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STUDY: RANDOM DRUG TESTING OF MIDDLE SCHOOLS STUDENTS PROVES EFFECTIVE IN PREVENTING SUBSTANCE ABUSE

ATLANTIC CITY—The Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey (PDFNJ) and Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind released the results of their six year study of the effectiveness of drug-testing in the prevention of substance abuse among New Jersey middle school students at the statewide Addiction Conference.

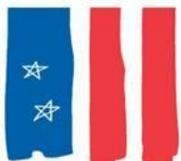
For several years, some New Jersey middle schools have asked parents for permission to carry out random drug testing in the school. Now, the first longitudinal study measuring the effectiveness of these programs indicates these tests tend to reduce rates of drug abuse in later years.

The PDFNJ/PublicMind study measured student attitudes toward drugs and alcohol as well as their use of drugs, and their social contact with drugs and alcohol. It was carried out over a six-year period in schools both with and without the random drug testing programs.

“Almost every school now does drug testing for students engaged in sports, or other extra-curricular activities,” said Dan Cassino, a professor of political science at Fairleigh Dickinson, and principal investigator for the study. “Programs that allow testing of any student are pretty new, though, and no one was really sure if they worked or not as a substance abuse prevention strategy.”

Although almost no students in middle schools studied test positive for drug or alcohol use, the findings suggest that the mere act of drug testing makes them less likely to use drugs in the future.

“These results show that student drug testing changes the environment of the school community and show they serve as an effective prevention strategy for the abuse of drugs and alcohol in their future,” explained Angelo M. Valente, Executive Director of the Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey. Valente added, “This study proves random drug testing in New Jersey middle schools helps prevent substance abuse.”

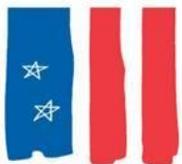


“Generally, we see a huge spike in drug and alcohol use around the junior year of high school. That’s when students get jobs, get cars, get money, and start having contact with older individuals who are more likely to use drugs,” said Cassino. “Students who were tested for drugs at any point in middle school, though, don’t show nearly as big a spike, and that reduction is a big deal.”

Researchers – who are in no way affiliated with the program being studied – weren’t expecting these results. Research on the effect of random drug testing in high schools, or among athletes, has been mixed, and indicated that the most likely effects would come from students being less likely to use drugs because of fear that they’d be tested in the future, or from increased knowledge about how many of their peers were using drugs.

“People expect students to say, ‘I’m not going to do drugs now because I might be tested tomorrow,’ but that’s just not how kids and teenagers think,” said Cassino. “What seems to be happening is that students who’ve been tested start to realize what a big deal it is, and stay away from drugs in the future.” The results also indicate that drug and alcohol use in middle school is relatively rare. For instance, only about 1 percent of 8th graders give answers that indicate that they have ever used illicit drugs, and only about 14 percent indicate that they have ever drunk alcohol (other than in circumstances where it’s allowed, such as religious ceremonies). Among students who were tested for drugs and alcohol at some point, though, that figure of 14 percent drops by more than half to 6 percent.

The Fairleigh Dickinson University study, funded by the Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey, surveyed more than 3,500 students at New Jersey middle and high schools over a seven year period. The names of the schools participating in the surveys are not disclosed by the researchers in order to protect student confidentiality.

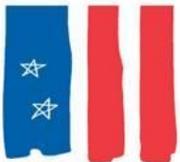


Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey

in Cooperation with the Governor’s Council on Alcoholism and
Drug Abuse and the NJ Dept. of Human Services

Methodology, questions, and tables on the web at: <http://publicmind.fdu.edu>
 Radio actualities at 201.692.2846 For more information, please call 201.692.7032

	Overall	School w/o Suspicionless Testing			School w/ Suspicionless Testing			Students Who Have Been Tested		
		6	7	8	6	7	8	6	7	8
Desirability of Alcohol Use	0.26	0.09	0.18	0.30	0.10	0.17	0.26	0.13	0.16	0.28
Estimated Alcohol Use	0.26	0.02	0.11	0.22	0.06	0.17	0.28	0.11	0.15	0.29
Desirability of Drug Use	0.18	0.10	0.14	0.22	0.10	0.17	0.26	0.09	0.12	0.19
Estimated Drug Use	0.05	0.02	0.02	0.06	0.02	0.03	0.06	0.03	0.04	0.06



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