

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Report Concludes Schools Should Not Be Primary Provider of Drug Prevention Education

“Schools should not be relied on as the primary element in the country’s efforts to prevent the early initiation and consequences of alcohol and drug use” (p. 1), according to the recent report, *Prevention Education in America’s Schools*. In April 2006 an online survey was conducted with more than 3,500 teachers, school administrators, and other educators from 48 states and the District of Columbia. The survey found that while 37 states require schools to provide drug prevention education as part of their curriculum, “teachers don’t have the time, training or other resources needed to do the job effectively, regardless of what the state-mandated standards say” (p. 1). Based on the survey results, an education advisory committee developed five recommendations on how to more effectively reduce and prevent drug and alcohol use among youth (see description below). A full copy of the report, which includes specific actions for elementary, middle, and high school levels, is available online at <http://www.jointogether.org/keyissues/education/download.html>.

School-Based Recommendations for Preventing Alcohol and Drug Use Among Youth

- Schools should not be relied on or act as the principal provider of general prevention education. Rather, they should be part of a comprehensive community prevention strategy that includes parents and other resources.
- School systems should carefully reevaluate money and time spent on outside programs and speakers and unfocused printed materials because they are likely to have no lasting impact on what students know about alcohol and drugs or on their drinking or drug taking behavior.
- Schools and communities should pursue opportunities to expand the use of prevention programs and curricula that have been shown by research to be effective in reducing alcohol and drug problems in all extracurricular and after school activities.
- Teachers should have easy access to materials that use prevention methods that have been shown by research to be effective and are organized for presentation within the time constraints that actually exist in most schools.
- When teachers and administrators have drug and alcohol prevention education as an explicit part of their job, their performance should be included in their formal evaluation.

NOTE: Survey results were based on a convenience sample of kindergarten through 12th grade educators who were invited to participate in an online survey through Join Together, Safe and Drug-Free Schools, the National Education Association, and the New York State Teachers Union.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Join Together, *Prevention Education in America’s Schools: Findings and Recommendations from a Survey of Educators*, 2007.

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