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# SPEAK OUT LEXINGTON 1998

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## Summary Report

In January and February, people gathered throughout Lexington-Fayette County to discuss the topic: *What's Going on with Young People in Our Community?* These citizens met in 90 groups of friends, neighbors, classmates, co-workers, and civic organizations as part of *Speak Out Lexington 1998*. Trained moderators and reporters led the sessions. In addition, a group attended a Citizen Symposium, a series of meetings created to discuss the central issue in greater depth and to form recommendations.

This year's *Speak Out Lexington* topic generated a great deal of interest and energy. An increased effort to involve youth resulted in more young people serving as moderators and reporters, and increased numbers participating in groups of young people or in mixed groups of young people and adults. Whether mixed by age differences or not, most groups appreciated the opportunity to talk together and think together about this important topic.

People of all ages share many concerns about young people. Nearly all participants desire Lexington to be an inclusive community that values young people and produces healthy, safe, active, responsible, and productive citizens. Participants share a commitment to the overall welfare of young people and to the serious work required to find solutions to seemingly insurmountable problems and concerns. Most also believe that additional opportunities for communication between adults and young people and increased opportunities for young people to have input into decisions affecting their lives in our community are keys to opening the door to a better future for all of Lexington's citizens.

Differences of opinion regarding young people also exist. Some of these differences are along lines of age, while others reflect diverse values within our community. Areas of agreement and areas of difference are noted in the summary of responses to each of the questions in this year's *Speak Out* sessions. (See the back page for information about the full, detailed report.)

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### The Lexington Citizen Symposium

The members of the Citizen Symposium met four times to read and discuss current materials on youth development. During their lively, passionate discussions, participants discovered both differences and common areas of agreement. The issues on which the Symposium members agree are:

- Lexington must become united on the importance of youth issues.
- Lexington's adults and young people must continue the dialogue on youth issues.
- Lexington's citizens must emphasize strengths, stay hopeful, and keep their eyes on the big picture.

More details about these conclusions are included in the full *Speak Out* report.

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*Question 3: What are your major concerns about young people?*

The most frequent responses largely speak for themselves on this question, with concerns such as violence, drugs, boredom, and sex appearing as a litany in nearly all groups. Other

concerns, such as family life or preparation for the real world, illustrate some variation among different age groups.

Concern	Adults	Adults and Young People	Young People
Violence, guns, crime, gangs	24	26	44
Boredom/ lack of opportunities	20	16	31
Drugs, alcohol, smoking	21	22	32
Sex, teen pregnancy, abortion, STDs, AIDS	15	21	29
Family life	22	14	14
Overall school environment	14	15	13
Quality of education	18	11	13
Preparation for the “real world”	17	13	4
Peer pressure	10	12	12

*Question 4: What are your top three major concerns about young people?*

The concerns that received the most votes as groups’ most pressing concerns about young people were: gangs, violence, guns, and crime; drugs, alcohol, and smoking; education/school topics; not enough activities; and sex, teen pregnancy. These reflect both the similarities and differences among groups as noted above in Question 3.

*Question 5: Who are the most influential people in young people’s lives? (Optional Question)*

Although traditional influences such as parents and friends ranked high on the list of responses, the names of various celebrities -- actors and actresses, musicians, athletes, and models -- often appeared to be the first thing that popped into participants’ minds.

*Speak Out Lexington*  
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*Speak Out Lexington 1998*  
Vital Statistics

Total Meetings..... 90  
Total Participants ..... 1,339  
Average Participants per meeting ..... 15  
Total Group Leaders ..... 136

The full report of *Speak Out Lexington 1998*, which includes a complete tabulation of responses from all *Speak Out* sessions and a complete description of the Citizen Symposium conclusions, is available at no charge from Urban County Government. Call the Council Office, (606) 258-3200, or the Mayor's Office, (606) 258-3100. Mayor Pam Miller and the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Council sponsored *Speak Out Lexington 1998*. Roberts & Kay, Inc. served as consultants for the project.

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