



Smoke Signals

Subjects: Health, Language Arts, Math

Overview:

Students estimate the amount of money a non-smoking teen spends in a week, a month, and a year, and compare it with the expenses of a teen who smokes one, two, and three packs a day. They then research other reasons that teens should not smoke, and create an ad campaign geared toward young people emphasizing the financial and health benefits of not smoking.

Suggested Time:

1-2 Class Sessions

Resources/Materials:

- Student journals
- Copies of "When Smoking Is a Matter of Money" (one per student)
- Poster board, markers, crayons, old magazines, and other art materials that can be used to create students' advertising campaigns
- Reference materials with information about the health risks of cigarette smoking (computers with Internet access, encyclopedias, textbooks, library references)

OBJECTIVES:



Students will:

1. compare the amount of money a smoker and a non-smoker spends weekly, monthly, and annually
2. learn about the correlation between the price of cigarettes and teen smoking by reading and discussing "When Smoking Is a Matter of Money"
3. work in groups to identify reasons why young people should not smoke
4. create ad campaigns that encourage teens to quit or to not start smoking

Preparation:

-Read and make copies of "When Smoking Is a Matter of Money"

Procedure:

1. WARM-UP: In their journals, students respond to the following questions (written on the board prior to class):

- How much money would you estimate that a smoker spends on cigarettes ...
... a week? ...A month? ...A year?
- If the price of cigarettes were to go up, would fewer people smoke? Why or why not?"

2. After 5 minutes, discuss student responses as a class. To check students' estimates, assume a price of \$3.50 for a pack of cigarettes. Thus, a pack-a-day smoker would spend about \$24.50 a week, \$98 a month, and \$1,176 a year. A 2-pack a day smoker would spend \$49 a week, \$196 a month, and \$2,352 a year, and a 3-pack-a-day smoker would spend \$73.50 a week, \$294 a month, and \$3,528 a year. Invite students to compare this with what they estimate they spend daily, weekly, monthly, and annually on other things that they buy.



3. As a class, read and discuss "When Smoking Is a Matter of Money," focusing upon the following questions:

- What, according to a new study, is the link between teen smoking and the price of cigarettes?
- How did this study compare with other similar studies that have been done?
- What basic "economic rule" does this study help to prove?
- Why were some experts unsure that this rule would apply to cigarette smoking?
- Do you think the cost of cigarettes will have a bigger impact on the number of people who start smoking or the amount of smoking that current smokers do? Why?
- Do you think the study's findings are right?
- Is the cost of smoking the main reason not to smoke?

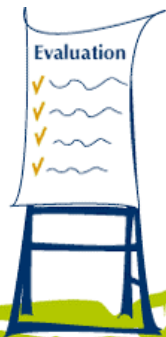


4. Encourage students to identify reasons why young people should not smoke, and list them on the board. (Reasons could include cost, the effects of smoking on the body, environmental damage, irritation to others and unattractive appearance.) Divide students into groups with each group responsible for focusing on one of these topics. Have each group brainstorm ways in which they could create an ad campaign for teens encouraging them not to smoke, focusing on their topic.

5. Each group, focusing on their specific topic, creates at least one media product (could be a poster, a print ad, a video or radio PSA, etc.) geared toward young teens encouraging them to quit or to not start smoking. Depending on time, this phase of the project can include either brief or more extended research on their topic. Similarly, the media production component can be as simple as creating a poster to as complicated as creating a video PSA. Regardless of the product, encourage each group to think about their target audience and how best to create an appealing and effective message.
6. The media products should be displayed around the school or broadcast by local public service outlets.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Which do you think is a better reason not to smoke: the amount of money that would be saved, or the health risks involved in smoking?
- How do you feel about current ad campaigns that try to convince kids not to smoke? Do you find them appealing? Convincing? Why or why not?
- How do you feel these campaigns could be made better? Is the problem the "message" (there simply isn't a compelling reason not to smoke) or the "medium" (how the message is communicated)?



Method of Evaluation:

Students can be evaluated based upon written journal entries, participation in class discussions, and thoughtful anti-smoking ad campaigns.

Extension / Reinforcement:

1. Survey smokers and potential smokers (including the teachers) at your school to determine whether a 10 percent increase in the price of cigarettes would affect their current smoking habits (or the possibility of their starting one). Include questions in your survey that would also help to determine what other factors people think would affect whether or not they quit, or start smoking, in the first place. Graph your survey results, and then share them with the class.
2. Compare your net financial gain or loss after 10, 20, and 40 years of smoking or not smoking. Assume a two-pack-a-day habit for the smoker and that the nonsmoker, rather than spending the money on cigarettes, puts the same amount of money into a money market account instead and earns an average of 6% a year. To simplify the calculations, have students assume that the nonsmoker simply puts the money in the bank at the beginning of the year and that the smoker buys his or her supply for the year at the same time.

Answer:

After one year, the smoker will have spent \$2,352, while the nonsmoker will have \$2,493.13 in the bank. By the end of ten years, the smoker (assuming no inflation) will have spent \$23,520. The nonsmoker would have a bank account of \$32,861.30. After 20 years, the smoker (again, assuming no inflation) will have wasted \$47,040. The nonsmoker, by contrast, will have \$91,710.89 to spend. After 40 years, the smoker will have lost \$94,080, while the nonsmoker would have \$385,840 – probably enough to buy a house with cash!

3. Create an ad campaign for a different "target group" (i.e. women, minority smokers, older smokers, etc.) to encourage them to stop or to not start smoking. To do so, you will need to determine which factors might have more impact on these target groups that might not mean as much to teens.
4. Visit The Truth.com (<http://www.thetruth.com>) and compare its ad campaigns against smoking with the ones that you and your fellow classmates created. Also with the smoking-related public service announcements (PSAs) you have seen on television. Which ads do you find to have the most impact? Smallest or no impact? Select one of the ads at The Truth.com and one of the PSAs that you have seen on television and write a critique comparing the impacts of each.



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When Smoking is a Matter of Money

By Eric Nagourney

Getting people to quit smoking may be hard, but discouraging them from starting, at least when they are young, may be as simple as raising the taxes on cigarettes.

A new study reports a link between the price of a pack of cigarettes and the likelihood that a teenager will start smoking. After surveying a total of 12,000 8th- and 10th-grade students for seven years and taking into account the local price for cigarettes, the researchers concluded that a 10 percent increase in price decreased the odds of teenagers' starting smoking by as much as 10 percent.

The study was conducted by ImpacTeen, a research partnership at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and by researchers from the University of Michigan.

The researchers said the study helped resolve a debate over whether cigarette prices affect the number of teenagers who begin smoking. Previous studies also showed that higher prices did decrease the number of children smoking and the amount they smoked.

The lead author, Dr. John A. Tauras, said the evidence was clear. Indeed, to hear Dr. Tauras tell it, the study says almost less about public health than it does about basic economics: if you charge too much for something, fewer people are likely to buy it. Noting its addictive nature, other experts have doubted that this would hold true for tobacco.

The study also illustrates another fundamental of many teenagers' lives. "Youths have very little disposable income," Dr. Tauras said. "They have certain fixed dollars each month to spend."

Competitive Media Reporting, an organization that monitors magazine advertising.