

# Effectiveness of student random drug-testing programs

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By

Joseph R. McKinney, J.D., Ed.D.  
Chair and Professor  
Department of Educational Leadership  
Ball State University  
Adjunct Professor of Education Law  
Indiana University School of Law-Indianapolis  
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PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES TO PREVENT AND REDUCE DRUG USE



**STUDENT DRUG-TESTING COALITION**

Helping students pursue a better future.

## **Introduction**

As follow-up to a 2003 survey of 65 Indiana high schools with student random drug testing programs (SRDT), those same high schools were surveyed again in the Spring of 2005 about the effectiveness of these programs. Information on the costs of such programs was incorporated into the most recent survey, along with questions regarding athletic and extra-curricular participation levels, as well as questions regarding the impact of student drug testing programs on student morale.

## **Survey Description**

High-school principals at 65 Indiana schools were surveyed in April of 2005 about random drug-testing program effectiveness and changes in student drug use over a period of almost three (3) school years (2002-03 school year to April 2005). The response rate to the written survey instrument was 86% (56 responses).

Of the 56 responses received, 54 of the high schools (98%) continue to utilize random student drug-testing programs as a part of prevention measures. One (1) high school has discontinued the program and one (1) high school never implemented a program. Two-thirds (N=36) of the principals responding to the survey report that their responses about student drug use are based upon written drug-use surveys of students.

## **Summary of Findings**

The majority of responders reported that student drug use *decreased* and that the SRDT programs did not affect student activity participation levels adversely. In fact, almost one-half of principals reported *increases in participation levels for athletic programs*. The reported per-test cost of a program was \$30 or less for 91% of the 54 high schools with SRDT programs.

When asked if the random testing program negatively impacted the classroom, a full 100% (N=53) of principals responding (one respondent left this question blank), stated that they observed no evidence of a negative impact of the prevention program upon the classroom. The majority of testing programs utilize urine specimens and all schools notify parents of test results. The majority of schools temporarily restrict participation in activities upon a positive-test result. Most schools made referrals for some form of counseling when there was a positive test result.

High schools with SRDT programs exceeded the state average for test scores on the state-mandated graduation test as well as exceeding the state average for graduation rates.

## **Detail of Results**

### Drug use by students:

- 58% reported that drug use by students decreased (N=21)
- 42% reported that drug use by students remained the same (N=15)
- 0% reported that drug use had increased
  
- 18 high schools responded that written surveys of student drug use are not utilized
- 91% of principals (N=49) stated that they believe that SRDT does, in fact, limit the effects of peer pressure to use drugs
- 9% of principals (N=5) stated that they do not believe that SRDT limits peer pressure effects
- 41% (N=22) reported that the positive drug-test result rate has decreased
- 56% (N=30) reported that the positive drug-test result rate has remained the same
- 3% (N=2) reported that the positive drug-test result rate has increased

### **Impact of random student drug-testing programs**

#### On athletic program participation:

- 0% of the high schools surveyed reported a reduction in student participation in athletic or extra-curricular activities
- 46% (N=24) of high schools reported increases in student participation in athletic activities
- 54% (N=28) of high schools reported that student participation in athletic activities remained at the same level as before SRDT

#### On extra-curricular activity participation:

- 45% of high schools reported increases in student participation in extra-curricular activities
- 55% of high schools reported that student participation in extra-curricular activities remained at the same level as before SRDT

#### On test scores and graduation rates:

- 80% (2002-03 school year) and 79% (2003-04 school year) of schools with SRDT achieved scores higher than the state average on the mandated graduation test for grades 10-12
- 80% of high schools with SRDT programs (2003-04 school year) had more 10<sup>th</sup> graders passing the two graduation exam standards than the state average
- 71% (2002-03 school year) and 75% (2003-04 school year) of high schools with SRDT programs had graduation rates higher than the state average (statistically significant number of high schools [37/52 - 71%] with SRDT programs in 2002-03 and 2003-04 [39/52-75%] had graduation rates higher than the State average)

#### Impact upon morale:

- 100% of principals reported that, despite critics claiming that SRDT negatively impacts on the classroom, their experiences showed this claim to be untrue

### **Student random drug-testing program components**

- Drug testing costs
  - \$15 - 13% (N=7)
  - \$20 - 50% (N=27)
  - \$30 - 28% (N=15)
  - \$40 - 5% (N=3)
  - \$60 - 4% (N=2)

91% of surveyed schools test for \$30 or less  
63% of surveyed schools test for \$20 or less
- Covered activities
  - 96% test students in athletics
  - 78% test students in extra-curricular activities
  - 72% test students with driving/parking privileges
  - 50% test students in co-curricular activities
- Drug testing methods
  - 57% (N=31) test for alcohol
  - 22% (N=12) test for steroids
  - 87% (N=47) test urine
  - 13% (N=7) test oral fluids
- Consequences of a positive test result
  - 85% require loss of athletics playing time
  - 79% require loss of extra-curricular participation time
  - 63% require follow-up testing
  - 60% require participation in counseling
  - 43% require drug education participation
- Notifications of a positive test
  - 100% to parents
  - 81% to principals
  - 22% each to a counselor; a substance coordinator
  - 4% each to the school nurse; the Dean
- Student referrals
  - 44% to counseling
  - 35% each for family/parent counseling and treatment
  - 30% for drug education/prevention curriculum
  - 20% to an SAP
  - 19% of schools reported that they do not refer students
  - 7% reported “other” than the above types of referrals