

Manchester School Survey: Senior High

The Rotary Manchester Junior and Senior High School surveys are based primarily on “40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents,” created by Search Institute (www.search-institute.org). The Developmental Assets can be used to assess building blocks of healthy development, toward becoming caring and responsible adults. This particular list is intended for adolescents, age 12-18. The senior high survey is based on 426 responses. “Junior High” and “Senior High” may be abbreviated as JH and SH respectively.

Of the nine questions that are asked, only the first question is not directly related to this assessment tool. Nevertheless, it is informative to learn what teenagers are concerned about at this stage in their lives. This question will also be instructive regarding a number of the questions that follow.

Question 1: What are the biggest problems you face in life?

TOP 10 RESPONSES

165	Schoolwork/good grades
58	Time management
47	Relationships
42	No/few/minor problems
27	Family problems
24	Finances
22	Future/plans
16	Stress
13	Work/finding work
9	Sleeplessness
9	Physical appearance/condition

The greatest concern for senior high youth relates to completing their schoolwork and doing well in school, although 61% did not list school as a major concern. Compared to the JH students, time management is a greater concern. Young people feel busy and struggle to fulfill all of their commitments. Relationships and family problems combine to be a major problem for 17% of the students. Ten percent of the students had difficulty thinking of any significant problems in their lives. Even as they approach graduation, only 22 students (5%) express a concern for their future plans, and only 3% are worried about work or finding a job.

Other problems that scored lower than one might expect are drugs (5 responses), absentee parents (5), and depression and hopelessness (6). As with the JH students, SH youth are scoring much better than

the national averages in these areas, indicating that the trends have possibly become so normalized they are viewed merely an aspect of everyday life.

EXTERNAL ASSETS



SUPPORT (Question #2)

1. **Family Support** | Family life provides high levels of love and support.
2. **Positive Family Communication** | Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
3. **Other Adult Relationships** | Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
4. **Caring Neighborhood** | Young person experiences caring neighbors.
5. **Caring School Climate** | School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. **Parent Involvement in Schooling** | Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the child succeed in school.

Question 2: Do you have adults in your life, including your parents, who provide the care and support you feel you need? If no, what kind of support do you lack?

TOP RESPONSES

379 Yes

21 No

4 Sometimes

Eighty-nine percent of respondents say that have adults in their lives that provide care and support. Of the teens that identified the adults, a majority listed their parents or guardians. Teens that stated who it is that provided care and support listed them as follows:

TOP RESPONSES

85 Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

17 Grandparents/other relatives

5 Other adults

1 Teachers/School staff

1 Friends

When combined with the lack of concern for absentee parents, these responses generally speak well to the strength of the family in North Manchester.



EMPOWERMENT (Question #3)

- 7. **Community Values Youth** | Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
- 8. **Youth as Resources** | Young people are given useful roles in the community.
- 9. **Service to Others** | Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
- Safety** | Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.

Question 3: Do you have opportunities to help others? If yes, what are some examples?

TOP RESPONSES

349	Yes
59	No
18	Sometimes

The large majority of youth, 82%, believe they have opportunities to help others. Examples of opportunities to help others are recorded as follows:

TOP RESPONSES

70	Service activities
62	Church/youth group
45	School/schoolwork
45	Home/Family
37	Clubs/groups
31	Sports
31	Work
20	Friends
19	People in need

Senior high youth are much more likely than JH students to view serving others as an organized activity (16%), as opposed to helping around the house. They also scored higher in helping others through their church or youth group (15%). Some students help their fellow students with school work or mentor them in relation to athletic skills (a combined total of 18%). Churches and youth groups are often connected with service activities, although some mentioned service opportunities, without referring to church. A number of teens consider their job as a means to help others. For some, family arrangements, such as farming families, work and home life are closely intertwined. As with the JH youth, clubs, such as 4-H and Scouts, elicited surprisingly few responses (9%), in terms of providing an opportunity to help others. The fact that so few SH teenagers stated that they help others through service projects, indicates a need for more opportunities in this area.



BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS (Question #4)

10. **Family Boundaries** | Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
11. **School Boundaries** | School provides clear rules and consequences.
12. **Neighborhood Boundaries** | Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
13. **Adult Role Models** | Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
14. **Positive Peer Influence** | Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
15. **High Expectations** | Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

Question 4: Are there people in your life who help set boundaries and have expectations of you?

TOP RESPONSES

403 Yes

6 Sometimes

25 No

Ninety-five percent of the SH youth say they have someone in their life that helps set boundaries. Those identified as setting boundaries are as follows:

TOP RESPONSES

186 Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

22	Teachers/School staff
16	Friends
16	Grandparents/other relatives
4	Sibling
1	Pastor/youth pastor

Forty-four percent of SH youth identify their parents or guardians as providing boundaries in their lives. Teachers and school staff came in second at 5%. Fifty-three percent did not specify if it was an adult who provided boundaries. The church registered only one response.



CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME (Question #5)

- 16. **Creative Activities** | Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
- 17. **Youth Programs** | Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.
- 18. **Religious Community** | Young person spends one hour or more per week in activities in a religious institution.
- 19. **Time at Home** | Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

Question 5: Do you have a place to go outside of regular school hours? If so, what do you like to do there?

TOP RESPONSES

375	Yes
47	No
34	Sometimes/other

Eighty-eight percent of the youth say they have somewhere to go after school. However, where they spend their time is, as with the JH survey, quite revealing.

TOP 10 RESPONSES

167	Home
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81	Hang/chill out
56	Sports
42	Friend's house
39	Work
18	The pool/fitness center
13	Club/group
11	Hobbies
14	Library
9	School

Responses in relation to the constructive use of time are the most difficult to evaluate. For example, when teens are at home, they often stated they were by themselves playing video games. Fifty six youth indicated that they play sports, but in many instances, they were referring to informal games at the park, etc. Another 42 teens spend time at a friend's house, or hanging out. A remarkably small number of teens listed youth clubs (13) or church activities (8) as a place to go after school. Overall, there seems to be a need for a place for youth to go outside of school, where they can more constructively spend their time.

INTERNAL ASSETS



COMMITMENT TO LEARNING (Question #6)

- 21. **Achievement Motivation** | Young person is motivated to do well in school.
- 22. **School Engagement** | Young person is actively engaged in learning.
- 23. **Homework** | Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
- 24. **Bonding to School** | Young person cares about her or his school.
- 25. **Reading for Pleasure** | Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

Question 6: Do you receive the help you need with your schoolwork?

In answering this question, it should first be noted that 165 youth indicated that they are more concerned about their school work than anything else. On the other hand, 61% of SH youth have issues that are of a greater concern to them.

TOP RESPONSES

396	Yes
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58 No

53 Sometimes

26 Does not need help

Ninety-three percent of the students feel they receive all the help they need all of the time, with an additional 12% receiving the help they need some of the time. Twenty-six students said they didn't need help, while others said they had the help they needed, if they asked for it.

A relatively few students specified who provided them help with their schoolwork. Of those who responded, teachers were listed as the primary helper, with parents coming in a close second.

TOP RESPONSES

22 Teacher

18 Parents

12 Tutor

5 Other relative

5 Friends

2 iPad/YouTube



POSITIVE VALUES (Question #7)

- 26. **Caring** | Young Person places high value on helping other people.
- 27. **Equality and Social Justice** | Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
- 28. **Integrity** | Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
- 29. **Honesty** | Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
- 30. **Responsibility** | Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
- 31. **Restraint** | Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

Question 7: Who is your greatest role model? What do you admire about that person?

In order to determine teenager values, the question was asked, "Who is your greatest role model?" The second half of the question, "What do you admire about that person?" is more revealing regarding their values. Below are the responses to the first half of the question:

TOP RESPONSES

168 Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

65 Grandparents/other relative

47 No role model

46 Celebrity/famous person

25 Friend

24 Sibling

13 Teacher/school staff

6 One's self

5 God/Jesus

5 Professional/career person

1 Pastor

It is encouraging to learn that 39% of SH youth consider their parents to be their role model. Another 15% list other family members as their role model. Forty-seven SH youth have no role model at all, while celebrities and other famous persons scored fourth as their role model. This is lower than with the junior high youth, likely reflecting a higher level of maturity. Here are the responses regarding what it is that they admire about the person:

TOP 10 RESPONSES

76 Works hard/likes job

49 Helps others/me

45 Compassionate/kind/loving

33 Strong/courageous

32 Determination

25 Successful

25 Encourages/supports

16 Teaches me

15 Provide for needs

15 Smart/wise

Senior High teens value a work ethic more than any other quality (18%). Ninety-four teens valued qualities of compassion, helping and encouraging. No students listed “equality” and “social justice” as an important value. Only some of the forty-nine who valued helping others/me mentioned helping

other people, in contrast to themselves. In regards to “integrity,” only three students listed “ethical and trustworthy” as admirable qualities. “Honesty” garnered five responses, while no one listed “responsibility” as a positive character quality. Instead, most of the youth admire traits such as determination, strength, working hard and success. The fact that positive values, as identified by Search Institute, scored so poorly, indicates a need for values training.



SOCIAL COMPETENCIES (Question #8)

- 32. **Planning and Decision Making** | Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
- 33. **Interpersonal Competence** | Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
- 34. **Cultural Competence** | Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- 35. **Resistance Skills** | Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
- 36. **Peaceful Conflict Resolution** | Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

Question 8: How do you get along with other people?

One of the aspects of social competence, “planning and decision making,” is related to question #1. Most of the teens are focused on immediate concerns, while only twenty-two students indicated they are most anxious about future plans. This is an area that needs attention.

TOP RESPONSES

309	Yes
78	Sometimes
24	No

Ninety-one percent of the students say they get along with others all or some of the time. Of those who got along with others only sometimes, many of the youth described themselves as shy and having difficulty making friends. Others indicated that they get along with others, just as long as they are treated nicely by that person.

A relatively small percentage of teens specified how that got along with others. For those who addressed the subject, their responses are as follows:

TOP RESPONSES

24 Mutual respect

17 Friendly/outgoing

11 Like people/likeable

3 Humor

3 Be myself

2 By helping them

2 Pretend

2 Depends on the person



POSITIVE IDENTITY (Question #9)

37. **Personal Power** | Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."

38. **Self-Esteem** | Young person reports having a high self-esteem.

39. **Sense of Purpose** | Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."

40. **Positive View of Personal Future** | Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

Question 9: How do you feel about yourself and your purpose in life?

Teens responded to the question of "feelings about yourself" and "your purpose" almost independently. In regards to feelings about themselves, they responded:

TOP RESPONSES

280 Positive

53 Neutral

32 Negative

A clear majority, 66%, feel positive about themselves all the time. Only 32 youth have a negative view of themselves. Sixty-one youth avoided the question altogether. In regards to having a purpose in their lives, the students responded as follows:

TOP RESPONSES

279 I have a purpose

55 Uncertain

24 No purpose/negative

Sixty-five percent of the SH teens said they had purpose in life, while an additional 147 students listed it as “uncertain,” “no purpose,” or did not respond at all.

TOP RESPONSES

20 Help others

11 Achievement/success

8 Related to God

6 Pursuing goals/career

4 Change the world

4 Do good

3 Make your own purpose

3 College

2 Better myself

2 Relationships

2 Make money

Many more teens stated they had purpose in life than could or chose to state specifics regarding their purpose. Almost all of the youth pointed to a functional purpose, in contrast to any ultimate, transcendent purpose in life.

Concerns to Address with Junior High Youth at North Manchester

1. Students need to be offered more service projects for the purpose of helping other in constructive and substantive ways.
2. Many teenagers need a place to go outside of school where they can spend their time more constructively and productively.
3. Youth can use more guidance with long-range planning.
4. Teens have a need for values training.