

# HUNTINGDON AREA HIGH SCHOOL

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**"ALL LEARNERS, ALL FUTURES"**

May 22, 2019

Good afternoon Parents and Guardians,

Today we hosted a guest speaker, Dr. Judy Grisel, a professor from Bucknell University. The focus of her presentation was to be about the effects of alcohol and drugs on the brain, specifically about scientific principles regarding addiction and the brain. Her presentation is based upon her book, *Never Enough: The Neuroscience and Experience of Addiction*. Dr. Grisel has powerful stories about her personal history with drug addiction and the detrimental impacts that this has made on her life. The purpose for the presentation was to further educate our learners about the harmful effects of drug and alcohol use, especially for adolescents with developing brains. However, during this morning's presentation, the approach was not the best for this audience, anecdotal information shared about personal experiences was not handled in the best manner, and the overall intended message did not get through to many observers.

Following the presentation, Dr. Grisel and I discussed the intent of the presentation, how the presentation was perceived, and what information needed to be shared. Some of this information was able to be shared in smaller group sessions with learners, supervised by Health and Physical Education staff. Many students in this setting asked meaningful questions and were engaged with the speaker and information. However, not all learners had this opportunity.

We were able to gather information from learners from a survey and during the small group session about what they learned from the presentation and what questions they had.

At the end of the day, the school came back together to reinforce the intended message of the presentation, including excerpts read from Dr. Grisel's book, that highlighted important issues about the epidemic of addiction. In addition, Dr. Grisel briefly spoke about her intended message, about the consequences of drug and alcohol use, and about the importance of not beginning to use, and if using, to enhance recovery outcomes by stopping.

The presentation, small group seminars, and presentation to conclude the day had varying effects. The messages during the course of the day resonated very strongly with some learners, in both positive and negative ways. The overall message is that we want to educate our kids about the negative effects of harmful substance, and that the school does not condone

any use. Furthermore, sharing education about the impacts of substance on the brain, on development, and negative life impacts is important.

Though we hoped that the presentation today would have unfolded in a more productive way, we hope that attention to the serious issue of substance abuse with youth and adults across our society, and the negative impacts of use, are understood. We appreciate your understanding in trying to get this message across to our students, and our acknowledgment that the presentation today missed the mark.

If at any time you have a concern for your child, or other learners, in regards to substance abuse, we ask that you please notify the school and consider the resources that we can offer through our Student Assistance Program (S.A.P.) and by making recommendations to other community supports. The overall health and well being of our kids is extremely important to us!

Sincerely,

Travis R. Lee,  
HAHS Principal