



Raising Healthy Teens

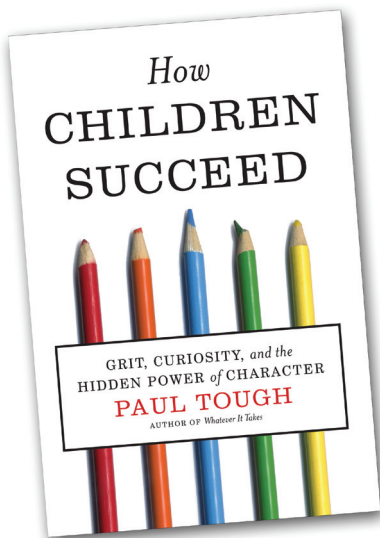
Promoting the Health & Safety
of Bristol-Warren Teens

Summer 2016

Learn More

“Overcoming adversity is what produces character. And character, even more than IQ, is what leads to real and lasting success.”

– Author Paul Tough



PEOPLE Magazine says: “Drop the flashcards — grit, character, and curiosity matter even more than cognitive skills. A persuasive wake-up call.”

Character, not IQ: The Real Key to Teen Success

All parents want their teens to set and achieve personal goals but what determines whether kids will succeed has a lot more to do with who they are than what they know, according to Paul Tough, author of *How Children Succeed*.

Typically, success has been associated with good grades, high test scores and other indicators of cognitive development but contemporary research in neuroscience, economics and psychology doesn't focus on IQ when determining who will be successful. The real keys to success are found in a person's character, not just religious or moral values, but skills and attitudes that parents and schools can cultivate in children.

Consider KIPP, a nationwide network of 183 non-profit public charter schools in 20 states, currently serving 70,000 students. Students there get two report cards at the end of each term: one for academic performance and one for character. The character report card has eight categories, including zest, grit, self-control, optimism, gratitude, social intelligence and curiosity. They're all character traits proven to help kids succeed.

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Some of the sub-categories include showing enthusiasm, finishing whatever the student begins, remaining calm even when criticized or otherwise provoked, getting over frustrations and setbacks quickly, recognizing and showing appreciation for others and an eagerness to explore new things.

Surely cognitive skills are important but if we focus more on character development — at home and in school — our kids are much more likely to succeed (and be happier), whatever their personal goals may be.

VAPING: A GROWING THREAT TO TEEN HEALTH

From 2011 to 2014, use of e-cigarettes increased nine-fold for high school students (1.5% to 13.4%) and more than six-fold for middle school students (0.6% to 3.9%) and the CDC pulls no punches when it comes to e-cigs: “Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which causes addiction, may harm brain development, and could lead to continued tobacco product use by youth.”

But there’s more than nicotine in most e-cigs. Independent laboratories have reported that liquids used with vaping devices have been found to contain traces of formaldehyde, benzene, cadmium, and diacetyl, a chemical that can lead to irreversible loss of lung function. Though the FDA plans to begin regulating e-cigs sometime this year, it’s still unclear whether any of these ingredients will be listed on warning labels on e-cig packaging.

Despite the big money fueling the increased use of e-cigs by youth, the CDC suggests several strategies local communities can use to fight back and reverse this trend. Parents, pediatricians, nurses, and other health care providers can set a positive example by being tobacco-free. They should talk to kids about why they shouldn’t use any tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.

Communities can take action too. The CDC recommends funding tobacco prevention, requiring age verification to make purchases, and restricting the number of stores that sell tobacco products and how close they can be to schools.

For more information, check out the CDC’s report, cdc.gov/vitalsigns/ecigarette-ads/.



Typical e-cig ads.



Kickemuit takes a “STAAND”

Across the nation and right here at Kickemuit Middle School, teens are taking responsibility for making good decisions — and encouraging their classmates to do the same.

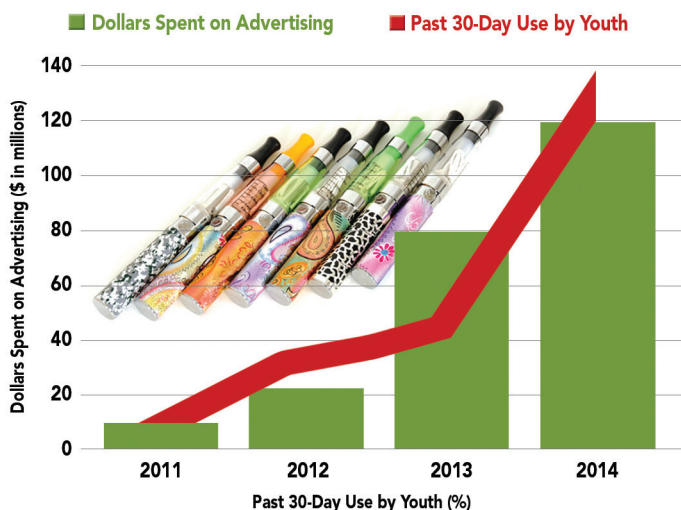
The middle-schoolers call themselves Students Taking Action Against Negative Decisions, and they’re committed to creating a community where young people make positive decisions that ensure their health and safety.

While all teens need adult guidance and support, ultimately when they’re out there on their own or with their friends, their decisions are what really count. STAAND is committed to influencing that decision making process. In addition to planning wholesome events for other students and their families, these KMS-ers promote several simple messages, including you can have a good time without taking drugs or drinking alcohol; bullies need to change their behavior; people shouldn’t be judged based on race, gender or sexual orientation. Certainly, parents, teachers, coaches and clergy promote all of these values, but their power multiplies when they’re reinforced kid-to-kid.

While they’re invested in building a safer, more healthy community for themselves and their peers today, STAAND members are also developing strong leadership skills that they’ll carry with them through life.

If you have a student at KMS or one who starts there in September, suggest they explore STAAND. It’s a great extracurricular activity open to all who want to make Bristol and Warren safer communities for kids.

E-CIGARETTE USE AMONG YOUTH RISING AS ADVERTISING GROWS



This graph shows that during 2011 to 2014, current e-cigarette use among high school students soared from 1.5% to 13.4%, and among middle school students from 0.6% to 3.9%. Spending on e-cigarette advertising rose from \$6.4 million in 2011 to an estimated \$115 million in 2014.

Kicking Butts

They don't smoke cigarettes and they don't think anyone else should either.

"They" are The East Bay Tobacco Youth Council, made up of students from Bristol, Warren, Barrington and East Providence – all committed to preventing tobacco use, the leading cause of preventable deaths in the U.S.

The Council meets once a month to plan activities. Students give presentations to their peers and other members of the community, including policy makers; create social media campaigns; organize and participate in no-smoking demonstrations; and study how Big Tobacco often uses advertising to lure kids into smoking or vaping by making it seem glamorous or cool.

The Council recently helped the RI Department of Health assess sales practices and advertisements in stores that sell tobacco. The students also participated in the "Zombie Walk" at the State House in Providence on National Kick Butts Day, a nationwide campaign for tobacco-free kids.



TEEN STRESS How Parents Can Help

Everyone — adults, teens, and even children — experiences stress at times. Stress can be beneficial by helping people develop the skills they need to cope with and adapt to new and potentially threatening situations throughout life. However, the beneficial aspects of stress diminish when it is severe enough to overwhelm a person's ability to take care of themselves.

The Center for Disease Control recommends the following stress-reduction tips that parents can reinforce with their teens and younger children. They work for stressed-out parents too!

- **Talk to and stay connected to others.** Talking with someone — a parent, teacher, coach or pastor — can help make sense out of your experience and figure out ways to feel better.
- **Get active.** Go for a walk, play sports, write a play or poem, play a musical instrument, or join an after-school program. Volunteer with a community group. Trying any of these can be a positive way to handle your feelings and to see that things will get better.
- **Take care of yourself.** As much as possible, try to get enough sleep, eat right, exercise, and keep a normal routine. Staying healthy, you will be better able to handle a tough time.

- **Take information breaks.** Pictures and stories about a disaster can increase worry and other stressful feelings. Taking breaks from the news, Internet, and conversations about the disaster can help calm you down.

Father Shares Story with Mt. Hope Prom-Goers

On Nov. 5, 2007, John Converse, 16, from Barrington, decided to get into a car with a drunk driver. Several minutes later, the car crashed into a telephone pole. John was partially ejected from the car and died at the scene, only a half mile from his home.

"This never leaves my head," Dan Converse, John's father, said at the beginning of his pre-prom presentation to Mt. Hope seniors.

Since his son's death, Converse's avocation is to talk about good decision making to as many teens who will listen. He sees what happened to his son as a series of bad decisions by several people on that fateful night nine years ago.

"John was a passenger," he recounted, "who made a choice not only to drink but also to get into a car with someone who was drunk. He also decided not to wear his seatbelt, which may have saved his life." He spoke about the driver making a bad decision to get behind the wheel and the bad decision



STAAND members from Mt. Hope High School with John's father Dan Converse.

the other two passengers made to just go along. He also called out the liquor store for selling the beer that led to his son's death.

On display throughout the presentation were posters of John waterskiing, playing soccer and wearing what Converse described as a "goofy" hat.

"Alcohol deceives you into thinking that you can do things that you shouldn't," he said, "so make the choice that you know is right in your heart."

The pre-prom event was sponsored by Mt. Hope STAAND.

Summer: A Risky Season for Teens



School's out for the summer. Teens look forward to more free time and some much-needed relaxation, but that freedom comes with risks that parents need to talk about to make sure a safe summer lies ahead.

Driving risks escalate. The AAA says Memorial Day kicks off the “100 deadliest days” for teen drivers. Over the past five years, the average number of crashes involving drivers ages 16-19 increased 16% per day during summer months compared with other days of the year and nearly 60% of teen crashes involved distracted drivers.

Certainly texting while driving, which is illegal in Rhode Island, is a distraction that can be eliminated if teens promise not to use their phones when they're behind the wheel, but the National Safety Council reports that passengers in the car are even a bigger distraction. Passengers increase the risk of a teen driver having a fatal crash by at least 44%. John Ulczycki, NSC vice president of strategic initiatives, says, “It's tragic that parents don't really appreciate the risks of passengers,” adding that passengers are a distraction the entire time a teen is driving.

Substance use sky rockets. National Survey on Drug Use and Health reports first-time use of most substances peaks during the summer months. More than 11,000 youths used alcohol for the first time; in other months, the daily average ranged from about 5,000 to 8,000 new users per day. And more than 4,800 youths used marijuana for the first time, whereas the daily average ranged from about 3,000 to 4,000 in other months.

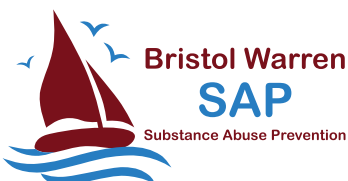
Conversations and rules reduce risk. Parents need a plan of action to help keep their teens summer-safe. Here's one plan recommended by prevention specialists. **1.** Set clear rules. **2.** Understand the risks and talk often about them with your teens. **3.** Monitor your teen's activities. **4.** Stay involved in your teen's life. **5.** Engage your teen in summer activities or work. **6.** Reserve time for family.

How Well Do You Know Your Teens?



If you can answer most of these questions correctly, you probably know your teen pretty well. If you don't know the answers to some of the questions, think of them as good discussion starters. Good luck — either way!

- What embarrasses your teen the most?
- What is your teen's biggest fear?
- What person outside the family has most influenced your teen's life?
- What are your teen's favorite and least favorite foods?
- What is your teen's biggest complaint about the family?
- What are your teen's favorite and least favorite subjects in school?
- Who is your teen's favorite teacher?
- What non-school book has your teen most recently read?
- What is your teen's most prized possession?
- Of what accomplishment is your teen the proudest?
- Does your teen feel liked by other kids at school?



Raising Healthy Teens is published by the Bristol-Warren Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition with permission from the South Kingstown Partnership for Prevention. For more information about keeping teens healthy and safe, contact B-W SAP Coordinators Ann Marie Roy at (401) 533-7448 or amfr@cox.net or Maria Ursini at bsapc@bristolri.us.

