

# Building more inclusive school-based public health surveys: Increasing participation of youth with disabilities in the Youth Tobacco Survey



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## GOAL

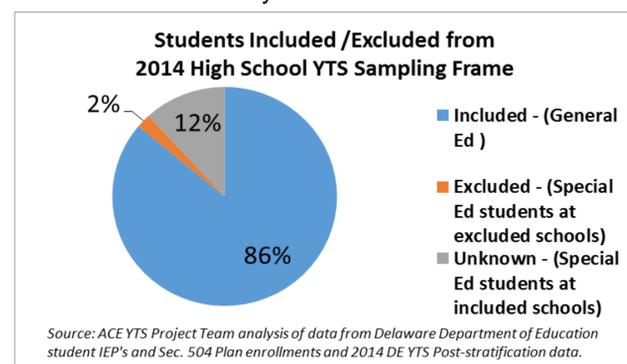
Using a more representative, inclusive sample to improve the utility of Delaware's Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS ) to inform public health prevention programs for youth and to reduce tobacco-related health disparities between students with and without disabilities. Findings will help drive change towards more inclusive sampling protocols and provide health educators with information to design prevention programs that help students with disabilities make informed choices about healthy behaviors.

## WHAT ARE THE PATTERNS OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE YOUTH TOBACCO SURVEY?

In Delaware in 2014, 14% of high school students and 15% of middle school students had disabilities, and were receiving special educational services. Eighty-six percent of students – those enrolled in general education programs - were included in the sampling frame. Two percent of students - those receiving services in special schools – were not included. For the remaining twelve percent of students, they may have opportunities to participate but it is difficult to track without disability indicators on the survey.

## CONCERN FOR THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

Health education programming is a key element in preparing youth with disabilities for an independent and productive life in the community. Unfortunately, we have limited information about the health risk behaviors and information needs of these students. School health surveys have not assessed disability status, and CDC sampling protocols routinely exclude students in dedicated special educational programs. What we know from limited data is that students with disabilities are at higher risk for health risk behaviors including tobacco use (2015 YRBS).



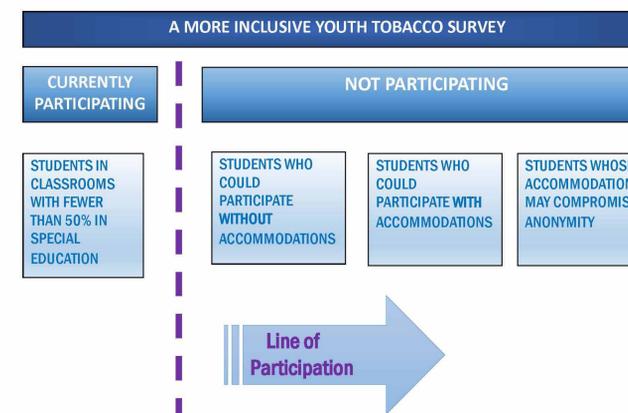
Variables Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2011)	Disability (17.9%)	No Disability (82.1%)
Current smoking	28.6%	16.1%
Ever drank alcohol	80.7%	70.1%
Physically active (≥1 hr/day on 7 days)	17.6%	26.5%
Overweight or obese	34.0%	27.0%
Depression	48.0%	22.1%
Ever been forced to have sex	20.6%	5.8%
Been bullied at school in the past year	30.8%	13.4%
Considered suicide	28.2%	10.2%

## TO WHAT EXTENT CAN PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES BE INCREASED IN STANDARDIZED HEALTH SURVEYS SUCH AS THE YOUTH TOBACCO SURVEY?

The Youth Tobacco Survey is a paper and pencil survey, administered to students in randomly selected classrooms, with no formal options for accommodations. In order to protect their anonymity, students must be able to complete the survey on their own, without human assistance.

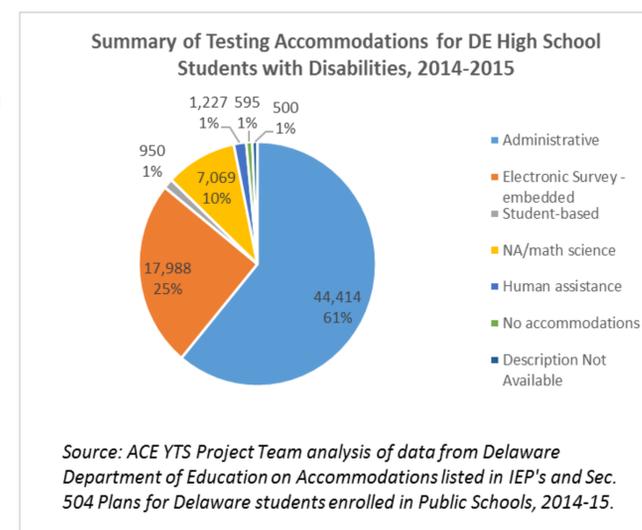
## FRAMING THE PROJECT THROUGH PARTICIPATION

*One way to explain this project is to explore the boundary for who is, and is not, included in the sample for the survey. This work seeks to include more students by redefining the boundary and moving the "line of participation."*



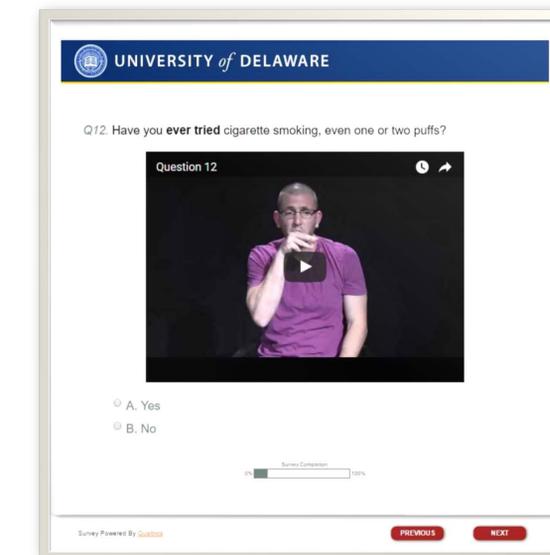
## WHAT TYPES OF APPROACHES AND ACCOMMODATIONS ENHANCE STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN THE YTS?

In order to expand student participation, we examined types of accommodations used in state standardized testing. Accommodations data from the Delaware Dept. of Education shows that only a very small fraction of accommodations on students' IEP plans (1.5%) require human assistance. The vast majority of accommodations (61%) are 'administrative' accommodations, such as time of day, preferential seating or small groups, or those that could be provided through electronic surveys (18%), or simply are not relevant to the administration of a health survey (17%).



## PILOT ADMINISTRATIONS

Our pilots are targeted to assess whether students currently excluded can successfully participate, with needed accommodations or without, if appropriate. The project team worked with the Advisory Panel and administrators at several schools to identify groups of students who are currently not included in the sampling frame. The team successfully administered the pencil and paper version of the YTS to selected students in Delaware's Autistic Program (N=4) and an electronic version of the survey with embedded ASL video clips to students who are Deaf or hard of hearing (N=11).



Screenshot of electronic survey with questions offered in both English and embedded video with American Sign Language.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UCEDDs

All states conduct school-based public health surveys. Not all states will be integrating disability data at this point in time. In your state, you can begin the conversation if you:

- Inquire about the inclusion of disability indicators and request they be added for future surveys, if not already included.
- Educate researchers about the high-risk behaviors of youth with disabilities.
- Ask whether accommodations with survey administration are provided to students with disabilities.
- Request that students receiving special education services be included in school-based surveys.
- Review and use the data for public health programming and health equity initiatives.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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