

October 1, 2008

IMPORTANT Information About an Upcoming Survey

Dear Parents of Students in Grades 7 through 12:

The Darien Public Schools has had a long and positive relationship with Darien Family and Youth Options of Liberation Programs, an organization available both to the school community and the wider community in providing programs and services aimed at addressing at-risk behaviors of youth. Over many years the Darien Public Schools and Darien Family and Youth Options have partnered in creating initiatives to help reduce at-risk behaviors among Darien's youth.

Often the information on which such work was based has been largely anecdotal or relied upon state and national statistics, instead of Darien data. At this time, we would like to obtain local data on which to consider options and base program development efforts. Therefore, this fall we are planning to obtain survey data that will be anonymous, tightly controlled, and carefully communicated. We plan to use a highly credible and appropriate instrument for collecting such data.

Recently, the Darien Board of Education has approved a collaborative survey effort with Darien Family and Youth Options and The Darien Coalition to Address At-Risk Behaviors (DCAARB). During a single period, we will be administering a unique type of survey which seeks to provide data through a much broader perspective. The instrument is called *The Survey of Student Resources and Assets* and it looks more globally at adolescent experiences, including many positive experiences. It has been utilized by a number of Southern Fairfield County communities. This survey will also be supplemented with additional questions on the topic of alcohol and drug use.

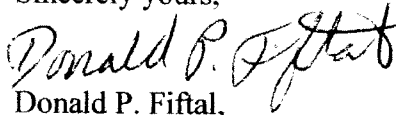
Darien Public Schools and Darien Family and Youth Options intend to administer the survey during a single class period (such as homeroom or health classes) for grades 7 through 12 at the middle school and high school. The survey questions are completed anonymously, placed into a sealed envelope, and no one in our schools will review them. We will receive a report of findings organized by grade, by gender, and by the entire school district. No individual student data is reported back to us.

Please give serious consideration for your child to participate in this study, as it will provide Darien with important information on the developmental needs of our youth. A complete copy of the exact survey is available for your viewing on the school district's website at www.darienps.org. Ideally, to obtain the most credible data, it will be important to have all students participate in grades 7 through 12.

If you do not want your child to participate, you **must** return the form at the bottom of this letter to Mr. Dan Haron (Darien High School Principal) or Dr. Debi Boccanfuso (Middlesex Middle School Principal) by October 24, 2008. If no form is received, your child will be asked to participate in completing the survey when it is scheduled for his or her school. We anticipate the survey will be administered in early November and that the report back to us will be received sometime after the first of the year.

If you have questions about the logistics of the administration of the survey, please call Mr. Haron at 655-3981 or Dr. Boccanfuso at 655-2518. If you have questions about the content of the survey, please contact the Director of Darien Family and Youth Options, Moira Rizzo at 655-8973.

Sincerely yours,


Donald P. Fiftal,
Superintendent of Schools

If you do not want your child to participate in the survey, please fill out and return the following non-consent form to the school principal of your child's grade level.

Please withdraw my child from participation in the *Survey of Student Resources and Assets* that is being co-administered by the Darien Public Schools and Darien Family and Youth Options in November, 2008.

Child's Name (please print) _____ Date _____

School _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Grade Level _____