

Fact Sheet for Parents Regarding

Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors

Search Institute

Search Institute is an independent nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide catalytic leadership, breakthrough knowledge, and innovative resources to advance the health of children, youth, families, and communities. To accomplish this mission, Search Institute conducts research, develops publications and practical tools, and provides training and technical assistance. Search Institute collaborates with others to promote long-term organizational and cultural change that supports the healthy development of all children and adolescents.

Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Survey (A&B)

The A&B survey provides schools and communities with a portrait of the attitudes, behaviors, and needs of its youth. The survey has been administered in over 3000 communities and to well over 3 million students in urban, suburban, and rural settings. The survey contains 160 questions about school climate, parent and school boundaries and expectations, structured time use, and a wide range of risk behaviors.

Common Concerns

Some of the questions parents may ask are these:

By taking the survey, will my child be encouraged to try some of the risk behaviors it addresses?

There is no evidence to indicate that asking questions about risk behaviors encourages young people to become involved in those behaviors. Also, there are many federal regulations specifically addressing the protection of people involved in research of all types, including survey research conducted in public school settings. Protection of parent and student rights is very important to Search Institute and we comply with all appropriate federal regulations. We also take great care to provide information about applicable federal regulations to any organization using our survey service.

How do you know whether students are answering truthfully?

Search Institute uses several methods for looking at each survey to determine whether students are answering truthfully. For example, the computer looks for inconsistencies in the way students respond to similar questions, unrealistically high substance use, and too many unanswered items. Surveys with these kinds of problems are not used in the report findings. The percentage of surveys removed from individual school or community studies has remained consistent over time and generally falls into the 5 to 8 percent range. When too many surveys are being eliminated, the resulting data may not be of good quality, and Search Institute may make the decision that a report cannot be generated.

Will anyone know how my child answers the questions?

Anonymity is a very important issue for surveys like this. In its 40 years of work in this area, Search Institute has created careful procedures to ensure that no student's results can be traced back to an individual student. Students do not put their names on the surveys and there are no hidden identification marks on the surveys. Thus, the surveys are completed anonymously.

As students complete their surveys, they place them in one envelope that is sealed at the end of the class period. The survey coordinator collects the envelopes from each class and ships them to Search Institute for analysis.

All findings are reported in aggregate form only by combining student responses by grade and by gender. No individual student responses are reported.

