

THE HARD FACTS

01

Schools can help prevent substances being brought to school by having frank, open discussions with students who are known to use them.

02

Children will learn about drugs from their peers. They may hear how fun or easy it is to smoke and drink, but unless they are educated, they will not know the negative consequences of using these substances.

Schools can provide awareness and safety tips to all students. Ultimately, arming children with information to make healthy decisions can help prevent drug use in the first place.

Operation Survival was founded in 1988 in the hopes of stemming the inevitable tide of drugs and alcohol seeping into the community.

Operation Survival provides evidence-based programming in the local yeshivas and public schools, art programs, rap groups, positive alternatives, and crisis assistance to thousands of students each year.

The program also networks with other agencies to disseminate information to educators, clergy, social service and medical professionals, and community agencies.

Operation Survival is the first program to combat alcoholism and substance abuse in both the Jewish and African-American communities of Crown Heights, and has been credited with bringing the racially diverse community together in common cause.

Dena Gorkin, CPP, Director of Community Education at Operation Survival and Principal of Bnos Chomesh Academy.



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PREVENTION 101

Help Save a Life.

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Should the schools be talking to our children about drugs?

A project of Operation Survival

There has always been a debate about whether we should expose children who are clueless about drugs and substance abuse to information about these sensitive topics.



walk home from school one day with another child who is more informed.

During the conversation on that walk home, the unexposed child is given information, but he or she is not armed with protective knowledge to combat it. He or she may have just heard about how much fun it is to smoke or drink, but this child does not know of the possible consequences of doing so.



It is always safer to err on the side of caution and give the information to all children. While schools can certainly target groups of kids who are known to be involved in risky behaviors with more specific information, general education about being safe and being aware should go to everyone.

Prevention is always better. The old adage, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” has merit.

There are powerful arguments for both sides of this issue but in a school setting, where children are not segregated according to their levels of innocence, it may be necessary to expose the more innocent students to this information in order to inform and protect those who are engaging in risky behaviors. Dena Gorkin, CPP, believes it is better to inform innocent children than to leave the exposed kids unprotected.

In schools, there generally are kids who know about drugs and kids who do not. But these children learn together, play together and share information, and an unexposed child who has never heard of any drugs and is completely uninvolved, need only



THERE is not a single perfect solution to this issue. Each school and each parent must determine how conversations and other situations related to drugs and other substances are handled. When making these decisions, it is important to remember that children will inevitably be exposed to harmful substances. The more knowledge and information they have, the more likely they are to make healthy, wise decisions.

This can include measures taken by schools to prevent substances from being brought into school or on trips. Before a school trip, school personnel might talk to students who are known to be substances abusers and say, “No substances are allowed on school trips. We realize this may be a challenge for some students. If this applies to you, then you need to be honest with yourself. If you can’t control yourself from bringing this substance, then we ask you to please refrain from joining the trip.”

If adults have an honest relationship with students, most of them will be able to have a frank conversation about this. Some schools have students sign a piece of paper that says the student agreed there will not be any substances on the trip, and if there are, the student will be sent home in the middle of the trip.



► Based on interviews with Mrs. Dena Gorkin, CPP, for Prevention 101 series.