

YOUTH SURVEY SUMMARY

This survey was conducted at Wawasee High School, in Syracuse, Indiana, on Wednesday, October 8, 2008. The survey was filled out by 264 students, grades 9-11, on a voluntary basis. The following are the survey questions, the answers given, the number of respondents who gave the answer, and some general observations.

ANSWER	NUMBER	Question 1: What Websites do you like to visit to connect with friends?
MySpace	185	<p>It is very evident that the two primary Websites young people like to use to connect with friends are MySpace and Facebook, with MySpace significantly preferred among the two. However, please note that the results only reflect the respondents first answer. Many of the youth listed more than one Website.</p> <p>Since MySpace and Facebook are Websites for individuals, it would follow that, if one wishes to connect with youth using these sites, it would be most productive to do so as an individual, creating one's own Webpage, and not as an organization.</p>
Facebook	39	
Yahoo	3	
Podcast	1	
PSC Network	1	
Game Forum	1	
Youtube	1	
Funscape	1	

A relatively recent technology that youth are using in large numbers is cell phone messaging services. Had a question regarding messaging been included in the survey, it is highly probable that the results would have indicated that messaging is a way to communicate with a sizable percentage of youth in real time.

ANSWER	NUMBER	Question 2: What do you like to do on these sites?
Talk to friends	206	<p>By far the most common reason for getting on the above mentioned Websites is to spend time with friends. A much smaller number uses the sites to make new friends. As a result, persons within organizations wishing to build relationships with youth must do so in person, before establishing a presence on the Internet. Building and maintaining relationships are much more important to youth than listening to music, watching videos, playing games and research.</p>
Look at/send pictures	23	
Listen to music	12	
Build/play games	11	
Make page/profile	7	
Meet people	5	
See what people are doing	5	
Watch videos	4	
Express myself	2	
Listen to Podcast	1	
Post forum	1	
Send gifts	1	
Stay updated	1	
Share info	1	
Make plans	1	
Research	1	
Make fun of people	1	
Do fun stuff	1	

ANSWER	NUMBER
Talk to friends/people	122
Share profile, read others	30
Meet new people	27
Many things to do	13
Listen/play music	10
Games	8
Nicely formatted, easy to us	8
Upload and look at pictures	6
Nothing else to do	5
Fun	5
Sense of community/connection	3
Upload and watch videos	3
Research/learn	3
You can personalize it	3
It's free	2
Privacy/security	2
Variety of people	1
Match interests	1
You can send stuff	1
It's useful	1
Has what I like	1

Question 3: What makes these Websites interesting to you?

As with the previous question, the Websites are interesting to young people because they are a means of communicating with others of a like interest. They can creatively share their own profile and learn about their friends.

In comparison to the previous question, more youth listed “meet new people” as a reason to access the sites. It is possible that, in response to this question, meeting new people included getting to know other youth who, prior to accessing their Webpage, were only acquaintances.

While talking to friends, from the respondents perspective, is primary to their use of Websites, it is possible, if not probably, that factors such as the use of pictures, music and videos, and ease of use, are more important to making the experience rewarding, than the survey indicates.

ANSWER	NUMBER
Friends houses	103
Hang out	51
My house	40
Movies	29
Go anywhere/do anything	24
Restaurant/coffee shop	22
With friends	20
Skatepark	20
Talk	19
Lake/swim/tubing/fish	18
Sports/ball field	14
The park	13
Out of town	12
Mall/shop	12
Syracuse	10
Fun	8
Attend ballgame/sporting event	7
Basketball/gym	7
Parties/dance	7
School/study/school events	6
Church	6
Bowling	5
Community Center	4
Play musical instrument	3
Play/listen to music	3
Ski/snowboard	2
Bonfire	2
Television	2
North Webster	2
With parents/family	2
Sing	2
Read	2
Woods	2
Library	2
Ride bike	2
Work	2
Meet new people	2
Climb	1
Outside	1
Computer	1
Phone	1
Family	1
Cook	1
Paint ball	1
4-wheeling	1

Question 4: Where do you like to hang out for fun? What do you like to do there?

Most youth like to spend time at each others houses. They often prefer not having any agenda, spending time hanging out, going anywhere and doing anything. Structured activities rate far lower in popularity. Highest on this list are going to movies, a restaurant, the skatepark and the lake.

It's interesting to note, based on the following question (Question 5), that school and grades are the greatest concern for young people, yet schoolwork is not something they like to do.

From the perspective of a Christian organization, it should not go unnoticed that only six youth indicated that going to church is something they like to do. So appealing only to spiritual needs in today's environment will likely prove ineffective.

ANSWER	NUMBER
School/grades	57
Family problems	27
Finances	18
Balance/time management	17
Stress/pressure	16
Relationships (drama)	16
Concerns about life plans	8
Parents/control	7
No friends/need belonging	6
Sports	5
Transportation	4
Lack of sleep	4
Job	4
Friends	4
Family health	4
Broken home	4
Bored/nothing to do	4
Teachers	3
Staying out of trouble	3
Loss of loved ones	3
Drugs	3
Wrong friends	2
No guidance	2
Discouragement/depression	2
Dating relationships	2
Court/probation	2
Alcoholic parents	2
Alcohol	2
Separation from friends	1
Separation from family	1
Relationship with God	1
Racism	1
Pregnant	1
Need a place to go	1
Moving	1
Mental health	1
Don't fit in	1

Question 5: What are the biggest problems you face in your life?

Young people in Wawasee High School are greatly concerned about their grades. School is a significant source of stress in their lives. Family problems comes in a distant second, with the economic downturn and finances an increasing concern. Time management is a close fourth. Many young people are feeling the pressure of being overly busy. School, sports and jobs combine to overwhelm them.

Surprisingly low on this list are drugs and alcohol. It is likely that the level of use is not reflected in the extent to which they consider these a problem. Also surprisingly low, in relation to actual statistics, is the number of youth who are concerned about broken families. It is probable that divorce, uncommitted relationships, and stepparents and siblings have become an accepted part of everyday life.

The fact that only one person listed “relationship with God” as a need in their life, indicates that there is little perceived spiritual hunger among the general population.

ANSWER	NUMBER
Grades/study	29
Money	14
A job	12
Transportation	11
Balance/time/free time	9
Place to hang out/inexpensive	7
Food	6
Sleep	5
Quiet time/alone	4
Graduate/college	3
Stay active	3
Gym/workout	3
Family support/love/unity	3
Nothing to do	2
Better entertainment, concerts	2
Protection from bullies	1
Life direction	1
Better Internet	1
Clothes	1
Friends	1
Get close to God	1

Question 6: What needs do you have that are not met?

As with the previous question, most young people are concerned about how they are doing in school. The lack of money, a job and transportation are much less of a concern. This indicates that one-on-one mentoring and tutoring would meet a significant need and can be an important connecting point with youth.

The focus on school and grades points to an absorption with the present. This is evident in the fact that only three youth indicated that graduation and college were a top concern. They seem to be trying to just make it through school, and will then deal with their more extended future.

ANSWER	NUMBER
In Syracuse	43
Lake/beach	22
Where Community Center is	8
Close to school	6
Middle of nowhere	4
Arthur's Market	3
Along side a river	1
Oakwood	1

Question 7A: Imagine a place to hang out just for youth: What would be the best location?

Most of the respondents would like a place to hang out somewhere in Syracuse. Twenty-two youth preferred the lakefront. Only six indicated that they would like a place close to school. From a practical perspective, purchasing lake frontage would be very expensive and difficult to justify.

ANSWER	NUMBER
Café/restaurant/food court	56
Game room	47
Comfy couches	29
Fitness/gym/basketball	26
Big building	23
Sports	18
Band/music	18
Fun stuff to do	16
Dancing	14
Video games	11
Computers	10
Televisions	8
Pool	8
Arcades	8
Skate park	7
Theater	6
Study/tutoring	5
Park/sports	5
Paintball	4
Go-carts	4
Like a house	3
Colored lights	3
Laser tag	3
Bike ramps/dirt bikes	3
Colorful	2
Internet	2
Like NW Community Center	2
Bowling	2
Let teams build it	1
Looks geeky	1
Rock wall	1
High tech	1
Neat decorations	1
Modern	1
Like a mall	1
21st Century	1
Tropical Island	1

Question 7B: What would the place look like? What would there be to do? What would be in that place?

It should not go unnoticed that the majority of youth indicated that they like to spend time at home or at a friend's house. However, the extraordinary number of responses to this question, and the number of youth who volunteered to serve on the Task Force (33), demonstrates that the idea of a place where youth could hang out has greatly sparked their interest.

Many of the youth would like a café or restaurant where they could feel at home. Most respondents enjoy the idea of having a place for games, video games and sports, while others want a place to relax, hang out and "chill."

Factors that would point to what should be included in a youth center are 1) cost vs. benefit, 2) unnecessary duplication of services provided elsewhere in the community, 3) safety and security issues, 4) needs vs. wants, and 5) the underlying mission in the community.