

SIDEKICKS RETURNS TO THE CLASSROOM

Where Did Sidekicks Go?

Sidekicks is a program designed to support youth to hold respectful conversations with their peers about e-cigarette usage. For nearly 2 years, the District Tobacco Prevention Partners (DTPP) serving Cumberland County shifted their Sidekicks programming to distanced-learning. Partners were able to deliver tobacco education and resources on a virtual platform, but continued to notice that the level of student engagement wasn't quite the same as it was with in-person learning. In November 2021, Portland's DTPPs celebrated the completion of 3 in-person Sidekicks series at Greely Middle School.

The Comeback

At the beginning of the 2021 school year, our DTPPs began outreaching to school contacts who had regularly received tobacco education but expressed that the 2020-21 school year wasn't a good time or that virtual learning was causing too much burnout for students. Following the update that our team was available for in-person learning, Greely Middle School's health teacher reached out to resume E-Cigarette presentations and learn more about how the Sidekicks program might benefit their 6th grade students.

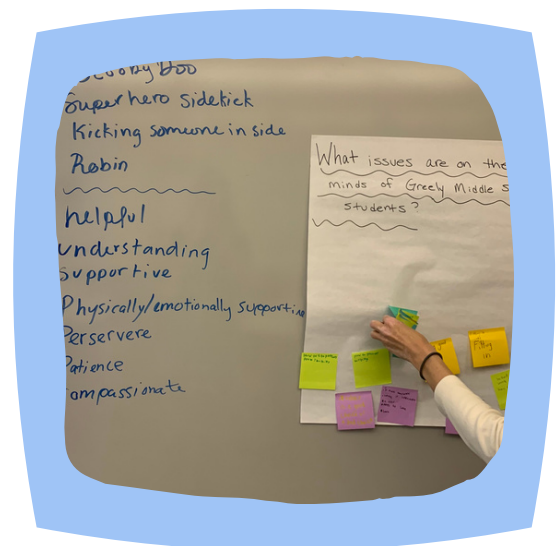
"I'm really excited about Sidekicks. I think that it is SO important to start the conversation around how to help and its an appropriate time for [students] to start hearing it."

-Greely Middle School Health Teacher

The Need for Sidekicks

According to the 2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey, more than 2 million U.S. youth currently use e-cigarettes and about 1 in 4 use e-cigarettes daily.

Education on tobacco products and their subsequent health impacts play an essential role in preventing initiation. Access to quitting resources and social supports systems are important in reducing and ending their usage.



How Did It Go?

Over a 2 week period, Portland's DTPPs delivered 1 E-Cigarette presentation and 3 Sidekicks sessions to each of Greely Middle School's 3 health classes. This reached approximately 40 students.

At the end of the program, Greely's health teacher and school counselor began discussions on bringing Sidekicks' message to students of all grades.



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