

Research Brief

Drug Testing

Question: Is drug testing realistic or feasible?

Summary of Findings: The Vernonia School District v. Acton Supreme Court decision in 1995, forever changed the landscape of the legality of drug testing in schools. This decision stated that students who were involved in athletic programs could be drug tested as long as the student's privacy was not invaded. In subsequent cases, this decision has been upheld and in fact extended, to include random drug testing of students of who are involved in extracurricular activities and/or if there is "reasonable suspicion" that any student might be using drugs.

Drug tests run from \$14.00-\$30.00 per test and up to \$100.00 for steroids. Evidence of drug use is difficult to pin down because most of them run through the body's system within 24-48 hours. The one drug that stays in the system for a longer period of time is marijuana. Drug tests do not pick up alcohol or tobacco, two of the most commonly abused substances. According to some in the medical profession, there are two purposes for drug tests: 1) to diagnose substance abuse and addiction; and 2) to help in the treatment for those recovering from abuse. Drug tests do not provide information on patterns, dependencies, or frequency of use.

In George W. Bush's 2004 State of the Union address, he proposed a 23 million dollar allocation in school funding to support drug-testing policies. In 2003, there was an 8 million dollar allowance for the same program.

Overall, 5% of public schools drug test athletes and 3% drug test students who participate in extracurricular activities.

Major Studies:

1. A long term study was conducted between 1998-2001, by Ryoko Yamaguchi, Lloyd Johnston, and Patrick O'Malley. They studied data collected from the Monitoring the Future study that was supported by the National Institute of Drug Abuse. The students were representative of the national arena: 30,000 8th graders from 260 schools, 23,000 10th graders from 227 high schools, and 23,000 12th graders from 235 high schools. This study is repeatedly cited in the literature.

It was found that:

- a. in these schools, 18.14% conducted some type of drug test and the most common reason for testing was cause or suspicion
- b. school size, those from higher and lower socioeconomic levels, did more drug testing than those from the middle class
- c. drug testing is not a strong predictor of students' marijuana or other drug use

- d. the strongest predictor of student drug use was the students' attitudes and perceptions of peer drug use
2. In one school year, one district spent \$65,000 on drug testing 11,000 middle and high school students. It resulted in less than 25 positive results.
3. A study in Oregon found that schools that had drug testing, had a lower incidence of drug use than those that did not test.

4. A school district in New Jersey had a decrease in 20 out of 28 categories of drug use. They stopped the program for three years while awaiting the outcome of some court decisions. During those three years, there was an increase in 18 of the 28 categories.
5. In a survey done in 2003 by Columbia University, it was found that half of 9-12 grade students attended high schools where drugs were sold, used, and/or kept.

Major Conclusions:

1. Drug use has gone down significantly since the 1980s, however, the use of alcohol and tobacco are at high levels.
2. The cost of drug testing is expensive and false positives are commonplace.
3. Students who are connected and involved in their schools have a lower incidence of drug use than those who are not.
4. Investing in education programs, counseling, and other programs that will support connecting relationships were strongly recommended throughout the literature.

Online Resources:

- Drug Impairment Detection Services
This company sells the PassPoint eye scanner machine that can detect the presence of drugs in a person's system.
<http://www.passpoint.org/gsa.html>

- Drug Policy-ACLU
This webpage provides numerous articles to different court cases, references and drug testing policies.
<http://www.aclu.org/DrugPolicy/DrugPolicylist.cfm?c=79>

- Drug Testing: An Overview
This includes several articles about different types of drug testing.
<http://www.aclu.org/DrugPolicy/DrugPolicy.cfm?ID=10997&c=79>

- Drug Testing in Schools: Can it Cause Harm?

This article suggests that more research and hard data should be obtained about the effects of drug testing before mandating and implementing it.

http://www.cleartest.com/testinfo/school_testing_harm.htm

- **Drug Test Your Teen**
This is a site for parents about resources and available supportive products for purchase so that they may drug test their child privately.
<http://www.drugtestyourteen.com/>
- **Guilty Until Proven Innocent**
One district in Alabama that has been doing random drug testing and its results are described in this article.
http://www.cleartest.com/testinfo/drug_testing_children.htm
- **Ignoring Expert Advice, Supreme Court Expands School Drug Testing of Students**
A brief synopsis of the Supreme Court's decision to uphold and support the drug testing of students is given.
http://www.cleartest.com/testinfo/supreme_court_expands.htm
- **Keeping kids off drugs Pragmatism vs. zero tolerance--Let science be the guide**
Written by a parent who strongly supported the California P.T.A.'s Alternatives to Zero Tolerance recommendation, which is to keep students in school to help them develop positive and productive relationships.
http://www.cleartest.com/testinfo/drugs_zero_tolerance.htm
- **Making Sense of Drug Testing: Why Educators Are Saying No**
A brief summary of possible legislation in California to approve of random drug testing of all students is described.
<http://www.aclu.org/DrugPolicy/DrugPolicy.cfm?ID=14767&c=79>
- **Random Drug Test Ban OK'd**
An overview of the Vernonia School District v Acton Supreme Court ruling on the legality of random drug testing of students is described in this piece.
http://www.cleartest.com/testinfo/drug_test_ban.htm
- **Random Drug Testing of Students: Where Will the Line Be Drawn?**
An explanation of the data and study conducted about student drug use and school drug testing policies is provided.
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3994/is_200204/ai_n9077232

- School drug testing less effective than parenting
The need for good parenting as a way to help students stay off of drugs is described in this article.
<http://www.mapinc.org/newsdtf/v05/n204/a10.html>
- Schools do more testing for drugs
This article discusses the need to look for changes in the student's behavior and patterns before doing a drug test.
<http://www.northjersey.com/page.php?qstr=eXJpcnk3ZjczN2Y3dnFIZUVFeXkzJmZnYmVsN2Y3dnFIZUVFeXk2NjcxMTcyJnlyaXJ5N2Y3MTdmN3ZxZWVFRX15Mg>
- Schools May Use Spray to Trace Kids' Drug Use
In 2004, the Federal Government offered grants to school systems that wanted to try an aerosol spray that could be used to test for drugs. This article provides a description of the aerosol and its potential uses.
http://www.cleartest.com/testinfo/kids_drug_use.htm
- Scott County's drug testing program cuts student drug use
This article describes the random drug testing of all of their high school students who have "privileges" and have given their permission to be tested.
<http://www.wbir.com/news/news.aspx?storyid=24424>
- Seeing is Believing: Teens' Parents Could Soon Use Eye-Scan Drug Test
A county in Florida is considering purchasing an eye scanner that can detect drug use and will be placed in a convenient location so parents can test their children.
<http://www.cleartest.com/testinfo/drug-testing-eye-scan.htm>
- Students find dialogue more effective than drug testing
This is written by a young woman who describes her high school experience and the need for strong parenting as a way to stay off of drugs.
<http://www.drugpolicy.org/library/rorvigusatoday.cfm>
- Testing the Wrong Policy on Students
This article cites the study done by Yamagochi, et al to support the view that drug testing is expensive and counterproductive.
http://www.drugpolicy.org/library/leverenz_aff_0904.cfm
- The Drug Testing Policy Alliance and ACLU Set the Record Straight with New Publication-Drug Testing Does Not Deter Teenage Drug Use

This is a downloaded document that looks at why drug testing does not scare students about drug use.

<http://www.aclu.org/DrugPolicy/DrugPolicy.cfm?ID=14773&c=79>

- What an amazing scientific study
This brief article describes research conducted as "forced" drug testing on athletes in Oregon.
http://www.cleartest.com/testinfo/amazing_study.htm
- What the experts say on drug testing
This piece provides a very brief synopsis on different cases and perspectives on drug testing. It provides active links to the full texts of each article.
<http://www.aclu.org/DrugPolicy/DrugPolicy.cfm?ID=10998&c=79>

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