

Dare program

[Health & Medicine](#), [Drugs](#)



America has been fighting a war on drugs for more than a century. From opium to cocaine, to the current drug of choice of Meth, Americans by the millions have ruined their own lives from the poor choices that they have made which have been influenced by their drug use. Some have tried to combat this epidemic and have only received resistance from the ACLU and an apathetic public. As part of Nancy Reagan's anti drug campaign in the 1980's "Just Say No" has since been a source of comedic fodder ever since as people feel that instead of implementing their own anti drug campaign, feel that it is necessary to make fun of the efforts of others.

One group which has tried to combat the use of illegal drugs by our nation's youth is the Drug Abuse Resistance Education or DARE program. It was implemented in 1983 by Los Angeles Police Chief Daryl Gates. This was in response to the high number of drug related crimes which the police were being forced to deal with at that time. Urban renewal had proven to be a disaster in the major cities across the country and with that failed experiment came a spike in the number of crimes, drug related and non drug related, which plagued the entire country.

Since their humble beginnings in 1983, the DARE program has expanded into the largest anti drug campaign aimed at our nation's youth. Over 26 million children each year are involved in DARE's anti drug campaign as the nation tries to ride them from the plague which illegal drugs in this country bring. (www. dare. com) With an organization as large as the DARE program, there is going to be criticism. There is a vocal segment of the population which is in favor of the legalization of numerous illegal drugs and feels that it is not

the right of the government to prevent the consumption of these mind altering and murderous drugs.

They will automatically be against the DARE program and claim that the last twenty years and the millions of dollars which have been put into the program, was a waste since the DARE program is fighting a war which cannot ever be won or should not ever be won, or they just simply have not produced the promised results which society had expected would have become a reality by now. There is another segment of the population which illegal drugs for what they are: blight on the health and well being of society and one of the most dangerous forces for evil in the country today.

Therefore, every effort should be made to criminalize the illegal use of drugs as much as possible as well as preventative measures be put in place, such as the complete closing of the borders and an even greater emphasis of the DARE program and other programs of its kind so that America can finally claim to have won the war on drugs. However, the latter will never become a complete reality as there will always be illegal drug use in the country by people who are oblivious to its dangers and powerless to the temptations and allure which illegal drugs has within their own mind.

However, this does not and should not impede the efforts of those organizations which seek to eradicate the harmful effects of illegal drugs on this nation. The question therefore is: Has the DARE program over the last five years been successful and worth the taxpayers' money to be implemented in our nation's schools? There has no doubt, been a great deal of money spent on the DARE program. Any program in which nearly every

child across the nation witness to for the last twenty years, such programs cost a great deal of money.

Some school districts, although no friend to the use of illegal drugs by their students, have come to the conclusion that such money could be put to better use in other areas of the school district. They do not criticize the efforts and motivation of the DARE program. They just believe that the DARE program has not lived up to the expectations that they have put forth at the initial implementation of the program or the expectations that each separate school district had concerning the eradication of illegal drugs from their schools.

Therefore, it would behoove the general public to take a critical look at the DARE program and whether or not the program has been a success by anyone's expectation. Success is a general term which can be imposed on a variety of different subjects. Is the DARE program successful if it has decreased the percentage of drug use by our nation's children by 10%? Would it be successful if it has saved hundreds of lives over the past twenty years despite record high drug use in the country?

What makes the DARE program successful or unsuccessful? In part, even those stubborn holdouts who still believe in absolute truths and will not be swayed by the relativism and humanism which is growing in this country, have to accept the fact that in part, the success or failure of such a large organization as the DARE program, coupled with the fact that it has been in existence for over twenty years, is relative. Some will say, partially motivated by their background, will say that it is a success and others will say that it is not.

An unbiased and critical look at the DARE program over the last five years is warranted in order for those who care about the future of the nation's children, regardless of whether or not one has children of their own, is being protected by the DARE program. If they have proven to be unsuccessful by a majority of the people, then a new program, with many of the same motivations, needs to be quickly and successfully put into place. In first deciding whether or not the DARE program has been a success, one must first know the specifics about the DARE program on a general level.

The DARE program is not only in the United States but in the UK and Ireland as well as forty countries around the world. (www.dare.uk.com) DARE America is the main resource for schools in which officers provide training and comes to the schools in order to support the development of the DARE curriculum in our nation's schools. This is done through education materials, educational videos, interaction with the police by students as well as promoting community awareness as to the dangers of illegal drug use.

Its main focus is to keep kids off of drugs as the prevention of drug use by children, when implemented, is so much more effective than being forced to deal with the problem once it begins. It is to the advantage of the children, their families, the society in which they live as well as the police officers, who in the country's largest cities, report that more than 30% of the domestic calls that they receive, illegal drugs, including the illegal consumption of alcohol by minors is somehow involved. (Gormon, 2003 pg. 143)

Police officers from the community in which the school resides and the children live, will be called into the classroom to talk to students, one on one about the effects of drug use. This includes what they can expect to be done

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to their body if continued drug use, or even a single instance in which they consume one of the harder drugs, cocaine, heroin, etc.. and the possibility of even dying from a single instance of poor judgment.

In order to do this, sometimes the police officers might be compelled to give graphic stories and images of those who used drugs and the results which soon followed. This can include death from drinking and driving as well as what effects drug use has on the body. An age progression chart of an individual who is addicted to Meth is one of the more effective tools for which police officers use in order to dissuade children from partaking in what has now become, the most popular illegal drug in the country today.

“ At a time when teenagers are self consciousness about their physical appearance, images of individuals who are less than ten years older than them, but which look as old as their parents; decaying teeth, sunken eyes and the loss of color in their skin, often times results in the images being forever burnt into their eyes and their memory. We have concluded that such images, although graphic, are effective tools. ” (Manos, 2006 pg. 12)

Despite criticism from parents and other school officials which say that such images are not age appropriate for children of such a young age as eleven or twelve, DARE officials believe that the use of scare tactics can be useful in helping to get their message across to children; a segment of the population which is known for an apathy towards self destruction until something tragic actually happens to them. A feeling of invincibility seems to prevail more often than not with teenagers and irresponsible behavior is often to follow.

The DARE program has within its curriculum, seventeen steps which are usually discussed in seventeen separate sessions or weeks. The first three steps deal with an introduction of the police officers as well as the name and misuse of some of the nation's most common illegal drugs at that time. Due to time restraints, which is one of the criticisms of the DARE program, in depth analysis and discussion of the drugs are only reserved for those which are popular at the time. In the 1980's the popular drug of choice was Cocaine and Heroin.

Today, the most popular drug, by far, is Meth as it is very cheap to manufacture and is gaining a strong hold in the rural areas all across the country. It is the most commonly used drug by America's teenagers today. It has also been a criticism of the DARE program that a more current approach to the dangers of drug abuse be implemented. Not only does not need to think like a teenager in order to communicate effectively with teenagers, being up to date on the drugs which are "in vogue" that year is also helpful.

Elaine Clay, an eleventh grader at Thorton Fractional South in Suburban Chicago stated: " My friends and I were most effected by the drug ecstasy but the police officer kept talking about drugs that I had never heard of. I didn't get much out of the experience to tell you the truth. " (Manos, 2006 pg. 28) Step four deals the consequences of using drugs such as alcohol and marijuana. On the surface, these drugs seem to be the least harmful compared to the more potent drugs of heroin and cocaine.

The previously mentioned drugs are more potent but as the use of alcohol and marijuana are used to such a greater degree, it is these drugs which DARE officials believe to be the most dangerous. " There are more than 400,
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000 alcohol related deaths in the United States every year. Almost 20% of those are from individuals who are under the age of 21 and the majority of those deaths are accident related and therefore avoidable. ” And 43, 000 are from teenagers who drink and drive. (Phillips, 2004 pg. 19)

The next step deals with the advice of peer pressure when one decides to give into what one’s friends are doing. As it relates to drug use, peer pressure is one of the most potent disadvantages that one’s friends has over the police or any other authority figure. Being able to identify the different forms of peer pressure and refusal strategies when the individual is presented with such situations, it is believed, will help the teenager to refuse the offer to partake in the illegal drugs.

The next step, despite the criticism of those who feel that the DARE program is ineffective because of this reason: a lack of self esteem, the DARE officials stress the importance of self esteem and in asserting oneself enough not to partake in the consumption of illegal drugs. One of the critics made against DARE from such sources as the University of Chicago as well as former administrators in the DARE program upon its inception over twenty years ago is the lack of attention that is given to self esteem issues which promote illegal drug use in the first place.

According to psychologist Herman Weber: “ Giving into peer pressure from a lack of self esteem is one of the most common reasons why one will first experiment with illegal drugs. One is the result of the other. ” (Phillips. 2004 pg. 20) There is the belief that the DAREW program does not adequately stress the importance of self esteem as a key aspect in the refusal of drugs when first offered. “ The DARE program does not spend adequate time on <https://assignbuster.com/dare-program/>

the subject and those who teach it, are not educated enough in the field of psychology and the other social sciences in order to effectively deal with the problem in the first place.

It should be likened to a doctor who cannot identify the cause of a patient's massive headaches and only continues to prescribe Tylenol. The underlying cause of the problem is only masked but is never identified and therefore, is never cured. The man will continue to have headaches and those with self esteem issues who submit to peer pressure at a higher rate, drug use will follow. The next step is to recognize the media influences that seem to glorify the drug culture and do not show the real consequences of taking drugs. This is a topic which the faculty at DARE is up against a stiff challenge.

As more and more students come home to an empty home; void of adult supervision and lacking the element of self discipline, many teenagers are watching an average of six to eight hours of television a day. This is alarming when drug culture which is glorified on television has the attention of the children for more than forty hours a week and DARE officials have the reluctant attention of the students for only seventeen hours at most, whereas the majority of school districts do not employ DARE for the full seventeen classroom hours.

As a contributing factor, DARE is low on the priority level for many teenagers who are the most at risk of partaking in illegal drugs. Here in lies the problem that modern society is facing today: " Children today have access to a greater degree of technology; from a television set with satellite to the latest IPOD and Internet. How can we expect to be competitive, especially

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when in the homes of the most at risk students, parental involvement is not only non-existent, often times it will be the parents who are reinforcing their negative feelings about the police." (www.dare.com)

In this, failures of the DARE program cannot entirely be left at the feet of the DARE program under its current curriculum. Perhaps however, that is the problem. How can DARE or any anti drug program work and in a sense, deprogram a child who had spent the last few years having his mind saturated with images of drugs and alcohol being perceived in a positive or intriguing way? There are efforts made by DARE, sometimes against the wishes of the parents, to begin the curriculum within the 5th Grade.

This is a step in the right direction but then what happens from Grades 5 until the next time the student receives instruction from a future DARE police officer at Grade 11 or 12? It is highly presumptuous and naive to think that this will have the positive results that all are wanting. The studies have shown that after passing a full DARE curriculum, students do respond in a way that would make the general public react in a positive and hopeful manner as to the success of DARE.

However, most follow up studies show that such feelings quickly fade as there then occurs a steady drop off from the level of police involvement in the student's life. As a result, a subsequent drop off in anti drug sentiment within the student will parallel police involvement as well. The key to learning within the secondary level is the repetitious introduction of interesting material. The message must be repeated and it must be interesting in order to capture the attention of the student. DARE does not

do this and it should be a surprise to nobody that the results will parallel such incomplete training.