

All Drugged Up: Kids, Schools, and the Dulling of the Mind

"What's the matter?" I ask a student sitting on a cold cement bench in the courtyard of our school on a rainy March afternoon. He looks very distraught.

"My uncle was just found overdosed on the sidewalk in front of our house," he says.

"Fentanyl?" I ask. When he responds in the affirmative, I tell him I'm sorry, and then, "I want to commend you for being the good kid you are, refraining from drugs through your three years at our school. Come see me in my office if you want to talk." He thanks me, and I walk away thinking about the dark place our nation is currently stuck in, wallowing in the muddy uncertainty of the last few years.

There has been more than one fentanyl overdose in our district this year, and our school nurse had to show all of us school administrators where the NARCAN kits are in case we encounter a student who is passed out from an overdose. We have many students who get high and come to school every day, dazed and slobbering with the high percentage of THC (the main psychoactive compound in marijuana) available through dispensaries. We have intelligence that fentanyl-laced marijuana and Percocet have been sold in the city park across the street from our school. In fact, a student and a father even took on and fought an adult male who was distributing laced weed in the park.

Marijuana was legalized in Colorado in 2012, and the legislation had an immediate negative impact in our school. My colleagues and I are amazed at the brazen use by our students, despite the fact that they cannot legally purchase the drug

until age 21. Kids wear dispensary-marketed clothing brands and smoke their weed in the bathrooms or in the middle of the park, not clandestinely in the bushes or behind closed doors as they used to.

After legalization we saw possession cases of marijuana increase exponentially in the schools, and other drug-possession incidents increased as well. Student searches were suddenly resulting in dispensary-issued weed confiscations, most likely contraband originating from their drug-using families and friends. [Published state data](#) claims that marijuana use has flatlined since legalization, but the anecdotal evidence I'm seeing in the schools makes me suspicious that the data is wrong or skewed, possibly to serve big money-makers in the drug industry or perhaps even the state's coffers, made full with increased tax revenue from drug sales.

The [Colorado state legislature passed](#) another negative-impact act in 2019, which went into effect in March 2020. The act declared that it is no longer a felony to possess four grams or less of heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine, or any other narcotic, sending the message to dealers to just make sure they carry less than four grams with them for their deals.

Our [porous border](#) doesn't help any either. Fentanyl is manufactured in Mexico, where the cartels buy the unregulated raw materials from China. With [Title 42](#) being lifted in May, no doubt hundreds and thousands of more illegal immigrants will be flooding into our country, and there will be more drugs and more overdoses.

I encountered some truant, melancholic ninth and tenth-grade girls behind a coffee shop near the school the other day. I could tell they had just gotten high, as they were sitting in a circle in a "comfortably numb" manner, their eyes torch red. All four girls were previously suspended for marijuana. But I decided to take a softer approach with them this time, knowing

that their friend from another school had just overdosed on fentanyl, the funeral having taken place just two days prior.

I shared with them the hope I have during difficult times because of my faith in God. I told them that I care about them and that I would pray for them. They appreciated that I didn't take them back to school to suspend them, and they actually thanked me for my encouraging words. My approach with the girls was one I have never used before, but in these times, I am trying different tactics, focusing more on showing mercy and listening to their thoughts and perspectives.

Sadly, those thoughts are nihilistic and bleak, a fact not surprising given the depression and hopelessness prevailing from pandemic-response measures. That students would attempt to quell such depression with drugs shouldn't surprise us; instead, it should make us more wary. Perhaps the increase in drug usage is playing a part in the so-called Great Reset; after all, dazed minds are easier to manipulate and control.

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