

Facing a Problem Head-on

Tackling Smoking at a Large Urban
High School

B.M.C. Durfee High School of
Fall River

Profile

- 2,400 to 3,000 students per year over the last decade.
- 200-275 staff over same time frame.
- 500,000 square foot facility, with a campus layout and meandering corridors.
- 16 bathrooms total available for student use.
- 37 total exits to thirty-plus acre campus.

That was then...

- The school's policy prior to 2006 was to suspend a student that was OBSERVED to be smoking.
- Two bathrooms (one for each gender) were available to service the entire student population, as a result of smoking and vandalism.
- Unless staff was physically present in the bathroom, smoking was rampant.
- Smoke could be smelled when you entered the building.

That was then...

- Culture of the school was an issue—problems were accepted as unavoidable rather than confronted. Although it was banned, smoking in teacher lounges continued.
- Many decisions were made to make work easier for adults, rather than doing what was best for students.
- Smoking was a significant commentary on the culture of the school.

This is now...

- New administrative team appointed for 2006-2007 academic year.
- Solving the smoking issue became paramount--fixing an “unfixable” problem would have major ramifications in terms of changing the school climate.
- A new, aggressive policy and approach to enforcement was approved by School Committee.

This is now...

- New policy addresses smoking, suspicion of smoking, and possession of smoking materials.
- Students found to be in violation of any of above are first offered a smoking cessation program.
- If student does not opt for cessation program, student is fined \$100 or required to perform service work on campus in lieu of payment.

This is now...

- If student has subsequent smoking infractions, student is fined and suspended.
- Fourteen total bathrooms are open and available for student use.
- Bathrooms are consistently monitored by security and administration.
- Tenacious, “zero-tolerance” enforcement of new policy.

This is now...

- If a student is suspected of smoking but denies activity, the “smell test” is given—smell student’s breath, fingers, and clothing. Student may also be searched under reasonable suspicion of possessing smoking-related materials.
- Adults are required to leave property if they wish to smoke during breaks.

The Data 2002-2005

- Data totals include all recorded incidents of smoking, suspicion of smoking, and possession of smoking materials.
- 2002-03 168 incidents*
- 2003-04 290 incidents*
- 2004-05 260 incidents*
- 2005-06 192 incidents*
- *Not all incidents were recorded

The Data 2006-2008

- 2006-07 44 incidents*
 - 2007-08 33 incidents*
 - 2008-09 04 incidents as of 10/17/08*
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- * Current administration enters all conduct