

# “Words to be Heard” Scholarship

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A real life experience is the most effective tool to teach with. However, it is impossible to give pre-teens or teens alcohol by law, so my plan involves a program with several simulations on how drinking affects a person and their life.

The program would start with a movie presentation in a school auditorium on how teens view alcohol, and then move into the statistics of how alcohol affects a person's life immediately and in the future, paying special attention to the costs of drinking monetarily, physically, and emotionally. Usually, such presentations end with a guest speaker, but instead students will be asked to move out into the hall. During the presentation, several tables and activities will be set up in the hallways or lobby outside the auditorium, to which the students will now have free access. Features would include a guest speaker, preferably a reformed alcoholic, a policemen who would explain how underage drinking and drinking and driving are prosecuted, a drunk-driving simulation, alcohol simulation goggles, price comparisons between other party beverages and alcohol, and whatever else the budget would allow. Giving the students a chance to move around and learn will make them more attentive to what is being said, and let them choose what to spend the greatest time at. This will not only reinforce the message, but allow kids to find their own unique reason for not drinking. Each station should be used by every participant, and a punch card will keep track of the students' progress through them. When filled, the punch card could be exchanged for a choice of prizes like pencils, erasers, notebooks, or other school supplies with anti-alcohol propaganda on them. This incentive should entice kids to use every station and learn everything.

During this presentation, non-alcoholic beer would be distributed as a beverage. The students will not be told that it is non-alcoholic, just that it is beer. This drink would also have a staining agent added, the agent they use to detect plaque in a dentist's office. Every student who partook of the refreshment would then have pink teeth, easily detectable. After a length of time the students would be gathered back to the auditorium, where each would be checked for the tooth dye. If a student had pink teeth, they would be taken on stage. Each student would then be assigned a fake life. Each life for the people on stage would include the effects of alcohol and have a counterpart in the crowd who had the same life without drinking. Students on stage would then read their lives out loud to the rest of the audience, who would attempt to match lives with the person who is reading. If they matched, then that student would be asked to go up on stage as well and read their life, the one without alcohol. This can be repeated as necessary, but would probably be best if there were three or four such readings. This would show teens and pre-teens how easy it is to start drinking and ruin their life, as well as give each student a taste of the real consequence for that choice.

After all this, another movie would play. It would pay particular attention to the alternatives to drinking and the consequences of drinking. It would serve primarily to reinforce and wrap up the program with a powerful finish. This section should also include speeches by people whose lives were ruined by alcohol and what those people are doing now without it. An emotional story about someone who has effectively reformed speaking about how much better their life is without alcohol would also have a great effect here. This would be the end of the program, and students would be free to return to class.

In all, this plan has much freedom. Because of its piecemeal nature, if one piece of the presentation is unavailable, then it is easy to substitute another similar section for it or delete the section from the program altogether. The time is also flexible, and would require just two hours to complete at minimum, but could be stretched to half a day or even a whole day depending on the size of the school. There would be some cost involved though. Using resources from the police would probably be free, considering

that it is part of their duty to stop crimes before they happen, as well as arrest criminals. The guest speaker would also not be a cost, as it is easy to find someone who would be happy to speak to students in a community. The simulation goggles and driving simulator can be provided at little cost by various non-profit groups who share the same goal, to stop drinking before it starts. In our area, the Pennsylvania Driving Under the Influence Association ([www.padui.org](http://www.padui.org)) can provide such a service. The largest cost would be the nonalcoholic beer and the tooth dye to go in it. This would need to be replaced for each presentation, and it is not cheap. The best way to pay for it is to charge the school a fee for that part of the program. The presentation can go without it, though the impact would decrease. As a possibly cheaper alternative, some other beverage could be substituted, like grape juice to simulate wine. Hopefully, the program can be partnered with other non-profit groups for funding so that there are no charges involved. Partnerships could provide many things other than money as well, like a partnership with Alcoholics Anonymous to provide guest speakers at little or no cost.

Using these measures will not stop students from drinking. That is a Herculean task, and clearly impossible. However, if we can stop just a few people, I would call the program a great success. I myself have seen the consequences of drinking when my friends were caught on underage drinking charges. This program would be an effective countermeasure against underage drinking, drinking and driving, and alcoholism in teenagers and pre-teen students.