



Practice Allows Staff to Demonstrate Grace Under Pressure

Crises rarely unfold in a predictable manner. A well-practiced plan, however, allows people to adapt to circumstances as they arise. That happened recently at Bolden Elementary and Middle School when a backhoe damaged a gas line filling the school with noxious fumes.

Staff and students responded as they had been trained. Administrators evacuated the school quietly and calmly within six minutes. “There is no question that training paid off. We covered all the procedures discussed in our monthly crisis management meetings,” noted Principal Charles “Chuck” Yahres. “But sometimes there are unique situations that require people to think outside of the box.” That is just what the teachers and staff at Bolden did as the day progressed.



The evacuation went seamlessly. A pregnant staff member was immediately assessed by Emergency Medical Technicians for possible inhalation. Mr. Yahres had no sooner accounted for all students, than he turned to find veteran teachers waiting to offer value-added suggestions. “They had their rosters and their grab and go bags ready,” he recalled. In addition, they foresaw obstacles and suggested solutions.

One teacher suggested an alternative staging area because the usual assembly point smelled strongly of gas. Meanwhile, without being asked, the cafeteria supervisor coordinated a cold lunch of yogurt and fruit for the entire student population. “Her first thought was making sure the kids didn’t go hungry,” said Mr. Yahres.

Later, at the alternative evacuation site, a neighboring elementary school, another teacher from Bolden set up a desk at the parent-child reunification station to ensure that each child was properly dismissed with the appropriate adult. Someone else thought to pair young bus riders with their elder siblings as an additional layer of insurance against student anxiety. Mr. Yahres praised his staff for their clear thinking and compassionate care for students. “The take-away message for me, from this event, was how calmly everyone performed,” he said with pride. “People made smart decisions in a pretty dramatic situation.” ■

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Deployment Stress Busters

Psychologists who have studied the emotional cycle of deployment agree that if families have problems before a deployment, those problems will usually be magnified when military personnel come home. Luckily there are numerous steps individuals can take to address these challenges.



Below is the first in a series of three “Stress Busters” articles describing ways to reduce stress during a deployment. These will be featured in the March, April, and May newsletters. The articles offer tips for families that help them reduce stress in the areas of: finances, relationships, and time management.

Convert Financial Stress into Savings

Managing money is a key source of stress for most people. Debt can pose a particular challenge. Based on the *2007 Survey of Consumer Finances* from the Federal Reserve, the average American household has between \$3,000 and \$8,000 of credit card debt. In addition, deployment inevitably brings unexpected expenses such as goodies for care packages, phone cards, and additional services needed to maintain the household. The following practical strategies have worked for others:

Develop a realistic budget. Avoid being surprised by large expenses such as car repairs by allocating a modest amount for that category each month. To

make projections realistic, take a shoebox of old receipts and sort them into categories.

Allow time. Consider using the deployment cycle to gradually implement a savings plan.

Question need. Wait 30 days before making major purchases to see if you really need an item.

Curb credit card use. Limit purchases to one card and pay the others off gradually, one at a time, starting with the card with the highest interest rate.

Successful financial planning can turn a stressful situation into a tangible “life victory.” It also leaves families with a sense of accomplishment. For more information, see the family services center on the local military installation, or visit www.militaryonesource.com. ■

Alcohol and Sexual Assault Prevention

In 2010, the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), the office responsible for all DoD sexual assault policy, encouraged installations to link their April Alcohol Awareness Month initiatives to the observance of Sexual Assault Prevention Month (SAPM). The theme of SAPM this year is “Hurts one. Affects All... Preventing sexual assault is everyone’s duty.”

According to SAPRO, sexual assault often occurs in the presence of alcohol and tends to disproportionately affect young people. Because of this link, SAPRO is encouraging their certified DoD Sexual Assault Prevention Officers to “reach out” to schools in an effort to “educate early” and “foster goodwill between the military and the surrounding civilian population.”

Administrators interested in coordinating with their installation Sexual Assault Prevention Officers can visit www.sapr.mil. For more information contact safeschools@csc.com. ■

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Deployment Mentoring Helps Students of All Ages

Understanding the deployment process can help students learn what to expect and how to ask for support if they want it. Recently, Ms. Jennifer Greubel, a school psychologist who works with students at Kubasaki High School and Lester Middle School, on Okinawa, described an innovative “mentoring” program that helps students with deployed parents understand the emotions that can accompany a parent’s deployment. High school students deepen their understanding of deployment by helping students from the local elementary school.

Ms. Greubel’s “Deployment Buddies” group currently has 15 high school students. The mission of the group is to support younger students, but it also offers opportunities for empowerment for the high school students. “Once a month during their seminar period we all walk down the hill to Zukeran Elementary to pair up with the little kids,” Greubel explained. Participants learn communication skills, how to describe emotions, and the stages of the deployment cycle. The younger students learn what to expect during deployment, and the mentors internalize the lessons they are teaching their younger counterparts.



The community pitches in as well. Volunteers from Families Overcoming Under Stress (FOCUS) assist by working with the elementary school students and coordinating the group activities. “FOCUS helps families understand deployment and learn how to cope with deployment,” explained Ms. Greubel. FOCUS works with families to strengthen their skills in meeting many of the challenges commonly experienced by military families during wartime.

Greubel noted that the program also benefits from the support of caring teachers. Sometimes teachers or school administrators will learn from parents about an upcoming deployment and let Greubel know so she can “check in” with the student. Other times teachers notice that a student seems tired in class or starts turning in work late, and they suggest to Greubel that she talk with that student to see how they are doing.



Prior to the Deployment Buddies sessions, each group meets separately. The high school students meet for about ten minutes to discuss the concepts they will be teaching the younger students. Meanwhile, FOCUS volunteers help the elementary school students think about questions to ask their mentors. “Then we mush the two groups together,” chuckled Greubel. Everyone benefits. The younger students learn from their mentors how to describe their feelings. They also learn that the emotions they may experience, such as fear, sadness, and resentment are normal. “At least they can put a name on feelings and connect it to what they learned in group,” said Greubel.

Following the group activities, students take part in a debriefing to share insights with one another. For additional information on how to support families experiencing deployment visit www.focusproject.org. To learn more about Deployment Buddies, contact safeschools@csc.com. ■

ADHD Research Yields New Findings

A flurry of recent studies into the nature and prevalence of childhood Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) across various medical sub-specialties is changing how educators and medical practitioners address this learning difficulty. Being aware of the growing body of knowledge related to ADHD can help educators respond effectively to students with this complex disorder. ADHD is one of the most common childhood disorders and can continue through adolescence and adulthood. It can also affect student behavior and achievement at school. Students with this disorder sometimes exhibit hyperactivity, impulsive behavior, and/or difficulty staying focused on tasks.



A recent study has found the first biological evidence of how ADHD affects the brain. Previously, ADHD was only assessed behaviorally. Diagnoses are made based on observations and questionnaires. Researchers at the University of California-Davis Center for Mind and Brain analyzed brain activity and found an electrical disconnect between the center of the brain that allocates attention and the visual processing regions. Researchers hope that one day imaging technology can assist in the diagnosis of ADHD so that children can begin receiving the appropriate support at an earlier age.

Additional research found that ADHD manifests differently in girls and boys. According to a study published in the November 2008 issue of *Neurology*, boys with ADHD were more likely to “fidget” than girls. The study also showed that ADHD affected movement control. Students with ADHD had slower reaction times and poorer coordination. The study found that girls with ADHD were twice as likely to be able to control their movements compared to boys their age. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine hypothesize that this is because girls’ brains mature earlier than boys’ brains. Girls with ADHD are far more likely to “fly under the radar,” or go undiagnosed, because they appear more coordinated and they tend not to present behavioral indicators.

Demographics are also a factor in the identification of children with ADHD. According to a 2007 study by the Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, nearly 10 percent of American children meet the criteria for ADHD. Among those, fewer than half receive treatment. In addition, the prevalence of ADHD among students of modest means was much higher than among their more affluent counterparts. Despite this, poorer students were the least likely to consistently receive interventions.



Awareness is crucial to supporting students, families, and teachers as they work collectively to ensure the academic success of children with this disorder. Numerous resources exist for supporting students with ADHD and their families. Identifying affected children and enrolling them in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) ensures that they receive the appropriate academic and medical support. Additional information about EFMP and overseas screening can be found at www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil (search for “EFMP”). For more information about DoDEA and special education services see www.dodea.edu/curriculum/specialEduc.cfm. ■

Put Spam Back in the Can

The December 2009 Safe Schools Newsletter warned readers against corrupt e-mail “phishing” schemes. In many of these fraudulent acts, online scammers randomly bombard multiple recipients with corrupt e-mail messages.

Whether corrupt or commercial, unsolicited e-mail messages (commonly referred to as “spam”) arrive in abundance. Nearly 210 billion spam messages were sent daily in 2008, according to the Radicati Group, an Internet research firm. This large quantity of useless information traveling through a system will inevitably do two things: hinder a network’s performance and create security vulnerabilities. Spam consumes data communication resources and introduces spyware (e.g., “Trojan horses” or “worms”) to individual computers.

Currently, the DoDEA worldwide e-mail filtering systems block more than 250,000 spam e-mail messages per day. According to DoDEA Chief Information Officer Jeffrey Friedler, this equates to nearly 90 percent of all e-mail traffic received by the system. In a November 2009 memo, Mr. Friedler requested that users “do not use your DoDEA e-mail address to sign up for anything not directly related to official business” to minimize the amount of spam infiltrating the DoDEA network.

In addition to the technical protection provided by DoDEA, individuals can reduce the spread of unsolicited e-mail. Spam that is not “caught” by network filters may contain corrupt information, or malware. Limiting the distribution of e-mail addresses prevents such threats. The following six tips from the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) can help keep spam out of the inbox:

- ✓ Use an e-mail filter. Most e-mail providers should have this service, ensure that spam filters are enabled. Many e-mail providers filter spam into a “bulk” e-mail folder and delete old messages automatically.
- ✓ Avoid posting professional or personal e-mail addresses in “public.” This includes chat rooms, Web sites, or any online Web directory.
- ✓ Read the “privacy policy” or “user agreement” when submitting an e-mail address to a Web site. If the agreement allows the company to sell personal information to other entities, consider opting out.
- ✓ Read forms before submitting information online. Some sites have options allowing users to “opt out” of receiving additional e-mails, but you may have to un-check a preselected box.
- ✓ In addition to your DoDEA account, use two personal e-mail addresses. Use a “dummy e-mail” address as a “front” to automatically forward messages to your personal account. Though both accounts should provide spam-filtering software, only provide the dummy address to unreliable sources such as forums, publications, coupon offers, or other mass e-mails.
- ✓ Use a unique e-mail address. Spammers use computer programs to distribute messages. Often, they randomly combine common names or simple usernames with addresses of different e-mail providers to find a valid e-mail address.



Any unwanted, unsolicited, or deceptive e-mails can be forwarded to the FTC at spam@uce.gov. An FTC Facts for Consumers information packet on “How to ‘Can’ Unwanted E-mail” is available online at www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/tech/tec02.pdf. ■

Bullying Research: Parallels Between Home and School

A new study, published in the *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, finds a correlation between patterns of bullying that take place in the home and those that occur at school. Children in the study, who were bullied at home by their siblings, were more likely to be victimized by their peers at school. The inverse was true, as well. Researchers found that children who bullied their younger siblings were also more likely to intimidate their peers within the school setting. (Note: Only occasionally in the study did a younger child bully an elder sibling and those cases tended to be among girls.)

Researchers in Italy conducted the study using questionnaires given to 195 children aged 10 to 12 years of age. All of the children had a sibling no more than four years older or younger than them. Within the study group, the children who had an older brother were by far the most likely to be bullied at home and at school. Researchers suggest this finding indicates bullying within families is about maintaining dominance, particularly for boys.



The girls who bullied, or were bullied, revealed a slightly different story. In those cases, “bullying was related to a poor quality of sibling relationship and not to birth order.” High levels of conflict and low levels of empathy were a factor in every sibling bullying case examined in this study. This underscores the importance of teaching empathy and using character education as a means of reducing social aggression among children.

This particular study did not examine parental bullying although significant evidence also suggests that children who are victimized by adults at home take those behaviors into the school either as bullies or as victims of social aggression. For more information about the sibling bullying study mentioned above, visit www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_92608.html. For information about bullying awareness, prevention programs, and/or character education emphasizing empathy and tolerance, contact the DoDEA Safe Schools Program at safeschools@csc.com. ■

Define Bullying First

Ensuring that all stakeholders agree on the definition of bullying helps reduce this behavior. Some schools involve teachers, parents, and students in the process of formulating a definition of bullying and then publish this definition in the student handbook. In the guide, *Preventing Bullying: A Manual for Schools and Communities*, the U.S. Department of Education defines bullying as “intentional, repeated, hurtful acts, words, or other behavior such as name-calling, threatening, and/or shunning committed by one or more children against another.” The guide notes that bullying may be physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual in nature. For example:

Physical – Punching, poking, strangling, hair pulling, beating, biting, and excessive tickling.

Verbal – Hurtful name calling, teasing, and gossip.

Emotional – Rejecting, terrorizing, extorting, defaming, or humiliating.

Sexual – Voyeurism, exhibitionism, propositioning, harassment, and abuse.

For such acts to be defined as bullying, they should not be provoked by the victim and there should be a real or perceived imbalance of power. For a copy of the U.S. Department of Education guide on bullying visit www.edpubs.gov. ■