

tional element is a peer-led discussion group.

- The “I Can Problem Solve” program, a Drug Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) model program, a Promising Program of the Department of Education and the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention among others, teaches children “how to think, not what to think.” It encourages teachers and parents to engage in an interactive problem solving style of communication in which children are asked questions to define the problem, guide consequential thinking, and guide thought about the child’s own and others’ feelings.
- Paulo Freire, a philosopher and major contributor to the field of education, went so far as to describe the traditional lecturing role of teacher as further oppression of the student. He promotes education that is dialogue-driven based on the student’s reflections on their own reality, utilizing critical thinking to empower students to create their own solutions based on these reflections.

Recommendations for conducting effective interactive learning.

- Adolescents have been found to be more likely to engage in interactive discussion after peer-counseled HIV education, than adult health care providers.
- Discussion should allow for informal language, which along with little time for caution leads to more openness.
- The NEA’s “Can We Talk?” program describes a natural approach to communication for all people young and old. It includes learning (getting information), reflecting (processing, filtering and evaluating information) followed by communicating (sharing practical information)

For more information, visit:

PartySmart.org/community/drugTalks.html



School & Community Drug Talks

Why is it just a discussion, instead of a lecture on drug facts?

Discussion has been an approved and recommended classroom technique for many years.

- According to the National Education Association (NEA), many national education studies have recommended that students be more active in the learning process, instead of passive recipients of knowledge. The NEA recommends that education be interactive which sharpens thinking skills by practice of independent thinking, critical thinking and creative thinking. Discussion has also been shown to develop language-processing skills. It has also been shown to enhance social skills and self esteem by making the students responsible for the knowledge.
- The NEA promotes the “Can We

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Talk?” program, which incorporates violence, sexuality and drug education. The program promotes discussion as the primary method of prevention.

- Rodney Skager, an expert in research of drug education programs, has recommended interactive teaching and learning strategies conducted in an environment that encourages questions and sharing of personal experience for more effective drug education.

Studies have shown that interactive drug education is more effective than lectures.

- Research on effective school-based drug education in Australia found that teaching should be interactive with a focus on community values, social context of use and the nature of drug harm.
- Interactive peer-led programs were found to be significantly more effective than non-interactive, teacher-led programs in preventing drug use.
- Many national education studies have recommended that students be more active in the learning process, instead of passive recip-

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ients of knowledge. Interactive learning sharpens thinking skills by practice of independent thinking, critical thinking and creative thinking, develops language processing skills, enhances social skills and self esteem by making the students responsible for the knowledge.

- The Upfront Program in Oakland, CA was labeled “an exemplary program” by the California Department of Education. It utilizes group discussion, and makes the classroom a safe space to explore issues surrounding drug use.
- A Meta-Analysis of California School-Based Risk Reduction Programs found that alternative interventions (independent thinking, coping, social skills, etc) have less impact on knowledge but more impact on attitudes and behavior.
- Discussion has been found to be an effective way to change attitudes. It encourages students to discover their own strengths and weaknesses, teaches students to think for themselves and allows students to learn from each other. After an interactive discussion students become more commit-

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ted to the actions discussed.

Interactive education has been utilized and promoted for health education by reputable sources.

- Centers for Disease Control (CDC) includes popular education in their “Guidelines for STD Prevention Community and Individual Behavior Change Interventions,” which define popular education as a social action that promotes participation of people and communities in gaining control over their lives, empowering people to act with others to bring about change. The discussion should consist of listening, participatory dialogue followed by action, envisioning positive change during the dialogue. The facilitator should describe what the participants see and feel, define the problem as a group, share similar personal experiences, question why the problem exists and develop action plans.
- The CDC and the Academy for Educational Development (AED) list HIV prevention interventions that are science-based and proven effective. One such intervention is the Mpowerment Project in which the major educa-