

Underage Alcohol & Drugs – Know the Risks

62% of Ontario students reported drinking in the last two years; 15% have tried at least one illegal drug. These were some of the statistics and information on the risk of alcohol and drug use by teens that were provided to parents on the evenings of October 6 and 7 at St. Clement's and Crescent Schools. The speakers, Dr. Ron Clavier and Mr. Eric Roher, were dynamic and the parents had many questions and concerns. The issues are complex and the solutions not all that simple.

Dr. Ron Clavier holds a Doctorate in Physiological and Experimental Psychology from Northwestern University. He specializes in general adult and adolescent psychotherapy and addictions. Dr. Clavier encouraged parents to engage and be honest with their teens about their own experience with drugs and alcohol and look to understand why our teens are exhibiting these behaviours. He described the long-term effect of drugs and alcohol use during the years when the development of brain cells is still significant.

Eric Roher is a lawyer and partner at Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. He advises school boards and independent schools on education law issues. He spoke about the legal implications of providing a venue or hosting underage consumption of alcohol and drugs. Mr. Roher described some actual legal cases in Ontario and advised parents of the importance of being aware of the activities going on in their homes, whether they are present or not.

To know more about the risks of alcohol and drugs to your teens, the Conference of Independent Schools of Ontario (CISO) has published a very comprehensive booklet called *Community of Care: A Guide for Students, Parents, and Educators about the Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Use*. You can reach CISO at 905-665-8622 or by email at admin@cisontario.ca. You may also want to get Dr. Clavier's book *Teen Brain, Teen Mind*.