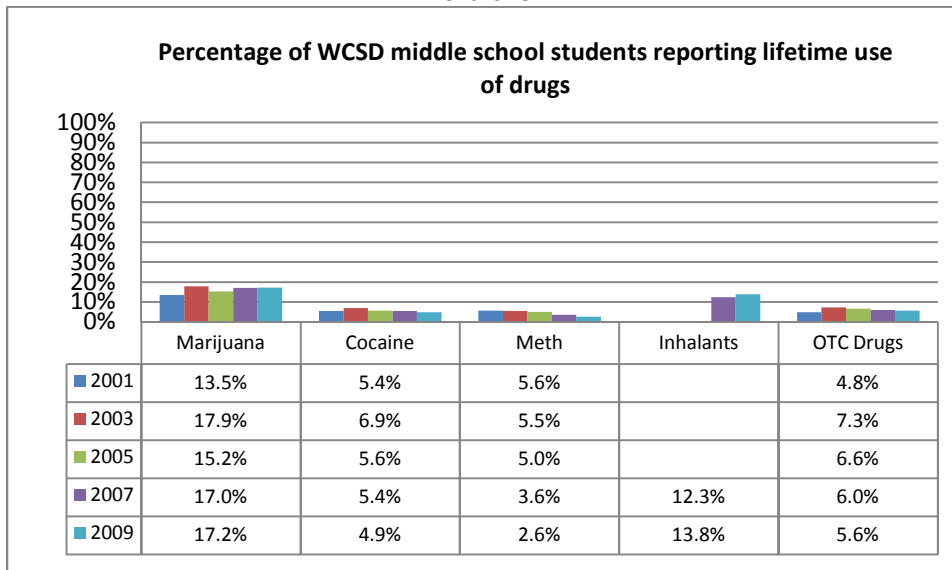


Chart 23



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Drugs, cont'd.

Chart 24

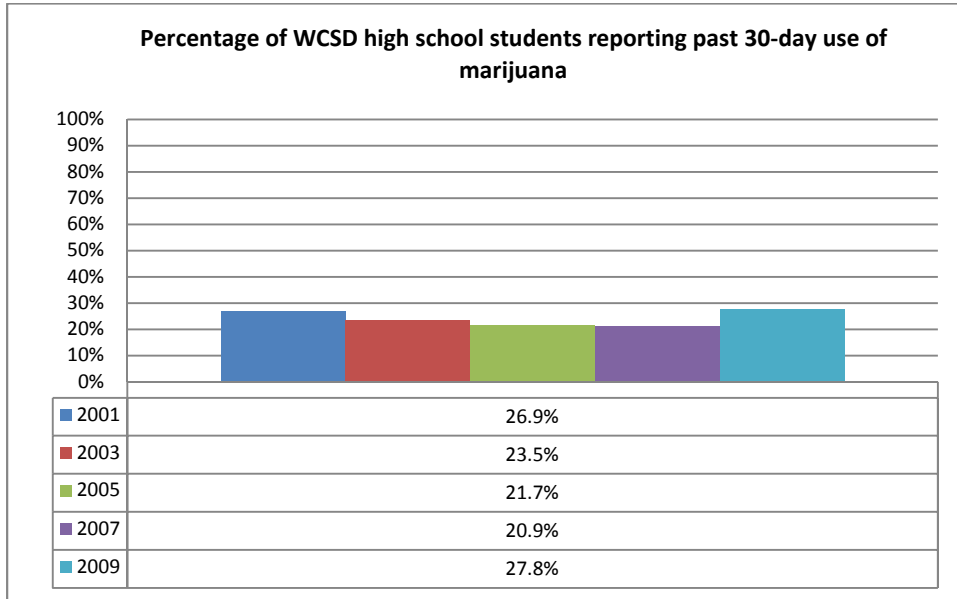
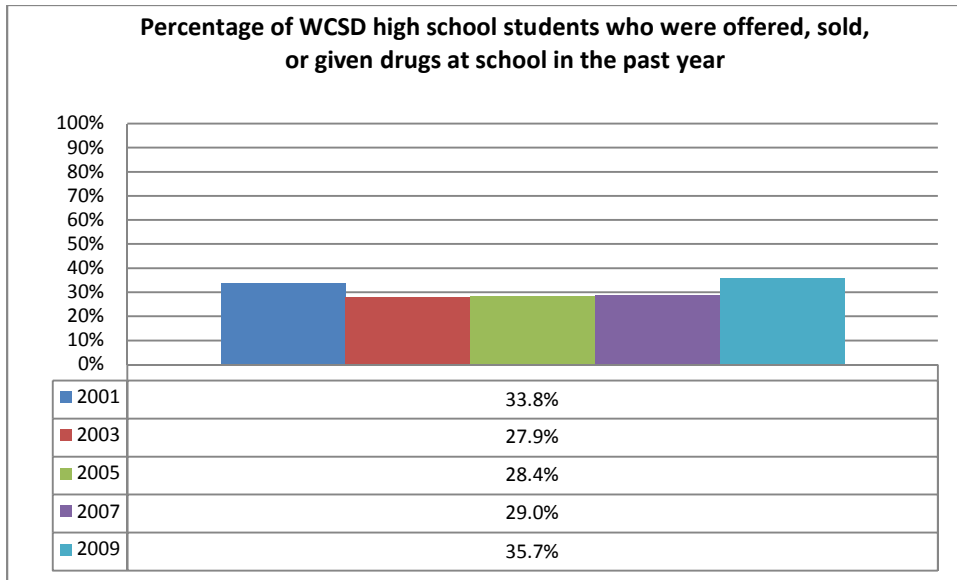


Chart 25



Drugs, cont'd.

Chart 26

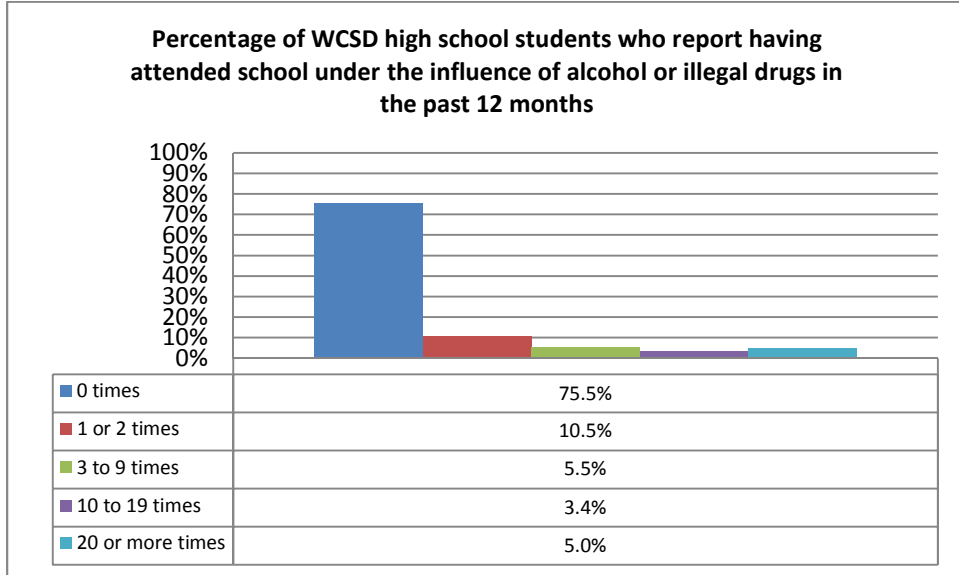
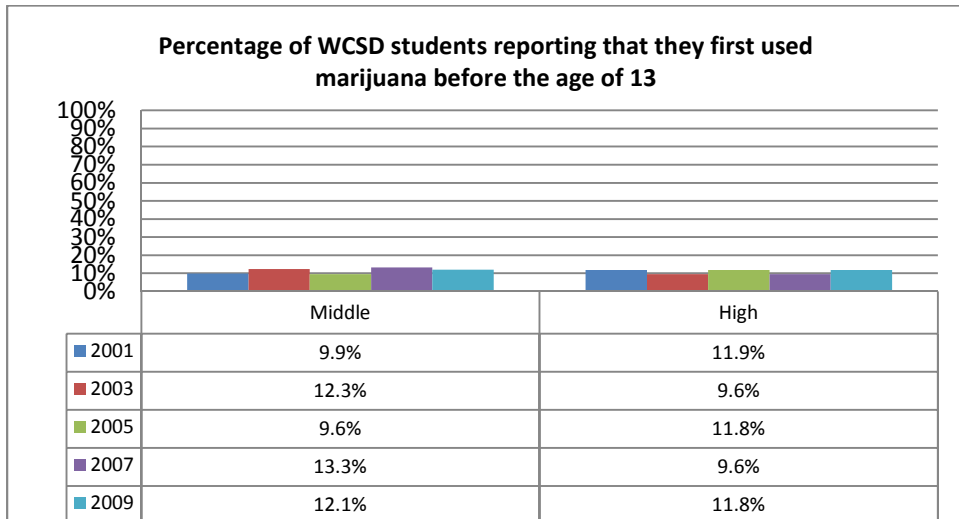


Chart 27



Drugs, cont'd.

Chart 28

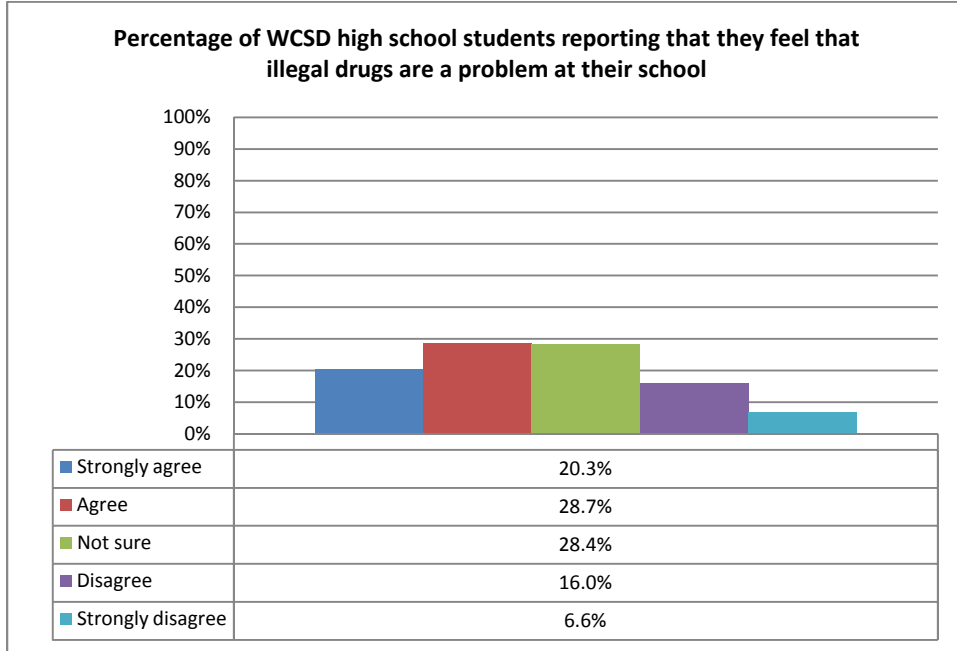
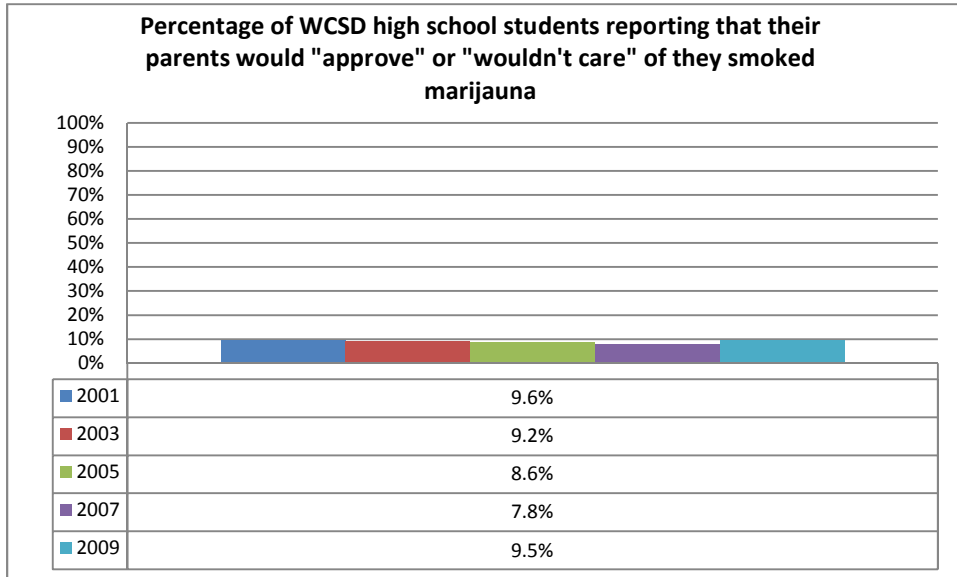


Chart 29



Tobacco

Chart 30

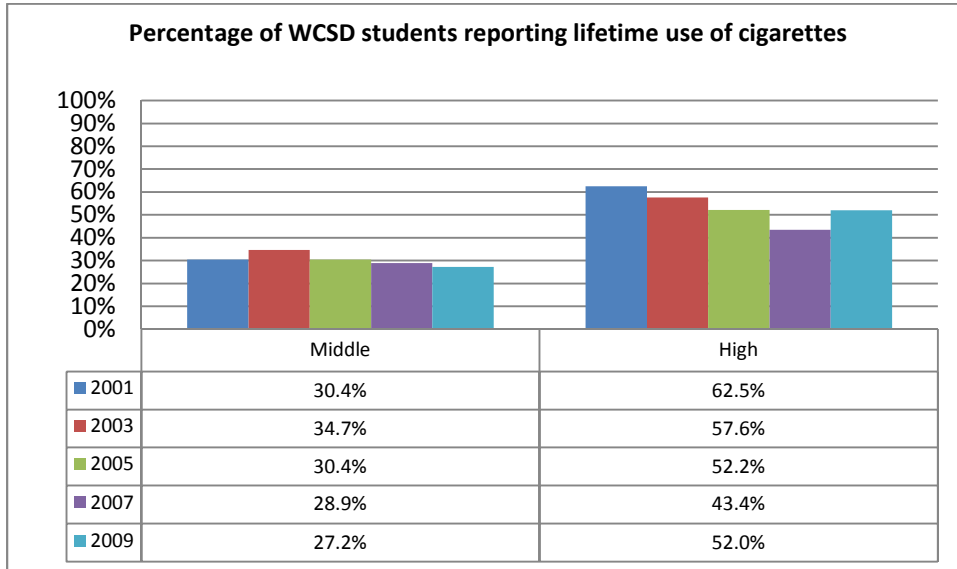
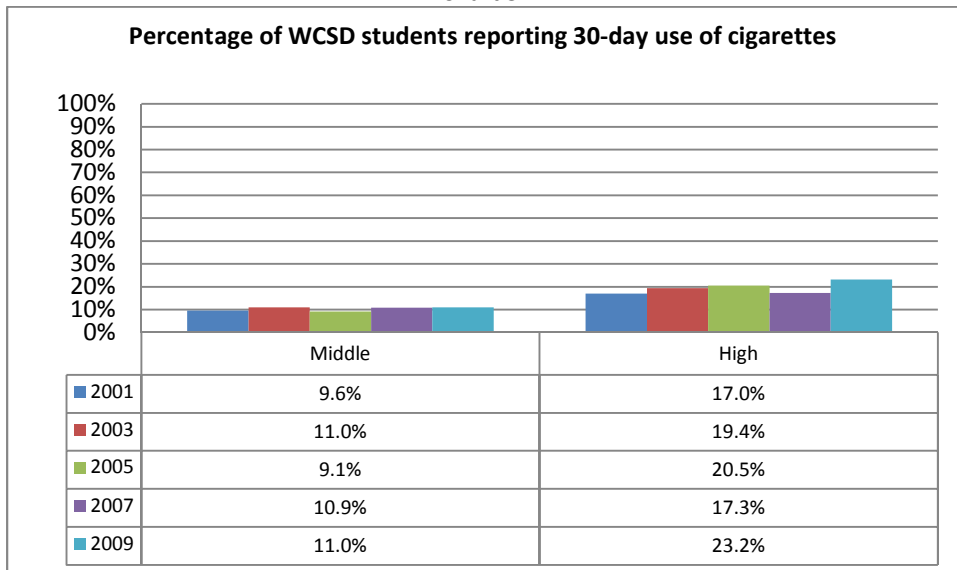


Chart 31



Tobacco, cont'd.

Chart 32

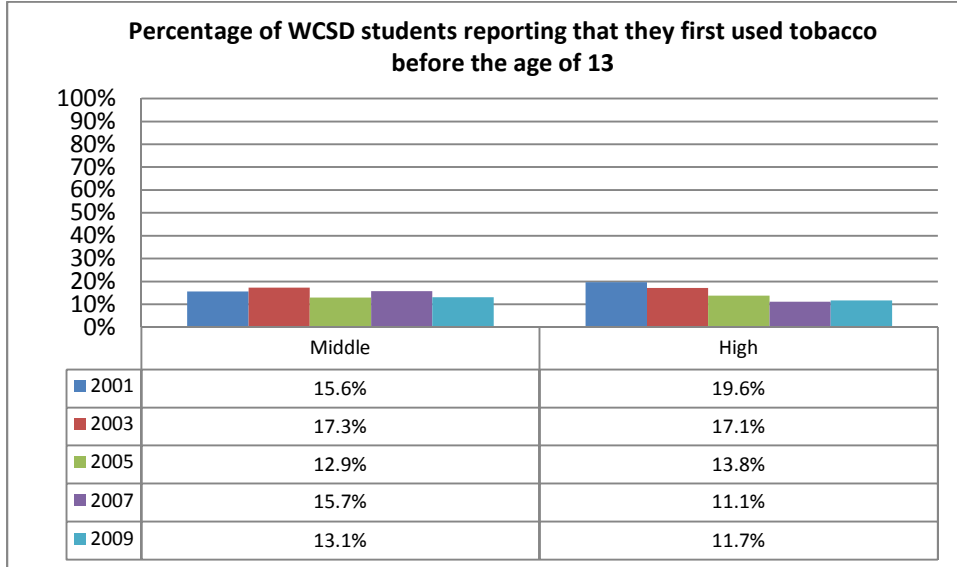
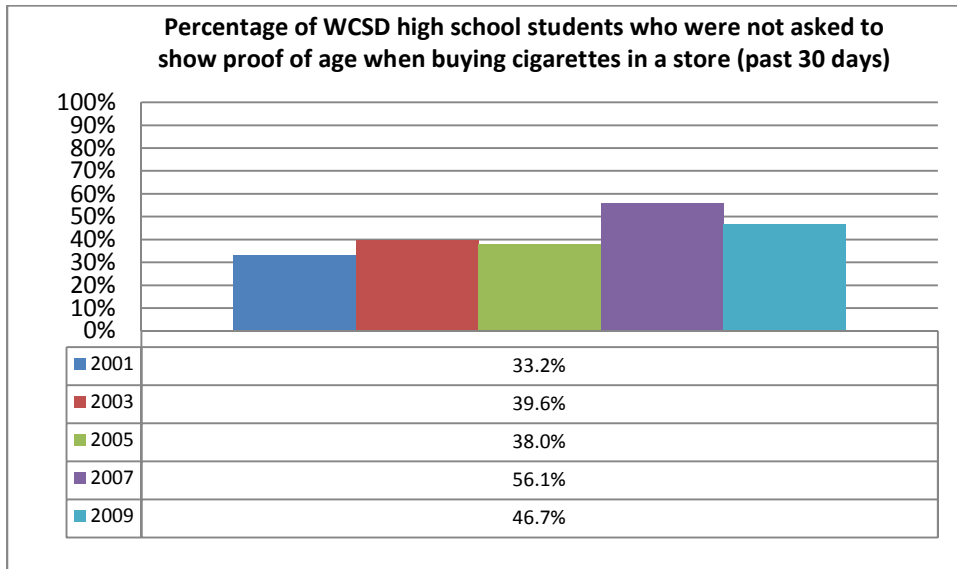
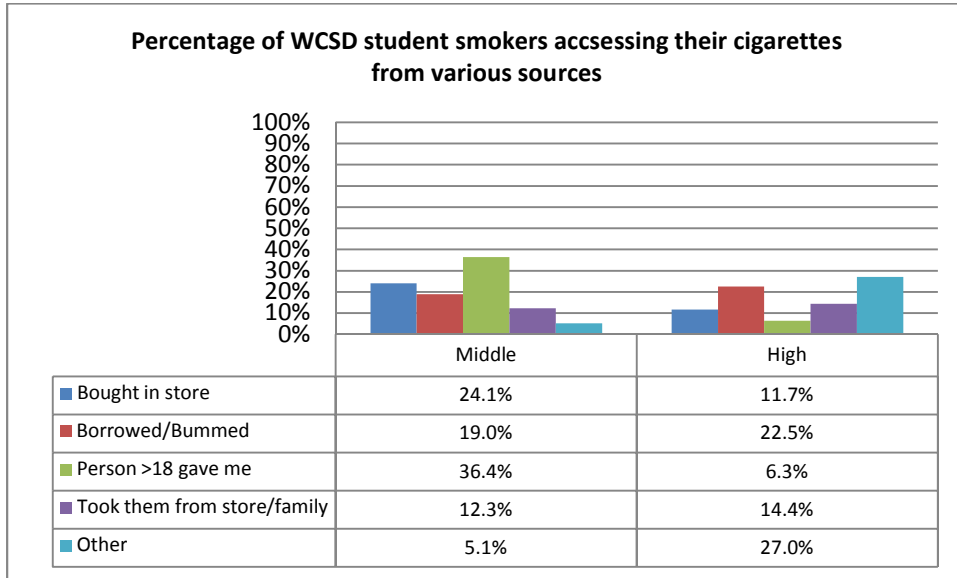


Chart 33



Tobacco, cont'd.

Chart 34



Sexual Behaviors

Chart 35

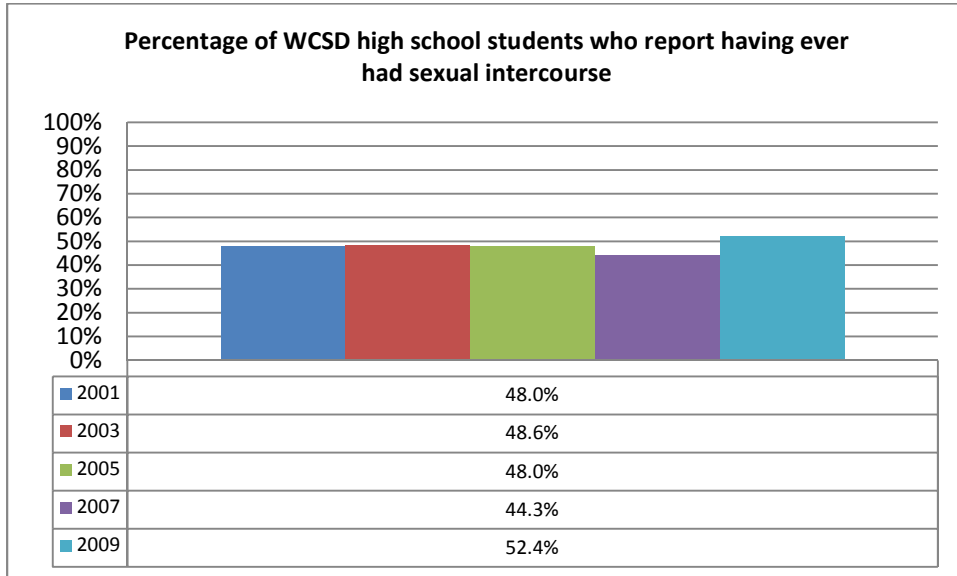
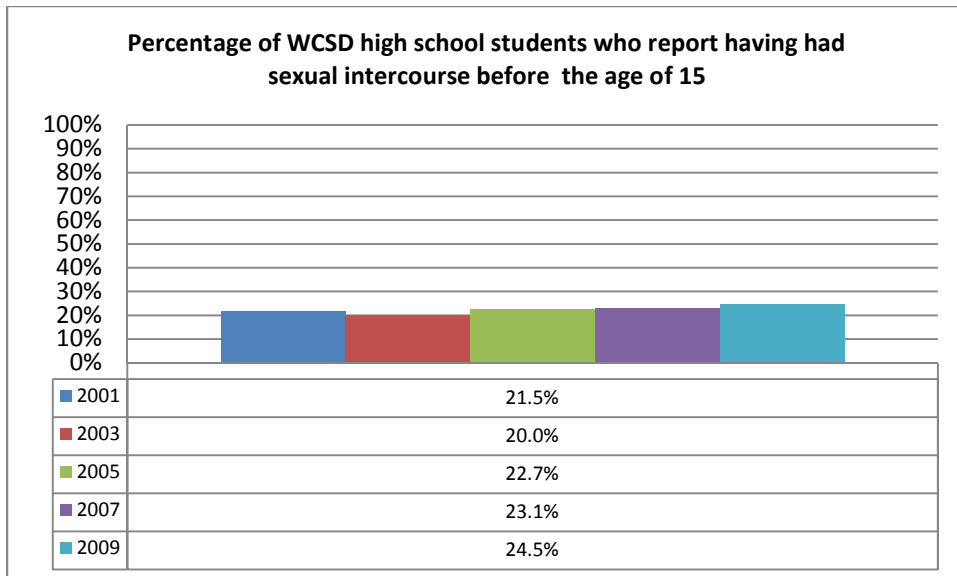


Chart 36



Sexual Behaviors, cont'd.

Chart 37

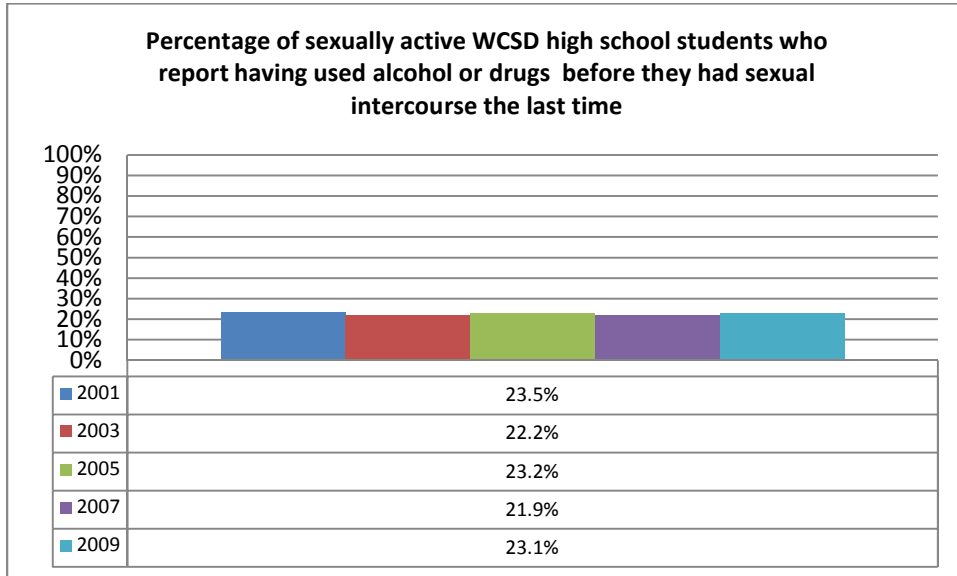
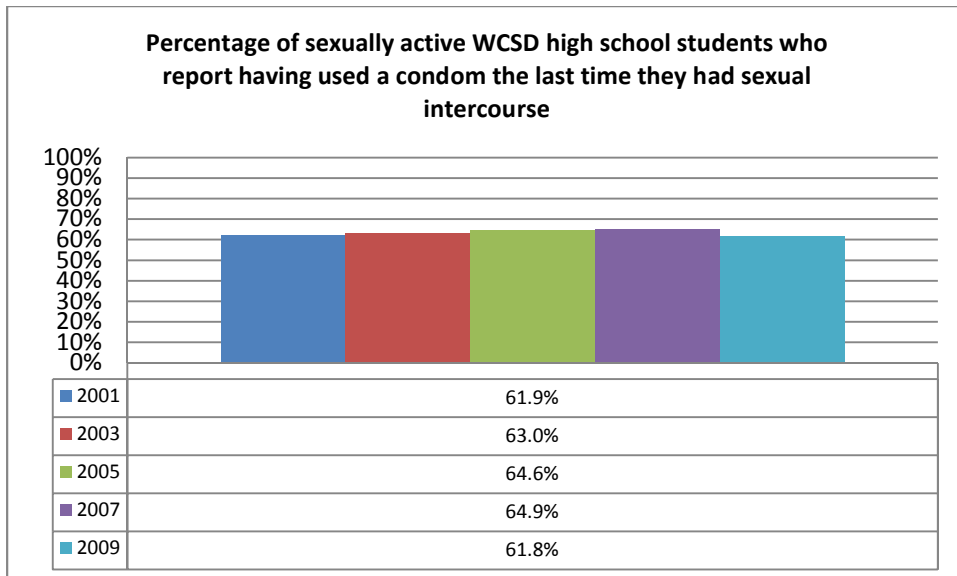
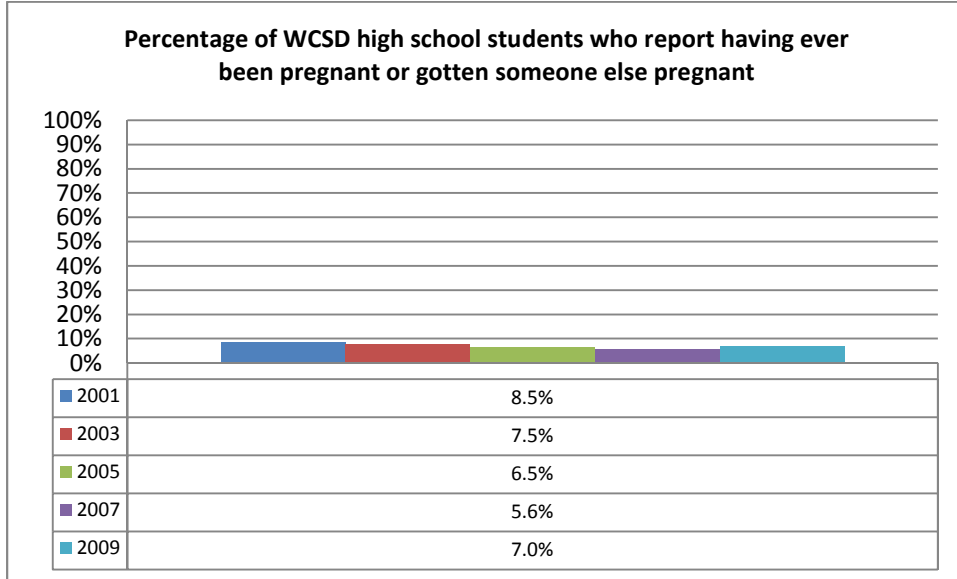


Chart 38



Sexual Behaviors, cont'd.

Chart 39



Summary

Overall, many of the trends noted at the high school level are concerning, while most of the middle school data is positive and shows improvement. In the area of academics and safety, high school students are increasingly missing school and reporting that they do not intend to pursue post secondary education, though they are slightly less likely to report poor grades. The percentage of high school students who “never”, “rarely”, or “only sometimes” feel safe and secure in their neighborhood almost doubled from 2001 to 2009, though feelings of safety at school are fairly consistent from 2003 to 2009. The percentage reporting that they have been in a physical fight in the past 12 months increased slightly every year from 2001 to 2009. The percentage of Washoe County high school students reporting that they carried a weapon in the past 30 days increased substantially in 2009, though the percentage who carried a weapon at school remained unchanged. Unfortunately, the percentage of students who were threatened or injured with a weapon at school in the past year has risen steadily each year since 2001. A disturbing trend continues in the percentage of high school students who have attempted suicide in the past year. Amongst the Washoe County high school population, this number increased every year from 2001 to 2009.

In terms of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, Washoe County high school students reported an increase in lifetime use of alcohol, riding in a car with someone who had been drinking, lifetime and 30-day use of marijuana, lifetime and 30-day use of cigarettes, and lifetime use of cocaine, inhalants, meth, and OTC drugs from 2007 to 2009. Further, they were much more likely to agree that they had been offered, sold, or given drugs at school in 2009 than in 2007.

For the first time in 2009, over half of Washoe County high school students report that they have had sexual intercourse. The percentage who report that they had sexual intercourse before the age of 15 continues to rise. Between 2007 and 2009, the percentage who report that they used a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse declined, and in accordance, the number of pregnancies increased.

Results are more encouraging at the middle school level. The percentage of students missing school declined sharply from 2007 to 2009. The percentage reporting that they did not feel safe in their neighborhood or at school declined dramatically from 2007 to 2009. Additionally, the percentage of middle school students who report that they did not go to school in the past 30 days because they felt unsafe declined from 2007 to 2009. These trends are all very encouraging, and can likely be attributed to various efforts targeted at middle school staff and students including the Middle School Safety Summit and various other interventions. Unfortunately, more middle school students are reporting that there are gangs in their schools, and more middle school students report that they have ever carried a weapon. It should be noted, however, that this question does not differentiate between weapons intended for use against humans and those used for hunting animals, which is a common pastime in Washoe County. In terms of suicide, from 2007 to 2009 more middle school students report seriously thinking about killing themselves, though less actually tried to kill themselves.

The 2009 results related to the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs at the middle school level are mixed. The percentage reporting lifetime use of alcohol declined from 2005 to 2007 but then rose again in 2009, while the age at which students first report having used alcohol remains unchanged. Lifetime use of marijuana and inhalants remain constant, while lifetime use of meth, cocaine, and OTC drugs to get high declined slightly from 2003 to 2009. Lifetime use of cigarettes continued to decline in 2009, though 30-day use remains unchanged. No identifiable trend can be seen in the percentage of students

who first used tobacco before the age of 13; these percentages have remained fairly consistent from 2005 to 2009.

In summary, much work still needs to be done to ensure that trends continue to move in a positive direction, or to reverse some of the negative changes seen between 2007 and 2009. It should be noted that one of the District's major focus areas over the past two years, middle school safety, has seen some major improvements between 2007 and 2009 in response to initiatives introduced by WCSD to improve school and climate safety. Among the most successful of these initiatives is the Middle School Safety Summit which has focused needed interventions at the middle school level. The newest initiative, Positive Behavioral Support (PBS), a sister initiative of Response to Intervention (RTI), targets all school levels through changing the culture of the school through positive rewards. Even at this early stage in implementation, promising changes are occurring at those schools that have adopted the system. This document should be used to continue to guide WCSD in determining focus areas for interventions, and where to target resources as the district moves forward in combating these barriers to academic achievement and overall student health.