

**Hanover Public Schools**

**Matthew A. Ferron**  
*Superintendent of Schools*



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*Assistant Superintendent*

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*Director of Pupil Personnel Services*

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To: Matthew Ferron, Superintendent of Schools  
From: Beverly Shea, PPS Director and Co-Chair of the HPS Wellness Committee  
Date: April 24, 2015  
RE: 2015 Massachusetts Youth Health Survey

Our middle school has been randomly selected to participate in the **2015 Massachusetts Youth Health Survey**, a collaborative effort on the part of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and the University of Massachusetts Center for Survey Research (CSR).

The primary purpose of this initiative is to evaluate the impact of state and local efforts to reduce high-risk behaviors and to develop and redesign comprehensive health education programs and other strategies to help reduce risk behaviors. Student participation is voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. The questionnaire takes one class period to complete, and consists of a standard set of questions being asked of children throughout the state. Questions address many health issues including the use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, diet and exercise, exposure to bullying, time spent watching T.V. and playing video games, coping with stress, and suicide. (Please see the enclosed questionnaire.)

Typically, representatives from the UMASS Center for Survey Research come out to the school to administer the survey for one class period with 2 randomly selected classes. In addition to the two classrooms used for their study, UMASS will also provide the district with extra questionnaires to administer on our own. The results of those surveys would be shared with us after the regular statewide sample is completed, usually by the end of the summer.

The middle school principal, school nurse, and middle school wellness representative reviewed the questionnaire in depth, as did the Wellness Committee. Following much discussion, we all agreed that should the district decide to move forward with administration of the survey, it would be best suited to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade level only, and our recommendation includes administration of the survey to all 8<sup>th</sup> graders who choose to participate, by June of 2015.

We have gathered information from members of the Wellness Committee regarding previous administration of similar surveys in our district. An abbreviated form of a youth risk survey was administered here in 2002. Given the many health issues facing our student body today, the Wellness Committee strongly recommends that we participate in this initiative in order to gather data that will inform and guide our health initiatives moving forward. We are committed to supporting the students, staff, and families of the Hanover community in a meaningful way. The information gleaned from the survey will also assist us as we develop partnerships with local police and other organizations designed to promote prevention of risk behaviors. We greatly appreciate your consideration and welcome any questions you might have.