

July 28, 2006

SUBJECT: Minutes of Town Hall Follow-up Regarding Teen Drinking

TO: Distribution

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This meeting was held at noon on Thursday, July 27, 2006. Meeting was held in Conference Room A at the Los Alamos Public Schools (LAPS) Central Office.

1.2 Purpose: This meeting was a follow-up to the issues raised at the March 30, 2006 Town Hall meeting on Underage Drinking. At that very well attended meeting at the Hilltop House concerns were expressed by young and old about the health and safety effects of underage drinking – DWI, auto accidents, poor grades, skipping school, smoking, STDs, teen pregnancy, etc. Prior to the March meeting knowledgeable people had expressed concerns about parties with alcohol and that frequently athletes were the magnets ensuring attendance at these parties.

1.3 Meeting attendees included "Robert Abney, LAPS Athletic Director" <r.abney@laschools.net>, "John Chicoine, LAPD" <chicoinej@lac.losalamos.nm.us>, "Joy Freymiller, JJAB" <laads@lamonitor.com>, "Steve Girrens, LAPS Board of Education" <spgirrens@cybermesa.com>, "Alan Kirk, Municipal Judge/Coach" <pakirk1@msn.com>, "Morrie Pongratz, LAPS Board of Education" <mpongatz@losalamos.com>, "David Sims, LAC DWI Program Coordinator" <simsd@lac.losalamos.nm.us>, "Sharon Stover, JJAB" <[sstover@cybermesa.com](mailto:ssstover@cybermesa.com)>

2.0 Scenarios – To focus discussion Morrie Pongratz presented two scenarios with questions.

2.1 Scenario #1. LAPD does a traffic stop and finds two minors in possession. Assume that the minors are school age. Will LAPD inform LAPS? Does LAPS want to be informed? What evidence, etc. does LAPS want before imposing sanctions? Assume that the two are members of an athletic team or Olions - what are the consequences?

2.2 Scenario #2. LAPD is called to a large house party (over 15 young folks present with alcohol present). What actions does LAPD take? Does LAPD enforce the "Allowing yourself to be served" statute? Does LAPD take names of all attendees? Are they willing to share names of students not charged with LAPS? I asked the schools' attorneys and they told me that LAPD could share the names with LAPS.

3.0 David Sims presented some relevant results from the 2004-2005 PRIDE Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug (ATOD) prevalence survey.

3.1 Figure 1 shows results from the 2004-2005 PRIDE Survey conducted at LAMS and LAHS. The figure shows that participation in school activities is a protective factor against beer drinking by students. On the left the figure shows that students that participate in school activities (e.g., Olions, Key Club, etc) “Often” or “A Lot” are more likely to be non-drinkers than frequent drinkers. On the right the figure shows that students that never participate in school activities are more likely to be frequent drinkers than non-drinkers.

3.2 Figure 2 shows results from the 2004-2005 PRIDE Survey conducted at LAMS and LAHS. The figure shows that participation in community activities is a protective factor against beer drinking by students. On the left the figure shows that students that participate in community activities (e.g., scouting) “Often” or “A Lot” are more likely to be non-drinkers than frequent drinkers. On the right the figure shows that students that never participate in community activities are more likely to be frequent drinkers than non-drinkers.

3.3 Figure 3 shows results from the 2004-2005 PRIDE Survey conducted at LAMS and LAHS. The figure shows that participation in athletics is not a protective factor against beer drinking by students. On the left the figure shows that students that participate in athletics “Often” or “A Lot” are not more likely to be non-drinkers than frequent drinkers. On the right the figure shows that students that never participate in athletics are equally likely to be non-drinkers or frequent drinkers.

3.4 David raised the question of what is the “preventive factor” in school and community activities that is not present in athletic activities.

4.0 Robert Abney reviewed the sanctions for the students if the school administrators become aware of scenario #1.

4.1 First Offense – if scenario #1 is the first offense the student is suspended from activities and athletics for 45 days or the sports season.

4.2 Second Offense – if scenario #1 is the second offense the student is suspended from activities and athletics for the school year.

4.3 Third Offense – if scenario #1 is the third offense the student is suspended from activities and athletics while at LAHS.

4.4 Robert was asked how many students received these sanctions in a given year and he replied not very many, maybe five. In response to a question about the reasons for this Robert said that the administrators do not become aware of many incidents because the penalties may be too harsh or because of a lack of communication between LAPD and high school administrators.

5.0 What happens in scenario #2?

5.1 If LAPD officers do not observe a misdemeanor violation (e.g., Minor in Possession) they just break up the party. John Chicoine said that typically they'd line the students up on the curb and ask them to call their parents.

5.2 The police cannot give breathalyzer tests to the students. If the police do not observe a misdemeanor, they cannot "take names" of un-cited students. LAPD does not enforce the "Allowing yourself to be served" statute. Nor do they use "constructive possession" language that was proposed and then dropped by Albuquerque police.

5.3 Basically in scenario #2 no actionable information would be communicated to LAHS because the police officers did not observe any minors in possession of alcohol or drugs. If scenario #2 involved a house party would the owners of the house be cited?

6.0 Comments from the perspective of the municipal judge and basketball coach

6.1 Judge Alan Kirk commented that he did not see a lot of collaboration between LAPD and LAHS administrators. This means that judges, coaches and administrators are forced to react to rumor and hearsay to take action.

6.2 The judge also commented that alcohol use is not the scariest aspect; he is very concerned about marijuana and meth use. The judge felt that there was a high correlation between marijuana and meth use and drinking. Note that this hypothesis could be tested using the PRIDE and/or Search Institute survey data.

7.0 Since deterrence via information from law enforcement did not look promising the conversation turned to random drug testing.

7.1 It is a privilege to participate in athletics and activities and LAPS could enact a policy requiring consent to drug testing as a prior condition to participating in athletics or activities.

7.2 Random drug testing would create a level playing field – both athletes and activities would be subject to testing.

7.3 The consequences for positive drug tests would be school imposed sanctions. Law enforcement would not be involved.

7.4 How would we implement a drug testing policy? The first step would be for the school board to adopt a policy authorizing random drug testing for participation in extracurricular activities. Robert Abney agreed to draft such a policy and the accompanying regulations. He will also provide copies of policies used in other schools such as Carlsbad, Pojoaque and St. Pius. There was consensus that cost is not a reason not to do it. David Sims suggested that we might be able to get grants to pay for the testing. Robert passed out an article from Lynne Saccaro, the LAHS principal. The article (<http://www.philly.com/mld/philly/14777026.htm>) described the resistance in Haddonfield, PA to a sobriety push in the community (see attachment #1).

7.5 When might this happen? Robert agreed to have his materials available to the school board by the August 8 meeting. We agreed to supply these minutes for the August 8 agenda packet. We agreed that we cannot get such a policy in place for fall sports and since many sports cross over the semester break it would be a challenge to implement drug testing this coming year. Judge Kirk mentioned that we could adopt a policy, but not apply the regulations until the 2007-2008 school year. We discussed that in the interim there could be an “educational” effort.

8.0 What do we do proactively in the meantime?

8.1 We agreed that the LAMS to LAHS transition is an especially vulnerable time for incoming ninth grade students particularly females.

8.2 Parents – the key: We agreed that we need to alert parents. At the Town Hall the youth told us that many parents were clueless about the amount of drinking. We discussed techniques for alerting parents at LAHS Open House, over the PA at football games, a periodic e-mail informing parents, etc. Robert offered to pursue the e-mail option and an opportunity to do something at the LAHS Open House.

8.3 Improved communication: John Chicoine offered a suggestion to improve communications between LAPS administrators and the police. The school resource officers at LAMS and LAHS get morning briefings on citations issued the previous day. The resource officers will be encouraged to relay this information to the school administrators.

9.0 Next steps:

9.1 When approved these minutes will be forwarded to the School Board President and Dr. Anderson for inclusion in the August 8 board agenda packet.

9.2 Robert Abney will develop draft policy and regulations that would enable a random drug testing policy.

9.3 This report will be added to the agenda of the August 23 JJAB meeting.

10.0 Distribution

Members, LAPS Board of Education

Members, Los Alamos Juvenile Justice Advisory Board (JJAB)

Robert Abney, LAPS Athletic Director

John Chicoine, LAPD

Joy Freymiller, JJAB

Steve Girrens, LAPS Board of Education

Alan Kirk, Municipal Judge/Coach

Morrie Pongratz, LAPS Board of Education

David Sims, LAC DWI Program Coordinator

Sharon Stover, JJAB

**Participation in school activities
is a protective factor against beer drinking**
2004-2005 PRIDE Survey LAMS and LAHS

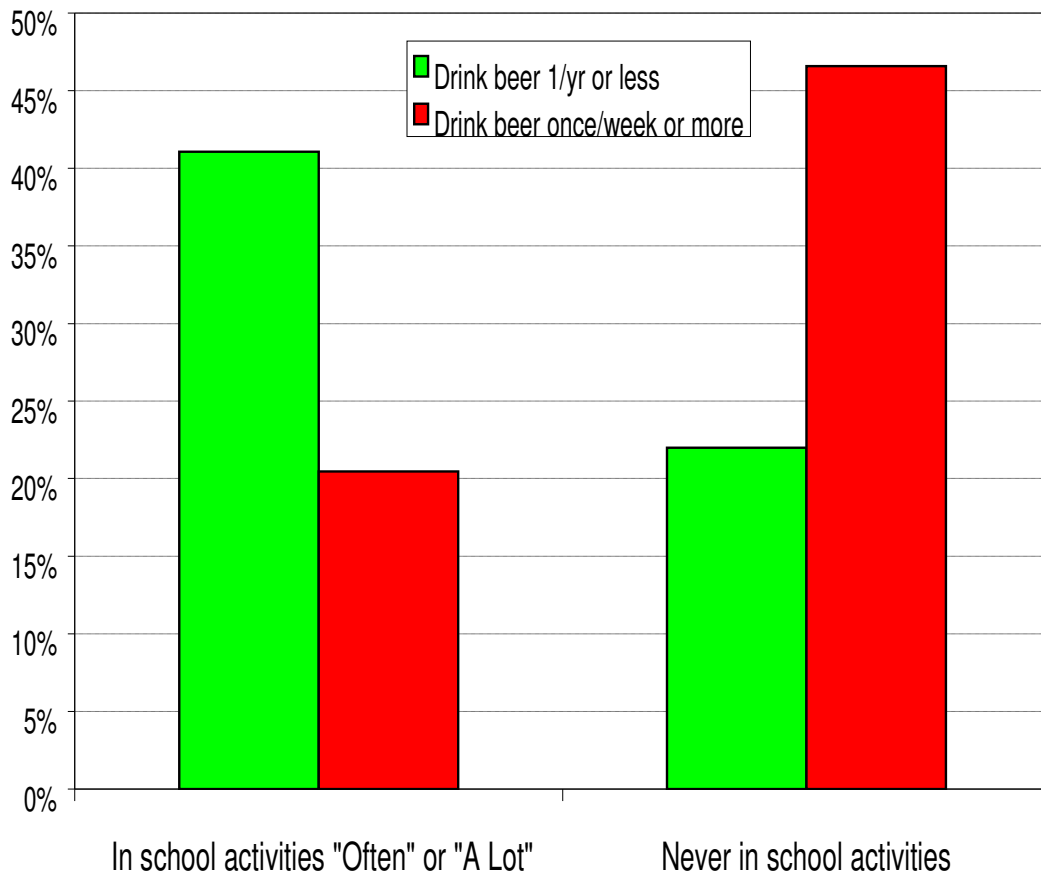


Figure 1. Results from the 2004-2005 PRIDE Survey conducted at LAMS and LAHS. The figure shows that participation in school activities is a protective factor against beer drinking by students. On the left the figure shows that students that participate in school activities (e.g., Olions, Key Club, etc) "Often" or "A Lot" are more likely to be non-drinkers than frequent drinkers. On the right the figure shows that students that never participate in school activities are more likely to be frequent drinkers than non-drinkers.

Participation in community activities is a protective factor against beer drinking

2004-2005 PRIDE Survey LAMS and LAHS

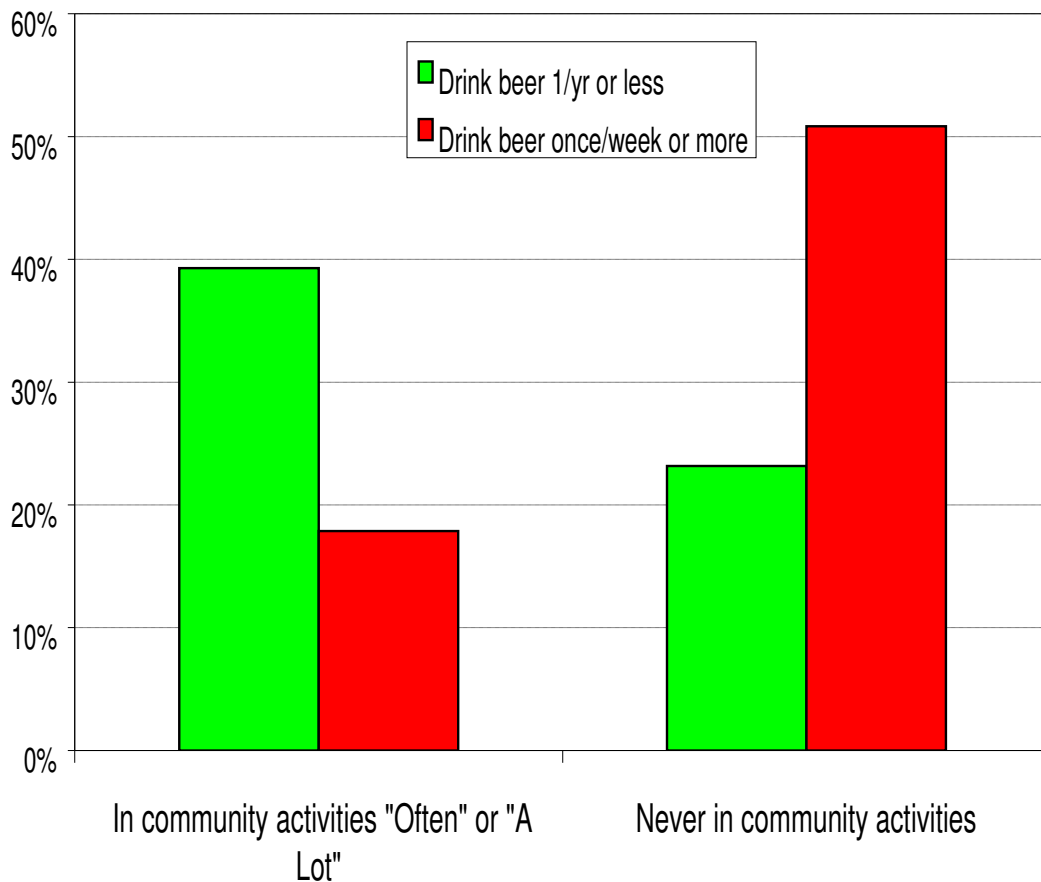


Figure 2. Results from the 2004-2005 PRIDE Survey conducted at LAMS and LAHS. The figure shows that participation in community activities is a protective factor against beer drinking by students. On the left the figure shows that students that participate in community activities (e.g., scouting) "Often" or "A Lot" are more likely to be non-drinkers than frequent drinkers. On the right the figure shows that students that never participate in community activities are more likely to be frequent drinkers than non-drinkers.

Playing sports and beer drinking uncorrelated
Essentially the same percentage of students in each category
2004-2005 PRIDE Survey LAMS and LAHS

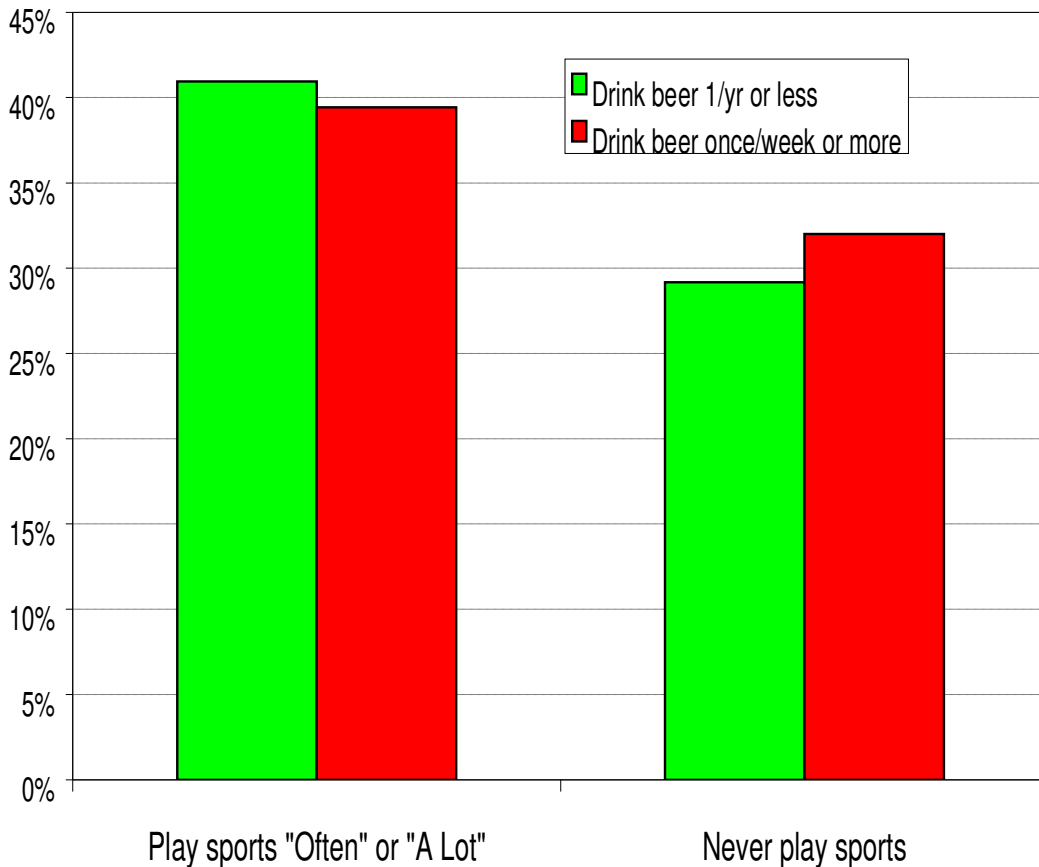


Figure 3. Results from the 2004-2005 PRIDE Survey conducted at LAMS and LAHS. The figure shows that participation in athletics is not a protective factor against beer drinking by students. On the left the figure shows that students that participate in athletics "Often" or "A Lot" are not more likely to be non-drinkers than frequent drinkers. On the right the figure shows that students that never participate in athletics are equally likely to be non-drinkers or frequent drinkers.

Attachment #1

Posted on Fri, Jun. 09, 2006

School's sobriety push divisive

There is resistance in Haddonfield to a round-the-clock initiative to crack down on underage drinking and drug use.

By Kristen A. Graham

Inquirer Staff Writer

In a town where weekend underage-drinking parties are a rite of passage and a "culture of acceptance" is acknowledged, it's a novel idea: making students accountable for their behavior, in school or outside of it.

But Haddonfield Schools Superintendent Joseph O'Brien's plan to battle alcohol and drugs - one he pioneered during a long, popular tenure in Springfield, Delaware County - has met with considerable resistance in his new, wealthy, high-achieving district. Detractors say that they don't want educators sticking their noses in family business, that some students are punished more than others, that they can't stand punitive policies.

"Most kids want to do the right thing," said O'Brien, an enthusiastic man with a broad face and an easy smile. "This allows us to use the power of our teams and clubs to let kids say, 'It's OK not to drink.' You give them something bigger than the party."

Consequences for using drugs or alcohol range from community service, optional counseling, and a written apology for a first offense to the loss of a month or 10 events' worth of extracurricular activities, mandatory counseling and group meetings, paid for by the student's family, for the fifth offense.

That's a powerful tool in a town where an average of 95 percent of students participate in some after-school activity.

A 2002 report commissioned by the district noted that Haddonfield had a "culture of acceptance" of illegal substance use by teenagers. "Once a student enters the second half of their secondary schooling career, it is generally accepted that alcohol is a regular part of their schooling experience," the report concluded.

When O'Brien arrived in Haddonfield in the fall, focusing on underage drinking was one of his first priorities.

The new policy - which is to expire at the end of the month but could be extended - is just one weapon in the arsenal that schools have against underage drinking.

A growing number of local districts are administering Breathalyzer tests before trips or proms. At tonight's Haddonfield's senior prom, students suspected of drinking will be ferried to a hospital and given a blood-alcohol test.

Novel in New Jersey, in place in some Pennsylvania districts, the policy is known as "24/7" to emphasize that it is in effect around the clock, and not just during school hours.

To O'Brien, the policy handles two problems: underage drinking and the district's history of unevenly applying the old drug and alcohol policy, which targeted athletics and some other activities.

But to Haddonfield dad Dennis Sobolewski, it's just plain wrong.

"I will parent my own kids. I don't think the school has any business doing it," said the father of three, whose youngest, Dennis, is graduating this year.

Sobolewski said he was not against O'Brien but thought "24/7" was too harsh.

"All the penalties come down on the athletes and the kids in extracurricular activities," said Sobolewski, whose son played soccer and basketball. "Kids who aren't in extracurriculars can do anything, and you can't touch them, and they probably need more watching."

He and his wife have talked to their children about alcohol, but there are simply realities about being an 18-year-old, he said.

"I couldn't stop these kids from going around to graduation parties and drinking," he said. "They always had a designated driver, though, and I thought that was very mature. But under 24/7, if they got stopped, that designated driver would pay a penalty for doing a good thing. I don't like that."

Though it appears a majority of the school board favors some form of a 24/7 policy, member Larry Berger is not in favor of the current plan.

"I think that what Dr. O'Brien has done is to show that there was a lot of inconsistency in what we were doing before this past year, and that has been very valuable. But I don't think the school district should be viewed as being primarily responsible for what people do outside of school," Berger said.

He also worries about taking away after-school activities.

"Extracurricular activities are, in fact, a good thing," he said. "They are something that helps a student feel more connected to the school and more connected to other students. And if a student is having a problem involving drugs and alcohol, it doesn't strike me that the best response to that is to take away a source of support."

But to Andrea Macfadden, mother of one child in middle school and one in elementary school, the policy is necessary. She wouldn't mind its having more teeth, even.

"Drinking is out of control in this town," she said. "Even the kids feel like their parents don't give them enough boundaries. I think that the consequences need to unfold in the community and at school, because there are no consequences at home."

After the weekend, she often has to clean the detritus of teenage beer parties out of her bushes, Macfadden said, and on her regular jogs through town she sometimes sees teenagers vomiting in parking lots.

It is a particularly sore spot for Macfadden. "Last year, I buried my sister at age 42 from the effects of alcoholism," she said. "She started drinking at age 15. I take kids aside, and I say, 'I want to show you a picture. Doesn't she look like she could have been any of you?' "

John Toto, a middle school guidance counselor and head of the borough's Municipal Alliance, hears the arguments of school's overstepping boundaries and knows parents worry about their kids' transcripts getting tarnished, but he said something needed to give.

"It's hard for parents to see what we see in school," Toto said. "A lot of parents don't handle things."

A quarter of Haddonfield eighth graders have tried alcohol, he said, and by winter break of ninth grade, more than 50 percent have sampled a drink. But since 24/7 was put in place this spring, reports have trickled in of students opting not to drink or skipping parties, he said.

"We don't want to punish kids," he said. "We want to change the climate in the district."

Annie Bentley, a Haddonfield senior, said students received a much harder sell on staying away from cigarettes than they did on the evils of drugs and alcohol. And while some students are in favor of the policy, most of the people she hangs out with are against it, she said.

"Somebody needs to figure out a plan, but I don't think Dr. O'Brien's plan will work," said Bentley, an involved student who works on the yearbook and is headed to Drew University in the fall. "This plan is really unfair to students who are in a lot of extracurricular activities, and you could get in trouble if you're just at a party where there's alcohol, even if you're not drinking."

Maryann Bigelow, president of the Haddonfield Memorial High School PTA, will take no stand on the policy, but said she was sure of one thing.

"This is an issue that needs to be addressed," Bigelow said. "Some people think it's too easy, and some people think it's too tough. But I haven't heard one parent that says, 'We shouldn't be talking about this.' "

'24/7' Targets Teenage Drinking

School districts across the region try to battle alcohol use among teenagers. Two districts with so-called "24/7" policies have a strict system of consequences.

Haddonfield

First offense: Dialogue with coach sponsor; in-district counseling made available; written apology to coach, parents or both; 10 hours of school or community service.

Second offense: Mandatory drug and alcohol counseling paid for by the student's family; essay about the incident and how it could have been avoided; 20 hours of community service; mandatory meeting with parents, principal, and coach or sponsor.

Third offense: Attendance at professional group meetings paid for by student's family; 30 hours of community service; loss of the right to participate in one extracurricular event.

Fourth offense: Continued or resumed attendance at professional or group meetings; 30 hours of community service; loss of the right to participate in extracurricular events for two weeks in season or three events out of season.

Fifth offense: Continued or resumed attendance at professional or group meetings; mandatory drug and alcohol counseling; loss of the right to participate in extracurricular events for one calendar month in season or 10 events out of season.

Springfield (Delco)

First offense: Two-week suspension from extracurricular activities.

Second offense: Ninety-day suspension from extracurricular activities.

Third offense: Banned from all extracurricular activities.

SOURCE: Haddonfield School District; Springfield School District.

ONLINE EXTRA

Access the Haddonfield schools page via <http://go.philly.com/hfield>

On the main page is a link to an open letter to parents on the temporary drug and alcohol regulations. Click on the "Links of Interest" in the left column to see a PowerPoint presentation called "Our Students Our Community."

Contact staff writer Kristen Graham at 856-779-3927 or kgraham@phillynews.com. To comment or to ask a question, go to <http://go.philly.com/schooltalk>.