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THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF
DRUG ABUSE RESISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS
(D.A.R.E.)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
D.A.R.E. BACKGROUND	3
D.A.R.E. DEFINED	4
D.A.R.E. CURRICULUM	6
D.A.R.E. LESSONS	7
D.A.R.E. OFFICERS	9
D.A.R.E. AMERICA	10
SELECTED D.A.R.E. PROGRAMS	11
San Angelo, Texas	11
Midland, Texas	12
Hurst, Texas	14
CONCLUSION	14
NOTES	16
SOURCES CONSULTED	18

INTRODUCTION

For years the United States and much of the rest of the world has been fighting drug abuse. It has become a war; a war against drugs. The war is actually against those individuals who make their living by cultivating, manufacturing and distributing all kinds of illicit drugs.

The war is against middle drug pushers who sell to those who seem to be insignificant street dealers, who reach out and infect the young people of communities. The street dealers can be found in shopping centers and in school yards. Their customers are elementary school children, middle school students and high school students. Their influence is pervasive, and to say that small time street dealers are insignificant, is false. If it were not for them, drugs would probably not reach school age children, especially those in junior high and elementary schools.

But the small time dealer is a reality. He peddles his insidious wares in shopping centers, on street corners and in and around school yards. The small time dealer forms the foundation upon which the grower, manufacturer, distributor depends, therefore, the war against drugs must be fought from the bottom. Children must be taught to resist the temptation of taking drugs.

If drugs are going to be around and if the threat of peer pressure is always present, there must be a way to combat the use of illicit drugs by the young people. One way that society has tried to prevent drug abuse is by trying to scare kids. Kids have been bombarded with commercials, with lectures and with the threat of punishment. Drug abuse has been taught in high schools, but by the high school age years, students are already set in their ways. It is hard to convince kids that they should do or not do certain things.

Peer pressure is tremendous among young people. One study has shown that the average age of first users of drugs, tobacco and alcohol is declining. A large number have used drugs, tobacco or alcohol by the time they reach junior high school. An Institute for Social Research study shows that 1.1% of 1975 senior class reported drug abuse before the sixth grade. For the senior class of 1985 it 4.3%. Compared to other industrialized countries, the United States has the highest level of teenage drug use.

Peer pressure to use drugs is showing up in lower grades. One-fourth of fourth graders surveyed by a Weekly Reader poll said that they felt pressured by their peers to try alcohol and marijuana.¹

Another survey, conducted by the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse in 1978, concluded that more younger students are using inhalants. The highest number was by students in the seventh grade. The survey recommended that intervention into drug use must be started prior to the seventh grade.²

So what is the solution to the drug abuse problem? Health educators believe that teaching young people should begin in the elementary and junior high grades. Elementary and junior high school age children are not as susceptible to peer pressure. This fact is more true of fifth and sixth graders.

D.A.R.E. BACKGROUND

One drug abuse program was developed in 1983 by the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles Unified School District. Chief Daryl F. Gates and Superintendent Dr. Harry Handler worked together to form a task force. Dr. Ruth Rich of the school district headed the study, which developed the Drug Abuse Resistance Education project, better known as D.A.R.E.

D.A.R.E. is a unique program, which has continued to grow since it was first introduced. The Los Angeles pilot program began in September 1983. The task force selected fifty elementary schools and used ten Los Angeles Police Department officers, who were trained in an eighty-hour course. They were taught teaching techniques, elementary school operations, use of visual aids, officer-school relations, communications skills and child development.³

By 1985, D.A.R.E. was being taught at 10 junior high schools. A total of 153,290 elementary and junior high school students were exposed to the program. The initial fifty elementary schools jumped to 110.⁴

By 1989, the number of D.A.R.E. officers had grown to fifty-three. They were teaching in more than 300 elementary schools. Teachers, school administrators, parents and students reported positive results directly caused by the D.A.R.E. program. It was so successful in Los Angeles that it became a model for police agencies throughout the country.

In its third year, the program was being taught in 500 jurisdictions and thirty-three states. The October, 1989 figures were even more overwhelming. There were 2000 D.A.R.E. programs in place in forty-nine states. In addition to the United States, D.A.R.E. was being used in Australia, New Zealand, American Samoa, Canada and Department of Defense Schools throughout the world. D.A.R.E. America estimated that three million children were taught D.A.R.E. in 1989.⁵ D.A.R.E. attempts to reach all students, even if they have special problems.

Los Angeles has initiated a program in kindergarten through the fourth grade. The program is not as lengthy, but it does prepare the students for the complete program. In addition to the abbreviated program, Los Angeles also has developed a Spanish version and Braille translation of the student workbook.⁶

Developing new versions of the program has not been left to Los Angeles alone. In Illinois, D.A.R.E. Officer Lt. Tab Turke, Morgan County Sheriff's Office, developed his own unique version of the D.A.R.E. program. He developed a program for the hearing-impaired. He began teaching the

program at the Illinois School for the Deaf in Jacksonville, Illinois, and the program was soon adopted by others.⁷

D.A.R.E. DEFINED

D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) is designed to reach young people. It is geared toward fifth and sixth grade students, although some jurisdictions also teach D.A.R.E. in the seventh and eighth grades. Fifth and sixth graders are not yet pressured by their peers to begin to rebel. They have impressionable minds. If the right messages can be instilled in them, they will have no problem rejecting temptations they will face in junior high school and in later life.

D.A.R.E. uses trained, uniformed, but unarmed, officers as teachers. They teach a formal curriculum in the classroom, using lessons that make the students feel good about themselves and encouraging them to have more confidence in resisting all types of pressures. The students are also taught the dangers of using tobacco, alcohol and drugs. In addition, the training officers teach ways to cope with stress and how to have fun without the use of drugs.

D.A.R.E. officers teach the curriculum in a non-enforcement role. The D.A.R.E. curriculum was developed by health educators and uses proven teaching principles. With the trained officers teaching, the regular teacher is relieved from teaching the difficult subject matter with which the regular teacher is not familiar, on the other hand, by having the program as part of a regular school schedule, time is

made available to have D.A.R.E. taught and creates credibility for the lessons and emphasizes the importance of the subject.

From D.A.R.E., the students learn to get along with police officers, who are not seen simply as an authority figure who will punish them. The good rapport which is developed between the students and the officers is one of the side effects that will carry on to later life.

The main things that students should learn are how to: (1) resist negative peer pressure, (2) make decisions, (3) identify risks, (4) manage stress, (5) choose alternatives to use drugs and (6) say, "no."

Some school administrators were concerned that by teaching D.A.R.E., other important topics would suffer, because of less time to devote to them. However, they found that D.A.R.E. was also teaching social studies. According to the State Department of Education in Hawaii, D.A.R.E. teaches social studies, which include: (1) developing basic communication skills, (2) developing positive self-concepts, (3) developing decision-making and problem solving skills, (4) developing emotional and physical health and (5) developing a sense of responsibility to themselves and others.⁸

D.A.R.E. CURRICULUM

The D.A.R.E. curriculum was developed by Dr. Ruth Rich, a specialist with the Los Angeles Unified School District.

It was adopted from a project already in place called S.M.A.R.T. (Self-Management And Resistance Training). S.M.A.R.T. is a program that deals with prevention. It was designed by the Health Behavior Research Institute for the University of Southern California.

D.A.R.E. consists of seventeen classroom sessions. Each class is from forty-five to sixty minutes long and is held once a week. Every program must follow the same basic curriculum. Each lesson teaches a subject which builds upon the previous one.

The lessons involve question and answer sessions, group discussions, role playing and workbook exercises. These sessions encourage student participation and response. Some of the benefits of using a complete semester are:

- (1) it allows D.A.R.E. teachers to cover more material;
- (2) it reinforces learning; and (3) it is long enough for students and officers to become friends.⁹

D.A.R.E. LESSONS

The following lessons are taught in the program:

- (1) Practices for Personal Safety - Used to familiarize students with role of the police and review practices for safety of the students.
- (2) Drug Use and Misuse - To highlight the harmful effects of drugs if they are misused.
- (3) Consequences - Helps students understand that there are many consequences, both positive and negative, that result from using and choosing not to use drugs.
- (4) Resisting Pressure to Use Drugs - To make students aware of kinds of peer pressure they face and help them learn to say no to offers to use drugs.

- (5) Resistance Techniques - Ways to Say No - Teaches students ways to say no in resisting various types of pressure.
- (6) Building Self-Esteem - Helps students understand that self-image results from positive and negative feelings and experiences.
- (7) Assertiveness: A Response Style - Teaches that assertiveness is a response style that enables students to state their own rights without loss of self-esteem.
- (8) Managing Stress Without Taking Drugs - Helps students recognize stress and suggests ways to deal with it other than by taking drugs.
- (9) Media Influence on Drug Use - Helps students develop the understanding and skills needed to analyze and resist media presentations about alcohol and drugs.
- (10) Decision Making and Risk Taking - Helps students apply the decision making process in evaluating the results of various kinds of risk taking behavior, including that of drug use.
- (11) Alternatives to Drug Use - Helps students find out about activities that are interesting and rewarding and that are better than taking drugs.
- (12) Role Modeling - Older student leaders and other positive role models that do not use drugs talk to younger students to clarify the misconception that drug users are in the majority.
- (13) Forming a Support System - Students will be able to develop positive relationships with many different people in order to form a support system.
- (14) Resisting Gang Pressures - Students will be able to identify situations in which they may be pressured by gangs and to evaluate the consequences of the choices available to them.
- (15) D.A.R.E. Summary - Helps students summarize and assess what they learned from the program.
- (16) Taking a Stand - Students complete own commitment and present to class. Helps them respond effectively when pressured to use drugs.
- (17) D.A.R.E. Culmination - Graduation from the program.

No major changes may be made to the program, although the curriculum may be altered to solve the problems of a particular area. For example, if there is no problem with gangs in a community, the section relating to gangs may be replaced with a second lesson on alternatives to drug use.¹⁰

D.A.R.E. OFFICERS

A successful program must have good teachers, and it must be taught in a uniform manner. Teachers must be properly trained. D.A.R.E. officers must be trained by an accredited D.A.R.E. training agency, which must be certified by the Los Angeles Police Department.

Officers who teach others to be D.A.R.E. officers are called mentors. Mentors are taught in Los Angeles and must already have been D.A.R.E. officers. A training center may use mentors from different agencies.

D.A.R.E. officers must go through an extensive eighty-hour course. They cover such topics as: narcotic identification, trends in narcotic packaging, symptoms and signs of drug and alcohol use, child development and the power of peer pressure. In addition, officers learn how to communicate in the classroom and how to better communicate with the community. They are also made aware of being able to recognize child abuse and how to deal with it.

Officers must learn their responsibilities with D.A.R.E., the philosophy and content of the program and also, how to

teach and manage a classroom full of young energetic students.¹¹ There has been great interest in officers wanting to become D.A.R.E. officers.

D.A.R.E. AMERICA

The number of D.A.R.E. programs in Texas is growing tremendously. There are presently seventy-five Texas jurisdictions with D.A.R.E. programs, being taught by 284 D.A.R.E. officers.¹² It has grown to the extent that there are plans to begin D.A.R.E. Texas Incorporated, which would be patterned upon the same concepts and structures as D.A.R.E. America.¹³

D.A.R.E. America, based in Los Angeles, California, is an organization that was formed to promote D.A.R.E. It responds to the great demand for D.A.R.E. programs. It supports the implementation and coordination of fundraising projects. D.A.R.E. America also monitors the integrity of the programs.

D.A.R.E. America was responsible for acquiring major corporate sponsors. These sponsors include companies such as: Coca-Cola, Arco and Kentucky Fried Chicken. In order to continue to survive, D.A.R.E. depends on financial support from not only corporations, but also from government and individual donors.¹⁴

D.A.R.E. America is responsible for beginning the wave that the D.A.R.E. project has been. It has spread across this country and into other countries. D.A.R.E. Texas Incorporated will do the same thing. It will help

deal with tremendous growth in the number of D.A.R.E. programs in Texas.

SELECTED D.A.R.E. PROGRAMS

Three Texas cities that have D.A.R.E. programs are San Angelo, Midland and Hurst. San Angelo and Hurst have had their programs for three and four years, respectively. Midland is in its initial year.

San Angelo, Texas

The San Angelo program was begun in 1987. Sergeant Rusty Smith was responsible for convincing his department that D.A.R.E. was a worthwhile project. Sergeant Smith and two patrol officers were trained in Los Angeles, California. Sergeant Smith remained with D.A.R.E. for about two years until a permanent D.A.R.E. sergeant was assigned. One of the original officers is still with the program.

In January 1989, Sergeant Mike Morris was assigned to head D.A.R.E. in San Angelo. There are three full time officers teaching fifth graders in twenty-one elementary schools. San Angelo also teaches kindergarten through the fourth grade abbreviated program. They plan to include junior high schools in 1990 with the addition of one more officer.

Its officers do not receive any incentive pay, since civil service does not allow it. Even without the incentive of additional pay, officers are willing to participate in the

program. Unlike other departments, San Angelo does not have a time limit of duty in D.A.R.E.

The support from the community has been overwhelming. Officers and teachers get to learn from each other. Sergeant Morris is pleased with the fact that the program gives police officers an opportunity to do something positive. It gives them an opportunity to prevent something, if not stunted but allowed to grow, that later causes major social problems.

The results and side effects have been positive. Some of the fringe benefits have been: better interaction between students and the police and between teachers and the police. Some teachers at the beginning are reluctant to accept police officers as capable teachers. They accept it once they see that it is a well-taught program.

San Angelo is also designated as a Certified D.A.R.E. Training Center. Its officers were trained in Los Angeles, California to be mentors. They in turn have been training others to be D.A.R.E. officers.¹⁵ The D.A.R.E. program has been successful in San Angelo.

Midland, Texas

In January 1989, Chief Richard Czech presented a proposal recommending the implementation of the D.A.R.E. program in the public schools. By August 1989, three full time officers and one alternate had been selected and sent to Arizona to be trained as D.A.R.E. officers.

In January 1990, two more officers were added. Presently there are four full-time and two part-time officers. The latest two officers were trained in San Angelo, Texas, by the San Angelo mentors.

Officers who apply for the position must have had two years of police experience. They are then selected by a board, composed of police department and school district representatives. Officers are asked to stay with the program for two years, which gives others the opportunity to participate. It also prevents officers from burning out on the assignment.

Midland D.A.R.E. officers receive 5% assignment pay. The supervising officer, who is equal in rank to the others, receives 10%. Midland's program was initially financed by the City of Midland, the Midland Independent School District and by the private sector. The initial annual budget was \$93,000.00, but has been increased to \$122,000.00.

D.A.R.E. is being taught in the fifth grade only. The Midland Independent School District has twenty-two elementary schools. There are seven schools that instruct the fifth grade. There are approximately 1495 fifth graders with an average size of thirty students per class.

D.A.R.E. Officer, Phyllis Blair, says that Midland D.A.R.E. officers are enthusiastic about the program. She believes that the only way to solve the drug problem is through education. D.A.R.E. has given her the opportunity to interact with the good kids of the community. Midland

D.A.R.E. officers have already seen the difference in the students' attitudes after the completion of the first semester. Midland has planned to evaluate the program after two years in order to assess its progress and determine its continued feasibility.¹⁶

Hurst, Texas

A third Texas city using the D.A.R.E. program is Hurst. As in the previously mentioned departments, D.A.R.E. in Hurst is a success.

According to Hurst D.A.R.E. Officers, Sergeant Ken West, Hurst began its program in 1986. Its program is run with Euless and Bedford, two neighboring communities. Each department sent two officers to Los Angeles, California to be trained.

The Hurst-Euless-Bedford School District felt that for them, the program would be better in the seventh grade. There would be better coverage of the few junior high schools by the six D.A.R.E. officers. D.A.R.E. has worked in the seventh grade. It will probably remain in this grade.

Officers are selected for the program from a list of candidates who want the position. The best officers are selected by a board made up of current D.A.R.E. officers. They are then trained in either Los Angeles, California or in San Angelo, Texas. D.A.R.E. officers do not receive any type of assignment pay.

The D.A.R.E. program in this area is also working. D.A.R.E. has received positive media attention and has been accepted by the students.¹⁷

CONCLUSION

To say that the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program is working is an understatement. Survey after survey of implemented programs has shown only positive feedback. On-going evaluations are done by the Evaluation and Training Institute, of Los Angeles, California, and by A.H. Training and Development Systems of Springfield, Illinois. Results of Project D.A.R.E. have surpassed its goal of helping kids reject peer pressure to use drugs and alcohol. It has helped decrease vandalism and gang activity. In addition, D.A.R.E. has caused students to have greater respect for police officers.¹⁸ D.A.R.E. was a brilliant idea.

The drug problem is a major social illness. Fighting drugs on the offensive is a slow and costly process. While drugs are still reaching younger and younger people, D.A.R.E. is proving that the fight against drugs through positive education, is making a difference.

Project D.A.R.E. is working.

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5. D.A.R.E. America, "Fact Sheet," (Los Angeles, Ca.: D.A.R.E. America, February 1990), 1.

6. Department of Justice, Implementing Project DARE: Drug Abuse Resistance Education, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, June 1988), 49-53.

7. "DARE to Keep Kids Off Drugs," Law and Order 35, no. 12 (December 1987): 23.

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