

Experts Agree that Marijuana and Learning Don't Add Up

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American School Counselor Association are among the nine signers of an open letter to parents entitled ***Experts Agree that Marijuana and Learning Don't Add Up***. They recognize that teens with an average grade of "D" or below are more than four times as likely to have used marijuana in the past year as youth who reported an average grade of "A." Significant consequences of marijuana that interfere with learning include negative effects on short-term memory, motivation, problem-solving, concentration and attention span.

The Academy also notes adverse effects of marijuana on "coordination, judgment, reaction time, and tracking ability contribute substantially to unintentional deaths and injuries among adolescents (especially those associated with motor vehicles.)"

The American Academy of Pediatrics wants parents and legislators to know it opposes the legalization of marijuana. This policy position outlined in the June 2004 issue of the Academy's Journal, *Pediatrics* concludes: "**Any change in the legal status of marijuana, even if limited to adults, could affect the prevalence of use among adolescents.**" The AAP Journal, *Pediatrics*, notes:

* Tobacco and alcohol products, both **legal** for adults 18 and 21 years of age, respectively, **are the psychoactive substances most widely abused by adolescents**. "...it does not follow logically that yet a third addictive psychoactive drug (marijuana) should be legalized. Many of the harms associated with alcohol and tobacco use stem from the widespread acceptability, availability, and use of these substances.

* Enforcement is another issue. **Law enforcement has found it difficult to meet its current regulatory obligations for tobacco and alcohol sells to minors**, creating doubts that marijuana laws could be enforced either.

* If marijuana is a legal drug, youth will likely consider it readily available. Surveys indicate that when **youth have the perception that marijuana is readily available, they are approximately 2.5 times more likely to use it.**

* Legal avenues to reduce tobacco (a legal drug) advertising that targeted children has been unsuccessful. One of the purposes of legal action against the tobacco companies, *Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement*, was just such an attempt. However, cigarette advertising in youth-oriented magazines increased by \$54 million after the *TMSA*.

Go to www.theantidrug.com for the open letter and links to the research cited. Share these facts about marijuana with your teens. Be clear about your expectations, because the rules you set and enforce today will make all the difference in your teen's life tomorrow.

Information provided by **San Dieguito Alliance for Drug Free Youth**
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