



When Mascots Deploy, Kids Rest Easy

Helping students stay connected to deployed parents is a key goal of DoDEA counselors. At Schweinfurt Elementary School, counselors Nancy Eisaman and Dan Riley have adapted the “Flat Stanley” concept to the school’s porcine mascots, calling them “Wilbur” and “Schweinella.” They then sent them downrange with deploying parents.

The mascots help relieve the feelings of anxiety and loneliness students may have about a deployed parent. “Seeing pictures of Schweinella and Wilbur helps students relate to the tasks their parents are doing to help people,” said Ms. Eisaman. “It gives them a mental picture of this foreign country and reassures them that their parents are okay.”

When one local unit deployed to Iraq last year, Wilbur went with them just as his spouse Schweinella was rotating home with her unit. The soldier-parents send home pictures of Wilbur and Schweinella in the mess hall, on patrol, and engaging in the duties of a deployed soldier. Soldiers from the support battalions visit the school and give PowerPoint presentations describing Wilbur and Schweinella’s adventures which the children and the adults enjoy. “It’s a fun way to remind them that we are all in this together, that a lot of adults are here to support them,” points out Ms. Eisaman.



Wilbur rides with a soldier in a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle.

“The mascots give students a way to feel like they are still connected with their parents while they’re down range,” explains Principal Wilma Holt. “Of course, Schweinella doesn’t get to see much of her husband, because just as he comes home, she deploys,” she half-joked. Eisaman noted that this project is part of a larger overall effort to support children of deployed troops. During the past few years the community has received additional mental health resources from both DoDEA and the Army to help address students’ emotional and mental health needs. “Wilbur and Schweinella are just one of the many ways we are all pulling together to support our students.” ■

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Making Connections to Improve Security for Students

The world-wide tour of the “Making Connections” conference for DoDEA principals and counselors came to Peachtree City on October 7-9, 2009. Elementary school administrators gathered from around DDESS to discuss strategies for improving student achievement. A similar format was offered earlier in the school year for administrators in Europe and the Pacific.



Conference participants focused on enhancing administrator skills in a number of key areas. Counselors learned how to tailor the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) model for service delivery to their schools. Pat Nailor, Ed.D., president of ASCA, led this Competency Based Counselor Training which showed counselors how to quantify and measure the results of their contributions to the school community. School principals addressed issues of process improvement in seminars led by Dr. Shirley Miles, DoDEA Director, and Linda Curtis, DDESS Area Superintendent.

Counselors and principals then convened for two highly motivational presentations, one by Marlene Wong, Ph.D., and the other by Trevor Romain. Dr. Wong discussed how to tailor crisis recovery to the elementary grades. Group exercises showed participants how to help younger students communicate their feelings and recuperate quickly from trauma. Trevor Romain presented a new curriculum designed to help students

cope with the unique stresses associated with military transitions and parental deployments.

The value of this type of conference, many participants reported, was the opportunity to meet with one another in person to share their experiences with fellow administrators. “This is fabulous,” said counselor Hesta Roach of Johnson Primary School, Camp Lejeune. “We are all working together toward common objectives, but we do not always have an opportunity to coordinate our efforts the way we have today. This conference ensures we are all on the same page.” ■

Study Reviews Psychological Impact of Mass Shootings

A new study confirms what school counselors and security experts have long believed: psychological interventions after a mass crisis are both necessary and, in the past, have not been effective enough in identifying individuals at risk for post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). At the June 2009 International Congress on Law and Mental Health, researchers from McGill University presented the findings of the first study to empirically assess the psychological impact of a mass shooting on a community. The study looked at the aftermath of the shooting at Dawson College in Montreal, Canada on September 13, 2006. Researchers measured how well recovery services were delivered.

The findings are of interest because they confirm conventional wisdom. Men are more reluctant to ask for help than women. Also, certain groups, such as cafeteria staff who had witnessed the shooting, or people who were hospitalized, were overlooked when it came to providing psychological support. Finally, a significant number of people from the community, especially professors, feared the stigma associated with PTSD. The researchers who took part in the study noted that this data will help counselors develop interventions that reach more people affected by tragedy. ■

DoDEA Headquarters Personnel

Rose Chunik, Chief, Office of Safety and Security
 Ronnie Martin, Program Manager, Physical Security
 Adam Bergstrom, Program Manager, Antiterrorism

CSC Safe Schools Newsletter Editorial Staff

Bob Michela, Sarah Markel, Brian McKeon, Bert Garcia

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Learn the Warning Signs of Terrorism

Every individual has the power to interrupt terrorist activity by reporting actions that seem out of the ordinary. Knowing what to report is important, however. Here are a few warning signs to illustrate the types of activity that generally precede a terrorist attack and therefore merit reporting:

Surveillance – Terrorists “do their homework” before an attack. Typically they observe from a location where they can watch people arrive and depart a facility. They also note patterns in activity. Techniques include:

- ▶ Static surveillance – Individuals sitting at a bus stop who do not board a bus.
- ▶ Foot surveillance – Children lingering in the area who do not appear to be playing, or adults who take turns walking past a facility.
- ▶ Mobile surveillance – Vehicles appearing repeatedly without an obvious purpose (i.e., repair vans that do not repair anything). Vehicles can include bicycles, scooters, motorcycles, cars, trucks, or utility vehicles.

Asking suspicious questions (Elicitation) – Terrorists gather information by requesting information about security plans, procedures, and events. They might submit questions in person, via e-mail, or in online chat rooms.

Tests of Security – Terrorists sometimes drive into prohibited zones or attempt to enter doors that should be secured, just to see how well security procedures are enforced or to gauge response time. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) suggest that school officials remain alert for these types of tests of security:

- ▶ Increase in telephone or e-mail threats to facilities.
- ▶ Observation of protective action drills.
- ▶ Attempts to enter secure doors or restricted areas.

Acquiring Supplies – Terrorists sometimes steal identification badges, vests, or uniforms to gain admission to restricted areas. Encourage staff and students to report theft of IDs immediately and publicize the reporting procedure so everyone knows where to go and whom to tell. It is important to report losses promptly because the theft of a badge puts others at risk.



Dry Runs – Terrorists usually practice their attacks in advance. Observable activity includes mapping out routes; timing traffic lights; or driving up to an entrance, hopping out of a vehicle, and moving into position.

Deploying Assets – Immediately before an attack, terrorists will place individuals, equipment, and supplies into position for an attack. This is often the final indicator. Reporting the following types of activity could thwart a terrorist incident, so immediately alert authorities if someone is observed:

- ▶ Leaving a suit case, purse, or bag in a public building and rapidly exiting the area.
- ▶ Parking in a restricted zone and exiting the area on foot.
- ▶ Unloading boxes from a van and leaving them.

Whether at school, in the community, or while travelling, erring on the side of “over-reporting” is better, especially if the Force Protection Condition (FPCON) has recently been raised. For additional information, consult the District or Area Safety and Security Officer or contact safeschools@csc.com. ■

Sexual Harassment Awareness Prevents Long-Term Harm

Sexual harassment awareness efforts benefit students by teaching them how to recognize and avoid the behavior. Part of maintaining a “safe and secure learning environment” includes ensuring that students and staff can function free from the distraction of sexual harassment. As adolescents explore relationships and boundaries, it is important to help them learn positive ways of communicating that avoid making others feel uncomfortable.

Definition. Most definitions of sexual harassment parallel that of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which defines sexual harassment as “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.” Students might not realize that sexual harassment can take many forms. These include annoying jokes, physical touching, visual depictions, or psychological aspects (i.e., circulating rumors about a student’s sexual behavior, either in person or on the Internet).

Harm. Sexual harassment can cause long-term psychological harm. A study in the September 2009 issue of the *Journal of Adolescent Medicine* stated that sexual harassment can lead to “elevated risk of self-harm, suicidal thoughts, substance abuse, and feeling unsafe at school.” In the study, entitled *Impact of Sexual Harassment Victimization by Peers on Subsequent Adolescent Victimization and Adjustment*, researchers at the University of Western Ontario surveyed over 1,700 students at the start of 9th grade and again at the end of 11th grade.

Helping Students Distinguish Flirting from Hurting	
<u>Sexual Harassment</u>	<u>Flirting</u>
◆ Feels Bad	◆ Feels Good
◆ One sided	◆ Reciprocal
◆ Degrading	◆ Compliment
◆ Demeaning	◆ Building self-esteem
Source: Iowa Department of Education Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Manual	

The researchers found that over 40 percent of both boys and girls entering high school reported experiencing sexual harassment. Two years later, students who had initially reported being sexually harassed were significantly more likely than non-harassed peers to report experiencing dating violence, physical violence from peers, and substance abuse.

Solution. Greater understanding of the behavior enables victims and bystanders to appropriately name these unacceptable behaviors. That allows perpetrators to correct their behavior immediately, rather than triggering formal reporting, investigation, and disciplinary action.

Effective awareness programs also emphasize that the victim determines whether a certain behavior constitutes sexual harassment. In other words, sexual harassment is subjective. If a behavior persistently makes the victim uncomfortable, then it should cease.

The Iowa Department of Education suggests that the best prevention of sexual harassment is insisting upon “good manners.” In addition, students could ask themselves the following questions to decide whether their behavior is acceptable:

- ◆ Would I behave this way in front of my parents, teachers, or siblings?
- ◆ Would I like it if someone behaved this way toward a family member?

Helping students understand the difference between flirting and sexual harassment can minimize disruptions to the learning environment. For additional information, including a sample lesson plan, contact safeschools@csc.com or visit the DoDEA Office of Safety and Security Web site at www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/safeSchools.cfm. ■

Don't Get Hooked by "Phishing" Scams

Most people have online accounts with various Web sites, and this makes them vulnerable to a variety of cybersecurity threats. Students and teachers alike are vulnerable because identity thieves use deceptive tactics to solicit personal information from anyone with an e-mail account. Becoming familiar with the ways that criminals try to solicit personal information through online social engineering can help deter identity theft or protect electronic privacy.

Often, online scammers or identity thieves will distribute e-mails hoping that a vulnerable or dismissive recipient will provide them with personal information. This criminal activity is called "phishing."

The most common forms of phishing schemes are fraudulent e-mails that imitate trustworthy Web sites – banks, payment sites, companies, employers, or even an employer's Information Technology (IT) department. Commonly, an e-mail will claim that the entity needs to verify account information.

Be wary of e-mails which include a request for "log-in" information for various Web sites. Recipients of phishing e-mails are usually directed to a different Web site via a hyperlink (although sometimes they are asked to call a phone number). Recipients are then asked to enter information such as user names, passwords, identification numbers, or credit card numbers. Finally, recognize that phishing scams often claim an artificial sense of urgency (i.e., "Log in within two days or your account will expire").

Sometimes a rogue Web site will visually imitate another entity's log-on site. By "logging in" with a user name and password, an unknowing victim has already provided his or her personal information to the scammer. Once a scammer knows the victim's information, they can access the Web site. An immediate remedy available to all users who suspect their password has been compromised is to sign on and change it.

Clicking on a suspicious hyperlink is deceptive. Phishing e-mails may include Web site addresses that seem authentic, yet relay users to a different site. Whenever a new Web page is visited, it is a good idea to check that the Web site address (URL) did not change.

One way to avoid phishing scams is to type any URL into a new Internet browser instead of clicking a hyperlink or copying the URL provided in a suspicious e-mail. Because phishers can make links appear as if they go to one site while directing users to another, this can help ensure that the Web site is authentic and not an imitation of another site.

In addition, when logging into a personal account on any Web site, ensure that the URL starts with "https" instead of "http." The extra "s" ensures that the Web site enables "secure" transmission of data with a computer's Internet browser.

The Federal Trade Commission maintains OnGuardOnline, a Web site that provides practical tips to protect personal information, secure computers, and guard against Internet fraud. For tips on how to avoid phishing scams, visit www.onguardonline.gov/topics/phishing.aspx. ■



Plan Now for National Alcohol Screening Day

The Force Health Protection and Readiness Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs has fully funded an alcohol awareness and prevention program as part of the Mental Health Self-Assessment Program. The products and services associated with National Alcohol Screening Day (NASD) on April 4, 2010 are available at no cost to DoD or Veterans Administration (VA) affiliated programs. While NASD is still several months away, planning ahead allows time to recruit volunteers and order materials in time for them to arrive overseas.



Feeling Disconnected?
Sad? Stressed? Angry?
Drinking too Much?
 Put the pieces together with an anonymous self-assessment.
www.MilitaryMentalHealth.org
 Online. 24/7.

The kits are designed to enable presenters to conduct an alcohol education and screening event. The goals of the program include raising awareness of how alcohol affects one's health; screening for at-risk behaviors; and promoting healthy attitudes toward alcohol use. Included are a planning guide, promotional posters, education materials, and screening forms for up to 500 participants. In addition, a Spanish language kit and a customized anonymous online screening tool are available. While these programs were specifically designed for soldiers, some of the materials are adaptable for older teens as part of other school-related alcohol awareness events.

To order NASD materials, contact military@MentalHealthScreening.org. In addition, Time to Talk.org offers materials designed to help military parents talk to "tween-age" children about substance abuse and other issues affecting youth. Information on the Time to Talk materials is available at www.timetotalk.org/military/. ■

Alcohol Abuse: Worldwide Health Issue

Despite numerous public health initiatives, alcohol abuse continues to increase around the world. The medical journal *Lancet*, published by the Center for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), recently reported on a study that found that one in 25 deaths is directly attributable to alcohol consumption. Moreover, this number has risen since the year 2000 and researchers attribute the rising numbers to increases in women drinking. Europe in particular, where the average consumption rate was found to be 13 standard drinks per week per person (as compared to 11 standard drinks in North America), has seen the numbers of alcohol-related disease and death rise in recent years.

CAMH researchers estimate that the global effect of alcohol consumption now equals that of smoking in 2000. Researchers expressed concern that while rates of smoking have declined, alcohol consumption continues to rise. ■

Tool Helps Parents Learn More About Teen Alcohol Use

In a medical study of 11,426 American teens, almost 18 percent indicated they drank alcohol at least once per month. About ten percent said they drank alcohol at least once per week.

Some parents find these statistics hard to believe. The University of Maryland Medical Center offers a "Teen Alcohol Use Calculator" designed to help adults assess a teen's likelihood of early alcohol use. The answers can help parents educate teens about the consequences of early alcohol use.

This test should be used only as a guideline. It is based on information found in the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health and is for informational purposes only. To access the calculator visit www.healthcalculators.org/calculators/teen_alcohol.asp.