D.A.R.E. Presentation

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July 18, 2022

USD 261
HAYSVILLE
SCHOOLS

Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.)

- Taught to 5th graders in all six elementary schools
- Semester course, schedule with the principal
  - Can be taught in the fall or the spring semester

Reasons to Discontinue D.A.R.E.

- Documentation that D.A.R.E. is not effective/impact is not there
- Student Resource Officers (SROs) are being pulled from other schools to teach D.A.R.E.

Continuing...

- Drug Free Week
- Kids Against Tobacco Day
- Health classes
- Healthy Relationships class
- Research the most effective strategies to meet the needs of teaching kids how to make good choices


Questions
?
?
Answers
?

Kansas Health Education Standards
Content Standards for Substance Use and Abuse & Addiction

Grade Level	Benchmark: The students will know, comprehend, apply, analyze, synthesize and/or evaluate:
K-2	**2.1** Drug types and dangers of each (alcohol, tobacco, other illegal drugs) **2.2** Helpful and harmful drugs **2.3** Appropriate use of medicine **2.4** Safe choices with medicines and drugs **2.5** Effects of medicines and drugs **2.6** Refusal skills
3-5	**5.1** Types of tobacco products and the risks of using these products **5.2** Dangers of misuse and abuse of drugs **5.3** Proper use of over the counter and prescription medicines **5.4** Short-term and long-term effects of drugs **5.5** Rules and laws for medicines and drugs **5.6** Physical and psychological addictions **5.7** Values and social behaviors in preventing drug use **5.8** Resources and trusted experts on drugs and medicines **5.9** Personal strategies (assertiveness, resistance, refusal skills, and goal setting) for drug free living
6-8	**8.1** Effects and consequences of nicotine use (all forms) **8.2** Effects and consequences of alcohol use **8.3** Effects and consequences of illegal drug use **8.4** Cumulative risk behaviors (patterns, gateway drugs, etc.) **8.5** Correct use, misuse and abuse of drugs **8.6** Categories of drugs (ex. stimulants, opiates, depressants, hallucinogens, etc.) **8.7** Addiction and tolerance **8.8** Addictive substances and effects on all dimensions of health **8.9** Media, social influences, and peer pressure of drug usage

	8.10 Rules and laws for medicines and drugs **8.11** Safe alternatives to medicine **8.12** Treatment, intervention and prevention of drug overdose, dependency, and abuse
9-12	**12.1** Effects and consequences of nicotine use (all forms) **12.2** Effects and consequences of alcohol use **12.3** Effects and consequences of illegal drug use **12.4** Categories of drugs (ex. stimulants, opiates, depressants, hallucinogens, etc.) **12.5** Cumulative risk behaviors (patterns, gateway drugs, etc.) **12.6** Unsafe situations involving drugs, including alcohol **12.7** Helpful and harmful use of prescription and non-prescription drugs **12.8** Strategies to resist peer pressure to engage in substance abuse **12.9** Media, social influences, and societal pressure of drug usage **12.10** Rules and laws for medicines and drugs **12.11** Safe alternatives to medicine **12.12** Government policies and global issues in drug trends

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May 10, 2022

Mr. B.J. Knudson,

This school year the Haysville Police Department School Resource Officers were regularly contacted by their school administration with concerns about them teaching D.A.R.E. Their administrators felt it took them away from their responsibilities and availability as SRO's at their respective schools. This year we had two SRO's teaching D.A.R.E. The 2022-2023 school year we are slated to have Campus SRO J.D. Willis trained and teaching D.A.R.E. This presents a whole new situation. We will now have our entire SRO staff out of their schools teaching the D.A.R.E. curriculum.

The Haysville Police Department has taught D.A.R.E. for many years. Thousands of USD 261 5th grade students have completed the program. We are completely willing to continue with D.A.R.E. if the district chooses to continue with the program. Our concern is the time it will take the officers away from their schools while still trying to meet the expectations of their school administrators. We are requesting your administration look at the pros and cons of continuing the D.A.R.E. program and decide what is in the best interest of the children, staff and schools. Do we continue to teach D.A.R.E. or provide the maximum coverage possible with the SRO's in their schools?

As per our discussion last week on 05/04/2022, I am providing you with the information you requested on the Kansas D.A.R.E. program. The purpose of the information is to assist USD 261 in making a determination as to whether or not they want to continue the D.A.R.E. program presented by the Haysville Police Department.

I have included information on the original D.A.R.E. program and the reasons it was deemed a failure. I have included information on the 2009 revised curriculum and why it appears to be somewhat better. I have included a comprehensive list of Kansas Law Enforcement agencies that teach the D.A.R.E. program. There are 321 school districts in Kansas. There are 371 law enforcement agencies in Kansas. Of those law enforcement agencies, only forty-seven (47) teach D.A.R.E. in their respective communities. Several of the sheriff departments listed cover the D.A.R.E. curriculum for multiple school districts in their county. The agencies highlighted in yellow represent the Sedgwick County law enforcement agencies currently teaching D.A.R.E. locally.

The Haysville Police Department is slated to send SRO Willis to D.A.R.E. School for two (2) weeks in July/August. The cost is a significant amount of money out of our training budget. I am respectfully requesting USD 261 administration review this material and make a decision as to whether or not we continue with the program before we send SRO Willis to the training.

Please do not hesitate to call or email me if you have any questions that I may help with. Thank you for your time and consideration. I will await your decision.

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5-19-22

Date

Kansas D.A.R.E. Communities

*Indicates Sedgwick County Agencies

Anderson County Sheriff's Office

Arkansas City Police Department

Augusta Department of Public Safety

Barton County Sherriff's Office

Belle Plaine Police Department

Butler County Sheriff's Office

Caldwell Police Department

Caney Police Department

Chanute Police Department

*Cheney Police Department

Clark County Sheriff's Office

*Clearwater Police Department

Coffeyville Police Department

Comanche County Sheriff's Office

Concordia Police Department

Crawford County Sheriff's Office

*Derby Police Department

Ellis County Sheriff's Office

Ellsworth Police Department

Eudora Police Department

Great Bend Police Department

Harper County Sheriff's Office

Hays Police Department

*Haysville Police Department

Iola Police Department

Jefferson County Sheriff's Office

Kearny County Sheriff's Office

Leavenworth Police Department

Leawood Police Department

Lincoln County Sheriff's Office

Lindsborg Police Department

McPherson Police Department

Miami County Sheriff's Office

Osawatomie Police Department

Prairie Village Police Department

Pratt County Sheriff's Office

Russell County Sheriff's Office

Saline County Sheriff's Office

*Sedgwick County Sheriff's Office

Shawnee County Sheriff's Office

Shawnee Police Department

Sterling Police Department

*Valley Center Police Department

Wabaunsee County Sheriff's Office

Washington County Sheriff's Department

Wellington Police Department

Yates Center Police Department

What Is DARE?

In 1983, the federal government introduced a nationwide education program called DARE which aimed to reduce drug-taking, gangs, and violence among young people. Let's examine what DARE was, what the impact it had was, and what we can learn from the failures of past rhetoric.

DARE stands for Drug Abuse Resistance Education. Los Angeles (LA) police chief Daryl Gates and LA Unified District School set up the program as a strategy to reach children during the infamous War On Drugs. DARE workshops are delivered by policemen who go into classrooms from kindergarten through grade 12 with the aim of teaching school kids to reject drug use and violent gang culture. According to DARE, the program is delivered in 75% of schools and has been rolled out across 43 countries. The DARE website claims the program is a resounding success as it "led to rapid growth and expansion." However, despite DARE's bold claims, research has shown that the program has failed spectacularly. There is still a great deal of controversy surrounding the effectiveness of the program and of the War On Drugs in general.

The Effectiveness of DARE

After 10 years of the DARE program, the American Psychological Association ran a study of 1002 subjects who received DARE education in their 6th grade. This study assessed the efficacy of the program by tracking the subsequent drug use of the subjects when they hit their 20's. The results of the study found that the program had no meaningful impact on rates of drug use, attitudes towards drugs, or self-esteem. The National Institute of Justice's research found that the program has some effect, but on a modest scale. Another study carried out by the University of Illinois concluded that the DARE program was counter-productive with students who participated in the program **more** likely to use drugs.

The psychologist William Colson said, "*DARE gives kids the confidence to say no to drugs and to say **yes** to drugs. It gives them more confidence than they should have.*" By this, Colson implies that the program educates students about drugs they were otherwise not aware of. One theory is that the DARE program educates children on drugs, but approaches it from a non-educational standpoint by telling kids to say no instead of telling them what happens if they take the drug; this can lead to children participating in risky, ignorant behavior.

Why Is the DARE Program a Failure?

Critics argue that the DARE program was not effective because it was delivered by policemen rather than addiction prevention specialists. The DARE workshops mainly involved police officers entering classrooms and teaching students about the kinds of drugs they might encounter and how to say no. Law enforcement can represent a punitive, zero-tolerance approach to drugs rather than adopting an educational and rehabilitative view. Beyond this, there will always be an element of any classroom that views the police as an oppositional force.

Not everyone views the police in a positive light. The program encouraged students to anonymously report back on any drugs they encountered at home or school via a box in the classroom. VICE conducted a series of interviews with people suffering from substance use disorder who had received

DARE education. When asked whether they thought the DARE program was effective, they responded answers such as, "I think it would be better to include recovering addicts like myself" and "I didn't encounter drugs until later in life; the DARE education had faded in my memory by then."

Three Reasons Why the DARE Program Has Failed

If you were a grade or middle school student in the 1980's or 90's, you remember DARE. Founded in 1983, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) was a byproduct of Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign and America's "War on Drugs". In essence, DARE was the youth-directed arm of these campaigns. Over roughly 15 years, DARE was a hallmark of public education. At its peak in the early 90's, DARE was implemented in 75% of schools and cost taxpayers an estimated $600 million to $750 million a year. Although immensely popular and touted by politicians, parents, and school officials, DARE had one glaring problem: DARE did not work.

The first (but not the last) major study to indicate the DARE program's failure was conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA). After 10 years of the program's implementation, the APA ran a study of 1002 individuals in their early 20's who participated in DARE in 6th grade. The study found no measurable positive outcomes regarding drug use, attitudes towards drugs, or self-esteem. Beyond the cheesy mascots (Daren the Lion), long lectures, and cringe-worthy catchphrases, why the DARE program failed can be attributed to three fundamental reasons.

1. Public Hysteria vs. Evidence-Based Education

There's a number of reasons why the DARE program failed. However, one contributing factor is the social context in which it was created. In the 1980's, the War on Drugs hysteria was rampaging through the American psyche via paranoid media coverage, the "Just Say No" campaign, and a policy of mass incarceration for drug-related offenses. In this environment, DARE was introduced to school-aged children by police officers rather than substance abuse prevention specialists. As such, the curriculum tended to focus on punitive consequences versus rehabilitative education.

Along with the zero-tolerance mantra of the "Just Say No" campaign, some experts claimed that the presence of uniformed, armed police actually made the program more adversarial than educational, especially for children who had police-involved experiences outside of the classroom.

2. The Politics of Policy

Politics also played a large role in the assumed success, and ultimate failure, of the DARE program. From TV ads to bumper stickers to large-scale events, the DARE program presented a façade of success for years. Policymakers and politicians, as well as stakeholders who profited from selling DARE's curriculum, were fast to dismiss questions of the DARE program's efficacy. In fact, a 1994 study conducted by the National Institute of Justice – the independent research arm of the Department of Justice – was a major point of controversy.

The Department of Justice, which gave federal grants to DARE, ordered for a large-scale report to be conducted by the Research Triangle Institute, the most prestigious research organization of its kind. After analyzing large amounts of meta-data that showed DARE simply did not work, DARE actually resorted to legal action in attempt to squelch the report. DARE's reluctance to incorporate data to adapt its curriculum is arguably one of the reasons why the DARE program failed.

3. A Faulty Curriculum

For over 10 years, the DARE program involved 45-minute lectures that occurred weekly for a few months. For most schools, the program was incorporated in the 5th and 6th grades. Overall, the curriculum explained the risks of drug use and offered tips on how to refuse them. The program also attempted to foster a better image of the police and addressed issues such as self-esteem and peer pressure.

In addition, DARE began creating literature for parents, such as the book, Keeping Kids Drug Free. With its 2000-word glossary of slang terms and questionnaires designed to gauge a child's stress level, the book was out-of-touch at best and an attempt to scare parents at worst. For example, if your child answered "yes" to "did something exciting happen" or if they "tried hard to win a game" in the questionnaire, then parents should be wary of possible drug use. Many critics lambasted the book as borderline fraudulent, while harsher critics reserved that term for DARE itself.

Drug Abuse Resistance Education: The Effectiveness of DARE

By David J. Hanson, Ph.D.

The Drug Abuse Resistance Education program is used in nearly 80% of the school districts in the United States, in 54 other countries around the world, and is taught to 36,000,000 students each year. Therefore, it's important to know if this highly popular program is effective in reducing alcohol and drug use.

The Effectiveness of DARE

Scientific evaluation studies have consistently shown that DARE is ineffective in reducing the use of alcohol and drugs and is sometimes even counterproductive -- worse than doing nothing. That's the conclusion of the U.S. General Accounting Office, 1 the U.S. Surgeon General, 2 the National Academy of Sciences, 3 and the U.S. Department of Education, 4 among many others. 5

For Example

The U.S. Department of Education prohibits schools from spending its funding on DARE because the program is completely ineffective in reducing alcohol and drug use.

The Public Response of DARE

Leaders of DARE say the program shouldn't be judged by evidence from empirical research studies. They tend to be indifferent to factual evidence and prefer to rely on feelings, impressions and hopes. As one DARE leader explained: "I don't have any statistics for you. Our strongest numbers are the numbers that don't show up." 6

DARE's leadership dismisses studies questioning the program's effectiveness. It's argued that the program doesn't need to be evaluated because it's based on proven educational theories and techniques. 7

Not so, according to the experts who should know. "World-renowned psychologists Bill Coulson, Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow developed the theories that DARE was founded on. Rogers and Maslow later admitted their theories were wrong and off-base. Coulson concluded that the program is 'rooted in trash psychology.'" 8

If people insist on evidence, MADD leadership points to surveys that ask students, parents and teachers whether they like the program. Although irrelevant to effectiveness, most people report satisfaction with DARE. The organization's leadership argues that such satisfaction demonstrates effectiveness. 9 *

When the National Institutes of Health/University of Kentucky study found DARE ineffective, the organization's leader called it "bogus," 10 an "academic fraud," 11 and claimed that it was "part of an anti-DARE vendetta by therapists." 12 He dismissed the results as "voodoo science" and charged, without any evidence, that DARE's critics are biased by their financial interest in prevention programs that compete with DARE. "I truly believe they are setting out to find ways to attack our programs and

are misusing science to do it. The bottom line is that they don't want police officers to do the work, because they want it for themselves." 13

Proof?

DARE has a double standard for proof. On the one hand, it says the fact that most people like the program is proof that it's effective. On the other hand, it insists that only a nation-wide study over many years and costing three to five million dollars could demonstrate that it's not effective! DARE plays a game of "heads I win, tails you lose."

Proponents seem inclined to ignore scientific research findings. "In Houston, Texas, where a study showed a shocking 29% increase in drug usage and a 34% increase in tobacco usage among students participating in DARE, the police chief defended it by saying he would use the results to 'fine-tune the program to better serve the children.'" And he unashamedly promoted spending $3.7 million on DARE in the city. 14

DARE leaders not only tend to ignore scientific evidence but even challenge science itself. On one occasion, when confronted with the scientific evidence found by a major study, DARE leadership retorted that "Scientists tell you that bumblebees can't fly, but we know better." 15 Of course, scientists don't tell us that bumblebees can't fly and this statement illustrates a complete lack of any understanding of science. Similarly, the leadership sometimes seems to dismiss scientific evidence as nothing more than opinion or preference." 16

"Our detractors like to characterize DARE as an 'Orwellian reality' or 'Big Brother' at work," says DARE. "These bush-league tactics are transparent for what they are: attempts to support various individual personal agendas at the expense of our children." 17

A DARE press release titled "Pro-Drug Groups Behind Attack on Prevention Programs" damns any who criticize DARE as being advocates of drug legalization. 18 DARE leadership has questioned the motives of anyone who doubts the program in any way." 19 Sometimes DARE suggests that critics are just jealous of the organization's success. 20 The DARE position is that the program works fine; the only problem is with evaluators and anyone who criticizes it.

This is unfortunate and counterproductive. As a DARE supporter points out "The group is its own worst enemy because it has spent so much effort attacking the evaluators, rather than learning from research." 21

The Private Response of DARE

"In 1986, a National Institute of Justice study suggested that DARE had some promise. The timing was perfect. First Lady Nancy Reagan was admonishing kids to 'Just Say No.' And Congress soon approved a large package of drug prevention money, earmarking 10 percent to go to programs taught by uniformed cops. Along with other criteria, the set-aside perfectly matched DARE, launching the program nationally." 22

However, a peer review of the study soon identified major problems. In reality, the results suggested that DARE might actually increase drug use among girls. 23 The U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance then

funded a follow-up study by the Research Triangle Institute (RTI), a nationally prestigious research organization that had never had a study go unpublished. Before the study was completed, RTI "started finding that DARE simply didn't work," and released preliminary findings at a conference. 24

"The national DARE organization kicked into high gear: such information could never been seen by the public. The group made threatening phone calls and violent threats to researchers, determined to hide the information." RTI didn't publish its study. 25

When it became known that the prestigious *American Journal of Public Health* planned to publish the study, DARE strongly objected and tried to prevent publication. "DARE has tried to interfere with the publication of this. They tried to intimidate us," the publication director reported. 26

After his story questioning the effectiveness of DARE appeared in *USA Today*, reporter Dennis Cauchon "received letters from classrooms in different part of the country, all addressed to 'Dear DARE-basher,' and all using near-identical language." He says that DARE also tried to intimidate USA Today with a lawsuit. 27

When NBC planned a news magazine feature on the program, DARE cooperated until it became apparent that the story wasn't going to be simply a puff-piece. "They worked very hard to get our story suppressed," the producer says. After interviewing a critic of DARE, the producer was angrily confronted by a national DARE official, who demanded to know why they were "talking to a pro-marijuana supporter." 28

In a case involving DARE's libel suit against *Rolling Stone* magazine for a critical article, a Federal judge ruled that there was "substantial truth" to the charges in the article that DARE had sought to "suppress scientific research" critical of DARE and had "attempted to silence researchers at the Research Triangle Institute, editors at the *American Journal of Public Health*, and producers at *Dateline: NBC*." 29

Effective Alternatives to DARE

The social norms marketing technique has repeatedly proven effective in reducing the use and abuse of alcohol among young people. It's based on the fact that the vast majority of young people greatly exaggerate in their minds the quantity and frequency of drinking among their peers. Therefore, they tend to drink -- or drink more -- than they would otherwise, in an effort to "fit in."

When credible surveys demonstrate the actual, much lower drinking rates, and the results are widely publicized or "marketed" to this group, the imagined social pressure drops and so does youthful drinking. The technique works with both alcohol and drugs.

And if this weren't enough, the technique costs very little to implement.

For more about the social norms technique, visit The Social Norms Marketing Approach and Social Norms Marketing Handbook.

A very practical guide to social norms marketing is Michael P. Haines' *A Social Norms Approach to Preventing Binge Drinking at Colleges and Universities*. Newton, Massachusetts: Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention, 1996.

Web sites on social norms marketing include:

- National Social Norms Resource Center (www.socialnorm.org)
- Higher Education Center (www.edc.org/hec/socialnorms")
- Montana Social Norms Project (www.mostofus.org/)
- Alcohol Education Project (www.hws.edu/Aca/depts/alcohol)
- Social Norms 101 Primer (academic.hws.edu/alcohol/SocialNormsPrimer.html)

Brief intervention techniques have also proven effective. To learn more, visit Brief Intervention Techniques. See also Brief Intervention Can Reduce College Alcohol Abuse.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Education has identified the following programs as effective for specific target groups. They include:

- **Life Skills Training Program (LST)** -LST is a school-based substance abuse prevention program for students 10-14 years of age. It teaches general personal and social skills, specific resistance skills, and normative information. 30
- **Project ALERT** - Project ALERT is also a school-based program, in this case for students in middle school. It teaches drug abstention norms, reasons to abstain, and resistance skills. 31
- **Strengthening Families Program (SFP)** - SFP is a substance abuse prevention program for substance-abusing families with children six to12 years of age. 32

While they are limited to restricted target groups, the major disadvantage of these three programs is their cost, which is high to very high. But because they are effective, they are bargains compared to the completely ineffective DARE program. For more alternative programs, visit Alternatives to the Failed DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) Program

With all of the effective programs available, there is simply no excuse to continue using the useless and sometimes counterproductive DARE program. It's important to remember that DARE is expensive in terms of both money and time. Every hour devoted to DARE is an hour lost to math, reading, or even to an effective abuse prevention program.

Our young people deserve much better.

Important Facts about DARE

DARE has been charged with "cribbing" its program from a curriculum developed by someone else without that researcher's permission. 33

One researcher discovered that DARE was misrepresenting his findings on its web site to imply that he had found it effective in the long term, which he had not. 34

"Its well established that DARE doesn't work" Dr. Gilbert Botvin - Cornell Medical Center. 35

"Research shows that, no, DARE hasn't been effective in reducing drug use" William Modzeleski, Top Drug education official at the Department of Education. 36

"I think the program should be entirely scrapped and redeveloped anew."

Dr. William Hansen, who helped design the original DARE curriculum. 37

DARE is "a fraud on the people of America," says the mayor of Salt Lake City, asserting that "For far too long our drug-prevention policies have been driven by mindless adherence to a wasteful, ineffective, feel-good program." 38

"Anything is better than nothing, but common sense says more is better," DARE leadership says. 39 DARE's solution is to expand DARE by beginning it in earlier grades and extending it to higher grades. More of an ineffective program can't make it effective. Apparently the head of DARE also thinks a dog could catch its tail if only it could run faster.

DARE has made about a dozen revisions to its program. Each time another study reports that the program is ineffective, DARE responds by saying that the results apply to "the old program." Each revision has proven to be just as ineffective as the one it follows, but it's a very effective tactic to distract and confuse the public.

DARE is testing another revision. However, it remains essentially the same, "with only superficial changes. The same student handbook will be used, with the same messages that do not work." 40 Preliminary evaluations have found the rates of alcohol and drug use among students participating in the "new" DARE program to be the same as those among students using the old, failed DARE. 41

"Critics of DARE say the time is long overdue to dismantle the program and make sure, before exposing children to it, that it is not only effective but, most important, not harmful. They also worry that these changes, like much-heralded changes in the past, will not be significant enough to completely revamp the failing program." 42

"It's a mistake to assume that you can simply design a program and know in advance whether it will be harmful," says Dr. Joan McCord, a leading expert on evaluating programs. "I think of those who created thalidomide. They had good intentions, and look what happened. The harm comes from the failure of programs and programs must be evaluated for safety." 43

DARE argues that "if D.A.R.E. detoured just one child...." communities should support it. Yet if a drug worked one percent of the time, the Food and Drug Administration would pull it off the market. 44 Many experts assert that politics is what has kept the much-criticized program around for so many years, despite a mountain of evidence that it's not only ineffective but sometimes even counterproductive and causing harm to young people. 45

The estimated cost of DARE annually is already $1 to 1.3 billion. 46 That's a lot for a completely ineffective, often counterproductive, program.

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Mind & Brain

The New D.A.R.E. Program—This One Works

The "keepin' it REAL" substance-abuse curriculum focuses on elementary and middle-school students' decisions, not drugs

By Amy Nordrum on September 10, 2014

If you were one of millions of children who completed the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program, or D.A.R.E., between 1983 and 2009, you may be surprised to learn that scientists have repeatedly shown that the program did not work. Despite being the nation's most popular substance-abuse prevention program, D.A.R.E. did not make you less likely to become a drug addict or even to refuse that first beer from your friends.

But over the past few years prevention scientists have helped D.A.R.E. America, the nonprofit organization that administers the program, replace the old curriculum with a course based on a few concepts that should make the training more effective for today's students. The new course, called keepin' it REAL, differs in both form and content from the former D.A.R.E.—replacing long, drug-fact laden lectures with interactive lessons that present stories meant to help kids make smart decisions. Beginning in 2009 D.A.R.E. administrators required middle schools across the country that teach the program to switch over to the 10-week, researcher-designed curriculum for seventh graders. By 2013, they had ordered elementary schools to start teaching a version of those lessons to fifth and sixth graders, too. "It's not an antidrug program," says Michelle Miller-Day, co-developer of the new curriculum and a communications researcher at Chapman University. "It's about things like being honest and safe and responsible." Even so, keepin' it REAL has reduced substance abuse and maintained antidrug attitudes over time among students in early trials—an achievement that largely eluded the former iteration of the program.

D.A.R.E.'s original curriculum was not shaped by prevention specialists but by police officers and teachers in Los Angeles. They started D.A.R.E. in 1983 to curb the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco among teens and to improve community–police relations. Fueled by word of mouth, the program quickly spread to 75 percent of U.S. schools.

But for over a decade research cast doubt on the program's benefits. The Department of Justice funded the first national study of D.A.R.E. and the results, made public in 1994, showed only small short-term reductions in participants' use of tobacco—but not alcohol or marijuana. A 2009 report by Justice referred to 30 subsequent evaluations that also found no significant long-term improvement in teen substance abuse. "Thirty years ago, everyone believed that if you just told students how harmful these substances and behaviors were—they'd stay away from them," says Frank Pegueros, president and CEO of D.A.R.E. America. "I've actually had officers tell me, 'You mean I was doing it wrong for 15 years?' Evidently, we were."

Behavioral scientists started to suggest a different approach as early as 1998, based on research into successful behavior-change techniques. Instead of bombarding students with information in 45-minute lectures, they called for a hands-on program that would build communication and

decision-making skills and let children rehearse these tactics via role play. Eventually D.A.R.E. started to search for a new curriculum, and the program's scientific advisory board selected keepin' it REAL from over 200 listings on a national registry of evidence-based programs maintained by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Now instructors speak only for about eight minutes during each lesson, partly so students can spend more time practicing tough decisions in activities with their friends. "If we teach good decision-making skills, it should transfer from one high-risk behavior to the next," Pegueros says.

Sgt. Christine Rapp, who has been a full-time D.A.R.E. officer at the Hancock County Sheriff's Department in Indiana for 16 years, says these exercises are as popular in the classroom as they are with prevention researchers. "The interaction and group work is awesome because we learn by doing—much more than just by hearing," Rapp says. "When [students] learn the ways to say no to friends, they absolutely love getting up in front of the class and acting those out." Officers teach four ways to say no: *R*efuse, *E*xplain, *A*void and *L*eave (hence the acronym).

The elementary curriculum focuses on developing these four basic skills, says Michael Hecht, a communications researcher at The Pennsylvania State University who developed keepin' it REAL with Miller-Day. And the middle-school curriculum, intended for seventh graders, has the students apply the guidance much more to drugs. The four strategies that make up the acronym were teased from 300 interviews that the two researchers conducted with kids across the country.

Hecht and Miller-Day have authored several of the handful of studies that demonstrated the program's effectiveness and convinced the D.A.R.E. scientific advisory board to adopt it. The largest one, published by Hecht, Miller-Day and their colleagues in 2003, asked 6,000 students to fill out questionnaires about their use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana at several points over a two-year period. The reports from students who completed keepin' it REAL indicated that they sampled these substances less than those in a control group, and used a wider variety of strategies to stay sober. Their antidrug attitudes were also more likely to stick over time. A subset of that study with 1,300 students who were already using drugs, showed that the program reduced substance use at a rate that was 72 percent higher than the control group. Steven West, a rehabilitation counselor at Virginia Commonwealth University who once published a meta-analysis showing D.A.R.E. to have negligible effects, is encouraged by these results. "They are going the right route now—it's based in science," West says.

Richard Clayton, a retired prevention researcher formerly of the University of Kentucky, was also once an outspoken critic of D.A.R.E. but has since been responsible for many science-based improvements to the program after it invited him to join its board of directors and chair its scientific advisory council, which is now stacked with prevention researchers. "They listened to the notion that comes from the literature that you need to be interactive—not didactic lecturing," he says. "I think what they've done is pretty amazing."

West and Clayton also argue that the D.A.R.E. program is worth saving, because it has built a remarkable network of schools and police stations that have proved willing to work together to encourage kids to lead smart, healthy lives. With that network firmly in place, D.A.R.E.'s biggest responsibility is finding the best way to put it to work. "We want to be on the cutting edge of research and science," says John Lindsay, a regional director for D.A.R.E. America. "If you believe

in that, you can't just talk the talk, you have to walk the walk—and I think that's what we've done over the last few years."