

Our Data, Our Voice

Youth Creating Positive Community Change

Our Data Our Voice

Team Mentoring and Social Media tools in a community wide education campaign known as Our Data Our Voice were used to build youth and community capacity in creating community change.

Students from two Portland high schools were recruited by Oregon Partnership as teen activists and social agents. Working with team mentors, the students collected data about underage drinking and substance abuse using surveys and focus groups and disproved a community perception that most youth were abusing.

Both groups conducted pre- and post-surveys and were able to show that as the *perception of use* decreased, *use* also went down.

Their data showed that 70 percent or more of their classmates were not binge drinking and were refraining from using drugs. At one high school, for example, the students using social media tools to gather data and launch a campaign saw a 28 percent decrease in school infractions. At both schools, alcohol and marijuana use have decreased since the onset of the campaign two years ago.

Campaigns using social media tools have proven helpful in supporting policy change and together have had significant impact. The actual number of students, schools and community members that support policy changes was higher than most students perceived the number to be, particularly in relation to stricter enforcement of existing policies. By pairing multiple strategies (youth mentoring, media campaigns and policy change) Our Data Our Voice provides a comprehensive approach for community- level change.

