



DoDEA

SAFE Schools

NEWSLETTER



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DoDEA Input Sought for Suicide Prevention Video

Thank you to everyone who responded with critiques of the Jason Foundation's suicide awareness program "A Promise for Tomorrow." In June 2005, kits were donated to all DoDEA middle and high schools.

The Jason Foundation plans to revise the video accompanying the program. DoDEA counselors and administrators have been invited to submit ideas on how it can be improved.

Please e-mail your suggestions or comments to Ms. Linda Dunlap at lindadunlap@jasonfoundation.com. If you need a kit, please contact safeschools@csc.com. ■

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Back-to-School Safety Tips for Students

Here is a list of "Back-to-School" tips that administrators can use to raise the security awareness of students and staff. Practicing these actions will help create a safer environment during the 2006-07 school year.

Personal Security

- ✓ Secure your belongings. Know where you put your backpack and what's inside of it.
- ✓ Put your name on the inside of your jacket, bookbag and other belongings. This allows you and others to identify your property without advertising your personal information.
- ✓ Do not bring expensive electronics, such as cell phones or iPods, to school. However, if you do, keep them secure.
- ✓ Stay on familiar routes to and from school. Do not take short-cuts through secluded areas. If possible, travel in groups.



Stranger Danger

- ✓ Do not talk to people you do not know.
- ✓ Be aware of the situation and circumstances around you while on your way to and from school.
- ✓ Report suspicious persons, vehicles, or activities around school.

Providing these tips to students lets them share responsibility for their physical security and personal safety. In addition, raising security awareness among students and staff improves the school's defense against terrorism and other potential incidents of violence. For additional suggestions visit the National Center for Missing or Exploited Children at www.missingkids.com or CBS News: "Back to School Safety Tips" at www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/08/23/earlyshow/living/parenting/main519691.shtml. For more information, e-mail the Safe Schools Team at safeschools@csc.com. ■

Classroom Management Reminders

A new school year offers teachers an opportunity to start the year right by establishing rules and expectations for classroom discipline. In response to requests, here are some classroom behavior management tips from Thomas McDaniel, author of several publications on classroom management including the book *Improving Student Behavior*, and Mary Lorenz, a Program Specialist at the Texas Education Agency.

Post the Rules

Posting classroom rules on the wall allows teachers to quietly keep students on task by looking at the rules and asking, “Jose, are you following rule number three?” Veteran teachers suggest limiting rules to a few positive assertions of what is expected, for example:

- ▶ Pay attention.
- ▶ Follow instructions.
- ▶ Talk only when appropriate.
- ▶ Keep your hands and feet to yourself.

Start with Silence

Rather than compete with a noisy classroom, an effective teacher insists that the students quiet down. Some veterans delay starting their lesson until the room has been quiet for five to ten seconds. Over time, students learn that they need to quiet down and behave in an orderly manner to hear the instructions.

Introduce Each Activity

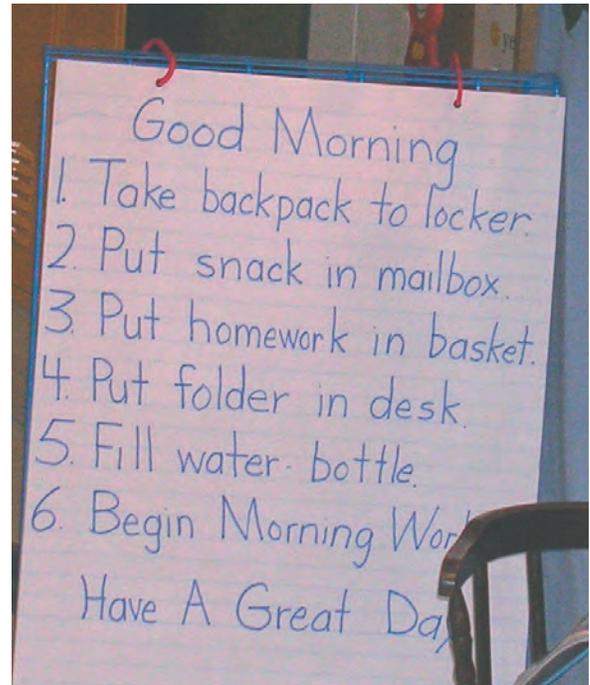
Provide a verbal outline to explain what will happen throughout the class period. Establish time limits for some tasks. This minimizes uncertainty and reminds students that they have a lot to accomplish during the class period.

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Circulate

Once a class has begun an activity, walk around in the classroom to see how students are doing. Ensure individuals understand the directions and encourage those who are slow getting started to begin their work.

Non-Disruptive Intervention

Avoid rewarding a student for misbehavior by making them the center of attention. Anticipate problems before they occur. Approach misbehaving students in an inconspicuous manner to avoid distracting the class. Instead of telling students to “stop” misbehaving, use positively phrased “I-statements” to prevent a verbal escalation, i.e., “Darlene, I need you to begin the assignment.”

Different techniques work with different students. Most teachers develop a variety of classroom management techniques that work for them. Please share your favorite techniques with your DoDEA colleagues by sending them to safeschools@csc.com.

An abundance of classroom management resources are available on-line. References for handling specific misbehaviors are available from Discipline Help at www.disciplinehelp.com/teacher. For specific suggestions from other teachers visit ProTeacher at www.proteacher.com. ■

Safe School Committee versus Crisis Management Team

With school starting, now is the time to organize your Safe School efforts for the year ahead. One of the most important tasks of Safe School Planning is identifying and organizing the people who will help you.

The DoDEA Safe Schools handbook, *Safe Schools: A Handbook for Practitioners*, and the soon to be published *DoDEA Crisis Management Guide* both refer to the teams that, if organized properly, can carry much of the burden for the principal. Principals, lighten your load! Form two teams; the Crisis Management Team and the Safe School Committee. Each of these is often called by different names and their roles and functions are not clearly understood. This article will clear things up and make the distinctions between them.

Comparison of Safe School Committee and Crisis Management Team

	Safe School Committee	Crisis Management Team
Purpose	Long-Range and Strategic Planning	Situational Assessment and Crisis Intervention
Responsibilities	Planning	Execution
Stakeholders	School Community	Internal School Staff
Size	8 - 15	4 - 6
Membership	Community Members, Security Personnel, School Staff, Parents, and Students	Principal, Administrator, Counselor, Nurse, and Maintenance

The Crisis Management Team, as described in the DoDEA Crisis Management Guide, is a small group of key school personnel. Because these personnel are present in the school on a continuing basis, and familiar with the students, staff, and daily school operations, they are best suited to help the principal assess a situation and assist in immediately reacting to a critical incident – a situation that could develop into a crisis event. Crisis Management Team members should be able to address a range of immediate needs such as basic first aid procedures, dealing with tension filled situations, identifying students who are experiencing depression and are disconsolate, and identifying situations that are escalating. The team leader is normally the principal. Other candidates that should be considered for the team are the school counselor or psychologist, the school nurse, a lead teacher or staff member and possibly a custodian. In the DoDEA Safe Schools handbook this team is referred to as the Internal School Safety Assessment Team. The Team’s function is the same and it dedicates itself to Incident Response.

The Safe School Committee is a different type of group with a distinctly different role. It is significantly larger than the Crisis Management Team and representative of the entire school community. Its main function is to participate in long range and strategic planning. As an additional resource to the principal, the Committee should assist in the Safe School Planning process to help create the Safe School Plan. Some members might have a special interest or key skill set to help with the Risk Reduction Planning process. For example, Committee members may help administer the surveys to parents (e.g., Tool 4 in the Safe Schools Handbook), help with volunteer programs, promote and support security initiatives, or participate in addressing school community issues. This group of key personnel provides a valuable communications link between the principal and the school community.

The time to organize is now. Don’t procrastinate. Form your Crisis Management Team and Safe School Committee and let them help you through the year with all of your Safe School Planning and implementation. ■

The Most Dangerous Gang in Schools: Mara Salvatrucha, aka MS-13

Administrators across the U.S. are using the start of the school year as an opportunity to prevent the spread of youth gangs by reminding students that gang activity or “wannabe” behavior will not be tolerated. DoDEA administrators have several reasons for implementing preventive gang resistance training including:

- ◆ Ensuring that students transferring from U.S. public schools into DoDEA schools understand that gang activity will not be tolerated.
- ◆ Demystifying gangs for gang “wannabes” and teaching them about the violence, hazards and the ugly reality of life in a gang.
- ◆ Educating students about the risks of gang involvement before they leave DoDEA for U.S. public schools, so they cannot easily be recruited by gang members.

One particularly violent gang is rapidly spreading across America. At a 2005 meeting of New York principals, 75 percent of the 480 administrators present agreed that the greatest threat confronting their schools and communities was the *Mara Salvatrucha* street gang, better known as “MS-13.” In schools and neighborhoods where they are active, MS-13 creates a climate of fear and increases the amount of violence and criminal behavior.

While attending civilian schools in the U.S., future DoDEA students could be exposed to widespread gang activities, influence and violence. Some may be recruited as members or associates into an MS-13 clique. In the Washington D.C. area and northern Virginia suburbs alone there are estimated to be as many as 6,000 MS-13 members. Gang-related crime is so widespread that a federal task force was organized in 2004 to deal with the problem. According to Virginia Congressman Frank Wolf, chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee with jurisdiction over the Justice Department, “These gangs are extremely violent and they are recruiting children in our high schools, middle schools and even elementary schools.” Wolf added, “We have to do everything we can to rid our communities of this plague.”

MS-13 is not terrorizing just northern Virginia. “They were popping up everywhere,” says Chris Swecker, assistant director of the FBI’s criminal investigative division. MS-13 is a violent force in 33 states including: Texas, Georgia, North Carolina, New York, and Virginia. Members range in age from 11 to 40 years old. The average age is 15 to 17.

MS-13 is flexible, organized and highly violent. In some areas MS-13 purposely mutilates individuals to create an atmosphere of fear. They refuse to back down from the police and have openly threatened both federal and local law enforcement. Students recruited in civilian schools in the U.S. may try to establish a clique when transferred to a DoDEA school. According to Detective Tony Avendorf, a gang expert in Prince George’s County, Maryland, it is difficult to eliminate gangs once they take root. The key is to prevent gangs from starting. Administrators and staff need to know the tell-tale signs of gang activities and be prepared to deal with this growing problem.

Colors, Symbols, and Clothing

Gang members use hand signs, graffiti, jewelry, and tattoos to represent and show-off their membership. Each gang has its own signs, symbols, signals, dress and colors. Some are shared by other gangs. The MS-13 colors are blue and white, taken from the flag of El Salvador. Tell-tale graffiti and markings will typically include body tattoos containing the texts “MS”, “MS13”, “13”, or “18.” Look for the consistent wearing of the same color combinations (i.e., blue and white) which could also match friends’ clothing colors.



The Most Dangerous Gang... (Continued)

Graffiti

One of the first indications that gangs are in an area is the appearance of graffiti. To a gang member, graffiti is a marking of territorial boundaries. Gangs place graffiti on any available space such as walls, street signs, or rest rooms. The purpose is to glorify the gang. Graffiti on students' belongings, such as notebooks, clothing, or jackets is an obvious indicator. Tattoos or ink drawings of gang symbols on the skin are another sign.



Street Name or Moniker

Gang members in general, and MS-13 specifically, adopt street names or monikers. These names may be simple, and typically are descriptions of the appearance or personality of individual gang members. Examples of typical monikers include: Green Eyes, Casper, Smiley, Goofy, or other similar names.



Indicators of gang activities must be identified and dealt with quickly in order to provide a good learning environment. For additional ideas on gang prevention, visit the National Youth Gang Center at www.iir.com/NYGC/. ■



Stranger Danger DVD Teaches Security Awareness

The National Alert Registry is distributing the free DVD "Safe From Harm" designed to help protect children from becoming the victims of sexual offenders. In the DVD, parents who volunteered for the program observe how their child responds to an actor playing the role of a sexual predator. A role player uses the typical ruses of walking up to a playground with a cuddly animal or knocking on the door of a house and pretending to be a policeman or a repairman.

The DVD shows adults and children how hard it is to adhere to the time honored lessons: "don't talk to strangers" or "don't open the door when your parents are not home." The footage of real children responding to the simulated situations is a powerful training tool for adults and children.

The National Alert Registry, located in Deland, Florida, is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting children from sexual offenders. The registry accomplishes their mission by educating adults about the best ways to protect children from possible future occurrences. The registry also maintains a national database of sexual offenders organized by zip code.

For additional information visit the registry at www.registeredoffenderslist.org. For a copy of the DVD contact the registry at service@nationalalertregistry.com. ■



Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Toolkit

How Dating Violence Harms Students

Dating violence is a pattern of over-controlling behavior that someone uses against a girlfriend or boyfriend. Dating violence can take many forms, including mental/emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse. Some students may experience dating violence even if they are not being physically abused. It can occur in both casual dating situations and serious, long-term relationships.

Dating violence crosses all economic, racial, and social lines; most victims are young women who are also at higher risk for serious injury. Statistics show that one in three teenagers has experienced violence in a dating relationship. Forty percent of teenage girls, ages 14 to 17, say they know someone their age who has been hit or beaten by a boyfriend.

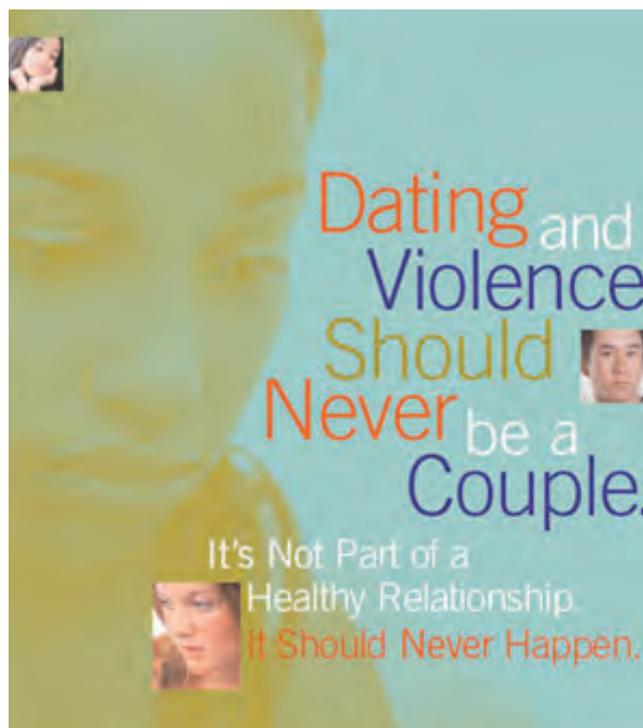
What DoDEA Is Doing to Help

To deal with the emerging social issue of dating violence, the Department of Defense recently purchased the Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Toolkit for high schools to use in a focused prevention program. The Toolkit, created by the American Bar Association, was sent to all DoDEA high schools in May 2006 in their administrator's weekly packet.

This focused prevention program raises awareness about teen dating violence. High schools can use the Toolkit to hold discussions and develop activities that educate the community and school population, involve them in prevention, and coincide with the classroom curriculum while also addressing components of teen dating violence. By using the toolkit, counselors and staff become active participants in the prevention of teen dating violence.

The Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Toolkit includes:

- ▶ *The Dating and Violence Should Never be a Couple* DVD in which a diverse group of teens talks about their personal experiences with teen dating violence.
- ▶ *The Teen Dating Violence Prevention Recommendations* book helps individuals recognize and understand the problem of teen dating violence. It targets teens, parents, school personnel, mental health professionals, physicians, and law enforcement officials.
- ▶ *A Teacher's Guide* gives teachers suggestions for interesting, fun, and effective classroom activities to influence teen dating violence awareness and prevention.



For more information about the Toolkit, visit the American Bar Association's Teen Dating Violence Prevention Initiative web site at www.abanet.org/unmet/toolkitmaterials.html, or contact Moreen Murphy, Director of National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Week at murphym@staff.abanet.org. For training on the use of this toolkit, school personnel are asked to contact their local Family Advocacy Program representative. ■