



LAKE COUNTY NARCOTICS AGENCY

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P.L.U.S.² Parent's Guide to Week #3

Before we begin with this week's lesson I need to address a question asked by several parents of students in P.L.U.S.². The question is: Why are our children having P.L.U.S.²? Is it because of a drug incident at the school? Is there a problem we don't know about? Actually it's neither. Here's an answer to your question.

In 1995 as I began to put together the overall scope of the P.L.U.S. program. At that time a 5th, 7th and 10th grade component were envisioned. As P.L.U.S. began in 1999 at the 5th grade I was already in the process of writing the 7th grade component, P.L.U.S.². I knew at that time the 5th grade program needed to be in place and operating smoothly before any advancement into the 7th grade program was attempted. In the Spring of 2002 I knew we were ready to move forward with the 7th grade program, and I also knew we needed a place to start and to work out any wrinkles. During the Fall of 2002 I had three schools offer to pilot P.L.U.S.², LaMuth Middle school in Painesville Twp. was one of those schools. I thought LaMuth would be an excellent example to see how the lessons would work out. Our P.L.U.S.² program began in January of 2003 at LaMuth Middle School.

The research is very clear regarding drug prevention success. We know that talking with students at 5th grade is effective, however we know that it is even more effective if we can talk with them again in 7th or 8th grade. We also know that we are even more productive if we can talk with the students a third time while they are in high school. As I already said, we have planned since our beginning to have prevention programs at the 5th, 7th and 10th grades.

We have offered you a *Parent Night* meeting. Unlike 5th grade P.L.U.S., this *parent* night meeting will only be held if you (parents) show an interest in attending. This meeting is not going to be a repeat of what you had in the 5th grade program. We are going to share information regarding P.L.U.S.²; its curriculum content, and a phenomenon known as *normative behavior*. In addition we will be talking about "Prescription Abuse" since this area of drug abuse is becoming the highest form of abuse among youth. We can certainly clear up any additional questions you have at that time.

One last item of interest: There are three main goals of the homework assignments. The first is to prepare the students for participation during the class. The second is to look at the drug issues from a different perspective and thus learn additional information. And the third is to develop and continue dialogue between the students and you (parents) around issues that are extremely important for the developmental age of your child. Due to the nature of some of the homework it may appear that the P.L.U.S.² officer is trying to pry into your private affairs. This is not the case. If during any of the homework assignments you feel that your privacy is being invaded then all you have to do is: A) write a note on the assignment that you and your child have had a discussion related to the homework, B) sign the homework, and C) have your child turn the homework sheet in as normal. No written answers are required on the homework if you follow the above steps.

Now on to the lesson..... This week we have asked the students to research information regarding how they see tobacco and alcohol effecting youth throughout the United States. We then asked the students to write a

Dedicated to Protecting a Great Way of Life

short opinion statement about what they learned through this research search. We asked the students to share with you what they had learned and to receive input from you regarding their opinion statement. As class began we had the students break up into groups according to what they wrote about (either tobacco or alcohol). The goal of the group is to discuss their written opinions on the *Effects of Tobacco (or Alcohol) on Youth in Our Society* using the homework. The discussions within the groups are very good. The groups talk about the issues across several areas like: mothers who smoke or drink and how dangerous that is for the unborn child; Environmental Tobacco Smoke (second-hand smoke); motor vehicle accidents caused by drunk drivers; how media messages make smoking and drinking look cool, fun and safe; how difficult and strong peer-pressure can be; and the new Clean Air Tobacco law which the voters passed in November 2006.

The officer then shared with the students some of the tobacco data compiled through the survey done by the students during the first P.L.U.S.² class. The data was interesting and surprising for the students. Here are some of the results:

I have tried cigarettes without my parents knowledge or permission?
17%

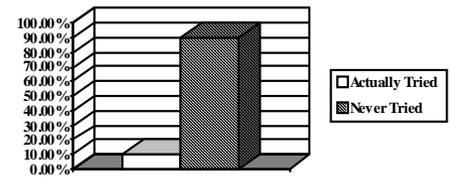
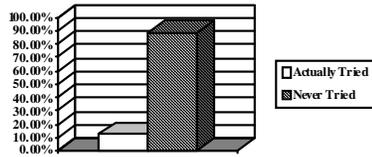
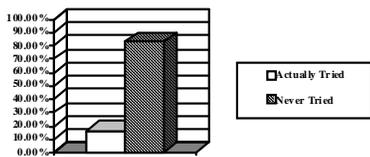
I have used cigarettes, more than 5 times, without my parents knowledge or permission?
12%

I am currently using cigarettes without my parents knowledge or permission?
10%

I have never tried cigarettes without my parents knowledge or permission?
83%

I have never used cigarettes, more than 5 times, without my parents knowledge or permission?
88%

I have never used, nor am I using cigarettes without my parents knowledge or permission?
90%



So what does this all mean? In the first graph the students saw that nowhere near as many students have *tried cigarettes* as they thought. When the students talked about the difference, what they came up with was to fit in, to be like their peers, to be part of the cool group you actually don't need to try cigarettes. In the second graph the students saw that even less peers have *used cigarettes more than 5 times*. And in the third graph the students found that out of 46 students only 4 students said that they *currently smoke*. Even if ten percent of students lied on the survey the fact is very few 7th grade students, who attend Harding, smoke.

The data on Alcohol is better. Twelve percent (12%) of the 7th grade students at Harding indicated that: "I *have tried* alcohol without my parent's knowledge or permission." Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the 7th grade students at Harding indicated that: "I have *never tried* alcohol without my parent's knowledge or permission." Seven percent (7%) indicated: "I *have used alcohol, more than 5 times*, without my parent's knowledge or permission." Ninety-three percent (93%) indicated: "I *have never used alcohol, more than 5 times*, without my parent's knowledge or permission. Three percent (2.5%) indicated: "I *am currently using* alcohol without my parent's knowledge or permission." Which leaves ninety-seven percent (97.5%) who indicated: "I *am not currently using* alcohol without my parent's knowledge or permission."

The students actually seemed relieved to know that the majority of their peers don't smoke or drink, and more of them haven't even tried!

We will be showing all of the data collected in our survey during the P.L.U.S.² Parent's Night. As we continue through the P.L.U.S.² lessons we will continue to share the data with the students. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Officer Willis at the Lake County Narcotics Agency, phone 440-350-3302 or 440-918-3302.