

We expect students, parents and community members to have questions about the Reveal what's Real (RwR) campaign. It is intended to challenge our students' perceptions of and attitudes about their normative behaviors. Below is a list of common questions and concerns, and suggestions for appropriately responding.

“Worsening” trends: I remember the percentage of students NOT drinking used to be in the 80’s, so more students must be drinking.

- RwR is now focusing its messaging on the percentage of students who reported NO alcohol use in the past 30 days versus in an “average week.” It’s logical a larger timeframe would capture more use.
- While it may appear that the percentage of students who don’t drink has dropped, we are actually seeing a gradual decline in substance use.
- Our hope is that this message is more believable.

Self-report data: *Isn’t the campaign based on data provided by student surveys? How do we know self-report data are reliable?*

- The annual student surveys Minnetonka students take are anonymous and completely voluntary. Individual responses are never analyzed independently. This is explained to students prior to administering the survey.
- Survey creators have incorporated items to identify inconsistent or highly improbable responses, and approximately 1-2% of respondents are omitted each year from the data set for this reason.
- Analysis of Minnetonka data indicates patterns that are consistently observed across time. Minnetonka’s findings are also very consistent with trends from state and national student surveys.
- The advantage of self-reported data is that it gives respondents an opportunity to identify their own perspectives and behaviors directly.

Alienating students who use: *What about the students who are using, aren’t we going to make them feel bad?*

- By focusing on communicating accurate data and using *positive* norms, images, and designs, the RwR Campaign is intended to increase support for healthy, positive decision making. It is not intended to induce shame or pass judgment on those who are using.
- Challenging “False Consensus,” the idea that others behave in a manner consistent with your own behavior, is an expected and essential component of this prevention strategy.
- The RwR communication effort is part of an integrated prevention approach of Tonka CARES. This initiative is one component of a comprehensive package of support services available to Minnetonka High School students. Other resources and efforts are dedicated solely to those who have experimented with substance use or are struggling with addiction.

Increasing denial: *Many individuals are already in denial about their friend’s or child’s substance use; won’t communicating that most students aren’t using contribute to this denial?*

- The primary intent of the RwR campaign is to support all students in making healthy decisions. For students who are in denial about their own use, the campaign draws attention to the fact that their behavior is not consistent with the majority of their peers’ behavior.

- If one believes that his or her child's or friend's behavior is typical, they are less likely to identify it as a problem. For this reason, RWR may motivate one to address concerns that could have gone unnoticed.
- Along with the RWR student campaign, Tonka CARES implements the KNOW the Power of Parents Campaign, which is intended to increase healthy behaviors among parents such as communication about substance use, family rules, and student norms.

More on Positive Community Norms

We know that...

- Most Minnetonka High School Students do not use alcohol or marijuana in a typical month.¹
- As do students elsewhere, the majority of Minnetonka High School students overestimate the prevalence of alcohol and marijuana use among their peers.¹
- Students tend to behave in a way that they believe is typical of and accepted by their peers.²
- Overestimating peer substance use is a proven risk factor for engaging in that behavior.³
- Positive Community Norms (PCN) is an effective strategy for correcting misperceptions.⁴

We believe that...

- We must balance hope and concern for creating a healthier community.
- There are many positives within our community that are worth growing.
- Our community is benefiting from this approach.

What it is...

- The PCN approach to improving community health is a transformative prevention framework built upon several theories of health behavior.
- This framework has been implemented in hundreds of communities across the country and has been tested and refined over time.
- Though Tonka CARES utilizes PCN as a framework for all of our prevention efforts, the RWR Campaign is the primary strategy aimed at reducing student misperceptions.

How it works...

- Using reliable student survey data, gaps are identified between the perception and reality that exists around student perspectives and behaviors.
- Using various health communications and marketing strategies, data describing the positive, healthy norms of a population are highlighted and shared in order to correct misperceptions.
- By bridging this gap, we create an environment that supports and celebrates healthy decision making, and over time, the community experiences a cultural transformation in which healthy norms are accurately perceived.

If you have additional questions or concerns about PCN or RWR, contact: rochelle.martin@minnetonkaschools.org

¹ Minnetonka Student Survey and Minnesota Student Survey Data

^{2,3} Berkowitz, A. D. (2004). The social norms approach: Theory, research and annotated bibliography. *Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention. US Department of Education.*

³ Donaldson, S. I., Graham, J. W., & Hansen, W. B. (1994). Testing the generalizability of intervening mechanism theories: Understanding the effects of adolescent drug use prevention interventions. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 17* (2), 195-216.

³ Tyas, S. L., & Pederson, L. L. (1998). Psychosocial factors related to adolescent smoking: a critical review of the literature. *Tobacco control, 7*(4), 409-420.

⁴ Perkins, H., Linkenbach, J. W., Lewis, M. A., & Neighbors, C. (2010). Effectiveness of social norms media marketing in reducing drinking and driving: A statewide campaign. *Addictive behaviors, 35*(10), 866-874.