

SCHOOLS

school-based education
for drug abuse prevention



UNITED NATIONS
Office on Drugs and Crime





This publication is the result of a Theme Meeting of Experts and Youth on School-Based Drug Abuse Prevention held in Vienna from 2 to 5 September 2002 organised by the Global Youth Network.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
Vienna

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UNITED NATIONS
New York, 2004

The Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention became the Office on Drugs and Crime on 1 October 2002.

UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATION
Sales No. E.04.XI.21
ISBN 92-1-148191-0

This publication has not been formally edited.

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Acknowledgements

This guide could not have been written without the helpful contributions of and feedback from many people, youth and adults alike. Special thanks go to the following:

- Tamara Maman, Jouhaida Hanano, Patrick Starzer and Kurian Maniyanipurathu for organizing the “Hands-On” Theme Meeting of Experts and Youth on School-based Drug Abuse Prevention, held in Vienna from 2 to 5 September 2002;
- The representatives of the many groups and organizations (see complete list on pages 7 to 11), who provided comments and shared their experiences and ideas during the meeting and provided comments on the manuscript;
- Rod Ballard from the Queensland Department of Education, Australia, for structuring and facilitating the meeting, preparing the background documentation and preparing and finalizing the publication;
- Bruce Wilson, Chief Executive Officer of Curriculum Corporation in Australia whose work and reflections on drug education (and on the role of schools in drug education) were extensively used for the finalization of this guide;
- Gautam Babbar, Giovanna Campello and Stefano Berterame of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for conceptualizing and driving the overall initiative and for providing comments and inputs for the development of the publication;
- The Governments of Canada, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, whose generous financial contributions made the publication of *School-based Education for Drug Abuse Prevention* possible.



Introduction

For some decades now students have been given lessons about drugs in school in the belief that education about drugs can change their behaviour. Some educators, however, question the goal of behaviour change and propose a more education-oriented approach to drug prevention in schools.

School is not about repairing all social evils. It is about repairing one: the evil of ignorance. We all have responsibilities as adults for these evils. But as teachers, we don't need to be ashamed if we can't fix homelessness or stamp out violence, or prevent AIDS, or end drug abuse.

Individual teachers will care as human beings when students use drugs, or contract sexually transmitted diseases, or adopt poor nutritional practices. But it is not the fault of schools, and schools ought not to set targets to change such behaviours. Schools can, of course, influence such behaviour. The way they do it is through the development of knowledge and skills and the cultivation of values in their students.

The fact is that schools do not have it in their power to stop smoking, drinking, sex or poor eating patterns. They do have it in their power to improve student knowledge and skills and to encourage the development of defensible values. Equally, they should not be blamed when students engage in health behaviour that is less than desirable. They should be blamed, or at least held accountable, if students do not gain essential knowledge and skills regarding health, and cannot articulate a value position.

Wilson, 1998.

This publication does not offer a pre-packaged programme of education for drug abuse prevention that can be picked up and implemented. It is, rather, an attempt to provide a conceptual basis upon which teachers, policy makers and school administrators can make decisions about school-based drug prevention programmes in order to achieve greater success in educational terms.

"Hands-On" Theme Meeting of Youth and Experts on School-based Drug Abuse Prevention
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1. Schools and drug abuse prevention

::: What is drug abuse prevention?

“Drug abuse prevention” is a commonly used term, but what does it really mean? And what does it mean to schools? “Drug prevention” or “drug abuse prevention” has three main components:

• Demand reduction strategies

These strategies aim to reduce the desire and willingness to obtain and use drugs and to prevent, reduce or delay the uptake of drug use. They may include abstinence-oriented strategies.

• Supply reduction strategies

These strategies aim to disrupt the production and supply of illicit drugs, as well as limit the access and availability of licit drugs in certain contexts. In the school setting this includes measures taken to limit the use, possession and sale of illicit drugs on school premises.

• Strategies to mitigate the negative health and social consequences of drug use

These strategies aim to reduce the impact of drug use and drug-related activities on individuals and communities.

::: The role of the school in drug abuse prevention

It is possible, and desirable, for schools to be concerned with drug demand reduction, drug supply reduction and mitigating the health and social consequences of drug use, with the major focus on demand reduction. However, education authorities should not accept sole responsibility for changing student health behaviours, including reducing drug use.

Schools may well be able to influence drug use behaviour and it is hoped that they will do so. However, it is the primary role of the school to teach skills, to impart knowledge and to establish a sound values base in relation to health and drug use, not to change behaviours that may be determined by factors beyond the influence of the school.



Schools, therefore, should not make change in health behaviours of students, particularly drug use behaviours, the only measure of the success or effectiveness of drug prevention programmes. Schools can and should report to the community on the achievement of educational outcomes that have been identified as contributing to the achievement of the broader health goals of preventing drug use and reducing adverse consequences to individuals and society.

∴ School-based education for drug abuse prevention

Education for drug abuse prevention in schools may be defined as the educational programmes, policies, procedures and other experiences that contribute to the achievement of broader health goals of preventing drug use and abuse.

Education for drug abuse prevention should be seen to include both formal and informal health curricula, the creation of a safe and healthy school environment, the provision of appropriate health services and support as well as the involvement of the family and the community in the planning and delivery of programmes.

The components of a school-based drug abuse prevention education and intervention programme

The educational components of a school drug abuse prevention programme are the following:

- ∴ **A programme based on the guiding principles for school-based education for drug abuse prevention** as set out in chapter 2 that forms a core component of the school curriculum and focuses on equipping young people with information about drugs, the life skills necessary to enable them to deal with different situations without turning to drugs, the ability to resist pressure to use drugs and an understanding of what drugs are
- ∴ **A safe and supportive school environment** made possible by a set of clearly communicated policies and procedures that provides care, counselling and support for all students and ensures a cooperative approach among staff, students, parents, and related professionals, agencies and the police



- **Strategies for ensuring that all members of the school community contribute to and support school policies** and procedures for dealing with drug matters
- **Appropriate professional development** and training for relevant staff
- **Information and support for parents**, in particular parents of students involved in illicit and other unsanctioned drug use
- **Mechanisms for continuous monitoring and review** of the school's approach to education for drug abuse prevention and incident management

The intervention components of a school drug abuse prevention programme are:

- **Policies and procedures for dealing with drug incidents** based on the guiding principles for school-based education for drug abuse prevention (see chapter 2) that consider the student's whole life and the degree to which he or she is in control of his or her actions and decisions
- **Plans for initial and long-term responses to drug incidents** aimed at protecting the health of all students and the school community
- **A plan for managing drug incidents consistent with local laws** and regulations, as well as national and local school policies on drugs
- **A communication strategy for drug incidents** that ensures all staff are aware of school or system-wide procedures for contacting and responding to the media
- **A directory of professionals and agencies**, including the police, who can provide opportunities for professional development, advice and resources
- **Agreements with professionals and agencies**, including the police, to formalize and strengthen cooperative liaison and referral arrangements
- **Support for students involved in drug incidents** that ensures their continued participation in education programmes
- **Records of drug incidents:** these should be kept and due attention should be paid to the protection of the rights and privacy of all those involved

This publication will attempt to guide the reader through all the elements stated above.



2. Guiding principles for school-based education for drug abuse prevention

Definitions

Guiding principle: *a statement encapsulating the basic idea or assumption upon which an action may proceed with the greatest likelihood of success in achieving the stated purpose of the action*

Drug: *includes tobacco, alcohol, illicit (illegal or unlawful) drugs, prescription drugs and over-the-counter medicines*

School-based education for drug abuse prevention: *the total set of experiences to which students are exposed over their time at school that contribute to preventing drug use and mitigating the consequences of drug use*

The purpose of the present “Guiding principles for school-based education for drug abuse prevention” is to express the concepts and values upon which legislators, policy makers, school administrators, teachers, students, parents and community agencies can base decisions about school-based education for drug abuse prevention.

Guiding principles can convey a sense of direction towards the ideal, and, with associated guidelines, can confirm that plans are as close to the ideal as they can be, given the situation and the circumstances. However, they should not be seen as so idealistic and rigid as to convey a sense that nothing can be achieved unless programmes and policies reflect every principle to its extreme ideal.

Much can be and has been achieved in resource-poor settings, for schools already have the resources most needed for success: committed teachers and students who want to be engaged meaningfully in the education process. These guiding principles can help ensure that scarce resources are not wasted on programmes and resources that have a superficial albeit immediate appeal, but do not meet the criteria for achieving learning



outcomes or long-term changes to the school environment that will impact on future drug use.

These guiding principles help to define the central role of the teacher and stress the educational rather than the preventative focus of school-based education for drug abuse prevention. Their adoption will help to reduce the use of ineffective programmes that place students at risk by giving parents and the community a false sense of confidence that their children are being helped when, in fact, they are not.

The guiding principles have been developed in consultation with a group of practitioners, including youth, experts, policy makers and researchers from a number of countries, who made professional judgements after consideration of the available research and current practice in school-based drug education.

Principle 1. An emphasis on learning outcomes, environmental factors and collaborative partnerships is vital to the success of school-based education for drug abuse prevention

Schools that aim to change drug use behaviour directly risk failing to achieve it since the “target” is not under their control. It ought to be recognized that schools influence behaviour (they do not determine it) through the development of students’ knowledge and skills and the cultivation of values. This in turn requires sufficient time to be allocated to achieving clearly stated learning outcomes and collaborative partnerships with the family and the community to be developed in an atmosphere supportive of personal and academic growth.

Principle 2. Drug-related learning outcomes should be addressed in the context of the health curriculum or other appropriate learning area that can provide sequence, progression, continuity and links to other health issues that impact on students’ lives

Isolated programmes cannot provide the ongoing comprehensive and developmental elements that encourage development of personal and social skills and values. Just as drug abuse does not exist in a vacuum but is part of the young person’s whole life, education for prevention should incorporate other issues important to young people, including adolescent development, stress and coping, sexuality, collaboration between home and school and personal relationships.

Principle 3. The school environment should be conducive to achieving educational outcomes and building productive partnerships

Students respond positively to a school environment—comprising the culture, milieu, ethos, sense of community, goals and a sense of order—in which they feel that they are treated fairly. Students benefit when school



is purposeful, when schools make clear what students should know and do and how those outcomes are to be achieved and measured.

Principle 4. Collaborative partnerships should be developed for decision-making

Students, school personnel, parents, prevention practitioners, referral agencies and the wider community should collaborate to make decisions on drug policy, including on the management of drug incidents. A collaborative approach to policy development reinforces desired values and consistent behaviours at school, in the home and among the community.

Principle 5. Teaching and learning should be interactive

Interactive teaching techniques such as discussions, brainstorming, decision-making, assertion training or role-playing new skills and behaviour stimulate the active participation of all students. A supportive classroom climate is promoted by conducting activities in smaller groups, which encourages peer to peer communication and maximum participation.

Principle 6. Educational programmes for the prevention of drug abuse should be responsive and inclusive

Educational programmes for the prevention of drug abuse should take into account levels of drug use among individuals and in society, risk and protective factors, gender, ethnicity, culture, language, developmental level, ability level, religion and sexual orientation. Interacting with students in a way that acknowledges the reality of their backgrounds and experiences creates opportunities for meaningful student input into education for drug abuse prevention programmes. Students react positively when their individual needs and the needs of users and non-users are acknowledged and communication channels are kept open without drug use being condoned.

Principle 7. Training teachers in drug abuse prevention education enhances the impact and sustainability of drug abuse prevention programmes

Offering teachers professional development, consisting of an orientation to drug abuse prevention education that enables them to use a range of learning strategies, resources and evaluation techniques appropriate to students' needs, rather than offering training only in the use of a specific programme or resource, ensures that programmes have greater impact and sustainability. Teachers should be offered the support of school leaders, as well as technical advice and networking opportunities for sharing both successes and problems.

Principle 8. Programmes, strategies and resources should be designed to support the teacher, to help achieve drug-related learning outcomes and to contribute to the long-term improvement of the school environment and ethos



Drug education programmes and resources should be selected to complement the role of classroom teacher with external resources enhancing not replacing that role. The credibility of the teacher's role in meeting student needs may be compromised where externally developed programmes are imposed on schools.

Principle 9. Drug abuse prevention programmes and their outcomes should be evaluated regularly to provide evidence of their worth and to improve the design of future programmes

Some drug abuse prevention education programmes are not effective and some are counterproductive. Schools can avoid poor practices if they refer to principles, guidelines and models of good practice as standards to inform and guide the evaluation of programmes and outcomes.

Principle 10. Policies and procedures for managing drug-related incidents at schools should be collaboratively developed and widely publicized in order to elicit a positive response

Some responses to drug use may marginalize and stigmatize students. Detection of drug use with a solely punitive outcome is not a productive strategy unless the health and safety of the school community is being compromised and could alienate students at risk from the only place where individuals and activities can support their efforts to change.



3. Planning the drug abuse prevention programme

Focusing resources on effective school health: a FRESH start to enhancing the quality and equity of education

At the World Education Forum, held in Dakar in April 2000, the international community reaffirmed its goal of providing quality basic education to all. The Dakar Framework for Action outlines goals and strategies for attaining that target by 2015. One important condition for fulfilling children's right to a basic education, is the creation of "safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environments conducive to excellence in learning". Improving students' health and nutritional status can reduce absenteeism, improve classroom performance and prevent early school dropout, thus bringing closer the possibility of achieving education for all.

Recognizing the importance and potential of a healthy school setting, four international agencies, each with decades of specialized experience working through schools to enhance learning and health, agreed upon a shared framework to strengthen school health, hygiene and nutrition programmes. Working together to Focus Resources on Effective School Health (FRESH), UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank recommended a core group of cost-effective components as a common starting point for all schools. The components included: health-related school policies on the provision of safe water and sanitation; skills-based health education and school-based health and nutrition services.

When implemented and coordinated well, an effective school health programme can provide a strong foundation from which to build a "health-promoting school". The WHO Global School Health Initiative describes a health-promoting school as a school that is constantly strengthening its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning and working.

For example, with the four common components firmly in place, a school can strive to foster health with all the measures at its disposal. This might include health-promotion programmes for staff, nutrition and food-safety programmes, opportunities for physical education and recreation and many other health-related efforts.



∴ Planning the programme

When planning the programme, the teacher should take into account the key areas discussed below.

Situation analysis

Teachers should conduct a simple situation analysis by seeking answers to the following questions:

- ∴ What is the prevalence of drugs?
- ∴ What drugs are being used and in what context?
- ∴ At what ages are children using drugs and which substances are they using?
- ∴ What is the level of use in particular age groups?
- ∴ What are the national laws and policies pertaining to drugs?

Needs assessment

Teachers should consider:

- ∴ What students already know and want to know about drugs
- ∴ What values, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions students currently hold about drugs
- ∴ What skills students have already mastered and what skills still need developing

Setting goals and objectives

Teachers should consider:

- ∴ How to challenge students to defend their values, increase their knowledge, explore their attitudes and the attitudes of others, and refine their skills
- ∴ How to encourage students to reflect on what they have learned and how it can be applied to situations in school, the community and their everyday lives



Selecting programme components

By seeking answers to the following questions, teachers can obtain information necessary for the planning of a learning sequence:

- What are the key concepts in drug abuse prevention education?
- What are the skills the students will need to develop?
- What values, attitudes and beliefs should students explore?
- What opportunities will there be for students to demonstrate their knowledge, values, attitudes and skills in relation to education for drug abuse prevention?

∴ Content of the programme

Knowledge about drugs and drug use is important for informing decisions and shaping values and attitudes to drug use. The nature of this information, and the mode and timing of its presentation have a significant impact on how it is received.

Information given to students as an integral part of “learning” in the broadest sense of that term, based on two-way communication, and respectful of the feelings and attitudes of students, is more likely to be retained and used. One-off Drug Information sessions that simply throw out “facts” about drugs may in fact prove to be counterproductive.

The guidelines for selecting content, given below, will help teachers to determine what content is most likely to further the drug abuse prevention programme and, more importantly, will help them to recognize that some information may be useless and some counterproductive. Appropriateness of content should be decided by the teacher, with due consideration given to the needs of the students, the drug-related learning outcomes and the guiding principles for school-based education for drug abuse prevention given in chapter 2.

Guidelines for selecting content

Selecting the information to be included in the programme

Decisions on what information to select and present should be made on the basis of:

- What students already know about drugs and what they need to know



- The values, attitudes and perceptions of students
- What skills students have already mastered and what skills need developing
- The need to ensure a balance of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills development
- The need to develop links between knowledge, attitudes, values and skills

Information on the drugs that cause most harm to individuals and/or society and on the drugs that students are likely to encounter at some time in their lives should be included in the programme.

The following should also be taken into account:

- The prevalence of drugs in the community indicated by:
 - Surveys at local and broader levels
 - Information from the police, drug counsellors and health workers
 - Community consultation
 - Student input
- The personal and social context of the use of particular drugs
 - The age at which students start using particular substances
 - The level of use and level of harm of particular drugs among particular age groups
 - Laws, policies and school rules pertaining to different drugs

Teachers should consider the social context or the way students use drugs and use a mode of presentation that:

- Encourages students to reflect on what they have learned and how it can be applied to their social situations and their lives generally
- Does not increase drug use or harm caused by the drugs under discussion
- Contributes to the development of an environment that is non-threatening and non-judgemental of student ideas, opinions and discussions
- Is respectful of students' gender, ethnicity, culture, language, developmental level, ability level, religion, sexual orientation and lifestyle

As mentioned above, the aim of school-based drug education programmes should be to bolster those social and educational outcomes that are most likely to strengthen youth resilience to drug abuse. Seen in this light, some of the most important learning objectives for school kids at various levels are discussed below.



∴ Objectives of the drug abuse prevention programme for the junior school

Knowledge

Students should know:

- ∴ Ways of enhancing their and others' confidence and self-esteem
- ∴ How to share with and care for family and friends
- ∴ People who can help them when they have questions or concerns
- ∴ About the physical and emotional differences between people and how to accept them
- ∴ What medicines are for, their safety rules and the danger of incorrect use
- ∴ Ways that substances can get into the body
- ∴ Alternatives to medicines
- ∴ About the possible effects of others' smoking on their health

Attitudes and values

Students articulate:

- ∴ Valuing one's body and recognizing one's individuality
- ∴ Responsible attitudes towards medicines and health professionals
- ∴ Positive attitudes towards the non-use of tobacco
- ∴ A responsible attitude towards the social use of alcohol (where laws allow it)
- ∴ Critical responses to the advertising of medicines and other health supplements
- ∴ Their feelings with confidence

Skills

Students can:

- ∴ Demonstrate basic listening and communication skills when interacting with others



- Express their feelings constructively and show respect for the feelings of others
- Work effectively in small groups
- Recognize situations where choices can be made and identify the consequences of their choices
- Set simple goals to keep themselves safe and healthy
- Follow simple safety instructions and know when and how to get help from adults and others such as police or ambulance services

•• Objectives of the drug abuse prevention programme for the middle school

Knowledge

Students should know:

- School and society rules and laws relating to legal and illegal drugs
- How to use products to maintain health safely
- Appropriate health services and how to access them
- How manufacturers, media and advertisers try to influence decisions about drugs
- The consequences of smoking and the misuse of alcohol
- That drugs can alter the way a person behaves and feels
- The contribution of drug use to lifestyle diseases and associated social, emotional, legal and economic costs
- That changing the type of drug, the person(s) involved or the context and situation can vary the risk to individuals and groups

Attitudes and values

Students articulate:

- How values about drugs are shaped by teachers, family, friends, media and church



- An acceptance of responsibility for their actions and safety
- A positive self image
- Respect for the right of others to have different attitudes and values, realistic attitudes and accurate beliefs about drugs and people who use them

Skills

Students can:

- Communicate effectively with a wide range of people
- Identify problem or risk situations and make decisions based on firmly held values
- Cope with peer influences and assert their ideas
- Use decision-making and assertiveness in drug use situations
- Maintain friendships, give care and get help
- Recognize and deal with a range of feelings and changes in relationships over time

•• Objectives of the drug abuse prevention programme for the senior school

Knowledge

Students should know:

- The importance of self-esteem, positive self-concept and identity
- Rights and responsibilities in relationships
- The concepts of abstinence and alternatives to drug use
- The definitions of drugs, drug misuse and abuse, drug dependence
- How different contexts and situations influence personal values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour in relation to drug use
- The consequences of unlawful and unsanctioned drug use
- That drugs can affect a person's ability to perform tasks
- The impact of media messages on the health behaviour of individuals and society



Attitudes and values

Students articulate:

- A values stance on drugs and the confidence to act on those values
- The significance of the social and cultural influences on beliefs about drugs
- Empathy and acceptance of a diverse range of people
- Individual responsibility for health and universal health protection
- Personal beliefs about drugs and their effects on decisions

Skills

Students can:

- Communicate constructively with parents, teachers and peers
- Give and receive care in a variety of health-related situations
- Set short- and long-term health goals
- Demonstrate conflict-, aggression-, stress- and time-management skills
- Identify and assess personal risk and practise universal protection
- Assert themselves and deal with influences from others
- Work effectively with others and cope with change, loss and grief

∴ Implementing the programme

Having thus set appropriate objectives for each stage in the students' learning career, we move now to the issue of implementing such a programme. While devising lesson plans and learning sequences in order to achieve the objectives defined, teachers should seek to answer the following:

- Is there a balance of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills development?



- Do the activities provide practice and can students demonstrate what they have learned?
- Will the activity contribute to the development of an environment that is non-threatening and non-judgemental of students' ideas, opinions and discussions?
- Is there a range of activities for the different learning styles of individuals?
- Are programmes responsive, in educational terms, to levels of drug use in individuals and society and risk and protective factors, as well as gender, ethnicity, culture, language, developmental level, ability level, religion and sexual orientation?
- Are there opportunities for connections to be made between knowledge, attitudes and skills?

•• Evaluating the programme

Teachers need to seek answers to the following questions:

- Are learning outcomes related to or likely to contribute in the long term to desired behaviour change in the broad context of prevention?
- Do the teaching and learning strategies relate directly to the learning outcomes?
- Is the education for drug abuse prevention programme part of the formal school curriculum or can it be linked to it?
- Do programmes have sequence and progression throughout the year and across year levels?
- Are the messages across the broader school environment consistent with the stated learning outcomes?
- Are interactive and participatory teaching and learning methods used in the programme?
- Is the programme based on sound principles, current research, effective teaching and learning practices, and student needs?
- Does the programme address social, environmental or other external factors that can affect individual behaviour?



- Does the programme include other complementary elements such as policy and services that can reinforce education for drug abuse prevention?
- Are students, parents and the wider community involved in planning and implementing programmes?



4. Teaching resources and strategies

::: Teaching resources

Resources such as charts, videos and stories can contribute to learning experiences by stimulating interest and enjoyment.

The guidelines for selecting teaching and support resources given below are intended to assist classroom teachers in selecting appropriate resource materials to design innovative lessons.

The suitability of a resource should be decided by the teacher, taking into account its capacity to engage students in interactive processes, the drug-related learning outcomes desired and the Guiding principles for school-based education for drug abuse prevention (see chapter 2).

Guidelines for selecting teaching and support resources

Choosing resources that engage the students

Resources should be chosen on the basis of their ability to assist students who have differing levels of exposure to drugs, namely those:

- Who choose to abstain from drug use
- Who choose to postpone or delay their drug use
- Who already use drugs
- Who are experiencing difficulties with their own use or that of relatives or friends

What resources should do

- Complement the central role of the classroom teacher in the delivery of the drug abuse prevention programme
- Present a balance of drug use information based on possible effects, risks and consequences of drug use
- Differentiate between problematic and experimental use



What resources should not do

Resources should not present information about drugs and drug use in a way that supports, encourages or normalizes drug use or experimentation with dangerous substances. Examples of approaches that may be counter-productive include:

- Glamourizing: presenting drug use and drug users as sophisticated or “cool”, even inadvertently, for example by using media clips that imply as much
- Strategies that exaggerate and misrepresent the dangers of drug use present a message which contradicts students’ knowledge or beliefs, based on their own experience, do not reflect the whole truth
- Sensationalizing: using graphic images that portray drug use as dangerous and exciting
- Presenting frightening case studies that are too far removed from the reality of young people
- Presenting emotionally loaded videos and personal anecdotes
- Romanticizing: using slang or “street” names without using the pharmacological name, which highlight a drug’s supposed positive effects while concealing the potential harms associated with its use
- Informing students how to obtain, make or use potentially harmful substances, including detailing the chemical composition of substances
- Using pictures and images of drug use or the drug user that are appealing or attractive
- Using “one-off” or “stand-alone” activities rather than activities that contribute to an ongoing, comprehensive, developmentally appropriate programme

:: Teaching strategies

Interactive teaching and the life skills approach

A life skills approach is a way of teaching and interacting with young people that has the potential to lead to better health and drug abuse prevention learning outcomes and may ultimately influence student drug use. Life skills are best taught through interactive methods and are most effective when applied and practised in potential drug use situations that are relevant and meaningful to the social situations of students.



The life skills approach is more effective when:

- Teachers or facilitators have the capacity to boost students' sense of self-worth
- The classroom atmosphere is non-threatening and non-judgemental
- The learning environment reflects care, understanding and involvement

Education for drug abuse prevention is more successful when it is student-focused and uses interactive methods, with experiential learning and small group work as its basis.

A life skills approach to education for drug abuse prevention will provide drug information in the context of developing attitudes, values and skills in students. These include skills for increasing self-esteem, setting realistic goals, coping with anxiety, resisting pressures, communicating effectively, making decisions, managing conflict and dealing assertively with social situations in which drugs are offered.

Small group work

Life skills are best taught in small groups, which provide opportunities for free and thorough exchanges of ideas and increased individual participation. Small group processes, being interactive, are more appropriate to facilitating the examination of attitudes to drugs and drug use and create an environment conducive to attitude change by encouraging trust and reducing personal obstacles to change such as egocentrism (looking at things from your own point of view only) and defensiveness.

Evidence suggests that programmes that are teacher-facilitated and student-oriented rather than drug-oriented, one-off or information-based are more likely to achieve drug- and health-related learning outcomes.

Effective group work does not happen as a matter of chance, but is a well-orchestrated organizational strategy that requires planning in advance. The facilitator needs to confirm carefully the group goals, organize how the groups are formed, establish group member roles and plan the steps that the groups will follow to achieve their goals.

The goals and objectives of group work must be clearly defined before selecting and facilitating a learning activity. The environment in which group work is facilitated is critical to the effectiveness of the process.



The facilitator

The role of the facilitator is different from that of the instructor. The facilitator should promote an atmosphere of trust, support and encouragement for the group and intervene only when ineffective group behaviour is impacting negatively on group outcomes.

An effective facilitator will:

- Model the skills that are being taught
- Use active and interactive methods
- Follow the procedures for experiential learning
- Create an atmosphere of openness, acceptance and support
- Be sensitive to the needs, styles and personal preferences of students
- Introduce, complete and link all learning experiences
- Organize the material, procedures and facilities required
- Be task-oriented and keep to time
- Know, understand and be enthusiastic about the material being presented
- Show enjoyment of the experience and enthusiasm, ensuring that it is a worthwhile personal learning experience
- Focus attention on the key learnings and understandings and the underlying theory and application

Experiential learning

Experiential learning involves active and interactive participation in structured learning experiences or activities employing a combination of learning styles, including:

- Concrete experience: doing things rather than learning from text
- Observation and reflection: watching the facilitator and other participants and thinking about what is observed and experienced
- Abstraction and generalization of concepts: understanding the theory and purpose behind the activities and linking these to real-life situations
- Testing new ideas and assessing implications: using the safe learning environment to explore ideas and theories, as well as hypotheses



The four components of experiential learning

Experiential methods provide students with a balance between didactic and inquiry teaching methods, and the opportunity for everyone to contribute, to share feelings about an activity and its application to interpersonal relationships and to acquire the necessary theory.

Warm-up. Short activities “warm up” the group for the lesson and give members time to focus on group tasks. Activities can be physical or passive, written or oral. As a secondary aim of the warm-up activities is to enhance group empathy, activities should be selected according to the level of group development.

Leading the activity. Before starting an activity, the stage should be set for learning and the purpose of the activity should be clearly stated. An activity or statement can act as a way of connecting the previous session or activity to the present session. The objectives of an activity should be stated from the outset. Group members are more likely to understand the purpose and relevance of the activity and are less inclined to resist it. Once a group is working well, the objectives of an activity need not be stated in advance, but can become clear in the process of work.

Conducting the activity. This provides the experience through which learning objectives are achieved and the information learned is applied to real life. Facilitators should use their knowledge of the group when selecting activities. The activity should be relevant to the desired objective, provide a balance between theory and practice and allow maximum participation.

Reflection. Students should be actively involved in the learning process and should be encouraged to reflect on the learning experiences in terms of how and why activities contributed to the objectives and how activities may be applied to their lives. Reflection is a vital component of the learning process.

Learning from an experiential activity occurs when students see how classroom skills and knowledge can be generalized and applied to real-life situations. Making these connections and stating them ensures that the information acquired has maximum impact.

The following are some of the techniques that can be used to ensure that students reflect on the applicability of the activity to their real lives:

- Questioning: feedback questions or structured questionnaires such as the following should be used after every activity or at the end of a session or lesson:
 - Description: What did we do?
 - Objective: What did we learn?



- Feelings: How did you feel?
- Values: Why did we do this activity?
- Application: How would you use this knowledge?
- Unfinished sentences such as the following:
 - I learned that ...
 - I was surprised that ...
 - I was happy that ...
 - I was frustrated that ...
 - Something I felt today was ... because ...
- Brainstorming: this is a technique for providing maximum creativity and minimum self-censorship to develop numerous ideas in order to solve a problem. The basics of brainstorming can be boiled down to these features: presenting a problem and encouraging quick-fire ideas for solving it without interruption or discussion; the approach allows a group of people the chance to think “outside the box” by leaping the usual hurdles of self-defined “rational thought”
- Fishbowl: some of the students observe the group during the activity and provide feedback
- Recording: the activity is recorded and then analysed

Interactive learning experiences

Interactive teaching involves learning techniques that complement or are part of the experiential learning approach.

Learner-centred teaching. This method focuses on the needs of the learner and encourages students to participate actively by exploring the issues, questioning and challenging information, instead of being passive recipients. Learning is more effective when there is a high level of participation.

Cooperative learning. Students are encouraged to work towards the achievement of education outcomes collaboratively and to use social cooperation to develop other skills. Students interact with each other and sometimes with other resource people, including the teacher:

- To debate • To solve problems
- To question • To consider different points of view



- To explore issues
- To share experiences
- To reach consensus
- To discuss
- To clarify
- To build skills and knowledge

Cooperative groups develop the social skills of sharing, leadership, communication, building trust and managing conflict, which are important life skills, for work, within families and for other personal relationships.

The inquiry method. The inquiry method is incorporated into experiential learning to draw issues and lessons from activities. Using this method, teachers would:

- Use a questioning mode that enables students to take responsibility for their learning, in terms of content and style, rather than being provided with information by the teacher
- Encourage student-student interaction as well as student-teacher interaction in a way that respects the ideas and opinions of everyone
- Develop lessons that respond to the needs, interests and concerns of students and are not limited by a set curriculum
- Engage students in exploring how and why they think in a particular way rather than telling them what they should think

Questioning techniques. Experiential learning incorporates a variety of questioning techniques including:

- Closed questions, which are simple and require only a “yes” or “no” answer
- Defined questions, which are simple questions of definition and recall and establish a knowledge base on which to build. Question beginnings could be: “What ... ?” “When ... ?” “Who ... ?” “Which ... ?”
- Personalized questions, which build on the knowledge base so that students can be involved and achieve learning outcomes. They yield more information and aid application. Question beginnings could be: “Why do you ... ?” “When do you ... ?” “What is your experience of ... ?”
- Challenge questions, which require clear, logical and creative thinking; analysis; synthesis; and evaluation. Utilizing “defined” and “personalized” questions encourages students and enhances learning. Question beginnings could be: “How could we ... ?” “Can you think of a way ... ?” “Compare and contrast ... ”

These questioning techniques are highly significant in education for drug abuse prevention, as they provide an opportunity for all aspects of an issue to be raised and considered before a decision is made or an attitude



formed. For example, instead of asking “Are drugs bad for you?” and expecting a “yes” answer, teachers can ask “What good and bad aspects of this drug would we have to consider before making a decision to use it?” This allows a full and open discussion about the drug, with due consideration of perceived good points as well as bad points.

Responding to questions. When preparing to answer a question, the facilitator or teacher should:

- Acknowledge the significance of the question and inform the group if it is relevant for all to hear
- If he or she does not know the answer, say so and ask how the information may be obtained
- Decide whether it is necessary to give an answer. Some options are:
 - To explore the nature of the question with the student or the group by saying, for example, “That’s a good question. I’d like to hear what you or what everyone thinks might be the answer.”
 - To find out why the question has been asked if it is not clear
 - To encourage students to assist in the development of a response
- Give positive encouragement by asking questions such as:
 - “Thanks for asking that question.”
 - “Good question!”
 - “That raises an interesting issue.”
 - “I’m glad you asked that question.”

Role play. Role play is one of the most useful experiential learning techniques and is ideally suited to group work. Through role play, students can experience and explore the feelings they might have in a social situation and its potential outcomes, without suffering the real consequences of the decisions they make in that situation.

Role play can provide an opportunity:

- To broaden a person’s skills
- To practise and reinforce new skills without fear of failure or criticism
- To generate solutions to conflict situations in a safe environment
- To consider a range of responses to particular situations
- To experiment with roles and personalities in a non-threatening environment
- To experience the feelings that may accompany decisions



Role play may be used by a facilitator, teacher or health educator to explore the attitudes, values and skill levels of students and as an evaluation tool to assess changes in each of these over time.

Decision-making

Decision-making is a skill that can be learned and practised. It helps students to look after themselves, their peers, others in the community and their environment. Teachers do not need to be experts to facilitate the learning of decision-making. Decision-making is relevant to education for drug abuse prevention because it promotes and supports student decisions in relation to positive healthy behaviour and acceptable social activity.

The role of the facilitator in decision-making is:

- To provide a decision-making process that can be used in a variety of situations
- To help students to realize that they have control over the decisions they make
- To encourage students to gather accurate information from many sources to inform their decisions
- To assist students to assess the positives and negatives of their decisions, including the possible consequences for themselves and for others
- To help students to identify the factors that influence options and choices before an accurate assessment of a situation can be made
- To allow a number of decision-making options to be considered
- To explore feelings and values associated with the various options
- To encourage students to take responsibility for their actions before a choice is made
- To emphasize the need for students to re-evaluate the decisions they make and adapt them to new situations
- To remind students to confirm the decision prior to assertion, as it is critical for students to be committed to the decision before asserting the choice

The components of decision-making are the following:

- An issue, situation or problem
- Various actions, options or possible decisions



- The possible consequences of each option
- The feelings associated with the consequences
- The values underlying each potential decision and possible conflict

Assertion

Assertion is a specific way of communicating that enables people to express their thoughts, feelings and values about a situation openly and directly. It focuses on the rights of the individual, with consideration of the rights of others. As such, it is an important skill in social situations that involve pressure to use drugs, as well as in many other real-life situations.

Assertion, aggression or submission

Assertion is one of three types of behaviour that a person may choose to adopt in a conflict situation. The three types of behaviour may be described as assertive, aggressive or submissive. The table below outlines why people choose a type of behaviour and what the result of that choice may be. It is the behaviour, not the person, which is called aggressive, submissive or assertive.

Basic assertive rights

The concept of assertion is based on the assumption that people have rights in their interaction with others and that they must assume a level of responsibility for asserting those rights.

As a person, you have the assertable right:

- To make your own decisions
- To be treated with respect
- To refuse others' requests
- To make mistakes
- To change your mind
- To take time to consider requests
- To make reasonable requests
- To hold personal opinions
- To control your own destiny
- To express your feelings

As a person, you have the associated responsibility:

- To allow others to make their decisions
- To treat others with respect
- To refuse courteously and assertively
- To ensure mistakes do not harm others
- To act reasonably
- To allow others this courtesy
- To not impose upon others
- To respect the opinions of others
- To allow others to control their destiny
- To consider the feelings of others



⚡ Student action on drugs

Students can be powerful agents for change when they are encouraged to undertake anti-drug action. Outlined below are some suggested activities that students could undertake either in conjunction with the school, student groups and clubs or individually.

Suggested student activities

- *Writing letters to favourite sporting teams and stars asking them not to use drugs or endorse tobacco or alcohol products*
- *Writing to film, television and magazine producers and editors to object to tobacco and alcohol advertising and promotion*
- *Promoting non-smoking male and female role models and seek to establish non-smoking as the normative behaviour for most people*
- *Surveying local businesses that make inhalant products easily accessible to young people to buy or steal*
- *Creating anti-drug art projects for display around the school*
- *Using the school newsletter or magazine to promote drug-free messages*
- *Helping to revise the existing school drug policy or curriculum*
- *Participating in local community parades and festivals with drug-free messages*
- *Planning a culturally appropriate youth health day*
- *Designing and painting an anti-tobacco/alcohol/drug mural in the school*
- *Supporting drug-free celebrations, formals, social and cultural events, dances and festivities*
- *Providing active support for youth drug prevention campaigns and strategies*

⚡ Further reading

Skills for Drug Education in Schools: A Manual for Teachers and Trainers. Available free from Tay Bian How, Director, Drug Advisory Programme, Colombo Plan Secretariat (e-mail: cplan@slt.lk). This is a comprehensive training manual on skills for education for drug abuse prevention in schools and includes sections on group facilitation, communication, decision-making, self-esteem building, assertion and other personal skills.



5. School, classroom, community and home influences

∴ The school environment and the classroom climate

The school environment and the classroom climate are major variables influencing the effectiveness of education for drug abuse prevention. Students interact in the context of classrooms, each of which has its own normative climate, encouraging or discouraging certain behaviours. Classrooms exist within and form part of the school environment that provides the larger context for all activities in a school.

Schools, as institutions for people in their formative years, are strategic settings for advancing health promoting skills, policies, practices and community links. Some of the characteristics of schools that relate to successful change include quality leadership, teacher morale, teacher mastery, the school environment and resources.

The school environment can directly influence emotional well-being and health, as well as academic outcomes. A sense of belonging to both family and school are major protective factors against health-risk behaviours in young people.

The features of a school environment or culture that enhance a sense of belonging include:

- ∴ Caring and supportive teachers
- ∴ Opportunities and skills for meaningful and valued contributions to school life
- ∴ A sense of security
- ∴ The availability of close and positive relationships

Students benefit when school is purposeful, when schools make clear what students should know and do, and describe how they are going to bring about these desired results and how those outcomes are to be achieved and measured.



Characteristics of a purposeful school environment

- Strong administrative leadership and an orderly school climate
- High expectations of student success
- An organizational culture that channels teachers and students towards achieving high teaching and learning standards
- A clear school mission statement

Physical and structural aspects must be a consideration in building a positive environment, including the following four overlapping spheres of influence:

- The physical ecology of the school or the school buildings and material aspects
- The culture or ethos of the school or that set of beliefs, values and sense of meaning embodied within the school
- The social climate of the school, as manifested by the dynamic relationships among school community members
- The milieu of the school or the particular characteristics and mix of groups within the school

Schools in which students perceive school rules and reward structures to be clear and sanctions to be unambiguous experience less disorder, as do schools in which students feel that they belong and that people in the school care about them.

The influence of the school mission statement and policy on the school environment

The school environment—meaning its culture, milieu, sense of community, the presence of order and discipline and clearly established goals—provides the setting for successful education outcomes. The challenge for schools is to convey the importance of the school environment as a setting for successful educational outcomes to the school community.

One way that schools can do so is by outlining their values, beliefs and educational goals in a mission statement, which motivates all members of a school community to work together.

The mission statement should be communicated to all stakeholders early and repeatedly and should focus on student learning and achievement as



the major responsibilities of the school. Some suggested themes or goals for a mission statement are provided below. It is intended that they be used in a consultation process for a school to arrive at a mission statement that reflects its own values and priorities.

Some suggested themes or goals for a mission statement

[Name of school] will:

- *Encourage academic learning through mention of curriculum, student learning, thinking and analytical skills*
- *Foster robust self-esteem among students*
- *Develop student social skills through mention of the ability to work together, resolve conflict and behave responsibly*
- *Ensure a caring environment in which all students feel valued*
- *Provide a safe environment with an emphasis on balancing emotional, mental, physical and spiritual safety*
- *Encourage community involvement through mention of parent participation or communication with groups in the community served by the school*
- *Prepare students for future work outcomes through mention of preparation for the world of work, vocational skills or employment*
- *Prepare students for future life other than work by mention of citizenship and the ability to contribute to community or family life as adults*
- *Ensure equal opportunity to all students*
- *Provide a positive, professional environment for all staff*

::: A sample departmental or system-level drug policy

The school drug policy should be part of the school mission statement. A policy statement concerning education for drug abuse prevention that addresses the education component, parental concerns, school and classroom values and protocols for dealing with drug incidents in schools adds to the perception of a supportive school environment.

At a broader level, governmental departments for education could also adopt policy statements on drug abuse along the following lines:



The department of education drug policy

Objectives of the department of education drug policy

The department of education drug policy aims to ensure that all students have access to education for drug abuse prevention programmes and provisions for intervention, including counselling and referral to professional help, throughout their time at school.

Department of education schools will:

- Implement education for drug abuse prevention programmes within appropriate curriculum areas, in accordance with the guiding principles for school-based education for drug abuse prevention given in chapter 2
- Incorporate statements in school plans about education for drug abuse prevention and intervention that include referral, counselling and procedures for managing drug incidents at school
- Inform the school community about education for drug abuse prevention programmes and procedures developed under the department of education drug policy
- Report on policy implementation and the achievement of learning objectives that reduce the health and social costs and consequences of drug abuse
- Provide professional development opportunities that assist teachers to achieve drug-related educational outcomes

The department of education central office will:

- Develop policy for education for drug abuse prevention and intervention in schools
- Provide information and guidelines to assist schools in implementing the policy

Guidelines on implementing the department of education drug policy

Department of education schools can implement the drug policy by:

- Implementing education for drug abuse prevention programmes that are:
 - Shaped by learning outcomes from the school health education or other relevant syllabus
 - Consistent with the guiding principles for school-based education for drug abuse prevention given in chapter 2



- Guided by a situation analysis of the needs of the school community and a review of resources
- Concerned with the drugs young people may encounter now and in the future
- Incorporating statements on education and intervention in school plans:
 - In the context of the health or other appropriate curriculum
 - That include information on processes to identify and assist students with drug-related problems
 - That outline intervention procedures for staff and students, including the action that will be taken in response to drug-related incidents
 - That include requirements for disclosure of information
- Informing and engaging the school community by disseminating information:
 - On drug use
 - On school programmes and procedures for managing drug-related incidents at school
 - On the planning and delivery of programmes
- Reporting on policy implementation:
 - Using learning outcomes from the health syllabus or other related areas
 - By providing a framework for planning and student assessment
 - Including the achievement of long- and short-term goals and learning outcomes
- Emphasizing the central role of teachers in education for drug abuse prevention through the provision of access to professional development:
 - Through workshops, seminars, conferences and networking
 - Including access to the Internet
 - Including basic counselling skills for teachers



::: Creating a positive environment

Checklist: school factors

Does the school:

- *Encourage school stakeholders, teachers, administrators, students, parents and community members to engage in collaborative planning and collegial relationships?*
- *Encourage the development of a sense of community among stakeholders?*
- *Establish clear goals and set high standards for student performance?*
- *Create a climate of order and discipline within the school?*
- *Build its capacity to be self-managing?*
- *Set norms (values) and expectations for behaviour and establish and enforce school rules, policies and regulations?*
- *Change classroom instructional and management practices to enhance the classroom climate and improve educational processes?*
- *Group students in different ways to achieve smaller, less alienating or otherwise more suitable microclimates within the school?*

Checklist: leadership factors

Do school leaders:

- *Utilize consultative, collaborative processes to develop education for drug abuse prevention programmes and procedures for managing drug-related incidents?*
- *Identify the roles and responsibilities of staff in implementing and evaluating education for drug abuse prevention programmes and procedures for managing drug-related incidents?*
- *Inform the school community of the aims of education for drug abuse prevention programmes and the procedures for managing drug-related incidents?*
- *Relate intervention procedures to principles, policies and practices identified in relevant system policy statements?*
- *Provide opportunities for school personnel to attend professional development programmes on education for drug abuse prevention and intervention?*
- *Ensure adequate resources are available to the school staff responsible for*



implementation of education for drug abuse prevention programmes and intervention procedures?

- *Access appropriate resources and services to meet the identified drug-related problems of students or their families?*
- *Ensure that school education for drug abuse prevention programmes are consistent with the guiding principles for school-based education for drug abuse prevention given in chapter 2?*

∴ Engaging parents in drug abuse prevention

The role of parents as primary educators can be recognized and supported by schools by working in partnership with parents. Partnerships with parents and community help to integrate consistent and relevant health messages into the home and the community, improve student health and promote a greater awareness of health issues among students and their families.

Programmes that are implemented and initiated in consultation with parents are not only more successful, but also empower parents. Parents often have difficulties discussing drug issues with their children, yet they can be the most trusted and preferred source of information on health issues for young people.

Schools can assist parents by providing them with information on health and drug issues as a group. Schools working in partnerships with parents remove some of the anxiety parents experience from the expectation that education for drug abuse prevention is their sole responsibility. Further, such programmes have the potential to provide parents with skills and knowledge to broach and discuss the topic of drugs with their children.

Parents are also important because families are a primary source of socialization and because parental opinion can either reinforce or countermand the messages of education for drug abuse prevention programmes. Parents are important also as their opinions contribute to community norms about substance use and community support for education for drug abuse prevention.



The family can prevent drug use

The family can play a role in preventing drug use among its members by ensuring:

- *Adequate parent-child communication*
- *The maintenance of affectionate relations among family members*
- *A fair distribution of responsibility among family members*
- *Good relationships between siblings*
- *That social or illegal drugs are not used by family members*

The role of parents in drug prevention

Parents can have a significant influence by modelling responsible behaviours concerning drug use, instituting family rules, becoming more aware of youth culture, recognizing the early signs of drug use and by maintaining communication within the family and with other parents and the school.

They can also be influential in promoting drug policies at the school and community levels and by advocating for changes to laws. Parents also have a role in managing drug incidents in schools.

Schools, together with families and the wider community, share responsibility for the education and welfare of students, and parents and guardians have a right to know when their children are misusing substances. The importance of mutual support between school and home is emphasized and parental support is seen as crucial to dealing with drug-related issues.

Objectives of parent programmes

Parent programmes should try:

- To give parents a clear understanding of drug usage patterns among school-age persons
- To give parents an understanding of the reasons underlying drug use
- To assist parents in forming a personal perspective on alcohol and drugs based on facts and to assist them in clarifying their attitudes and beliefs towards alcohol and drugs
- To outline effective parent strategies for preventing or coping with drug use by their children



Getting better results from engaging parents: a case study

We had a major drug incident at school involving about a dozen students. The school called a parents' meeting, which was attended by about 60 parents and at which a support group aimed at helping parents to network and support each other was established. But the support group failed because there were parents whose kids "weren't problems" who wanted to tell the other parents how to bring up their kids. I did find two Maori parents who wanted to continue, though, and started working with them.

One was a public health nurse, the other a tribal elder. They would bring parents along to school to meet with me and we'd discuss all sorts of problems, including drug use. My office was separate from the main building and easily accessible to parents. The group grew and grew until, in the end, I was spending a whole morning with parents. The spin-off was that they also started getting more involved with other school activities as they began to see the school as a less threatening place.

In the long run, the process improved the relationship between Maori parents and the school and, I believe, enabled a more positive environment to be established for our other programmes. (I also put on weight, as they'd bring food.) So, the big meeting was a failure, but by identifying key community people and starting small, I got better results.

Thanks to Cliff Shepherd of New Zealand, currently teaching at the Vienna International School

Involving parents

To involve parents and the community, schools can:

- Design pamphlets that answer the most commonly asked questions
- Provide families with access to advice and recommend support agencies for assistance with drug-related issues
- Publicize the school support system and its availability for members of the school community who may be experiencing drug problems
- Ensure a school environment that encourages any student experiencing drug-related problems to seek help
- Offer parents drug information sessions that are accessible to a range of cultural backgrounds and sensitive to differing ability levels



- Provide parents with a summary of current research indicating the importance of parental influence on young people and their drug use behaviour
- Suggest strategies for parents to assist in the prevention of drug use problems, such as:
 - Modelling a responsible use of drugs
 - Discussing the topic of drug use with children
 - Setting clear family rules about drug use
 - Teaching children first-aid skills
- Encourage parents to develop an authoritative, warm and supportive style of parenting, to express negative attitudes about teenage drug use, to keep in touch with other parents in order to establish consistent expectations and to keep up to date on drug-related issues

•• Engaging the community in drug abuse prevention

Schools can enlist the help of the wider community in drug abuse prevention by:

- Involving the school community (students, people working at the school, families and the community at large being served by the school) in local and national health events, youth and community service activities and local action groups
- Involving the community in the review of school policy statements and programmes
- Involving the community in activities related to newsletters, pamphlets, web sites, committees, open days, student homework activities, forums, information evenings
- Involving the community in conducting drug-free activities for students
- Engaging the community in sponsoring education for drug abuse prevention programmes in schools
- Involving the community in teacher training workshops
- Involving the community in working with youth groups in schools



::: Religious and cultural diversity

The diverse views of religious and cultural groups need to be acknowledged and catered for when school-based drug abuse prevention policies, programmes and practices are developed. Religious and cultural values are often ignored because of a perceived difficulty in talking about or acknowledging young people's behaviour when it could be in conflict with religious or cultural teaching. This does not mean that young people with firm beliefs should not have relevant teaching about health and safety, especially in drug education.

Fostering a partnership between home and school to develop approaches to education for drug abuse prevention is likely to be the best way of catering for and acknowledging the range of religious beliefs within a school community. Partnerships with parents and community help to integrate consistent and relevant health messages into the home and the community, improve student health and enable a greater awareness of health issues among students and their families.

Programmes that are implemented and initiated in consultation with parents are not only more successful, but also empower parents who sometimes feel left out because of language difficulties or a lack of confidence in a new environment.



6. Evaluation and assessment of the drug abuse prevention programme

Evaluation must relate directly to the stated learning outcomes or objectives of the programme. A common mistake is to enlist young people in a drug abuse prevention programme and then use their level of drug-taking alone as a measure of success of the programme.

The school can influence skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that may, in turn, influence drug use. Evaluation of the programme should focus on the classroom level of knowledge, attitudes, values and skills that represent the immediate impact of the programme.

∴ Informal evaluation or professional judgement

Teachers and other qualified and trained professional programme facilitators can and should evaluate the worth of lessons and programmes by using their professional judgement and monitoring their own feelings and reactions, as well as seeking feedback from students. This is useful when time and resources do not allow for a more formal evaluation to be undertaken.

A professional judgement may be reached by seeking answers to the following questions:

- ∴ Was I comfortable with how the lesson proceeded?
- ∴ Were the intended learning outcomes achieved?
- ∴ Were the resources and activities adequate and engaging?
- ∴ Was my knowledge of the subject matter sufficient?
- ∴ Did students remain active, interested and motivated?
- ∴ Did students contribute with questions and opinions?
- ∴ Was the discussion focused and structured enough?
- ∴ What would I change to make the lesson better next time?



Indicators of a well-planned learning sequence are:

- An enhanced teaching methodology
- A high level of teacher confidence or satisfaction
- Teacher effectiveness evidenced by student learning outcomes of knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours

•• Guidelines for assessing knowledge skills and values or attitudes

Processes for assessing student learning should:

- Be consistent with the programme objectives and school goals
- Be based on student outcomes and reflect the programme content
- Be gathered from the everyday learning activities of the student
- Make a positive contribution to student learning
- Build the self-esteem of students and provide motivation to achieve
- Recognize and value the diversity of student backgrounds
- Acknowledge the personal experiences of the student
- Inform the teacher of the student's ability and assist in the further development of learning activities
- Provide a basis on which to plan for further improvement

•• General assessment tools

Tools for the general assessment of student learning should include:

- Written tests with questions on knowledge of drugs, as well as items on attitudes and intentions
- Student folders that show samples of the students' work that reflect their knowledge and attitudes
- Observation of students preparing and participating in role play



- Item assessment, when students create a pamphlet, poster or song or generate a debate that reflects their learning in the area of drugs
- Self-assessment, when students identify risk situations and possible risk factors for themselves in their lives
- Peer assessment, when students compose questions to assess each other's knowledge and attitudes and construct situations in which they can demonstrate their skills
- Teacher interviews, during which questions or discussion topics are identified

•• More advanced assessment strategies

Some more advanced strategies that could be used include:

- The students identify dilemmas faced by characters in drug-related scenarios and the possible decisions these individuals could make
 - Assuming they are the characters in the scenarios, the students predict the likely consequences of each decision option for themselves and others, focusing on the ways in which health may be harmed or put at risk
 - The students decide which decisions would most effectively promote health and communicate these appropriately
 - The students propose actions they could take to support their decisions and to promote health, immediately and in the future
- Students predict how drug use might result in their own and others' health being harmed or put at risk in the short and long term
 - Can students identify the consequences of each decision?
 - Can students identify decisions most likely to promote their own and others' health?
 - Can students propose actions to promote health, now and in the future?
- Students participate in scenarios involving drug use situations and demonstrate recommended first-aid behaviours and actions to provide care and to manage risks in responding to those situations
 - Does each student demonstrate appropriate care in response to situations involving drugs?



- Does each student assess the situation to manage risks to health associated with drug use?
- Students use role-play scenarios involving possible drug use to demonstrate decision-making, assertiveness and negotiation
- Does each student use a decision-making process to deal with challenges and conflicts that may arise from the situation?
- Does each student choose an appropriate skill to suit the situation?
- Does each student demonstrate effective use of assertiveness, decision-making and negotiation skills?

∴ More formal types of evaluation: programme level

Formative evaluation

Formative evaluation is the gathering of generally qualitative data to help design and modify a new programme. It refers to the process of gathering information to advise the planning and design stages and decisions about implementation. This information can be gathered through observation and/or individual and group interviews to gather feedback from students, teachers and other interested personnel.

Process evaluation

Process evaluation is the gathering of information about what has been done and with whom. There needs to be ongoing monitoring so that it will be obvious what services have been delivered, to whom and when. This will help assess progress towards agreed goals and objectives. Information can be gathered through written student diaries, school records and interviews with teachers, school administrators, parents and community leaders. Documentation of planning, development and implementation stages will assist others who want to replicate the success of the programme.

Outcome evaluation

Outcome evaluation is gathering information about what has been done and whether it has made a difference. It is to establish if any changes have occurred from before the intervention is implemented to after implementation and to demonstrate that the changes identified are the result of the intervention itself. It is important to measure outcomes that are directly tied to the objectives of the programme.



Checklist for evaluating skills-based programmes of education for drug abuse prevention

The following checklist, based on the guiding principles for school-based education for drug abuse prevention given in chapter 2, provides a method for determining the quality of programmes of education for drug abuse prevention:

- Are learning outcomes related to or likely to contribute in the long term to desired behaviour change in the broad context of prevention?*
- Do the teaching and learning strategies relate directly to the learning outcomes?*
- Is the programme of education for drug abuse prevention part of the formal school curriculum or can it be linked to it?*
- Does a qualified and trained teacher facilitate the programme?*
- Do programmes have sequence and progression throughout the year and across year levels?*
- Are the messages across the broader school environment consistent with the stated learning outcomes?*
- Are programmes and resources accurate and appropriate for the target group and the year level?*
- Does the programme take into account the knowledge, attitudes and values of the community and the individual?*
- Are interactive and participatory teaching and learning methods used in the programme?*
- Is the programme based on sound principles, current research, effective teaching and learning practices and student needs?*
- Does the programme address social, environmental factors or other external factors that can affect individual behaviour?*
- Does the programme include other complementary elements such as policy and services that can reinforce education for drug abuse prevention?*
- Does the programme take into account risk and protective factors as well as levels of drug use, gender, ethnicity or culture, language, developmental level, ability level, religion and sexual orientation or lifestyle?*
- Are students, parents and the wider community involved in planning and implementing programmes?*
- Are objectives, processes and outcomes evaluated?*
- Do the programmes, activities and resources contribute to long-term positive outcomes in the health curriculum and the health environment of the school?*



7. Teacher training and technical support programmes

::: Teacher training

Teacher training is as important a component of any drug abuse prevention programme as are content, resources and teaching method. Education for drug abuse prevention is more effective when teachers receive formal training and ongoing advice and support. Some common features of education for drug abuse prevention programmes are described below; these are a useful starting point for training teachers involved in school-based drug abuse prevention education.

Training for teachers in drug abuse prevention education, rather than focusing on training teachers in the use of a specific set of resource materials, should focus on providing them with an orientation to drug abuse prevention education that enables them to select content and use a wide range of strategies and resources appropriate to meeting student needs.

Some common features of drug abuse prevention education that could be used as a basis for teacher training programmes are given below:

- *Teachers should understand the theory underpinning drug abuse prevention programmes*

It is important that teachers understand the theoretical rationale underpinning the new programmes and learn the skills needed to deliver programmes in accordance with that rationale in the school environment.

- *Teachers should have an understanding of the life skills needed by adolescents to deal with the challenges of adolescent life*

Teachers need to recognize the importance of developing adolescents' life skills in their drug abuse prevention programmes and need practice in providing real-life situations and contexts for that purpose.

- *Teachers need an understanding of adolescent developmental changes*



Teachers should be aware of the wide range of behaviours in adolescents that are part of the natural process of separating from parents, developing a sense of autonomy and independence and acquiring the skills necessary for functioning effectively in the adult world. Profound cognitive changes occur at the beginning of adolescence that significantly alter the adolescent's thinking and view of the world.

Teachers should be familiar with interactive classroom strategies. Interactive teaching strategies such as role play, discussions and small group activities that promote the active participation of students and programmes using these techniques have been found to be more effective than didactic teaching strategies. They should therefore be given major emphasis in teacher training and support programmes.

Based on G. Botvin, 1995.

Objectives of teacher training programmes

The objectives of teacher training programmes should be:

- To assist teachers in planning, developing and implementing a programme of education for drug abuse prevention for their students
- To train teachers to identify students who may encounter alcohol and drug problems and to assist them in getting help
- To make teachers more comfortable with the content and process of drug abuse prevention education
- To expand knowledge of the facts of student drug use and related issues among teachers
- To expand the repertoire of methods for delivering drug abuse prevention education
- To increase the competence, confidence and commitment of teachers of drug abuse prevention education
- To improve teacher confidence in using interactive teaching methods

Students also reap the benefits of increased teacher competence, confidence and commitment.



The training effect can be strengthened by requiring a school administrator to be a member of the school team; holding regular technical assistance meetings to help facilitate project goals; and offering incentives of a material nature such as release time or a monetary stipend. Teachers may also be motivated by a psychological incentive such as a desire to achieve public recognition or win public support.

Teachers may benefit from assignments that offer choices such as attending a treatment centre or other community health-related activity, developing a drug abuse prevention plan or presenting a mini-session of the course to colleagues as an in-service opportunity.

The training can increase the confidence of participants in recognizing and intervening with student alcohol and drug problems and in increasing the knowledge of participants regarding substance use prevention. Adult learning principles can provide the basis of sound teacher training in drug abuse prevention education.

Adult learning processes that incorporate experiential and multi-directional techniques rather than one-way learning processes enable the skills and experiences of the participants to be put to use. Multiple and sequenced sessions that require active participation produce higher levels of skill acquisition.

Effective training requires that teachers identify information relevant to students of different age levels and social backgrounds and that information relating to drug abuse prevention be taught in small amounts in conjunction with the development of skills such as decision-making, assertiveness and coping.

The major processes used in successful teacher training programmes include:

- Small group discussion
- Independent study
- Simulation and role play
- Practice in using the techniques
- Curriculum development
- Video and film presentation
- Experiential learning



- Structured learning experiences
- Large-group discussion and lecturing

It is important to develop in teachers a sense of belonging or collegiality and to ensure that teachers are working within their “comfort zone”. It is also critical to build in short-term success by setting clear and achievable goals and to have ongoing system support.

•• Using external agencies for training and technical support

Guidelines for engaging external agencies

The following items are required prior to employing external agencies:

- The school policy and guidelines for engaging external agencies
- An opportunity to discuss the proposed presentation with the appropriate staff member, including the context in which the presentation is placed
- The learning outcomes and related content to be addressed in the presentation
- Information on the developmental level of students, sociocultural, economic, gender and other issues that may be relevant
- A process for evaluating the session/presentation

The person or organization should provide the school with:

- Information about the agency and its position on education for drug abuse prevention
- Information on how the learning outcomes will be addressed by the presentation
- Learning experiences (activities), resources and content
- Lists of pre-session requirements and suggested follow-up actions
- A list of the operational requirements for the proposed session, such as audio-visual equipment, whiteboard and handouts

School checklist for the engagement of an external provider

- The decision to engage the agency has been informed by an analysis of school needs, current internal resources and how learning outcomes can be addressed adequately



- The external agency will not replace an existing school programme, nor will it impose on the role of the teacher as the person accountable for the learning outcomes
- The school has approved the content, the learning experiences and the resources to be used with students
- The session uses interactive activities rather than just passive information-giving
- Criteria have been developed by the school to evaluate the presentation
- A teacher will be present during the programme or presentation
- Either parents have been informed or there is no need to inform parents in this instance



8. Managing drug-related incidents

In dealing with drug use or possession incidents at school, inappropriately punitive, ineffective or unlawful actions are less likely if clear procedures have already been put in place. A rational response, planned in advance, is more likely to have a good outcome than an action determined when actually confronted with a drug use or possession incident.

∴ Guidelines for planning responses to drug incidents

- ∴ As the detection of drug use with a solely punitive outcome is a limited strategy, a strategy of democratic discipline, as opposed to authoritarianism, should be adopted
- ∴ Responses to illicit drug use should not marginalize users or exacerbate existing predispositions to alienation and emotional distress that are likely to encourage more drug use
- ∴ A common response across education systems is the recognition that schools can provide effective support for students at risk by working in cooperation with family members and support agencies
- ∴ A particular behaviour should not be encouraged by being explicitly or implicitly condoned. School staff should be aware that deterrent effects are most potent when there is a perception of the likelihood of detection and punishment or some other undesirable consequence
- ∴ The school should ensure that behaviours associated with illicit drug use such as possession of or dealing in drugs by students are detected and that the consequences of detection are serious enough to discourage such behaviours, as they are more likely to be curtailed when students know this to be the case
- ∴ Rather than remove students when drug use occurs, education authorities should retain students at school and confront them with the consequences of their actions as offenders and victims
- ∴ Schools should use harmful behaviour as an opportunity for positive change

- Schools should identify the values that will guide school policy and procedures on managing drug-related incidents in consultation with students, teachers, parents and the wider community
- The messages that students receive in the classroom and from the school in response to a drug incident should be consistent with the values articulated in the drug policy by the school and the community
- Schools should act in the best interests of all students, as there is little evidence that a hard-line disciplinary approach is helpful to the student, the family and the community in the longer term

Strenuous efforts should be made to retain those with problematic drug-related behaviour within a treatment or educational setting. Drug use commonly occurs in association with other risk factors or behaviours. Detachment from school is an additional risk factor, and an attempt to build connectedness with school can be a key component in the welfare response.

Assumptions and values underlying intervention

The following 10 statements about values can be adapted or adopted as part of a school drug policy:

- *Illegal or unsanctioned drug use at school, including alcohol and tobacco use, can have significant social, legal, health, safety and educational implications for young people and cannot be ignored*
- *Responses to student drug use should recognize that some drug use is a transient behaviour among some young people*
- *The unlawful use, possession or distribution of drugs should not be allowed in schools, but students have the right to retain a place in school if they are not a threat to others*
- *The illicit use, possession or selling of drugs in schools should be detected as early as possible*
- *Consequences of possessing, using or selling drugs at school should be enforced publicly, fairly and consistently*
- *Curriculum and management practices should take account of the individual needs and circumstances of all students*
- *A range of strategies should be utilized to reintegrate students in cases where the health and safety of the school community is not threatened*
- *The most significant action is to discourage the use of and dealing in drugs at school through the definition of, and education about, the real and inevitable consequences of such activities*



- *Students involved in drug incidents should experience one or more of the following consequences: counselling, the involvement of parents, the involvement of the police and the justice system, detention, loss of privileges, suspension and exclusion*
- *Student drug use and the consequences of that drug use should be considered in the context of the student's life, family situation, mental and emotional health, intellectual ability and the degree to which they may have been, or are, in control of their actions and decisions*

∴ Objectives of the intervention process

- ∴ Implement intervention guidelines for drug incidents that are fair and just and that recognize the educational and welfare needs of all students
- ∴ Apply consistent and fair disciplinary processes for all violations of guidelines
- ∴ Support students, parents and school personnel in the process of coping with drug-related incidents
- ∴ Coordinate school and community resources relevant to drug-related incidents
- ∴ Create a school climate in which the unlawful use, possession and selling of drugs are unacceptable to the whole school community
- ∴ Provide and publicize clear guidelines on acceptable and unacceptable drug use behaviour at school
- ∴ Eliminate drug possession and selling on school premises
- ∴ Identify students who use drugs or students with drug-related problems and encourage them to get help

∴ Suggested outcomes for acceptable drug interventions

A programme based on the objectives listed above will result in the following outcomes:



- Knowledge and understanding of drug-related issues among school personnel, parents and students are enhanced
- School personnel, parents and students perceive that there is an increased level of information available to and support for all individuals involved in drug-related incidents in schools
- All school community members perceive the intervention processes developed and implemented by the school as clear, fair and consistent

•• Notes on managing media contact

If media attention is unavoidable, the following suggestions may help to make communication with journalists more productive:

- One person should be the designated media contact; that person should be confident in the role and provided with all relevant information
- When necessary, short and concise written statements should be released to the media; interviews conducted by telephone or face-to-face, which are difficult to manage and subject to editing, should be avoided
- The media contact person should not be drawn into a discussion of broader issues that are not directly relevant to the situation
- The names of teachers, students, parents or administrators and specific aspects of an incident should not be disclosed
- The option of making no comment should be considered, particularly if previous experience has led to a misrepresentation of the facts or sensationalism
- It is generally advisable to avoid discussing issues off the record
- Statements to be released to the media should be confirmed beforehand with the school principal and, where possible, other school staff should be informed prior to contact with the media

Other school or system guidelines or regulations may also apply.



❖ Actions to minimize drug incidents at school

1. Publicize the drug policy

Publicize widely that the illicit use, possession and supply of drugs in the school are unacceptable and will result in serious consequences.

2. Reinforce the message

Reinforce the unacceptability of illicit drugs in school by consistently acting on stated actions, including police and parental involvement.

4. Safe school environment

Establish an environment in which all school community members have enough care and concern for each other that they will confidentially pass on information about people using, carrying or selling drugs.

3. Apply consequences

Identify unambiguous consequences and apply them consistently and fairly to users and suppliers.

5. Reintegrate when possible

Use police warnings where possible and reintegration processes such as community conferencing or community service.

6. Education programmes

Implement education programmes that reinforce the consequences of having illicit drugs at school.

8. Inform the community

Inform the whole community about the possible consequences and potential outcomes of being found with drugs at school.

7. Maintain and sustain efforts

Ensure that detection and deterrent processes are maintained and sustained.

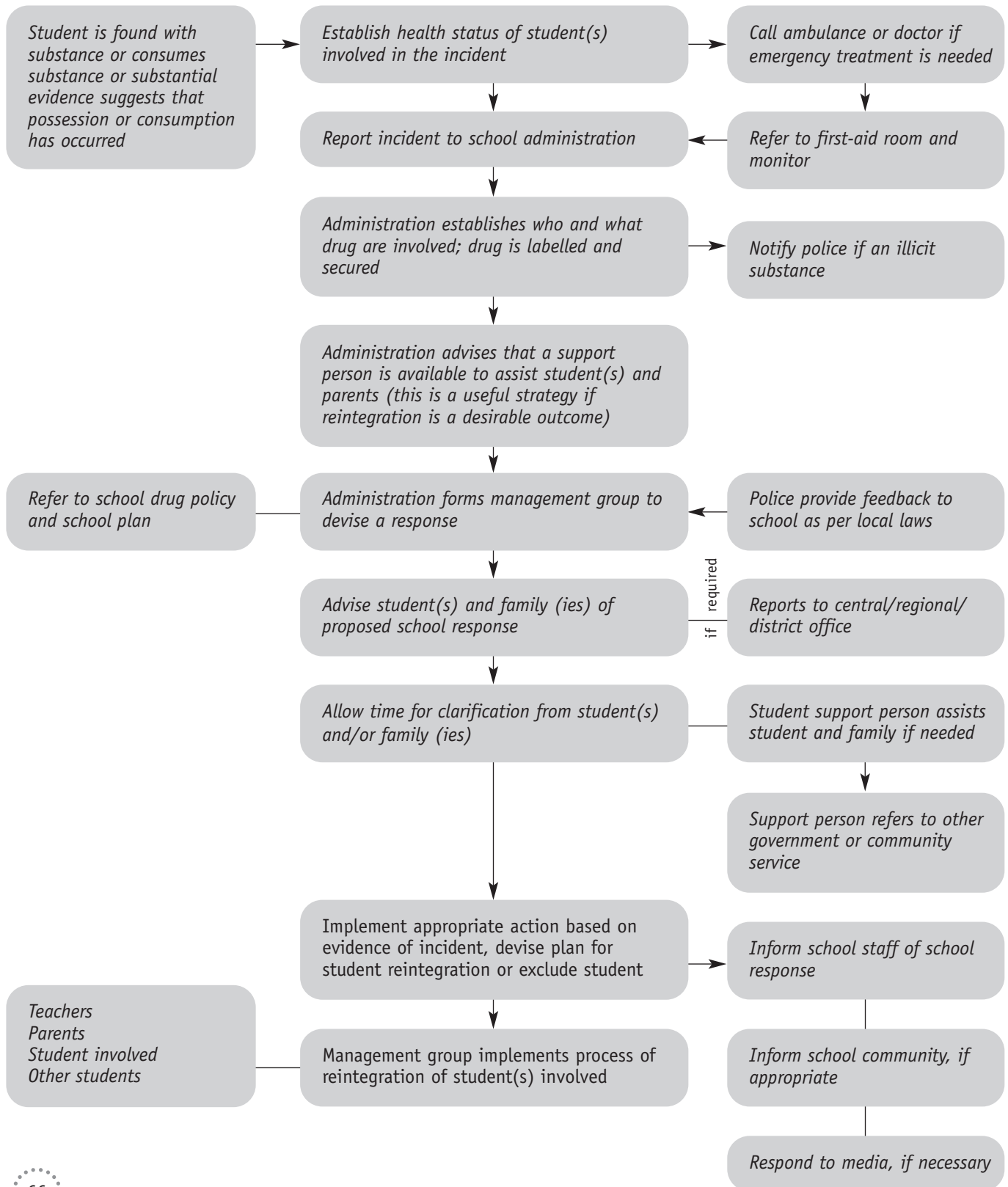
9. Review and revise

Review and evaluate the drug strategy and procedures regularly and revise them as required.

10. Media strategy

Devise a strategy to inform the media on procedures for managing drug incidents.

❖❖ Suggested procedures for managing drug incidents at school





❖❖ The drug incident intervention plan

Drug abuse and experimentation with drugs is not uncommon among students in several countries. Sometimes students may consume drugs on school premises. The reaction of teachers, students and administrators to such an event is an important one because it has an impact on the overall perception of drug abuse among students and it may influence the results of education for drug abuse prevention programmes. Therefore, it is necessary for the school to have a clear and open policy in place on how to deal with these situations.

No action should be taken until the validity of the information and evidence relating to the incident has been given careful consideration.

The following suggested actions should be adapted to conform with school guidelines and procedures, as well as system policies and relevant laws.

Immediate intervention

Scenario 1

School personnel suspect or are advised that a student has used a drug, is in possession of a drug or is selling drugs at school. They should:

- ❖ Establish and respond to the student's health and safety status
- ❖ Refer the student(s) and the drug to the school administration
- ❖ Identify a person to manage the incident, to be called an "incident manager"
- ❖ Advise the school counsellor or chaplain, or other appropriate person, that an incident has occurred and that their involvement as a student and family support person may be required
- ❖ Establish and validate facts by interviewing relevant staff and students, and securing the substance, in order to establish the nature of the substance, where and when the incident occurred and identify those involved

Scenario 2

An illicit substance such as marijuana is found. Staff should:

- ❖ Obtain and secure the suspected substance and implements for its use, observing procedures for searching and securing student property
- ❖ Exercise care with confiscated property; label and store it carefully and securely in the presence of a witness



Scenario 3

The presence of an unsanctioned substance is suspected, but the student declines a request for his or her property to be searched.

Scenario 3A

The suspected substance is, for example, alcohol or cigarettes and is therefore not illicit, but possession contravenes the school rules. Staff should:

- Contact the student's parent or guardian for consent to search the student's property and request their cooperation (or take other action in accordance with the procedures set out in the school rules)

Scenario 3B

The suspected substance or item is, for example, cannabis or a bong and is therefore illicit. Staff should:

- Inform the police and request a search of the student's property

Scenario 3C

The suspected substance or item is, for example, cannabis, and is therefore illicit and it is understood that an adult, including the student's parent, may be involved.

- The principal should contact the police for advice prior to informing the parent or guardian

Scenario 4

A student is suspected of using or possessing an illicit substance at school. Staff should:

- Refer the matter to the police
- Inform the student's parent or guardian of the incident
- Advise the parent or guardian that a support person is available

Scenario 5

A substance is not found, but there is reasonable evidence, such as reliable witnesses or specific student behaviour, to suggest that a student has used or possesses a drug.



Scenario 5A

The suspected substance is, for example, alcohol and is therefore licit.

Staff should:

- Contact the student's parents or guardian and take action according to school procedures for drug-related interventions

Scenario 5B

The suspected substance is, for example, cannabis and is therefore illicit.

Staff should:

- Inform the police and supply relevant details
- Contact the student's parent or guardian
- Take action according to lawful procedures for drug-related interventions

Scenario 6

There is not enough information or evidence to take action. Staff should:

- Note the incident
- Advise the student's parent of the concerns about the student's behaviour
- Implement processes to monitor the student's behaviour at school

Drug incident intervention plan: general points

1. *A record of the incident should be maintained and should include the names of students, school personnel, parents, police and others involved in the incident, the nature of the incident, meetings with parents and students and actions taken.*
2. *The student support person may contact the student, their parent or guardian, the year-level coordinator and, where necessary, community health agencies with a focus on and in order to support the health and education needs of the student involved and all students.*
3. *It is preferable that the witness to the incident not be a student support person, as he or she may be required to appear in court later to give evidence in an impartial manner.*



Medium-term intervention

In the medium term, the school should endeavour to implement fair and just actions, consistent with system and school policy and laws, that address the education and welfare needs of the student involved in an incident, all the other students attending the school, as well as other school and community members.

The incident manager may:

- In consultation with the student support person, disseminate a written statement to staff, students and parents that clarifies the school drug prevention and intervention plan and acknowledges that an incident has occurred and that action has been taken according to the guidelines for planning responses to drug incidents
- Prepare a statement and a procedure for managing media contact (see the notes on managing media contact above)
- Coordinate with the school counsellor or other appropriate person and hold a follow-up debriefing session for all the students and staff involved (if one has not been held earlier). Another appropriate person may have to be involved if the school counsellor has been the student support person

The student support person may:

- Provide ongoing support to the student and family through liaison with health, police and community agencies, including monitoring of the student's welfare and progress at school and arranging school or community-based counselling for the student and the student's family

The school may:

- After all other approaches have been exhausted or rejected, the education and welfare needs of the student have been considered and the student is suspended, put in place procedures for maintaining liaison with the student, the student's family and community agencies and for providing work programmes for the student

Long-term intervention

Action in the long term will focus on facilitating the reintegration of the student into the current school or his or her integration into a new school.

The student support person or other nominated person may:

- Monitor the student's welfare and progress at school through liaison with the year-level coordinators, teachers, administrators and parents



- Provide ongoing support to the student and the student's family in cooperation with health and community agencies
- Provide student information to the new school in accordance with system policy concerning the provision of student information
- Contact the new school's administrator, counsellor or identified student support person to assist the integration of and support for the student
- Contact the student support person at the new school again after week four and week twelve to ascertain the effectiveness of the student's integration into the new school
- Where appropriate, contact the student or parents of the student to obtain information on the student's progress at the new school. This action will indicate to the student, their family and the new school that the school has maintained interest in that student, as well as provide an evaluation of the intervention process
- Record all actions in the incident report file

••• Consequences of drug use for students

The following actions or consequences of drug use for students are suggestions that can be adapted or expanded upon as required. Each incident should be assessed with the focus on the student and not the drug involved. Reintegration should be considered in all cases of suspension or exclusion. Police involvement may be necessary, even when not indicated, if there is a possibility of harm to others or associated unlawful activity such as theft or driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.



Level of involvement	Possible response
1. <i>Knowing about drugs at school but not informing the school administration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Counselling by administration</i> • <i>Referral to parents</i>
2. <i>Requesting an illicit substance from another student on the school premises (request not fulfilled)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Counselling by administration</i> • <i>Referral to parents</i>
3. <i>Being present when other students use or supply drugs on the school premises</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Counselling by administration</i> • <i>Referral to parents</i> • <i>Detention and withdrawal of privileges</i>
4. <i>Entering the school premises or attending school functions in an intoxicated condition</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Counselling by administration</i> • <i>Referral to parents</i> • <i>Period of suspension and counselling</i>
5. <i>Smoking tobacco on the school premises or at school functions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Referral to a stop-smoking programme</i> • <i>Issuance of warning for breach of school rules</i> • <i>Detention</i>
6. <i>Repeatedly smoking tobacco on the school premises or at school functions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Referral to parents</i> • <i>Referral to stop-smoking programme and/or counselling</i> • <i>Detention</i>
7. <i>Using alcohol on the school premises or at school functions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Referral to parents</i> • <i>Suspension and counselling</i>
8. <i>Supplying alcohol on the school premises or at school functions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Issuance of health and illegality warning</i> • <i>Referral to parents</i> • <i>Suspension and counselling</i>
9. <i>Possessing or using a small quantity of illicit substance on the school premises or at a school function</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Referral to police</i> • <i>Notification of parents</i> • <i>Suspension and counselling</i> • <i>Community conferencing</i>
10. <i>Continuing to possess or use a small quantity of illicit substance on school premises or at a school function</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Referral to police</i> • <i>Notification of parents</i> • <i>Suspension and counselling</i> • <i>Community conferencing</i>



11. Possessing a large quantity of an illicit substance on school premises or at a school function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to police • Notification of parents • Community conferencing • Exclusion from school
12. Selling or supplying a small quantity of an illicit substance on the school premises or at a school function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to police • Notification of parents • Exclusion from school; exclusion for a period of between one semester and one year and counselling • Community conferencing
13. Selling or supplying a large quantity of an illicit substance to minors on the school premises or at a school function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to police • Notification of parents • Exclusion from school and counselling
14. Continuing to sell or supply illicit substances while on school premises or at a school function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to police • Notification of parents • Exclusion from all schools

∴ Community conferencing: a non-punitive approach to managing students involved in drug-related incidents in schools and community settings

Community conferencing is a process that brings together, in the wake of a serious incident, the offender, his or her victim(s) and the victim's family and appropriate school personnel in order to explore the harm done to all those affected, to decide what needs to be done to repair that harm and how to minimize the chance of it happening again.

A trained facilitator conducts the conference. While illicit drug use is viewed by many as a victimless crime, the impact on families and the school community can be immense, not to mention the impact on the young person's health and life chances.



Conferences are designed to provide all those affected with a chance to tell their stories about the harm that has been caused. Being able to talk about deeply negative feelings is a great relief. Having those feelings acknowledged and validated is even better. Seeing young people and their families understand the hurt, be genuinely remorseful and offer an apology from the heart does something fundamental for those affected; it allows them to forgive.

This does not mean letting people off easily. Indeed, they are often asked to do any number of things to repair the damage. The conference is very demanding on those responsible. It is more demanding than a suspension, detention or some other sanction that does not necessarily make the young people involved accountable for the harm caused; it helps repair the damage and avoid further harm by helping the perpetrators and others to gain a deeper understanding of how damaging their behaviour was to themselves and others.

Experts in the field of drug counselling caution us to be certain our interventions do two things: that they do no further harm and that the intervention is more likely to motivate the person to change their behaviour than to repeat it. The practice of conferencing is consistent with this advice. It has a great deal to offer those seeking to build healthier, more accountable and connected communities

The philosophy of restoration and transformation offers hope for those who want students to understand the impact of their behaviour on themselves and others, the need for thoughtful consideration of options and the possibilities for relationship-building despite things going wrong between people. If used creatively, the harmful behaviour can be an opportunity for positive change.

Community conferencing: a case study

One morning before school two girls in Year 8 were discovered by the janitor smoking marijuana behind a shed in the school grounds. The school administration took the girls to the sick room to establish their health status, then suspended them with a view to exclusion and phoned their parents.

It transpired that the girls had obtained the joint from a friend and had decided to smoke it before class. After an investigation, it was decided to conduct a community conference to deal with the issues and to help decide whether the girls would be permitted to return to the school or not. Details of the incident and the source of the drug were passed on to the police.



The conference participants were the following:

- Tracey and her mother and father
- Bronwyn and her mother (Bronwyn's father was so angry that he refused to participate in the conference or speak to a conference facilitator on the telephone)
- The person who discovered the girls smoking the joint
- The deputy principal of the school, who investigated the incident
- The coordinator of Year 8, who had a significant role in managing the affairs and behaviour of the Year 8 students
- The police liaison officer who had been talking to classes about criminal behaviours that could affect their lives and had played a supportive and preventive role in the school
- The principal, who would decide the fate of the girls
- The conference facilitator

The conference opened with both girls being asked to talk about their involvement: what they had been thinking at the time; what had happened to them since; who had been affected and in what way. They spoke of their foolishness and their worry at the time about getting caught.

They talked about the disappointment of their parents and the loss of trust between each of them and their parents. They mentioned that sanctions had also been applied at home and described the effect on their families at home. They were unable to guess what effect their behaviour had had on any others.

The janitor spoke about his reaction to discovering the girls smoking marijuana behind the shed, about his attachment to the school after working there for many years and about how he imagined he would have felt if he had had a daughter who was caught using drugs. He offered to support the two girls in any way he could.

The deputy principal spoke of how difficult it was for him to ring parents with bad news and how he felt about their shock and embarrassment. He spoke of his feelings of responsibility to the students in his care and his wish for both girls to make the most of their lives at school. Later in the conference he discussed the health risks associated with smoking marijuana and how often he had seen whole families destroyed because of young people's drug-taking.

The Year 8 coordinator was very emotional and cried when speaking of her own guilt that somehow she had contributed to the girls' behaviour by not



trying harder with them. She spoke of how committed she was to the welfare and education of the students under her care. She said that she faced a dilemma every time parents rang her to ask about the use of drugs in the school.

She talked of girls and women needing to take risks to get on in the world, but of their need to choose the right sort of risks. She spoke of how highly both girls were regarded by other staff and students and described them as having leadership potential, the prospects for which had been ruined by their behaviour.

The police liaison officer spoke with emotion of her feeling that her work in the school was now seen as a joke and how embarrassing that was for her. She said that she thought the girls were lucky to have been caught, as it provided an opportunity for some positive changes. She spoke of her disappointment in hearing that the only risk the girls had perceived was getting caught. She also mentioned that she had first heard of the incident at the police station, so she assumed that it was already widely known about. She offered her support for the girls at school.

The principal echoed and empathized with the views held by the staff present at the conference. She made suggestions as to how the school might minimize the chance of such an event recurring and how it might be handled if it did occur.

Both mothers were visibly upset and, at one stage, one had to leave the room. They spoke of their worry, their disappointment, the conflict that had been caused at home, the ruin of their children's prospects when such potential was there for success and leadership.

They spoke of how hard they had tried to meet adolescent needs for independence and how hard it had been to achieve a balance between being too lenient and too strict. They were relieved to hear that the school shared their sentiments. Tracey's father confessed to having been in trouble as a child and "knowing all the tricks". He also added that as parents they tried to steer their kids away from potential mistakes.

The two girls, who had cried on-and-off throughout the conference, offered their apologies to their parents and staff and assured the group that they would never make the same mistake again and would work hard to win back the trust and respect of their parents and the school.

The following agreement was reached by those present:

- The proceedings and outcomes of the conference were to remain confidential
- Tracey was to come to school on a later bus so that she did not have so much time at school in the mornings before lessons started



- Both girls agreed to assist the Year 8 coordinator in reaching some conclusion about what she would tell prospective parents
- Both girls were encouraged to seek support from caring adults in the school such as the guidance officer (counsellor), the deputy principal, the principal and the Year 8 coordinator when they were troubled by anything
- The deputy principal requested a meeting with the girls later so that they could give him the names of other Year 8 students who were using drugs. He wished to refer them for help
- Both girls were to exhibit exemplary behaviour in and out of class to prove that they had changed their behaviour and could again be trusted
- The principal would recommend to the regional office their readmission to the school

In the weeks and months following the conference, both girls settled down at school and were model students. Tracey's mother later commented that it was a defining moment in her daughter's life. Bronwyn's mother said how disappointing it was that her husband had not attended the conference, as he missed a valuable opportunity for healing some of his hurt.

Some months later, a visiting American documentary maker interviewed these two girls about the conference and its impact on them. They spoke of the feelings of shame they had felt when they realized just how many people had been affected and how much those people cared for them.

More information on community conferencing in schools and on training school-based conference facilitators may be obtained from Margaret Thorsborne at marg@thorsborne.com.au or at the following web site: www.thorsborne.com.au.



9. Counselling and referral

::: Early signs of a student at risk

Young people may from time to time exhibit some of the signs listed below as they meet normal everyday challenges. A combination of factors should be present before drug use is suspected, but even when all those factors are present, drug use is still only one possibility among all the things that can affect young people.

Marked personality change

A placid, softly spoken student suddenly becomes noisy and abusive. The change may be gradual and apparent only on reflection. Sometimes the reverse may also happen.

Mood swings

Moods may swing from high to low and back again, seemingly without reason, with outbursts sparked by simple events.

Changes in physical appearance or well-being

Changes in weight, sleep patterns and general health may be sudden or gradual. They may include slurred speech, staggering, sluggishness, pinpoint or dilated pupils, talkativeness, euphoria, nausea and vomiting.

Change in school performance

A significant deterioration in performance, especially when a student has been diligent, may be an indicator of difficulties. A rapid change from poor performance to diligence may be equally important.

Increased secretive communication with others

A student may suddenly seem to be in secretive communication with others; this is often manifested as cryptic telephone calls. It should be remembered that some of this may only be typical adolescent behaviour.



Intuition

An adult's intuition may provide a warning sign of something being wrong with a student, based on the adult's knowledge of that person. It may not be possible to be specific or clearly verbalize the feeling of something being wrong, but the adult will know that something is wrong.

Increased need for or supply of money

Buying drugs costs money and the more drug-dependent a person is, the greater is their need for money. Money, however, is not the only transferable commodity among young people; baseball caps, sports shoes and sexual favours may also be traded for drugs.

Judgements should not be too hasty

Adults should not be too hasty in concluding that a student has a drug problem. There may be a number of other reasons for the behaviours described above, which must be considered in the context of the person's whole life situation.

Five basic drug-counselling principles

1. Confidentiality should be assured

Confidentiality contributes to openness and trust which are essential to any helping relationship. If total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, school personnel must make students aware of the possible ramifications of disclosure beforehand. Students are likely to be unwilling to take up counselling opportunities when confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

2. Teachers should know their strengths and limitations

Teachers should consider their level of skill and knowledge before intervening, remembering that limitations also relate to issues such as available time, confidentiality and student acceptance. Teachers should be prepared, if necessary, to refer to or seek the advice of a drug counsellor.

3. Counselling should be kept separate from discipline

At some schools it may not be possible to have two separate staff members to provide counselling and discipline. Where possible, however, those roles should be separated in order to increase the effectiveness of intervention in both areas.



4. *De-stigmatizing without condoning drug use*

Teachers should avoid trying to force the student to change, as that may increase their resistance. Similarly, condoning or condemning the student's behaviour is counter-productive. Instead, the student should be treated as a decision-maker who has certain reasons for his or her choices based on how he or she sees the world. Teachers should direct their efforts to helping the student balance the costs and benefits of his or her decisions.

5. *Concentrating on rapport and empathy*

Drug use is a sensitive topic and one that young people are often reluctant to talk about. Some of them believe that adults will attempt to convince them to stop, criticize their behaviour or punish them. Establishing a rapport and expressing understanding is vital to a healthy helping relationship.

:: Referring students for expert help

The decision to refer a student to a professional counsellor requires consideration of the needs of the person and the competence, confidence and context of the helper. Where issues are complex, referral should be made to a counsellor with experience to provide assessment and intervention.

Who should the student be referred to?

The easiest way of dealing with referral is to phone the relevant health authority in your area to determine the most appropriate referral option, and obtain information on how best the referral may be facilitated.

Encouraging the student to accept professional help

Teachers may want to refer a young person for professional help, but actually persuading them to see someone is difficult. Even if the student is persuaded to do so, the counselling session might not be successful if the young person is reluctant to be there. Teachers, parents and other helpers might use strategies suggested below to encourage the person to seek help.



1. Visiting the counsellor before referring the student for help

One strategy is to visit the counsellor before referring the student to him or her. This enables the teacher to describe his or her experience of the counsellor and the counselling process to the young person and give them an idea of what to expect, which reduces their anxiety about the referral.

2. Offering mutual support

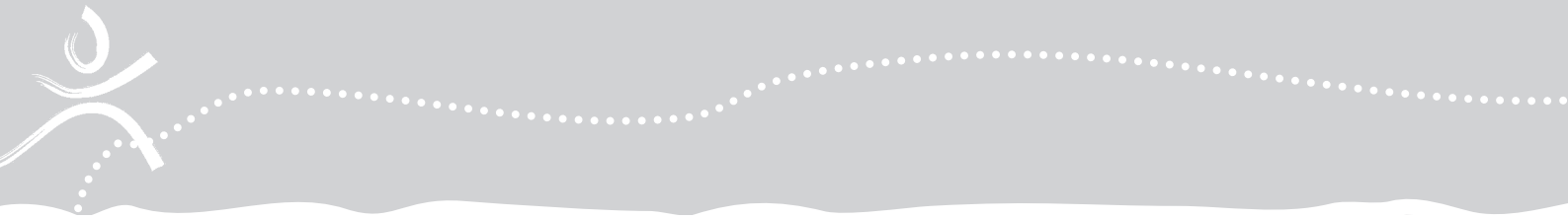
Offering to attend a counselling session with the young person is helpful.

3. Highlighting the positives

The teacher could tell the student about the potential benefits of seeing a counsellor, such as weighing up the costs and benefits of drug use; this can provide a positive influence for change. Counselling can help the student find clarity in his or her life, particularly if he or she feels he or she is losing control over his or her drug use.

4. Discussing confidentiality

The teacher should assure the student that any sessions with the counsellor would be conducted in total confidentiality. He or she would therefore have nothing to lose by seeing the counsellor, since no one would know that the session or sessions had taken place.



References and further information

G. Botvin, *Prevention Update* (Cornell University Medical College, Institute of Prevention Research, United States of America, 1995).

B. Wilson, *Quality Education and the Health of Young Australians*, HIV/AIDS and Sexual Health and Drug Education Forums (Education Queensland, Health Issues Section, Australia, 1998).

Skills for Drug Education in Schools: A Manual for Teachers and Trainers.

This publication is free and may be obtained from Tay Bian How, Director of the Drug Advisory Programme, Colombo Plan Secretariat, 13th Floor, BOC Merchant Tower, 28 St. Michael's Road, Colombo 3, Sri Lanka (telephone: + (94) (1) 56448/381831, facsimile: + (94) (1) 564531, e-mail: bhtay23@yahoo.com).

Information on community conferencing in schools and on training school-based conference facilitators may be obtained from Margaret Thorsborne at marg@thorsborne.com.au or at the following web site: www.thorsborne.com.au.



For some decades now students have been given lessons about drugs in school in the belief that education about drugs can change their behaviour. This publication discusses basic principles upon which policy makers, school administrators and teachers can make decisions on how to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate school-based drug prevention programmes.

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United Nations publication
Sales No. E.04.XI.21
ISBN 92-1-148191-0

Printed in Austria
V.04-54867—November 2004—750

