

Alcohol Use Prevention Curriculum

Protecting You/Protecting Me



The Curriculum

- *Protecting You/Protecting Me* is a science-based alcohol use prevention curriculum for students in grades 1-5. There are 8 lessons for Grades 1-4 and 10 lessons for Grade 5.
- Based on the latest brain research, the curriculum states that the developing brain is much different from an adult brain. Students learn about the role and importance of the brain, brain growth and development, the dangers of alcohol exposure to the developing brain, and the importance of protecting themselves by making good decisions.
- The curriculum also teaches children safety skills, including how to refuse a ride from an unsafe driver and how to reduce the risks associated with riding with a driver who is not alcohol-free.
- Lessons are designed to be infused into a school's core curriculum and are taught by trained school personnel, high school students in a structured program, and/or volunteers. The training component is included in the cost of the curriculum.

The Goal

- The goal of the curriculum is to prevent injury and death of children and youth due to a) underage consumption of alcoholic beverages, and b) vehicle-related risks, especially as passengers in vehicles in which the driver is not alcohol-free.

The Problem

- The curriculum helps to fill the gap in current prevention programs that have not yet incorporated the latest research on human brain development and the risks associated with exposure to alcohol before age 21.
- Alcohol is the No. 1 drug problem among young people. (CSAP, 1996).
- Eleven percent (11%) of surveyed teens between the ages of 16 and 19 had their first drink before age 11 (American Academy of Pediatrics: Ideas for Child Health Month Activities, 1998); 50% of sixth graders surveyed felt peer pressure to drink alcohol and 40% had tried beer or wine. Only 15% perceived any risk or harm from using alcohol on a daily basis. (American Academy of Pediatrics: Adolescent Health Update, 1997).
- From 1985 to 1996, there were 5,555 child passenger deaths involving a drinking driver. Of these deaths, 3,556 (64%) occurred while the child was riding with a drinking driver; 67% of these drinking drivers were old enough to be the parent or caregiver of the child. Children whose family members have alcoholism are more likely to be riding with drivers who are not alcohol-free and are therefore at greater risk as passengers. (CDC, 2000).

The Credentials

- The curriculum has been tested with over 3,500 elementary school students in six states and Guam in three separate pilot tests.
- The curriculum has been evaluated by 22 leading experts and groups with experience in the field of prevention and/or curriculum, and it has been endorsed by The American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of Elementary School Principals.
- *Protecting You/Protecting Me* incorporates the "Principles of Effectiveness" established by the U.S. Department of Education in 1998; it also focuses on 13 Internal Developmental Assets of the "Developmental Assets" framework developed by Search Institute.

For information about implementing the program, contact project director Kappie Bliss at kappie@kbliss.com.

Protecting You/ Protecting Me

Summary of Evaluation Findings

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Protecting You/ Protecting Me is a school-based alcohol prevention program for elementary school students. The curriculum provides a total of 40 lessons (eight lessons per grade for grades one through five). Specifically, the curriculum helps to fill the gap in current prevention programs that have not yet incorporated the latest research on children's and adolescents' brains and the developmental risks associated with exposure to alcohol before age 21. This is the only elementary school curriculum at this time that is based on the latest brain research and has been reviewed by prominent neuroscientists for scientific accuracy. The American Academy of Pediatrics also has written a letter of support stating, "One of the most important areas of health and safety for our children is to help them protect their growing brains." The goal of the curriculum is to prevent injury and death to children and youth due to underage consumption of alcoholic beverages and vehicle-related risks, especially as passengers in vehicles in which the driver is not alcohol-free.

Approximately 3,000 elementary school students in ten schools in Montana, Texas and New Mexico participated in a pilot test of the curriculum in Spring 2000. Students in five schools were taught the eight lessons and completed surveys prior to beginning the program, post-tests immediately after and follow-up surveys six weeks later. Students at matched schools served as the comparison group and completed pre- and post-program surveys. A total of 1848 students received the curriculum; 1150 were in the comparison group. The students included 57% Anglos, 19% Hispanics, 12% Blacks, 7% Native Americans, 2% Asians and 3% other. They were evenly divided between males and females.

Results indicate that the program is effective, particularly in teaching children about the importance of their brains. Among the third to fifth grade students there were also statistically significant changes from pre- to post-test in their attitudes about underage consumption of alcohol, especially that it is not all right for older teen-agers to drink beer or wine, even if they do not drive. Students also learned how to protect themselves if they are ever in a car with a driver who is impaired by alcohol, especially that they should not sit in the front seat and not talk to the driver. Students receiving the curriculum were also more likely than the comparison students to indicate in two different hypothetical scenarios that they would not get into a car with an alcohol-impaired driver.

First and second grade students were read an abbreviated survey and marked their responses on color-coded answer sheets. Like the older students, they made significant improvements in understanding the importance and development of their brains. Their attitudes and intentions regarding underage drinking of alcoholic beverages and riding with alcohol-impaired drivers also changed in the desired direction, compared to students not receiving the curriculum, although the changes were not statistically significant. Some areas did not show significant change and are being explored to determine how to strengthen both the curriculum and survey instruments for all grades. Testing of first grade students was especially problematic.

Teachers completed evaluation forms after each lesson providing valuable feedback about the lessons and suggestions for improvements (n=489). Outside professionals such as school counselors, principals and drug prevention specialists observed curriculum being delivered and evaluated it for cultural/ethnic relevancy, age appropriateness, student engagement and a variety of other factors (n=151). Both teachers and observers were extremely positive about the curriculum. They were most enthusiastic about the high level of student participation and the variety and relevancy of the student activities.

Two other pilot tests of the curriculum have been completed, also demonstrating the effectiveness of the program. One used MADD volunteers, staff and other non-school personnel to present the curriculum in three sites in Guam, Michigan and Connecticut. The other pilot test, conducted in California, used high school students who were in the Peer Assistance Leadership (PAL) program as presenters. The PAL high school students were received very enthusiastically according to a post-program survey of the elementary school students. The curriculum is undergoing a final revision using the evaluation findings.



LESSON TOPICS AND MAJOR MESSAGES

Lesson 1: Our Brain

Students learn about the physical role of the brain and its importance.

Message: Children's brains are different from grown-ups' brains.

Lesson 2: Growth and Development

Students learn about the danger of alcohol exposure to the developing brain.

Message: Brain development within the first 21 years of life provides the foundation for development as an adult.

Lesson 3: Health and Safety

Students learn to not trust their lives to luck, but to make healthy, safe choices.

Message: It's our job to protect our brain as it develops.

Lesson 4: Rules and Laws

Students learn about the purpose and value of using rules and laws.

Message: Rules and laws are created so we don't have to leave our lives to luck. We know how to protect ourselves and others.

Lesson 5: Friends

Students learn that being a friend includes helping a person be safe.

Message: Friends help keep each other safe.

Lesson 6: Choices and Decisions

Students learn that they can, and sometimes need to, say "no."

Message: We can say 'no' and keep our friends.

Lesson 7: Media Awareness

Students learn to not trust commercials to give us all the information we need to protect ourselves and others.

Message: We need to know what the media doesn't tell us.

Lesson 8: Communication

Students learn that they can talk to adults about things that are hard to talk about.

Messages: Children can talk to grown-ups about difficult subjects, and children can protect themselves when grown-ups don't.

Grade 5 only:

Extra lesson on Media Awareness

Reflection and Appreciation