

e-Edition Plus

A current events feature for teaching with electronic editions.

By Emilia Pastina

Student study shows a link between movies and drinking

Do movies affect how kids behave? That question has been debated for years across America, as people try to figure out whether seeing risky behaviors in movies can encourage kids to act the same.

Often the debate has focused on violence, drug use and smoking, but a new study has put underage drinking in the spotlight.

The study compared the behavior of elementary and middle-schoolers whose parents didn't allow them to watch R-rated movies with those who were allowed to watch the restricted films "all the time."

When it came to alcohol, there was a big difference between the groups, according to researchers at Dartmouth Medical School.

Almost 25 percent of students whose parents let them watch R-rated movies "all the time" had tried a drink without their parents' knowledge, the study found. But just 3 percent of those who were "never allowed" to watch R-rated movies had tried.

The study, which was made public in the May issue of the "Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs," surveyed more than 2,400 students in Grades 5-8 over a two-year period.

The study began with the 10- to 14-year-olds filling out paper surveys.

Researchers followed up 13-26 months later with a touch-tone telephone survey.

The study didn't measure how often students drank alcohol, but asked if they had it without their parents' permission and how often they were allowed to watch R-rated movies.

"There are lots of things that

contribute to why you do something," said Dr. Susanne E. Tanski, an assistant professor of pediatrics at Dartmouth Medical School and lead author of the study, in a CNN article. "But seeing things onscreen makes behaviors more normal."

By the numbers

In the United States, the minimum age to legally drink alcohol is 21.

However, the 2009 Monitoring the Future Survey by the University of Michigan found that 37 percent of eighth graders and 72 percent of 12th graders had tried alcohol.

More than 90 percent of high school seniors and 60 percent of eighth-graders claim it's fairly easy or very easy to get alcohol, the survey found.

And even more disturbing, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that 29 percent of high school students said they recently rode one or more times in a car that was driven by someone who had been drinking. About 10.5 percent of those same teens said they had driven a car themselves at least once when they had had a drink.

For health's sake

Kids and teenagers who drink alcohol are more likely to have problems in school and in social relationships with other people. But the American Academy of Pediatrics points out that the dangers are long-lasting and serious.

A policy statement in an April Pediatrics journal notes that underage alcohol use is a major contributor of accidental injury, homicide and suicide.

It also increases the chances young people will take part in other dangerous activities, such as substance use, unsafe sex and violence.

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A new study has found that elementary and middle school students who were not allowed to watch R-rated movies were less likely to try drinking alcohol.

Talk About the News

- **Underage drinking is a serious issue that can lead to problems in school, with the law and socially. Drinking at a young age can also lead to health problems and even death. As a class, talk about alcohol — why some kids and teens drink, the peer pressure to try it and the dangers of using it. Together, come up with ways to encourage students your age not to drink.**

Learning Standard: Engaging peers in constructive conversation about matters of public concern by clarifying issues, considering opposing views, applying democratic values, anticipating consequences and working toward making decisions.

Explore Your e-Edition



- **Movie ratings set guidelines and help parents determine appropriate movies for their children. Using today's movie listings in the e-Edition, choose a movie you have seen. Write a review of the movie. Tell your audience what you liked or didn't like about it and what ages the movie is good for.**

Learning Standards: Developing and applying critical standards for individual use; focusing on meaning and communication while listening, speaking, viewing, reading and writing in personal, social, occupational and civic contexts.

- **Often, kids and teens try alcohol because of peer pressure. However, students who make the right choices have the power to influence, too. Find an article in today's e-Edition that tells about a young person who made a good decision. Write a journal or blog entry about what the person did or is doing. Then write about the good choices you are making and how you can encourage others to make good choices.**

Learning Standards: Responding to a variety of texts by making connections to students' personal lives and the lives of others; writing fluently for multiple purposes.

- **Kids and teens who drink or do other dangerous things are often looking for ways to fit in. Read today's e-Edition, including the classified and display ads, to find positive ways young people can get involved in groups or activities, including such things as joining a sports team, volunteering or getting a part-time job. Create an e-Edition ad highlighting the positive things you found.**

Learning Standards: Reading and writing fluently, speaking confidently, listening and interacting appropriately, viewing critically and representing creatively; acquiring information from multiple sources.

How Well Did You Read?

Understanding what you read is a skill that will help you all through life. Review the story about movies and underage drinking by answering the questions below.

1. **According to the story, the legal age to drink in the United States is:**
 - A. 17
 - B. 18
 - C. 20
 - D. 21
2. **The person quoted in the 11th paragraph says that seeing someone doing something in a movie makes the behavior seem more:**
 - A. Fun
 - B. Normal
 - C. Dangerous
 - D. Wrong
3. **According to the story, a dangerous thing that kids and teens say they have done is:**
 - A. Drank alcohol
 - B. Rode in a car with a driver who had a drink
 - C. Drove a car when they had a drink
 - D. All of the above
4. **According to the story, a 2009 survey found what percentage of 12th graders had tried alcohol?**
 - A. 37 percent
 - B. 60 percent
 - C. 72 percent
 - D. 90 percent
5. **According to the story, what percentage of eighth graders said it was very easy or fairly easy to get alcohol?**
 - A. 37 percent
 - B. 60 percent
 - C. 72 percent
 - D. 90 percent