

The Coalition 2017 Adult Perception Survey Report Executive Summary

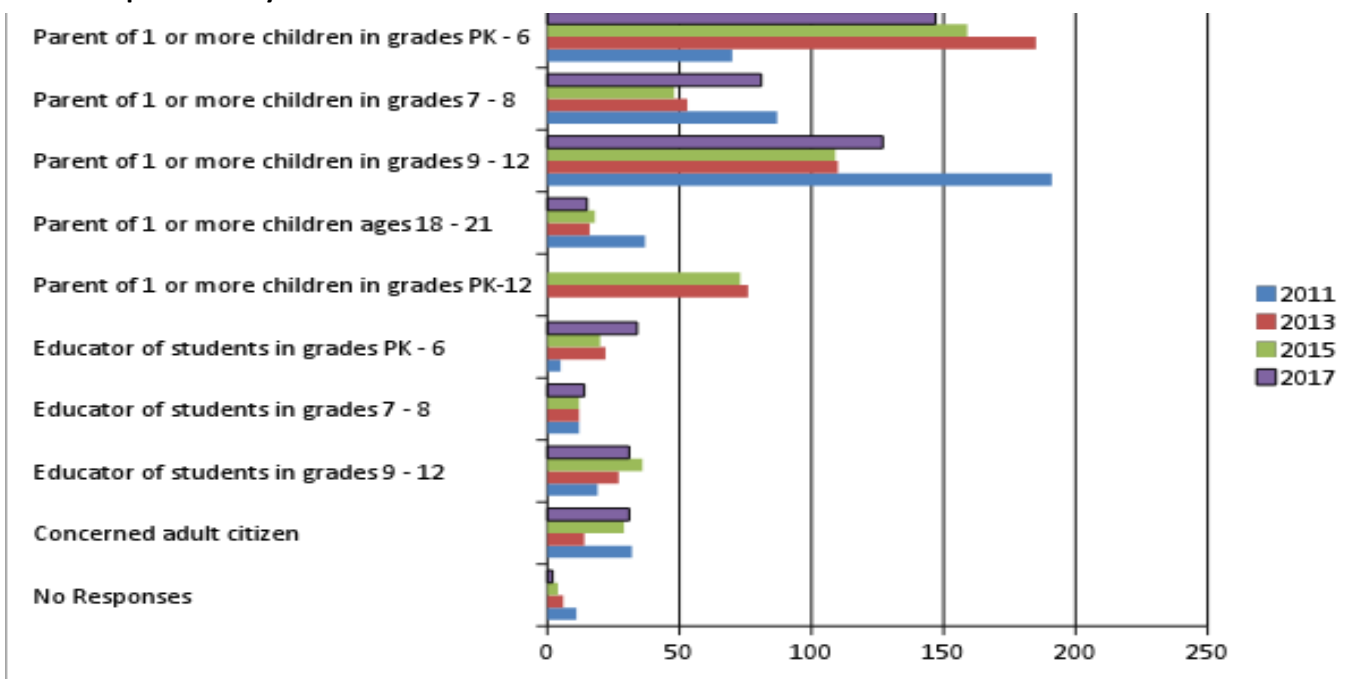
INTRODUCTION:

The Coalition, a program of [Tri-Town Council](#), conducted its fourth bi-annual online Adult Perception Survey in May/June 2017. The purpose of the survey was to provide an opportunity for Tri-Town parents/primary caregivers, educators and concerned adults to share their attitudes, perceptions and concerns of middle and high school youth regarding substance use and abuse and other health issues. The results of this survey provide information to expand understanding of parent and community concerns and beliefs, to assess parent, educator and community perceptions of normative behaviors of middle and high school Tri-Town youth, and to support and inform continued discussions to strengthen the well-being of all youth in the Tri-Town region.

PARTICIPATION:

The Coalition received 482 responses to the 2017 Adult Perception Survey. Of the total respondents, 31.5% were from Boxford, 25.3% from Topsfield and 30.7% from Middleton, which is similar to the population distribution across the 3 towns and represents an increase in participation from Middleton and a decrease from Topsfield compared with 2015. Most respondents (76.6%) were parents with one or more children in grades pre-K through age 21 compared with 80% of respondents in 2015. 16.3% of respondents identified as educators of youth in grades pre-K through 12, an increase from 13% in 2015. Participants identifying as concerned adult remained about the same, representing 6.7% of responses. Slightly more than seventy-six percent (76.7%) of respondents were female, about the same as the past two cycles of the APS, and 92.6% were between the ages of 35-54, an increase in that age group compared with 80% of participants in 2015 and 83% in 2013. The table below identifies and compares the number of respondents according to the role identified for 2017, 2015, 2013, and 2011.

Number of Respondents by Role:



KEY FINDINGS:

Common Concerns The adults who participated in the survey identified similar concerns for Tri-Town youth. The top concerns were: **MENTAL HEALTH, SOCIAL ISSUES, SUBSTANCE ABUSE, ACADEMIC PRESSURE, and TECHNOLOGY & SOCIAL MEDIA USE**¹. The top 4 concerns have shifted in their importance rankings from those identified in the 2015 and 2013 APS survey results.

Mental Health is now the number 1 top concern for virtually every respondent role, except for parents of youth, ages 18-21, which represent only 3.1% (N=15) of the 482 respondents. This group ranked Mental Health as its number 2 concern and only 2 percentage points behind its number one concern, Academic Pressure. Social Issues is either the #2, #3, or #4 concern for nearly every group. Substance Abuse is either the #2 or #3 concern for virtually every respondent role, except for educators in grades PK-6 and 7-8, where it was ranked 6th and 5th, respectively. Academic Pressure has more consistently appeared as a concern within the top 4 and Technology and Social Media use has been identified more consistently within the top 4 areas of concern.

Respondent Role	#1 Concern	#2 Concern		#3 Concern		# 4 Concern
Parents grades PreK-6	Mental Health	Social issues		Substance abuse	Bullying	Academic Pressure
Parents grades 7-8	Mental Health	Substance abuse	Social issues	Technology & Social Media Use		Academic Pressure
Parents grades 9-12	Mental Health	Academic Pressure		Substance abuse		Social Issues
Parents of youth aged 18 - 21	Academic Pressure	Mental health		Substance abuse		Social Issues
Educators PreK-6	Mental health	Social issues		Technology & Social Media Use		Academic pressure
Educators 7-8	Mental Health	Technology & Social Media Use		Bullying		Academic pressure
Educators 9-12	Mental health	Substance abuse		Academic pressure		Technology & Social Media Use
Concerned Adults	Mental health	Bullying		Substance abuse		Academic pressure

The issues of greatest concern were very similar, with slight differences between where in the ranking the concern fell. **Social issues** and **academic pressure** moved slightly in their ranking of importance since 2015, however, remain amongst the top areas of concern. **Substance abuse** moved slightly down in its concern ranking, but remained within the top 4 for most roles. New in 2015, **academic pressure** emerged as one of the top concerns for all parents of PK- 12 youth and while it is still a dominant concern in 2017, it has moved slightly lower in its ranking for most groups, with a notable exception for parents of ages 18-21 youth, where it has replaced **substance abuse** as their #1 concern. The many (50) open response comments related to this one question about the top concerns of adults echoed the themes of mental health, academic pressures, how technology & social media impacts youth socially including fueling social anxiety. Some of the comments also indicate that there are concerns about bullying and raise the question as to whether there might

¹ NOTE: For the 2017 survey cycle *technology and social media use* was introduced as a separate concern category, uncoupled from *social issues*.

be some benefit in re-educating parents and educators about the anti-bullying programs in place in the schools as there are many new parents and educators that have joined the communities since the initial anti-bullying programs were adopted by the school districts in 2010.

Educators across all grade levels now identify **Technology & Social Media use** within their top 4 areas of concern. (It should be noted that this category was added in the 2017 survey and was separated from ‘social issues.’) **Substance abuse** is not amongst the top 4 concerns of Educators of grades PK-6 and 7-8, but moves into the #2 spot for Educators of grades 9-12. For youth who engage in substance abuse, it can sometimes be a way of relieving or avoiding social and mental health issues and academic pressure.

Concerned citizens continued to identify mental health and substance abuse as top concerns in 2017 as they did in 2015 and 2013; however, bullying has now emerged as the #2 area of concern #4 area of concern in 2017.

Risk of Harm

Most respondents reported they believe that use of the following substances poses a moderate or great risk of harm for youth in grades 9 -12, as they did in prior years. As in prior years, respondents perceived that youth in grades 9-12 were at greater risk of harm from use than youth in grades 7-8.

	Middle School Youth		High School Youth	
	NO/Slight Risk	Moderate/ High Risk	NO/Slight Risk	Moderate/ High Risk
Smoke cigarettes daily	35%	65%	22%	78%
Use Electronic smoking devices	26%	75%	11%	78%
Sniff glue...to get high weekly	31%	69%	23%	77%
1-2 drinks of Alcohol 1-2x weekly	29%	70%	N/A	N/A
1-2 drinks of Alcohol nearly daily	37%	63%	21%	79%
Have 5+ drinks in a row 2x weekly	N/A	N/A	15%	86%
Smoke Marijuana 1-2x weekly	26%	74%	10%	90%
Smoke Marijuana nearly daily	34%	65%	17%	82%
Take OTC Medicines to get high weekly	32%	68%	20%	79%
Take Rx drugs to get high weekly	33%	68%	18%	81%

Perceptions of Youth Substance Use

As was shown in the 2013 and 2015 surveys, adults continued to perceive that more middle and high school youth smoked tobacco, drank alcohol and used marijuana at higher rates in the past 30 days than youth actually reported in the corresponding years’ Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) conducted at the Masconomet Middle and High Schools. Adult perception and youth reported usage rates are shown in the table below. **NOTE:** *Highlighted text represents the 2017 percent of adult perceptions that aligned with actual reported youth use.*

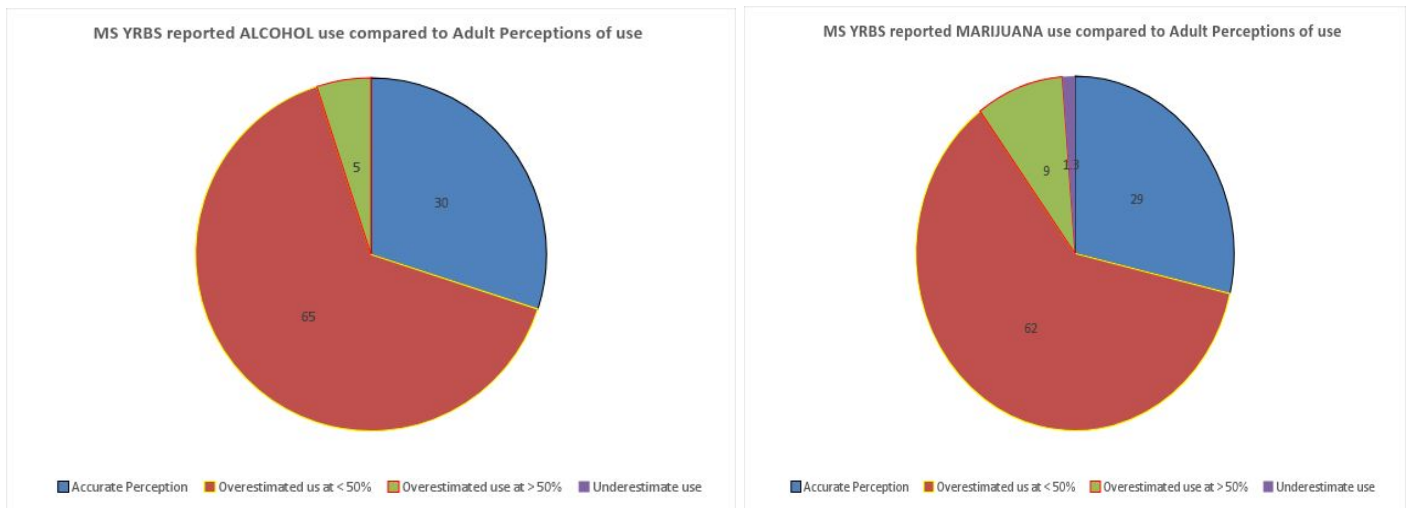
Substance		Adult Perception of Youth Use in Past 30 Days	Youth Report of Use in Past 30 Days
Grade 7-8	Alcohol: <i>How many MS youth had at least one drink of alcohol in the past 30 days?</i>	30% of adults thought between 0 – 10% of youth (this is a decrease from 39% alignment in the 2015 APS) 44% of adults thought between 11 - 30% 15% of adults thought between 31 – 50% 11% of adults thought between 61 – 80% < 1% of adults thought > 81% use	2.0 % of middle school youth self-reported alcohol use (MS use rate was 0.7% in 2014)
	Cigarettes: <i>How many MS youths have smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days?</i>	46% of adults thought between 0%-10% of youth (this is a decrease from 54% alignment in the 2015 APS) 42% of adults thought between 11-30% 13% of adults thought between 31-70% < 1% of adults thought > 71%+ use	1.1 % of middle school youth self-reported cigarette use (MS use rate was 0.2% in 2014)
	Marijuana: <i>How many MS youths have used marijuana in the past 30 days?</i>	29% of adults thought between 0 - 10% of youth (this is a decrease in alignment from 45% in 2015) 47% of adults thought between 11-30% 19% of adults thought between 31-60% 5% of adults thought between 61-80% < 1% of adults thought > 81%+ use	1.3% of middle school youth self-reported marijuana use (this is an increase from 0.4% in 2014)
Grade 9-12	Alcohol: <i>How many HS youth had at least one drink of alcohol in the past 30 days?</i>	35% of adults thought 30% or fewer of youth (under estimated use) 16% of adults thought between 31-40% 23% of adults thought between 41-60% 18% of adults thought between 61-80% 8% of adults thought between 81-100%	32% of high school youth self-reported alcohol use (this is an increase from 30% in 2014)
	Cigarettes: <i>How many HS youth have smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days?</i>	17% of adults thought 10% or fewer of youth smoked cigarettes 52% of adults thought between 11-30% 26% of adults thought between 31-60% 5% of adults thought between 61-80% < 1% of adults thought > 81%+ use	7% of high school youth self-reported cigarette use (this is an increase from 6% in 2014)
	Marijuana: <i>How many HS youth have used marijuana in the past 30 days?</i>	3% of adults thought between 0 – 10% 18% of adults thought between 11-20% of youth used marijuana 49% of adults thought between 21-50% 17% of adults thought between 51-70% 12% of adults thought between 71-90% < 1% of adults thought > 91%+ use	20% of high school youth self-reported marijuana use (this is a decrease from 22% in 2014)

Youth in grades 7-12 use alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana **at much lower rates** than is perceived by adult respondents. While the table shows a number of adult respondents accurately perceive middle and high school youth use rates of alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana (highlighted in the table), **the majority of adults perceive that middle school and high school youth are using substances at higher rates than the 2016 YRBS data indicate.** Adults accurately reported that youth substance use increases from middle to high school, as validated by the usage rates students reported in the 2016 YRBS. And, according to the YRBS reports, youth use of substances also increases as they progress through the high

school grades. While we certainly want to evaluate the impact of all our collective efforts across our communities in educating youth and families regarding the dangers of substance use, particularly during the highly vulnerable teenage years, we also want to recognize that, according to the results of the YRBS, **MOST Masconomet middle and high school youth are not using substances**. Alcohol, cigarette and marijuana use among Tri-Town youth is **not the normative behavior** based on the survey results. **Overestimating actual use rates among youth is a risk factor and can unintentionally promote risky behaviors by perpetuating the inaccurate perception that “everyone else is doing it”**. Therefore, it is important to determine adult perceptions regarding youth use rate, which can inform educational and informational programs that can positively impact perceptions, so they more closely align with reality.

Below are graphic displays of adult perceptions of use:

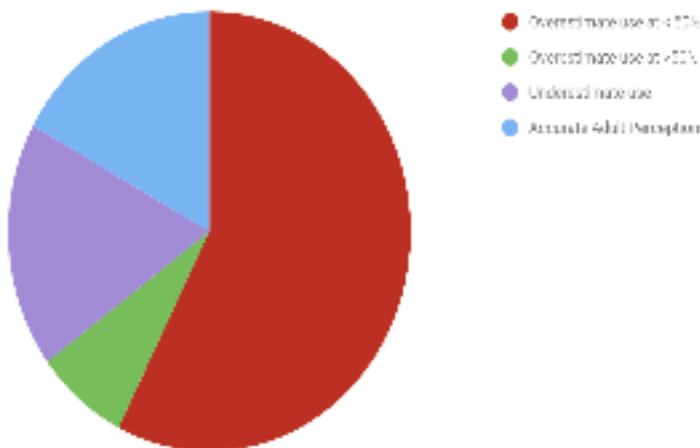
MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH ALCOHOL/MARIJUANA USE and PERCEPTIONS:



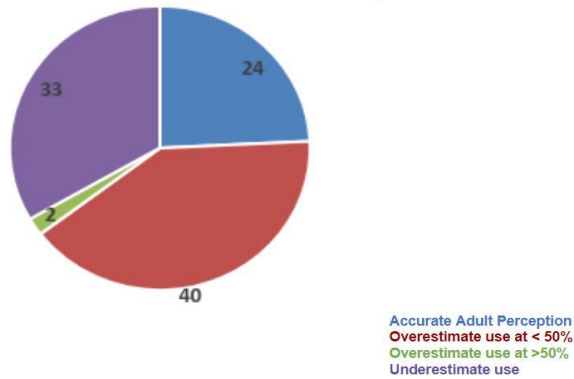
NOTE: MS youth self report alcohol and marijuana use at 2% and 1.3%, respectively.

HIGH SCHOOL USE RATES and ADULT PERCEPTIONS (Alcohol, Marijuana and E-Vapor Products):

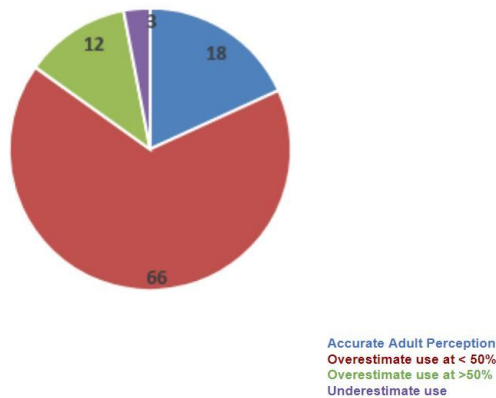
Adult Perceptions 30 Day Alcohol Use: HS



Adult Perceptions of Electronic-Tobacco Products/Device Use: HS



Adult Perceptions of Marijuana Use: HS



NOTE: HS alcohol, marijuana and e-vapor use is 32%, 20% and 28%, respectively.

Adult Attitudes towards Substance Use

Parental Attitudes about Youth Substance Use

Parents of middle and high school youth shared similar attitudes of disapproval of 7-12 graders use of substances.

- 100% of parents of children in grades 7-8 reported that it would be ‘very wrong’ or ‘wrong’ for their child to use cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana or other substances to get high, which is up slightly (from 98%) from the 2015 and 2013 survey results.
- 95% - 99% of parents of children in grades 9-12 reported it was ‘very wrong’ or ‘wrong’ for their child to use cigarettes, alcohol, or other substances to get high, compared with 93% or more in 2015. (The 95% very wrong/wrong attitude was towards marijuana use and the 99% attitude was towards hard drugs use.)
- NOTE: Aggregating the “very wrong” and “wrong” categories leads to comparable results for MS and HS parents, however; when looking at the response rate differences between the “wrong” and “very wrong” selections, it was noted there was a greater difference between the 2 categories for HS parents. For example: 81% of HS parents feel smoking cigarettes is ‘very wrong’ compared with 97% of MS parents; 80% of HS parents feel drinking alcohol is ‘very wrong’ compared with 97% of MS parents; 81% of HS parents feel smoking marijuana is ‘very wrong’ compared with 97% of MS parents.

Alcohol Access and Use

Adults identified the primary source of alcohol for middle school youth was from their own home, the same as in prior years. From friends and at parties were the second and third sources identified by survey participants. **Note:** 34% of respondents (accurately) selected “I think most youth in grades 7 – 8 do not use alcohol.” Per the 2016 YRBS, middle school youth who reported obtaining alcohol in the past 12 months primarily took it from home.

For high school youth, adults identified the top four most likely sources of obtaining alcohol as: home (79%), parties (62%), friends (62%), and older siblings (49%). Per the 2016 YRBS, of high school youth who obtained alcohol in the past 12 months obtained it through friends (24%), parties (20%), and home (14%) which was very similar to 2014 and 2012 YRBS results. In terms of where the alcohol consumption takes place, high school youth reported that they are most likely to drink at friends’ homes, 25.9%, at weekend parties, 23.3%, and at home, 12%.

Additionally, 58% of high school youth and 33% of middle school youth reported it is ‘very easy’ or ‘fairly easy’ to obtain alcohol. The high school youth response was slightly lower than in 2014 (61%), however the middle school youth response that had dropped from 41% in 2012 to 25% in 2014 has increased to 33% in 2016.

Adults were varied in their opinions about permitting youth under age 21 to drink at home.

- 58.2% of all survey participants felt it was never OK to allow youth under 21 to drink at home, a slight decline from the 2015 and 2013 results.
- 29.4% felt it was permissible to allow their own children under 21 to drink at home, 3% higher than in 2015, but very similar to 2013.
- NO participants believed it was OK to have youth drink in their home if an adult took their car keys, but 2.4% thought it was OK to allow youth to drink in their home if supervised.
- When breaking out results by respondent role’s age of children (i.e.: grades PK – 6; 7 – 8 etc.) most survey participants responses to “it is never OK to all youth under 21 to drink at home” were within +/- 5% of the aggregate 63%. However, there was a wider variance between role types when asked to respond to “it is ok to allow youth under 21 to drink at home only if it’s your own child”; parents of youth ages 18-21 were 6.2 percentage points above the aggregate and parents of youth grades PK-6 were 8 percentage points below the aggregate.
- 85% of middle school parent respondents would not allow their child to drink at home to prevent dangerous behavior.
- 97% of high school parent respondents would not allow their child’s friends to drink in their home to prevent dangerous behavior.

Parents of youth in grades 7 – 8 and parents of youth in grade 9 – 12 were also asked about their own attitudes toward underage drinking, the attitude of their child, the attitude of their child’s peers, and the attitude of child’s peers’ parents. Results are shown in the tables on the next page:

Middle School Parent Response

<i>Which statement best represents the attitude(s) of...</i>	<i>You</i>		<i>Your child</i>		<i>Your child's peers</i>		<i>Your child's peers' parents/guardians</i>	
	2015	2017	2015	2017	2015	2017	2015	2017
Drinking is never a good thing for youth under 21	81%	79%	81%	92%	37%	61%	58%	61%
Drinking is alright for youth under age 21, but they should not get drunk	8%	1.6%	5%	3.3%	28%	13.1%	13%	4.9%
Drinking is alright for older teenagers if it is in a private home with a parent present, and no one drives	10%	18%	11%	3.3%	23%	18%	29%	31 %
Getting drunk occasionally is okay for youth under 21 as long as it does not interfere with daily activities	1%	1.6%	3%	1.6%	12%	8.2%	0%	3.3%
Getting drunk regularly is okay if that is what the youth under 21 chooses to do	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0

2016 YRBS results show that 94.4% of middle school youth believe their parents would view them consuming alcohol as “very wrong/wrong”. When asked how their peers would feel about them drinking alcohol, 88.6% of youth selected “very wrong/wrong”. 82.4% of middle school youth reported that drinking one or more alcoholic drinks a day puts people at “great risk/moderate risk” of harming themselves.

Despite that the questions on the YRBS and Adult Perception Survey are slightly different and measure opinions, attitudes, and perception of risk of underage drinking, some comparisons may be gleaned. Analysis of the data table above and the YRBS results show that most middle school youth report knowing their parents disapprove of underage drinking, at slightly higher rates than middle school parent respondents perceive. Additionally, most middle school youth understand that underage drinking is a risky behavior. 82.4% identified risk of harm as “great risk/moderate risk”.

The survey data shows most middle school parent survey respondents disapprove of underage drinking (and would not allow their child to drink at home to prevent dangerous behavior), perceive their child shares a similar attitude, yet perceive child’s peers and other parents disapprove at much lower rates than they themselves, 18 percentage points lower.

High School Parent Responses

Which statement best represents the attitude(s) of...	You		Your child		Your child's peers		Your child's peers' parents/guardians	
	2015	2017	2015	2017	2015	2017	2015	2017
Drinking is never a good thing for youth under 21	80%	66%	51%	50%	22%	19%	39%	39%
Drinking is alright for youth under age 21, but they should not get drunk	<2%	13%	22%	23%	20%	30%	17%	16%
Drinking is alright for older teenagers if it is in a private home with a parent present, and no one drives	17%	21%	21%	19%	25%	24%	37%	43%
Getting drunk occasionally is okay for youth under 21 as long as it does not interfere with daily activities	<2%	0	4%	9%	26%	26%	6%	3%
Getting drunk regularly is okay if that is what the youth under 21 chooses to do	0%	0	2%	0	7%	1%	1%	0

2016 YRBS results show that 75% of high school youth believe their parents would view them consuming alcohol as “very wrong/wrong”. When asked how their peers would feel about them drinking alcohol, 43% of youth selected “very wrong/wrong”.

As with the middle school parent respondent data, high school parents perceive child’s peers and other parents disapprove of underage drinking at much lower rates than they themselves, at 27 percentage points lower. There was a change in the percentage of parents whose opinion is that ‘*drinking is alright for older teenagers as long as it is in a private home with a parent present, and no one drives;*’ the rate increased from 10% in 2015 to 18% in 2017. Additionally, almost all high school parents surveyed (97%), would NOT allow their child’s friends to drink in their home to prevent dangerous behavior.

Parent Conversations with Middle and High School Youth

Most parents of youth in grades 7-12 report having talked with their child(ren) about substance use and other health and safety issues.

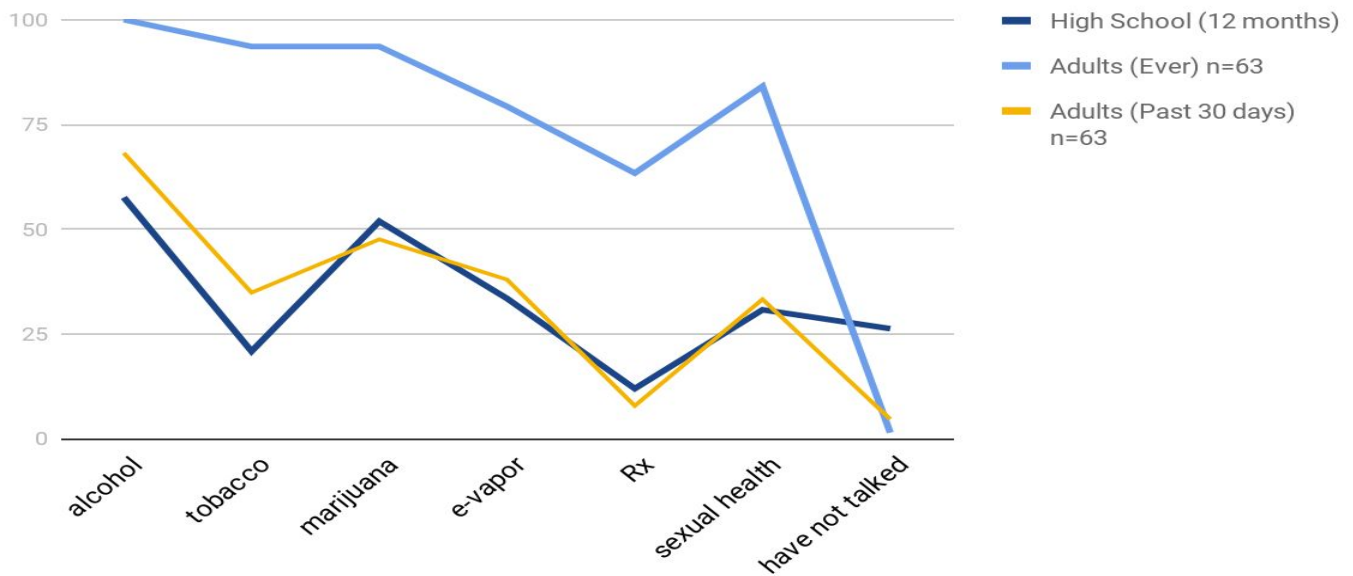
In 2017, parents of high school aged youth report having ever talked with their child about alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and driving with persons under the influence (92% or greater) and at lower percentage rates regarding the use of electronic smoking devices (78.5%) and high-risk drinking (62.8%). Parents of high school aged youth also report lower percentage rates of speaking with their children about the use of ‘hard drugs’, ranging between 22.8% (LSD or other psychedelics) and 68.5% (heroin). High school parents have talked with their children about healthy ways to manage stress (85.7%) and sexual health and safety (84%).

More detailed data regarding the conversation topics by parents of high school age youth for various risk behaviors break down as follows:

Topics:	Ever: (% of HS parent respondents)	Past 30 Days: (% of HS parent respondents)
Alcohol	98.5	68.5
Marijuana	92.8	47.1
Electronic smoking devices	78.5	37.1
Tobacco use	94.2	35.7
Driving with intoxicated person	92.8	48.5
Sexual health and safety	84.2	35.7

The graph below compares 2017 adult survey responses and the high school youth responses from the 2016 YRBS. **Please note:** YRBS results measure a 12 month time period, so a direct comparison of adult survey to youth survey responses is not possible.

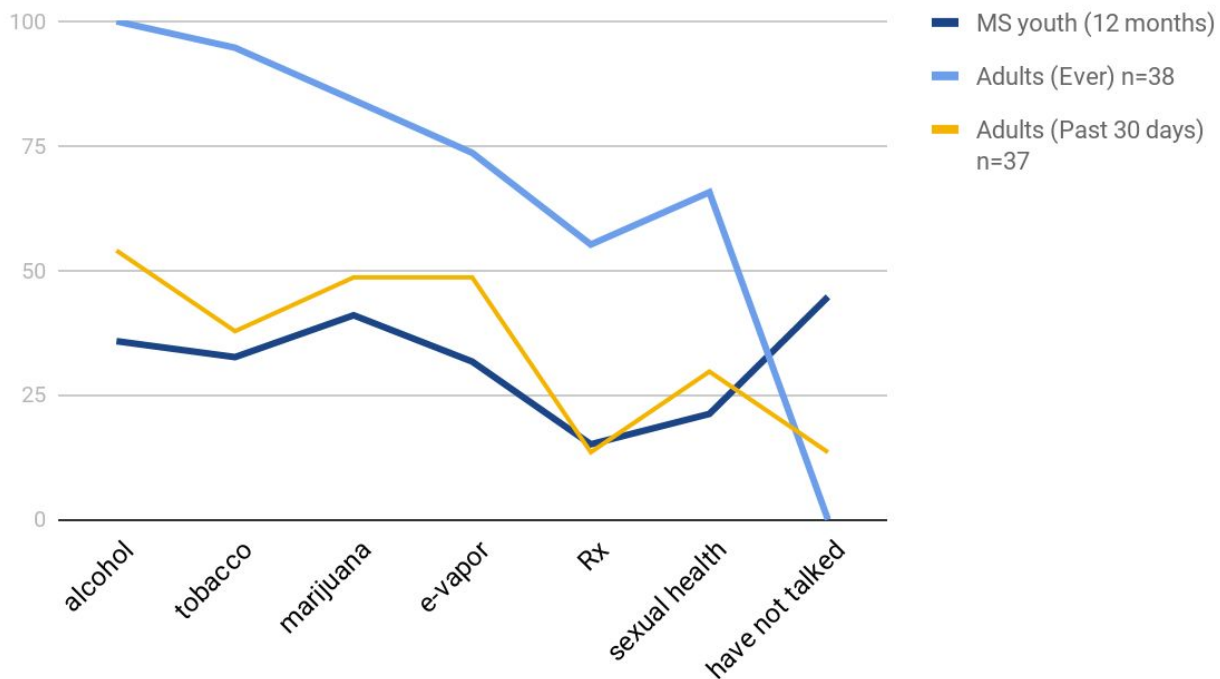
Topics discussed...High School



Encouragingly, the parents of middle schoolers, while a small sample size of 38 respondents, reported about the same frequency of talking with their youth about substance use as parents of high schoolers; this is an increase in frequency since the 2015 report. A slightly lower percentage of middle school parents report talking with their children about marijuana (88.7%) and high-risk drinking (48.3%). Middle school parents have talked with their children about healthy ways to manage stress (88.7%) and sexual health and safety (71%).

The graph below compares the 2017 adult survey responses and the middle school youth responses from the 2016 YRBS. **Please note:** YRBS results measure a 12 month time period, so a direct comparison of adult survey to youth survey responses is not possible.

Topics discussed ... Middle School



Parents of middle school aged youth report **ever** having talked about alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, the use of electronic smoking devices, and driving with persons under the influence at higher rates than previously. **Between 44 – 54% of middle school parents report having talked with their child about alcohol, tobacco products of any kind and marijuana use in the past 30 days.** More than double the percentage of middle school parents have ever talked with their child about prescription drug use without a prescription, (up from 28% in 2014 to 60% in 2016), and nearly double the percentage of parents have talked with their middle schooler about the use of other substances (heroin, inhalants, etc.), up from 28% to 52%. The percentage of parents of middle schoolers talking about sexual health and safety in the past 30 days is 36% compared with 71% that have ever talked with their children about this topic.

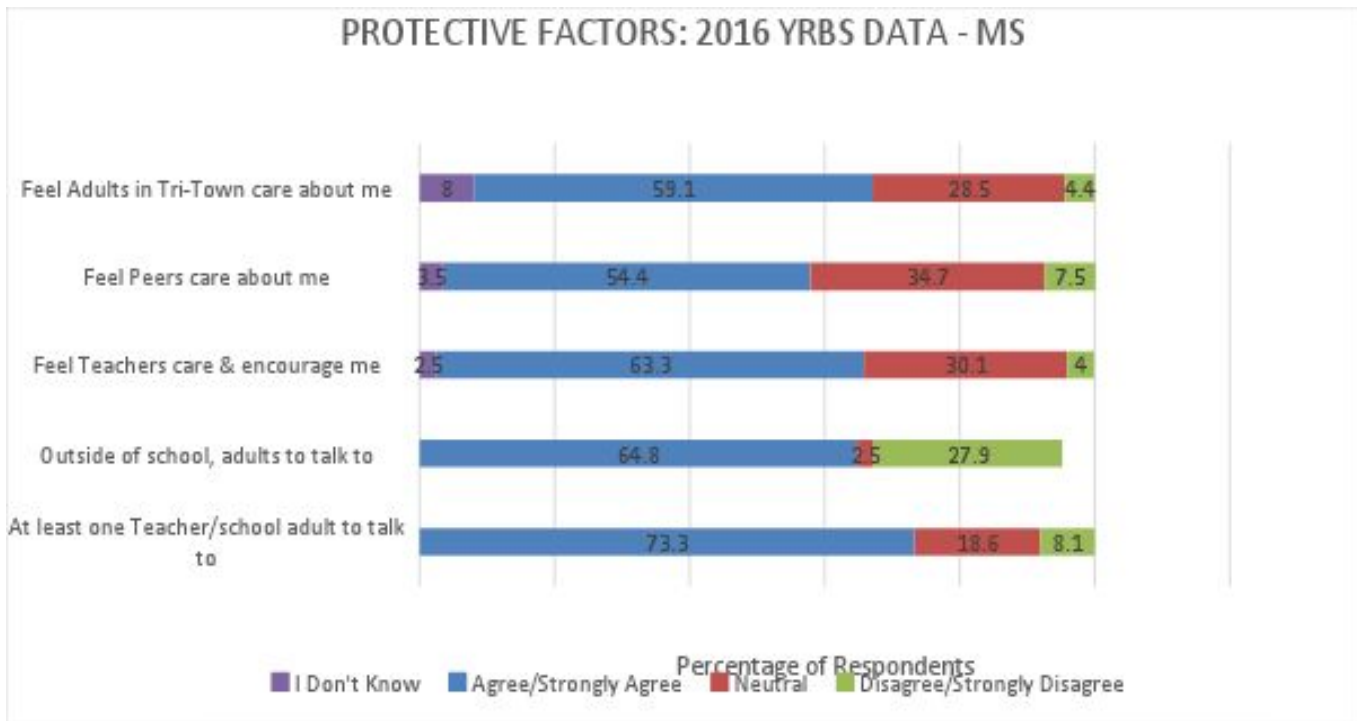
However, parents of high school and middle school aged youth had not had a conversation with their child(ren) about most of these topics in the past 30 days except for alcohol use as the only topic where greater than 50% of the parents (68.5%) reported a conversation within the past month. Driving with persons under the influence was just under half at 48.5% of parents. 52.8% of parents of high schoolers and 55.7% of middle schoolers’ parents also report having talked with their children about healthy ways to manage stress in the past 30 days.

Frequent and repeated conversations about risky behavior and substance use are necessary – especially since alcohol and substance use rates increase with age as do reports of sexual activity. Frequent and repeated conversations are not only important, but are actually helpful in deterring the early onset of alcohol and/or substance use as the youth report believing their parents have a high rate of disapproval of their use of substances. They do listen...they just may not look like they are ‘taking in the message’ at the time of the conversation. Multiple research studies indicate that the longer youth put off or delay use of alcohol and or drugs, the less likely they are to develop dependence and the more time their brains have to continue developing and maturing, leading to better adult outcomes. Although teenage youth are not always open to deep and lengthy conversations about sensitive topics, it is important for parents and adults to continue to provide youth with messages of support and the facts and data to help them make good decisions when they are not in situations under the direct control or supervision of parents.

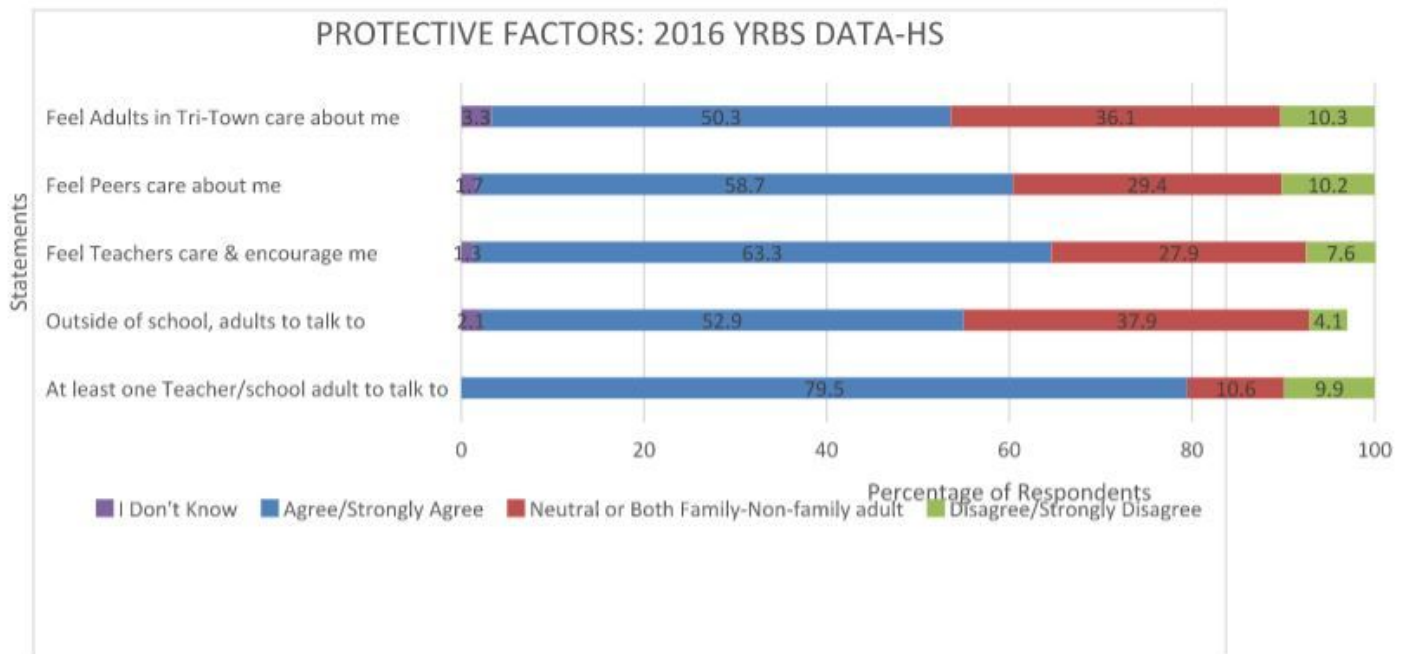
Protective Factors

Most parents of middle and high school aged youth report an adult family or non-family member (outside of school) their child(ren) can talk with about important things, 59.6% of middle school parents and 57.1% of high school parents.

The 2016 YRBS data shows that 73.3% of middle school youth and 79.5% of high school youth report having an adult at school they can talk with if they have a problem and 64.8 % report they have a parent or adult family member with whom they can talk about things that are important to them; this is an increase in identifying parents/adult family members and a slight decline in reporting both family and non-family members since the 2014 YRBS. (See graphs below)



When asked whether middle school youth feel valued and cared about by adults in the Tri-Town community, 76% of parent respondents of middle school youth strongly agreed/agreed, while 21% chose “neutral”. This reflect both a decline in the middle school parents’ agreement and an increase in the percentage of parents choosing neutral to this statement. The 2016 YRBS data shows that 59% of middle school youth strongly agreed/agreed that the Tri-Town community cares about them as young people, a decline from 66% in 2014.



NOTE: In the above graph, for the line reporting the percentage of HS youth who had an adult outside of school to talk to, an additional 2.9% of youth reported they had a non-family adult with whom they could talk about important topics.

In comparing the 2016 YRBS and 2017 APS data, it is important to note that there is a significantly larger percentage of youth who identify adults with whom they may confide than their parents realize. Encouragingly, both middle school and high school students report having at least one teacher or school adult with whom they may talk about important topics, 75% of high school and 73% of middle school youth. Encouragingly, 63% of both middle and high school students report agreement with the statement ‘Teachers care about me and give me encouragement and support.’

The APS data indicates that 79% of high school parent respondents strongly agreed/agreed that youth in grades 9 – 12 feel valued and cared about by the adults in the Tri-Town community, an increase of 9 percentage points over the 2015 results; and a decline in the percentage of parents choosing ‘neutral’ from 24% to 17%. The 2016 YRBS data shows that 50.3% of high school youth strongly agreed/agreed with the statement “I feel valued and cared about by the adults in the Tri-Town community.”

HOPE, CONCERNS and OPPORTUNITIES:

Common Concerns:

- **Mental health** of youth is a dominant concern for all respondent groups.
 - What variables have contributed to this increased concern; the number of students with mental health issues? The types and intensity of behaviors displayed by these youth, even if the number of students hasn't increased? What changes have been made within the schools to address the mental health needs of youth? Have there been changes in access to private mental health providers and/or insurance coverage rules for such needs?
- **Substance abuse** does not appear as a #1 concern for any respondent group and has decreased from appearing 4 times as a #1 or #2 area of concern in 2015 to appearing 2 times as a #2 area of concern (Educators of grades 9-12 and Parents of grades 7-8), yet is a #3 concern for 4 respondent groups. Therefore, substance abuse continues as an area of concern that requires consistent attention and resources.
- **Academic pressure** is less dominant within the top 3 areas of concern than it was in 2015, appearing only twice in 2017 compared with 7 times in 2015. However, it is the 4th area of concern for 5 respondent groups, so remains an area in need of attention.
 - What variables might have influenced the level of concern for Academic pressure? Are there revisions to homework policies? Are there additional support programs available for students to help with the pressures? Has there been an increase in the number of students and/or frequency with which students access the after-school help programs at Masconomet?
- **Social issues** appear less frequently in the top 3 areas of concern in 2017, with 4 instances across respondent groups compared with 9 instances in 2015. It is more of a concern for Parents PK-6 and 7-8 (#2) and for Educators PK-6 (#2) and 7-8 (#3), than for parents and educators of older youth.
- **Technology & Social Media use** appears in the top 3 concerns for 3 respondent groups. Educators in PK-6 and 7-8 were two of the groups that identified this area of concern.
 - What are the educators seeing in terms of frequency of use? How the technology is being used? Do they believe this may be contributing to weaker social skill development and/or detracting from academic focus while in school? How has the use of devices across the curriculum impacted this as a concern?
- **Bullying** is a concern to PK-6 parents (#3) and is ranked as #5 for educators of PK-6; it is also the #2 concern for concerned citizens.
 - What might be contributing to the increase for parents of PK-6 but a decrease in concern of the educators of youth PK-6?
 - Middle school educators surveyed rated bullying as their #6 area of concern this time, a drop from its more prominent position (#3) in 2015.
 - What might teachers be seeing or sensing with middle school youth that is contributing to this being less of a concern? (It is also important to note that the middle school educators' response rate was low (14), therefore caution should be taken in interpreting the results of this respondent group.)

Many of the top concerns identified across respondent groups are “**root causes**” that may lead to substance abuse. (Mental health, social issues, academic pressure)

- What resources do parents/primary caregivers, teachers and citizens have to address their top concerns for youth and how are these resources made available and accessed? In what ways are these concerns addressed in schools and in the community? Are there any consistent ‘messaging campaigns’ that would

be helpful for all constituents to consider? To what degree have some of the positive programs impacted youth development and parents in the challenges of raising strong and resilient youth?

Perceptions of Youth Substance Abuse:

- *While most adults misperceive middle school and high school youth use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana, the percentage of adults who misperceive at rates of 50% or higher is relatively small, which is positive. (Clinically significant misperception is defined as a difference of 50%+ in perception vs. actual use rates and this can unintentionally increase youth use.)*
- *No adults underestimate substance use by middle school youth and a larger percentage of adults accurately perceive middle school youth use of all substances than they do of high school use rates.*
- *Adults underestimate high school youth use of several substances:*
 - *35% of adults underestimate HS use of Alcohol and 17% underestimate HS binge drinking*
 - *33% of adults underestimate HS youth use of E-tobacco product use*
 - *3% of adults underestimate HS youth use of marijuana*
- *The Positive Community Norms campaign - where Tri-Town youth's positive normative behaviors are promoted school and community wide – will help to address these misperceptions.*

Adult Attitudes towards Substance Use:

- *While all parent respondents strongly disapprove of substance use, it was noted that 100% of middle school parents disapprove of substances as “very wrong or wrong” and that 96% of high school parents disapprove of substances “very wrong or wrong”.*
 - *How might this subtle shift impact young people's perceptions and actions?*
- *Primary source of alcohol is perceived to be the home among adults and is consistent with middle school YRBS data. Continue to educate parents/primary caregivers of the importance of securing alcohol kept in the home.*
- *Most high school youth report weekend parties and friends' homes as the location of drinking; continue to educate parents about the ways in which alcohol can be concealed, consumed. Presentations such as “Hidden in Plain Sight” will continue to educate adults in the community.*
- *While most parent respondents disapprove of underage drinking, the survey shows they misperceive the attitudes of their child's peers and other parents/guardians. Parents of both middle and high school youth believe their children's friends' parents disapprove of underage drinking at a lower level than themselves.*
 - *What impact might those misperceptions have on themselves, their children, and the community?*
 - *As part of the Positive Community Norms campaign, develop messaging for parents/primary caregivers that communicates parental disapproval of underage drinking is a **normative belief** among parents of middle and high school aged youth.*
 - *It's possible as youth enter middle/high school and become part of broader social circles, parents may not know their child's new friends/families well and may be hesitant to talk to other parents due to the risk of isolating their child from his/her peer group. To address this concern:*
 - *Encourage parents/primary caregivers to talk with each other about substance use*
 - *Provide parents/primary caregivers resources for how to have these difficult or sensitive conversations with each other; perhaps have easy to locate ‘fact sheets’ with key YRBS and APS data that can be the conversation starter*

Parent Conversations with Middle and High School Youth:

- **All parents** have talked with their children about the use of substances; the percentage varies with age and type of substance
 - A slightly higher percentage of middle school parents report talking with their children about alcohol, cigarettes, and electronic tobacco products/devices more frequently than high school parents.
 - A significantly higher percentage of high school than middle school parents report talking with their children about binge drinking, marijuana use, taking prescription drugs without a prescription, sniffing inhalants or glue, the use of OTC drugs, and the use of ‘hard drugs’
 - A significant decrease in parents of both middle and high school students is reported when asked about these conversation topics within the past 30 days. **Frequent and repeated conversations about substance use are necessary – especially since use rates increase with age AND that all students report believing their parents have a high rate of disapproval of their use of substances. They do listen...they just may not look like they are ‘taking in the message’ at the time of the conversation.**
 - Remind parents/primary caregivers of the importance of **frequent conversations** and to look for natural opportunities to initiate conversations.
 - Provide “ages and stages” resources for talking with children about substance use as they grow; include pertinent facts about both state and Tri-Town reported use rates and the potential dangers of misperceptions by adults. (One parent comment noted that the changing laws/regulations/rules about marijuana are confusing, so resources to help guide those conversations would be appreciated.)

Protective Factors:

- Most parents perceive their children have people outside of school they can talk to and this perception is supported by the 2016 YRBS data.
- Most parents perceive that youth are valued and cared about by the adults in the Tri-Town; however, a significant percentage are “neutral”, which was also reflected in the 2016 YRBS. The 40 Developmental Assets Framework can provide the information, support, and tools adults may need to communicate how they value and care about young people. This work may impact those who feel neutral.
- School leaders may be able to include ways in which their educators demonstrated caring for youth in newsletters, blogs, school committee reports, etc., so that the varied and valiant efforts of educators are publicly communicated and recognized.
- Continue to look for opportunities in the community to communicate Asset information.
- Continue to provide opportunities for youth to contribute in a meaningful and authentic way to the community.

Tri-Town Council’s Coalition would like to thank all the adults who took the time to complete the APS in the spring of 2017; we understand how very busy and complicated lives have become, and your time and effort are deeply appreciated! There is no greater resource nor population more important than our youth!

NOTE: It should be stated that the Adult Perception Survey was developed by the ‘data team’ of the Coalition and is intended to gather information from various adult groups in the Tri-Town to help compare adult perceptions with actual substance use rates, as well as the understanding and importance of social norming conceptions. There are other bodies of research that support the notion that when perceptions exceed 50% of actual use rates, there can be the unintended result of increased use. As an ‘opinion survey’, it is not scientific and exact in its measurements, however, is very useful when comparing data across years in gauging the impact of various programs established by various youth oriented agencies and groups in the Tri-Town communities. As this is the fourth cycle of administration of the APS, the data is gaining in its consistency and value to interested groups.