



Orange County, Virginia, Office on Youth Prevents Substance Abuse with Media Detective

SUCCESS STORY

The Challenge

The educators at the Office on Youth, part of the county government in Orange County, Virginia (OCVA), are passionate about empowering Orange County youth, and run a popular afterschool program that focuses on promoting healthy behavior and substance use prevention.

When Program Coordinator Ashley Jacobs and her colleagues set out to find a substance use prevention program to use in the afterschool program, they knew that they needed something that was going to be educational and effective – but it also had to be fun.

It was challenging to find a program that was effective in an afterschool setting, since other programs they tried had been designed for a more traditional classroom setting.

They needed a more flexible program that could fit their non-traditional schedule. Ashley and her team were determined to find an evidence-based program to fit their needs.



“[Media Detective] is a very straightforward, but powerful solution.”

– Ashley Jacobs

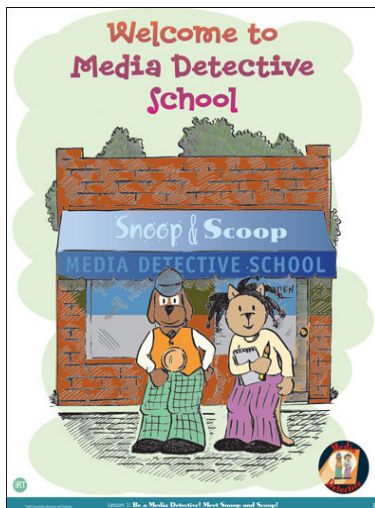
Program Coordinator
Office of Youth

The Context

The OCVA Office on Youth has worked to prevent juvenile delinquency and promote positive youth development for more than 30 years.

“We’re setting them up to be able to make positive choices,” Ashley Jacobs, the Program Coordinator, said.

The Office’s afterschool funding comes in part from the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth, an organization dedicated to preventing smoking, childhood obesity, and general substance use.



The Solution

When the Office on Youth needed a fun, flexible, and effective substance abuse prevention program for elementary schoolers, it turned to Media Detective from iRT. Using media literacy education, Media Detective teaches children to think more critically about unhealthy messages about substances promoted in media.

With the help of animal detective mascots, Scoop and Snoop, students learn to unravel the mysteries of advertising while improving their knowledge of the danger of alcohol, tobacco, and e-cigarette products.

The Outcome

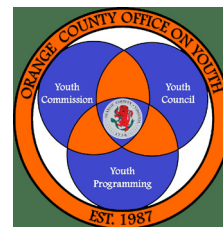
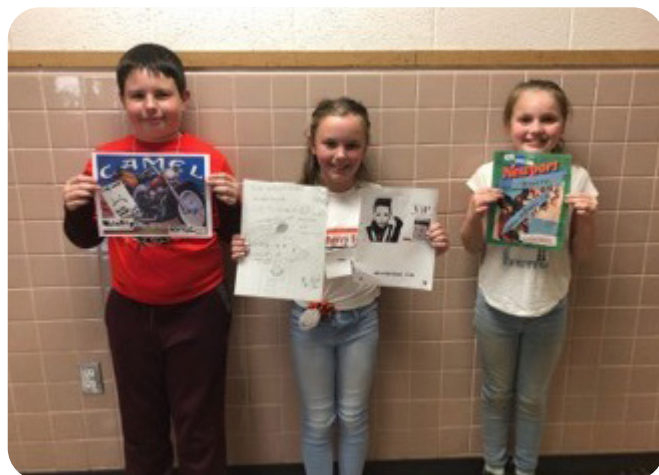
The Office on Youth started teaching Media Detective as a small pilot program. Students, teachers, and the assistant principal in the afterschool program loved Media Detective.

Jacobs said the students' enthusiasm stemmed from the fact that the program didn't feel like more school—it felt like being a detective! Students were especially eager to analyze real-life ads featuring basketball players, video games, and other things they knew well in real life. Whereas previously they may have simply accepted the advertisements at face value, Media Detective sparked critical conversations about the techniques and hidden messages advertisers use. At the end, students made their own "counter-ads" by spoofing advertisements to create educational posters about the dangers of substance use.

One of the challenges the Office on Youth faced was finding a program adaptable to the afterschool schedule. This made the curriculum easy to teach and fun for students to learn. Even with the Office on Youth's Tuesday/Thursday afterschool schedule, students stayed engaged with the program from week-to-week.

The Office on Youth originally taught the Media Detective program to 3rd and 4th graders in afterschool. But the program's popularity encouraged the office to expand its offering—soon, 5th graders will have the opportunity to become Media Detectives as well!

Media Detectives:



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