

# Young Voices:

students documenting school experience  
in Woonsocket Schools

June 2009



**YOUNG  
VOICES**

PLANTING THE SEEDS OF CHANGE

# Introduction

Since its founding in 2006, Young Voices has enabled youth to create policy agendas and action plans for improving quality of life for young people in Rhode Island. Empowering youth to design and direct credible, focused research to inform a clear policy agenda has been central to Young Voices' success at transforming urban youth into powerful advocates for their communities. In 2008, the youth of Young Voices conducted research about the experience of students and teachers in Providence's public high schools. This research has formed the basis for a collective effort to transform the Providence public school system.

Over the past year, in an effort to bring this work to a statewide level, Young Voices partnered with local leaders in Central Falls, Pawtucket, and Woonsocket, offering them technical assistance to replicate the Young Voices model in their communities. The partner organizations were SCOPE/the Central Falls School Dept, Blackstone Academy, and YWCA Northern RI. Technical assistance included supporting on-site staff to conduct leadership training with local youth, and assisting those youth to conduct research in their communities. The results from Woonsocket are presented in this report, while the results from Pawtucket, Central Falls and Blackstone Academy are presented in a separate report.

# Methodology

Staff from the partner organizations supported youth to distribute the surveys at local public high schools. The surveys were the same as those used in Young Voices' Providence-based research. (Youth from Young Voices created those surveys with guidance from staff at Brown University and RI KIDS COUNT). Youth independently conducted all research. After collection, research data was analyzed by an outside consultant hired by Young Voices to bring clarity to the research findings.

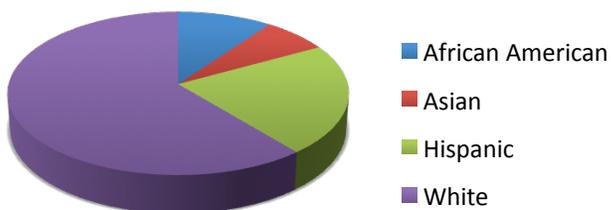
The methodology used in determining the student survey samples was random selection. Any surveys with questionable validity were thrown out. The student sample is similar to the demographics of the respective school districts (see p.3).

A total of 365 surveys were conducted, an average of 21% of student population in Woonsocket High School.

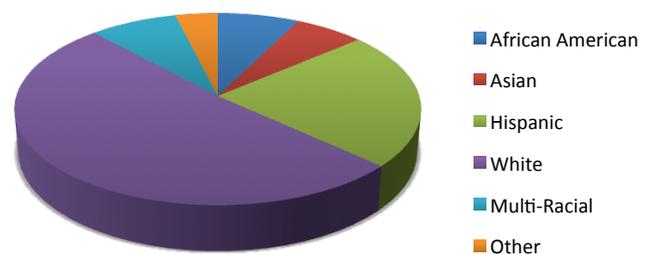
<sup>1</sup> as reported by the RI Dept of Education (RIDE)

# Demographics

**Woonsocket District Demographics**



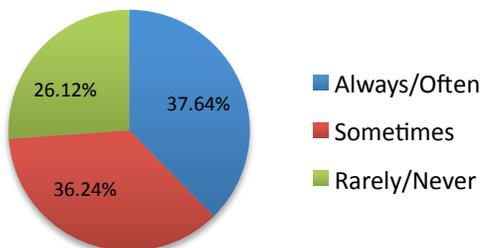
**Demographics of Survey Sample**



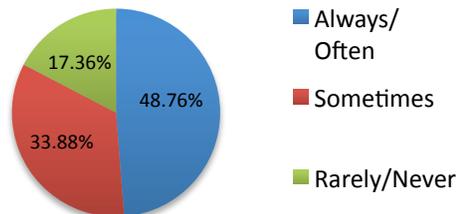
# Findings: Youth Survey Results

I spend most of my time in class...

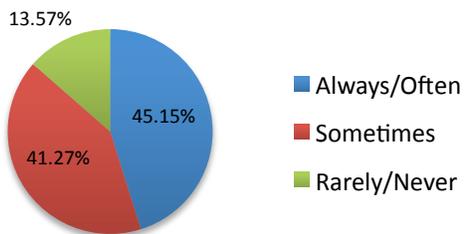
... working on dittos.



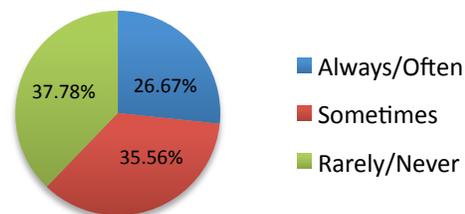
... listening to a lecture.



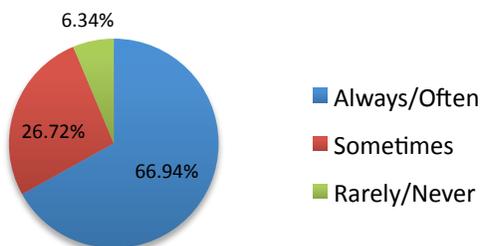
... participating in hands-on learning.



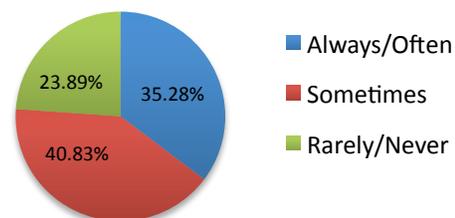
... reading the textbook on my own.



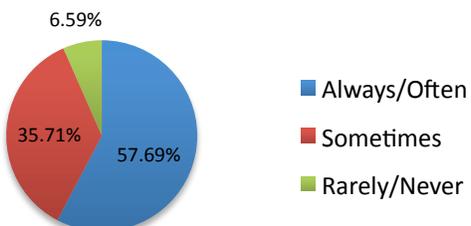
My teachers give me the help I need when I ask for it.



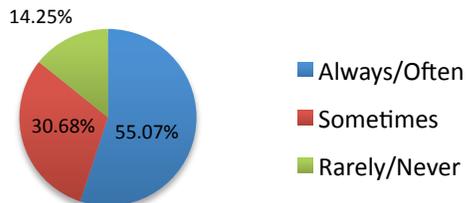
... applying what I learn to real life/relevant situations.



My teachers explain information clearly.

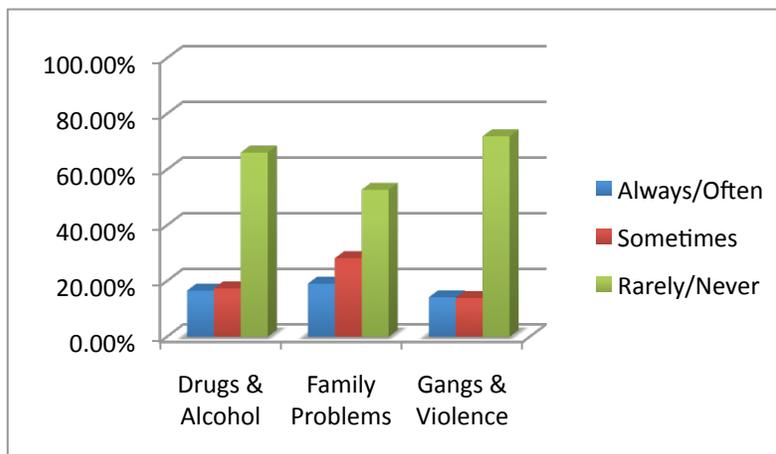


I ask my teachers for help when I need it.



# Findings: Youth Survey Results

As a teenager in Woonsocket, the biggest problems I face are:



## Research Summary

## Acknowledgements

Primary Support for this report was provided by the Rhode Island Urban Education Task Force (UETF). The UETF was convened to understand the challenges of urban education in the state and to recommend solutions. The UETF is being coordinated by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University.

Additionally, the Rhode Island Foundation has supported our work to create a statewide youth movement through technical assistance to organizations across RI. A special acknowledgement is due to the Central Falls School Dept, Blackstone Academy, and YWCA Northern RI, our partners in building a statewide movement. It is the hard work of their staff and youth members that made this research a success.

We would also like to thank the following individuals: Warren Simmons, Ellen Foley, and Carol Walker, the Annenberg Institute; Denise Jenkins, Anna Cano Morales, and Alex McCray, the Rhode Island Foundation; Deb Perry, Nate Smith, Reza Clifton, and Deb Smith, YWCA Northern RI; Melissa Walsh; Maryclaire Knight; Tehani Collazo, Brown University; and Elaine Budish, RI KIDS COUNT.

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