

CONFRONTING THE OPPOSITION TO NPRSDT

By Roger Morgan

- **Schools Job Is To Teach** – The best education is of no value to an addict, or a young person who ODs. Aside from just saving lives, drug testing improves academic achievement, reduces juvenile delinquency and violence, improves attendance and reduces the high school drop out rate. Drug and alcohol use are major barriers to education. Parents are considered the most important in determining at-risk factors, but schools are the safety net to protect all kids. 56% of kids are considered at moderate to high risk of substance abuse, largely because of the situation at home. Schools are the only practical safety net.

- **Schools Don't Have Staff Or Money To Perform Tests** - We will pay \$5 per child for taking and mailing the hair sample either to a school person, a volunteer or a local community coalition. Further, we can provide urine and saliva test kits a very low prices, which a school can in turn provide to parents for a donation 3 to 5 times higher. The difference can more than cover the cost of the program. There is no cost to the school. Just benefits.

- **Parents Say Drug testing can undermine trust between parents and kids.** It is just the opposite. A school program, voluntary or suspicion based, takes the onus completely off the parent's back and makes the kids accountable for their own actions. If they aren't using, there should be no problem.

- **My Child Would Never Use Drugs Or Alcohol.** All kids are at risk, and parents are the last to find out. On average a child uses drugs for two years before they find out, and too often its from the police, or morgue. We have great respect for good parents, but 56% of kids are at moderate to high risk because they don't have the same good fortune. Hair testing doesn't hurt anyone, it gives kids a reason to say no to peer pressure, and it can help the kid next door. Over six million kids are being raised by grandparents or in foster homes. They/we need your help for a better nation.

- **Random drug testing does not deter drug use.** That is patently false. In almost all cases where a valid program has been implemented it has deterred drug use. The figures range from 67% to 90% reduction in the work place, military, transportation and many schools, and almost 100% in private schools that have used hair testing.

- **Drug testing is expensive.** It is an investment, not an expense. Compared to the pain, anguish, suffering and economic cost of a young life, it is the cheapest life insurance one can buy. \$59 for hair testing for a 90 day window of detection, or \$5 to \$15 for a urine or saliva test is nothing. The cost of education alone ranges from about \$7,000 to \$12,000 a year. And ... parents or kid pays the cost.

- **Drug testing is legally risky.** The legal issues regarding privacy rights was clarified by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2002. What could be even riskier today is for a school board and administration not to safe guard students from drugs by implementing the best known prevention tools, as proven by science. Almost all those dependent on tobacco, alcohol and other drugs got hooked as teenagers, average age 13.

- **Drug testing can result in false positives, leading to the punishment of innocent students.** Baloney! Hair testing is extremely accurate. Other tests can be verified by a lab. Plus, the intent here is not to punish students, but to keep them in the system, drug-free. Better safe than sorry.

- **Drug testing may lead to unintended consequences, such as students using drugs that are more dangerous but less detectable by a drug test, and learning the wrong lessons about their constitutional rights.** There are now drug tests even for designer drugs, so we can cover the waterfront. As to civil rights, there are reasons why one can't smoke until age 18, consume alcohol until 21 or use illicit drugs at all. The intent is to preserve them long enough that they can enough their civil rights.

RANDOM STUDENT DRUG TESTING IS EFFECTIVE

Critics say there is a lack of empirical evidence that random student drug testing works. We would like to have more data, but there is consistent evidence to show that it works, just as it has in the military, transportation work place and elsewhere where it reduced drug use by 67% to 90%, and private schools with 100% success.

There is overwhelming evidence to show that our collective failure to stem the level of death, destruction and economic cost to the nation without using this tool is at the heart of the nation's problem of substance abuse. A non-punitive random student drug testing program is the best way to ensure the health and safety of young people, and its use as a prevention tool may no longer be an option, but more of a necessity.

Legal challenges by the ACLU slowed the momentum, and caused some schools to suspend programs that were showing considerable success. The 2002 Supreme Court rulings cleared the use of RSDT for athletes and those engaged in extra curricular activities, and now many schools are getting on board. Schools who have properly administered programs have almost unanimously achieved success. Following are some examples that support that contention:

De La Salle High School, New Orleans A Catholic school, had been nicknamed "De La Drugs" by some in the community, before Yvonne Gelpi, the Principal and Head Mistress, took action around 1998 and implemented a non-punitive random student drug testing policy using hair analysis, which gives a 90 day detection window. Kids testing positive were referred to parents, and to this day there are practically no repeat offenses. Private schools have the luxury of mandating NPRSDT as a criteria for admission. One need look no further than this one school to conclude that non-punitive random drug testing can eliminate drug use by young people. It worked there. It can work everywhere.

2005 Research by Dr. Joseph McKinney of 65 Indiana High Schools that were using random student drug testing before 2000 when ACLU legal challenges caused the cessation of the programs. After the 2002 Supreme Court Decisions, Dr. McKinney surveyed the schools and reported the following. A more complete disclosure is available at www.studentdrugtesting.org.

- 98% of the Principals said they would re-implement a RSDT program.
- 91% of the Principals said they believed RSDT helped students reject peer pressure to use drugs.
- In 2005, 95% tested athletes, 78% Extra Curricular activities, 51% both, and 71% included drivers.
- Formal written surveys of students indicated 58% said drug use had decreased, 0% increased, and 42% remained the same.
- Regarding what impact RSDT had on student participation:
 - Athletics - 0% decrease, 46% increase and 54% remained the same.
 - Extra Curricular Activities – 0% decrease, 45% increase and 55% remained the same.
- 100% of principals said there was no negative impact in the classroom.
- 80% of high schools with RSDT programs in 2002/03 and 79% in 2003/04 scored higher than the State average on the State mandated graduation test (grades 10-12)
- 71% to 75% of high schools had graduation rates higher than the average.
- In 2003/04, 80% of high schools with RSDT programs had 10th graders passing both graduation exam standards higher than the state average.
- The consequences of a first positive drug test for students – 100% were referred to parents; 63% were given follow up tests; 43% were referred to drug education; 85% lost playing time; 79% loss participation in extra-curricular activities.

The conclusions reached by Dr. McKinney's research indicated:

- 1) The intent was not to "catch and punish";
- 2) RSDT is effective in reducing temptation;
- 3) Formal written surveys provided hard evidence that RSDT programs are effective as a deterrent to prevent drug use;
- 4) Per student drug testing costs are reasonable, and ;
- 5) RSDT programs do not cause reductions in student participation in sports and extra curricular activities.

The Department of Education has contracted with SEI Services to work with schools through the nation (www.sdti.ed.gov) to acquaint them with non-punitive random drug testing.

21 DRUG-FREE CHALLENGE

The Institute For Behavior and Health (Dr. Robert Dupont) surveyed 7 public and 2 private schools that had RSDT programs for 2001/02 school years. Check www.protectionnotpunishment.com for new information. In general, schools reported improved behavior; increased productivity; significant reductions in behavioral problems, noticeable reduction in student arrests and student referrals. The only opposition to RSDT came from students and the media. When RSDT programs were suspended due to legal challenges, drug use increased.

The SATURN Study, Oregon. 1999-2000 pilot study of two public high schools, Wahtonka H.S. which had an RSDT program for student athletes and Warrenton H.S. who did not have a program. Wahtonka had 5.3% of student athletes said they were using illegal drugs as compared to 19.4% of Warrenton students, less than 1/3rd the usage. In a 2000/01 study of 13 schools, preliminary findings showed: 1) No decrease in sports activity, in fact there was an 11% increase; 2) testing 50% of students was adequate to deter drug use; 3) Heavier alcohol users decreased their alcohol use due to RSDT; 4) Drug testing appears to deter frequent drug users rather than “experimenters”. The full report is at www.studentdrugtesting.org.

Hunterdon Central Regional High School, New Jersey. Had a RSDT program for student athletes from 1997 to 2000, then suspended for two years due to legal challenges, and re-implemented program in late 2002. They experienced an overall decrease during 1997 to 2000, then drug use skyrocketed when the program was cancelled (316% for 9th graders to 209% for seniors), then a decrease again when program was re-instituted. They experienced a reduction in 20 of 28 categories of drug use by testing only 10% of the student athletes. Details are available at www.studentdrugtesting.org.

San Clemente High School, California. They have a voluntary program, which has grown every year to now include over 50% of student population. According the Principal, a student survey showed over 50% of the students in the program had used the excuse of RSDT to reject peer pressure to use drugs.

Oceanside Unified School District, California. Implemented a RSDT program for athletes in 1997 at the request of students and then dropped the program in 2002 due to budget constraints. Drug use declined when the program was in effect, and increased again when they stopped for a year. During years when they had a program, they got no complaints, but when they stopped, according to Tim Ware who oversees the program, the parents complained.

There is enough evidence to suggest that every school district in the nation should at least try non-punitive random student drug testing, because it is the most effective and least costly way to ensure the health, safety and learning environment of young people.

SUMMARY

Hair Testingmakes money for the schools; improves academic achievement; reduces High School Drop Outs; reduces juvenile delinquency problems; keeps kids in school as opposed to “zero tolerance” programs that flush them out; gets parents involved; makes kids accountable for their own actions; and keeps law enforcement uninvolved except when crime is involved. Records are sealed on graduation. Public health and safety is enhanced, with less cost to the public sector. ***It can get America back on track and save lives!***

How Much Is Even One Life Worth?

21 DRUG-FREE CHALLENGE