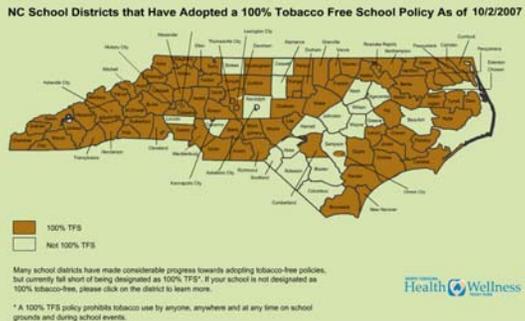


What Factors Promote the Adoption of Tobacco-Free School Policies?

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BACKGROUND

- Comprehensive tobacco-free school (TFS) policies that are enforced
 - lead to significant reductions of youth tobacco use¹⁻³
 - are part of a comprehensive tobacco control program to prevent youth tobacco use.⁴
- Two basic approaches used by states to mandate TFS policies:
 - statewide TFS legislation
 - district-level policy advocacy.
- 61 of NC's 115 (53%) school districts had passed TFS policies as of August 2005, using district-level policy advocacy
- This study uses data from TFS districts to guide remaining school districts in TFS policy adoption



CONCLUSIONS

- October 2007: 94 of 115 (82%) NC school districts had adopted TFS policies.
- Rapid adoption of TFS policies in NC, with its economic and cultural history of dependence on tobacco, is a tremendous success story.
- Statewide funding, leadership, grassroots organizing, and optimal communication strategies have had a rapid and dramatic effect on adoption of TFS policies in the state.
- In July 2007, NC legislature passed law mandating adoption of TFS policy in all remaining NC school districts by August 2008.



RESULTS

Effective Leadership from Organizations/Individuals in Positions of Influence

Leadership of the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund

"This [funding] has been crucial and is still crucial. The district has shown a lot of improvement in having someone focused on and dedicated to this." (Safe and Drug Free School Coordinator)

Political Leadership

"I felt the effects of that [letter from the Governor] quick. One Board member called when he got it and said 'I got this letter - where are we at with this policy?'" (Superintendent)

Leadership from Technical Assistance Providers

"[The Tobacco Free Schools Director] was an important liaison and sounding board and gave us resources so that we could get the experience of others. She was a great support." (Superintendent)

Grassroots Organizing from Community Coalitions and Youth Groups

Strong Local Coalitions Promoted Policy Adoption

"[We involved] school counselors, Health Department and extension services, the community, school nurses, the superintendent, School Board members. . ." (School Board Member)

Youth Involvement and Empowerment

"I think just coming from the youth was a big message to the board members and teachers. They saw it was coming from a student so something must be wrong." (Student)

Communication Strategies that Optimally Position Policy Adoption and Compliance

Messages about adult role modeling and the health effects of tobacco use

"We made people aware of what kinds of messages we're sending to our children through tobacco use. When you put it in light of the youth, people are willing to comply." (Principal)

Demonstration of local support for policy adoption

"We surveyed. . . students and parents at basketball games. The surveys helped a lot, so we could say principals and the public don't think it's a big deal." (School Employee)

Communicating the success of policy adoption in other districts

"By showing that the policy has worked in other districts, we were able to convince the School Board that enforcement is not a big problem." (Coalition Coordinator)

LIMITATIONS

- No interviews in districts that had not passed TFS policies to compare strategies
- Unmeasured factors (lobbying, school board members' experience) may have had impact as well

METHODS

Sample (n = 118)

- Key informants in 46 school districts that passed TFS policies Dec. 2001-Aug. 2005
- Identified through state/local networks, personal recommendations, public information about policy passage
- Special role/knowledge of TFS policy adoption in their districts
- Participation rate = 94%

Procedure

- Survey adapted from previously published work (of first 14 districts)
- Telephone interviews (~ 20 minutes)

Analysis

- Coded, reconciled by 2-3 researchers
- Interviews reviewed 3 times:
 - Themes (frequency of response)
 - Context
 - Representative quotes



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