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*Drugs in school*  
*We're losing*  
*our minds*

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Justice

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## School Safety

*School Safety* is published by the National School Safety Center to communicate the latest trends and exemplary programs of school safety and delinquency prevention. Publication dates are September (Fall issue), January (Winter issue) and May (Spring issue) to coincide with the academic calendar.

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Prepared under Grant No. 85-MU-CX-0003 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Education or Pepperdine University.

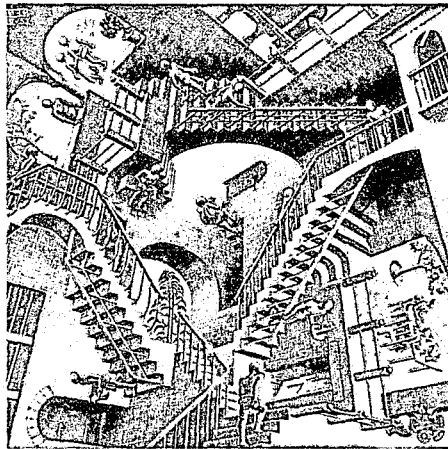
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ACQUISITIONS

# LAPD's Project DARE tells youths to resist drugs

By Daryl F. Gates

***Many students think smoking, drinking and drugs are their passport to adulthood. DARE officers teach being an adult really means making your own decisions and coping with life.***

Adolescent substance abuse is a problem. This fact already is well documented. A Rand Corporation study reports preventive programs are more effective in curbing adolescent drug abuse than law enforcement apprehension efforts or treatment for chronic abusers. Since drug abuse is a two-sided issue, it is clear that the demand for drugs, as well as the supply of those drugs, must be curtailed.

In September 1983, Project Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE), a cooperative effort between the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles Unified School District, was developed to address the demand side of the drug abuse problem. This innovative approach is a preventive program to equip youth with the skills to resist peer pressure to experiment with and use harmful drugs.

It is imperative to reach young people before they become involved with alcohol and drugs. They must realize success and enjoyment are not dependent upon chemical substance. Project DARE targets fifth- and sixth-grade students because they are more susceptible to the pressures to use drugs than the younger students.

In the DARE Program, 18 Los Angeles Police Department officers are assigned full time to a classroom beat. Each officer is assigned to five schools each semester. Officers teach in uniform but are unarmed. All of the officers selected are talented in human relations and communication skills. The

essence of their message is learn to say "No!" and don't feel you have to go along with the crowd.

School district health specialists wrote the curriculum and trained the officers to present the 17 special lessons, which focus on four major areas. They provide accurate information about alcohol and drugs, teach students decision-making skills, show them how to resist peer pressure and give them ideas for alternatives to drug use. DARE instructors use activity-oriented techniques to involve students in group discussions, healthy exchanges of ideas and feelings and role-playing exercises.

Four introductory lessons which are presented in kindergarten through fourth grades set the scene for later DARE instruction. The DARE Program also has been extended to the seventh grades at selected Los Angeles junior high schools.

In the junior highs, school counselors provide early intervention counseling to students with a potential drug or alcohol problem. In addition, counselors coordinate educational and other prevention programs to heighten awareness and knowledge about alcohol and other drug dependencies. These activities include faculty and parent awareness training, grade level and school assemblies, instruction by DARE officers in target classrooms, talkshops, interest groups and alternative activities during the noon break and after school.

DARE counselors, school administrators, nurses, guidance counselors and

*Daryl F. Gates has been chief of police of the Los Angeles Police Department for the past eight years.*

DARE officers conduct and evaluate group discussions on improving student attitudes and behavior. DARE counselors also plan and schedule other informal meetings and activities for students and parents.

DARE is independently evaluated at the conclusion of each semester the program has been operating. Principals, teachers and parents are surveyed and interviewed. Pretests and posttests are completed by random samples of students, including both those who have and have not been taught the DARE curriculum.

Evaluations have been very positive in all instances. DARE has been overwhelmingly accepted and viewed as extremely valuable by school staff at both the elementary and junior high school levels. The pre- and posttests indicate significant student growth from the instruction. In addition, school staff report behavior changes.

Clearly, comments from staff members in previous surveys are echoed by their colleagues in the latest survey who report that after DARE instruction students have more negative attitudes about smoking, drinking and drug use. Students have also increased their levels of self-esteem and are taking more responsibility for their actions. They are able to say "no" to many negative behaviors and express more positive attitudes toward police officers. Many teachers and principals have commented that attendance increases on the days the DARE officer is at the school.

As part of the DARE evaluation



*A DARE officer/instructor explains the meaning of self-esteem. Officers teach in uniform and unarmed.*

activities during the past two years, several teachers and principals stated they believe many students were performing better in school generally as a result of participation in the program. To determine the accuracy of these perceptions, two seventh-grade classes receiving the DARE curriculum were selected randomly from each of five junior high schools participating in DARE, a total sample of 10 classes and 276 students. A comparison was made between the students' academic records for the previous year (1984-85) and the semester they were being taught the DARE curriculum (first semester, 1985).

Three separate grades were examined, including academic grades, work habits and cooperation marks. Student grade point averages (GPAs) were computed on a four-point scale (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1 and F=0). Work habit and cooperation marks were averaged by using a five-point scale: excellent=5, satisfactory=3 and unsatisfactory=1.

This analysis showed that 50 percent of the DARE junior high school students increased their GPA during the semester they were in DARE. Approximately one-third raised it by more than half a grade point, while 12 percent went up by a full grade point or more. In addition, 56 percent increased cooperation marks, and 43 percent improved work habit marks during that period. These findings support teacher and principal perceptions that many DARE students show academic and behavioral improvement although DARE curric-

ulum is not specifically designed for these areas.

Beginning September 1985, a longitudinal evaluation was implemented to complement the on-going process evaluation. A sample of 2,000 DARE students and 2,000 non-DARE students entering the sixth grade will be surveyed over seven years to determine the impact of the program on drug use and attitudes toward drugs. Student records will be examined to determine changes in grades, work habits and cooperation marks, occurrences of school disciplinary incidents and attendance.

Drug and alcohol involvement among young people is linked to failing grades, school dropouts, runaway children, broken families, potential addiction, juvenile crime and even loss of life. The youthful abuser sadly misses out on much of his own childhood and education. Students who do not use drugs are seriously affected by classmates who disrupt learning and destroy friendships.

The traditional scare tactics that preach the harms of drugs are de-emphasized by DARE officers. While today's youth do not want to be told what not to do, they do want to act grown-up. Many of them think smoking, drinking and using exotic drugs are their passport to adulthood. DARE tries to teach students being an adult really means not giving in to peer pressure, making one's own decisions and learning to cope with life's problems in positive ways.

The need for an effective education program to "inoculate" students against the threat of drugs is no longer an issue to be debated. The DARE Program provides "immunization" against drug abuse. The "shot in the arm" is the ability to deal with peer pressure.

If the DARE Program is indeed having the wide-ranging impact on students reported by school personnel who view student behavior on an extended basis, then it is exceeding the expectations of its developers.

*For additional information on how your community can start a DARE Program, please contact: Los Angeles Police Department, Juvenile Division - DARE, 150 North Los Angeles Street, Los Angeles, California 90012.* □

The glitter and glamour of life in the fast lane - expensive cars, designer clothes and beautiful women - all are part of the dangerously alluring image of drugs portrayed in the popular television show "Miami Vice."

Friday nights for the past couple of years millions of viewers throughout America have tuned in to see Crockett and Tubbs fighting the evil that runs rampant in the hedonistic drug culture of Miami.

But the dynamically dressed duo can't do it all alone. They are, after all, only actors who, along with the show's producers, directors and writers, are in the business of entertainment. That's where Commander Nelson Oramas of Florida's Metro Dade Police Department comes in.

Oramas, with the law agency's Public Affairs Department, is technical advisor for "Miami Vice" and makes the show as accurate and authentic as possible.

During a recent interview with *School Safety*, Oramas talked about the show and the drug problem that has spread throughout the nation.

Stressing he is not a "drug expert," Oramas does agree there is cause for concern in regards to drugs in American schools. "It is apparent our biggest problem is how readily available drugs are at the school level," he says.

Miami has long been a favorite entry point for illegal drugs. While law enforcement agents seized some 25 tons of cocaine in south Florida in 1985, it is estimated that between 80 to 90 percent of America's cocaine supply still comes through Miami from various Latin American countries. The federal Drug Enforcement Administration estimates Americans used between 61 and 84 tons of cocaine in 1984.

"Unfortunately, Miami is the focus of cocaine trafficking because of its location, being so accessible to South America," says Oramas.

A 12-year veteran of police work,

*Interviewed by Blanca Gonzalez,  
resource specialist for NSSC.*

## Drugs: TV's new 'Vice'

the police force commander believes the drug problem is accurately portrayed on "Miami Vice" and on television in general. "Miami Vice" realistically portrays the effects of drug problems especially because it includes the peripheral effects which can be devastating, such as the loss of family and friends."

While Oramas admits the show definitely has a very "upscale look" with designer clothes, fast cars and fast women, he points out that negative consequences of the bad guys' actions are also emphasized on the show.

Oramas says producers' concerns about the influence the show may



have on young viewers is clearly apparent. "We always get the bad guy. It's not too hard to tell the good guys from the bad guys . . . it's real obvious," says Oramas, adding that "Miami Vice" provides "positive reinforcement" because it shows that negative actions result in a negative outcome.

"Crime doesn't pay, we've seen it time and time again," says Oramas. "There was the episode where the bad guy is shot on the courthouse steps by the wife he abused. Other guys get killed or sent to prison."

While television has a responsibility to both young viewers and the general public, Oramas stresses there must also be a responsibility on the part of parents. "Parents should

emphasize the positive aspects of 'Miami Vice' as well as other shows. They can stress the morals and messages."

"During the commercial the parent can ask, 'Did you see what happened to the girl when she took the drugs? She thought she was going to get a lot of money, but look what happened . . . !' It's almost like spoon-feeding them," says Oramas.

The show has gotten a lot of positive mail and feedback from law enforcement, according to Oramas, who admits "Miami Vice" writers do use "poetic license" on the show. But, he says, "that works better for us because we always get the bad guy.

"They're not trying to recreate real-life, they're trying to create drama," Oramas says of those involved with the show. "Miami Vice' is entertainment first of all."

However, efforts are made to make sure the show is technically accurate. "I help develop storylines and help fine tune scripts by reviewing them for accuracy and authenticity," says Oramas, who offers advice on technical language used and the handling of firearms. Sergeant Robert Hoelscher, a Metro Dade master firearms instructor, also works as an advisor in selecting the appropriate weapons for various situations on the show.

Oramas says the specific focus of the show may present a problem in that it limits the possible realistic storylines. "After all, the gist of vice work is narcotics and prostitution." For this reason, the theme, "narcotics is the root of all evil," often seems overemphasized in "Miami Vice."

"Unfortunately, it is kind of a parallel of life," according to Oramas. "Most of all crime can be related to drugs. It's all interwoven in the storyline of real life."

It is highly unlikely that drug trafficking ever will be completely eliminated. However, as long as Crockett and Tubbs do their job, with the help of Metro Dade Police, justice will prevail - at least on Friday nights. □