

School drug, alcohol prevention programs work, say supporters

by Val Varney
Times staff reporter

Educators, researchers and others involved in school drug- and alcohol-prevention programs spoke out yesterday, contending that whatever anyone may say to the contrary, those programs do work.

At issue is a study done by two Washington State University social

scientists who concluded that even the best drug-education programs are "destined to failure."

Those defending the programs at a press conference included Dr. Doyle E. Winter, superintendent of Educational Service District No. 121; Clay Roberts, whose firm develops health-education programs; and Dr. David Hawkins, director of the Center for Social

Welfare Research at the University of Washington.

Winter said there was a concern about the WSU study by Armand Mauss and Ronald Hopkins.

The WSU researchers said family and religious background and peer pressure are more important than classroom lessons in determining whether a child takes drugs.

"We agree that parents and peers are powerful influences, but the schools can have an impact," said Roberts, one of the developers of "Here's Looking At You," a drug-education program used throughout the nation, including in Seattle. "Studies have shown that if you teach kids strategies to deal with peer pressure, they are less likely to become involved in drugs."

"It's ridiculous to be calling a press conference to defend drug education," Roberts said. "Parents and communities feel powerless about drugs, and we want them to let them know that these programs work and we have the data to support it."

The UW's Hawkins said several studies since 1979 on school programs, dealing mainly with tobacco, made it very clear they do

work according to experimental tests done throughout the country.

The results have found significant reductions in the use of tobacco, alcohol and marijuana use, said Hawkins.

Tests also have shown, he said, that when people use strategies they've been taught to help resist those social influences, they are more likely to refuse to use drugs.