

Students help is needed in both planning and conducting workshops if the program is to provide meaningful training for the participants who will be working with students.

# Education may be in deep trouble in drug education workshops without students

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One of the most serious problems facing the youth of today and their administrators, counselors and teachers is the use and abuse of drugs and its impact upon present and future generations.

The Vietnam conflict was perhaps an epoch in itself in heightening our concern with youth and drug abuse. Eventually, the problem became so pronounced that by March of 1970, the President stated, "There is no priority higher in this administration than to see that children—and the public learn the facts about drugs in the right way for the right purpose, through education." (Faber, 1973, p. 11) Immediately, Congress, for the fiscal year 1970, appropriated nearly \$16 million for drug education and training programs. During the fiscal years of 1975, 1976 and 1977 under the Amendments to the Drug Education Act, Congress authorized respective expenditures of \$26, 30 and 34 million. If the additional funds

under other federal, state and local resources were added, the expected expenditure for the current year could well exceed \$100 million in drug and alcohol training programs and projects.

In practically every metropolitan community, the same spiralling series of events have been noted in the newspaper: the recent death or arrest of a young person addicted to drugs, the pleas of his/her parents, the newspaper stories depicting the life of a drug or alcohol abuser, the request for funds by a community drug abuse committee, the use of drugs by local high school, junior high school and elementary school students, and eventually the announcement of a school corporation's drug education workshop for their personnel. This does not include the additional incidents and experiences that could be added by numerous school officials, personnel of various community agencies, and law enforcement officers.

## Student oriented programs

Initially it was stated that the problem involved both youth and personnel in educational institutions. Without question, the goal of schools and school personnel should be the deliberate education of youth. Educational institutions and community agencies must perceive learning as a resultant function of deliberate education. In achieving this goal, Carl Rogers, (1969) in his book **Freedom to Learn**, has described one kind of learning as experiential: where students discover something significant to them because of their personal involvement of feelings and thoughts. Robert Ebel, (1972) in an address to elementary school principals at a national conference, described the human side of learning, a concept that includes those things that make us truly human: human beliefs, attitudes, feelings, understandings and concerns. Program planning for drug abuse workshops and conferences concerning student learning cannot take place in an administrator or teacher vacuum.

Earl Keely once said, "We've got this marvelous school system with beautiful buildings and magnificent curriculum and these great teachers . . . marvelous administrators, and then, damn it all the parents sent us the wrong kids." (Combs, 1973, p. 39).

That which Earl Keely was saying about schools is a concern of many in regard to crisis oriented drug education workshops. A very fine program may be intended but in this case the "wrong kids" can be substituted with **NO KIDS**. Generally, when considering students in a complete series of workshop activities there must be student involvement in both planning and conducting of all workshop phases. Numerous drug education programs have failed because the content ignored the target audience, the student.

## Drug education programs that failed

Generally speaking, most drug abuse workshops for teachers have been devoted to the presentation of a quagmire of different types of drug substances, their effects, statistics relating to drug use and abuse and legal issues concerning drug use. A number of fact and information oriented drug education programs have encouraged students to use drugs rather than prevent their use!

Robinson (1975) in reviewing three studies involving Penn State University students, high school students in Massachusetts, and high school students representing a

large metropolitan area indicated respectively: 1.) the more they know the more likely they are to try certain drugs, 2.) the more one knows the more pro-drug is their attitude, and 3.) most information comes not from school classes or drug programs but from friends and peers. In all three studies, drug education programs focused on drugs not students.

Hoffman (1971) analyzed attitude scale responses of students and discovered the more knowledge the student had the more favorable was his attitude toward drug use. Swisher, Crawford, Goldstein and Yura (1971) in a study of high school and college students indicated factual programs led to a desensitization of fears of drugs which could result in greater drug experimentation and use. Other writers (Goodstadt, 1975; Swisher and Harmon, 1970; Stuart, 1974; and Bard, 1975) have suggested that knowledge or information approaches may be counter-productive or may be related to increased drug use. The effects of most drug education programs have been so unclear that the National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse eventually declared a moratorium until such time as the programs could be evaluated and become more realistic in orientation.

One approach to improve drug education programs would include the participation of students in planning and conducting drug abuse workshops or inservice programs prepared for and presented to personnel who implement a K-12 drug education program.

#### **Student involvement**

Students must be deeply involved in any proposed drug education workshop or conference. Several writers (Antonow, Eicke and Mathers, 1976; Fagerberg & Fagerberg, 1976) emphasized the importance of student involvement but failed to suggest how students might participate in planning and implementing a drug education workshop. Part of the current dilemma grows out of the problem of identifying students who will be open and straightforward regarding their perceptions of the proposed workshop or conference content. This has been an extension of the communication gap that exists between students and their teachers, counselors, administrators and parents. Dearden and Jekel (1971) have best described this gap in their statement, students . . . "felt that teachers and school administrators were insensitive to students and regarded them as faces in the crowd instead of human beings, and they expressed fear of being themselves around parents and other adults, who condemned drug behavior but were unwilling to sit calmly and rationally and discuss the situation" (p. 120). Traditional approaches to identifying students have included representatives from the student council, from various clubs and organizations, from religious groups, from drug education classes and from nominations at large. The pitfalls apparent with the traditional approaches have resulted in identifying students who have values and attitudes similar to the school personnel being trained in the inservice programs or workshops. Students are identified who are not knowledgeable of the current drug scene and who do not have the perceptions of the target audience. Students who might make greater contributions include youth from peer influence programs, peer counselors and youth involved in rap room activities, youth from community hot line programs, youth leaders from community addiction agencies, young people from community youth agencies/centers and youth from com-

munity socio-medical-health agencies and organizations. If rehabilitated young people from the community drug program are selected, caution should be exercised relative to how they might be used in the program. Too much reliving of personal experiences as a drug addict permits listeners to infer that if he/she used all of those drugs at one time then they cannot be all that bad. Over the past three years, this writer has used students from a peer influence program when teaching a graduate course in alcohol and drug education. These students have been open, honest and sincere in sharing their perceptions concerning drug education programs and have helped the teachers, counselors and others in providing suggestions and feedback concerning proposed programs.

In those situations where student resources are not available, it might behoove the counselors and administrators to think about developing a peer influence/counseling program in conjunction with initiating drug education workshops and training programs. A concise presentation on the organization, implementation and evaluation of peer counseling programs has been presented by Crosson-Johnson (1976). Other peer types of programs exist in Indiana, Michigan, California, Illinois, Missouri, Florida, Texas, New York and other states.

Once the students have been identified, they should be used in the selection of the workshop participants, thus implementing the training of a participant who has already established initial rapport with students. The participant could be a teacher, counselor, administrator, school nurse or yes, even a custodian. Someone whom the students can identify with and talk to concerning student interests. Last but not least, the planning committee should identify student representatives who will participate in the workshop or training sessions. The student representatives will become the "core student members" following the training/workshop sessions.

#### **Drug workshop program**

Traditionally, at least one-half or all of the workshop periods has been devoted to the presentation of facts. The participant does not need to know all the parameters of the drug problem, i.e., number of addicts, age and economic groupings, police statistics on usage and arrest, drug categories, pharmacology, brand names, etc., to understand why students are using drugs. Students have indicated the paramount problem is the teenager's self-perception and the question of why he/she is experimenting with and turning to the use and abuse of drugs? The school's product, the student, must be involved in answering this question in the development of workshop tapes, booklets and learning experiences for use by other students and teachers.

The workshop or training program for the participants should focus upon elements of the profile of a drug user and the development of life skills. The profile of a drug user includes the following elements: the drug user 1.) has a poor self-concept, 2.) has been unable to relate to others, 3.) has been unable to resist peer pressure, and 4.) has been unable to cope with feelings, stress, and everyday problems. The development of life skills should include activities in value clarification and skills in problem solving and decision making, skills in communication, skills in coping with stress and conflict, (peer pressure) and activities to develop self-concept. A final element should include identifying alternatives to drug use and abuse. Students have repeatedly indicated that

too often the traditional drug education programs and classes have emphasized the facts and information aspects under the cognitive component and have failed to pursue concepts and activities under the affective component, the component most concerned with growing up and daily living!

Student representatives who attend and participate in a drug education workshop can serve as "reality barometers" to insure that the workshop activities and outcomes will be effective when applied to the general student population. As a result of the training, student representatives can become core members on teams to work with other school personnel in presenting drug education concepts in classroom and other group settings. Student core members can become the catalysts for motivating students to become involved in peer group activities or activities oriented toward various components of the school's drug education program. Trained student core members might be used in peer counseling activities, drug crisis management and rumor control, information dissemination, parent and community involvement and information, service to fellow students and community projects, group counseling sessions and as change agents for school system. The outcomes from selecting and involving students in drug education sessions and workshops relative to the proposed components of such a workshop can be profound in its effect upon the atmosphere of the school.

#### Some suggestions

With the help of teachers and students in the writer's drug education course, a number of suggestions for drug abuse workshops and training sessions have been identified. These are as follows:

1. Drug education workshops or inservice programs for school personnel should be objective or goal oriented and on-going rather than crash or crisis-oriented.
2. Drug education workshops used to train school personnel must include students in planning and implementing the education/training sessions.
3. Drug education workshops should emphasize a confluent education, both cognitive and affective elements, and give particular attention to skills, strategies and techniques used in developing affective components.
4. Affective elements of a drug education workshop should include skills, strategies and techniques in value clarification, decision making, effective communication and development of self-concept in daily living.
5. Life skills for daily living as a part of the drug education workshop should include goal setting, conflict resolution, alternatives to drug use, peer group pressure and critical thinking concerning any substance that has the potential to harm one's body.
6. Drug education workshops should encourage an atmosphere which promotes free, open and honest discussion of problems pertaining to students and staff members.
7. Since the literature indicates students obtain most of their information concerning drug substances from peers, peer counseling/facilitator programs should be included as a topic in drug education workshops.

#### Conclusions

The primary goal in teaching is the deliberate education of youth. Drug education workshops and training sessions provide an ideal opportunity to involve students in solving a problem of concern to both them and older generations. The proposed approach would prepare students to solve their own problems through the joint efforts of all concerned. Can parents and educators neglect to consider the needs and involvement of those from whom the program is to profoundly effect? If the answer is yes, then one must conclude that education may be in deep trouble.

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