

Research Précis

Edition 11 – 2

Fall 2009

Best Practices: Safe and Drug-free Schools and Communities

Creating a better tomorrow...

Title: Across Ages

Overview:

Across Ages is a school- or community-based mentoring program designed to enhance resiliency of children and promote positive development, thus preventing high-risk behaviors such as substance use, sexual activity, or violence.

Target: Children ages 5-14; focused on youth ages 9-13

Extent/Duration of Program: Program lasts 12 months, and consists of various time dedications. Mentors spend two hours per week in one-on-one contact with youth, and family weekend events take place monthly. Youth spend one to two hours per week at community service. The Social Problem Solving Module is composed of 26 weekly lessons, 45 minutes each.

Program Costs:

- Costs for English or Spanish materials include \$75 for development and training manual; \$25 per participant handbook; \$25 for evaluation protocol; \$65 for video "Elders as Mentors," \$25 for guide "Across Ages: An Intergenerational Approach to Prevention."
- Two days pre-service staff training required. Training package of two full days for staff and community partners covering all components is offered for \$2000 plus expenses.

For general information:

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For training information:

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Principles/Approaches/Components: *Across Ages* is based on the premise that increasing youths' knowledge of the consequences of substance use, involving them with family and mentors in monthly activities, helping them learn coping and resistance skills, and allowing them opportunities to be of service to their community will help them avoid later substance use, demonstrate increased commitment to school, improve their sense of social responsibility, and increase their capacity for problem solving. The program consists of numerous components, including weekly adult mentoring (55 years of age and older), community service (biweekly visits to institutionalized elderly), outreach (coordinator to recruit mentors and establish community service opportunities), monthly parent-child-mentor interactions, parent assistance (Handbook for Parents containing resources and information on program components), and skill development (curriculum focus on stress management, self-esteem, problem solving, substance and health information, social networks, and peer-resistance skills).

Evidence-based Effectiveness: The research design was quasi-experimental, but though schools were not selected completely at random, findings were positive. Compared to controls, students participating in the program experienced decreased alcohol and tobacco use. They

also demonstrated improved attitudes and behaviors such as increased knowledge about drugs and negative attitudes toward drug use, increased school attendance, decreased school suspensions, improved grades, improved future outlooks toward school, and improved attitudes toward adults (older adults in particular). Also, notably, the mean number of school absences during the eight years in which data was collected (1991-98) showed a significant decrease among youth in a program with the adult mentorship component.

Safe and Drug-free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) connections:

A.iv - Activities that teach students to recognize social and peer pressure to use drugs illegally and the skills for resisting illegal drug use.

B - Activities that involve families, community sectors, and a variety of drug and violence prevention providers in setting clear expectations against violence and illegal use of drugs and appropriate consequences for violence and illegal use of drugs.

E.x - Counseling, mentoring, referral services, and other student assistance practices and programs, including assistance provided by qualified school-based mental health services providers and the training of teachers by school-based mental health services providers in appropriate identification and intervention techniques for students at risk of violent behavior and illegal use of drugs.

E.xi - Programs that encourage students to seek advice from, and to confide in, a trusted adult regarding concerns about violence and illegal drug use.

E.xix - Community service, including community service performed by expelled students, and service-learning projects.

National Standards connections:

Kindergarten through Grade 8 (Primarily Grades 4 through 7)

Health Education Standard 4 – Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

Health Education Standard 7 – Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.

National Health Education Standards, Second Edition: Achieving Excellence. American Cancer Society, 2007.

Counseling: Personal and Social Development Standard A: Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

ASCA National Standards for Students. American School Counselor Association, 2004.

Recognition and additional reports:

The following organizations/institutions have recognized *Across Ages*. The organizations are in alphabetical order and the recognition status is in parentheses.

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Best Practice Model in Youth Violence Prevention)

Child Welfare League of America (Commendable Practice)

Communities That Care—Developmental Research and Programs (Effective Program)

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Exemplary Program)

SAMHSA (Model Program)

United Nations Office of Drug Control Programs (Model Program)

U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services (Top 25 Youth Development Program)

GENERAL NOTES: The intent of the above synthesis and correlations is to assist teachers and school administrators dedicated to using best practices to reduce violence and substance abuse among students. To our knowledge, the information was current upon publication. However, details pertaining to status of program recognition, research and findings, costs, and contact information are subject to change.

Correlations to the Safe and Drug-free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) federally approved activities and to national education standards have been limited in depth (“standard” level only) and breadth (number of standards and subjects) due to the encompassing nature of many programs that typically qualify as model or exemplary. The correlations listed should not be viewed as exhaustive.

Designed Instruction’s effective SDFS program research series was funded by the United States Department of Education. For information on other effective programs for promoting safe and drug-free schools and communities, visit www.designedinstruction.com/learningleads/effective-sdfs-programs.html

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