

## TEN GOOD REASONS TO HAVE A 100% TOBACCO-FREE POLICY

1. **COMPLIES WITH STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS PROHIBITING SMOKING IN SCHOOL BUILDINGS.** New York education laws prohibit tobacco use in school buildings and on school grounds.<sup>1</sup> State public health law prohibits smoking in work places, including schools, school grounds, and all vehicles transporting children and school personnel.<sup>2</sup> Federal law bans smoking in all indoor facilities owned or leased by schools.<sup>3</sup> Over 70% of adults support smoke-free policies.<sup>4</sup>
2. **PROVIDES A HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENT FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF BY REDUCING EXPOSURE TO SECONDHAND TOBACCO SMOKE.** Secondhand smoke causes premature death and disease. Children are at higher risk for asthma and asthma symptoms, ear infections, and respiratory illnesses such as colds and coughs.<sup>5</sup> These illnesses also contribute to increased absenteeism from school.
3. **CHANGES THE NORMS REGARDING TOBACCO USE.** People tend to act in accordance with group expectations and behaviors.<sup>6</sup> Adopting a Tobacco-Free School Policy reinforces the norm that most people don't smoke (over 80% of New Yorkers don't smoke).<sup>7</sup>
4. **PROTECTS CHILDREN FROM DEVELOPING AN ADDICTION TO TOBACCO.** Ninety percent of adult smokers began in their teens.<sup>8</sup> Students who attend schools with tobacco-free policies that are enforced are less likely to use and become addicted to tobacco.<sup>9</sup>
5. **REINFORCES AND SUPPORTS INSTRUCTION IN THE CLASSROOM AND OTHER PROGRAMS.** Students are taught about the hazards of tobacco use, how to resist using it, and they are subject to the extracurricular codes on tobacco use and possession. Allowing adults to use tobacco on school grounds sends a conflicting message to students.
6. **PROVIDES POSITIVE ADULT ROLE MODELS FOR STUDENTS.** In 2006, nearly 42% of middle school students and 43% of high school students reported having seen adults smoking cigarettes on school property during the past 30 days.<sup>10</sup> A 100% tobacco-free school policy represents a firm commitment by the school administration, teachers, and parents to prohibit tobacco use, and provides positive role models for students.
7. **COUNTERACTS THE TARGETING OF CHILDREN BY THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY.** The tobacco industry loses millions of customers who die or become disabled from tobacco use. They need new users. Internal industry documents indicate that tobacco companies have purposefully marketed to children as young as 14.<sup>11</sup>
8. **PREPARES STUDENTS FOR TOBACCO-FREE WORKPLACES AND COMMUNITIES.** With passage of the New York State Clean Indoor Air Act in 2003 and similar laws being passed in communities, states, and countries worldwide, tobacco-free worksites and communities are becoming the norm.
9. **REDUCES THE RISK OF FIRES DUE TO SMOKING.** Fires caused by smoking materials (ex. lighted cigarettes) are the leading cause of fire deaths in the U.S.<sup>12</sup> These materials tossed into trash cans and on the grounds put students and staff at increased risk of injury due to fire.
10. **PROTECTS SCHOOLS FROM THE RISK OF FUTURE LIABILITY.** Litigation related to exposure to secondhand smoke has been successful in recovering damages from employers who failed to provide a safe, smoke-free work environment. With the rise in the number of children with asthma this may be more cause for concern if symptoms are triggered when a child is exposed to tobacco smoke at school.

Adapted from North Carolina's 100% Tobacco-Free Schools initiative funded by the Health and Wellness Trust Fund. (<http://www.tobaccofreeschoolsnc.org/BenefitsOfTFS.aspx>)

- <sup>1</sup> New York State Department of Education Commissioner Regulation is available at: [www.emsc.nysed.gov/sss/Laws-Regs/](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/sss/Laws-Regs/)
- <sup>2</sup> New York State Department of Education Commissioner Regulation is available at: [www.emsc.nysed.gov/sss/Laws-Regs/](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/sss/Laws-Regs/)
- <sup>3</sup> United States Department of Education—No Child Left Behind Act available at [www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html)
- <sup>4</sup> RTI International. (2007). *Independent Evaluation of New York's Tobacco Control Program Final Report 2007*. Research Triangle Park, NC: RTI International.
- <sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2007). *Children and secondhand smoke exposure excerpts from the health consequences of involuntary exposure to tobacco smoke: a report of the surgeon general*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007.
- <sup>6</sup> Asch, S.E. (1951). Effects of group pressure on the modification and distortion of judgments. In Guetzkow, H. (Ed.) *Groups, Leadership and Men: Research in Human Relations*. Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Press.
- <sup>7</sup> RTI International. (2007). *Independent Evaluation of New York's Tobacco Control Program Final Report 2007*. Research Triangle Park, NC: RTI International.
- <sup>8</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (1994). *Preventing tobacco use among young people—a report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- <sup>9</sup> Kumar, R., O'Malley, P.M., & Johnston, L.D. (2005). School tobacco control policies related to students' smoking and attitudes toward smoking: national survey results, 1999-2000. *Health Education & Behavior*. 32(6),780-94.
- <sup>10</sup> New York State Department of Health. (2006). *New York State Youth Tobacco Survey 2006*. Albany, NY: Tobacco Control Program, New York State Department of Health.
- <sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2000). *Reducing tobacco use: a report of the surgeon general*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- <sup>12</sup> Hall, J.R. (2006). *The smoking-material fire problem*. Quincy, MA: National Fire Protection Association. Retrieved on November 14, 2007 from [www.nfpa.org/assets/files//PDF/OS.SmokingMaterials.pdf](http://www.nfpa.org/assets/files//PDF/OS.SmokingMaterials.pdf).