

SPARK UP THE CONVERSATION

Poudre Think Tank Report

Spring 2018



**CENTER FOR
PUBLIC DELIBERATION**
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Key Summary of Findings

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About the Center

The Colorado State University Center for Public Deliberation (CPD) serves as an impartial resource to the northern Colorado community. Working with students trained in small group facilitation, the CPD assists local government, school boards, and community organizations by researching issues and developing useful background material, and then designs, facilitates, and reports on innovative public events. The interpretations and conclusions contained in this publication have been produced by CPD associates without the input of partner organizations to maintain impartiality.

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Executive Summary

What you really need to know

The Spark Up a Conversation project began with a request from Assistant Superintendent, Scott Nielsen. Nielsen asked Poudre Think Tank (PTT) to explore the issue of substance abuse among high school students in the Poudre School District (PSD). The PTT is a high school student advisory group that aims to provide insight to the district’s school board and administration. In the past, PTT has worked with the Center for Public Deliberation (CPD) to engage students in topics, such as bullying and mental health. With their experience in deliberation and their close relationship to their peers, the PTT was a perfect group to learn more about the prevalence of substance abuse in high school.

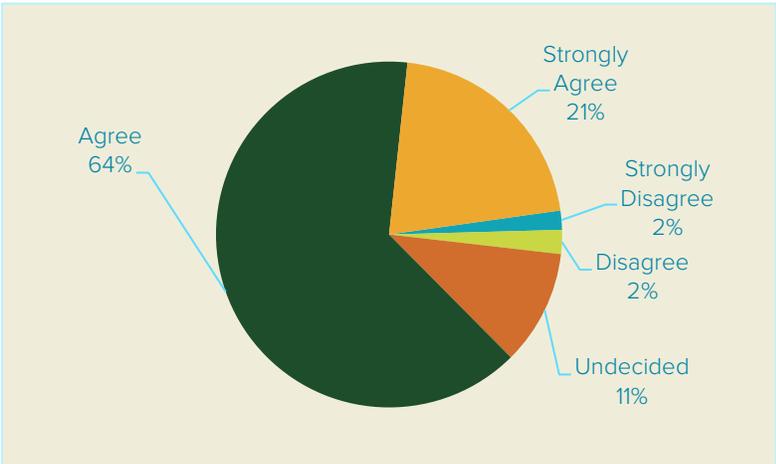
PTT and CPD students worked together to develop a forum on substance abuse. The forums took place at four high schools across Poudre School District, engaging 270 students in the conversation. In each forum, students were given a sheet that listed three approaches to “solve” the problem of substance abuse. The conversation allowed students to talk about substance abuse by considering potential actions related to:

- Keeping people safe
- Addressing conditions that foster substance abuse
- Upholding individual freedom

Issue of Substance Abuse

Following the forum, students were asked to complete an anonymous survey. From the survey results, we discovered that 85% of students agree that substance abuse is an important issue facing PSD. It is important for community members and the administration of PSD to delve into the findings and the potential solutions that were posed by the high school participants.

Substance abuse is an important issue facing Poudre School District.



Key Findings

The CPD conducted a visual analysis of the three action items each participant contributed. The findings listed below were the top ranked findings from the analysis. The majority of them are connected to educational initiatives.

Some of the key findings:

- **SPACE TO TALK** Students expressed greatly that they wanted a space in school to have open and honest conversations with people at all levels about substance abuse and use without the fear of facing punishment.
- **EXPLAIN THE EFFECTS** Rather than getting taught the moral case against using substances, students mentioned that they want to be educated on not only the long-term effects and associated risks but explain why people use substances in the first place and ways to use some substances in moderation.
- **PUNISHMENT** Some students supported the increase of punitive measures that were more consistent, standardized, and harsher. On the other hand, others advocated for the use of alternative forms of punishment rather than traditional forms of punishment, such as suspension.
- **EARLY ON** Students suggested that they want substance abuse education to begin at a different age as it is taught now, but the age at which students thought it should be varied.
- **USE VS. ABUSE** Students voiced their confusion around the differences between substance use and abuse. For this reason, they advocated for an education that clearly differentiates these two terms.

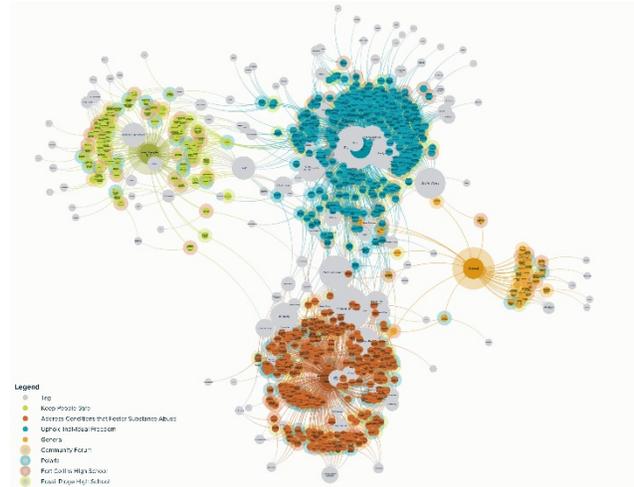


FIGURE 1- KUMU VISUAL ANALYSIS

Next Steps

Based on what was discussed during the forums, these are the recommendations that PSD students would like the district and community to consider:

1. Increasing the number of opportunities for students to talk about substance abuse with their peers, teachers, and counselors.
2. Consistently starting substance abuse education early on.
3. Moving away from an abstinence only curriculum and towards a use versus abuse approach.
4. Ensuring that education materials include the latest research about the immediate and long-term effects of substance use, especially for e-cigarettes.
5. Creating greater consistency in health curriculum across different teachers.
6. Utilizing consequences that promote rehabilitation.
7. Widely promoting resources for recovery that are available within the school and external community.

Evaluation

Based on what we learned from post-surveys and facilitator reflections, deliberation is an effective way of engaging high school students. From the post-survey, 36% of students indicated a strong probability that they would talk to another student about the conversation they had that day. If each person who indicated they were willing talked to at least one other student, this project potentially reached a total of 464 students.

METHODS.

Background

Just so you know how this all got started

In the fall of 2017, Assistant Superintendent Scott Nielsen requested that the Poudre Think Tank (PTT) explore the issue of substance abuse among high school students. The PTT is an advisory group of high school students. Their aim is to provide the school board and Poudre School District administration with insight into student issues and experiences. Additionally, they may advocate on behalf of the student body at various times.

Over the years, the Center for Public Deliberation (CPD) has worked with the Poudre Think Tank on a variety of similar issues. In conjunction with PTT students and their staff advisor, Elaine Holmes, we decided to engage students from various high schools in a deliberation on substance abuse. We identified two undergraduate students, Kaia Heer and Sabrina Duey, who would take the lead on designing the process and coordinating with the PTT.

To begin, we adapted a [National Issues Forum](#) (NIF) guide, [Over the Edge](#), to fit a local and high school context. NIF develops guides that help communities across the U.S. engage in deliberative discussions. They utilize a model that provides three approaches to an issue, rather than a pro-con framing that breeds debate over dialogue. Each approach includes information on potential tradeoffs and possible actions. PTT students helped to generate a new list of potential actions that would be specific to Poudre School District middle and high schools.

NIF guides also include background information on a given topic, so that those discussing have enough knowledge to adequately dive into the issue. An average NIF forum takes 90 minutes, but most high school classes could not afford the same amount of time. In order to abbreviate the process, we created an infographic with Colorado and Larimer-County based statistics (see Appendix I). The idea was that students could more easily reference an infographic throughout the discussion.

Once the materials were adapted, they were submitted to Student Support Services' Mental Health and Prevention Coordinator, Melanie Voegeli-Morris for review. She and her team provided valuable insight into additional actions that could be added to the three approaches. We did find out throughout this process that while there is some state and county level data, substance abuse information is particularly difficult to collect because of distrust among youth. For this reason, we did not incorporate PSD specific stats. During this review period, PTT also

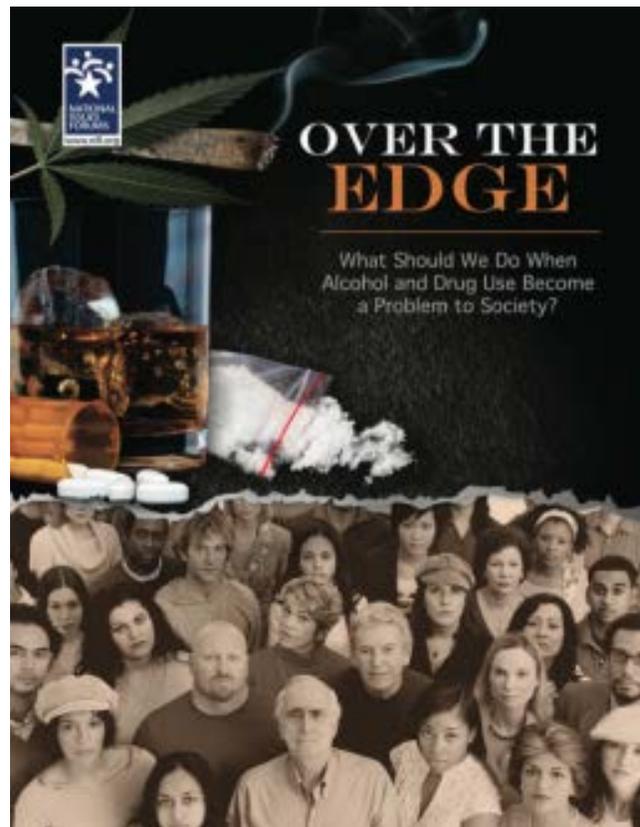


FIGURE 2 - NATIONAL ISSUES FORUM GUIDE

worked with leaders to determine required questions for each approach. Required questions were related to an area that leaders wanted specific information about.

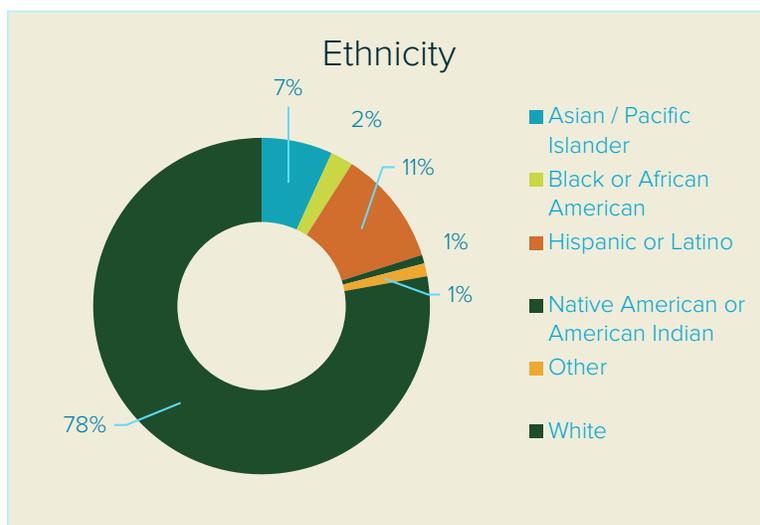
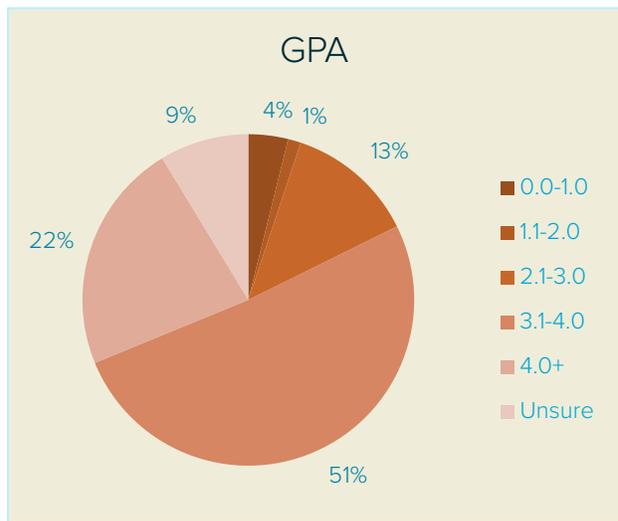
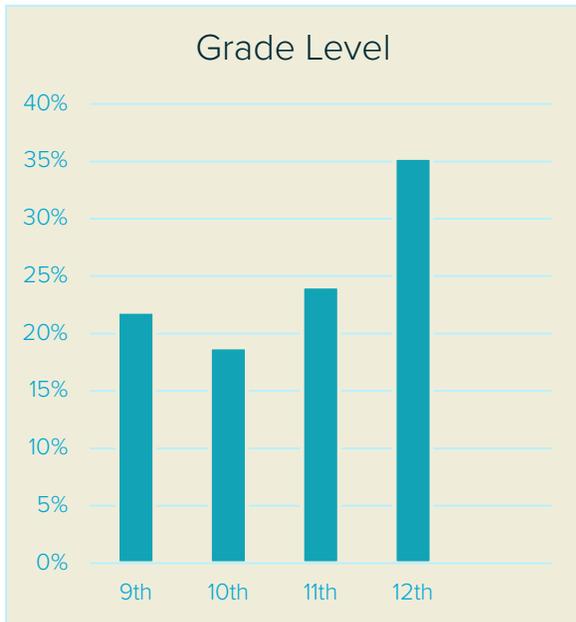
After the revisions were made, the PTT began contacting high school principals for permission to run the forums in various classes. Once the principals approved, students worked with teachers in the schools to coordinate forums. The courses solicited varied, but often had some connection to substance abuse, like health or psychology. Some classes were combined into a single session, so that we facilitated between 25-70 students each forum. CPD student associates facilitated the forums with the assistance of PTT students. For each CPD facilitator, there was a CPD or PTT note taker. In addition to the high school forums, the PTT selected to host to one community forum. Despite intensive recruitment efforts, participation in the community forum was low. This provided an opportunity for the PTT students to participate in a forum themselves while CPD students facilitated and took notes. The following methodology section details what occurred during each forum.



FIGURE 3 - FORUM INFOGRAPHIC

Who was in the room?

Each conversation had a facilitator and notetaker from the CPD and/or PTT. The facilitator worked with a group of 8-10 students. These were students from psychology, health, and current issues courses. Teachers, and in some cases counselors, were in the room, but were instructed to remain on the sides of classroom. This was done so that students could have space to talk. After the forum, students filled out a post-survey where the CPD collected key demographic information (see Appendix II).



What did people talk about?

Placemat

The following were the three approaches that were included on a one-page placemat for the students to review and discuss. Within the NIF model, the objective isn't to discuss each and then pick one option at the end. Rather, the objective is to consider each option and pull what you like from each approach. To view the full facilitation process, see Appendix III.

OPTION ONE

Keep People Safe

Our top priority must be to protect people from the dangers posed by substance abuse, according to this option. To keep people safe, we must tightly regulate and control the selling and use of alcohol and drugs, as well as impose penalties for people who break the rules.

Potential Actions

- Assume parental responsibility for at-home drinking parties.
- Increase monitoring of possible off-campus smoking areas.
- Develop methods for determining marijuana impairment.
- Further research the health effects of smoking alternatives (i.e. vape pens, Juuls, and e-cigarettes).
- Require all schools to share data related to drug/alcohol-related offenses.

Possible Drawbacks and Tradeoffs

This option takes too much of a “nanny state” approach and infringes on individual privacy and choice. Its focus on externally imposed rules discourages people and communities from coming up with their own solutions to the problems created by substance abuse. This option also tends to prioritize catching students, leaving fewer resources for treatment and recovery programs.

OPTION TWO

Address Conditions that Foster Substance Abuse

We must recognize the critical role society plays regarding how and why people use drugs and alcohol, according to this option. It is our shared responsibility to change the social, cultural, and economic conditions that foster widespread substance use and abuse.

Potential Actions

- Promote more after-school activities as alternatives to alcohol/drug use.
- Create a peer counseling program at each school.
- Provide tools to help students talk with friends who are using.
- Offer support resources for specific groups (Spanish-speaking, LGBTQ, low-income).
- Reduce the glamorization of substance use in media.
- Limit advertising of prescription drugs.

Possible Drawbacks and Tradeoffs

This option suggests that people bear little responsibility for their choices when it comes to using substances. It also requires too much time and too many resources to turn around school

climates when people need help now. This option invites too much government control over private businesses and could limit our access to products, such as media and prescription drugs.

OPTION THREE

Uphold Individual Freedom

We must respect people's freedom while offering them the means to act responsibly, according to this option. We must provide the information and accessible treatment options people need to make their own choices, as well as reform policies or laws that are unduly intrusive or unfair.

Potential Actions

- Expand education and harm-reduction efforts.
- Provide students with tools to make informed decisions, rather than abstinence-only education.
- Provide online/text-based resources for students seeking help anonymously.
- Offer alternatives to harsher penalties that encourage recovery (i.e. on-campus suspension, resiliency skills classes).
- Differentiate between substance use and abuse in health curriculum.

Possible Drawbacks and Tradeoffs

This option places too much confidence in the hope that people will use substances responsibly and increases the potential risk to others, especially among new drivers. Without serious consequences, people have little incentive to change their behavior. Also, this option hinges on government and industry to provide unbiased research into substances and their effects.

What information was collected?

Table Notes

The CPD assigned a trained student facilitator and notetaker to each table. Notetakers were asked to record summaries of each section of the conversation. These notes are not a transcript and do not reflect the conversation exactly as spoken. Notetakers, however, attempt to capture the main ideas within the discussion and record stories expressed by the participants. Notetakers did not capture any personal identifiers and let participants know that they're names would not be included.

Surveys

At the conclusion of the event, post-surveys were given to each participant to fill out. The post-survey collected information on the top three actions students should be taken in relation to substance abuse among youth in the district. They were also asked to evaluate the event and provide demographic information. They were not asked any information about use of illegal substances.

Following the forum, we took each of the responses to the first survey question regarding district actions. We coding these actions based on a few factors. First, they were grouped into the approaches they best aligned with. Then we coded them with between 1-3 tags. This allowed us to group the 645 actions submitted into various themes.

Notetaker and Facilitator Reflection

Following the event, notetakers and facilitators were asked to provide reflection notes on the topics of conversation at their table and how the conversation went. These notes can be used to connect table notes, key themes, and pull out ideas from the tables. They can also be used to improve the process going forward, by reflecting on how the conversation went.

KEY FINDINGS.

Key Findings

Making Sense of the Data

While there were a number of ways that we collected information from students, one of the primary pieces of data are the three action items that each student contributed to their post survey. They were given the following instruction: based on the discussion today, what are the top three actions Poudre School District staff, teachers, counselors, and/or students should take to address substance abuse. Each of these actions was then coded based on the approach it best fit within and assigned between one to three tags. Tags were keywords that would help us to cluster similar ideas. We created a visualization of these action items and their tags.

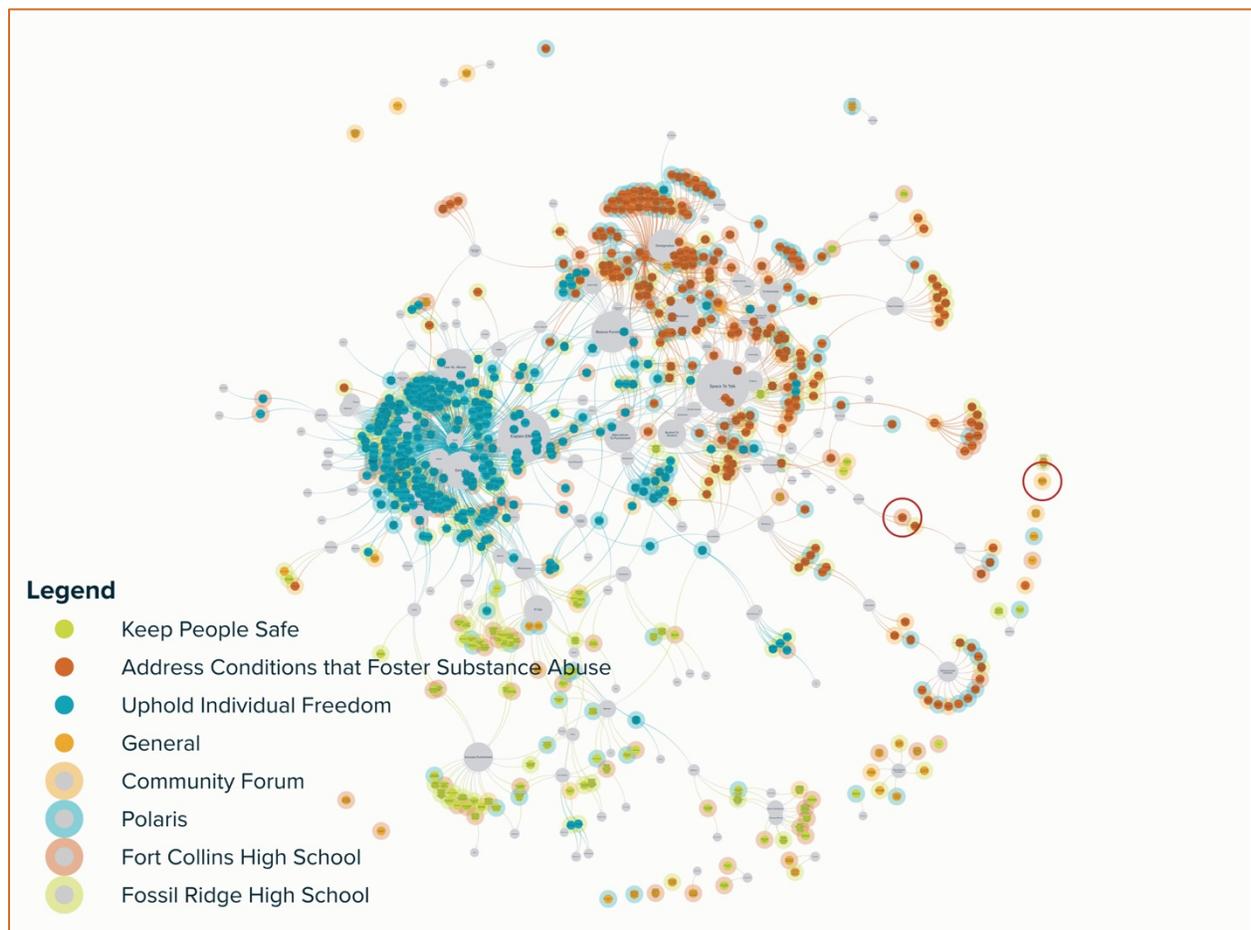


FIGURE 4 - KUMU VISUAL ANALYSIS

[View Data Visualization](#)

We conducted an analysis to find out which tags had the most connections to individual goals. The goals were weighted, depending on whether the student ranked the idea first, second, or third. The following are the top 25 tags. To see a full breakdown of tag connections, see Appendix IV.

Top 25 Tags

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Space to Talk (47) | 14. Effectiveness (14) |
| 2. Explain Effects (46) | 15. Extracurricular Activities (13) |
| 3. Reduce Punishment (34) | 16. Teacher to Student (13) |
| 4. Early On (31) | 17. Culture (13) |
| 5. Use Vs. Abuse (30) | 18. Harm (13) |
| 6. Destigmatize (26) | 19. Safe Use (13) |
| 7. Recovery (26) | 20. Seek Help (11) |
| 8. Alternatives to Punishment (25) | 21. Drug Counselor (11) |
| 9. Not Abstinence Only (24) | 22. Counseling (11) |
| 10. E-Cigs (21) | 23. Monitor (10) |
| 11. Student to Student (21) | 24. Personal Stories (10) |
| 12. Increase Punishment (19) | 25. Facts (10) |
| 13. Confidentiality (15) | |

Used alone, the tags can't tell the whole story. In the following findings, we use the tags to guide us, but combine them with learnings from the discussion notes.

Space to Talk

As the top-ranked tag, students were hungry to have open, honest conversations about substance use and abuse. They wanted these conversations to also be safe. Safety meant that students wouldn't be afraid of getting in trouble, had established trust with other participants in the conversation, and felt conversations were confidential.

“Create a system that promotes a positive, community-based culture.”

Space to talk was also closely linked with the tag, culture. Culture referred to the sense that one was a part of a larger community of people who would be open and willing to talk about substance abuse. This related to the idea that the school should feel connected in general. Culture included actors at a variety of levels, including students, teachers, counselors, administrators, and more. In this way, a culture shift would require multiple parties, rather than a top-down directive. In particular, there are three key themes that came up within this larger conversation.

Classroom/Teacher Conversations

“Have a stronger student/staff connection so we can talk.”

Some students saw the classroom as an important place to have conversations about substance abuse. They wanted more teachers to set up their classroom in such a way that students felt

comfortable talking about substance abuse. This could be personal experiences, but also issues that were related. For example, one student suggested, “Talk about glamorization in media with honest discussion and information.” During one conversation, students discussed the idea of having advisement periods be a place for these conversations. The one drawback was that not everyone feels connected to their advisement teacher or other students in the class.

Student Conversations

“Make a student group that allows kids to talk to each other.”

Some of the actions related to this tag were directed towards students themselves. Some students felt a responsibility to talk to their peers about substance use and abuse. Others, though, asked the schools to provide resources on how to talk to your friends about issues like this. During the course of the conversations, however, there was some push back on peer conversations. Some students expressed that they didn’t like this responsibility feeling pushed onto them. They felt like it pressured them to risk certain friendships by calling someone out.

It should be noted that peer conversations were different from peer counseling. While some students were advocates of having peer counseling at every school, there were also concerns. Some weren’t sure that the information shared with a peer counselor would be safe and kept confidential. Others saw peer counselors using the same substances they were supposed to advise against, which felt hypocritical.

Getting to “Why”

“Talk to the people with the addiction.”

Space to talk also referred to a different depth of conversation. When students were using, they wanted people to ask them for more questions, like “How did it happen?” to better understand the “why”. Throughout discussions, students talked about the multitude of reasons why people use substances, including:

- helicopter parents
- boredom
- peer pressure
- family conflict
- coping mechanism
- perception that peers are using

Students expressed a desire to be able to have these conversations, rather than just the resulting consequences.

Education

Within the Uphold Individual Freedom approach, students focused primarily on the educational components of this approach. While alternatives to punishment also comes highly ranked, there are a variety of key terms associated with education that are also highly ranked.

Explain Effects

“Education on not only the effects of substances but how to use them safely if necessary.”

When talking about the effects of substance use, students wanted education based in health and science frameworks, as opposed to a moral case against substances. This included a desire for information that could detail both the potential benefits and risks of various drugs. They expressed a desire to know the long-term impacts and the way different substances affected the physical body. Throughout this conversation there was a sense that students didn't feel like they were always getting “real” information or research. Some extended this to wanting to information about how to use substances safely if students are going to engage in use now or later on in life.

This tag was closely linked with another tag: harm. There's a subset of actions that focus particularly on explaining the specific risks and potential harm of substances to students. Students in this group talked about the need for students to know the consequences.

Early On

“More education about the topic from a younger age. But not a scare tactic, useful information.”

Students who advocated for education early on varied in their sense of what early on meant. For some this meant a specific grade level, ranging from 6th to 9th grade. Some emphasized that this education should begin when students are most impressionable, while others advocated for when substance abuse begins.

One of the required questions facilitators asked was around students' experience of middle school substance abuse education. Oftentimes, students could not remember their middle school education. When they could remember it, they often described getting the message that drugs were bad. They said that they didn't gain enough specific information about substances, including their side effects and long term impacts. Despite the lack of positive feedback on middle school substance abuse education, students did advocate for increased education that starts early on. There was a mixed sense of what would be more effective. Some expressed a sense that students are beginning to use substances at an earlier and earlier age. In response, they advocated for health education that included more information and frank discussions. Others disagreed. They perceived a lack of substance abuse occurring throughout middle school. As a result, they didn't want health teachers telling them too much, too soon for fear that they would start using as a result.

Use vs. Abuse

"When we use the word abuse, it suggests a right and wrong. There are people who use and can handle it and others who can't and end up affecting others."

When students encountered education that didn't differentiate between use and abuse, they felt that the education was unrealistic. Some provided personal experience of friends or family who they have seen simply use versus others who abuse. Based on that experience, they wanted education that reflected both. This could include something like knowing what counts as moderate or casual drinking versus how to know when it becomes a problem. During the course of conversation, students contributed their own definitions for use versus abuse. For example, one student said, "If you need it to function (other than medical uses) than it's abuse/addiction." Generally, students said that if a substance was impairing your ability to do the things you normally do, it counts as abuse. Oftentimes students did not differentiate what use and abuse looked like across different substances. This is an area for further exploration. For example, a substance like methamphetamine would not have a differentiation between use and abuse, but many adults partake in alcohol use at a moderate level.

Not Abstinence Only

“We are only taught not to do drugs, so when we do we don't know how to be safe. TEACH IT LIKE SEX.”

A movement away from abstinence only education came from a sense that students were informed as to how to use substances safely. They wanted to know the pros and cons of using drugs. This could include answering questions like, "Why do people choose to do drugs," or, "How does it make them feel?" They felt that these types of conversations, coupled with the negative effects, would be more effective.

Those who advocated for this shift felt that abstinence was an unrealistic goal. They described an abstinence approach as biased that utilized shame to impact results. Some voiced that teaching in this manner makes a student want to rebel against it.

Types of Evidence

Throughout the conversation on education, there were various threads on the types of evidence students found convincing. Some students advocated for personal stories. They wanted real-life, local, young people to talk with them about their own experiences and share stories of rehabilitation. Others advocated for facts, but didn't tend to elaborate on the kinds of information they found credible. Rather, they talked about the kind of moral arguments that they saw as biased. There were others though, who advocated for scare tactics as a type of evidence in the classroom.

“It seems to me that no effort short of taking immensely large amounts of time out of class to horrify and bias students against the idea of drug use would have much effect on the rate of it in our community. Even then, abolition seems unlikely.”

Punishment

In regards to punishment, there's a distinct split in opinion between students. While the tag Decrease Punishment (34) is ranked at number three, there also a significant number of actions connected to tag Increase Punishment (19). Increase Punishment is also the highest ranked tag

connected to the Keep People Safe approach. This may be a conversation that's more nuanced depending on the substance in question. This is, however, what we can learn generally from advocates of each type of action.

Decrease Punishment

“Don't just give us suspension, because we will just go do it outside of school.”

Discussion of decreasing punishment was closely linked to alternatives to punishment. Rather than simply removing various consequences, most advocates wanted to see consequences better linked to rehabilitation. This could include mandatory education programs, support groups, or individualized consequences based on the specific offense. Some students also advocated for more after school activities, while others said that those would not be effective. In particular, students wanted to see less punishments that were linked to taking away time in class, like suspension.

Increase Punishment

“Help crack down on these students with possible jail time for them.”

Those in favor of increasing punishment talked about developing consequences that were more consistent, standardized, and harsher. Harsher included mentions of expulsion and jail time. In some cases, students reasoned that harsher consequences would lead to greater deterrence. Others specifically referenced offenses that were on campus and the need to draw a harder line in regard to these offenses. There's a sense that these instances become school-lore about the ones who got away with it. One student wrote, “Increased discipline for near-school use (apparently Mr. 1/2 lb didn't get expelled).”

Effectiveness

Tied to punishment in general is the idea of effectiveness. Students advocated that PSD provide, “better ways to help people,” “more useful education,” “rework(ed) punishments.” Although looking at the way that students talk about punishment doesn't provide us with a definitive direction, their related conversation helps us to better understand what they mean by “better.” In both cases, students want punishment to be directly tied to reducing substance abuse. In some cases, students believe that substance abuse has larger causes and can't be solved through consequences alone. Others believe that consequences send students a clear warning that helps deter the behavior from beginning, which will help everyone stay safe.

Parents

The vast majority of actions related to punishment had to do with school or legal consequences. Overall, there was a lack of clarity in how students saw the role of parents. This could include consequences from parents, parental responsibility, and informing parents. For example, some students advocated that parents shouldn't be held responsible for at-home drinking parties because the young people would be safer using if they had parent supervision. Other times, students said that holding them responsible could be an important way of deterring use, because

parents wouldn't want to take the fall for their kids' friends. Similarly informing parents could help to reinforce the school's consequences, but it could also make it worse for students who use substances because of issues at-home. In general, this raises the issue of incorporating parents into the solution when students' experiences at home can be widely varied.

Resources for Recovery

“Each person is an individual, and I think some people have struggled their entire life with these issues because their family or friends drag them into it, but an alcoholic only stops drinking when he decides to.”

One of the major barriers that students identified was the risk involved in seeking help. Students expressed a fear that when struggling with substances, they were more likely to get punished than provided support. Many students talked about Safe2Tell as a resource, but they did not want to utilize it because of the fear that they would get in trouble for reporting things, and the punishments that the person they reported would face. Others voiced that it is not taken seriously, and others said it is used as a "snitch tool" and does not help those that are reported. There was a common concern that people are not going to get better if they do not seek help. They also wondered, however, how to help those students who don't necessarily want to be helped or don't know that they need help.

Students wanted to have easy-to-access resources both in and out of school. They wanted these resources to be well-advertised, so that students were aware of them. In particular, some students talked about providing specific resources to those who were at-risk and/or students who were in the minority in regards to identity.

Destigmatize

“Don't treat users like monsters.”

Some of the conversation around destigmatizing was around making sure students felt safe asking for help. There was much more, however, about the experience students had in substance abuse education. Students reported that education focusing on a moral justification places shame and blame on users. This was a problem, they said, because of external factors that led to substance abuse, like a family history of substance use. Some students even called substance users “victims.” Instead, students suggested things like sending the message that substance abuse can happen to anyone.

Counseling

In terms of counseling, students wanted:

- Increased confidentiality
- Option to choose one's counselor
- Increased availability of counselors
- Multiple counselors per school
- Counseling options outside of school

- Qualified therapists

Research

E-Cigarettes

“Further research effects of smoking alternatives. Vaping is pathetic.”

Out of the range of substances, e-cigs came up the most frequently in students’ action items. Part of this was students noticing the prevalence of e-cigs, juuls, and vape pens within their own schools. Sometimes this was a result of students seeing the different policies schools enacted to try and prevent it, like shutting down bathrooms where students were smoking. In response, students wanted more information about the health effects of e-cigs. Some students talked about a perception that e-cigs were harmless and a safe alternative to smoking. They wanted there to be support for further research in this area as well as providing new research to students in classes. There was a sense that if people knew as much about e-cigs as we now know about cigarettes, this would be an effective deterrent. Alternatively, some students also suggested increasing monitoring and placing taxes on e-cigs as other ways of addressing the issue.

NEXT STEPS.

Next Steps

Call to Action

“Realize that your real life students are affected. This affects our community. It's a real issue.”

Students didn't just contribute actions that could be taken in each school. There were a set of actions about what should happen next. Students said things like, “Be in touch with the students and grasp an understanding of what's really going on in schools,” and, “Come to the school and see how bad it is, don't be oblivious to it.” These statements show how important it is for action to be taken because of these conversations. After participating in the forums, they want to see change occur among their teachers, counselors, administrators, parents, and school board.

In particular, student conversations advocated that the larger Poudre School District community should consider the following:

1. Increasing the number of opportunities for students to talk about substance abuse with their peers, teachers, and counselors.
2. Consistently starting substance abuse education early on.
3. Moving away from an abstinence only curriculum and towards a use versus abuse approach.
4. Ensuring that education materials include the latest research about the immediate and long-term effects of substance use, especially for e-cigarettes.
5. Creating greater consistency in health curriculum across different teachers.
6. Utilizing consequences that promote rehabilitation.
7. Widely promoting resources for recovery that are available within the school and external community.

Continuing the Conversation

These are the seven actions with the most wide-felt support from students. Other areas still need more exploration. For example, students expressed mixed opinions in areas like:

- The role of parents
- Appropriate education for each grade level
- The impact of extracurricular activities
- Legal consequences

For this reason, we encourage community members to continue the conversation. This can include reading the report before engaging in a discussion at a PTA, staff, or school board meeting. It could also include sitting down with your family, book club, or co-workers to talk through the placemat.

EVALUATION.

Evaluation

Our Research

As a part of a research university, the Center for Public Deliberation uses each forum as an opportunity to study and improve the ways we do public engagement. After each forum, we have participants fill out a survey using measures developed by Knobloch et al. (2013). To see the complete post-survey, reference Appendix II.

By asking these questions, the CPD better understands various factors that influence collaborative decision-making. This could be how well the facilitator handles a given topic or conversation. It can also be how well a process helps people to learn about an issue, so that they can make informed decisions.

Key Learnings

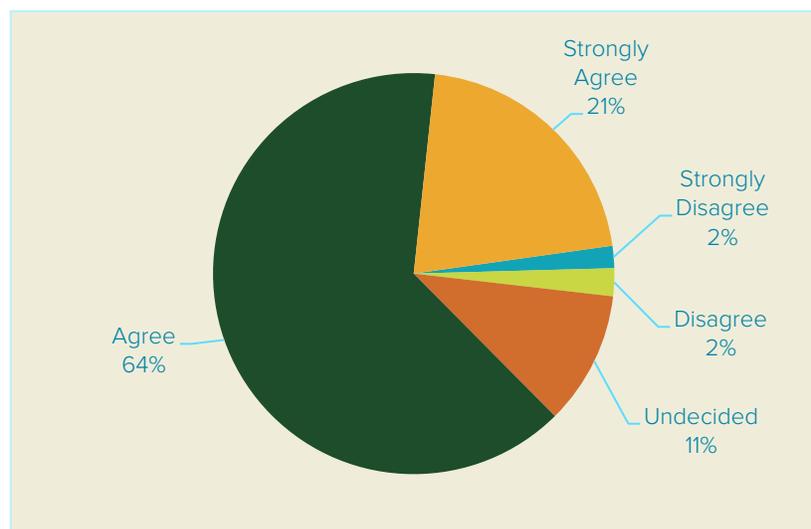
Learning

One of the claims of the deliberative theorists is that through the process of weighing different perspectives, participants learn more about a topic. This, however, goes hand-in-hand with the idea that high-quality deliberation requires good information. To this end, we provided each student with an infographic that contained key Colorado-based substance abuse information (see Appendix I). This was intended to primarily give students a sense of the scope of the issue, but it did also include a few facts related to intervention strategies and current policies.

We did not include a pre- and post-assessment of subject knowledge for brevity. By reviewing facilitator reflections, however, we found that facilitators perceived students to have limited to moderate knowledge of the subject. This was especially true when it came to knowledge of Poudre School District's current policies and the legal consequences related to substance use and possession.

While we wanted to be mindful of class time by including an infographic rather a full reading, we may have been mistaken. To ensure that students are prepared to engage in discussion of a complex topic, it may be

Substance Abuse is an important issue facing Poudre School District.



valuable to provide teachers with a recommended reading assignment, lesson plan, and/or assessment ahead of time. Another approach could include Student Support Services, school counselors, police officers, and/or SROs giving a presentation to students to give them context on different policies.

Opinion Change

One of the benefits of deliberation is the ability to hear different perspectives and consider various opinions. Working through these positions will ideally help participants arrive to a more nuanced decision, rather than the one they carried into the conversation. We found that opinion change occurred in 83% of participants, but the majority of participants said their opinions only changed somewhat. One of the reasons why opinion change may not be substantial is because of the homogeneity of the group. While students would be able to hear from other students of varying opinions, they were not able to hear from teachers, parents, administrators, etc. When groups are too similar, there can be a tendency for groupthink to occur. In future forums, we should consider how to incorporate multiple perspectives, while also creating a safe space for students to speak.

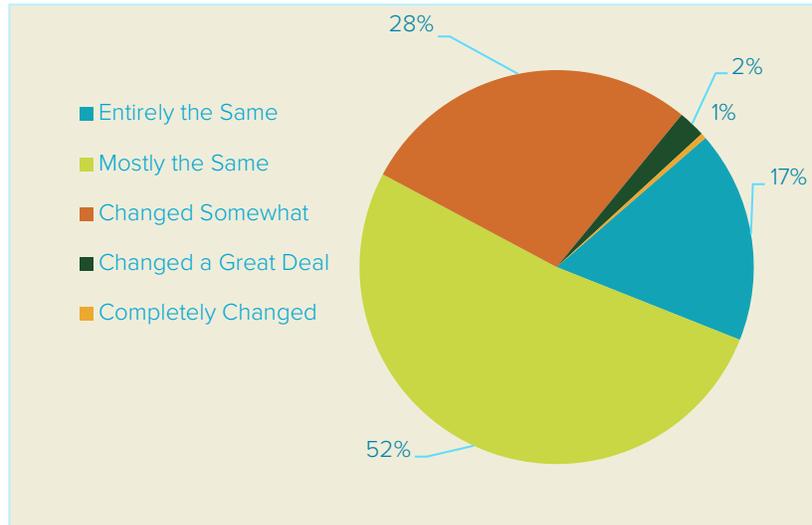
Reach

At the outset, we knew it would be impossible to engage every PSD high school student in the conversation. We wondered, however, if students would be willing to share their learnings and extend the impact of the deliberation. Only 23% of students indicated that they were unlikely to talk to another student about the conversation they had that day. If the 36% of students who indicated a strong probability of doing so ended up talking to at least one other student, the reach would be another XX students.

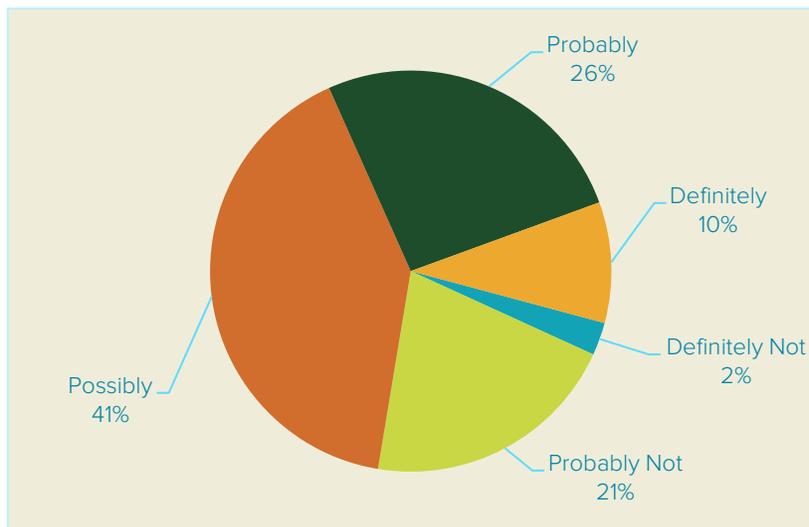
Action

Lastly, we wanted to see how participating in the forum would affect students' self-efficacy when it came to addressing substance abuse. Would they feel more empowered to take action because of considering the larger problem and potential solutions? 1 in 3 students were more motivated to action in their own life and their community following the discussion. To understand this number, we would need to compare it to an evaluation of self-efficacy after a traditional health class. We do see, however, some willingness to take action on the part of students. This percentage may increase as the stakes of the conversation increase. For example, if students knew that at least their school principal would adopt one of their actions, they may feel a greater sense of shared responsibility. Not knowing exactly how their input would be used may have decreased their willingness to take action as an individual.

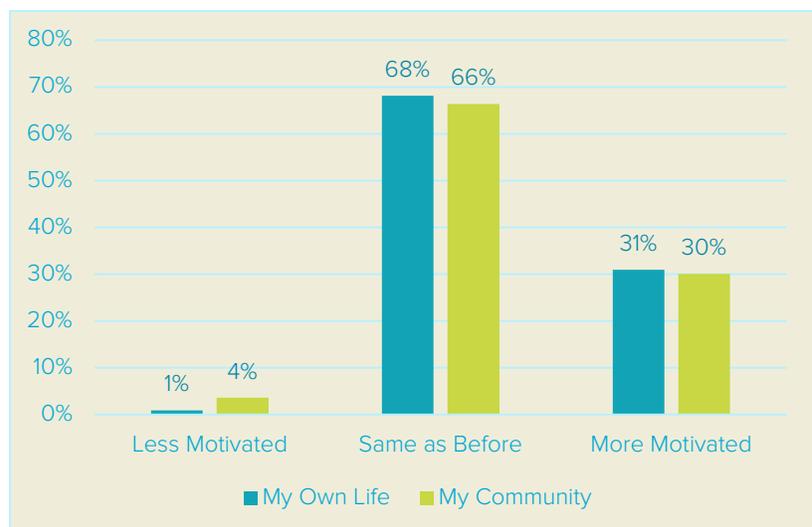
Did you change your opinion because of the discussion, or are your views mostly the same?



How likely are you to talk to another student about the discussion you had today?



After our discussions today, do you feel more or less capable of taking action to reduce or prevent substance abuse in your own life and community?



ENDNOTES

1. Ryfe, D. M. & Stalsburg, B. (2012). Democracy in motion: Evaluation the practice and impact of deliberative civic engagement. Nabatchi, T., Gastil, J., Weiksner, G. M., & Leighninger, M. (Eds.) New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
2. Abdel-Moneem, T., Bingham, S., Marincic, J., Tomkins, A. (2010). Deliberation and diversity:perceptions of small group discussions by race and ethnicity. *Small Group Research*, 41, 746-776. doi: 10.1177/1046496410377359
3. Toosi, N. R., Sommers, S. R., Ambady, N. (2012). Getting a word in group-wise: Effects of racial diversity on gender dynamics. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48, 1150-1155. doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2012.04.015
4. Karpowitz, C. F. & Raphael, C. (2014). *Deliberation, democracy, and civic forums: Improving equality and publicity*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
5. Fung, A., Young, I. M., Mansbridge, J. (2004). Deliberation's darker side: Six questions for Iris Marion Young and Jane Mansbridge. *National Civic Review*, 47-54.

APPENDIX

Appendix I

Forum Infographic

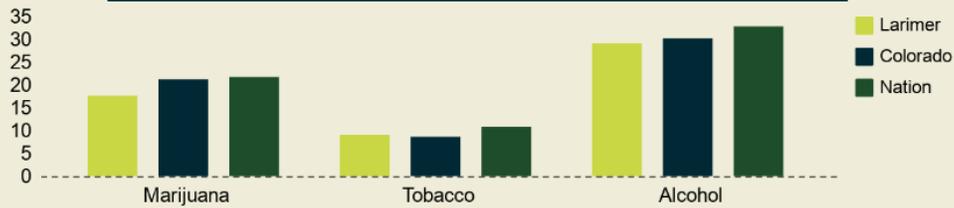
PSD

SPARK THE CONVERSATION

THE ISSUE

More than two-thirds of Americans are taking at least one prescription drug, and more than half drink alcohol on a regular basis. These habit-forming substances can cause serious problems with health, jobs, relationships, and the law. During this conversation, we'll focus on how to address substance abuse before it takes over. As a community, how can we help Colorado's youth avoid the negative impacts of substance abuse?

Avg. CO Youth Substance Abuse in Past 30 Days



PREVENTION



Youth who agree that teachers care and encourage them are **2x LESS** likely to misuse prescription drugs



Youth who can ask a parent, guardian, or other adult for help are **1.5x LESS** likely to binge drink

ALCOHOL ABUSE

Binge drinking refers to consuming 5 or more drinks per occasion for males and 4 or more drinks for females.

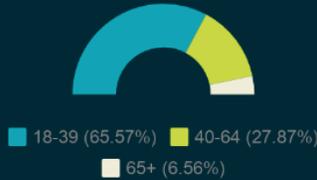
According to the Larimer County Health District's 2016 Community Health Survey, 25% of Larimer County adults reported binge drinking in the past month.

Binge Drinking By

Gender



Age

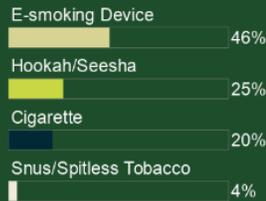


Income



SUBSTANCE USE

Tobacco Products Ever Used by CO Youth



Vape pens were invented in

But the Federal Drug Administration didn't start regulating them until

Which means we have limited research on their risks and impacts on health.

2003
2016



In 2016, the City of Fort Collins expanded its no smoking policies. Smoking is prohibited:

- Downtown Fort Collins, including Old Town Square
- All City facilities and their grounds
- All City parks, trails, and natural areas
- Most City-approved events and festivals

TOBACCO USE

Nicotine can cause adolescent brain damage that continues into the mid-20s.

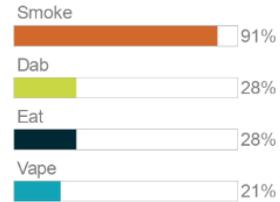
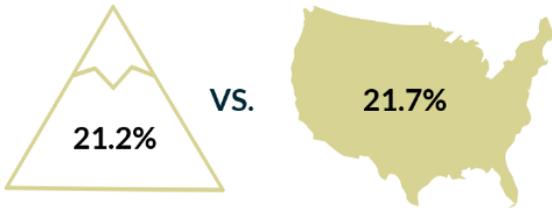
E-cigarettes can contain nicotine, flavoring such as dactyl, cancer-causing compounds, and heavy metals like nickel and lead.



MARIJUANA USE

How Youth Use Marijuana in CO

Marijuana Use in Youth CO vs. Nat'l

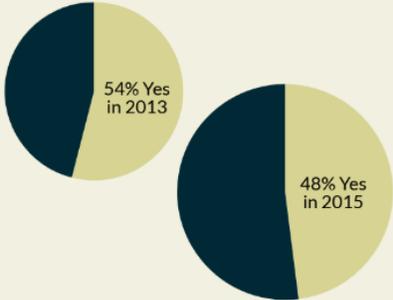


MARIJUANA RISK

Is Marijuana risky to Colorado students?

Compared to those that have never used marijuana, recent Larimer County marijuana users (past year), were more likely to:

- not have sufficient sleep
- currently report depression, anxiety, or another mental health problem
- report binge drinking in the past 30 days
- have experienced pain most or every day



125
Marijuana-involved traffic fatalities occurred during 2016 in Colorado

1. "Substance Use Among Youth in Colorado." Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, 2015, healthykidscolo.org. 2. "Marijuana Use Among Youth in Colorado." Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, 2015, healthykidscolo.org. 3. "Tobacco Use Among Youth in Colorado." Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, 2015. 4. "Electronic Cigarettes." CDC, 6 Nov. 2017, https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm. 5. United States, US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General. "E-cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults." Government Printing Office, 2016. 5. "Community Health Survey." Health District of Northern Larimer County, 2016.

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Appendix II

Post Survey

1. PTT Based on the discussion today, what are the top 3 actions Poudre School District staff, teachers, counselors, and/or students should take to address substance abuse.

Action #1

Action #2

Action #3

2. Substance abuse is an important issue facing Poudre School District students.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
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3. How likely are you to talk to another student about the discussion you had today?

Definitely Not	Probably Not	Possibly	Probably	Definitely
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4. Did you change your opinion because of the discussion, or are your views mostly the same?

My views are entirely the same as before	My views are mostly the same as before	My views changed somewhat	My views changed a great deal	My views completely changed
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5. After our discussions today, are you more or less motivated to take actions to reduce or prevent substance abuse in your own life.

I am less motivated to act than before	I am the same as before	I am more motivated to act than before
--	-------------------------	--

6. After our discussions today, do you feel more or less capable of taking action to reduce or prevent substance abuse in your community?

I am less motivated to act than before

I am the same as before

I am more motivated to act than before

What grade level are you in?

- 9th
- 10th
- 11th
- 12th

7. My grade level is between:

- 0.0-1.0
- 1.1-2.0
- 2.1-3.0
- 3.1-4.0
- 4.0+
- Unsure

8. I identify my gender as:

- Man
- Woman
- Trans*
- Fill in the blank _____

9. Which category best describes you?

- White
- Hispanic, Latino
- Black or African American
- Asian
- American Indian
- Middle Eastern
- Native Hawaiian
- Other

Appendix III

Facilitation Process

DISCUSSION	PURPOSE	ACTIVITY
Introduction	Inform participants about the purpose and outcomes of the forum.	The CPD leads, Kaia and Sabrina, began each forum. They introduced the Center for Public Deliberation by explaining what the organization is, what we do, and why we are here. They then continued by introducing the PSD Think Tank, and what participants can expect from data gathered at this event. They explained that anything said during the forum is confidential. The note takers would not capture any information that lets someone know who said what during the forum.
Ground Rules	Provide an environment where students feel comfortable participating.	CPD leads set and introduced the ground rules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to understand. • Leave the stories here, but take what you have learned. • Be respectful. • Agree to disagree, but with curiosity, not hostility. • Be brief to allow everyone a chance to participate. • Put away electronic devices. • Speak at a moderate volume.
Share Personal Notecards	Provide a personal connection to the topic.	PTT staff advisor, Elaine Holmes, collected personal notecards during her psychology courses. She asked students to write down how their life had been impacted by substance abuse. A selection of these anonymous note cards were read at the beginning of each forum. read the note cards written by high school students that Elaine has collected in an effort to help participants connect to the issue personally before discussing the three approaches.
Table Introductions	To provide each participant an initial opportunity to speak	Facilitators asked participants to go around and each take a turn answering one of the following questions:

DISCUSSION	PURPOSE	ACTIVITY
	and get comfortable participating.	<p>“What is the most important component of substance abuse that you want the school to focus on?”</p> <p>“When you think of preventing substance abuse - what comes to mind?”</p> <p>“What is the most ineffective strategy that you have been or encountered around substance abuse?”</p>
Option One – Keep People Safe Discussion	Deliberate on the benefits and drawbacks of option one.	<p>Before beginning to facilitating, the facilitators gave the participants about 2-3 minutes to read over the placemat.</p> <p>Below there are required, general, and specific questions. Facilitators needed to ask the required questions at some point in the discussion, but it did not matter when. The general and specific questions did not need all need to be asked. They were there as a resource and could be used if needed.</p> <p>Required Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While marijuana is legal in Colorado, it is not legal to drive while impaired or use under marijuana the age of 21. Does marijuana pose a safety risk? Should we impose harsher penalties on teens who break the rules regarding marijuana? <p>General Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some initial reactions about this approach? • What do we think about this approach? Likes? Dislikes? • What are the actions steps that we need to take within this approach? • What would be the consequences of doing what this approach is suggesting? Positives? • What are some values that you can pull from this approach? • In what ways is this approach focused on accomplishing short term goals? What about long term? • What tradeoff do you struggle with the most?

DISCUSSION	PURPOSE	ACTIVITY
		<p>Specific Questions Around Approach 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What grade level should this approach focus on? Why? • This approach discusses imposing penalties - do you think there are enough penalties currently in place, or not enough? • Do students know about current penalties in place for the district? Are they effective? Why or why not? • A potential action is to further research into smoking alternatives. What are your reactions about this option? • This approach tends to focus more on punishment, what is your opinion about that? Is that the correct approach to take with youth? Why or why not?
<p>Option Two – Address Conditions that Foster Substance Abuse Discussion</p>	<p>Deliberate on the benefits and drawbacks of option two.</p>	<p>Required Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the reasons why high school students want to drink, smoke, or get high? <p>General Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some initial reactions about this approach? • What do we think about this approach? Likes? Dislikes? • What are the actions steps that we need to take within this approach? • What would be the consequences of doing what this approach is suggesting? Positives? • What are the underlying values of this approach? • In what ways is this approach focused on accomplishing short term goals? What about long term? • What tradeoff do you struggle with the most? <p>Specific Questions about Approach 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One potential action is to provide more after school activities to dissuade students from using substances, do you think students will take hold of these resources? Why or why not?

DISCUSSION	PURPOSE	ACTIVITY
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your thoughts about implementing more after school activities? • This approach is focusing on talking more about the issue, what are some positives and negatives about this decision? • Would further discussion around substance abuse help or hinder those who are suffering from addictions to substances? • What are some ways to de-glamorize substances in the media? • Who or whom does this approach give responsibility to change substance abuse?
<p>Option Three – Uphold Individual Freedom Discussion</p>	<p>Deliberate on the benefits and drawbacks of option three.</p>	<p>Required Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective was your middle school education on substance abuse? How has it impacted the choices you have made since then? <p>General Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some initial reactions about this approach? • What do we think about this approach? Likes? Dislikes? • What are the action steps that we need to take within this approach? • What would be the consequences of doing what this approach is suggesting? Positives? • What are the underlying values of this approach? • In what ways is this approach focused on accomplishing short term goals? What about long term? • What tradeoff do you struggle with the most? <p>Specific Questions about Approach 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This approach gives more freedom to the students, do you think students will respond positively to this approach or will they abuse this freedom? • Alternatives to harsh punishments include on-campus suspension and resiliency skills classes, what are your opinions about these

DISCUSSION

PURPOSE

ACTIVITY

		<p>alternatives? Why do you like them or why not?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A potential action is differentiation between use and abuse. What do you think this differentiation is? Should information be offered on both? • People in high school are new drivers with less experience than other drivers. Do you agree or disagree that this approach provides them with too much freedom while driving? • A tradeoff states that without serious consequences, there is little motivation for change, do you think that this is true for young people? Why or why not?
Conclusion	<p>The purpose of the conclusion is not to pick one approach, but rather, is a time to reflect about the various approaches.</p>	<p>Facilitator Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think is the most important thing for the school districts to do? • If you could pick and choose options from each approach, what components of each approach would you choose? • What do we see as the tension between the approaches? • Based on everything you said and heard today, what are the most important things about the issue of substance abuse you want the school and district to know?

Appendix IV

Tags Ranked by Degree

Rank	Tag	Value
#1	<u>Space To Talk</u>	47
#2	<u>Explain Effects</u>	46
#3	<u>Reduce Punishment</u>	34
#4	<u>Early On</u>	31
#5	<u>Use Vs. Abuse</u>	30
#6	<u>Destigmatize</u>	26
#7	<u>Recovery</u>	26
#8	<u>Alternatives To Punishment</u>	25
#9	<u>Not Abstinence Only</u>	24
#10	<u>Increase Punishment</u>	22
#11	<u>E-Cigs</u>	21
#12	<u>Student To Student</u>	21
#13	<u>Confidentiality</u>	15
#14	<u>Effectiveness</u>	14
#15	<u>Extracurricular Activities</u>	13
#16	<u>Teacher To Student</u>	13
#17	<u>Culture</u>	13
#18	<u>Harm</u>	13
#19	<u>Safe Use</u>	13
#20	<u>Seek Help</u>	11
#21	<u>Drug Counselor</u>	11

#22	<u>Counseling</u>	11
#23	<u>Monitor</u>	10
#24	<u>Personal Stories</u>	10
#25	<u>Facts</u>	10
#26	<u>Awareness</u>	10
#27	<u>Tools For Conversation</u>	10
#28	<u>Detect Substances</u>	9
#29	<u>Addictss</u>	9
#30	<u>Community</u>	9
#31	<u>Resiliency</u>	9
#32	<u>Health</u>	8
#33	<u>Identify Causes</u>	8
#34	<u>Harm-Reduction</u>	8
#35	<u>Punishment</u>	8
#36	<u>Options</u>	8
#37	<u>Training Officers</u>	7
#38	<u>Avoid Scare Tactics</u>	7
#39	<u>On Campus</u>	7
#40	<u>Utilize Student Feedback</u>	7
#41	<u>Support Groups</u>	7
#42	<u>Individual Freedom</u>	6
#43	<u>Accountability</u>	6
#44	<u>Rehabilitation</u>	6
#45	<u>Policy</u>	6

#46	<u>New Substances</u>	6
#47	<u>Health Class</u>	6
#48	<u>Safety</u>	6
#49	<u>External To School</u>	5
#50	<u>Online Resources</u>	5
#51	<u>Anonymous</u>	5
#52	<u>Reduce Judgement</u>	5
#53	<u>Individualize Support</u>	5
#54	<u>At Risk Students</u>	5
#55	<u>Alternatives To Drugs</u>	5
#56	<u>Training Teachers</u>	5
#57	<u>Stress Relief</u>	5
#58	<u>Training Counselors</u>	4
#59	<u>Marijuana</u>	4
#60	<u>Long-Term</u>	4
#61	<u>Mental Health</u>	4
#62	<u>Strikes</u>	4
#63	<u>Continuing Education</u>	4
#64	<u>Benefits And Drawbacks</u>	3
#65	<u>Offenders</u>	3
#66	<u>Alcohol</u>	3
#67	<u>Use Scare Tactics</u>	3
#68	<u>Parent Support</u>	3
#69	<u>Peer Counseling</u>	3

#70	<u>Prevention</u>	3
#71	<u>Alternative Punishments</u>	3
#72	<u>Increase Sros</u>	2
#73	<u>Confiscate Paraphernalia</u>	2
#74	<u>Bathrooms</u>	2
#75	<u>Less Monitoring</u>	2
#76	<u>Strategic Goal</u>	2
#77	<u>Smoking</u>	2
#78	<u>Parents</u>	2
#79	<u>Technology</u>	2
#80	<u>Accessible</u>	2
#81	<u>Honesty</u>	2
#82	<u>Substances</u>	2
#83	<u>Classroom</u>	2
#84	<u>Possession</u>	2
#85	<u>Informed Decisions</u>	2
#86	<u>Data Sharing</u>	2
#87	<u>Empathy</u>	2
#88	<u>Reach Out</u>	1
#89	<u>Text</u>	1
#90	<u>Genetics</u>	1
#91	<u>Peers</u>	1
#92	<u>In-Depth Dialogue</u>	1
#93	<u>Enforcement</u>	1

#94	<u>Required</u>	1
#95	<u>Short-Term</u>	1
#96	<u>Legal</u>	1
#97	<u>Risks</u>	1
#98	<u>Addicts</u>	1
#99	<u>Police</u>	1
#100	<u>Public Announcements</u>	1