

Helping the Kids of Binghamton: Education on Basic Health Topics

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Thesis

Binghamton University should work with the Promise Zone of Binghamton to implement a two credit course that allows college students to teach middle school students topics ranging from safe sex and drug abuse to mental health issues.

Background & Analysis

The city of Binghamton is plagued by widespread poverty. These economic conditions have fostered an environment where drug abuse has skyrocketed. Additionally, the poor economic conditions in the area have left many children with no parental guidance, as many parents have to work multiple jobs in order to make ends meet. The main concern with the local area is that the negative external The lack of a good role model in these children's lives leaves them susceptible to mental health issues, such as anxiety or depression. This lack of a central authority figure also leads kids to make poor decisions, such as having unsafe sex. Implementing such an academic subject is not yet mandated because of Binghamton's fragile economic conditions. At the moment, such an important cause is being ignored because the local area is not able to find the funds to provide students with a necessary educational program.

Talking Points

- ▶ Mental health, sex, and drug education are imperative teaching lessons that every child should be aware of. These topics are seemingly dismissed from Binghamton's education department due to the burden of cost. Students should have access to this education with the use of this alternative method of teaching.

The Policy Idea

To create an awareness program that does not hinder the strict budgets, Binghamton University should implement a 2 credit course that trains college students regarding safe sex, drug abuse, and mental health issues. As a requirement for the course, the college students must then go to the local schools and carry out these awareness programs. This is mutually beneficial because the middle school students will be gaining this necessary knowledge, the school systems are not facing a large cost, and the college students have an incentive to join the course.

Policy Analysis

The cost of implementing such a policy is targeted towards Binghamton University, which is a public university. With frequent donations from alumni and grants given by DASNY, the university should be able to support the addition of this two credit course. This course is specifically aligned with Binghamton's College of Community and Public Affairs school as its primary topic of courses relates to social work and human development. With the idea of helping the local community in mind, this policy can be effective if its mission is clearly stated. However, two primary concerns do arise. The first is actually implementing such a course. Even though the financial aspect of this course seems feasible, there will be a level of apprehension to add this course. With this in mind, the partnership with Promise Zone and the support from the faculty of the middle schools will advance Binghamton University's consideration of this course. The second concern is with the local parents of the students who are receiving this program in the classroom. It is imperative to educate the parents on the importance of their children learning such topics and it will be our duty to clarify that. The apprehension will stem from personal beliefs, customs, and experiences that may make these parents uneasy about their child learning safe sex, drug abuse, and mental health. To mitigate this, factual statistics regarding the benefits of awareness programs will be provided through several informational sessions provided by Promise Zone and the policy supporters.

Key Facts

- ▶ As of 2013, 41.4% of residents had an income that fell below the poverty line.¹
- ▶ 29.3% of Binghamton drug users who went to rehab began using the substance between the ages of 15-17, which is significantly younger than the average national starting age.²
- ▶ Before entering rehab, 27.7% of drug abusers in Binghamton used their drug of choice daily.³
- ▶ 46% of people admitted to rehab from the Binghamton Metro area also had a psychiatric disorder.⁴

NEXT STEPS

Children in the city of Binghamton lack information about the dangers of drugs, safe sex, and mental health issues. We want to work with the Promise Zone of Binghamton and implement a policy that would allow students from the university's College of Community and Public Affairs to go to the local high school and teach a basic health class to the students that focused on these problem areas. This will help alleviate the overwhelming drug epidemic, which will have a great impact on the community. Additionally, kids will be better educated on crucial topics like mental health issues and safe sex. Education in these topic areas will help the kids stay focused on their goals and set them up for success later in life.

¹ "Binghamton, New York (NY) Poverty Rate Data Information about Poor and Low Income Residents." Binghamton, New York (NY) Poverty Rate Data - Information about Poor and Low Income Residents Living in This City. Accessed December 02, 2016. <http://www.city-data.com/poverty/poverty-Binghamton-New-York.html>.

² "Binghamton Area Substance Abuse." HealthGrove. Accessed December 02, 2016. <http://drug-abuse-rates.healthgrove.com/l/221/Binghamton-New-York>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.