

February 13, 2023

Dear Parents/Guardians:

By the time they are seniors, almost 70 percent of high school students will have tried alcohol, half will have taken an illegal drug, nearly 40 percent will have smoked a cigarette, and more than 20 percent will have used a prescription drug for a non-medical purpose. (*National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2014.*) Sadly, our school is not exempt from these troubling statistics.

***Desert Trails Preparatory Academy is committed to reducing teen drug and alcohol use in our school via parent education and awareness, and that will be an area of focus in my future communications over the next several weeks.***

Research shows that the fear of losing their parents' trust and respect is the greatest deterrent to adolescent drug use. Parents are the front line of defense in protecting their teens' developing brains from drugs and alcohol, so I encourage you to use this helpful information in the coming weeks to become comfortable talking with your teens about mood and mind-altering substances. Remember, the most dangerous words in today's teen drug world are not "Crack" or "Binge drinking." The most dangerous words are "Not my child."

Over the next several weeks, DTPA will be providing helpful insight to parents as a resource to help parents understand and build relationships with their children to open discussion about drug abuse and prevention. We will start our conversation today by exploring the negative impact of marijuana on teens.

### **Marijuana is a different drug today than you might expect.**

There is a lot of uncertainty about marijuana today. It's legal in some states for *adults over the age of 21*. It's legal in many states for medical use. So what's the truth here? Marijuana today is much, much stronger and can derail healthy brain development. In the teen brain, marijuana's active ingredient disrupts the way critical neural pathways form. We see the result of that disruption in many studies that show marijuana interferes with attention, motivation, memory, and learning. Students who use marijuana regularly tend to get lower grades and are more likely to drop out of high school than those who don't use. Those who use it regularly – estimated to be at least 6.5% of teens – may be functioning at a reduced intellectual level most or all of the time. On an academic level, teens are diminishing their intellectual future. Furthermore, the consequences of having drugs, like marijuana at school could lead to detrimental consequences.

According to Ed Code 48900, a public school, such as DTPA, may expel a scholar who is in possession of drugs on school property.

The Ed Code law further explains that a scholar can be expelled from school if they

(c) *Unlawfully possess, use, sell or otherwise furnish, or been under the influence of, a controlled substance listed in Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 11053) of Division 10 of the Healthy and Safety Code, and alcoholic beverage, or an intoxicant of any kind.*

*(d) Unlawfully offer, arrange, or negotiate to sell a controlled substance listed in Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 11053) of Division 10 of the Health and Safety Code, an alcoholic beverage, or an intoxicant of any kind and either sold, delivered, or otherwise furnished to a person another liquid, substance, or material and represented the liquid, substance, or material as a controlled substance, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant.*

Therefore, we are urging you to begin discussing the ill-effects of using marijuana in general and the worst case consequence of being removed from Desert Trails Preparatory Academy. Remember, as a charter school, it is a choice for your child to be here. We take great pride in school and have high expectation for our scholars. Drug use is not tolerated in any way and therefore, scholars who engage in such behavior will not be able to maintain their place here at DTPA.

We thank you for supporting our efforts to eradicate drug use in our school community. We will be having conversations with our scholars this week regarding the negative effects of drugs. If home and school work together to drive this point, we can definitely make a positive impact on our children.

I'm looking forward to further sharing more with you in the weeks to come.

Thank you for support,

Mrs. Tiffany Sutton, *Principal*