



Spotlight for Parents

Vaping is a National
Health Crisis for Youth

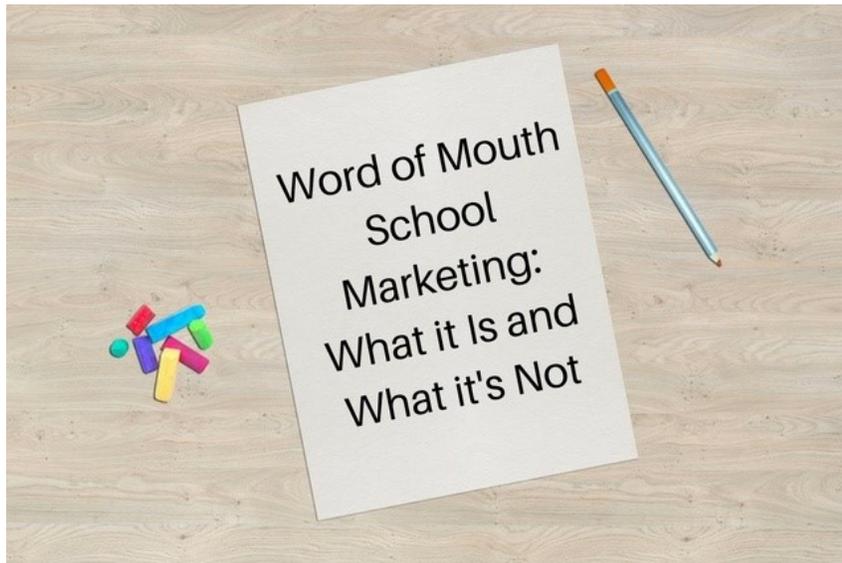
The numbers behind vaping continue to tick up ominously. The percentage of teenagers and middle schoolers who vape has nudged up close to some of the high-water marks the cigarette achieved in the same age group. A sudden whirlwind of deadly, vaping-related respiratory illnesses [recently swept across dozens of U.S. states](#), sickening more than 500 and killing eight.

And research is quietly confirming some of the more worrisome speculation about vaping: a [2016 Surgeon General's report](#) joins a growing body of evidence in concluding that adolescent exposure to nicotine—the addictive chemical is present in high concentrations in the vapor kids are inhaling—“may have lasting adverse consequences for brain development.” Other studies are beginning to suggest that [harmful metals](#) and [lung-damaging chemicals like diacetyl](#) may be inhaled along with the flavored vapor the industry claims is squeaky clean.

Avoid lectures about the risks: The urge to deliver dire warnings about the risks of nicotine addiction and long-term damage to the brains and lungs of kids is understandable, but studies show that middle school and high school students simply don't listen. The research is unequivocal on that point. In his 2014 book, [Age of Opportunity: Lessons From the New Science of Adolescence](#), the researcher and renowned expert on adolescent development Larry Steinberg summarizes: “most systematic research on health education indicates that even the best programs are successful at changing adolescents' knowledge but not in altering their behavior.”

Show them the money: Adolescents do respond powerfully to the idea that they are being taken advantage of, or are playing an unwitting role in a societal injustice. According to Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, a professor of cognitive neuroscience and author of [Inventing Ourselves: The Secret Life of the Teenage Brain](#), one major study from 2000 tested the effectiveness of a range of anti-smoking messages on adolescents. The most effective campaigns focused on the problem of second-hand smoke (putting younger children in danger, in particular) and on the idea that an adult industry was engaging in the “deceptive portrayal of a lethal product” to make money and hook kids. “If you focus on things like that, you can change attitudes,” she concluded.

For parents that might mean collecting relevant research, articles, and advertisements and then allowing students to draw their own conclusions about the motivations—and the honesty—of the tobacco and vaping industries. A Google image search of “[vaping and tobacco advertisements](#)” is a simple place to start. Other good resources: Stanford's [brilliant, encyclopedic overview](#) of tobacco and vaping ads and their [excellent 2019 study](#) of JUUL's marketing tactics, along with [Vox's thoughtful](#) coverage of Stanford's work.



Word of Mouth marketing is effective because it offers parents of school-age children the opportunity to directly convey testimonials and stories to other parents of school-age children. These testimonials and stories can dramatically illustrate the ways your child's school is educating and ministering to children and families in your community. They also offer a means for those prospects to see the school as a trusted resource, which in turn strengthens the brand of the school.

Word of mouth can also be of benefit when it comes to your school's retention efforts. The act of having you share testimonials and stories that convey your child's school's vision and mission to prospective families can reinforce for them their decision to place their children at the school.

You are a vital part of your child's recruitment process whether you are "officially" or "formally" a part of a marketing committee. Every time you share stories at a baseball game, or hang out with friends and talk about the wonderful learning, and growing your child is doing at school you are a part of the school's marketing program.

This is VERY important work, and one that you should be proud you are a part. For someone to become interested in pursuing something new a series of things has to happen. It takes 15-170 days and 65-440 touchpoints for a person to make a decision. That may seem like a lot, but in reality, every twitter, Instagram, and Facebook post count as a touchpoint. Sitting at dance practice or in the bleachers at a football game and talking about school activities or programs are creating touchpoints for someone.



As schools enter the full court press of recruitment season, it is vital that if you don't feel like you have enough or the right talking points that you reach out to the school administration. Ask for the "60 second elevator speech", gather brochures, pictures and materials you can give to friends and family.

Our schools don't have to have declining enrollments, the kids are out there, we parents need to create the touchpoints to peak interest in our wonderful schools. If you have questions or want to be a part of the recruitment and retention efforts at your child's school speak to the Principal.