

A rare opportunity to test whether drug prevention is best done by **outside specialists or a school's own teachers** came down on the side of the teachers.

The US All Stars programme for early secondary school aims to retard growth in substance use by fostering a belief that this is incompatible with desired lifestyles, correcting over-estimates of how many age-mates are using drugs, strengthening bonds with the school, and providing an opportunity to make a public commitment to avoid drugs. These 'mediating variables' are targeted through interactive classroom activities supplemented by one-to-one sessions to help children integrate with the school. In five schools the programme was delivered by specialists with teaching experience drafted in for this task and given 30 hours training. In three, the school's own teachers took it on after just half a day's training. Another six schools implemented their normal lessons. Only when teachers led the programme did it significantly retard substance use (drinking, smoking and solvent abuse). ① This was because the teachers created greater positive change in all four mediating variables, only one of which was significantly affected by the specialists. Further analyses found that the pupils enjoyed the programme more and became more involved when it was led by their teachers, which in turn was related to greater change in the mediating variables. However, observers judged the teachers to have delivered the programme slightly *less* well than the more highly trained and experienced specialists. That nevertheless they were more effective may have been due to their continuing relationships with pupils, enabling them to tailor and reinforce the programme's messages. Since their schools were prepared to devote in-house resources to the programme, they may also have been relatively well supported and comfortable with interactive teaching.

① McNeal R.B. *et al.* "How All Stars works: an examination of program effects on mediating variables." *Health Education & Behavior*. 2004, 31(2), p. 165–178 