



SAFE SCHOOLS

NEWSLETTER



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Character Education



"When we give children knowledge and skills, we give them tools to build a future for themselves. When we give our children lessons in character, we give them tools to build a brighter future for their world."

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige

In a televised meeting on October 16, 2001, Secretary of Education Rod Paige discussed how schools, communities and parents work together in effective character education programs. School officials discussed how character education affects student academic achievement, civility, and citizenship. Information regarding future broadcasts of the presentation is available from the Department of Education Internet site (<http://registerevent.ed.gov/downlink/event-flyer.asp?intEventID=149>).

Commitment

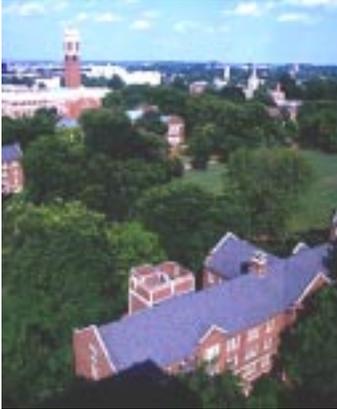
Educators understand commitment. Inspiring youth to excellence in academics and leadership requires the same persistent commitment required to fight terrorism. The "God Bless America" graphic is included on several upcoming newsletters as a reminder that the patriotic zeal displayed by citizens in September 2001 is also needed in June 2002.





DoDEA Is Doing Something Right!

Vanderbilt University Study Lauds DoDEA Student Behavior



On October 9, 2001, Vanderbilt University's Peabody Center for Education Policy reported that DoDEA students are safe and enjoy a healthy school climate (Vanderbilt University news: www.vanderbilt.edu/News/news/oct01/nr9a/default.htm).

"March Toward Excellence," the September 2001 report to the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP), states: "severe discipline problems such as use of drugs, alcohol, graffiti and violence are almost non-existent" (NEGP report: www.negp.gov, select Publications/Reports, then select "March Toward Excellence..."). Researchers visited fifteen middle schools in the U.S., Germany and Japan and interviewed more than one hundred thirty DoDEA teachers, principals and superintendents.

Threats of Violence

Researchers discuss threats of violence affecting DoDEA schools including:

- ➔ "Depressing housing conditions for enlisted families" that contribute to "student frustrations, arguments, and fighting at school."
- ➔ Previous attempts by youth gangs to recruit DoDEA students in Germany and the Southeastern U.S..
- ➔ Student access to guns, balanced by parents' responsible gun ownership.

DoDEA Responses

The report attributes the decreased risk of incidents of violence to the emphasis on personal accountability, community/parental involvement, and the relatively small size of DoDEA schools. Although the study recognizes some unique characteristics of military communities, it recommends public schools consider several DoDEA policies including DoDEA's effective use of after-school programs.

Personal Accountability

Students reportedly respond to DoDEA's high expectations for student behavior and academic performance. The study describes how emphasis on individual responsibility in DoDEA schools enhances school climate. School buildings visited were "quiet, clean and orderly." At one school, a U.S. Army commander said that there was no vandalism or graffiti because students were accountable for their behavior.

Community/Parental Involvement

The study lauds the sense of community at military installations and the ability of parents to leave work to attend parent teacher meetings. Some DoDEA principals attributed improved behavior to the high expectations, school uniforms, and "shadowing" by parents, which involves requiring parents of students who misbehave repeatedly to attend classes with their child.

Size of DoDEA Schools

School size enables DoDEA teachers and school administrators to give personal attention to students and become familiar with their family situations. Research indicates students learn more and behave better if the schools are not so large that students feel anonymous.





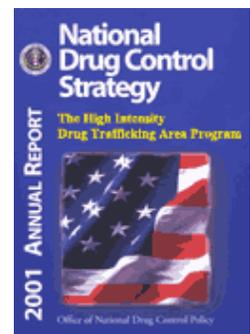
CDC: Schools Favor Intervention Programs



U.S. public schools preferred teaching skills to avoid violence and drug use rather than using physical security measures such as surveillance cameras and metal detectors, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The September 2001 *Journal of School Health* presents the results of CDC's recent School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS 2000). SHPPS regularly reports on school health policy including policies prohibiting student fighting, weapon possession, and youth gangs (www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/shpps/index.htm).

Study conclusions regarding violence and drug use programs include:

- 91% of schools use **intervention programs** to prevent bullying and teach anger management.
- 68% of school districts provide their schools **examples of violence prevention policies**.
- 97% of schools use **drug abuse prevention programs** that teach students communication and decision making skills.



However, study results regarding security measures indicate that only:

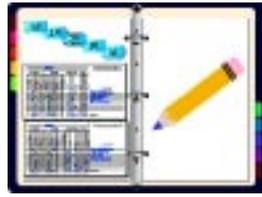
- 3% of elementary schools, 10% of middle schools and 10% of high schools use **metal detectors**.
- 12% of elementary schools, 21% of middle schools and 24% of high schools use **surveillance cameras**.
- 6% of elementary schools, 19% of middle schools and 30% of high schools have **uniformed police** at the school.
- 18% of elementary schools, 38% of middle schools and 45% of high schools routinely **search book bags**, desks or student lockers.



New Department of Education School Violence Study

The "School Survey on Crime and Safety" (SSOCS) is a new Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) study on school violence (<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ssocs/main/#ABOUT>). NCES reports on **types of crimes** at schools including homicide, assaults with and without weapons, robbery, theft and vandalism. The study also reports on **discipline actions** in response to school violence, such as expulsions, transfers, and suspensions. Principals describe their perceptions of **disciplinary problems** such as bullying, verbal abuse and disorder in the classrooms. The study surveyed more than 3,000 U.S. elementary and secondary school principals during Spring and Summer of 2001. NCES estimates the final report should be available by February 2002.





Safe School Planning

Safe School Plan Ingredients

We learned from the DoDEA Program Evaluation that principals could benefit from a sample Safe School Plan (SSP) in order to better prepare their own individualized plan. Although the Safe Schools Handbook has a template for use in developing a school security plan, a more robust sample plan would be even more helpful. Recent inquiries from the field reinforce this message.

The DoDEA Safe Schools Program Evaluation and email responses from school administrators indicated principals would like to refer to an example of a Safe School Plan (SSP) as they write the SSP for their school. Although the Safe Schools Handbook includes a Planning Worksheet (Tool #9), principals would like to see an outline of a completed plan.

The Summer 2001 Newsletter (Newsletter #1-10) Emergency Planning article described the elements commonly found in an Incident Response Plan (IRP). The article presents an outline of a Risk Reduction Plan (RRP). The April 2001 Newsletter (Newsletter #1-8) explained that a Safe School Plan includes both a Risk Reduction Plan and an Incident Response Plan (SSP = RRP + IRP).

The RRP is a roadmap for creating and maintaining as safe a school environment as possible. The document is the written result of the principal and the Safe School Committee (SSC) working together on the Five Phase Process. Although the RRP does not need to be a voluminous document, it needs to address school policy, intervention programs, and physical security measures that the school decided to implement. The RRP includes timelines

for implementation of each measure and documents requirements based on the SSC's risk assessment. An RRP includes:

Purpose

Begin with a purpose statement. The purpose statement concisely describes the intentions regarding school security. An uninformed reader should be able to clearly understand that the document is your plan for creating and maintaining a safe learning environment.

Current Situation

Use information gathered in Phase One "Identify Problems," to explain the current security situation at the school. Describe the type and quantity of incidents experienced at the school (Incident Worksheet: Tool #1), perceptions of threats to school security (Student and Teacher Surveys: Tools #2 and #3) information provided by community law enforcement (Tool #4) and the principal's personal perspective (Climate Worksheet: Tool #5).

Objectives

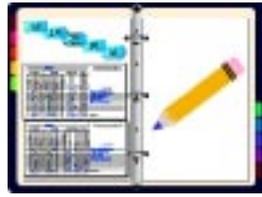
Concisely present the risk reduction and climate improvement objectives determined during Phase 2, "Determine Objectives".

Options Adopted

Use a table to identify the policies, intervention programs, and physical security measures selected. Include existing policies the SSC decided to change as well as new measures selected.

Each new option should be referenced to its corresponding objective. This relationship will manifest the logic for your having selected the option. Use the data from Tool 8, "Options Worksheet", to prepare this section.





Safe School Planning

Implementation Schedule

Your implementation schedule should list each new option you plan to implement. For each option, you should stipulate a start date, a cost, and a person responsible for overseeing its implementation. Your implementation could easily be a two or a three-year plan because of the lead-time necessary for funding some of the options.

Communicating the Plan

You should describe your plan for ensuring that the entire community is informed about the plan and its details of implementation.

Applicable Policies

Provide a full reference of the policies that are applicable to the school.

Intervention Programs

Describe each intervention program that is currently in use and that you plan to use (i.e. anti-bullying programs, conflict resolution programs, etc.)

Physical Security Measures

Describe each physical security measure that is currently in use and that you plan to use (i.e. surveillance cameras, metal detectors, guards, hall monitors, access control, badge systems, etc.)

By including these sections and by adhering to the fundamentals discussed above, you will ensure that your RRP will reflect a cohesive approach to enhancing your school's security. A clearly written plan enables you to communicate to each of your stakeholders (e.g. students, staff, parents, administrators, and post personnel) the "who", "what", "where", "when", "why" and "how" of your strategy to reduce the risk of school violence and to improve the school's learning atmosphere. Remember your Risk Reduction Plan need not be a voluminous document. What is important is that you create the plan according to a methodological approach. Creating the plan systematically enables the principal to support each of the decisions made in developing the plan.

SSP = RRP + IRP

Purpose
Objectives
Current Situation
Options Adopted
Implementation Schedule
Communicating the Plan
Applicable Policies
Intervention Programs
Physical Security Measures



After-School Programs

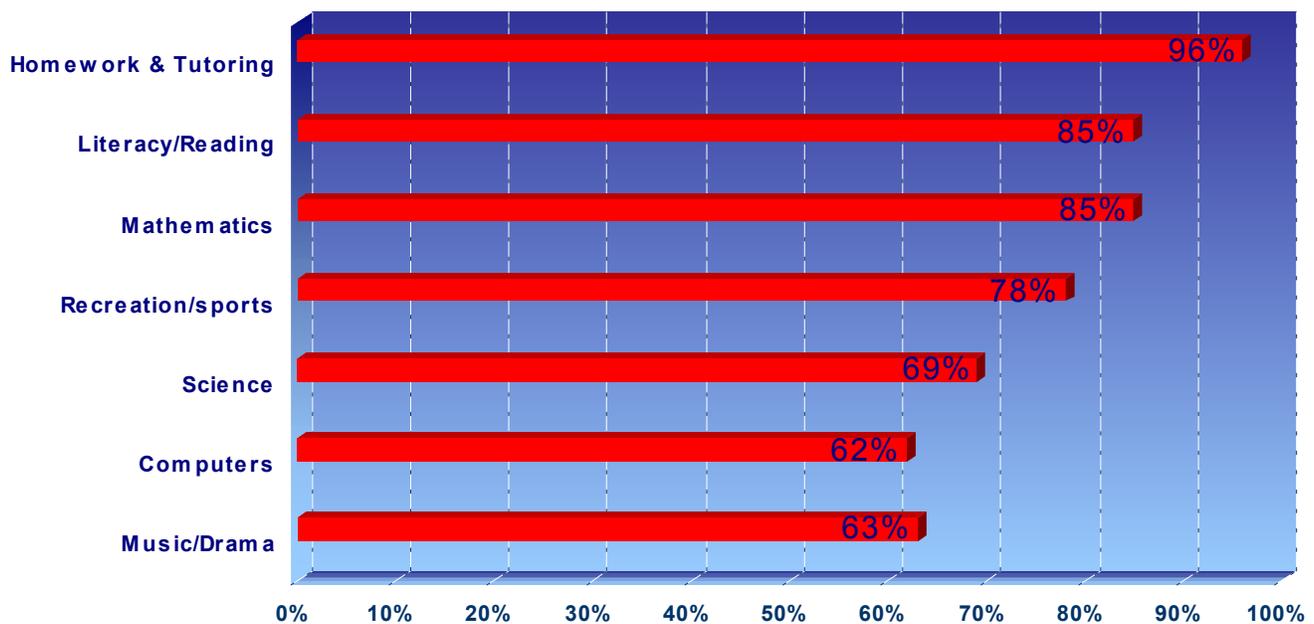
Principals use After-School Programs (ASP) to help students improve academic performance while avoiding becoming victims or perpetrators of school violence. ASP provide students assistance with homework and tutoring in mathematics and reading. Children benefit from a safe place to study and play between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.; schools benefit from increased parental involvement and improved student academic performance.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) surveyed more than five hundred principals (www.naesp.org/afterschool/), and found that ASP:

- ✓ Teach conflict resolution, leadership skills and community service.
- ✓ Offer counseling services and programs for gifted and talented students. ASP offer an opportunity to work with students without disrupting their normal classwork.
- ✓ Require approximately ten staff members: two teachers, two teacher's aids and parents or volunteers.
- ✓ Provide children access to television/VCRs, playground equipment, computers, a library and the Internet.
- ✓ Include athletics and sports to keep students interested and attending.

A fact sheet summarizing the survey results (www.naesp.org/afterschool/aspfactsheet.htm) reported that ASP increased student attendance and improved the school's relationships with community organizations. Accompanying graphics depict the *percentage of principals* reporting their ASP provides the identified services, or their school experienced the specified benefits.

ASP Services to Students

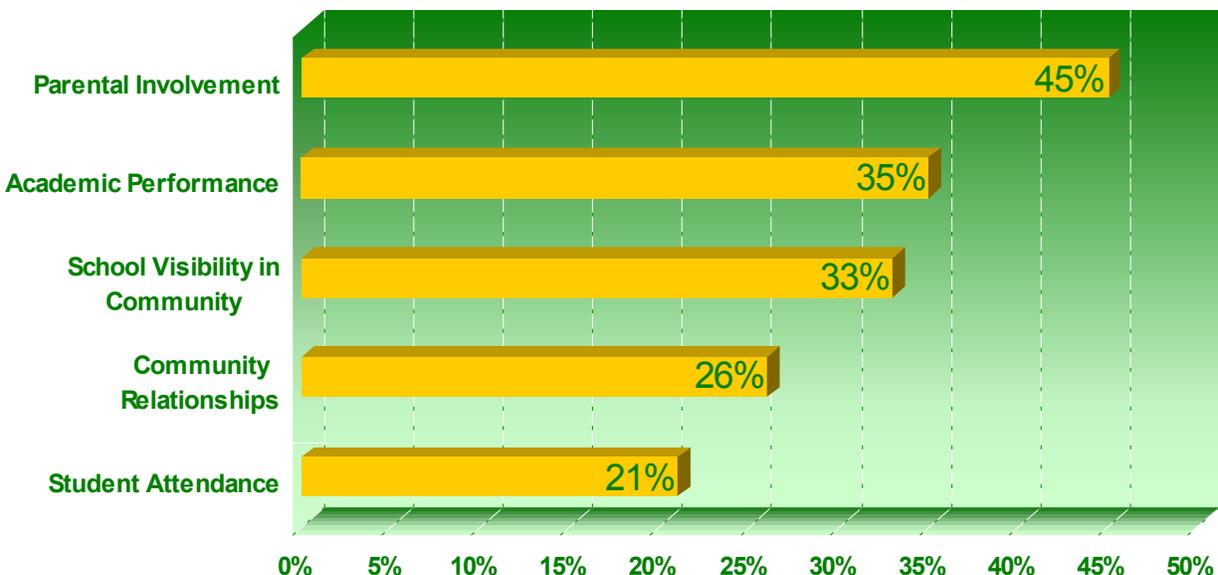


Characteristics of Effective After-School Programs

The June 2000 U.S. Department of Education report *After-School Programs: Keeping Children Safe and Smart* recommends these criteria for effective After-School Programs (ASP). (See “What Works: Components of Exemplary After-School Programs” www.ed.gov/pubs/afterschool/3whatworks.html).

- ✓ GOAL SETTING, STRONG MANAGEMENT, AND ACCOUNTABILITY
- ✓ QUALITY STAFFING
- ✓ PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, LAW ENFORCEMENT AND YOUTH GROUPS
- ✓ INVOLVING FAMILIES
 - Include in ASP planning
 - Accommodate working parents
- ✓ ENRICHING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES
 - Challenging classes
 - Coordinating ASP learning with students’ regular school classes
- ✓ COMMUNICATION BETWEEN REGULAR TEACHERS AND ASP PERSONNEL
- ✓ EVALUATION OF ASP PROGRESS AND EFFECTIVENESS
 - Using quantifiable information to measure progress
 - Designing effective evaluations

ASP Benefits to Schools



WHAT DOES THE “S” STAND FOR IN YOUR SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN?

I can still remember ‘some’ of my colleagues circulating jokes around the teachers’ lounge about the “hormonally challenged” youngsters we were dealing with in our classes when I taught math in the middle schools a number of years ago. A common thought was that that these kids were going through all kinds of physical and psychological changes at this age, so try to manage the chaos and their strange behaviors and just wait until they grow up. Time and maturity would help them become productive.

After decades of observing the contributions and accomplishments of adolescent youth, and watching my own children and grandchildren go through these years, I believe ‘some’ of my colleagues sure *missed the mark* when judging the potential of this powerful student group.

Almost every time I turn on the television or pick up a newspaper, another story is being told about the creative spirit, talent, and giving nature of middle school students.

- ◆ Following the horrendous tragedies on September 11 in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, two sixth grade students in Ashburn, VA, created and sold patriotic symbols and raised more than \$5,000 for families of survivors in these places.
- ◆ Youth, pictured with former President Carter, are shown on the front cover of the Washington Post’s October 21, 2001, Parade Magazine helping “Hands on Atlanta” volunteers to improve their communities.

- ◆ A 14-year-old student in Wilmington, IL, enlisted kids and adults to help found a “Share-A-Friend” program which enabled 50 able-bodied volunteers to assist 60 disabled residents who live in group homes around his town.

A new Halloween approach for youth **dress up** was just announced in our local newspaper. This year, students will be dressing up as “What I Want to be When I Grow Up”. This is only part of a constructive and unique program for youth sponsored by the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Job Shadow Coalition to help children think about their futures.

These few examples only scratch the surface in telling the whole story about how teachers, school administrators, and parents are transforming the creative juices and energy of middle school youth into powerful learning experiences for students in all corners of this country.

These examples bring to mind the admonition of a Maryland principal who was giving advice to us during the formative years of our safe schools program. He said, **“Don’t forget that the “S” in Safe Schools planning stands for students.** Individually, and as a group, they know more about what is happening around your school than anyone else, and they can be of invaluable assistance as you develop safe school plans.”



Recent comments from Heather Lobe, an 8th grade student at Glen Landing Middle School in NJ, make the words of the Maryland Principal ring in my ears. “My friends and I know where most of the danger places are in our school. We just are not sure how to tell anyone about them!” Heather’s mother, a middle school teacher at C. W. Lewis Middle School echoes her daughter’s comments: “Everyone knows that the kids have the danger spots in school pretty well figured out. But, we have not figured out how to use their help effectively.”

As we continue to develop our safe school plans in the middle schools, let’s not forget how valuable the “S” (Students) can be in assisting with planning. Does your middle school student leadership group have the interest and communication skills to adopt ‘School Safety’ as a major project for the year and assist the administration and staff with such things as Student Safety Surveys and Physical Security Reviews?

Does the improvement of school climate offer another area where students might have significant input as they suggest practical ways of improving the atmosphere both in and out of the school?



In any case, we dare not leave the “S” out of our school safety planning. Most students care a lot about their school – their student body, teachers and other staff members. If given a chance to operate within their level of competence and with some appropriate adult guidance, these same students will continue to amaze most of us with the eagerness, commitment and skills they are able to bring to

any worthwhile program of school improvement.

Submitted by:
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National Institute for Safe Schools

