



ARLINGTON PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES - ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

2011

Community Report Card

on the Status of Children, Youth and Families



PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

(February 2011)

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Table of Contents

PREFACE	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
CHAPTER 1 • STARTING HEALTHY, STAYING HEALTHY	11
A Healthy Start In Life	12
On-Time Immunizations	13
Recent Physical Exam	14
Adequate Exercise.....	15
Physical Fitness	16
Early Initiation of Risk Behaviors.....	17
Sexually Active Youth	18
Teen Births.....	19
Depressive Feelings and Suicidal Intentions	20
Use of Harmful Substances	21
CHAPTER 2 • STABLE AND SECURE FAMILIES	25
Births to Stable Families	26
Encouraging Pregnant Teens to Continue Their Education	27
Teen Mothers Staying in School.....	28
Teen Repeat Births.....	29
Need for Subsidized Child Care.....	30
Eligibility for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Program.....	31
Cases of Child Abuse.....	32
Family Developmental Assets	33
CHAPTER 3 • EDUCATIONAL READINESS AND SUCCESS	37
Pre-Kindergarten Experiences.....	38
Early Literacy Skills	39
Skipping School.....	40
Pass Rates for Standards of Learning Tests	41
SAT Scores	42
Results of Stanford Achievement Test.....	43
Passing Algebra I by 8th Grade	44
Youth Attitudes Towards School	45
Parent Involvement in School	46
Feeling Welcome at School.....	47
Suspensions from School.....	48
Plans to Attend College.....	49
CHAPTER 4 • A SAFE SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY	53
Serious Injuries of Children.....	54
Safety and Support for Youth	55
Activities and Opportunities for Youth	56
Positive Peer Relationships.....	57
Violence and Other Antisocial Behavior	58
Victim of Bullying	59
Arrests of Arlington Youth	60
Gang Membership	61
APPENDIX	62
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	63



Preface

A message from the Chair, Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families

As part of its work and charge from the County and School Boards the Partnership for Children, Youth and Families launched the *Community Report Card on the Status of Children, Youth and Families* in 2003. The report card provided for the first time a comprehensive source of information on the well-being of young people and their families in Arlington. The Partnership is delighted to present the third Community Report Card providing an up-to-date statistical portrait on the health and well-being of children, youth and families.

As in the previous two Report Cards the information includes 80 different indicators for health and well-being of young people and is organized in four areas:

- Starting Healthy, Staying Healthy;
- Stable and Secure Families;
- Educational Readiness and Success;
- A Safe, Supportive Community.

Within each of these areas there are data for four priority or critical indicators that were identified by the community seven years ago through a broad-based community input process. The Partnership is once again convening community work groups to review the current target measures for each indicator. These work groups will also identify the indicators that are most important to the community and develop action recommendations for the County and School Boards' consideration.

The information in the Report Card suggests that there is both much to celebrate in Arlington and reasons for concern. The data clearly illustrate the power of deliberate and directed efforts in effecting positive change. More often than not, improvements in the health and well-being of Arlington's young people are a direct result of concerted and sustained efforts on the part of a county agency, the public schools, and/or the community. For example, since the last

Report Card was published in 2008, our community has put in place a number of specific initiatives to reduce alcohol use by young people. There has been a noted decline in teen binge drinking over that same period. The data also show a continuation of positive trends in areas such as gang membership, fighting, and young people being overweight or obese. On the disappointing side, there has been a significant increase in bullying and depressive symptoms, specifically among 6th and 10th grade students.

Believing that a key measure of a community's success is how well it cares for its children and youth, the Report Card is designed to inform and spark discussions across all sectors and neighborhoods in Arlington about the conditions for our youngest community members. The Partnership looks forward to working together with the whole community to improve the lives of all children, youth and their families. If you have any questions about the report, or would like to learn more about the community meetings or volunteer to participate, please contact Kim Durand, the Partnership Coordinator, at 703-228-1667.



Barbara Gomez, Chair
Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth and Families



Executive Summary

The 2011 Report Card on the Status of Children, Youth, and Families includes updated information on numerous indicators of the health and well-being of young people in Arlington. The data come from a variety of sources including birth certificates, school system records, public health reports and surveys of middle and high school youth. The indicators create a statistical portrait of the health, family support, educational readiness and success and community life of youth.

The 2011 Report Card is the third compilation of statistics on youth from the Partnership. What do the indicators reveal about the well-being of Arlington County youth since 2008, when the last Report Card was published? Overall, the statistics give a mixed picture.

- A number of positive trends continued in each of the four areas (health, family, education and community). As examples, young people were more likely to report getting enough exercise; teen births declined; results of the SAT and Stanford tests continued to show that Arlington youth perform well in comparison to their peers nationwide and self-reported gang membership declined to historic lows.
- Other indicators in each of the four areas suggested that young people are now worse off. There was a large drop in the percentage of babies born with a healthy start (i.e., adequate prenatal care, normal birth weight, and no exposure to tobacco or alcohol); an increase in child abuse; a modest decline in the percentage of kindergarten students who attended preschool; and increases in bullying.
- Especially worrisome are a reversal of the trend for a number of indicators where significant progress had been made. These include babies born with a healthy start, babies born into stable families, depressive symptoms, and bullying. In some cases, recent declines have offset the earlier progress (e.g., Healthy Start) and in others, some of the improvement has been sustained.

- Also worrisome are indicators that simply have not changed since data collection began. These include marijuana use, early and/or irresponsible sexual activity, the lack of parent involvement in education within many families, and the failure of youth to develop the interpersonal skills needed to solve problems and conflicts without violence.

Although the report does not specifically address the causes of any changes, many of the improvements took place after the community began a specific initiative to address the issue (e.g. high risk alcohol use and gang membership). These initiatives appear to have had an impact despite recent poor economic conditions and restrictions on County and school budgets. In other cases, national campaigns to target a risk behavior, as in the case of cigarette smoking, appear to be making a difference.

Assessing the well-being of children and youth in a diverse community such as Arlington is not easy. To assist in summarizing the large amount of data found in this report, each chapter begins with a list of indicators and highlights from that particular area. Additional information from the youth surveys conducted by the Partnership and any corrections to the Report Card can be found at www.arlingtonpartnershipforyouth.org.





A R L I N G T O N , V I R G I N I A

1

Starting Healthy, Staying Healthy



Starting Healthy, Staying Healthy

INTRODUCTION

How many of our infants get off to a healthy start in life? Do all children in Arlington have access to the health care services they need for proper growth and development and early identification of problems? What proportion of our youth is adopting a healthy lifestyle? This set of indicators attempts to answer these questions.

INDICATORS

- A healthy start in life
- On-time immunizations
- Recent physical exam
- Adequate exercise
- Physical fitness
- Early initiation of risk behaviors
- Sexually active youth
- Teen births
- Depressive feelings and suicidal intentions
- Use of harmful substances

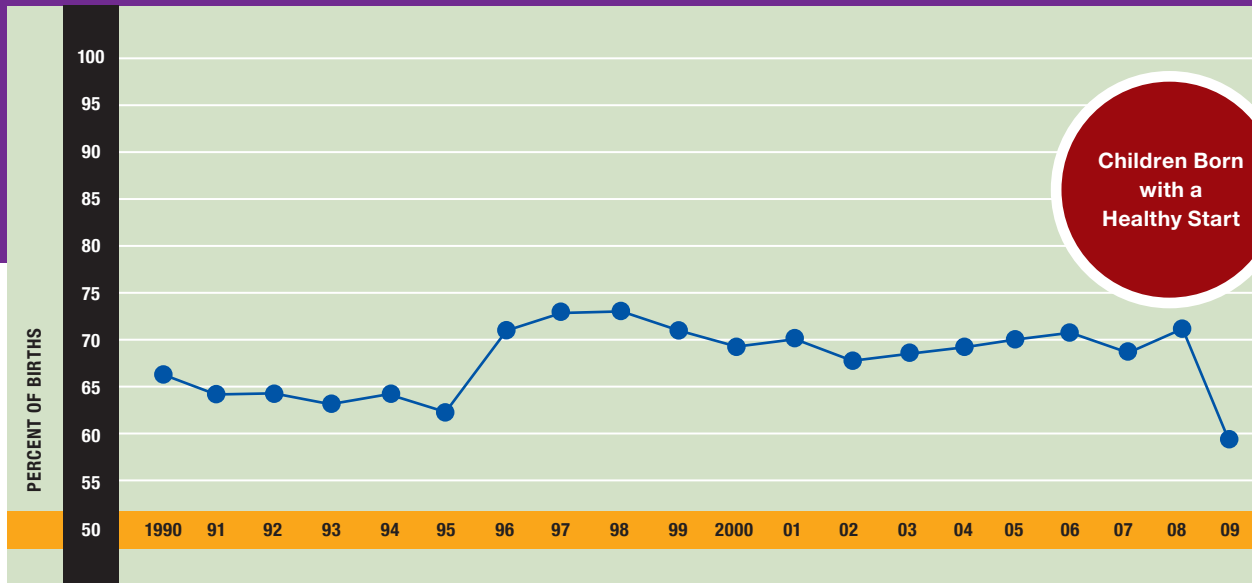
KEY FINDINGS

- Several indicators suggest that young people are adopting a healthier lifestyle. The percentage of youth who met recommended exercise levels increased from 2007 to 2010. Alcohol and cigarette use has fallen and fewer youth are starting to use these substances at a young age (i.e., before 13). However, there has been no change in marijuana use or sexual activity.
- Indicators that reflect the health of infants give a mixed picture. Since 1990, the percentage of babies born with a healthy start generally increased modestly but then decreased sharply in 2009. On the positive side, there are fewer teen births and more children were fully immunized at age two years.
- Two other indicators also give a mixed picture. The percentage of youth who reported serious depressive symptoms fell from 2001 to 2007 then increased. Passing rates for aerobic fitness generally improved for elementary and middle school girls, fell for high school boys and did not change much for the other groups. Fewer girls pass all fitness tests than two years ago but they are still more likely than boys to pass tests.

WHAT'S MISSING

This set of indicators needs to be supplemented with measures of the accessibility of health care. Possible measures include pediatric admissions for asthma or other conditions in which hospitalization is considered preventable, children with a regular source of primary health care (other than an emergency room) and children who have had a dental check up in the past year.

A Healthy Start in Life



DEFINITION

The percentage of births to mothers residing in Arlington in which the birth certificate indicates the following three characteristics: (1) prenatal care began in the first trimester, (2) the mother reported not using alcohol or cigarettes during pregnancy, and (3) the baby weighed more than 2,500 grams (about 5.5 pounds). All births to mothers residing in Arlington are included, not just those births that take place in the county.

SIGNIFICANCE

Low-birth weight babies face higher risks of health and developmental problems¹ and are 20 times more likely to die during the first year of life than normal-weight newborns.² Receiving prenatal care during the first trimester of pregnancy and avoiding cigarettes and alcohol reduce the risk of low birthweight.³ Nearly twice as many infants born to mothers receiving late prenatal care have low birth weights compared with infants of mothers receiving early care.⁴ Other factors influence low birth weight including multiple births, which have become more common.

FINDINGS

Data for Arlington County show that the proportion of babies born with a healthy start ranged from 62 percent to 73 percent of all births between 1990 and 2008, then fell dramatically to 58 percent – a level lower than any observed in the previous 20 years. A sharp decline in a similar index was also observed at the state level. The data also show babies born to White mothers are much more likely to have a healthy start, than babies

born to Black mothers or mothers of another race. Just over half of those born to Hispanic mothers have a healthy start.

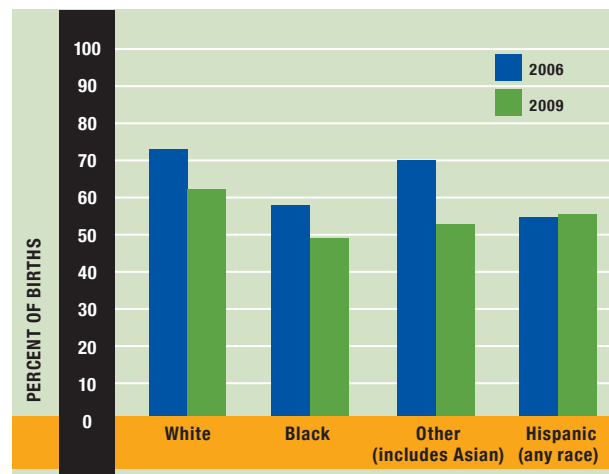
SOURCE

Virginia Department of Health, Division of Health Statistics

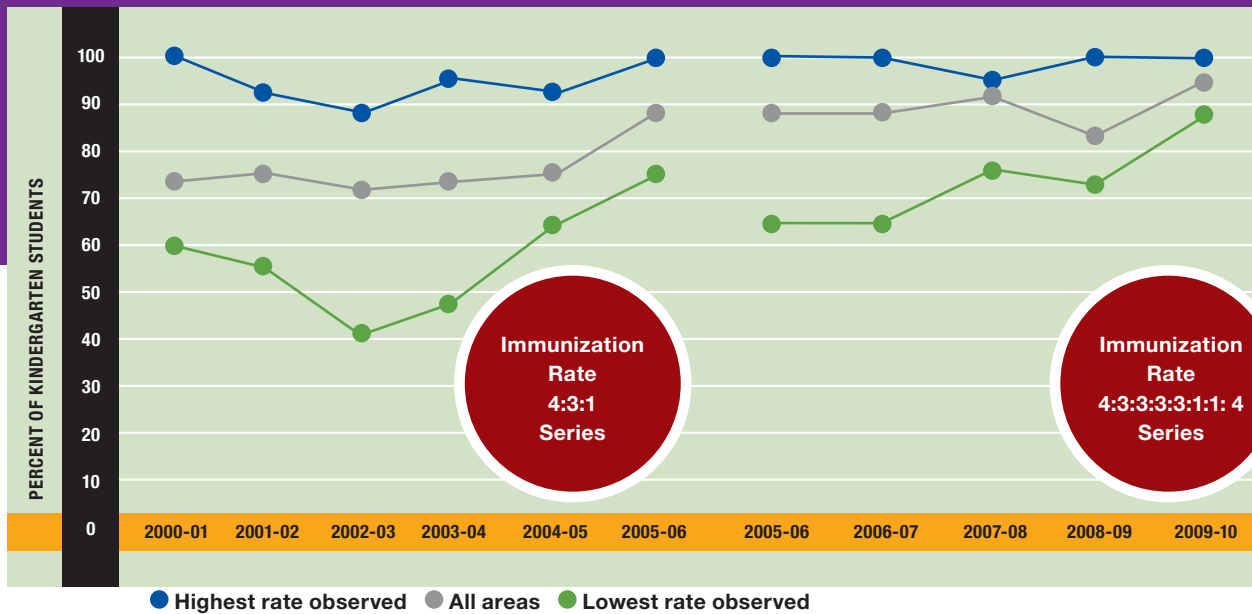
REFERENCES

- 1 Maternal, Infant, and Child Health in the United States (2001). March of Dimes Data Book for Policy Makers, page 11.
- 2 Kiely, J.L. *et al.*, Low Birth Weight and Intrauterine Growth Retardation, Centers for Disease Control, page 185.
- 3 Kids Count Data Book (2000) page 25.
- 4 Kids Count Data Book (2000) pages 26 and 36.

Healthy Start, by Race and for Hispanic Mothers 2006 and 2009



On-Time Immunizations



DEFINITION

The percentage of Arlington children who received selected immunizations by the age of two years, which is assessed upon entering public school. Over time, the recommended number of vaccinations a child should receive by age two has increased.¹ The original immunization series (4:3:1) included four doses of DPT (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis), three polio, and one MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella). The new 4:3:3:3:1: 1: 4 series also includes three doses of vaccines for Hib and hepatitis B (Hep B), one varicella (chicken pox) and four PCV (pneumococcal conjugate vaccine to prevent a form of meningitis.) A child with no documentation of having received a shot is considered the same as a child who never received it.

SIGNIFICANCE

Immunizations are among the most basic and important safeguards of the individual and collective health of our children. As noted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,² immunizations protect against diseases that killed or disabled many children in past decades. Because cases of these diseases have declined precipitously, communities find it challenging to maintain a high level of concern for immunizations. However, the diseases remain a threat, and periodic outbreaks occur among the unimmunized.

FINDINGS

Immunization rates varied from 83 to 95 percent between the 2005-06 and the 2009-10 school years. This is a notable achievement, given that the current recommended series has more components than it did before 2007 and compliance is harder to obtain. The variance between the areas of the County (i.e., each school's attendance area) reporting the highest and lowest rates diminished. However, data from 2009-10 reflect only a sample of schools, making that year's figures less reliable. In 2008-09, the last year in which immunization records were reviewed at all schools, the range was from 72 to 100 percent.

Immunizations are one of the most basic and important safeguards of the health of our children.

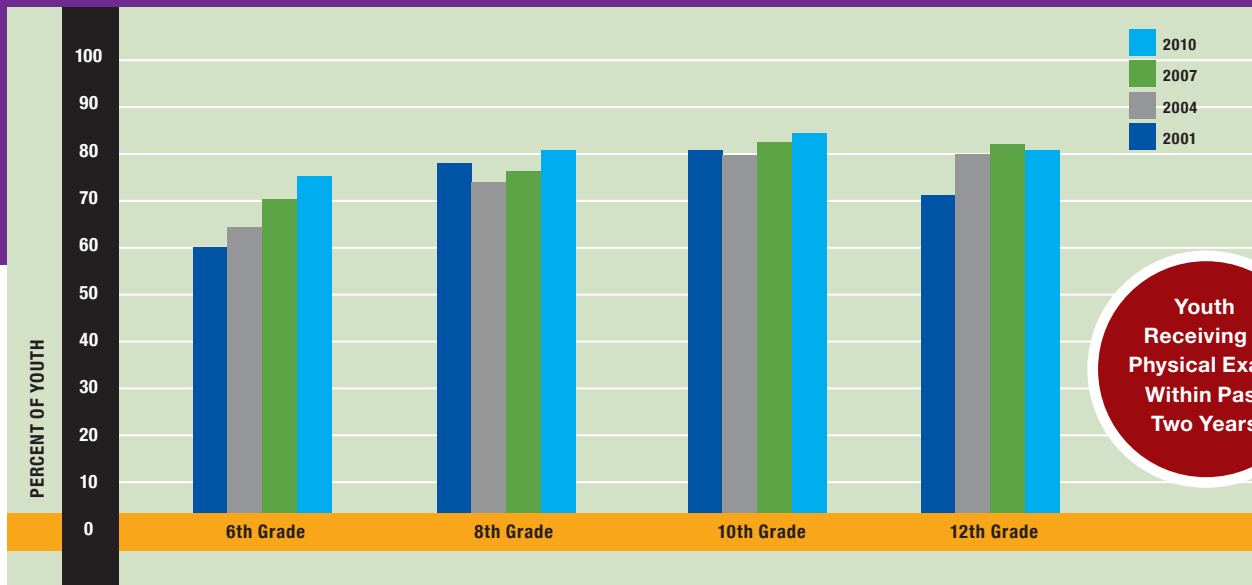
SOURCE

CASA Survey/ Kindergarten Retrospective, Public Health Division, Department of Human Services, Arlington County

REFERENCES

- 1 The recommended childhood immunization schedule can be found at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/schedules/child-schedule.htm
- 2 Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well Being 2001*, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, page 27.

Recent Physical Exam



DEFINITION

The percentage of Arlington young people ages 11 through 18 who report having had a physical examination from a medical provider in the past two years.

SIGNIFICANCE

Young people can maintain good health through regular and timely physical examinations by medical personnel. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends annual preventive examinations for young people from age 11 through 21. During these exams, the physician can administer routine immunizations; check height, weight, and blood pressure; conduct a physical exam and developmental assessment; and provide anticipatory guidance in nutrition, exercise, and the prevention of violence, injury, and risk behaviors. The patient’s history or physical exam may indicate the need for other services.

FINDINGS

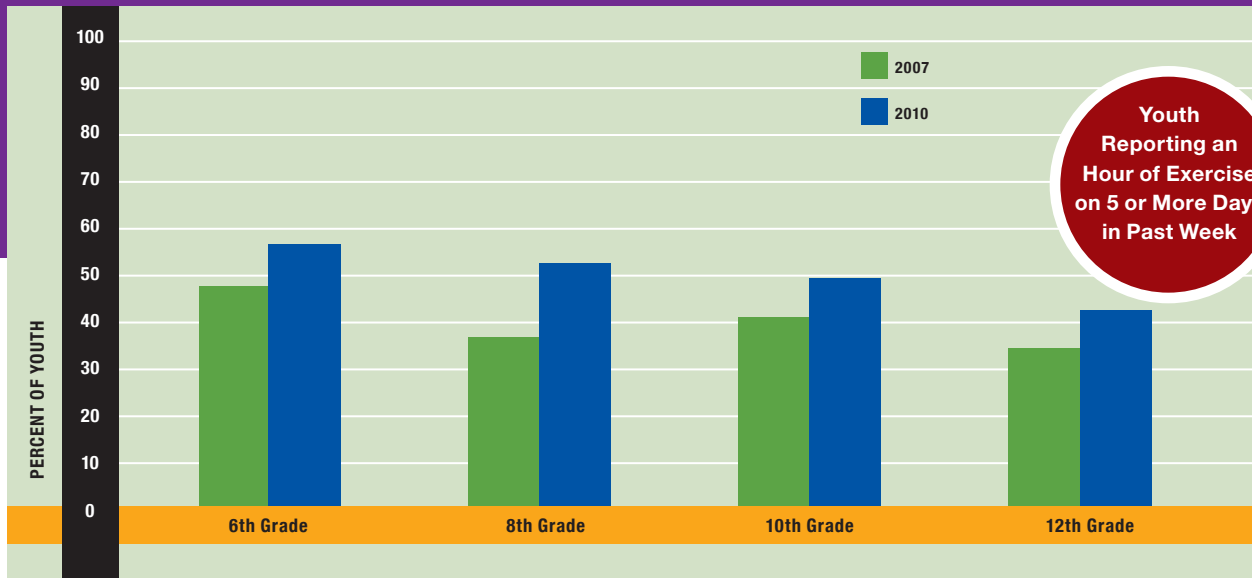
Nearly 80 percent of young people report having a physical examination with a medical provider in the past two years. Since 2001, more youth report having a recent physical, especially those in 6th and 8th grades. Despite the improvement, 6th-grade students remain the least likely to report this measure of access to medical care. Only 75 percent of 6th graders but 81 to 84 percent of older youth reported a recent physical in 2010.

The percentage of youth reporting a recent physical exam increased from 2001 to 2010.

SOURCE

Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families, *Youth Risk Behavior Survey* (Centers for Disease Control): 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010

Adequate Exercise



DEFINITION

The percentage of Arlington youth reporting at least an hour of exercise or more on five or more days per week. This measure reflects current recommendations on exercise.

SIGNIFICANCE

The benefits of regular exercise for good health are well-established. The Surgeon General recommends participating in regular physical activity to help build and maintain healthy bones and muscles, control weight, reduce fat, reduce feelings of depression and anxiety, and promote psychological well-being as well as contribute to long-term health.¹

FINDINGS

The percentage of students reporting adequate exercise varies by grade, with 6th grade students most likely and 12th grade students least likely to report this behavior. This is probably due to the fact that few students take physical education class after 10th grade. However, even students taking physical education cannot meet the recommended levels solely at school during the 50-minute classes.

From 2007 to 2010, a greater percentage of students at every grade level reported adequate exercise.

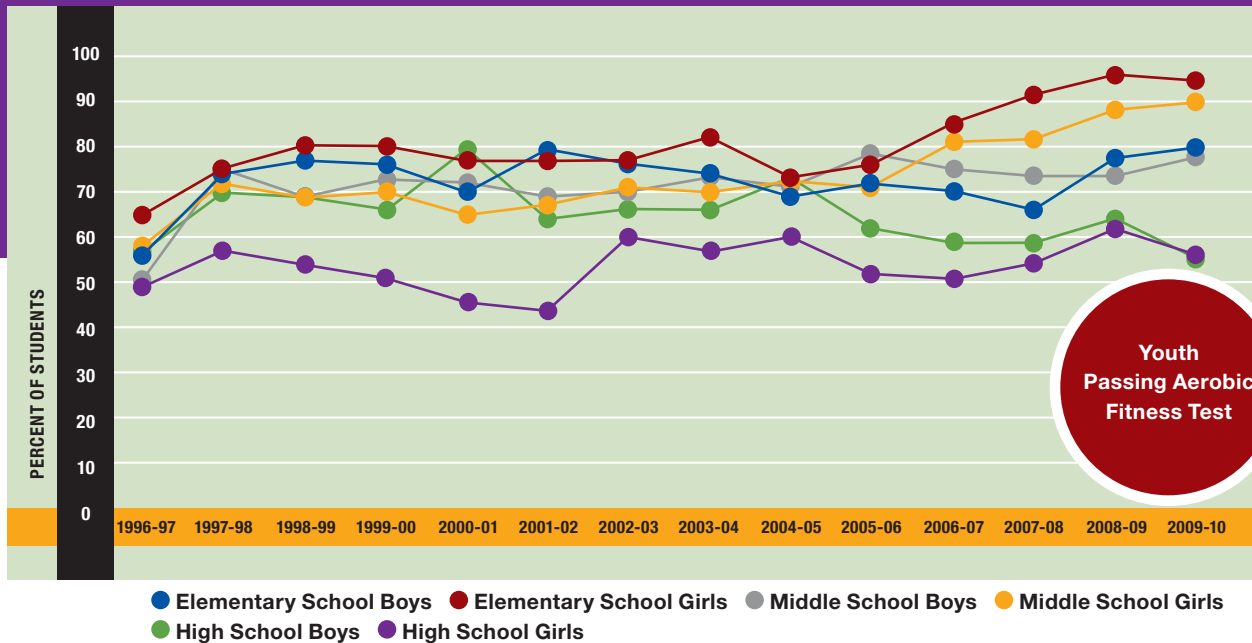
SOURCE

Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families, *Youth Risk Behavior Survey* (Centers for Disease Control): 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010.

REFERENCE

- Centers for Disease Control, Physical Activity and the Health of Young People, at: www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/physicalactivity/facts.htm

Physical Fitness



DEFINITION

The percentage of Arlington County students (1) scoring satisfactory or better on the aerobic capacity test (one-mile walk or run) and (2) passing all five physical fitness tests¹, including: (in addition to aerobics) the curl up, 90° push up, trunk extensor and the sit-and-reach. These tests measure muscle strength, endurance, and flexibility.

SIGNIFICANCE

As the Virginia Department of Education has noted: “(f)it students feel better, look better, have more energy and are better learners.” The state has also identified aerobic capacity as the most important component of a fitness program.²

High school girls in Arlington are consistently the least likely to pass the aerobic fitness test.

FINDINGS

As a group, high school girls in Arlington have consistently been least likely to score satisfactory or better on the aerobic fitness test and elementary school girls most likely to pass. This pattern is consistent with national data showing that decreases in vigorous physical activity between 9th and 12th grades are especially pronounced among girls.¹ Elementary and middle school girls made consistent gains in the period from 1997 to 2010. High school boys’ performance on aerobic fitness has fallen and there has been no change in other groups.

About half of youth who participated in all five fitness tests in grades 4 through 10 passed all of them. Girls were more likely to pass than boys but the three year trend is down for both groups.

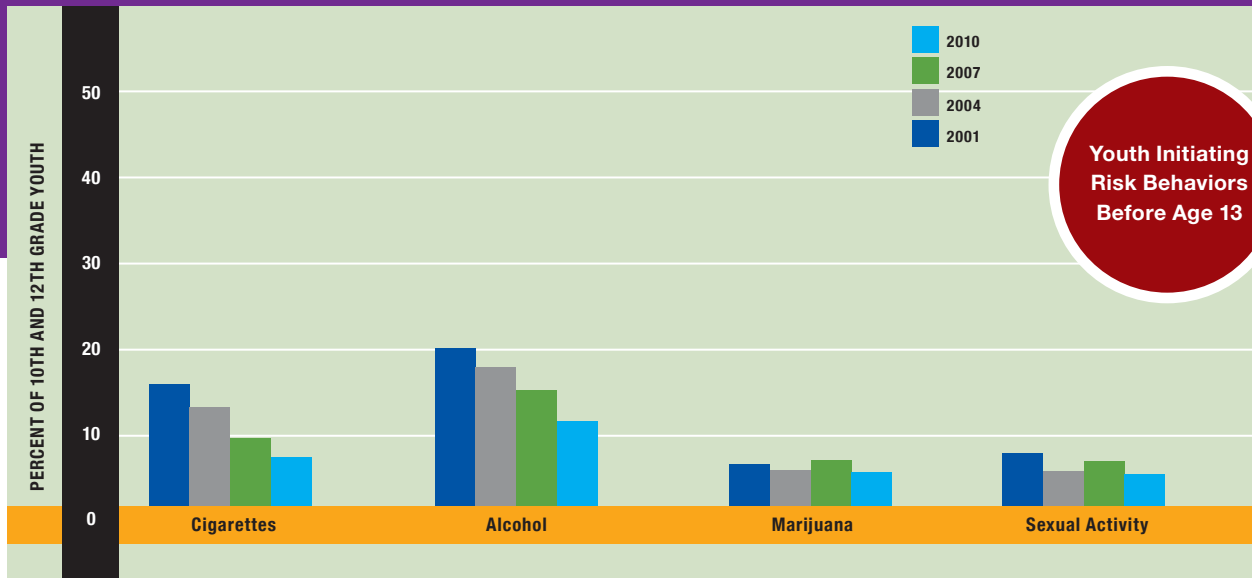
SOURCE

Arlington Public Schools, Health, Physical Education, and Athletics.

REFERENCES

- 1 Virginia Department of Education, Health-Related Fitness Testing Guidelines at doe.virginia.gov/instruction/physed/fitness_testing/fitness_testing_info.pdf.
- 2 Centers for Disease Control, *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, Item Rationale at www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/2003/rationale.htm#Physical

Early Initiation of Risk Behaviors



DEFINITION

The percentage of youth in 10th and 12th grade who report initiating use of cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana and engaging in sexual intercourse before the age of 13.

SIGNIFICANCE

In general, starting risk behaviors early increases the negative consequences. Becoming sexually active before age 13 puts a young person at increased risk for premature parenthood and disease.¹ The earlier an individual starts using alcohol, the more likely he or she is to develop a clinically defined alcohol disorder.² The earlier an individual begins smoking, the more likely he or she is to become addicted to nicotine and the more difficulty he or she will have in quitting.³

FINDINGS

Alcohol use is the risk behavior most likely to begin before age 13 but has declined steadily. Early use of cigarettes has fallen significantly from 16 percent of youth to only 6 percent in 2010. Early use of marijuana and early initiation of sexual activity were lower in 2010 than in 2001 but the change has not been as large, given that these behaviors were always less common.

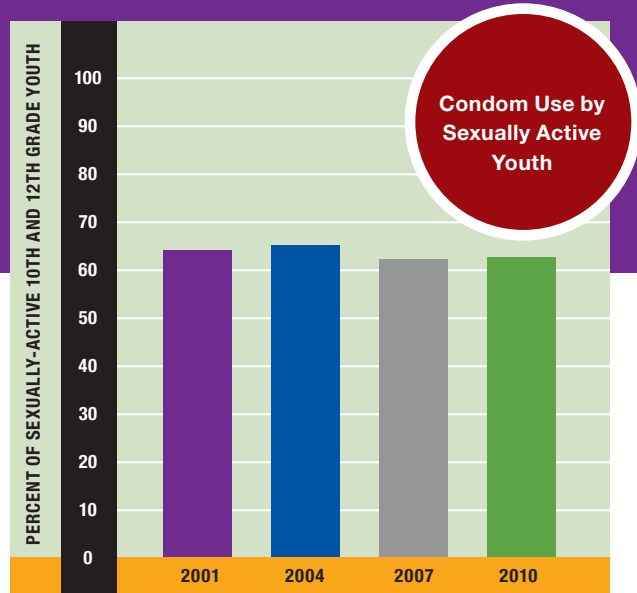
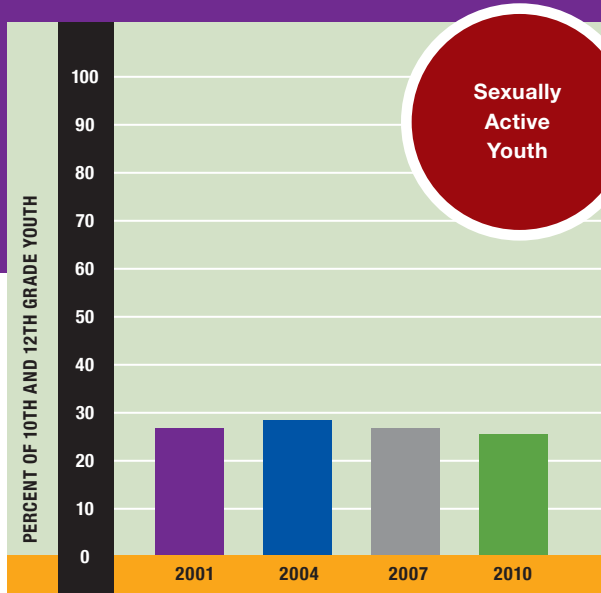
SOURCE

Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families, *Youth Risk Behavior Survey* (Centers for Disease Control): 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010.

REFERENCES

- Centers for Disease Control, *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*, Item Rationale www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/2003/rationale.htm#physical
- National Center for Health Statistics, *Health, United States, 2000 with Adolescent Chartbook*, page 78.
- Moolchan, E. (2001) Is it a Good Time For Treatment? Smoking Prevention for Teenagers, *Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter*.

Sexually Active Youth



DEFINITION

The percentage of high school youth in Arlington who report (1) that they currently are sexually active (i.e., have had intercourse in the prior three months), and (2) the percentage of sexually active youth who used a condom the last time they had intercourse.

SIGNIFICANCE

These statistics look at how many of our young people are avoiding sexual activity as adolescents and, of those sexually active youth, how many are using condoms to avoid premature parenthood and exposure to sexually-transmitted infections (STIs). Teen parenthood typically compromises the future of mother, father, and child, and imposes significant costs on society. Nationwide, adolescents account for about one-fourth of the annual cases of STIs. But less than half of sexually active adolescents (ages 15 to 17) have discussed their sexual history or testing for STIs with a health care provider.¹

About one out of four high school students in Arlington are sexually active.

FINDINGS

In 2010, just over one in four high school students reported being sexually active. Just six out of ten of those youth also reported using a condom. There has been no significant change in these figures since 2001.

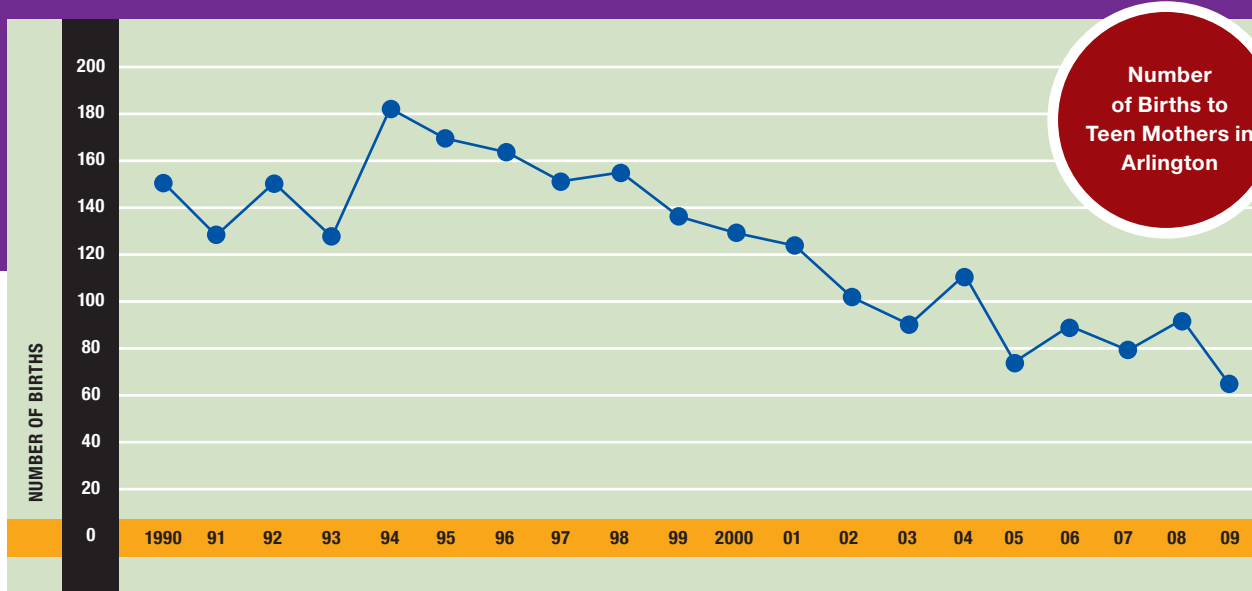
SOURCE

Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families, *Youth Risk Behavior Survey* (Centers for Disease Control): 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010.

REFERENCE

- 1 Kaiser Family Foundation, May 2001, available at www.kff.org/entpartnerships/upload/SexSmarts-Survey-Sexual-Health-Care-and-Counsel-Summary.pdf

Teen Births



DEFINITION

The number of births to mothers who are 19 years old or younger. All births to Arlington mothers are included, regardless of the location of the birth. For 1990, 2000, 2005, and 2009, years in which Census data are available, the teen birth rate is also calculated. The teen birth rate controls for variations in the number of teen births that are simply due to changes in the number of adolescents in the county.

SIGNIFICANCE

National statistics show that a teenage girl who has a child before graduating from high school is far less likely to complete school than a teenage girl who does not have a child.¹ Limited education means limited employment prospects and earnings for the mother, and is correlated with elevated risks of low birth weight, infant mortality, and dropping out of school for the child.² About three out of ten high school students in Arlington are sexually active.

FINDINGS

The number of teen births fell fairly steadily between 1994 and 2009. The teen birth rate in 2009 was also considerably lower, falling from 25 per 1,000 in 1990 to an estimated 9 per 1,000 in 2009. This trend is consistent with national declines in teen birth rates from 1991 to 2005. This trend reversed in 2006 at the national level but continued to decline in Arlington.³

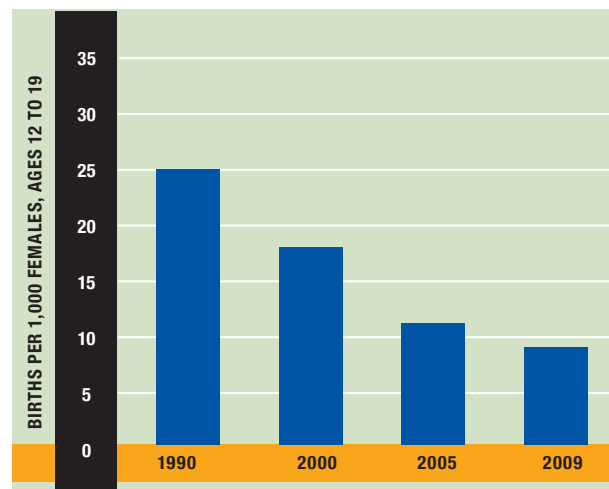
SOURCE

Virginia Department of Health, Division of Health Statistics.

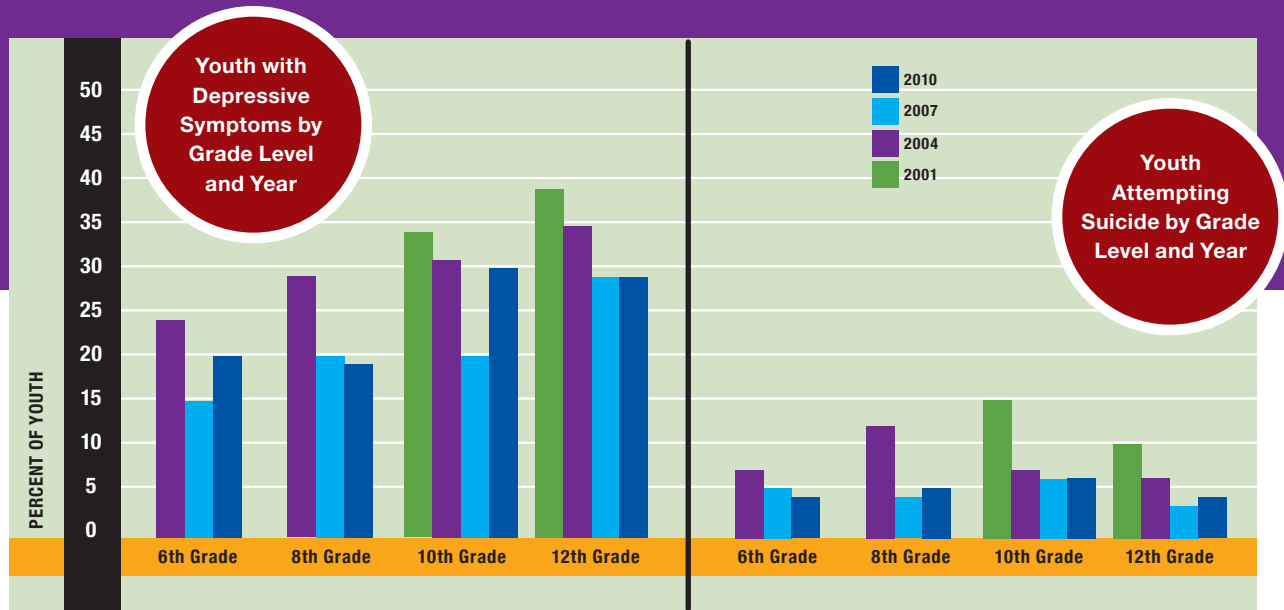
REFERENCES

- 1 The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, *The Public Costs of Teen Childbearing*, December 2006 at www.thenationalcampaign.org/costs/national.aspx
- 2 The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (1998) *When Teens Have Sex: Issues and Trends*, page 13.
- 3 Hamilton, B. et al *Births: Preliminary Data for 2006*, National Center for Health Statistics (2007).

Teen Birth Rate



Depressive Feelings and Suicidal Intentions



DEFINITION

The percentage of Arlington youth reporting depressive symptoms, including persistent and disruptive feelings of sadness or hopelessness in the past month and the percent who attempted suicide in the previous year.

SIGNIFICANCE

These indicators provide information about one aspect of the mental health of the youth in our community and about those most at risk for suicide attempts. Young people who attempt suicide face greater risk of future attempts into adulthood. Young people reporting that they are frequently sad or depressed may be suffering from depression. Research suggests that up to 80 percent of depressed teenagers (based on standard diagnostic criteria) do not get necessary psychiatric treatment, leaving them vulnerable to additional bouts of depression.¹ Further, young people with depressive symptoms, but not full-blown clinical depression, often have difficulties in school, with peers, or family.²

Up to 80 percent of teens who are depressed do not receive needed treatment.

FINDINGS

In 2010, 24 percent of youth reported depressive symptoms and 5 percent reported attempting suicide in the previous year. Depressive symptoms are more commonly reported among older youth. Over time, the percentage of teens reporting these risk behaviors has declined. However, from 2007 to 2010, the percentage of youth in 6th and 10th grades reporting depressive symptoms increased, returning to 2004 levels in the case of 10th grade. Nearly one in three high school students in 10th and 12th grade reported depressive symptoms.

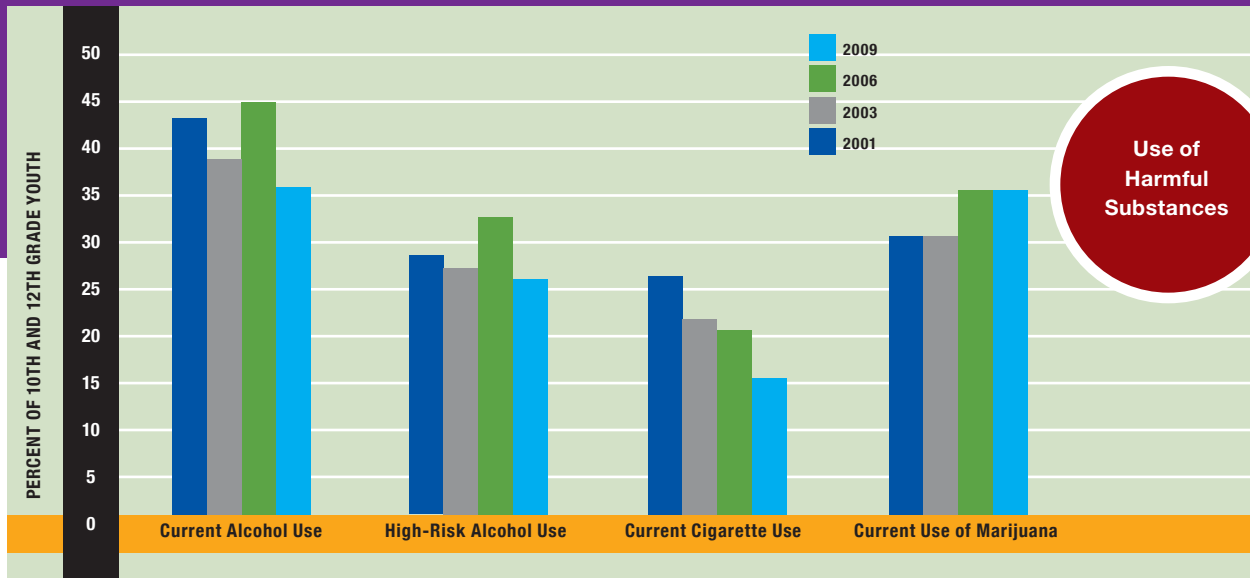
SOURCE

Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families, *Youth Risk Behavior Survey* (Centers for Disease Control): 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010.

REFERENCES

- Lewinsohn, P.M., et al. (2000), "Natural Course of Adolescent Major Depressive Disorder in a Community Sample: Predictors of Recurrence in Young Adults," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, page 1584.
- Glied, S. and Pine, D.S. (2002), "Consequences and Correlates of Adolescent Depression," *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 156 (10), pages 1,009-1014.

Use of Harmful Substances



DEFINITION

The percent of *high school* youth reporting:

- Alcohol use in the past month,
- High-risk alcohol use in the past month, (i.e., used alcohol three or more times in the past month or got drunk in the past two weeks,)
- Cigarette smoking in the past month,
- Marijuana use in the past month.

SIGNIFICANCE

Though experimentation with substance use is common in adolescence, recurring use can have serious negative consequences. Recent research has shown that adolescents are neurologically more vulnerable than any age group to develop nicotine, alcohol, and other drug addictions.¹ Youth who regularly use alcohol and drugs are more likely to be victims of violence, commit violent acts, engage in unplanned and unprotected sex, to have trouble in school and engage in other dangerous activities.² Young smokers are more likely to become adult smokers with the many associated health problems.

FINDINGS

In 2009, fewer youth than in 2001 reported alcohol use, high risk alcohol use, and cigarette smoking. In contrast, marijuana use rose from 31 percent in 2001 to 36 percent in 2006, a level maintained in 2009.

In 2009, about one-third of high school youth reported marijuana use, with no change since 2006.

SOURCE

Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families, *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Survey* (Search Institute): 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2009.

REFERENCES

- 1 Taylor J. and Marc Potenza, M.D., Department of Psychiatry, Yale University, as noted in [www.sciencedaily.com/releases, 2003](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2003).
- 2 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Keeping Youth Drug Free*.





A R L I N G T O N , V I R G I N I A

2

Stable and Secure Families



Stable and Secure Families

INTRODUCTION

Are pregnant teens and teen mothers able to continue their education and avoid additional child-bearing? How many working poor families are eligible for and receiving subsidies to help defray the costs of childcare? Do young people report having the support, boundaries, and positive communication they need to become healthy, caring, and responsible adults? This chapter looks at measures of the stability, functioning, and economic security of families in Arlington.

INDICATORS

- Births to stable families
- Keeping pregnant teens and teen mothers in school
- Teen repeat births
- Need for subsidized child care
- Eligibility for school lunch program
- Cases of child abuse
- Family Developmental Assets

KEY FINDINGS

- A number of indicators suggest that over time, the well being of Arlington children has improved. Increases in the percentage of youth reporting *Family Support*, a Developmental Asset, an overall decrease in teen repeat births since 1990 and reductions in the percentage of school children eligible for subsidized school lunches are all signs of positive change.
- In several cases, however, long-term improvements were offset by more recent changes. The percentage of children born to stable families, teen mothers staying in school, and founded cases of child abuse all grew worse in the past two years. This potential reversal of the long-term trends may reflect economic conditions prevailing in 2009 and 2010, which may delay marriage, cause teen mothers to leave school, and increase stress within families.
- Developmental Assets that reflect the support, rules and boundaries and communication skills of families showed different patterns. *Family support* and *positive family communication* improved while *family boundaries* declined slightly. The parenting skills required for youth to experience these Assets are even more critical during times of stress and economic hardship.

WHAT'S MISSING

This report card lacks four critical measures of family life:

- Secure employment of parents, which directly affects household income and indirectly affects many aspects of family life, including health insurance coverage.
- Housing condition: crowded and poor-quality housing contributes to numerous childhood problems, including developmental delays, illness and injury, and behavioral problems.
- The enrollment of preschool children in *high quality* childcare programs such as those accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Access to good parent education programs, which can offer guidance to Arlington parents who are struggling with such issues as discipline and communication.

Babies Born Into Stable Families



DEFINITION

The percentage of births to mothers who are Arlington residents at least 20 years old, have completed high school, and are married, according to the birth certificate.

SIGNIFICANCE

This indicator tells us the proportion of Arlington children born into families most likely to provide them with the social, emotional, and financial resources they need to thrive. Children born to single mothers are at higher risk for adverse birth outcomes and are more likely to live in poverty.¹ An unmarried teen parent who lacks a high school credential faces especially daunting challenges. Such individuals have limited opportunities for obtaining secure employment and adequate income, and they often experience poor health outcomes. These difficulties harm their children in numerous ways.

FINDINGS

Births to stable families in Arlington increased steadily from 67 percent in 1990 to 73 percent in 2008 and then dropped sharply to 59 percent in 2009. During this period, however, a far lower percentage of births to Black and Hispanic mothers met the criteria for stable families. In 2009, for example, 65 percent of births to White mothers but only 40 percent of births to Black mothers and 30 percent of births to Hispanic mothers met the stable family criteria. (Note: Hispanic mothers may be of any race.)

SOURCE

Division of Health Statistics, Virginia Department of Health, by special request

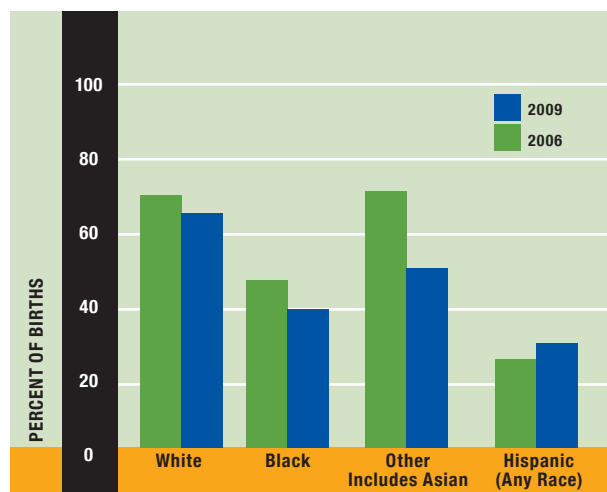
NOTE

The statistic includes births to Arlington residents regardless of the location of the birth.

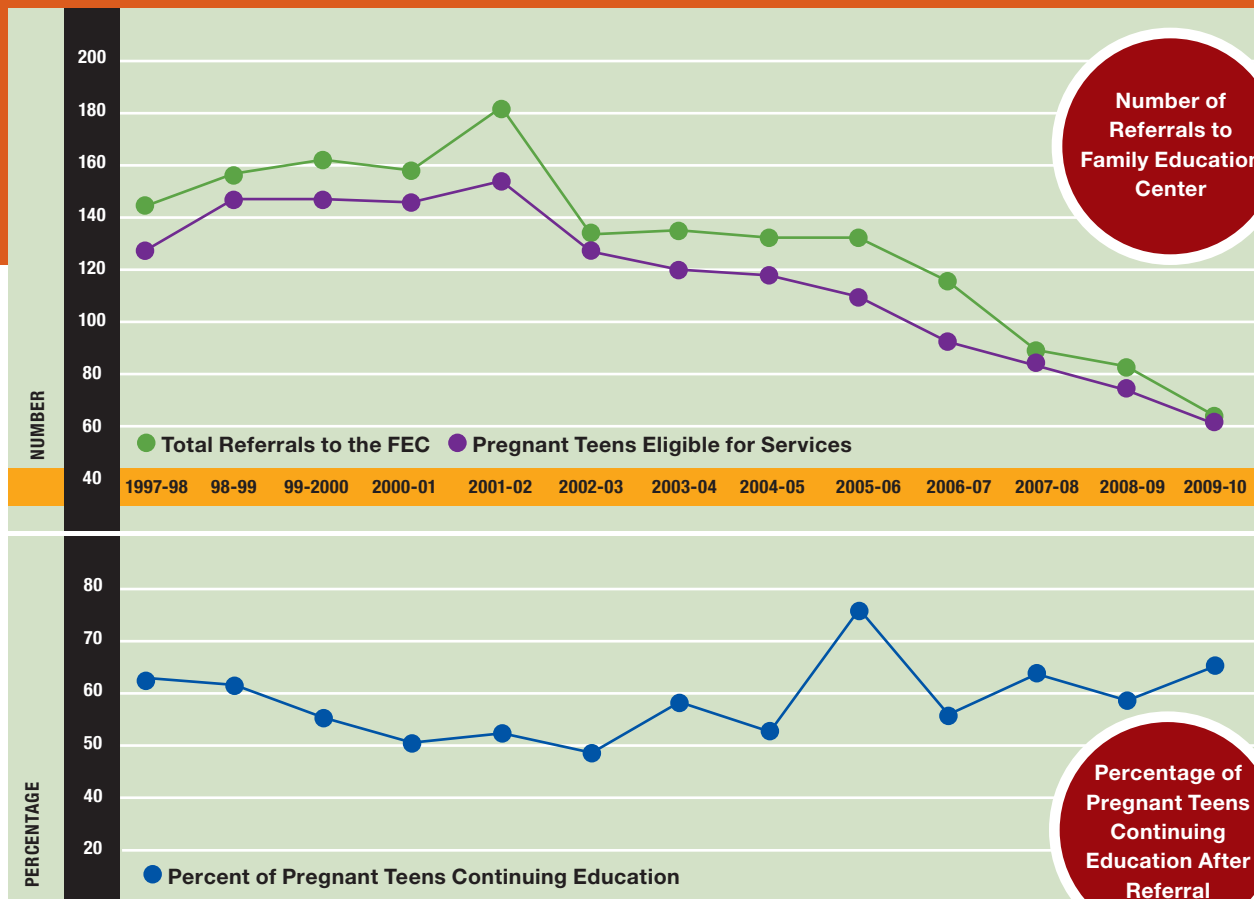
REFERENCE

¹ Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being 2001*, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, page 8.

Births to Stable Families, by Race or Ethnicity



Encouraging Pregnant Teens to Continue Their Education



DEFINITION

- The number of pregnant teens referred to the Family Education Center (FEC), an alternative program for pregnant teens enrolled in Arlington Public Schools, and
- The percentage of pregnant teens referred to the FEC who enroll or remain in school at the time of referral.

SIGNIFICANCE

These indicators relate to our ability to identify pregnant teens and encourage them to continue their education. This is a daunting task. One study found that only three out of ten adolescent mothers in the U.S. earn a high school diploma by age 30 compared with three out of four of those who delay having children until 20 or 21.¹ Teen parents who are not enrolled in school require more intensive outreach to identify and address the obstacles impeding their continued education.

FINDINGS

As the teen birth rate has declined so have referrals to the FEC. From the 2000-01 school year to the 2004-05 school year, the FEC received an average of 148 referrals. During the most recent five-year period, they received an average of only 96. In

2010, the FEC received 64 referrals and identified 61 teens eligible for services. (They may be ineligible if they are age 22 or older, lack documentation or have already obtained a diploma or GED.)

In each year, most of the pregnant teens referred to the FEC were not enrolled in school at that time and had not completed their secondary education. About 10 to 25 teens per year had a high school diploma or GED.

Since 1998, the percentage of pregnant teens without a high school credential who were referred to the FEC and decided to enroll or remain in school (typically attending the FEC) has ranged from 49 to 77 percent. However, the range in the past five years has been higher (57 to 77 percent) than in the previous five years (49 to 58 percent).

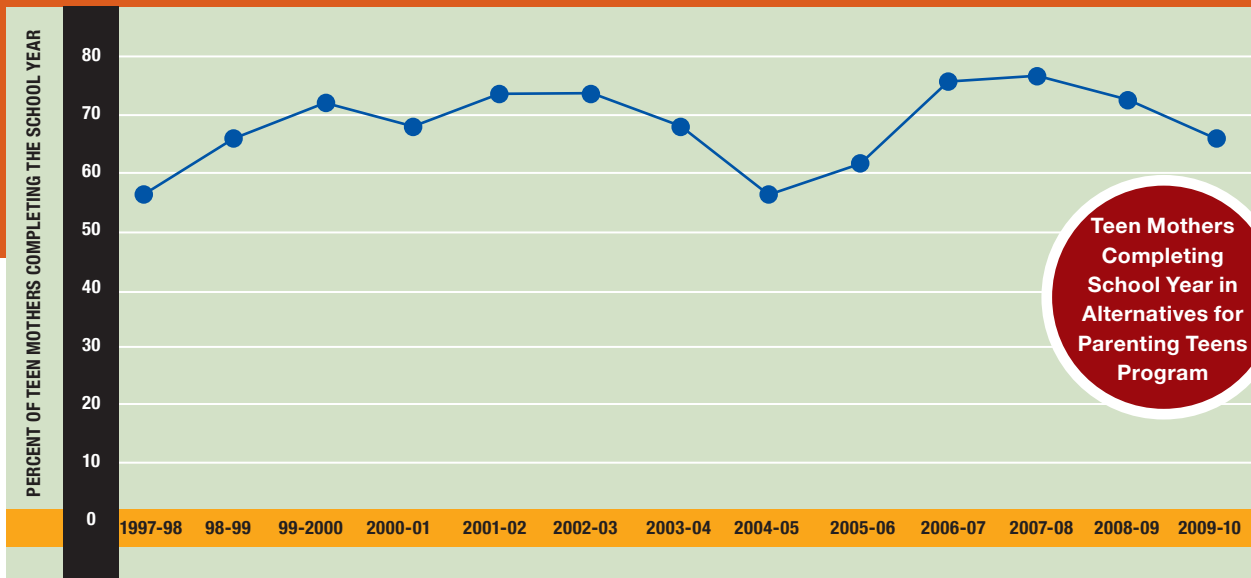
SOURCE

Office of Teen Parenting Programs, Arlington Public Schools

REFERENCE

1 Robin Hood Foundation, Kids Having Kids at: www.robinhood.org/approach/KHK.pdf

Teen Mothers Staying in School



DEFINITION

The percentage of teen mothers enrolled in the Alternatives for Parenting Teens (APT) program who complete the program or graduate in a given year.

SIGNIFICANCE

This indicator measures the success of a comprehensive program to help teen parents complete their education. The APT program is a year-round alternative school for teenage mothers and their children. The program includes both instruction and support, including health care, child care, training in parenting skills, and transportation. The teen mothers selected for this program are those most at-risk for not finishing their education, as assessed by APT staff.

FINDINGS

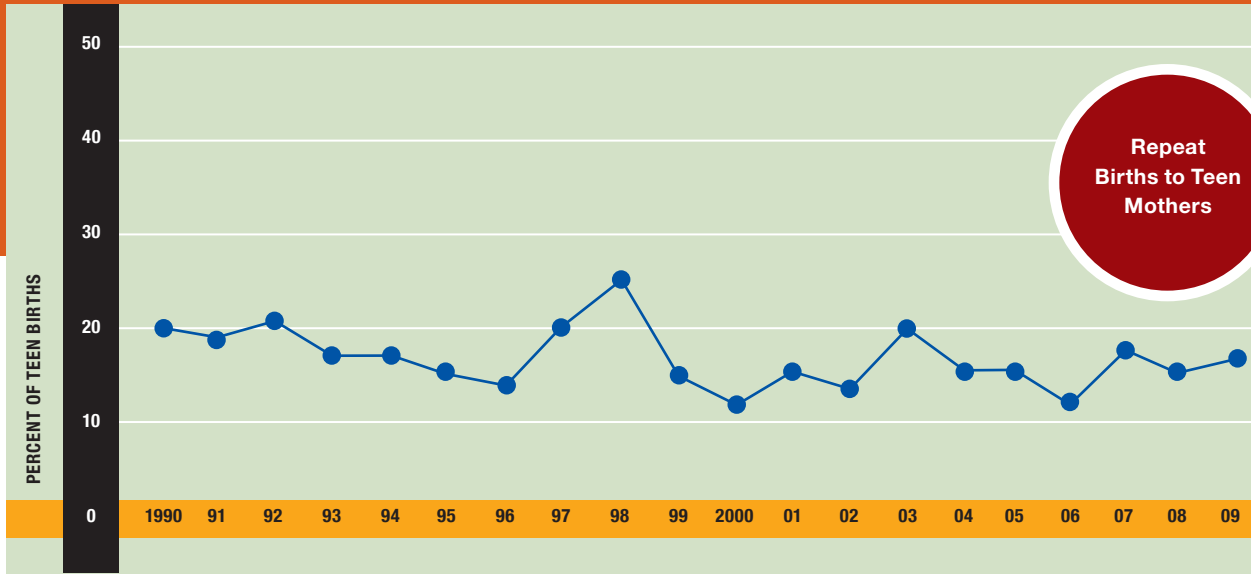
On average, just over two-thirds of the teens who participate in the APT program complete the school year. Since 1997-98, this percentage has varied from 57 to 77. In the most recent school year, only two-thirds completed the program compared to approximately 75 percent during the previous three years. Young mothers leave the program to work, to relocate, or for other reasons.

About two-thirds of teens who participate in the Alternatives for Parenting Teens program complete the school year.

SOURCE

Office of Teen Parenting Programs, Arlington Public Schools

Teen Repeat Births



DEFINITION

The percentage of births to teen mothers that are second (or subsequent) births.

SIGNIFICANCE

This indicator is a measure of the success of efforts to focus teen parents on educational and vocational goals before having more children. Having a second child exacerbates the problems created by teen parenthood.

The rate of repeat births for Black teenagers fell from an average of 26 percent in the years 1998-2001 to 13 percent in the years 2006-2009.

FINDINGS

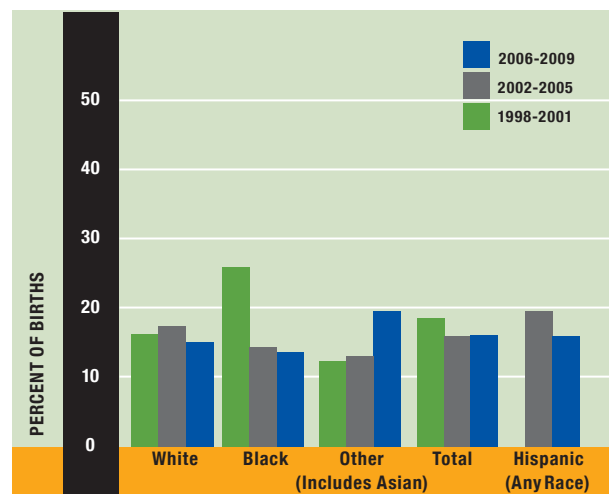
Between 1990 and 2009, from 12 to 25 percent of births to teenagers were to young women who already were mothers. The percentage of teen births that were repeat births was lower in 2009 (17%) than in 1990 (20%). During this 20-year period, rates as low as 12 to 14 percent have been attained, but not maintained. During the last five years, rates have stabilized somewhat, at an average of 16 percent. In addition, the pattern by race has changed: specifically, the rate of repeat births among Black teenagers fell dramatically

from an average of 26 percent during the three-year period 1998 - 2001 to 13 percent during the three year period 2006 - 2009. By contrast, for the most recent time period, the rate for White teens was 15 percent and the rate for Hispanic teens, regardless of race, was 16 percent.

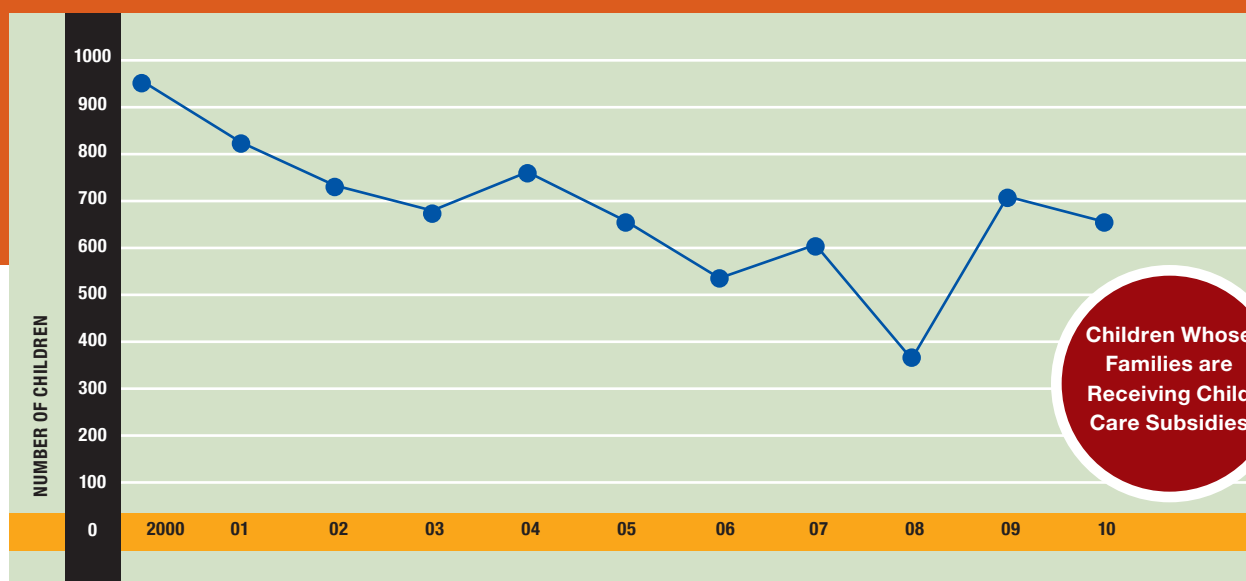
SOURCE

Division of Health Statistics, Virginia Department of Health

Repeat Births by Race or Ethnicity



Need for Subsidized Child Care



DEFINITION

The number of children whose families receive financial assistance for child care.

SIGNIFICANCE

This indicator is a proxy for the need for child care subsidies by low-income, working families. In Virginia, an estimated 60 percent of infants and toddlers spend all or part of their day in the care of adults other than their parents.¹ Research confirms that the care that children receive in their early years has a tremendous influence on their intellectual, emotional, and social development.

Child care is important but also expensive, particularly in urban areas. According to the National Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies, the average cost of center care for an infant in an urban area in Virginia was over \$14,000 per year, far above the state average of nearly \$9,000.² Non-center based care settings are typically less expensive but may be unlicensed and may not have the capacity to deliver a comprehensive program that meets the full range of physical, emotional, and cognitive needs of the child.

To help offset these high costs, Arlington County receives federal and state funds, which it augments with local funds, to subsidize child care for families with income near the poverty level. In fiscal year 2010, families working and earning less than 185 percent of the poverty level (e.g., \$33,874 for a family of three) were eligible.

This definition of need for subsidized child care probably underestimates true need because the income criteria don't reflect the cost of living in Northern Virginia.³

FINDINGS

The number of children whose families received a subsidy generally declined between 2000 and 2008, from 947 to 375. The need for subsidized child care then rose sharply in 2009, returning to levels not observed since 2003.

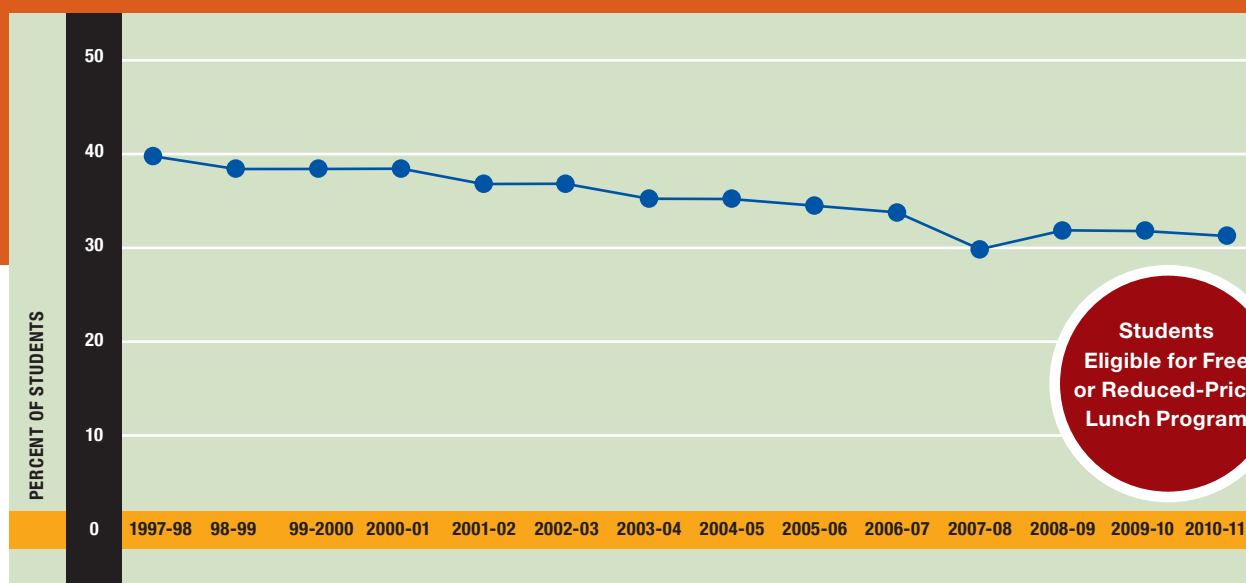
SOURCE

Child Care Office, Department of Human Services, Arlington County.

REFERENCES

- 1 Garland, C. and Rasmussen, A. Quality Matters: Setting the Stage for Life for Virginia's Infants and Toddlers, (2010), Voices for Virginia Children, at www.vakids.org/pubs/ECE/Infant%20Toddler%20Specialist%20Network%202010%20policy%20brief.pdf
- 2 Kendall, R., Parents and the High Cost of Child Care: 2010 Update, National Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies, at www.naccrra.org/docs/Cost_Report_073010-final.pdf
- 3 Pearce, D., The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Virginia, Voices for Virginia's Children, at: www.vakids.org.

Eligibility for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Program



Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Program

DEFINITION

The percentage of children enrolled in Arlington Public Schools who qualify for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program, a program to provide nutritional, low-cost meals to economically disadvantaged children.

SIGNIFICANCE

This indicator is a proxy for family poverty among school-age children. Poverty has pervasive and lasting effects on children. Research shows that children from low-income families typically do not do as well as those living in more affluent families in areas such as including health, emotional well-being, and academic achievement.¹ They also are at greater risk of delinquency and teen parenthood.²

This indicator is an imprecise measure of poverty. Typically, families earning up to 185 percent of the poverty level (adjusted for household size) receive benefits. Some research at the national level suggests this indicator overstates the percent of children living in poverty.³ However, other researchers and public opinion polls suggest that official poverty lines are set unrealistically low,⁴ especially in locations with higher-than-average cost of living. (In the 2007-08 school year, a child in a household of three qualifies for the program if family income is \$31,765 or less.) A second problem is that family mobility can affect this measure at the local level, i.e., the indicator may improve not because family income increases but simply because low-income families leave the area.

FINDINGS

The percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch has gradually declined from 40 percent in the 1997-98 school year to 31 percent in 2010-11.

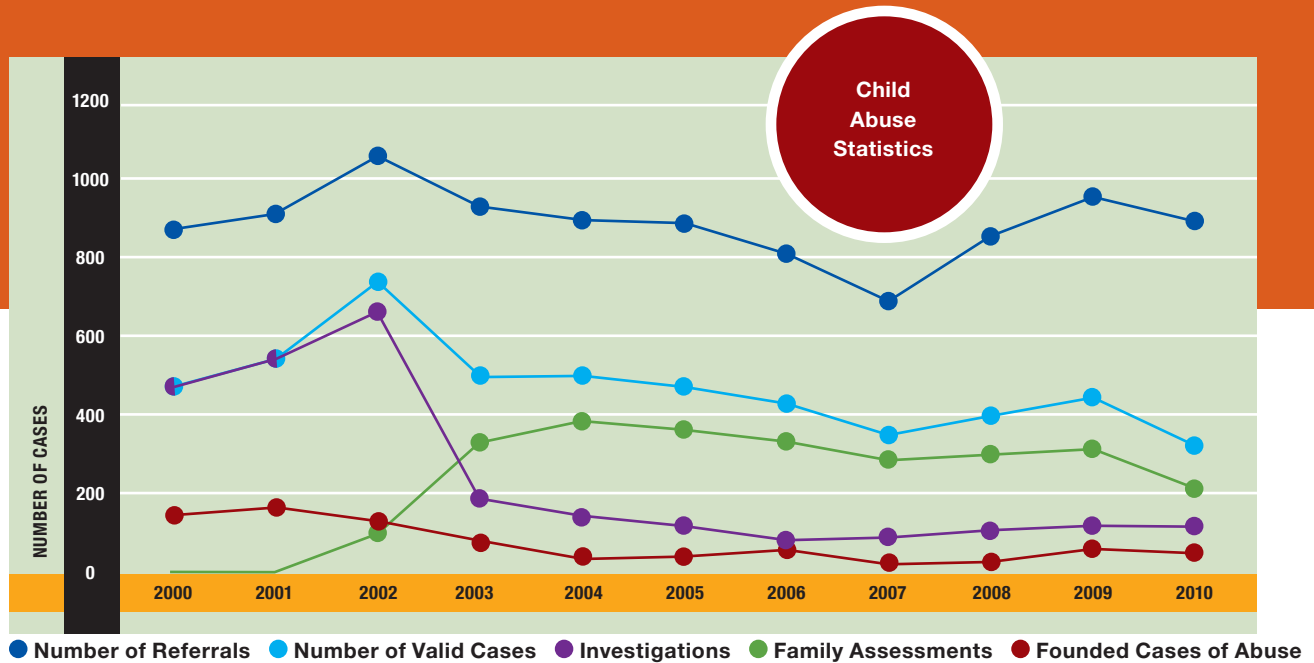
SOURCE

Office of Food Services, Arlington Public Schools

REFERENCES

- 1 Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being 2001*, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, page 14.
- 2 Annie E. Casey Foundation. *Kids Count Data Book 2000*, page 31.
- 3 Duncan and Brooks-Gunn (2000) Family poverty, welfare reform and child development. *Child Development* 71 (11), pages 1988-96
- 4 Pearce, D. and Brooks, J. (2002) *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Virginia*, Action Alliance for Virginia's Children and Youth, (at www.vakids.org), page 7.

Cases of Child Abuse



DEFINITION

This set of indicators reflects the work of Child Protective Services (CPS):

- The number of *referrals* represents the number of suspected cases reported to CPS from school employees, police, physicians, or others.
- The number of *validated cases* is a count of cases meeting the criteria required to take action, including age of child, residence, and whether the allegation meets the definition of abuse.
- How a case is handled depends on the seriousness of the alleged abuse. More serious cases lead to *investigations*, less serious ones to *family assessments*. (Alleged sexual abuse, serious physical abuse and a child fatality always lead to an investigation.) In both cases, CPS staff gathers facts about the allegation and determine the need for services for the child or family.
- Cases of *founded child abuse* are those in which an investigation confirms that child abuse has taken place. National studies suggest that this number underestimates the actual level of child abuse because many cases are never reported to authorities.

SIGNIFICANCE

Child abuse and neglect have well-known detrimental effects on the physical, psychological, cognitive, and behavioral development of children.¹ The trauma to children includes physical injuries, chronic low self-esteem, problems forming relationships, developmental delays, learning disorders, aggressive

behavior, depression, and other mental health problems.² Communities in which victims live must cope with the harmful effects of abuse on academic achievement, drug use, teen pregnancy, delinquency (especially in its more serious forms³), and adult criminality.

FINDINGS

Referrals for child abuse generally declined between 2002 and 2007 and then began to increase. As expected, the introduction of family assessments in mid-2002 led to a large decline in both the number of investigations and founded cases of abuse. Family assessments are now used in two-thirds to three-fourths of the validated cases. The number of investigations (potential cases of serious child abuse) also declined (from 2002 to 2006) and then began to increase. In 2010, nearly half of investigations resulted in a finding of abuse.

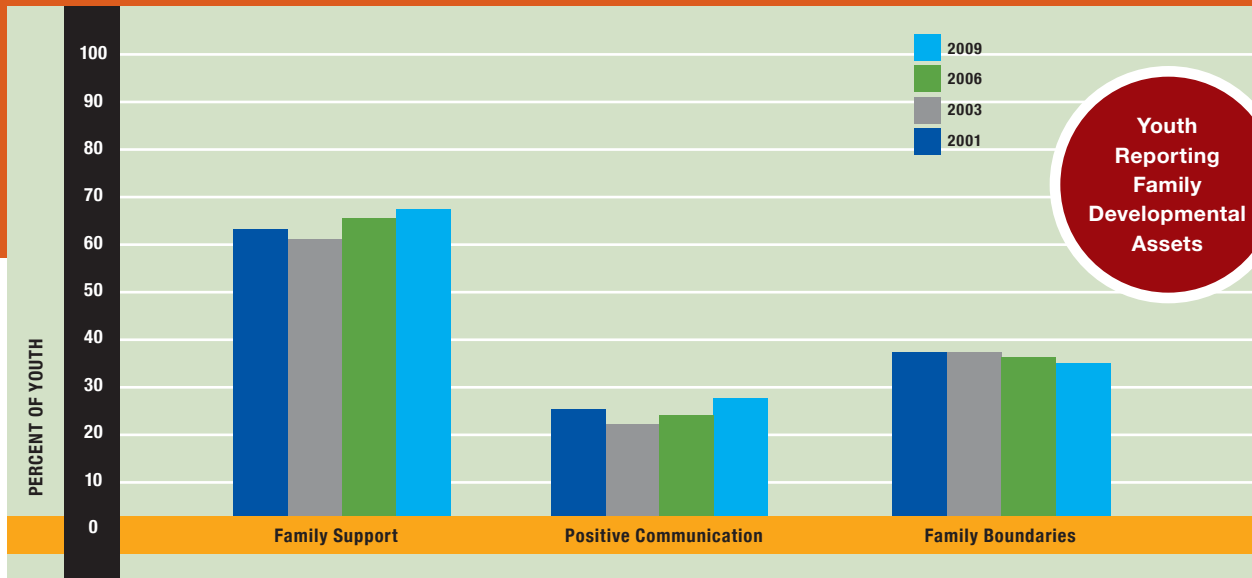
SOURCE

Child Protective Services, Department of Human Services, Arlington County

REFERENCES

- 1 National Research Council. (1993) *Understanding Child Abuse and Neglect*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.
- 2 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1999) *Prevention Pays: The Costs of Not Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect*.
- 3 Hanna, A. (2001) *Risk and Protective Factors for Delinquency*, Juvenile Services Report, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services.

Family Developmental Assets



DEFINITION

The percentage of youth in 8th, 10th and 12th grade who report the following Developmental Assets:

- **FAMILY SUPPORT:** The love, affirmation, and acceptance of parents and family.
- **POSITIVE FAMILY COMMUNICATION:** Frequent, close communication and sharing of advice, information, and concerns.
- **FAMILY BOUNDARIES:** Clear and age-appropriate rules and consequences within the family.

SIGNIFICANCE

This set of Developmental Assets measures three ways that families can promote the positive growth of their children. Each has been demonstrated through research by Search Institute to enhance the lives of young people by reducing risky behaviors and making it more likely that a young person thrives. Search Institute emphasizes that older teens continue to need these Assets as they gradually internalize the values, skills and abilities that will guide them as responsible adults. See the Appendix for more information on Developmental Assets.

FINDINGS

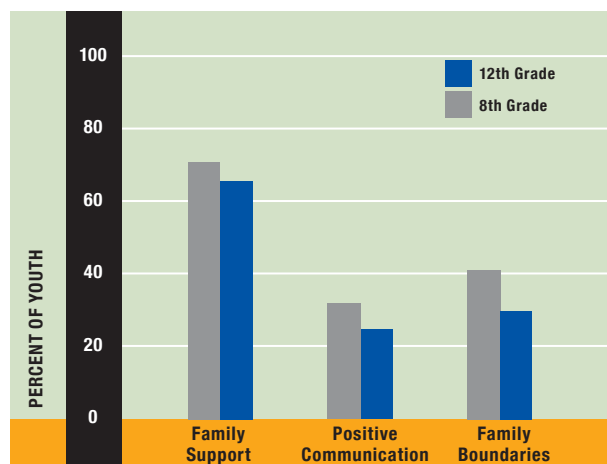
Young people in Arlington are most likely to report *Family Support* and least likely to report *Positive Family Communication*. Each of these Assets shows a distinct trend. More youth reported *Family Support* in 2009 than in 2001. *Positive Family Communication* initially declined then increased and there was a decline in *Family Boundaries*.

Older teens are far less likely to report each of these Assets. For example, 41 percent of youth in 8th grade report *Family Boundaries* but only 30 percent of youth in 12th grade.

SOURCE

Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families, *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Survey* (Search Institute): 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2009.

Family Developmental Assets, By Grade, 2009







A R L I N G T O N , V I R G I N I A

3

Educational Readiness and Success



Educational Readiness and Success

INTRODUCTION

Do young children start school ready to learn? How well do Arlington youth do on the Standards of Learning and other standardized tests? Are efforts to encourage all young people to take challenging classes working? What proportion of Arlington youth has positive attitudes towards school and learning? Do parents feel welcome at school? This chapter examines measures of children's readiness to learn, achieve at high levels, and move successfully from grade to grade and on to work or college.

INDICATORS

- Pre-kindergarten experiences
- Early literacy skills
- Skipping school
- Results of the Standards of Learning and other standardized tests
- Passing Algebra I by 8th Grade
- Youth attitudes towards school
- Parent involvement in school
- Feeling welcome at school
- Suspensions from school
- Plans to attend college

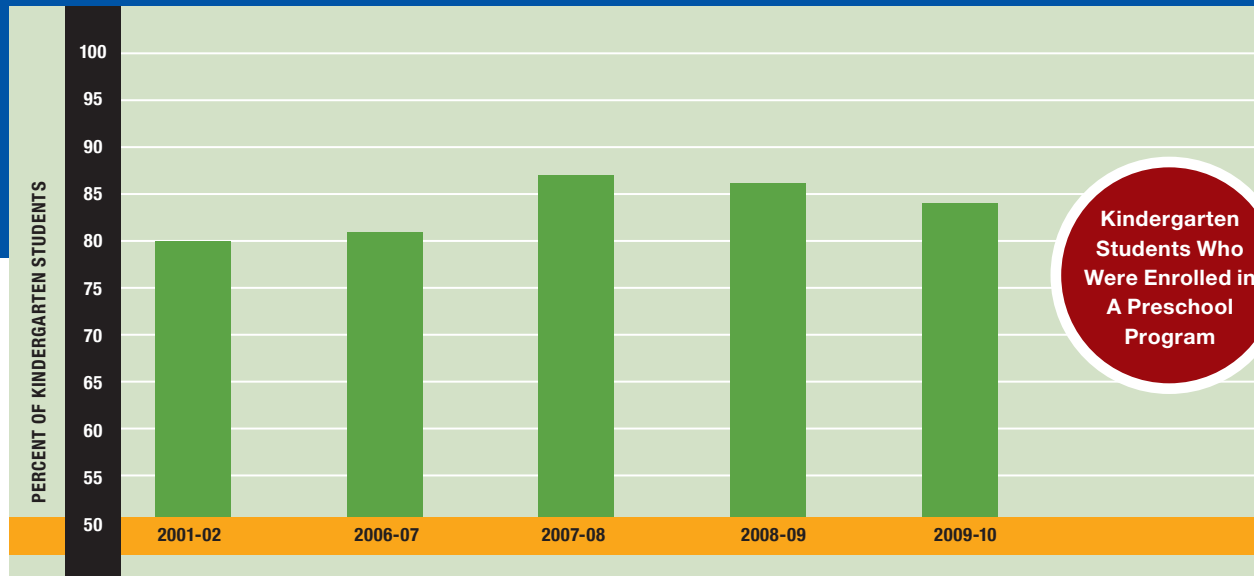
KEY FINDINGS

- More children are attending preschool and demonstrating early literacy skills. Eight-four percent of children entering kindergarten in 2009 attended preschool during the previous year. Ninety-two percent met the reading readiness benchmark for entering kindergarten students.
- Students in Arlington Public Schools consistently do well on tests compared with peers elsewhere in Virginia and across the nation, including the Standards of Learning assessments, the Stanford 10, and the SAT.
- Compared with White or Asian students, a higher proportion of Black and Hispanic students are suspended. Overall and within each category of students, suspensions are down and differences have somewhat narrowed. Hispanic students are about half as likely to plan to attend a four-year college as White students.
- Many students lack the experiences and attitudes (Developmental Assets) most strongly linked to positive academic outcomes. For example, only about one-third of students in grades 8, 10, and 12 report a Caring School Climate. However, a number of these Developmental Assets improved between 2001 and 2009. Fewer students report skipping school.
- Surveys show that most parents feel welcome at school. Nonetheless, parental involvement steadily drops as children reach higher grades.

WHAT'S MISSING

The most notable omissions in this category are direct indicators of "readiness" for school for young children, other than literacy skills. In particular, we want to know what proportion of young children had early screening for disabilities and developmental delays; received screening for dental, hearing, and vision problems that interfere with learning; attended *high-quality* preschools; and demonstrated social and emotional readiness for school.

Pre-Kindergarten Experiences



DEFINITION

The percentage of kindergarten students who were enrolled in some type of preschool program at age four. Preschool experiences include Arlington Public Schools' (APS) preschool programs; community preschools; or child daycare (e.g., KinderCare), Head Start, and home day care.

SIGNIFICANCE

Numerous studies have produced “overwhelming evidence” that enriching, high-quality educational and child care programs enhance intellectual achievements and social development.¹ In a recent study of Arlington children, those who attended preschool scored higher on a test of pre-literacy skills than students without this experience.² (See *Early Literacy Skills* in this chapter.)

There is overwhelming evidence that enriching high-quality educational and child care programs enhance intellectual achievement and social development.

FINDINGS

Overall, more children are attending preschool before they enter kindergarten. But it's not clear that the trend will continue. In the 2001-02 school year, a one-time study found that 80 percent of Arlington kindergarten students had attended preschool as a four-year-old. In the 2007-08 school year, the comparable figure was 87 percent. The percentage has since declined to 84 percent. There is some variation in preschool attendance by race and ethnicity. In 2009-10, 88 percent of White kindergarten students attended preschool compared to 78 percent of Black students and 79 percent of Hispanic students. A 2007 study by the University of Virginia found that just under 60 percent of four-year-olds statewide attended preschool.³ The study also found that Virginia four-year-olds in homes with incomes near or below the poverty level were less likely to attend.

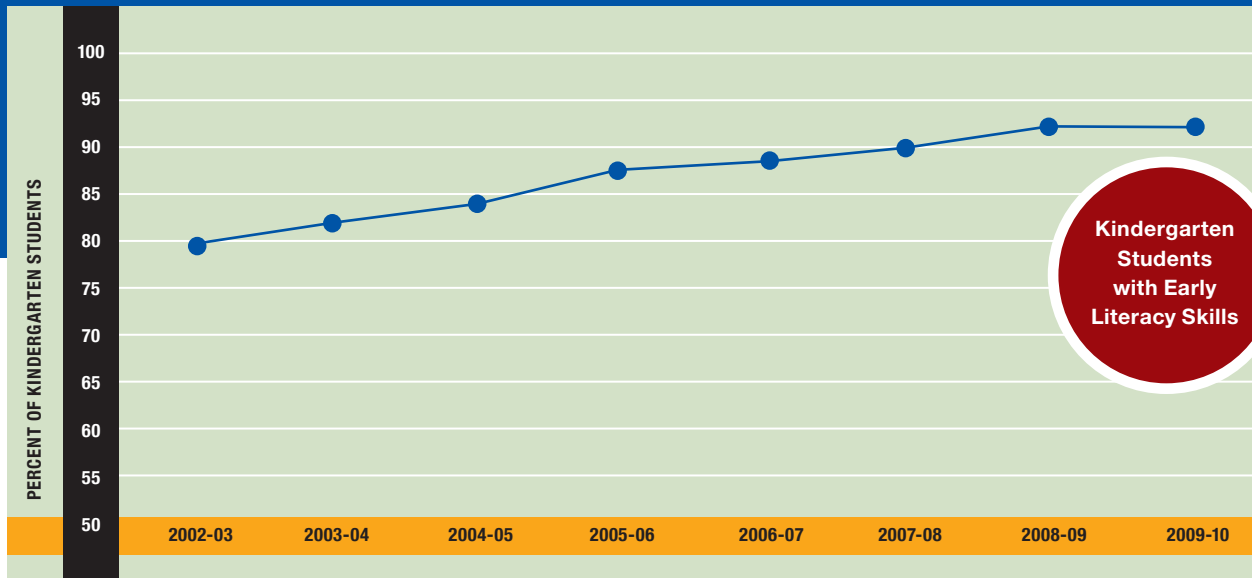
SOURCE

Arlington Public Schools, Office of Early Childhood and Office of Planning and Evaluation.

REFERENCES

- 1 Johnson, S.C., Baratka, T. V. and Wood, L. (2003) *Quality Child Care in Virginia*, Action Alliance for Virginia's Children and Youth, page 5.
- 2 Apostolico-Buck, J., Goffredi, R. and Reynolds, A. (2002) Evaluation Report, Office of Early Childhood, Arlington Public Schools, page 32.
- 3 Walters, A. and Cai, Q. (2007) *Preschool Enrollment: Identifying Virginia's Underserved Population*, Presentation to the Southern Demographic Association. Available at www.coopercenter.org/publications/publications-home-page

Early Literacy Skills



DEFINITION

The percentage of kindergarten students who score at or above the benchmark score for the fall administration of the Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screening (PALS) test.

SIGNIFICANCE

The kindergarten version of PALS measures a child's knowledge of several important literacy fundamentals: phonological awareness (specifically, the ability to distinguish separate speech sounds), alphabet recognition, concept of word (or the ability to match the spoken and written word), knowledge of letter sounds, and spelling.¹ Individual student results are used by kindergarten teachers to identify a child's early literacy skills and instructional needs. Summary results for all students identify the percentage of students who enter school prepared for kindergarten literacy instruction.

FINDINGS

The percentage of students scoring at or above the benchmark for K-PALS increased from 79 percent in fall 2002 to 92 percent in 2009. Preschool experiences and family circumstances have an impact on this percent. In particular, 88 percent of economically disadvantaged students who attended a preschool run by Arlington Public Schools (APS) met the benchmark in 2009-10 compared to 78 percent of those attending a non-APS preschool and only 62 percent with an unknown or no preschool experience.

The percentage of students entering kindergarten with important preliteracy skills increased from 79 to 92 percent between 2002 and 2009.

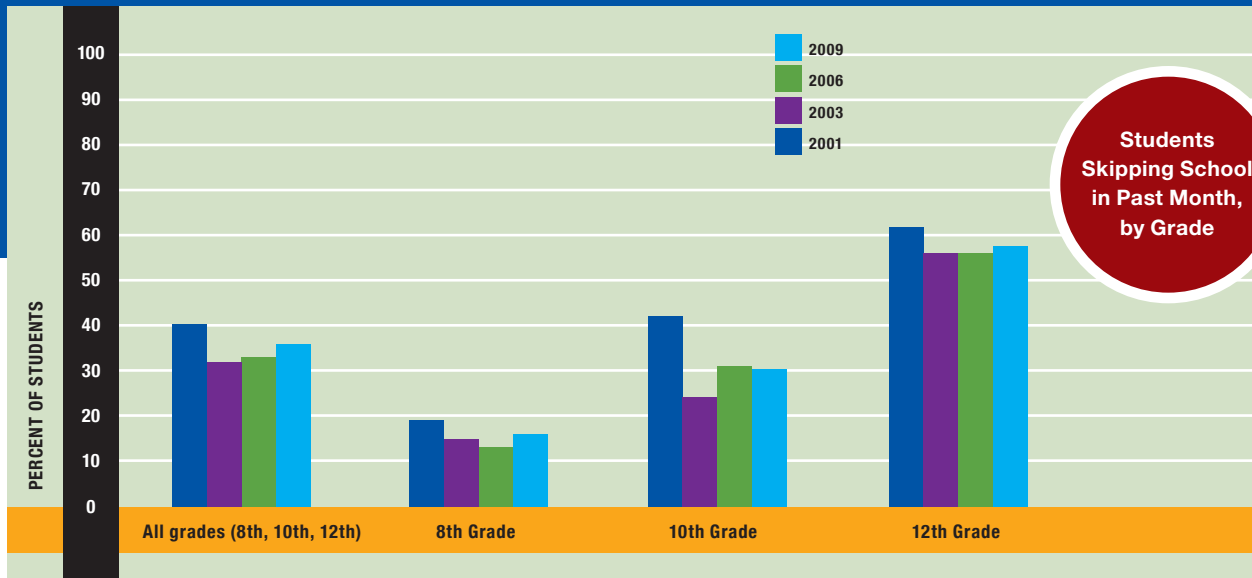
SOURCE

Arlington Public Schools, Office of Planning and Evaluation.

REFERENCE

1 University of Virginia, Background of PALS, at <http://pals.virginia.edu/Technical-Information/Background.asp>

Skipping School



DEFINITION

The percentage of public school students in 8th, 10th, and 12th grade who reported skipping school at least one day in the previous four weeks.

SIGNIFICANCE

Missing school for any reason hinders student learning. Absenteeism due to skipping school is particularly problematic because young people with attendance problems are also more likely to drop out of school before graduating and to exhibit delinquent behavior¹ and substance abuse.

In 2009, fewer students overall reported skipping school than in 2001. However, almost 60 percent of seniors said they skipped school in the previous month.

FINDINGS

In 2009, significantly fewer students than in 2001 reported skipping school in the previous month. This decline is consistent with the improvement in indicators of students' attitudes towards school and their education. However, most of the decline took place from 2001 to 2003. The survey data also show that students in higher grades are far more likely to skip school than younger students.

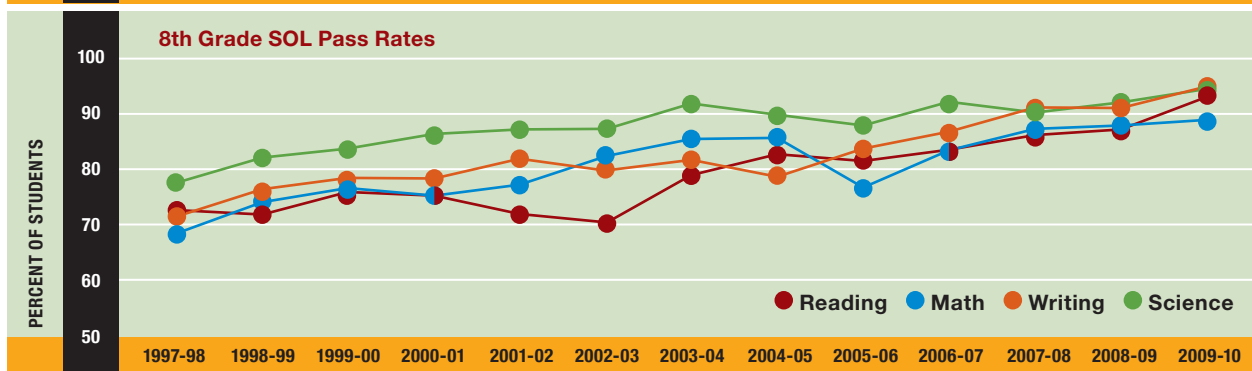
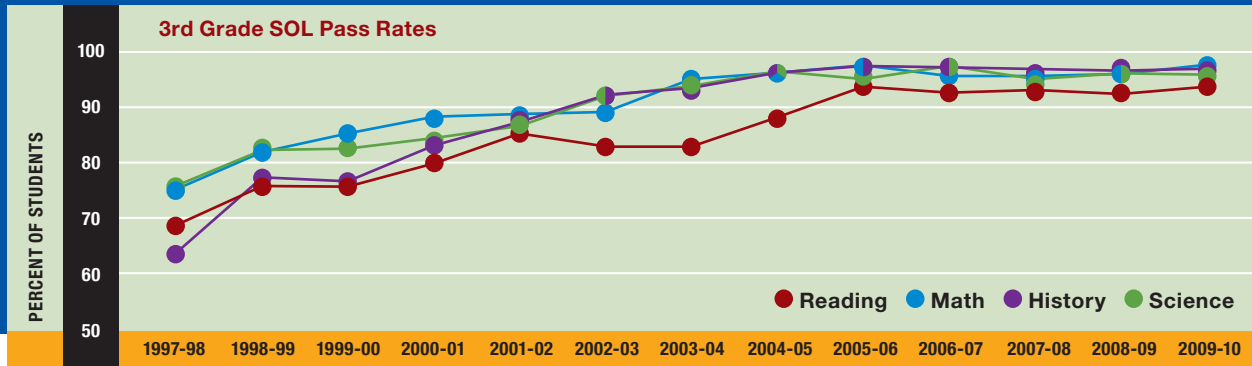
SOURCE

Partnership for Children, Youth and Families, *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Survey* (Search Institute): 2001, 2003, 2006 and 2009.

REFERENCE

- Hanna, A. (2001) *Risk and Protective Factors for Delinquency*, Juvenile Services Report, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services.

Pass Rates for Standards of Learning Tests



DEFINITION

County-wide pass rates on selected Standards of Learning (SOLs) assessments for Arlington Public Schools (APS) students in 3rd and 8th grade and end-of-course assessments for courses earning high school credit.

SIGNIFICANCE

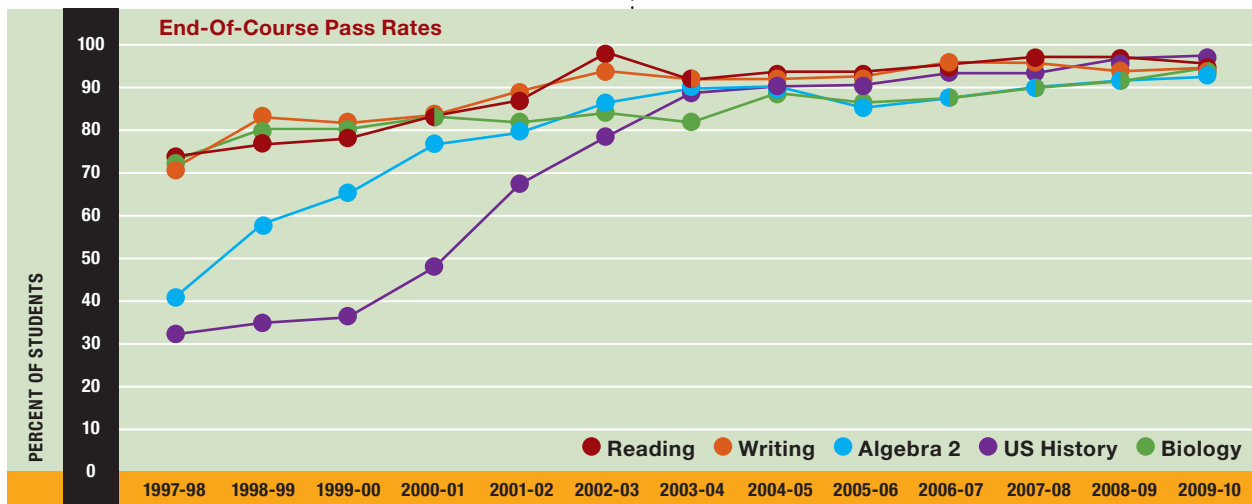
The SOLs reveal whether students have mastered the core knowledge and skills as defined for each grade by the state of Virginia. The pass rates shown here have been adjusted for use by the state in determining school accreditation and typically differ from both unadjusted rates and rates used to determine adequate yearly progress under No Child Left Behind.

FINDINGS

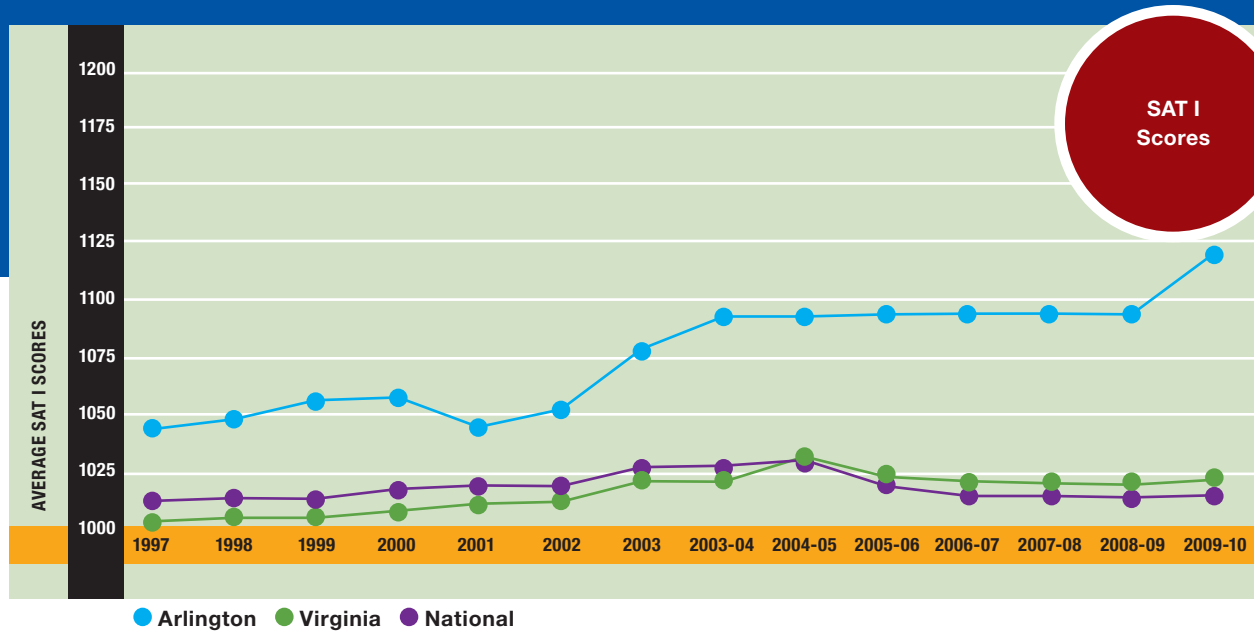
In Arlington, SOL pass rates have increased over 13 years of testing and differences across subject areas have narrowed. In 2009-10, pass rates exceeded 90 percent in all 13 tests shown here with the exception of eight grade math (88 percent). Scores on several tests have plateaued in the 95 to 98 percent range and further improvements are likely to be small and difficult both to achieve and to sustain.

SOURCE

Arlington Public Schools, Office of Planning and Evaluation



SAT Scores



DEFINITION

The average combined math and reading score on the SAT I, a well-known college entrance examination test taken by most of the county’s high school graduating seniors. Scores on the writing section, added in 2005, are not included in the indicator.

SIGNIFICANCE

The SAT I measures critical math and reading skills that help predict college grades as a freshman.

Students in Arlington’s public schools score higher on the SAT I than other students in Virginia or the nation.

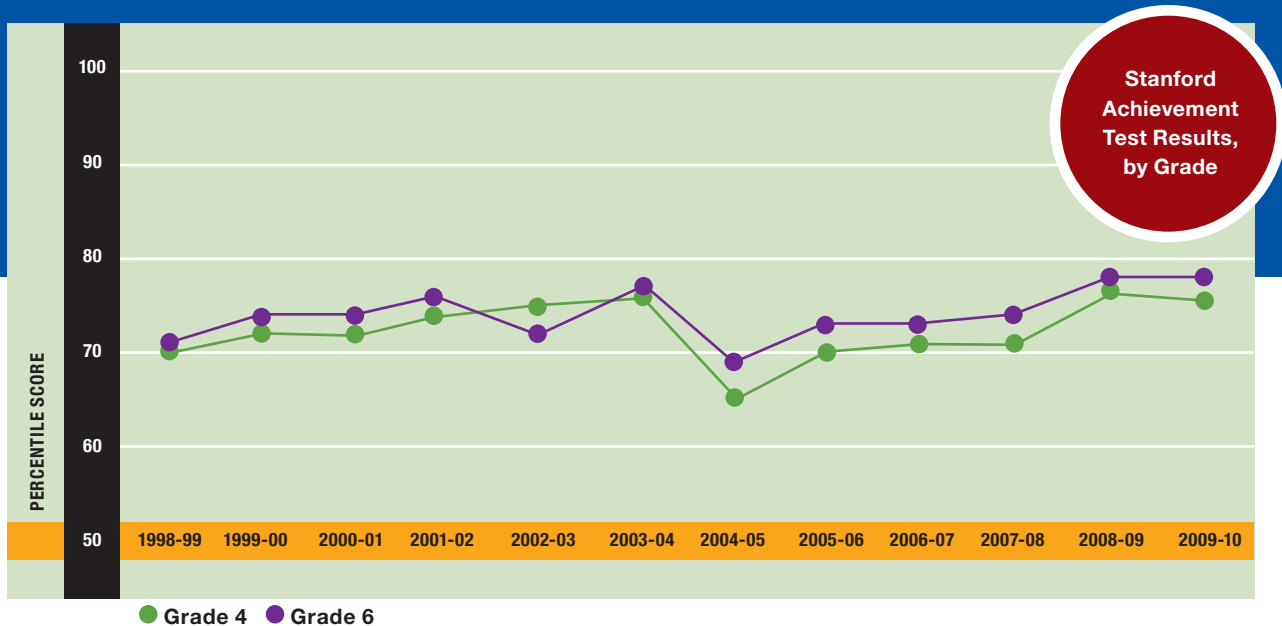
FINDINGS

Combined math and reading scores on the SAT have increased over time from about 1050 in 1996-97 to over 1100 in 2009-10. Students in Arlington’s public schools score higher on the SAT I than the average for Virginia and the average for the nation as a whole. This is especially noteworthy because a high percentage of Arlington’s high school graduates take the test, e.g., 69 percent in 2010 compared with 47 percent in the nation. In general, when comparing scores across jurisdictions, the higher the percentage who take the SAT, the lower the average score. That’s because when only a fraction of students take the SAT, it is typically those with higher academic aspirations who, as a group, tend to score better.

SOURCE

Arlington Public Schools, Office of Planning and Evaluation and State profile report for Virginia at: www.collegeboard.com.

Results of Stanford Achievement Test



DEFINITION

The national percentile rank of Arlington Public Schools (APS) students in on the Stanford Achievement Test composite, which combines results from all subjects. The percentile indicates the percentage of students in the national sample who scored below the level attained by Arlington students.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Stanford Achievement Test is used to compare the performance of a group of students with a representative sample of students nationwide. To do this, the test items are chosen to represent what is taught in 4th and 6th grade throughout the country. The test covers six subject areas: reading, math, language, spelling, science, and social science.

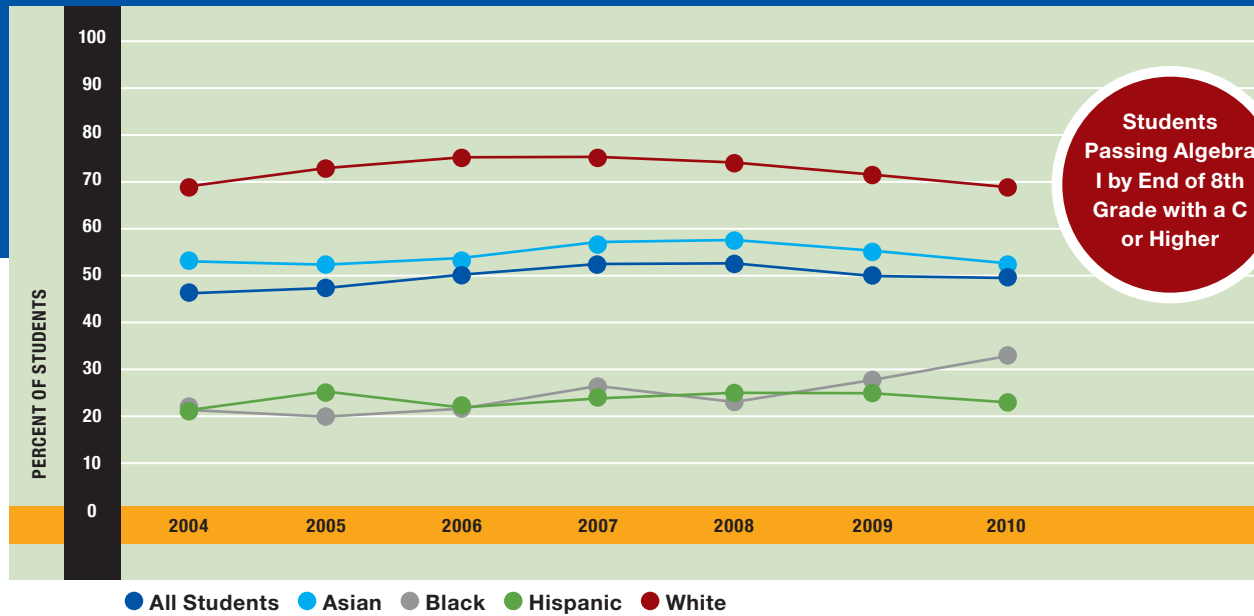
FINDINGS

APS students score well above the national average (i.e., 50th percentile). In 2009-10, the average composite score for APS students in 4th and 6th grade was higher than the scores of 75 and 78 percent of students in 4th and 6th grade in the national sample. The percentile rank for Arlington students is now essentially equal to the percentile rank achieved by Arlington students in 2003-04, just prior to the introduction of a new version of the test.

SOURCE

Arlington Public Schools, Office of Planning and Evaluation

Passing Algebra I by 8th Grade



DEFINITION

The proportion of students who receive a C or higher in Algebra I by the end of 8th grade. Only these students are eligible to enroll in Geometry in 9th grade. Although most students take Algebra I in 8th grade, some take it as early as 6th or 7th grade.

SIGNIFICANCE

The more rigorous the courses students take in high school, the more likely they are to persist in college and ultimately attain a degree. This pattern suggests that to be prepared for college, students generally need to take higher-level math courses during high school. To successfully complete such courses, students should complete Algebra I by the end of 8th grade. This has been a priority in the strategic plan for the Arlington Public Schools since 1999 and there were sizeable improvements during the first years of the initiative. Historically, Black and Hispanic students have been under-represented in advanced math classes in Arlington, as in the nation as a whole.

While more Black students are passing Algebra I by 8th Grade, a significant gap remains.

FINDINGS

The overall rate of students completing Algebra I by the end of 8th grade increased from 22 percent in 1996-97 to 52 percent in 2006-07. However, enrollment has not increased since then and has actually declined slightly. The percentage of Black students passing Algebra I by 8th grade increased from 27 percent in 2006-07 to 33 percent in 2009-10. During the same time, the percentage of Hispanic students has remained the same and the percentage of Asian and White students has declined somewhat.

SOURCE

Arlington Public Schools, Office of Planning and Evaluation

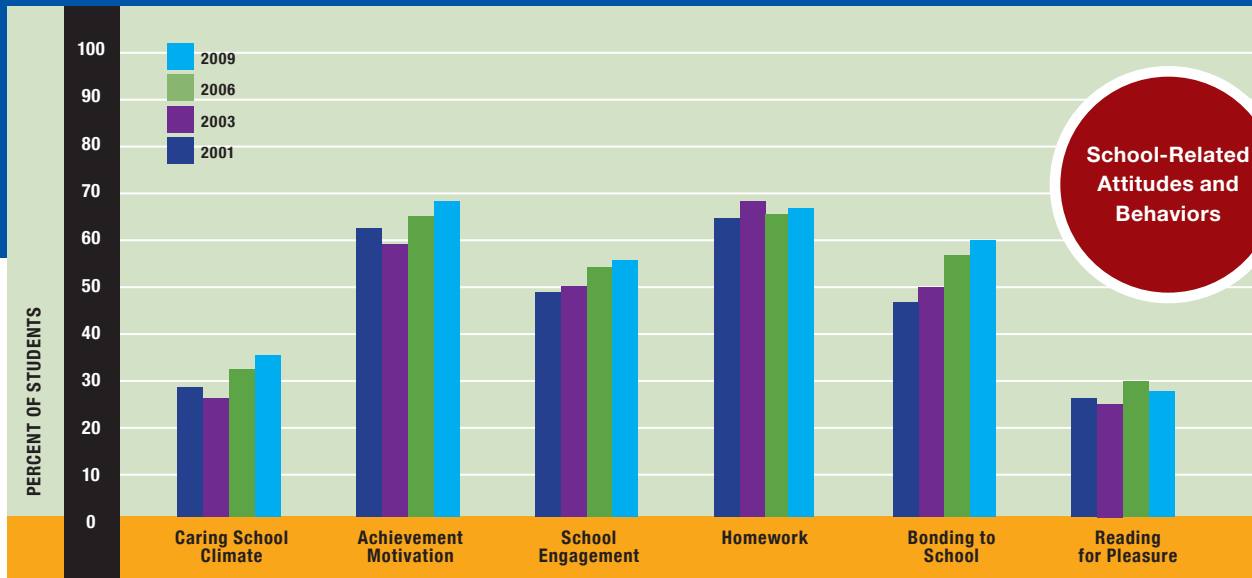
NOTE

Separate data for Asian students only became available in the 2003-04 school year.

REFERENCE

AHorn, L. and Kajaku, L. (2001) High School Academic Curriculum and te Persistence Path through College, NCES 2001-163, Washington D.C.:National Center for Education Statistics, page 36 at: www.ed.gov/thinkcollege/highschool.

Youth Attitudes Toward School



School-Related Attitudes and Behaviors

DEFINITION

The percentage of Arlington young people who report the following Developmental Assets:

- **CARING SCHOOL CLIMATE:** Feeling cared for and encouraged at school;
- **ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION:** The desire to do well in school;
- **SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT:** Taking interest in their classes and being prepared to learn;
- **HOMEWORK:** Spending at least one hour per day doing homework;
- **BONDING TO SCHOOL:** Caring about their school; and
- **READING FOR PLEASURE:** Spending at least three hours per week reading for fun.

SIGNIFICANCE

A caring school climate helps students feel more positive about school, have fewer behavior problems, and achieve at higher levels.¹ Teachers, other adults and peers help create a caring school climate by having high expectations, acting fairly, and being friendly and approachable. The other indicators measure internal qualities that help students do better academically in terms of a wide range of educational outcomes, including test scores, math and reading achievement, graduation, and pursuit of higher education. See the Appendix for more information on Developmental Assets.

FINDINGS

Students are most likely to report having the Developmental Assets *Homework* and *Achievement Motivation* and least likely to report *Reading for Pleasure*. Since 2001, significantly more students report four of these six indicators: *Caring School Climate*, *Achievement Motivation*, *School Engagement*, and *Bonding to School*.

Students with these desirable attitudes towards school do better academically on a wide range of educational outcomes.

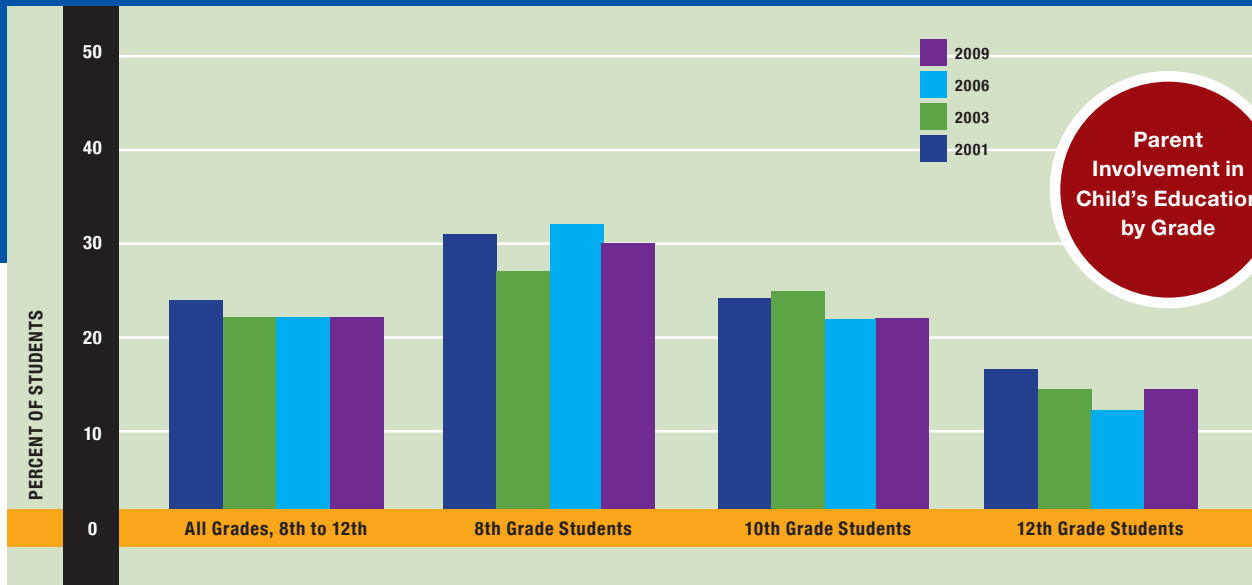
SOURCE

Partnership for Children, Youth and Families, *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Survey* (Search Institute): 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2009.

REFERENCE

- 1 Scales, P. and Leffert, N., (1999) *Developmental Assets: A Synthesis of the Scientific Research on Adolescent Development*, Search Institute, page 37.

Parent Involvement in School



DEFINITION

The percentage of Arlington youth who report that their parents are actively involved in helping them succeed in school by talking about school and homework, helping with homework, and attending events and meetings at school.

SIGNIFICANCE

Parental involvement and support of learning can significantly help a child's progress in school. This indicator reflects a range of activities, including attending school functions, taking an interest in lessons, and monitoring and talking with children about homework. Experts believe that children continue to benefit from parental involvement as they grow older.¹

Parent involvement is just as important in grade 12 as it is in kindergarten.

FINDINGS

From 2001 to 2009, there was a slight decline overall in the proportion of youth in grades 8, 10 and 12 who reported their parents are actively involved in their schooling. The data suggest students in 12th grade are least likely to report having this Developmental Asset. In 2009, 30 percent of students in 8th-grade reported parental involvement but only 14 percent of those in 12th grade.

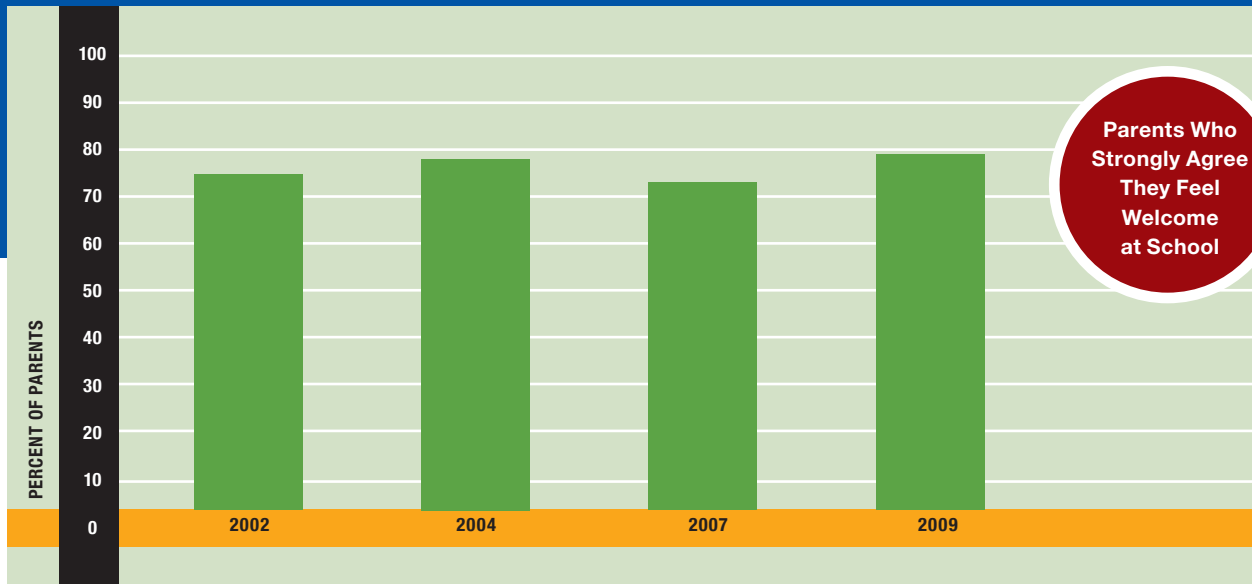
SOURCE

Partnership for Children, Youth and Families, *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Survey* (Search Institute): 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2009.

REFERENCE

- 1 Kreider, H. et al. (2007) *Family Involvement in Middle and High School Student's Education*, Harvard Family Research Project, Number 3, available at: www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/research/adolescent.html

Feeling Welcome at School



DEFINITION

The percentage of parents who strongly agree they feel welcome at their child's school, as reported in a survey of Arlington residents with at least one child enrolled in public school.

SIGNIFICANCE

By making parents feel welcome at school, school personnel encourage parental involvement in their child's education and can more easily help parents identify developmentally appropriate ways to support and promote the value of academics.

About three out of four Arlington parents strongly agreed that they feel welcome at their child's school.

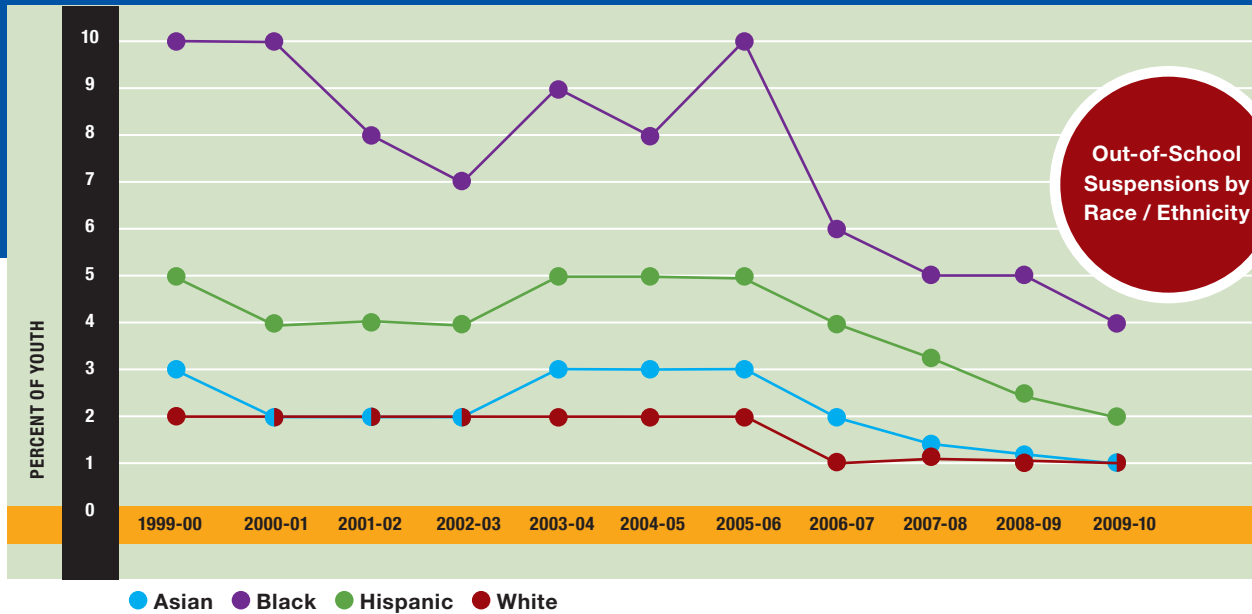
FINDINGS

Almost 80 percent of the parents surveyed strongly agreed that they felt welcome at school. This figure is the highest level reported since data collection began in 2002.

SOURCE

Arlington Public Schools, Customer Satisfaction Survey, at: www.arlington.k12.va.us, under Statistics.

Suspensions from School



DEFINITION

The percentage of students by racial/ethnic category who are given an out-of-school suspension in a given school year.

SIGNIFICANCE

The Arlington Public Schools system expects young people to be responsible and cooperative both in the classroom and at school-related events. Suspension from school is one of the most serious disciplinary actions used when a student has behaved in a disruptive way. This indicator looks at the frequency with which this technique is applied and whether certain groups of students disproportionately receive this action. Arlington Public Schools has established eliminating the differences in the suspension rate as one of the priorities in its Strategic Plan.

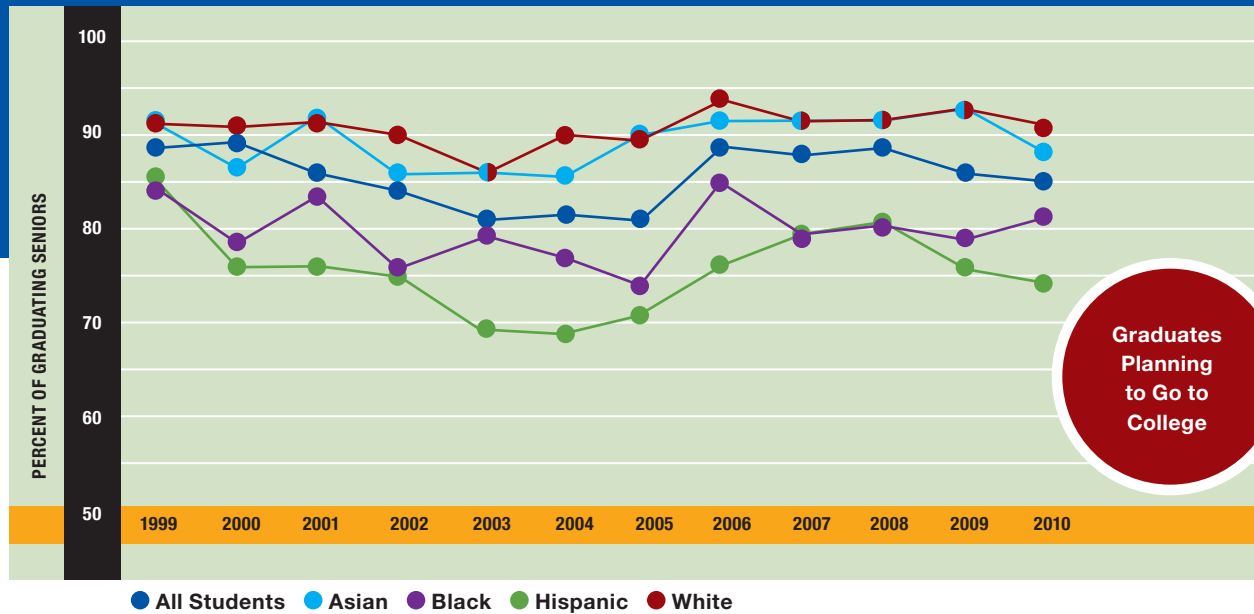
FINDINGS

The vast majority of students do not receive an out-of-school suspension during the school year. However, Black students have been consistently far more likely to be suspended than White, Hispanic, or Asian students. Between the 1999-00 and the 2009-10 school year, the percentage of students suspended in each category fell, with the largest decline for Black students. The decrease that occurred in the one-year period from 2005-06 and 2006-07 was especially large but the trend has continued since them.

SOURCE

Arlington Public Schools, Office of Administrative Services and Office of Planning and Evaluation.

Plans to Attend College



Graduates Planning to Go to College

DEFINITION

The percentage of Arlington Public Schools (APS) graduates who plan to attend two-year or four-year college.

SIGNIFICANCE

Having a college degree increasingly is a “gateway” to achieving economic independence and the ability to change careers. In 2000, young adults with a bachelor’s degree earned from 60 percent (for men) to 95 percent (for women) more than their peers with only a high school degree. Individuals with a college degree are more likely to work in full-time, year-round jobs. Higher education is also associated with better health (regardless of income) and being a regular reader, which is one attribute of an engaged citizenry.¹

FINDINGS

Most graduating seniors plan to attend college. In 2010, 85 percent of APS graduates planned to continue their education at a two-year or four-year institution. Between 1999 and 2010, the rate fluctuated between 81 and 88 percent. However, in Arlington, Hispanic students have consistently been less likely to report college plans and far less likely to report planning to attend a *four-year college*. In 2009-10, only 39 percent of Hispanic students compared with 83 percent of White students planned to attend a four-year institution.

Hispanic students continue to be the least likely to have plans to go to college.

SOURCE

Arlington Public Schools, Office of Planning and Evaluation.

REFERENCE

¹ U.S. Department of Education, *The Condition of Education 2002*, pages 29, 63, and 66





A R L I N G T O N , V I R G I N I A

4 | A Safe, Supportive Community



A Safe, Supportive Community

INTRODUCTION

Do young people feel safe at home, at school, and in their neighborhoods? Are there many opportunities for young people to participate in enjoyable and positive activities and to serve their community? What proportion of youth is involved in gangs or other criminal activity? This chapter looks at measures of community safety and support for young people.

INDICATORS

- Serious injuries of children
- Safety and support for youth
- Activities and opportunities for youth
- Positive peer relationships
- Violence and other antisocial behavior
- Victim of bullying
- Arrests of Arlington youth
- Gang membership

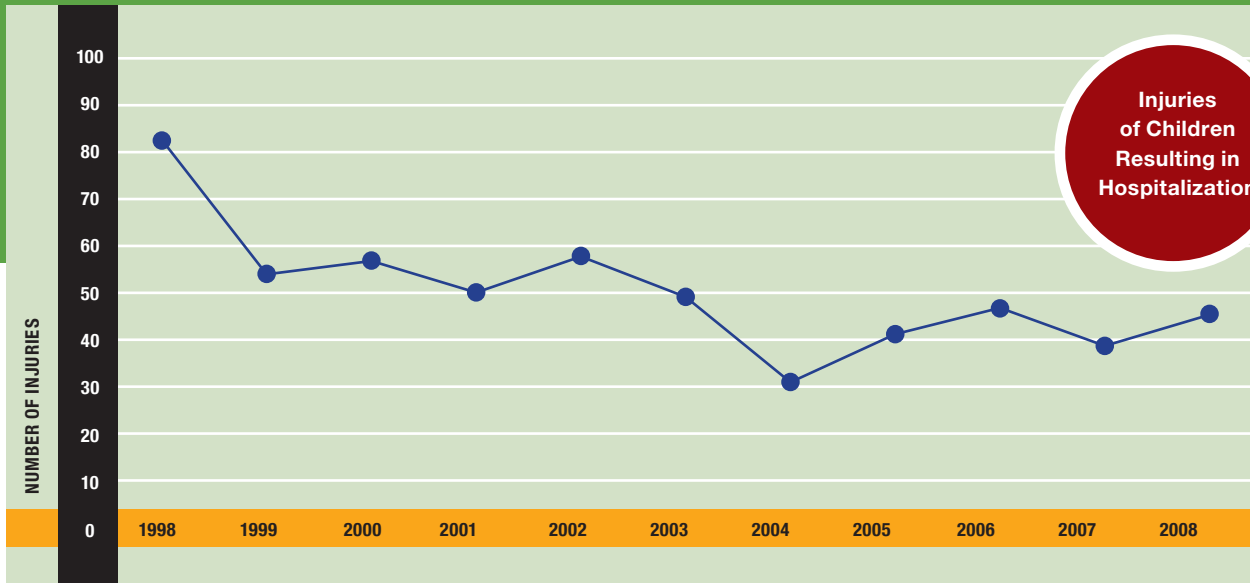
KEY FINDINGS

- Overall, indicators in this area improved or remained unchanged over time. Notable improvements were observed in terms of serious injuries, arrests of Arlington youth, and gang membership. The number of injuries may have plateaued recently. Experts consider the vast majority of these injuries to be preventable; thus, significant reductions are still possible.
- Improvements were also noted among a number of Developmental Assets and Deficits related to safety and support from the community and positive activities. However, youth programs, a traditional strength of the Arlington community, has shown little change among youth in 8th, 10th and 12th grade.
- Bullying and Developmental Assets related to peer relationships also have changed little, suggesting that young people, particularly boys, need more support and guidance from caring adults to strengthen their interpersonal skills..

WHAT'S MISSING

Measures of part-time work and employment would give us information on another dimension of community life that is very important to older youth in learning skills they will need as adults. Information about the effectiveness of programs that target antisocial behavior and violence, particularly for boys, would help us understand how to reduce those behaviors.

Serious Injuries of Children



DEFINITION

The number of injuries resulting in the hospitalization of a child living in Arlington (see Note). The injuries result from a variety of causes, including motor vehicle accidents, poisonings, falls, drowning, head injuries and sports. The injury may be intentional (e.g., assault) or unintentional (e.g. motor vehicle accidents).

SIGNIFICANCE

Injuries are a leading cause of death, disability and hospitalization of children in Virginia and the nation.¹ In 2008, injuries accounted for 62 percent of deaths and nearly 9 percent of hospitalizations of Virginia children ages 1 to 19.² Motor vehicle accidents were the cause of nearly 25 percent of deaths of children ages 1 to 19 and 33 percent of deaths of youth ages 15 to 19. Experts believe that the vast majority of serious injuries are preventable by changing the environment, individual behavior or policies to increase protective factors and eliminate risk factors.

Injuries are a leading cause of death, disability and hospitalization of children in Virginia and the nation.

FINDINGS

Overall, serious injuries of children living in Arlington declined significantly between 1999 and 2008, reaching its lowest level in 2004. Since then, the number of serious injuries has ranged between 40 and 50 per year. From 2000 to 2008, the number of children in Arlington, ages 0 to 19, grew from 34,000 to an estimated 42,000.³

SOURCE

Center for Injury and Violence Prevention, Virginia Department of Health

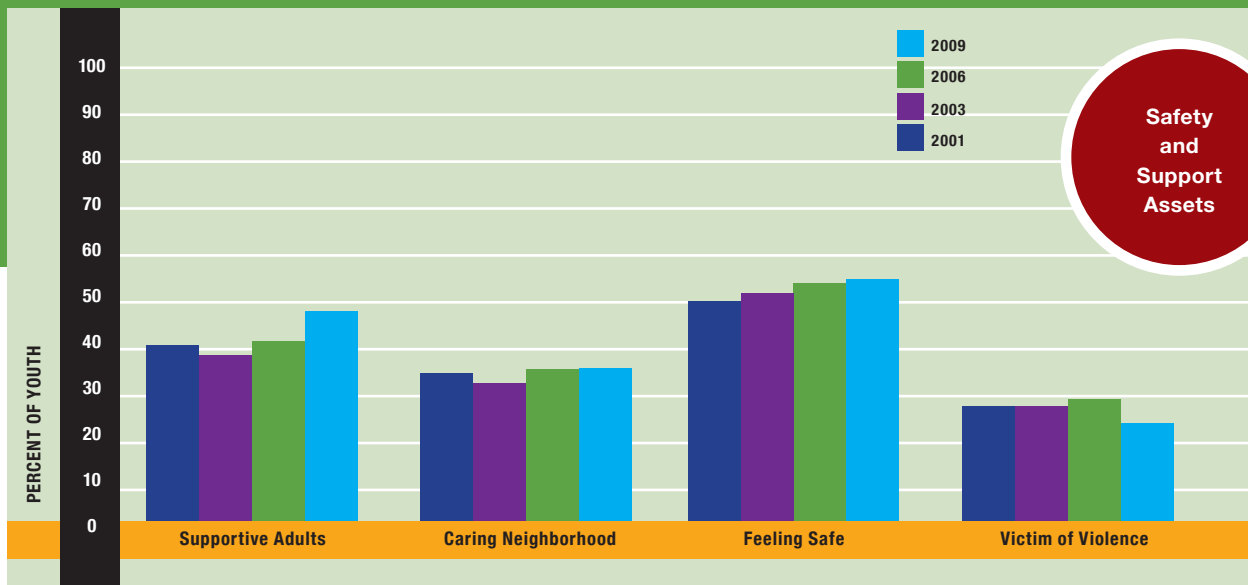
NOTE

It is possible that a serious injury could lead to a child fatality with no intermediate hospitalization. In that case, the indicator would underestimate serious injuries.

REFERENCES

- 1 Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being 2007, at: www.childstats.gov/americaschildren/phenviro6.asp.
- 2 Injury in Virginia, 2008. Division of Injury and Violence Prevention, Virginia Department of Health, at www.vahealth.org/Injury/data/documents/2010/pdf/2008%20Injury%20Report_June2010a.pdf
- 3 Profile 2010, Arlington Virginia, Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development at www.arlingtonva.us/departments/CPHD/planning//data_maps/profile/file69129.pdf

Safety and Support for Youth



DEFINITION

The percentage of youth in 8th, 10th and 12th grade who report the following Developmental Assets:

- **SUPPORTIVE ADULTS:** Supportive relationship with at least three adults other than parents.
- **CARING NEIGHBORHOOD:** Having many caring neighbors.
- **FEELING SAFE:** A sense of safety at home, in the neighborhood, and at school.
- **VICTIM OF VIOLENCE:** Suffering pain or injury from physical violence in the prior two years.

SIGNIFICANCE

The first three indicators measure distinct dimensions of a safe and supportive environment for youth. Communities that provide many different formal and informal support systems create the best conditions for the positive development of young people.¹ See the Appendix for more information on Developmental Assets. As a result, *reductions* in the percentage of youth victimized by violence represent *increases* in well-being.

The last indicator measures a developmental *deficit* that works against positive development of youth.

Since 2001, there has been little change in the level of community support that young people report.

FINDINGS

Since 2001, from 35 to 55 percent of Arlington youth report having the Developmental Assets that most closely measure support from the community outside of families and schools. Three of the indicators have shown significant improvement over time. The proportion of youth reporting *Supportive Adults* rose from 41 to 49 percent between 2001 and 2009; the proportion reporting *Safety* rose from 50 to 55 percent; and the proportion reporting being a *Victim of Violence* fell from 27 to 23 percent.

Boys are significantly more likely to report pain or injury from physical violence in the previous two years. In 2009, 27 percent of boys reported this deficit, compared to 20 percent of girls.

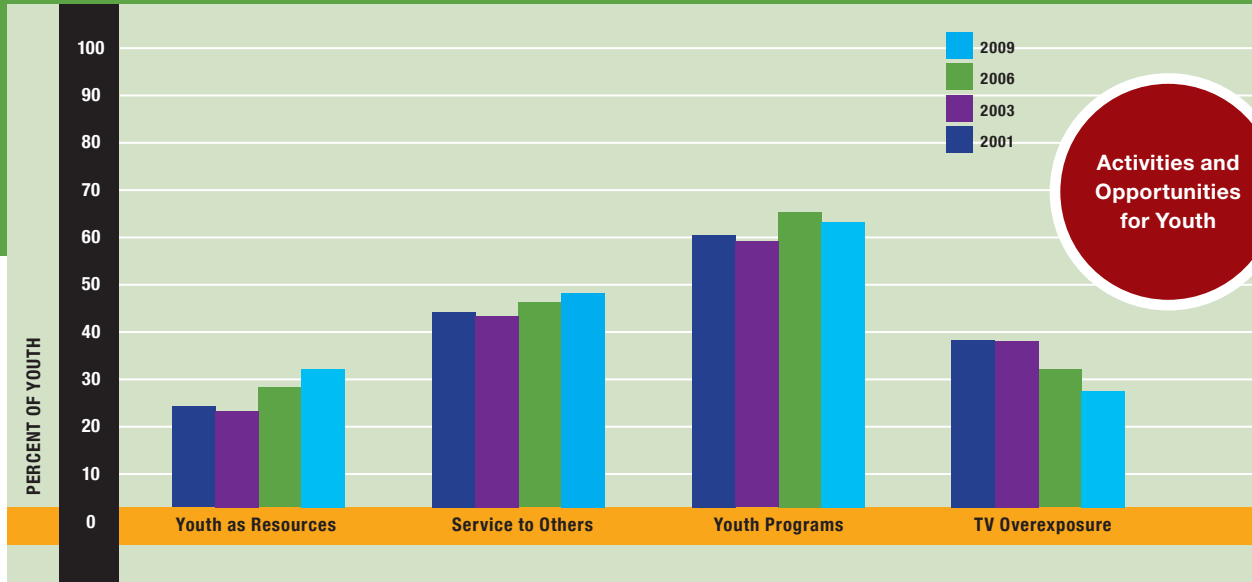
SOURCE

Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families, *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Survey* (Search Institute): 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2009.

REFERENCE

- 1 Scales, P. and Leffert N. (1999) *Developmental Assets: A Synthesis of the Scientific Research on Adolescent Development*, Search Institute, page 22.

Activities and Opportunities for Youth



Activities and Opportunities for Youth

DEFINITION

The percentage of youth in 8th, 10th and 12th grade who report the following Developmental Assets:

- **YOUTH AS RESOURCES:** Has a voice in decision making and opportunities to make the community a better place.
- **SERVICE TO OTHERS:** Spends at least one hour per week helping others in the community.
- **YOUTH PROGRAMS:** Spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, and after-school activities.
- **TV OVEREXPOSURE:** Watches television or videos more than two hours per school day.

SIGNIFICANCE

Research by Search Institute (which developed the Developmental Assets framework) shows that communities that give young people the opportunity to spend time in positive activities and contribute to the community help them in two ways. First, the caring relationships formed through these activities nurture the development of positive values and competencies that young people need to become healthy and responsible adults. Second, these positive activities help young people to avoid risk behaviors, such as fighting and alcohol use. In contrast, excessive television watching has been linked to health risks and leaves less time for positive activities and relationships. See the Appendix for more information on Developmental Assets.

FINDINGS

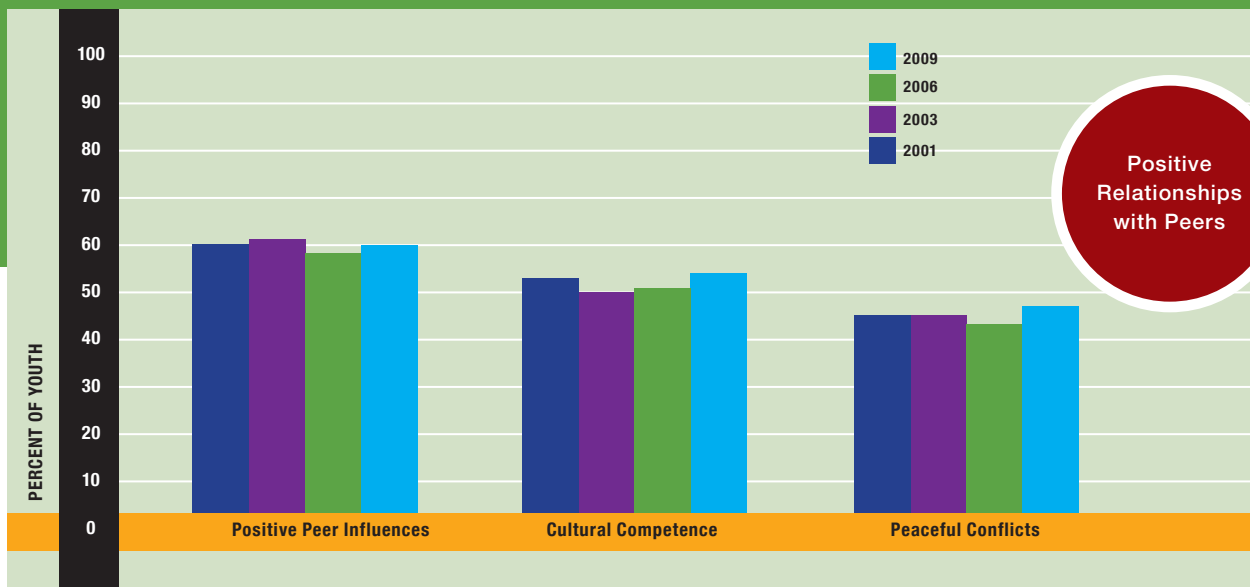
Among the three Developmental Assets, young people in 8th, 10th and 12th grades were most likely to report *Youth Programs* and least likely to report *Youth as Resources*. Between 2001 and 2009, the percentage of youth reporting *Youth as Resources* and *Service to Others* increased steadily and significantly. Still, in 2009, only one third of youth reported having a useful role in the community. (*Youth as Resources*) The percentage reporting *Youth Programs* rose then fell between 2006 and 2009. Far fewer youth report TV overexposure: 27 percent in 2009 compared to 38 percent in 2001.

Excessive TV and video leave little time for positive activities and relationships.

SOURCE

Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families, *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Survey* (Search Institute): 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2009

Positive Peer Relationships



DEFINITION

The percentage of youth in 8th, 10th and 12th grade who report these Developmental Assets:

- **POSITIVE PEER INFLUENCE:** Has friends who model responsible behavior.
- **CULTURAL COMPETENCE:** Knows about other cultures and is comfortable with people of different backgrounds.
- **PEACEFUL CONFLICT RESOLUTION:** Is able to work out differences without violence (i.e., hitting or hurting someone).

SIGNIFICANCE

The values and behaviors of peers can have a strong influence on a young person’s behavior. *Positive Peer Influence* has been associated with increased self-esteem and self-competence, higher achievement and lower use of alcohol. Social skills such as *Cultural Competence* and *Peaceful Conflict Resolution* make it easier for young people to gain the acceptance of peers and form friendships without engaging in risk behaviors.¹ See the Appendix for more information on Developmental Assets.

FINDINGS

Overall, there has been no change in the percentage of youth reporting these three Developmental Assets. Girls consistently have been more likely to report these Assets. For example, in 2009, 55 percent of girls but only 36 percent of boys reported that they could work out their differences without violence.

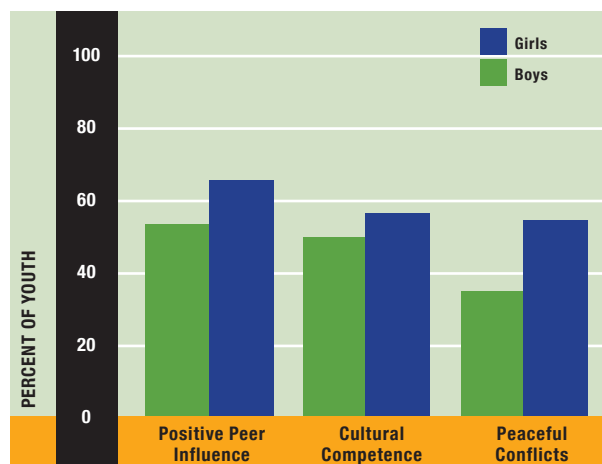
SOURCE

Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families, *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Survey* (Search Institute): 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2009

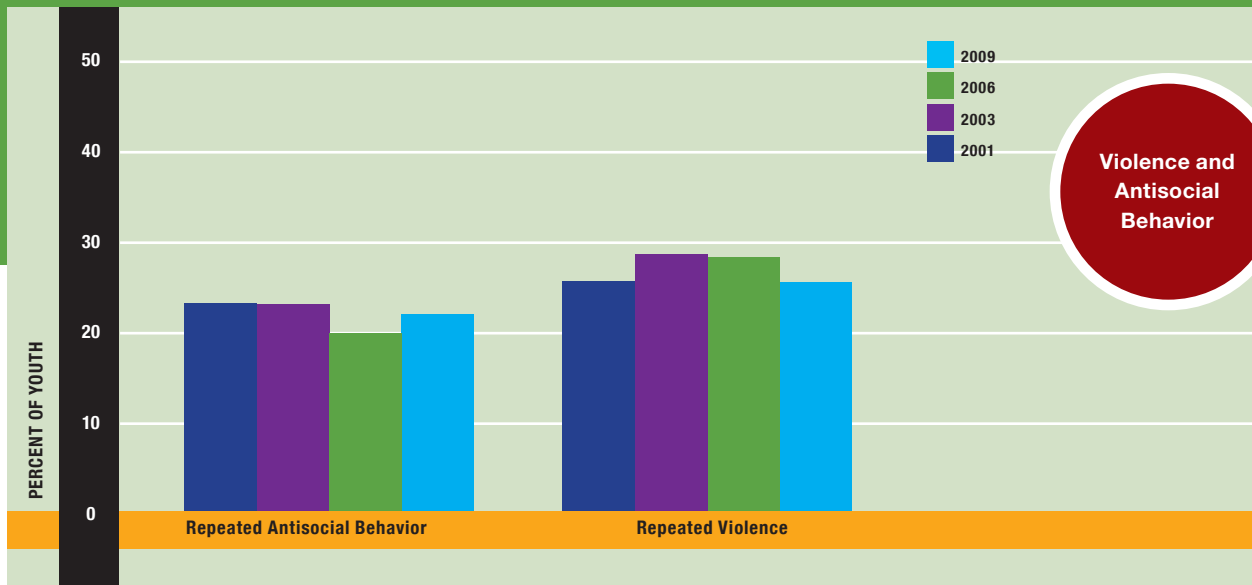
REFERENCE

- 1 Scales, P. and Leffert N. (1999) *Developmental Assets: A Synthesis of the Scientific Research on Adolescent Development*, Search Institute, pages 173-193.

Peer Relationship Assets, by Gender, 2009



Violence and Other Antisocial Behavior



DEFINITION

The percentage of youth who report three or more incidents of violence (including hitting someone, getting into a fight, carrying a weapon, and/or making threats) or antisocial behavior (shoplifting, vandalism, and/or trouble with the police) in the past 12 months.

SIGNIFICANCE

These indicators examine the safety and support of the community from a negative perspective, complementing the positive view provided by Developmental Assets. The repeated nature of the behaviors that define these indicators suggests that they represent more than adolescent experimentation. In particular, the level of youth violence and delinquency can be viewed as (reverse) indicators of how well community institutions are doing in helping young people develop self-control and channel their behaviors to acceptable norms.¹ These institutions include families, schools, and community groups that work for and with children.

Among adolescent boys, over one in four report repeated incidents of vandalism, shoplifting or getting in trouble with the police while more than one in three reported repeated incidents of fighting, carrying a weapon, or making threats.

FINDINGS

The percentage of youth reporting each antisocial behavior pattern was essentially unchanged in 2009 from levels re-

ported in 2001. Boys remain at least twice as likely as girls to engage in both behaviors.

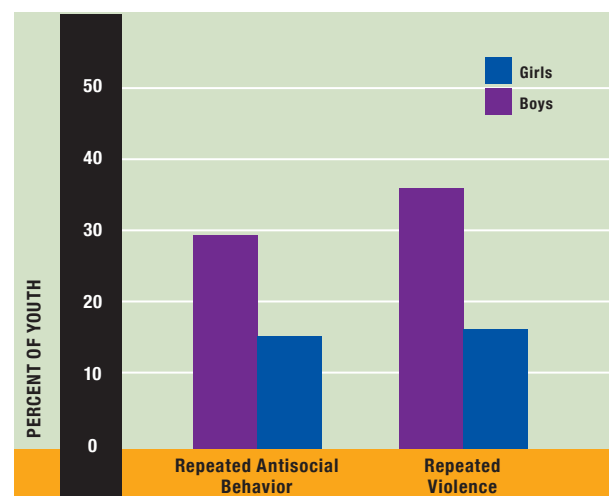
SOURCE

Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families, *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Survey* (Search Institute): 2001, 2003, 2006, and 2009

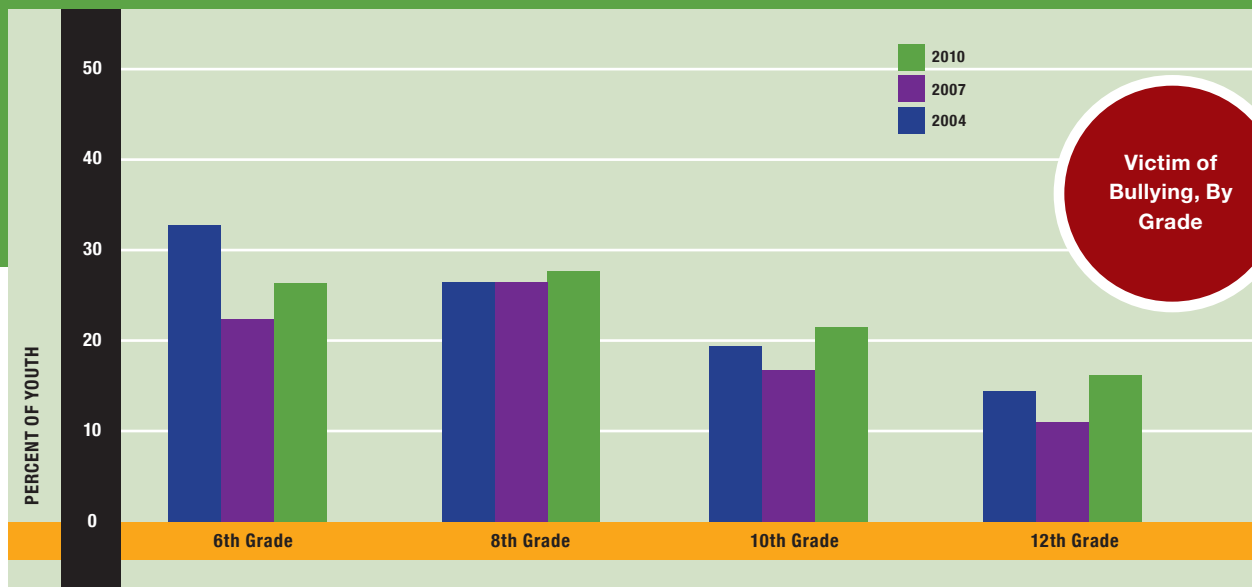
REFERENCE

1 Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being 2001*, Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Violence and Antisocial Behavior by Gender, 2009



Victim of Bullying



DEFINITION

The percentage of youth who report being the victim of bullying in the past year. Bullying is defined as repeatedly being called names, teased in a hurtful or malicious way, threatened, hit, kicked, or pushed, or being repeatedly ignored or shunned by a group usually because one or two people in the group insist on it.

SIGNIFICANCE

Bullying creates problems for both the victim and the bully. Studies have shown that victims are more likely to feel depressed and anxious, have low self-esteem and lower academic achievement.¹ The bully is also at risk for serious problems. For example, bullies are more likely to drop out of school and have criminal records as adults. They tend to be aggressive, have positive views of violence, and have little or no empathy for their victims.

FINDINGS

After initially declining in three of four grades, bullying was slightly higher in 2010 than in 2004. Youth in middle school consistently report higher levels of victimization than youth in high schools. Still, one out of five 10th grade students reported being the victim of a bully.

Bullying creates serious problems for both the victim and the bully.

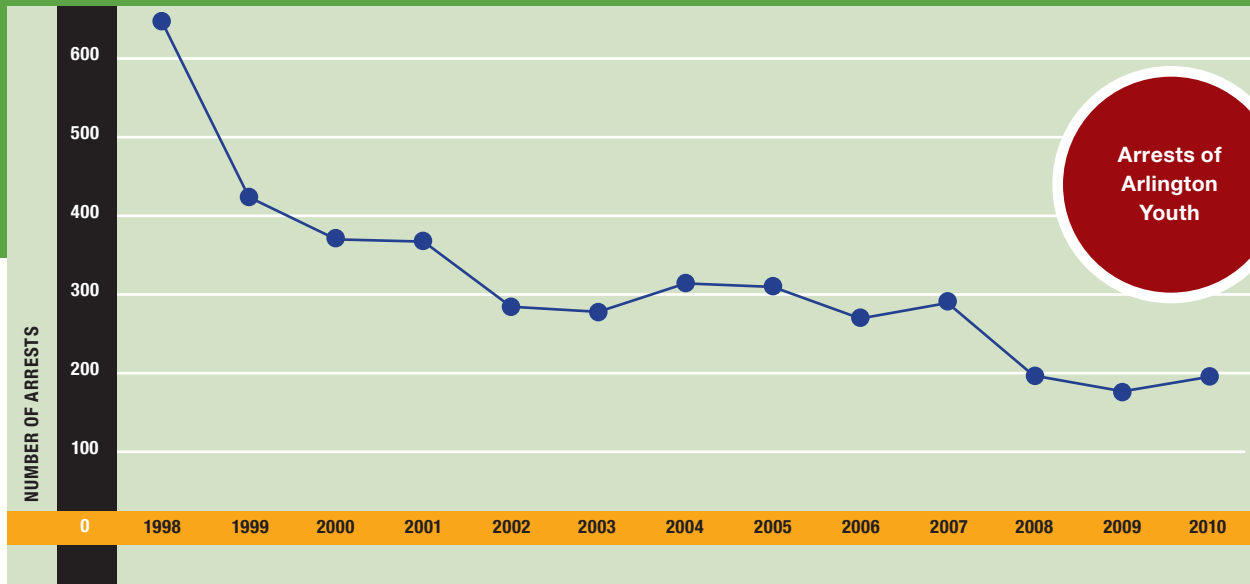
SOURCE

Arlington Partnership for Children, *Youth and Families, Youth Risk Behavior Survey* (Centers for Disease Control): 2004, 2007, and 2010.

REFERENCE

¹ National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center, *Bullying Facts and Statistics*, at www.safeyouth.org/scripts/topics/bullying.asp

Arrests of Arlington Youth



DEFINITION

Arrests of youth, i.e., under age 18, who reside in Arlington County from 1998 through 2010, and arrests of Arlington youth by charge for the five most frequently observed charges for 1998 and 2010: larceny (usually shoplifting), simple assault, drug-related offenses, vandalism, and alcohol-related offenses.

SIGNIFICANCE

The level of delinquency can be viewed as an indicator of how well community institutions (including families, schools, and other organizations that work for and with youth) are doing in helping young people develop self-control and channel their behaviors to acceptable norms¹.

Since 1998, total arrests of juvenile Arlington residents have declined by 70 percent.

FINDINGS

Arrests of Arlington youth fell dramatically from 662 in 1998 to 197 in 2010, reaching their lowest level (175) in 2009. During this time, the number of children age 5 to 19 grew, suggesting that the decline in arrests is not due to simply having fewer teenagers.² The five most common charges accounted for 53 percent of arrests in 1998 but almost 75 percent of arrests in 2010. Drug and alcohol and assault charges accounted for a higher percentage of arrests in 2010 (about 47 percent) than in 1998 (about 25 percent).

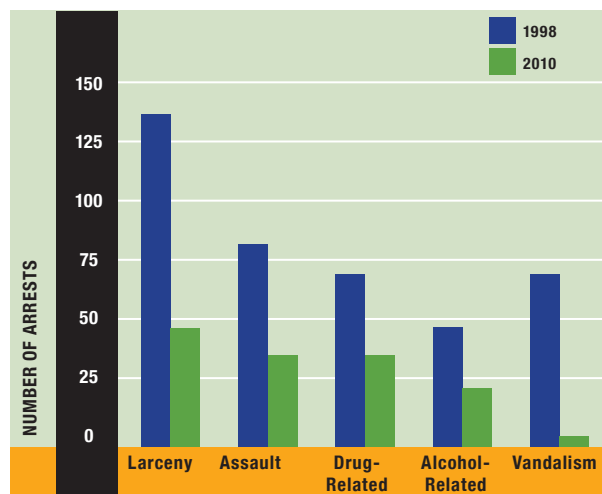
SOURCE

Arlington County Police Department Record Management System.

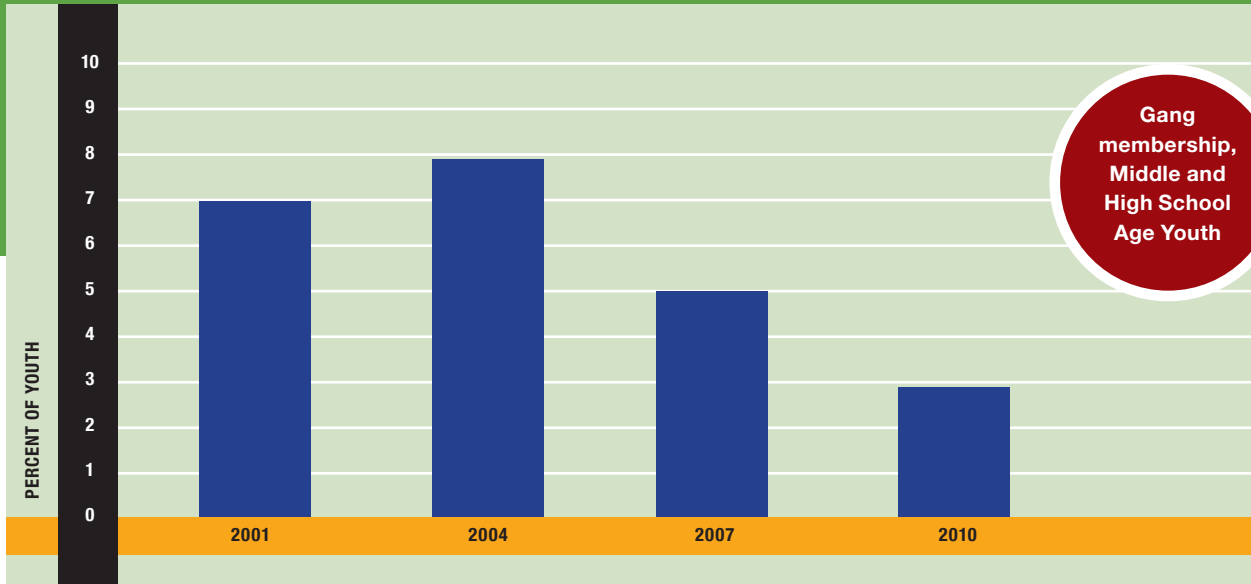
REFERENCES

- 1 Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics. *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being 2001*, Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- 2 Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development, Arlington, VA. *Profile 2010*, at www.arlingtonva.us/departments/CPHD/planning//data_maps/profile/file69129.pdf

Arrests of Arlington Youth, Selected Charges, 1998 and 2010



Gang Membership



DEFINITION

The percentage of middle and high school students who reported belonging to a gang in the previous year.

SIGNIFICANCE

Gang membership has powerful effects on behavior of youth. A 1998 study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice found that gang members are much more likely to sell drugs, possess lethal weapons, and commit violent crimes, compared with similar at-risk youth who do not join gangs.¹ The same study found that the median age at which youths began hanging out with gangs was 13 years. Youth gang members also face a higher likelihood of arrest, injury and death.

Gang members are more likely to sell drugs, possess lethal weapons, and commit violent crimes, compared with similar youth who do not join gangs.

FINDINGS

Gang membership among Arlington middle and high school students fell to its lowest level in 2010. In 2001, 7 percent of youth reported being a member of a gang. In 2010, only 3 percent reported gang membership. While the percentage is low, it translates to hundreds of teens in our community. Boys are consistently more likely than girls to report being in a gang. Because this survey is administered in schools, it may underestimate the percent of youth in gangs to the extent that gang membership is associated with dropping out of school.

SOURCE

Arlington Partnership for Children Youth and Families, *Youth Risk Behavior Survey: 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010*.

REFERENCE

- 1 C. Ronald Huff, *Comparing the Criminal Behavior of Youth Gangs and At-Risk Youths*, National Institute of Justice (1998) at www.streetgangs.com/academic/chuff_compare.pdf.

Appendix: The Developmental Assets Framework

The work of the Arlington Partnership is guided by the Developmental Assets Model. In 2000, the Partnership chose Developmental Assets as the framework to guide our efforts toward realizing our community vision; *Arlington is a community where all young people's needs are met and their voices are heard*. The County and School Boards officially adopted the Assets Model to guide their planning in May of 2001.

Through decades of research, the Search Institute (www.searchinstitute.org) has been able to name forty positive experiences, opportunities, relationships, skills and values – the 40 Developmental Assets. **The Developmental Assets are research-based. The research is clear: the more Developmental Assets young people have, the more apt they are to make healthy, positive choices and the less apt they are to get involved with risk behaviors.** Developmental Assets have been shown to have more powerful links to actual behavior of young people than the “standard” characteristics such as socio-economic status, family structure, race and ethnicity.

Developmental Assets are divided into two groups: **External Assets and Internal Assets.**

External Assets are the experiences, relationships and opportunities we as a community can provide with and for our young people. They include:

- **SUPPORT** – The community (ALL adults and young people themselves) ensures that all young people feel loved and cared for and are surrounded by an all encompassing network of support.
- **EMPOWERMENT:** The community treats children and teens as valued individuals who are appreciated for who they are and the useful role they can play in their communities.
- **BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS:** The community is clear about what behavior is acceptable and what behavior is not and is clear in conveying that message to teens and children. Young people are challenged and inspired to do to their best by the entire community.
- **CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME:** The community provides many opportunities for children and teens to learn about themselves and grow through programs and activities.

The **Internal Assets** are the skills, values and attitudes children and teens must develop from within. A supportive, empowering “Asset Building” environment nurtures the development of the skills, values and attitudes we want our children to develop

- **COMMITMENT TO LEARNING:** The community nurtures in all young people their intrinsic sense of curiosity and excitement about learning, not only in school, but everywhere.
- **POSITIVE VALUES:** The community talks about and models these positive values – and others- so that young people can develop within themselves an internal guide for making decisions.
- **SOCIAL COMPETENCIES:** The community teaches and models the skills young people need to get along with others and also the skills they need to set their goals and the steps to reach those goals.
- **POSITIVE IDENTITY:** The community nurtures the formation of a sense of self in young people that sees each person as a worthwhile and valuable human being who has a measure of control over what happens in his/her life.

We are able to track our progress in becoming an Asset-building community through the Profiles of Student Life or “Assets” Survey. This survey has been administered by the Partnership in Arlington Public schools since 2001. Please see *The World According to Our Kids* report for more information www.arlingtonpartnershipforyouth.org/pdf/World%20According%20to%20Our%20Kids%202009.pdf

For more information and to find out how you can build Developmental Assets, please contact Mary Ann Moran, mmoran@arlingtonva.us 703-228-1671

Acknowledgments

This document is the result of the efforts of many individuals who all care deeply about the children and youth of Arlington. The Partnership wishes to thank each of these people for their assistance, advice and constructive criticism.

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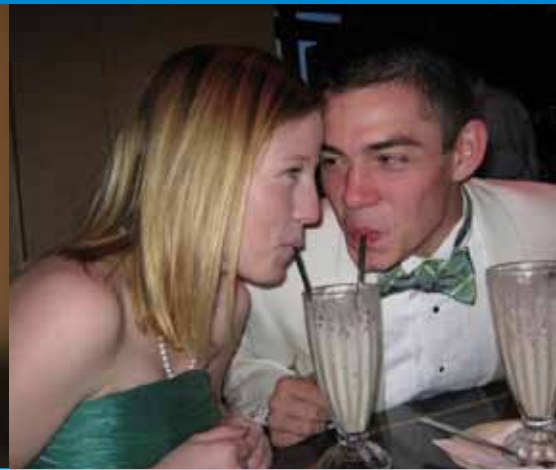
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