



What Gaston County Parents Say About Teen Pregnancy Prevention 2011 Parent Survey Results

In September and October 2011, Gaston Youth Connected hired Clark & Chase Research, Inc. to conduct an independent survey of Gaston County parents.

This survey gives local program planners and policymakers an opportunity honor local parents' needs and desires. Furthermore, the survey can help parents understand the breadth of support for effective education and become stronger advocates for their families' needs.

Parents Know Addressing Sexual Health is Important

- 95% of parents agreed with the statement, "Teaching teenagers about sexual health will help them become healthy adults."
- Parents are actively engaged in talking with their children about sex (82%), healthy relationships (89%), and birth control (68%). Of parents who talk with their children about sex, 66% have these talks very often or somewhat often.

Why it matters: Parents think addressing sexual health is important, not inappropriate. Furthermore, parents are actively engaged in helping their children become sexually healthy people.

Parents Are Both Responsible and Realistic

Parents were asked, "Which of these statements best describes what you want for your oldest child as a teenager?"

- 10% answered, "I want my teen to abstain from sex, so I don't think he or she needs information on birth control."
- 80% answered, "I want my teen to abstain from sex, but I also think he or she needs information on birth control."
- 10% answered, "I can accept my teen being sexually active and I think he or she needs information on birth control."

Why it matters: Parents recognize that providing information on birth control complements a belief in abstinence and understand that information is beneficial to their children.

Parents Favor Thorough School-Based Sexuality Education

Parents were asked to rate the importance of topics covered in sexuality education classes:

- 96% say it's important to cover what it means to have an emotionally and physically healthy relationship.
- 99% say it's important to cover abstinence or delaying sex until they are adults or married.
- 94% say it's important to cover effectiveness rates of birth control methods, including condoms.
- 86% say it's important (70% very important) to cover how to use condoms and 85% (68% very important) say it should include a how-to on other types of birth control.
- 75% of parents say it is important to provide a condom demonstration in the classroom. 54% of parents say the condom demonstration is very important.

Why it matters: Parents want sexual health education to be thorough and complete. Parents do not want schools to skip over seemingly controversial items like complete coverage of birth control methods and demonstrations.

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Parents Think School is the Right Place for Sexuality Education

- 90% of parents think Gaston County Schools should provide sexual health education.
- 91% of parents would let their own child participate in sexual health education classes in school.
- Parents also trust school-based sexual health education classes more than classes in other settings:
 - 82% would let their own child attend a church-based class.
 - 75% would let their child attend an after-school class.
 - 71% would let their child attend a class “in a community setting.”

Why it matters: Decision makers may think providing sexual health education in an out-of-school setting is more appealing to parents. However, 91% of parents think sexual health education should be provided by schools during the school day, perhaps reflecting a high level of trust in Gaston County Schools.

Parents Support Access to Birth Control

- 91% of parents think it’s important for their teenager to know where they can get birth control, including condoms. 73% of parents think it’s very important.
- 91% of parents think there should be services in the community where teens can talk to a doctor about pregnancy prevention.
- 87% of parents think there should be services in the community where teens can receive birth control, if needed.

Why it matters: Access to birth control should be viewed as noncontroversial, and clinic referral processes should honor parents’ desire for access.

Parents Vote

- 78% of parents think Gaston County isn’t doing enough to address teen pregnancy.
- 63% of parents who vote say a school board candidate’s position on sexual health education would influence their vote. An additional 11% say it might.
- 90% of parents who vote favor sexual health education being taught in Gaston County Schools.

Why it matters: Public officials should understand that parents are looking to them as allies in helping their children be sexually healthy, and may be willing to hold public officials accountable for their responses to this information.

Methodology

- Survey developed and conducted by independent researchers with Clark & Chase Research, Inc.
- Margin of error of +/- 4.9% at a 95% level of confidence.
- Survey questions were developed to minimize bias and reflect a full range of opinions.
- Results are representative of Gaston parents with regard to race, income, age of children, and proportions of enrollment in middle and high school.
- Responses include both landline and mobile phone users.