



**DoDEA**

# SAFE SCHOOLS

**DoDEA**

# NEWSLETTER



Issue 1

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## Safe Schools **NEWS**

### DoDEA Newsletter is Coming Your Way!

Beginning this month and in each succeeding month of the school year, DoDEA will publish a Safe Schools Newsletter. Each school principal will receive the newsletter directly via e-mail. The purpose of the monthly newsletter is to provide useful information that can assist each principal in implementation of the training received last year in the Safe Schools workshops.

The newsletters will feature articles on applying the Five Phase Process and the use of its Tools, Intervention Strategies, Emergency Planning, DoDEA Safe Schools News & Updates, Educational Legal Issues, and Lessons Learned. Principals should feel free to print the newsletters locally and distribute them as appropriate. Principals are encouraged to provide feedback in letters to the editor, regarding lessons learned, opinions, and comments.

Later in the year, the Safe Schools Newsletter staff will be seeking articles submitted by students. Start planning now to sponsor a special project in your school for students who wish to write on the subject of violence in schools and have it published in the Newsletter. Details of this program will be published later this Fall.



## DID YOU KNOW...

...that 54 percent of 9 year olds reported reading for fun on a daily basis, compared with about 32 percent of 13 year olds and about 23 percent of 17 year olds. Among children ages 9 to 13, larger portions of girls than boys reported frequent reading in their spare time. Among 17 year olds, 22 percent of boys and 24 percent of girls reported reading for fun on a daily basis.

## DoDEA has contracted DynMeridian, Inc....

...to assist with the implementation of the DoDEA Safe Schools Program and to sustain it in future years. Last year’s workshop training was an overwhelming success in initiating the Program and DynMeridian will provide continued support to evaluate the Safe Schools Program, provide consultative support to administrators, publish a monthly newsletter, and participate in the periodic world-wide conferences. Administrators should feel free to contact DynMeridian for assistance with their Safe Schools Program. Administrators may contact Bob Michela directly via internet at [michelar@dyncorp.com](mailto:michelar@dyncorp.com) , by phone at (703) 461-2000, or facsimile at (703) 461-2020.

## HERE’S A TWIST!

Teachers in Chicago this year will send home a new type of progress report – one that evaluates mothers and fathers on their parenting skills. Although the progress reports (parent checklists) won’t provide letter grades they will tell parents whether they’re helping enough with homework, getting their children to school on time, etc. The progress reports are to be issued every five weeks for each student’s parents. Included in the reports are whether children are dressed properly for school, fall asleep in class, wear their glasses or attend class regularly. This new approach has brought about much discussion in the community. Some claim the idea is a way to shift blame for poor student performance onto parents instead of teachers and school officials. Others call the report a “smokescreen” to divert attention from the large number of students poised to fail. And then some say that it is hard enough to get parents to come to school for a parent conference and therefore question the effect of a progress report. The bottom line hope is that it may help open the lines of communication between parents and teachers.

## Safe Schools Program Evaluation

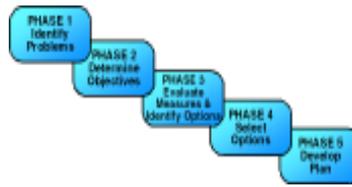
Later this Fall, we will initiate a program to evaluate the implementation of the Safe Schools Program throughout DoDEA. The objective is to determine the extent and the effectiveness of the program’s implementation at each school. DynMeridian personnel will be contacting principals to inquire about steps taken, ease/difficulty of implementing the program, successes and failures, and suggestions for improvement.

### SAFETY & SECURITY OFFICERS APPOINTED!

Each of the following districts have a newly appointed Safety & Security Officer. Two positions are located in the DDESS Area Support Center. Names and locations can be found on the DoDEA S&S website ([www.odedodea.edu/log/securitystaff.htm](http://www.odedodea.edu/log/securitystaff.htm)).

- |           |                |        |
|-----------|----------------|--------|
| Brussels  | Heidelberg     | Italy  |
| Wuerzburg | Kaiserslautern | Hessen |
| Turkey    | United Kingdom | Japan  |
| Korea     | Okinawa        |        |

# Applying the 5 Phase Process

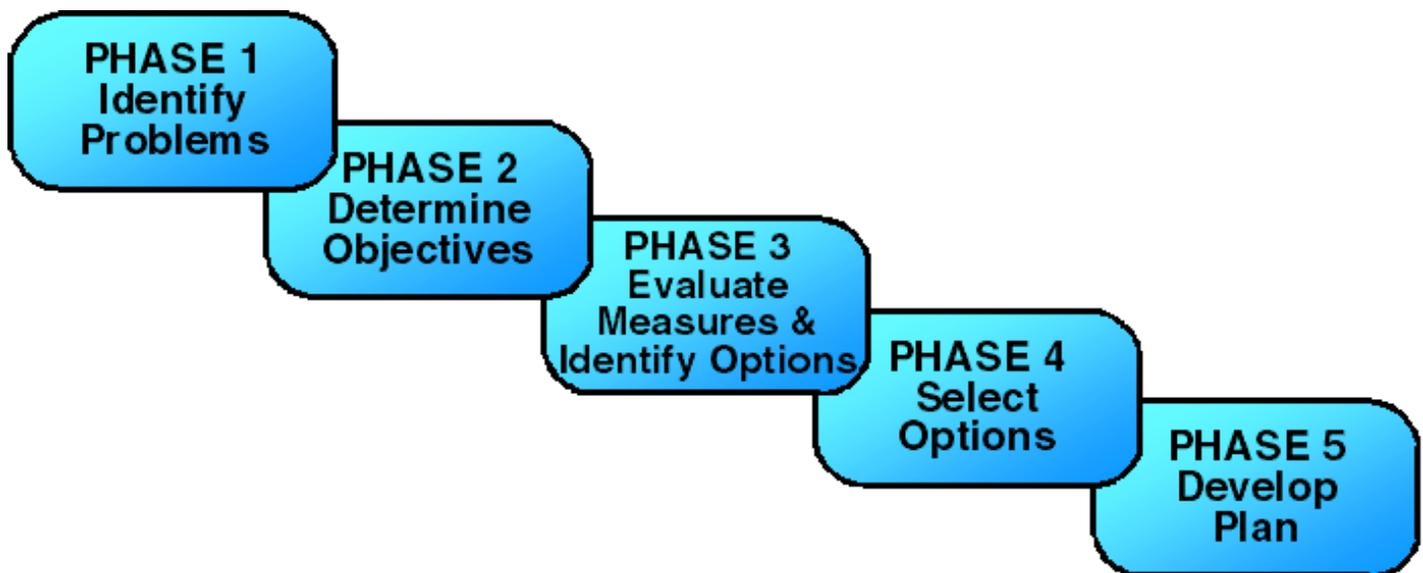


## Creating a Safe School

First in a series, this article reviews the important aspects of the guide, *Safe Schools: A Handbook for Practitioners*, and the training during last year's workshops. Remember, the objective of the Five-Phase Process is to develop a School Safety Plan. It is important to draw the distinction between this Plan and an Emergency Management Plan or a Crisis Management Plan.

It is still too early in the school year to conduct your new Risk Assessment using the Five-Phase Plan. Your present school policies, programs, and physical security measures are based on last year's experiences and carry over from your assessment last year. A sufficient amount of time must pass this school year before you can assess the effectiveness of your current plan.

It is important to remember what the Handbook is and what it is not.



A School Safety Plan developed by using the Five-Phase Process is PRO-ACTIVE in nature and addresses school Policies, Programs, and Physical Security. The fact that your assessment is forward thinking and forward planning makes this process pro-active. This type plan helps in reducing the risk of problems from occurring. On the other hand, an Emergency Management Plan is designed to be REACTIVE in nature and to provide procedures to follow in the event a problem does occur.

- It is a source for ideas
- It is not a cookbook with prescribed recipes (solutions)
- It is a tool box containing tools you can use to create solutions

The Five-Phase Process is the model for conducting your risk assessment. By following the phases in sequence you will assure development of a plan that has been created methodologically. If you make certain not to select options before you have identified problems and set objectives, you will go a long way toward ensuring that you have avoided the sin of "solution jumping".

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

What to do when confronted with an incident has been the preoccupation of administrators, teachers, and security personnel ever since the incident at Columbine High School in Littleton Colorado. As DoDEA principals are aware, the Five-Phase Process is designed to prevent incidents. But, if an incident does occur, then what? The fundamental answer to “then what” is training and preparedness. Here are some specific steps to take in order to be BEGIN being prepared in reacting to a variety of incidents.

Establish Emergency Codes for Principals, Assistant Principals, and Teachers. The reason for having emergency codes is to streamline communications. Getting the “word” to key personnel quickly and succinctly is critical to gaining control of a situation. Effective communications are everything!

A **sample set** of emergency codes would look like this.

**CODE YELLOW**  
**EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY**  
(i.e., Fire, Explosion)

**CODE RED**  
**LOCK DOWN**  
(i.e., Hostile or Violent Situation  
or anything that might trigger  
such an event)

**CODE BLUE**  
**BOMB THREAT**

**CODE GREEN**  
**NORMAL OPERATIONS**

Once the codes are established, spell out the specific steps for each emergency code color for each group (i.e., teachers). For example, here are **two sample codes** for two selected groups.

### **CODE YELLOW** **for Teachers**

1. *Remain Calm*
2. *Announce to class that they are to evacuate building*
3. *Gather daily attendance roster*
4. *Students are to leave backpacks and books behind*
5. *Evacuate students to the designated holding area*
6. *At evacuation, take roll and have students standby until given further instructions*
7. *No re-entry until CODE GREEN is announced*

### **CODE BLUE for** **Principals / Assistant Principals**

1. *Deactivate bell system*
  2. *Call the emergency number (the equivalent of 911)*
  3. *Assess the threat (If evidence is found, immediately evacuate building to the designated holding area)*
  4. *Announce CODE BLUE to teachers (by classroom phones) only*
  5. *Wait for safety officials' further instructions*
  6. *Notify Superintendent*
- NOTE: USE OF PORTABLE, ELECTRONIC DEVICES IS PROHIBITED.

## Anger Management

Intervention strategies that teach students how to manage their anger can decrease school violence by providing distraught students with alternatives to violent action. Uncontrolled anger has been identified as a common characteristic of youths who killed other people at school and is included in “early warning signs” of students at risk of becoming involved in school violence. Several intervention strategies teach students how to recognize their anger, articulate and communicate their feelings to others, and how to choose non-violent responses. The challenge for school administrators is to consider the need for anger management at their school and to select intervention strategies that are practical, affordable and effective.

The National School Safety Center identified angry behavior as one of the behaviors common to youth responsible for violent incidents that resulted in school-related violent deaths. ([www.nsscl.org/reporter/checklist.htm](http://www.nsscl.org/reporter/checklist.htm)) Inability to manage anger was also considered a “warning sign” in a guide produced by The American Psychological Association (APA) with Music Television (MTV) ([www.mentalhealth.org/publications/allpubs/CA-0032/Ca-0032.htm](http://www.mentalhealth.org/publications/allpubs/CA-0032/Ca-0032.htm)) and the DoEd/DoJ Report *Early Warning, Timely Response* (<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/earlywrn.html>).

The Center for Mental Health Studies (CMHS) guide, “Helping the Child Who is Expressing Anger”, ([www.mentalhealth.org/publications/allpubs/CA-0032/Ca-0032](http://www.mentalhealth.org/publications/allpubs/CA-0032/Ca-0032)) describes how adults can reassure youth who are experiencing feelings of anger, teach them to solve problems and to choose productive activities. The CMHS guide states: “some young people turn to violence, because they do not see other ways to endure what they are feeling.” Intervention strategies provide students the means to cope with their feelings by teaching them to recognize their anger, manage their emotions, communicate their emotions and choose different responses. Anger management programs teach students that no one can make them feel angry. Instead, students learn *they* are responsible for their emotions and *they* can choose how to

respond to irritating situations. Students are taught communication techniques such as using “I statements” so they can communicate their angry emotions to the source of their anger in a non-confrontational manner. Students learn problem-solving skills so they can find alternatives to the tensions contributing to their anger. Enhancing communication skills and problem solving skills provides students with options to expressing their anger through violent behavior.

Three intervention strategies that teach students anger management techniques and communication skills are the *Anger Coping Program*, *Building Personal Power: Skills for Managing Anger*, and the *Peacemakers Program*. The *Anger Coping Program* is described in the DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook (Intervention Strategies: Behavior Management Programs p. 173).

“Building Personal Power: Skills for Managing Anger” is also described in the DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook (Intervention Strategies: Behavior Management Programs p. 175). This program is offered by Sera Learning and a description of the program and the results is available on their internet site ([www.sera.com](http://www.sera.com)). An independent evaluation of *Skills for Managing Anger* found that youth, given this training, reported that they were less likely to respond to anger-provoking situations with physical or verbal aggression, and more likely to use the self-calming language, or exit the area to avoid a fight.

The *Peacemakers Program* was provided to fourteen hundred students in the Cleveland Public Schools during the 1997-98 schoolyear. The program resulted in a 41% decrease in aggression-related disciplinary incidents and a 67% decrease in student suspensions for violent behavior. The lesson that specifically addresses anger management teaches students to recognize what causes them to experience feelings of anger. It then teaches four actions students can take to control their emotions. Course materials include a guide for teachers, a guide for school counselors, and interactive computer software. Developed by Applewood Centers, Inc., information is available from their internet site ([www.applewoodcenters.org](http://www.applewoodcenters.org)) or a description in the National Association of School

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Psychologists report on Behavioral Interventions (<http://www.naspweb.org/pdf/BehInt2k.pdf>).

Just as schools using the Safe Schools Handbook indicated that they felt their Safe School plans worked because they did not experience a violent incident, students controlling their anger contribute to school safety by choosing non-violent options.

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## Student Profiling

With what seems like a never ending barrage of school shootings occurring in the United States, politicians, teachers, and administrators are scrambling to find a way to stop the cycle of violence. One of the most controversial methods school administrators are applying is student profiling. Student profiling is the attempt to identify potentially dangerous children by answering a series of questions about their past behavior and current mental and emotional state.

Many nonprofit organizations, and government agencies, including the American Psychological Association, The Department of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), have developed profiling tools to be used by school councilors and administrators.

The Granite City, Illinois school district has adopted a comprehensive approach to student profiling. Each evaluation is conducted at the individual level to avoid classifying a certain section of the student body. The evaluation team, which consists of a social worker, psychologist, school resource officer and school administrator, uses the CDC checklist to guide them. After the evaluation is complete the administrator decides on the appropriate course of action.

Though student profiling seems like a valuable tool there have been many critics. The temptation to go on a McCarthy-era witch-hunt to protect the innocent cannot be ignored. The American Civil

Liberties Union (ACLU) has already voiced its concern regarding student profiling, noting that some school administrators and teachers, though well meaning, might misuse or abuse the idea.

In *Early Warning, Timely Response*, the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education outline the early warning signs of violence but emphasize the principle of “do no harm” when conducting any type of student assessment. The report stresses that the identification of early warning signs should not be used as a process to label children. If a student exhibits warning signs it is important to approach the situation with the intent to treat rather than punish.

The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence suggests that each evaluation team should include at least three non-school professionals who are able to contribute objective assessments due to their removed relationship with the school. However, this can be a difficult task to achieve with resources already being spread thin.

Experts agree student profiling should not be used as the only tool to detect and prevent violence in schools. Even the United States Secret Service, the government’s foremost authority on profiling potentially violent people, claims that profiling is far from an exact science. In July 1998, the Secret Service stated in a report that there is no specific profile for an attacker or an assassin. The report claimed that “Attackers and near-lethal approaches do not fit any one descriptive or demographic profile or even several descriptive or demographic profiles.”

However, these lists of behavioral warning signs are similar and all of the school shooters in the last two years exhibited one or more of commonly listed traits. Frequently listed warning signs are chronic depression, uncontrollable rage, being a product of a broken or abusive home, a history of violent behavior and having easy access to weapons. However, until recently, it has not been considered necessary to establish a written policy for psychologically assessing potentially violent students. In one way or another, educators have been practicing student profiling since the first school bell rang.

## Middle School Incidents of Violence

On 5/26/00 at Lake Worth Middle School in W. Palm Beach, Florida, Nathaniel Brazill killed his English teacher, Barry Grunow. *The Washington Post* reported that an assistant principal sent Brazill home for disruptive behavior, but the student came to school later with a gun. The teacher told Brazill to leave the classroom for talking and the boy responded by shooting the teacher. Similar incidents of violence are increasing public awareness that violent incidents can happen at Elementary Schools and Middle Schools as well as at High Schools.

However, parental concern about school violence is increasing as the number of incidents of school violence is decreasing. In his editorial "Safe in Our Schools," published in *The Washington Post* on 8/15/99, Secretary of Education Riley states "Less than one percent of all homicides among school-age children occur in or around our schools." The 8/23/99 National Governors Association (NGA) report *Making Schools Safe* (<http://www.nga.org/Pubs/IssueBriefs/1999/Sum990823SafeSchools.asp>) stated, "Despite research indicating that incidences of school violence and in-school weapon violations [have decreased], students, teachers and administrators feel less safe within their own schools and more worried about attacks." The report attributed the fear to the well publicized incidents of school violence such as "the tragedies of Jonesboro, Arkansas; Conyers, Georgia; W. Paducah, Kentucky; Pearl, Mississippi; Springfield, Oregon; Edinboro, Pennsylvania;" and Littleton, Colorado.

Two other aspects of the highly publicized incidents might have contributed to parental concern: one, there appear to be more incidents involving students young enough to attend Middle School, and two, sometimes there are multiple victims.

The Jonesboro, Arkansas and Edinboro, Pennsylvania incidents involved Middle School students and multiple victims. The events surprised the public because they involved students young enough to attend Middle School. The severity of the events also made them newsworthy since both incidents involved multiple victims. The official

reports might reassure parents that the number of school violence incidents are decreasing, but, if there are multiple victims, that increases the possibility that their children could be injured. Young students have also recently been involved in school violence incidents that were less well publicized. On 5/11/00 at Prairie Grove, Arkansas, Prairie Grove Junior High School student Michael Nichols exchanged gunshots with school security officer Greg Lovett. Together with the Lake Worth, Florida incident and the 2/29/00 shooting of Kayla Rolland by her classmate at Buell Elementary School in Flint, Michigan, these recent incidents reinforce the perception that younger students are becoming involved in school violence.

Although these particular incidents did not involve multiple victims, there is some recognition of the perception that the number of incidents with multiple victims has increased. A factsheet from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) acknowledged the increase in multiple victim incidents, despite the decrease in the number of incidents ([www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/schoolvi.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/schoolvi.htm)). The CDC factsheet states, "The total number of events has decreased steadily since the 1992-1993 schoolyear. However, the total number of multiple victim events appears to have increased." The factsheet indicated that there were an average of five multiple victim events during the previous three schoolyears between 8/1/95 and 6/30/98, compared to one multiple victim event per schoolyear during the three school years from 8/1/92 to 7/1/95.

The National School Safety Center (NSSC) report on School-Associated Violent Deaths ([www.nssc1.org/savd/savd/.pdf](http://www.nssc1.org/savd/savd/.pdf)) reveals the increasing percentage of incidents at Middle Schools. The NSSC reported that during the 1997-98 schoolyear, there were ten school-related violent deaths in Junior High Schools and Middle Schools, five deaths at Elementary Schools, and twenty seven deaths at High Schools for a total of forty two deaths. In other words, violent deaths at Middle Schools comprised twenty three percent of the violent deaths reported by the NSSC for the 1997-98 school year. That was an increase from 12.5% the previous school year. As the number of violent deaths decreased to twenty seven deaths for the 1998-99 schoolyear, Middle School deaths comprised 18.5% of those deaths. And Middle

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School deaths amounted to 30.7% of the thirteen violent school-related deaths the NSSC reported for the 1999-2000 school year. The bottom line is that incidents are now occurring with more frequency at the Elementary and Middle School levels and often involve multiple victims.

## LEGAL NEWS: CASE STUDY

Recently, the U.S. media have reported increasing numbers of cases concerning weapons in public schools. Some such cases have been tried in State or Federal courts where issues, such as due process and unlawful search and seizure, have been argued.

A pertinent case was decided in late July in the U.S. District Court in Alexandria, Virginia. Benjamin Ratner, an eighth grade student, along with his mother, sued the Loudoun County (Virginia) Public School System and four of its employees for harm he had suffered as a result of a multi-month suspension and the manner in which the defendants decided upon its imposition. Ratner alleged that his rights of due process and equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and his right of freedom from cruel and unusual punishment under the Eighth Amendment had been violated.

According to the Memorandum of Opinion by Judge Albert V. Bryan, Jr., a fellow student had informed Ratner that she had contemplated suicide the previous night by slitting her wrists. She had a history of suicide attempts and psychiatric treatment and inadvertently had brought the intended knife to school in her notebook. For safe keeping, Ratner took the notebook from her and put it in his own locker.

Learning of the presence of the knife in the school, the Assistant Principal questioned the suicidal student and then summoned Ratner for questioning. A dean of the school recovered the knife and notebook from Ratner, along with an explanation. The dean reported to her superiors that Ratner believed he had acted in the best interest of his friend and, at no time, did he intend to harm anyone with the knife. The Assistant Principal, nevertheless, on October 8, issued a 10-day suspension of Ratner for violating the policy prohibiting the possession or use of a weapon by a

student while in school or on school property. Four days later, the Principal affirmed the decision by written notice. On October 14, the Division Superintendent ordered the student suspended indefinitely, pending a decision by the School Board. An administrative hearing panel convened two weeks later and recommended suspension for the balance of the semester; i.e., through January.

The Principal adopted that recommendation and issued a written notice of the suspension on October 29, twenty-one days after the incident. Ratner requested a hearing before the Discipline Committee to appeal the suspension. The Committee met, unanimously approved the semester-long suspension, and the final notice was issued December 10.

Judge Bryan stated that it appeared clear to him that the crux of the claim by Ratner and his mother was the alleged violations of due process. They argued that the several notices of suspension omitted details such as the availability of alternative educational options and the right to seek review in state court and that the delay between the initial notice of suspension issued on October 8 and the final notice on December 10 was unreasonable. They also contended that the semester-long suspension constituted grossly excessive punishment, bearing no rational relationship to and took no consideration of the circumstances.

Judge Bryan found that no violation of Ratner's due process right had been shown. He had been given notice of the charges against him, a description of the evidence, and a reasonably prompt opportunity to present his side of the story, in the initial interview and in two subsequent hearings. The fact that neither of the two reviewing panels had accepted Ratner's version of his actions, did not constitute a denial of due process, nor did the absence of counsel.

Judge Bryan also could not find any unconstitutionality in Virginia's statute banning the possession of weapons in schools. He said that an argument that the statute is vague and overly broad might have succeeded, if the object involved could have been construed as something other than a weapon, but in this case, there was no such uncertainty regarding the knife. Accordingly, he concluded that no actionable claim for relief had been shown and the entire case was dismissed.