

Durham School District Adopts 100% Tobacco Free Policy



Process of creating CHANGE

In the fall of 2001, ?Y youth and adult leaders from the Central region began what would become a year and a half long campaign to create a 100% Tobacco Free School (TFS) in Durham. ?Y began by developing critical awareness of the issues surrounding TFS. Adult leaders shared information with ?Y youth on the TFS movement in North Carolina, where at the time, only 15 schools had adopted a 100% policy against tobacco use. Youth learned about the importance of social norms and policy change for preventing the initiation of tobacco use, and subsequent tobacco addiction, among youth. They reviewed the current policy that existed at Durham County and recognized that adding a no use policy at athletic events would bring the policy to the 100% "gold standard". With this knowledge in hand, youth leaders went into their schools and community, collecting signatures for a Durham TFS and assessing the support within the community for such a measure. Between September, 2001 and May, 2002, ?Y sponsored over 10 school-wide promotional activities, including a special school edition (8,000 copies) of the Durham Herald Sun daily newspaper that focused on tobacco free schools.

In January, 2002, ?Y began planning their campaign in earnest and started to build the advocacy skills of youth. The ?Y team attended a school board meeting to observe how it works, and discussed how many members are on the Board, how many votes it takes to change a policy, and how the public can sign up to speak for no more than 5 minutes. The ?Y Director worked closely with youth built their skills in background research, presenting information and public speaking.

In January, ?Y also initiated a series of partnering meetings. The ?Y Team elicited the support of the Durham County Health Department, where the Board of Health passed a resolution endorsing 100% TFS. The Durham County health educator became a key partner in the campaign. The Durham Center (Durham County Mental Health) Prevention Director is also a key supporter. With his encouragement, the Board of Directors passed a resolution supporting 100% TFS. Both resolutions were sent to the Superintendent and School Board Chairperson. The Team met with a Durham County Commissioner, who supports TFS directly by helping to secure the support of the Durham County Manager in agreeing to comply with no tobacco use rules during school athletic events held at the Durham County stadium. A meeting with the

Durham Safe and Drug Free Coordinator led to a limited partnership, with the Coordinator not quite fully "sold" on the need for a 100% TFS.

In February of 2002, an essential partnership began: ?Y youth and adults met with a Durham County school board member who privately supported TFS. The member shared information on strategies for creating support for policy on the school board and reviewed the history of support for the current policy. Staff from the NC Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch (TPCB) held a meeting with ?Y Director and the Assistant Superintendent to share information about the TFS movement and the letters of support from public officials. The ?Y Director also presented to the Durham School Wellness Committee in hopes of receiving a letter of support, which unfortunately did not materialize.



At the end of February, ?Y had a milestone event: two ?Y youth presented compelling and well researched speeches to the school board. This was the first of several opportunities where youth were empowered to advocate for policy change to a formal decision-making body. The ?Y Team also presented to the Board in April and September. Other speakers at these events included parents, community members, agency leaders and TPCB

An event in March helped to solidify the ?Y team and build support for TFS in Durham. The TPCB hosted a workshop designed to build the skills of school and community based teams. ?Y youth had the opportunity to share their leadership skills as keynote speakers. Out of this meeting, two stronger partnerships emerged: The Safe and Drug Free Schools Coordinator became a full supporter, and the school board member publicly endorsed the work of ?Y toward 100% TFS policy change. The next step for the ?Y Team was conducting key informant interviews with principals. All 3 principals gave their full support for a 100% TFS policy and these results were shared with the School Board.

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Several setbacks occurred during the next phase of the campaign. The Safe and Drug Free Schools coordinator took another position in June, so ?Y "started over" by updating the new person hired in July. ?Y youth presented for the third time to the Board in September, and provided members with results from the Youth Tobacco Survey, TFS Fact Sheets, recent research supporting TFS and copies of petitions with 500 signatures. Community members also testified on their support for TFS in Durham. Despite the show of strong support, the Board had their lawyer draft 3 options that would be presented to the 44 site-based decision teams at the local schools.

While this School Board decision was frustrating and felt like a "stall tactic", the ?Y team decided to continue their more "friendly" advocacy strategy rather than focus on higher pressure tactics (such as generating media attention.) The ?Y youth worked on the "inside" as members of the site based decision making teams. Community members kept attention on the issue by calling and writing letters to Board members asking for specific details on when and how the decision would be made. They also continued to provide arguments for the importance of this decision in protecting the health of Durham youth and school employees. This was part of the advocacy strategy to keep the issue on the "front burner" as much as possible rather than letting it slide into obscurity.

?Y youth rose to the occasion by making the best of the opportunity to work as insiders in their schools -- one youth was able to convince her individual school to adopt the policy change regardless of whether the school district went with the policy! The ?Y Director also contacted each of the high school site based decision teams to provide them with the same information that school board members were given during the course of the campaign.

After receiving 27 positive endorsements from the site based teams in December, the School Board let ?Y and community members know that they would be considering the policy change at their February meeting. One year after the first testimony by ?Y youth, those same youth were publicly thanked by the Board members during the meeting where they voted unanimously to change to a 100% TFS policy to go into effect the next school year.

Type of Change:	Environmental Policy
Location of Change:	Durham County, NC
Reach of Change:	Students, staff & parents
Contact:	Bronwyn@dacinc.org

According to the US Preventive Task Force, creating 100% smoke-free environments is one the most effective strategies for reducing harm caused by tobacco smoke (www.thecommunityguide.org). Recent research also suggests that school policies restricting smoking by adults reduces the exposure of youth to



role modeling of the behavior, thereby reducing youth smoking rates [Poulsen, et.al (2002). Exposure to teachers' smoking and adolescent smoking behavior. *Tobacco Control*. September:11(3).] By choosing a TFS campaign in a large urban school district, the ?Y Team was able create change affecting thousands of students, parents and employees. The youth will no longer witness adults smoking (norm change) or be exposed to harmful tobacco smoke.

What we learned about CHANGE

- Be prepared! Build critical awareness while you develop a strategy that fits your setting: review the policy, study the policy-making process, know the 100% TFS research, understand issues from the school administrative perspective, etc.
- Find an "inside champion" who can help you understand the history/culture of your school board and determine whose support will be crucial for creating policy change before you go public.
- Empower students with skills & opportunities to analyze their strengths, develop strategies and advocate, especially within their spheres of influence among peers, teachers, parents and school officials.
- Cultivate support from key allies: Community leaders such as public health and school personnel, local officials, and even business owners appreciate the opportunity to join your efforts to create positive change for the health of the community.
- Follow-up! Letters and calls remind decision-makers that you're not going away.

