



LAKE COUNTY NARCOTICS AGENCY

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P.L.U.S.² Parent's Guide to Week #4

This week we asked the students to research information regarding how they see Marijuana and Inhalants affecting youth throughout the United States. We asked the students to share with you what they had learned as they study for the Marijuana/Inhalant review class. We have the students break up into random groups. The goal of the group was to answer as many questions from the Marijuana/Inhalant Jeopardy game as possible. The groups did well.

As we went through the questions additional discussion evolved around other issues like: how dangerous it is to be high on marijuana while operating a motor vehicle; the "usefulness" of marijuana as a medicine and the myths regarding marijuana being useful as a "medicine". There is some research indicating medical benefits from some of the chemicals found in marijuana, HOWEVER none being worth the risk of putting marijuana into the body in it's current form, through smoking. The most current research says; the cannabinoid chemicals could help people with AIDS by helping increase the appetite; the chemical THC could help relieve an AIDS patient and cancer patient vomiting due to the treatments they are under; the chemical THC could help relieve some of the involuntary spasms experienced by those with multiple-sclerosis, "IF" these chemicals could be put into the body without the process of inhalation. The truth is medical science is not able to remove these chemicals directly from marijuana in any "safe" usable form to date. (There is a synthetic form of THC which has been on the market as a prescription drug since 1985, Marinol.) The chemicals in marijuana are more cancer causing and damaging to the lungs than smoking cigarettes. One study "Effects of Marijuana on the Lungs and Its Immune Defenses", University of California-Los Angeles School of Medicine Study, 1997, found that smoking 3-5 marijuana joints per week does equivalent damage to the lungs as smoking 16 cigarettes per day.

Another "medical use" myth has to do with Glaucoma. "The quantities of marijuana required to reduce intraocular pressure in glaucoma sufferers are large, and would require inhalation of at least six (6) marijuana cigarettes each day.", said Dr. Keith Green, American Journal of Ophthalmology (1982). Furthermore, glaucoma experts testify that "at this quantity of use a reduction of blood supply to the optic nerves due to low blood pressure would speed up, rather than slow down, the loss of eyesight and cause blindness."

The officer then shared with the students the marijuana data compiled through the survey done by the students during the first P.L.U.S.2 class. The data was interesting. Here are some of the results:

I have tried marijuana without my
parent's knowledge or permission?
0%

I have used marijuana, more than
5 times, without my parent's
knowledge or permission?
0%

I am currently using marijuana
without my parent's knowledge or
permission?
0%

I have never tried marijuana
without my parent's knowledge or
permission?
100%

I have never used marijuana, more
than 5 times, without my parent's
knowledge or permission?
100%

I have never used, nor am I using
marijuana without my parent's
knowledge or permission?
100%

So what does this all mean? In the first data set the students saw that no one has admitted to trying marijuana at all. When the students talked about why kids use marijuana they came up with: to fit in, to be like their peers, to be part of the cool group, and curiosity. In the second data set the students saw that again no one has used marijuana more than 5 times. And in the third data set the students found that out of 76 student surveys no one said that they currently use marijuana. Even if ten percent of students lied on the survey the fact is very few 7th grade students, who attend St. Gabriel, have tried marijuana and no one admits current use of marijuana.

We had the class brainstorm information gathered through their homework regarding inhalants. Their goal was to discuss the information they each have and to discuss the most serious ways they see inhalants effecting youth in the U.S.

The data on Inhalants was good. 0% percent of the students at St. Gabriel indicated that: "I have tried inhalants without my parent's knowledge or permission." 100% of the students at St. Gabriel indicated that: "I have never tried inhalants without my parent's knowledge or permission." Zero percent (0%) indicated: "I have used inhalants, more than 5 times, without my parent's knowledge or permission." One hundred percent (100%) indicated: "I have never used inhalants, more than 5 times, without my parent's knowledge or permission. Zero percent (0%) indicated: "I am currently using inhalants without my parent's knowledge or permission." Again leaving one hundred percent (100%) who indicated: "I have never used, nor am I currently using inhalants without my parent's knowledge or permission."

Another interesting point about the inhalant discussions....the students remembered more information on inhalants from what they learned during 5th grade P.L.U.S. than any of the other drugs we discussed. The students recalled the dangers of Sudden Sniffing Death (SSD) and how 30% of youth who die from SSD die the first time they use inhalants. I'm not sure what caused this phenomenon, but it does tell use that the kids are listening!

I think the students were a shocked about the inhalant data. They knew that there were not many peers using inhalants, but they don't understand why someone would use a drug that is so dangerous. They reacted differently to the marijuana data. The students really thought more kids were using marijuana, and many of them don't see marijuana as "*that dangerous*" a drug. As with the tobacco and alcohol data, the students actually seemed relieved to know that the vast majority of their peers don't use marijuana or inhalants, and most of them haven't even tried!

This week for homework the students are asked to study for a "Prescription abuse/Over the Counter Medication abuse" test they will be administered during the next P.L.U.S.2 lesson. The web pages listed below will be where the information on the test will come from. The students have been told that any handwritten notes they have put together while studying can be used on the test. No computer generate notes will be allowed. The Internet sites suggested include: kidshealth.org; drugfree.org; nida.nih.gov; abovetheinfluence.com; mayoclinic.com/health/prescription_drug_abuse/DS01079; theantidrug.com; whitehousedrugpolicy.gov.