

Portland Alcohol Research Center Education and Outreach Program

The Portland Alcohol Research Center (PARC) is a basic science research center funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism of the National Institutes of Health, USA. The work of the PARC focuses on uncovering how genes can confer protection against or enhanced risk of problem use of alcohol, and how the brain adapts to alcohol.

PARC Education and Outreach Mission – The Center’s kindergarten through 12th grade education and outreach activities provide K-12th grade students and their teachers with information about alcohol, the brain, and neuroscience. Age-appropriate activities illustrate how the brain works and how alcohol can affect it.

PARC Message – Presentations are conducted from a biological perspective. Biological responses to alcohol can be important for the choices, behavior, safety, and health of individuals and the community. Study of how the brain and body respond to alcohol is beneficial to individuals and the whole community.

PARC K-12th Grade Education and Outreach Activities

Elementary schools: *Of Brains and Safety: Neuroscience for K-3*

PARC educators present an age-appropriate, novel two-hour curriculum for children in kindergarten through 3rd grade that links neuroscience and safety. *Of Brains and Safety* introduces children to the human brain, the nervous system, and the effects of alcohol and drugs of abuse, and promotes ways of keeping their brains safe, especially out-of-doors.

Middle Schools: *The Biology of Alcohol*

The foundation of this project is NIAAA’s published middle school curriculum, “Understanding Alcohol: Investigations into Biology and Behavior”. Presentations utilize classroom and web-based activities to examine the biology of how the body handles and responds to alcohol, from the cellular to behavioral levels. Students also take part in an alcohol impairment simulation which demonstrates alcohol effects on hand-eye coordination.

High Schools: *Discover OHSU!*

Science students from area high schools make on-campus visits at OHSU, taking part in several activities at the School of Medicine. The PARC activity includes a presentation on the neurogenetics of how the body responds to alcohol and other drugs, a hands-on alcohol impairment simulation, and data collection during a web-based mock experiment of how genes can affect an organism’s response to alcohol.

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