

Source: Data for 1976-1994: National Center for Health Statistics. (2003). Health United States, 2003 with Chartbook on Trends in the Health of Americans. National Center for Health Statistics. 2003. Table 69. Data for 1999-2002 from Hedley, Allison, Ogden, Cynthia, Johnson, Clifford, Carroll, Margaret, Curtin, Lester and Katherine Flegal. "Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity Among US Children, Adolescents, and Adults, 1999-2002," JAMA, 291 (23): 2847-2850. Data for 2003-2004: Ogden, Cynthia, Carroll, Margaret, Curtin, Lester, McDowell, Margaret, Tabak, Carolyn, and Flegal, Katherine. "Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity in the United States, 1999-2004." JAMA, 295 (13): 1549-1555

In response to concern over this growing problem, policymakers around the country have been enlisting schools to spearhead efforts to reverse this trend.

- Some schools are changing the types and availability of snack foods available within the school to improve nutrition and reduce obesity. A 2004 survey of 27 states found that a median of 89.5 percent of schools in each state allowed students to purchase snacks from a vending machine or snack bar, with the percentage ranging from 59.8 in Alaska to 95.0 in Utah. The majority of schools offered less nutritious snacks such as chocolate and candy, and among more nutritious snacks, fruits and vegetables were much less common than items such as salty snacks low in fat or 100 percent fruit juice.<sup>10</sup> (see Map 1) In addition, in 2006 a memorandum of understanding was reached between major U.S. companies supplying

competitive food and beverages to schools, the William J. Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association to adopt practices that would significantly improve the nutritional content of food offered in the schools. This is a voluntary effort, and progress is being independently monitored on an annual basis.<sup>11</sup>

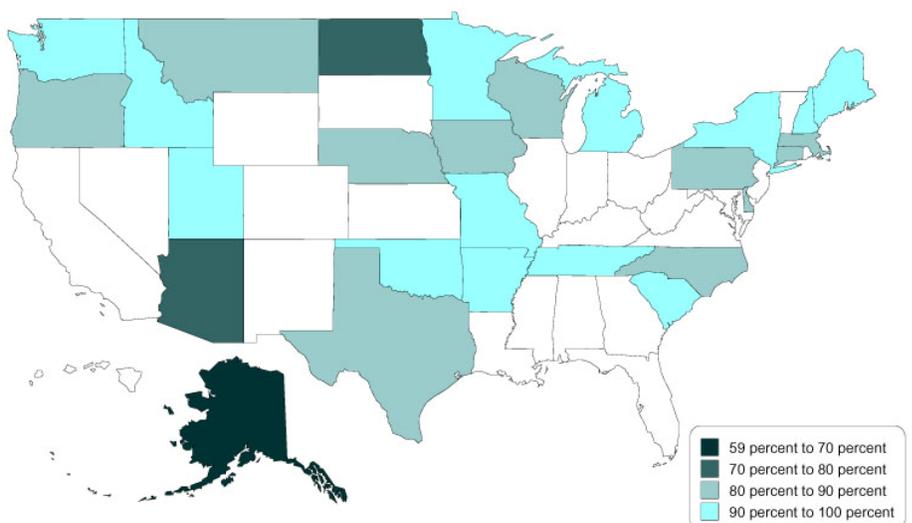
- Between 2003 and 2007, 27 states have passed laws intended to improve school nutrition and 24 states have enacted laws to improve physical education in the schools.<sup>12</sup> The content and scope of these initiatives varies widely, however, and communities are often given a lot of flexibility in the nature and extent of programs enacted.<sup>13</sup>
- High schools offer opportunities for physical activity for students through physical education classes and school sports activities. In 2006, 63 percent of tenth graders and 54 percent of twelfth graders participated in a school sports team during the school year.<sup>14</sup>

### Schools and Drug Use

While tobacco, alcohol and drug use have all declined to some extent among high school students in recent years, these activities still represent major threats to student health. The school environment

Map 1

Percentage of schools that allow students to purchase snacks from a vending machine or snack bar



Note: States in white were not part of the sample.  
 Source: Kann, L., Grunbaum, J.A., McKenna, M.L., Wechsler, H and Galuska, D.A. (2004). "Competitive Foods and Beverages Available for Purchase in Secondary Schools — Selected Sites, United States, 2004." MMWR 54(37):917-921. Available at: <http://0-www.cdc.gov.mill1.sjlibrary.org/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5437a1.htm>.



to graduate college or attend a 4-year college, even after controlling for other personal and school characteristics.<sup>31</sup>

Unsafe environments can also have direct effects on the health of students. Students in dangerous school environments are more likely to get into fights, to be injured, and to experience emotional stress.<sup>32,33,34</sup>

In addition, one analysis of data from four national surveys found involvement with school violence, either as a perpetrator or victim, was the most important risk factor for a student carrying a weapon to school.<sup>35</sup>

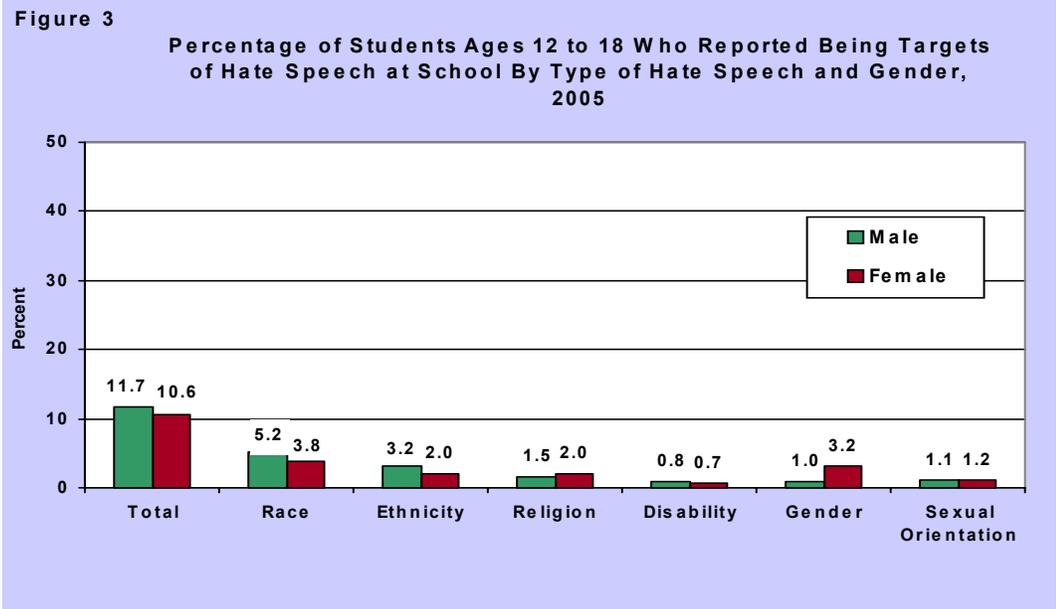
Adolescents who are involved in bullying (a common form of violence in schools) either as a perpetrator or victim, are more likely to suffer from depressive symptoms such as loneliness and difficulty making friends, and more likely to face psychosocial adjustment issues.<sup>36</sup> Involvement in bullying as a bully or victim is also associated with poorer health outcomes, while being a bully is associated with more frequent alcohol use.<sup>37</sup>

Students (ages 12-18) who reported having been a target of hate speech, defined here as being called names based on one's race, religion, Hispanic origin, disability, gender, or sexual orientation, were 1.5 times more likely than other students to report being nonviolently victimized and 3.1 times more likely to report being violently victimized while at school.<sup>38</sup>

### School Violence

- **Unsafe at School:** In 2007, 6 percent of high school students reported that they had not gone to school in the past 30 days because they felt unsafe at school or on their way to or from school. This is down from a high of 12 percent a decade earlier.<sup>39</sup>

- **Bullying:** Twenty-eight percent of students ages 12 to 18 reported being the victim of bullying at school in the previous 6 months in 2005. Nineteen percent reported being made fun of or called names, and 15 percent reported being the subject of rumors.<sup>40</sup>



Note: Students were asked to report being targets of hate speech based on the past six months.

Note: "At school" means in the school building, on school property, on a school bus, or going to and from school. Source: Dinkes, R., Cataldi, E.F., Kena, G., Baum, K., Baum, K., & Synder, T.D. (2006). Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2006 (NCES 2007-003/NCJ 214262). U.S. Departments of Education and Justice. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Table 10.2. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/2007003.pdf>.

- **Hate Speech:** In 2005, 11 percent of students ages 12 to 18 reported being the targets of hate-related words at school during the previous six months. Among the types of discrimination surveyed, race-based hate speech was the most common (5 percent), followed by ethnicity (3 percent), and between 1 and 2 percent each for religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation based hate speech.<sup>41</sup> (See Figure 3). Black students were the most likely to report being a victim of hate speech (15 percent) with about half of them citing race-based hate speech (7 percent).<sup>42</sup>
- **Gang Activity:** In 2005, 36 percent of students in urban areas reported the presence of gangs at school, compared with 21 percent of students in suburban areas and

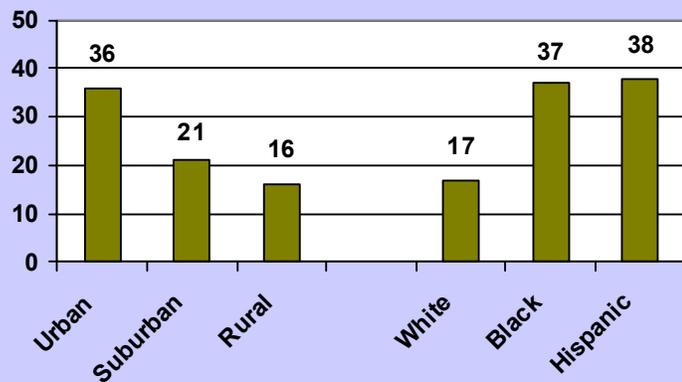
16 percent of students in rural areas. In addition, Hispanic and black students are more likely than white students to report the presence of gangs at school (38 and 37 percent versus 17 percent, respectively).<sup>43</sup> (See Figure 4.)

(regarding suspension and expulsion); security measures (metal detectors, monitoring cameras, security officers at the school, use of drug sniffing dogs); and involving parents (to maintain school discipline, to offer them training to deal with problem behaviors in the home).

Based on data from the 2003-04 school year, for example:

- Formal violence prevention programs are common: 87 percent of schools have a formal violence prevention curriculum, instruction, or training, 91 percent have behavioral or behavior modification interventions, and 57 percent have student involvement in resolving student conflict problems.<sup>45</sup>
- Security officers are present on a regular basis in 72 percent of high schools and 64 percent of middle schools.<sup>46</sup> (See Figure 5)
- Metal detectors are used in 13 percent of high schools and 10 percent of middle schools.<sup>47</sup>

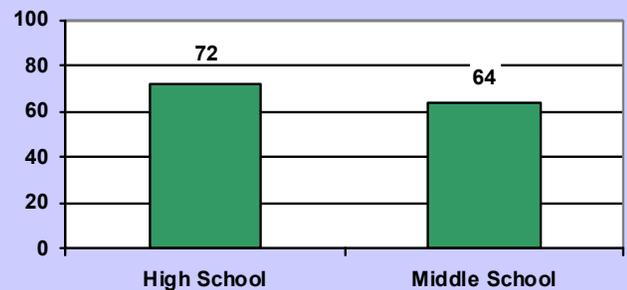
**Figure 4 Percentage of Students Reporting the Presence of Gang Activity at School, by Urbanicity and Race/Ethnicity, 2005**



Source: Dinkes, R., Cataldi, E.F., Kena, G., and Baum, K. (2006). Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2006 (NCES 2007-003/NCJ 214262). U.S. Departments of Education and Justice. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

- Violent threats and attacks (ranging from threats of attack to physical attacks and rape) in high schools were reported at a rate of 31.2 per 1,000 students in 2005-6, and incidences of theft were 5.1 per 1,000 students.<sup>44</sup>

**Figure 5 Percentage of Schools with a Security Officer Present on a Regular Basis, by School Level, 2003-2004**



Source: Guerino, P., Hurwitz, M.D., Noonan, M.E., and Kaffenberger, S.M. (2006). Crime, Violence, Discipline, and Safety in U.S. Public Schools: Findings from the School Survey on Crime and Safety: 2003-04 (NCES 2007-302rev). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education

- Out-of-school suspensions with no services provided are allowed in 85 percent of high schools and 77 percent of middle schools.<sup>48</sup>
- Badges: Students are required to wear badges or picture IDs in 16 percent of high schools and 11 percent of middle schools.<sup>49</sup>

There are numerous safety and security measures and initiatives that schools employ in order to prevent school violence. While research on the consequences of school violence for student well-being is relatively strong, research on the effectiveness of common strategies for reducing violence in the schools has mostly focused on comprehensive curricula or strategies, making it difficult to determine which specific elements are effective (or not).

Common measures at the middle and high school levels for reducing violence in school include: student training and behaviors (peer conflict resolution, mandatory uniforms, violence prevention curricula); disciplinary policies

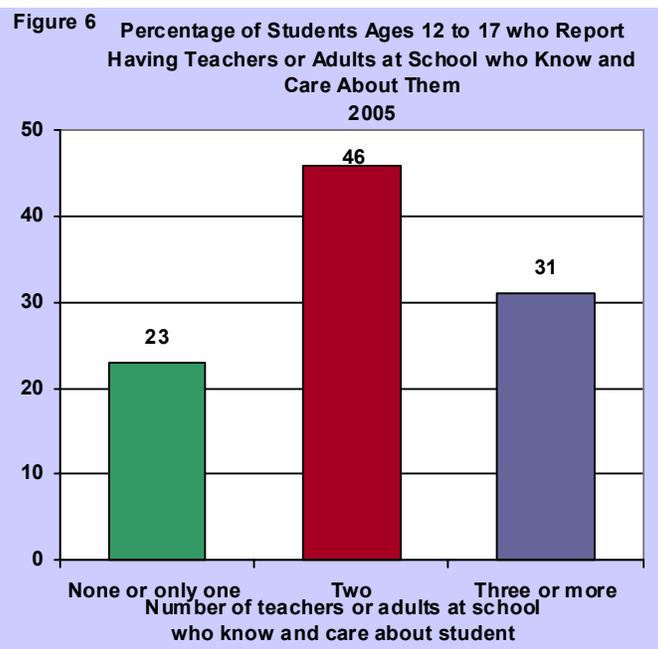
## SCHOOL SOCIAL SUPPORTS

The support of peers and teachers at school can have important consequences for student well-being. Adolescents who feel that there are people who care about them at school and feel connected to the school are more likely to be academically motivated<sup>50,51</sup> and less likely to engage in a variety of negative behaviors including drug use, violence and sexual activity.<sup>52</sup>

Support from teachers can be expressed in many ways including caring, having rules that are perceived as clear and fair, and allowing for age-appropriate autonomy in decision-making.<sup>53</sup> A positive relationship with a teacher may motivate a student to learn, participate more in class, or engage in other behavior related to academic achievement. In addition, teacher support may help students psychologically. One study of middle school students found students who perceived increasing teacher support during the transition to middle school reported increases in self-esteem and decreases in depressive symptoms, while those who perceived decreasing teacher support experienced the opposite.<sup>54</sup>

- More than four in five students ages 12-18 believe that their school's rules are fair and consistently enforced.<sup>55</sup>
- Nearly a quarter (23 percent) of youth ages 12-17 report that they have none or only one teacher (or other adult in their school) who knows them well and cares about them. About half (46 percent) report two such supportive school staff in their lives, and 31 percent report three or more.<sup>56</sup> (See Figure 6.)
- Among school principals of 15-year-old students, 14 percent report that student learning at their school is hindered by poor student-teacher relations to some extent. Sixty-six percent said that learning was hindered very little and 18 percent said learning was not hindered at all.<sup>57</sup>
- Nearly half (49 percent) of 15-year-old students in the U.S. agreed or strongly agreed that other students in their school were kind and helpful. This was low by

international standards, where 25 of 34 countries reported higher rates.<sup>58</sup>



Source: Unpublished analyses by Child Trends staff from the Every Child Every Promise poll, a nationally representative poll of youth ages 12-17, and parents of children ages 6-17. For additional information visit <http://www.americaspromise.org/APAPage.aspx?id=6584>.

## ACADEMIC QUALITY

While schools are called on to shape many aspects of students' lives, their core focus is clearly the development of academic knowledge and skills. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) initiative, our nation's major education initiative of the last five years, has made challenging demands on public schools to improve the academic performance of all students while narrowing performance gaps across groups, providing additional resources and demanding greater accountability. Schools that fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets towards NCLB goals are initially given greater resources and attention, though repeated failure can result in penalties and increased oversight.

- Annual Yearly Progress: The National Education Association reports that 28 percent of all public schools did not make AYP in the 2007-2008 school year as defined by NCLB.<sup>59</sup>







<sup>25</sup> Ibid, Table 9.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, Table 9.

<sup>27</sup> SAMHSA, Office of Applied Studies, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2004 and 2005. Tables 6.36B 6.41B. Available at <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k5NSDUH/tabs/Sect6peTb1to67.htm>

<sup>28</sup> U.S. Department of Education. "No Child Left Behind: A Desktop Reference." Accessed September 28, 2007. Available at: <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/nclbreference/index.html>

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<sup>31</sup> Grogger, Jeffrey T. (1997). "Local Violence, Educational Attainment, and Teacher Pay." NBER Working Papers 6003, National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc.

<sup>32</sup> Elliott, D.S., Hamburg, B.A., and Williams, K.R. (1998). Violence in American Schools: An Overview. In D.S. Elliott, B.A. Hamburg, and K.R. Williams (Eds.), *Violence in American Schools*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

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<sup>35</sup> Kingery, Paul M., Coggeshall, Mark B. and Alford, Aaron A. (1998). "Violence at School: Recent Evidence from Four National Surveys." *Psychology in Schools*, 35(3): 247-58.

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<sup>38</sup> Van Dorn, R. (2002). "Unrecognized Warning Signs." *Education Week*, 22, 41. Available through edweek.org at: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2002/11/13/11vandorn.h22.html?querystring=Unrecognized%20Warning%20Signs>

<sup>39</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2008). *Youth risk behavior surveillance – United States, 2007*. MMWR 2008:57 (No SS-4). Table 17.

<sup>40</sup> Dinkes, R., Cataldi, E.F., Kena, G., and Baum, K. (2006). *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2007* (NCES 2008–0213/NCJ 219533). U.S. Departments of Education and Justice. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Table 6.1. Available at: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008021>.

<sup>41</sup> Child Trends. *Child Trends Data Bank: Victims of Hate Speech*. Retrieved August 27, 2007 from <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/indicators/94VictimsofHateSpeech.cfm>. Original data from School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey.

<sup>42</sup> Child Trends. *Child Trends Data Bank: Victims of Hate Speech*.

<sup>43</sup> Dinkes, R., Cataldi, E.F., Kena, G., and Baum, K. (2006).

<sup>44</sup> Dinkes, R., Forrest Cataldi, E., Lin-Kelly, W. (2007). *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2007* (NCES 2007- NCES 2008021). U.S. Departments of Education and Justice. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Table 16.1

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<sup>46</sup> Jekielek et al. (2007).

<sup>47</sup> Guerino, P., Hurwitz, M.D., Noonan, M.E., and Kaffenberger, S.M. (2006).

<sup>48</sup> Guerino, P., Hurwitz, M.D., Noonan, M.E., and Kaffenberger, S.M. (2006).

<sup>49</sup> Dinkes, R., Cataldi, E.F., Kena, G., and Baum, K. (2006).

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