Parenting styles and their impact on drinking behaviour: What's the 'kick-on' effect for schools and the classroom teacher?
Outline of presentation

- are young people drinking more than in the past?
- what do we know now about the impact of alcohol on young people?
- what do we know about effective parenting?
- 'parenting styles' and the 'age of entitlement'
- teaching in the 'age of entitlement' – the impact on schools and teachers
- three basic parenting principles around alcohol
- what is the school's role here and what can you realistically do as a classroom teacher?
Alcohol

How about school-based young people? Is it getting worse?
Never consumed alcohol, Australian secondary school students (%), 2011


The majority of young people across all age groups have tried alcohol, with use increasing as they get older. That said, it is important to remember that almost one in five Year 10 students have never consumed alcohol.
Australian secondary school students who describe themselves as non-drinkers (%), 2011


Even though many of them have tried alcohol, the vast majority of them still regard themselves as 'non-drinkers' until they reach 16 years of age.
Respondents were classified as 'non-drinkers' (never had a glass of alcohol), 'moderate drinkers' (had a full glass but not more than four drinks on a single occasion in the last month) or 'risky drinkers' (had more than four drinks on one or more occasions in the last month). Although there are more small numbers of 'risky drinkers' in Years 8 and 9, it is Year 10 where things begin to change.
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Average number of drinks consumed by current drinkers in past seven days, by age and gender, 2011


Unfortunately 'current drinkers' consumed a lot of alcohol. Across all ages, average drinking levels reported exceeded recommended levels for adults.
Why shouldn't young people be drinking?

Growing evidence that we should be delaying alcohol use for as long as possible – key concerns ...

- the **developing brain**
- increased risk of **liver disease**
- increased cancer risk, particularly **breast cancer in young women**
- the earlier you drink, the greater risk of future alcohol problems, including **dependency**
- more likely to be **sexually active** at earlier ages, have sexual intercourse more often, and have unprotected sex
- more likely to be **victims of violent crime**, including rape, aggravated assault, and robbery
Does any parent really want their teen to drink?

Most probably not ... however ...

- small minority simply don't care – abusive in their response
- there are certainly cultural issues to consider – drinking small amounts in a family context is a 'tradition'
- some desperately want to be their child's friend and are frightened of saying 'no'
- "we all did it ... there's nothing wrong with us!"
- others may want to relive their adolescence by drinking with their teens or 'becoming one of the gang'
- it's just too hard and whatever they do, it won't make a difference

What does the evidence say – can parents make a difference?
Of course they can, but they have to put some effort into it and be a parent and not a best friend!

Unfortunately by the time young people get to high school the damage has been done ...
It's no wonder parents are confused – lots of theories on what works

Also lots of critics telling you what you shouldn't be doing ... some really practical ideas too ...
What do we know about effective parenting?

No-one can tell any parent what to do with their child – have to make their own decisions

- no rule-book
- plenty of books and opinions about what to do
- opinions have changed over the years
- what may have worked for one child may not work for the next
- they can only do the best they can do at that moment in time!

To prevent or at least delay alcohol and other drug use – 3 simple rules for parents ...

- know where your child is
- know who they're with
- know when they'll be home
Parenting styles

Different parenting styles have been identified, with one being the most effective in limiting future risky drinking.
Different types of parenting styles have been identified:

- **authoritarian** (strictness but not warmth)
- **authoritative** (warmth and strictness)
- **indulgent** (warmth but not strictness)
- **neglectful** (neither warmth nor strictness)
Authoritative parenting

Steinberg, L. (2014) Age of Opportunity

"The single most important thing parents can do to raise healthy, happy and successful kids is to practice authoritative parenting"  

Steinberg says it's crucial that parents excel in three areas:

- **be warm** – "you can't spoil a child with love" – you want to build your child's sense of feeling loved, valued and protected
- **be firm** – "set rules that are grounded in logic and purpose" and make adjustments as they get older and reward good behaviour
- **be supportive** – "gradually relinquish control and try to permit – rather than protect – when you can". If you decide to say 'no', explain why
Parenting in the 'age of entitlement'

No parent wants to be 'hated' but giving a child everything they want to avoid conflict is problematic

- they need to hear 'no' regularly
- also need to experience failure
- dangers of a culture where everyone wins

"We may think that rewarding every child will make them feel good -- and it may, for a moment. But it may also make them feel that they are entitled to praise and recognition for merely existing. And that does no one any favours."

(Drexler, 2012)

'No' is an important word and parents need to explain clearly why it's been said ...

When they fail or don't get invited somewhere – need to talk that through

- they can't be good at everything, only one person can 'win' and they can't be friends with everyone - that's ok!
Also has an impact on the school and the classroom teacher. As much as parents want to think their child can do no wrong, they most probably can!
Teaching in the age of 'entitlement'

Greater pressure on teachers
- community and parental expectations are higher – teaching, reporting and results

Some parenting styles more problematic
- some students never hear 'no' apart from at school – difficult to maintain rules/boundaries
- school punishments are not always supported by parents and often undermined
- failure is not an option and will not be accepted. If they fail - it's the teacher's fault, not the student's fault!
- not everyone is going to be popular – teachers cannot enforce popularity!
- not everyone is going to succeed at school and some students simply shouldn't be there!
So is this whole generation a 'waste of space', spoilt and disrespectful?

Is 'Generation Z' as bad as we making out?
Australian secondary school students who describe themselves as non-drinkers (%), 2011


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Even though many of them have tried alcohol, the vast majority of them still regard themselves as 'non-drinkers' until they reach 16 years of age.
Three simple parenting principles around alcohol

Research shows that parents have a major influence on their child's drinking behaviour, even during adolescence

- **never underestimate the power of role modelling**
- **authoritative parenting, incorporating rules and consequences bound in unconditional love, reduces the risk of future risky drinking**
- **delay, delay, delay** – try to delay your child’s first drink of alcohol for as long as possible
Summary of findings and recommendations of this UK study included:

- poor parenting significantly increases the risk that children will be binge drinkers
- high levels of parental warmth and attachment under the age of 10, combined with strict discipline by the time they are 16, play a powerful role in reducing the likelihood that a child would go on to be a binge drinker
- recommendations for parents included discipline and supervision at age of initiation (15-16) and careful monitoring of alcohol access
- recommendations for government included enforcement of underage drinking laws and investment in alcohol-related school programs that involve parents
So what is the school's role?

Increasing pressure to do more in less time
That said – can your school say that these statements reflect your practices in this area?

- drug education is not only provided in health classes
- alcohol and drug-related issues are also discussed in pastoral care or well-being programs
- external presenters are only used to support existing school programs
- professional development for those teachers who are interested is encouraged and supported
- hot topics that affect young people are covered
  - by specialist health teachers when appropriate
  - parent education on these topics is provided, evaluated and reviewed where appropriate
Most importantly, be a good teacher and connect ....

Make them feel important and valued and you are building their resilience

- not a subject area or something you can evaluate, you either do it or you don't – **if you don't you shouldn't be teaching!**
- **it's not about trying to be their best friend!**
- show an interest in what they are doing or what they've done – it doesn't need to be about their personal life
- spend a few minutes extra with them working on an assignment
- anything that in that moment makes them feel they are special!

**Such a simple thing – true pastoral care - but it can make a real difference in a teen's life ...**
For further information or you are interested in more of what I have to say ...

For a PDF copy of this presentation or a list of references and supporting information, please go to my website - [www.darta.net.au](http://www.darta.net.au)

Please feel free to contact me by email - [p.dillon@darta.net.au](mailto:p.dillon@darta.net.au) or follow me on Facebook or Twitter ([Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia](https://www.facebook.com/drugalcoholresearch?ref=ts)) or go to my blogs – 'Doing Drugs with Paul Dillon' or 'The Real Deal on Drugs'

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**DOING DRUGS WITH PAUL DILLON**

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2012**

**The ‘Schoolies’ Week’ phenomenon**

It’s that time of year that many parents dread - the lead-up to ‘Schoolies’ Week, or ‘Leavers’ Week’ as it is known in NZ. Last week Foreign Affairs Minister Bob Carr issued a warning to Schoolies travelling overseas that if they break the law consular staff can’t ‘rescue them if they are arrested’. It was a great move by the Australian Government in my opinion but, doubt very much if it will have any great effect on these young people who choose to go overseas for Schoolies celebrations.

You only need to take a look at a story that ran on Channel Ten’s ‘The Project’ in response to the DIA’s warning to realise what we are up against. If you go to the following link the story on Schoolies traveling overseas begins at 2min 20sec. The interview with the two young women who are planning to travel to Bali is quite disturbing. When asked why they chose to go overseas they make it clear that it is to avoid the laws around alcohol as they will be under-age and that the purpose of the trip is to get drunk. I know that it is extremely difficult to stop young people from attending Schoolies’ Week events but any parent who believes that it is safer for their child to travel overseas to party rather than make the pilgrimage to the Gold Coast, Byron, Rochester or North Harbour study have their heads in the sand.

Of course you have to let your child experience life and they are going to make mistakes. Some parents have said to me that their child is planning to take a ‘gap’ year and that they see the overseas Schoolies’ Week as a controlled introduction to that experience. Are they nuts? The attraction for many young people to travel overseas for Schoolies is that they are not subject to laws.