

January 26, 2009

Dear CRMS Parents and Guardians,

At Castle Rock Middle School, we strive to educate students on the dangers of engaging in risky behavior and give students the tools necessary to make good choices. Douglas County School District has recently started the Social Norms Project as a positive prevention tool. This project will be implemented throughout the 08-09 school year as a way to help prevent substance abuse among students at Castle Rock Middle School.

The objective of the campaign is to educate students with the actual data around “real” versus “perceived” usage of alcohol, cigarette, and marijuana usage, thereby reducing the prevalence of these behaviors. This, in turn, will lower the pressure to drink or smoke because the data shows that not “everyone is doing it” and makes it easier and more socially acceptable to make healthy decisions.

Data was recently collected through an anonymous survey by our 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in November. The data collected was in regard to actual usage of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana by 8<sup>th</sup> graders and their perception of use by the student population at CRMS. The survey itself is designed to factor out student misrepresentation and the overall results are compared against various norm groups in the county, state and nation.

As the data shows below, the majority of 8<sup>th</sup> graders at CRMS do not engage in risky behavior. It is much more common for our students to make good choices and refrain from using alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana.

Parents and teachers share an important role in changing student perceptions. Believe it or not students across the nation rank their parents and teachers as someone they believe. In fact, CRMS students rank parents as the third most believable source on alcohol. They rank teachers in the top 4 of most believable sources for this information.

Please use the enclosed data as a starting point to talk with your son/daughter. Discuss what the data shows, highlight for them that most students at CRMS do not participate in risky behavior. Talk to your son/daughter about how to avoid situations where he/she might be exposed to alcohol or tobacco. Please encourage students to talk to counselors, teachers, doctors or any other trusted source about this information.

Social norms survey results for CRMS 8th graders conducted November 2008:

<u>Usage of substance</u>	<u>Actual Reported Use</u>	<u>Perceived Usage by Peers</u>
Alcohol	24%	78%
Cigarette	6%	64%
Marijuana	6%	55%

<u>Approve Using Substance</u>	<u>Actual Approval</u>	<u>Perceived Peer Approval</u>
Alcohol	21%	38%
Cigarette	16%	31%
Marijuana	24%	41%

Student Ranking of Believability for Information on Substances

1. Police
2. Doctor
3. Parent
4. Teacher

It is interesting to note that “Friends” ranked #10 and the “Internet” ranked #9 out of 13 choices as to believability.

Please feel free to contact either a counselor or an administrator at CRMS with any other questions or concerns. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Terry Olson  
Principal  
Castle Rock Middle School