

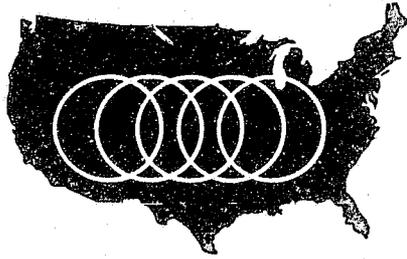
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# An Overview of the School Team Approach

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Education Program  
(ADAEP)

U.S. Department of Education

## ADAEP's Response to a Growing Concern

Drug use and abuse have continued to have serious effects on the development of the nation's youth. At all levels of society and in communities across the country, widespread drug use, in combination with other problems — poor school performance, truancy, school violence and vandalism, dropouts — has increased at a rapid pace and has reached progressively younger age groups. *President Reagan has called drug abuse "one of the greatest problems facing us internally in the United States."*

The response developed by the U.S. Department of Education, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Education Program is the School Team Approach Program — a national network of training and resource centers set up to train teams of school, community and volunteer representatives in problem-solving techniques that help schools develop effective programs for youth.

Rather than prescribing preconceived solutions to problems, the program offers a systematic process that can be adapted to a wide variety of problems and circumstances in local schools; a process that can lead to greatly improved school and community services and ultimately, to the healthy, positive development of young people.

## The School Team Approach Program

The ADAEP uses a school team training approach to drug and alcohol abuse prevention. The network of five regional training centers provides training and follow-up on-site support to clusters consisting of two to four teams of five to seven representatives of local schools and communities.

Emphasis is on helping teams and clusters of people to assess and solve problems themselves. This entails the development of a plan of action, implementation of the plan, and on-site support (technical assistance and field training).

Now in its twelfth year, the program has trained over 4,500 teams throughout the country. These teams in turn have had an impact on millions of individuals — students, parents, teachers, administrators and community leaders — in their respective communities.

## The Goal of the School Team Approach Is:

To develop the capacity of the local schools to prevent and reduce alcohol and drug abuse and associated disruptive and destructive behavior which hinder learning in schools.

For schools participating in the School Team Approach, there are a number of criteria for assessing its effectiveness. One or more of the following may be considered success criteria for schools participating in the ADAEP two years after training:

1. Reduction of drug and alcohol use and abuse. The indices could be in the form of self-reports by students or reduction of alcohol and drug abuse referrals to the principal's office in the school.
2. Reduction of associated disruptive behavior during school hours that interferes with the learning process and takes administrative and teacher time and energy from education tasks. Indices of impact could be in the form of reductions in referrals to the principal's office, in suspensions, in costs of vandalism, or student self-reports of reduction in disruptive behavior or vandalism or an increase in the perception by students of a safe school environment.

## Objectives for Leadership Roles and Groups

The School Team Approach recognizes that the key to a well-functioning school and a well-functioning school system is its leadership. Therefore, superintendents and principals are crucial in the School Team Approach. Their desires to identify problems, to explore solutions openly, and to carry out new approaches are necessary. To clarify the School Team Approach, its goals and program design, role objectives have been developed for superintendents, principals, school district clusters, and school teams participating in the program. A school team is an interdisciplinary group of approximately five to seven members, usually an administrator and combination of teachers, counselors and staff within a selected school who participate in training and become responsible for developing programs in the school.

A "cluster" consists of two to four teams within a school district, from schools organizationally related (e.g., a high school and its feeder schools) headed by a coordinator from the district office. The cluster concept is intended to provide for the coordination and exchange of program activities and ideas within a school district and for the development of mutual resources within the district and cluster.

The role objectives are the following:

### A. Superintendent or Regional Superintendent

To coordinate resources in the school district and community to address and solve problems of alcohol and drug abuse and related disruptive behavior, and to give leadership and support to all school district personnel and principals to enable them to accomplish this goal.

### B. Principal

To coordinate resources in the school, school district and the community to address and solve problems of alcohol and drug abuse and related disruptive behavior; to increase a positive school environment through good school governance and with the cooperative efforts of all those engaged in the educational process; and to create a feeling of safety and accountability in the school by all concerned so that more productive learning can take place.

### C. Cluster

To assist the superintendent and principals, teachers and students in their tasks by becoming a group of skilled and knowledgeable resources in the areas of alcohol and drug abuse and related disruptive behavior, their causes and solutions; to become a creative planning, problem-solving and training resource for the school district in those areas.

### D. Trained Teams

To assist the administration and school community by becoming a group of skilled and knowledgeable resources in areas of alcohol and drug abuse and related disruptive behavior, their causes and solutions; to become a creative planning and problem-solving resource for the principal and an implementation team, with the skills and experience to develop and manage a variety of activities to deal with the above behaviors in the school.

## Program Philosophy

The basic premises of the Department's program place much emphasis on helping people to assess and solve problems themselves. These are: (1) the Federal Government does not dictate to communities what they should do to reduce alcohol and drug abuse; (2) local schools are responsible for solving local problems; (3) the resources for solving local problems are at the local level; (4) problems and their solutions differ with each location; (5) people are committed to solutions they had some part in developing; (6) teams of people are much more effective in solving problems than individuals; (7) volunteers are highly effective; and (8) parental involvement is important.

It is clear that the causes of alcohol and drug abuse and related disruptive behavior have multiple roots in the family, school and community. All may be reasons that young people have poor interpersonal relationships and few opportunities for successful experiences, both of which appear to be correlated with alcohol and drug abuse. For their part schools may contribute to the causes of alcohol and drug abuse and related disruptive behavior by labeling students as failures and by giving little support to students during the inevitable times of confusion as they seek to arrive at decisions natural for teenagers progressing through their normal stages of development.

Current studies and ADAEP experience confirm that the principal is the one ultimately responsible for a well-functioning school and for creating a positive environment for learning. But because the job of principal requires multiple management skills, and because the influence of diverse societal forces is making school management increasingly complex, the principal needs school and community resources to help in doing his or her job.

ADAEP focuses on the "organizational approach" as the approach to assist a principal and the administrative team to deal effectively with alcohol and drug abuse and related disruptive behavior in the school. The approach takes the whole school community and its functions into account as it assesses the prob-

lems and prescribes solutions. The school community is composed of many units — the physical plant and all the people in the school and their interactions — all of which affect what happens in a school. To this we must add parents, volunteers and youth-related community agencies. The administrative team is responsible for orchestrating these units into a functioning positive system.

Many times the people in the school structure who have knowledge about drug and alcohol abuse are the students, teachers, and school staff. It is these people the administration needs to involve in the analysis of school problems, the development of cooperative school goals, and the creation and implementation of a range of alternative programs. At the same time, classroom teachers should go beyond seeing themselves only as content specialists but should take responsibility for governing students and for enforcing school rules and regulations. The prescription could include better governance of the school, clearer policies for the school, in-service training for teachers to improve their skills, better programs to give counseling support to students, a more responsive curriculum or more communication between school and home.

With twelve years of experience in the field, ADAEP has found that there are characteristics in a school, a school manager and an administrative team that can be identified and developed that may increase a school's effectiveness. These are also supported by a growing body of research. If these identified characteristics exist in a school, then it is probable that a school system will have a low incidence of alcohol and drug abuse and related disruptive behavior in the school during school hours.

A school that is most likely to be successful in preventing alcohol and drug abuse and related disruptive behavior will have many of the following:

1. A decision-making and problem-solving process, which everyone in the school community understands and which includes teachers, staff, administrators and students.
2. Programs that reduce the possibility of alienation by reducing the impersonality of the school environment.
3. Administrative strategies aimed at effective management, required in a school to enable it to meet the constant demands of a changing environment.
4. Classroom policies that encourage the student's sense of accountability.
5. Strategies and programs to promote community volunteer efforts in the schools.
6. Instructional methods that extend, on an equitable basis, realistic opportunities for more students to gain meaningful rewards. A school should offer a variety of alternatives that give each student an opportunity for success in at least one area of competence.
7. Strategies and programs that promote and maintain positive relations between schools and families.
8. Administrative support for teachers for activities in classrooms.
9. Instructional methods and administrative policies that avoid labeling students and putting students in special groupings.
10. Teachers who are effective classroom managers and who understand the importance of the informal dynamics of the classroom. These teachers should have training opportunities available to them to further these skills and to perform better as teachers.
11. Opportunities for teachers to participate in groups for the purpose of identifying areas of training desired and of providing the opportunity to share and discuss problems with colleagues. Groups providing teacher support should have good two-way communication with teachers and administrative teams.
12. Opportunities for students to have adequate contact time with teachers and other adults as a means to prevent feelings of alienation on the part of adolescents.
13. Good school governance that brings both community and school resources together for the development of comprehensive policy and discipline procedures for alcohol and drug abuse and related disruptive behavior. These procedures are effective in crisis situations and include preventive activities. Governance procedures are fair, consistent and understood by all. They include measures for keeping undesirable outsiders off the school grounds.

Administrative teams that are most successful will probably do most of the following:

1. Deal with suspension referrals, dropouts and drug and alcohol abuse and other disruptive behavior in a systematic manner.
2. Increase the involvement of the total school community in problems such as drug and alcohol abuse and disruptive behavior and their solutions.
3. Consider discipline as a "total process," which emphasizes the mutual rights and responsibilities of everyone involved in living and working together in the school community.
4. Take positive stands on the problems and issues of drug and alcohol abuse and disruptive behavior.

5. Define the role of the school and the school system in dealing with social problems such as drug and alcohol abuse and disruptive behavior as differentiated from the role of the family and the community.
6. Develop and maintain a systematic discipline policy with coordination between faculty and administration.
7. Assure that administrative policy is perceived as fair and that it respects the rights of students.
8. Facilitate continuing contact between teachers, administrators and students thereby developing personal ties between students, teachers and administrators and increasing student commitment to and involvement with the school.

Successful principals will probably have many of the following skills: (ADAEP suggests some of these can be taught while others can be provided by diverse members of the administrative team.)

1. The ability to foster confidence in staff and students.
2. The ability to encourage two-way communication among teachers, administrators and students.
3. The ability to facilitate participation in decision-making processes by all groups in the school.
4. The ability to distribute responsibility throughout all units of the school community — empowering all units, but, at the same time exercising the specific responsibility of coordinating the units and setting priorities and goals with input from all units.
5. The ability to judge when to make decisions during difficult times and when to remain flexible in problem-solving sessions.
6. The ability to pursue tasks to completion.
7. The ability to develop and give leadership to a management team.
8. The ability to manage conflict in the system.
9. The ability to use resources in the school district and community and within the school to solve problems of the school.

The goals and objectives of the ADAEP's training and resource centers are to assist school teams in realizing the above characteristics.

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