

Research-Based Strategies

(Taken from the Florida State Department of Education web page.)

The following research-based strategies are listed as resource tools to determine how to incorporate programmatic and strategic ideals into your existing programs. These strategies are not listed as stand alone prevention ideas or activities; instead, they are strategies that experts highly recommend.

Anti-Bullying Norms and Policies

Studies show that anti-bullying policies, along with encouragement of appropriate behavior, can dramatically reduce bullying at school and lower the likelihood of later aggression and delinquency which often follows. In addition, research suggests that school climate improves only when schools develop and implement a comprehensive anti-bullying plan designed to teach pro-social behavior, limit aggressive behavior and teach skills that promote positive interactions between students.

Building School Capacity

Definition: A structured, organizational development method developed to help organizations plan, initiate, and sustain needed changes. Researchers and practitioners collaborate to develop and implement programs. A spiral of improvement is created as researchers continuously provide data feedback during the implementation phase to the practitioners and work with them to identify and overcome obstacles to strong program implementation

Comprehensive, Multi-Component Approach

Programs that use a combination of (1) normative education, (2) information about the consequences of drugs and violence and (3) social skills training, including social influences training (especially peer pressure resistance skills) are more successful in preventing drug use, crime and delinquency than using a single approach.

Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation

Conflict resolution provides training to an entire class, grade, or school. In general, these programs teach students to manage anger, control aggressive responses, understand conflict, and avoid and diffuse potentially violent confrontations. Peer mediation training is provided to a few selected students. They are taught to mediate disputes between other students. Both conflict resolution and peer mediation allow students to settle disagreements peacefully among themselves. Research has found that some programs have had a positive impact on students' attitudes about interpersonal violence, improve school discipline, and positively impact absenteeism.

Family and Community Involvement

Programs that include a commitment from communities, families, and school districts have shown much higher success rates in their prevention/reduction of drug use than their counterparts that lack support.

Gender Relevance

Violence prevention programs should incorporate components especially relevant to

girls (i.e. indirect aggression, such as spreading rumors) in order to maximize program effects on students of both genders.

Information Dissemination

Information dissemination is a vital part of a comprehensive, multi-component approach.

It aims

to increase knowledge and alter attitudes about issues related to alcohol, tobacco, and drug use and abuse by disseminating information about the nature and prevalence of substance abuse and addiction

and the psychological and social effects of substance abuse. However, research has shown that

knowledge of the consequences of drug use is not enough to prevent adolescents from using drugs. It is

seen to be an effective prevention strategy insofar that it causes students to perceive themselves as

personally susceptible to the consequences of drugs use.

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Interactive Teaching Techniques

The interactive process provides opportunities for the exchange of ideas between peers.

Researchers found that non-interactive programs showed only a 4% reduction in (substance use) prevalence rate, while interactive programs showed a 21% reduction in prevalence rate. Small interactive programs were found to be most successful.

Long-Term, Multi-Year Programming

Studies have found that in order for a prevention program to be effective, it needs to be delivered over a long period of time continually to reinforce skills.

Mentoring

Mentoring is one-on-one interaction with an older, more experienced person to provide advice or assistance. Evaluations of community-based mentoring programs have found the programs decrease substance use. School-based mentoring programs show promise in that they reinforce strengths that may lead to the delayed onset of drug use or participation in delinquent behavior.

Normative Education

Clarifying and communicating norms about behavior. An essential part of a comprehensive, multi-component approach.

Parent Involvement

The participation of parents in a prevention program has been found to help increase

communication, alter students attitudes toward positive health practices, and is identified as a protective factor against substance abuse.

Refusal/Resistance Skills Training

Activities that teach refusal or resistance skills are incorporated into the program along with opportunities for practice. These programs help prepare students to identify pressures to use drugs and give students the skills they need to resist peer pressure to use drugs.

Risk-Focused Approach

Research suggests that prevention programs should address risk and protective factors.

School Climate

Studies show that schools in which students feel as though they belong and that people in the school care about them experience less disorder and student misbehavior.

Students who bond with positive people and institutions are less likely to become involved in violence and other behavior.

Social Influences

An emphasis on social influences such as advertising and media as well as the influence of friends (peer resistance skills training) and family members as role models are an important part of a comprehensive, multi-component approach. Research has shown that a focus on social influences is a critical aspect of effective drug prevention education.

Social Skills Training

Social Skills Training means focusing on a range of social competency skills (e.g. developing self-control, stress management, responsible decision-making, social problem solving, and communication skills).

Hawkins, W.B., Catalano, R.F. & Miller, J.Y. (1992). Risk and protective factors for alcohol and other drug problems in adolescence and early adulthood: Implications for substance abuse prevention. *Psychological Bulletin*, 112(1), 64-105.