

Top 10 Survey Questions: Southington STEPS and the Search Institute Survey February 2024

1. What is the survey?

- The survey is called *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors Survey (Search Institute)*. STEPS has been implementing this survey in Southington public schools every other year since 2009.
- The Search Institute is a national not for profit research organization that has surveyed over 6 million youth over the past 20 years in hundreds of communities across the US and the world.
- The survey has 160 questions about how youth experience the 40 developmental assets, a “research-based framework that identifies basic building blocks of human development”. The survey explores how assets are related to student behavior and overall health.
- The survey has questions about student demographics; assets like family, adult and community support; youth empowerment; boundaries and expectations; positive peer influence; constructive use of time; commitment to learning; positive values like caring and honesty; social competencies; positive identity; use of drugs and alcohol; exposure to violence; risky behaviors; and mental health.

2. Who are you surveying?

- The survey is offered to Southington public school students in grades 7, 9 and 11.
- Last time we did the survey in February 2022, 1,312 students completed the survey – over 85% of the students in those grades. Five students opted out.

3. Why do you ask these questions/collect this information?

- STEPS does this survey with support from the schools, to better understand youth in our community and identify strengths, challenges, trends and needs. This information guides our work and helps us plan for the programs and services that are most needed by our community.
- There is no evidence that asking youth about certain behaviors will encourage them to engage in those behaviors.
- The data gives a snapshot of the current experiences of youth in our community.

4. How is the survey completed?

- Online, during school hours.

5. Is it anonymous?

- Yes. The survey is voluntary and anonymous. IP addresses are not collected, and the data goes directly to the survey company for analysis. We just get the summary report. There is no way to connect any student with their answers.

6. What do you do with the data?

- STEPS uses this data to better understand youth in our community and identify strengths, challenges, trends and needs. This information informs school and community programs.
- The full summary report is posted on our website and shared with the community.

7. Can I see the survey?

- Yes, parents are notified in advance about the survey and its contents, are given the ability to view the survey, and can choose to opt out their child.
- You are welcome to come into the school office to review the survey, but we are unable to distribute the survey due to concerns about fidelity.
- The survey report from 2022 is on the STEPS website and includes a list of all the survey questions.

8. Can I see the results?

- Yes. Full summary results are shared with the community via public presentations, info briefs, and are made available on the STEPS website.

9. How do you know kids tell the truth?

- Research has shown that students generally answer questions truthfully on anonymous surveys.
- Students are assured and reminded that the survey is anonymous and there is no way to connect them with their answers.
- The questions on the survey are tested and validated by research, and the survey has been revised over time.
- Surveys that show inconsistencies in how questions are answered, unrealistically high substance use, or other unusual patterns are removed from analysis. Researchers review the data carefully and eliminate surveys that meet certain criteria. For example, data missing from more than 40 questions, long patterns of responses that don't match the questions, or unrealistically high substance use rates, etc. Last time we did the survey, seven percent (7%) of the surveys were eliminated from analysis for these reasons.

10. I don't want my child to take this survey/What if my child doesn't want to take the survey?

- Parents and students ALWAYS have the right to opt out, before or during the survey. Parents are notified in advance about the survey and its contents, are given the ability to view the survey, and can choose to opt out their child.
- Students themselves can opt out of any questions or choose not to complete the survey at any time, before or during implementation. No question is required – students can choose to skip any question they wish.
- There are no direct benefits or consequences to students whether or not they choose to take the survey.