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FIRST PLACE, GRADES 7-8: Drug testing can save lives

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The itching of his skin until it's raw . . . the blood underneath his finger nails . . . his heart racing faster and faster . . . the sound of his pulse ringing in his ears . . . the feeling of waking up not knowing if he can go another day without getting stoned. This is the sad image of a teen on drugs.

The look on his face when he realizes that he's been selected for a random drug test . . . this is that same teen, relieved to be summoned and end his destructive downward spiral. Although not a typical situation, for many teens using drugs, random drug testing can be the only salvation to identify and stop their addiction.

Random drug testing is a positive approach to identifying teens who are using drugs. It is important that we become aware of the students who are experimenting with drugs and guide them to the right path. Teens don't understand the irreparable damage they can do by using drugs. Schools that conduct random drug tests can save millions of teens. For some teens a drug test is the critical link between life and death. Unfortunately, many teens lack the willpower to stop using because the addiction is far more powerful than the desire to quit.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the school to not only educate children, but to also realize that many teens who are currently doing drugs are suffering secretly, silently and shamefully. They often don't have the voice or the courage to speak up and let teachers know they are using . . . the only thing that can speak up for them is the result of a drug test.

If the little girl in "The Starfish" had just picked up a few starfish and didn't try to help all of them, she could have just missed the one that needed the most help. Testing every student is the only way to be sure that the school did everything possible to help each and every student. If the schools target only a certain population they may miss that one child who is crying out for help and desperately needs to be saved.