



DoDEA

# SAFE Schools

## NEWSLETTER



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### MPs Give Cub Scouts Class in Law Enforcement

*Deepening coordination with emergency responders can start with something as simple as arranging for student groups to visit with police or fire officials. The following article was written and submitted by Bill Heiges, Area Security Manager, DoDDS-Europe, and describes a visit to the PMO that he arranged for his Cub Scout den. Bill serves as a Cub Scout den leader, Boy Scout troop chaplain, district committee chair, and executive board member in the Transatlantic Council in Europe.*

Bear Cub Scout Den 9 of Pack 13 in Wiesbaden, Germany got an inside look at law enforcement operations during a visit to the Clay Kaserne Military Police Station on October 22, 2013. The visit helped the Scouts fulfill one of their rank requirements.

After being greeted by Master Sgt. Richard Jungman, Staff Sgt. Joseph Onessimo, Spc. Bobby Noriega, and Pfc. Gabriel Rolanramos, the Bear Cubs were shown the inside of a patrol car and had the opportunity to use the PA system and overhead lights. Afterwards the Scouts took turns sitting in the patrol car and cruised around the parking lot sounding off on the PA system and turning on the siren and lights. "This is really cool," said Bear Cub Brian Allen.



Bill Heiges pictured with son Micah



Inside the station, the Scouts got to sit inside the D-Cell where detained persons are held while being processed and each of the 10 Scouts, ages 8-9, were fingerprinted. Other highlights included a demonstration on the use of hand irons and the handcuffing of Pack 13 Cubmaster Marcus Grimes.

The visit ended with a question-and-answer session along with the Scouts gaining a greater appreciation for the jobs performed by Wiesbaden military community law enforcement officers. Scout leaders thanked the MPs, calling them "true professionals," for their support of the community and local Scouting programs. To learn more about Cub Scouting in Wiesbaden visit [www.facebook.com/CubScoutPack13wiesbaden](http://www.facebook.com/CubScoutPack13wiesbaden) or send an email to [scoutpack13@gmail.com](mailto:scoutpack13@gmail.com). ■

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## Applied Wisdom

As DoDEA educators sift inspirational quotes to cite during discussions of Martin Luther King Day in January or Black History month in February, it helps to review the comments that surfaced as the world bid farewell to Nelson Mandela in December 2013.

Much of the insight Mandela shared about how to treat each other has applicability in bullying prevention lessons and life skills modules. Educators can incorporate the quotes into academic curricula by reading the quote aloud and inviting younger students to draw a picture of how they observe freedom around them. Educators can challenge older students to write a one page journal entry describing how they would like to apply one of these insights in their lives. Selected quotes are presented below:



“To be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” – Nelson Mandela

“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.” – Nelson Mandela

“It always seems impossible until it’s done.” – Nelson Mandela

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” – Nelson Mandela ■

## Speaking of Farewells . . .

Due to budget cuts, this will be the final Safe Schools Newsletter. We are privileged to have been a part of DoDEA’s Safety and Security efforts for 14 years and are thankful to have worked with DoDEA personnel in schools and district, area, and headquarters offices.

The Safe Schools Team remains committed to serving students. If you have questions regarding this newsletter, or materials that you had requested previously that have not yet arrived, you can contact us at [safeschools@schoolsecurityroundtable.com](mailto:safeschools@schoolsecurityroundtable.com). ■

## Lessons from Connecticut

In December 2013, the State of Connecticut released the final report on the incident in Newtown, Connecticut. The findings revealed the importance of two key actions:

- 1) Ensuring all hall doors can be locked, and
- 2) Conducting lockdown drills to ensure everyone is proficient at accomplishing the duties required.

During conversations with District Safety and Security Officers throughout the world, they echoed the points in the Connecticut report: Lockdown actions should be completed in order of priority. The top priority is to shut and lock the door.

When classroom teachers hear the lockdown announcement they need to quickly check the hall for students, close and lock the door, and turn out the lights. Then teachers can cover the door window with paper and move students to the safest area of the room. Teachers can accomplish some tasks simultaneously by telling students to move as the teacher locks the door. The report and appendix are available from the Connecticut State’s Attorney at [www.ct.gov/csao/cwp/view.asp?q=535784](http://www.ct.gov/csao/cwp/view.asp?q=535784). ■

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## Successful Earthquake Exercise in Japan

Coordination between educators and responders provided the key to success during a December 2013 full-scale exercise in Yokosuka, Japan that demonstrated the procedures that would be implemented in the event of an earthquake and tsunami. Over 2,000 students and staff members simulated taking cover during an earthquake, and then climbing out of reach of a tsunami by evacuating to a hill behind the school complex.

During a recent interview, Scott Welch, DoDEA District Safety and Security Officer, Japan District, noted, “Technology worked as planned, responders and school personnel coordinated movement, and students remained calm and behaved superbly.” Welch explained that the installation has a three tiered emergency notification system that includes: 1) the capability to send text and voice messages to registered cell phones, 2) the public address systems inside buildings, and 3) the system of loudspeakers located outside, called Giant Voice. Participants in the exercise reported that the announcements on Giant Voice were loud enough to hear, and they could distinguish the words clearly, “even at the top of the hill.”

Inside the schools, when students heard the initial announcement about the earthquake, they simulated the procedures they would use to protect themselves. Then everyone proceeded to high ground, just as they would if a tsunami threatened.

The exercise involved students and staff members from three schools at the complex: Sullivans Elementary School, Yokosuka Middle School, and Kinrick High School. Within twenty minutes of the announcement to evacuate, everyone assembled on high ground, and they had full accountability for students and staff members. Mr. Welch confided that as a retired U.S. Air Force veteran of the Gulf War, he can appreciate how hard it is to move that many people. “The little kids were holding hands and proceeding just as they had practiced,” Welch said. And even the older students were completely cooperative. “When I saw how well it worked,” Welch commented, “my jaw dropped and I told Ms. Lee, the high school principal, ‘They did great!’”

Exemplary support from Yokosuka installation responders made the exercise possible. Security forces controlled traffic on the roads around the exercise, and school personnel and security forces served as road guards to shepherd students on evacuation routes. In addition, the fire department and hospital had teams ready to respond if anyone experienced physical symptoms.

Later, the installation responders and school officials reviewed the outcome to identify areas to enhance future exercises. Mr. Welch concluded the time and energy invested was worth it because “Everybody knew what to do.” ■



*Installation security personnel ensured a safe evacuation of over 2,000 students*



*School staff effectively managed “crowd control” throughout the exercise.*



*“Green cards” were used to indicate 100 percent accountability of staff and students.*

## Suicide Rating Scale Helps Identify Troubled Students

Educators who have seen suicide among youth in U.S. public schools increase dramatically over the past three decades, now have a screening tool that predicts whether an individual is likely to commit suicide. Accurately identifying who needs help makes it easier to concentrate limited resources to save lives.

“Deaths from suicide are preventable,” affirmed Kelly Posner, Ph.D., during a recent interview in New York City. “But to help people, you have to be able to find them.” Dr. Posner served as the lead researcher who helped develop the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS). The rating scale is based on 20 years of research and provides the first tool proven to predict who is likely to commit suicide.



*Dr. Kelly Posner*

The tool emerged from the Treatment of Adolescent Suicide Attempters (TASA) study conducted by teams from three universities for the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH), which is one of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Dr. Posner explained that by asking direct questions about specific behaviors, rather than traditional open ended questions about thoughts, the survey zeroes in on the “triage points” that allow health and mental health professionals to determine the severity of the situation.

Although evidence-based, and supported by research, the survey is not complicated to use. It only takes a few minutes to administer, and educators can access the survey instrument, and accompanying training, online. School psychologists and school counselors can learn more about the instrument, and the study, by visiting the National Behavior Center for Biotechnology at NIH: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov).

Developing a tool that is easy to use means we can intercept troubled individuals at more points in the system of care. “We ought to be screening for suicide as routinely as we screen for blood pressure,” concluded Dr. Posner.

### Suicide Warning Signs

Indications that an individual might be considering suicide, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ◆ Talking about suicide.
- ◆ Giving away prized possessions.
- ◆ Putting their affairs in order.
- ◆ Visiting or calling people one cares about, to “say good-bye.”
- ◆ Taking unnecessary risks or exhibiting self-destructive behavior.
- ◆ Expressing preoccupation with death.
- ◆ Suffering prolonged depression.
- ◆ Losing interest in things the individual previously cared about.

### How Educators Can Help

Educators can take three actions to help prevent suicide:

1. Learn about the size of the problem to help others understand that students may contemplate suicide. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides statistics and graphics on suicide at [www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide/).
2. Teach students and staff members how to recognize when a colleague or friend needs help, and how to appropriately encourage them to seek help. The Office of the Secretary of Defense provides the Signs of Suicide (SOS) Kit to teach students to do this using the initials ACT for “acknowledge, care, tell.”
3. Reinforce factors that strengthen resiliency and support youth such as enhancing the sense of “connectedness” students feel with their school and the community. ■

## Digital Guardian Angel

When it comes to monitoring children’s digital footprints, parents/sponsors may struggle to decide what ethical parenting entails. The boundaries between interfering with the child’s personal life, stalking, and keeping an eye out for the child’s best interests can appear blurry. Understanding that others, including school principals, college admission officers, or the police, could be looking at a student’s online content may help justify checking on what a son or daughter shares on the Internet.



The following two examples illustrate why it is important for teens to maintain clean online profiles:

- ▶ Glendale Unified School District recently hired a social media analytics firm to monitor the district’s middle and high school students. The firm uses its automated analytic tools to scour the Internet for terms that may indicate cyberbullying, vandalism, obscenities, and even early signs of self-harm. If a message from one of the district’s students pops up in the results, the firm informs district officials.
- ▶ Tools for monitoring tidbits of information online are getting so accurate, affordable, and accessible that select police departments are already tapping these resources to fight crime. But sometimes sarcasm or a misplaced joke can carry severe consequences. A Texas teenager was jailed for months after authorities deemed the teen’s comments on a social network a “terroristic threat.”

Sometimes, in this digital age, when it seems like big brother is watching, he probably is. Parents/sponsors can protect their children by identifying ill-placed content on their children’s social media profiles before someone else does. Just consider which of the following two conversations a parent would prefer their child experience. Since big brother is watching over one shoulder, it is okay for parents/sponsors to serve as the guardian angel covering the other shoulder. ■

### Public Discovery

**School Principal:** It has come to my attention that you have posted inappropriate material about another student on the Internet. Can you explain yourself?

**Student:** I didn’t realize that everyone would be able to read those posts.

**School Principal:** That’s not an excuse for your behavior. And nonetheless, your teachers can, so can I, and anyone with an internet connection could.

**Student:** I know I shouldn’t have said that, especially if I had known that everyone would be able to see my messages.

**School Principal:** There are going to be consequences for what you posted about that student. Someone is always looking and that’s a very important lesson for you to learn.

### Family Conversation

**Parent:** Susan, your father and I came across some messages that you posted online about drugs. Can you tell us what that was all about?

**Child:** Oh, It was just a joke. I saw those messages on the Internet and thought it would be funny to repost them for my friends.

**Parent:** Why did you think that posting material about drugs online would be funny? Drugs are not a joking matter, nonetheless, to do so on a public forum . . .

**Child:** Mom, it’s nothing serious. It’s not like I was doing drugs or anything!

**Parent:** That’s not the point. Can you imagine what could happen if any the admission officers at the colleges you applied to saw these, or what about the teachers that are writing recommendations for you? Please take those messages down and anything else that would reflect negatively upon you.

**Child:** You’re right, mom. Sorry I’ll delete all of those posts. Hopefully, no one else has seen them yet.

## Starting College Off on the Right Foot

In a few months, DoDEA high school seniors will be graduating and starting careers or heading off to college. While the student is transitioning into this new environment, he/she is going to face uncertainty and difficult challenges. It can also be challenging for parents to understand their role during the transition. Knowing how to communicate effectively, however, allows a parent to provide resources and reassurance to their child, who may be struggling.

Mental health symptoms, such as anxiety, depression, stress, eating disorders, and suicidal ideation often appear in early adulthood. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, “75 percent of lifetime cases of mental health conditions begin by age 24.” And the numbers are increasing. As psychologist Dr. Sharon Kirkland-Gordon told participants at a national education leadership conference in December 2013, the number of college students suffering from mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety, is on the rise.

The American College Health Association states that 72.5 percent of students still obtain medical advice and information from their parents. Therefore, it is critical that parents are able to communicate effectively and listen carefully to their children. Additionally, open conversations help parents identify children who are significantly distressed and need to be referred to local professional help.



Parents can start by recognizing that there is a distinction between interfering with the student’s freedom and providing support and guidance. Here are a series of tips that parents may find useful to facilitate healthy conversation:

**Encourage open dialogue** by explaining to the young student that it is completely normal and healthy to share both negative and positive personal feelings. Help your child feel comfortable sharing by offering an example of how you dealt with a difficult or emotional situation in the past.

**Listen** carefully to your child. It is important to allow the student the opportunity to finish his or her thoughts first before responding. Resist the urge to finish sentences and thoughts, or to offer a solution before your child is finished speaking. Use nonverbal listening techniques such as maintaining eye contact, smiling when appropriate, or nodding during face-to-face conversations (or video chats).

**Take breaks** when necessary. Discussing delicate topics with a loved one can be upsetting. Sometimes stepping away and resuming the conversation at a later time is the safest option.

**Communicate on a regular basis** by establishing a convenient time to talk on the phone about recent events and share any thoughts or feelings. In addition to regular phone conversations, consider scheduling periodic video chats on the computer. Mix things up with an occasional text message update or thoughtful e-mail.

Although the transition to university life can be an overwhelming experience for incoming freshmen, these communication strategies can enhance their natural coping mechanisms. Maintaining ongoing dialogue with students, despite the physical distance, can help former DoDEA students succeed in their new environment. ■