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## Federal funds for drug-free school programs running out

By [Amy Hetzner](#) of the Journal Sentinel

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A small pool of federal funds that Wisconsin school officials say helps pay for everything from safety officers to anti-bullying efforts is drying up this year, leaving local districts scrambling for alternative revenue sources.

Milwaukee Public Schools probably will have to reduce programs aimed at helping students avoid risky choices and find alternative funding sources to continue a life-skills training program aimed at reducing alcohol and drug use.

Private schools in the city also will be affected, as MPS used its federal grant money to provide training and supplies for programs to those schools as well, said Brett Fuller, MPS' curriculum specialist for safe and drug-free schools.

"There was a lot of good programming that I don't know how I'm going to continue without these resources," Fuller said.

MPS received the largest slice of the safe and drug-free school grants distributed by the U.S. Department of Education on a per-student basis to schools in the state. Of nearly \$3.6 million received by Wisconsin schools in the 2009-'10 school year, MPS got a little over \$1 million.

But school officials in other districts also say they relied on the federal funding to pay for programs that other grants would not. The Waukesha School District used a portion of the \$36,378 it received this school year to pay for a school resource officer, which cannot be funded out of the district's other existing grants, said James Haessly, Waukesha's assistant superintendent for special education and student services.

The federal money also paid for drug-testing for students seeking reinstatement after drug-related expulsions and for safety equipment, such as two-way radios for assistant principals, he said.

"All of these efforts added together help us make a dent in teen risk behaviors," Haessly said. "I think we save lives with that money. I really do."

Just because the safe and drug-free school grants are going away does not mean that schools will no longer receive help from the federal government for this type of program, said Kevin Jennings, assistant

deputy secretary for safe and drug-free schools at the U.S. Department of Education.

The department has proposed replacing the grants with a more targeted program, he said. Five to seven states would receive funding for the first year of the new program, with funding allocated to schools based on how their school environments rate on a variety of factors that affect their students' ability to learn, Jennings said. The program would be expanded after the first year to reach more schools in other states, he said.

"It is true that some schools will now be getting nothing," he said. "However, some schools - and it's going to be the ones with the biggest problems - will be getting much more than they did before."

Jennings said the new program is part of an overall change in approach by the federal Education Department, which has never been a major funding source for the nation's schools. The department is trying to get the most out of its limited resources for the new school-climate initiative, for which the department has requested \$410 million for the next fiscal year, he said.

The alternative would be to continue a funding system that provides many schools too little money to have much effect, he said. In Wisconsin, for example, all but 41 school districts received less than \$10,000 in federal funding for this school year, which Jennings said "was not enough money to do much of anything, quite bluntly."

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Well, since Jimmy Casino has tapped out the highway fund and hid it somewhere in the general fund the state ought to look there if they can't figure out a way to teach kids about drugs without money. It is ironic to me however that cash and drugs stay tied together for the "greater good".

In my generation of the 80's there where drugs around too but somehow it didn't take a Federal handout to "educate" us about dope. Since the dropout rates are terrible nowadays and if the majority of the reason is because of drugs, well then perhaps the program should be eliminated as it doesn't seem to me that it's been a very affective "program".

The only real addiction I see with this "crisis" is about where or who is going to supply the teachers union with the cash fix it's starting to get the shakes over.

I say let the school system go through it's withdrawls the old fashioned way and perhaps this is one of those times when going back to 80's could be cool if only the education system would go back to having pride in their work and putting the kids before cash.

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