



Seattle Public Schools, King County Executive Summary of the Community-Level Progress Evaluation Reports

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Executive Summary

Seattle Public Schools is one of eighteen recipients of the Washington State Incentive Grant (SIG). SIG funds are allocated to communities to prevent the use, misuse and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana and other drugs by Washington State youth. Community grantees are expected to make their local prevention system more effective by establishing prevention partnerships, using a risk and protective factor framework for data driven needs assessments, and by implementing and monitoring science-based prevention programs. The focus of the Seattle Public Schools SIG project is Mercer Middle School in Southeast Seattle.

Project Site

The Southeast Seattle urban community is culturally diverse. Prevention programs and services must be sensitive to the cultural and language needs of the area. For many in the community, English is not the primary language spoken in the home. The schools and several community agencies respond to this diversity by offering many special programs, such as English as a Second Language. Economic deprivation is also an issue in Southeast Seattle. Area schools have one of the highest percentages of students involved in a free or reduced fee lunch program in the Seattle School District.

Prevention History

Prior to the Southeast Seattle SIG project, prevention efforts in the area were primarily provided through programs such as Asian Counseling and Referral Services, Atlantic Street Center, and Washington Asian Pacific Islander Families Against Substance Abuse. However, partnerships between programs and organizations were somewhat limited in their scope and generally only encompassed a few agencies or organizations. Agencies and organizations in Southeast Seattle were not using science-based programs prior to SIG. Rather, programs were chosen on the merit of past successes and familiarity. Planning did not consistently involve data, nor did planning always involve prevention partners. SIG introduced the concept of using pre-tests and post-tests to measure changes in risk and protective factors as a result of program participation. After some initial confusion, pre-/post-tests data were collected for selected programs.

Challenges experienced by local SIG staff in fulfilling SIG requirements included unexpected staff turnover, recruitment difficulties, and difficulty coordinating partners and resources. Programs were more time-consuming than expected. Use of the Everest database for program evaluation was not begun during this initial program implementation phase due to confusion regarding its use by program staff.

Progress toward SIG Community Level Objectives

Objective 1: *To establish partnerships...to collaborate at the local level to prevent alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drug use, misuse, and abuse by youth.*

The Southeast Seattle SIG project holds monthly provider meetings, informally called the Southeast Seattle Community Partnerships Meetings. These meetings include program providers, agencies providing services, school principals and staff, counselors, project coordinators, project stakeholders, social workers from the Department of Social and Health Services, and representatives from Harborview Medical Center. An important SIG achievement has been establishing partnerships between the schools and outside prevention service agencies that were not previously involved with the public schools.

Objective 2: *To use a risk and protective factor framework to develop a community prevention action plan...*

Implementation of SIG programs has helped educate the Southeast Seattle community about the prevention framework. SIG has helped school staff learn the risk and protective framework and then explain it to parents and the community. Respondents believe that the local prevention community is beginning to understand and accept the framework. The Developmental Assets prevention framework is used by Seattle Public Schools.

Objective 3: *To participate in joint community risk and protective factor and resource assessment...*

Respondents report that there has been a lack of organization and structure with regard to a joint community resource assessment. The prevention community is aware of the importance of participating in a joint resource assessment and hopes in the future to increase its efforts in this area.

Objective 4: *To select and implement effective prevention actions...*

The SIG process encouraged the choice of programs shown through published research to be effective in different locales and with multiple populations. These are known as research-based programs. The programs selected to address Seattle Public Schools' prioritized risk and protective factors include the following:

- *Tutoring:* This school-based program places tutors in classrooms to assist teachers. Highly successful, the program has generated a demand for even more volunteer tutors. Teachers have concluded that tutors are having a

positive impact and that youth attentiveness and commitment to academic activities has improved.

- *Project ALERT*: Project ALERT is a school-based, social resistance approach to drug abuse prevention with a highly participatory curriculum. Taught jointly by the Mercer Middle School and a local prevention agency, Washington Asian Pacific Islander Families Against Substance Abuse, the program is an example of successful collaboration. Additional benefits for the community include the ability to refer a troubled youth to the agency for a case management assessment and potential services. Due to heavy teaching schedules, however, Project ALERT is taught in only half of the middle school's classrooms. In addition, some students said they had already learned similar materials in sixth grade.
- *Strengthening Multi-Ethnic Families*: This program has a reputation for successfully addressing issues of substance abuse within diverse populations. Low attendance, despite multiple outreach efforts, has been a problem. Prevention planners are considering locating the program within the schools instead of in community centers in hopes of improving recruitment.

Objective 5: To use common reporting tools...

To determine community level prevalence rates and risk and protective factor levels, Mercer Middle School participates in the Washington State Survey of Adolescent Health Behavior. Program level data on risk and protective factors is gathered using pre-tests and post-tests. Some of these test results are entered into the Everest program outcome monitoring web-based database, developed by the Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, and tested by SIG community grantees.

Everest was not used during the first year of the Seattle Public Schools SIG project. A pre-test was administered to students in the Project Alert program in 2000. Post-tests will be administered at the end of the school year in 2001.

Conclusion

The Southeast Seattle SIG community has shown some progress toward achieving most of the community level objectives established by the Governor's Substance Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee. During the last year of SIG community funding, the Southeast Seattle SIG community will hopefully move toward institutionalizing some of the changes they have achieved in the system of prevention planning, funding, implementation, and monitoring that they developed under SIG.