

NOVEMBER: AFFECTING POLICY CHANGE IN YOUR SCHOOL

TOOLKIT OVERVIEW

This toolkit is designed to help participants explore how they can influence school policy around tobacco and nicotine products. They will build confidence discussing these issues with peers and school leaders, learn how to identify existing policies and gaps, and begin to imagine what healthier school environments could look like. Through collaborative discussions and real-world examples, participants will discover their power to advocate for changes that improve health and well-being in their school communities.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

Meeting	Materials Needed
Meeting 1	- Review the “Tool Up” activity, gather relevant information about your school and district, and be prepared to share with participants. - Prepare to provide and analyze school tobacco policies (e.g., student handbook, code of conduct, wellness policy, discipline policies, district guidance, etc.) - If using, prepare a copy of 11.1: Collaborate: School Policy Analysis for collaborative use.
Meeting 2	- Print or prepare to digitally share 11.2: Tool Up: Margaret Mead Quote - Prepare three stations where groups of students will be able to gather their ideas (e.g., chart paper, shared digital documents, whiteboard). Label the three stations: - Students - Staff - Families/Community
Meeting 3	- Print or prepare to digitally share 11.3: Tool Up: Resist Communication Strategies - Print or prepare to share one scenario for each group from 11.3: Collaborate: School Communication Scenarios
Meeting 4	Print or prepare to share digitally several copies (one per group of 2-5 students) of the Stakeholder Mapping Tool: 11.4: Collaborate: Stakeholder Mapping Tool

RELATED KANSAS HEALTH EDUCATION STANDARDS (GRADES 9-12)

Community Health

- 12.2 Local/state laws, ordinances, and policies for a healthy community
- 12.4 Strategies to maintain a healthy community
- 12.5 Personal service for the betterment of the community

Mental and Emotional Health

- 12.5 Coping skills (grief, stress, depression, bullying, anxiety, etc.)

MEETING 1: POLICY AND POWER – WHAT’S THE CONNECTION?

Introduce participants to what school policy is, how it’s made, and how students can play a role in changing it.

Section	Activity Description
Check In (5 mins)	Quick Draw ● Draw what a healthy school looks like to you. ● Invite a few to share or describe.
Tool Up (5 mins)	Briefly share with students details and processes for policy change in your school or district: ● Who creates or approves school policy here? (Principal? School board?) ● How can students make requests for change? ● What are examples of policies students have influenced at your school in the past? ● Who are the gatekeepers - people who don’t make final decisions, but control access - in your school? ● What other relevant practices exist? (e.g., Who do you talk to before putting up posters? What is the process for taking a school-sponsored trip?)
Collaborate (25 mins)	Break participants into groups, and provide each group with some or all of the tobacco policies. Tell participants they have 10 minutes to: ● Highlight any policies related to tobacco or substance use, ● Mark anything that is unclear or confusing, and ● Identify who might be responsible for each policy (e.g., teachers, custodial staff, administration, parents, students, district personnel) After groups have completed analysis, facilitate a whole group share. Create a chart that shows: ● What policies or practices exist now? ● What is missing, confusing, or not working? ● What might know more about that issue?
Debrief (5 mins)	Ask participants: ● What surprised you about how school policies are written or enforced? ● Who would we need to talk to if we wanted to understand this issue better? ● What power do students have in this process?
Mission	Invite students to talk to one teacher, administrator, or other staff member this week. Prompts they can use: ● Who is in charge of the tobacco/vaping policy here? ● How do students usually share ideas for improving school rules? ● If students wanted to propose a change, where should they start? Students write down: ● Who they spoke with, ● What they learned, ● Any next person that adult recommended they talk to.

MEETING 2: WHY POLICY MATTERS

Explore the real-life impact of school tobacco policies — and what happens when they're strong, weak, or missing.

Section	Activity Description
Check In (5 mins)	Emoji Check-In Invite participants: Drop or draw an emoji that matches how you feel about your school's rules or policies.
Tool Up (5 mins)	Invite a participant to read aloud: 11.2: Tool Up: Margaret Mead Quote Ask participants: - Margaret Mead suggests that thoughtful, committed people create change - not necessarily those with power. How does this relate to our group's work? - What strengths do young people have on this topic that adults don't have?
Collaborate (25 mins)	Divide participants into three groups, and assign each group to start at one of the stations. Tell participants they will have five minutes at each station to add their thoughts about: - How current school policies and practices help that group - How current school policies harm or overlook that group - Any experiences or stories they hear about tobacco use at school that relate to that group After all groups have visited all three stations, facilitate a whole group discussion: - Are some groups left out currently? - Are our current policies punitive, preventative, or unclear? - Who loses as a result of our current policies?
Debrief (5 mins)	Ask participants: - How do the policies we have (or don't have) shape daily life at school? - Whose experiences are we not hearing about yet?
Mission	Students ask another student (not in Resist): - How do you feel about the rules around tobacco use at school? - Do they help people? Hurt people? Make sense? Get ignored? Students record: - Key insights - Any misconceptions they heard - Patterns they want to explore

MEETING 3: SHARING YOUR VOICE

Help participants build confidence in speaking to peers and adults about school policy and student wellness.

Section	Activity Description
Check In (5 mins)	Would You Rather • Speak in front of the school board or write a letter? • Advocate alone or with a group? • Use these to lead into a convo about comfort levels in advocacy.
Tool Up (5 mins)	Display or provide to participants: 11.3: Tool Up: Resist Communication Strategies Ask participants: • Which of these communication strategies feels most important when talking to an adult who has power in your school, and why? • How might that strategy change depending on who you're speaking to - a teacher, parent, counselor, friend, or administrator?
Collaborate (25 mins)	Divide participants into groups of 2-5 people, and assign each group a scenario from 11.3: Collaborate: School Communication Scenarios. In groups, invite participants to: • Draft talking points for their scenario. • Practice role-playing their conversations in their groups. As groups work, the following questions may help guide their thinking: ○ What is the current policy situation? ○ Why does it matter to students? ○ How do students experience the issue? ○ What is one small request or next step? ("Could we meet again?" "Who else should we talk to?" "What are our next steps?")
Debrief (5 mins)	Ask participants: • As you practiced these conversations, what felt natural? What felt awkward? • What strategies helped you feel more confident or effective?
Mission	Students choose a person (teacher, coach, friend, family member) and share one of their talking points. They report back next time: • Who they talked to • How the person reacted • What they learned about communication

MEETING 4: BUILDING A VISION FOR CHANGE

Brainstorm what a better school policy could look like — and what steps your chapter could take to make it happen.

Section	Activity Description
Check In (5 mins)	One Word Invite students: Go around and ask each person to share one word that describes how they want their school to feel.
Tool Up (5 mins)	Ask participants: If our school was perfect regarding tobacco and nicotine policies and use, what would be different?
Collaborate (25 mins)	For 10 minutes, facilitate a brainstorm to create a school policy and practice “wish list” for your school. Ask participants: What specific policy or practice changes would help our school move closer to the ‘healthier, more supportive school’ we imagined during Tool Up? Optional facilitator prompts (use only if the group needs more support):  11.4: Collaborate: School Policy Change Facilitator Prompts Once the “wish list” is complete, divide participants into groups and assign each group one item from the list. Provide each group with a stakeholder mapping tool to complete for their topic:  11.4: Collaborate: Stakeholder Mapping Tool Tell participants: “You’ll work in small groups to complete a Stakeholder Mapping Tool for one idea from our list. As you go, remember: you don’t need all the answers. The goal is to uncover possibilities, ask good questions, and start seeing the pathways that make student-led change possible. We’ll come back to these skills in future months, so think of this as your first round of exploration. Ready to dive in?” Facilitation note: The goal of this activity is not for students to decide which project they will take on this year. Instead, this is a chance for them to practice the thinking skills, processes, and curiosity that shape effective student-led change. By mapping stakeholders, pathways, and power structures for different ideas, students begin to understand how change actually happens in a school setting, and how many roles and relationships are involved. Students will continue exploring these ideas in future toolkits, and they will revisit stakeholder mapping throughout the year as their thinking sharpens and their projects become clearer.
Debrief (5 mins)	Ask participants: - Which ideas feel most meaningful to you? - Which stakeholder relationship seems most important to build?
Mission	Students take their group wishlist and ask a teacher, counselor, or administrator: - Which of these ideas seems realistic? Why? - What obstacles should we expect? - Who else should we talk to?

	• What is the process for starting something like this at our school? Students record: • New insights • Recommended next contacts • Pathways they didn't know existed
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