

I never know exactly how to respond when I'm asked why the patterns of alcohol and marijuana use at BSM parallel so closely the rates of use at other high schools. We have so many "good kids" and "good families" that sometimes the only answer I can come up with is the (not so) brilliant observation that "good kids" make mistakes. In addition, "good parents" make mistakes too.

The BSM Parent Association partnered with the Student Support Team approximately four years ago to produce the following "Best Practices" document:

Best Practices

Set the consequence for first use of alcohol or marijuana very high.

Make sure they know what you have decided the consequence will be.

Welcome their friends in your home as long as there has been a chance for parents to talk.

Introduce yourself to parents when you drop your child off at someone's house.

Call the other parent and welcome calls from other parents.

Always call before and occasionally call after to compare notes.

Friends are not to bring any of their own beverages into your home.

Tell your teenager to leave any gathering where there is any drinking or drugs.

Call parents if it turns out there was alcohol or marijuana use in your home.

Be visible at the party. Walk through; fill the chip bowl, etc.

Set the time when you would like the party to end and stay up until everyone is gone.

Wait up for them, kiss them goodnight.

"It's over when it's over". No after-event events.

Don't say yes to spring break trips without adults or any kind of hotel party.

Be reluctant to say yes to last minute requests for sleepovers.

Remember: Teenagers notice what their parents do and what their friends' parents do.

Virtually all BSM parents follow these practices when their children are in 7th, 8th and 9th grades. However, compliance begins to decline when the driver's licenses appear. By 12th grade, many BSM students have convinced their parents that they don't have to call other parents to verify supervision at weekend get togethers and the host parents don't always see the necessity of walking through and "filling the chip bowl".

After 25 years of watching parents grow more and more relaxed as college approaches, I think I understand it as well as anyone. But that doesn't make it helpful and it doesn't make it right. Adolescents are known to be impulsive and short-sighted at

times, even when they have high grade point averages, terrific scores on the ACT and SAT, and acceptances to competitive colleges in their back pocket. They are strengthened to make good decisions by our supervision, by our waiting up for them, and by our goodnight kiss.

Every BSM parent has attended at least one “Community of Concern” presentation, some reluctantly. Let me repeat one of the main points from that evening. All of our children will be less likely to get into trouble with alcohol or marijuana when we have 100% of the parents of BSM students working together to prevent alcohol use until the legal drinking age of 21. It takes every one of us doing whatever we can to impress upon all BSM students (even the seniors) that 18 is still three years away from legal. It takes every one of us calling parents and filling chip bowls. Unfortunately, even “good kids” make mistakes that can affect their health, safety and even their standing at school.