



In Some DoDEA Schools, Recess Comes Before Lunch

Among DoDEA's many strengths are flexibility and openness to innovation, especially when new ideas can enhance student learning and behavior. Recently, Principal Lee Kirsch of Yokota West Elementary was approached by the school nurse, Lily Bagtas, with an intriguing proposal. Ms. Bagtas had found research showing that elementary school students can benefit from eating lunch after recess, rather than before. The evidence was compelling enough that Principal Kirsch decided to give it a try. "Normally you don't like to make schedule changes mid-year," noted Kirsch. "But this was such an easy fix, simply reversing lunch and recess, that we made the switch after our return from winter break."

A decade of research has shown that children are sometimes calmer at lunch if they have recess first. One study, conducted by the National Food Service Management Institute, found that student nutrition improved because the children ate more protein. Also, since students often arrived in the cafeteria thirsty, they consumed more milk, thus increasing their calcium intake. Several studies found that students behaved better in class when they had time to unwind from recess while eating. While Principal Kirsch noted that behavior had not been a problem at Yokota West, there were noticeable improvements in the noise level during lunch. "The kids have burned off that excess energy and are more focused on eating," he explained.



Principal Kirsch also noted that less food is now wasted in the cafeteria and students are using better manners. "They are not gulping down their food so that they can get out to recess and there is less food thrown away. The recess seems to work up their appetites."

Many schools across the United States are adopting recess before lunch, most notably in South Dakota, Montana, and Arizona. Principals in those states point out that the shift can require logistical changes, especially in areas with extreme weather. Recess before lunch is not the answer for all circumstances. For Principal Kirsch, it was a simple idea that worked, in part because he had the support of the DoDEA community, staff, and parents. ■

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The Antiterrorism DVD is in the Mail

DoDEA principals should soon be receiving copies of the updated DoDEA antiterrorism awareness video and curriculum guide. Students can also visit a portion of the DoDEA Web site devoted to the program. On these pages, students will find the video, downloadable checklists, and interactive games based on the information presented in the videos. By emphasizing the teaching points of the videos, the material on the Web site reinforces antiterrorism awareness throughout the year.



The updated Antiterrorism Awareness Training DVD for students contains the videos for both elementary and secondary students.

In the new videos, students meet characters who resemble themselves and their fellow students. Together the students sail through topics ranging from “stranger danger” to personal security. A separate video was prepared for high school and relatively mature middle school students. Since each DVD contains both videos, middle school educators can select which video they would like to use based on the maturity of their students.

The high school version features students hosting a “Webcast” which covers travel security, mail security, and how to survive a hostage rescue situation. Both videos illustrate what students should do during a protective action such as evacuation, lockdown, shelter-in-place, or take cover.

The video can be used to provide the antiterrorism training required by DoD Instruction 2000.16 and DoDEA Regulation 4200.1: Antiterrorism Program. The DoDEA Regulation is available at www.dodea.edu/foia/iod/pdf/4700_1.pdf. For additional information contact safeschools@csc.com. ■

Landmark Study Reveals Risk of Suicide Contagion

For decades researchers have known that people who know or care for a person who commits suicide are at risk of suicide contagion. Now, a new study conducted at Johns Hopkins Children’s Center finds that children who lose a parent to suicide are at greater risk of dying in the same fashion later in life. The study, led by Holly Wilcox, Ph.D., and published in the May 2010 issue of the *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, also found that children of people who commit suicide are at greater risk for a range of psychiatric disorders than those who lose a parent in young adulthood.

The study followed children for over thirty years, and identified windows of opportunity for intervention to support grieving children. Teaching children how to give voice to their grief is recognized as a crucial tool in building resiliency and recovery. For more information on resources to support grieving children, see the prevention programs page of this newsletter. ■

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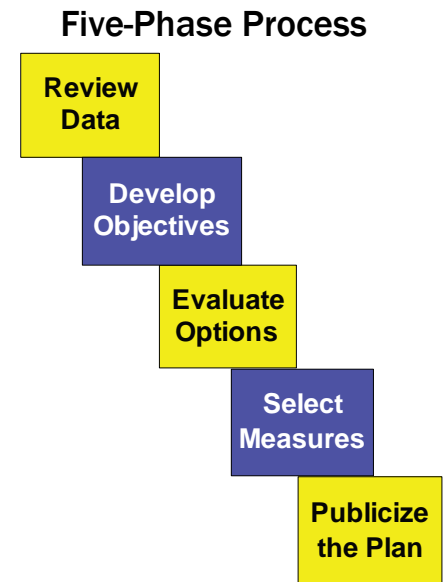
Safe School Planning Basics

Administrators who rotate to new assignments and schools this summer may find themselves assisting in updating the Safe School Plan. Clarity regarding the purpose and intended outcome of the Safe School Planning process can energize individuals assisting with this work.

Essentially, Safe School Planning is a process for reducing the school's vulnerability to hazards, and enhancing school climate, so that critical incidents are less likely to happen, or more easily managed if they do. The outcome that emerges from this process is a plan that is:

- ◆ Tailored to that particular school.
- ◆ Based on quantifiable data.
- ◆ Designed to accomplish measurable security objectives.
- ◆ Developed by individuals familiar with the school.

DoDEA has its own Five-Phase Process for determining how best to reduce risk and enhance school climate. This planning approach accomplishes the goal stated in the Community Strategic Plan for ensuring a secure learning environment for students and staff. Instructions and automated tools are available to help, but the process can be summarized in these five steps:



- 1) **Review Data:** Start by analyzing the available data using a systematic approach. Solicit input from students, staff members, parents, and law enforcement. Look at discipline referrals and incident reports and consider where and when incidents have been happening. Use Tool 1 on the Automated Tools CD-ROM to discern patterns of incidents.
- 2) **Develop Objectives:** Establish measurable, time-bound objectives that identify specific ways the school can improve security during the coming school year, for example: decreasing bullying by 30 percent or increasing parental involvement by 20 percent. Include the principal, Crisis Management Team, and other stakeholders.
- 3) **Evaluate Options:** Review policy, prevention programs, and internal security measures to help the committee determine the best steps to take.
- 4) **Select Measures:** Based on the review of existing measures, select measures to accomplish the security objectives (e.g., adopt a bullying prevention program to decrease bullying by 30 percent during the upcoming school year).
- 5) **Publicize the Plan:** Communicate the results to the school community.

This comprehensive approach to Safe School Planning not only ensures that the doors are locked and access control measures are implemented to protect students from external threats, it also leaves room to address the internal threats that distract students from learning, such as bullying or even the changes in routine caused by having parents deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan.

Safe School Planning should contribute directly to enhancing the learning environment. Since students cannot learn if they do not feel safe, the effort invested creating a secure learning environment pays tremendous dividends by strengthening the bonds of the school community and improving academic achievement. ■

Correction: The new position of SMSS was incorrectly identified in the May newsletter as Student Management Services Specialist. SMSS actually stands for Supervisory Management Services Specialist. We apologize for the error.

Decreasing Bullying Benefits School Climate

Researchers at the American Educational Research Association (AERA), a non-partisan, not-for-profit think tank, recently released a study of the relationship between academic achievement and school security. During her summation of the study, *New Strategies for Keeping Schools Safe: Evidence-based Approaches to Prevent Youth Violence*, AERA researcher Anne Gregory, Ph.D., from Rutgers University, described trends in highly publicized incidents of violence.

Dr. Gregory noted that although policy makers often become concerned about highly publicized incidents such as school shootings, these incidents are relatively rare, and students report greater preoccupation with daily incidents involving low levels of violence such as bullying and intimidation. AERA's analysis of data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) revealed that students' concern over bullying distracts them from learning far more than the threat of terrorism or armed intruders.

Dr. Gregory presented statistics to show the prevalence of bullying and the impact on school climate. She reported that in 2007, 32 percent of secondary students in U.S. public schools reported being bullied at school. She acknowledged that bullying tends to affect younger students more than older students, noting that around 42.9 percent of sixth grade students reported being bullied while only 23 percent of twelfth grade students reported similar bullying behavior. Further, she acknowledged that only a portion of that bullying consists of physical injuries from bullying in the form of bruises, cuts, or bloody noses.

Dr. Gregory argued that bullying deserves a high priority in efforts to improve school security because it affects not just the victim, the bully, and the bystander, but also damages the school climate. According to Dr. Gregory, "the perception in the school that there is bullying means it is tougher for all students to concentrate." The AERA report noted that bullying results in long term psychological effects that might prove more damaging than physical injury. Specifically, the report found that "peer conflict, peer rejection, victimization, and threats of violence produce psychosocial adjustment problems such as depression, anxiety, attention problems, and social withdrawal." The researchers concluded that these issues disrupt learning and erode students' motivation.

The remedy, according to Dr. Gregory and her colleagues from AERA, involves using evidence-based prevention programs to change the school climate so that bullying is not tolerated. The report concluded that the key to effective programs was an emphasis on changing peer norms and bystander behaviors. For additional details or the briefing materials contact safeschools@csc.com. ■

Auf Wiedersehen, Mary Patton

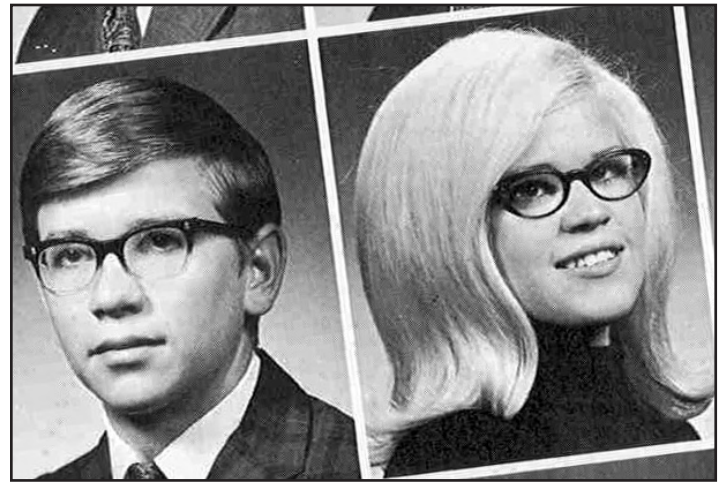
Congratulations to Mary Patton, Pupil Personnel Services Coordinator, DoDEA, who retired on April 30, 2010. Mary served in public education for 43 years, 21 of those years with DoDEA.

Countless counselors, school psychologists, and students were touched directly by Mary's passionate dedication to education. In the words of David Cantrell, Chief, Special Education and Student Services: "Mary has provided a wealth of knowledge and leadership in the area of Pupil Personnel Services and she will be greatly missed." You can see a farewell video message from Mary at www.dodea.edu/xcast/2010_MaryPatton/index.cfm. ■



Outdated Hairstyles Linger Online

There was a time when a change of schools allowed students to reinvent themselves. A shy girl could become more outgoing. A boy previously known as a troublemaker was free to become more caring and studious. Today, however, students' personalities leave an indelible mark on the Internet in the form of personal profiles on social networking sites, news articles covering school events, or comments and pictures posted by friends. There are smart ways, however, to share information online while maintaining personal privacy. Following are some tips that can help individuals of all ages protect themselves from embarrassment, harassment, or discrimination (not to mention identity theft) online.



Create an online persona – When posting on public Web sites or discussion boards, consider using a unique username (different than your e-mail address or first initial and last name). This masks your identity from anyone that may be searching for information about you online. If you no longer use a given Web forum, ask the moderator of the discussion board to remove your account entirely. As always, ensure that your public user profile does not contain any personal information you do not want online.

Dig deep – Search for your own name on line and peruse through a few pages (not just the top results) to see if any results threaten your privacy or reputation. Online personalities of people with unique names will be easier to search and clean up. Those with common first or last names may have to dig deeper – or may not find anything at all.

Check “orgs” – Visit the Web sites of organizations of which you are a member. Check to see whether the site includes a membership roster and decide whether you feel comfortable with the personal information made available, including usernames, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses.

Remove “tags” – Friends may have listed or tagged your name in an online picture album that the public can view. If an embarrassing picture exists, contact the individual who posted the picture and politely ask them to remove it from the photo album. At a minimum, request that they remove your name or any tags to your profile.

The guiding principle for protecting your online identity is to constantly monitor and control the Internet content available about yourself. Reconsider what you sign up for and what you write. Be mindful of what you, your friends, and colleagues are posting online about each other. For additional resources and tips on how to control information published about you online, contact safeschools@csc.com. ■

Students Adopting Online Aliases

Recent anecdotal reports gathered from multiple press sources indicate that some students are adopting aliases when they post news about each other online. Though adults might guess that many students do not filter their online activities, the trend among college applicants shows that high school students know that people are researching them online, and the students want to protect their virtual reputations.

Whether such behavior should be encouraged or discouraged might offer a suitable topic for character education discussions. To request a plan for a guided discussion of responsibility online contact safeschools@csc.com.

Elmo Lends a Fuzzy Shoulder to Grieving Kids

Research shows that children and adults follow similar grieving patterns. Children, however, sometimes do not receive the support they need because they have no way of articulating their experience. *When Families Grieve*, a new video produced by the Sesame Workshop in conjunction with the Department of Defense, addresses grief, healing, and recovery particularly as it applies to losing a parent. Adults learn that grief is an intense set of emotions that follows loss. When the Muppet Elmo learns about grief, children hear the message: “It is okay to be sad, angry, and upset, but it is also okay to feel happy again.” They also learn that no matter how sad they may feel now, eventually, they are going to be happy again.

At the April 13, 2010 pre-screening ceremony at the Pentagon, Deputy Secretary of Defense William Lynn praised the new video. He pointed out, “It’s important to have the tools to help the youngest members of our military families deal with these challenges.” According to Deputy Secretary Lynn, beloved characters, such as Elmo, “help us reach children in ways that they can understand. They also show adults how to reassure their children that they are safe and loved.” The key concepts of talking, listening, and connecting, form the backbone of the program.

Talk: *When Families Grieve* takes a documentary style approach to storytelling. Television anchor, Katie Couric, whose husband passed away when their children were young, talks with Elmo and friends about loss and grief. These conversations between Katie Couric and the Muppets are blended with profiles of actual families dealing with the loss of a parent.

Listen: Active listening is an important way to support someone who is grieving. It can be difficult for adults to listen to children describing painful feelings. When Ms. Couric asks Elmo to describe how he feels, she encourages him to use crayons and paper to illustrate his perspective. She demonstrates active listening by repeating Elmo’s comments to reassure him that he has been heard. The profiles of human families emphasize the importance of listening, for both adults and children. For adults, it is important to listen to children in order to support them. For children, listening to stories about the parent, reading letters they left behind, even reading letters written about them by other people, provide ways to create dialogue around the grieving process.

Connect: The most important phase of the program is devoted to connections between people. Research into depression indicates that connectedness with other humans is one of the best coping tools a person facing significant life challenges could adopt. In *When Families Grieve*, all of the featured individuals, even the Muppets, describe the positive benefits of connecting with others as a way of honoring their loved one and healing. One family, whose father passed away after returning from Iraq, spent time sailing together. Another dad of two girls, whose mother died of cancer, took his daughters for pedicures and even had his own feet pampered, much to the delight of his children. A third family created a room devoted to celebrating their dad’s military career.

When Families Grieve is the gateway to a host of grief and loss support materials now being offered by the Sesame Street production team. These materials are part of the Talk, Listen, Connect program and were created in direct response to a perceived need within the Department of Defense and with DoD funding. As Gary Knell, president of Sesame Workshop, noted during the kick-off ceremony, across the U.S., more than 12,000 military children have had to cope with the death of a parent in the past eight years. Talk, Listen, Connect is available from Military One Source at no cost. Additional program materials are available at the Sesame Street Web site www.sesamestreet.org. Viewing with children is recommended. ■

