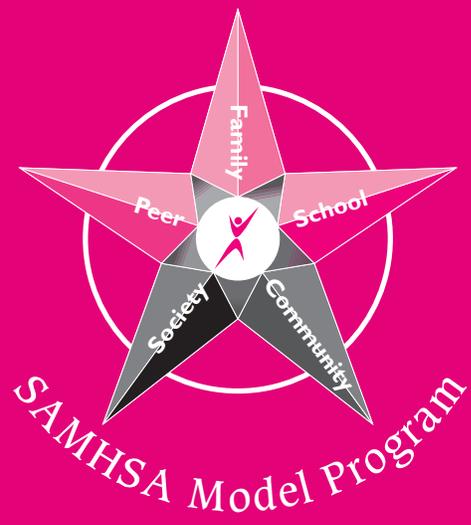




Also available
in Spanish



*Effective Substance Abuse and
Mental Health Programs
for Every Community*

keepin' it REAL

The *keepin' it REAL* (Refuse, Explain, Avoid, Leave) program is a video-enhanced intervention that uses a culturally-grounded resiliency model which incorporates traditional ethnic values and practices that protect against drug use. A school-based prevention program for elementary, middle, and early high school students 10 through 17 years of age, *keepin' it REAL* is based on previous work that demonstrates that teaching communication and life skills can combat negative peer and other influences. *keepin' it REAL* extends resistance and life-skills models by using a culturally-based narrative and performance framework to:

- Enhance anti-drug norms and attitudes
- Facilitate the development of risk assessment, decision-making, and resistance skills

keepin' it REAL utilizes a 10-lesson classroom curriculum accompanied by a collection of five videos that demonstrate resistance strategies and illustrate the skills taught in the lessons.

INTENDED POPULATION

The *keepin' it REAL* curriculum originally was targeted to a population of middle school adolescents in the urban Southwest who were considered to be at risk due to poverty and other factors such as immigration status, English acquisition, and acculturation stress. Adolescents represented African America, American Indian, Mexican American, Mexican Immigrant, and White populations. Replications have shown *REAL* to be effective within a range of school and agency settings for students

PROVEN RESULTS *

- 32% to 44% reduction in marijuana, tobacco, and alcohol use
- 30% to 38% increase in knowledge about and negative attitude towards drug use
- 29% to 34% decrease in intent to accept substances

** Compared to control group at 2-year followup. All results statistically significant.*

INTERVENTION

Universal

Selective

Indicated



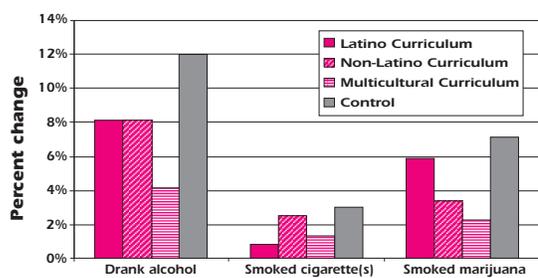
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
www.samhsa.gov

Outcomes

Compared to control group students, *keepin' it REAL* students reported:

- Better behavioral and psychosocial outcomes, including reduction and cessation of substance use, increased repertoire of resistance skills, more frequent use of those skills, and internalizing mediators of substance use such as highly-developed and well-articulated personal anti-drug norms.
- Significantly less substance use, especially alcohol.
- Increased adoption of strategies to resist using alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana.
- Retention of unfavorable attitudes against someone their age using substances.
- Perception that their peers' increase in substance use experimentation was significantly less than previously believed.

At posttest, students receiving various versions of *keepin' it REAL* showed lower rates of recent use than students in control groups



10 through 17 years of age. Designed to intervene with students before they actively begin to participate in risky behaviors such as experimentation with alcohol and drugs or to assist students to reduce existing substance use, the curriculum teaches specific resistance skills applicable across a variety of risky situations.

BENEFITS

- Limits increases in short-term marijuana use
- The curriculum develops and strengthens existing prosocial attitudes and behaviors, core resistance skills that are transferable to many other life situations

HOW IT WORKS

The program helps to teach youth to live drug-free lives by drawing on their strengths and the strengths of their families and communities. Students are taught how to say no to substance use through practical, easy-to-remember and use strategies that are embodied in the acronym *REAL* (Refuse, Explain, Avoid, Leave). Using *REAL* strategies, students learn how to recognize risk, value their perceptions and feelings, and embrace their cultural values (e.g., avoiding confrontation and conflict in favor of maintaining relationships and respect) and make choices that support them.

The curriculum is organized as ten 45- to 50-minute lessons. The program's key learning tool is a series of videos produced by youths, based on actual student experiences. The videos specifically demonstrate how students can use *REAL* strategies to resist drug use in real-life situations. Distinct Mexican American, African American and multicultural versions of *keepin' it REAL* were developed so that students can recognize themselves in the prevention message and can see solutions that are sensitive to their unique cultural environments. To ensure the video material is relevant, has a realistic youth-centered message, and is engaging to young people, a creative team of students from Phoenix South Mountain High School developed, produced, and acted in the videos. Worksheets, games, role-play scenarios, and discussion materials also are used in the classroom lessons and students receive homework materials as well.

One monthly booster session during the 8 months after completing the classroom-based intervention is recommended. In addition, while it is not a core component, at several replication sites, program prevention messages and resistance strategies were reinforced in the community through television and radio public service announcements and billboards.

IMPLEMENTATION ESSENTIALS

Program success heavily relies on the acceptance and commitment of school leadership and staff to the importance of culturally relevant materials and approaches. Administrators and staff that have delivered *keepin' it REAL*

acknowledged that increased cultural understanding positively influenced instructional planning and delivery in all subjects. The curriculum includes:

- **Teacher's Manual:** This manual provides teachers with a complete curriculum including materials preparation instructions, implementation suggestions, and samples of all materials needed for each lesson.
- **Educational videos:** Each curriculum manual is accompanied by a video that contains an introduction to the video components of the curriculum as well as a specific supplemental video segment for each of the four resistance strategies taught—Refuse, Explain, Avoid, and Leave.
- **Worksheets:** Master documents of each worksheet, homework assignment sheet, and classroom activity record are included in the curriculum manual.
- **Overhead transparencies and other instructional aids:** Instructional aides (e.g., transparencies, vocabulary lists, materials lists) for full implementation are included in the curriculum manual.
- **Spanish-language materials:** All implementation materials are available in the regional Spanish most commonly spoken in the Southwest United States and Northern Mexico.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

keepin' it REAL developers perceived the need to develop and test culturally specific prevention interventions that would incorporate the already-present cultural strengths represented in the country's ethnically and racially diverse school populations.

A decade of research funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Grant No. 5 RO1 DA05629-07), led to development of *keepin' it REAL*. Researchers combined narrative theory with the focus theory of norms and implemented an experimental design with 24 treatment schools and 11 control schools. The *REAL* strategies and skills are embedded in everyday scenarios of Mexican American, African American, and White youth of the Southwest and are transferable to many situations in life.

EVALUATION DESIGN

The initial *REAL* evaluation was conducted over 48 months:

Year 1—stratified 35 sample schools by enrollment and ethnicity (percent Hispanic), used block randomization to assign to one of four conditions Mexican American, Black/White, Multicultural, or Control.

Year 2—administered pre-intervention questionnaire to all participants (Wave 1), implemented the curriculum in seventh grade classes in treatment schools, followed by Wave 2 post-questionnaire. Teachers utilized English

HERE'S PROOF PREVENTION WORKS

and/or Spanish versions of the materials available with each version. During the summer, a bilingual television public service announcement and outdoor billboard campaign was conducted.

Year 3—delivered school-based booster sessions with students in the treatment schools; administered follow-up questionnaires (Wave 3) and final questionnaires (Wave 4) to students in all schools.

Wave 2, 3 and 4 questionnaires were administered 2, 8 and 14 months, respectively, after complete program implementation. The questionnaires utilized a three-form design that employed planned "missingness" to limit the number of items each individual student received in their questionnaire, while maximizing the total number of items included for analysis. At each wave students responded to the items used to obtain information about their demographic characteristics; recent alcohol, cigarette, and marijuana use; anti-drug personal norms; descriptive norms; and intentions to accept substances.

PROGRAM DEVELOPERS

Michael Hecht, Ph.D.

Flavio Francisco Marsiglia, Ph.D.

Dr. Michael Hecht is a professor of communication arts and sciences at Penn State University. Dr. Hecht received his doctorate in 1976 from University of Illinois. His wide range of publications on adolescent substance use includes his recent book, *Adolescent Relationships and Drug Use*. Dr. Hecht's long association with NIDA has resulted in successful school-based interventions for high school and middle school students including the Drug Resistance Strategies project. He has participated in the design and evaluation of culture-based drug treatment programs and writes extensively about identity and interethnic communication.

Dr. Flavio Francisco Marsiglia, a 1991 graduate of Case Western Reserve University, is an associate professor of social work and director of the National Institutes of Health/NIDA-funded Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Consortium at Arizona State University. Dr. Marsiglia specializes in drug-abuse and HIV prevention with an emphasis on Hispanic/Latino populations in geographical context and intragroup relations. Dr. Marsiglia serves as the principal investigator of the Arizona-based research team for the Drug Resistance Strategies project and currently is conducting field-based research on drug-abuse prevention in Monterrey, Mexico. Dr. Marsiglia has published numerous articles on drug abuse prevention and is principal author of an upcoming book entitled *Culturally Grounded Social Work*.

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RECOGNITION

Model Program—Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S.
Department of Health and Human Services