

SAFE SCHOOLS

NEWSLETTER



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INSIDE this issue

- Safe Schools News 1
- News & Updates 2
- Applying the Five Phase Process 3
 - Phase Three – Evaluate Measures & Identify Options (continued)
- Emergency Planning 4
 - Grab & Go Kit
- Intervention Strategies 5
 - Substance Abuse Warning Signs
- Lessons Learned 6
 - Video Game Violence
- Education Issues 8
 - How Character Education Programs Work

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Safe Schools NEWS

Thanks for the Student Articles

Thanks to the DoDEA students and schools that submitted student articles on school violence. The articles we received were very insightful. We plan to include student articles beginning with the February 2001 Safe Schools Newsletter.

McCaffery Leaving ONDCP

Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey, U.S.A. (Ret.), Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) since 1996, is leaving to teach at West Point Military Academy. At a 1/4/01 news conference, McCaffery said that since 1996, federal funding increased 55% for prevention programs and 34% for treatment programs. ONDCP officials indicated that youth drug use decreased 21% since 1997.

On 7/7/00 McCaffery told the D.A.R.E. Officers Association how important drug abuse prevention education is in decreasing youth drug abuse. “The strength of D.A.R.E.’s organization is a major reason for our declining juvenile drug use rates. D.A.R.E. knows what needs to be done to reduce drug use among children and you are doing it—successfully.” McCaffery also noted the importance of D.A.R.E.’s classes for parents. “We know that parents are the most effective prevention tool...”

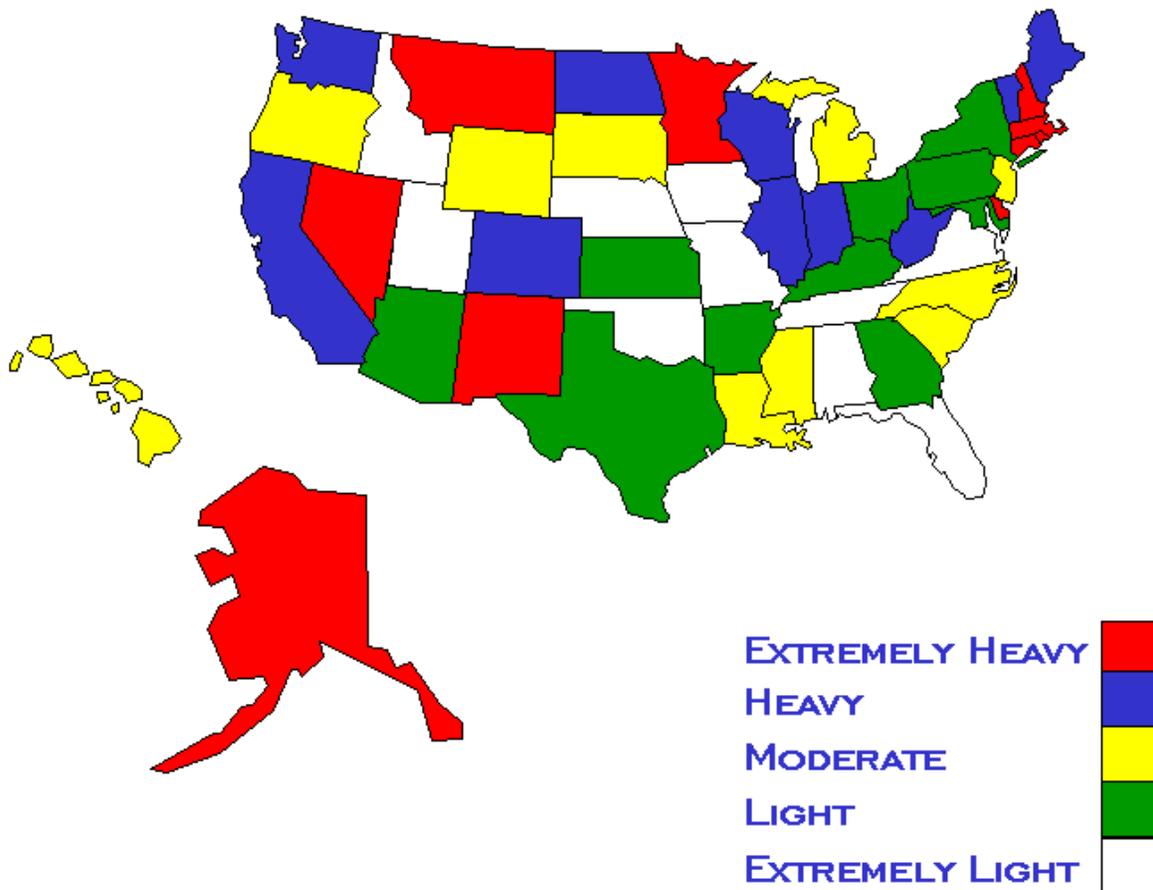


Progress in Drug Prevention Slowing

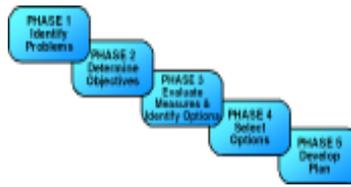
In August 2000, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) concluded that the 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) indicated marijuana use among U.S. middle school and high school youth decreased 26% from 1997 to 1999 (<http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov>). Unfortunately, a 12/14/00 ONDCP Fact Sheet analyzing the 2000 Monitoring the Future Survey (MTF) reported that results from the MTF indicated no significant change in use of marijuana and other illicit drugs from 1999 to 2000 among middle school and high school students.

Student use of illicit synthetic drugs and steroids increased, although the percentage of students using those drugs remained modest. The MTF indicated that between 1999 and 2000, use of the synthetic drug "Ecstasy" in the month preceding the survey, increased 82% (from 1.7% to 3.1%) among 8th graders. "Ecstasy" use increased 44% (from 1.8% to 2.6%) among 10th graders. Steroid use increased 29% among 10th graders from 1999 to 2000 (from 1.2% to 1.7%). The graphic accompanying this article depicts the frequency of illicit drug use among youth aged 12-17, in the month preceding the NHSDA.

MONTHLY YOUTH DRUG USAGE



SOURCE: 1999 NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY ON DRUG ABUSE (NHSDA)



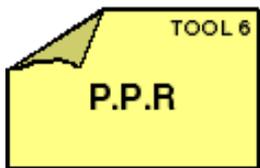
Applying the 5 Phase Process

PHASE THREE - Evaluate Measures & Identify Options (continued)

PHASE 3 Evaluate Measures & Identify Options

CONDUCTING A POLICY REVIEW is the first “P” in “P.P.R”. The policies that govern a school must be reviewed thor-

oughly in order to set the foundation for the way a school operates. Simply stated, school policies are ground rules. Policies are set from the Department of Defense level all the way down to school level. For policies that principals can establish, here are some guidelines for helping to create effective policies at their school level.



Start a policy review by taking inventory of all policies “on the books” and asking three questions regarding the current school policies.

DO I HAVE IT?
WHAT SHOULD IT DO?
CAN I DO IT?

The TOOL 6 worksheets, found in DoDEA’s *Safe Schools: A Handbook for Practitioners*, are designed to help administrators evaluate the effectiveness of existing measures (e.g., school policies) and to determine if the measure is acceptable for helping achieve the objective to which it applies. When evaluating the effectiveness of a policy, consider the following questions:

- What is the goal of the policy?
- What constitutes a violation of the policy?

- Are violations clearly defined in the policy?
- Who is responsible for enforcing the policy?
- Are the enforcers aware of their responsibilities?
- Has the policy been applied consistently?
- Is the policy clearly communicated to the students, parents and staff?
- Has the policy been successful?

Military communities have no lack of policies, standing operating procedures, and rules dictating certain expected behaviors. The fundamental benefit of regulation is to define expected standards. When an administrator has decided upon an inventory of school policies, three final questions, if asked, will help “test” the policies before going final. Is the policy

Enforceable?
Enforced?
Reasonable?

If a policy can not pass this litmus test, the chances are good that the policy should be modified or removed from the inventory. Existing policies that are not enforced often become the object of ridicule and undermine the entire school climate. A school’s inventory of policies can be a very long list. The list of policies should be reviewed periodically. For more information pertaining to policy reviews, consult Appendix A, Discussion of Measures, in the DoDEA Safe Schools Guide, *Safe Schools: A Handbook for Practitioners*.



“GRAB & GO KIT”

When an emergency situation demands your immediate attention, there are a few basic questions that need to be asked. What are your actions? Where do you go? With whom do you communicate, as you attempt to prevent a crisis situation from developing? The answers to some of these questions have been addressed in previous Emergency Planning articles, but one subject not yet covered is what you can prepackage that might be of possible use during a crisis situation.

Although all contingency situations may not be able to be accommodated, they can often be handled more easily by having a prepackaged container that is stocked with a wide variety of useful items. Such a container(s), or a “grab & go kit”, should be easily transportable and always positioned in the same place so it is readily accessible to you while rushing to respond.

A “grab & go kit” should be designed to be taken to a location where emergency response personnel and school staff will be able to find material and information helpful to them in dealing with the situation. The contents would be items that you either don’t have time to go back and retrieve or are no longer accessible because of the nature of the emergency (e.g., fire).

If you have established a “grab & go kit”, check its contents against the list provided with this article. If you don’t have such a container, think about establishing one with the items mentioned here.

- + Emergency Policies & Procedures Notebook
- + A complete list of phone numbers
- + Spare keys for all doors or a master key
- + Plan of the school (blue prints, if possible)
- + Site map, blueprints, etc.
- + Information regarding main shut-off valves for utilities (e.g., gas, electricity)
- + First aid supplies
- + Means of putting identification on all students (e.g., adhesive labels for name tags)
- + A means of accounting for all students
- + Protocol for all students on medical plans
- + Something to wear that identifies you readily (e.g., brightly colored vest)
- + Communication devices (e.g., mobile phone, walkie-talkies)
- + Lights (e.g., flashlights, candles, matches)
- + Writing supplies (e.g., paper, pencils, index cards, markers, poster board)
- + Tape (e.g., masking, caution, duct)
- + Cutting instruments (e.g., scissors)
- + Hand tools (e.g., hammer, nails, screwdriver, saw)
- + Storage materials (e.g., plastic water containers, large plastic bags, pails)
- + Blankets
- + Water
- + Rope & string

Substance Abuse Warning Signs

The 1999 DoDEA Customer Satisfaction Survey reported that school staff members were interested in how to identify and help students who might be abusing drugs. This article describes warning signs, actions for schools, and sources for more information on substance abuse prevention.

Warning signs of possible drug use described by the American Council for Drug Education and the internet publication *OnHealth* (<http://onhealth.webmd.com>) include sudden changes in student behavior and physical effects.

Behavior Indicators

- Poor academic performance
- Decreased interest in athletics or school activities
- Frequent class absences
- Hostility, aggression or irritability
- Deteriorating relationships with family members

Physical Changes

- Drowsiness in class
- Red eyes
- Runny nose
- Extreme weight loss
- Sore throats
- Bruises

Experts caution that warning signs merely indicate the possibility of substance abuse. Diagnosis usually requires a physical examination, laboratory tests and interviews with the student and their family.

School Actions

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) reports that some schools provide “protective factors” or influences that protect students from substance abuse. Effective school programs include:

- High teacher expectations of student academic performance.
- School discipline policies and behavior guidelines that clearly indicate substance abuse is not acceptable.
- Opportunities for youth participation, involvement and responsibility in school activity and decisions.

Sources of Drug Abuse Prevention Information

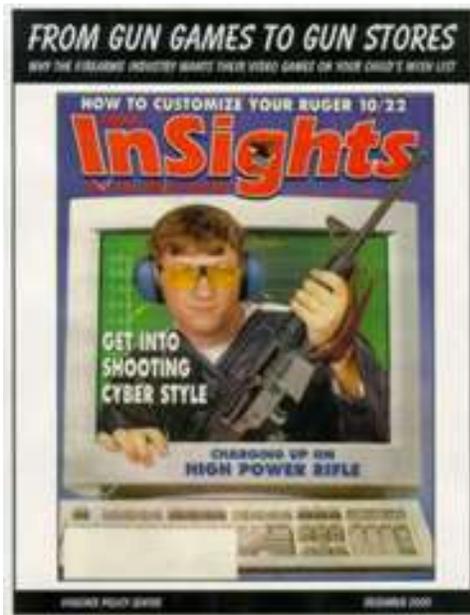
DoDEA's *Safe Schools: A Handbook for Practitioners* identifies nine substance abuse prevention programs (pp. 273-282) and nine intervention strategies designed for use by military services (pp. 237-247). Substance abuse prevention Internet sites include:

- Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP) <http://www.samhsa.gov/centers/csap/csap.html>
- Narcotics Anonymous (NA) <http://www.narcoticsanonymous.org/>
- National Clearinghouse for Alcohol & Drug Information (NCADI) <http://www.health.org/>
- National Institute for Drug Abuse (NIDA) <http://www.nida.nih.gov/>



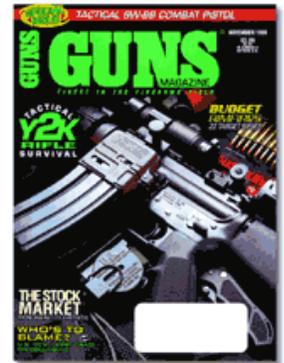
Video Game Violence

A recent report released by the Violence Policy Center, a well respected non profit organization dedicated to the study of gun violence in America, has reinvigorated the debate surrounding video game violence. The December 2000 report titled, *From Gun Games to Gun Stores* (<http://www.vpc.org/studies/vidcont.htm>), claims that the gun and video game industries have teamed to target children by putting virtual guns into the hands of future potential customers. This tactic is used to get children interested in guns and to inspire brand loyalty.

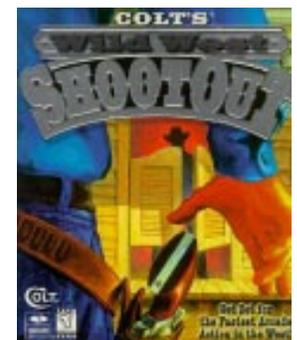


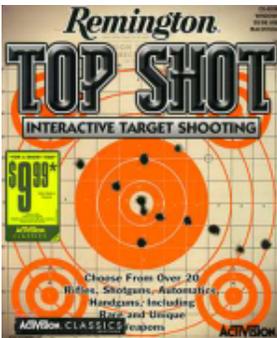
The report states that gun manufacturers are paying video game manufacturers to have the names of actual guns used as weapons in video games. The use of video games by the gun industry offers several advantages over other youth marketing strategies. Through video games, the gun industry

is able to appeal to a larger and demographically more diverse audience. Scott Farrell, editor of *Guns Magazine*, stated that such a video game, “Combines the use of a real handgun...with state-of-the-art graphics and an exciting story.... A game like that would be an extremely effective vehicle to introduce safe recreational shooting to the video game generation.”



However, the Violence Policy Center stated that some of these games depict realistic simulations of gun battles that do not seem to advocate “safe and recreational shooting”. For example, one game, *Colt's Wild West Shootout*, features such weapons as the Colt .45 Single Action Revolver, Colt Long-Barreled Peace Maker Revolver, and Colt Fast Action Rifle. One of the scenes in the game features a gun battle in a church where those shot can be heard screaming. Another game, *Remington's Top Shot*, features a shoot out on a passenger plane with shots being fired from behind a row of seats. For the battle, the player can select between using a Desert Eagle 50 caliber handgun, a Springfield Armory M1A rifle, or a SAR 4800 assault rifle. These games are





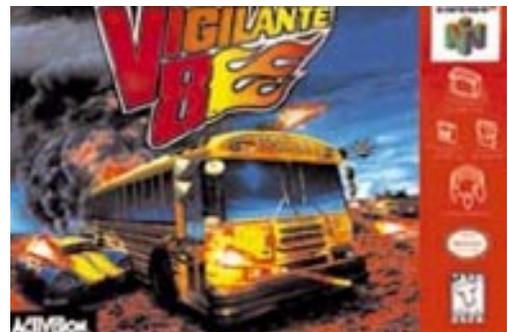
designed, in the words of the National Rifle Association, to help children and teens “get into shooting cyber style.” But in the wake of recent school shootings like the one in Littleton, Colorado, where one of

the shooters claimed that their deadly rampage would be “just like” the video game *Doom*, parents and teachers are concerned about the impact these games have on children.



The National School Transportation Association (NSTA) has launched a nationwide campaign to remove the violent “Vigilante 8” video game from toys stores and the shelves of video rental stores. “Vigilante 8,” marketed to children by Activision Inc. for use in Sony Playstation systems, presents a disturbing image of school buses and encourages violent student behavior. Packaging for the game features a marauding yellow school bus bearing

rocket launchers and blazing machine guns. The game’s play manual describes a main character as “an obnoxious kid [who] stole a school bus and headed west to play bully with the big boys.” Also, children playing the game reportedly view the animated shooting of a school bus driver.



The games mentioned, as well as many others on the market, have angered parents and children’s safety advocates who claim the entertainment industry and gun manufactures are putting profits ahead of the welfare of America’s children.

Military commanders and school officials might consider changing the selection of video games available at military installation recreation rooms to decrease the number of violent images that students encounter. As the Safe Schools workshop presenters visited military installations during 1999 and 2000, they checked the types of video games available for youth at the recreation rooms. Although the specific number varied from installation to installation, a large percentage of the video games were usually “shooter games” or video games containing violent images.

How Character Education Programs Work

Character Education (CE) programs attempt to prevent violence at school and improve the school climate by teaching values to children. CE programs usually involve:

Principal and Teacher Training to teach educators how to provide the CE program to students.

Values Discussion among parents, school officials, and community leaders to identify shared values. Involving the community early avoids concerns about the CE program later.

Student Discussion Groups to help students internalize values and accept responsibility for themselves and their future.

Community Service projects that enable students, parents and community members to participate in putting the values into action.

Program Evaluations to check on CE program implementation and successes.

CE sometimes includes conflict resolution programs that teach specific communication or problem-solving *skills*. However, CE also provides students with *reasons* for choosing better behavior by teaching values important to the school and community.

Examples of Effective Character Education Programs

Operation Respect: Don't Laugh At Me: Ten national education organizations including the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), National School Boards Association (NSBA), the National Education Association (NEA),

and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) recently endorsed the CE program *Operation Respect: Don't Laugh At Me (DLAM)*. DLAM uses music by the singing group *Peter, Paul and Mary* and participatory exercises to teach students social and problem solving skills, reasoning, and an appreciation for diversity. DLAM is designed to enhance students' self-esteem and help them feel less afraid of expressing themselves or being different. On the video tape introducing the CE program, Peter Yarrow, of *Peter, Paul & Mary* explains that DLAM sensitizes children to the idea that other children, even gifted students or talented athletes, feel vulnerable.

Community of Caring: Mound Fort Middle School in Ogden, Utah received national recognition for implementing a successful CE program to prevent violence at school and improve student reading. Between 1995 and 2000, the school implemented the Community of Caring program designed to teach students community values (<http://www.communityofcaring.org>). Discipline referrals decreased and school climate improved. The community also benefited. Thefts at the grocery store decreased. Student referrals to community agencies and juvenile justice services decreased. Former youth gang members participated in service projects to help the homeless and read to the elderly (http://www.character.org/action/newslet.cgi?spring_2000:nsoc).

Further information about CE programs is available on the Internet from the Character Education Partnership (<http://www.character.org/>) or the Center for Character Development (<http://www.charactercenter.com/ForEducators.htm>).