

# **List of Cannabis Model Programs for School District or Charter School Consideration**

Minnesota Department of Education

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# **Legislative Charge**

Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 120B.215 Education on Cannabis Use and Substance Use.

Subdivision 1. Model program.

The commissioner of education, in consultation with the commissioners of health and human services, local district and school health education specialists, and other qualified experts, shall identify one or more model programs that may be used to educate middle school and high school students on the health effects on children and adolescents of cannabis use and substance use, including but not limited to the use of fentanyl or mixtures containing fentanyl, consistent with local standards as required in section <a href="mailto:1208.021">1208.021</a>, subdivision 1, paragraph (a), clause (6), for elementary and secondary school students. The commissioner must publish a list of model programs that include written materials, resources, and training for instructors by June 1, 2025. A model program identified by the commissioner must be medically accurate, age and developmentally appropriate, culturally inclusive, and grounded in science, and must address:

- (1) the physical and mental health effects of cannabis use and substance use by children, adolescents, and persons under 25 years of age, including effects on the developing brains of children, adolescents, and persons under 25 years of age;
- (2) unsafe or unhealthy behaviors associated with cannabis use and substance use;
- (3) signs of substance use disorders;
- (4) treatment options; and
- (5) healthy coping strategies for children and adolescents.

#### Subdivision 2. **School programs.**

- (a) Starting in the 2026-2027 school year, a school district or charter school must implement a comprehensive education program on cannabis use and substance use, including but not limited to the use of fentanyl or mixtures containing fentanyl, for students in middle school and high school. The program must include instruction on the topics listed in subdivision 1 and must:
- (1) respect community values and encourage students to communicate with parents, guardians, and other trusted adults about cannabis use and substance use, including but not limited to the use of fentanyl or mixtures containing fentanyl; and
- (2) refer students to local resources where students may obtain medically accurate information about cannabis use and substance use, including but not limited to the use of fentanyl or mixtures containing fentanyl, and treatment for a substance use disorder.
- (b) District efforts to develop, implement, or improve instruction or curriculum as a result of the provisions of this section must be consistent with sections <u>120B.10</u> and <u>120B.11</u>.

Subdivision 3. Parental review.

Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, each school district shall have a procedure for a parent, a guardian, or an adult student 18 years of age or older to review the content of the instructional materials to be provided to a minor child or to an adult student pursuant to this section. The district or charter school must allow a parent or adult student to opt out of instruction under this section with no academic or other penalty for the student and must inform parents and adult students of this right to opt out.

#### Subdivision 4. Youth council.

A school district or charter school may establish one or more youth councils in which student members of the council receive education and training on cannabis use and substance use, including but not limited to the use of fentanyl or mixtures containing fentanyl, and provide peer-to-peer education on these topics.

# **Executive Summary**

In 2023, the Minnesota Legislature enacted Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.215, requiring comprehensive education on cannabis and substance use for middle and high school students. This new law requires the Commissioner of Education, in collaboration with health and human services officials and local education experts, to identify and publish model programs by June 1, 2025. These programs must be science-based, medically accurate, developmentally appropriate, and culturally inclusive. Instruction must cover the physical and mental health effects of substance use, including cannabis and fentanyl, identify signs of substance use disorders, and promote healthy coping strategies.

Beginning in the 2026–27 school year, all Minnesota school districts and charter schools must implement a comprehensive education program on cannabis use and substance use. The curriculum must also respect community values, encourage communication with trusted adults, and refer students to medically accurate local resources. Additionally, parents and adult students have the right to review instructional materials and opt out of the program without academic penalty. The statute also allows for the creation of student-led youth councils to promote peer education on substance use topics.

Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 120B.215 Education on Cannabis use and Substance Use was reviewed, and 11 prevention content requirements were identified that are directly related to information and activities intended to educate students about cannabis' harms. Also identified in the statute were nine implementation requirements. Subsequently, a thorough review of published literature and online sources was conducted to identify English language, school-based, relatively current (developed and/or updated no later than 2020) cannabis prevention programs. Eleven school-based prevention programs with original curriculum were identified that met these criteria.

A rating procedure was applied to determine the alignment of each of the 11 prevention programs with the 11 statute content requirements. Each program was assigned a "Yes" or "No" score for each content requirement. A "Yes" rating meant that the program's curriculum addressed the content requirement, with the understanding that the program's attention to the requirement could vary from minimal (for example, one sentence about a specific cannabis harm) to a very thorough treatment of the topic (for example, details of the signs of addiction). A "No" rating was assigned when the program was absent of any educational information about the specific content requirement.

Through the rating process, three programs were identified as having the best alignment to the required content requirements. The three programs identified were:

- Cannabis: The Facts You Need to Know;
- Marijuana Prevention Plus Wellness; and
- Smart Talk: Cannabis Prevention and Awareness Curriculum.

The statute content requirements were reviewed again and each of the three programs' "Yes" ratings were assigned a score (1 = minimal, 2 = moderate, 3 = strong) to identify the programs' depth of coverage of the respective content requirements. This procedure resulted in the following relative ranking of the model programs:

- 1. Smart Talk: Cannabis Prevention and Awareness Curriculum;
- 2. Cannabis: The Facts You Need to Know;
- 3. Marijuana Prevention Plus Wellness. The report provides more details about each program.

Please visit MDE's Health Education page to find more detailed information about this list including a report and short video about the list of cannabis model programs that will be available for educators in fall 2025. Lastly, while it is not required for a school district or charter school to use one of the programs listed, the list and rubric provided below may be useful to school districts and charter schools in their own decision-making process.

## Introduction

The Minnesota Prevention Alliance Foundation (MPAF), a 501c3, with consultation from a group of Research Advisors, entered into a contract with the Minnesota Department of Education to work to fulfill the cannabis health education requirements specified in Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 120B.215 Education on Cannabis Use and Substance Use. This statute states "(t)he commissioner of education, in consultation with the commissioners of health and human services, local district and school health education specialists, and other qualified experts, shall identify one or more model programs that may be used to educate middle school and high school students on the health effects on children and adolescents of cannabis use and substance use, including but not limited to the use of fentanyl or mixtures containing fentanyl, consistent with local standards as required in section 120B.021, subdivision 1 . . . The commissioner must publish a list of model programs that include written materials, resources, and training for instructors by June 1, 2025."

This list, in compliance with Minnesota statute, identifies cannabis model programs that school districts may choose from and implement in their schools for the 2026–27 school year. School districts may be currently implementing a substance use prevention program that may or may not provide specific cannabis and fentanyl educational components. To meet both student educational and health needs, as well as the requirements of this statute, school districts with an existing prevention strategy should evaluate their own programs. Based on this evaluation, districts may need to determine necessary next steps and whether any supplemental materials are required. All districts, including those new to implementing prevention curriculum, may select from the identified model programs.

To reduce youth-substance-use initiation and minimize harm from drug use, prevention education is also needed (Prevention | National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)). Whereas an important goal of the statute is to identify cannabis-specific prevention programs, there are advantages to schools employing a broader health education program that includes a wider scope of prevention. Additionally, schools will be implementing new health standards in the coming years which will also cover the requirements from this statute.

# **Analysis**

## **Steps for Identifying Model Programs**

Described below are the steps for determining the model cannabis prevention programs. The steps include identifying the specific educational requirements stated in the statute, the process of reviewing existing cannabis prevention programs, and selecting among the model programs.

## **Review of the Statute: Criteria**

Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 120B.215 Education on Cannabis Use and Substance Use was reviewed to identify prevention program requirements. Eleven content-related and nine school implementation-related requirements were identified. The content requirements are directly related to information and activities intended to educate students about cannabis' harms. A list of these requirements (from subdivision 1) is provided below.

#### **Curriculum must consist of the following:**

- 1. Suitable content for middle and high school students (age and developmentally appropriate);
- 2. An administration guidance/manual; and
- 3. Content that is grounded in science and medically accurate.

#### **Curriculum must educate about:**

- 4. Physical effects of cannabis use;
- 5. Mental effects of cannabis use;
- 6. Effects of cannabis use on developing brains up to age 25;
- 7. Unsafe or unhealthy behaviors associated with cannabis use;
- 8. Signs of cannabis and other substance use disorders;
- 9. Healthy coping strategies;
- 10. Harms and adverse effects of all substances; and
- 11. Dangers of fentanyl.

Implementation requirements at the school level provide essential administrative and policy guidelines to support the rollout of prevention curricula in the 2026–27 school year. Implementation by schools must be culturally inclusive (subdivision 1); be respectful of community values (subdivision 2); be supportive of students discussing cannabis harms with parents (subdivision 2); allow a parent, guardian, or adult student to review the

content of the instructional material (subdivision 3); allow a parent, guardian, or adult student to opt out (subdivision 3); provide training of staff to deliver the prevention program (subdivision 1); provide references to and referral information regarding local treatment (subdivision 2); and provide references to local resources (subdivision 2). Schools may also establish one or more youth councils that provide education for students to learn peer-to-peer training (subdivision 4).

#### Literature Search

A wide-ranging search was conducted of English language, school-based, relatively current (developed and/or updated no later than 2020) cannabis prevention programs. As noted above, given the direction and language in the statute, the search was limited to prevention programs that focused specifically on cannabis use. The following data sources were included in the search (listed alphabetically):

- Google
- Google Scholar
- National Academy of Science's Blueprint for a National Prevention Infrastructure
- Southwest Prevention Technology Transfer Center's Guide to Online Registries for Programs and Practices
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration's Focus on Prevention
- UCLA's Substance Use Prevention Evidence-Based Resource (SUPER)
- Washington State Institute for Public Policy's Benefit-Cost Reports

This search criteria identified 15 candidate cannabis prevention programs. However, four of them (Archdiocese of New York, Cannabis Policy Resource Center, Preventing Marijuana Use, and Project Here) do not offer their own curriculum and instead reference other existing programs. They are removed from the list, resulting in 11 candidate programs eligible for further review.

# **Rating Procedures**

A rating procedure was first applied to determine the alignment of each of the 11 prevention programs with the 11 statute content requirements. That is, for each program, a "Yes" or "No" score was assigned for each content requirement. A "Yes" rating meant that the program's curriculum addressed the content requirement, with the understanding that the program's attention to the requirement could vary from minimal attention (for example, one sentence about a specific cannabis harm) to a very thorough treatment of the topic (for example, details of the signs of addiction). A "No" rating was assigned when the program was absent of any educational information about the specific content requirement. See Table 1 to view all of the candidate model program ratings. The first three programs in the list (above the double line) were selected as model programs. The non-model programs (below the double line) are ranked within their group based on the number of "Yes" ratings. Given that many non-model programs had the same number of "Yes" ratings, there are ties in their rankings.

**Table 1: Cannabis Prevention Programs and Statute Content Requirements** 

Candidate Model Programs	1. Middle/High School	2. Administration manual	3. Science -based	4. Physical effects	5. Mental health effects	6. Brain development effects	7. Safety Concerns	8. Addiction	9. Coping	10. Harms from all substances	11. Fentanyl harms	Total Yeses
<u>Smart Talk</u>	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	N	$N^3$	9
Cannabis: The Facts	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Y <sup>1</sup>	$N^2$	$N^3$	9
Marijuana PPW	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	$N^2$	N	9
Stand with Me, Be Drug Free	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	N	Υ	N	N	N	N	6
The Tea on THC	N	N	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	N	Υ	N	N	6
Prevention Action Alliance	Υ	N	Υ	Υ	Υ	N	Υ	N	N	N	N	5
K.N.O.W.	N	N	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	N	N	N	N	5
Center for Community Research	N	N	Y	Υ	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	5
Cannabis & Public	N	N	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	Υ	N	N	N	N	5
<u>Health</u>												
Health Preventing Marijuana Use	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	5

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Additional coping skills are also provided by developer with separate resources.

Based on this process, three programs stood out as superior, each having "Yes" ratings for the same 9 of 11 content requirements. Thus, the following three programs (in alphabetical order) are best aligned with the content requirements of the statute:

- <u>Cannabis: The Facts You Need to Know</u> (Scholastic and the National Institute on Drug Abuse)
- Marijuana Prevention Plus Wellness (Chudley Werch, PhD)
- Smart Talk: Cannabis Prevention and Awareness Curriculum (Stanford Medicine REACH Lab)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Prevention curriculum for all substances provided by the developer with a separate resource.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Fentanyl prevention curriculum provided by the developer with a separate resource.

Two content requirements absent from each of the three model programs are "10. Harms of all Substances" and "11. Fentanyl Harms." However, the developers of the programs created additional prevention resources separate from the program that address these statute requirements. More information about these supplemental resources is provided below in the section "Details of Programs."

None of the non-model programs had more than six "Yes" ratings and most lacked two key requirements central to the statute: providing middle and high school curriculums and having an administration manual.

## **Thoroughness Ratings of Model Programs**

After identifying the model programs, a closer review of the nine "Yes" ratings for each model program was done. Program materials were rated on their depth of coverage of the statute content requirements. A 3-point rating scale was applied to each content requirement per program (1 = minimal, 2 = moderate, 3 = strong). Descriptors of each rating option are as follows:

- 1 = Minimal: The requirement was only minimally addressed and without much detail (for example, single sentence that heavy and persistent cannabis use may lead to an addiction).
- 2 = Moderate: The requirement was minimally addressed but with detail (for example, single sentence that cannabis use may harm teen brain development in ways that may negatively affect learning and mental health).
- 3 = Strong: The requirement was addressed in great detail (for example, the curriculums for the middle and high school programs were developmentally adjusted; a particular cannabis harm is described in great detail and is part of an activity).

The rankings for each content requirement per program are shown below in Table 2.

Table 2: Ratings of Depth of Content Coverage for Each Model Program

Selected Model Programs	1. Middle/High School	2. Administration manual	3. Science -based	4. Physical effects	5. Mental health effects	6. Brain development effects	7. Safety Concerns	8. Addiction	9. Coping	10. Harms from all substances	11. Fentanyl harms	Total
Smart Talk	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	N	$N^3$	26
Cannabis: The Facts	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	1	$N^2$	$N^3$	23
Marijuana PPW	3	3	3	3	2	1	2	1	3	$N^2$	N	21

Note. Rating scale: 3 = strong; 2 = moderate; 1 = minimal

This procedure resulted in the following relative ranking of the model programs:

Rank 1: Smart Talk: Cannabis Prevention and Awareness Curriculum (Stanford Medicine REACH Lab)

The program from Stanford Medicine REACH Lab had the strongest ratings (8 of 9), one moderate rating, and no minimal ratings.

Rank 2: Cannabis: The Facts You Need to Know (Scholastic and the National Institute on Drug Abuse)

The Scholastic and the National Institute of Drug Abuse program had many strong ratings (6 of 9) but fewer than the Smart Talk program, two moderate ratings, and one minimal rating.

Rank 3: Marijuana Prevention Plus Wellness (Chudley Werch, PhD)

This program received the fewest strong ratings (5 of 9), two moderate ratings, and two minimal ratings.

In summary, while all three model programs are well-aligned with the content requirements in the statute, they have differences in terms of overall quality and offerings.

# **Details of Programs**

The three model programs are listed in order of their relative ranking based on the procedure noted above. (See Table 1 for the full list of the available 11 cannabis prevention programs and their Yes/No ratings.)

# **Model Programs**

Rank 1: Smart Talk: Cannabis Prevention and Awareness Curriculum



**Developer:** Stanford Medicine REACH Lab

**Description:** This theory-based and evidence-informed cannabis prevention resource consists of a set of toolkits that address the following cannabis-related topics: cannabis-free brain; effects of cannabis on the body; how cannabis affects the whole community; how industry is misleading youth and skills to decode marketing tactics; and improving coping skills.

Each toolkit comes with activities, online quiz games, presentation materials, and resources. As noted by the developers, this prevention program is aimed at changing adolescents' attitudes toward and misperceptions about cannabis; increasing their refusal skills to the influences of marketing and social media; reducing stress

and depression, which have been linked to cannabis initiation and use; improving coping skills; and decreasing intentions and actual use of all cannabis products. Some activities encourage students to discuss various cannabis-related topics with a trusted adult and/or peer.

**Materials:** Quizzes, activity worksheets, presentation materials and resources, follow-up discussion guides and activities to promote discussion with parents/caregivers, and a teacher's guide

**Grade levels:** Separate curriculum for elementary, middle school, and high school

Time duration: Five class periods

Language(s): English and Spanish

Cost: Free

## Other curriculum from the developer:

- Prevention curriculum that addresses tobacco: <u>Tobacco Prevention Toolkit</u>
- Prevention curriculum that addresses fentanyl and other opioids: <u>Fentanyl and Opioid Awareness and</u>
   Overdose Prevention

#### Rank 2: Cannabis: The Facts You Need to Know



# Cannabis: The Facts You Need to Know

Created by: Scholastic and the National Institute on Drug Abuse 2022

Developer: Scholastic and the National Institute on Drug Abuse

**Description:** This cannabis prevention program seeks to increase student understanding of the health effects and risks of cannabis use, including the negative effects of cannabis on the developing brain, learning, and addiction. As stated on the website, this program will "help students make healthy choices by sharing the article 'Cannabis: The Facts You Need to Know,' the online interactive 'Cannabis and the Brain,' and the activity sheet 'Help Spread the Facts About Cannabis.'" A unique feature is an activity to improve student skills in analyzing and interpreting information and data.

**Materials:** Activity worksheets, article on cannabis harms, online interactive exercise focusing on cannabis and the brain, and a teacher's guide

**Grade levels:** Same curriculum for middle school and high school

Time duration: One class period

Language(s): English

Cost: Free

#### Other curriculum from the developer:

- Information about fentanyl: Fentanyl DrugFacts | National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
- Information about other substances: <u>DrugFacts | National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)</u>
- Coping skills: <u>Nurturing My Mental & Emotional Health | National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)</u>;
   Coping With Stress Details Kahoot!
- Parent resource: <u>Start A Conversation: 10 Questions Teens Ask About Drugs and Health | National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)</u>
- Other educational resources for educators: <u>Teachers: Classroom Resources on Drug Effects | National</u>
   Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

## Rank 3: Marijuana Prevention Plus Wellness (Marijuana PPW)



Developer: Chudley Werch, PhD

**Description:** This program is designed to educate students on cannabis harms and increase health-enhancing behaviors, with a focus on physical activity and sports, healthy eating, getting adequate sleep, and practicing stress control, such as improving self-regulation skills. Notable features of this program are the inclusion of preand post-test surveys to monitor program outcomes and a counselor-led brief intervention for students who may have a substance use problem.

**Materials:** Activity worksheets, goal tracking chart, screening tool for substance use issues, and teacher's guide.

Grade levels: Separate curriculum for elementary, middle school, and high school

Time duration: One class period

Language(s): English

Cost: \$599\*

\*Price as of June 30, 2025. Email <u>Info@preventionpluswellness.com</u>, call (904) 472-5022, or refer to their website for any price changes after this date.

#### Other curriculum from the developer:

- Evidence-based prevention curriculum that addresses substances in general
- Parent resource

# **Additional Comments on Meeting Statute Requirements**

Supplemental materials are required to address some content and implementation statute topics not available in any of the model programs, including:

- Local prevention resources,
- · Local referral and treatment information, and
- Delivering curriculum that is culturally informed and respectful of community values.

Also, a handful of content areas were inadequately addressed by all model programs and may merit supplemental material (for example, the impact of tetrahydrocannabinol [THC] on brain development past adolescence; effects of high-potency THC on mental health). Other topic areas that should be supplemented can be determined through an alignment assessment of the selected program to the forthcoming Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards in Health.

A substantial body of prevention research is available to help teachers deliver a program in such a way that it is culturally inclusive and respectful of community values. School districts already implementing a substance use program will need to import cannabis-specific and fentanyl-specific content into their current program that aligns with the criteria laid out in the statute. Please note that this criterion is also reflected in the forthcoming Minnesota K–12 Academic Standards in Health and can be used for alignment and gap analysis. Additionally, local school and community groups such as a local youth council, elders/knowledge keepers from local tribal nations and indigenous communities, and licensed health teachers may inform needs and provide culturally appropriate information as well.

Finally, various training programs exist or can be developed to educate school districts and the substance-use prevention educators prior to fall 2026. Such trainings will benefit from a focus on implementation of each of the specific programs, how to adjust an existing school prevention program to meet the cannabis education statute, best practices for training youth to be peer-to-peer leaders, and other topics.

## **Conclusion**

Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 120B.215 Education on Cannabis Use and Substance Use provides a comprehensive framework for substance use prevention education, requiring schools to implement age-appropriate, medically accurate, and culturally inclusive curricula by the 2026–27 school year to middle and high school students. The statute outlines 11 key content requirements focused on the health risks of cannabis and other substances, particularly fentanyl, while also addressing healthy coping strategies and signs of substance use disorders. In addition, it mandates nine school implementation requirements to ensure effective delivery, protect student rights, and provide referrals to local prevention resources and treatment options.

Of the 11 identified candidate cannabis prevention programs, three were selected among them based on their alignment with the statute requirements. While these programs aligned best with the requirements, all three will need to be supplemented in various capacities, such as including a list of local resources to share with students and families. The supplementation process should be informed by a gap analysis of the programs

compared to the statute requirements and by groups such as a youth council, elders/knowledge keepers from local tribal nations and indigenous communities, and health teachers.

# **Identified Program Links**

The following list provides the full link to the identified cannabis programs. This list is organized in alphabetical order.

- Cannabis and Public Health: (https://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/site.html)
- <u>Cannabis: The Facts You Need to Know</u>: (https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/parents-educators/lesson-plans/cannabis-the-facts-you-need-to-know)
- <u>Center for Community Research</u>: (https://www.ccrconsulting.org/initiatives/cannabis-public-health/resource-library)
- K.N.O.W. 4 Yourself: (https://www.know4yourself.org/)
- <u>Marijuana PPW</u>: (https://preventionpluswellness.com/products/evidence-based-marijuana-preventionplus-wellness)
- <u>Microlearning Toolkit</u>: (https://pttcnetwork.org/products\_and\_resources/microlearning-toolkitcannabis-prevention-101)
- Prevention Action Alliance: (https://preventionactionalliance.org/resources/marijuana-toolkit/)
- <u>Preventing Marijuana Use</u>: (https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/sites/default/files/2022-04/DEA-Marijuana-Prevention-Summary-%282022%29-Compliant.pdf)
- Smart Talk: (https://med.stanford.edu/cannabispreventiontoolkit.html)
- <u>Stand with Me, Be Drug Free</u>: (https://matforce.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/drug-prevention-resource-guide-2024.pdf)
- The Tea on THC: (https://teaonthc.org/)

# **Acknowledgement**

The List of Cannabis Model Programs for School District and Charter School Consideration was prepared by Minnesota Prevention Alliance Foundation on behalf of the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). It was created in consultation with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) as well as other qualified health education experts.