



## Background

With the increase in e-cigarette use among youth, innovative communication strategies to convey the risks associated with this health crisis are lacking.

**National High School Rates: 14%**



**Kentucky High School Rates: 26%**



By utilizing more engaging materials that resonate with youth, like comic books, connected conversations can support the discussion of health issues relevant to youth.

## Research



University faculty and staff developed the 'Villainous Vape' by translating research on e-cigarette use among college students to a comic book.

The process included translating interpretation of the study findings into a narrative that resonates with youth and young adults.

## References

<sup>1</sup>Park-Lee, Eunice, Chunfeng Ren, Maria Cooper, Monica Cornelius, Ahmed Jamal, and Karen A. Cullen. "Tobacco Product Use among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2022." *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 71, no. 45 (2022): 1429–35. <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7145a1>.

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## Methods

A cross-sectional exploratory research design aims to determine *general perceptions* of the comic, *visual appeal*, *overall themes* identified after reading it, and *suggestions* to integrate into prevention curriculum.

### 1. Read



### 2. Review



### 3. Regroup



## Results

Results were compiled based on survey results and discussions with **50** students.

### Perceptions

**100%** said they emotionally connected with characters.



**70%** of students found Dep relatable



**54%** of students found Kat relatable

### Themes

Students reported that they took away three main lessons:

- 1) **Danger of secondhand aerosol**
- 2) **Symptoms of addiction**
- 3) **Use of media to target youth**

### Appeal

**96%** said they thought the comic book was a good way to display the information about e-cigarettes.

"The illustrations were eye catching."

"The cover art is very good!"

### Suggestions

Students recommended that the comic be presented to certain grade ranges:



**6%** for high school



**80%** for middle school



**14%** for elementary school

## Youth Feedback

"They need to show this in every school world-wide to show them the lesson and reason."

"I liked the illustrations all around and personifying the vaping into monsters or creatures made the action of vaping and its long term effects into an imminent threat."

"The struggle of an ordinary person secretly struggling with vaping makes me wondering who I know is struggling like that."

"I related to Kat because a some of my friends Vape and I feel bad for them because they are so dependent on it."

"I thankfully haven't had a close friend that has struggled with vaping, but I do know people that do. With more information and resources, I now can help someone who is wanting to quit or someone who is also helping their friend quit."

## Discussion

- Feedback from youth reinforces that the **comic book contains incredibly important information** that is **easily understood** through a narrative story format.
- Alternatives to e-cigarette education can be beneficial for students to **see characters that they can relate to**, and to read stories that can make the difficult **conversation of addiction, health effects, and support easier to understand**.
- **Next Steps:** Sharing the comic with more schools, facilitating additional discussion groups with students to collect feedback and support, and create and pilot test guides for schools and teachers to hold their own in-class discussions about the comic.