

**THE STUDENT DRUG-TESTING COALITION**  
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PROGRAMS AND STRATEGIES TO PREVENT AND REDUCE DRUG USE



**STUDENT DRUG-TESTING COALITION**  
Helping students pursue a better future.

An open letter from Mike Motherall, Superintendent of the Sundown Independent School District, Sundown, Texas—a pioneering district in implementing student drug-testing programs.

In the spring of 1998 it became evident to the administrative staff at Sundown ISD that we had a drug problem in our school, as discipline referrals were up, extra-curricular participation was down, and our positive atmosphere was deteriorating. We suspected use of drugs as a big reason for the above mentioned problems, and did a drug survey of our students which confirmed we had students who were using drugs.

School and community committees were formed, and our community came to the 100 percent conclusion that any drug use was too much and that we needed to consider all the alternatives available to us that would help deter the use of drugs and give our students another reason to say “no”.

Knowing that we would take a chance if we drug-tested all students, and that even testing extra-curricular students was a risk, but realizing that we could definitely test athletes, we began the deliberation as to how to go about the testing that would most benefit our kids. After much discussion, it was whole heartedly decided that we should take our chances and test all students as it could be seen as even possibly stepping on the rights of those students we wouldn't be testing in the other plans, since we might not be protecting them in the same way we were protecting others.

We communicated thoroughly and often with parents and students, with a very rehabilitative plan in place, about allowing students the opportunity to privately, or coming to us for our assistance, cleaning themselves up prior to our initial testing. Once the initial testing arrived for all students, grades 6–12, all 360 students and staff (yes, our staff requested that if our students were to be tested, they should be also, thus it was required) were drug free, and we had a wonderful celebration time.

After the initial testing of all students, students were selected randomly, at a minimum number of 15 percent each month. During the next three years, we tested in the manner as described above, and had only five positive tests for marijuana, with no repeat offenders. The biggest change we saw was in attitudes, reductions in discipline referrals, extra-curricular participation, and in a positive overall feeling in the district.

Without a doubt, mandatory drug testing, when put in place for the right reasons, and with careful consideration to its implementation, is an extremely positive and effective deterrent to the use of drugs.

Mike Motheral  
Superintendent of Schools  
Sundown ISD