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05/04/01

Reflection Paper

I believe that these presentations were done for the purpose to learn what factors cause children to act and behave the way they do when we teach or counsel. The goal is to make us aware of the things in our daily lives that affect overlooked performances. If we as teachers and counselors know what to identify as at-risk factors, we can be more productive in getting the students the help they need to do well and interact with their peers with less fears and worries.

Another positive benefit from these presentations is just general knowledge. We may never know what kinds of questions children might have about some of these at-risk behaviors. Children are aware of daily issues, and we never know if they have ideas that would solve problems with or among their peers. The students may also be able to use their own advice some time in the future when they are caught in a bind.

Learning is affected greatly by friends, emotions, social skills, interests, drugs, alcohol, parent expectations, physical abuse, sexual abuse, failures, self-image, understanding, maturation and so much more. We need to be able to address these problems without labeling children as being disruptive, lazy, off-task, stupid, and/or other, because it could increase tensions or anxiety that will lead to further problems; suicide is an extreme example, but also possible.

Suicide is probably the most important issue to be addressed, because it is a matter of time and being able to make changes before it is too late. It is also the worst condition for a child to be in because by the time suicide is recognized as a possible solution, they are already feeling that they have sunk so deep that they will never be able to come out again. They have lost all hope in their future, because they are abandoning every effort to make their situation better. Other issues are more fixable given the right encouragement, but suicide is permanent damage if successful.

Being aware of who is at-risk is very important to teachers and counselors because they may be the only ones that children can turn to, either by comfort of personal feelings, or someone who will listen. Not only is it a job, but teachers and counselors should want to do it. Teachers and counselors are the first aid to the problem of suicide. They are the one's that will get a student talking about their problems and help them work out their plans for the future, but further help is needed.

Suicide issues may be easier for teachers to detect because they usually have an eye on how children are performing, interacting, and socializing in class and among their peers. They need to pay attention to the changes in behaviors. If a student is depressed for a long length of time turning into a great mood over night, it may be a sign that there is something wrong. It is possible that there is nothing wrong, but it doesn't hurt to check into it because problems usually work themselves out slowly.

Teachers may have to break promises and be snitches when they don't want to. It is part of their job. If a student talks about suicide, it should not go without attention. Sealed notes should be opened immediately. Teachers are obligated to report events such as this, even though they may suspect that they weren't serious.

It is probably a good idea to gain knowledge from the students on a regular basis as to their progresses and let them know that there are people that do care as to how they are doing. Parents trust teachers with the lives of their children, and they should take every action to keep their students safe.

Another issue that deals with safety is drugs and alcohol. First time experiences may just be due to experimentation, curiosity, and socialization. Later, it may become a solution to the stresses a student may undergo, either by escaping personal problems or by enhancing bodily growth for a better image.

Students may not even realize the damages they do because they are not thinking properly, so teachers and counselors need to again be able to identify the problem and seek help for the students. The sooner the problem gets taken care of the better off it is to fight the spread to other students. Things to watch out for are tempers, dropping grades, frequent sickness, tardiness, and absences.

Programs such as "Just Say No!" and "D.A.R.E." are very affective in schools as far as education on the topic, but more will still be needed. Encouragement needs to be present in and around school to reinforce these programs. Children need to have fun and deal with issues in a productive manner. If they can't do that, then help is needed as soon as possible in order to keep other students safe. Drugs and

alcohol are serious problems because the students may not only hurt themselves. Other innocent students can be hurt both physically and emotionally. Beside drugs and alcohol affecting motor skills, attitudes are greatly enhanced.

Finding away to afford their addictions is a possible issue if the students get so dependent upon drugs and alcohol. Academic failure is another to be addressed early before it has a large impact on the students' lives. These issues may result in both delinquency and truancy.

Drugs and alcohol is a good influence of crime because the students' wants become more important than honesty and/or others. When attitudes change, the students may lose an interest in school and bettering themselves.

An important duty for a teacher is to make sure that they are making their classes interesting while showing care for the thoughts of the students. The students need encouragement to take on higher responsibilities so they feel more needed and accepted in the classroom.

Teachers and counselors need to find out what the problems of delinquency and truancy are, so that the students get back on the tasks at hand. Most children have the potential to be great. They are just misguided and learn to take the wrong paths. Misguided actions can be changed. There are other factors that may also have to do with the problem such as at home issues of poverty, neglect, abuse, separations, lack of respect, punishments, and lack of reward, credit, or love.

Physical, sexual and emotional abuse to children can be the result from several possible reasons. Parents may not be ready for the responsibility of childcare. They may be under the influence of drugs and alcohol. The child may have educational and attention disorders. They may be fighting divorce or the loss of a loved one. They may be undergoing extreme stresses such as job failure. No matter what the reason may be, it is undeserving of the child to go through, and they should not be a victim to another's problems.

Physical harm such as bruises, burns, fractures, welts and cuts should be reported for the safety of the child. Physical harm is very serious and should not be taken lightly or hesitantly. The children need help, and they aren't going to always know where to turn.

There is more than just physical harm that needs to be identified in order to solve the problems. Behaviors such as poor socialization, lack of comfort expectation, little eye contact, withdrawal, and

always being on guard are other signs that the problem exists. The student needs to see the right counselors to determine how the parents are being abusive.

The children being dealt with may be too young to defend themselves from unfair punishment, so it is a teacher's duty to see to it that the parents get professional help while not getting involved directly.

Teen pregnancy is a large issue these days in the schools. Like drugs and alcohol, there is experimentation and lack of encouragement. Education may be present, but it may not affect everyone's decision to abstain from sex. Our world is trying to decide what the best method of education to use is because they know the potential is out there. Do we teach the non-fail proof concept of contraceptives being a solution, or do we teach abstinence and run the risk of it happening?

Some people don't look at teen pregnancy as a problem. Certain cultures were raised that way. Others come from a wealthy family, where a grandparent is present and/or can afford the help. The question is whether that is fair for the child.

Having a child is a good positive thing. It gives the parent something to be proud of. It declares independence and allows responsibility. It brings on companionship and a feeling of being depended on. It creates attention and popularity. It is also is a learning experience.

In some of these other issues, we talked about having children at a young age being the cause of abuse and neglect. There are problems that do arise from teen sex, such as women never thinking about the father leaving and being left to do the work on their own. This can leave feelings of hurt and less likely to complete high school. The parents may pick up at-risk behaviors in order to deal with the problem, hoping that they don't involve drugs and alcohol. Dealing with welfare and these bad behaviors is not a good influence for the child.

The children are the most important factors because they need a good loving and caring lifestyle where they can feel safe and secure without worrying about their moms and dads. They don't deserve abuse and neglect. They have a right to survive with good morals and intentions. They should get a good education without hearing foul language and obscenities from home. Those children will be the next generation that we will have to counsel and make sure that things are ok.

Extending beyond teachers and counselors, television, radio, and internet programming should be monitored because they have such a large influence on our younger generation. We may not have to deny all access to it, but we should be present for guidance, encouragement and safety.

Guidance, encouragement, and safety are the main three words that I feel belong to the solution of all of these issues.

The most important of the three words I feel is safety. If a student is at risk of being harmed in any way, whether it be abuse, drugs and alcohol, or suicide, it should be addressed before anything else. It should require no hesitation from a teacher or counselor.

The second most important word I feel to be encouragement. In order to teach or get to the root of any problem, a teacher or counselor needs to get on a social level and understanding with the students in order to be affective in maintaining discipline and attention.

The third most important word I feel is guidance. Teachers and counselors need to be available to the students to answer questions and pose situations they haven't thought about. The students need to learn how to think for themselves responsibly and feel like they made the right decision on their own.

The world as we know and experience will be as good as we want it to be, just in the interactions we have. There may be places where there are problems, but as long as we remain positive, and stress good morals and behaviors toward the one's in our daily lives, we should recognize a difference.

