

#### Volume XI - Issue 9 - May 2011

### When Students at Vilseck See Something, They Say Something

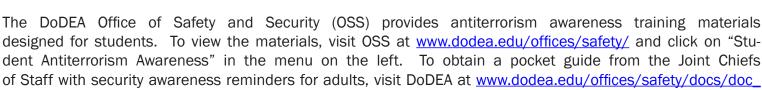
Following the tragic events at Frankfurt Airport on March 2, 2011, in which two U.S. service personnel were killed and two others seriously injured, many DoDEA schools across Europe reemphasized security awareness. At Vilseck High School in southwest Germany, Principal Duane Werner reminded students about the importance of vigilance. Principal Werner encouraged students to identify and report anything they saw that seemed suspicious.

Within days, Mr. Werner received a report from a student who noticed a car in an unusual location. The student thought the driver of the car might be observing students. Mr. Werner notified the Provost Marshal Office and the District Superintendent's Office and the authorities investigated. Luckily, the observer turned out to be innocuous. The school community demonstrated that they can multiply their attentive eyes and ears by imparting the lesson of staying aware of one's surroundings. Principal Werner summarized the school's approach to security: "Our goal is to have a safe school in a safe community. We can help ensure this by working together."

Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano recently echoed this sentiment when she introduced the simplified threat advisory system with the comment, "We don't want people to live in fear, we want people to live in a state of alertness and awareness." Signs of possible terrorist activity include:

- ♦ Surveillance Observing people entering or departing from a facility.
- Elicitation Asking suspicious questions.
- Testing security Wandering into prohibited areas.
- Gathering supplies Stealing ID badges or uniforms that might help perpetrators gain access to a facility.
- Deploying assets Taking up positions or placing supplies around a possible target.

designed for students. To view the materials, visit OSS at www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/ and click on "Student Antiterrorism Awareness" in the menu on the left. To obtain a pocket guide from the Joint Chiefs AntiTerrorismCard pc5260.pdf.



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### **News & Updates**



# eCybermission Kindles Students' Enthusiasm for Science

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to apply the scientific method to a problem in your community. Confronted with this challenge, teams of DoDEA students in grades six through nine have used their creativity to find solutions that benefit their community through the U.S. Army's eCybermission program.

Since 2002, this annual on-line competition has offered teams of three to four students the opportunity to compete in a "virtual science fair." The students work with a faculty advisor to identify a topic in one of the mission challenge areas (i.e., energy, ecosystems, environment, or robotics). Students then research and analyze the problem, formulate a hypothesis, and conduct experiments. They implement a solution based on their research and publicize their results in their "mission folder." Throughout the competition, students use on-line discussion forums, chat rooms, and electronic messaging to communicate with their teammates and conduct research.



Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Eric Shinseki (USA ret.), established the program to help the United States maintain a technological advantage in research and development. As Dr. Venkat Rao, a scientist with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, explained, "There is a direct connection between our ability to cultivate enthusiasm



for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, and our research and development capabilities in the future." He added, "If we want to maintain the U.S. advantage in national security technology, we need to work the pipelines."

For DoDEA students preoccupied with a deployed parent/sponsor, or wrestling with adjustments to new schools, eCybermission offers an opportunity to concentrate their energy, learn valuable skills, and become deeply involved in their new school. Over 2,000 teams of students from both U.S. public schools and DoDEA compete annually. In previous years, several teams from DoDEA distinguished themselves, including: Rainbow Elementary School, Heidelberg Middle School, and Vilseck High School in Germany; Taegu Elementary High School in Korea; Guam High School in Guam; and Zama American School in Japan.

Military service personnel volunteer as program ambassadors to explain the program to schools. Adults with a technical background can also help as "CyberGuides" or on-line mentors and virtual judges.

Now is the time to plan a program for fall 2011. Teams will form and register from September through December. The "virtual judging" takes place during March, and winning teams are announced in April or May. Faculty advisors of students who accept the mission can learn more about eCybermission by contacting "mission control" at <a href="missioncontrol@ecybermission.com">missioncontrol@ecybermission.com</a>. Read more about the success of previous DoDEA teams from the DoDEA Communications Office Web site at <a href="mailto:www.dodea.edu/pressroom/releasesDisplay.cfm?prld=20070418">www.dodea.edu/pressroom/releasesDisplay.cfm?prld=20070418</a>.

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CSC Safe Schools Newsletter Editorial Staff Sarah Markel, Brian McKeon, Bert Garcia The material herein is presented for information purposes only and does not constitute official policy of the Department of Defense (DoD), or the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), nor does it constitute endorsement by DoD or DoDEA of any non-federal entity or its programs. All comments and questions should be directed to safeschools@csc.com.

### Safe Schools Planning

### Case Study Illustrates Value of a Parent Center

On Fort Campbell, Lincoln Elementary School Principal Pansy Straub recognized a need to support parents/sponsors with additional information, and met this need with a "Parent Center." Principal Straub designated a room for the center. Helpful staff members then stocked it with learning materials and divided the room into "academic centers" with guides on specific subjects (i.e., mathematics, science, reading). The guidance counselors provided pamphlets and references on issues ranging from how to help children establish a time and place to do homework, to tips on helping children stay positive during the deployment of the military service family member.

Straub explained how the idea originated from the school "Stakeholders Committee" chaired by Eunice Sumbler, a third grade teacher who saw a community need to support parents in helping their children become successful learners. While she was supervising the arrival of children in the morning, mothers would approach her and explain that they had only been at the installation for a few weeks before their husband was deployed. Sometimes, parents needed basic information about how to access available community services, and other times they needed information on how to help their children succeed in school.



At Lincoln Elementary School, on Fort Campbell, counselor Teresa Moss (left), Principal Pansy Staub (right), and other staff members recognized a need and collaborated to establish a parent center.

Straub credits the enthusiastic support of her staff as the key to the success of the center. They contributed books and resources, and agreed to meet with parents in the center. The school benefitted from the presence of a Military Family Life Consultant (MFLC) who used the center for one-on-one meetings with parents to discuss issues of concern to them, and refer them to additional resources if needed. Parents can also arrange to take class modules on topics such as how to:

Help with homework.

academics is important to families.

- Explain deployment and tough life events.
- Listen to children and reinforce learning.
- Prepare for a parent-teacher conference.
- Contribute to the parent-teacher partnership.
- Incorporate learning into daily activities.

Establishing a parent center can be easy. A center can be as simple as a Web page or magazine rack in the media center with tips on how to enforce bed times and provide structure to help students concentrate on homework. For schools with a room and an MFLC available, a parent center can become a hub of knowledge transfer for the military family. Lincoln Elementary publishes a schedule of parent modules on the school Web site. Parents can sign up with the MFLC to learn about topics such as how to manage behavior at home, improve study skills, or practice conflict resolution. Providing a designated location where parents can find answers and assistance with

In other living situations, Straub explained, parents' questions might have been answered within a family by a grandparent. Some parents confront child rearing for the first time by themselves, while still learning their way around a new military installation. "In their home town these young parents might have relatives to ask, but here, they can find the answers about their role as a parent," observed Straub. "Gathering information in one place lightens their load." For tips on how to establish a parent center, contact <a href="mailto:safeschools@csc.com">safeschools@csc.com</a>.

### **Education Issues**



### Intervention Program Proven to Help Students Exposed to Trauma

The Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) program helps children who have experienced traumatic events by enhancing their ability to handle stress or trauma in the future. Three randomized, controlled studies published during the past decade found that the intervention reduced symptoms of trauma in students, improved their resilience, and increased peer and parent support for the affected children.

During a recent webinar conducted by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Marleen Wong, Ph.D., and Audra Langley, Ph.D., from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), provided an overview of the program. Dr. Wong explained that the program was developed to address the suffering that counselors observed in Los Angeles students exposed to traumatic events:

- Decreased ability to concentrate,
- Lower test scores,
- Signs of depression, and
- Decreased Intelligence Quotient (IQ).



Dr. Wong said that during grief counseling sessions, the counselors discovered that students exposed to trauma who were having trouble concentrating on school work, or behaving appropriately, usually reported a previous experience with violence. They surveyed the other students in the district, and based on analysis of 28,000 student responses, they found that 88 to 91 percent of their students reported exposure to violence. Of those students exposed to violence, 27 to 34 percent exhibited symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and approximately 30 percent also showed signs of depression.

Counselors in the Los Angeles Unified School District decided to work with UCLA to develop a research-based intervention program designed specifically for use in schools. What emerged was a 10-session intervention program for use in grades six through nine. The program begins with three individual sessions designed to help the students talk about their traumatic experience. "For many of our students, this is the first time they are telling their story," noted Dr. Langley. Later the students participate in group sessions to discover that they are not alone, and concentrate on building skills to help them manage their emotional responses.

Children learn several cognitive-behavioral techniques to help them manage their emotional response. They learn about the normal reactions to trauma so they understand their experience was not unusual. Students practice relaxation techniques, so they can recognize when they start becoming tense or upset and control their behavior. Participants also receive cognitive therapy to assist them in psychologically processing their traumatic experience. In addition, they practice problem-solving and communication skills. Parents participate in two sessions to learn how to support their children's improvement. Dr. Wong emphasized that for the program to work, the mental health experts presenting the program need to make the content culturally relevant and applicable to the students.

An evaluation in 2009 by the research firm RAND showed that the program worked for students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The evaluation concluded that students participating in CBITS showed decreased symptoms of PTSD and depression, improved behavior, and enhanced academic performance compared to a control group. Measurable improvement continued for three to six months from program implementation. To learn more about the program and how to obtain the facilitation materials, contact <a href="mailto:safeschools@csc.com">safeschools@csc.com</a>.



### A Web History That Lasts Forever: Sexting

Research indicates that most teens know not to send sexually explicit photos via the Internet or cell phones. Still, some 20 percent of students report that they have either sent or received such images. Many parents do not realize the importance of setting clear rules around electronic messaging. Sometimes parents simply are not aware that when they give a child a mobile phone, they are also giving them a mobile computer. A school "outside the gate" of a large U.S. military installation offers a cautionary tale of how an entire community was affected, irredeemably damaging lives in the process, when electronic flirting went too far.

In 2009, a 14 year-old girl, named Margaritte snapped a nude photo of herself in the bathroom mirror and texted it to her boyfriend, a popular eighth grade boy named Isaiah. When the couple parted ways a few days later, Isaiah forwarded the image to one of Margaritte's friends. He was not aware that Margaritte and her friend were in the throes of a "mean girl" conflict. The girl attached a nasty caption to the image of Margaritte and forwarded it to her extensive contact list. The photo quickly went "viral," spreading to middle school students throughout the district and neighboring state. To their credit, many of the students who received the image were upset by the content and reported it to parents and teachers.

The school principal reported the incident to the police who investigated and quickly realized that there were three key players, in addition to Margaritte. Because of the extensive nature of the harassment, the county prosecutor decided to charge those three students, Isaiah and two other girls, with dissemination of child pornography. He did not charge Margaritte. The students spent a night in jail. Meanwhile, Margaritte transferred to another school in the district. Students there, however, had already received the photo and shunned her.

In time, the prosecutor, who said he had only wanted to send the students a "scared straight" message, downgraded the charges from a fourth class felony to telephone harassment, a misdemeanor. The students were ordered by a judge to create educational programs designed to educate other students about the risks of "sexting." In addition, the judge required all of the parties to meet and formally apologize. That meeting was attended by teachers and parents.



One teacher described the remorse Isaiah showed when he apologized to Margaritte: "Isaiah said that he was ashamed of himself, but that most of all he was sorry he had broken Margaritte's trust." The girl who had forwarded Margaritte's photo offered only a perfunctory apology. The parents of Margaritte and Isaiah collectively acknowledged their lack of supervision. Margaritte, despite all she had been through, still struggled to clearly define appropriate online behavior. She offered the following advice to anyone considering sending explicit photos, "If they're not sure they should, then don't do it at all. I mean... It's freaking stupid."

Some students within DoDEA will already be familiar with this case. It was widely reported in the U.S. news media, though parents may be less aware. Administrators can use Parent Teacher Association meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and school newsletters to remind parents that they have the power to positively influence their children by monitoring their electronic communications. In addition, Military One Source offers an online safety program at no cost to families. To learn more, contact <a href="https://www.militaryonesource.com">www.militaryonesource.com</a>.

## **Prevention Programs**



#### Some Secrets Should Be Shared

The Office of the Secretary of Defense provides DoDEA administrators a suicide prevention program that research has shown decreases suicide attempts. The second half of the March 3, 2011 Military Pathways webinar was devoted to this Signs of Suicide© (SOS) program. The SOS program manager, social worker Diane Santoro, described the program need, goals, and implementation. Ms. Santoro explained that through this program, students learn that if a friend admits considering suicide, it is extremely important to help that individual seek assistance. Students also learn that even if a friend refuses to ask for help and demands they keep the news secret, it is okay to alert a responsible adult.

The SOS program presents information about depression and suicide to students, staff, and parents so they will know how to help a student seek help. The program is designed to accomplish three goals:

- Increase knowledge of suicide warning signs and appropriate responses.
- Increase awareness of the link between depression and suicide.
- Decrease the number of suicide attempts.

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey, a surveillance system designed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to monitor certain behaviors among students, reports that suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth. More than 25 percent of youth admit having felt so depressed for two weeks or more that they ceased some normal activity. To put this problem in perspective, Ms. Santoro invited administrators to view that percentage in terms of high school students in grades nine through 12: "That's like saying that, on any given day, all of the ninth graders could be feeling depressed."

In SOS, students learn that suicide is not a normal response to stress, but rather a preventable tragedy. "We want students to recognize the link to depression, so that when they hear about an incident on the news they do not rationalize it by saying, 'Oh, they committed suicide because they broke-up with their girlfriend,'" explained Santoro. Viewing depression as an illness that requires treatment helps decrease the stigma associated with seeking help. The suicide prevention mantra "Acknowledge, Care, Tell" reminds students to encourage a troubled friend to ask for help, reassure their friend that everyone cares about them, and tell a responsible adult if the friend refuses to seek help on their own.

The SOS program has three versions: middle school, high school, and a booster kit designed for 11th and 12th graders transitioning into college or work life. The facilitator guide increases each staff member's confidence to help them feel more comfortable presenting the program. In the booster kit, the "T" stands for "Treat" and students learn that beyond high school they need to know how to ask for help and seek treatment. A DVD intersperses real-life stories with staged vignettes that depict a typical teenage reaction, and then shows the correct way to respond to a student who reveals that they are considering suicide.



An evaluation of SOS that surveyed more than 2,100 U.S. public school students concluded that the program resulted in a "reduction in self-reported suicide attempts." Based on the results from the first year of the two-year study, the U.S. Health and Human Services Department's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) added the SOS program to SAMHSA's national registry of evidence-based programs. For additional information about the SOS program, visit <a href="https://www.mentalhealthscreening.org/programs/military/resources/past-webinars.aspx">www.mentalhealthscreening.org/programs/military/resources/past-webinars.aspx</a>.