

**NORWIN MIDDLE SCHOOL BEGINS OPIOID AWARENESS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM
Lessons Begin in Mid-March; Norwin's Effort Described as Leading the Nation**

NORTH HUNTINGDON, Pa. — To do its part to counter the heroin and opioid epidemic, Norwin School District will begin providing lessons using the *Operation Prevention* educational program in Middle School health classes this spring.

Operation Prevention provides students with the tools they need to make smart, informed choices when they are prescribed or presented with the opportunity to experiment with opioids. The educational program is a joint creation of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and Discovery Education.

To introduce the new curriculum to the parents and community, the School District hosted a Parent Information Forum at Norwin Middle School on February 22, 2017, that was attended by approximately 130 people, including several members of the Board of Education.

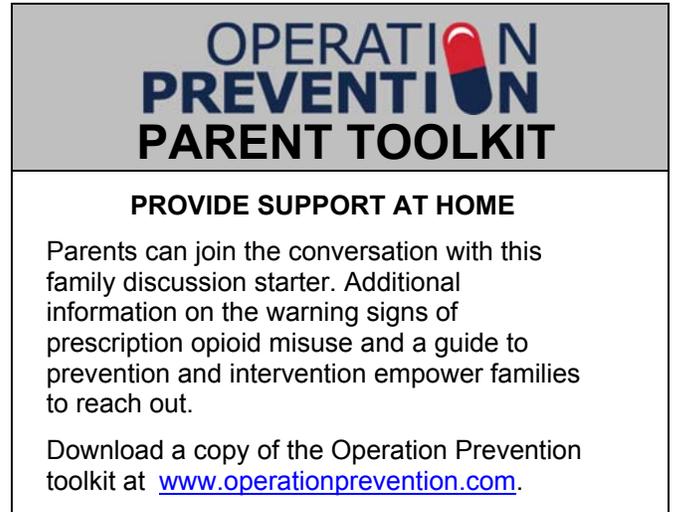
The Parent Information Forum provided parents with useful “discussion starters,” information about signs of addiction, and ways to teach their children refusal skills. In addition, the *Operation Prevention* program was also previewed for the parents in attendance. The Norwin Council of PTAs, the Norwin Education Association, and Excelsa Health served as primary sponsors of the February 22nd Parent Information Forum.

A Steering Committee of Norwin teachers and administrators has integrated the *Operation Prevention* curriculum into existing health lessons about drugs and alcohol. The following teachers spoke at the public meeting:

- Mr. David Gubanich (7th Grade classroom resources);
- Mr. Andrew Phipps (8th Grade classroom resources);
- Mrs. Vicki Potter (Parent Tool Kit);
- Mrs. Mary Ellen Ferragonio, Co-Department Head (signs and symptoms of addiction); and
- Mrs. Mary Ann Stevens, Co- Department Head (ways to teach children refusal skills).

The *Operation Prevention* curriculum became available nationwide in fall 2016 and is free to all schools at www.operationprevention.com. Norwin School District's decision to integrate *Operation Prevention* into its health and physical education classes has established Norwin as a national leader, according to one of the partner agencies that created the curriculum.

“Norwin School District is leading the charge not only regionally, not only in the state of Pennsylvania, but nationally,” said Mr. Donovan Goode, Director of Partnerships at Discovery Education. Mr. Goode, speaking on behalf of Discovery Education, showed the organization's support for Norwin School District's efforts and for the Drug Enforcement Administration's commitment to education and prevention.



**OPERATION
PREVENTION
PARENT TOOLKIT**

PROVIDE SUPPORT AT HOME

Parents can join the conversation with this family discussion starter. Additional information on the warning signs of prescription opioid misuse and a guide to prevention and intervention empower families to reach out.

Download a copy of the *Operation Prevention* toolkit at www.operationprevention.com.



*Mr. Donovan Goode,
Director of Educational
Partnerships, Discovery
Education*



*Mr. David Battiste,
Assistant Special Agent in
Charge, Drug Enforcement
Agency - Pittsburgh*

Several officials from the United States Department of Justice and other partner agencies spoke at the public meeting about the seriousness of the drug epidemic. They included Mr. Darrin Turpin, Acting Assistant Special Agent in Charge; and Ms. Kelly Wesolosky, Community Outreach Specialist, both of the Federal Bureau of Investigation - Pittsburgh office. They spoke about the Heroin Outreach Prevention and Education initiative (HOPE). Also speaking was Mr. David Battiste, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Pittsburgh office of the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Mr. Tim Kotch, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education, spoke at the meeting and said the ages of 12 to 17 are often the first time children experience being prescribed painkillers because of athletic injuries or having wisdom teeth pulled. This presents a potential for misuse or addiction to those painkillers. That's why Norwin Middle School is an ideal place to pilot this opioid awareness program, Mr. Kotch said, so that students are made aware of the risks.

Mr. Robert Suman, Norwin Middle School Principal, delivered the Welcome Remarks, and Mr. Troy Collier, Norwin Middle School Assistant Principal, provided statistics from Westmoreland County. Mr. Tim McCabe, Coordinator of K-12 Drug and Alcohol Prevention & Awareness, provided an overview of other prevention programs being used in the District.

Dr. Jason Conway, Executive Director of the Westmoreland Intermediate Unit, spoke about the expansion of the Operation Prevention program to other school districts in the region.

Superintendent Dr. William Kerr, in his closing remarks at the forum, said reversing the opioid epidemic will require a total commitment on the part of the School District and the greater Norwin community. "Without question, the opioid and heroin crisis is the most critical challenge facing our region and one that we as school and community leaders must continue to address collectively," Dr. Kerr said.

There is a component of Operation Prevention for the high school level, and by Fall 2017, there will be an elementary age-appropriate

curriculum available, Dr. Kerr said. "The evaluation of our Middle School pilot program will determine implementation at the elementary and high school levels," Dr. Kerr said.



Mr. Darrin Turpin, Acting Assistant Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation - Pittsburgh

Operation Prevention is research-based, embraces best practices, and provides a scope and sequence of lessons with associated resources. It is exactly the type of addendum curriculum which can be integrated with a school's Health curriculum and one in which the FBI Pittsburgh H.O.P.E. research committee wanted to offer school districts across southwestern Pennsylvania. "And, as chairman of the FBI H.O.P.E. Education Committee, I am very pleased that our Board of Education approved the curriculum pilot project for the Norwin Middle School," Dr. Kerr said.

Mrs. Jennifer Miele, Vice President, Marketing and Communications, Excela Health, served as Master of Ceremonies. More than a dozen health agencies set up display tables and exhibits for the parents to browse available services and prevention information. There was also time for the public to ask questions and receive answers.

Ms. Sally Wiggin, host of WTAE-TV's *Chronicle* documentary program, was also in attendance with her photographer Mr. Brian Caldwell to film footage for an upcoming program about the overdose epidemic. It is scheduled to air in mid-March at 10 p.m. on either Monday, March 13th, or Monday, March 20th. Operation Prevention also sent a film crew led by Ms. Haley Rhyne, the video from which may be used for educational purposes.

Dr. Kerr will be leading efforts to create a K-12 Operation Prevention Advisory Committee, which will include parents and community representatives, to fully engage key stakeholders to help address the opioid and heroin epidemic.

"We're going to build upon all the existing programs and resources that have been in place through our health curriculum, as well as those provided through our partnerships with outside agencies," Dr. Kerr said. "Our highest priority is to ensure that we have done all we can so that no individual or family experiences the negative impact of opioids and heroin."