

Screening For Alcohol

As teenagers show up to class or dances intoxicated, some schools are sobering up.

Using one of several alcohol screeners, made by Q3 Innovations, school administrators and staff can test the blood alcohol concentration of a student quickly and accurately.

In Indianapolis, Ind., North Central High School started using breathalyzers in 1995 but now uses the AlcoHawk. Principal C.E. Quandt says parents and administrators thought 10 years ago they ought to start working together concerning student behavior, particularly underage drinking.

So the school started giving breathalyzer tests to every student before school dances. Students are not as rowdy or inconsiderate as some were in the past, Quandt says. "No one has ever failed the test," he says. "It's been a wonderful addition to our safety and security program."

But a handful of students have come to school intoxicated, he says. The first offense requires students get drug or alcohol awareness counseling. The second offense means expulsion.

Brian Eddy, CEO of Q3 Innovations, the makers of several alcohol screeners, says more schools are using breathalyzers to deter students from drinking. "It's really becoming a big problem," Eddy says.

About 12 percent of eighth graders have had five or more drinks on a single occasion within the past two weeks, according to a 2004 National Institutes of Health report. The product is also helpful as lawsuits increase. Schools are legally responsible to provide a safe environment for all students, Eddy says.

—Angela Pascopella

