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The High School Transition: A Step Ahead or a Downward Trend

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The High School Transition: A Step Ahead or a Downward Trend

Abstract

This research was recorded to discourage the placement of 7th and 8th graders into the Anaconda High School, because it was thought that the earlier transition to the high school environment causes poor and illegal decisions to be made as well causing a decrease in the responsibility of students. The research was conducted using the survey research method, and the surveys that were dispersed to the 7th grade through sophomore classes took all possible ethical concerns into consideration. The data collected showed significant increases in the consumption of both alcohol and marijuana after students had made the transition into high school, as well as decreases in student's levels of responsibility if a substance was being abused. With these findings it was concluded that the earlier transition to the high school proposed by the Anaconda school district should undoubtedly be discouraged, because students who have matured less than their older freshman peers would be even more likely to be influenced to take part in illegal and irresponsible activities.

The High School Transition: A Step Ahead or a Downward Trend

Topic

There is consideration of placing the 7th and 8th graders of the Anaconda school district into the high school in coming years. This research was performed in an attempt to show that this should be discouraged due to an increase in the use of drugs, alcohol, and other substances as students progress through the primary education system, especially once they reach high school.

Previous Studies

There have been many studies concerning the abuse of drugs, alcohol, and any other substance by students in the US education system. Many of which show that habits of substance abuse do increase as students reach the high school level, and that once this level is reached these habits can be seen in very large numbers.

Research from 2010 performed by the National Institute on Drug Abuse found that, on average, the number of sophomores that had consumed alcohol was double that of 8th graders. This organization has also shown that, by their senior year of high school, 72% of students had consumed more than a few sips of alcohol at some point (AlcoholEdu® for High School, 2011).

Another study from Columbia University, described in Carol Costello's 2012 interview with CNN news anchor Carl Azuz, showed that 17% of high school students use some substance; drugs, alcohol, or tobacco; on campus during the school day. It was also found that most of the students that used these substances reported that they were influenced to do so through peer pressure found online through pictures of friends, and messages that encouraged abuse of substances that are often found on social media websites. This research also showed that, on average, 60% of the 1,000 students surveyed by telephone, comprised from both public and private schools, reported that substances were available on campus, and 1/3 said that they were easily acquired (Azuz, 2012).

Also the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control's 2011 Youth Risk Behavior survey showed that alcohol abuse was significant in the high school environment. It showed that in a period of the past thirty day, from when the survey was conducted, that almost 2/5 of high school students drank some amount of alcohol, and that just over 1/5 had binge drank. This survey also reported that 8% of these students had driven while under the influence of alcohol, and that nearly 1/4 had ridden with a driver who was under the influence; which shows that the level of

“responsibility” shown by high school students while using alcohol was also somewhat low (Alcohol and Public Health: Fact Sheets-Underage Drinking, 2013)

Questions

1. How many students from each grade, 7th through 10th, abuse some sort of substance?
2. Do these numbers increase as students reach high school?
3. What level of “responsibility” is shown if and while a substance is being abused?
4. Does “responsibility” increase or decrease as students reach high school?
5. Does integration into the high school seem to have a negative effect on the responsibility and choices of students?

Conducting Research

In order to conduct this research the survey below was created, asking questions that would determine the number of students using substances, and their level of responsibility. There was a need to print large quantities of surveys, which was dealt with using the equipment available at the Anaconda High School. The surveys were to be dispersed and collected by individuals that were not involved with the analysis of the data, and the teachers of the Anaconda School district readily accepted this task. The rest of the work involved with this research was done without outside assistance.

Grade: _____

Please read through this survey carefully and answer the questions honestly based on the past 30 days using the 1-5 scale. An answer of 1 being you never have, and a 5 representing that you always do. Once again please answer honestly, there will be no information given as to who filled out this survey other than that which you have provided above.

<u>In the past 30 days have you:</u>	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Consumed alcohol?	1	2	3	4	5
Driven under the Influence of alcohol?	1	2	3	4	5
Remained in a single location if alcohol has been consumed?	1	2	3	4	5
Used marijuana?	1	2	3	4	5
Used another substance other than alcohol or marijuana?	1	2	3	4	5
Driven while under the influence of any substance?	1	2	3	4	5
Remained in a single location if a drug/substance was being abused?	1	2	3	4	5

Research Method

This research was conducted using survey research method. Surveys were passed out that contained questions that regarded the use of substances. Our survey focused on alcohol and marijuana, but also addressed the use of any other substance. Other questions that were asked concerned the actions of those students who were using substances, in order to determine if there was some level of “responsibility” being used if a substance was being abused. They addressed topics such as driving under the influence of a substance, and remaining in a single safe location if a substance was being abused.

Ethical Concerns

The ethical concerns of that were raised with collecting our data mainly surrounded the privacy of the students that were taking the surveys. This possible issue was taken into consideration and addressed in several ways.

1. Requiring only grade level to be recorded, and in doing so the possibility of names to be attached to individual surveys was removed. Even the singling out of someone based on their gender was rendered nearly impossible. Both of these factors aided in ensuring the anonymity of individual’s survey data.
2. Requesting teachers to pass out surveys to groups of students. By having teachers pass out surveys to groups of students no survey could be attached to a specific individual as they while they filled the form out, and no individuals that filled out the survey could be seen by those who would evaluate and collect the data from them. Also by collecting the data from an entire grade level at one time, there was little chance to identify any single students form from the entire groups.
3. Collecting all data of an entire grade level from said teacher at one time. In doing this there was little chance to identify any specific student’s form from the entire groups

Data

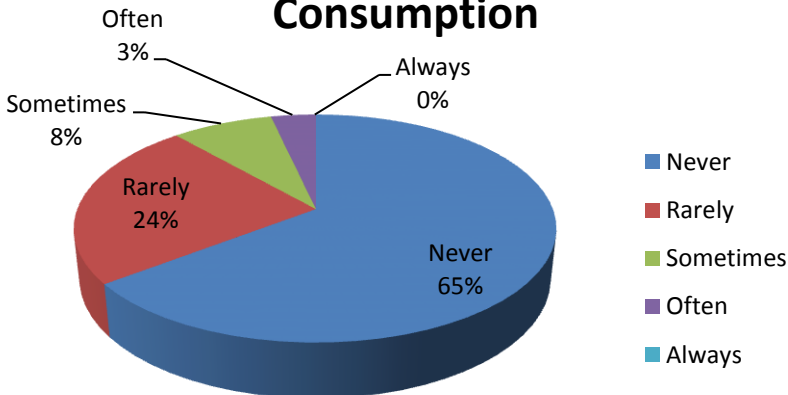
Middle School V. High School Illegal Habits

	<u>7th Graders</u>						<u>Freshman</u>				
	<u>Never</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Always</u>		<u>Never</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Always</u>
<u>1</u>	68%	25%	7%	0%	0%	<u>1</u>	65%	12%	5%	11%	7%
<u>2</u>	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	<u>2</u>	95%	2%	2%	0%	2%
<u>3</u>	0%	7%	0%	1%	91%	<u>3</u>	0%	11%	7%	5%	77%
<u>4</u>	97%	1%	0%	0%	1%	<u>4</u>	81%	5%	2%	4%	9%
<u>5</u>	94%	3%	3%	0%	0%	<u>5</u>	89%	5%	2%	4%	0%
<u>6</u>	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	<u>6</u>	93%	4%	0%	2%	2%
<u>7</u>	1%	4%	0%	0%	94%	<u>7</u>	0%	7%	2%	4%	88%

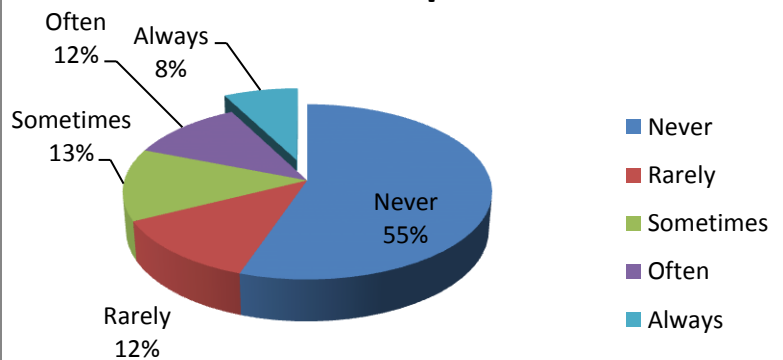
	<u>8th Graders</u>						<u>Sophmores</u>				
	<u>Never</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Always</u>		<u>Never</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Always</u>
<u>1</u>	58%	23%	9%	9%	0%	<u>1</u>	44%	13%	23%	13%	8%
<u>2</u>	93%	0%	5%	2%	0%	<u>2</u>	75%	19%	4%	0%	2%
<u>3</u>	7%	5%	16%	5%	67%	<u>3</u>	2%	10%	8%	15%	65%
<u>4</u>	86%	7%	2%	2%	2%	<u>4</u>	71%	8%	8%	6%	6%
<u>5</u>	86%	5%	2%	5%	2%	<u>5</u>	85%	6%	2%	2%	4%
<u>6</u>	95%	2%	2%	0%	0%	<u>6</u>	77%	10%	10%	0%	2%
<u>7</u>	9%	0%	9%	2%	79%	<u>7</u>	10%	6%	8%	6%	69%

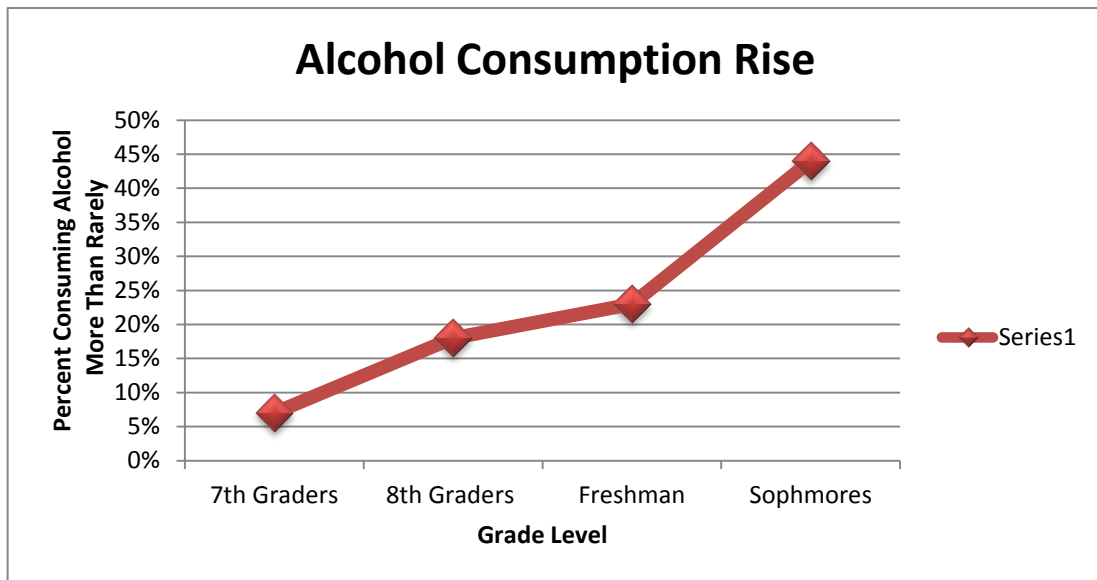
1	Consumed alcohol?
2	Driven under the Influence of alcohol?
3	Remained in a single location if alcohol has been consumed?
4	Used marijuana?
5	Used another substance other than alcohol or marijuana?
6	Driven while under the influence of any substance?
7	Remained in a single location if a drug/substance was being abused?

Middle School Alcohol Consumption

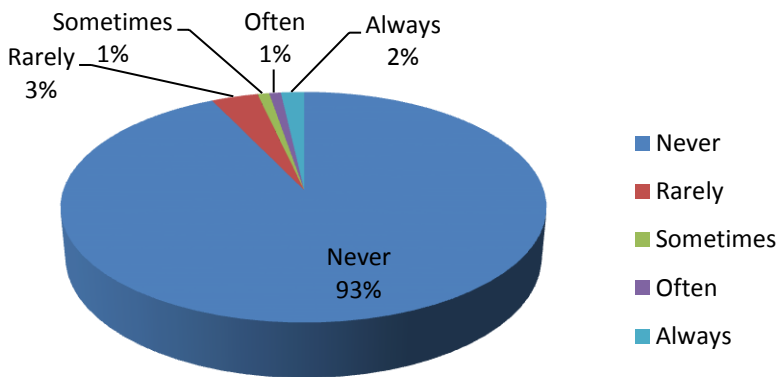


High School Alcohol Consumption

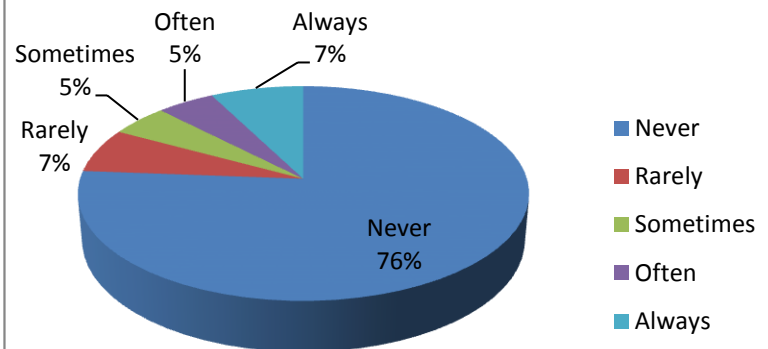




Middle School Marijuana Use



High School Marijuana Use



Results

The data collected through the surveys that were dispersed among Anaconda's 7th through 10th grade students confirms the hypothesis that the use of drugs, alcohol, and other substances increases once students reach high school.

The results showed that, compared to the 35% middle school students in 7-8 had consumed alcohol in the past thirty days, compared to the 45% high school students in grades 9-10. The frequency in which alcohol was consumed also increased greatly among high school students that had taken the survey, with 33% claiming that they consumed alcohol more than rarely compared to only 11% of middle school students. The data also showed a significant

increase in the amount of students using marijuana after entering high school, with only 7% of middle school students reporting to have used marijuana in the past thirty days compared to nearly 1/4 of all high school students surveyed.

In addition the reports from the students show the "responsibility" of students while using a substance decreases as they progress into high school. Among those who were recorded, the number of students driving under the influence increased by 18% between 8th graders and sophomores, and the number of students remaining in one location if marijuana had been used declined from 79% of 8th grade students to 69% of sophomores.

Overall, according to the data collected, the integration from middle school into high school decreases the responsibility and the choices made by students. It has shown that students are more prone to use substances such as marijuana and/or consume alcohol, the frequency in which substances are abused increases, and "responsibility" shown if a substance is being used decreases.

Conclusion

This research, as well as that of previous studies, proves that a student's integration into the high school can propose problematic and dangerous habits and behaviors, and that earlier integration, such as Anaconda's considerations of placing 7th and 8th graders into the high school in the coming years, should be discouraged.

This study showed some significant increases in the abuse of substances such as marijuana and alcohol after high school had been reached. The results from the collected surveys showed that 24% of high school students had used marijuana in the past thirty days, 17% higher than the middle school recordings. The number of students that were drinking also went up by 10% from middle school data to that of the high school; and over 1/3 of the high school students reported drinking more than rarely, compared to 1/10 of middle school students. This trend is shown even clearer through the data of 8th graders and sophomores, which showed that between 8th and 10th grade there was a 26% increase in the number of students drinking more than rarely. Results and trends such as these have also been noticed in studies from The National Institute on Drug Abuse, the Center for Disease prevention and Control, and the University of Columbia.

Social media connections with older students could also influence the 7th and 8th grade populations to drink and use other substance, due to the strive to fit in to the new setting that

most would likely have. Socialization with older students would become much more frequent among 7th and 8th grade populations if they were placed on the same campus as students up to six years older than themselves. Viewing the illegal actions of their older peers on sites such as Facebook, could cause the younger students to view habits such as drinking and abusing substances as socially normal things to do. This online peer pressure was shown to be very frequent among normal high school students around the country by the University of Columbia's telephone survey (Azuz, 2012). This increase in both face to face and online peer pressure would likely cause these even younger students to experiment with these things very quickly after their integration into high school.

The ability to make good choices and act responsibly also declines after the entry into high school, as shown by the data collected during this research. The survey results indicated that no 7th graders and 6% of 8th graders had driven under the influence of alcohol in the past month. According to the data the percentages of 8th graders and freshman were nearly the same in this category, but amongst the sophomore population 25% of the students had driven under the influence in the past 30 days, and 6% of these students reported doing so more than rarely. Also 79% of 8th graders reported to have remained in a single safe location if marijuana or any substance other than alcohol had been consumed, while only 69% of sophomores had displayed this "responsibility."

There were some minor faults in this research. Although most of the student population in each grade surveyed was taken into account, some students were not taken into account due to complications with teachers and student schedules. Teachers also reported that there was some confusion amongst younger students concerning how to respond to specific questions properly.

Even with these small mishaps this study should show society there are negative trends that are involved the entry into a high school environment, and that they will likely continue. The results showed increases in the use of both marijuana and the consumption of alcohol after students reach high school, as well as a decrease in the level of responsibility shown in decision making once these higher education levels are reached. This should also aid in the desired prevention of integrating younger students and lower grade levels into the high school; a consideration which should be cast aside due to the fact that it could cause students that partake in illegal substance abuse at an earlier age and in much larger numbers.

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