

Texas School Survey of Drug and Alcohol Use

Frequently Asked Questions

The Texas School Survey of Drug and Alcohol Use has been conducted in Texas school districts since 1988. The survey is conducted by the Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI) at Texas A&M University on behalf of the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS).

A statewide survey is conducted every two years. These statewide assessments generate current data to inform state level policy-making. In addition, they can provide a standard of comparison for districts conducting local surveys.

What formats are available for the Texas School Survey?

- The Texas School Survey is offered in two formats: (1) the traditional paper-pencil version where a student darkens an oval for a corresponding answer and (2) an online web version. Both versions are identical in the number and types of questions. The two versions are offered in English and Spanish.

Why give the Texas School Survey?

- The Texas School Survey provides state and local agencies with data to quantify local drug and alcohol use, as well as provide guidance on the best means to address the problem. Questions assess where the students get most of their information on drug and alcohol use and where they say they would turn for help with a substance problem. These data help identify which sectors of the community can most effectively unite to combat student substance use.
- It produces factual data to replace speculative and sensational information.
- At the community level, the survey helps estimate the extent to which student substance use is primarily a “school problem.” Some research indicates that much drug and alcohol use is centered not in the schools, but instead takes place after school hours and away from school grounds.
- Administered over an extended period of time, the survey is an effective tool to evaluate the impact of special substance abuse prevention and education programs.
- The Texas School Survey is designed to be responsive to questions of specific interest to Texas’ educators, policymakers, parents, and community groups.

What do you get when you use the Texas School Survey?

Compensation. Schools selected to participate in the statewide sample will receive monetary compensation for time and effort involved in survey administration. This payment will be made when survey administration is complete and all materials are returned.

Survey Administration Materials. All materials needed for survey administration will be shipped to your campus or district.

Data Analysis. PPRI produces three types of reports:

- **Executive Summary and Comparative Graphics.** A brief Executive Summary of local results, contrasted to statewide data, is presented. The report includes figures and graphics comparing local and state results that can easily be converted into overheads for use in press releases or presentation to school boards or community groups.

- **Local Survey Results.** Includes a series of General Substance Tables detailing the use of tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs, and inhalants among the local student population, and ones that illustrate environmental and behavioral factors related to substance use. Also includes Prevalence Tables that compare substance use by gender, ethnicity, academic performance, and other student characteristics.

***State Results.** Up-to-date comparative data from the most recent assessment of substance use among the public school-age population in Texas. The results are presented in a format identical to that found in the local report.

*Schools selected in the statewide sample will receive a copy of the statewide report as part of their contribution to the study. District level reports and Executive Summary reports with comparative graphics are also available for an additional cost. School districts participating in their own local level assessment will receive these three reports as part of their paid participation in the study. Please contact the PPRI Survey Coordinators if you would like to receive more information about this option.

What kinds of questions does the Texas School Survey answer?

The Texas School Survey begins by asking for demographic information such as age, gender, race, grade, and so forth. The remaining questions address three basic issues.

Drug and alcohol use patterns:

- What types of drugs and alcohol are students using?
- How much do they typically consume, and how often?
- How old are the students when they first use drugs and alcohol?
- How easy is it to get drugs and alcohol?
- Where do the students usually get alcoholic beverages?
- What substances do students say their close friends use?

Drug and Alcohol Related Behaviors

- How often do students drive after using drugs or alcohol?
- How often are drugs and alcohol used at parties?
- How often do students attend class high?
- How often do students report “skipping” or “cutting” school?

Substance Abuse Education and Support Networks

- Where do the students get most of their information about drugs and alcohol?
- Who would students turn to if they needed help?
- How many students have actually sought help for a substance use problem?
- What do parents think about their children drinking alcohol or using marijuana?

What grades can take the Texas School Survey?

The Texas School Survey is designed for students in grades 6 through 12.

How long does the survey take?

The survey takes about 30 minutes to complete. An additional 10 to 15 minutes should be allowed for handing out and taking up the instruments (or online survey tokens) and for reviewing instructions. It can easily be completed in a single class period.

Is Parental Notification required?

Schools/Districts taking part in *The Texas School Survey of Drug and Alcohol Use* are **required** to notify parents of the survey and its general contents prior to survey administration. This notification **MUST** include the **“Information Sheet”** that has been provided. Ideally, these forms should be mailed to parents to ensure proper dissemination, but it is up to each school/district to decide how such matters are to be handled.

The Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects at Texas A&M University has waived the requirement to document parental assent/consent, but does require that the “Information Sheet” be distributed to parents and that the students are read the information in the classroom informing them that participation is completely voluntary.

Either the parents of students or the students themselves have every right to NOT participate in the Texas School Survey. Each participating school/district is responsible for having a mechanism in place to accommodate those students who will not be participating in the survey. Either the Campus Coordinator or the teacher will need to keep track of students for whom either the parents or the students themselves choose not to participate in the survey.

If your school/district is making use of US Department of Education funds (e.g., Safe and Drug Free School programs) to pay for the Texas School Survey, the school/district may be required to obtain informed consent from parents/guardians. In addition, there may be other circumstances that require your school/district to use informed consent and, if so, it is up to the district to obtain and document such consent.

(If you have any questions, or are unclear as to these requirements, please call us at 979-845-1922 or send an email to txschoolssurvey@ppri.tamu.edu.)

Are surveys and parent consent forms available in Spanish?

Yes, Spanish surveys are available upon request. Each school will be provided with an “Information Sheet” (Parental Notification Letters) in English and Spanish to notify parents of the survey and its general contents prior to survey administration.

Is it necessary to survey all students in every grade level, or are sampling services available?

Participating campuses in the statewide sample are requested to survey 8 classrooms per grade level. If your campus has fewer than 8 classrooms per grade level, then you are requested to sample all students.

What is required from a campus in order to select a representative sample of 8 classrooms per grade level?

For the Texas School Survey to be administered in your school/district, PPRI will need to randomly select classes for participation in the study. The random selection process will allow us to generate survey results that are representative of the student population within your school/district. Detailed instructions for completing this master list are noted below.

*If you are surveying students at an **individual school only**, you will need to provide a master list of classes for the specific grade levels contained at your school (only grades 6-12 are eligible to participate).

*If you are surveying students at the **district level**, you will need to provide a master list of classes at each district campus with grades 6-12.

- For schools conducting the survey via paper pencil, choose *either* a **class period** (i.e. 1st, 3rd) in which *all* students are present *or* a **subject** (i.e. English, Science) in which all students must be enrolled; for schools conducting the survey online, choose only a subject (i.e. English, Science) in which all students must be enrolled.
- List *all* teachers for that class period or that subject;
- List the number of students *per grade level* in each of those classes.
- List the class period, regardless of whether class period or subject was selected

Note: The Survey Coordinator will receive a guide (*Sampling Guide for Survey Administration*) and a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet titled *Sampling Template*. Please refer to this guide when completing the template.

Once the spreadsheet is complete, the Survey Coordinator will submit it electronically to: txschoolsurvey@ppri.tamu.edu. PPRI will randomly pick entire classes until we reach the target numbers per grade level for the sample. Then, we'll send a Master List of those classes randomly selected to be surveyed in order for the Parental Notification Letters to be sent home to the parents of students in the selected classes.

When will survey results be available?

PPRI expects the report to be distributed to schools in the fall following the survey administration year.

What other optional services are available?

The *Texas School Survey* has a number of other optional services available for a fee.

Customized Survey Questions. Additional items can be added to the survey to address questions of specific interest to individual schools. These additional questions can be cross-analyzed with existing survey items. Initial cost for this service is \$300 with an additional cost of \$10 per supplemental question. (Note: supplemental questions should not stray too far from the subject of substance use and related behaviors, and must be approved by the Principal Investigator for the project.)

Supplemental questions are limited to a total of 30. A grid will appear on the last page of the survey instrument for such questions. Each question can have up to ten responses (a.-j.).

Extra copies. Additional hard copies of the reports can be requested.

How much will the survey cost?

Schools included in the statewide sample will receive survey materials free of charge to survey sufficient numbers of students for inclusion in the statewide sample. The Texas School Survey is available for use by districts not included in the statewide sample for an initial fee of \$200 with an additional \$1.25 per student surveyed for paper pencil or \$.50 for online surveys. This price includes all survey materials and shipping fees and includes a District Level Report.

How do I enroll in the Texas School Survey?

Complete the online basic participation form at: www.texaschoolsurvey.org

Where should I direct further questions?

If you have questions or need further information, please feel free to contact PPRI directly. You may direct inquiries to:

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