

Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District

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Assistant Superintendent



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To: Dr. Paul C. Gagliarducci, Superintendent
From: Donna M. Scanlon, Assistant Superintendent
Date: January 2, 2007
Re: Drug, Alcohol, and Violence Prevention Education Curriculum Review
Cc: Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School Committee, Administrative Council, Curriculum Planning Council, Citizens Curriculum Advisory Council, Wilbraham Select Board, Hampden Select Board, Police Chief Stratton, Police Chief Farnsworth, Officer Dan Menard, Dennis LaPlante

As you requested, a review of our elementary and middle school curriculum and programs related to drug, alcohol, and violence prevention education has been conducted. The timing of this effort coincides with the retirement of D.A.R.E. officer, Dennis LaPlante, and so we did consider the question of whether D.A.R.E., as one element of a broader prevention program, should continue. The reviewing committee who worked with me consisted of the following members:

- Dan Menard, MRHS School Resource Officer
- Dennis Laplante, retired D.A.R.E. officer
- Gina Kahn, Risk Prevention Services Coordinator
- Pam Pearson, Physical Education and Health Teacher/Coordinator.

We also received input and feedback from Bryan Lombardi, MRHS Associate Principal, as well as elementary and middle school principals. I want to express my appreciation for this group, who generously completed many tasks beyond their normal work load, and contributed ideas that resulted in a thorough understanding of the issues involved. I also wish to acknowledge Ann Gilligan, from the Massachusetts Department of Education, who connected us with resources from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. The resources she sent described and compared model drug, alcohol, and violence prevention programs.

D.A.R.E. has been one high-quality strand of our comprehensive, research-based prevention efforts that include, but are not limited to, standards-based lessons designed by our health educators and school resource officers as well as the implementation of model research-based programs such as Second Step and Aggressors, Victims, and Bystanders. Officer LaPlante's implementation of the D.A.R.E. program has been universally acclaimed as exemplary, and we wish for him a long and healthy retirement. We have benefited a great deal by his commitment to our students and his expertise over the years.

Activities (October – December 2006)

The following tasks were completed by one or more members of the committee:

1. Review of United States General Accounting Office report on *Youth Illicit Drug Use Prevention: D.A.R.E. Long-Term Evaluations and Federal Efforts to Identify Effective Programs*
2. Review of research on the effects of D.A.R.E.
3. Review of SAMSHA Model Programs
4. Review of New D.A.R.E. curriculum and evaluation plan and the University of Akron's Year Four Progress Report: *A Longitudinal Evaluation of the New Curricula for the D.A.R.E. Middle and High School Programs: Take Charge of Your Life*
5. Review of HWRSD prevention program in light of National Institute on Drug Abuse InfoFacts: Lessons from Prevention Research
6. Review of state learning standards for tobacco, alcohol, substance abuse, and violence prevention and how they are addressed in HWRSD
7. Review of HWRSD Safe and Drug Free Schools grant application goals, objectives, activities, and performance measures.
8. Development of an evaluation plan for both process and outcomes, with performance targets and timelines (See attached)

Findings

The SAMSHA model programs that were reviewed had limited benefits for use within our program either due to the degree to which they complemented our program or our ability to implement them as they were designed due to time or staffing constraints. No program provided the opportunity for developing positive relationships between our youth and a community police officer.

The principles developed from long-term prevention research by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services provide us with excellent guidelines for a state of the art comprehensive prevention program. A selection of the principles that are relevant to this report includes the following:

- Prevention programs should be tailored to address risks specific to population or audience characteristics such as age, gender, and ethnicity, to improve program effectiveness.
- Prevention programs should be long-term with repeated interventions to reinforce the original prevention goals. Research shows that the benefits from middle school prevention programs diminish without follow-up programs in high school.
- Prevention programs are most effective when they employ interactive techniques such as peer discussion groups and parent role-playing, that allow for active involvement in learning about drug abuse and reinforcing skills.
- Parental monitoring and supervision are critical for drug abuse prevention. Drug education and information for parents or caregivers reinforces what children are learning about the harmful effects of drugs and opens opportunities for family discussions about the abuse of legal and illegal substances.

Though several studies suggest that the elementary D.A.R.E. program is ineffective, it is obvious that 10 – 15 lessons on any topic may not make a significant impact on behaviors two to ten years down the road. Many of the studies noted the difficulties involved in determining long term effect, including factors such as the quality of middle and high school programs during the interval between the initial D.A.R.E. lessons and the data collected two to seven years later. The concepts must be reinforced over a long period of time, and research repeatedly shows that

positive parenting monitoring and strong school and community attachments are important protective factors.

The New D.A.R.E. curriculum uses the latest evidence in prevention science. It is in its fourth year of a large five-year national research project. The effort is a rigorous scientific evaluation of the New D.A.R.E. curricula.

Recommendations

The reviewing committee agrees that the New D.A.R.E. program would be a key and valued component of the HWSRD comprehensive prevention program. The ten elementary and middle school lessons facilitated by a trained New D.A.R.E. resource officer are excellent in content and methodology, reflecting the latest research in both prevention science and teaching techniques. Since every New D.A.R.E officer is trained as a School Resource Officer, this approach offers both flexibility and structure and is a good example of community policing. The relationships that develop permit students to see officers in a helping role, not just an enforcement role; and open lines of communication between law enforcement and youth as well as between the school, police, and parents.

In addition to our internal curriculum review and renewal processes that take place regularly across all discipline areas, the federal Safe and Drug Free Schools program mandates that we evaluate the effectiveness of our prevention programs on an ongoing basis. Though we use disciplinary referral data as part of our outcome evaluation process, we also periodically administer the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which provides us with comparison data beginning in 1996. The 2007 Survey will be administered to middle and high school students in January. Attached is an evaluation plan for both process and outcomes, with performance targets and timelines included. Of particular relevance to the evaluation of D.A.R.E., we will monitor the impact on personal decision making among eighth graders. Our goal is that rate of self-reported use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs will remain below state/national averages and will demonstrate a pattern of declining use among HWRSD students.

The HWRSD D.A.R.E. experience has been highly regarded by everyone involved, and has universal support among principals. We know that it complements our curriculum well, and that our students learn the content that is taught. Our review shows that the New D.A.R.E. curriculum is designed according to the best research currently available, and that the national evaluation of it will be rigorous. The year four progress report states results are promising and showed improvements in the students' decision making skills, refusal skills, and beliefs that substance abuse is not the norm for adolescents.

Over the years, our D.A.R.E. and School Resource Officers in both Hampden and Wilbraham have provided us with an inimitable presence. They support us in ensuring safe, secure, and healthy schools, and provide us with a foundation and support for all prevention activity. These positions are pivotal components of our school community and represent more than just a curriculum. They represent relationships between individual children and officers that build safe schools and align with the principles of prevention research.

**HWRSD Evaluation Plan
Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention Education**

Outcome Evaluation – evidence of the effects of the program and impact on the desired prevention goals.

Program Component	Evaluation Activity/ Indicator	Target	Timeline
Students' participation will reflect mastery of key concepts.	Post-testing (Pre/post testing if part of curriculum delivery)	Post-test results will reflect 85% mastery of selected curriculum concepts.	At unit completion.
Impact on school-based incidence	Number of disciplinary referrals that are substance/ violence related.	School infractions will be reduced by 10% compared to previous year. Specific standards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to reduce instances of peer conflicts on school property by 10%. • to reduce instances of physical fights by 10%. • to reduce instances of verbal harassment by 10%. • to reduce instances of school bus infractions by 10% 	Monitored quarterly, aggregated annually
Impact on community-based incidence	Number of juvenile offenses recorded by WPD/HPD.	2006 police reports will reflect no increase in juvenile offenses.	Spring 2007
Impact on personal decision-making	Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Middle and High School Alumni focus group	Rate of self-reported use of Alcohol, Tobacco and other drugs will remain below state/national averages and will demonstrate a pattern of declining use among HWRSD students. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8th graders who smoked cigarettes in the last 30 days • 8th graders who drank alcohol in the last 30 days • 8th graders who used inhalants in the last 30 days • 8th graders who smoked marijuana in the last 30 days A representative sample of ten recent graduates will correctly identify at least two prevention-related curriculum concepts.	January, 2007 (Comparison data: 1995, 1997, 2000, 2002 and 2004 YRBS Massachusetts State Report, 2005) May/June, 2007
Parent participation will result in specific transfer of concepts to parenting for prevention.	Evaluation surveys	90% of parents will provide specific examples of how they plan to utilize training concepts.	Quarterly, post training event.
Professional development will result in increased	Debriefing tools for student conflict (sample attached).	In debriefing of an actual incident, all students will be able to correctly identify	Semi-annually, post training event.

opportunities for students to transfer of training to other settings.		appropriate decision-making strategies that would successfully prevent a problem from re-occurring, such as a peer conflict.	
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Process Evaluation—focus on how the selected programs are implemented.

Program Component	Evaluation Activity/ Indicator	Target	Timeline
<p>Curriculum Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For each selected curriculum, develop an outline of units by grade level, # of sessions, topics to be delivered. <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Second Step - Aggressors, Victims, Bystanders - Steps to Respect - DARE - Prentice-Hall Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of classroom sessions actually delivered per grade level, - Number of students receiving instruction - Average number of opportunities for transfer of training - Other settings where curriculum is reinforced (guidance office) - Number of adults trained in selected curriculum or curriculum delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Related curriculum components at each grade level. aligned with MA Curriculum Frameworks, 95% correspondence - Fidelity with developed criteria for # and sequence of presentations—for example: “All district eighth graders will be trained strategies to prevent conflict from escalating into fighting and violence.” 	Quarterly
Parent Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of parent trainings conducted - Number of parents participating in trainings - Post-workshop evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quarterly opportunities for parent training - At least 20 parents attend each training - 90% of participants will endorse statements of satisfaction with training. 	Quarterly
Teacher Education/ Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of training opportunities provided to teachers and number of teachers participating. - Post-workshop evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Semi-annual trainings for Health/PE teachers and others who would deliver prevention curriculum, i.e. counselors. - 90% of participants will endorse statements of satisfaction with training. 	Semi-annual