



Language Matters: Help for Parents of Learning Disabled ESL Students

Overcoming learning disabilities in the classroom is hard enough when the student and teacher share a common language. The challenge is doubly complicated, however, if the child is one of the estimated one million children in U.S. public schools who have both a learning disability and difficulty speaking English. These hurdles can lead to both behavioral problems as well as academic challenges. DoDEA provides extensive support to children learning English who are also identified as having learning disabilities. Parental involvement in the identification process, however, is crucial to timely and effective intervention.

Sometimes, cultural and language barriers can make it difficult for parents to understand the purpose and goals of the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). While there is no substitute for conversation when it comes to communicating with parents, an additional tool is now available to help non-English speaking parents understand the ways in which learning interventions can support their children. The National Center for Learning Disabilities offers several dozen foreign language resources to help parents understand the purpose and benefits of identification of a learning disability for their child when that determination is appropriate. The majority of the resources are in Spanish,

but some are also available in other languages including Hmong and Somali. For more information, contact safeschools@csc.com. DoDEA's ESL Program Guide is available at www.dodea.edu/curriculum/docs/esl/eslprogramGuide0307.pdf. ■

How to Prevent Bullying: First Define the Problem

The first step to preventing bullying is to develop a clear definition of the problem, says nationally recognized expert and frequent DoDEA speaker, Barbara Coloroso. Defining the problem ensures all students can recognize and describe bullying when it happens, and, most importantly, trust that the adults in their community will understand and take action. Over the past year, the U.S. Army Garrison Garmisch and Garmisch Elementary and Middle School (GEMS) have been working together on an anti-bullying policy which includes this expanded definition of bullying:

Our community and school define bullying as follows: Bullying is a mean and one-sided activity intended to harm, where those doing the bullying get pleasure from a targeted child's pain and/or misery. Bullying can be verbal, physical, and/or relational; have as its overlay race, ethnicity, religion, gender (including sexual orientation), physical, or mental ability; it includes all forms of hazing and cyberbullying. It can be, and often is, continuous and repeated over time, however, once is enough to constitute bullying.

For the full story on how the policy was created and the steps administrators and staff at GEMS are taking to prevent bullying, turn to page six of this newsletter. To view the actual policy, visit www.garmisch.army.mil/Documents/Anti-Bullying.pdf. ■

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DoDDS-Europe Conducts Safety and Security Workshop

Bill Heiges, DoDDS-Europe Antiterrorism/Security Program Manager, recently shared some highlights from the DoDDS-Europe Safety and Security Officers workshop that took place in Mainz-Kastel, Germany, from November 29 through December 1, 2011. The DoDDS Europe Officers met to examine the most current policies and practices that affect school safety and security. Heiges summarized the benefit of gathering in person: “Anytime you get security and safety professionals together face-to-face with other support elements, you always walk away with something positive that strengthens the program.”

The workshop kicked off with Harv Gerry, DoDDS-Europe Chief of Staff, welcoming participants and providing the DoDDS-Europe Area leadership perspective. Kirk Bireley, Physical Security Program Manager, described new professional development certifications that will assist DoDEA security professionals in maintaining state-of-the-art expertise and familiarity in multiple security disciplines (i.e., physical security, information security).

Representatives from Wiesbaden Garrison and U.S. Army, Europe (USAREUR) Antiterrorism and Emergency Management offices provided insight on the National Incident Management System (NIMS) that DoD is rapidly implementing. These briefings emphasized the importance of installations including schools in crisis management exercises.



Michael Dirks, Antiterrorism Officer, Wiesbaden (left) and Allen Winchester, Emergency Planner, USAREUR.

Wayne Hartmann, DoDDS-Europe Chief of Logistics, presented a briefing on the 21st Century School concept in DoDEA. He highlighted the importance of safety and security professionals bringing security concerns to the attention of planners early in the design process. Dave Buzard from DoDDS-Europe Facilities Branch arranged a site visit to a nearby school that serves as a test site for a key and locking system that could be adopted more widely throughout DoDDS-E. The group also observed a state-of-the-art access/visitor control badging system demonstration.

Mike St. Clair, DoDDS-Europe Transportation Security Program Manager, invited the Bus Security Attendant Program (BSAP) contract manager, to provide an overview of the Incident Report (IR) process. This in-depth presentation on the reporting system described the data analysis process for the three Germany districts. The automated Risk Assessment Planner (RAP), projects, and safety topics were also discussed and the area level leaders welcomed feedback from all participants. The workshop finale consisted of best practices and lessons learned presented by the District Safety and Security Officers (DSSOs).

All participants commented on the valuable conference insights. Mike Bryant, Kaiserslautern DSSO, felt it was “especially useful listening to the area leadership talk about safety and security issues.” Bryant observed, “They are working those issues at much higher levels of command.” Mike Bradford, DoDDS-Europe Safety Manager, noted the connections between safety and security: “All the security issues seemed to have a safety impact and the development of a viable safety program will have a positive impact on the security programs.”



Collage: Kirk Bireley, DoDDS-E Security Manager, and Mike Bryant, Kaiserslautern DSSO.

Heiges noted that the group established “baseline priorities for the future.” The discussions of solutions that started at the conference, Heiges explained, will continue via technology: “With money getting tight we will continue to work on issues such as 21st Century Schools, access control, mass notification, and emergency drills/exercises through e-mail, telephone, and Video Teleconference (VTC).” ■

Tips from TRICARE: How to Support a Depressed Friend

According to the National Institutes of Health, people who are depressed often lose interest in hobbies and activities. They can appear irritable, anxious, and/or lacking in energy. While there are some differences in the way men and women behave when they are depressed, recognizing the signs of depression in a close friend or loved one is generally not difficult. Knowing what to say and how to support that person, however, can be daunting.

As part of a new depression management program, TRICARE, the Department of Defense health care plan for service members and their families, offers a telephone support program for people living with depression. According to the program information, there are several steps an individual can take to support a friend or loved one with depression:

- ▶ Avoid blaming the person for feeling negative. People do not choose to get depressed. Instead, listen compassionately to what the person is experiencing.
- ▶ Do not criticize the person. This can worsen depression by reinforcing the negative feelings already experienced.
- ▶ Do not tell the person to “snap out of it.” Many people seem to think these types of statements are helpful, but they actually imply the depressed person has chosen to be depressed.
- ▶ Encourage the person to be active. Several studies have shown the benefits of both distraction and exercise as effective mood management tools. One study found regular exercise to be as effective as anti-depressant medication in some populations.
- ▶ Be a caring friend. Ask the person what others can do to help. Invite the individual to share a meal or a walk. Sometimes just spending time with a depressed person can be a reminder that others are interested and willing to help.
- ▶ Do not take rejection personally. When someone does not want to engage in his or her usual activities, those around them, especially family members, can feel rejected.



Perhaps the most important tip TRICARE offers is to encourage the person to get treatment if the depression lingers or worsens. Depression is an illness which responds well to several different treatment modalities including cognitive therapy, medication, relaxation techniques, and psychotherapy. Multiple treatment options are available; there is no need to suffer. ■

Depression Management Resources

The TRICARE Depression Management program is available in select locations as a resource to individuals already receiving mental health support from a military provider. Participants enrolled in this program receive information about depression and other resources to help them increase their coping skills. Patients learn how to establish mood-boosting routines and activities, such as planning family activities and scheduling time for hobbies, nutrition, exercise, and developing a healthy sleep routine.

The program pairs depression management specialists, including behavioral health professionals and specially trained registered nurses, with patients, for phone counseling and support. The patients and health professionals work together to develop a customized plan based on the patient’s individual needs. Once a patient is enrolled in the program, the entire medical team can access the patient’s behavioral health plan to monitor progress and adjust the plan as needed. To learn more about the program, visit www.tricare.mil/pressroom/contractornews.aspx?fid=120. ■

Are You Smarter than Your Smartphone?

Students in middle school and high school often expect to see advertisements open automatically on their smartphones informing them of sales on items they have searched for online. Parents and school staff, on the other hand, might feel uncomfortable with a smartphone that “knows” so much about them that it can tempt them to spend money with advertisements tailored to their tastes. To become savvy digital citizens, smartphone users need to recognize this new technological influence and learn how to make responsible decisions online.

During a public forum on personal privacy and digital communication on December 6, 2011, panelist Stephen Balkam, Chief Executive Officer of the Online Family Safety Institute, shared a personal anecdote to explain how mobile advertising works. “On the way here, I was riding the Washington, D.C. metro system and emerged at a station near Macy’s – a department store,” Balkam explained. He added, “When I checked my phone for messages, I noticed it was sending me advertisements for a limited time offer in the store I was walking past.”

Balkam admitted it felt “a bit creepy,” as if someone was walking along behind him pelting him with ads. He noted his daughter, however, would expect the applications on her smartphone to help her save money by letting her know about sales on items she likes in the nearby stores.

Two recent trends make interactive advertising possible: the number of smartphones has increased, and it is now possible to tailor advertising messages to users based on their online behavior. The number of smartphones throughout the world increased 30 percent in 2010 and doubled in 2011. Typically, smartphones include Internet access, WiFi, and Global Positioning System (GPS) capability.

The technical capability to analyze, sell, and use the data gathered from smartphones has improved dramatically. Many people already know about “cookies,” or software that Web sites place on a computer for tracking purposes (see the December 2009 newsletter, page four “How to Delete Cookies”). Similar software called “beacons” capture information regarding shopping habits. Firms sort the data based on probable age, income, and education level and sell it to advertisers.

Advertisers purchase the data because recipients are more likely to read and act on advertisements tailored to their personal tastes and location. In the time it takes to read an article about sweaters, information clearinghouses can receive the data from the smartphone, sort it, auction it online, and an advertising firm can send the user an advertisement about sweaters in a nearby store.



Just because this personal information is collected and made available to advertisers does not mean it is an invasion of privacy. It does, however, mean users need to become more aware and better informed about how they use interactive devices. If a software application for a smartphone is free, the application probably sends information about the user to an advertising firm, or has ads built into it.

Meanwhile, although it is difficult to limit an application’s analysis of browsing habits, smartphone users can turn off GPS capabilities to individual applications. On most smartphones, to turn off GPS, users select the “Settings” or “Advanced Options” menu. GPS functions are commonly listed here as “location services” (on some phones it may be listed as location data, location settings, or location aiding). Most phones allow users to select which applications may or may not use the phone’s GPS capabilities. One productive approach to outsmarting a smartphone is to develop an awareness of how information gleaned about online activity is harvested and used. ■

Garmisch Takes a Team Approach to Bullying Prevention

School administrators and installation officials at Garmisch, Germany, kicked off a bullying prevention pilot program in October, culminating ten months of coordination between Garmisch Elementary and Middle School (GEMS) principal Debbie Parks, the Garrison Command, and the U.S. Army Installation Management Command-Europe. The program and its accompanying bullying prevention policy are now being implemented and piloted at GEMS. The program will later expand to other schools as part of a DoDEA-wide effort to prevent bullying.

A growing body of research shows that bullying prevention programs only work when both school and community stakeholders are involved and committed. Therefore, in developing the program, Mrs. Parks and her staff reached out to all the childcare, medical, legal, and educational agencies at Garmisch including Child and Youth School Services; Morale, Welfare, and Recreation; Military Police; the Chaplain's office; and the Garrison command.

Judi Patrick, School Liaison Officer for U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR), provided oversight for the policy and organized a bullying prevention training program for teachers and parents. "She also worked at the [U.S. Army] Europe level to keep leadership on the military and school sides informed and was responsible for taking our policy draft to legal for an official review and approval," noted Mrs. Parks. "We are very grateful to her."

During the training sessions, which were generously funded by Army Community Services, Susanna Leist from the Army Center of Expertise for Youth Programs, and Les Nichols, Vice President of Safety for the Boys and Girls Club of America, provided insight and expertise into creating safe learning environments for children. Dr. Ken Ginsburg, from the Child, Adolescent and Family Behavioral Health Office of the U.S. Army Medical Command, spoke to parents and teachers about youth resiliency. Internationally recognized bullying prevention expert Barbara Coloroso shared her experience and knowledge on bullying and parenting. In addition to the training for teachers, she led special parent-only sessions in the evenings where she spoke about how to support children who are being bullied and how to teach youngsters to speak up when they see another child in need.

At the school, GEMS counselor Esther Hardy implemented the Steps to Respect bullying prevention curriculum for students. This curriculum includes scripted questions for leading class discussions about bullying. It gives youngsters a common language they can use to identify and describe bullying and teaches them how to effectively respond when someone says or does something hurtful. Teachers stay in the classroom during Ms. Hardy's sessions so they can reinforce the program language during class time. Mrs. Parks reports she is already seeing positive results. She recently walked into a class of fifth graders who were watching a film depicting one child saying hurtful things to another. Several students shouted out, "That kid needs a lesson in bullying from Ms. Hardy!"



Counselor Esther Hardy, Principal Debbie Parks, Deputy Garrison Manager Jeff Darrow and students from Garmisch Elementary and Middle School.

Mrs. Parks notes that the ability to handle conflict and recognize inappropriate behavior does more than prevent bullying. "This is a life skill that we want our students to take with them into adulthood," she said. So far, community support for the pilot program at Garmisch has been overwhelmingly positive. "Garmisch is a close-knit community," said Mrs. Parks. "We are very proud to pave the way for our fellow DoDEA schools!" ■

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