



The Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc., an active member of the Student Drug-testing Coalition, responds to Prime Minister Tony Blair's Endorsement of Student Drug Testing.

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London, February 22, 2004: Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that British schools will be given the option to carry out random drug testing of their students

The Prime Minister's bold move to stop student drug use came as the News of the World's latest polls showed undeniable support for random student drug testing in British schools. 82% of British parents and 66% of Britain's children are in favor of student drug testing. Almost half (45%) of the children who admit to taking illegal drugs support the Prime Minister.

Mr. Blair was alarmed by the results of the News of the World's investigational poll. According to their research four out of ten 14 to 18 year olds have taken illegal drugs. More importantly, drug transactions are increasingly happening on school property. Over 25% of kids as young as 14 have seen drug dealing at school, and one in five of the student drug users said that they had bought drugs at school and taken them there. 53% of student drug users agreed that students were put under pressure at school to try illegal substances.

Cleaning up schools remains the priority in the war on drugs. The Prime Minister revealed that school drug tests would be part of a ?1.5 billion (about \$2.8 billion) program aimed at cracking down on young drug users over the next two years.

Under the new directive school principals will have the right to obtain urine samples from students as well as to use police dogs to search the school for drugs. School principals will have the option to offer treatment to students who are using drugs, expel them or turn them over to the police. "We can't force them to do it, but if heads (principals) believe they have a problem in their school then they should be able to do random drug testing," Blair stated.

Blair's proposal is similar to the drug testing programs currently in place across the United States. In his State of the Union address in January, President George W. Bush unveiled a plan to give \$23 million toward expanding current drug testing programs in schools since seeing an 11% decline in high school drug use over the past two years.

Both the U.S. and British governments have established that the decision to implement student drug testing is up to each school and its administration. "If you told every head in the country

they had to introduce random drug testing I think you would get quite a reaction from that,” Blair said. “But what you can do is say, ‘Look, here is the power. If you have a serious problem in your school there is no point in trying to conceal it.’”

IBH has identified Student Drug Testing as the single most promising new idea to reduce the high level of illegal drug use among teenagers. By helping youth delay or completely avoid illicit drug use, we increase their chances of a bright future.

“The modern drug abuse epidemic is global,” IBH President Robert L. DuPont, M.D. said, “With youth being especially vulnerable. The British government in supporting student drug testing recognizes the seriousness of the drug abuse threat and the responsibility of schools to help youth grow up drug-free. Student drug testing makes all other drug prevention programs work better and, when youth use drugs despite these prevention efforts, student drug testing makes it possible for adults to intervene and get drug-using youth the help they need. We at IBH applaud Tony Blair’s leadership.”