

LESSON ONE

● INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT ALERT

GOALS

1. To set the tone and establish an open, supportive classroom environment
2. To motivate students and to convey the purposes of Project ALERT

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

1. Introduce Program (5 min.)
2. Develop Ground Rules (5 min.)
3. Make Reasons Lists (15 min.)
4. Compare Marijuana and Alcohol (5 min.)
5. Show and Discuss Video: *Let's Talk About Marijuana* (10-15 min.)
6. Wrap-up (2 min.)

DESCRIPTION

This is the Project ALERT kick-off lesson. Activities 1 and 2 establish the tone and set the foundation for an open and supportive classroom environment. In Activity 3, students are motivated to want to resist pressure to use drugs by actively participating in small groups where they list and discuss the reasons why people do and do not use drugs. Teacher credibility is enhanced by providing this balanced view of drug use.

Comparisons between alcohol and marijuana (Activity 4) demonstrate the great similarity between the reasons for use and nonuse of marijuana and alcohol. The class discussion of the lists and the video *Let's Talk About Marijuana* in Activity 5 allow for myths to be corrected and for additional information to be added.

This is a long lesson, so pacing is critical. While it is not essential that students know every reason for using or not using drugs, it is essential that wrong information be corrected from the lists.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Research has demonstrated the importance of including parents as partners in prevention efforts. Therefore, nearly all of the core lessons include a homework assignment designed to be completed with a parent. These assignments are best

viewed as “home learning opportunities” that make it easier for parents to engage in conversations with their children about drugs and reinforce the learning that occurs in the classroom.

Sometimes Project ALERT teachers express concern or skepticism about parents’ willingness to collaborate in the home assignments. In these cases, another trusted adult, such as an extended family member, adult friend, or school staff, may be enlisted to provide that support. Others worry that the home assignments might be viewed as intrusive to family privacy. Teachers can reassure parents that the information will not be shared in class. One way to encourage positive home learning experiences is to provide a letter explaining the curriculum at the beginning of the Project ALERT course. A sample parent letter is located on page 1.20.

PREPARATION

- Review the Lesson Plan
- Read the following Teacher Reference material:
 - Myths and Facts About Cigarettes* (page 1.10)
 - Myths and Facts About Marijuana* (page 1.11)
 - Myths and Facts About Alcohol* (page 1.12)
 - Reasons Why People Use Drugs* (pages 1.13-1.14)
 - Reasons Not to Use Drugs* (pages 1.15-1.16)
- Optional: you may find it helpful to prepare 3" x 5" reference cards listing reasons and myths for Activity 3. Myths and Facts sheets can be handed out to students at your discretion.
- Preview video: *Let's Talk About Marijuana*
- Be familiar with *Facts on Other Forms of Tobacco and Smoking Blends* (Teacher Reference, pages 1.17-1.19)
- Collect and prepare materials, as indicated below

MATERIALS NEEDED

Assemble the following materials:

- Video player and video: *Let's Talk About Marijuana*
- 6 thick, felt-tip, nontoxic markers (including 2 red and 2 blue), masking tape, poster board, chart paper, 3" x 5" index cards

Prepare the following materials:

- Partial visual (title only) on poster board: *Ground Rules: Students*
- Completed visual on poster board: *Ground Rules: Teacher* (Activity 2B)
- Partial *Reasons Lists* (Activity 3), titles only, each on a separate sheet of chart paper

Write each title on a separate sheet:

- Reasons Why People Smoke Cigarettes* (blue marker)
- Reasons Not to Smoke Cigarettes* (red marker)
- Reasons Why People Use Marijuana* (blue marker)
- Reasons Not to Use Marijuana* (red marker)
- Adapt and copy *Sample Letter to Parent/Guardian* (Student Handout, page 1.20) for each student
- Copy *Test Your Drug IQ* and *Answer Key* (Student Handout, pages 1.21-1.24) for each student on colored paper

ACTIVITIES

1. Introduce Program (5 min.)

- A. Write “Project ALERT” on the board or chart paper.
- B. Describe the program content.

“This is the first session of Project ALERT. The program is basically about three things:

- 1. Why some people use drugs and why most people don’t*
- 2. How to recognize the pressures on teenagers to use drugs*
- 3. How to resist these pressures.”*

“Project ALERT focuses on cigarettes, marijuana, inhalants and alcohol because these are the substances that people your age are most likely to come in contact with. We will also talk about smokeless tobacco, crack, and other drugs.”

“We’ll be meeting weekly for eleven weeks.”

“The program will be fun and different. It will teach you important facts and skills. It includes videos, skits, and games. You will have homework.”

- C. Discuss Decision-Making.

“You are now at an age when you are making more of your own decisions.”

“What are some decisions that you are making now?” (what food to eat, how to spend money, what clothes to wear, whether to take drugs) Call on several students to respond.

“The decision whether to use drugs is ultimately up to you. You need to know the health, legal, and social risks involved in using drugs so that your decisions can ensure a healthy, safe lifestyle.”

“No one can make you use drugs if you don’t want to. Project ALERT will help you say ‘no’ if you feel pressured to try drugs.”

“Today we will talk about why some people use cigarettes, marijuana, inhalants, and alcohol, and also the reasons why most people have decided not to use these substances.”

2. Develop Ground Rules (5 min.)

A. Develop ground rules for students.

- Tape up the blank poster board visual: *Ground Rules: Students*

“We’ll be talking about smoking, drinking, and the use of other drugs in Project ALERT. It’s important to have some special (not regular classroom) ground rules so that we all can feel more comfortable talking.”

“What rules could we make that would help us all feel comfortable during Project ALERT?”

- Try to elicit the following:
 - No put-downs (respect)
 - Everyone try to participate (participation)
 - No personal identification of sensitive information; *“Someone I know....”* (confidentiality/privacy)
- If there is no response, try one of the following questions:

“How would you feel if you said something personal about drugs and it got around school?”

“How would you feel if other students laughed at your ideas?”

- Record students’ answers on the visual.
- Save the visual. Label it with the date and period, and keep it for subsequent lessons.

B. Display and read aloud: *Ground Rules: Teacher.*

Develop your own language for each of the following points. See references under each point.

Ground Rules: Teacher

1. Respect

“I will listen carefully to what you have to say and treat all responses with respect.”

2. Inclusion

“I will encourage all students to participate in the program’s activities.”

3. Confidentiality

“I will keep things I hear in class private unless” (go over district policy on reporting here)

3. Make Reasons Lists (15 min.)

- A. Tell the class they will be forming four groups.
- B. *“Each group will appoint a Recorder and will make one of the following lists.”*

Group 1. Reasons Why People Smoke Cigarettes (blue marker)

Group 2. Reasons Not to Smoke Cigarettes (red marker)

Group 3. Reasons Why People Use Marijuana (blue marker)

Group 4. Reasons Not to Use Marijuana (red marker)

Each group should list at least five reasons on their sheet.”

- C. Divide the class into four groups. (Students may self-select or be assigned groupings. Groups should be of about equal size.)
- D. Give each group a piece of titled chart paper and one blue or red marker.
- E. Allow five minutes for brainstorming and writing.
- F. Circulate, helping groups as needed.
- G. Set up the video while students are making their lists.
- H. Ask the Recorders to bring their completed lists to the front.
- I. Reassemble the class.
- J. Tape up the lists.
- K. Ask each Recorder to read the group’s list, starting with one of the *Reasons Why* lists.
- L. Reinforce students’ good reasons.
- M. Add “peer pressure” to the *Reasons Why* lists if not already mentioned.

- N. Correct any errors (for more information, see Teacher References, *Myths and Facts about Cigarettes, Marijuana, and Alcohol*, pages 1.10-1.12). If the lists contain any of the myths below, circle and correct them, acknowledging the kernel of truth (that many people believe it or that some aspect of it is true). Do not discuss myths not mentioned by students.
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Cigarettes

- Myth 1: They help you think clearly.
- Myth 2: They calm you down.
- Myth 3: They keep you thin.
- Myth 4: It's easy to quit later.

Marijuana

- Myth 1: It takes away anxiety, anger, depression, problems.
 - Myth 2: It makes you creative, a better dancer, talker.
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4. Compare Marijuana and Alcohol (5 min.)

- A. Point to the list of reasons why people use marijuana. Ask, "*Which reasons are also true for alcohol?*" Checkmark these reasons.
- B. Point to the list of reasons not to use marijuana. Ask, "*Which reasons for not using marijuana are true for alcohol?*" Checkmark these reasons.
- C. Sum up: "*What do you notice about alcohol and marijuana? Right, people don't drink and don't use marijuana for a lot of the same reasons.*" (Reinforce the idea that both alcohol and marijuana are drugs.)
- D. SAVE the *Reasons Why People Use Marijuana* list for use in Lesson 3.

5. Show and Discuss Video: Let's Talk About Marijuana (10-15 min.)

- A. "*Now we'll see a video in which older teens talk about reasons why people smoke marijuana and why they do not. See if they come up with any reasons we haven't.*"

- B. After showing the video, discuss it and tie in students' reasons lists (Teacher Reference, page 1.9). Students' lists need not contain all of the reasons shown.
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Discussion Goals

1. To compare marijuana and alcohol so students will see that these substances often are used for the same reasons.
 2. To clarify and reinforce reasons not to use marijuana and alcohol by showing how similar they are.
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“What are some of the reasons those teens gave for why people start using marijuana?” After each reason, refer to it on the students' marijuana list or write the new reason on the students' list.

For each new reason ask, *“Is this also true for drinking?”*

“What are some of the reasons those teens gave for NOT using marijuana?” After each reason, refer to it on the relevant students' list or write the new reason on the list.

For each new reason, ask, *“Is this also true for drinking?”*

Refer to the completed lists. Say, *“You have done a good job listing the reasons why people smoke, drink, and use marijuana, and the reasons not to - and showing how similar many of these reasons are.”*

“During Project ALERT, we'll be talking more about reasons not to use drugs. We'll also be learning skills that will help you resist the pressures to use them.”

6. Wrap-up (2 min.)

A. Homework:

1. Hand out *Test Your Drug IQ*. Say, *“This is an opportunity to see how much you already know about drugs.”*

“Answer the questions from your own knowledge. You are not expected to know all the answers.”

“After you have taken the test, ask your parent(s) or other trusted adult the questions. Put an ‘X’ by the answers your parents give.”

“Then compare your answers together.”

“Bring your homework in tomorrow for credit. At that time, I’ll give you the answers to take home to correct and discuss your tests with your parents.

“I’m also giving you a letter about Project ALERT that I want you to give to your parents before you ask them the questions in this week’s homework assignment. They will be involved in some other homework assignments, too, so it’s important that they know about these classes.”

Since the intent of the home assignments is to facilitate discussion about drugs with a parent, the assignments cannot be graded in the traditional way. Instead, many teachers provide participation points for completed assignments. A note signed by the parent verifies completion for those parents reluctant to return their responses to class.

- B. *“At the next session we’ll talk about what really happens when you smoke marijuana and cigarettes.”*
- C. Praise students for knowledge, interest, and attention.

TYPICAL STUDENT LISTS

Reasons Why People Smoke Cigarettes

1. Friends do it (peer pressure)
2. Cool, sophisticated
3. Rebellion
4. Parents smoke
5. Addiction
6. Think clearly
7. Curiosity
8. Nervous

Reasons Why People Use Marijuana

- ✓1. Friends do it (peer pressure)
- ✓2. Cool, sophisticated
- ✓3. Rebellion
- ✓4. Parents use it
- ✓5. Escape problems, responsibility
- ✓6. Cope with emotions (insecure, angry)
- ✓7. Dependence/addiction
- ✓8. Curiosity

Reasons Not to Smoke Cigarettes

1. Hurts your health (lung cancer, lung disease, heart attacks, heart disease)
2. Do worse in sports
3. Breath, clothes, and hair smell bad
4. Addicting
5. Trouble with family, at school
6. Harms others
7. Yellow teeth

Reasons Not to Use Marijuana

- ✓1. Hurts your health
- ✓2. Do worse in sports
- ✓3. Can't think clearly
- ✓4. Lose control of actions, thoughts
- ✓5. Can't drive safely
- ✓6. May cause dependence/addiction
- ✓7. Paranoid
- ✓8. Problems remain
- ✓9. Trouble with family, at school
- ✓10. Illegal

✓Also true for alcohol

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT CIGARETTES

1. **Myth:** Cigarettes help you think clearly.

Fact: It may seem like you are thinking more clearly, but smoking has no effect on the reasoning process. Nicotine is the substance in tobacco that is highly addictive. It is both a stimulant and a sedative to the central nervous system. The initial nicotine "kick," which stimulates the central nervous system and causes a sudden release of glucose, is followed by depression and fatigue, leading the smoker to seek more nicotine.

2. **Myth:** Cigarettes calm you down.

Fact: Many people believe this, but they really feel better only because they are addicted to nicotine. As with other addictive drugs, you begin to feel jittery if the level of nicotine in your body drops. If you are not addicted, cigarettes actually make you feel nervous.

3. **Myth:** Smoking keeps you thin.

Fact: Smoking stimulates the central nervous system, which can suppress appetite, but it doesn't change eating habits. Overall, this is not an effective way to lose weight.

4. **Myth:** It's easy to quit later.

Fact: Only 3% of daily smokers in high school think they will be smoking in 5 years. But over 60% are still regular smokers up to 9 years later. Usually people make three or more attempts before finally being able to quit.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT MARIJUANA

1. **Myth:** Marijuana makes uncomfortable feelings go away (fear, anger, depression).

Fact: You may feel less scared, angry, or depressed because marijuana temporarily covers up feelings; it doesn't make them go away. Some people actually get more depressed or anxious when they have used marijuana.

2. **Myth:** Marijuana makes you creative.

Fact: Sometimes marijuana makes a person feel creative while high, but actual performance is not better and is often worse. Marijuana can't make you become something you aren't. After the marijuana wears off, people often say that what seemed creative when they were high no longer makes sense.

3. **Myth:** Marijuana makes your problems go away (trouble with parents, school, or friends).

Fact: You may feel you have escaped your problems by getting high, but when the marijuana wears off, the problems are still there.

4. **Myth:** You can't get addicted to marijuana.

Fact: Increasingly, research is showing that long-term use of marijuana produces changes in the brain similar to those seen after long-term use of cocaine, heroin and alcohol. Chronic users can experience "withdrawal" symptoms (agitation, sleep problems) after stopping heavy use suddenly, as well as "tolerance" (needing larger doses of a drug to get the same desired effects once produced by smaller amounts).

5. **Myth:** Marijuana makes you a better dancer, talker.

Fact: Marijuana can create this illusion, which has been termed "magical thinking," but it can't make you be anything you aren't. If anything, you become less competent because marijuana interferes with memory, perception and coordination.

6. **Myth:** It is safe to drive after using marijuana.

Fact: Marijuana use makes driving more dangerous. It affects important skills needed for safe driving. The ability to concentrate diminishes and reflexes slow down, making it hard to respond to sudden, unexpected events. It also impairs coordination and the ability to judge distances and react to signals and sounds.

7. **Myth:** Since marijuana is "natural," it is much safer than other drugs.

Fact: Many "natural" substances also have toxic properties (poisonous mushrooms, mistletoe, tobacco). Heavy use of marijuana can adversely affect hormones in both males and females. Young men can have delayed puberty and young women can find that the drug disturbs their monthly cycle (ovulation and menstrual period). It can also damage the immune system causing greater risk of disease.

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOL

1. **Myth:** A can of beer will not have as much effect as a mixed drink (or a shot of liquor).

Fact: A can of beer, a glass of wine, a mixed drink, and a shot of liquor all have about the same amount of alcohol and will have about the same effect.

2. **Myth:** Alcohol is not a drug.

Fact: Alcohol is a drug that affects the brain. It slows down the brain area that controls judgment, thought, and muscular coordination.

3. **Myth:** Alcohol is not as dangerous as other drugs.

Fact: Alcohol can be deadly. Drinking a quart of vodka in one sitting can kill you. Even one drink can affect your judgment and cause you to lose control. Auto crashes are the leading cause of death among teenagers, and of these fatalities, over one third are alcohol-related.

4. **Myth:** Black coffee and a cold shower can sober you up quickly.

Fact: Only time sobers you. The liver needs one hour to burn up one ounce of pure alcohol (the amount contained in a can of beer, glass of wine, or mixed drink). Coffee and cold water may make a person less sleepy, but neither improves judgment or coordination.

5. **Myth:** Drinking makes your problems disappear.

Fact: You may feel you have escaped your problems by drinking, but when you get sober, the problems are still there.

6. **Myth:** Drinking makes uncomfortable feelings go away (anger, shyness, loneliness, frustration).

Fact: Alcohol may cover up uncomfortable feelings for a while, but they come back when you are sober again. Drinking isn't always a reprieve from uncomfortable feelings. The fact is that alcohol just as often has the opposite effect and intensifies feelings with sometimes catastrophic results: sadness (poor choices, crying jags, suicide) or anger (domestic violence, rage).

REASONS WHY PEOPLE USE DRUGS

(TYPICAL STUDENT ANSWERS, 2 PAGES)

ALL DRUGS

Friends do it (peer pressure).

You don't want to be different than your friends.

Others at a party are smoking or drinking.

To look cool, older, sophisticated.

To be more independent.

To be more mature.

To impress someone.

Parents say "Don't do it" (rebellion).

Parents do it.

To relax.

To relieve stress.

To have fun.

Curiosity.

Because you're bored.

Because it's there.

CIGARETTES

* To think clearly.

You feel bad when you stop (addiction).

Something to do with your hands (nervous).

* They calm you down.

MARIJUANA

* It makes uncomfortable feelings go away (fear, anger, depression).

* It makes you creative.

* It makes problems go away.

* It makes you a better dancer, talker.

MARIJUANA (cont'd)

It makes you high.

It makes things seem funny.

It helps you sleep.

ALCOHOL

* To make uncomfortable feelings go away (anger, shyness, loneliness, frustration).

To get high/drunk.

* To make problems go away.

Advertisements make drinking look cool, glamorous.

It's more accessible, seems more acceptable.

* A widely held myth. The statement is untrue. See *Myths and Facts for Cigarettes, Marijuana, and Alcohol* (pages 1.10-1.12)

REASONS NOT TO USE DRUGS

(TYPICAL STUDENT ANSWERS, 2 PAGES)

ALL DRUGS

It's bad for your health.

You can't play sports as well (cigarettes shorten breath, marijuana slows you down, alcohol interferes with coordination).

You can get into trouble.

It will hurt your parents (upset them).

It's a bad habit.

It might get you into the wrong crowd.

It's expensive.

CIGARETTES

Your breath (clothes, hair) smells bad.

Smoking causes cancer.

It's hard to stop once you start (cigarettes are addicting).

Smoking causes heart attack, heart disease.

Your teeth get yellow.

Your skin gets wrinkled.

Smoking harms others (secondhand smoke).

It's illegal for minors.

MARIJUANA

It interferes with your ability to learn (makes it hard to remember something you just read or heard; reduces your ability to think clearly and concentrate).

It can make you do things you wouldn't do if you weren't high (lose control).

It slows you down, distorts your perceptions, and reduces your coordination (bad for driving; bad for sports).

MARIJUANA (cont'd)

It can make you feel anxious or panicked.

It's illegal.

It can harm your reproductive health.

You can become dependent or addicted.

You don't really solve your problems (depression, anxiety) when you smoke.
As soon as the marijuana wears off, you're back where you started.

ALCOHOL

You can't think clearly, might do something you don't want to do.

You lose control, are out of it.

It slows driving reaction time and distorts perceptions.

You can become addicted.

It interferes with communication.

It doesn't help solve your problems.

It's illegal for minors.

You can overdose.

FACTS ON OTHER FORMS OF TOBACCO AND SMOKING BLENDS

CIGARS

- People who smoke cigars regularly get serious diseases and die from them. In fact, long term cigar smoking doubles your chance of dying from heart disease. The risk of lung cancer and death from cancer of the esophagus is 2-5 times higher in cigar smokers than in nonsmokers; death from cancer of the oral cavity is 3-8 times more likely, and the risk of death from cancer of the larynx is 10 times higher.
- Cigar smoke contains more carbon monoxide, ammonia and nitrogen oxides than cigarette smoke. And, a stogie has as much nicotine as several cigarettes. (Nicotine is the drug found in tobacco that causes addiction.) When cigar smokers inhale, nicotine is absorbed as rapidly as it is with cigarettes. For those who don't inhale, it is absorbed more rapidly through the lining of the mouth.
- Cigars are a major source of secondhand smoke and because of the kind of tobacco and the manufacturing process of cigars, many of the concentrations of carcinogens are higher than for cigarette smoke.
- Consider that it can take as long as forty-five minutes to an hour to smoke a cigar, compared with just a few minutes for a cigarette. Now, the exposure to secondhand smoke both for the smoker and those around the smoker becomes very significant.

SECONDHAND SMOKE

- Secondhand smoke, also known as passive smoking or environmental tobacco smoke, comes from two places: smoke breathed out by the person who smokes, and smoke from the end of a burning cigarette, cigar or pipe.
- More than 4,000 chemical compounds have been identified in tobacco and tobacco smoke. Tobacco smoke includes at least 60 different carcinogenic substances. Some of these compounds are tar, carbon monoxide, hydrogen cyanide, ammonia, benzene, formaldehyde, phenols and nicotine.
- Nonsmokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke absorb all of these chemicals just as smokers do. Because they are unfiltered, the concentrations of carcinogens in secondhand smoke are up to 100 times higher than in smoke inhaled directly through cigarettes and cigars.
- Exposure to secondhand smoke causes over 3,000 deaths from lung cancer among nonsmokers in the United States each year, and is linked to as many as 60,000 fatal heart attacks annually.
- Separating smokers and nonsmokers within the same air space may reduce, but does not eliminate, nonsmokers' exposure to secondhand smoke.

SMOKELESS TOBACCO

- Smokeless tobacco is chewed or sucked on. Its four primary forms are plug tobacco, loose-leaf tobacco, twist tobacco, and snuff.
- Smokeless tobacco users face an increased risk of cancers of the mouth, esophagus, lung, liver, and pancreas.
- Nicotine is the drug in smokeless tobacco that causes addiction.
- All forms of smokeless tobacco are addictive.
- The physiological and psychological processes that determine nicotine addiction are similar to those that determine addiction to such drugs as heroin or cocaine.
- Smokeless tobacco products are not a safe alternative to cigarettes.
- Smokeless tobacco users experience higher rates of such dental problems as receding gums, tooth enamel erosion and discoloration, tooth decay, and loss of both the senses of taste and smell.
- Smokeless tobacco manufacturers are actively and aggressively promoting starters, products that feature pouches and cherry flavoring, in order to expand the use of, and addiction to, products that were once used only by older men. *Monitoring the Future, 2005* reported that 10.1% of eighth graders have used smokeless tobacco.

HERBAL CIGARETTES AND SMOKING BLENDS

- Alternatives to cigarettes have become popular among teens and adults who are trying to quit cigarettes.
- Herbal cigarettes have been marketed since 1997 and are gaining in sales. Instead of tobacco and nicotine they contain catnip, wild lettuce, damiana, passion flower and marshmallow.
- Herbal cigarettes are often promoted as a safe alternative to tobacco smoking. However, a 2000 ruling by the Federal Trade Commission required makers of tobacco-free herbal cigarettes to stop making claims that “no additives” means a safer cigarette unless they had scientific proof that it was true. Manufacturers are required to prominently disclose on packages and ads that: “Herbal cigarettes are dangerous to your health. They produce tar and carbon monoxide.”
- Bidis are unfiltered, flavored (strawberry, vanilla, chocolate, cherry, raspberry and mango) cigarettes from India. They look like marijuana joints and contain higher levels of tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide than regular cigarettes.

- Bidis are hand-rolled by women and children and, according to a report by Human Rights Watch of New York, Indian bidi manufacturers employ several hundred thousand children as underpaid “bondage slaves,” some earning as little as 15 cents a day to roll 1,000 bidis.
- Flavored cigarettes in colorful wrappers have been introduced under the Camel and Kool brand names.
- Kreteks are Indonesian cigarettes containing approximately 60% tobacco and 40% shredded clove buds. Exposure to tar, nicotine, and carbon monoxide is higher from clove cigarettes than from regular cigarettes.
- Eugenol, the major active ingredient in cloves, has been used as a dental anesthetic for years. It has been associated with severe illnesses of the lungs and symptoms related to the respiratory tract. Because the backs of smokers’ throats may be anesthetized by eugenol, smokers may inhale more deeply and may not feel the harshness.

Sample Letter to Parent/Guardian

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Today we started a program called Project ALERT in your son/daughter's class. Project ALERT is an age-appropriate substance abuse prevention curriculum proven effective in reducing experimentation among teens, and in reducing usage among teens who experiment.

Project ALERT contains eleven lessons in its initial year that focus on alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and inhalants - those substances that are the first and most widely used by young people today. Project ALERT's focus is on motivating non-use, learning to recognize pressures to use, and on developing and practicing skills to resist these pressures.

Our school district is committed to providing the most effective approaches to preventing the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in our schools and communities. We know that prevention of drug use and abuse is most effective when it is a partnership between the community, the home and the school.

According to a nationwide survey released by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, youth who learn about the risks of drugs at home from their parents are much less likely to use drugs than those who do not. However, getting the message across is not easy. According to the Partnership's survey, virtually all parents (98%) reported talking to their kids at some point about drugs, but just 68% of the kids remembered the conversation, and only 27% reported learning a lot at home on the issue of drug use. Here is where the structured home learning opportunities within Project ALERT can help to focus discussion between you and your kids.

Your child will be bringing home five homework assignments that will involve you in discussion, sharing responses, and listening to oral reports. These Home Learning Opportunities will be for Lessons 1, 5, 6, 8 and 9.

Please be aware that this process and your responses will not be shared in class. These activities provide you an opportunity to communicate with your child about these important issues. If for any reason you are not comfortable with returning your responses to me, I will accept a note from you confirming the assignment has been completed.

If you have any questions, please contact me at:

Sincerely,

Name _____

Date _____ Period _____

TEST YOUR DRUG IQ

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT ALCOHOL, CIGARETTES, AND MARIJUANA?

Circle the right answer to each question. If you think more than one answer is correct, circle all that apply. After you have completed the test, read it to your parents or another adult in your family. Put an "X" next to each of their answers.

1. Some people become dependent on marijuana or alcohol as a way to feel good or to escape their problems.

True

False

2. Tobacco is a highly addictive drug, which means the body becomes physically dependent on it very quickly.

True

False

3. It's more dangerous to drive when you're drunk than when you're high on drugs.

True

False

4. Teenagers who smoke often have "smoker's breath" and yellow teeth.

True

False

5. If someone offers you marijuana and you don't want it, a good response is to

- a. say, "No, thanks."
- b. make a scene and put him or her down for smoking marijuana.
- c. say, "I don't like what it does to me."
- d. say, "Thanks a lot," and take a hit.

6. People who smoke don't become addicted to cigarettes until several years after they start smoking.

True

False

7. Losing control when you are drunk or high means you may do something you wouldn't do if you were not high.

True

False

8. Of everyone who has lung cancer, over 85% got it from smoking.

True

False

9. Alcohol can be deadly. If you drink enough alcohol at one time, it can kill you.
- True False
10. Smoking just one cigarette a week can cause coughing, wheezing and excessive phlegm production.
- True False
11. Almost any drug, if used for a long time, causes physical or mental dependency.
- True False
12. It is legal to sell cigarettes to any teenager.
- True False
13. Marijuana damages your lungs.
- True False
14. Heavy and chronic drinking can harm every organ and system in the body.
- True False
15. Smoking relaxes you even when you've never tried cigarettes before.
- True False
16. The main reason most teenagers continue to smoke cigarettes once they start is
- a. they think it makes them look cool.
 - b. they like spending so much money on cigarettes each week.
 - c. they like the way their breath smells.
 - d. they are addicted.
17. Having a bad "high" on marijuana means you might feel anxious, scared, uptight, or even terrified.
- True False
18. Advertisers try to make you believe that drinking alcohol will
- a. make you more popular.
 - b. make you throw up.
 - c. make you look glamorous, sexy, or macho.
 - d. get you addicted.
 - e. make you have a car crash.

19. More than four in five smokers want to quit. With a good smoking cessation program, 20-40% of the participants are able to quit and stay quit for at least one year.
- True False
20. Marijuana smoke contains some of the same cancer causing and toxic substances as tobacco, sometimes in higher concentration.
- True False
21. Marijuana is being cultivated to contain much higher THC content than it has when it grows in the wild. THC content is often as high as 20%.
- True False
22. If a parent or other family member is an alcoholic, you are much more likely to become an alcoholic.
- True False
23. People who smoke for many years are likely to develop
- a. bronchitis.
 - b. lung cancer.
 - c. heart disease.
 - d. cancer of the mouth, larynx, esophagus, or bladder.
24. Because marijuana is a “natural” substance, it is a safe alternative to drugs.
- True False
25. Teenagers start smoking because of
- a. pressure from peers.
 - b. pressure from ads, sponsorships and promotions.
 - c. pressure from themselves.
 - d. curiosity.
26. Teenagers drink because
- a. their parents drink.
 - b. they think it’s less harmful than other drugs.
 - c. advertising makes it tempting.
 - d. they want to rebel.

ANSWER KEY

(To be distributed after students and parents complete *Test Your Drug IQ.*)

1. True
2. True
3. False. It is just as dangerous to drive when you're high.
4. True
5. a and c
6. False. One or two cigarettes each day for a week can make you addicted. Nearly one-third of people who try a single cigarette eventually develop dependence on tobacco.
7. True
8. True
9. True. Alcohol depresses the nerves that control involuntary actions such as breathing, heart beat, and the gag reflex that prevents choking. A fatal dose of alcohol (too high a level of blood alcohol content) will eventually stop these functions.
10. True. According to the Surgeon General, these symptoms can be triggered with your first cigarette.
11. True
12. False. In all states you must be 18 or older to legally purchase cigarettes.
13. True. Marijuana has been shown to damage the bronchial airways. In addition, the same cancer-causing tars in cigarettes are also in marijuana.
14. True
15. False. Each cigarette you smoke makes your body less relaxed. It increases your heart rate, constricts your blood vessels, and raises your blood pressure.
16. a and d
17. True
18. a and c
19. True
20. True
21. True
22. True. This is called genetic alcoholism.
23. a, b, c, and d
24. False. Marijuana is a drug. Many naturally occurring substances can be dangerous if ingested (poisonous mushrooms).
25. a, b, c, and d
26. a, b, c, and d