



## CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

ITEM #WC-9

### MARCH 2004 AGENDA

**Federal Waiver**

**SUBJECT**

Request by **Los Angeles Unified School District** to waive No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB); Title IV, Part A, Section 4115 (a)(1)(C) to use Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities funds to support the cost of **Take Charge of Your Life**, a seventh and ninth grade prevention program

Waiver Number: Fed-21-2003

**Action**

**Consent**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Approval  Approval with conditions  Denial

That district must continue to take part in the University of Akron evaluation of *Take Charge of Your Life*. The district must submit a report to the Safe and Healthy Kids Program Office no later than March 2005 describing the progress made by the University of Akron in evaluating the *Take Charge of Your Life* program. The district must submit a report to the Safe and Healthy Kids Program Office no later than March of 2006 describing the progress made by University of Akron in submitting the results of the evaluation to the National Registry of Effective Programs, the University of Colorado's Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, and/or the California Healthy Kids Resource Center, for possible designation as a Model, Blueprint, or Validated Program. The district must also evaluate its own comprehensive prevention program in accordance with the district's approved Local Educational Agency Plan.

**SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

The SBE previously adopted policy 03-01 that requires a program or activity supported with Safe and Drug Free School and Communities (SDFSC) funds to meet the principles of effectiveness. Attachment A of the policy lists those programs that provide scientific evidence that the program reduces violence and illegal drug use as required by Title IV, Part A Section 4115. *Take Charge of Your Life* is not on the Attachment A. This is the first waiver submission for the *Take Charge of Your Life* curriculum.

**SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES**

The waiver application from the **Los Angeles USD** regarding the *Take Charge of Your Life*, a 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum, has been reviewed to ensure compliance with the three major criteria described in SBE policy 03-01 that must be met in order for the waiver to be approved by the board. The waiver application's success in meeting each

of the three criteria is described as follows:

## Los Angeles Unified School District, Page 2

### **Is the program innovative?**

The *Take Charge of Your Life* curriculum was specifically developed to be delivered by law enforcement officers as the new DARE program for middle and high school. It was created within the last two years by the Institute for Health and Social Policy, University of Akron and can be considered a new program. Previous evaluations of the former DARE program consistently found that there was little or no evidence that DARE had any impact on behavior and could not be considered an effective program. As a result, the publisher (DARE America) has been dedicated to developing completely new curriculums. A grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is supporting a five-year, multi-site clinical study of the *Take Charge of Your Life* curriculum. There are 14 California school districts taking part in the national study. The Los Angeles USD is one of the sites taking part in the study.

The DARE program claims to be the nation's most widely implemented prevention program as a result of using a highly developed network of training centers and law enforcement officers to deliver classroom lessons. The use of law enforcement officers to implement the program is the most unique aspect of the *Take Charge of Your Life* curriculum. However, the use of law enforcement officers in this regard has been a consistent and defining aspect of the DARE program for the last 19 years.

The *Take Charge of Your Life* curriculum draws on research about important prevention variables related to normative beliefs, personal attitudes, problem solving and resistance skills, consequences, peer influences, and media in affecting normative beliefs. The program design and content is now consistent with many other already available social-influences prevention curriculums. The *Take Charge of Your Life* curriculum is innovative relative to other available science-based prevention programs primarily because of its advantage for being implemented by a large number of school districts and its support from the law enforcement community.

The *Taking Charge of Your Life* curriculum meets the board's criteria for being innovative primarily based on being evaluated as a completely new program.

### **Does the program demonstrate substantial likelihood of success?**

The University of Akron's Institute for Health and Social Policy incorporated the most up-to-date evidence and research-based strategies for drug use prevention programming into the new *Take Charge of Your Life* curriculum. There are 10 lessons presented in middle school to be reinforced with a set booster lessons in the ninth grade. Prevention research supports the importance of using a booster component to reinforce middle school prevention curriculum. The lessons emphasize active learning principles and "best teaching" practices that have been found to be consistent characteristics of effective prevention programs.

The University of Akron conducted a feasibility study to assess the readiness of the core components of *Take Charge of Your Life* in preparation for the full implementation of the national study. The first year interim report on the longitudinal study of *Take Charge of Your Life* does not yet provide student behavioral outcome data. However, the evaluators report that the feasibility study results provide evidence that the curriculum was successful in improving students' communication skills and changing normative

beliefs about substance use. The evaluator reports the program has robust results for increasing student refusal skills, decreasing student perception of peer drug

**Los Angeles Unified School District, Page 3**

use, and decreasing perception of substance use acceptance. These claims support a conclusion that the *Take Charge of Your Life* curriculum demonstrates the likelihood of success. It is essential that the national study be completed and the results published in a peer-reviewed study so that the program's efficacy claims are subject to scientific scrutiny.

**Is there a plan and timeline for submitting the program for review and recognition?**

This condition requires that the program be evaluated and the outcomes of the evaluation be reviewed by one of the nationwide research groups identified in policy 03-01. This waiver request meets these criteria, because the publisher and developer of the program are supporting a study by the University of Akron that will determine the effectiveness of the program within the next two years. The applicant has confirmed that the outcomes of that evaluation will be submitted via the National Registry of Effective Programs to the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) for possible designation as a Model Program. Following through on this commitment to evaluation and submission for review by CSAP is therefore a condition for approval of the waiver.

**Summary**

The Department recommends that this waiver be approved, as it meets the three criteria in the State Board of Education policy.

---

Authority for Waiver: NCLB, Title IV, Part A, Section 4115(a)(3)

Local board approval date(s): 12-9-03

Period of request: 09-01-03 to 09-01-05

**FISCAL ANALYSIS (AS APPROPRIATE)**

Waiver approval will decrease the amount of NCLB, Title IV, Part A funds available to support science-based and proven-effective alcohol, tobacco, other drug and violence prevention programs consistent with the LEA's approved LEAP.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Documentation is attached to this Summary.