

Introduction

In 1989 the Teen Assessment Project (TAP) survey was introduced to Grant County schools. In later years it was conducted in Iowa, Richland and Crawford Counties. It has been repeated in Grant and Iowa Counties.

The idea behind these surveys and the current Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey conducted in Crawford, Grant, Lafayette, and Richland Counties, was to gain valuable information about the teen population in order to more effectively address the needs of local teens, families and communities. Specifically these surveys attempt to address the needs of youth by providing reliable information on several key questions:

- What are the most serious problems faced by teens in the area?
- How widespread are the problems?
- Are there any clues as to the causes and possible solutions for the problems?
- What can we do to help?

The 15 participating schools administered the 2005 Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey with these questions in mind. The schools utilized the expertise of local UW-Extension faculty and academic staff members and the University of Wisconsin-Platteville to organize and implement the survey as well as to analyze the data and communicate the results. CESA #3 provided a forum for project coordination. School districts are currently analyzing their own data to determine individual issues and allocate what resources they can to address these issues.

It is our belief that as we continue to tackle problems facing local youth, a better, updated understanding of our young people and the challenges they face is needed. We also believe that even with current data, adults can make incorrect assumptions about how young people are feeling and seeing the world. Therefore, if we are to truly make a dent in the issues raised in this report, it is important to involve young people as well as adults in developing strategies to address them.

