

**THE ATTITUDES OF EIGHTH
GRADE STUDENTS TOWARD
QUEST-SKILLS FOR ADOLESCENCE**

A MASTER'S PROJECT

**Submitted to the Department of Teacher Education,
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Master of Science in Education**

by

**Mary J. Buechler
School of Education
UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON
Dayton, Ohio
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Approved by:

~~Official Advisor~~

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DEDICATION

I dedicate my master's project in the school of education to my two daughters, Katie and Chelsea Buechler, for their patience and unconditional love.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose for the Study

Quest-type programs are growing in popularity around the United States. Many educators advocate such programs as a means of dealing with student issues as low self-esteem, negative peer pressure, poor communication in relationships, substance abuse, and other negative outcomes from unhealthy life choices. Other educational researchers question whether these programs like Quest are a successful way to deal with these issues based on students' attitude toward these programs.

Today's adolescents are faced with numerous challenges that make it difficult for them to consider healthy life choices. Adolescence is a period marked by rapid and confusing emotional and physical changes for young people which place their development at risk (Gerler, 1989). Dohner and Kester (1990) found that the middle school-educators' primary concern is addressing the developmental needs of the early adolescent so that he/she may develop into a responsible adult. Schools are encouraged to place emphasis on providing protective programs for youth at risk of substance abuse and other negative outcomes from unhealthy life choices.

According to Bennett (1986), the foremost responsibility of any society is to nurture and protect its children. In America, the most serious threat to the health and well being of children is drug use. Society recognizes this threat and acknowledges that children need support from parents, schools, and communities who work together to give similar messages and actively model and teach the behaviors that are expected of our young people (Benson, 1990).

Almost every school system in the country has some sort of drug and alcohol policy and prevention program in place (Bradley, 1988). Valley City Schools* has implemented the Quest-Skills for Adolescence (SFA) program at the seventh and eighth grade level for the past seven years (1990-97). This program and the assisted classroom lessons had been carefully selected; and they have also received school board approval. Since Quest's inception in Valley City Schools, the curriculum for other classes has changed. For example, in 1994-95, a health class was added at the seventh grade level and proficiency/career experience class at the eighth grade level. Project Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) continues to be the drug prevention program for grades 4-6 in the school district. Does the overlap of these courses and DARE affect the SFA students' feelings toward the Quest-Skills for Adolescence curriculum? Some research has been done on the success of drug and alcohol prevention programs used throughout the country. Most programs note a positive change in student attitude, while other research indicates no significant change in student attitude (Williams, Ward, & Gray, 1985). Williams, Ward, and Gray (1985) found in their research that programs designed to alter attitudes towards drugs and other negative choices have short comings. They neglect to study attitude change over time.

The importance placed on Quest SFA by the school district may impact students' attitude toward the Quest curriculum. Quest SFA is a required six-week course at both the seventh and eighth grade level. The program had been a source of controversy to the community. In the early 1990's, a religious group of Freedom 2000 advocates came into

* Valley City is a pseudonym.

the communities near Valley City and criticized the Quest program. According to this group, Quest and DARE actually cause drug use in young people. Some community members were strong in their belief that values are to be taught at home and through church and not through the public schools. The school district allows parents to sign their children out of the course when parents challenge the value/character education part of the program. These children are exempt from the program and are assigned to study hall.

Quest-SFA is a part of the arts block in the school day. Students receive a grade for the six-week Quest class. This grade, however, does not influence grade retention as does the academic courses. The writer feels that this may influence student attitude toward the importance of the class.

After seven years, the Quest curriculum needs to be looked at in a more thoughtful, critical fashion. Student attitude toward a subject matter is a good indicator of how successful a program is in a school. A need exists to determine how well the program is working in the district and to determine if possible changes are needed in the near future. The course of study for the Quest program is due to be revised during the 1997-98 school year. The research done for this paper will be helpful as part of this revision process.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study is to analyze the attitudes of the eighth grade student who have participated in the Quest-Skills for Adolescence curriculum.

Research Questions

Do students manifest a positive attitude toward the Quest-SFA program?

Is there a significant difference between the male and female respondents?

Methodology

The subjects chosen for the study were eighth grade students who had participated in the Quest-Skills for Adolescence (SFA) program at the middle school level in a small southwestern Ohio community. These subjects were eighth grade students who had taken two 6-week blocks of Quest SFA. Approximately 300 eighth graders were in the district at the time of the study. One 6-week block occurred during their seventh grade year and the second occurred during their eighth grade year.

The instrument used was a Likert-type questionnaire. The instrument was constructed by the researcher who used information gathered from review of the literature on which established content validity; the instrument was then reviewed by the building staff and principal. The instrument addressed the goals and skills of the Quest SFA program.

The instrument was administered to a sample of approximately 181 eighth grade students during a twenty minute homeroom in late May 1996.

Assumptions

An order to carry out the study, the Likert-type questionnaire was used to measure eighth grade students' attitudes toward the Quest SFA curriculum. The researcher assumed that students honestly responded to the statements addressed in the questionnaire.

Limitations

The writer found several limitations effecting this study. One of the limitations of the study was that the Quest program was a two year, twelve week program. As a result, only eighth grade students who completed both six week programs were surveyed

because they participated in two years of the program. The sample size was 181 students. Many students were excluded because they did not complete both segments of the program. Findings may have been more accurate if a larger number of pupils were used or if the instrument had been administered over a two year period.

Another limitation of the study was the time of the year with in which the students were surveyed. The Likert-type questionnaire was not completed until late May, 1996. Students' focus on school may have been diminished due to the time of school year, and the dimmed focus may have been reflected in their response to the survey.

Definitions

Attitude is a student's positive or negative feeling towards a given topic.

Quest-Skills for Adolescence (SFA) is a youth development and drug abuse prevention program designed for students grades six through eight.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Aspects of Quest-Skills for Adolescence (SFA)

In the flurry of new programs that deal with student self-esteem, several existing models stand out. One of most effective approaches available for working with students that is used in numerous schools in the United States and abroad is Skills for Adolescence (SFA), a program for middle and junior high schools developed by Quest International. As a result of a partnership between and among Quest, the American Association of School Administrators and Lions Clubs International, this program combines the best recent research with practical applications (Green, 1989). Its comprehensive approach includes many of the key components called for by nearly every major report on youth at risk. These include:

- Increased parent involvement
- Enhanced inservice training for classroom teachers,
- Enhanced service learning opportunities for students,
- Enhanced community partnerships with schools, and
- Enhanced emphasis on teaching students skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and goal setting.

SFA is designed to be a semester long program for students who are in grades six through eight. Many districts find it more workable to alter this time period. For example, the Valley City school district designed their Quest program over a two year span totaling twelve weeks because it fit into the time slot available. Other districts may teach Quest one period a week during a study hall, homeroom, or a social studies class.

The program offers detailed lesson plans and a full array of curriculum materials, including parents and student guides (see Appendix A for a sample of the materials). The program gives youth a wide variety of opportunities to interact with others and to explore the issues that they deal with as adolescents..

This Quest program has a number of goals that are important in order for the youth of today to lead productive and successful lives. One of the major goals of the program is for students to discuss aspects of early adolescence in order to gain a greater understanding of the changes they are beginning to experience. According to Gerler (1986), this helps students see that they actually have a great deal in common and that the unpredictability and irregularity of the changes they are experiencing are normal, and that their concerns and anxieties are far from unique.

The program guide for Quest SFA by Quest International (1992) includes goals for helping young people to develop the positive social behaviors and skills necessary to lead healthy productive lives. Little (1985), the founder of Quest, points out that all the Quest programs emphasize important social and personal skills that students will need as they progress through adolescence and later on in life. According to Little, Quest helps schools find positive ways to deal with the issues of today's youth. Skills for Living is the program for elementary grades and leads into the SFA program researched for this project. It helps young people develop strong commitments to themselves, peers, schools, and communities. The program encourages service learning through school and community. Generally speaking, students who are involved in their school and community are less likely to get involved with drugs and alcohol. Adolescents who feel that they are separate from the mainstream and who long to be accepted have difficulty

saying no to drugs because that may further isolate and alienate them in relationships to others (Gerler, 1986).

As youth move into the junior and senior high schools, parents generally have fewer opportunities to be involved in their lives. Yet research consistency shows that parent and family involvements play a key role in a child's development.

According to Green (1989), the SFA curriculum encourages parent involvement through parent meetings that focus on adolescent issues, a book covering these issues, and service learning projects. The parent connection is fostered in an attempt to enhance relationships between parents and their children.

The SFA program is a response to teach skills that are universal at the middle and junior high level (Quest International, 1992). These skills have been grouped into seven unique program aspects. One category is that the program teaches students skills in building self-discipline, responsibility, and self confidence. The teen years, a time when even the most self-assured kids are likely to doubt themselves, pose special difficulties for youth at risk (Green, 1989). Thus, teachers need to be involved in enhancing student self confidence. The program also emphasizes positive discipline and self-discipline.

The second aspect is that the program teaches students skills in communicating effectively and cooperating with others. Such skills help students defuse conflicts that are likely to occur in their lives with peers, family, and forms of authority. Conflict resolution is a "hot" topic in today's schools. It also relates to another aspect of SFA that teaches students to strengthen their relationships with family and peers. Topics that are not specifically addressed anywhere else (e.g., communication skills, peer pressure, and conflict resolution) in the school curriculum are dealt with in SFA (Green, 1989).

The fourth aspect of the program is that it teaches students skills in learning developing skills for solving problems and making healthy choices when students grapple with issues such as sexuality, self-image, chemical substances, peer pressure, and the need to weigh tough decisions. The program empowers students to control their choices.

The fifth aspect teaches students skills in resisting negative peer pressure and drug use. Students are exposed to a wide range of mixed messages and negative influences. We as educators need to teach youth how to deal with the variety of pressures they will face and give them opportunities to put their new skills into practice. Actual practice in resisting negative influences is part of the SFA curriculum.

The sixth aspect of SFA teaches students skills in setting goals and then following through to ensure that goals are achieved. Students need direction in setting realistic, achievable goals. The Quest teacher is a role model in this regard. People are more likely to reach their true potential when they set goals and then work to achieve those goals.

The final aspect of SFA is that the program teaches students skills in providing service to others. SFA students generally are asked to survey the needs of their school and community. Through the decision making process, students practice service learning through their class service project. The project allows students to volunteer to help others; such volunteering creates a sense of self-worth and involvement in a positive cause.

The Quest programs are values-based curricula (Quest International, 1992). The core values they consistently reinforce are the positive behaviors of self-discipline, good

judgment, responsibility, honesty, and the positive commitments to family, school, peers, and community. As these values are learned and practiced, young people are encouraged to develop the positive attitudes and behaviors that form the basis of personal character and integrity.

According to Quest International (1992), it no way supports or promotes “value clarification,” a term that refers to the technique of leading participants to think about their values without judgment, discussion, or definition of right or wrong. Quest promotes values and clear messages about right and wrong such as “drug use is wrong.” The Quest program sends only one message about drug use to young people and that is: “no illegal use of legal substances and no use of illegal substances.”

Other Prevention Programs

Almost every school system in the country has a drug and alcohol abuse policy as well as a curriculum that is often mandated by the state. In general, educators and legislators still believe that education can help young people resist drugs and alcohol. Many school districts either adopt or modify existing drug curricula or to create their own. Educators and legislators have hoped that drug prevention may be effected by positive classroom training of young people to make informed decisions. According to Ellickson (1985), Project ALERT, the Rand Corporation reported that school-based drug prevention programs are the most promising way to prevent adolescent drug abuse. By 1988, emphasis in drug curricula was on teaching students how to make their own decisions, understand peer pressure, develop positive self-esteem, and learn about drug and alcohol facts. Quest SFA, though it has many aspects, is often used as a drug prevention program in numerous schools.

This paper will also present two other widely used drug education prevention programs: Project Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) and Here's Looking At You 2000 (HLAY 2000).

Project Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) is a program developed by the Los Angeles Unified School District in 1983, which was designed to equip elementary and junior high school children with the skills necessary to refrain from giving into negative peer pressure. DARE lessons also focus on the development of self-esteem, coping, assertiveness, communications skills, risk assessment and decision-making skills, and the identification of positive alternatives to drug use. DARE uses many ideas from previous drug prevention programs established in the late 1970's and early 1980's.

DARE is one of, if not the most, widespread drug prevention program in the United States. In 1992, it was used in all 50 states (Harmon, 1993). It is traditionally taught by a uniformed police officer with 17 classroom lessons designed for fifth or sixth graders.

A number of researchers have examined the effectiveness of the DARE program during the years span between 1987 and 1993. One short term evaluation study completed by DeJong (1987) surveyed the knowledge, attitudes, and self-reported behavior of students who had completed DARE in sixth grade. The questionnaire showed significantly less substance use by DARE students in comparison to "NO DARE" students. It showed no difference, however, in overall student self-concept.

Another study completed by Harmon (1993) in Charleston County, South Carolina showed positive gains in the fifth grade students surveyed in the DARE program. Significant differences were found in the predicted direction for alcohol use in the last year, belief in prosocial norms, association with drug using peers, positive peer

association, attitudes against substance use, and assertiveness. No differences, however, were found on cigarette, tobacco, or marijuana use in the last year, frequency of any drug use, attitudes about police, coping strategies, attachment and commitment to school, rebellious behavior, and self-esteem.

Becker and Agopian (1992) studied the impact of DARE on fifth grade students in Long Beach, California. Their research suggests that DARE does not significantly change the amount of drug use, which is minimal at the fifth grade level.

Kochis (1993) utilized a quasi-experimental research design in his New Jersey study. He collected and evaluated data from official police reports and school behavioral records of ninth graders who had participated in DARE (the experimental group) and the NO DARE students (the control group). The findings showed that for all intents and purposes the two groups were equally “criminal,” which meant that all students evidenced similar levels of illegal activity.

Unfortunately, little research exists which empirically supports the efficiency of prevention efforts such as DARE. These research results suggest a need for further examination of the impact of DARE (Kochis, 1993).

Here's Looking At You 2000 (HLAY) is another drug education/prevention program designed in 1985 for students in grades kindergarten through twelve. Currently, the program is perhaps one of the most widely used drug education/prevention programs in the United States (Schwanz, McLead, & Schantzis, 1993). HLAY focuses on the “gateway” drugs and delivers a clear “no drug use” message. It also teaches social skills and attempts to promote student's self-esteem, bonds with families, and other prosocial behavior.

In 1993, Schwanz, McLead, & Schantzis conducted a study on seventh and eighth grade students in a rural North Carolina school district to evaluate HLAY in regards to attitude and behavior domain. Those who conducted the study concluded that the HLAY 2000 as replicated in Yadkin County School failed to produce any notable impact, either positive or negative. In particular, the program was unable to produce any significant change in the attitudinal domains that are related to student drug using behavior.

Findings in Support for Using Quest

Quest SFA programs, like any school program designed to provide protective factors for youth at risk of substance abuse and other outcomes from unhealthy life choices, need to be evaluated to determine their success. Quest International continues to evaluate its positive youth developmental programs. The findings from studies conducted by both independent agencies and Quest's own research and evaluation staff, are more than likely nontechnical in nature.

Over the years, several research projects have uncovered significant evidence of the effects of the student performances in school settings as compiled in the Summary of Evaluation Results by Quest International in 1995. Findings from the studies are highlighted in the next several paragraphs.

The first finding is that SFA students had significant improvements in their attitude and awareness of the harm of alcohol and other drugs when measured from pre to post testing. When compared to those in the same schools who did not participate in the SFA program, students in the Quest program showed a significantly higher perception of harm to their health from alcohol and other drugs (Final report, April 1992).

A second finding is that inner-city SFA Detroit students had higher perceptions of success in school than the comparison students. SFA students were also more willing to take responsibility for their own behavior in school (Final report, Oct. 1991).

The third finding is that SFA students made enhanced gains in school achievement. The grade point averages of SFA students in inner-city public schools improved more than a comparison group's grade point averages when measured from pre to post testing (Final report, Oct. 1991). This same study also found that students in grade seven had significant improvement on the nationally formed California Achievement Test in both reading and math while comparison students' scores remained near their pretest levels.

The fourth finding is that SFA predicted that they would use fewer alcohol products (Summary Quest International, 1995). SFA students had significantly lower self-reported rates of using beer, liquor, and chewing tobacco in the previous month as compared to non SFA students.

According to the Summary Quest International (1995), parents and principals support the Quest program. The majority of principals believe that the program supports the position that alcohol and drug use is wrong. It supports the "no use" principle. Parents reflect similar views.

The seventh finding according to Green (1989) is that the number of teachers trained in the Quest program continues to increase. Quest has expanded its middle school program to add a conflict resolution program called Working Toward Peace. This study highly recommends that Working Toward Peace created in 1993 be used as a supplement to SFA. The preliminary evaluations were positive; with both teachers and students

reporting that the curriculum helped develop appropriate coping response in situations where students had conflicts with peers (Laird, 1996).

Few evaluations on Quest SFA are available that were not completed in conjunction with Quest personnel. Some results showed no significant differences between SFA students and the comparison students. Even though Quest acknowledges that their studies have limitations, studies tend to support the relationship between the SFA curriculum and increased performance on some measures of school attitude, attendance, and knowledge.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

Subjects

The purpose of the study is to analyze the attitudes of junior high students who have participated in the Quest-Skills for Adolescence curriculum. The subjects chosen for this study were eighth grade students who have participated in the Quest-Skills for Adolescence (SFA) program at Valley City School in Valley City, Ohio. These subjects consisted of a random sample of eighth grade students who have previously taken two, 6-week blocks of Quest SFA. One 6-week block occurred during their seventh grade year, and the second occurred during their eighth grade year.

Setting

School. Valley City School is a public school which contains students grades six through eight. The eighth grade enrollment was approximately 300 students.

Community. Valley City is the county seat in a south-western community in Ohio. Located 30 minutes from the major cities of Dayton and Cincinnati, Valley City offers a small town, historic atmosphere. Valley City is a fast growing community, thus forcing the school system to expand.

Data Collection

Construction of the Data Collecting Instrument. The instrument (see Appendix B) was constructed by the researcher using information gathered from the review of the literature establishing content validity. The instrument was reviewed by several teaching staff trained in Quest and the building administrator. Before being administered, necessary changes were made to the instrument to better ensure the clarity of each item.

The instrument used was a Likert-type questionnaire containing fourteen questions structured with strongly agree (SA), agree (A), undecided (U), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD) responses. The general goals and skills of the Quest-SFA program were addressed in the instrument.

Administration of the Data Collection Instrument. The instrument was administered to a sample of 181 students during a twenty minute homeroom in May 1996. Of the students involved in responding to the instrument, 44% of the participants were males and 56% were females. Questionnaires were completed anonymously, but the gender of each of the respondents were ascertained. Not all students responded to all 14 questions on the questionnaire. The individual student data were then transferred to scantron sheets, processed, and statistically analyzed.

Presentation of the Results

The findings from the Likert-type questionnaire on the attitude of eighth grade students toward Quest-SFA are provided in Table 1.

There was no significant difference between the male and female responses except for question number five, which dealt with preference for whether to take home economics or another class over a Quest-SFA. Females were more likely to choose home economics than the males who participated in the study.

Over 64% of the participants perceived the material presented in SFA to be appropriate. Yet, of those responding, only 28% felt that the material was personally useful to them. When asked if they felt the material in Quest overlapped with other programs or courses in the building, 38% responded yes they agree and 36% were undecided.

The service project was valuable to over 43% of the students. A few classes did not do a service project so this may account for the fact that 26% found the project to not be valuable. Over 70% of the students expressed a preference to take home economics over Quest. Some of the reasons students listed for this response included comments such as the material was too personal, the class was too boring, and the class was not hands-on. Sixty-three percent of the students felt that the Quest class was not as important as their academic classes, while 20% were undecided as to its importance.

Of the students surveyed, 35.9% agreed that they learned about the factors that influence self-confidence, while the same percent disagreed; 28% were undecided. About the same number of students (37%) felt like the course helped them with decision making as those who did not (35%). Only a little over a third (35%) of the students felt like the class was helpful in teaching them to express their emotions in constructive ways. The majority of the students (63%) were undecided or felt that Quest did not help them to understand the changes that occur during adolescence.

The majority of students felt that Quest taught or at least reinforced the harmful effects of drugs on people and society. Students also felt like long and short term goal setting was stressed as well as strong family and peer relations. Nearly half (46%) of all participants felt that Quest emphasized ways to strengthen relations with family and friends.

Students were undecided on approximately one-fourth of all responses to the survey questions. This fact limits the significance of the data. It also raises significant issues about the program: Why are students so undecided? What factors contribute to student indecision about the efficiency of Quest?

Discussion of the Results

All responses reported in the results are student responses in one particular school system. These results do not in any way indicate how students may feel about the program who are in other school districts around the United States.

The current questionnaire demonstrates that eighth grade students' attitudes toward Quest-SFA is positive on some of the percentage outcomes but not on others. The study shows that students felt Quest taught and/or reinforced the "no drug message"; it also suggests the importance of strengthening family and peer relationships and of personal goal setting. Students also were generally open and positive about service learning by completing a community project. Some of those projects include things such as holding clothing/food drive, cooking meals for the abuse shelter, holding an anti-smoking campaign at school, and starting a recycling program at school. SFA, however, did not specifically help students by enhancing personal decision making, increasing self-confidence, controlling emotions, and dealing with the changes of adolescence. Like the DARE studies done by DeJong (1987) and Harmon (1993), Quest failed to show any marked positive attitude changes toward individual self-concept as a result of students' participating in a SFA course. A few written comments even suspect that Quest addressed too many personal issues, and that if someone chose not to change his or her self, a class like Quest was not going to make a difference.

Even though students felt the material was age appropriate, only 28% felt it was useful. If students do not find value in a course, it is unlikely they will apply themselves. Others felt there was too much overlap with other required classes. The majority of students also felt Quest was not as important as the academic classes (e.g., English,

math). Those students also appeared to be less likely to participate in the class. Most preferred to have a regular home economics class with hands-on practice.

Kochis (1993) notes that DARE and programs like it increase the students' awareness of drugs. What he questions, however, are the goals set by these programs to combat and modify relatively immutable and stable attributes such as self-esteem, academic interest and aptitude, dysfunctional families, and more. It seems unrealistic to expect a "cure all" from a twelve or so week course over a two year period.

Table 1
STUDENT ATTITUDES
TOWARD QUEST-SKILLS FOR ADOLESCENCE
QUESTIONARIE RESULTS

| Survey Question | N | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|---|-----|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1. The material covered in Quest is age appropriate for seventh and eighth graders. | 181 | 13.8% (25) | 50.8% (92) | 16.6% (30) | 12.7% (23) | 6.1% (11) |
| 2. The information covered in Quest has been useful. | 181 | 6.6% (12) | 21.5% (39) | 31.5% (57) | 23.2% (42) | 17.2% (31) |
| 3. The information covered in Quest overlaps with the material covered in other classes or programs. | 178 | 6.8% (12) | 18.5% (33) | 36.0% (64) | 25.8% (46) | 12.9% (23) |
| 4. As a participant, I found the eighth grade class service project to be a valuable experience. | 180 | 12.8% (23) | 30.6% (55) | 30.0% (54) | 16.6% (30) | 10.0% (18) |
| 5. I would prefer to take home economics or another class in place of Quest. | 181 | 38.1% (69) | 32.0% (58) | 19.4% (35) | 6.6% (12) | 3.9% (7) |
| 6. As a student, I think this class is as important as my other academic classes. | 181 | 2.8% (5) | 13.8% (25) | 19.9% (36) | 38.1% (69) | 25.4% (46) |
| 7. The course helped me to learn more about the factors that strengthen self confidence. | 181 | 7.2% (13) | 28.7% (52) | 28.2% (51) | 26.0% (47) | 9.9% (18) |
| 8. The course taught me to learn and practice the approach to use in developing positive decision making steps. | 181 | 5.0% (9) | 32.6% (59) | 26.5% (48) | 22.1% (40) | 13.8% (25) |
| 9. The course taught me to use constructive ways to express thoughts and emotions to peers, family, and others. | 181 | 5.5% (10) | 31.5% (57) | 22.1% (40) | 26.0% (47) | 14.9% (27) |

Table 1 continued

| | | | | | | |
|---|-----|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 10. The course helped me better understand the normal changes that occurs during adolescence. | 181 | 6.1% (11) | 30.3% (55) | 21.0% (38) | 28.2% (51) | 14.4% (26) |
| 11. The class taught (or reinforced previous knowledge of) the harmful effects of drugs on young people, their families, and the community. | 181 | 10.5% (19) | 48.1% (87) | 20.4% (37) | 15.5% (28) | 5.5% (10) |
| 12. The importance of setting and achieving short and long term goals in the class was emphasized. | 181 | 12.7% (23) | 43.1% (78) | 26.5% (48) | 11.6% (21) | 6.1% (11) |
| 13. The course emphasized ways to strengthen relations with family and friends. | 181 | 7.7% (14) | 44.8% (81) | 24.3% (44) | 17.7% (32) | 5.5% (10) |
| 14. The course emphasized understanding the benefits of having a positive role model. | 178 | 8.4% (15) | 38.2% (68) | 28.1% (50) | 15.2% (27) | 10.1% (18) |

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Almost every school system in the country has a drug and alcohol policy and a drug prevention program (Bradley, 1988). Valley City Schools used Quest-SFA program for a number of years at the seventh and eighth grade level and DARE at the elementary level. The district, however, has experienced numerous changes in the curriculum, the administration, and the demographics of the community. Much of the content from SFA is being addressed, though perhaps in a different way, through an expansion of the health curriculum and the addition of a proficiency/career experience class in grades 7 and 8. It is questionable whether the overlap of these courses with DARE and the lack of emphasis placed on Quest by the district, would impact students' attitude toward the Quest curriculum.

After seven years, the curriculum for the Quest program in this district needs to be examined. Course of study for Quest and home economics are to be written during the 1997-98 school year. Student attitudes toward subject matter is generally a good indicator of how successful a program is in a school. Thus, there is a need to determine how well the program is currently working and if changes need to be made to impact student attitudes toward Quest.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the attitudes of eighth grade students who previously participated in Quest-Skills for Adolescence curriculum.

The subjects chosen for this study consisted of 181 eighth grade students who have previously participated in Quest-SFA as seventh and eighth graders at a southwestern

Ohio middle school. These students completed a Likert-type questionnaire during a homeroom period in May, 1996. The instrument was written by the Quest-SFA instructor and contained questions regarding students' attitudes toward Quest-SFA and the goals and skills covered in the program.

No significant differences existed between the male and female responses to the questionnaire except for the question that focused on a preference to take home economics over Quest. Females preferred home economics; males preferred Quest. The fact that industrial arts had been cut because of budget cuts from the junior high program may have impacted their response to this question. Generally, students liked industrial arts. Over 70% of the students preferred to have home economics or another class over Quest. Home economics, industrial arts, and art are more than likely to be hands-on classes with less homework than Quest. The content of Quest is valuable, but students often see it as too boring or personal.

The results from the questionnaire were mixed. Students felt more positive toward topics as drugs knowledge and prevention, the emphasis of strong peer and family relations on setting goals, and community service projects. SFA students, however, felt that topics including decision-making, self-confidence, controlling emotions, and adolescent changes were generally not useful to them.

The majority of students felt that SFA was much less important than their academic course work. Others felt that the overlap of Quest material with other classes made it boring.

Conclusions

Though programs like Quest-SFA, DARE, and Here's Looking at You 2000 show improvement in positive student attitudes in some areas of their curriculum like drug knowledge, there is no significant difference in other areas such as self-concept and assertiveness. Research shows these programs are deemed necessary but limited on their overall success (Harmon, 1993). Also, most of the short-term research is done directly after a experimental group completes a program in middle school and does not follow them into high school when drug use increases.

The Likert-type questionnaire made it clear that the majority of eighth grade students in Valley City Schools do not place enough emphasis on the Quest course in order for the class to be truly successful in making a psychological or behavioral impact. When 70% of these students would prefer to take another class and 43% do not think the class is very important for learning the skills of the program at school, there is reason to be concerned.

Much of the attitude concern is due to several reasons. One reason is because the district allows students to be taken out of the class if a parent questions the content. This includes one of school board members own children. This is not a new problem; it became a problem years earlier when the Freedom 2000 religious movement went through the region criticizing the program. Even though the students are given a grade for the class, it does not effect retention and has little effect on a student's grade point average.

Another reason for concern is that the courses at the school have changed. The health curriculum at the seventh grade now includes a lengthy unit on drug prevention/life choices including issues like self-concept, decision making, and peer pressure. Current

eighth graders took a proficiency/career class where they covered goal setting, decision-making, and leadership skills which all could be considered part of the SFA program. Also, the success of Quest may relate to who is teaching Quest at the time, and the schedule the students are forced to follow due to a short “arts” block (i.e., students changing classes every six weeks).

The Quest-SFA program covers some very important material and has many useful units. Much of the research done on Quest is quite positive in it’s significance. The majority, however, of Quest research is completed by Quest personnel and should be expanded.

Recommendations

Overall, the results of the survey indicate that student attitudes toward Quest-SFA is not positive enough to continue the current curriculum. A committee of staff, administration, and parents is all ready in place and has made curriculum changes for the 1997-98 school year. The staff in the building appear to believe that the Quest material is important, but that the salient Quest concepts can be distributed across the regular curriculum. The seventh grade semester health class already covered a large percent of the Quest information and should continue to. The eighth grade proficiency class has changed to a nine week career education class, which will include goal setting, decision-making, leadership skills, and conflict resolution. The Quest information that will not be covered in the health or career class, can be covered in a new nine week life skills class instead of Quest. This class will complete a community service project like the old Quest class. The class numbers will be lower than has been evidenced in the old Quest classes.

Quest-SFA will not be lost but rather will be integrated across the curriculum where it may be more suitable for the this district at this time.

Additional research needs to continue to occur to keep projects like Quest, DARE, and HLAY 2000 current and successful.

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UNIT 1, SESSION 8

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE: PEER PRESSURE

TODAY'S QUOTATION

It wasn't my fault; my friends made me do it.

One of the biggest challenges facing young adolescents is dealing with peer pressure. This session gives students an opportunity to explore how much peer pressure affects young people's behavior in their school and community. It prepares them to recognize and resist negative peer pressure and to recognize and support positive peer pressure. Later in the program, they'll learn specific techniques they can use to say "No" to negative activities and specific ways they can apply positive peer pressure.

SESSION PURPOSE

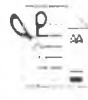
To be aware of peer pressure as a major influence and challenge.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

The student will:

1. Explain and give examples of positive and negative peer pressure.
2. State reasons young adolescents should learn to resist negative peer pressure.
3. Describe ways to use positive peer pressure to help others.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION



- Peer Pressure Survey worksheet
- Marker

1. Put the following chart on newsprint, extending the numbers on the left to 12.

| | Never | Once a Month | 2 or More Times a Month |
|----|-------|--------------|-------------------------|
| 1. | | | |
| 2. | | | |

INTRODUCTION (3 MINUTES)

Before class, write the session purpose and today's quotation on the board.

Session Purpose: To be aware of peer pressure as a major influence and challenge.

Quotation: *It wasn't my fault; my friends made me do it.*

Begin the session by asking students what the quotation means to them. After some discussion, ask why they think friends are so important at their age. (Friends become increasingly important as young people begin to rely on their peers as well as on their families for support and a sense of identity.)

SESSION AT A GLANCE

1. Define and explain positive and negative peer pressure.
2. Have each student complete a *Peer Pressure Survey*.
3. Tally the survey results and discuss the implications.

PEER PRESSURE SURVEY

Read each statement carefully. Put an X in the box that shows how often this situation happens.

| | Never | Once a Week | 2 or More Times a Week |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. My peers encourage me to behave responsibly. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. My peers pressure me to drink alcohol. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. My peers encourage me to be responsible if I drink. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. My peers ask me to cheat on school. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. My peers encourage me to skip school. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. My peers ask me to skip school. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. My peers ask me to call parents/caregivers for help on school. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. My peers encourage me to be responsible if I cheat. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. My peers ask me to do things my family/caregivers don't want me to do. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. My peers encourage me to do things my family/caregivers don't want me to do. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. My peers encourage me to resist negative peer pressure. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. My peers ask me to do things that I don't want to do. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. My peers encourage me to be responsible if I do things I don't want to do. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. My peers encourage me to do things I don't want to do. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. My peers encourage me to do things I don't want to do. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)


1 Explain that now students will complete a survey about positive and negative peer pressure. Have them turn to the *Peer Pressure Survey* worksheet.

Read the survey instructions aloud. Check for understanding by asking volunteers to explain the task. Discuss items students suggest for the last three lines. If appropriate, add them to the survey. Give students several minutes to complete the survey individually. Provide assistance if necessary.

2 Collect, shuffle, and pass out the completed surveys for tallying. For each statement, count by show of hands the number of check marks under each column and tally the responses on your newsprint chart.

3 Guide students to analyze the survey findings. Which items deal with positive peer pressure? Negative peer pressure? What do the class tallies indicate about the influence of positive and negative peer pressure on this group? Which kind seems stronger, according to the results? How could students explain the results? Stress that people involved in positive behaviors should be encouraged and supported.

4 Summarize the session by pointing out that peer pressure is a real influence in their lives. In later sessions, they'll learn and practice ways to resist negative peer pressure and ways to use positive peer pressure to help others lead healthy lives.

 You may wish to use Unit 1 Test Part E, page 84, as a critical thinking exercise after completing the Activity section.

CLOSURE QUESTIONS (5 MINUTES)

1. What are some reasons negative peer pressure is a concern?
2. What did you learn today that might help prepare you to resist negative peer pressure? Tell a partner.
3. What are some ways you could use positive peer pressure to help others? (Elicit a number of responses.)

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM (2 MINUTES)

Have students interview a parent or other adult to compare peer pressure today with peer pressure when that adult was a teenager. Questions might include:

- When you were a teenager, did young people experience negative peer pressure? If so, what are some ways they handled it?
- Do you feel any peer pressure as an adult? In what ways? Is it positive or negative?

NOTEBOOK ENTRY (3 MINUTES)

Have the students write three ways they could use positive peer pressure to help friends. Ask them to carry out one of the ways and write a brief description of what happened.

UNIT 2, SESSION 9

STEPPING UP TO GOOD DECISIONS

Learning how to make positive and healthy decisions is an important part of preparing for responsible adulthood. Decision making is a complex thinking skill that young people should practice under the guidance of trusted adults.

In this session, students discuss the relationship between actions and consequences. They learn what is involved in making good decisions and ways to determine whether their actions can lead to trouble. Then, under your guidance, they examine ways to handle typical adolescent dilemmas.

SESSION PURPOSE

To learn how responsible people make positive, healthy decisions.

PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

The student will:

1. Explain why decision making is an important skill.
2. Explain why young people need guidance from responsible adults for the decisions they make.
3. Describe the steps to use in learning to make positive decisions.
4. Apply these steps to practice making a positive decision.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION

- *Stepping Up to Good Decisions* information sheet
 - *Decisions! Decisions!* worksheet
 - *Will It Lead to Trouble?* resource sheet
 - *What Should You Do?* worksheet
1. Choose a positive decision you made recently to discuss as an example, such as getting more exercise, doing something special on the weekend, or volunteering to help a friend or neighbor.
 2. Make copies of the *Will It Lead to Trouble?* resource sheet and prepare a card for each student. (Laminate the cards if possible.)



TODAY'S QUOTATION

*Give me a fish and I will eat today.
Teach me to fish and I will eat for a lifetime.*

—Chinese Proverb



SESSION AT A GLANCE

1. Explain how positive decision-making skills are developed.
2. Discuss reasons for young people to have rules and limits and explain the positive influences that help shape decisions.
3. Explain the decision-making steps.
4. Present the *Will It Lead to Trouble?* guidelines.
5. Read aloud two situations and discuss with students possible courses of action.

INTRODUCTION (3 MINUTES)

Before class, write the session purpose and today's quotation on the chalkboard.

Session Purpose: To learn how responsible people make positive, healthy decisions.

Quotation: *Give me a fish and I will eat today. Teach me to fish and I will eat for a lifetime.* —Chinese Proverb

Begin the session by asking students how the quotation might apply to learning to make good decisions. After some discussion, explain that the ability to make positive decisions is an important part of being a responsible teenager and becoming a responsible adult.

NEW INFORMATION/SKILLS (12 MINUTES)

1 Explain that no one is born with the ability to make good decisions. It's a skill that comes from practice, experience, and guidance from caring adults—much like the skill of driving a car. Strong decision-making skills are especially important in today's world, where the students, as adults, will deal with a variety of choices and opportunities.

Important: Because adolescents are still learning how to make positive decisions, emphasize their need to depend on their families or other trusted adults for guidance with decisions, especially those involving their health and safety.

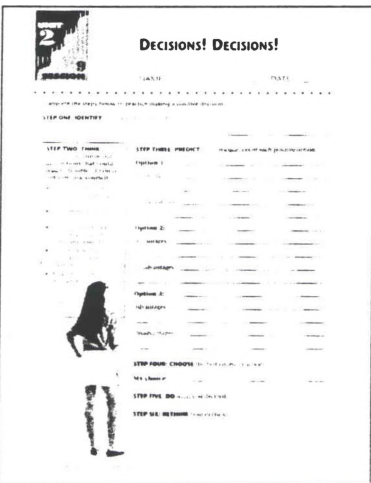
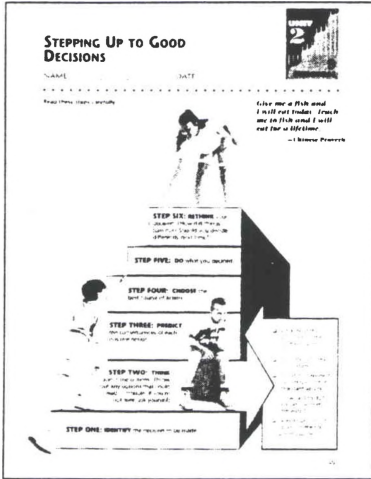
2 Explain that responsible people have learned to think *before* they act. They identify positive options and think carefully about the consequences before making a decision. Because many consequences are difficult for young people to foresee, the adults in their lives usually set rules and limits. This is why parents say "Homework before TV" or "No staying out late on a school night!"

Ask students to name general rules most people their age must follow at home or at school. List these on the board and have students identify the positive consequences of following them.

3 Explain that many of the positive influences that encourage us to be responsible also help to shape strong decision-making skills.

Examples:

- Our families
- Our positive goals and values
- Teachings of our religion
- School and community rules and laws
- Cultural traditions



ACTIVITY (20 MINUTES)

1 Ask students to turn to their *Stepping Up to Good Decisions* information sheet. Explain how you used the steps to make a positive decision of your own.

Note: Students who were part of the *Skills for Growing* program in elementary school will already be familiar with the decision-making steps. This lesson will reinforce and expand on what they've already learned.

2 Stress that negative options are discarded automatically during the THINK step. Tell students that if they're not sure whether something is a positive option, they should ask themselves these questions:

- **Is it against the law, rules, or the teachings of my religion?**
- **Is it harmful to me or to others?**
- **Would it disappoint my family or other important adults?**
- **Is it wrong to do? (Would I be sorry afterward?)**
- **Would I be hurt or upset if someone did this to me?**

Explain that if students answer yes to any of these questions, they need to reject that option because it leads to trouble.

Ask students for some reasons why the RETHINK step is important. Guide them to understand that this step helps us evaluate our decisions. By thinking over what happened and why, we can learn from our experiences.

3 Pair students and ask them to turn to the *Decisions! Decisions!* worksheet. Explain that you will read a description of a situation. Then partners will work together to fill in their worksheets.

Situation

Some people at school are having a party. They asked you to come, but they told you not to tell your good friend, whom they don't like, about the party. What should you say to them?

4 Give pairs a minute to discuss and complete Step One. Check to make sure all students reach an appropriate conclusion before going on to Step Two.

Step One: IDENTIFY the decision to be made.

What should you tell those who are having the party?

Step Two: THINK about the options.

Have students suggest possible positive options.

Examples:

Option One: Tell those planning the party that unless your friend can come, you don't want to come either.

Option Two: Tell those planning the party that you won't be coming. Then do something else with your friend.

Option Three: Accept the invitation and explain your decision to your friend.

Also discuss with students some negative options and the reasons they should reject these options.

Examples: lying to the friend, calling the party planners names, and so on

Stress that students should not even list these negative options on the worksheet.

5 Have each pair select two or three of the positive options and complete Steps Three (PREDICT) and Four (CHOOSE) on the worksheet. Discuss as a class the advantages, disadvantages, and various decisions made by the partners.

6 Conclude the session by emphasizing that developing decision-making skills takes time. Therefore, young people need guidance and support from trusted adults to help them determine the best decisions.

7 Give everyone a *Will It Lead to Trouble?* card to remind them of the questions they need to ask.

NOTES

**APPENDIX B
QUEST SURVEY**

Circle your response for each statement below.

Male ___ Female ___

- | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| 1. The material covered in Quest is age appropriate for seventh and eighth grade students. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 2. The information covered in quest has been useful. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 3. The information covered in Quest overlaps with the the material covered in other classes or programs. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 4. As a participant, I found the eighth grade class service project to be a valuable experience. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 5. I would prefer to take home economics or another class in place of Quest. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 6. As a student, I think this class is as important as my other academic classes. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 7. The course helped me to learn more about the factors that strengthen self-confidence. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 8. The course taught me to learn and practice the approach to use in developing positive decision making skills. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 9. The course taught me to learn more about the factors thoughts and emotions to peers, family, and others. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 10. The course helped me to better understand the normal changes that occur during adolescence. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 11. The class taught (or reinforced previous knowledge of) the harmful effects of drugs on young people, their families, and the community. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 12. The importance of setting and achieving short and long term goals in the class was emphasized. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 13. The course emphasized ways to strengthen relations with family and friends. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 14. The course emphasized understanding the benefits of having a positive role model. | SA | A | U | D | SD |