



## RESOURCES

# The Importance of Social Norms in Substance Use Prevention

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Project Director, Alcohol Education & Youth Health & Safety Projects

**Michael Haines, MS**

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Social Norms Consultation





## PRESENTER BIO

### H. Wesley Perkins, PhD



Dr. Perkins is a Professor of Sociology at Hobart & William Smith Colleges and Project Director of the Alcohol Education and the Youth, Health and Safety Projects, initiatives providing research, educational resources, and strategies to reduce risk-related and problem behaviors among youth and young adults. This Project has received multiple national awards from the U.S. Department of Education as a Model Prevention Program. Dr. Perkins has published extensive research on promoting health and well-being and numerous publications on prevention of violence and substance abuse among youth. He developed the theory underlying the social norms approach to preventing risk behavior and edited a book on *The Social Norms Approach to Preventing School and College Age Substance Abuse*.

Dr. Perkins has delivered over 400 guest lectures, keynote addresses, research presentations, and workshops for universities, secondary schools and professional conferences and has consulted with hundreds of secondary schools, institutions of higher education, and community health agencies about social norms interventions throughout the United States, Canada, England, and Scotland.





## PRESENTER BIO

### Michael Haines, MS



Michael P. Haines is a private consultant and former Director of the National Social Norms Resource Center. Mr. Haines and his staff implemented the first successful use of the Social Norms Approach to reduce heavy alcohol use. The effort was chosen as an Exemplary Program by the U.S. Department of Education, a national model by the New York Times, and featured in the Chronicle of Higher Education and USA Today.

Mr. Haines is a Fellow of the American College Health Association, was a developer of their National College Health Assessment for which he received their Hitchcock Award.

Mr. Haines was honored with the Northern Illinois University Presidential Award for Excellence and the Outstanding Service Award for National Drug Abuse Prevention from the U.S. Department of Education.

Currently, he is a consultant to the state of Maine, the National Social Norm Institute, and programs in Georgia, and Illinois.



# **The Importance of Social Norms in Substance Use Prevention Messaging**

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## **The Social Norms Approach**

- What is it and how does it differ from other approaches to substance abuse prevention among youth?
- What are the basic principles of the approach?
- Is there clear evidence of effectiveness in prevention interventions using this approach?

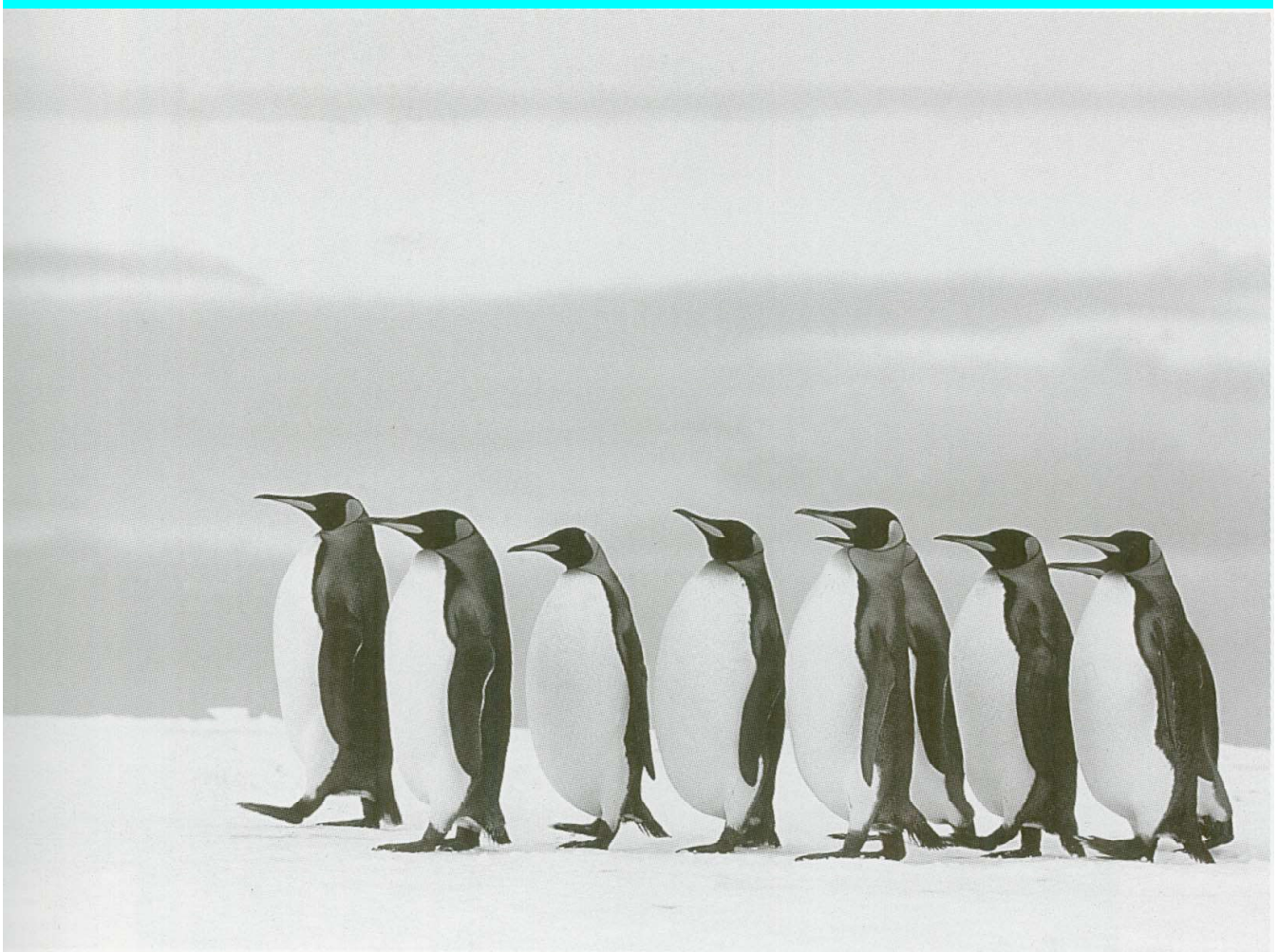
# Current Theoretical Models for Risk Behavior Prevention

- Health Education
- Health Terrorism
- Asset Based Resistance
- Social Control
- Social Norms

## Starting Point for Social Norms Approach

**Humans are group oriented.**

**We are largely influenced by  
and conform to peer norms.**



Long Tradition of Theory and  
Research on Peer Influence and  
Conformity to Peer Norms

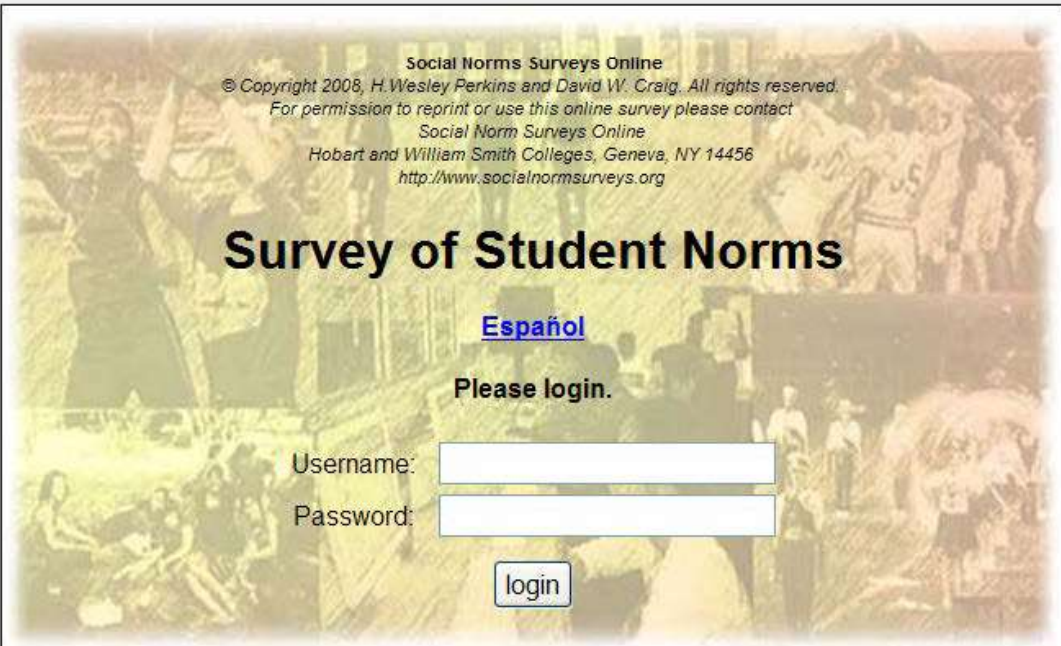
What about Perceptions of Peer Norms?



# Two indisputable findings in the research literature:

1. The peer norm is one of the strongest predictors of personal behavior.
2. Peer norms about substance use and other risk behaviors are grossly misperceived in the direction of overestimated behavior and permissiveness in attitudes.

## Web Surveys Online



Social Norms Surveys Online  
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For permission to reprint or use this online survey please contact  
Social Norm Surveys Online  
Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, NY 14456  
<http://www.socialnormsurveys.org>

### Survey of Student Norms

[Español](#)

Please login.

Username:

Password:

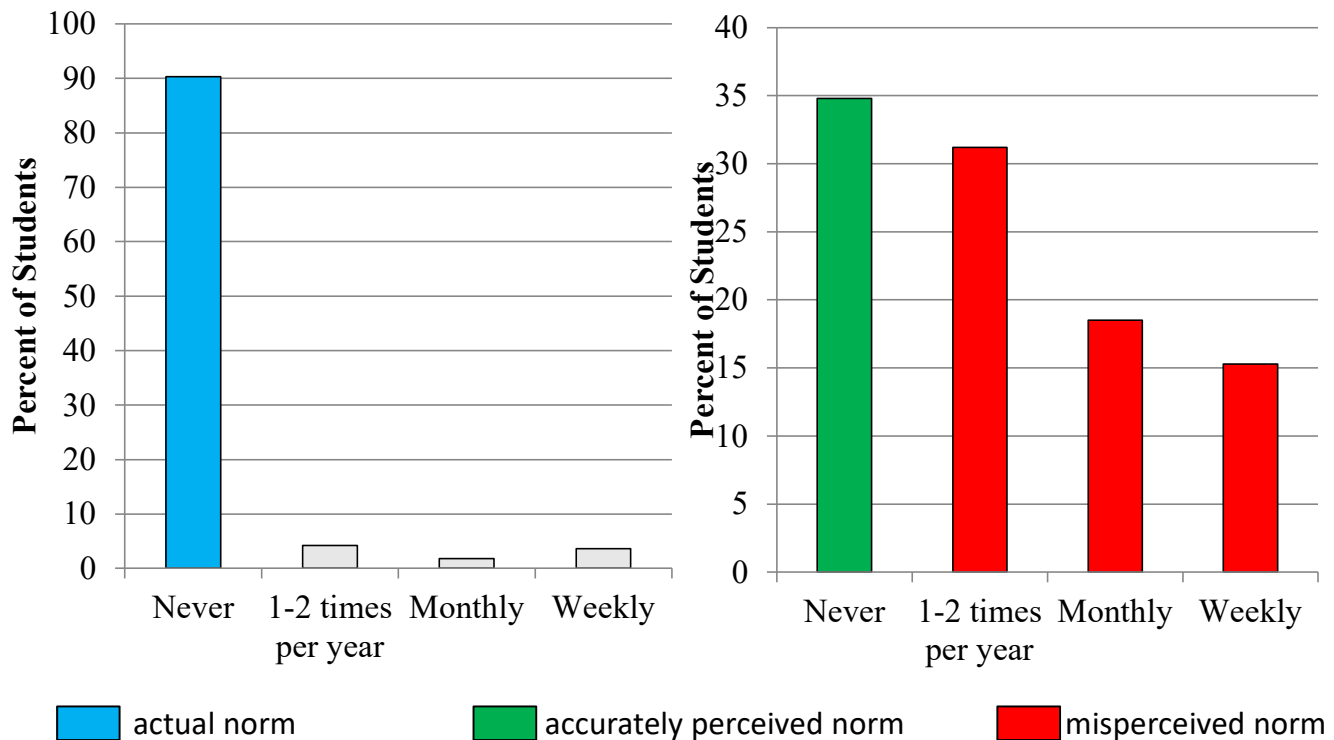
# Sample Secondary School Data

119 School Cohorts Surveyed  
Grades Ranged from 6 -12  
12 States across the USA  
52,462 Respondents

Source: HW Perkins and DW Craig, [www.YouthHealthSafety.org](http://www.YouthHealthSafety.org)

## Grades 6 - 8

### Personal Tobacco Use and Perceived Norm

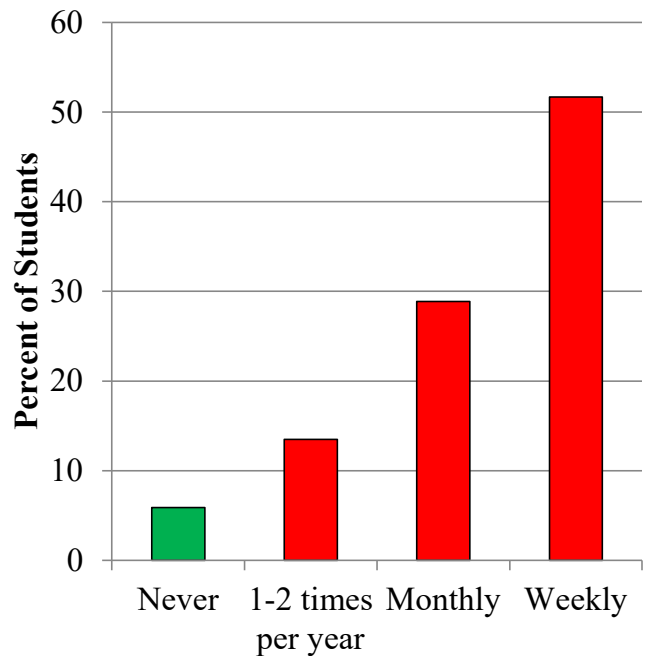
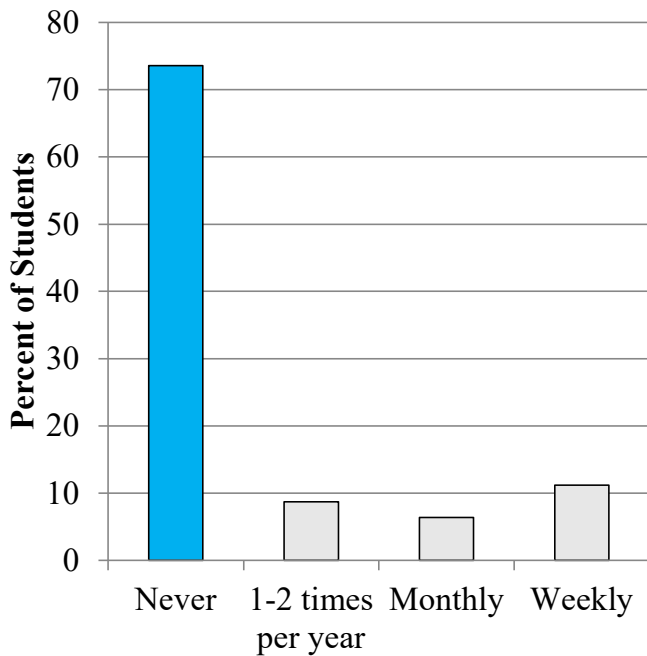


Source: HW Perkins and DW Craig, [www.YouthHealthSafety.org](http://www.YouthHealthSafety.org)



## Grades 9 - 12

### Personal Tobacco Use and Perceived Norm

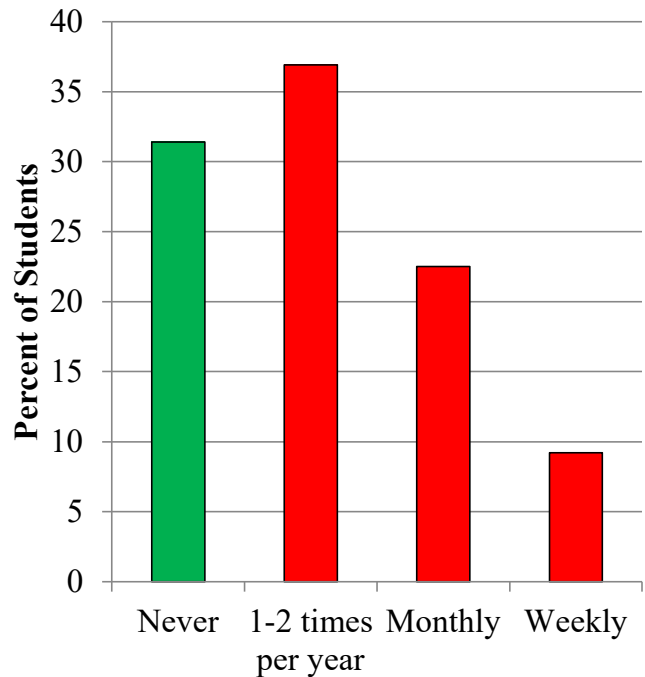
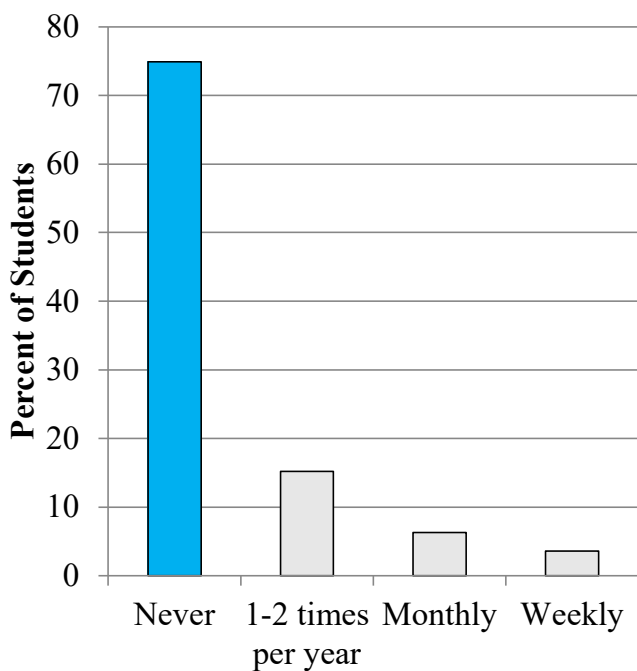


actual norm      accurately perceived norm      misperceived norm

Source: HW Perkins and DW Craig, [www.YouthHealthSafety.org](http://www.YouthHealthSafety.org)

## Grades 6 - 8

### Personal Alcohol Use and Perceived Norm

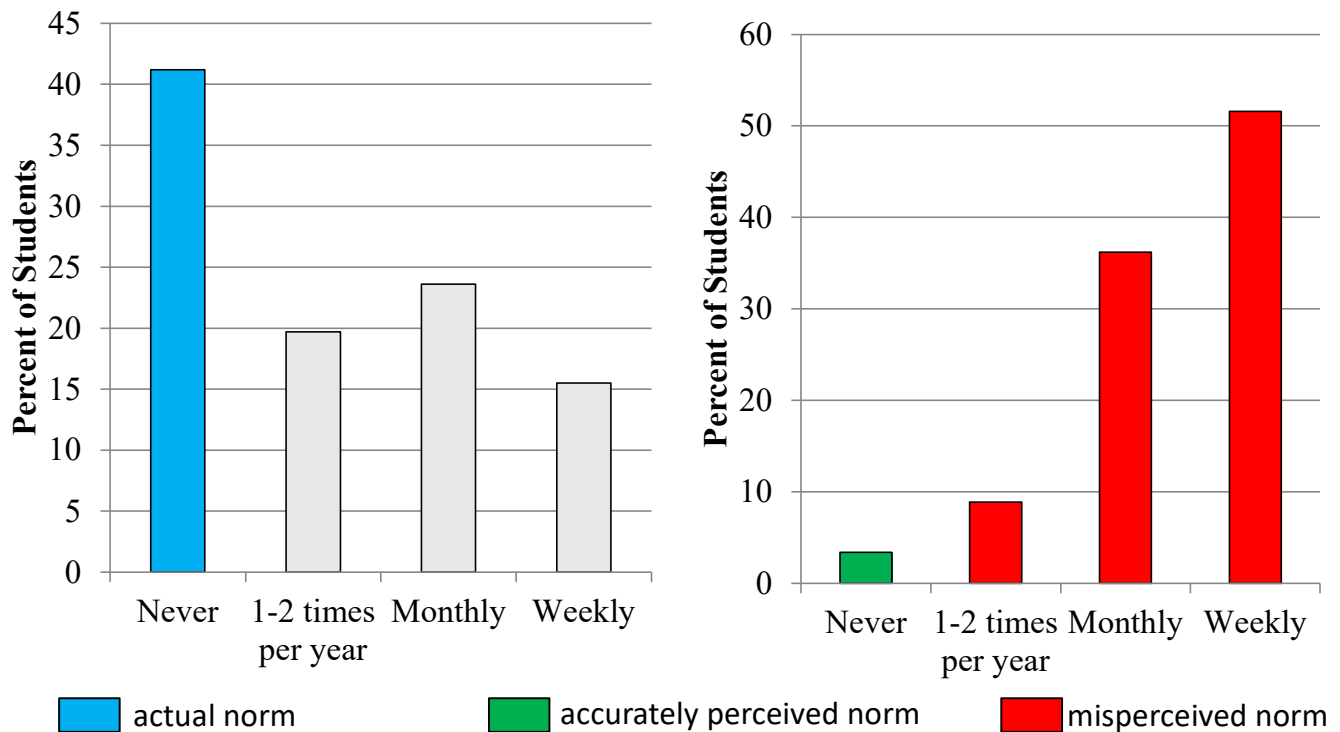


actual norm      accurately perceived norm      misperceived norm

Source: HW Perkins and DW Craig, [www.YouthHealthSafety.org](http://www.YouthHealthSafety.org)

## Grades 9 - 12

### Personal Alcohol Use and Perceived Norm



Source: HW Perkins and DW Craig, [www.YouthHealthSafety.org](http://www.YouthHealthSafety.org)

## Research Shows Misperceived ATOD Norms Exist

- **In All Types of Schools (Countries, Size, Programs, Actual Norms, Age Levels)**
- **Across Subpopulations of Youth**
- **For Attitudes, Use, Policy Support, and Protective Behaviors**
- **For All Types of Drugs**

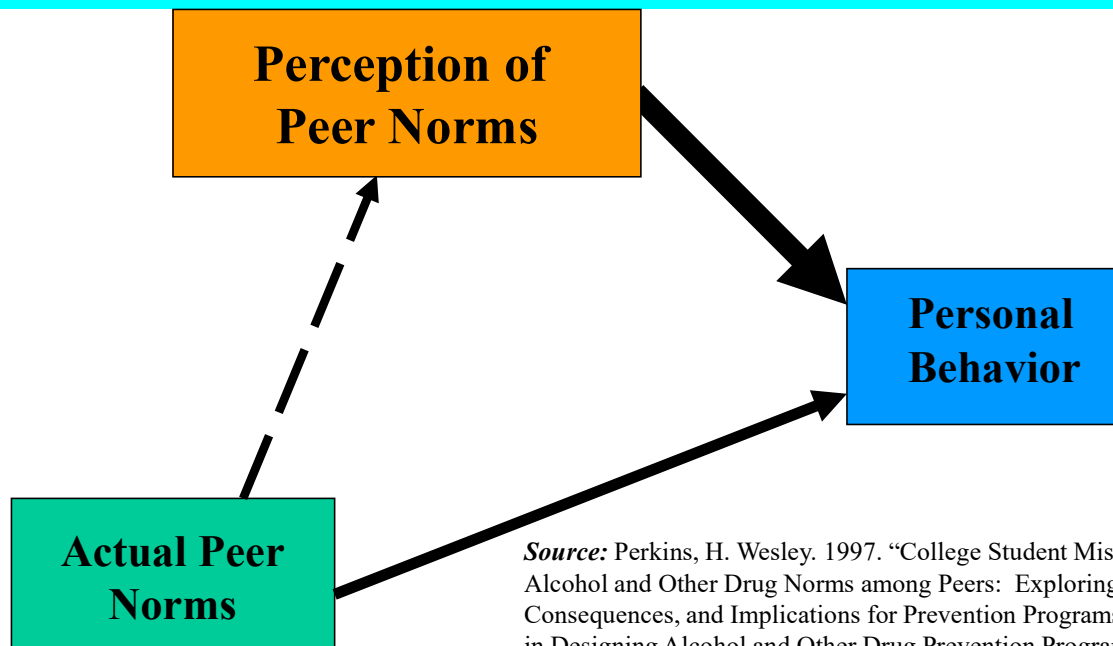
**Source:** Perkins, H. W. (2014). Misperception is reality: the “Reign of Error” about peer risk behaviour norms among youth and young adults. In M. Xenitidou & B. Edmonds (Eds.), *The Complexity of Social Norms* (pp. 11-36). Springer.

# Cause of Misperceptions

- **Psychological - mental attribution processes**
- **Social psychological - memory and conversation patterns**
- **Cultural – entertainment, advertising, news and health advocacy media**

*Source:* HW Perkins, “Social Norms and the Prevention of Alcohol Misuse in Collegiate Contexts,” *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 2002.

## Peer Influence on Personal Substance Use Behaviors



*Source:* Perkins, H. Wesley. 1997. “College Student Misperceptions of Alcohol and Other Drug Norms among Peers: Exploring Causes, Consequences, and Implications for Prevention Programs.” Pp. 177-206 in Designing Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Programs in Higher Education: Bringing Theory into Practice. The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention, U.S. Department of Education.

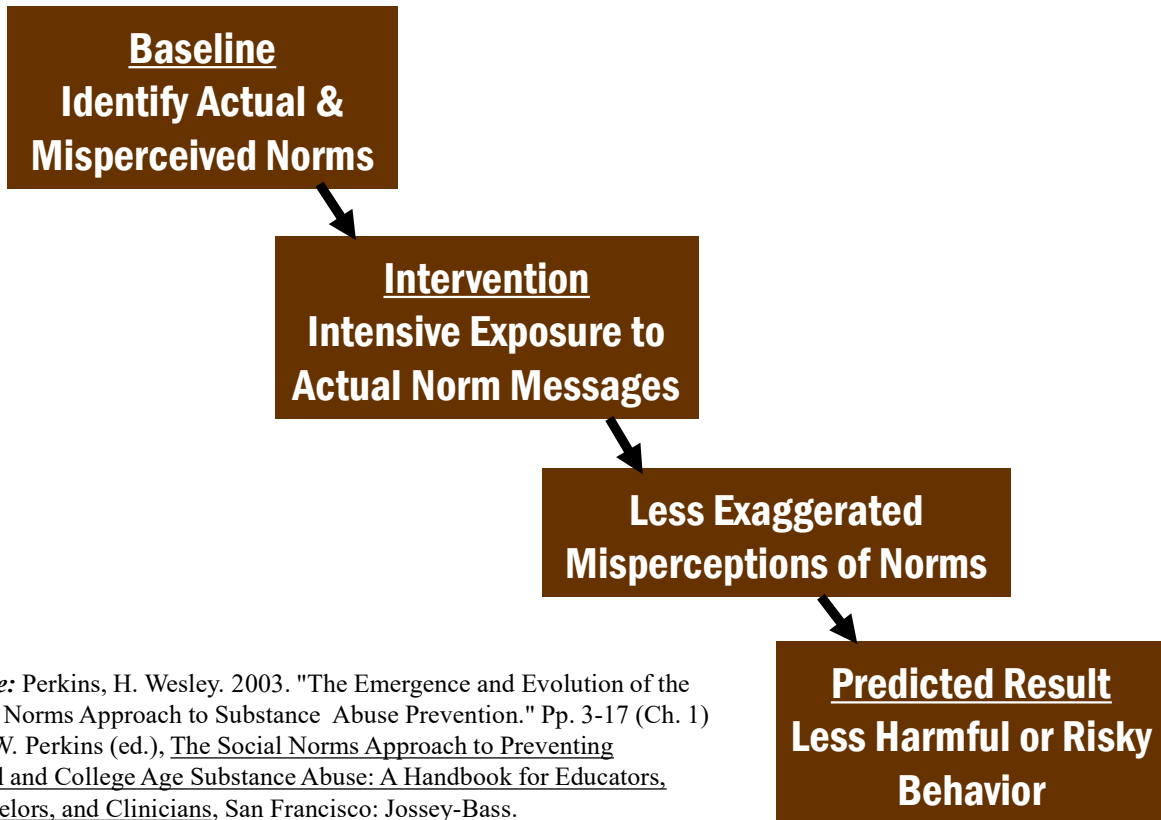
# Consequences of Misperceptions

- **Definition of the situation produces a “Reign of Error”**
- **Actual Use and Abuse Increases**
- **Layers of Misperceptions Compound**
- **Opposition is Discouraged from Speaking**
- **Intervention by Others Declines**
- **“Carriers” of Misperception Add to Problem**

*Source:* Perkins, H. Wesley. 1997. “College Student Misperceptions of Alcohol and Other Drug Norms among Peers: Exploring Causes, Consequences, and Implications for Prevention Programs.” Pp. 177-206 in Designing Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Programs in Higher Education: Bringing Theory into Practice. The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention, U.S. Department of Education.

Translating Social Norms Theory  
into Prevention Strategies

# The Social Norms Model



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**A HEALTHY Dose  
of Reality...**



# Examples of Strategies to Reduce Misperceptions and Strengthen Positive Norms

- **Print media campaigns**
- **Peer education programs and workshops for targeted risk groups**
- **New student orientation presentations**
- **Counseling interventions**
- **Curriculum infusion**
- **Electronic multimedia (digital signage and social media messaging)**

# UNITED

**Most of Us  
Most of Us Are Healthy  
Most of Us Don't Drink  
Most of Us**

**4 OUT OF 6**

DeKalb & Sycamore Study, DCP/SAFE, (N=1172, 2001)





# 8 out of 10 don't smoke!



Health tools to share:

1. Leave places where people are smoking
2. Say "No thanks" if someone offers you tobacco
3. Avoid places where people are smoking

DeKalb & Sycamore Study, DCP/SAFE, (N=654, 2000)

Funded in whole or in part by IDHS and the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

An advertisement for MOST of us. It features a large, bold, white silhouette of a skateboarder in mid-air against a dark background. Below it, a white silhouette of a cyclist is shown. The text "MOST of us" is written in large, bold, white letters. The main message reads: "MOST [70%] Montana teens are tobacco free." At the bottom, there is a logo for "MOST of us" and the website "WWW.MOSTOFUS.ORG".

**MOST of us**  
MONTANA SOCIAL NORMS PROJECT  
WWW.MOSTOFUS.ORG

**MOST [70%] Montana teens are tobacco free.**

STRIVE DATA SOURCE: MONTANA SOCIAL NORMS PROJECT

FUNDED BY THE MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES





**JUST THE FACTS:**

When Hunter-Tannersville High School students were asked about their last 30 days in a Fall 2015 anonymous survey, the **MAJORITY**—

- ...had **NOT** used tobacco **(93%)**
- ...had **NOT** used alcohol **(78%)**
- ...had **NOT** used marijuana **(88%)**.

Source: Results are based on a Fall 2015 anonymous survey of 74 Hunter-Tannersville High School students grades 9-12.



**The Majority** of Hunter-Tannersville High School students

**86%**

say their parents **NEVER** allow them to consume alcohol in their home with friends even if a parent is present.

**Source:** Results are based on a Fall 2015 anonymous survey of 74 Hunter-Tannersville High School students grades 9-12.

**9 out of 10**

**89%**

**Hunter-Tannersville High School students say they use one or more of these strategies to resist drinking alcohol:**

- Not going to parties where people drink,
- Leaving parties where people drink,
- Hanging out with people who do not drink,
- Saying they do not want to drink if people ask.

**SOURCE:** Results are based on a Fall 2015 anonymous survey of 74 Hunter-Tannersville High School students grades 9-12.

## Example Social Norm Messages for Delaware County Students

Source: Data based on the 2019 Pennsylvania Youth Survey conducted anonymously among 12,490 students from 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades in Delaware County.

*When asked about the last 30 days:*

**4 out of 5** 10<sup>th</sup> graders (**79%**) had NOT consumed any alcohol.

**MOST** 12<sup>th</sup> grade students (**64%**) had NOT consumed any alcohol.

**OVER 95%** of all 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students had NOT smoked cigarettes.

**4 out of 5** 10<sup>th</sup> graders (**80%**) and **7 out of 10** 12<sup>th</sup> graders (**72%**) had NOT used e-cigarettes/vaping.

The **MAJORITY** of 6<sup>th</sup> graders (**99%**), 8<sup>th</sup> graders (**94%**), 10<sup>th</sup> graders (**85%**), and 12<sup>th</sup> graders (**74%**) had NOT used marijuana.

## Example Social Norm Messages for Delaware County Students

Source: Data based on the 2019 Pennsylvania Youth Survey conducted anonymously among 12,490 students from 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades in Delaware County.

(continued)

*Other messages:*

**99%** of 10<sup>th</sup> grade students and **98%** of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students have NEVER used cocaine in their lifetime.

**97%** of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students did NOT drink alcohol and drive in the last year.

**4 out of 5** 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students believe it is “wrong” for someone their age to use prescription drugs that are not prescribed to them.

## Example Evidence of Positive Effect of Interventions

### **Research on Effects of Perceived Norms and Social Norms Intervention Programs**

- Longitudinal pre/post case studies of school populations (including research on effects by degree of exposure)
- Experiments with intervention and quasi control sites
- Experiments with randomly assigned intervention and control conditions for individuals, classrooms, and schools

# Similar Initial Effects in Rates of Heavy Drinking Reduction at Different Schools Over 2 Years

- Hobart & Wm. Smith Colleges, NY -21%
- University of Arizona -21%
- Western Washington University -20%
- Rowan University, NJ -20%
- Northern Illinois University -18%

Source: H. W. Perkins (ed.), *The Social Norms Approach to Preventing School and College Age Substance Abuse*, 2003.

## Six Years of Declining Negative Consequences Related to Alcohol Misuse Among Students Exposed to a Social Norms Intervention at U of Virginia

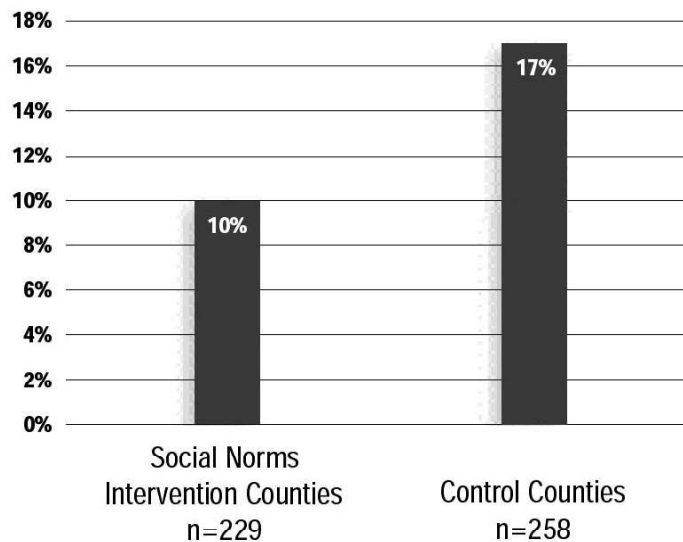
	<u>2001</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2003</u>	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>
% No Consequences	33	38	44	46	48	51
% Multiple Consequences	44	40	36	34	31	26

*Source:* Turner, J., Perkins, H. W., & Bauerle, J. (2008). Declining negative consequences related to alcohol misuse among students exposed to a social norms marketing intervention on a college campus. *Journal of American College Health*, 57(1), 85-94.

# “Most of us are tobacco free: an eight-month social norms campaign reducing youth initiation of smoking in Montana.”

Source: Linkenbach, J. W., & Perkins, H. W. (2003). In H. W. Perkins (Ed.), *The Social Norms Approach to Preventing School and College Age Substance Abuse: A Handbook for Educators, Counselors, and Clinicians*. Jossey-Bass.

Montana Youth Trying Smoking For the First Time between 2000 and 2001

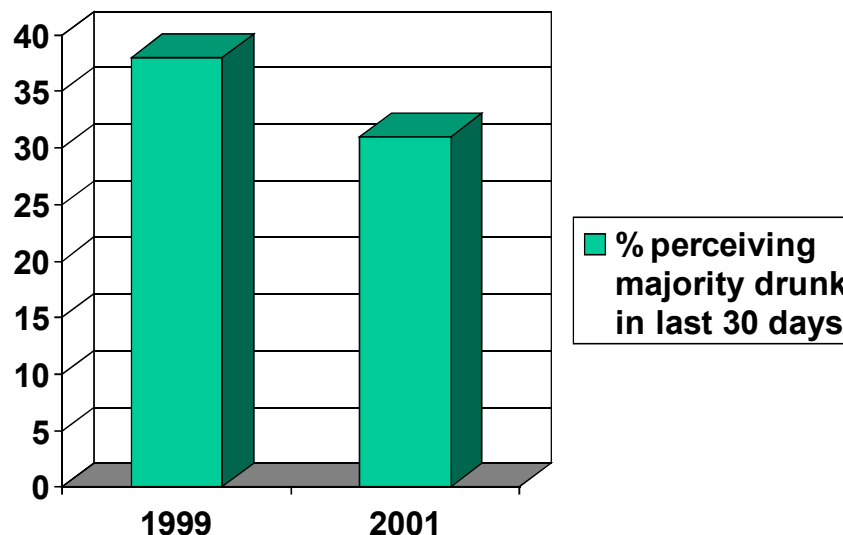


\*Significant difference between intervention and control groups at  $p < .05$

# “Using social norms to reduce alcohol and tobacco use in two midwestern high schools.”

## Student Perceptions

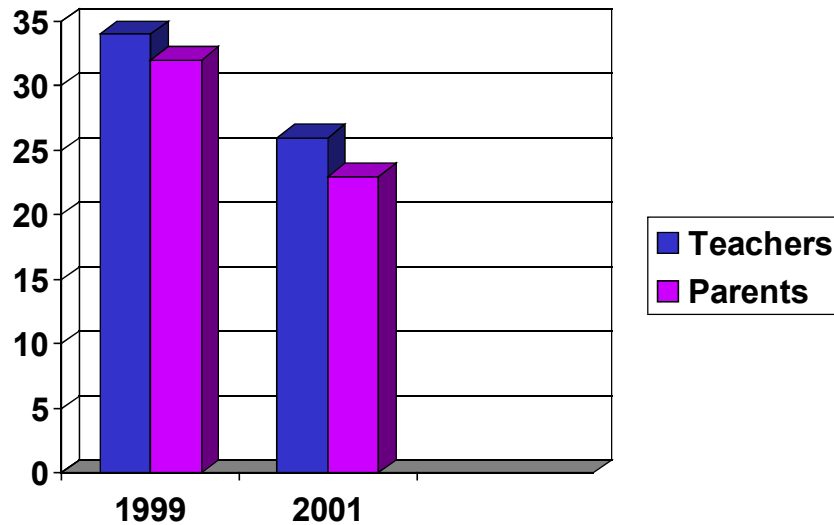
Perceptions of student intoxication in last 30 days



Source: Haines, M. P., Barker, G. P., & Rice, R. (2003). In H. W. Perkins (Ed.), *The Social Norms Approach to Preventing School and College Age Substance Abuse: A Handbook for Educators, Counselors, and Clinicians*. Jossey-Bass.

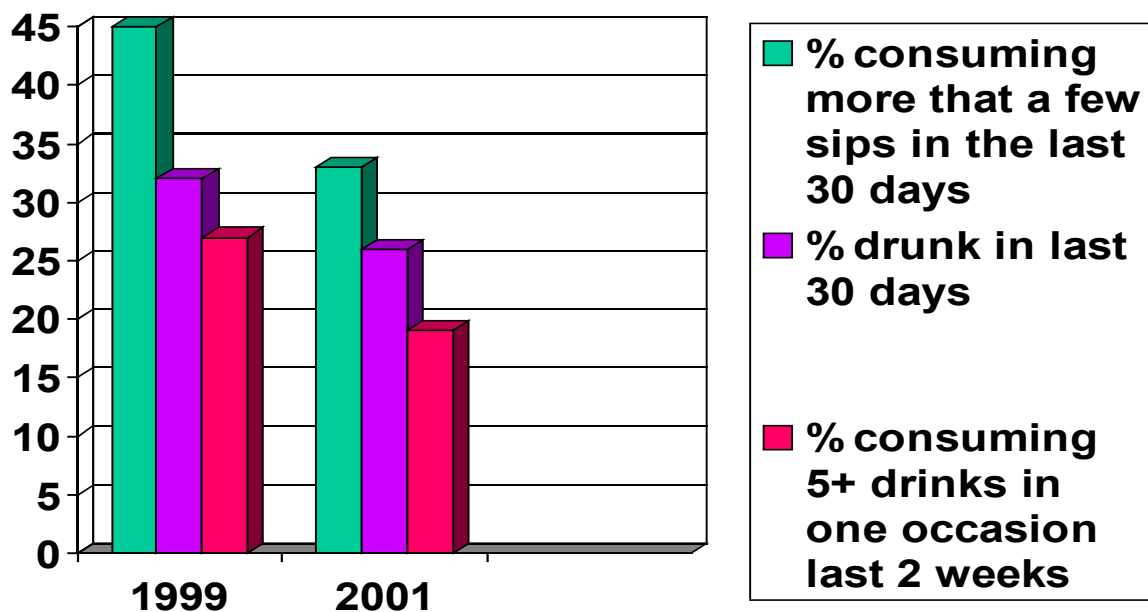
# Parent and Teacher Perceptions

Perceived % of Student having 5 or more drinks in last two weeks



Source: Haines, M. P., Barker, G. P., & Rice, R. (2003). In H. W. Perkins (Ed.), *The Social Norms Approach to Preventing School and College Age Substance Abuse: A Handbook for Educators, Counselors, and Clinicians*. Jossey-Bass.

# Student Alcohol Use



Source: Haines, M. P., Barker, G. P., & Rice, R. (2003). In H. W. Perkins (Ed.), *The Social Norms Approach to Preventing School and College Age Substance Abuse: A Handbook for Educators, Counselors, and Clinicians*. Jossey-Bass.



## “Effects of the social norms intervention *The GOOD Life* on norm perceptions, binge drinking and alcohol-related harms: a cluster-randomised controlled trial.”

Sample of 1,355 students (age 13-17) from 38 schools in southern Denmark participated in matching pre- and post-surveys resulting in:

- 1) Intervention group was only half as likely to overestimate peers' lifetime binge drinking and only two-thirds as likely to personally report two or more alcohol-related harms compared to those in the control group in post results.
- 2) Permissive drinkers in the intervention group (pupils stating it would be OK if they drank more) were only about one-third as likely to binge drink frequently compared to permissive drinkers in the control group in post results.

Source: Vallentin-Holbech, L., Rasmussen, B. M., & Stock, C. 2018). *Preventive Medicine Reports*, 12, 304-11.

## When is the Social Norms Approach Most Effective?

- **Clear positive norm messages**
- **Credible data**
- **Absence of competing scare messages**
- **Dosage is high (ongoing and intense social marketing of actual norms)**
- **Synergistic delivery strategies**
- **Broad student & community population receives message along with high-risk target groups**

**October 6, 2022**  
**2022 HIDTA PREVENTION SUMMIT**  
**Mind the Message: Equipping Communities with Evidence-Informed Communication Strategies**  
**for Youth Substance Use prevention**

# **The Importance of Social Norms in Substance Use Prevention Messaging**

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# Communicating with Teens about Substance Use

Michael Haines

mhaines@niu.edu 815-751-0624

## Social Control Approach Exaggerates risk behaviors

**23% drink alcohol**

**19% use marijuana**

**9% smoke cigarettes**

**6% use Rx drugs (without a doctor's Rx)**

**4% drive while drinking**

From: 2017 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey n = 55,526

# **The Social Norms Approach**

## **Highlights healthy norms**

**96% do not drive while drinking**

**94% do not use Rx drugs (without a doctor's Rx)**

**91% do not smoke cigarettes**

**81% did not use marijuana**

**77% do not drink alcohol**

From: 2017 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey n = 55,526

## **Social Control Approach**

- **Uses Scare tactics / death education**
- **Tries to coerce healthy teen choices**
- **Uses incredible messages**
- **Alienates teens**

# **Social Norms Approach**

- **Uses actual protective teen norms**
- **Celebrates healthy teen choices**
- **Uses credible messages from credible messengers**
- **Partners with teens**

© Michael Haines 2007

## **Which story will you tell?**

**Almost 25% Maine Teens Use Alcohol Marijuana or other Drugs**

About 1 in 5 use Marijuana and fully four percent drink and drive!

**or**

**Overwhelming Majority of Maine Teens Are Drug Free**

77% of students do not use alcohol, marijuana or other drugs!

Like most American high-school-age youth, Maine students choose to avoid illicit drugs...

© Michael Haines 2018

# Social Norms Formula

## Identify

Protective practices, healthy beliefs, safe behaviors  
that are the norm.

## Model & Promote

Pro-social attitudes and health-positive behaviors

= **Health Enhancement and  
Risk Reduction**

© Michael Haines 2007



**SUPPORT YOUR FRIENDS' HEALTHY CHOICES!**



**Make a pact ahead of time not to drink.  
Leave parties together if there's drinking.  
Stand your ground— together.**



**72%**  
of ETHS  
students  
choose  
healthy options  
other than  
drinking  
when they're  
with their  
friends.

## LAKE TRAVIS STUDENTS CHOOSE TO AVOID ALCOHOL

93%



**THINK IT IS WRONG TO PRESSURE ANOTHER STUDENT TO DRINK**

93% of LTHS students disapprove of high school students pressuring other students to drink. Based on a 2012 survey of all LTHS students.

## May the Facts Be with You!

**JHS Students Prefer  
Soft Drinks to  
Alcohol When They  
Get Together with  
Friends**



87% soft drinks - 13 % Alcohol  
Based on Survey data from 970  
JHS students April 2009



*Miss Mandy Knows Long Beach Students are GREAT!*



THEY DON'T PRESSURE EACH OTHER TO DRINK. THEY HAVE A GOOD TIME WITHOUT ALCOHOL.

**90% do not typically drink when hanging out with friends!**

Data from Long Beach Student Survey.

*Weston students make good choices!*



### Top Ten Reasons they give for not drinking alcohol:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I like to make smart decisions          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I could get arrested                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> My parents would kill me                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sports drinks and soda taste better  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I like to be safe                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Almost all of my friends don't drink |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I don't like the taste                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I like to be the driver              |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I don't want to jeopardize my athletics | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I promised my grandma & grandpa      |

Data from Weston Student Intercept Survey.

**FACT**

9 out of 10

Wayland High School Students  
choose non-alcoholic drinks  
when they hang out  
with friends.

(Data collected from 2010 Wayland High School Survey)

Photo Credit Kenny Wheeler

## *The Stall Street Journal*

- Anywhere High School January 4, 2021 -

### ***Romance at Anywhere High***

In a recent survey, students at Anywhere High School were asked, "If you were with a friend, what is most romantic?"

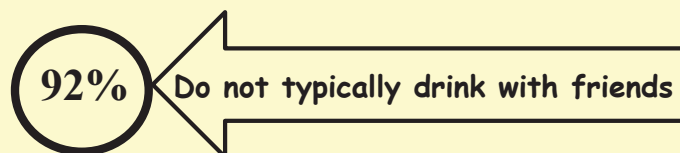
Going out for dinner	30.2%
Going to downtown	28.0%
A walk in the park	21.2%
Watching a movie	12.7%
Dancing	7.9%

A total of 196 students from all grade levels responded to an informal survey conducted in the cafeteria in April, 2013.

**Boxers 82% --- Briefs 18%**

The survey asked students, "What do you Like?"

Boxers	82%	Briefs	18%
Coke	73%	Pepsi	27%
Beef	69%	Veggies	21%
Soft drinks	80%	Alcohol	20%



**"Do you approve or disapprove of..."**

**Lowering the drinking age to 18**

Approve

80%

Disapprove

20%

**Alcohol use that interferes with academics, athletics, or friendships**

15%

85%

**Students who drink and drive**

4%

96%

# Parents, Teachers, and Other Adults are Important!

## Sources and Believability of Information

Source	Frequency of Obtaining Information (Sometimes to Very Frequently)	Rank	<u>Believability</u> of the Information (Somewhat Believable to Very Believable)	Rank
Your friends	78%	1	49%	8
The Internet	71%	2	33%	13
<b>Your parents</b>	62%	<b>3</b>	78%	<b>1</b>
Nurse, doctor or other health professional	52%	4	76%	2
The police, DARE, etc.	51%	5	73%	3
Your coach	46%	6	62%	5
A poster at school	45%	7	51%	7
Your Teachers	43%	8	66%	4
School counselor	26%	9	56%	6
Student peer educator	24%	10	43%	9
Church Group or Minister	19%	11	40%	10
A flyer/handout	14%	12	38%	11
School Newspaper	9%	13	33%	13



# Actual Student Use V Perception of Typical Student Use

Thirty Day Use	Student actual	Parent perception	Teacher perception
Drank alcohol?	41%	78%	83%
Smoked cigarettes?	16%	59%	63%
Used marijuana?	13%	56%	53%



**Before your child attends a party,  
call the host parents.**



**77%** ...of WHS parents do.

Data based on the 2010 Weston High School Parent Survey

Dear Mom and Dad,

We believe the information that you share with us about alcohol and tobacco.

Research shows that you are a believable and a valuable source of truthful information.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Partnership for a Drug Free America, 1999 and DeKalb & Sycamore Study, DCP/SAFE, (N=1172, 2001)

**“Most of us don’t use alcohol”**

DeKalb & Sycamore Study, DCP/SAFE, (N=1172, 2001)

- \* 7 out of 10 students don't drink alcohol at parties
- \* 4 out of 6 students haven't had any alcohol during the past 30 days

**“Please Continue to share the FACTS with us!”**



# They listened to you then...



## **And they listen to you now!**

**Celebrate the healthy choices our students continue to make:**

- **Most do not typically drink alcohol when socializing.**
- **They do not drink and drive.**
- **They support students who choose not to drink at parties.**
- **They do not approve of parents providing alcohol to students.**

**We know you to care too!**

- **Discuss these healthy norms with your child.**
- **Talk to your student about your expectations and alcohol rules.**
- **Talk to other parents about their successful strategies to support healthy choices.**

# *Some Thoughts to Consider*

- 1 - When you hear PROBLEM, think SOLUTION  
When you hear DON'T, think DO
- 2 - Create CREDIBLE MESSAGES from REAL DATA
- 3 - Use CREDIBLE MESSENGERS
- 4 - REPEAT MESSAGES often in DIFFERENT WAYS
- 5 - ADD VALUE to your messages > Normalize to peers,  
Describe a Reward, etc.

© Michael Haines 2022

## **Which Story Will YOU Tell?**

**Parents Who Host, Lose the Most!**  
Another teen drinking party was raided by police.  
Mr. and Mrs. Haines were arrested and taken....

**Or**

**Congratulations Parents!**  
You set limits, you made the call, and you  
talked safety with your teens...



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## Social Norms Consultation



TRAINING • RESEARCH • DEVELOPMENT