

Teen Reports of Adult Support in Natick (Grades 7-12)

2010 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey

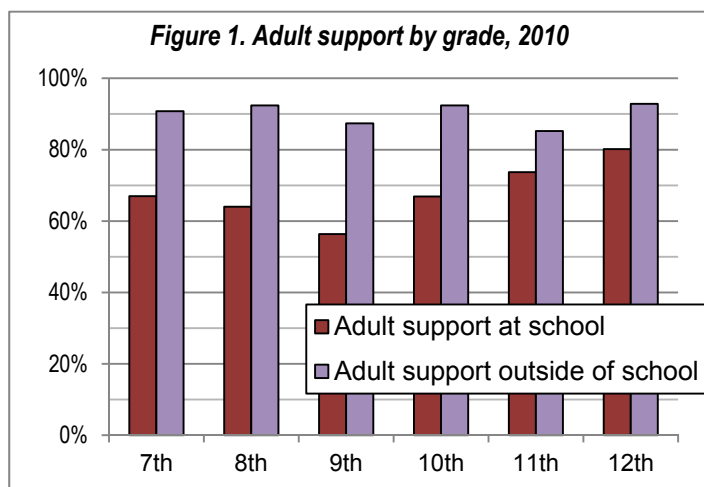
Adolescence is a time when teens experience many emotional, physical, social, and psychological changes. Having support from trusted adults during this challenging time can positively impact the health of these teens. The *MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey* has collected information on adult support in Natick since 2006. The most recent survey, administered in 2010, was completed by 997 Natick middle school students in grades 6-8, and 1,114 Natick high school students in grades 9-12, representing 90% of youth. This fact sheet summarizes data for grades 7-12.

How many teens report having adult support?

- **Most students report having adult support outside of school.** 92% of middle school students and 89% of high school students have at least one parent or other adult outside of school to talk to about things that are important to them.
- **Fewer students report having adult support at school.** While still a majority, only 66% of middle school students and 68% of high school students have at least one teacher or other adult at school to talk to if they have a problem. In the past 12 months, 24% of middle school students and 31% of high school students reported that they actually talked to an adult at school about a personal problem.
- **Some students lack adult support inside *and* outside of school.** 6% of middle school students and 6% of high school students do not have an adult inside or outside school that they can talk about problems or important things in their lives.

Which youth are most likely to lack adult support?

- **Reports of adult support at school decrease with the transition from middle school to high school, and then increase throughout the high school years.** Students in 9th grade are least likely to report having adult support at school. [Figure 1]
- **Reports of adult support outside of school are more similar during middle and high school years.** [Figure 1]
- **Adult support at school and outside of school does not differ substantially among females and males.** However, females are more likely than males to report talking to school adults about personal problems (29% vs. 19% in middle school; 40% vs. 22% in high school).



Is having adult support protective against engaging in unhealthy behaviors?

- **While the majority of students report having adult support, those without it, either at school or outside of school, are more likely to report mental health problems.** For example, middle school students who lack adult support are more likely than their peers to report depressive symptoms (33% vs. 11%), and seriously considering suicide (21% vs. 9%). Similar patterns exist among high school students.
- **Students who lack adult support are also more likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as substance use and violence.** For example, high school students without adult support are more likely than their peers to engage in recent binge drinking (35% vs. 21%), and recent marijuana use (49% vs. 25%). They are also more likely to report being in a physical fight in the past 12 months (35% vs. 18%) and carrying a weapon in the past 30 days (22% vs. 5%). Similar patterns exist among middle school students.