

Study of High Schools with Student Drug-Testing Programs

By

Joseph R. McKinney, J.D., Ed.D.
Chair and Professor
Department of Educational Leadership, Ball State University
Adjunct Professor of Law, Indiana University/Indianapolis School of Law
Muncie, IN
jmckinne@bsu.edu
2004

Reported by

THE STUDENT DRUG-TESTING COALITION
A PROJECT OF THE
DRUG-FREE PROJECTS COALITION, INC.

PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES TO PREVENT AND REDUCE DRUG USE



STUDENT DRUG-TESTING COALITION

Helping students pursue a better future.

These 2004 studies examined the data on:

- 1) 52 Indiana high schools with student random drug testing-programs (SDT) to compare graduation rates and test scores to rates and scores in those schools without drug-testing programs.
- 2) Drug and alcohol use at two high schools in Columbus, Indiana during the period (2000–2001) when Indiana student random drug-testing programs were suspended and one-year following reinstatement (2002–03) of the programs.

Highlights of the study comparing graduation rates and test scores

- ▶ 80% (42) of high schools with SDT programs in 2002-03, scored higher than the state average on the state-mandated graduation test (grades 10–12). Statistically significant 0.000 (Z test)
- ▶ A statistically significant number of high schools (37 or 71%) with SDT programs in 2002–03 had graduation rates higher than the state average 0.001 Z test
- ▶ Number of expulsions and suspensions due to drugs, alcohol and weapons for SDT high schools showed a 30% reduction in schools with testing programs.

Columbus, Indiana comparative study

Comparison of student drug-use survey data from two high schools with SDT programs in the 2000–2001 school year (when SDT program suspended) and the 2002–2003 school year (with SDT program reinstated).

Student population:	3,000 students, grades 9–12.
Community size:	35,000 citizens.
Data source:	High schools have surveyed students regarding alcohol, tobacco and drug use every 2 years since 1995. The Indiana Prevention Resource Center (IPRC) coordinates the student self-reporting questionnaire (ATOD).
Student drug testing:	Implemented 1999.
SDT program description:	Random testing of athletes, students in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities; parental request.
Program components:	Written policy; student assistance; counseling for students with positive test results funded by grants; random drug testing.
Drug testing procedures:	Parental consent required; non-academic consequences.

Results

Category: Marijuana use

- ▶ Statistically significant decreases in marijuana use in 2003 with a SDT program, over 2001 without a SDT program.

- ▶ Compared to 2001, students felt safer in 2003 when asked “In past month, how often has student missed school because he/she felt unsafe on school property?”
 - Grade 9—Felt much safer
 - Grade 10—Felt much safer
 - Grade 11—Felt much safer
 - Grade 12—Felt much safer

- ▶ Compared to 2001, fewer students approved of marijuana use in 2003 when asked “How do you think friends feel (or you) about smoking marijuana occasionally?”
 - Grade 9—Fewer approving, much more strongly disapproving
 - Grade 10—Fewer approving, much more strongly disapproving
 - Grade 11—Fewer approving, much more strongly disapproving
 - Grade 12—Fewer approving, much more strongly disapproving

- ▶ Levels of participation in athletics, clubs, intra-murals, art programs extracurricular activities showed no significant difference in the number of students participating in athletics and extracurricular activities when the high school had a SDT program compared to no SDT program. Direction was toward increased participation in all grades in 2003.

- ▶ Compared to 2001, students reported fewer serious arguments and physical fights in 2003 when asked “In past month, how often has student been in a serious argument involving shouting? (Never, 1-2 times, 3-9, 10+)”
 - Grade 9—Significantly down
 - Grade 10—Significantly down
 - Grade 11—Significantly down
 - Grade 12—Significantly down
 In a physical fight, Grades 10 and 12 significantly down

Category: Other Drug Use

- ▶ Comparing 2001 to 2003, students were asked “How many times in last month has student used Amphetamines? (Never, 1-5 times, 6-19 times)”
 - Grade 9—Significantly less use
 - Grade 10—Significantly less use
 - Grade 11—Significantly less use
 - Grade 12—Significantly less use

- ▶ Comparing 2001 to 2003, Inhalants – 9th and 10th grades significantly less

- ▶ Comparing 2001 to 2003, Tranquilizers – 9th and 10th grades significantly less

Category: Perceived Risk

- ▶ Comparing 2001 to 2003, students were asked “How much do you think you or others risk harming themselves if they smoke pot occasionally?”
 - Grade 9—No difference
 - Grade 10—Greater risk
 - Grade 11—No difference
 - Grade 12—Greater risk

Category: Student drug-testing program

- ▶ Comparing 2001 to 2003, students were asked “I believe this procedure is an effective measure in deterring substance abuse.”
 - 90.5% said yes

Category: Student comments about a random drug-testing program

- “It is a smart thing to do.”
- “The staff is friendly.”
- “Awkward but efficient.”
- “Teachers need tested.”