

Maine Tobacco Prevention Success Story: Student Engagement in New Tobacco/Vape-Free Policy

Summary:

The entire student body at the Watershed School, a private high school in Camden, helped finesse the language of its new tobacco- and vape-free policy at two all-school meetings. The Knox County Community Health Coalition assisted by providing a policy template, technical assistance and an ENDS presentation.

Challenges

In Knox County, 8.5% of high school students and 18% of adults have smoked and 27.4 % of students have vaped within the past 30 days. (2019 MIYHS; 2021 County Health Rankings and Roadmaps). Engaging youth in the crafting of a school tobacco- and vape-free policy enhances buy-in during the enforcement phase.



“We had a good meeting last week, and I have a proposed policy based on your documents. We are keeping it very simple, and all students agree with the basic language.”

--Will Galloway, Head of School

“The democratic nature of our school community develops skills leading to effective citizenship and leadership.”

--From their website at:

watershed-school.org/content/guiding-principles

Results/Success

Students at Watershed School, using template language, drafted a final version of a tobacco- and vape-free policy through lively discussions at two all-student meetings. The result was a concise, clear policy that all the students endorsed. The policy and an administrative procedures document were approved by administration as well.

When KCCHC offered the Watershed School a mini grant for updating its tobacco-free policy, the school immediately said yes, recognizing this was an opportunity to engage students in a democratic process to develop policies that impact their lives. Working with a model-level template, the entire student body worked to make the language its own. Students also participated in an ENDS presentation, asking insightful questions. Watershed School provides a rigorous academic program through innovative teaching and project-based learning. This policy development process fit well with their school culture.

For more information, contact:

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