

SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PREVENTION FIRST

TIP SHEET

15 IDEAS TO CONNECT WITH SCHOOLS

This tip sheet presents ideas for activities and types of information you can provide to students and teachers to keep them engaged with prevention if in-class YPE presentations are not an option at this time.

It's a challenging time for everyone. Education looks different. Prevention work looks different. Providers are required more than ever to be innovative and demonstrate due diligence in prevention efforts. As preventionists, it's important to acknowledge the challenge and remain connected with school administrators and students.

When it comes to YPE, the ideal is that your model program has a virtual learning option, you have your linkage agreement, and you are set to start virtual YPE classes at your schools. But more likely, your model program is still trying to adapt to a virtual world and you may be having difficulty figuring out how to deliver YPE to students in your community. School environments are continuing to adapt, requiring school administrators to focus on planning and delivering virtual or hybrid learning programs.

The reality is that you may not be able to deliver model program YPE lessons at the moment. However, continued engagement with youth in schools is important even if you cannot deliver in-person lessons.

The following ideas can assist you with maintaining engagement:

1. Keep current on updates. Check YPE curriculum developer websites for online adaptations and guidelines for virtual adaptations and implementation (if provided). You might find tips or resources to share with students. Use Prevention First as a resource for updates as well. TTA staff have been working hard to provide continuous updates from developers. And don't forget to get the most "real time" updates on Groupsite: <https://pfgroups-site-sapp.groups-site.com/>.
2. Create a video to illustrate a prevention topic, provide an overview on specific substances, or share important substance use data with youth. This would be a great activity to engage your YAC members with. They can help brainstorm ideas and create the videos. Here's a resource to help you get started: <https://visme.co/blog/video-tips/>.

For more information on how to communicate with schools, review the [***Engaging with Schools During Remote Instruction***](#) tip sheet available on the Prevention First website.



Prevention First
2800 Montvale Drive
Springfield, IL 62704

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3. Give students a guide for keeping healthy and active. For example, watch a YouTube video to learn a new art skill or use a fitness app to do a virtual fitness challenge with a friend. Ask your YAC members to brainstorm ideas and make a list. Share the list on social media and ask youth to add to the list by sharing what they have been doing to stay healthy and active.
4. Create a catchy “101” things lists, such as “101 things to do to remain drug free”, “101 boredom busters”. Engage your YAC members by asking them to brainstorm ideas to include on the list. Conducting a quick Google search can provide resources like this one: <https://www.granitewellness.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/101-things-to-do-instead-of-drugs.pdf>. Share the list through email, social media, or the virtual classroom channel.
5. Provide prevention-themed puzzle activities, like a crossword puzzle or word scramble, around YPE terms and concepts that can be distributed by teachers. Here is a site that you can use to create a variety of puzzles: <http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com/>.
6. Provide online resources that inform youth on substance use prevention and ask teachers to share them with students, such as these Scholastic magazines:
 - http://headsup.scholastic.com/sites/default/files/NIDA_YR18_INS2_downloadall_508.pdf.
 - http://headsup.scholastic.com/sites/default/files/NIDA_YR18_INS1_StudMag_2pg_508.pdf
7. Send a WWYD (What Would YOU Do?) prevention scenario. Create a scenario in the format of a video, a document, or a presentation. Your YAC members could offer relevant, realistic suggestions for the script and help create the scenarios in the format you choose. Teachers can ask teens how they would respond. Provide a guide with discussion questions, such as: Did this scenario make you think about a time when you faced a similar influence in your life? In this scenario, were the decisions made and the consequences realistic? What would you have done the same or differently from the performers? What alternative (other route) could have been chosen?
8. Send critical-thinking questions for teachers to use for discussion. For example: What are some bad influences in your life? They can be things you see or experience in your life that make you think about doing things that you know aren't good for you. What are some good or positive influences in your life? How have they enriched your life? They can be people, things, activities, events, etc. How are you a positive influence on people in your life? Who are you a positive influence for? Consider questions around coping skills for dealing with social isolation, out-of-school time, etc.
9. Host a virtual scavenger hunt by guiding students towards prevention-related websites and having them look for information about prevention. Students could work individually or in teams.

Here are a couple of resources with tips for creating virtual scavenger hunts:

 - <https://blog.reallygoodstuff.com/internet-scavenger-hunt-how-to/>
 - <http://mhbombers.com/technology/Links/How%20to%20Make%20Online%20Scavenger%20Hunts.htm>.
10. Develop a new resource or share an existing resource for parents and ask the school to share it on their website, via email, or in an online newsletter. For example, start conversations around substances; set expectations; provide resources like DEA's Drugs of Concern, etc. For resource materials and links, check out <https://www.prevention.org/professional-resources/prevention-resources-%E2%80%93-general/parentscaregivers-help/> or <https://www.prevention.org/covid-19>
11. Sponsor an essay or drawing contest for youth around the theme of “Why I am drug free.”
12. Ask teachers to help students create a class video compilation about prevention and what they know about being drug free. (Students can create individual videos to be combined into a class video.)

13. Provide teachers with ideas about structuring a research project for youth about depictions of drug use in the media and how this portrayal can be detrimental to youth.
14. Help teachers brainstorm ways to incorporate prevention messages into current curricula.
15. If the classroom is using social media, consider engaging students through social media challenges, trivia questions, and quizzes. For example, challenge students to create a haiku related to prevention to be posted on Twitter or Facebook. Or present a prevention trivia question using the Instagram Quizzes feature (<https://www.proprofs.com/c/lms/instagram-quizzes-everything-you-need-to-know/>).

Ideally, materials and activities would be most impactful if distributed and supported by teachers. If you already have a strong relationship with the school, work with classroom teachers to develop a plan for conducting prevention-related activities. If accessing students through the classroom teachers is not possible, try reaching out to school administrators to discuss how you can get materials distributed to youth, perhaps through student email accounts, school social media, or school newsletter.

If you are not able to access youth through schools, consider choosing materials and activities that you can distribute on your social media platforms (and tagging local schools and/or youth organizations). You can also engage community partners who have access to youth and who might be willing to share substance use prevention resources.

Pick one or two ideas from the list above or try something different. Make a plan and don't be discouraged. This is an evolving situation. If you are hitting a wall with accessing youth within the schools to deliver YPE, make a plan to check back with school administrators periodically. The key is to stay connected and to remind them that you are a credible, reliable resource on prevention and you are there to support them and their students. Demonstrate an understanding, "we will get through this together" attitude and continue to promote the benefits and importance of prevention services.

Do you have any strategies that have worked for you to stay connected with youth in the schools?

If you would like to share them to help other providers, we would love to hear from you on Groupsite!