



DRUG RESISTANCE STRATEGIES PROJECT

refuse explain **kiR** avoid leave

Fall, 2008

WELCOME !

kiR investigators

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*From kids,
To kids,
Through kids*

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Welcome to the Drug Resistance Strategies Project, featuring the *keepin' it REAL* curriculum (kiR) for rural middle schools.

We are pleased to collaborate with you on developing a new substance-abuse prevention program for our rural youth. It is particularly important that we do this now since *none* of the current drug prevention programs have proven effective in our rural middle schools. Using the federally recognized *keepin' it REAL* program as a model, we will be working with you to develop a drug prevention program for our rural youth that teaches them to assess risk, make healthy decisions, and communicate effectively with their peers to resist drug offers.

There are *no financial* costs to participate—the Drug Resistance Strategies team provides all the training, materials, and support you will need. Over the next few months we will be enlisting your help in a number of areas. A timeline of events is included below. As you can see, we will soon be recruiting and interviewing students and teachers in our collaborating schools. We will use what we learn to create new, rural lessons and work with high school students in rural communities to develop a new set of rural videos.

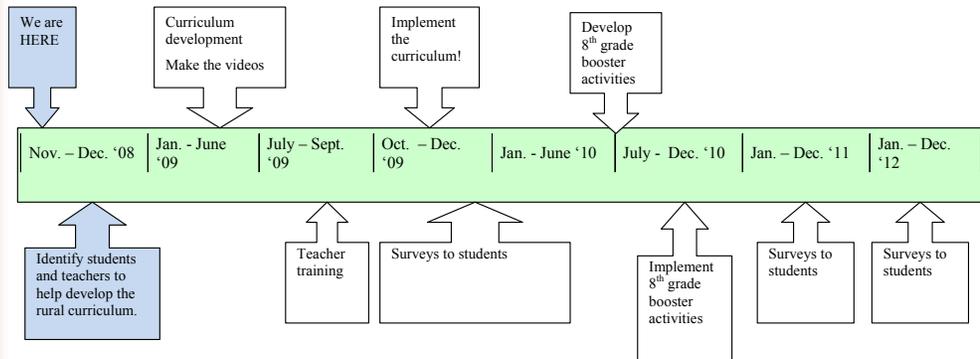
Next year we will be testing the program in your school and others like it. Stay alert for a

call from your school liaison in the next few months. Your school liaison and our project coordinator, Magi Colby, will be working with you to make this a successful experience.

In this packet you will find more information about the *keepin' it REAL (kiR)* project. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call one of the members of our team. We look forward to working with you and helping our rural youth lead healthy and productive lives.



Timeline





Students in Arizona making the kiR curriculum videos.

The curriculum uses a series of five videos produced by youth and based on students' real stories as a key learning tool.

Lesson Topics:

Week 1: Options and Choices

Week 2: Risks

Week 3: Communication and Conflict

Week 4: Refuse (video)

Week 5: Explain (video)

Week 6: Avoid (video)

Week 7: Leave (video)

Week 8: Norms

Week 9: Feelings

Week 10: Support Networks

WHAT IS THE DRUG RESISTANCE STRATEGIES PROJECT?

The Drug Resistance Strategies (DRS) Project is an innovative approach to substance use prevention. Over the past twenty years, we have created and refined a school-based substance use prevention curriculum, kiR (*keepin' it REAL*), based on students' cultural norms and values. The *kiR* curriculum was created for implementation in the seventh grade, as research shows that many children encounter drug-related situations at this age. *kiR* teaches youth how to confidently live substance-free, drawing on their strengths and the strengths of their families and communities. The acronym REAL stands for the four ways the adolescents resist drug offers (Refuse, Explain, Avoid, Leave) and represents the central message of the curriculum. These easy to remember and use resistance strategies help kids stay away from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs by preparing them to act decisively and comfortably

in difficult situations. Students also learn how to recognize risk, participate in critical thinking, value their perceptions and feelings, and make choices that support their values.

DRS has been implemented in classrooms across the nation with results indicating that students receiving the *kiR* curriculum reported significantly smaller increases in substance use after sixteen months as compared to students who continued to receive their schools' regular curriculum. The effectiveness of the curriculum resulted in the selection of *kiR* as one of SAMHSA's model programs and its listing on the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices.

DRS aims to reduce substance use by teaching valuable communication and life skills. The information learned through

keepin' it REAL will also provide benefits for many other areas of a student's life. The *keepin' it REAL* curriculum consists of a 10-week, 10-lesson program. Each lesson requires one 40–45 minute class period and promotes interaction between students and teachers. Fun activities involve students in their learning and allow them to practice the REAL resistance strategies. The curriculum uses a series of five videos produced by youth and based on students' real stories as a key learning tool. The videos demonstrate how students can use REAL strategies to resist alcohol, tobacco, and other drug offers in real life situations. To ensure that the video material is relevant and engaging to young people, creative teams of high school students from Pennsylvania and Ohio will produce the videos to reflect local culture.

The Drug Resistance Strategies Project is funded by the National Institutes of Health.

K I R CURRICULUM & RESEARCH

The purpose of the DRS project is to develop an effective version of the *keepin' it REAL* curriculum customized for rural middle school students in Pennsylvania and Ohio and to understand how teachers can use the curriculum effectively in their classes.

Participating schools will be randomly assigned to one of 3 groups:

(1) delivery of the original *keepin' it REAL* curriculum, (2) delivery of the adapted version of the curriculum, (3) a control condition. Control schools will continue their regular prevention activities during the implementation year and receive *keepin' it REAL* curriculum in a subsequent year. All schools will participate in regular surveys (once or twice a year) to evaluate the ef-



refuse · explain · avoid · leave

fectiveness of the original and new versions of the curriculum.

The project will provide the *kiR* curriculum (for use during and after the project), teacher training (teachers will receive Act 48 credits or cash incentives), technical support, training for control school teachers once the implementation has been completed, and other school incentives .

KNOW YOUR LIAISON

To effectively implement the kiR curriculum and conduct the research involved, each school will be assigned a liaison who will be your point of contact for training, service, or any question your school might have along the way. This liaison will be contacting you within the next few months.

Northeastern PA: Ms. Susan Mizenko

Central PA: Mr. Kris Glunt

Ohio and Western PA: TBD

SPOTLIGHT ON KRIS GLUNT

Kris Glunt graduated from Lock Haven University with a degree in Criminal Justice. He currently holds the position of prevention coordinator for the Penns Valley Area School District and is an Executive Committee Member of the Centre County Communities That Care. In addition to his duties as prevention coordinator, Kris is a man of many talents. He is the head junior high boys basketball coach for the Bellefonte Area School District and previously worked as an adult and juvenile probation/parole officer for three years in Centre County. If you are a Central PA school, you are in good hands!

Kris is excited to begin working the teachers, administrators, and students in the Drug Resistance Strategies Project and hopes to speak with representatives from each school soon to develop teams of teachers and students to help develop and provide feedback on the rural curriculum.

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**SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND RURAL YOUTH**

The good news is that substance abuse rates among youth overall are dropping. However, compared to their urban and suburban counterparts, use among rural youth is declining at a much slower pace and may begin at younger ages. In fact, some studies report that the use of certain substances, such as tobacco and alcohol, are more

problematic in rural areas.

Dr. Janice Krieger, a Drug Resistance Strategies researcher from Ohio State University, points out, "our best chance for success is to move away from importing programs designed to address urban or suburban substance use and develop prevention curricula grounded in

rural culture."

One goal of *kiR* in Pennsylvania and Ohio is to address the unique needs of rural youth in preventing the use and abuse of illicit substances.

**DRUG RESISTANCE
STRATEGIES
PROJECT**

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**GET INVOLVED: STUDENTS AND TEACHERS NEEDED TO
ASSIST IN DEVELOP THE *kiR* LESSONS!**

Calling all 7–9th grade students and middle school teachers! We need your help to develop the rural *kiR* curriculum.

We are currently forming a teacher/counselor advisory group and a kids advisory group to contribute to the development of this innovative rural prevention curriculum.

Middle school teachers as well as middle school and high school counselors are needed to participate in four group meetings between December 2008 and March 2009 and will receive a small stipend and sixteen hours toward fulfilling Act 48 requirements.

Rural students are needed to be a part of our youth advisory group. The rural youth members will unite to contribute to the development of the lessons, work closely with the project liaisons to develop activities and ideas for their schools and communities, and participate in a variety of web-based activities with other youth from Pennsylvania and Ohio.

We're on the web!

www.kir.psu.edu

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE FOR YOUR LOCAL NEWS

**New Drug Prevention Program
for Rural Youth**

The [insert district name] school district is now working with researchers at the Pennsylvania State and Ohio State Universities to develop and test a substance abuse prevention program specifically for rural middle school students.

The new program, funded by the National Institutes of Health and featuring the “keepin’ it REAL” (*kiR*) curriculum, will utilize stories, feedback, and advice from local youth and teachers to customize prevention curricula for adolescents in our district.

The acronym REAL stands for the four ways the adolescents resist drug offers (Refuse, Explain, Avoid, Leave) and the *kiR* curriculum teaches youth how to confidently live substance-free, drawing on their strengths and the strengths of their

families and communities. Pennsylvania and Ohio high schools will be instrumental in developing five short films to be integrated into the curriculum and illustrate rural experiences.

Current plans for the district include helping develop the curriculum for implementation in 7th grade classrooms during the 2009–2010 school year.

For more information about the Drug Resistance Strategies Project featuring the *kiR* curriculum go to www.kir.psu.edu



This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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