

# Strategies for Success

## new pathways to drug abuse prevention

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### Principals Claim Testing Brings a Wealth of Benefits

Evidence suggesting the efficacy of random student drug testing as a tool to reduce drug use among youth is mounting. Results of a recent survey in Indiana corroborate what some educators and substance-abuse experts have maintained for years: drug testing is a promising drug prevention strategy.

Testing may not only reduce illicit drug use, the report suggests, it may also help improve the learning environment in schools by diminishing the culture of drugs. Principals participating in the survey indicated they believe drug testing has no negative effect on school morale or participation in sports or extracurricular activities, and that costs are minimal.

Published in the February 23 issue of *West's Education Law Reporter*, "The Effectiveness and Legality of Random Student Drug Testing Programs Revisited" presents findings from an April 2005 survey of principals at 65 Indiana high schools. Of the 56 schools that responded to the written survey, 54 used drug testing as part of their substance-abuse prevention programs. Two-thirds of the principals responding to the questionnaire said they based their answers on written student surveys.

The report, written by Joseph R. McKinney, chairman of the Department of Educational Leadership at Ball State University, is a follow-up to a survey conducted at the same high schools in 2002-2003, a time when the schools had

either just begun or resumed their drug testing programs. Several years earlier, schools across Indiana had been forced to halt all drug testing because a ruling by a state appeals court had declared them unconstitutional. A landmark decision in June 2002 by the U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way by ruling that middle and high schools can conduct random drug tests of students participating in extracurricular activities.

The 2005 study is an attempt to learn about the effectiveness of drug testing

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programs by asking survey respondents what changes, if any, occurred in student drug use and other behavior at the target schools after nearly three years with testing programs in place. Its purpose, as stated in the report, is to shed light on two issues facing school districts trying to decide whether to test students for drug use: Are drug testing programs effective in reducing and preventing drug use, and are they legal?

McKinney is optimistic on both counts. “The Supreme Court has spoken,” he writes, “and so have several state and federal courts. Random student drug testing [RSDT] is legal with some limitations.” In McKinney’s opinion, “The research on RSDT also speaks volumes on the effectiveness of drug testing programs. RSDT programs are effective in deterring, reducing and detecting illegal drug use among students.”

While some indicators remained constant between surveys, almost every reported change in drug-use behavior or related activities was a change for the better. For example, more than half (58 percent) of the principals in the 2005 study who relied on written student surveys for their responses said student drug use had decreased since the previous study. The rest said levels of use remained the same. Additionally, 41 percent of the full group of principals reported that the positive drug-test result rate—the percentage of students testing positive for drug use—had decreased, while 56 percent said the rate had not changed since the previous survey.

Among the encouraging results to emerge from the McKinney survey is that in no case was drug testing seen to have a negative impact on the classroom. Despite critics’ concerns that drug testing erodes student morale, 100 percent of the responding Indiana principals whose schools have drug testing programs said

their experiences showed these claims to be untrue. (One left the question blank.)

Reporting on data collected from the survey, McKinney also addresses charges that drug testing discourages participation in sports and other extracurricular activities and is too costly. More than half of the high schools with drug testing programs reported that levels of participation in athletic programs remained the same from 2003 to 2005. The rest said participation increased. None reported that participation levels had gone down. As for the expense, the overwhelming majority (91 percent) of schools with testing programs reported that the per-test cost was only \$30 or less. Almost two-thirds said the drug tests cost no more than \$20 each.

Although overall youth drug use has decreased by nearly 20 percent Nationwide since 2001, illegal drugs remain a significant threat to young people. A 2005 survey of teens by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University found that 62 percent of high schoolers and 28 percent of middle schoolers report that drugs are used, kept, or sold at their schools. According to the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, almost half of all students (47.6 percent) have used marijuana by the time they finish high school.

Results of the McKinney survey cannot, of course, be construed as a definitive measure of student drug use or attitudes, nor do they prove a causal relationship between drug testing and reduced levels of use. Still, taken as a whole, the survey data offer compelling evidence that random drug testing can be helpful in the effort to keep students drug free. The report bolsters the notion that random drug testing, used in conjunction with other methods as part of a comprehensive program for preventing and treating substance abuse, can be a useful and potentially effective drug abuse prevention tool.

## Key Findings

*Here are key findings of the McKinney report, which compares the results of an April 2005 survey of 65 Indiana high schools with data collected from the same schools in 2002-2003:*

### **Principals Report:**

#### **Student Drug Use\***

- Decreased: 58 percent
- Remained the same: 42 percent
- Increased: 0 percent

*\* Responses based on written student surveys*

#### **Per-Test Cost**

- \$30 or less: 91 percent of surveyed schools
- \$20 or less: 63 percent of surveyed schools

#### **Positive Drug-Test Result Rate**

- Decreased: 41 percent
- Remained the same: 56 percent
- Increased: 3 percent

#### **Effects of Drug Testing on Peer Pressure to Use Drugs**

- Testing limits the effects of peer pressure: 91 percent
- Testing does not limit the effects of peer pressure: 9 percent

#### **Participation in Athletic Programs**

- Decreased: 0 percent
- Remained the same: 54 percent
- Increased: 46 percent

#### **Participation in Extracurricular Activities**

- Decreased: 0 percent
- Remained the same: 55 percent
- Increased: 45 percent

#### **Impact Upon Morale**

- Principals reporting that, based on their experiences, random drug testing does not have a negative impact in the classroom: 100 percent



Drug use among adolescents affects millions of lives nationwide. Recognizing the complexity of the problem, communities across the country are exploring measures to help reduce drug use in their schools. The U.S. Supreme Court has held constitutional the random drug testing of public school students, thus making a powerful, non-punitive tool available to combat student drug use.

Research shows that drug use can cause physical changes in the adolescent brain, and that drug use can develop into dependence and addiction. Research also shows that young abusers are especially vulnerable to other risky, potentially damaging behaviors, and that youths who use illicit drugs are more likely than other youths to have negative attitudes about school and to engage in fighting or other delinquent behaviors. In addition, students who use alcohol or drugs have been shown to be at greater risk for performing poorly in school. (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [2005], *Findings from the 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*, Office of Applied Studies, NSDUH Series H-27, DHHS Publication No. SMA 05-4061, Rockville, MD.)

Random student drug testing can help address these and other concerns. By identifying students who have just started using drugs or who may already have a drug dependency, random student drug testing helps to ensure that these individuals get the help they need through counseling or treatment to get their lives back on track. Random student drug testing also benefits the entire school community by encouraging a drug-free environment that is safer and more conducive to learning. Recognizing the potential for improving the teaching and learning environment as well as the behavior and well-being of students, more schools are adding random student drug testing to their existing drug prevention strategy.

Published twice a year and distributed nationwide, *Strategies for Success* will keep readers informed about events and developments in the field of drug testing. It will report the latest research findings on the effectiveness of drug testing as a tool for reducing substance abuse. Each issue will also provide a wealth of guidance and resources on student drug testing program development, implementation, and maintenance.

Much progress has been made in the effort to protect America from the ravages of drug use. In the past five years, in fact, overall drug use among young people has declined 19 percent. Still, many challenges remain. A successful drug abuse prevention strategy for children and teens must, therefore, include the concentrated vigilance of parents, educators, school administrators, coaches, community leaders, health professionals, and others who interact with our Nation's most precious resource.

Tools to prevent drug use, such as random student drug testing, can make all the difference to a child's future. We encourage schools across the country to consider making drug testing a part of their comprehensive drug abuse prevention strategy.

John P. Walters, Director  
National Drug Control Policy

Margaret Spellings  
U.S. Secretary of Education

# Drugs and Testing: Looking at the Big Picture

Imagine a surgeon turning down the opportunity to use a powerful medical procedure that is government-approved, affordable, available, easy to use, and potentially life-saving.

It makes no sense.

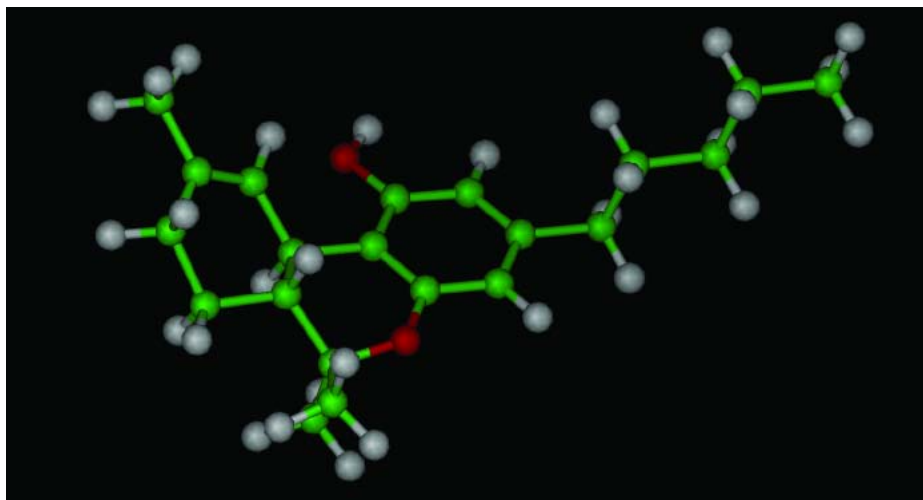
The same could be said about schools that pass up a promising new technique for combating the scourge of substance abuse: random student drug testing. As any good surgeon knows, better methods bring better results.

Parents and educators have a responsibility to keep young people safe from drug use. In recent years we have made solid, measurable progress toward that end. According to the latest national survey in the Monitoring the Future series, the proportion of 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-grade students combined who use illicit drugs continued to fall in 2006, the fifth consecutive year of decline for these age groups. Similarly, results of the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey show that rates of current marijuana use among high school students have dropped from a peak of 26.7 percent in 1999 to 20.2 percent.

This is good news, to be sure, but hardly reason to drop our guard. Consider: In 2006, according to Monitoring the Future, a fifth (21 percent) of today's 8th graders, over a third (36 percent) of 10th graders, and about half (48 percent) of 12th graders in America had tried illegal drugs at some point in their lives. Proportions indicating past-year drug use were 15 percent, 29 percent, and 37 percent, respectively, for the same grade levels.

Marijuana remains the greatest single drug threat facing our young people. Past-year marijuana use among 18- to 25-year-olds (the group with the highest drug-use rates) fell 6 percent from 2002 to 2005, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. And yet, despite reduced rates in this and other user categories, marijuana still ranks as the most commonly used of all illicit drugs, with a rate of 6 percent—14.6 million current users—for the U.S. population age 12 and older. This is particularly disturbing because

See *Big Picture*, page 15



$\Delta^9$ -Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the active chemical ingredient of the marijuana plant. Image courtesy of Project MathMol, Scientific Visualization Lab, New York University.

## Summit Watch

In response to growing interest in random student drug testing, the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) took to the road in 2004 with regional drug testing summits in Illinois, California, Georgia, and Colorado, and with State summits in Arizona, Mississippi, and Ohio. To date, the agency has hosted 12 summits across the country, most recently on April 25 in Milwaukee, WI, and more are being planned.

The goal of the summits is to inform community leaders and school officials about student drug testing and to promote discussion of this issue at the local level. At each summit, national and regional experts speak on a variety of topics, including the types of testing that are available, legal issues, program development, and the importance of student assistance programs. Also discussed are funding sources, such as grants from the Department of Education. Registration for the one-day summit is free.

From the keynote address to closing remarks, summit participants learn how to develop and sustain an effective, balanced random student drug testing program. Participants are reminded that well-designed and properly implemented programs serve three important public health and safety goals by 1) deterring children from initiating drug use; 2) helping to identify new users before a dependency begins; and 3) helping to identify students with a dependency so that they may be referred to appropriate treatment. Also emphasized at the summits are the issues of confidentiality and the non-punitive aspect of random student drug testing.

As Deputy Director of ONDCP, Mary Ann Solberg frequently delivered the keynote address at the summits. She offered advice for parents, schools, and communities searching for ways to help keep kids from using drugs: Set expectations and give children the tools they need to meet them. In her remarks, Deputy Director Solberg counseled summit participants to be as actively involved in drug abuse prevention as they are in other areas that affect young people.

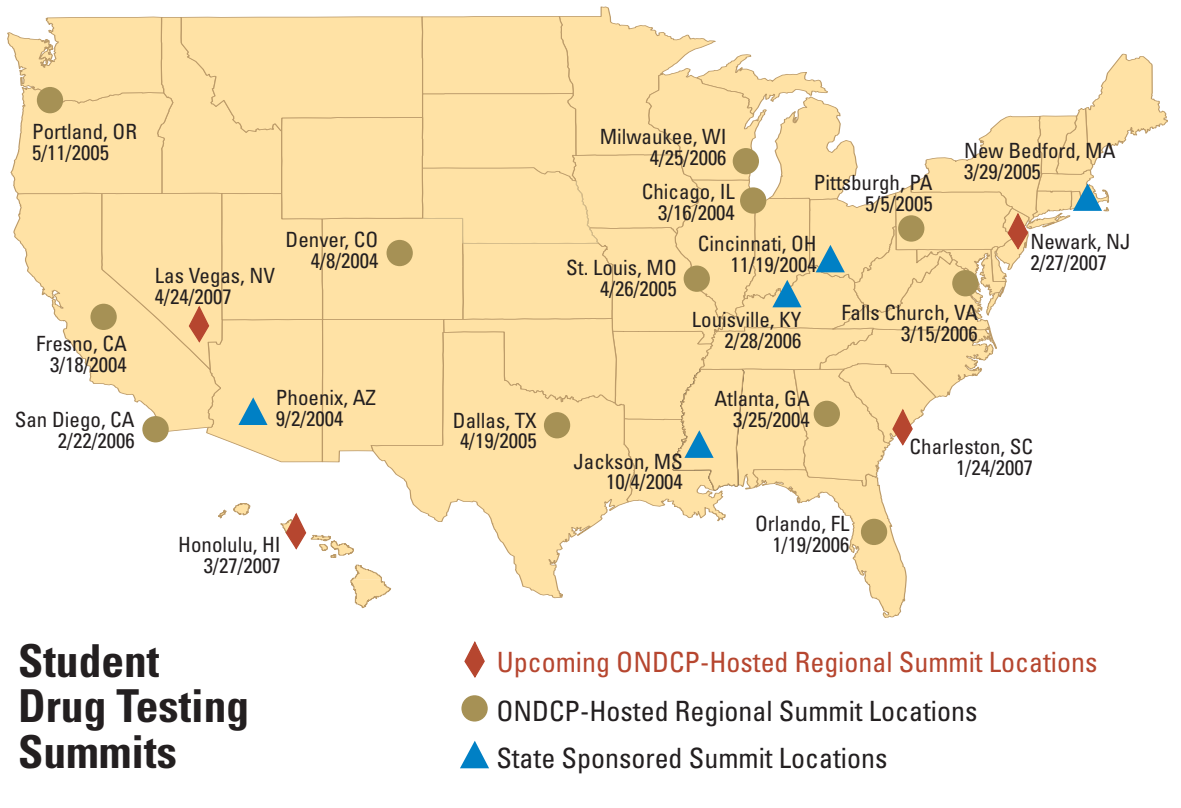
“An assembly once a year on the dangers of drug use is not enough,” she said, adding that the message must be broadcast everywhere—in the classroom, on the athletic fields, in the home, on television—and reinforced whenever possible by role models.

Another regular speaker at the ONDCP summits is Chris Steffner, former principal of Hackettstown High School in New Jersey. An educator for over 30 years, Steffner was instrumental in developing the random student drug testing program implemented at that school in the fall of 2004.

In her presentations on developing a random student drug testing policy, she likens the positive effects of a drug testing program on kids who are using or contemplating the use of drugs to the effects of a police car on drivers who are speeding or about to speed. “On the highway,” she points out, “the moment you see a police car, you modify your behavior. You slow down. You don’t speed.” Random student drug testing has the same effect on children. Like the police car, it gives kids a reason to change their behavior.

Although testing did not begin at Hackettstown High School until October 2004, students reported anecdotally that the program was already deterring drug use in September—a month before any students were tested. Now in its second year, the program has many supporters in the community and will be expanded to include steroid testing.

A complete list of expert speakers and their presentations is available online at [www.randomstudentdrugtesting.org](http://www.randomstudentdrugtesting.org). The site also provides news about the next round of regional summits as well as other information on random student drug testing, including the booklets *What You Need to Know About Drug Testing in Schools* and *What You Need to Know About Starting a Student Drug-Testing Program*.



## 2007 Regional Summits

ONDCP-hosted regional summits are scheduled for the following dates and locations:

<b>January 24, 2007</b>	<b>Charleston, South Carolina</b>
<b>February 27, 2007</b>	<b>Newark, New Jersey</b>
<b>March 27, 2007</b>	<b>Honolulu, Hawaii</b>
<b>April 24, 2007</b>	<b>Las Vegas, Nevada</b>

## 2006 Regional Summit Presentation Topics

Following is a list of topics that were covered during ONDCP-hosted summits at various locations around the country in 2006:

- Legal History/ Current Legal Issues
- Research on Student Drug Testing Programs
- Current Drug Testing Technology
- Developing a Student Drug Testing Policy
- The Role of Student Assistance and Support Programs
- Grant Writing Basics
- Department of Education Grant Information

Presentations are available on [www.randomstudentdrugtesting.org](http://www.randomstudentdrugtesting.org)





# Paying For a Drug Testing Program

## Federal Funding Sources

The Department of Education offers competitive grants to develop and implement, or to expand, school-based mandatory random or voluntary drug testing programs for students in grades 6 through 12. Authorized by section 4121 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the grants are supported through the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools.

Funds awarded for school-based drug testing programs must be limited to students who participate in the school's athletic program or who are engaged in other competitive, extracurricular, school-sponsored activities. Programs may also include students who voluntarily participate and have a parent or guardian provide that student with written consent to participate in a random drug testing program. For the purposes of this grant, "drug" is defined to include controlled substances; the illegal use of alcohol, tobacco, and prescription drugs; and the harmful, abusive or addictive use of substances including inhalants and anabolic steroids.

In 2003, the first year of grants for school-based student drug testing programs, the Department of Education awarded 8 three-year grants (74 schools) for testing and research. Since then, approximately \$10 million in three-year grants has been awarded to nearly 400 schools for implementing testing programs. A total of 55 three-year grants (310 schools) were awarded in 2005, and 11 new grants were awarded in 2006, including \$1.2 million for the first year of a multi-year evaluation. Information about the grant program is available at [www.ed.gov/programs/drugtesting/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/drugtesting/index.html)

## Non-Federal Funding Sources

Many schools have partnered with community drug coalitions, local service or business organizations, or religious or civic organizations to help fund their random drug testing program. Revenue from Parent Teacher Association fund-raising events, in-school vending machines, snack bars, school T-shirts, caps, and other merchandise is also used to great effect.

# Our Road to Random

## By Robert Razzano

On October 2, 2003, a young man made the ultimate decision of his life. It was a decision that would affect his family, friends, and community. That young man's name was Michael Mikkanen.

Michael was a model high school student who had it all. He was an athlete, honor student, popular, and personable. His future was full of promise and opportunities. The pressure of his transition from high school to his first year in college led to severe anxiety, depression, and instability. His inability to cope led to drug use. Heroin was cheap and easy to get. Michael's addiction became so intense that it led to crime to feed his habit. Eventually Michael was arrested and jailed. On his first night behind bars, Michael made the fateful decision to take his own life.

At the funeral home, Michael's mother pleaded with me to do something to help our young people with the drug problem in our city. As I sat there with my eldest son and watched Michael's friends walk up to the casket, I made a commitment to myself that I would try to fulfill the appeal of Michael's mother. Shortly thereafter I started my research on random and reasonable-suspicion drug testing.

As an administrator for the New Castle Area School District in Pennsylvania, I presented my research at our monthly administrative meetings. Superintendent George Gabriel asked me to select a committee and to present a proposal for drug testing to the school board. My committee included parents, coaches, the district attorney, school board members, the band director, and the athletic director. We spoke with many other school districts that already had a written drug testing policy. The committee spent six months working on the proposal, which Michael's mother and I presented to the school board. The board approved it, and the policy was implemented for the 2004/2005 school year.

The purpose of the random drug testing policy for the New Castle Area School District is to create a drug-free setting for all students and district employees. It is our belief that participation on any interscholastic athletic team or in any extracurricular activity is a privilege and not a right. The students who volunteer to take part in these programs are expected to accept the responsibilities granted to them by this privilege.

We recognized that drug use by school-age children is becoming more prevalent and dangerous in the community and believed the problem had to be addressed to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of all the students within the district. The need for a random drug testing policy is predicated upon the risk of immediate physical harm to drug users and to those with whom the users play sports or participate in extracurricular activities.

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# Drug Testing

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The objectives of our district's random drug testing program are to establish a deterrent to drug use and to take a proactive approach toward creating a truly safe and drug-free school.

creating a truly safe and drug-free school. We believe the random drug testing policy undermines the effects of peer pressure by providing students with a legitimate reason to refuse to use illegal drugs. The policy also, we believe, will encourage students who use drugs to participate in drug treatment programs.

Over the past two years, we have administered 2,221 drug tests to our 7th- to 12th-grade students. Less than 1 percent tested positive for illegal drugs. Of the 1,112 students tested during the 2004/2005 school year, there were eight positive tests (five freshman and three seniors). In 2005/2006, we tested 1,109 students. Only two tested positive. The parents of all those students were notified, and each student was obligated to follow the consequence phase of the policy.

The consequences phase includes suspension from extracurricular or athletic activities, assessment from a certified drug and alcohol counselor, five consecutive weeks of drug testing, and an automatic referral to the student assistance program. Also included in our policy is a parental request referral: if parents request that their son or daughter be drug-tested, that student will be added to the random sample list on the next scheduled date.

I am not under the illusion that drug testing is a panacea in the war on drugs. However, I unequivocally believe that a random drug testing policy is a strong deterrent and helps our young people say "no" to drugs. A drug testing program is worth the effort even if it saves only one life. I know Michael Mikkanen's family would agree.

*Robert Razzano is assistant principal of New Castle Junior/Senior High School in New Castle, Pennsylvania.*

## Around the U.S., Hopeful Signs at Schools with Testing

Drug testing programs have shown great promise in reducing student drug use. Here are some encouraging numbers from school districts around the country.

### **Community High School District #117 Lake Villa, Illinois**

Results of the American Drug and Alcohol Survey for 9th through 12th graders in 2005-2006 show a 29 percent decrease in past-year drug use, down from 30 percent in 2002 to 21 percent in 2006; and a 33 percent decrease in past-month drug use, down from 18 percent in 2002 to 12 percent in 2006.

### **Oceanside Unified School District Oceanside, California**

The Oceanside District saw an increase in drug use among student-athletes in 2004 after their drug testing program was eliminated. The school reinstated the program during the 2005-2006 school year. More than half of student athletes surveyed in 2006 said the school's current drug testing program made it easier for them to say no to drugs.

### **Eagle Mountain-Saginaw Independent School District**

#### **Fort Worth, Texas**

Ninth through 12th graders showed a decline in substance use in 8 of 13 substances from 2004 to 2005, according to a school substance use survey.

### **Paradise Unified School District Paradise, California**

Paradise High School staff noted a decrease in school disciplinary actions for student drug use during the 2005-2006 school year after drug testing began. The California Healthy Kids Survey results for Paradise Valley indicate that past-month drug use by 11th graders decreased 12 percent since 2003.

### **Pulaski County Board of Education Somerset, Kentucky**


The number of disciplinary infractions related to drug use decreased 26 percent from 76 incidents in 2004-05 to 56 incidents in 2005-06 after one year of student drug testing.

# Drug Testing In the News

Schools around the Nation are recognizing the value of random drug testing as an effective way to help steer students away from drugs.


Since the 2002 Supreme Court ruling that broadened

schools' authority to test students for drug use, a number of schools have launched testing programs of their own or started taking steps to put a program in place. Newspaper reports from cities and towns across America indicate that the




Grand Prairie schools in Texas have been awarded a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education to administer random drug tests to students who participate in extracurricular activities.

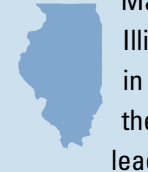
School leaders asked for the money after noticing an escalation in student drug use. Rosie Mendez, Grand Prairie's Safe and Drug-Free Schools coordinator, told *The Dallas Morning News* (March 3), "We have kids attending schools that are high, kids bringing in marijuana and cocaine. We're even seeing drug problems with elementary students. This is happening, and we're saying: 'We have a problem. Let's deal with it.'"




Officials of Clovis Unified Schools in Fresno, California, are pleased with the results of the district's new voluntary drug testing program, according to the *Fresno Bee* (June 30). Of the 1,100 students who signed up for the program, 440 were summoned for a screening, and only 11 tested positive for drugs, the article said. Kelly Avants, director of communications for the district, reportedly said, "We feel like the results affirmed our decision to implement the program."




The Francis Howell School District in St. Charles, Missouri, will begin mandatory drug testing this fall for students who participate in extracurricular activities and who have a campus parking permit, according to a June 16 account in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. District board member Anne Womack reportedly said she evaluated the program from a personal perspective: "If my child were experimenting or beginning to use drugs, would I want to know? As a parent, the answer is yes."



Marquette Catholic High School in Alton, Illinois, will start testing students for drug use in the 2007-2008 school year, as reported in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (April 30). School leaders said they could have started this year, but they wanted to make sure they were fully prepared before launching the program. School board President Ron Motil was reported to have said, "We want to examine it from every angle, get input from parents and supporters of the school, and take it apart and put it back together again before we actually begin the testing." (Parochial schools are not subject to the conditions set forth in the 1995 or 2002 Supreme Court rulings on student drug testing, so the scope of the testing pool is left to their discretion.)



★ New Jersey has become the first state to require drug testing for high-school athletes. Under the plan, scheduled for implementation this fall, high school students whose teams qualify for championship games must submit to a random drug test before competing. Morris Knolls football coach Bill Regan, quoted in the *Daily Record* (May 5), said drug testing might help students resist pressure from peers to use drugs. "It could help a kid make the right decision."



The drug testing program set to launch this fall in Houston's Cypress-Fairbanks school system is, in the words of one parent, "the greatest thing that's ever happened" in the district, according to the *Houston Chronicle* (April 17). In 2005, the district was awarded a three-year Federal grant, the newspaper reported.



# Say 'Yes' to Drug Testing and 'No' to Drugs

idea of testing is steadily gaining ground and winning acceptance as more schools discover the benefits.

Following are some examples of how student drug testing is making headlines.



Under the headline “Drug-Tester Sees Approval of Students,” the *Arizona Republic* (March 25) reported that student response to the Chandler Unified School District’s drug testing program “seems overwhelmingly positive.” The article quoted project director Regina Wainwright as saying, “We really have not had a negative reaction.” In fact, some students appear to welcome the program. Wainwright recalled a young man telling her he was glad when his name came up for a drug test. “This will prove to everyone that I don’t take steroids,” he reportedly told her. Of the 81 students who had been screened so far, the article said, none had tested positive for drugs.



Three weeks after drug testing began in California’s Vista Unified School District, no students had tested positive for drugs, as reported in the *North County Times* (May 3). Nor, for that matter, had there been any complaints from parents, some of whom had initially opposed the idea. “After quite a lot of uproar, we began testing, and it has been pretty smooth sailing,” said Rancho Buena Vista High Principal Richard Alderson. The article pointed out that despite some parents’ concerns kids would not sign up for extracurricular activities to keep from getting tested, enrollment in after-school activities actually increased.



As legal barriers fall and funding increases, a growing number of schools across the country are testing students for drug use, according to *USA TODAY* (July 12). The paper quoted John Walters, Director, National Drug Control Policy, who said testing helps teens resist peer pressure to use drugs. “It’ll give a kid a suit of armor,” as he put it.



*John Walters, Director, National Drug Control Policy, presents Christine Bottles with an Anti-Drug Community Action Award.*

As a four-year varsity athlete and participant in numerous extracurricular activities ranging from choir to National Honor Society to the school newspaper, I have associated with teenagers from all walks of life. While their circumstances are different, many have the same destructive, even deadly, habits: drug and alcohol abuse.

I support random student drug testing because I care about my peers. No one should become a slave to drugs or alcohol in order to achieve social acceptance or numb pain. No mother or father should open the door at 2 a.m. to a police officer bearing the sad news that their son or daughter was killed by a drunk driver.

High school students have a right to a safe learning environment and community, and random student drug testing is an effective way to combat this epidemic. I have seen enough potential squandered and lives ruined. It’s time for educators to equip their students with a tool that provides prevention and intervention. My desire is for schools across the country to say “yes” to drug testing to give us a way to say “no” to drugs.

*Christine Bottles*  
Senior, Jamestown High School  
Williamsburg, Virginia

# British Educator Calls Testing Program a Success

Peter Walker is not the type to sit idly by and wait for others to find solutions. Beneath that jovial, self-effacing manner and soft English accent lies an iron determination. “In this world,” the longtime educator told a group of ONDCP staffers and guests during a recent visit, “if you think there’s a problem and you can do something about it—you do it.”

Before stepping down last spring as headteacher (headmaster) of the Abbey School in Faversham, Kent County, England, Walker took his own advice to heart. He knew about the problem of drug abuse, about how drugs create barriers to education, burden society, and destroy young lives. So in a bold and historic move, he did something about it.

Early last year, Walker launched the first random student drug testing program at a public school in the United Kingdom. The program is open to all students but is entirely voluntary; both the student and parents must give their consent before testing can occur. And though more research must be done to determine the program’s full impact, Walker needs no further convincing. For him, the signs of success are everywhere.



*Peter Walker, former headteacher of the Abbey School in Faversham, England.*

## The numbers

Walker spent nearly a year developing the testing program, consulting with students, parents, teachers, staff, government officials, local police, and others. “I was overwhelmed by the support,” he said.

Particularly encouraging was the response of parents: 86 percent gave permission for their children to be tested.

From the time testing began in January 2005 until last spring, 600 of the nearly 1,000 students at the Abbey School had been tested for drug use (using the oral-fluids method). Only four refused when their names were called. And of all the samples tested that first year, just one was positive for drug use.

## Academic achievement

When the testing program began, Walker went on record with his belief that examination results would improve within the first year. It was a risky prediction, he said, “because in the UK, if a school doesn’t meet its targets, the headteacher is the first to go.” At year’s end, however, he was able to report that the exam results were not only the best in the school’s history, they beat out the previous record by a remarkable ten percent.

Testing gives students a way to resist what Walker called the greatest motivation for taking drugs in the first place: peer pressure.

The students not only accept the program, he said. “They support it. They want it. They believe in it, and they’re proud of it.”

### Reduced crime

Levels of crime, too, have plunged since testing began, Walker said. Last winter, a policeman came to his office and asked why crime rates at Abbey School had dropped below those at the other area schools within the past year. Walker wouldn’t go so far as to claim that drug testing alone was responsible for the decline. “But,” he said, “I will claim that drug testing might have had an influence.”

### Improved morale

And then there are the intangible signs of success. Morale, for instance, has improved noticeably throughout the school since testing began, Walker said. When the program was announced, more than half of the staff agreed to make themselves eligible for testing—“and they weren’t even asked.”

As for the students, they not only accept the program, Walker said, “They support it. They want it. They believe in it, and they’re proud of it.” For one thing, he continued, testing gives them a way to resist what he called the greatest motivation for taking drugs in the first place: peer pressure. Fear of being called up for a drug test gives students a convenient excuse to say no to drugs, he said. “If they can come up with their own reasons that their peer group will accept, you’re on a winner.”

A drug testing program, Walker explained, also shifts some of the emphasis away from the students who may be using drugs and focuses needed attention on those who strive to avoid them. From the start, he set out to achieve two main goals through drug testing. The first was to prevent drug use before it begins—by far

the cheapest and most effective way to combat substance abuse.

The second main goal was to improve the quality of life for kids who choose not to take drugs. Indeed, gaining the cooperation of the non-using majority of students is vital to the program’s success. “That’s the trick,” said Walker. One day last fall, he overheard a student telling a visiting reporter that she welcomed the program. With drug testing, she explained, “the kids now feel that they’re being protected. They’re feeling valued.”

Any good drug-prevention program requires what Walker calls a “total package” of student support. “Do it in isolation,” as he put it, “and you’re on a loser.” It is pointless to address substance abuse only occasionally or halfheartedly, such as during “drug awareness month,” he said. Instead, it has to be part of a package that encompasses broad aspects of the students’ lives, from academics and health education to sexual and financial matters.

### Looking ahead

The Abbey School’s drug testing program has become a catalyst for big changes in England. Prompted by its success, the government is rolling out a pilot drug testing program this fall for all schools in Kent. If all goes well, the plan is to extend drug testing to schools throughout the country.

Walker, meanwhile, though retired as headteacher, remains nonetheless an educator, actively spreading the word as a government-appointed ambassador for random drug testing. “I’m not an evangelist,” he said, “and I’m not selling anything. But I believe this can make a difference to young people.”

## Highlights of the drug testing program at the Abbey School, Faversham, England

### Planning

February 2004 to December 2004

### Drug testing begins

January 2005

### Those in favor of testing

- 86 percent of parents responded favorably when permission was requested.
- General public
- Students
- Staff
- Local Education Authority (board of education)
- Police

### Funding

- Annual cost: \$15,000
- First year of testing funded by British newspaper *News of the World*

### Statistics (as of spring 2006)

- 600 students tested
- 4 refusals
- 1 positive test

### Consequences of positive test or refusal

- No punishment for positive result
- No punishment for refusal
- Always a support program
- Drug dealers face possible expulsion, criminal prosecution



# The Biology of Drug Addiction

By Bertha K. Madras, Ph.D.

Deputy Director, Demand Reduction, Office of National Drug Control Policy

*This is the first in a series of articles on how drugs affect the brain and body. Specific drugs and their effects will be addressed in future articles.*

## The Magnitude of the Problem

Drug abuse and addiction account for thousands of deaths in the United States each year. In 2002, for example, more than 26,000 people died as a direct result of drug use, a figure that does not include those killed as an indirect consequence of drug-using behavior. Substance abuse and addiction are also the costliest and most prevalent of brain disorders, surpassing Alzheimer's disease, depression, spinal cord injury, developmental disorders, and other devastating maladies of the brain and nervous system. Yet addictive disorders rank among the most preventable diseases in our Nation.

Substance abuse places an enormous burden on society, causing or contributing to a host of medical, social, and criminal justice problems and can affect people at all stages of life. Prenatal exposure to drugs is linked to low birth weight and has been associated with developmental disorders. In adolescence and young adulthood, drug use can be associated with poor school performance, accidents, unplanned sexual activity and pregnancy, violence, and criminal activity. The work performance of illicit drug users is characterized by absenteeism, illness, injuries, low productivity, and job turnover. Older persons do not escape the long-term effects of drugs; addiction, compromised health, and interrupted educational and social development are issues in this population.

## Drug use, abuse, addiction

The environment is a major influence on whether a youth or adult will experiment with drugs. For instance, parents' indifference or acceptance of drug use, access to

drugs, peer pressure, and the media all play a role in a person's attitude and behavior toward drugs.

A number of personal factors also can promote drug abuse problems. Examples include psychiatric conditions, personality disorders, poor school performance, inappropriate school behavior, and early drug use. There is also growing evidence that genetics may contribute approximately 50 percent of susceptibility to addiction, depending on the type of drug and the particular environment. It has been proposed that drug use and addiction are forms of self-medication, with users seeking to relieve depression, anxiety, grief, or severe psychiatric problems.

## Drug-related risks

Drugs can exert powerful effects on the brain, but the exact response is determined by various factors, such as the chemistry of the drug, the dose, and the manner in which it is taken (injected, smoked, swallowed). A drug's biological imprint in the brain can be as hard to predict as a New England storm. It might come and go with little trace of passage—or leave a trail of destruction that seriously impacts brain function, biology, personality, and behavior.

What is certain is that drug abuse can have different and more profound effects on a young person than an older person. According to Dr. Jean Lud Cadet of the Molecular Neuropsychiatry Branch at the National Institute on Drug Abuse and Dr. Mark S. Gold of the Department of Psychiatry, Neuroscience, Anesthesiology,

and Community Health and Family Medicine at the University of Florida, the human brain takes at least 21 years to fully develop. Because the brain is still maturing during adolescence and young adulthood, and because drugs can change the programming responsible for the normal development of the brain, this population is particularly vulnerable to drug addiction.

## The Cycle of Addiction

No one starts using drugs with the intention of becoming addicted. However, even a first exposure to a drug can trigger biochemical and cellular changes in the brain, often within hours or even minutes. While the majority of changes at this early stage are reversible, some may be permanent. After repeated use, susceptible people—approximately 8 percent to 32 percent of users—may transition from controlled use to addiction, depending on the drug. At this stage, the brain evidences many changes, the most obvious of which are reflected in altered behavior and judgment. The user is driven to take the drug regardless of the consequences. If he or she suddenly cannot obtain or otherwise stops using the drug, psychological and/or physical withdrawal symptoms emerge. Even after a long period of abstinence from the drug, the addicted brain can generate intensive drug-craving and compulsive drug-seeking. If not addressed, this craving can lead to relapse, possibly causing the addict to spin through the cycle of compulsive use, withdrawal, and relapse over and over again.

No one starts using drugs with the intention of becoming addicted. However, even first exposure can trigger changes in the brain.



## How do drugs affect the brain?

Over the past decade, astounding progress has been made in explaining how the brain is affected by drugs. The details are complex, but the key lies in understanding how the brain communicates. The human brain manufactures more than a hundred different chemicals that it uses for conveying important information. These chemical messages are exquisitely controlled, for the work they do is essential for survival.

Drugs resemble, but are not identical to, the chemical messages produced by the brain. The “imposters” cocaine, amphetamine, and Ecstasy, for example, are similar to the brain chemicals dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine; THC ( $\Delta^9$ -tetrahydrocannabinol), an active ingredient in the marijuana plant, resembles anandamide and 2-arachidonyl-glycerol, produced by the brain.

But because drugs do not precisely duplicate brain chemicals, the brain

cannot control drug messages the same way it controls its own. The results, as the brain tries to process these “false” messages, are euphoria, delusions, hallucinations, anger, and a host of other strange sensations or behaviors.

With repeated frequent drug use, the brain can adapt to and compensate for abnormal signals, and it is not clear to what extent this adaptation is reversible. Drugs can change cell structure, metabolism, signaling, and networks. And some drugs, such as amphetamines, alcohol, and inhalants, are quite toxic to the brain. Long-term users of specific drugs may experience durable changes in brain function and behavior. Withdrawal from drugs can lead people to feel their brain is no longer normal unless they consume more drugs. During withdrawal, a variety of problems can emerge, including anxiety, irritability, misery, stress, and other psychological or physical discomforts, such as tremors or flu-like symptoms.

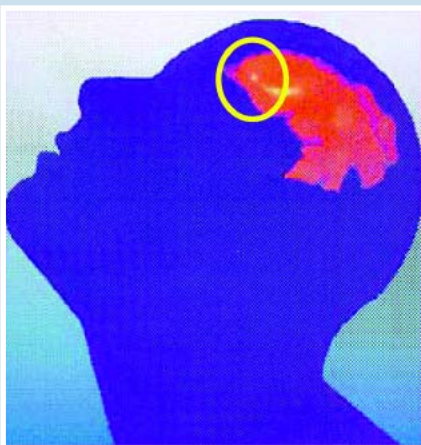
Drug addiction can be viewed as a chronic, relapsing disease characterized by compulsive, uncontrollable use despite adverse consequences. At the same time, it is important to recognize the role of personal responsibility in determining whether the addictive behavior stops or continues. Drug-addicted patients, like patients with other diseases, are urged to assume responsibility for compliance with treatment.

## Prevention, intervention, and treatment of addiction

The goal of prevention is to keep people from initiating drug use. Intervention and treatment aim to prevent drug use from progressing to addiction, or to reverse the behavioral patterns of the addicted state. We must protect our young people from the threat of drugs using every means available. Student drug testing may help stop drug use among this highly vulnerable population and keep children from getting trapped in the devastating cycle of addiction.

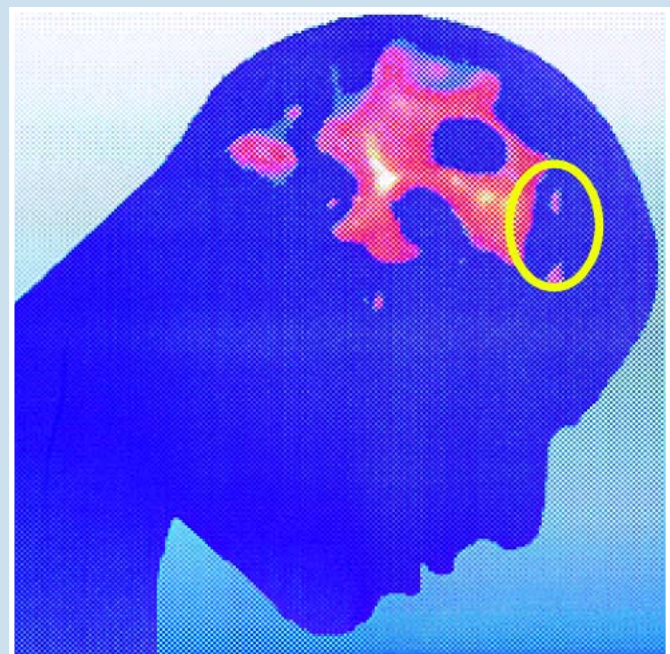
### Cocaine Decreases Blood Supply to the Brain

Cocaine use causes decreased blood flow to the brain, particularly in the frontal cortex, which is involved in important cognitive functions, including judgment and memory.



**Above:** Radioactive chemical illustrates strong blood flow to the brain of the control subject, particularly in the frontal cortex, which is marked with a yellow circle.

**Right:** Radioactive chemical illustrates poor blood flow in many areas of the brain of a chronic cocaine user (who also abuses other drugs), particularly in the frontal cortex, which is marked with a yellow circle.



Composite courtesy of B.K. Madras and B.L. Holman

# Resources

## Government Agencies and Services

### Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)

[www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov)

### Student Drug Testing (ONDCP)

[www.randomstudentdrugtesting.org](http://www.randomstudentdrugtesting.org)

### National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign

[www.mediacampaign.org](http://www.mediacampaign.org)

[www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com)

[www.laantidroga.com](http://www.laantidroga.com) (Spanish)

[www.chinese.theantidrug.com](http://www.chinese.theantidrug.com)

[www.korean.theantidrug.com](http://www.korean.theantidrug.com)

[www.filipino.theantidrug.com](http://www.filipino.theantidrug.com)

[www.vietnamese.theantidrug.com](http://www.vietnamese.theantidrug.com)

[www.freevibe.com](http://www.freevibe.com)

[www.abovetheinfluence.com](http://www.abovetheinfluence.com)

### National Institute on Drug Abuse

[www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov)

### Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Phone: 240-276-2130

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

### Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/SAMHSA

Phone: 240-276-2420

[www.samhsa.gov/centers/csap/csap.html](http://www.samhsa.gov/centers/csap/csap.html)

### Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/SAMHSA

Phone: 240-276-2750

[www.samhsa.gov/centers/csac/csac.html](http://www.samhsa.gov/centers/csac/csac.html)

### The Drug-Free Communities Program

[www.ondcp.gov/dfc/](http://www.ondcp.gov/dfc/)

### Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools

U.S. Department of Education

Phone: 202-260-3954

[www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS)

## Drug Testing Information

### State List of HHS Certified Labs

Current list of laboratories that meet minimum standards to engage in urine drug testing for Federal agencies.

<http://workplace.samhsa.gov/ResourceCenter/lablist.htm>

### College of American Pathologists

Information about choosing a lab.

[www.cap.org/](http://www.cap.org/)

### National Student Drug-Testing Coalition

[www.studentdrugtesting.org](http://www.studentdrugtesting.org)

Visitors to the site can click on the "Legislation" tab to view or download the booklet "Model Legislation For Student drug-testing Programs: State Bill and Insertion Language."

## Medical Review Officers

### American Society of Addiction Medicine

[www.asam.org/search/search4.html](http://www.asam.org/search/search4.html)

## Grant Information

### U.S. Department of Education

Phone: 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327)

School-Based Student Drug-Testing Programs

[www.ed.gov/programs/drugtesting/contacts.html](http://www.ed.gov/programs/drugtesting/contacts.html)

Programs/Initiatives

[www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/programs.html#national](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/programs.html#national)

Grantmaking at ED

[www.ed.gov/fund/grant/about/grantmaking/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/fund/grant/about/grantmaking/index.html)

### Developing Competitive SAMHSA Grant

#### Applications: Participants Manual

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

<http://alt.samhsa.gov/grants/TAManual/toc.htm>

## Surveys and Other Data Sources

### Monitoring the Future

[www.monitoringthefuture.org](http://www.monitoringthefuture.org)

Monitoring the Future is an ongoing study of the behaviors, attitudes, and values of American 8th, 10th, and 12th graders.

### National Survey on Drug Use and Health

<https://nsduhweb.rti.org>

Formerly the *National Household Survey on Drug Abuse*, NSDUH measures the prevalence of drug and alcohol use among household members age 12 and older.

### Youth Risk Behavior Survey

[www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm)

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a component of the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), maintained by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The YRBSS has three complementary components: 1) national school-based surveys, 2) State and local school-based surveys, and 3) a national household-based survey.

## Other Organizations

### Drug-Free Schools Coalition, Inc.

Phone: 908-284-5080

Email: [drugfreesc@aol.com](mailto:drugfreesc@aol.com)

### National Student Assistance Association

Phone: 800-257-6310

[www.nsaa.us](http://www.nsaa.us)

### Partnership for a Drug-Free America

[www.drugfree.org/](http://www.drugfree.org/)

### National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University

Phone: 212-841-5200

[www.casacolumbia.org](http://www.casacolumbia.org)

### The Core Institute

Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Studies

Phone: 618-453-4420

Email: [coreinst@siu.edu](mailto:coreinst@siu.edu)

[www.siu.edu/~coreinst](http://www.siu.edu/~coreinst)

### Recovery Network

[www.recoverynetwork.org](http://www.recoverynetwork.org)

### American Society of Addiction Medicine

[www.asam.org](http://www.asam.org)

### American Public Health Association

[www.apha.org](http://www.apha.org)

marijuana use can lead to significant health, safety, social, and learning or behavioral problems, and kids are the most vulnerable to its damaging effects.

Adding more cause for concern is the emergence of new threats, such as prescription-drug abuse. Over the past decade, youth populations have more than tripled their non-medical use of prescription drugs. Nearly one in five teens has taken prescription medications to get “high,” according to a recent study by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America.

Our task, then, is to keep forging ahead and working to defeat drug abuse wherever it should arise. And to do this, we need all the help we can get. It is vital that we make use of the best tools at our disposal to protect young people from a behavior that destroys bodies and minds, impedes academic performance, and creates barriers to success.

Drug testing is just such a tool. For decades, drug testing has been used effectively to help reduce drug use in the U.S. Military and the Nation’s workforce. Now this strategy is available to any school that understands the devastation of drug use and is determined to push back. Many of our schools urgently need effective ways to reinforce their anti-drug efforts. A random drug testing program can help them.

In June 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court broadened the authority of public schools to test students for illegal drugs. The ruling allows random drug tests not just for student athletes, but for all middle and high school students participating in competitive extracurricular activities. School administrators, however, need to consult with their counsels about any additional state law requirements regarding student drug testing.

Scientists know that drug use can interfere with brain function, learning, and the ability to retain information (see “The Biology of Drug Addiction,” page 12). Any drug use at school disrupts the

learning environment for all students. It spreads like a contagious disease from peer to peer and is, in this regard, nothing less than a public health threat. Schools routinely test for tuberculosis and other communicable diseases that jeopardize student health. Clearly, there is every reason to test for drugs as well.

It is important to understand that random student drug testing is not a panacea or an end in itself. Nor is it a substitute for other techniques or programs designed to reduce drug use by young people. Testing is only part of the solution and cannot do the job alone. For maximum effectiveness, it should be used in combination with other proven strategies in a comprehensive substance-abuse prevention and treatment program.

Schools considering adding a testing program to their current prevention efforts will find reassurance in knowing drug testing can be done in a way that is compassionate and respectful of students’ privacy, pride, and dignity. The purpose of

testing, after all, is not to punish or stigmatize kids who use drugs. Rather, it is to prevent drug use in the first place, and to make sure users get the help they need before the disease of addiction can spread. Drug testing is also affordable. Discussions with individual schools indicate that, on average, a high school with 1,000 students will spend approximately \$1,500 a year to test 70 students, or 10 percent of the pool of eligible students.

As the number of schools with testing programs grows, so does the body of evidence suggesting that random student drug testing can have beneficial effects on school morale. Students feel safer participating in an activity when they know their classmates are drug-free. As former drug users get and stay clean, they make healthier and better choices about how to spend leisure time, and they are more likely to engage in school activities. School pride and spirit increase as students, parents, and the school community become more involved in the school environment.





## Myth

Participation in extracurricular activities decreases when schools implement random student drug testing programs.

## Fact

To date, more than 750 schools have implemented random student drug testing programs. A number of these schools indicate that the presence of a testing program does not appear to reduce levels of student participation in extracurricular activities; in fact, the levels have remained stable or actually increased. In Florida's Polk County schools, for example, where athletes are randomly drug-tested, 448 more students tried out for sports in 2005 than in 2004, and 319 more students tried out for sports in 2004 than in 2003.

Published studies support these findings. In Oregon, the Student Athlete Testing Using Random Notification (SATURN) study found that sport-activity participation increased by over 10 percent in schools with a random testing program. In addition, on a recent survey of high school principals in Indiana with 54 principals responding, 45 percent of principals in schools with random student drug testing programs reported increases in student participation, and no principals reported a decrease (see "Principals Claim Testing Brings a Wealth of Benefits," page 1).

### How to Order

This document is available online at [www.randomstudentdrugtesting.org](http://www.randomstudentdrugtesting.org)



[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)  
[www.randomstudentdrugtesting.org](http://www.randomstudentdrugtesting.org)



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