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Safe Schools Week

During the week of October 21-27, state governors, superintendents, and the National School Safety Center (NSSC) sponsor America's Safe Schools Week. The goal is to motivate key education and law enforcement policy makers "to ensure that our nation's schools are safe, secure, and productive."

Including all stakeholders in the planning process fosters commitment to school security. To create partnerships that help keep schools safe, NSSC offers numerous strategies for enlisting participation from parents, law enforcement, the media, and the community at www.schoolsafety.us/Safe-Schools-Week-p-24.html.

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Principals Build Trust by Staying Visible

At Naples Elementary School (NES), Principal Richard Alix and Assistant Principals Denise Webster and Jerry Hood work together to maintain a highly visible presence within the school of 1,000 students. The benefits of principal visibility to school security have been well documented. Most recently, a study published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) found that discipline referrals dropped significantly among middle school students with "highly visible" principals.

Alix calls this practice "walkabout," a reference to the Aboriginal tradition of taking a long spiritual journey on foot. At NES, the journey is about helping build a sense of trust with the students. "It's very important that I have a one-to-one relationship with the students," says Alix. As a result, students more readily turn to administrators for help when they need it.



Principal Richard Alix (right) and Assistant Principals Jerry Hood (left) and Denise Webster (center).

The administrators at NES make it a point of pride to be visibly available to the students during the key transition times of the day. They greet the students in the morning; visit the lunchroom; and spend recess on the playground. The administrators and school staff use walkie-talkies to stay in touch with one another to ensure effective communication.

Alix finds that it can be difficult to be away from his desk so often, but he feels this is time well spent because of the positive impact on student behavior. Staying visible to students, Alix says, "gives me the opportunity to intervene and divert issues before they become problems."

News and Updates



Study: Gender is a Factor in Alcohol Use

In their August 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) Report, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) published a comparison of trends of alcohol use between male and female students. The report, entitled *Gender Differences in Alcohol Use and Alcohol Dependence or Abuse:* 2004 and 2005, found:

- Males aged 12 or older were more likely than females to report alcohol use within the past month.
- Males were twice as likely as females to have met the criteria for alcohol dependence or abuse in the past year.



- Among heavy alcohol users in the past month aged 12 or older, males and females had similar rates of past year alcohol dependence or abuse.
- For all other levels of current alcohol use, males were more likely to meet the criteria for past year alcohol dependence or abuse than females.

The 2007 NSDUH Report is available on-line at http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k7/AlcGender/AlcGender.pdf. The 2007 DoDEA Prevention Programs Guide provides resources for substance abuse prevention. The Guide is available on-line at the DoDEA Office of Safety & Security Web site at www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/docs/ss-PreventionPrograms-2007Spring.pdf.

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Constant Vigilance!

In author J.K. Rawlings' Harry Potter series, the wizard Mad Max reminds fellow wizards to pay attention to security with the admonition "Constant Vigilance!" The U.S. Congress' General Accountability Office (GAO) echoes this theme with its recent report on school security. The June 12, 2007 GAO report described both strengths and weaknesses in school security planning in U.S. public schools. While the GAO noted that almost all public school districts have developed written security plans, and that most were taking tangible steps to improve security, significant shortfalls persisted. Such shortfalls included:

- Less than 50 percent of school districts involve community partners when updating their incident response plans.
- Many school districts do not have procedures for training regularly with first responders.
- 62 percent lack training for staff in the area of emergency planning.
- ▶ 56 percent are not employing procedures for continuing student education in the event of an extended school closure.
- Many districts are not including procedures for special needs students.

Recognizing that DoDEA schools operate in a unique environment, administrators are encouraged to contact their District Safety and Security Officers (DSSO) to review their Safe School Plans. DSSOs are a resource when reviewing the GAO "best practices," including:

- Perform a vulnerability assessment.
- Conduct regular drills.
- Identify and acquire equipment to mitigate and respond to emergencies.
- Develop an emergency management plan.
- Practice with first responders on a regular basis.

The report, "Emergency Management: Most School Districts Have Developed Emergency Management Plans, but Would Benefit from Additional Federal Guidance" is available at www.gao.gov/new.items/d07609.pdf. ■

SAFE

Safe School Planning

Shelter-In-Place Drills Made Easy

America's Safe Schools Week is an ideal time to practice shelter-in-place, a procedure to protect students from environmental hazards such as chemical or biological agents. Many people confuse "shelter-in-place" with "lockdown," which protects students from dangerous people. Successful drills include a staff orientation prior to the drill, preparation and pre-positioning of supplies, and implementation and evaluation of procedures.

Staff Orientation - Allocate eight minutes during a staff meeting to describe shelter-in-place procedures. Administrators should also identify the shelter-in-place location, describe the location of supplies, and distribute supporting materials (i.e., shelter-in-place signs). During shelter-in-place, classroom teachers should:

- Lock all exterior doors and windows.
- Guide classroom students to designated areas.
- ◆ Turn off the HVAC or ventilation system to neutralize air pressure.
- ◆ Take attendance and report results to the principal or designee.
- Await further instructions.

Preparation and Pre-positioning of Supplies - The following measures enhance the school's ability to conduct shelter-in-place:

<u>Designate the Location</u> – Ask emergency responders to help identify the safest location within the school that offers the greatest protection from

environmental hazards. Typically, authorities recommend a large room without windows (i.e. auditorium, media center) or an interior hall. Authorities might recommend that students remain in their classrooms if the rooms are relatively air tight. If possible, include bathrooms in the shelter-in-place area.

<u>Plan for Emergency Supplies</u> – If possible, store these materials at the shelter-in-place location. Instruct teachers to have students bring reading materials with them. Keeping students occupied maintains order and helps calm fears. Arrange for cafeteria staff to bring water and snacks to the shelter location. Distribute signs to alert visitors arriving at the school during shelter-in-place that no one will be admitted until the conclusion of the protective action. Assign responsibility for posting these signs.

Implementation and Evaluation - Announce the drill as if it were a real shelter-in-place. In the unlikely event of an actual crisis, school personnel will perform better if the drills have been as realistic as possible. Designate personnel to evaluate the drill. Use objective criteria such as the checklist on page 30 of the *DoDEA Crisis Management Guide* so administrators can compare results from several drills to measure improvement. It is essential to provide feedback to participants, and, if possible, to conduct an after action review with staff and faculty.

The following references provide additional information on shelter-in-place:

- ◆ The DoDEA Crisis Management Guide, February 2007, pages 28-30, offers background and a checklist (www.dodea.edu/instruction/crisis/resources/docs/DoDEA Crisis Manag Guide 07.pdf).
- ◆ DoDEA Manual 1005.1: "Administrator's Manual" August 2007 page 133; section 47.3.4.4 provides guidance on shelter-in-place and is available at www.dodea.edu/foia/iod/pdf/1005 1.pdf.
- ◆ The Red Cross and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offer generic tips at www.redcross.org/preparedness/cdc_english/sip-5.asp.



Education Issues

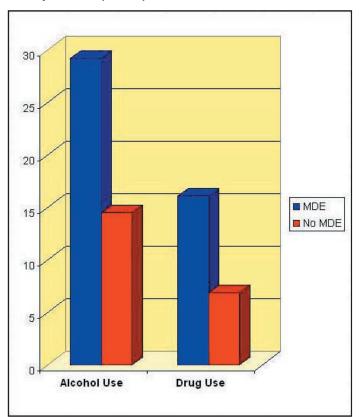


SAMHSA Finds Link between Drugs & Depression

The annual *National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (NSDUH) uses questions to assess the lifetime and past year drug use and mental health of students aged 12 to 17. The study, sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), revealed strong links between the age of initial exposure to alcohol and major depression in youth. Based on these findings, early diagnosis of depression might help in the prevention of substance abuse.

For the 2005 survey, 22,534 teenagers took part in face to face interviews in their homes using a formal questionnaire. The study defined major depression episodes as periods "lasting two weeks or longer, during which there is either depressed mood or loss of interest in pleasure and at least four other symptoms." Other symptoms include problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration, and self-image.

Linkage Between Major Depressive Episode (MDE) and Substance Abuse



Percent of Students Aged 12 to 17 Who Were at Risk for Substance Use Initiation by Past Year Major Depressive Episode (MDE): SAMHSA 2005.

Using these criteria, researchers found that nine percent of youths (2.2 million) had experienced a major depressive episode in the past year. Females were three times more likely than males to experience depression. Older teens tended to suffer from depression more often than their younger counterparts. Additionally, rates of depression were similar across racial and ethnic groups. Researchers also asked teenagers about their use of alcohol and drugs during the past year, and when they first tried drugs and/or alcohol. In the 2005 study, 30 percent of the respondents had recently started using drugs and 33 percent had recently used alcohol for the first time.

SAMHSA researchers found a strong correlation between substance use initiation and major depression. Students aged 12 to 17 who suffered a major depressive episode in the past year were twice as likely to take their first drink or use drugs as those who were not depressed. (See chart at left.)

Researchers do not yet fully understand the relationship between these two experiences for teens. It is not clear if the alcohol use contributes to the depression, or if the predisposition to mental disorder increases a person's likelihood of using substances. It is worth noting that in similar studies, adults with major depression have used drugs or abused alcohol (defined by the study as consuming more than five drinks on one occasion several times per month).

SAMHSA Administrator Terry Cline, Ph.D., noted that these findings underscore the importance of identifying students with depression. Cline noted that "Recognizing symptoms early, and helping youth receive appropriate care, may prevent substance abuse." The NSDUH Report: Depression and the Initiation of Alcohol and Other Drug Use among Youths Aged 12 to 17 is available on-line at http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k7/newUserDepression/newUserDepression.cfm.

Prevention Programs



Author Offers Strategies for Character Education

In *Character Matters*, published in 2004, Thomas Lickona offers over 100 strategies for helping children develop good judgment and integrity. Lickona is a developmental psychologist and professor of education at the State University of New York at Cortland. He directs the Center for the 4th and 5th Rs (respect and responsibility). Lickona explains that when children (or adults) exhibit disturbing behaviors, including everything from incivility to drug use to poor work ethic, the common problem is lack of good character.

Lickona defines good character using ten essential virtues that have been affirmed by societies and religions around the world. These include wisdom, justice, fortitude, self-control, integrity, love, hard work, a positive attitude, gratitude, and humility. He then sets out to address very specific ways parents and teachers can work individually and together to teach children these positive virtues.

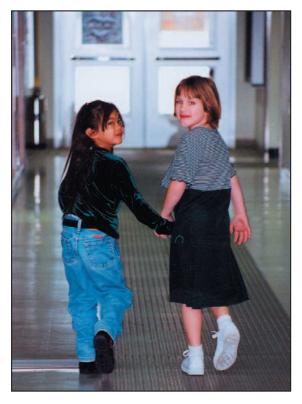
Because the focus of the book is building character in schools, Lickona devotes a significant amount of time to specific strategies for increasing peer kindness. He discusses why children bully, and how it affects everyone involved including bystanders. He includes anecdotes and specific strategies submitted by teachers for fostering positive classroom environments. For example, one teacher described how she uses "friendship clubs" to reduce bickering during recess. Another has children put "anonymous compliments" on a bulletin board. This technique creates a general feeling of goodwill because the compliments could have come from anyone in the classroom.

The "Anonymous compliments" activity works this way:

- 1. Each student draws the name of a classmate from a bowl.
- 2. Before the end of the week, each student writes a compliment about his or her person on a strip of paper and shows it to the teacher. Once the teacher approves the compliment, the student places it in the compliment box.
- 3. On Friday, the teacher posts the compliment on the bulletin board next to the class members' names.

Rick Mansfield, the teacher who submitted this idea, writes, "This activity takes almost no time but does a great deal to create a positive classroom climate."

The last third of the text describes how schools can use character education to improve school culture. Lickona includes checklists and self tests to help administrators reflect on how and why they want to incorporate character education into their schools. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, he recognizes that change takes time – the text is filled with reminders of the importance of managing expectations.



Character Matters also offers extensive Internet resources which administrators can share with staff to raise awareness of the value of character education. Character Matters is available from most booksellers and through inter-library loan. More information about character education can be found at www.CharacterCounts.org or in the 2007 DoDEA Prevention Programs Guide available on-line at www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/docs/ss Prevention-Programs 2007Spring.pdf. ■

Prevention Programs



Self-Injury Increasing Among Teens

Self-cutting is a type of self-injury, or the "deliberate, direct destruction of body tissue without conscious suicidal intent." According to a study published in the August 2007 issue of Psychological Medicine, it is becoming more common among high school adolescents.

The study, led by Miriam Hospital and the Brown University Medical School, reported that nearly half of the teens surveyed had participated in some form of non-suicidal self-injury in the past year. The survey asked the participants whether they had engaged in various self-injuring behaviors in the past year, and the frequency with which they may have done so. In addition, the survey assessed a student's motivations for the behaviors.

The study found that 46 percent of teens surveyed responded that they had injured themselves in the past year on multiple occasions. Additionally, 60 percent of these (28 percent of the entire survey) used "moderate" to "severe" forms of self-injury including cutting skin, burning skin, giving oneself a tattoo, scraping skin, or using a pencil eraser to "erase" skin.

The study's lead author, psychologist Elizabeth Lloyd-Richardson, Ph.D., said, "The findings are important because they suggest that non-suicidal self-injury is more prevalent among adolescents in the general population than previously thought." Dr. Lloyd-Richardson suggested that adolescents are engaging in self-injury for several reasons, including regulating their emotions and managing stress. "Once thought of as a phenomenon only found in teens with mental health issues, the results support the notion that many adolescents in the community are self-harming as a way to cope with emotional distress," said Lloyd-Richardson.

School staff should be vigilant for students who may be intentionally harming themselves. "Cutting is the most common method of self-injury and is often done repetitively, that is, not just as a one-time occurrence," according to health specialist Bruce Jacobs, Ph.D., from New Mexico State University. In his guide, *Adolescents and Self-Cutting* (Self Harm): Information for Parents, Jacobs describes some warning signs that teachers and parents should look for, including:

- Cuts, scars, or burns on arms, legs, abdomen, feet, etc.
- Blood stains on clothing.
- Cutting instruments (e.g., razors, knives, pins/needles) found among a student's belongings.
- Friends or peers cutting themselves.
- Consistently wearing long pants and long-sleeve shirts (especially in warm weather).
- Students regularly seeking isolation and privacy when emotionally distraught or depressed.

Educating the school community about the prevalence of self-harm helps staff members feel comfortable reporting observations of cutting or similar injuries. Administrators and parents need to ensure that any injuries students have sustained are given appropriate treatment. School counselors can provide information about mental health professionals to parents of at-risk students.

More information on the study can be found on-line at http://self-injury-in-high-school-students.html. Jacobs' *Information for Parents* is available on-line at http://cahe.nmsu.edu/pubs/i/l-104.pdf. ■