1. WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE?

Underlying this paper is my assumption that the most serious obstacle to an effective safe and drug-free schools program is not money or even research but adequate conceptualization of the causes of school violence and of high levels of illegal substance use among public secondary school students. What I will do is to set forth my own conceptualization of these problems, which then leads to suggested remedies. I understand that research is needed both to test my theoretical assumptions and the usefulness of my suggested remedies. Specifically, I believe that two factors underlie school violence, both everyday school violence and the catastrophic violence such as that which recently erupted in Littleton, Colorado: trapped students and a paucity of adult guardians. I believe that a third factor is needed to explain widespread substance use and abuse by secondary school students: the existence of multiple curricula in American secondary schools from which students learn, including the official curriculum but not limited to it.

**Trapped students.** In all the commentary on the murders at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, an obvious question has gone unraised: Why, if Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were miserable at school, didn’t they simply drop out and get jobs? Why did they feel trapped? The answer is apparently that the social stigma of dropping out of high school is so great in middle-class suburbs that it is unthinkable.

Because Americans regard dropping out as a terrible mistake -- for good reason in an information-oriented society -- all states have compulsory-attendance laws forbidding students from dropping out until they turn 16 and sometimes until they turn 18 or even older. States have also imposed penalties on dropouts and their families, including
reduced welfare benefits. West Virginia began in 1988 to revoke the driver’s licenses of minors who drop out of school, and other states followed suit, even though research demonstrated that this approach had a negligible effect on the dropout rate in West Virginia (Toby and Armor, 1992). Most important of all, suburban culture defines dropping out as illegitimate, thereby trapping youngsters like Harris and Klebold even though they were old enough to leave.

A good case can be made for coercing kids to attend high school in a modern society. However, the downside is that some kids are miserable in school, usually for academic reasons, but sometimes, as in Columbine High School, for social and/or personal reasons. Kids in inner-city high schools are more likely than kids in middle-class suburbs to find school unpleasant because they are often not engaged academically, sometimes when schoolwork does not enjoy sufficient parental or peer group support, sometimes due to individual circumstances that interfere with acquiring academic skills. Whatever the reason, if students fail to learn what the school tries to teach them, they have poor chances to go to college and prepare for a well-paid, interesting job, and they usually know it. They can and do drop out. But they too are under pressure to remain enrolled whether they find school meaningful or not: formal pressure from compulsory attendance laws and informal dropout-prevention arguments from teachers, parents, and the larger society.

Thus, inner-city and suburban schools both contain trapped kids. In inner-city high schools the main consequence of containing a substantial population of involuntary students who lack a stake in behavioral conformity (Toby, 1957) is to undermine the educational process. Because so many students do not perceive school as contributing to their futures, even those who do not drop out have little incentive to be respectful to their teachers or to try to please them. There are further consequences. They cope with being compelled to spend a good part of their time in an environment they dislike by various coping mechanisms. Some truant. Some clown around for the amusement of their friends and themselves. Some come to school drunk or high on illegal drugs. Some wander the halls looking for friends to speak with or enemies to fight. Some assault other kids or extort money
or valuables from them, partly for profit but also for kicks. Some simply turn off.

Unlike a prison, where a prisoner has to participate in the program willy-nilly, education in any meaningful sense depends on a cooperative relationship between teacher and student, not on the occasional presence of an enrolled student in a classroom. Professors Lawrence Steinberg of Temple University, Bradford Brown of the University of Wisconsin, and Sandford Dornbusch of Stanford University conducted a massive study of 12,000 students in nine high schools in Wisconsin and Northern California from 1987 to 1990. They concluded that about 40% of the students in these diverse educational settings (middle-class suburban schools, rural schools, and inner-city schools) were “disengaged” from the educational enterprise. Here is how Professor Steinberg put it in his book *Beyond the Classroom*:

Disengaged students . . . do only as much as it takes to avoid getting into trouble. They do not exert much effort in the classroom, are easily distracted during class, and expend little energy on in-school or out-of-school assignments. They have a jaded, often cavalier attitude toward education and its importance to their future success or personal development. When disengaged students are in school, they are clearly just going through the motions. When they are not in school, school is the last thing on their mind (Steinberg, 1996, p. 15).

The national trend toward raising the age of compulsory attendance from 16 to 18 worsens rather than improves high school education and inevitably contributes to discipline problems, including the likelihood of catastrophic violence such as occurred at Columbine High School. A half a dozen years ago the District of Columbia raised the age from 16 to 18, after which its schools went downhill faster (Toby, 1995). Even if such legal requirements could guarantee the physical presence of alienated students in school, they cannot force students to learn. Disengaged students not only threaten the educational process directly by not putting forth effort; they also threaten it indirectly by undermining the morale of teachers.
Weak Adult Guardians. One consequence of having disengaged students still enrolled in high schools but making no effort to learn anything is that teachers get discouraged. It is difficult to teach a lesson that depends on material taught yesterday or last week when appreciable number of students are not in class regularly or fail to pay attention when they do come. Eventually, these circumstances lead some teachers to "burn out" that is, to despair at the seemingly hopeless task of stuffing ideas into the heads of uninterested students (Dworkin, 1987). Burnout is an especially serious problem in inner-city secondary schools where large numbers of teachers retire early, change to another profession, or take jobs in private or parochial schools at a cut in pay. Thus, teacher turnover rates are high in inner-city schools with substantial proportions of internal dropouts ("stayins") who do the educational process no favor (Toby, 1989). New York City, for example, constantly has to hire new teachers (or substitute teachers) to replenish those who abandon their jobs. Of course some public school teachers hold on grimly, taking as many days off as they are entitled to, including not only genuine sick days but "sick" days in which to escape temporarily from demoralization (known to colleagues as "mental health days"). But burned-out teachers lose effectiveness at teaching those in their classes amenable to education; that probably is part of the explanation of the greater satisfaction of students and their parents with charter schools and with private and parochial schools available through voucher programs as compared with public schools (Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore, 1982; Coleman and Hoffer, 1987; Peterson and Hassel, 1998).

Burned-out teachers are also ineffective at preventing student misbehavior. The public thinks of teachers primarily as educators, not as agents of control. Teachers themselves tend to downplay their disciplinary role. Some object to hall or cafeteria duty on the grounds that they are not policemen. If pressed, however, teachers will agree that control of the class is a prerequisite for education.

Whatever the reasons for the reluctance of individual teachers to admonish misbehaving students, partly out of fear for their own safety, partly out of the desire to be popular, this reluctance implies at least
partial abandonment of their disciplinary role. When teachers see student misbehavior and turn away to avoid the necessity of a confrontation, adult control over students diminishes at school, thereby encouraging student misbehavior that might otherwise not otherwise occur. In short, teachers’ reluctance to admonish misbehaving students may be partly the cause of the high level of disorder in some schools as well as its effect. The formal controls that have developed in big-city schools are a partial result of the breakdown of informal social controls over students, such as the expression of teacher approval or disapproval. Informal controls still work quite well in the smaller schools of smaller communities.

Instead of the natural peacekeepers, teachers, preventing disorder and even violence from breaking out, many school systems resort to security guards, and some schools also have metal detectors to screen for knives and guns. As of several years ago, the District of Columbia school system employed 250 security officers -- along with metal detectors in place in 31 schools. New York City employs 3,200 security officers, as well as metal detectors. Security guards and metal detectors are useful for inner-city schools that need protection against invading predators from surrounding violent neighborhoods and to break up fights that teachers are afraid to tackle. But security programs cannot be the main instrument for preventing student misbehavior in public secondary schools because security guards are not ordinarily in classrooms where teachers are alone with their students. Furthermore, there are never enough security guards to maintain order in hallways or gyms or cafeterias or to prevent assaults or robberies by their mere presence. Thus, in January, 1992, while Mayor Dinkins was at Thomas Jefferson High School in Brooklyn, New York, to deliver a speech, accompanied by bodyguards and security guards, two students were fatally shot by an angry fifteen-year-old classmate (Toby, 1992). In short, security guards constitute a second line of defense; they cannot by themselves provide a disciplined environment within which the educational process can proceed effectively.

The Multiplicity of Curricula. Trapped students and a paucity of effective adult guardians help to explain why everyday school violence
is so difficult to control in public secondary schools in the United States. But there is a third factor: the official curriculum sponsored by boards of education, principals, and teachers does not enjoy a curriculum monopoly. This reality was brought home to me some years ago, when interviewing a young inmate in a New Jersey reformatory. I asked Joe about his school experiences. “I liked school,” he said. I was surprised. Most of the delinquents I had known hated school and did poorly in their schoolwork. “What did you like about it?” I asked. He told me about sitting in the lunchroom with his gang and having food fights, about “making out” in the halls with his girlfriends, about smoking in the boys’ room, about harassing a young, inexperienced teacher so much that she left teaching the following year. “What about your classes?” I asked. “Did you like them?” “Yeah,” he replied, “I liked gym.” I persisted. Did he like English, math, or anything else in the curriculum? “No,” he replied, smiling. “They weren’t in my curriculum.”

I had naively assumed that the curriculum of a high school is what boards of education, principals, and teachers say it is. But a large public high school is not only an educational opportunity; for students without academic interests it is more like a bazaar. It is a place where a multiplicity of activities are available for students interested in them: Calculus, history, and geography are offered as part of the official curriculum, but so is football, basketball, the student newspaper, chess, romance, sex, extortion from fellow students, and opportunities to make teachers’ lives as difficult as possible. Because of the size and heterogeneity of most public high schools, all of the students do not share a common definition of the situation in which they find themselves. For some students, the education that students take advantage of may be quite different from that envisioned in the formal curriculum. Students learn at school lessons that teachers do not teach them.

The term, “extracurricular,” presupposes that the clubs and the sports that students pursue supplement rather than displace the paramount academic pursuits of enrolled students. And that is true for most students, especially those who anticipate applying to college and
desire extracurricular interests on their records to show that they are well-rounded persons. But for some students the extracurricular activities take the place of the academic curriculum; the football or basketball player who has no interest in academic subjects is the usual example, but interests in drama or the chorus or the newspaper can also come at the expense of academic achievement. But at least these activities are recognized as legitimate by school authorities. There are, however, other offerings that are by no stretch of the imagination legitimate.

Certainly no school would say that armed robbery is a curriculum offering in its school. But insofar as there is a tradition of predatory extortion by gangs or cliques against weak and fearful schoolmates, some students rehearse the process of preying on their fellows until they become quite skillful at it. In effect, they learn to rob at school. Alcohol and drugs constitute another illegitimate curriculum among the many that compete for student attention. Student interest in drugs and alcohol feeds a counterculture hostile to academic effort, which in turn undermines the authority of teachers and reduces their ability to control student misbehavior.

An obvious question is: why are some youngsters attracted to the alcohol and drug curriculum while others are not? Why aren’t all students attracted to it? Since it is an underground curriculum opposed to the official academic curriculum and even to approved extra-curricular activities, alcohol and drugs start with an aroma of forbidden pleasure. Furthermore, alcohol and drugs are symbolically associated with adulthood, and children desire the higher prestige of adult status. As one sociologist put it before drugs became so pervasive in American society, smoking cigarettes, drinking alcoholic beverages, and dating are ways that children can claim adult prerogatives (Stinchcombe, 1968). He would probably agree that “doing” drugs is symbolically adult behavior too. Then there are whatever pleasant sensations the drugs afford. And if these attractions are not enough, the hard drugs like cocaine and heroin can provide self-medication for problems, and problems are universal among adolescents.
In the light of these attractions, why do most students resist them? For several reasons. Most important, students effectively controlled by conventional parents, religious organizations, and teachers accept a negative conception of the drug curriculum. Drug use is dangerous and morally undesirable. Perhaps students experiment furtively with drugs to find out what everyone is talking about, but they do not intend getting permanently involved. Of course, experiments sometimes go awry, and there are cases of essentially conventional kids who get hooked.

A second reason for resisting the attractions of the drug curriculum is that some students, perhaps a quarter of the high school student enrollment, in some high schools more, in some high schools less, perceive themselves and are perceived by others as academic successes. They receive good grades, are enrolled in the college preparatory and advanced placement courses, expect to go to college, and anticipate riding an educational escalator into a bright occupational future. For them, participating in the drug curriculum is incompatible with satisfying life goals; they have too much at stake.

An anonymous survey of 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students in about 40 New Jersey public schools has been conducted at three-year intervals (1980, 1983, 1986, 1989, 1992, 1995, and 1998) in order to assess substance use and abuse among high school students in the State. The following are two of the 143 questions in the 1995 survey:

4. What grades do you usually get?
   A. Mostly A’s
   B. Mostly B’s
   C. Mostly C’s
   D. Mostly D’s
   E. Mostly F’s

5. Which of the following do you intend to do first after you finish high school?
   A. Attend a two-year college
   B. Attend a four-year college
C. Obtain technical or job-related training
D. Take a job without further training
E. Join the armed forces
F. Other
G. Don’t know

In Appendix A I include three tables based on the 1995 survey, which is the latest for which data are readily accessible, in order to document the relationship between substance use and educational achievement (Fisher, 1996). Table 1 provides some academic information needed to understand who uses illicit substances and why. About two-thirds of the students surveyed said that they wanted to attend four-year colleges, and 80% of them received mostly grades of B or better. On the other hand, a majority of the students not planning to attend four-year colleges received mostly Cs, Ds, and Fs. Table 2 shows the substance-use patterns of students planning to attend four-year colleges and Table 3 shows the substance-use patterns of students not planning to attend four-year colleges (only a third of the sample) over the past year. Generally, students planning to attend four-year colleges used less of the illegal substances than students not planning to attend four-year colleges except for alcohol, which a majority of all students said they used over the past year. However, the difference was most dramatic for the students who not only planned to attend four-year colleges but who received mostly A grades. They used such substances less than half as often as even the A students not planning to attend four-year colleges.

Finally, a third reason for resisting the attractions of the drug curriculum is fear: fear of suspension or expulsion from school, fear of arrest, fear of parental disapproval -- if parents learn about drug activities. The fourth and fifth reasons may mutually reinforce one another. The school’s willingness to invoke severe formal sanctions is in itself a message that drug behavior is illegitimate and reprehensible.

Still, a residual category exists of students not deflected away from alcohol or drugs by these considerations -- or others. They are
not controlled well by parents, teachers, and church leaders; their degree of educational success has not been sufficient to give them a strong stake in conforming behavior; they are involved with peers and responsive to peer influences; they do not fear formal sanctions, perhaps because they do not expect to be caught; and they do not have enough loyalty to the school to be concerned that for many fellow students drug use at school is unthinkable. No one knows for sure what proportion of students are in this residual category of potential customers for the drug curriculum. Probably the proportion varies from school to school and for certain demographic categories. It is probably higher for male students than for female students and for students from highly urbanized than from suburban or rural areas, although some middle-class suburban high schools have major substance-abuse problems.
2. HOW CAN SCHOOLS BECOME SAFER AND LESS VULNERABLE TO VIOLENCE AND TO A SUBSTANCE-ABUSE CURRICULUM?

Given my diagnosis of the causes of unsafe high schools with substantial substance-abuse problems, the remedies that I would suggest are three: (1) give high-school-age youngsters a choice between attending high school and dropping out with an option to return later, (2) devise ways to introduce adult guardians into high schools to buttress the authority of teachers, and (3) crowd out the substance-abuse curriculum by increasing the vitality and attractiveness of the traditional academic curriculum.

LEGITIMATING DROPPING OUT AS AN INTERRUPTION OF EDUCATION

Schools vary in the proportion of students who do homework, attend regularly, are concerned about getting good grades, and work part-time after school to save money for post-secondary education and of students drifting aimlessly in school and looking for new excitement. This issue is particularly acute in some inner-city high schools where the educational process is jeopardized by large numbers of stay-ins. Nearly two decades ago national attention was drawn to Eastside High School in Paterson, New Jersey, where a new principal tried to force out stay-ins in order to make his school safe for education and free of substance abuse. When Joe Clark became principal in 1982, he expelled 300 of the 3,000 students at Eastside in an effort to gain control of the school (Rimer, 1988). At the time few objections were heard about “due process,” perhaps because the school was described by journalists as “a cauldron of terror and violence” and desperate measures were thought to be necessary. But in December, 1987, Mr. Clark threw out 60 students, eighteen years and older, who he said had failed too many courses and had not been attending classes or accumulating credits toward graduation in a timely fashion. He described them as “leeches, miscreants, and hoodlums.” What Joe Clark did in a heavy-handed way was to get rid of some of the disrupters. He was interested in whether throwing them out was beneficial to the educational process in his school. Other people
were worried about what would happen to those they described as “pushouts” when they hit the streets without an education.

The Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Frank Napier, supported Mr. Clark, but the Board of Education did not. And the law gives the Board, not the principal, the authority to expel students. The controversy over expulsions at Eastside -- and the possibility that the Board would force Mr. Clark to take back the students or fire him for insubordination -- became a national issue. Secretary of Education Bennett spoke out in support of Clark. The student body generally supported him too; individual students said that Clark believed them capable of achieving academically. But Clark was eventually forced out.

One issue that appears to have been involved is whether a tough principal would be allowed to determine the educational climate of his school. Here is how one reader of the New York Times put it in a letter to the editor:

Do you really think that the only way a student can drop out of high school is to stop attending (“Student Discipline, Principal Discipline,” editorial, Jan. 16)?

Joe Clark, principal of Eastside High School in Paterson, N.J. is in trouble with his Board of Education for expelling failing students, but those students became dropouts a long time ago. Their continued attendance might have been an attempt to avoid the stigma of the label. To continue this deception benefits no one and risks further injury to the nonperforming student and the rest of the student body.

The dropouts need to get on with their lives, and the school needs to get on with the business of schooling. I know: I was a high school dropout. When I had to repeat my last term and found myself doing less and less, I just stopped going. But I had dropped out at least a year earlier.

I got a job (several actually), was drafted and grew up. In the service, I passed my qualifying tests and, after discharge, received my high school equivalency diploma.

Some students will learn despite the school, and some will drop out of the best schools. The important thing is the school’s impact on the borderline students, those that will either graduate or drop out. For them, the example of older nonperforming students can be decisive. Had I been exposed to a school such as Joe Clark is attempting to create, I might have graduated (Illiano, 1988).
Mr. Illiano may not be correct that a school requirement for high school students that they either make academic progress or leave is in the long-run interests of most non-performing students. Suppose, for example, that students forced out of high school by principals like Mr. Clark are more likely to become drug abusers than if they had been allowed to vegetate in the school. (We don’t have research findings that provide a basis for prediction.) But Mr. Illiano seems to be on stronger ground when he speaks about the impact on “borderline” students. When Mr. Clark expelled nonperforming troublemakers, he decreased their visibility as role models and simultaneously increased the visibility of more positive role models. This may be particularly crucial in an inner-city school where students interested in drugs may be as common as students interested in college.

The issue is a more general one. If American society is serious about high school education, keeping kids enrolled who have no interest in learning anything except how to torment teachers and who prevent other students from learning seems counterproductive. On the other hand, what should be done with such youngsters? If high schools were made voluntary and students were asked to justify by studious behavior the public expense of providing teachers and facilities for them, most students would continue to attend school as they do now. Students who must prove that they are learning something in order to take advantage of a free education will attend more regularly, pay more attention in class, and do more homework. They will also be more respectful to their teachers and more concerned with earning good grades. But the small minority of high school students who do not realize that schools are educational institutions, not recreation centers, would have to choose between getting an education and leaving school until they are ready to take learning seriously, although society should try to keep their educational options open by providing alternative learning settings for dropouts in the community or the workplace.

Enacting laws that make attendance at public high schools voluntary, as it is in Japan, should also be accompanied by strenuous efforts to motivate students to attend in their own self-interest. This done, teachers will have more enthusiasm for teaching and will be less
afraid to confront misbehaving students. Such a willingness on the part of teachers and will nip in the bud some of the everyday school violence that disorder encourages.

What about junior high schools and intermediate schools? The higher academic and behavioral standards that voluntary enrollment will make possible in high schools will eventually have a beneficial effect on lower secondary schools. Once all high schools have become voluntary, the other side of the coin is that students must meet their standards in order to be accepted and to remain enrolled. Junior-high-school students would face the problem of getting accepted at the high school of their choice (as they face it now in Japan). Teachers would be able to say to junior high school students, "If you do not learn what you are supposed to learn in junior high school, you will cut yourself off from later educational opportunities." This will decrease, although not eliminate discipline problems from junior high schools. The Japanese experience is instructive. Although Japanese junior high schools have more school violence than Japanese senior high schools, most Japanese junior high school students are too busy preparing for the examinations for high school admission to engage in disciplinary infractions.

If high school attendance was made voluntary in some individual states of the United States, even if only as an experiment, academic achievement would increase and everyday school violence would decrease in American high schools, but the improvement would be most marked in inner-city high schools where the proportion of academically engaged students is currently lowest.

INTRODUCING ADULT SUPPORTERS OF TEACHERS INTO HIGH SCHOOLS

There are already hints of the usefulness of increasing the presence of conventional adults in high schools. For example, Chicago’s DuSable High School, an all-black school close to a notorious public housing project, demonstrated the practicality of offering the opportunity for repentant dropouts from the neighborhood to enroll as regular students (Wilkerson, 1993). A 39-year-old father of six children, a 29-year-old mother of a 14-year-old freshman at DuSable, a
39-year-old mother of five children hungered for a second chance at a high school education. They accepted the school district’s invitation to return to DuSable High School because they had come to believe that dropping out a decade or two earlier had been a terrible mistake. Some of these adult students were embarrassed to meet their children in the hallways; some of their children were embarrassed that their parents were schoolmates; some of the teachers at the high school were initially skeptical about mixing teenagers and adults in classes. But everyone agreed that the adult students took education seriously, worked harder than the teenage students, and set a good example.

These adult students were not in school to bolster the authority of teachers. That was just a byproduct of their presence. Apparently, it is harder to cut classes or skip school altogether when your mother or even your neighbor is a fellow student. For instance, the principal at DuSable High School observed one mother marching her son off to gym class, which he had intended to cut. Most school systems shunt adult students into special adult school programs or G.E.D. classes, partly because work or child-care responsibilities make it difficult for the late awokens to the value of education to come during the normal school day. But especially in inner-city high schools, much can be gained by encouraging even a handful of adult dropouts to return to regular high school classes. Teachers who have a serious adult student or two in their classes are not alone with a horde of teenagers. They have moral support for the academic enterprise.

The notion of introducing conventional adults into public schools in supportive roles has many precedents: graders to assist teachers in providing feedback on homework, mentors, tutors, crossing guards, volunteer or paid teacher-aides in the lower grades. Why am I touting adult as students as a more promising approach? True, I do not have research evidence in support of my suggestion, but, on the other hand, research evidence for the beneficial consequences of adults in these other roles is weak or non-existent. I recommend bringing adults into classes as students because I find it plausible to believe that they would influence youngsters in their classes by what they do and how they behave rather than the usual relationship between adults and
children, where adults are telling children what children ought to do. Of course, the effectiveness of this hypothesis should be tested systematically; the question is whether it is theoretically compelling enough to be worth testing.

Experienced educational administrators have pointed out that school bureaucracies fear that allowing parents in classrooms on a regular basis might interfere with their prerogatives or prove disruptive or both and that teachers are also wary of parents. Part of the value of research will be to establish whether these anxieties can be quelled by experience with an ongoing adult presence in secondary schools. Even if such a presence would prove very useful, it is conceivable that these fears, rational or irrational, would prove an insurmountable obstacle to the introduction of adult students into classrooms.

CROWDING OUT THE SUBSTANCE-ABUSE CURRICULUM

I assume that American society cannot make the drug curriculum unattractive to all students. (Much of what I will say applies to alcohol as well as to illegal drugs, but alcohol presents a more difficult test of the crowding-out strategy because, being a legal substance for adults, use of alcohol by high school students carries less stigma. Consequently youngsters use it more extensively than they do other substances.) Thus, a substantial minority of students in all schools and a majority in some schools will be attracted to the drug curriculum. The crowding-out strategy assumes that it may be possible to make competing curricula more attractive than they are now and, thereby, to reduce the relative attractiveness of drug involvement.

An obvious possibility is to involve students in activities that drain off energy and time so that the drug curriculum loses out in competition with them. Extracurricular clubs and athletic teams are not designed to compete with drugs intentionally, but, even in the absence of much systematic research, educators fervently believe that they drain off energy and commitment that might otherwise move into substance-abuse or delinquent channels.

An even more attractive possibility for educators is to involve all students -- not just those in college preparatory or honors classes --
in academically demanding activities that would crowd out substance-
abuse or delinquent tendencies. For example, the average number of
hours of homework done by students each week in public high schools in
the United States is much less than the average number of hours of
homework done by private high school students (Coleman, Hoffer, and
Kilgore, 1982: 104). And by comparison with Japanese high school
students, American students do hardly any homework at all (Rohlen,
1983). So there is considerable room for increasing the amount of
homework expected of public high school students. The most important
reason for doing so is academic. Studies have shown a strong
relationship between student achievement and the number of hours a week
students spend on homework (Wahlberg, 1985). But an incidental effect
might well be to reduce drug use.

It should not surprise anyone that students who do more homework,
on the average, than their classmates are less likely to use drugs.
What would be worth knowing, however, is whether increasing requirements
for homework in a school will decrease the likelihood of drug use for
the average student. Conceivably, those students prone to use drugs
will not conform to more demanding academic requirements -- and that
therefore the average amount of homework done in a school could increase
without an effect on drug behavior. On the other hand, it is possible
that most students, including those prone to use drugs, will increase
their academic commitments in response to teacher demands and
concomitantly avoid or at least reduce drug use. This hypothesis needs
to be tested by careful research; the critical question is whether
students who do more homework and get higher grades are detoured away
from drugs or whether students who are into drugs care less about
getting good grades and do less homework.

It is not easy to motivate students to work hard in school.
Nevertheless, it may be easier to motivate students to get more involved
in academic goals than to tackle drug prevention more directly, as I
imply in my analysis of efforts to create "schools without drugs" in
Appendix B. Assigning additional homework is of course worthwhile for
purely academic reasons, but its byproduct might be to deflect interest
away from drugs. How practical this approach would be to drug
prevention is once again an empirical question the answer to which can only be gained by careful research.

Just as requiring more homework may have the incidental effect of competing with the drug curriculum, so may monitoring attendance more carefully and penalizing truancy more effectively. The primary reason for insisting on good attendance is that without regular attendance learning suffers. But if good attendance can be coerced, it also tends to crowd out drug interests.

Part-time student employment can under some circumstances compete with the drug curriculum for student commitment and under other circumstances promote substance abuse. Part-time employment is not always character-building, although "work" has traditionally had that reputation. For example, the large longitudinal study referred to earlier (Steinberg, 1996) found that high school students who worked more than 15 hours a week performed worse academically than students who worked less or not at all. However, a moderate amount of part-time work in high school, as is involved in work-study programs that already exist in many high schools, may enable some students to have a socializing experience: a way to meet conventional people, to learn to subordinate the pleasures of the moment to long-range objectives, and, perhaps most important of all, to obtain a different type of success than the type obtainable by achievement in academic subjects. Furthermore, it makes a great deal of difference whether part-time work is being used to enable a youngster to run a car or to support a taste for drugs or whether part-time work is a chance to save money for a college education. Unfortunately, the Steinberg study did not differentiate the effect of student employment on students who were working to save for college or to contribute support to their families from the effect on students who were working to maximize present consumption. If research can demonstrate that some ways of structuring the part-time work experience are more effective than others at crowding out potential interest in drugs, a program might be developed -- this would require new legislation -- in which state or federal governments matched the earnings being saved for post-secondary education in special bank accounts not subject to income tax until withdrawn. By providing an
incentive to refrain from using for current gratifications at least part of one’s earnings from work, such a program would subtly be teaching an alternative to the hedonism implicit in the drug curriculum.
3. CONCLUSION

At the present time we take “no” for an answer in the inner cities, albeit reluctantly, and have high dropout rates. If we become as successful at dropout prevention in the cities as we have been in middle-class suburbs, the result may be more catastrophic violence such as occurred in Littleton in addition to the everyday low-level violence already endemic in inner-city high schools.

Compatible with this speculation is the consistent gap between the rates of violent student victimizations in public junior and senior high schools. In 1976, when data for the nation-wide Safe Schools study was being collected, the rate of violent victimizations in junior high schools was twice as high as the rate of violent victimizations in senior high schools (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1978, p. B-13). In 1989 and 1995 the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that violent victimizations continued to occur at twice the rate in junior as in senior high schools (Bastian and Taylor, 1991; Chandler et al., 1998, p. 13). A plausible interpretation of this gap is that the lower rate of violent victimizations in the senior high schools is due to the dropping out of the most anti-social kids when they could legally do so because the social pressure to remain until graduation is not as strong as it is in middle-class suburbs like Littleton.

Why not allow youngsters to choose when they wish to pursue education at the high school level (Toby, 1987)? By making high school attendance voluntary, high schools will become safer places in which it is easier to compete with the substance-abuse curriculum of some peer groups. In addition, the increased presence of conventional adults with an obvious commitment to education will demonstrate symbolically that American society is really serious about education, not just about incarcerating teenagers daily in buildings called schools.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Table 1
Post-Secondary Aspirations of New Jersey High School Students, by Self-Reported Grades, 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOAL</th>
<th>Mostly A's</th>
<th>Mostly B's</th>
<th>Mostly C's</th>
<th>Mostly D's and F's</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two Year College</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Year College</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Training</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Only</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>53.0%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>43.0%</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Per Cent Substance Users Among New Jersey High School Students Planning to Attend a Four-year College, by Self-Reported Grades

(Percent Using in the Past Year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Alcohol</th>
<th>Mari-</th>
<th>Hallu-</th>
<th>Cocaine</th>
<th>Amphetamine</th>
<th>Tranquil</th>
<th>Barbiturates</th>
<th>Inhalants</th>
<th>Glue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mostly A’s</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=466</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly B’s</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=958</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly C’s</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=331</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly D’s and</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Unpublished tabulation provided by Dr. Wayne S. Fisher and Christine M. Boyle, New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice from a 1995 survey of the substance use of New Jersey 10th, 11th and 12th graders in public schools.
Table 3
Per Cent Substance Users Among New Jersey High School Students Not Planning to Attend a Four-year College, by Self-Reported Grades

(Percent Using in the Past Year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Mostly A’s</th>
<th>Mostly B’s</th>
<th>Mostly C’s</th>
<th>Mostly D’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana</td>
<td>43.4%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallucinogens</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocaine</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphetamines</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tranquilizers</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbiturates</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhalants</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glue</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=54
N=343
N=430
N=68

Source: Unpublished tabulation provided by Dr. Wayne S. Fisher and Christine M. Boyle, New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice from a 1995 survey of the substance use of New Jersey 10th, 11th and 12th graders in public schools.
Appendix B

AN ANALYSIS OF SOME SCHOOL PROGRAMS TO CURB DRUG USE

On June 9, 1987, Secretary of Education William Bennett testified before the Select Committee on Narcotic Abuse and Control of the House of Representatives during a hearing on "Drug Abuse Prevention in America’s Schools" (Select Committee on Narcotic Abuse and Control, 1987, pp. 41-46). He cited a 1986 publication of the Department of Education, What Works: Schools Without Drugs, as exemplifying effective school anti-drug programs that were based on sound research, and proudly reported that the Department had distributed a million and a half copies of the report to every school in the United States. Furthermore, he wrangled with the Committee about its eagerness to give larger amounts of money for drug prevention in the schools than the Department felt could be spent effectively. My reading of What Works: Schools Without Drugs reinforces my previous impression that the strategies underlying what the Department described as “exemplary programs” were theoretically fuzzy. A better title of the booklet might have been: “Programs that seem to have succeeded but we don’t know exactly why.”

In this appendix to my paper I will show how I arrived at this conclusion. What are the main strategies implicit in programs to prevent or arrest substance abuse among the young? Essentially, there are four:

1. Disseminating scientifically correct information at school about the effects of alcohol and drugs on those who use them. If young people know how bad these effects are and if they are rational, they will avoid such costly missteps.

2. Providing services of various sorts to help youngsters cope better with the psychological problems underlying substance abuse.

3. Preventing young people from gaining ready access to alcohol or drugs, thus precluding abuse regardless of motivation.

4. Threatening legal or informal penalties severe enough so that youngsters will avoid alcohol or drugs for fear of possible
consequences. This category includes threats from the criminal justice system, particularly the police, but also efforts to persuade parents to supervise children more closely and policies of school districts to suspend or expel substance abusers or drug sellers.

Consider the first strategy: disseminating correct information about drugs and alcohol at school. Certainly it is important that young people realize the dangers in alcohol and drug use. However, it is not immediately obvious that schools are needed to deliver this message. After all, the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse are staples of television and film dramas. True, youngsters who report in national surveys greater use of drugs and alcohol are more likely to report lesser awareness of the risks (Johnston, O’Malley, and Bachman, 1986). But this does not mean that they have not been told the risks, only that they do not believe that the risks are great. Some may disbelieve the warnings of parents and teachers on the general principle that those over 30 cannot be trusted to tell the truth. Others -- under the illusion of personal immortality -- may believe that drugs and alcohol pose dangers to others but that they can handle such substances.

And even if information deficits needed to be remedied, are schools likely to be successful in remedying them? Fifty years ago, Professor Robin Williams of Cornell University published a comprehensive survey of the effects of school courses on stereotypes of ethnic and racial minorities (Williams, 1947). He concluded that “the mere giving of objective general information in print or by lecture about a group which is the object of hostility has only a slight effect, or no effect, in reducing hostility -- at least in the short run.” Although the analogy between information about substance abuse and information about minorities is only a rough one, it seems plausible that teachers would face the same problem: alternative sources of information. When the child observes alcohol use in the family and in the peer group, he or she receives a message that may contradict the message being taught in the classroom.
The second strategy, attempting to address the underlying problems to which substance abuse is a response, rests on two dubious assumptions. The first is that drug and alcohol abuse by adolescents is a response to personal problems for the relief of which adolescents adopt self-administered medication. They smoke marihuana, snort cocaine, inject heroin, or are chronically drunk in order to relieve their pain. In short, substance abuse is driven by deep, largely unconscious problems. This assumption is seldom stated explicitly and therefore is not examined in the light of research evidence. What would be necessary to establish (if the unconscious-pain assumption is empirically correct) is that substance abusers had worse personal problems before they began to use drugs or alcohol at all. Once use begins, difficulties of all kinds are likely to result: inability to perform well at school, loss of jobs, conflict with parents, nutritional deficiencies, financial problems. Consequently, what is cause and what effect becomes unclear.

The unconscious-pain assumption is also used to explain adolescent suicide (Toby, 1987a). Those who kill themselves or who attempt to kill themselves are assumed to be suffering more, on the average, than those who do not try to end their problems so dramatically. Despite its surface plausibility, another interpretation of the facts than unconscious pain is possible. Even if those who kill themselves are objectively no worse off, on the average, than those who don’t, they may desire death because subjectively they define suicide as an appropriate solution. One of the founding fathers of sociology, Emile Durkheim, demonstrated that Protestants are more likely to commit suicide than Catholics (Durkheim, 1951). Durkheim did not believe that Protestants led worse lives, on the average, than Catholics. However, the Protestant religious tradition guides suffering individuals in an activistic direction in situations where the Catholic religious tradition counsels resignation. Another way of putting this point is to say that the dependent variable, suicidal behavior, is less strongly related to the independent variable, suffering, than to another independent variable, the individual’s ideas and values.
The same logic applies to substance abuse, and there is some confirmatory statistical data. A generation ago, in a classic study, Professor Robert Bales found that Irish-Americans had high rates of alcohol abuse and Jewish-Americans low rates (Bales, 1969). Bales could not find evidence -- and he did not think it was plausible to believe -- that the Irish had more serious underlying problems, on the average, than the Jews. Instead he concluded that Irish culture is more compatible with using alcohol to solve whatever personal problems arise than is the Jewish culture.

Another factor that helps to explain suicide also helps to explain substance abuse. Those who have the means of killing themselves readily available -- lethal weapons or poisons -- have high suicide rates. Thus, policemen, soldiers, physicians, and pharmacists have high suicide rates. It seems more plausible to explain their high suicide rates as due to the ready availability of the means of self-destruction than to greater problems that members of these occupational categories endure. But if this is true, their motivation for self-destruction cannot run deep. Otherwise why would it be influenced by the happenstance of the availability of weapons or poisons? A parallel argument can be made about drug and alcohol abuse. The reason they are more prevalent in urban schools than in rural schools is that alcohol and drugs are easier for adolescents to obtain in urban areas, not that urban adolescents have more intense personal problems. Of course, the availability of drugs and alcohol depends on one’s family, one’s peer group, and one’s school as well as on whether one lives in an urban or rural community.

The strategy to reduce student substance abuse by mounting school programs to address the problems to which substance abuse is presumed to be a response rests on a second dubious assumption: that schools are capable of remediating these underlying problems. Suppose that substance abuse is a coping mechanism for dealing with parental rejection, school failure, unpopularity with peers, or even poverty (and the low self-esteem that such life problems produce). Schools can probably improve the academic skills of motivated students. But it is implausible that schools can improve family functioning much or find a formula for transforming unpopular into popular youngsters.
The third strategy, preventing young people from gaining ready access to alcohol or drugs, operates on the situational level rather than on the level of motivation. Community programs that use this strategy against alcohol “include ordinances to control the number and types of retail outlets where alcohol can be purchased..., education and monitoring of retail clerks and retail outlet owners, training of servers in bars and restaurants..., and, most recently, crackdown on the availability of bogus I.D. cards” (Klitzner, 1987: 20). Unfortunately, studies of community-based programs to control availability of alcohol have been unable to demonstrate effectiveness -- except for the effectiveness of increases in the minimum purchase age and price increases, both of which have been found to be associated with reduced consumption of alcohol and a lower incidence of arrest for driving while intoxicated. Police efforts to disrupt drug sales or interdict the drug traffic rest on this strategy of reducing availability and thereby reducing consumption (Reuter, 1985; Zimmer, 1987). So do school efforts to prevent students from merchandising drugs.

Operation SPECDA (School Program to Educate and Control Drug Abuse) is a cooperative program of the New York City Board of Education and the police department. It operates in 545 schools, serving students and their parents from kindergarten through grade 12.... Police help provide classes and presentations on drug abuse in the schools. At the same time, they concentrate enforcement efforts within a two-block radius of schools to create a drug-free corridor for students.

The enforcement aspect has had some impressive victories. Police have made 12,500 arrests to date, 61 percent in the vicinity of elementary schools. In addition, they have seized narcotics valued at more than $2.7 million, as well as $1.4 million in cash and 231 firearms (U.S. Department of Education, 1986: 37).

Note that the effectiveness of the war on drugs by police and by schools is difficult to measure directly by reduced consumption. Drug arrests or drug seizures are the indirect “evidence” of effectiveness.

The fourth strategy, threatening legal penalties or suspensions and expulsions, seems to have succeeded in some schools. However, while schools that have cracked down on drug use and sales have become
relatively free of drugs, this success may have been obtained partly by extruding from the school students who, as non-students, continued their drug involvements. Furthermore, the negative sanctions are usually imposed along with other measures. Thus, in the following accounts from What Works: Schools without Drugs (U.S. Department of Education, 1986: 149 20, 22, 28, 34), successful programs are described in different terms depending on features chosen for emphasis by the analyst:

1. The case of Northside High School, Atlanta, Georgia, is intended to illustrate what parents can do by supervising their children’s activities.

Northside High School enrolls 1,300 students from 52 neighborhoods. In 1977, drug use was so prevalent that the school was known as “Fantasy Island.” Students smoked marijuana openly at school, and police were called to the school regularly.

The combined efforts of a highly committed group of parents and an effective new principal succeeded in solving Northside’s drug problem. Determined to stop drug use both inside and outside the school, parents organized and took the following actions:

• Formed parent-peer groups to learn about the drug problem and agreed to set curfews, to chaperone parties, and to monitor their children’s whereabouts. They held community meetings to discuss teenage drug use with law enforcement agents, judges, clergy, and physicians.

• Established a coalition that lobbied successfully for State antidrug and antiparaphernalia laws.

• Offered assistance to the schools. The school acted on the parents’ recommendations to provide drug prevention education to teachers, update its prevention curriculum, and establish a new behavior code. Parents also helped design a system for monitoring tardiness and provided volunteer help to teachers.

The new principal, Bill Rudolph, also committed his energy and expertise to fighting the drug problem. Rudolph established a tough policy for students who were caught possessing or dealing drugs. “Illegal drug offenses do not lead to detention hall but to court,” he stated. When students were caught, he immediately called the police and then notified
their parents. Families were given the names of drug education programs and were urged to participate. One option available to parents was drug education offered by other parents.

Today, Northside is a different school. In 1985-1986, only three drug-related incidents were reported. Academic achievement has improved dramatically; student test scores have risen every year since the 1977-1978 school year. Scores on standardized achievement tests rose to well above the national average, placing Northside among the top schools in the district for the 1985-1986 school year.

2. The case of the Anne Arundel County School District, Annapolis, Maryland, is intended to illustrate one of the measures schools can take as contrasted with what parents can do. In particular it is recommended that schools “establish clear and specific rules regarding drug use that includes strong corrective actions.”

In response to evidence of a serious drug problem in 1979-1980, the school district of Anne Arundel County implemented a strict new policy covering both elementary and secondary students. It features notification of police, involvement of parents, and use of alternative education programs for offenders. School officials take the following steps when students are found using or possessing drugs.

- The school notifies the police, calls the parents, and suspends students for 1 to 5 school days.

- The special assistant to the superintendent meets with the students and parents. In order to return to school, students must state where and how they obtained the drugs. The students must also agree either to participate in the district’s Alternative Drug Program at night, while attending school during the day, or to enroll in the district’s Learning Center (grades 7-8) or evening high school (grades 9-12). Students, accompanied by their parents must also take at least 5 hours of counseling. Parents are also required to sign a Drug/Alcohol Reinstatement Form.

- If students fail to complete the Alternative Drug Program, they are transferred to the Learning Center or to evening high school.

- Students are expelled if caught using or possessing drugs a second time.
Distribution and sale of drugs are also grounds for expulsion, and a student expelled for these offenses is ineligible to participate in the Alternative Drug Program.

As a result of these steps, the number of drug offenses has declined by 60 percent, from 507 in 1979-1980 to 202 in 1985-1986.

3. The case of Eastside High School in Paterson, New Jersey, is also intended to illustrate the effect of school policy on drug abuse. However, the emphasis seems to be on enforcement of the policy and particularly on the role of security measures.

Eastside High School is located in an inner-city neighborhood and enrolls 3,000 students. Before 1982, drug dealing was rampant. Intruders had easy access to the school and sold drugs on the school premises. Drugs were used in school stairwells and bathrooms. Gangs armed with razors and knives roamed the hallways.

A new principal, Joe Clark, was instrumental in ridding the school of drugs and violence. Hired in 1982, Clark established order, enlisted the help of police officers in drug prevention education, and raised academic standards. Among the actions he took were:

- Establishing and enforcing strict penalties for breaking the discipline code. In reference to drugs, he stated emphatically, "If you're smoking or dealing, you're out." He acted on his warning, removing 300 students from the roll in his first year for discipline and drug-related violations.

- Increasing the involvement of local police officers known as the "Brothers in Blue," who visited the school regularly to speak to students about the importance of resisting drugs.

- Raising academic standards and morale by emphasizing the importance of doing well, requiring a "C" average for participation in athletics, and honoring student achievements.

As a result of actions such as these, Eastside has been transformed. Today there is no evidence of drug use in the school. Intruders no longer have access to the school; hallways and stairwells are safe. Academic performance has improved substantially: in 1981-1982, only 56 percent of the 9th graders passed the State basic skills test in math; in 1985-1986, 89 percent passed. In reading, the percentage of 9th graders passing the State basic skills test rose from 40 percent in 1981-1982 to 67 percent in 1985-1986.
4. The case of Samuel Gompers Vocational-Technical High School in New York City is intended to illustrate reaching out to the community for support and assistance in making the school’s anti-drug policy work.

Samuel Gompers Vocational-Technical High School is located in the South Bronx in New York City. Enrollment is 1,500 students; 95 percent are from low-income families.

In June, 1977, an article in the New York Times likened Gompers to a “war zone.” Students smoked marijuana and sold drugs both inside the school and on the school grounds; the police had to be called in daily.

In 1979, the school board hired a principal, Victor Herbert, who turned the school around. Herbert established order, implemented a drug awareness program, involved the private sector, and instilled pride in the school among students. Among the actions he took:

- In cooperation with the police captain, Herbert arranged for the same two police officers to respond to all calls from Gompers. These officers came to know the Gompers students; eventually, students confided in the police about drug sales occurring near the school. Police also helped school staff patrol the school grounds and were stationed at a nearby park known for drug trafficking.

- Herbert stationed security guards and faculty outside each bathroom. He organized “hall sweeps” in the middle of class periods and no longer allowed students to leave the premises at lunch time.

- Herbert established a drug education program for teachers, students, and parents that emphasized recognizing the signs of drug use. He also implemented other drug awareness programs that involved the police and community organizations.

- He persuaded companies, such as IBM, to hire students for after-school and summer work. Students had to be drug free to-participate. This requirement demonstrated to students that employers would not tolerate drug use.

- A computerized attendance system was installed to notify parents of their child’s absence. Newly hired paraprofessionals, called “family assistants,” worked to locate absentees and bring them back to school.
The results of these actions were remarkable. The current principal, Gregory Bettantone, reports that in 1986 there were no known incidents of students using alcohol or drugs in school or on school grounds and only one incident of violence. The percentage of students reading at or above grade level increased from 45 percent in 1979-80 to 67 percent in 1984-85.

5. The case of Greenway Middle School in Phoenix, Arizona, is also intended to illustrate what communities can do to control drugs in schools but more from a preventive angle.

Greenway Middle School is in a rapidly growing area of Phoenix. The student population of 1,000 is highly transient.

Greenway developed a comprehensive drug prevention program in the 1979-80 school year. The program provides strict sanctions for students caught with drugs, but its main emphasis is on prevention. Features include:

- Teaching students about drugs in science classes; mini-units on why people use drugs and what treatment resources are available to drug users; distributing and discussing current literature on drugs; sponsoring a 1-day Prevention Fair in which community experts talk to students about drug prevention.

- Enrolling students and staff in the “All Star” training program where they learn how to resist peer pressure, make decisions for themselves, and develop plans for personal and school improvement.

- Providing counselor training for specially selected students; drug counseling for students who are using drugs.

Under Greenway’s drug policy, first-time offenders who are caught using or possessing drugs are suspended for 6 to 10 days. First-time offenders who are caught selling drugs are subject to expulsion. The policy is enforced in close cooperation with the local police department.

As a result of the Greenway program, drug use and disciplinary referrals declined dramatically between 1979-80 and 1985-86. The number of drug-related referrals to the school’s main office decreased by 90 percent; overall, discipline-related referrals decreased by 70 percent.
These five “successful” programs differ. Maybe they are different in their kinds of success as well as in the elements composing them. For example, it is not the same sort of success if fewer students were attracted to drug activities in the later period than were attracted in the earlier period or if the same students used drugs in the later period but less extensively or if the new policies made anti-social students so uncomfortable that they left for other schools or dropped out of school altogether. None of the five exemplary programs seems to have been evaluated systematically so it is difficult to characterize “success” specifically. Nor is it clear which elements of multi-faceted programs were responsible for whatever effects did occur. In Northside High School, parents agreed to set curfews, to chaperone parties, and to monitor their children’s whereabouts.” Certainly, all parents did not participate -- if Northside is like other schools. Furthermore, students more likely to abuse substances are also less likely to have parents who have controlled them in the past and are capable of controlling them in the future, even if motivated to do so. Why then should parental efforts have produced such dramatic results at Northside? Maybe the threat of the principal -- “Illegal drug offenses do not lead to detention hall but to court” -- was more important than the participation of some parents.

In the Anne Arundel County school system, the threat was not legal sanctions but notification of parents and suspension or expulsion. There is also mention of a requirement of five hours of counseling for students, accompanied by their parents, before suspended students are permitted to return to school. However, the account does not say what happened if the parents or the students or both failed to follow through. Did the suspension turn into an expulsion? What proportion of students suspended for drug offenses in the Anne Arundel County school system took their punishment, returned to school, and sinned no more?

In Eastside High School, as in Anne Arundel County, suspensions and expulsions are part of the effort to turn the school around, but mention is also made of honoring student academic achievements and of requiring a “C” average for participation in athletics. Did the academic emphasis make an important contribution? And how about the involvement of local
police officers ("Brothers in Blue")? Could Principal Clark have succeeded without them by relying on security guards?

In Samuel Gompers High School, suspensions and expulsions are not mentioned at all. However, police cooperation is also cited as an important part of the war against drugs. Presumably the police made arrests. The same two police officers are assigned to answering calls for assistance from Gompers as the result of an agreement between Principal Louis and the precinct captain. The students got to know those officers and to give them tips about sellers of drugs. As part of their duties the officers help patrol the school as well as a nearby park where drug transactions take place. However, another feature of the Gompers program is an employment incentive. Drug-free students are hired for after-school and summer work. In addition, a computerized attendance system notified parents of the absence of their children? Were the enforcement features or the incentives more important?

In the Greenway Middle School, suspension, expulsion, and unspecified action by the police await students caught with drugs, although most of the account concerns a variety of informational and counseling programs. It is at least possible that the strict sanctions rather than the educational program is what keeps the school relatively drug free.

In effect, in all five cases principals came into schools that were out of control and did everything they could think of to restore order and get rid of drugs. They were more interested in producing results than in knowing which of a variety of measures worked better. But if only one measure produced results, it would be useful to know this -- both for scientific reasons and to prevent resources from being wasted in attempting to replicate the entire package of measures. On the other hand, if no measure would have produced results in the absence of an interactive impact with the other five, this is important to know too.

They are crucial questions because drug problems at school may be imported into the school from the environing community where they are pervasive or they can arise in the school without being influenced by a high level of community drug use. In the first situation, probably typified by Eastside High School in Paterson, New Jersey, and Samuel
Gompers Vocational-Technical High School in New York City, the principals certainly had to get control of the drug problem in their schools. Unless they did, education could not have continued. But whether they succeeded in reducing the incidence of drug use among their students is another question. Possibly students who used drugs or sold drugs in school shifted to using or selling drugs outside of school when the school principals at Eastside High School and Gompers applied pressure. The criminological literature talks about “displacement” effects, and there is a lively controversy about the conditions under which reducing criminal behavior in one neighborhood increases it in another.

Presumably, displacement effects are less likely to occur in situations where the drug problem is much more serious in schools than in the neighborhoods from which students come. Once the use and sale of drugs are controlled at school, students cannot easily substitute drug activities in the neighborhood. Furthermore, if drug use is not legitimated in the community, the delegitimation of drug use in school is more likely to affect out-of-school behavior. These sound like plausible conjectures, but no one really knows. That is why research is needed to establish not only how much of various illicit substances students use but whether their patterns of drug use reflects the drug problem of the community or whether they reflect conditions intrinsic to the school. For similar reasons, research is needed to establish whether students began using drugs on the streets and then transferred their activities to schools or whether they developed receptive attitudes toward drugs in school -- and perhaps began to experiment with them there. The formal curriculum does not, of course, encourage students to use drugs. To the contrary, the message, “Say ‘no’ to drugs,” is taught by teachers. But a furtive drug curriculum may exist in which students teach one another the desirability of various forbidden pleasures.
REFERENCES TO APPENDIX B


Select Committee on Narcotic Abuse and Control, House of Representatives (1987). Hearing on Drug Abuse Prevention in America’s Schools.


Toby, Jackson (1998b). “Getting Serious about School Discipline,” The Public Interest, Number 133 (Fall), pp. 68-83.
