

# **Improving the Odds**

## **The Role of Schools in the lives of Young People**

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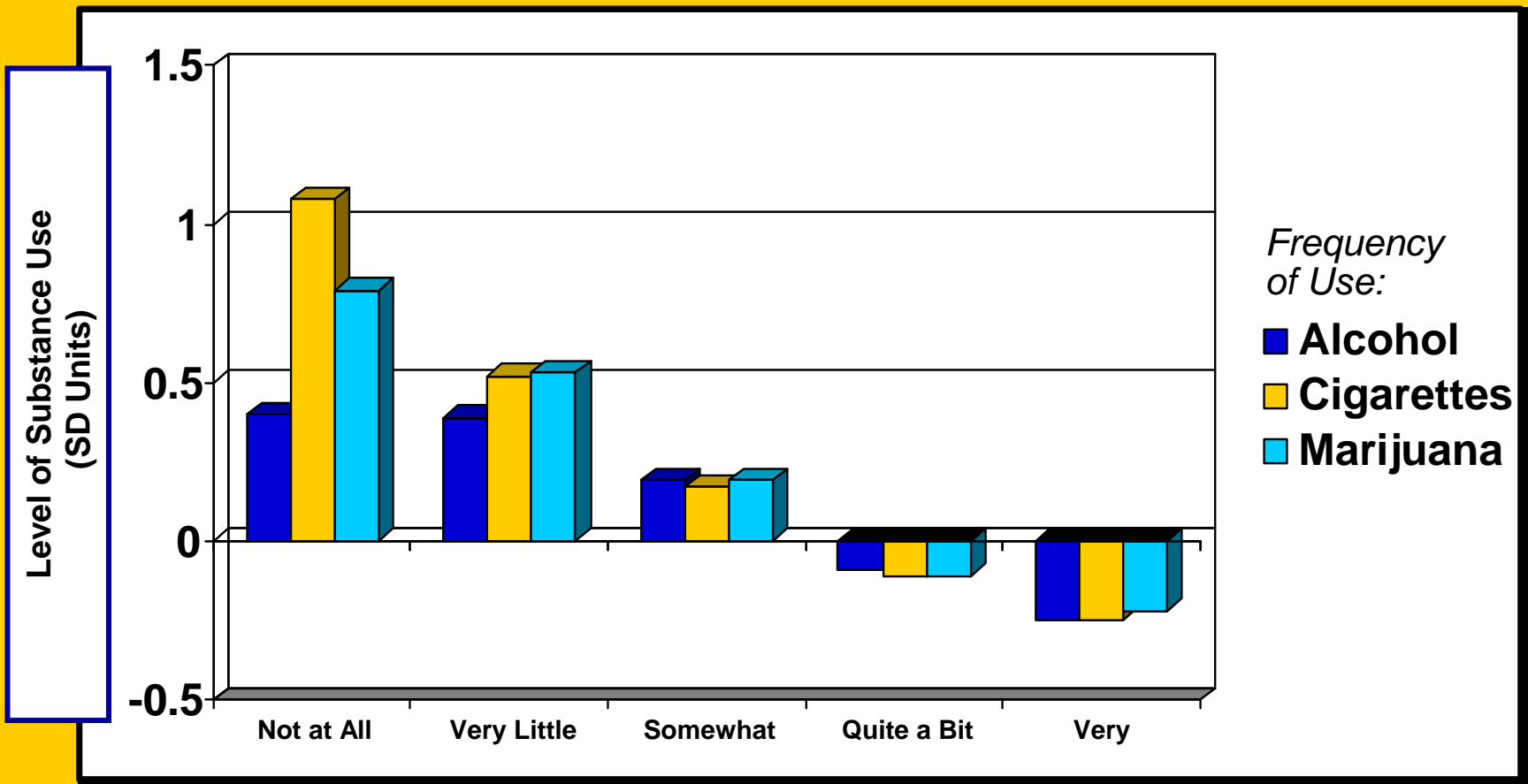
**Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health**

**Interim Director, Urban Health Institute**

**Research**  
has shown a **strong** association  
between **school connectedness**  
and every **risk** behavior  
we studied.

# Substance Use

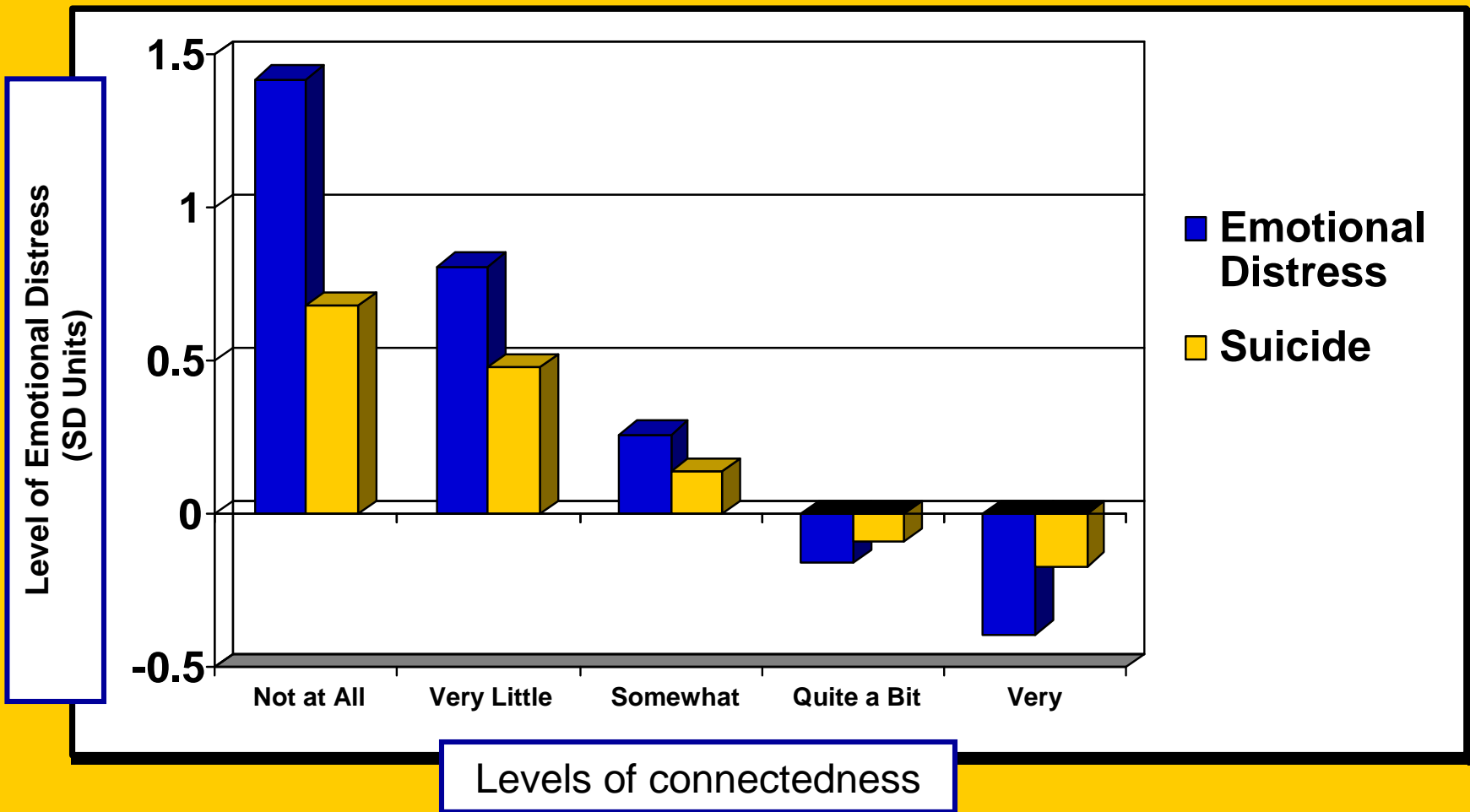
Students who feel connected to school are less likely to use substances



Levels of connectedness

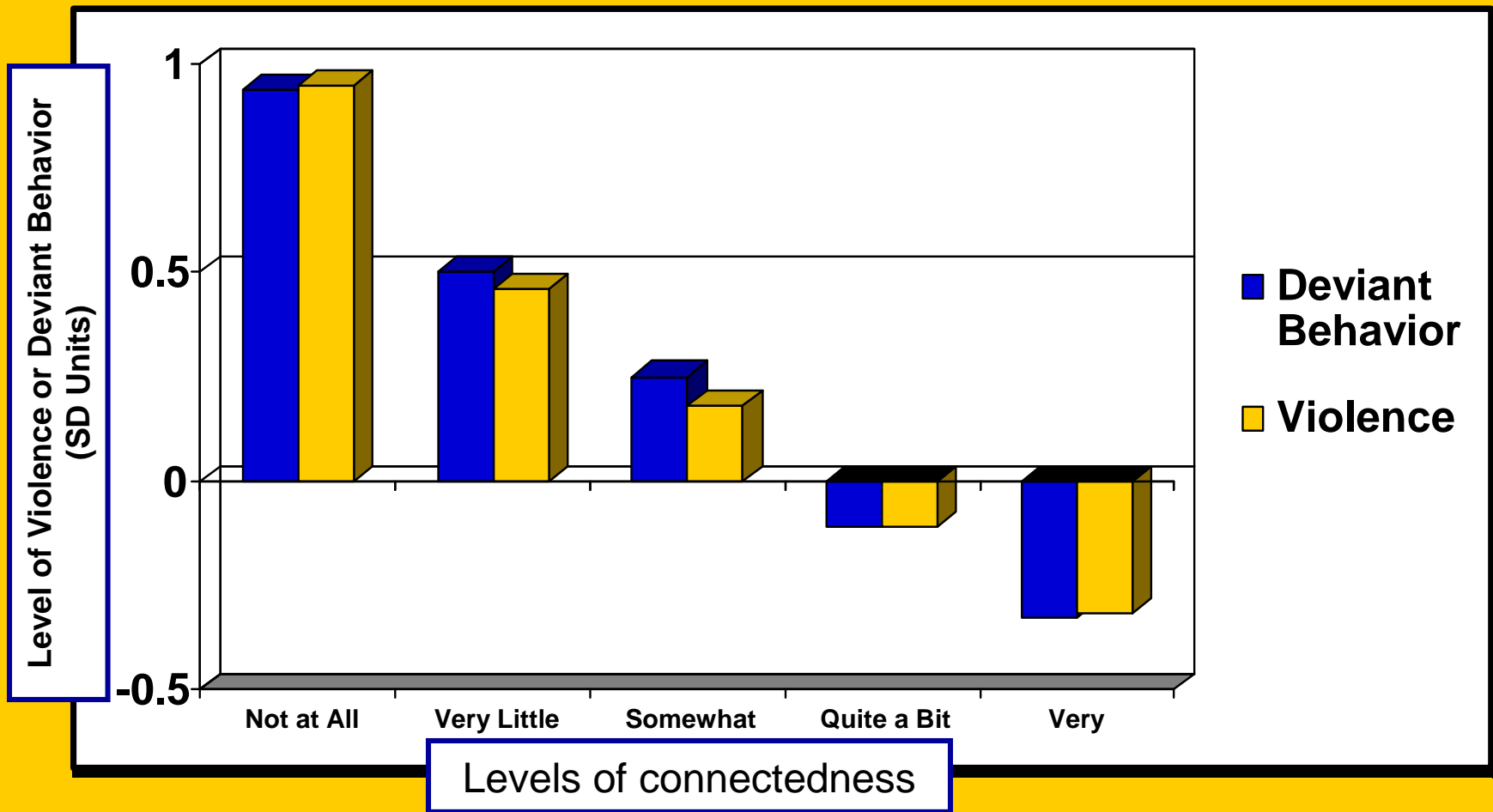
# Emotional Distress

Students who feel connected to school experience less emotional distress



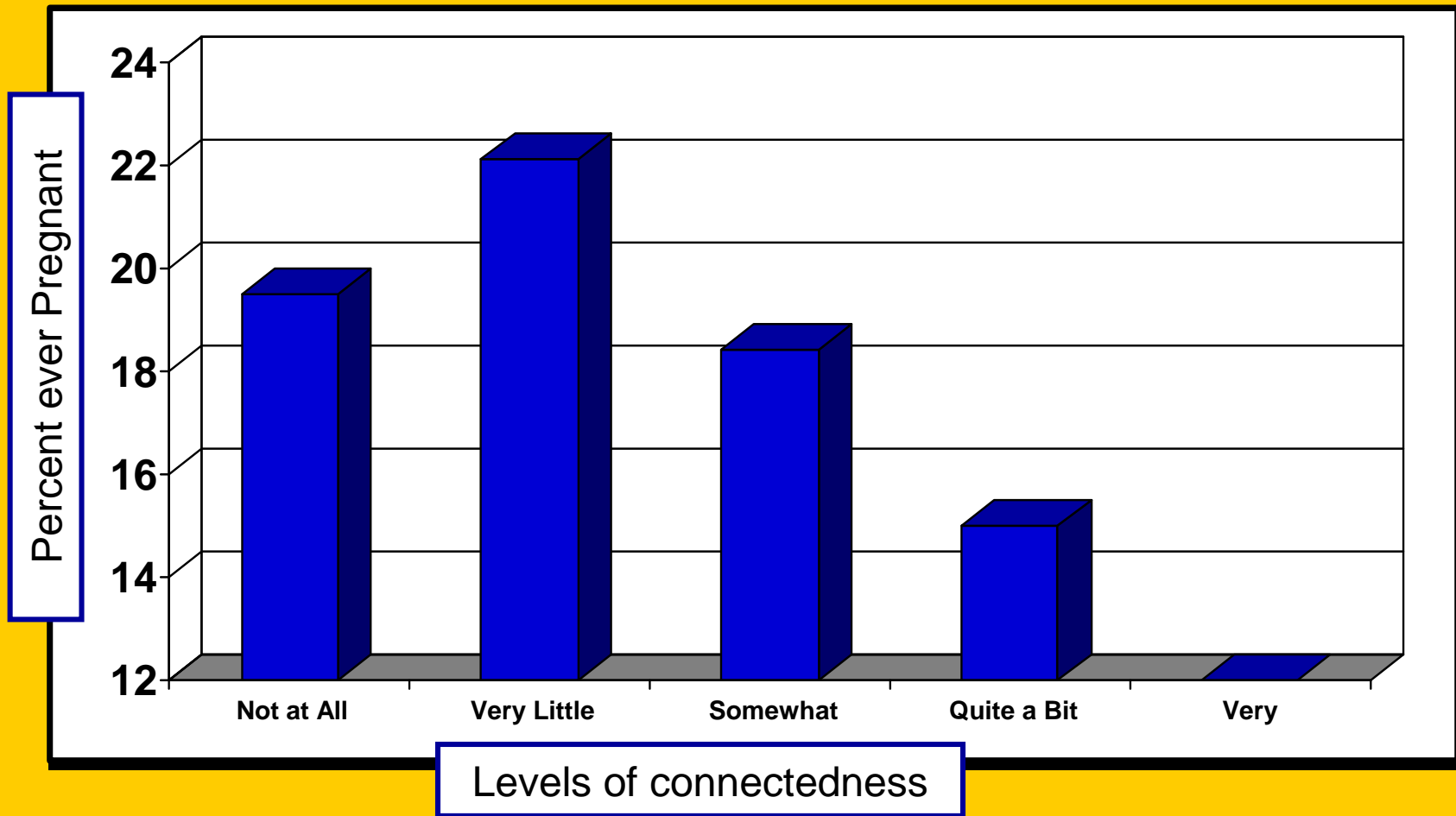
# Violence or Deviant Behavior

Students who feel connected to school  
engage in less violent or deviant behavior



# Pregnancy

Students who feel connected to school are less likely to become pregnant



# Critical Questions

- **What contributes to teens feeling connected to school?**
- **Why do some adolescents feel attached to school and others don't?**
- **What individual school characteristics predict connectedness?**

# Methods

## The Sample

- **The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health**
  - ▲ **A stratified random sample of 80 high schools with primary feeder schools**
  - ▲ **N=134 schools (127 participated in school survey)**
  - ▲ **N=71,515 students in 7th through 12th grade**
  - ▲ **N=127 school administrator surveys**



# **Scales**

## **Classroom Management**

- **Getting along with teachers**
- **Getting along with other students**
- **Paying attention in school**
- **Getting homework done**

# Scales

## School Connectedness

- **I feel close to people at this school**
- **I am happy to be at this school**
- **I feel like I am part of this school**
- **The teachers at this school treat students fairly**
- **I feel safe in this school**

\*

# Results

## Factors Associated with School Connectedness

### THE SCHOOL

- **School size mattered**  
...**classroom size did not**
- **School type is not associated with connectedness**  
...**public, private, parochial**
- **Location of school is not associated with connectedness**  
...**urban, suburban, rural**

# Results

## Factors Associated with School Connectedness

### TEACHERS

- **Teacher experience was not associated with connectedness.**
- **Having a master's degree was not associated with connectedness.**

# Results

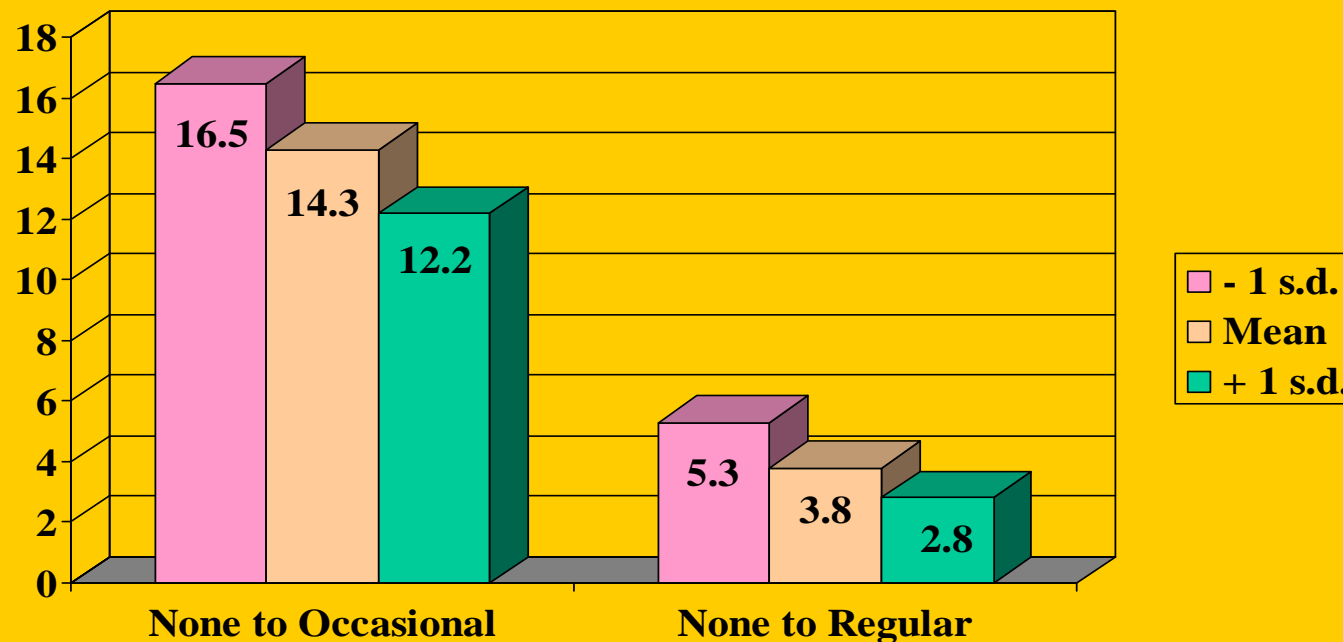
Factors Associated with School Connectedness

## **SCHOOL CLIMATE & CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

**The single strongest association with  
connectedness was **school climate****

# Initiated Cigarette Use

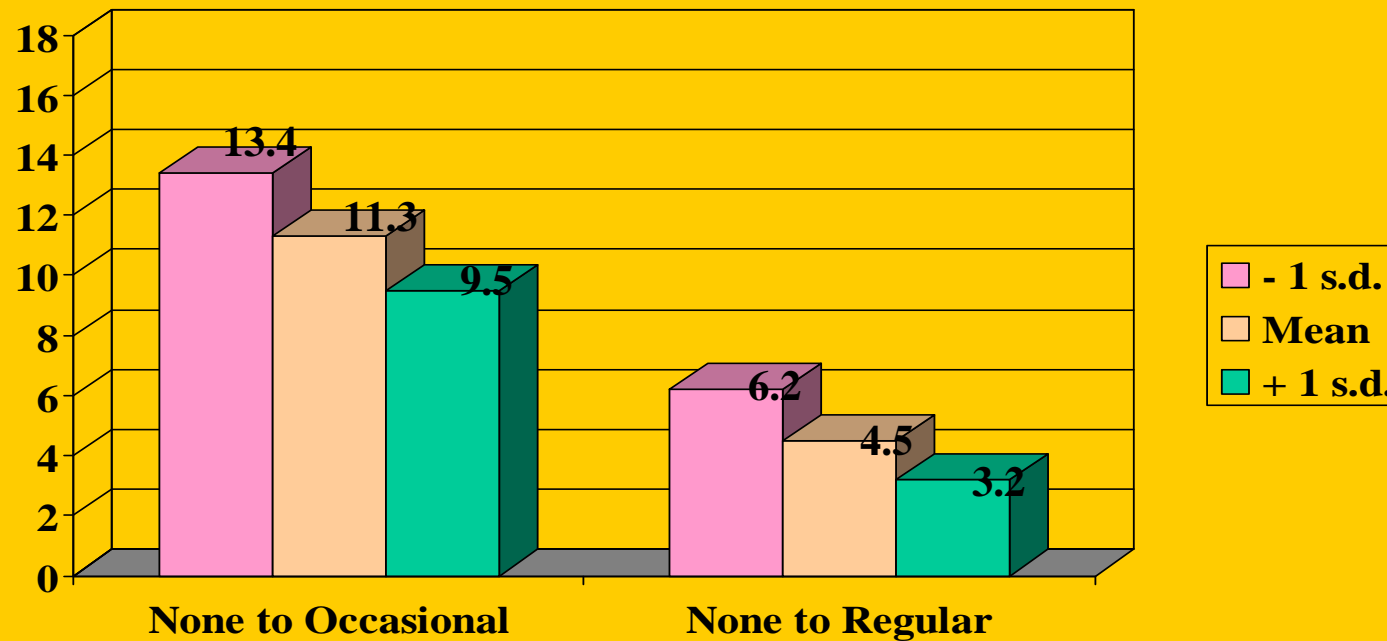
## Predicted Percent at Three Levels of Teacher Support



Multinomial logit models adjusted for social belonging, race/ethnicity, income, gender, family structure, emotional distress, relationship with parents, hx of peer suicide, hx of family suicide

# Initiated Getting Drunk

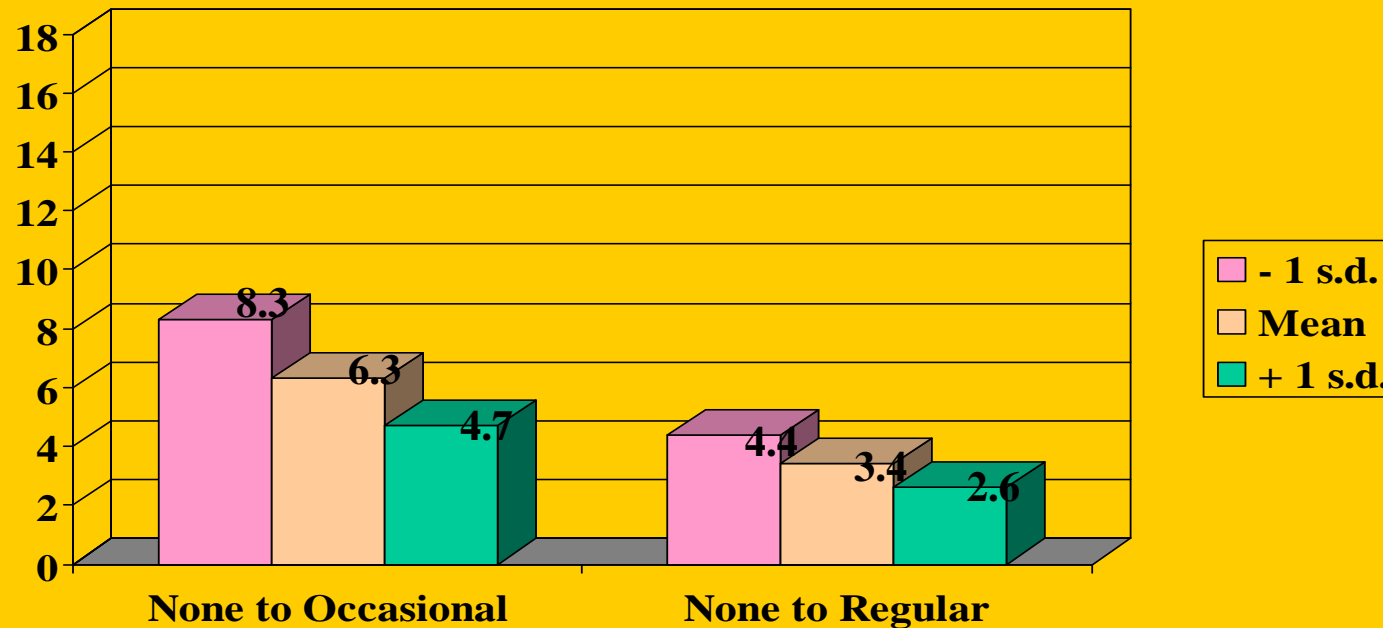
## Predicted Percent Three Levels of Teacher Support



Multinomial logit models adjusted for social belonging, race/ethnicity, income, gender, family structure, emotional distress, relationship with parents, hx of peer suicide, hx of family suicide

# Initiated Marijuana Use

## Predicted Percent at Three Levels of Teacher Support

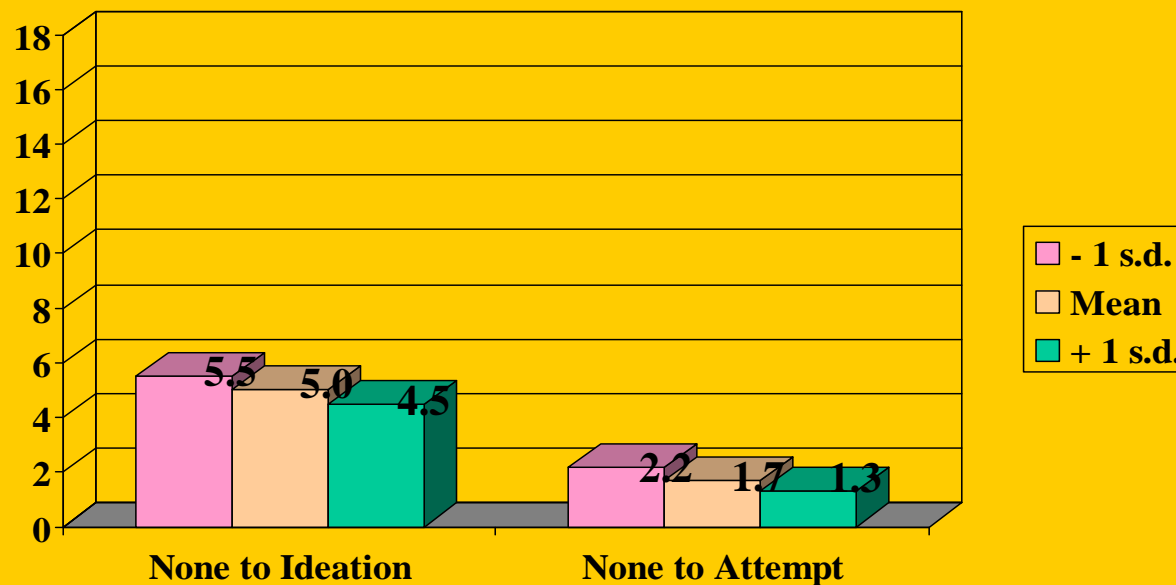


Multinomial logit models adjusted for social belonging, race/ethnicity, income, gender, family structure, emotional distress, relationship with parents, hx of peer suicide, hx of family suicide



# Seriously Considered or Attempted Suicide

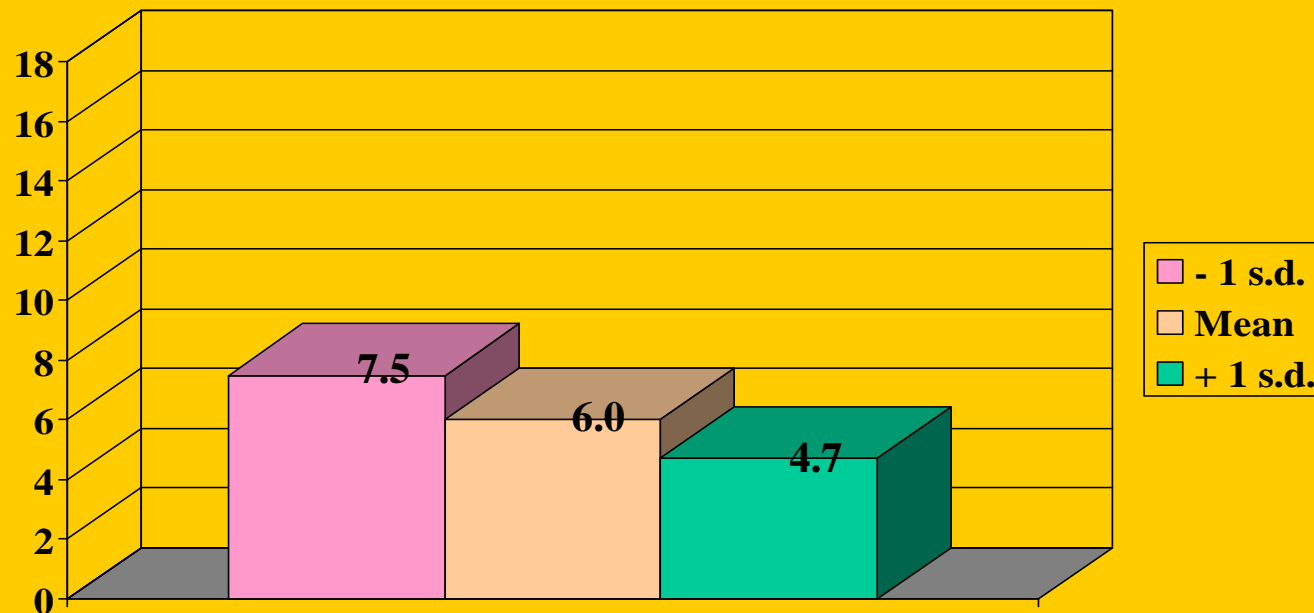
## Predicted Percent at Three Levels of Teacher Support



Multinomial logit models adjusted for social belonging, race/ethnicity, income, gender, family structure, emotional distress, relationship with parents, hx of peer suicide, hx of family suicide

# Initiated Violence

## Predicted Percent at Three Levels of Teacher Support



Multinomial logit models adjusted for social belonging, race/ethnicity, income, gender, family structure, emotional distress, relationship with parents, hx of peer suicide, hx of family suicide

# Creating Conditions for Learning

## Students are supported

Meaningful connection to adults  
Strong bonds to school  
Positive peer relationships  
Effective and available support

## Students are socially capable

Emotionally intelligent and culturally competent  
Responsible and persistent  
Cooperative team players  
Contribute to school and community

## Students are safe

Physically safe  
Emotionally and socially safe  
Treated fairly and equitably  
Avoid risky behaviors  
School is safe and orderly

## Students are challenged

High expectations  
Strong personal motivation  
School is connected to life goals  
Rigorous academic opportunities

# Support is the Key to Success

