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Schools threaten to suspend kids from activities for

DALLAS (AP) — Several North Texas schools are threatening to suspend students from extracurricular activities if they use alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs.

And some institutions are trying to extend the prohibition off campus.

The Grapevine-Colleyville school board recently revised a pledge that must be signed by students and parents: "I pledge not to drink alcoholic beverages, use tobacco illegally, take illegal drugs or be in possession of alcoholic beverages, tobacco, illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia."

It now states in bold letters: "The pledge is in effect at all times."

Arlington, Grand Prairie, Highland Park, Plano and other districts have similar 24-hour policies.

"We don't want kids out representing our district through extracurricular activities who are doing things that are illegal," Larry Guinn, executive director of student services for the Plano school system, told *The Dallas Morning News* in Tuesday's editions.

Critics say the school districts are out of their constitutional bounds.

"This is an unconstitutional invasion of privacy that would not be placed on others, such as teachers, who are clearly role models," said Frank Colosi, a Fort Worth lawyer who works with the American Civil Liberties Union. "The school districts are discriminating on the basis of who is willing to give up their constitutional rights to participate."

But school officials in Arlington say the round-the-clock pledge helps keep kids off drugs and alcohol, which is difficult to enforce.

"I don't have many kids show you, but I can just say from my experience we're seeing fewer kids" for disciplinary reasons, said Arlington School principal James Adams.

"It gives them a reason to do it," Adams said, "because kids tell me they didn't because they were afraid."

The Arlington school board instituted its around-the-clock policy after a hazing incident involving several students and the gang rape of a student in 1996.

The policies are built into the punishment. A first offense results in suspension from the remainder of the school year. Students are given one opportunity to be reinstated one time in junior high and one time in high school.

Punishments at Grapevine-Colleyville range from suspension of three weeks to removal for one calendar year after a third violation.

Districts have their own methods of finding out which students are breaking the rules, including random searches by students, an employee witnessing an offense, or a citation filed by a local law enforcement agency.

Lauren Taliaferro, a senior leader at Lamar High School in Arlington, said she is glad that students shouldn't use drugs, smoke or use alcohol. She thinks a 24-hour policy is the way to get kids to stop using drugs.

"Unless they're willing to do something that says they're part of the extracurricular activity, that shows they're part of the school, I don't think it's very fair," said 15-year-old Taliaferro.

Wednesday, August 21, 2002

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Houston-area
been swimming
Texas lake had
third child fatal
form of meningi
month.
The 9-year-old
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near Austin
weekend, acco
health official
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