

Don't Blow It

Vaping Education Curriculum & Resources for
Middle and High School Students



Vaping is *still* a major problem among our youth today; Don't Blow It aims to educate and equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to live a commercial-tobacco-free life.

The students in our group said they are more likely to listen to a friend than an adult. Peer education and leading by example is extremely important for the students. The students in our group also feel like addressing the reasons why young people start vaping is important. They have identified that some students use it as a tool to cope with depression/anxiety, weight loss, or as a way to fit in with peers.

-Nikki Sather, McGregor ISD #4 bv b

Background

Since the original *Don't Blow It* campaign launched in 2019, a lot has changed—new commercial tobacco control policies, a global pandemic, and a worsening mental health crisis. While new policies such as *Tobacco21* and *Menthol and Flavor bans* have taken place throughout much or all of Minnesota and Wisconsin, new and innovative vaping products continue to grip students across the nation and right here in our own towns.

In this new, updated version of *Don't Blow It*, you will find:

- deeply personal and relevant stories from youth about their own struggles with vaping addiction and mental health;
- a student-eye view of how and when students are vaping;
- and insights from youth about the cultural and historical context of tobacco.

Many older curriculums on commercial tobacco have focused on teaching students only about the dangers to their health, and while this curriculum certainly includes elements of that, there's a new and larger focus is on mental health and social emotional learning.

The videos presented within this curriculum are all product of local youth from Minnesota and Wisconsin. The students were able to be involved in all levels of production- writing, filming, and editing. As such, the hope is that fellow students will feel seen and heard as this curriculum is used, as opposed to being talked down to or belittled; that students will be encouraged to either stay away from vaping or to take the steps needed to quit.



How to Use this Curriculum

This curriculum is broken down into three modules:

- Looking Back- learning about sacred tobacco
- Looking Now- a student's-eye view of the issue and school policies
- Looking Forward- developing a strategy for better coping and/or quitting

Each module includes an objective, a video link, and related activities to be used in the classroom setting. While it is designed to be used in sequence from module one to module three, it is certainly possible to use just one module as you see fit for your needs. Each module's related activities include a shorter, in-class option to begin with, and then include ideas for how to encourage your students to take their learning a step further outside of the classroom; please feel free to use as much as you have time for within the structure of your learning environment.



81% who had used e-cigarettes said they started vaping to decrease stress, anxiety, or depression, according to an August 2021 survey of 1,000 people between ages 15 and 24.

- [The Truth Initiative](#)

Module I: Looking Back

OBJECTIVE: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO ARTICULATE THE HISTORICAL, CULTURALLY ACCURATE ORIGINS OF TOBACCO

ACTIVITY: "WHAT'S IN A NAME"

In this first module, students will learn about the term, *sacred tobacco*. Upon hearing the word, "tobacco," many, if not most, people think about the addictive and poisonous *commercial tobacco* products available for purchase, rather than the cultural form used in many Native American communities. Students in the video talk about the ways that they use sacred tobacco to honor their ancestor and give thanks. This module works best if you begin the activity prior to watching the video (see instructions below).

VIDEO: Tobacco is Sacred (4:32 min)

ACTIVITY: What's In a Name? (Approx. 30 minutes)

MATERIALS:

- Paper
- Writing Utensil

DIRECTIONS:

1. Before watching the video, ask students to write whatever comes to their mind when you say the word, "tobacco." Allow about 1 minute for this part.
2. Watch the video.
3. Ask students to share their reactions to what they wrote, versus what they learned from the video. Here are some discussion questions to help facilitate:
 - a. What did you write before watching the video?
 - b. Where did your ideas about, "tobacco" come from?
 - c. Who do you think is negatively impacted by misunderstanding, "tobacco?" How so?
 - d. Why is it important to understand the history and origin of tobacco? How does this change your view of the vaping and the commercial tobacco industry?

TAKE IT FURTHER: Creative Response

Encourage students to learn more about the history of sacred tobacco through a creative response project. Students could choose to write an essay, make and share a social media post (tik tok, Instagram reel, blog, etc.), illustrate a poster, make a power point presentation, interview an Elder, produce a short film, or whatever fun, creative idea they have to present their findings. Students may use the questions included in the discussion portion, and could also include the following:

- How has the commercial tobacco industry changed the narrative around, "tobacco?"
- What tactics has the commercial tobacco industry used to target youth? How does it make you feel?
- Why does language matter when talking about, "tobacco?"

NOTE FOR INSTRUCTORS: the amount of time needed to compete this activity will depend on how much time you allow for students to create their projects outside of the classroom and then will depend on how many students in your class and how much time is given to each for their presentations. Please assign the time according to your class needs.

Module II: Looking Now

OBJECTIVE: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO NAME AT LEAST ONE REASON WHY THEIR FELLOW PEERS MIGHT START TO VAPE.

ACTIVITIES: PAIR & SHARE, POLICY PRIMER

In this second module, students will hear from a variety of peers about the issues they see in school today around vaping. The youth share their personal stories and experiences with seeing vaping around them; how vaping impacts sports and other activities; as well as their concerns around mental health as a key factor for many young people who vape.

There are two activity options for this module. Both activities can be used independently of each other, though the second one does include some of the same questions around policy that are in the first activity. If time is a concern, but you want to include both activities, consider shortening the amount of time allotted for discussion in the first activity.

This video includes multiple clips, you can watch all of them in one, or individually depending on the time you have available.

VIDEO: Student's Eye View (10:28 min.)

- [Casual Conversations About Vaping](#) (2:01 min.)
 - [Bella's Story](#) (0:48 sec.)
 - [Mental Health](#) (0:44 sec.)
 - [Knowledge and Solutions](#) (1:57 min.)
- [The Big Threat of Vaping in a Tiny Town](#) (4:57 min.)

ACTIVITY #1: Pair and Share (Approx. 45 minutes)

MATERIALS: n/a

DIRECTIONS:

1. Watch the video.
2. Pair students into groups of 2-4.
3. Ask one question at a time and allow about 2 minutes for group discussion. At the end of 2 minutes, encourage each group to share parts of their discussion with the whole class to create further understanding of the topic. Use the following discussion questions to guide the conversation:
 - a. When do you recall first seeing a fellow student vape at school?
 - b. How does it make you feel when students are vaping?
 - c. What do you think are the driving factors behind choosing to vape as a young person?
 - d. What are the consequences for vaping if you're caught in the school?
 - i. Do you think the school policy around vaping consequences is fair? Why, or why not?
 - ii. If not, what do you think the policy should be?
 - e. Where do you see advertising for vaping?
 - i. Why do you think the ads appear where they do?
 - ii. In what ways do you see the commercial tobacco industry targeting youth?

TAKE IT FURTHER: Creative Response

Encourage students to learn more about the issues of vaping within their own community through a creative response project. Students could choose to write an essay, make and share a social media post (tik tok, Instagram reel, blog, etc.), illustrate a poster, make a power point presentation, produce a short film, or whatever fun, creative idea they have to present their findings. Students may use the questions included in the discussion portion, and could also include the follow:

- What are the health risks, both short-term and long-term, from vaping?
- How could you help encourage a friend to either choose not to vape, or to quit if they've already started?
- How would you respond if a loved one or a friend was vaping?

NOTE FOR INSTRUCTORS: the amount of time needed to compete this activity will depend on how much time you allow for students to create their projects outside of the classroom and then will depend on how many students in your class and how much time is given to each for their presentations. Please assign the time according to your class needs.

ACTIVITY #2: Policy Primer (Approx. 20 minutes)

MATERIALS:

- Internet Access

DIRECTIONS:

1. Have students go onto your school's website to look up the policies related to commercial tobacco.
2. Discuss the policy questions from the Pair and Share activity related to policy:
 - a. What are the consequences for vaping if you're caught in the school?
 - i. Do you think the school policy around vaping consequences is fair? Why, or why not?
 - ii. If not, what do you think the policy should be?

NOTE FOR INSTRUCTORS: It's a good idea for you to know your school's commercial tobacco policy ahead of this activity and consider your own feelings about it. The best practice policies today are focused more around supporting youth in quitting, rather than on punitive consequences. If your school's policy still includes measures like detention or suspension, please see the additional resources page for a link to support your school in updating their policy.

TAKE IT FURTHER: Policy Change

Getting students involved in the policy change process can be a powerful experience for everyone! The following are a few ideas for how students could learn more about policy change and make a difference in their community:

- If your school's commercial tobacco policy still includes punitive consequences like detention or suspension (as noted above), have students review updated, best practice policies and schedule a meeting with the district superintendent to encourage the changes to be made.
- Have students look up local city, county, and state commercial tobacco control policies to see what laws are in place, such as Tobacco21, Menthol and Flavor Bans, Coupon Restrictions, Distance Requirements (sales locations from schools, parks, etc.), and commercial tobacco-free grounds. If a particular policy of interest to students isn't in place where they live, encourage them to contact their local commercial tobacco control policy expert (see additional resources for contacts) to explore the process for making these changes.

NOTE FOR INSTRUCTORS: This has the potential to be a much larger project. If a select group of students is interested in taking this on, you could encourage this as an extra credit opportunity, or, for a student group like Student Council, National Honor Society, or a health-related club to take this on.

Module III: Looking Forward

OBJECTIVE: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY AT LEAST THREE HEALTHY COPING TECHNIQUES THAT THEY CAN USE TO IMPROVE THEIR MENTAL HEALTH.

ACTIVITY: MY COPING TOOLBOX

In this final video, students will hear two stories from local youth who have struggled with, and overcome, a vaping addiction. The youth share about why they started in the first place, how they felt when they were addicted, and what helped them to overcome their addiction.

VIDEO: Overcoming Vaping Addiction (8:10 min.)

- [Vaping- a Breakable Addiction](#) (3:31 min.)
- [As an Asthmatic](#) (4:39 min.)

ACTIVITY: My Mental Health Toolbox (Approx. 15 minutes)

MATERIALS:

- Paper
- Writing Utensil

DIRECTIONS:

1. Watch the video.
2. Ask students to write a list of at least five, healthy coping techniques that they have used when feeling stressed, anxious, angry, nervous, sad, etc. (ex.- running, journaling, talking to a friend, yoga, meditation, music, etc.).
3. Next, ask students to write a list of at least three people that they can connect with when they need someone to talk to.

4. Finally, ask students to write at least one positive, "I am..." statement that they can use when they are feeling down (ex.- "I am strong," "I am capable of doing hard things," "I am a good person," etc.)

NOTE FOR INSTRUCTORS: Many, if not most, students who vape admit to doing so as a coping technique to combat their anxiety. The students involved in this project repeatedly shared their desire for healthy coping skills to be taught as a younger age, as a means of prevention for unhealthy coping techniques. By encouraging students to think critically about their healthy coping skills, supportive people in their lives, and making positive self-statements, they are creating a toolbox that they can return to in the future when they are ~~tempted to use vaping~~

TAKE IT FURTHER: Learn and Teach

To help make the healthy coping techniques sink in better, have students learn more about a specific skill and teach it to their peers or younger students. Here are two ideas:

- Have students pair up to learn more about a specific healthy coping technique and plan a five-minute lesson for their fellow classmates. Encourage them to be creative and hands-on in their presentation style!
- Encourage students who are particularly passionate about a coping skill (ex.- yoga, meditation, journaling, music, art, etc.) to connect with an elementary class to teach a lesson on that skill. This could be a fun service project for older students.

NOTE FOR INSTRUCTORS: the amount of time needed to compete this activity will depend on how much time you allow for students to create their projects outside of the classroom and then will depend on how many students in your class and how much time is given to each for their presentations. Please assign the time according to your class needs.

Partners

American Lung Association



Essentia Health



Essentia Health

InProgress



Schools and Student Organizations: Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative, McGregor High School, Cloquet High School, and Superior High School