



Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.)

in 2019
It's Science & Evidence-Based
Curricula

D.A.R.E. is the most comprehensive K-12 prevention curricula in the world.
D.A.R.E. is in every state and 50+ countries.

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Is D.A.R.E. still around? I heard it doesn't work.

Not only is D.A.R.E. still around, it's in every state in America, as well as in 50+ other countries around the world.

Let's be clear at the outset. The "original" 17-lesson D.A.R.E. elementary school curriculum was evaluated by several researchers completely independent of D.A.R.E. The evaluations were of the D.A.R.E. elementary curriculum only, without consideration of follow-up of D.A.R.E. middle or high school curricula. Those studies were conducted 30 years ago. The papers reporting the results were published over 20 years ago. The research evidence was consistent. The "original" 17-lesson curriculum did not have the desired effects on drug use. That curriculum, the "old" D.A.R.E., is no longer used. It should be noted that through the years, unlike other programs, D.A.R.E. has not only participated in independent evaluations, but actively encouraged such scrutiny.

The “New” D.A.R.E.

With guidance from the prevention science community, D.A.R.E. adopted an evidence-based middle-school curriculum, *keepin’ it REAL (kiR)* that was initially designed to be delivered by classroom teachers.

An intensive/extensive collaboration between the prevention scientists who developed kiR and D.A.R.E.’s Scientific, Education, and Law Enforcement advisory committee members, D.A.R.E. “adapted” the 10-lesson curriculum for delivery by law enforcement officers. In 2009 this became the official D.A.R.E./kiR middle-school curriculum. In 2013, a similar process produced a 10-lesson D.A.R.E./kiR that is the official elementary curriculum. Integral to the D.A.R.E./kiR elementary curriculum are additional materials targeted to children in grades K-4.

Theory of Prevention Underlying Curriculum Content

The D.A.R.E./kiR curricula (elementary and middle-school) are based on Socio-Emotional Learning Theory (SEL). SEL identifies basic skills and processes needed for healthy youth development, including:

- 1) self-awareness and management,
- 2) responsible decision-making,
- 3) understanding others,
- 4) relationship and communication skills, and
- 5) handling responsibilities and challenges.

The curricula use this theory to teach youth to control their impulses and think about risks and consequences, resulting in more responsible safe and healthy choices.

Is the “New” D.A.R.E. Evidence-Based?

When someone asks if D.A.R.E. is “evidence-based, what do they mean?

They mean is research available showing the curriculum is effective in reducing outcomes such as drug use, bullying and other problem behaviors by improving

the decision-making and other skills of those who were exposed to the lessons compared to those who were not?

Middle-School, *keepin' it REAL*: Yes...it's Evidence-Based!

Three, large-scale studies (see references at end of document) demonstrate long-term effects on reducing the use of alcohol, tobacco, smokeless tobacco and marijuana. Effects have been demonstrated for as long as 14 months after the program ends. Reductions have been observed even among youth who started using substances before being exposed to the curriculum.

These studies provide evidence of effectiveness for the teacher-led, middle-school, *keepin' it REAL* curriculum. As discussed later, D.A.R.E.'s intensive 80-hour training program to certify law enforcement officers to teach the D.A.R.E. curricula thoroughly supports the belief that the officer-led version of *kiR* is equally evidence-based.

Elementary School, D.A.R.E./*keepin' it REAL*: Yes...it's Evidence-Based!

To date, there has been one published evaluation of the effectiveness of the officer-led elementary school D.A.R.E./*kiR* curriculum.

This evaluation demonstrated that the curriculum:

- Makes it more likely that youth will resist pressure to use drugs
- Increases confidence in their ability to resist pressure to use drugs
- Increases knowledge about decision-making, communication and relationships
- Improves targeted skills of decision-making, communication and relationships
- Improves attitudes toward police

The 10 lessons in the D.A.R.E./*kiR* elementary curriculum are aligned with National Common Core 5th grade standards. The curriculum meets multiple National Core Standards in the areas of Reading (Literature, Informational Text, and Foundational Skills), Writing and Speaking and Learning.

D.A.R.E. High School Curricula: Yes...it's Evidence-Based!

D.A.R.E. has two, evidence-based curricula (REAL messages and myPlaybook) designed for high school students (see references at end of document).

REAL Messages has demonstrated effects on:

- 1) attitudes toward drug use,
- 2) intentions to use drugs, and
- 3) ability to resist pressure to use.

myPLAYbook has demonstrated effects on:

- 1) drug use norms,
- 2) attitudes toward drugs,
- 3) alcohol use, and
- 4) marijuana use.

K-12 Opioid and OTC/Rx Prevention Curricula

In 2018, D.A.R.E. launched comprehensive lessons for students, parents and community regarding opioid and OTC/Rx drugs. The lessons are specific for developmental stages. There are two lessons each for K-2, Grades 3-4, Grades 5-6, Grade 7, Grade 8, Grades 9-12. This curriculum also includes materials for D.A.R.E. officers to use in making presentations to parents and in a variety of community settings. The K-12 lessons meet National Health Education Standards for students at each stage of development.

Supplemental Marijuana Lesson

The core D.A.R.E./*kiR* curricula focus primarily on the D.A.R.E. decision-making model (Define, Assess, Respond, Evaluate), rather than on knowledge about “specific” drugs. However, the curricula do include specific information regarding alcohol and cigarettes.

D.A.R.E. officers are also provided with materials that are developmentally specific if a need arises to deal directly with questions about marijuana.

Supplemental Family Talk Materials

D.A.R.E. assumes that youth exposed to its evidence-based curricula are/can be a conduit or vector by which prevention is disseminated from youth to the adults (and other siblings) in their family. Young people participating in D.A.R.E. are encouraged to talk with their parents about what they are learning. Students are provided materials to facilitate those discussions. D.A.R.E. officers have an opportunity to directly interact with the parents/guardians of children in their class at the D.A.R.E. graduation.

Supplemental Prevention Materials in Preparation

D.A.R.E. is working with experts to develop specific lessons on two additional issues:

- 1) teen suicide and
- 2) vaping.

D.A.R.E. Officers as Instructors: Are they effective in the classroom? Yes!

D.A.R.E. officers undergo an intensive and rigorous 80-hour, 2-week course focused on implementation fidelity to insure they are delivering the curricula exactly as they are written. Prevention programs led by teachers usually offer a recommended 1 or 2 days of training to deliver a curriculum.

In studies evaluating the effectiveness of the teacher-led, middle-school keepin' it REAL curriculum the participating teachers received either 1 or 2 days of training. A peer-reviewed paper has provided compelling evidence that law enforcement officers are effective in delivering prevention curricula. If teachers who receive minimal training can achieve positive results, it would be safe to assume D.A.R.E. officers who receive 80-hours of training on the curriculum can be equally or more effective.

Additional Indicators of Effectiveness

- **Surgeon General's Report.** The 2016 Surgeon General's Report, *Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health*, states that the *keepin' it REAL* curriculum is among a number of programs that build social, emotional, cognitive, and substance refusal skills and that

provides children accurate information on rates and amounts of peer substance use.

- **The President's 2017 Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis.** The report states: "When evidence-based programs are selected for specific populations and implemented with fidelity, they can be effective." The Commission's report identifies *keepin' it REAL* as one such program. It should be noted that *keepin' it REAL* has been adapted specifically for rural and urban populations as well as for Hispanic populations of students.
- **California Healthy Kids Resource Center.** The California Healthy Kids Resource Center, a division of the California Departments of Health and Education, lists *keepin' it REAL* as "research validated," the equivalent of an evidence-based ranking.
- **United Nations.** D.A.R.E. is the only international drug prevention curricula to hold consultative status with the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.
- **Return on Investment.** In a comprehensive analysis of the cost-effectiveness of a number of school-based, curriculum-driven programs, a \$1 investment in *keepin' it REAL* was estimated to produce \$27 in benefits.

Compelling Reasons to Adopt D.A.R.E.

- **Comprehensive Coverage:** grades K-12 plus supplemental materials dealing with timely substantive topics (opioid and OTC/Rx drugs, marijuana).
- **Dissemination and Sustainability.** D.A.R.E.'s training centers exist to provide quality DOTs (D.A.R.E. Officer Trainings) led by experienced mentors who have undergone additional training. Each state-level training center undergoes a periodic accreditation review. In addition, there are training centers in countries

other than the U.S. This allows D.A.R.E. to effectively disseminate its curricula and insure sustainability.

- **Training of Officers:** Classroom teachers usually receive 1 or 2 days of training before delivering prevention programming. D.A.R.E. officers undergo 80-hours of training to learn how to implement the curricula with close to 100% fidelity. In addition, officers are taught how to slightly adapt the curricula to meet local cultural and school-specific/student-specific needs.
- **Positive Impact on Outcomes:** The references included in this document confirm the impact of teacher-delivered *keepin' it REAL* on cigarette, alcohol, marijuana use and on decision-making, communication and relationships. If such results can be achieved by teachers who have received 1 or 2 days of training to deliver the curricula, it is reasonable to assume equal or better results when delivered by law enforcement officers who have received 80 hours of training on the curricula.
- **Respite for Elementary School Teachers:** Elementary classroom teachers are required to be in the classroom when the D.A.R.E. officer delivers the curriculum. For one day a week for 10 weeks this provides the teacher with a 45-minute respite during the day. In addition, almost no teachers receive instruction on prevention in their college/university teacher training courses. In some ways, adopting D.A.R.E. provides teachers with “continuing education” opportunities at no cost to them or the school district.
- **Community-Based Prevention:** All 3,000+ counties in the U.S. contain educational and law enforcement organizations/institutions and the professionally trained individuals working in them. D.A.R.E. provides a unique opportunity for these organizations to collaborate to help youth develop safe and healthy behaviors. D.A.R.E. is a prototype for community-oriented policing.
- **Diversity in the Community:** D.A.R.E. officers are more likely in most communities to reflect the racial/ethnic/gender diversity of the community.

- **Advisory Boards.** D.A.R.E. has enlisted regular input from members of its Scientific, Education, Law Enforcement Boards. In addition, there is an active Youth Advisory Board consisting of a member from every state and other countries where D.A.R.E. exists.
- **Annual Conferences.** For over 30 years D.A.R.E. has conducted a national/international conference in which officers receive “continuing education” via an average of 70 workshops at each conference.

The K-12 D.A.R.E. curricula are research and evidence-based.

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The prevention science community has emphasized testing the efficacy/effectiveness of school-based, curriculum-driven prevention programming with group randomized controlled trials (RCTs). This approach reflects commitment to *evidence-based practice*.

In contrast, proactive policing strategies have been universally adopted by law enforcement agencies using *practice-based evidence* and minimal reliance on evidence from RCTs (see quote below from David B. Muhlausen, Director’s Corner – Proactive policing – what we know and we don’t know yet, 17 January 2018).

In reference to a National Academy of Science report, Muhlausen states:

“While the NAS researchers found evidence suggesting a number of these strategies can be successful in reducing crime, the crime prevention impacts are localized – restricted to a specific place, individuals or groups of individuals. Little is known about the benefits at the larger jurisdiction level or across populations. There is also little known about the larger term impacts of these strategies.”

Muhlausen argues: “The promise of proactive policing strategies make it critical that we understand their effectiveness through rigorous and replicable research.”

It could be argued that D.A.R.E. represents/reflects the leading edge of a more rigorous, scientifically-driven strategy for proactive, community-based policing.

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