

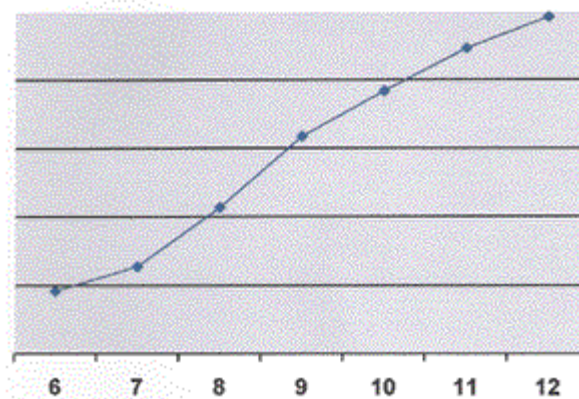
May 04, 2005

This is the second of two articles regarding drug and violence behaviors among students in grades 4 to 12. [Last week](#), the 4th Grade.

What is happening with our youngest students?

Part 2: The Age of Onset

Monthly drug use, Grades 6 to 12



While some students begin drug use in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades, Pride Surveys' national summary of grades 6-12 found that the average age of onset is between ages 12 and 13 when most students are in the seventh grade.

Once drug use begins, the number of students using drugs accelerates rapidly from grade level to grade level.

The percentage of students reporting monthly drug use is

- **39% higher in the 7th grade than in the 6th grade**
- **68% higher in the 8th grade than the 7th grade**
- **49% higher in the 9th grade than the 8th grade**
- **21% higher in the 10th than the 9th grade**
- **16% higher in the 11th than the 10th grade**
- **10% higher in the 12th than in the 11th grade**

By the time students reach the 12th grade, one in four report monthly use of an illicit drug – a 435% increase in the percentage of students reporting illicit drug use from the 6th to the 12th grade.

As drug use spirals higher and higher each year so do other negative behaviors. Last week's installment of this series showed that 2% of 4th graders carried a gun to school, and 4% carried a knife.

By the 6th grade, 3% of students report carrying a gun to school, and by 8th grade 3.5%. This percentage continues to rise to 5.1% by the 12th grade.

Among 6th graders, 8% reported carrying a knife, club or other weapon to school, rising to 14% by the 8th grade and 18.3% by the 12th grade.

As the past two newsletter articles indicate, drug use and violent behaviors begin as early as the 4th grade. Unfortunately, Pride Surveys found no improvement in 4th grade monthly marijuana use in the past two years and less than 1% improvement in the 7th grade, when many adolescents initiate drug use.