

1) Media Literacy Education in Anchorage Middle Schools

- a. **Measure 20% increase in youth perception that they will make healthier choices after involvement in media literacy program.**

Marcia Howell has presented on Media Literacy to 864 students at 8 different schools within the Anchorage School District. Evaluations from teachers from these presentations are attached to this report. Marcia received mostly 7's with a few 6's on the evaluations. 7's are the highest rating on the scale. Students also filled out pre and post surveys to determine the impact the presentation has on them, and how much they think learning about media literacy will help them make healthier decisions. Results from these surveys will be reported later once the presentations are completed and we have had a chance to analyze the results. Initial results show that 60-75% of students do remember the "Choose Your Own ending Ads," and have favorable impressions of them. However, some have said that they felt like the ads played too often. We will take that into account in this year's buy schedule.

- i. Analysis of the media literacy education evaluation shows that the program has positive statistically significant impact on the youth who participate in the classes. Youth were asked the following questions before and after the classroom media literacy presentation:
 - a. **How much do you think alcohol advertisements influence alcohol behavior of teens your age:** a lot, somewhat, only a little or not at all.
 - b. **How much do you think alcohol advertisements influence your own alcohol behaviors?** A lot, somewhat, only a little or not at all.
 - c. **Do you think alcohol advertisements target youth under 21?** Yes or no
 - d. **Do you think cigarette commercials target youth under 21?** Yes or no

Finally, after the presentation, youth were also asked these follow up questions:

- e. **Did this presentation increase your ability to critically analyze ads?** A lot, somewhat, only a little or not at all
- f. **How much do you think learning about persuasion in advertising will result in your making healthier decisions?** A lot, somewhat, only a little, or not at all.

The answers to the first four questions showed statistically significant positive increases. Answers were coded and then entered into SPSS statistical software. A lot was coded as a 1, somewhat = 2, only a little = 3 and not at all = 4. In the analysis, two tests were used. First, a paired sample T-Test was conducted, and also a dependent samples non-parametric test was used. Two tests were used because there is disagreement among statisticians whether likert scale data is adequate for the T-Test, or whether it should be analyzed using the less powerful non-parametric test. For our purposes, both tests showed that there was statistically

significant change in attitudes and belief that youth will change behavior. The paired sample T-Test compares the scores from the pre-test to the scores on the post test.

The mean score from pre-test question A was 2.04 (n=530) and for the post test the mean score was 1.76. This shows answers moving from believing that alcohol ads somewhat influence drinking behaviors of teens, closer to believing that it has a lot of impact. This was found to be a significant change at the 95% confidence interval.

On question B, the mean pre score was 3.32 and changed to 3.11 at the end of the presentation. This change shows that youth initially were closer to thinking that alcohol ads do not influence their behaviors at all, to moving closer to believing that they have a little impact. While this might not seem like much, we suspect that many youth who participated do not drink, and the few who do, were beginning to recognize that part of the reason they do is because of the influence of advertising.

- ii. *Identify key messages and marketing that need to be delivered:* In meeting with youth statewide, several key messages have been identified. Youth want to tell their peers about the reality of drinking. Realities include the effect of drinking on younger siblings, increased risk of "accidents" and the message that not everyone is doing it.
- iii. *Identify the best media methods available:* Talked to over 200 youth about what channels they watch on TV, how often they listen to radio, and other sources of media that they receive messages from. Learned a number of programs and channels that youth watch on TV and considered web-behavior. A result of this information is that the UAD prevention 30 second ads are now posted on: <http://www.youtube.com/user/marciahowell>. Several of these ads have already received over 700 hits, and the number is continuing to grow. A nice aspect of this is that the placement of the ads on youtube is free. Links to the ads are also visible at www.ourreality.org **I encourage AHSO to also link to the ads for greater exposure to the powerful messages that the youth are creating.**

Underage Drinking Prevention Media Campaign Primarily Rural Alaska

The Underage Drinking Prevention Media Campaign is one of our most exciting projects. Recognizing that underage drinking is at the core of multiple issues facing youth (failing in school, juvenile delinquency, suicide, unintentional injuries and death) AIPC developed a team of statewide players to figure out a way to reduce underage drinking. It became clear that part of the problem is how alcohol is depicted in everyday media that children and teens are watching. We developed a two prong approach to countering that impact.

First, we developed, along with partners Kigluait Adventures in Education and Larry Bottjen's DVDTech, a curriculum that promotes more cognitive and critical analysis of images and social norms that the media depicts. Second, and more exciting to the youth, is the opportunity to create an ad knowing that it will air on MTV, TNT, ESPN and other popular stations for teens around the state. The youth created ads follow a "Choose Your Own Ending" framework, where they work together to create a story based on the reality of underage drinking. We then provide the students with a professional videographer who finalizes the script with them, helps them with acting skills, and then films a TV ready version of the story. The last two steps include airing the commercials on Alaska cable including MTV, ESPN, TNT and other stations. And finally, the students will engage in a post evaluation of the whole project. The evaluation includes surveys and focus groups from both participants in the project as well as an online survey for viewers of the ads.

This year 113 students have participated, from 6 schools: Twindly Bridge, MidValley High, Su Valley, Bethel Alternative Boarding School, the Pribilofs and Mountain village. It is estimated that another 50,000 youth viewed the ads throughout the year on TV and about the ads have had over **2,000 hits on Youtube**. Youth have also included links to their own ads on their MySpace and Bebo pages, which encourages their friends to check out their anti drinking ads. We are tracking links from these personal webpages. This is an amazing free "buzz marketing" approach to getting the word out. The spots aired over 7900 times statewide. **We paid a total of \$36,972.52** and GCI generously provided **\$35928.56 worth of free and discounted airtime for the ads**. They were played statewide and included valuable times such as during basketball and football games and even during the MTV music awards.

Students engaged in an 8 hours of classes, as well as 8 hours of out of classroom activities, which included discussing their thoughts about underage drinking in monitored blogs, and investigating advertising techniques that they see on television. Unfortunately, the pre and post surveys were not completed by enough students to allow us to match answers before and after the project. We are making sure this does not happen again, by letting schools know that if they do not complete the documents, their ad will not be aired. This is a very important component to the campaign. We were able to consider their narrative answers to why youth drink, and what they will do differently after going through the class and creating their own ad. Highlights from their answers are listed below.

When asked why they or their peers drink, students said:

- "They have nothing better to do."
- "they see someone they look up too, do it"
- "They do not believe that bad things will happen to them."
- "They think its cool, and sometimes because they think that its going to solve their problems....which is NOT true."
- "be like their parents"
- "they want to get their troubles away or want to drink because other people are drinking." "They are also drinking because maybe their parents are drinking"
- "they get bored and want to be able to open up to other better"
- "they are trying to get away from their problems"
- "kids drink because it's fun they like the way feels some do it to prove a point some because their depressed people drink for their own reasons but those are some of the most common ones."

We will use these honest and open thoughts as we design the campaign for the '08 year. The student's expressions of why youth drink are extremely helpful as we consider storylines and themes to brand in the upcoming campaign year. It is useless for us as adults to tell youth what to think and why they should think it based on our own thoughts. Instead, it is authentic and powerful to let youth ideas and considerations guide us.

When asked how the program made a difference in their lives, students who participated in the Media Slam Curriculum said:

- "think before making an important decision"
- "I will get away from the commercials that sell alcohol....and if I know my friends are going to be drinking then don't even go to the party at all."
- "mute the commercials"
- "I will try to make my best decisions in life and know not to drink because it will affect me and my family members. I also learn about other peoples point of view about drinking."
- "Probably pay more attention ,to the advertisements and all the influence around me and probably recognize some situations that i have a potential problem with"
- "let people know the long term effects of alcohol and what it does to your family"

These comments help us consider how to redesign the program for the '08 year. And also lets us know that much of what we are doing is on track and is effective at increasing critical thinking skills among teens, for whom this is not a well developed area of the brain. The more we help them activate their neocortex, the more it will develop and help them live through their teen years and become thinking active participating adults.

REPORT

Youth Underage Drinking Prevention Focus Groups

Feedback for the State Of Alaska's UNDERAGE PREVENTION PLAN 2008

By Marcia Howell,
Associate Director, Alaska Injury Prevention Center
3701 East Tudor, Suite 105
Anchorage, AK 99508
929-3939

Executive Summary

Adriene Active, of The United Way of Anchorage, and Marcia Howell, of the Alaska Injury Prevention Center, met with young people at McLaughlin Youth Detention Facility to find out their views on underage drinking prevention. Marcia also met with a group of youth at Steller Secondary School in Anchorage. The sessions were each an hour long and included two written brainstorming exercises as well as discussion about underage drinking. The questions and discussion topics were designed to invite youth to evaluate elements of the Underage Drinking Prevention Plan, and in many ways can be correlated to the state's provided evaluation form.

The report is a digest of the main themes from the groups. It is laid out with a short narrative introduction into each theme, and then includes the most frequent thoughts about each theme.

In general, youth believe that ***underage drinking is a problem***. They discussed the degree of the problem. They think that ***education*** about the physiological effects of alcohol should be provided to children, and should start in early elementary school. They have a number of ideas about what information should be included. They suggested TV and web-based media messages. Youth can list quite a few ***activities*** that they like to do, but also have suggestions for additional activities (such as late night basketball, and alcohol free events and places to hang out.) Participants mentioned ***community services*** that are missing that would help. These included access to treatment when needed, people to call for help, and help navigating the world once treatment or incarceration times end. All youth at McLaughlin mentioned the importance and motivation they receive from their family. There was an overwhelming consensus on the value of family.

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
METHODOLOGY:.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
RESPONSES:.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING:	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
VALUE OF FAMILY:	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
EDUCATING YOUTH ABOUT ALCOHOL:	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
WHAT DO YOUTH LIKE TO DO?	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
WHAT IS NEEDED, BOTH SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES?	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
<i>Activities:.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
<i>Social Support:.....</i>	<i>Error! Bookmark not defined.</i>
WHAT <u>MOTIVATES UNHEALTHY</u> CHOICES?.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
WHAT <u>INHIBITS UNHEALTHY</u> CHOICES?.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
WHAT <u>MOTIVATES HEALTHY</u> CHOICES?	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
CONCLUSION.....	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

Methodology:

The sessions began with an introduction including information about anonymity and confidentiality for participants. We were clear that, if the youth told us anything that had happened to them which was dangerous or bad, e.g. if someone has hurt you, then we may have to report it. But we would talk to them on their own first. This did not come up, and there was adult staff in the room for all sessions.

We also let the participants know that we were here to learn from them. Even though we were once teens, it was a long time ago and life has changed. Today's youth are the experts on today and we let them know that we wanted their honest input. Lots of people are concerned about underage drinking and lots of people have ideas about what to do about it. But youth are the ones who really know what's going on.

The focus group began with youth brainstorming individually with guiding questions that were provided. The form used is found at the end of this report. The opening questions asked were to list their favorite TV shows, websites, and radio stations. And then what their favorite things were to do with friends, followed by their favorite things to do with family. The final questions were to write down their favorite memory. It was followed by the questions, with room for discussions to develop between youth in answering the questions. Near the end of the session, the students returned to their paper, and created a mind map around a few key words. For the McLaughlin youth the provided words were alcohol, happy, friends and money.

The following summary of the focus group findings is based upon six recurring themes: Value of **family**, how and when to **educate** youth (the difficulty in penetrating the partying culture), what there already is to do and what **services and activities** are needed, what **motivates good behavior** and what **motivates** and **what inhibits negative choices**. The narrative for each theme begins with an overview of the consolidated ideas, and then provides bullets of the common answers.

It should be noted that the youth at McLaughlin and those at Steller had some very different ideas. The McLaughlin youth were in their later teens, and all incarcerated. The Steller youth were mostly middle school aged, and while they know about underage drinking, did not appear to have engaged in the behavior. The differences will be distinguished in each section.

Responses:

Introductory thoughts about underage drinking:

As an introduction to the topic and issues, youth discussed their thoughts and experiences with under age drinking. There was general agreement that there is more drinking in the summer. Parties in Anchorage tend to be in homes with no

parents, and the drinks of choice are redbull mixes, and other liquor. Parties in the MatSu Valley are more likely to include kegs of beer, and be large outdoor gatherings. In villages, drinking happens in abandoned buildings, and where other adults are drinking. There was also general consensus from the McLaughlin youth that if a person goes to a party, they will be asked to drink, repeatedly. They suggested that if teens don't want to drink, they should avoid parties where there is alcohol. Finally, most participants believe that teens start drinking around age 13-14, but some start younger.

- **When and what are teens drinking?**

- Biggest parties are in the summer, big huge parties,
- Holidays,
- Barbeques,
- In Anchorage, youth are drinking more hard liquor: Red Bull mixed drinks, Bacardi, Everclear, Screwdrivers (vodka and orange juice.)
- In the Matsu Valley parties tend to involve beer with "keggers and triple-keggers."
- Most teens start drinking around age 13-14, but some start younger.

- **Access to alcohol:**

- Many McLaughlin youth said they got alcohol from friends, including older friends.
- Some steal from their parents.
- Some knew parents who would provide alcohol.
- Several girls mentioned that they had used fake id's to buy alcohol and to get into clubs.
- There were a few parents who let youth drink at their house, but most (and most of the parents of McLaughlin youth) did not let their teens drink. (Although they noted that they did drink anyway.)

- **Peer Pressure:** Youth were asked what would happen if they went to a party and said that they don't want to drink. We were surprised by the unanimous response that that doesn't work. Here are a few of the thoughts:

- They would think I'm crazy.
- They'd ask what I'm doing there.
- Call me a wimp or a pussy.
- "Why you gonna go to a party if you are not going to do anything?"
- People will keep offering it to you and keep coming back to ask again.
- "If you don't want to drink then you should not go to a party."

Value of Family:

The importance of family to youth came up over and over and in different contexts. Nearly every McLaughlin youth said that they associated the word "Happy" with family. When asked about their "Best Memory", many included family such as:

- Going to family get togethers,
- Going home for birthday,
- Visiting Grandma before she passed,
- Living with Aunt,
- Going home,
- Cooking for family,
- Camping with family,
- Being with Family.

When asked what they like to do with family, the lists between groups were similar:

- Eat, Barbeque, go out to eat, dinner at home,
- Watch movies; at home and at theater,
- Skiing, Biking, Camping, Sports, Boating, swimming and fishing,
- Board and card games (UNO),
- Talk, chill, joke around,
- Go to fun places, the park, vacations, theme parks.

Educating youth about alcohol:

Probably the strongest and most consistent comment concerning alcohol education was that it needs to start young, and not be sugar coated. Youth in both settings suggested that it start at age 5-6. They believe that by the time youth get to about age 13, adult lectures and lessons are less impactful. At that point many expressed a need for one on one relationships with adults or mentors. One thought that was shared by most McLaughlin participants was that TV media education should target younger children. Providing information for teens could be on TV and web-based.

- Schools:
 - Provide prevention education every 4-6 months for younger kids.
 - Kids need information about drinking: like it can make you tired, start skipping school, can't be as good an athlete.
 - Side effects from alcohol on the body.
- Parents:
 - Be careful about what you do around your children, if it's not good for your kids, don't do it in front of them.
 - Be sure to teach your oldest child, because whatever they learn, they will pass on, good or bad.
 - Parents have to give some freedom, because "the more you try watch someone, the more they will rebel."
 - Take kids out to do fun things, playground, and hiking, water parks, anything physical.
- Community:
 - Ads for younger children about the real effects of alcohol.
 - Websites can cover a lot of resources. They can talk about smoking and drinking information.
- Information that should be included in educational efforts:
 - Alcohol can cause blood clots, liver disease, slow brain, depression, suicide, FAS, don't think right, gets you hyped up, isolation, bad grades, mess up vision, loss of memory, makes you not as smart or fast (athletic).

- Alcohol can control you, it can take away choices and the ability to make them, Really messes you up, affects ability to work, hurt family, get in fights, can kill someone, consumes part of your life.

What do youth like to do?

When asked what participants like to do, there was a very long list. We found this to be the case in similar focus groups that we conducted with youth several years ago. The problem tends not to be that there is nothing to do: but that choices are made to not do them. Both McLaughlin and Steller youth had similar thoughts.

- Watch and go to movies,
- Play cards, games, play video games,
- Hockey, ski, bike, squirt gun fights, walk, snowboard, sports, football, basketball,
- Hang out, talk,
- Camp, hike,
- Shop,
- 4-wheeling,
- Fish and hunting (mostly males),
- Ride around,
- Draw,
- Tune cars (male),
- "I like to do things that I'm good at."

What is needed, both services and activities?

Youth were asked what they would do, or whom they could talk to if they were concerned that a friend was drinking too much. At first there was silence. Then after a discussion started youth couldn't identify anyone they could go to for help. Some were concerned about being snitches, going behind the back of a friend and losing friends. But over all, no one had ideas about where to go for help. Instead, they felt limited to talking to the friend directly, and maybe to the parents, though some would not take the second step. There were other ideas about prevention including services needed, and activities that would help.

Activities:

- Late night basketball, rec centers open later (concern about costs),
- Traditional activities,
- Yoga,
- More activities for older teens,
 - kickball team,
 - dancing in a healthy environment,
 - alcohol/drug free places like the Alano Club (although many youth were not familiar with the Alano Club, when they heard about it they liked the idea.)
- More activities for younger teens that aren't highly competitive, intramural sports for example.

Social Support:

- More attention from family,
- Getting sent to rehab if its needed,
- Having a positive person in life (mentor or friend) who will take you out to do things,
- AA, Alateen,
- Community resources to get help for someone with a problem.

What motivates unhealthy choices?

This question addresses why teens make unhealthy choices; what are the factors that contribute to making choices that are known to lead to bad outcomes. These thoughts and ideas are useful as both possible measures of change and to provide insight into causes of unhealthy culture and choices.

- Older siblings who party,
- Build a stable relationship with someone who she would be able to count on for positive help,
- Parents who drink,
- Friends who drink,

- Fear of getting caught is exciting,
- Not understanding the impact drinking has on the future.

What inhibits unhealthy choices?

- Getting caught by police (McLaughlin youth, even though they recognized that most teens don't get caught for just drinking) (However, several youth expressed the opposite: chances of getting caught drunk driving are not very great.
- Fear of losing family.
- Not being drunk at or during school.
- Hearing a true story from a speaker (DUI driver who killed people) made an impact. (Several youth agreed with this statement.)
- Parents need to send them to rehab.

What motivates healthy choices?

Pretty consistently, *family* can have an enormous positive impact on youth. And another strong motivator is a teacher who cares, because youth don't want to let them down. Youth mentioned not wanting to let down teachers who make the extra effort to connect with youth.

- Family,
- Being involved in recreation clubs,
- Teachers that really talk to me and encourage me,
- Sports,
- Thinking about the future (family, job, college, military),
- School.

Conclusion

Youth were very open and provided honest feedback. They should be commended for participating and offering useful thoughts and recommendations. It is the hope of the author of this report that their ideas will be thoughtfully considered as programming and funding is developed to address underage drinking prevention in Alaska.

There is a wide gap in services available for those concerned about someone's excessive drinking. Youth did not know who to call for help, and did not know how to deal with it other than talking to the person directly. This is a possible

avenue that should be considered for an awareness campaign. BUT first, it is necessary to develop the infrastructure that provides a place to call, or a person to help. And after there is a place to call, there *needs to be follow up services*, treatment, wraparound services. Many youth mentioned the need to be “sent to treatment.” But at the same time, they recognized that returning home with out help and without pre-arranged follow-up care, the cycle is most likely to repeat itself.

The McLaughlin participants were very clear that dealing only with alcohol is only part of the problem. Youth stated that they have not been to a party where there have not been drugs as well as alcohol. Just trying to do something to stop one (alcohol and not drugs) will not really make an impact.

Participants were interested in getting involved. They did not have clear ideas about what strategies would work, but believed that it is important for teens put the message out to your friends that drinking isn’t cool anymore. They also believe that they will need to set a good example not doing it themselves.

A final note, we asked teens what they prefer to be called. One person said “Dude”, and everyone groaned and said absolutely not. Children was equally disliked. Agreed upon words were young ladies and young gentleman, teens, youth and students. With the wisdom of youth, mostly participants said whenever possible, just call them by their own names.