Educational Leaders for Effective Practice

What Works in Prevention: Research to Practice

"Implementing a . . . prevention project is like taking a trip. You need to know where you are going, why you are going there, and the best route to take to reach your destination. A careful, thorough needs assessment is the road map for change and provides the basis for a strategic plan which addresses specific problems . . . in the community.

The needs assessment process helps . . . determine the nature and extent of the . . . problem in a community and how the problem is perceived among diverse groups. Without a needs assessment, a strategic plan is really just a best guess. A strategic plan based on a comprehensive needs assessment can become a roadmap for change."

NHTSA. (2001). *Community How to Guide on Needs Assessment and Strategic Planning*

Every effective prevention program started with a needs assessment of the target school and local community. Needs assessments is an essential part of the planning process. A needs assessment is a way of taking a systematic look at the issues facing a school and community. Through this process, information can be gathered from many sources to identify the issues to be addressedand the resources that might be used to support the implenattion strategy. An assessment can include gathering existing data, such as school offenses and suspensions. It provides objective data to problems that people might sense but not have the evidence to support. The assessment also may reveal issues that team members had not been aware of. Assessments also often include surveys of students, faculty and school administrators as well as focus groups. Many times, coordinators meet with community officials who may have access to key data or have conducted their own needs assessments. Police departments will have data on youth offenses and agencies such as the YMCA or Boys and Girls Clubs may have conducted their own youth needs assessments that could be relevant for this work. The results of a needs assessment may reveal issues that team members have not been aware of.

A needs assessment:

- Defines the nature and extent of substance abuse problems

- Identifies populations and/or neighborhoods statistically associated with the problem

- Identifies the underlying risk and protective factors of the identified population/ group/ neighborhood

- Leads to a plausible theory (or theories) of change that, matched to the appropriate program(s), should reduce or prevent substance abuse (SAMHSA, 2003, *Pathways to Effective Programs and Positive Outcomes*)

Why conduct a needs assessment? [Click here](#) to learn more about this critical first step

David Osher, principal investigator of the National Coordinators Program says, "[Prevention planning] has to be data driven. It can't just be `here are good programs'. It's 'here are the needs'. People really do need to be able to go beyond opinion and they have to be able to look at numbers so they are choosing the right programs and strategies. And then they have to monitor what they're doing to know that they're both doing it correctly and having an impact."

For more information on needs assessments see online courses ["Using Existing Data in Your Needs Assessment"](#) and ["Identifying Prevention Priorities and Strategies for Success"](#)

Characteristics of Effective Programs

In "What Works in Prevention," Maury Nation and colleagues reviewed reviews of prevention programs of four areas-substance abuse, risky sexual behavioral, school failure, and juvenile delinquency and violence). From their review, they identified principles related to program characteristics of effective prevention programs. Those characteristics are:

- *"**Comprehensive**. This means providing multiple interventions to address the target problem in multiple settings. For instance, Hawkins and Catalano argued that drug prevention programs should address risk and protective factors across domains or settings (e.g., community, family, school, peer group) that have primary influence on the participants.

- *Varied Teaching Methods.* Students need some type of active, skills-based component in preventive interventions. Effective prevention programs involve interactive instruction and provide hands-on experiences that increase the participants' skills. The National Institute on Drug Abuse concluded that programs that prevent alcohol and drug use help participants develop resistance skills, including the ability to be assertive and effectively communicate around issues related to drug use.

- *Sufficient Dosage*. Participants need to be exposed to enough of the intervention for it to have an effect. Aspects of dosage include the session length, number of sessions, spacing of sessions, and the duration of the total program. In addition to initial exposure to the intervention, effective interventions generally include some type of follow-up or booster sessions to support durability of impact.

- *Theory Driven*. This principle refers to the need for scientific justification of a preventive intervention. Although this principle may seem basic, an examination of actual prevention programs used in many communities and schools indicates that it is sometimes overlooked. Two types of theories that play a role in prevention programming are etiological theories and intervention theories. Etiological theories focus on the causes (e.g., risk or protective factors and processes) of the targeted problem. Intervention theories are focused on the best methods for changing these etiological

risks.

- **Positive Relationships**. Providing opportunities for children to develop strong, positive relationships was consistently associated with positive outcomes. Reviews of substance abuse prevention emphasized the necessity to have strong connections between children and significant others (including peers, teachers, community members) as a way of preventing drug use. The reviews support the idea that it is critical for children to have a strong relationship with at least one adult."

The authors also identified principles related to matching the program with a target population. Those principles were:

- *"**Appropriately Timed**. Interventions should be time to occur in a child's life when they will have maximal impact. Unfortunately, many programs tend to be implemented when children are already exhibiting the unwanted behavior or when the programs are developmentally less relevant to the participants. Early intervention allows programs to have a chance to affect the developmental trajectory of the problem behavior. This suggests that the elementary school to middle school transition may be an importance window for intervention.

- **Socioculturally Relevant**. The relevance of prevention programs to the participants appears to be a primary concern in producing positive outcomes. Culturally tailoring prevention programs goes beyond surface structure language translation to deep structure modifications sensitive to cultural factors that influence development and receptiveness to the intervention."

Finally, the authors identified principles related to implementation and evaluation of prevention programs. Those principles were:

- *"**Outcome Evaluation**. The evaluation of prevention programs is necessary to determine program effectiveness. Otherwise, practitioners may assume that a program is effective on the basis of anecdotal or case study evidence. As evaluation has become more common, the results indicate that many programs that are anecdotally believed to be successful may actually not be effective.

- **Well-Trained Staff**. A high-quality, research based program can produce disappointing results in dissemination field trials if the program providers are poorly selected, trained, or supervised. The implementation of prevention programs is enhanced when the staff members are sensitive, are competent, and have received sufficient training, support, and supervision."

Following are two case studies which illustrate how school coordinators used these principles when they chose and implemented prevention programs in their schools.

"This program has made the school safer. Kids feel better about coming to school. If they have an issue it's going to be dealt with. Everyone is talking the same language. They know what bullying is. They know it's unacceptable. Kids want to come to this school and teachers want to work here and that wasn't always the case."

Lisa Pisciotta, K-12 National Coordinator,
Denver Public Schools

When coordinator Lisa Pisciotta conducted a needs assessment at Kunsmiller Middle School in Denver, she learned that students, teachers and parents were most concerned with school safety and substance abuse. Fights were common and almost half of the students said that their peers picked on others because they were different.

"People want to feel good about the schools they are working in," Pisciotta said. "Without gaining information about the population it's difficult to say that we need bullying prevention or we need drug and alcohol prevention. But if we have data that says that 50 percent of the kids are being bullied that helps move faculty and administrators along."

The school administration decided to implement programs that were both evidence-based and shown to be effective with the Latino population. They chose the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, which attempts to restructure the existing school environment to reduce opportunities and rewards for bullying. The efforts are directed toward improving peer relations and making the school a safe and positive place for students to learn and develop. School staff is largely responsible for introducing and implementing the program.

Pisciotta coordinated the development of an Olweus Bullying Prevention committee that consisted of the principal, assistant principal, student advisors, nurse, social worker, psychologist, counselor, teachers and herself.

[Click here](#) for more information on the Olweus Bullying Prevention program.

Committee participants at Kunsmiller Middle School held a kick-off for students to discuss issues related to bullying and to informing them that a new program was being implemented at their school. All students signed a pledge during the kick-off agreeing to not bully their fellow students. The students' pledge was laminated and placed in the main entrance of the school. Kunsmiller also had a kick-off for parents and members of the community. At this meeting administration discussed bullying and informed parents that they were beginning the Olweus Bullying Prevention program to counteract bullying issues at the school. In addition, school rules against bulling were posted throughout the entire building. All Health teachers began implementing the program by utilizing discussion, video and role playing in their classroom. Also, all teachers began conducting individual interventions with bullies and victims. In addition, the administration secured the school's "hotspots" with increased supervision. Those areas include the locker rooms, hallways, stairways, and the adjacent park. The Bullying Prevention committee also met once a month to discuss specific reports of students who were

found to bully and those who were victimized. Plans and strategies were generated to support both groups of students.

The survey results showed that after one year of implementing the program, bullying had decreased significantly. The survey results showed a seven percent decrease in verbal bullying, an 8 percent decrease in physical bullying and an 11 percent decrease in relational bullying from 2002-2003 to 2003-2004.

Following the needs assessment, Pisciotta and her colleagues also decided to implement the Life Skills Training program to support substance abuse prevention. The program focuses on preventing tobacco, alcohol and drug abuse among adolescents. It addresses a range of risk and protective factors by teaching young people general personal social skills in combination with drug resistance skills and education. Every student participates in the program through their physical education class. The 2003-2004 pre- and post-survey showed a significant increase in overall knowledge, drug-related knowledge, and life skills knowledge. There was also a significant decrease in pro-drinking and pro-marijuana attitudes.

Click here *for more information on the*
Life Skills Training program

In addition to the universal interventions, Pisciotta oversaw interventions directed at specific groups who may be a higher risk for problems with violence and substance abuse. The school implemented the Aggression Replacement Training (A.R.T.) in the Special Education and Alternate classrooms. The program focuses on skill building, anger-control training and training in moral reasoning. The program also works with parents and family members in a parent empowerment component. Key findings from the A.R.T. program showed that teachers in the Special Education classroom went from mainstreaming none of their students to having every student mainstreamed into at least one regular classroom. Similar results took place in the Alternative classroom.

Click here *for more information on ART*

With another grant, Pisciotta brought in a full time substance abuse counselor, to work with students who were caught in school with drugs or alcohol. Another program, the Kunsmiller Middle School Mentoring Program works with ECCOS (Ethnic Counseling Community Outreach Services) Family Center, which is a non-profit organization operating throughout Metro Denver. Volunteers from ECCOS work as mentors for the students who need some extra support.

Click here *for more information on the ECCOS program.*

Pisciotta, who had previously worked at a mental health agency, said that it took a while for teachers and administrators to understand her role. She also had to step back from her inclination to do everything and let teachers and staff take on key responsibilities. It was critical that they do so because her job was only funded for three years. She sent an assistant principal to training on the bullying program and found funding to support him and others to take on extra duties. With the training and support, he will be prepared to oversee the program, she said.

As a result of the prevention work, Kunsmiller was recognized with a visit by the then Attorney General Ken Salazar (now a U.S. Senator) to speak to the students and spotlight the success of implementing the Olweus Bulling Prevention Program. Pisciotta said that the success of that and other programs has helped her receive additional grants including a $300,000 three-year grant from the Colorado Trust. The school has also received a $100,000 grant from Catholic Charities to partner with it in running an after school program. Before the coordinators program, the school did not have these grants or the recognition for its prevention efforts, Pisciotta said.

"As we get grants and become known throughout the state, people are coming to us and knocking on the door saying that they'd like to partner with us," Pisciotta said.

Through the grants, Pisciotta is sustaining much of the work begun under the coordinators initiative. She also spearheaded a successful effort to have the bullying program, Life Skills and other prevention program include in the school improvement plan. The school board voted to approve their inclusion in the plan. In addition, she has cultivated champions of this work among school administrators and teachers. All of those efforts make it likely that the work will continue.

Lessons learned: Empower others to take ownership of programs so they will continue without the coordinator.

In Tahlequah, Oklahoma, a simple box might have saved many lives. Fred Poteete, the former middle school coordinator there, learned through his needs assessment that bullying was a major problem in the school there. As part of the anti-bullying work, he installed a drop box for students to report anything that felt unsafe to them anonymously. While some of the reports were false, 90 percent checked out, he said. Poteete or his colleagues checked the box several times a day. One day, four students left notes saying that a new student was planning to bring a weapon to school. With that information, school officials went to the student who expressed relief that they had found out before he could have done anything dangerous, Poteete said.
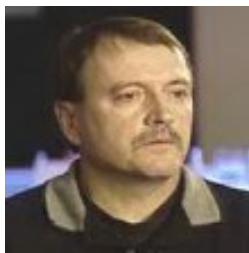
Poteete also worked with teachers to design a referral form for them to fill out when they see bullying. Before, the teachers never had such a clear and simple way to report bullying. By asking for teachers' input into the design of the form, Poteete won their support.

Students also filled out aerial maps of the school campus that showed "hot spots" where they felt unsafe. They also used the maps to report where tobacco and drug use took place. The results were eye-opening. For example, a student said that in a special education classroom, a student was hitting another behind a cabinet while the teacher stood outside the door. When she learned about this she changed her position and the bullying stopped. Students even added locations not on the maps, such as buses and the athletic building where bullying was taking place. Administrators learned that in the athletic building while the coaches were in their offices talking, seventh grade boys were getting harassed as they got dressed by eighth grade boys. The survey also yielded other useful information, such as where students were getting cigarettes and smokeless tobacco.

Poteete and his colleague also implemented a formal anti-bullying program. They started with

one and then moved on to Aggressors, Victims and Bystanders, which they felt had more of a track record and was more empathy based, which the junior high needed.

"On my first day of a school a girl dropped her books and nobody stopped to help her," Poteete said. "Everybody just walked around her. Then about a year later [after the bullying program had been implemented] a kid dropped her tray and other kids stopped and helped her pick things up. That never would have happened earlier."

Poteete and other coordinators emphasize that any prevention program must meet the particular needs of a school. For his school, an empathy-based training was critical because that was lacking among the students. Another school that tackles bullying may need a different emphasis. Schools in the same district might have different needs or be at different stages of readiness to take on prevention programming. Coordinators working in multiple schools need to keep that in mind.

Poteete has been educator for 27 years in Tahlequah, working as a teacher, assistant principal and coach. Lately, he has been filling in as a bus driver to relieve a shortage in the community. He knows the community well, which has helped him in his job. Tahlequah is the western capital of Cherokee Nation and two-thirds of the students are Native American. Most of the rest of the students are white.

The comprehensive anti-bullying program led to a drop in incidents of bullying and an increase in reporting in bullying. It was so successful that the Tahlequah school board passed a measure mandating bullying program in all of its schools. The work also drew the attention of State Senator Herb Rozell who once taught in Tahlequah public schools. He co-authored the School Bullying Prevention Act. Passed in 2002, the law requires all Okalahoma school districts to come up with policies and programs to prevent harassment, intimidation and violence.

To combat drug use, Poteete also implemented the drug prevention programs Project Alert and Life Skills training to combat drug use.

[Click here](#) for information on Project Alert.

Several coordinators are continuing to do this work in other school positions. One is funded through a drug free communities grant. Others have been absorbed by the school in other positions, such as student advocate.

Lessons learned: Find out where kids spend time outside of school and work with those adults to continue prevention messages, such as anti-bullying.

Select a Research-Based Prevention Program
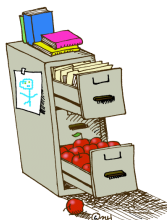
At the heart of the coordinator program is the reliance on prevention programs that have been validated by research. Coordinators were required to use prevention programs that were on the U.S. Department of Education's list of exemplary or promising programs. All had been shown to be effective in research studies.

Among the key prevention strategies that have been favorably evaluated are:
- [Enhancing students' personal and social skills](#).
- [Connecting at-risk students and families with appropriate services.](#)

- Providing safe and supervised alternatives.
- Restructuring classrooms to promote student engagement.
- Influencing school and community norms.
    - Establishing and enforcing clear school policies.
    - Establishing and enforcing clear community policies.
- Building school-family-community-partnerships

> For more information see online course
> Selecting Research-Based Prevention Programs for Your School

Criteria for Selecting the Right Programs for Your Community

How do you know which strategies and programs are right for your community? You have to do a feasibility study that considers more than just the cost of implementing the program. Your study should look at outcomes, costs, adaptability, and technical assistance available.

Outcomes -- Will it work with your students and staff? Which risk factors are targeted? Is there evidence that this program has worked in communities similar to yours?

Costs -- What are the actual costs involved in implementing this program? Factor in the cost of materials, consultants, additional staff, and staff time. Check with other coordinators to find out what the real bottom line is.

Adaptability -- Can this program be modified to better fit your program's needs without rendering the program ineffective? Key program components should not be modified.

External Support -- How readily can you get support from program developers, technical assistance centers, state department staff, and others who have been trained to implement the program? (Osher et. al., p. 122)

In 1998, a panel of experts comprised of nationally recognized researchers, practitioners, and technical assistance providers, identified these six criteria for selecting programs:

- The program must have documented effectiveness and be based on sound theory.
- The program can be easily integrated with existing school practices.
- The program must have data that demonstrate effectiveness or ineffectiveness with particular student groups.
- Data must indicate that the program has a positive impact on student achievement.
- Program developers/sponsors must demonstrate that subscribing schools receive sufficient technical assistance.
- Program components must focus on promoting positive solutions to behavioral and emotional problems. (Safe, Supportive, and Successful Schools, p. 123).

Finally, Nation et. Al. identified well-trained staff as key to the successful implementation, adaptation, and fidelity of evidence-based prevention programs:

Well-Trained Staff. A high-quality, research based program can produce   disappointing results in dissemination field trials if the program providers are poorly selected, trained, or

supervised. The implementation of prevention programs is enhanced when the staff members are sensitive, are competent, and have received sufficient training, support, and supervision (Nation et. al., 2003).

"It's very important for future prevention efforts in schools to learn from the wealth of experience that these coordinators have lived and have experienced. As the program has evolved we've gotten higher and higher quality professionals who have taken the job of coordinators. And they are so convinced that after doing the job that without them in their schools there would be a higher incidence of drugs, a higher incidence of fights and more discipline referrals."

Amalia Cuervo, U.S. Department of Education

Tomorrow we'll look at professional development from both sides -- what coordinators needed to learn and what they needed to share with their prevention teams -- and how that impacted their program implementation**.**

*Click **here** to print today's materials in PDF format.*

Discussion Questions

Please think about the questions below and share your responses, comments, and/or any questions about today's material in the discussion area.

- Looking at Maury Nation's principles of effective prevention programs, which elements have you employed in your schools? What was the result?
- Which of the strategies employed in Denver or Tahelquah might be helpful in your school or district? Why?

This completes today's work.

Please visit the *Discussion Area* to share your responses to the discussion questions!

References for Day 3:

Nation, M., Crusto, C., Wandersman, A., Kumpfer, K. Seybolt, D., Morrissey-Kane E., and Davino, K. (June/July 2003) What Works in Prevention: Principles of Effective Prevention Programs, *American Psychologist.* 58(6/7): 425-432.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). (2001). *Community how to guide needs assessment and strategic planning.* Available: http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/Community%20Guides%20HTML/ Book2_NeedsAssess.html#app1

Osher, David, Dwyer, Kevin, & Jackson, Stephanie. (2004). *Safe, Supportive, and Successful Schools Step by Step.* Colorado: Sopris West.

Pisciotta, L. (April, 2005). Personal communication.

Poteete, F. (April, 2005). Personal communication.

EDC

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Why Conduct a Needs Assessment?

- To document evidence of need. Let's say that parents in your community are very concerned about the use of psychedelics, cocaine, or heroin, but your needs assessment shows that more young people are using tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana. Your argument for selecting a prevention program that addresses smoking will be much more compelling if you can back it up with data.

- To highlight key issues that are particular problems in your community or district, and target prevention efforts to those at risk. You may find out that underage drinking rates are higher in your community than in similar locales or in the state as a whole, or that more students in your community than in other locales begin using alcohol in the sixth grade.

- To identify potential barriers to implementing research-based programs. You may discover, for example, that your superintendent is committed to continued implementation of a particular prevention program that is not based on research, but which has been part of the school system's curriculum for many years.

- To determine if your community is ready to address a given problem. For example, you may learn that parents in the community are unwilling to acknowledge that substance abuse or violence is a problem among their children. If this is the case, you will need to spend time educating parents, as well as their children, if your program is to succeed.

- To promote community buy-in to your prevention initiative. The school and community members you meet and connect with throughout the assessment process are your future partners in prevention. Engaging people in the process of collecting information about your community's needs will motivate and better prepare them to make decisions about which prevention strategies or programs should be selected to meet those needs.

- As a baseline for evaluation. Assessment data lets you track behavior change over time and monitor the impact of your prevention efforts.

- To mobilize the community. Carefully presented assessment data can be used to heighten awareness among community members of the extent and types of drug- and violence-related problems facing local youth. Local data, in particular, can be a powerful tool for mobilizing your community to address problems (perhaps even more effective than similar data about state or national populations.) Community members with a clear understanding of your findings are more likely to actively support and participate in prevention activities.

Source: Middle School Coordinator's online course, "Using Existing Data in Your Needs Assessment." http://www.k12coordinator.org/onlinece/ onlineevents/assessment/id81.htm

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Olweus Bullying Prevention Program

In 1983, after three adolescent boys in northern Norway committed suicide, most likely as a consequence of severe bulling by peers, the country's Ministry of Education commissioned Professor Dan Olweus to conduct a large-scale research project on bully/victim problems. His work led to the creation of the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. The program has been implemented and evaluated at a number of sites in the U.S.

The program, which can be used in elementary, middle or high schools, attempts to restructure the existing school environment to reduce opportunities and rewards for bullying. All students participate in most aspects of the program, while students identified as bullying others or as targets of bullying receive additional individual interventions.

Core components of the program are implemented at the school, classroom, and individual levels.

School-level components include-

- Formation of a Bullying Prevention Coordinating Committee

- Distribution of an anonymous student questionnaire assessing the nature and prevalence of bullying

- Training for committee members and staff

- Development of a coordinated system of supervision

- Adoption of school-wide rules against bullying

- Development of appropriate positive and negative consequences for students' behavior

- Holding staff discussion groups related to the program

- Involvement of parents

Classroom-level components include-

- Reinforcement of school-wide rules against bullying

- Holding regular classroom meetings with students to increase knowledge and empathy

- Informational meetings with parents

Individual-level components include-

- Interventions with children who bully

- Interventions with children who are bullied

- Discussions with parents of involved students

A number of sites also are implementing community-level components, such as: convening meetings with community members, incorporating anti-bullying messages and strategies in youth-related activities in the community (including recreational activities, scouting, and after-school programs). Results of the program include:

- A 30 to 70 percent reduction in students reports of being bullied and bullying others.
- Significant reductions in student reports of general antisocial behavior (e.g., vandalism, fighting, theft, and truancy).
- More positive attitude toward school work and school.

Source: http://www.clemson.edu/olweus.

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Life Skills Training Program

The LifeSkills Training program consists of three major components that cover the critical domains found to promote drug use. Research has shown that students who develop skills in these three domains are far less likely to engage in a wide range of high-risk behaviors. The three components include:

- Drug Resistance Skills enable young people to recognize and challenge common misconceptions about tobacco, alcohol and other drug use. Through coaching and practice, they learn information and practical ATOD (Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug use) resistance skills for dealing with peers and media pressure to engage in ATOD use.

- Personal Self-Management Skills teach students how to examine their self-image and its effects on behavior; set goals and keep track of personal progress; identify everyday decisions and how they may be influenced by others; analyze problem situations, and consider the consequences of each alternative solution before making decisions; reduce stress and anxiety, and look at personal challenges in a positive light.

- General Social Skills teach students the necessary skills to overcome shyness, communicate effectively and avoid misunderstandings, initiate and carry out conversations, handle social requests, utilize both verbal and nonverbal assertiveness skills to make or refuse requests, and recognize that they have choices other than aggression or passivity when faced with tough situations.

Source: www.lifeskillstraining.com

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Aggression Replacement Training

Aggression Replacement Training is a program for aggressive adolescents and young children that is administered by teachers or school counselors. The program seeks to enhance interpersonal skills, self-mediated ability to control anger and a youth's concern for rights and needs of others.

The goal of the program is to improve psychological skill competence, anger control and moral reasoning and social problem -solving skills. The intervention consists of skill streaming, anger-control training, and training in moral reasoning. Skill streaming utilizes modeling, role-playing, performance feedback and generalization training to teach the curriculum of pro-social skills. The rationale behind the program is to arm students with whatever is needed to behave in constructive , non aggressive and still-satisfying ways in school, at home and in the community. Many youths are skilled in fighting, bullying and intimidating , harassing, and manipulating others. However they frequently have inadequate skills in more socially desirable behaviors such as negotiating differences, dealing appropriately with accusations, and responding effectively to failure, teasing, rejection or anger. The curriculum has been offered in a variety of lengths and each session include skill streaming,anger-control training and training in moral reasoning. The program has been implemented in schools and delinquency and mental health settings. Evaluation demonstrated decreasing anger levels in response to minor anger-provoking situations and increasing pro-social skills and social skills knowledge.

Source: Virginia Best Practices in School-Based Violence Prevention.

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ECCOS Mentoring Program

KUNSMILLER MIDDLE SCHOOL MENTOR PROGRAM

Realizing that the majority of Kunsmiller students are Latino, it was agreed that the program should support a student's cultural identity. The ECCOS Family Center/Kunsmiller Mentor Program is culturally based and seeks to connect youth with mentors of similar ethnic and cultural background, thus promoting cultural identity, self-awareness, and positive self-esteem of each student participating in the program. The mentor program realizes that the importance of positive self-esteem is crucial to the student's academic success.

SUPPORT GROUPS AT KUNSMILLER

Beginning in February, 2005, ECCOS is offering support groups for eighth graders at Kunsmiller Middle School. The support groups will assist students to develop skills in the following areas:

- Character development

- Self-esteem

- Relationship building

- Anger management

- General social skills

Students build these skills in order to aid in their transition to high school. Students are screened before entering the program, and mental health referrals are made if necessary.

VISION

Students attending Kunsmiller will stay in school and proceed to high school. This vision will be realized by supporting the healthy development of youth, which includes cultural identity, positive peer groups, strong family support, as well as educational goals.

WHAT MAKES A MENTOR?

Mentors are adults, who have had more experience in life, and can support and guide students to make healthy, appropriate decisions in life. Additionally, mentors can also offer friendship and guidance. Mentors participate in recreational activities with the student, assist them in setting goals for the future, and encourage students to graduate from high school, while promoting the importance of their cultural identity.

WHAT ACTIVITIES DO MENTORS AND STUDENTS DO TOGETHER?

- Explore educational and career options

- Attend cultural events, such as plays, concerts

- Attend extra curricular school events

- Colleges visits and fairs

- Attend community functions

- Build a healthy and respectful relationship.

COMMITMENT

- Length of mentorship should be at least one year

- At least two personal contacts a month & weekly contact by phone

- Complete CBI and background check

- Attend mentor training

- Meet with the parents/families of the student at least once every three months (special events will be pre-arranged)

FUNDED BY:
The Colorado Department of Education/Denver Public Schools, DPS/Safe & Drug Free Schools & Communities.

WHO PROVIDES THE PROGRAM?
ECCOS Family Center and Kunsmiller Middle School came together to develop a mentoring program to help students achieve their academic potential. ECCOS Family Center is a nonprofit agency founded in response to the social and educational needs of youth and families in the Latino Community.
Source: www.eccosfamilycenter.org

Educational Leaders for Effective Practice

Project Alert

Project ALERT is a two-year, 14-lesson program that focuses on the substances that adolescents are most likely to use: alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and inhalants. The project is aimed at middle school adolescents.

Project ALERT uses participatory activities and videos to help:

- Motivate adolescents against drug use.
- Teach adolescents the skills and strategies needed to resist pro-drug pressures.
- Establish non-drug-using norms.

Guided classroom discussions and small group activities stimulate peer interaction and challenge student beliefs and perceptions, while intensive role-playing activities help students learn and master resistance skills. Parent-involved homework assignments extend the learning process.

According to its web site, the project has been effective with adolescents from a variety of backgrounds, including urban, rural and suburban committees as well as Caucasian, African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American and Native American youth from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds.

According to a study by RAND, students that received Project ALERT:

- Reduced initiation of marijuana use by 30%.
- Decreased current marijuana use by 60%.
- Reduced past month cigarette use by 20-25%.
- Decreased regular and heavy smoking by 33-55%
- Substantially reduced students' pro-drug attitudes and beliefs.

Source: www.projectalert.com

Key Prevention Strategies

☐ *Enhancing students' personal and social skills.* Instructional approaches that promote critical thinking and enhance social and emotional skills may prevent or reduce the behaviors that lead to substance use and violence. Skills-based instructional approaches can be offered as discrete "health education" courses, incorporated within existing courses (e.g., social studies), or integrated across the academic curriculum (i.e., spread throughout numerous existing courses and activities).

☐ *Connecting at-risk students and families with appropriate services.* Teachers, guidance counselors, school nurses, and others in the school setting are in a prime position to identify young people at risk for substance use and violence. They can also connect students to (or provide) the necessary educational or therapeutic interventions, medical care, or social services. Strategies that target at-risk students *and* their families are most effective at enhancing protective factors and producing positive youth outcomes. Schools can offer these services in the school or through links to other social service agencies in the community. Three family-centered approaches, in particular, have shown great potential for success: parent and family skills training, family in-home support and home visiting, and family therapy.

☐ *Providing safe and supervised alternatives.* Enrichment and recreational activities that are enjoyable, safe, and supervised provide positive alternatives to situations that may lead to substance use and violence. These activities, which can include mentoring programs, community service, school-to-work assignments, and internships, can be offered in conjunction with a variety of community-based organizations and businesses. Although these activities alone are insufficient to counteract substance use and violent behavior, they are more likely to be effective if they are part of a comprehensive prevention plan that includes other strategies that have been proven effective.

☐ *Restructuring classrooms to promote student engagement.* Improving the very structure of and management style in a classroom can help students engage in the learning process, "bond" to their school, and improve academic performance. Effective classroom management strategies include establishing and enforcing clear classroom rules, managing classroom time to hold students' attention, and using rewards and discipline to promote positive behaviors. Classroom restructuring may also present a prime opportunity to connect with school reform planning teams working in your district to promote academic achievement among students.

☐ *Influencing school and community norms.* A critical part of any prevention initiative

is the creation and reinforcement of a set of anti-drug and anti-violence messages within the school setting. One way to do this is by setting, communicating, and reinforcing positive norms -- clear and consistent social messages that substance use and violence are harmful, unacceptable, and illegal. To create and sustain changes, school-based efforts must also be supported and reinforced by the larger community.

☐ ***Establishing and enforcing clear school policies.*** School policies can be a powerful influence on reducing substance use and violence at school. When creating new school policies, make sure to communicate policy information and standards to students, school personnel, and families (including your rationale for developing the policy) and include clear consequences for infractions. It's also important to reward those who abide by the policies.

☐ ***Establishing and enforcing clear community policies.*** Establishing community policies that limit the availability of harmful substances and weapons represents another critical piece of a comprehensive prevention plan. Look to governments (municipal, state, and federal), public agencies (e.g., social service departments), and private organizations (e.g., HMOs, convenience stores) to institute policies. Although some new community policies may be necessary to help prevent substance use and violence among youth, many such policies are already in place.

☐ ***Building school-family-community partnerships.*** Schools, families, and communities must work together to design, deliver, and reinforce activities intended to prevent substance use and violence. For example, efforts to create, promote, and enforce social norms and policies directed at preventing substance use and violence must involve coordination and collaboration among schools, families, and communities. If anti-drug and anti-violence messages -- and the skills to follow through with those messages -- are to be effective, they must be reinforced rather than contradicted across these critical contexts.

Source: Middle School Coordinator's online course, Selecting Research-Based Prevention Programs For Your School, http://www.k12coordinator.org/onlinece/onlineevents/selecting/id48.htm