

February 15, 2005, School Board Meeting Report
Rick Hooker, Safe and Drug-free Schools Coordinator

Madam President, Dr. Otto, and members of the Board:

I want to thank you for this opportunity to present the programs and activities that fall under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities grant and the Student Services Department. The primary goal for this grant is prevention – prevention of the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs as well as the prevention of violent behaviors.

One of the requirements of the Safe and Drug-Free Schools grant is to conduct an evaluation to determine the levels of use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. Since 1994, Plano ISD has participated in the Texas School Survey of Drug and Alcohol Use sponsored by the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse and conducted by the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University. The district has been able to participate in the biennial survey at no cost since our surveys are included in the larger state analysis.

The latest survey was administered to classes of students in grades 4 through 12 during the first week of March, 2004. There were 2541 elementary surveys and 4824 secondary surveys included in the district analysis. The 6th grade was included in the elementary numbers.

A review of the data shows a continued decline in the use of substances by Plano ISD students with exceptions usually found at a specific grade or with a specific substance. This decline covers the last four surveys or the last eight years. It also shows lower rates of use when compared to peers statewide, as is frequently stated in the Executive Summary for 2004.

Primary drugs of choice continue to be alcohol, tobacco and marijuana. All showed declines in use by secondary students. Inhalant use was the only category to increase slightly.

Alcohol is still the most abused substance with 25% of secondary students reporting drinking in the past 30 days. “Binge drinking” is the consumption of five or more drinks at one time. Twenty-four percent reported “binge drinking” beer at least once in their lifetime. Twenty-six percent of secondary students reported alcohol at most or all parties they attended in the last year. Eleven percent of 9th through 12th graders reported driving a car after having “a good bit to drink” at least once in the last year.

Past month marijuana use was reported by 9% of Plano students with the higher percentages being in the 11th and 12th grades. Driving while under the influence of drugs was at the same 9% level.

Other illicit substances are used by a smaller number of Plano students with 5% reporting the use of powdered cocaine, uppers, downers, and hallucinogens at least once during their lifetime. This number includes students with one time experimentation and students with frequent use. The more accurate indicator of frequent users is the “past 30 day” use data which shows 2% or less in all categories of illicit drugs. Past month steroid use was .4%, and 1.4% reporting use at least once in their lifetime.

Elementary surveys addressed the gateway substances - tobacco, alcohol, marijuana and inhalants. Data from the elementary surveys (including 6th grade) showed some increases in both alcohol use and inhalant use. Ten percent of the students reported getting the alcohol from home. Glue and correction fluid/whiteout were the most frequently used inhalant products.

The good news is the consistent declines in the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs over a long period of time. Key factors contributing to this decline, as stated in the Executive Summary, are parental attitudes and education programs in the schools. Clear policies on TAOD and enforcement of these policies by Plano ISD are also positive factors as shown by the very low number of incidents reported in the annual PEIMS report.

Though the overall data is positive, the survey results will be used to identify areas of concern, review current programs, provide training as needed, and enhance or improve the prevention efforts in our district and the community.

Prevention is a collaborative process in Plano ISD. A list of programs and activities in our district has been provided in your packet. It includes a variety of programs and activities from Student Services, Counseling, and the School Liaison Officer program. The Counseling Department has been a long-term partner in the district's prevention efforts along with the Athletics and Curriculum Departments. The district also participates in the Region X ESC SDFSC Cooperative which offers workshops on prevention programs and related topics. One example is the North Texas Steroid Summit this month with experts in sports medicine and Texas UIL.

I want to highlight two specific programs that are significant in prevention efforts. They are the Peer Assistance and Leadership (PAL) Program and the Peer Mediation Program.

The PAL Program has been in Plano since 1991 when it was started in two middle schools. It has continued to grow as the district has grown. Currently,

PAL (Peer Assistance and Leadership) Classes:

20 classes on 19 campuses (MS through SHS)
increase of 2 classes from last year

313 students enrolled (184 MS, 91 HS, 39 SHS)
increase of 37 students from last year

The program varies from campus to campus depending on the needs and goals of the campus. However, there is a standard curriculum with requirements for the class. Mentoring and tutoring at feeder campuses are activities that make the most impact, and evaluations indicate improvement in areas of interaction with teachers, interaction with peers, academic performance, self-concept, classroom conduct, and discipline referrals. Last year, PALs completed over 20000 hours of service which included 4500+ hours of mentoring/tutoring, 10000+ hours of school service on their campuses, and 5000+ hours of community service. Last semester, PALs completed over 7800+ hours of service.

High school and senior high school PALs are required to present the STARS Program (Students Teaching About the Risks of Smoking) to all 5th grade classes. This program has been in Plano

ISD since the late 80's, and has contributed to the steady decline in tobacco use as reflected in the biennial surveys and PEIMS.

The Peer Mediation Program is currently at 4 middle schools and 3 high schools with 120 students trained this year. This program teaches selected students a scripted mediation process that they use with their peers in resolving conflicts. The peer mediators and coordinating staff participate in a 1 or 2 day training. The program is coordinated at the campus by the administrative intern or counselor. Conflicts are screened and assigned to mediation by the campus coordinator. The disputants then meet with a pair of mediators who use the process to help the disputants resolve the conflict. Mediators and disputants learn a valuable skill through this process.

Counselors are an integral part of the prevention efforts in PISD through their comprehensive guidance and counseling programs. Students Thinking of Peers (STOP) groups and Protecting You/Protecting Me Program at the elementary level, Red Ribbon Week activities, and the Drug Busters Program at the Middle School level are examples. At the beginning of the 2003-04 school year, elementary counselors were trained in bullying prevention and middle schools counselors were trained in bullying/sexual harassment prevention through the SDFSC grant.

As you will see from the list and the presentations tonight, there are a variety of programs and activities by diverse groups to address the issues of substance use and related prevention issues in our schools. The success and effectiveness of these efforts can be seen in the results of the survey and the annual PEIMS report. These same results also show areas for attention and improvement as we continue toward goals of safe schools, safe and healthy lifestyles and academic success.