



# CHOICES

is an interactive, evidence-based late elementary school curriculum to prevent destructive behaviors including violence and the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. The ten-lesson curriculum to promote wellness is taught by trained, highly skilled Prevention Specialists who are members of a countywide network of prevention services providers. **CHOICES** is offered free of charge to schools in Suffolk County.

**CHOICES** provides a state-of-the-art prevention approach in the context of the lifestyle risk reduction model. Through sequential learning and interactive hands-on experience, **CHOICES** teaches social competencies to late elementary school children. Classroom lessons teach students age-appropriate information about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. It teaches children how to take responsibility for their thoughts, feelings and actions; make decisions; recognize and manage stress; be assertive; communicate effectively; manage conflict; work in small groups; make friends; ask for help; and give themselves positive self-talk. **CHOICES** empowers children through self-efficacy.

**CHOICES** provides Suffolk County's elementary schools with a consistent, standardized substance abuse and violence prevention program in a convenient and reliable packaged offering. **CHOICES** offers a comprehensive product: an instructor's manual, a parent component, a student workbook available in either English or Spanish, enrichment exercises for classroom teachers, and Certificates of Completion for a graduation ceremony. The program helps students to utilize school-based referral sources. It stands on its own or complements other prevention activities and programs in the schools.

**CHOICES** was initiated in 1992 by County prevention personnel in conjunction with the community-based Prevention Specialists from County contract agencies. After receiving intensive training, Prevention Specialists field-tested the curriculum in the fourth and fifth grades, as well as Special Education classes, at the O'Neill Elementary School in Central Islip. The pilot culminated in an evening graduation exercise with a record-breaking attendance of over 250 parents. The District enthusiastically incorporated **CHOICES** into their permanent curriculum.

Subsequent evaluation of **CHOICES** conducted under the auspices of Dowling College indicated the program significantly increases students' levels of self-esteem. The literature has repeatedly identified self-esteem as a protective factor in resisting drug use. **CHOICES** is reviewed and revised on a regular basis based on the feedback from the community based Prevention Specialists, schools, parents, community groups, the literature and, most important, the children themselves.

**CHOICES** remains in demand by both public and private schools. In 2002-3, the **CHOICES** program was provided to third, fourth and fifth graders in 33 public school districts and 13 private schools in Suffolk County, reaching 16,000 students.

For more information about the **CHOICES** program, please call:  
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