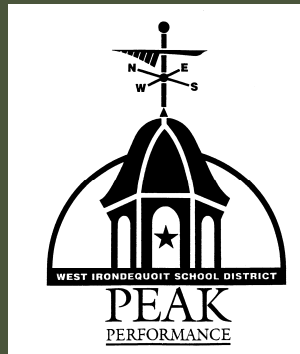


West Irondequoit Central School District  
**Drug & Alcohol Task Force**  
**Presentation**



June 4, 2009  
*for the West Irondequoit Board of Education*

## ***Committee Chairs***

**Rita Dulaney**, Substance Abuse Prevention Counselor  
**Tim Terranova**, Principal (Dake)

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## ***Committee Members***

**Mark Head**, Parent (IHS)  
**Melanie Falvo**, Student (IHS)  
**Christine Perry**, Parent (IHS)  
**Hilary Young**, Student, (IHS)  
**Renee Bosco**, Teacher (IHS)  
**Pat McCue**, Principal (IHS)  
**Kevin Martin**, Parent (IHS)  
**Dawn Soufleris**, Parent (District)  
**Dennis DesRosiers**, Teacher (Dake)  
**Gretchen Tortora**, PTSA President  
**Mary Beth Robinson-Vay**, Community Member  
**Chuck Montante**, Community Member

# Charge of the Task Force

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**Our purpose is to study and evaluate the current regulations addressing drug and alcohol use tied to our district policy on this matter and make recommendations to the Superintendent & Board of Education about these regulations. Our work should support educated recommendations based on the purpose of the policy, data available, research available, and our own insights.**

# Overview of Process

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- ❑ Solidify understanding of regulations, policy, and individual task force members thoughts and biases
- ❑ Use these thoughts and ideas to narrow focus on the specific issues that need to be addressed tied to the charge of the committee
- ❑ Consult specific research to support/adjust opinions based on the above issues and the information in the research
- ❑ Consult district data and the regulations of other districts to add to our insights
- ❑ Use structured discourse opportunities throughout the process to synthesize ideas and create solutions

# Decision Making Process

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1. Consensus wherever possible
2. In the absence of consensus, communicate to the Board of Education the varying ideas and the level of consensus related to each of these ideas

# Issues Addressed (Broad Based)

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- ❑ Fairness in the process: rest of student body
- ❑ Access to education: Length of suspension → Lack of tutoring time → Are they able to keep up academically?
- ❑ Tutoring : possible disconnect for the individual child from school – impact on academics
- ❑ Teaching accountability (student accountability)
- ❑ Burden on the family as well as the role of the family; Family/School District
- ❑ Tutoring → student viewpoints → only two hours, unsupervised before and after tutoring.

# Issues Addressed (Broad Based)

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- ❑ Can't forget the safety & well being of all the students
- ❑ Research → Efficacy of out of school suspension? → disconnect? Alternatives that are well thought out.
- ❑ Preparing them for the real world in terms of consequences for drug/alcohol use, employees
- ❑ "One size fits all" interpretation
- ❑ Rehabilitation piece for students (disconnect from school)

# Issues (Condensed)

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- ❑ The academic progress/connectedness of students who are caught possessing or using alcohol & other drugs
- ❑ Accountability- in terms of the student caught with alcohol or other drugs and the safety and well being of the student body
- ❑ Suspension Time

# Research Synopsis

- ❑ There is little empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of either punishment policies or prevention & intervention policies in terms of alcohol/other drug use (*A Review of School Drug Policies and their Impact on Youth Substance Use, 2004, pg. 232.*)
- ❑ The lack of professional assistance at the time of exclusion from school, a time when a student most needs it, increases the risk of permanent school drop out (*American Academy of Pediatrics—Out of School Suspension and Expulsion, 2003, pg. 1207.*)
- ❑ Harsh consequences for first time offenses create an authoritative environment in which students feel less connected. Overall level of school connectedness is lower in schools that temporarily expel students for minor offenses such as alcohol consumption (*Promoting School Connectedness: Adolescent Health, 2002, pgs 139 & 145*)
- ❑ Very appealing for adolescents to drink-when they drink, they usually drink heavily. The appeal of alcohol to adolescents is linked to factors in their environment- including school. Replace an environment that enables it to an environment that discourages it; be strict and consistently enforce a strong policy against alcohol & other drugs (*Surgeon General Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking, 2007, pgs. 1-11.*)

# Research Synopsis

- ❑ Out of school suspension and expulsion interrupt students' educational progress and remove students from school at a time when they may most need stability and guidance...suspensions and expulsion reduce adult supervision and give students unstructured time in which to get in trouble (*Building Blocks for Youth, 2003*).
- ❑ Protective factors of a strong school include behavioral limits and consequences that are clearly articulated and consequences that are predictable and consistently applied to all students (*Connections Resource Guide, 2004, pg. 33*).
- ❑ Strict penalties and messages of abstinence are the strongest deterrent to drug/alcohol use on campus. (*School, Parent, and Student Perspectives of School Drug Policies, 2007, pg. 145*).
- ❑ When you remove students from the opportunity to learn you potentially weaken the school bond with this student...There is a need for alternative programs that continue to provide educational opportunities to students even after being suspended from school. (*Handbook of Classroom Management, 2006, pgs 1065 & 1081*).

# Interpretations of Research

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- ❑ No one believes having a student away from school and adult support for long periods of time is the ideal situation for that particular student
- ❑ Nationally, out of school suspension has probably been used too much for too many things
- ❑ Most research (and common sense) believes alcohol and other drug use in school is not a minor offense
- ❑ There is debate over the effectiveness of different types of policies toward alcohol & other drug use in school; however, there is specific evidence that predictable, strong, consistent, and even harsh policies are the strongest deterrent (small amount of evidence)

# In-District Data

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- Since the year 2000, 144 students (7-12) were suspended for alcohol and other drugs
- 134 out of 144 participated in the existing program of support
  - 2 refused
  - 3 did not follow through
  - 2 went directly to in-patient rehabilitation
  - 2 moved
  - 1 was incarcerated

# In-District Data

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- Since the year 2000, more than three-fourths of the IHS and Dake students who participated in the existing program of support were recommended for outpatient treatment at some level after being evaluated by a drug/alcohol agency.

# In-District Data

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- ❑ 85% of the students who were suspended for possession/use of alcohol & other drugs graduated after 4 years of high school (Irondequoit High School 4 year graduation rate is 85%)
- ❑ The average GPA for the fall semester of 2008 for the 11 students in 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade suspended during that time was 79.0
- ❑ The average GPA of these same students the previous fall semester was 81.0

# Comparison to Other District Regulations

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- ❑ 5 out of 12 surveyed schools have less stringent regulations compared to West Irondequoit (*in terms of suspension time for alcohol and other drugs*)
- ❑ 5 out of 12 have similar regulations compared to West Irondequoit
- ❑ 2 out of 12 have more stringent regulations compared to West Irondequoit

# Consensus Regarding *School Connectedness*

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- ❑ The exclusion of students from the school setting without proper supports and/or sophisticated interventions is a major issue. The re-engagement of students caught with alcohol & other drugs is a priority.
- ❑ For the vast majority of students who use/bring alcohol and other drugs to school there needs to be some type of intervention, including family intervention.

# Recommended Solution

## *School Connectedness*

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A prescribed program of intervention that includes academic support, community service, and life skills training using the following guidelines:

- No less than four hours of academic support through a licensed tutor/teacher hired by the district
- Life skills support occurring on a daily basis through a district hired support person
- Community Service that occurs on a daily basis and consists of both service within the district and service that occurs in a contextually therapeutic situation involving reflection on this experience
- Mentoring possibilities using viable candidates as designated by school personnel

*Full Consensus*

# Consensus Regarding

## *Accountability/Suspension Time*

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- ❑ Experimenting with alcohol and other drugs at school is a sign of trouble.

*Full consensus*

- ❑ The Board of Education expects the “Clarity of its stance against illicit substances will be maintained in all cases” (Policy 7320). Hence, a prescribed amount of time out of normal classes.

*Vast majority of task force members*

# Recommended Solution

## *Accountability/Suspension Time*

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- Have a concrete amount of time that a child is suspended for alcohol & other drug use (20 weeks out).

*Full Consensus*

# Consensus Regarding

## *Accountability/Suspension Time*

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- ❑ There are circumstances where students should be allowed to come back to normal classes earlier than 20 weeks (unique circumstance, awful judgment, program of intervention)
- ❑ The substance abuse counselor must be the professional who makes the decision about unique instances and recommends to the Superintendent when a child should be allowed back to classes earlier than the prescribed suspension time
- ❑ The substance abuse counselor must be protected from administrative, student, and parent influence during this process

# Recommended Solution

## *Accountability/Suspension Time*

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- ❑ Return to academic classes when the drug & alcohol counselor felt the child was following through with the program of support.
- ❑ This could mean that the child would be back in academic classes potentially as soon as the initial five days of suspension is over while he/she and the family are actively & consistently following through with the program of support
- ❑ Students would also be subject to further suspension time if the drug & alcohol counselor felt the student was not following through with the program

*3 out of 12 Task Force Members agreed with this solution*

# Recommended Solution

## *Accountability/Suspension Time*

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- ❑ Return to school before 20 weeks is over after a prescribed program of support is completed.
- ❑ The decision to bring back the student earlier than 20 weeks would rest on the drug & alcohol counselor's recommendation with final approval granted by the Superintendent.

*9 out of 12 Task Force Members agreed with this solution*

# Recommended Solution

## *Accountability/Suspension Time*

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### Two Options within the Previous Idea

- Impose a minimum suspension time for the vast majority of students who were suspended for these reasons (7 weeks at IHS; 5 weeks at Dake). In unique cases, the substance abuse counselor could recommend an earlier return than 7 weeks if he or she feels it is warranted

*7 out of the 9 Task Force Members agreed with this solution*

- Attach no minimum suspension time to the 20-week suspension. Students would be able to come back when the substance abuse counselor deemed it was appropriate. However, no student would be allowed back to classes until the prescribed program of support was completed, which may take a number of weeks

*2 out of the 9 Task Force Members agreed with this solution*

# Recommended Solution

## *Other Aspects of the Regulations 2<sup>nd</sup> Offense/Selling*

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- ❑ Both for a second offense for possessing/using alcohol and other drugs at school and for selling or distributing alcohol & other drugs, the student who is caught should participate in all available interventions (a program of support), and still have an opportunity for a reduced suspension from 40 weeks.
- ❑ The substance abuse counselor makes this recommendation

*Minority of Task force Members*

# Recommended Solution

## *Other Aspects of the Regulations*

### *2<sup>nd</sup> Offense/Selling*

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Regulations stay the same

□ 2<sup>nd</sup> Offense

- 40 week suspension
- Program of support under the direction of the substance abuse counselor
- In some exceptional circumstances, the 40-week suspension may be reduced as designated by the substance abuse counselor

□ Sale or Distribution of alcohol & other drugs

- 40 week suspension
- Program of support under the direction of the substance abuse counselor
- **No** opportunity for a reduced suspension

*Majority of Task Force Members*

# Recommended Solution

## *Other Aspects of the Regulations*

### *Miscellaneous*

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- ❑ Accredited Agencies
- ❑ Emphasize communication of the specifics of these regulations to the highest degree
- ❑ Biennial assessments of risk behaviors among students
- ❑ Replace “guilty” with “responsible”
- ❑ Replace “illicit substances” with “alcohol & other drugs”

# In Summary

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- ❑ There was an emphasis on allowing each viewpoint to be heard
- ❑ There was significant consensus on a variety of issues that strengthen the regulations and support our children
- ❑ In the absence of consensus, there were strong opinions that are clear cut and easily distinguishable from one another
- ❑ Regardless of these opinions, everyone on the task force operated with the best interest of kids at heart