



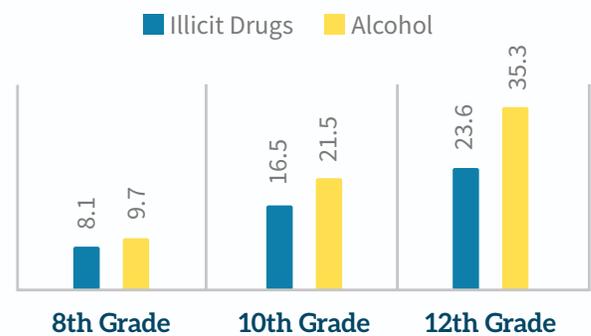
# Project Amp: A Resource to Improve Academic Outcomes

**H**igh rates of youth substance use result in poorer academic outcomes for schools and their students. [Project Amp](#), young adult peer-based prevention and early intervention model, is a cost-efficient intervention that can boost student engagement, help schools reach their goals, and ensure healthier futures for young people.

Schools play a critical role in health service delivery. In fact, [one in three students](#) rely on schools as their primary source of mental health services. This is especially true for [low-income students](#) and students of color who often face unique barriers to care. However, substance use programs like Project Amp are more than health services. They also help schools improve student academic achievement and meet performance indicators:

- **Grades:** Many young people use drugs and alcohol with rates [increasing during high school](#), as depicted in Figure 1. Data show that youth who use substances are much [more likely to receive failing grades in school](#).
- **Chronic absenteeism:** [Several studies](#) link youth substance misuse to [increased truancy](#),

**FIGURE 1:**  
Percent of student use of alcohol and drugs by grade

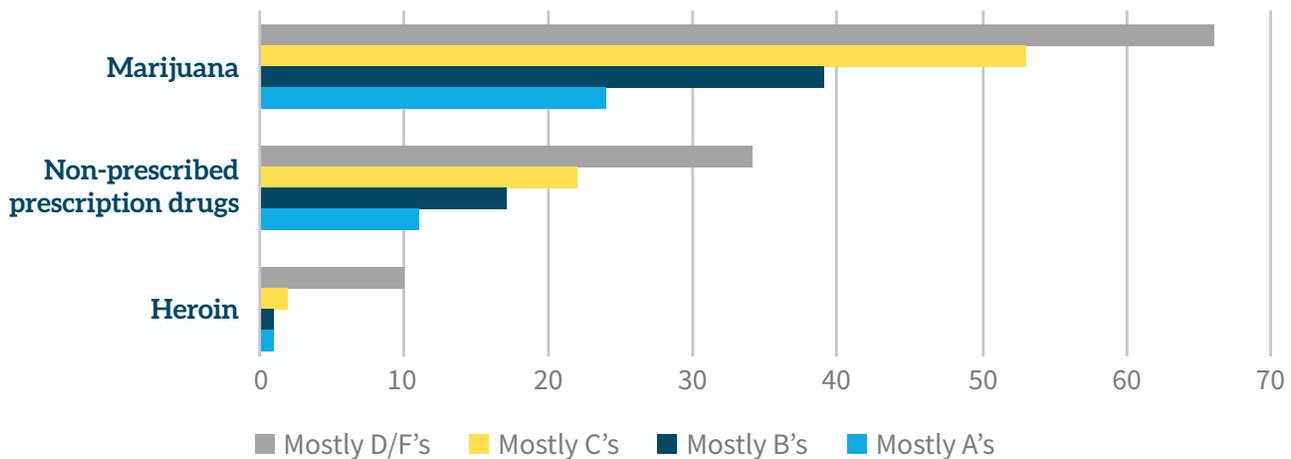


*Data is from the National Institute of Drug Abuse, [Monitoring the Future 2015 Survey Results](#) which shows substance use rates increasing by grade level. See an infographic that highlights the data [here](#).*

suggesting that young people who struggle with substance use are more likely to be truant than students who do not. In fact, some [studies](#) suggest a direct relationship between chronic absenteeism and youth substance use where as one increases so does the other.

- **Graduation:** Youth who use substances [are more likely to drop out of high school](#) than students who do not use substances, even when [taking into consideration other social factors](#) associated with lower academic achievement. This suggests that preventing and reducing youth substance use is an important strategy to improving student graduation rates.

**FIGURE 2:**  
**Percent of students reporting lifetime drug use by academic performance**



**Substance use interventions like Project Amp make a difference.** Young people who reduce their substance use and related risks [improve](#) their [attendance](#) and [grades](#). This suggests that effective substance use prevention and early intervention approaches like Project Amp can play an important role in improving academic outcomes. When schools work to reduce and prevent substance use among students, they simultaneously work to improve student achievement and to put young people on a path to successful, healthy futures.

## Why Project Amp?

**Reason #1: It works.** While schools are already a key player in the delivery of health services for youth, many schools lack the evidence-based programming needed to support students struggling with substance misuse. Project Amp — [developed for in-person or remote implementation](#) — is a school-based prevention model that works, incorporating various evidence-based substance use prevention and early intervention practices, including screening and brief intervention, motivational interviewing, and peer support. With Project Amp mentors, young people brainstorm healthy coping mechanisms, develop strategies for stress relief, and engage in positive goal setting, in addition to

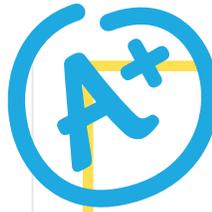
exploring factual information about alcohol and other drugs. Preliminary research and evaluation suggests that Project Amp works by promoting engagement, reducing substance use risk, and improving positive coping mechanisms and self-efficacy.

**Reason #2: It can be easily integrated into existing school initiatives.** Project Amp is commonly implemented as a peer-based adaptation of youth SBIRT, although it can also be implemented outside of the SBIRT framework as a universal or targeted prevention curriculum. As an adaptation of [youth SBIRT](#), Project Amp compliments other school-based health services and initiatives, including suicide prevention efforts, multi-tiered systems of support, and whole child education models. The SBIRT model is based on a multi-tiered system of support framework that many schools are implementing across the United States. Within the MTSS framework, Project Amp is a tier II intervention designed to support students at moderate risk. As study after study links student health to academic achievement, more schools are adopting whole child models like multi-tiered systems of support that encourage schools to provide trauma-informed environments, social-emotional supports, and behavioral health services.

Additionally, as more schools work to address rising rates of youth suicide—the second leading cause of death among youth ages 10-24—school leaders must integrate substance use prevention services into those efforts. Substance use has been shown to increase the risks for suicide among young people, and many young people turn to substances as a way to cope with trauma, depression, and anxiety.

**Reason 3: Schools are already doing it.** Schools across the country are currently implementing Project Amp. In Massachusetts, nurses have shared that Project Amp fills an important gap in services for youth who are at moderate risk of substance use. Additionally, a [2019 implementation study](#) in the Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment identified schools as an ideal setting for Project Amp.

**Reason 4: Students like it!** Youth participants like engaging with near-age mentors with similar experiences who can more easily understand students' experiences and avoid judgment.



## Project Amp's Report Card

- **Reduces** substance use
- **Improves** stress management + positive coping mechanisms
- **Promotes** engagement + positive relationships
- **Increases** student capacity to deal with difficult situations in school, with friends, and at home
- **Fits** into whole child approaches + multi-tiered systems of support
- **Complements** suicide prevention + other behavioral health initiatives

This brief was generated in collaboration with [Community Catalyst](#).



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