

The Effectiveness of Random Drug Testing Programs:
A Statewide Follow-up Study

By

Joseph R. McKinney, J.D., Ed.D.
Chair and Professor
Department of Educational Leadership, Ball State University
Adjunct Professor of Law, Indiana University/Indianapolis School of Law
Muncie, IN 47306
jmckinne@bsu.edu

The Effectiveness of Random Drug Testing Programs: A Statewide Follow-up Study

Introduction

In August of 2000, the Indiana Court of Appeals ruled that suspicionless (random) drug-testing of students was unconstitutional under the Indiana Constitution. At the time of the ruling approximately 65 high schools in Indiana had implemented student random drug-testing programs. All of those schools halted their random drug-testing programs after the decision. The Indiana Supreme Court set aside the appellate court's decision in January of 2002 and reversed the appellate court during the summer of 2002.

In a previous study released in 2002, the researcher asked Indiana high school principals to compare drug and alcohol activity during the 1999-2000 school year when random drug-testing policies were in effect with the 2000-2001 school year when schools were not allowed to engage in random drug testing programs. Results of the previous study may be found under 'Effectiveness' at www.studentdrugtesting.org.

This study is presented as a follow-up to the 2002 study for the purposes of determining how many schools in Indiana re-implemented random drug-testing programs after suspending those programs in the late summer of 2000 and the effectiveness of the re-implemented drug-testing programs as compared to the previous school year when random drug testing was suspended.

Methodology

Sixty-five high schools were identified as having random drug-testing programs that were suspended in August, 2000 (based upon information gathered in the first study). The survey instrument was sent to the principals of the 65 high schools. Fifty-nine principals responded representing 90.7% of high schools with random drug-testing programs.

Results

1. 94% of principals reported believing that the random drug-testing policy discourages drug and alcohol use among students
2. 88% (52) of high school principals responding to the survey reported re-implementation of random drug-testing at their schools
3. 73% of the principals reported a decrease in drug usage (compared to the period without a random drug-testing program) among students who are subject to the drug-testing policy
25% of principals reported that drug use "remained the same"
2% (1) reported an increase in drug usage

4. 51% of the high school principals reported a decrease in alcohol usage (compared to the period without a random drug-testing program) among students at their school who are subject to the random drug-testing policy

45% of principals reported that alcohol use "remained the same"

4% reported an increase in the use of alcohol

26% of principals reported that their drug-testing program did not test for alcohol. Most of these principals responded to the alcohol use question with "remained the same"
5. 81% of principals reported that the information on decreases in drug and alcohol usage was based upon reports from students

71% stated that their drug and alcohol usage responses were based upon information from teachers and staff members

38% drew their drug and alcohol usage information from formal surveys of students conducted at the schools

36% stated that their information on drug and alcohol usage among students came from law enforcement sources
6. 63% of the principals stated that athletic coaches provided information that the student athletes were involved in fewer incidents of drug usage as compared to the period without a random drug-testing program
7. 98% of the high school principals reported that the drug-testing policy covers students participating in interscholastic athletics

78% reported policies that cover students participating in extra-curricular activities

50% reported policies that cover students participating in co-curricular activities

80% reported policies that cover students wishing to drive on school property
8. 86% of the high school principals surveyed stated that the random drug-test is conducted using urinalysis
9. 40% of principals responding to the survey reported that fewer students had been suspended from participation in athletic programs for drug use since re-implementation of the random drug-testing program