Using Your School Health Profiles Results

USING YOUR SCHOOL HEALTH PROFILES RESULTS

This document is designed to assist you with presenting the results of your School Health Profiles (Profiles) effectively. It includes guidelines for planning and developing reports, choosing the method for reporting, and using effective graphics. The document also describes additional data sources you can use to supplement your Profiles results.

Effective reporting of your Profiles results enables you to provide a broad audience with factual information on school health policies and practices in the following areas: school health education; physical education and physical activity; school health policies related to HIV infection/AIDS, tobacco-use prevention, bullying and sexual harassment, and nutrition; health services; school health coordination; and family and community involvement in school health programs. The data contained in your report can be used to provide the support for concrete recommendations to education agencies, public health officials, parents, and those who assist in the development of your school health programs.

Reporting your results to the appropriate audiences in an effective and timely manner can:

- Increase commitments to support school health policies and programs;
- Help you make concrete, data-supported recommendations for school health policies and programs in your district or state;
- Enable you to respond more easily and effectively to public and media requests for information about school health policies and programs; and
- Encourage increased participation in future years.

Planning and Developing Effective Reports and Choosing Methods of Reporting

When planning your report, consider the following:

- Audience;
- Content;
- Style and format; and
- Method of reporting.

Determining your **audience** is the first step in planning and developing your report or reports. A primary audience for your Profiles results is CDC, but legislators, school board members, and district/state administrators are other audiences for your Profiles. Education department officials and program staff, teachers, trainers, parents, and the community may also be interested in your results.

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Your audience will determine the **content** of the report. Vary the materials you use for reporting to different audiences and consider the following for each group:

- Existing levels of knowledge;
- Key concerns and issues;
- Method of presentation most likely to draw that group's attention; and
- Types of information most likely to motivate action.

Emphasize those aspects of your Profiles data that are most interesting to each audience. Focus on the most important points you want to make instead of overwhelming your audience with too many details. Provide only the level of detail the audience needs or has requested.

Your results will be more meaningful if presented with other relevant data. After each Profiles cycle, CDC creates fact sheets that provide your site's prevalence of key variables along with the range of prevalence estimates for other sites. The 2012 version of these fact sheets can be found at: http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/profiles.

You also might want to compare your district or state data to data that reflect general national results. Other potential sources of data include the following:

- Previous School Health Profiles results;
- The School Health Policies and Practices Study;
- Your district or state Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS), and other student surveys;
- The national school-based YRBS and the national YTS;
- Your state Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS);
- Survey results from other states and cities and national organizations;
- Health outcome data; and
- National health statistics from federal agencies.

Examples of combining the YRBS results and the Profiles results can be found on the CDC/DASH web site (http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/profiles/topic_facts.htm). If current YRBS and Profiles results were available, three fact sheets were created for sites on the topics of Childhood Obesity, Sexual Risk Behaviors, and Tobacco Use.

Consider the **style and format,** as well as the content of the product you will target to each audience you want to reach. Organize your findings in a way that clarifies implications for each particular audience. Reports that contain visual images are more powerful than those with just written text.

Once you have selected the findings and determined a style and format that will have the most impact, the final step is to develop the appropriate **method** for dissemination. Keep in mind that using more than one method enhances your chance of reaching and persuading a broad audience.

Some examples of formats that can be used include:

Executive summary. A two- or three-page executive summary should include all the relevant information generally needed for the reader to become informed about the subject. Use this reporting mechanism to make recommendations for change based on the reported information.

Comprehensive report. Include many or all findings and details from your Profiles in a comprehensive report. Use bullets, boxes, and graphics to emphasize what you want the reader to remember. Include your executive summary as an introduction. Organize the report by topic and include principal data and teacher data in each section as appropriate.

Newsletter. Use a newsletter to report information specifically addressed to certain groups of people, such as teachers, parents, or other professional or community groups. Contribute to existing newsletters or develop your own. Publishing in the state/district principal and teacher newsletters is a way of gaining support for future surveys.

Fact sheets and brochures. A single-page fact sheet or threefold brochure should focus on three or four key results. Fact sheets also might contain some information about your YRBS results. Include your project name, address, and telephone number. Fact sheets can be used easily to disseminate information widely.

Visual presentation. In addition to written reports, you may want visual presentations to report your results before an audience. Consider creating a PowerPoint presentation depicting the most important findings from your Profiles. Include text interspersed with graphs that focus on a single finding.

Web site. You may want to include your findings on an existing web site or create a web site so you can share your Profiles data more easily and with many interested parties.

Using Effective Graphics

In reporting statistical data, graphic representation can be extremely useful in displaying results in an easy-to-understand manner. Graphics are charts, graphs, and other visual forms for presenting information. Graphic presentation of data is a powerful tool when effectively used. Graphic enhancements are often the sparks that bring life, attention, and interest to a report or presentation. Graphic images help demonstrate group differences and aid in the explanation of survey findings.

The remainder of this booklet has been developed to help you prepare accurate and effective graphics. It focuses primarily on graphics used in presentations, but the same guidelines can be used when including graphics in any report format--electronic or print. The guidelines are not intended to constrain creativity, but rather to encourage and support accuracy and consistency in the display of information. Your Profiles report CD-ROM contains bar charts for all of your questions in a PowerPoint presentation format. If you want to add additional "slides" or modify this presentation, you can make these changes yourself or find out about services available in your education or health agency.

Planning Your Graphic Presentation

The first step to preparing effective graphic presentations is to ensure that they have a clear purpose. Think about what you are trying to say with the graphic. Keep your message simple and straightforward. Remember that your graphic presentation should highlight your major findings.

Graphic presentations provide an opportunity for you to acquaint various audiences with your program. You must know your audience members so you can design a presentation to best fit their needs. For example, knowing whether your graphics will be viewed by policy makers, such as district superintendents, or by parent groups will help you decide how to present your results.

A graphic's primary function is to inform. This can best be done when data are presented clearly and simply. Simple graphics that are easy to understand will communicate your survey findings much more effectively than tables of raw data. Ideally, your graphics should be both accurate and visually appealing.

Graphics within a presentation should have a consistent style and format. Although many type or font styles are available, using too many different styles can add an inconsistent, cluttered, unprofessional look to an otherwise clean and simple presentation. If you add "slides" to your Profiles report presentation, limit your choices to one or two fonts, and use boldface or italics for emphasis.

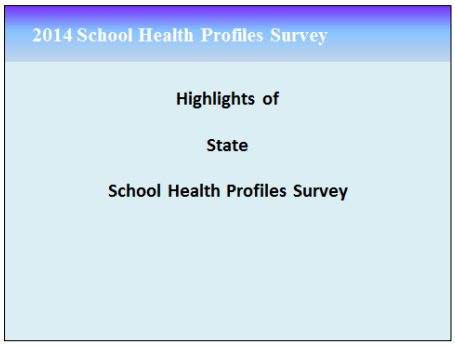
Another key factor to consider is the amount of information to convey in a single graphic. Too much information makes a graphic difficult to comprehend, which in turn detracts from your ability to demonstrate important programmatic needs. A series of simple graphics may be far more effective than a single complicated graph. However, be careful not to summarize the information to the point that it misrepresents the actual data.

Keeping presentation graphics as simple as possible forces you to interpret and discuss them in a conversational tone rather than reading them verbatim to your audience. Reading your PowerPoint "slides" is boring for both you and your audience. Your graphics should contain the framework rather than all the details of your presentation.

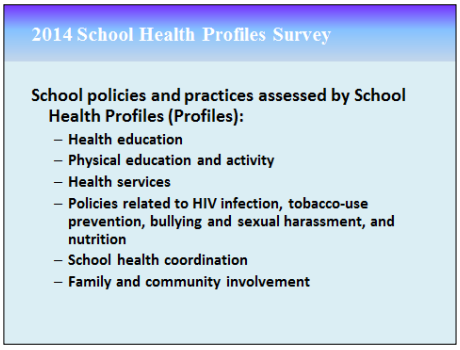
Selecting Chart Types

Several types of charts can be used to display your data. Choose the one that will best highlight the point you want to make.

Text Charts



Use text charts to introduce nonnumeric data in a presentation, for example, to introduce or summarize your findings. Text charts should be short and precise in meaning, using the minimum number of short keywords needed to convey your message. Keep lines short by highlighting only the main idea. Limit text charts to eight lines, with no more than 8 to 10 words on a line. Paraphrase rather than use complete sentences. Use initial capital letters and lowercase (as in the example shown) for the rest of the text. USING ALL UPPERCASE LETTERS MAKES TEXT DIFFICULT TO READ.

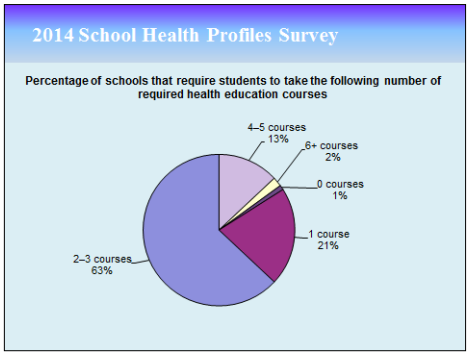


Avoid jargon. Be careful when using abbreviations or acronyms. For example, be sure your audience knows that Profiles stands for School Health Profiles.

Use bulleted lists to group and emphasize related ideas. If you have more than one bulleted list in your report or presentation, the symbol you choose for the bullets should be consistent for all of your graphics. Use a minimum number of indent levels, providing more detail verbally. To avoid monotonous presentations, be careful not to overuse bulleted lists.

Pie Charts

A pie chart is the graphic that answers simple questions about proportions. Each slice represents an individual part of a particular group. "Cutting" (separating) one of the slices emphasizes an element that is part of the whole. For clarity, place labels next to the slices, not in a legend. Include percentages or values in the labels to add detail to the interpretation. Pie charts should contain eight slices at most. When you have more than eight data values, use a bar chart. Use multiple pie charts cautiously; bar charts are more effective in comparing proportions among groups.



Arrange your data from the largest element to the smallest, unless you want to emphasize a particular element or there is a logical order to your categories or elements. Your most important element should start at the 3 o'clock position on the pie. The other elements should progress in importance in a counterclockwise direction, with each slice being a lighter color or shading. For the best color or pattern effects, work from dark to light. Fluctuating between dark and light makes it difficult to see pie shading differences.

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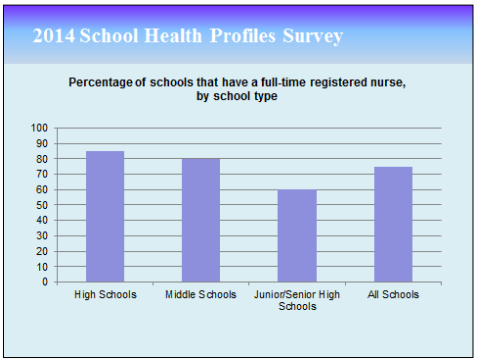
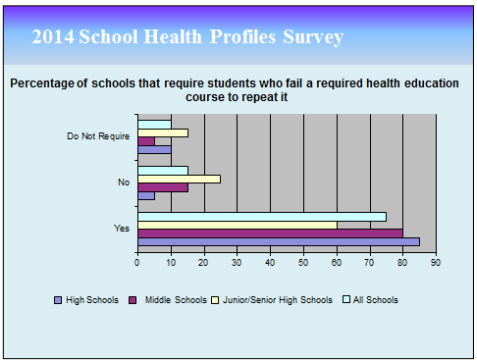
Vertical Bar or Column Charts



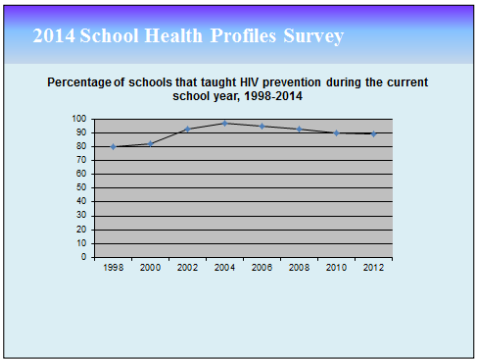
Vertical bars are used to present trends in data such as changes over time or differences among groups. Use bar charts for a relatively small number of discrete data points or groups. Use a clustered bar chart to compare data in more than one category. However, keep the number of clusters small, and limit the number of bars in each cluster to three or fewer.

Horizontal Bar Chart



Horizontal bar charts are used to show comparisons among parts, groups, or categories. This type of chart will accommodate many values without visual clutter and can indicate exact quantities as well as proportions. Use the same color or fill pattern for all bars. To emphasize one bar, select a contrasting fill pattern or color. The Profiles charts provided on your report CD-ROM are in this format.

Line Charts



Line charts are used to show changes in data over time or to represent continuous measurements. Like bar charts, line charts answer questions about trends, and they can support an almost unlimited number of data points.

Titles and Labels

Graphics should have clear, concise titles and subtitles. Both axes of a graph should be labeled with the names of the variables, and the scales should be indicated. Titles should be centered at the top or bottom of the graphic. All information necessary to understand the graphic should be included.

Production

Graphics produced for paper copies and those created for computerized digital display require different design formats. It is important to consider the purpose and presentation medium when choosing among pattern, shading, and color options. Computer presentations benefit from use of color. Photocopying printed graphics (unless using a color copier) will obscure color or shading patterns.

Electronic Presentation

You can present your results in the PowerPoint presentation format provided on your CD-ROM without any modification, or you can tailor the report to meet more specific needs. The PowerPoint presentation allows you to add transitions between slides, text builds, and even animation and sound. Transitions are special visual effects that appear when moving from slide to slide. Text builds allow you to show main bullet points on a slide one at a time. These special effects should be used sparingly. You need to preview your presentation to be sure that everything looks good.

When doing an electronic presentation, you will need a computer, a CD-ROM or a flash drive containing your "slides," and an LCD projector. You may want to bring a printed version as a backup in case of equipment problems.

Website

Presenting data on the Internet makes it readily available to many audiences. Having data available on a website emphasizes the importance of the data and encourages an exchange of information to enhance analysis and presentation.

Preparing data for a website is not difficult. Software packages are available to convert your paper presentation text and graphics into HTML (hypertext markup language) or PDF (portable document file), so it can be viewed on the Internet. Like your paper presentation, you will want to keep it simple and easy to read. Some formats will change in the HTML conversion, so take the time to adjust the format the way you like. Highlight important headings and keep basic facts bulleted. Converting to HTML will allow you to draw attention to links including appendices, tables, graphs, and pie charts, if you choose. By using hyperlinks, you can allow the user to move within your report or to jump to supplemental information available elsewhere on the Internet. Converting to PDF format will keep your document true to the original format.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is the time and effort spent by the graphics developer to ensure that the message conveyed by the graphic is true to the data it represents. Adequate quality assurance ensures that a graphic represents data in a manner that is easily viewed and understood by the observer and is not in any way misleading or incorrect. If the graphic presentation is incorrect, the viewer will have a false sense of the data and their implications.

Proofread your charts. If possible, enlist one or more of your co-workers who are familiar with your Profiles to help with the proofing. Also, check that percentages sum to 100%, when applicable, and that

counts sum to the total. If percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding, be sure to document that in a footnote.

Make sure the numbers on your chart match the numbers in the original data and that they are presented in the correct category. Within a presentation, scale changes should be avoided whenever possible so that between-chart comparisons can be made. For example, you may have two charts side by side showing response rates. One may use a scale of 0 to 100. The second chart may zoom in on a scale of 60 to 100. A person comparing these two charts will probably get a distorted view of the data. If you need to enlarge a selected portion of a scale, be sure it is clearly labeled as such. The vertical scale of bar and line charts should include zero.

Answer the following questions when proofreading your charts:

- Is all the text there? (Did the computer truncate text on long lines?)
- Is the spelling correct? (If your graphics package has one, use the built-in spell check.)
- Is your message clear?
- Is the chart simple and easy to understand?
- Are the data accurate?
- Would color enhance the presentation of the data?

Whether you are compiling a written report or preparing visuals for a presentation, graphics can be used to add emphasis to your message. Graphics can help make sure your readers or audiences leave with the message you want to convey. Effective use of graphics may help you generate interest in your program, gain support for conducting Profiles, and enhance your report or presentation.

Checklist for Effective Graphics

Purpose
- ☐ Identify your audience(s).
- ☐ Specify your objectives.
- ☐ Ensure presentation methods match purpose and audience.

Planning
- ☐ Create rough drafts first.
- ☐ Plan on making several drafts of all graphs.
- ☐ Remember that producing graphics sometimes takes longer than expected, so plan time accordingly.

Appropriate Use
- ☐ Use graphics to highlight the intended material.
- ☐ Use the correct type of chart for your data.
- ☐ Be sure the chart demonstrates the comparisons you planned.

Clarity
- ☐ Avoid unnecessary shadowing, 3D effects, and coloring.
- ☐ Minimize the number of fonts.
- ☐ Use bold and italic versions of fonts for highlighting.
- ☐ Avoid red and green adjacent to each other.
- ☐ Use accurate and complete labels.

Simplicity
- ☐ Present the data without extraneous material.
- ☐ Avoid elaborate fill patterns.
- ☐ Avoid too many different patterns.
- ☐ Avoid overly decorative backgrounds.

Consistency
- ☐ Use a similar style across all graphics.
- ☐ Use comparable scales for accurate comparison.

Accuracy
- ☐ Check that data are correct.
- ☐ Check that spelling is correct.
- ☐ Double-check everything!