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Sep 26th, 2017 · by Glenn Rolfe · Comments: 0

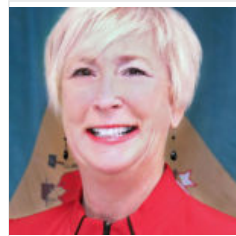
DAGSBORO – Indian River School District is turning to acclaimed expertise of an Ivy League faculty member in efforts to help better prepare pre-teens for the game of life.

By a 10-0 vote, IRSD’s board of education at its Sept. 25 meeting cast support to implementing the Botvin LifeSkills Training as part of the sixth-grade curriculum.

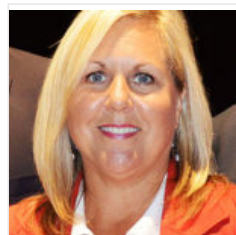
LifeSkills Training, which features 18 segmented lessons, is the product of Dr. Gilbert J Botvin, a longtime Cornell University faculty member who is viewed worldwide as one of the leading experts on tobacco, alcohol, and drug abuse prevention.

“Our children today are so de-sensitized by so many things that they see, whether it be on television or whether it be in social media or just in life. And we need to prepare them a little bit better for that,” said 37th District State Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown.

“It would take the place of similar lessons that are built into our curriculum. As you know we studied health curriculum long and hard for a good bit of time a couple of years ago and developed a very rigorous curriculum for our health teachers,” said Dr. LouAnn Hudson, IRSD’s director of curriculum and instruction.



Rep. Ruth Briggs King



Dr. LouAnn Hudson

Botvin LifeSkills Training lessons will “cover many of the same materials that are found in our tobacco, alcohol and drug prevention book for sixth grade or for middle school. Some of the lessons are contained in our emotional and mental health portions of the curriculum and some also touch on the bullying and violence/injury prevention segment of our curriculum,” said Dr. Hudson, adding that some similar materials found in the current health curriculum are “not

quite as updated with the new information on the opioid/heroin epidemic that we find ourselves in today.”

Botvin LifeSkills is part of a statewide pilot. Two Sussex County school districts – Indian River and Seaford – are among the districts in the pilot project. The two downstate districts were selected because of “what is going in the community,” Rep. Briggs King said.

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“What it does is it seeks to teach life skills in different areas. It is not a health education program. Instead of saying, ‘no to drugs, no to tobacco,’ safe sex, ‘no, no no’ ... this starts at an earlier age before it’s too late. It teaches them some healthy skills; how to make decisions ...,” said Rep. Briggs King. “The good news about the program is it provides drug-resistant skills, some general social skills and some self-management skills that the students can develop so when they are faced with what’s next ... today it might opiate and heroin. Two years ago, it could have been something else. The bottom line here is to give them some abilities to cope and to learn how things can feel good maybe through exercise or something else.”

Initial discussion a year or so ago incorporated the state department of health, the department of education as well as Drug Enforcement Administration and local law enforcement “to talk about what we can do to stem the tide,” said Rep. Briggs King, who attended trainer programs put on by the University of Delaware.

“This program is a little bit different in that it is a comprehensive program that begins in sixth grade and it can continue all the way through to gradation,” said Rep. Briggs King. “The program structure is for sixth grade. It can be taught in sequence. The good thing is some after-school providers are already engaging in the program so they (students) are going to hear a repetitive message about good choices.”

IRSD board member Jim Fritz asked if teachers have had the opportunity to see the LifeSkills curriculum. Dr. Hudson said they have not at present, due to time constraints.

Rep. Briggs King noted, however, that some school counselors were at the training sessions which she attended.

Since this is a pilot, the state will provide all training and materials at no additional cost to participating school districts, Rep. Briggs King said.

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