

“Words to be Heard” Scholarship

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How do we get our teenagers to have good decision-making skills? Is there a way to teach our young adults to be leaders and have confidence? What about positive interpersonal skills, can they help in our awareness of alcohol and its abuse? Although school-based programs do exist throughout the country, we need to make improvements that increase the results of the message!

My program will provide segments on alcohol abuse, underage drinking, drunk driving and even property damage.

The target ages will be students in grades 9 through 12. What about incentives?

Positive, constructive incentives can be a good thing. For example, when you have a job and you are offered another job making more money that is an incentive to leave the first job. So, if there was a benefit for young drivers through offering incentives it could have an impact. I am proposing a 9-week course for all students each year of grades 9 through 12. The class will be limited to the standard students per class ratio as with any other subject, so that questions may be addressed. In fact, it will become part of the Health Class curriculum. Many current programs offer an auditorium style format which creates a chaotic atmosphere that hinders grasping material. Below is the layout of the program by grade:

Grade 9: Students are instructed on the abuse of alcohol. This will include the effects that alcohol has on not just the abuser but that person's friends, family, fellow students and all of society. Tools will include a few films focusing on individuals and their abuse, study guides, quizzes and a final exam will be given.

Grade 10: After a short review of the 9th grade abuse segment, students will move more into the underage segments in the 10th grade. This section will specifically be the dangers and conflicts that occur while underage drinking. It will focus on the conflicts and dysfunctional tendencies that can occur while underage drinking. There will be a lead into the driving segment. Again with the aid of films, study guides, quizzes and the final exam, students will be taught phase II of the program.

Grade 11: The main objective of the grade 11 course is to bring home the drinking and driving message. This course would include speakers, specifically loved ones of those killed by drunk drivers. This part of the program will also provide police presentations. The officers will review the laws, including what the legal limits for alcohol intake are. They will review all of the legal aspects of what happens when you are pulled over for driving under the influence. This will include everything from the breathalyzer test to taking classes for alcohol abuse when you are found guilty of the offense. There will be classroom demonstrations of the roadside sobriety tests as well. This class will be a more hands on experience for young drivers but will still include the study guides, quizzes and a final exam.

Grade 12: The grade 12 course will include a general overall review of the 9, 10, and 11th grade segments. There will be additional concentration on driving under the influence, with a focus on personal injury, death and property damage.

In the beginning of this outline of my program, I talked about perks. The certification becomes the perk for this course. The cooperation of the State of Pennsylvania along with the Auto Insurance Companies will make this perk possible. Right now most Auto Insurance Companies provide a discount to teenage drivers or their parents for good grades. With my program, you do not have to be a topnotch student to enjoy a discount on your car insurance. As long as the student obtains a C during each of the 9-week courses, they will receive certification and will be eligible for the discount. The insurance companies, with backing from the state, would agree to this discount program in lieu of the good grades discount. The discount program would be called PA Teens for Alcohol

Awareness. The discount would in fact be one flat rate for all certified teens regardless of the insurance company.

What is the benefit of this program? First, all students are required to participate in the course. Teenagers are gaining valuable information about the problems associated with alcohol. They are provided with reinforcement through the continuation of the program year after year. Teens will become more aware of the alcohol problem around them and will intervene when they see wrongdoing at school or school-related events. They are gaining knowledge to help develop their interpersonal skills. It will give them the confidence to become leaders in the fight against alcohol abuse. For their efforts, they have a chance to earn a discount on their insurance, making it more affordable for the large amount of students whose parents cannot pay for it. The education of the students would be beneficial to the insurance companies since they will not be dealing with as many accidents or potential accidents and deaths. Insuring good, safe and informed drivers is paramount. The state will also be rewarded by the program, as they will most likely not be pulling over as many drivers under the influence or investigating as many accidents related to youths and alcohol.

I had two main goals in designing this program. The first was to find something that would teach, benefit and reward not only the students, but the State of Pennsylvania as well. The second was to give all students the opportunity to be able to drive SAFELY and AFFORDABLY. There are many students who are unable to keep a certain grade point average no matter how hard they try. I feel that does not mean they are bad drivers. A student being rewarded an A average can be just as likely to drink and drive as a student who has a C average. Combining the awareness in the form of an equal reward makes sense to me.