

Influencing Our Children's Choices



High school teacher Jennifer Eng has used real stories to inspire her students for years. However, something unexpected happened when she started using the book *Under the Influence: The Town That Listened to its Kids* at Glenn High School.

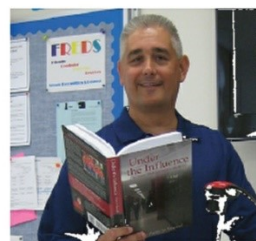
The students engaged in a lively debate when they read about student drug surveys. Marijuana was also a “hot topic” and many students believe that efforts to legalize marijuana “prove” that it is not harmful. The class then educated their teacher about e-cigarettes.

“I had no idea that e-cigarettes are being used to smoke illegal drugs,” Ms. Eng confided.

Ms. Eng also reads two-minute true-life stories from the book to teach lessons about character, values, and responsibility.

“Real stories are one of the most powerful teaching tools because they show real life consequences. This helps students make healthy choices,” Ms. Eng said confidently.

In fact, her students were so attached to the book, they wanted to take it home. Students like to find their own answers and the book contains “self-help” hotlines and online resources.



Coach Mike Muse, health and honors health teacher at East Forsyth High School, uses his classroom sets of the book in a different way.

“I use the book as a supplement. I tend to use the Teen Handbook in the back and start with the Top 10 Stressors for Teens,” Coach Muse said.

He also uses the research, statistics, and bullet points to add relevance to the State mandated lessons. Additionally, he has found the book very helpful when he has a substitute teacher.

“Each student is given a book and assigned to read two or three stories and then answer the questions in the book. Sometimes students will write that they can relate to the story because it is something that is happening in their family,” Coach Muse said.



This year, a corporate donor gave a classroom set of *Under the Influence* to Western Rockingham Middle School. Health teacher Brittany Morphies said, “I have found that the Health Core Curriculum is great for general ideas. It has information that you can store in your head. But most kids do not like to learn that way. The stories in *Under the Influence* give students a picture, and they need that real life picture to apply the material to their own lives.”

Though Ms. Morphies has since transferred to another school, she plans to use short stories in the book as “Warm Ups” and “Writing Prompts” to get her students focused on the topic of the day. She also plans to use the template, which ties over 150 stories in the book to the Standard Core Curriculum, so that she can easily add a story to her lesson plan. (www.UnderTheInfluence.org go to Community > Teachers > Teachers Health)

She concluded by saying, “Real life stories can have a huge impact on the choices our children make.”

Find copies of *Under the Influence: The Town That Listened to its Kids* at your public library, Amazon, or www.UndertheInfluence.org (2013 ebook and hardcover include the Teen & Parent Handbooks).