

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

TESTIMONY ON "BEST PRACTICES" OF
SAFE AND DRUG FREE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES
AUGUST 3, 1999

Chairman Castle
Distinguished Members of the Committee

It is indeed an honor and privilege to come before you today to report on the successful implementation of the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Community Program in the Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, Public School System. Jefferson Parish is a large suburban district immediately adjacent to New Orleans with very diverse populations and neighborhoods--from affluent suburbs to public housing, from rural areas to Cajun fishing villages. The public school system is comprised of 84 public schools with 54,000 students. We also provide services for 36 private and parochial schools with an additional 23,000 students.

The systemic structure of the Jefferson Parish program which delivers direct services to its students contributes greatly to its overall success. Each school has a Substance Abuse Prevention Education (SAPE') Team chaired by a School Team Chair who serves as the liaison between the school site and the system-wide coordinated program. Ten (10) Safe and Drug Free Facilitators provide technical assistance to their assigned schools working closely with the School Team Chair, identifying at risk students, providing classroom presentations on drug and violence prevention issues, facilitating student support groups, conducting staff development programs, and training parents.

In order to break the cycles of family addictions and violence, we believe that early identification of and interventions for children of substance abusers and children affected by violence are imperative. As such, for the past two (2) years approximately 4,000 students have received these services.

Also in place is a detailed referral process utilizing behavioral characteristics to identify not only children of substance abusers but also those students who are being

affected by their own use and abuse of mind altering substances. Interventions are conducted, referrals are made to community agencies for assessments, and the students are placed in school site self-help support groups.

In order for any school district to make an impact in the reduction of the use of mind altering substances, an effective policy must be consistently enforced. In Jefferson Parish, such a policy has been in place for ten (10) years with a recidivism rate below 2 percent. Students in possession of or under the influence of any mind altering substance, including look alike, are arrested, brought to the Juvenile Detention Center, and suspended from school for nine (9) days. During those nine (9) days, the student must be assessed by an approved treatment program, and the student and his/her parent(s) must attend a three-hour drug educational component. Failure to do so will result in a suspension for the remainder of the school year. The students are also suspended from extra-curricular activities for 18 weeks, and upon return to school, the students must participate in a mandated support group for one calendar year.

With numerous special programs in place for at risk students, we must not overlook the need to provide primary prevention strategies for all students. As such, Jefferson Parish has implemented the Infusion of Character/Values/Multicultural Education into the core curricula emphasizing the eight tenets on a daily basis. During health classes the students receive the cognitive information they need to make appropriate life choices regarding drugs and negative behaviors.

In continuing efforts to make our schools safer, Jefferson Parish has implemented a peer mediation program at each of the middle, junior high, and high schools in Jefferson Parish. Over 500 students have been trained with peer moderators coordinating the programs at the school sites. This year the peer mediation program will be expanded to include a cross-graded mentoring component using the Character Counts curriculum.

Another significant component of a successful drug and violence prevention program is staff development and training. Each year in Jefferson Parish every employee who directly impacts children (approximately 6,500) receives one hour of drug and violence prevention inservice presented by the Safe and Drug Free Facilitators. This year's

inservice is entitled “Breaking the Silence” encouraging teachers and staff to listen to their students to avoid future tragedies like we experienced this past school year.

In addition, 900 staff members serving on school site crisis management teams have been trained in the skills of Non-Violent Crisis Intervention. This two-day training teaches staff members how to de-escalate potentially violent situations in a manner that avoids harm to the child and the staff member.

For any Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities program to be successful, it is imperative to develop cooperative inter-agency collaboration within the community. In Jefferson Parish, these collaborative efforts have resulted in opportunities to co-fund numerous programs such as Parents Against Neighborhood Drug Abuse, Jefferson Citizens for a Safe Community, Summer Teen Institute, the District Attorney’s Juvenile Diversion Program, G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education and Training), and two (2) Substance Abuse Prevention/Intervention Facilitators funded by East Jefferson General Hospital.

I hope this information has shown you the importance of and the impact of the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities funding in Jefferson Parish in providing prevention and intervention strategies in our schools and communities.

Again, thank you for the privilege of sharing the efforts of the entire Jefferson Parish community with you. Your continued support of these programs is vital in the prevention of drug abuse and violence among our nation’s youth.

Respectfully submitted,

Freddie G. Landry, Coordinator
Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities
Jefferson Parish Public School System

JEFFERSON PARISH COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

1. Jefferson Parish Human Services Authority

- A. PANDA (Parents Against Neighborhood Drug Abuse)
A community liaison is co-funded with SDFSCA and conducts community mobilization and education programs in neighborhood throughout Jefferson Parish.
- B. SYNAR
A SYNAR coordinator works with teachers and students to reduce the sale of tobacco to minors.
- C. Summer Teen Institute
A week long training for high school students in developing drug and violence prevention strategies.
- D. Drug Court
Provides referrals of participants children to be placed in appropriate support groups.

2. Jefferson Parish District Attorney

- A. Co-funded two positions working between the Juvenile Diversion Program and the schools (Case Manager and Truancy Delinquency Prevention Specialist)
- B. Domestic Violence/Child Abuse Section regularly makes referrals to SDFSC of children needing SAFE Kids support group services.
- C. Teen Court
SDFSC provides education classes for student participants and Active Parenting training for the parents.

3. East Jefferson General Hospital

- A. Funds two (2) full-time positions (Substance Abuse Prevention/Intervention Facilitators) to work in the seven (7) eastbank middle schools.
- B. Funded initial peer mediation training for high school and middle schools through two (2) Youth Leadership Conferences on Violence

4. Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms

The G.R.E.A.T. (Gang Resistance Education and Training) Program is taught to all seventh graders in the Jefferson Parish middle/junior high schools with SDFSC purchasing the necessary materials of instruction and technical assistance.

5. Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office and six (6) Municipal Police Departments

The D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) Program is taught at all public and many private and parochial elementary schools in Jefferson Parish.