

Safe and Drug Free Schools and First Alert Voluntary Drug Testing Program: 2007-08

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At a Glance

The Dallas Independent School District is the recipient of two Title IV (A) grants under the No Child Left Behind Act to prevent violence and drug use among students, and to foster safe and drug free schools. To accomplish this, Dallas ISD has taken a two pronged approach. First, the administration, by and through its Safe and Drug Free Office, seeks to instill in students positive life values by imbuing them with inner strengths they need to resist risky behaviors and to develop lofty ideals. Second, the Safe and Drug Free Office has adopted a somewhat more practical approach to the drug problem by implementing a voluntary drug testing program called First Alert.

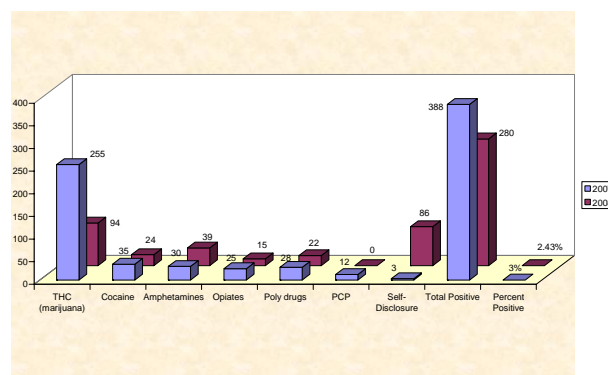
Both of these approaches are designed to complement each other by respecting students as individuals responsible for their own lifestyle decisions, yet providing them guidance and supervision necessary to encourage beneficial, rather than harmful, choices. The first approach – to instill positive life values – prompted the Safe and Drug Free Office to adopt the Forty Developmental Assets of the not-for-profit educational organization, The Search Institute. Adolescent developmental research has shown that the more of the Forty Developmental Assets a young person possesses, the more likely that person is to mature into a well developed, responsible adult. The Safe and Drug Free Office is committed to the mission of imbuing Dallas ISD students with the Forty Developmental Assets.

The second approach may be described as a “booster effect” to reinforce students in their war against drugs. This is the First Alert voluntary drug testing program. At the beginning of each school year, students and their parents or guardians commit to allow the Safe and Drug Free Office to administer an unobtrusive saliva test for five identified drugs. Parents or guardians of students

who test positive for drugs are notified of the result, and the students are referred to counseling, which the Dallas ISD provides through licensed chemical dependency counselors (LCDCs). Students need not fear legal or academic repercussions, since neither school administrators nor the police are notified. Results are not reported on a student’s permanent record. Retribution is not the goal; early positive intervention is.

For 2007-2008, there was a 23% reduction from last year in positive drug hits among students tested, and this finding is statistically significant. Self-disclosures increased from 3 to 86 from the previous year, possibly reflecting an effect of drug testing upon student attitudes. Recommendations for the future include more and improved data collection, as well as allocation of scarce resources toward wider and deeper community engagement in the war against drugs in our schools.

First Alert Positive Results, 2007 and 2008



For more information, see EA08-180-2, available at www.dallasisd.org/eval or contact Dr. Steven R. Wolfson at 972-925-6427.