



Simple Solutions Contribute to School Security

School security innovations include more than just technological solutions such as video surveillance systems, electronic keypads, or locking gates. Below, administrators throughout DoDEA share some creative “low tech” answers to their security challenges.

At Ashhurst Elementary School at Quantico, Principal Jan Weiss and her Crisis Management Team found a simple way to help move students with physical disabilities to the evacuation site during evacuations. Weiss placed a handful of red wagons around the school to transport students in case of emergency or during an exercise. This solution works best for schools where each floor exits to the outside, but it is an excellent example of crisis team members using critical thinking to produce an individualized solution.

Other schools across DoDEA have been similarly innovative when it comes to security challenges. At two schools in South Carolina, even the youngest of DDESS students were able to maintain a neat and orderly evacuation by following teachers’ instructions to walk beneath the row of lights down the center of the hallway. This simple guideline gives teachers and administrators a clear line of sight down the sides of the halls as students exit the building. It also encourages students to treat evacuations seriously which further enhances school security.

At West Point Middle School, Principal David Rudy recently demonstrated how teachers had made window coverings out of paper for use during lockdowns. A rolled up sheet of mural paper or folded construction paper is taped above each door window and held in place with a clothes pin. By removing the clothes pin, teachers can cover the windows quickly after locking their doors.

These solutions will not work for every situation. Sometimes, however, brainstorming ideas during a crisis management committee meeting can yield valuable results. If you have an idea that you would like to share with other administrators in DoDEA, please send an e-mail to safeschools@csc.com. ■



Teacher uses wagon to transport student with limited mobility during evacuation drill at Quantico.

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Elementary Counselors Hone Strategy

Elementary School principals and counselors in the Pacific and European areas recently participated in a series of trainings devoted to continuous improvement of student support. Elementary administrators in the Pacific Area met September 16-18 in Tokyo, Japan. In Europe, the conference was held September 21-23 in Wiesbaden, Germany.

Participants reviewed the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) model for effective counseling. Participants also received training on anti-bullying strategies from frequent DoDEA speaker and author Trevor Romain. The series continues with updated training for DDESS area administrators in Peachtree City, Georgia on October 7-9, 2009. Counselors and administrators attending the conferences say the training provides new strategies to help them support students in mastering life's challenges so that students can continue to excel in academics. ■

Build Character and Live Drug-Free

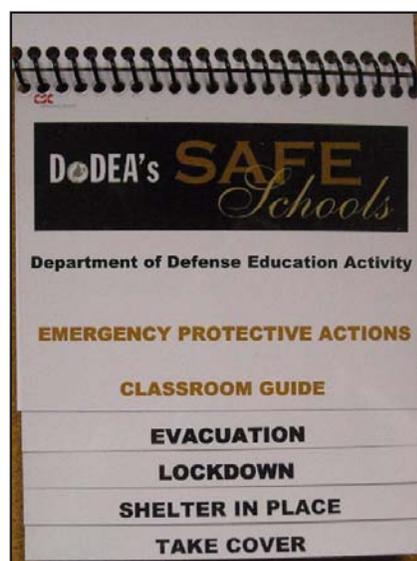
In a busy month full of back-to-school security drills, spirit events, not to mention the distraction of a sugary holiday, there are also several important observances held in October. What is a busy administrator to do?

Some administrators in U.S. public schools are taking advantage of the new "tie-in" materials created by Character Counts to link Character Counts Week to Red Ribbon Week. Many schools within DoDEA observe both events, but planning for the two observances can create logistical challenges, not to mention the clutter of additional signs and posters in the hallways and cafeteria. Some principals find themselves choosing between holding events devoted to building positive character and other events that emphasize the importance of living drug-free. However, these goals are not mutually exclusive.

With the new tie-in materials provided by Character Counts, it is now possible for students to sign drug-free pledges and engage in other healthy lifestyle promotions while also taking part in a character-building assembly. To order Character Counts materials, many of which are still free of cost, register at the Web site, www.charactercounts.org. ■

Protective Action Flip Charts Available

More than 1,500 Protective Action Flip Charts have been sent to DoDEA schools in response to requests from principals. The flip charts list specific, yet simple procedures used to implement each protective action. Substitute teachers and other educators can refer to the charts for the actions required of a classroom during Lockdown, Evacuation, Shelter-in-Place or Take Cover.



Most administrators choose to request one copy for each classroom plus a few for the school office area. The flip charts are still available at no cost to school principals. To request copies, please send an e-mail to safeschools@csc.com. Please include the administrator's name, school, district, and mailing address, and number of copies needed. ■

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An Easy Way to Remember Shelter-in-Place

Here is an easy way to tell the difference between Lockdown and Shelter-in-Place: determine the threat! Lockdown is designed to respond to the threat of a human perpetrator, Shelter-in-Place responds to the threat of an airborne cloud of toxic agent.

Protective Actions are implemented as a response to an imminent hazard to protect students, staff, and all other personnel in and around the school, from the potential consequences of the pending threat. The fundamental principles to consider in deciding on the proper response are:

- ▶ Avoid moving students toward the threat.
- ▶ Take appropriate action to keep the threat from getting to the students.

The two summaries below provide overviews of both procedures. Crisis Management Teams can use these summaries to familiarize themselves with the purpose and procedures for each of these protective actions. For additional information, contact safeschools@csc.com or visit the DoDEA Office of Safety and Security Web site at www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/index.cfm. ■

Lockdown

Lockdown is appropriate for threats posed from outside or inside the building. These threats could include a violent person attempting to enter the school, a perpetrator already inside, or nearby criminal or terrorist activity.

Lockdown Procedures:

- ✓ Direct students to a position out of the line-of-sight of doors and windows.
- ✓ Check outside of the classroom/office door (i.e., hallways) for nearby students, and move them into classrooms.
- ✓ Close and lock all doors and windows.
- ✓ Cover door window and close window blinds.
- ✓ Turn off room/office lights and remain quiet.
- ✓ Students outside of the school should move away from the school to the designated evacuation site or another appropriate, safe location.
- ✓ Take attendance and report it to the principal/designee (include missing or additional students).

Note: Students left in common areas should proceed immediately to the nearest classroom or a “safe haven” such as the nurse’s office, or other pre-designated room.

Shelter-in-Place

Shelter-in-place is appropriate for threats posed by atmospheric contamination. These threats could include accidents or attacks involving chemical, biological or radiological hazards.

Shelter-in-Place Procedures:

- ✓ Close and lock all exterior windows and doors to prevent inadvertent opening.
- ✓ Move all personnel to designated interior rooms for shelter-in-place.
- ✓ Designated staff should bring updated attendance reports, grab-and-go bag, Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs), and other equipment to the shelter-in-place locations.
- ✓ Turn off all heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.
- ✓ Take attendance and report it to the principal/designee.

Note: Determine interior shelter-in-place rooms/space in coordination with local emergency response officials. Select areas with the least potential exposure to outside air.

If the building(s) is not equipped with a central air handling shut-off, consider turning off all electrical power in the building(s).

Hot Wheels; Cold Facts

New drivers sometimes view risky driving as an outlet to test reflexes and explore limits. Many adults might have grown up at a time when “doing donuts” in the parking lot or “joy riding” at night was a rite-of-passage. However, today’s congested traffic and additional distractions, such as texting and cell phones, increase the probability that risky driving could harm student drivers, their passengers, or others on the road. Educators can help students develop a personal commitment to safe driving by reviewing the consequences, the risk factors, and defensive driving strategies.

Teens can decrease their personal risk of vehicle accidents by adopting the following guidelines developed based on research from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Rutgers University:

- ◆ **Buy time.** Limiting driving during the first two years of licensure gives drivers time to gain experience recognizing and responding to hazardous situations. In the United States, drivers 18 to 19 years old have half as many accidents as 16 year-old drivers.
- ◆ **Drive solo or with adults.** Students who avoided giving rides to other teens were far safer than students with multiple teen passengers. For those who did give friends rides, the fewer teen passengers, the less the risk of accidents due to distractions or peer pressure.
- ◆ **Wear seat belts.** Buckling up can decrease accident fatalities by 75 percent (and it’s the law!).
- ◆ **Have a “refusal sentence” ready.** Avoid getting in the car with drivers who have been drinking. For example, a teen could say, “Go ahead, I have a ride.” Then “phone home” or call a taxicab.



Put it into practice. Finally, a new study published in the American Journal of Public Health identifies the toughest part of the solution: putting healthy attitudes into practice. The George Institute for International Health in Australia surveyed more than 20,000 student drivers and studied not only how they responded to the survey, but also their driving records. The study found that teens who admitted to risky driving, knew what to do: fasten seat belts, avoid distractions such as texting and multiple passengers, keep speed within reason, and avoid riding with drivers who were drinking. But they did it anyway – and 50 percent of them crashed! The researchers concluded that whether students were injured due to unsafe driving depended less on students’ attitudes toward risky driving, than on how they actually behaved behind the wheel.

Emphasizing the consequences of risky driving can help students choose to implement safe practices and strive for precision rather than power. For additional information on safe driving practices visit the CDC Web site at www.cdc.gov/MotorVehicleSafety/Teen_Drivers/youngdrivers.html. ■

Consequences of Risky Driving

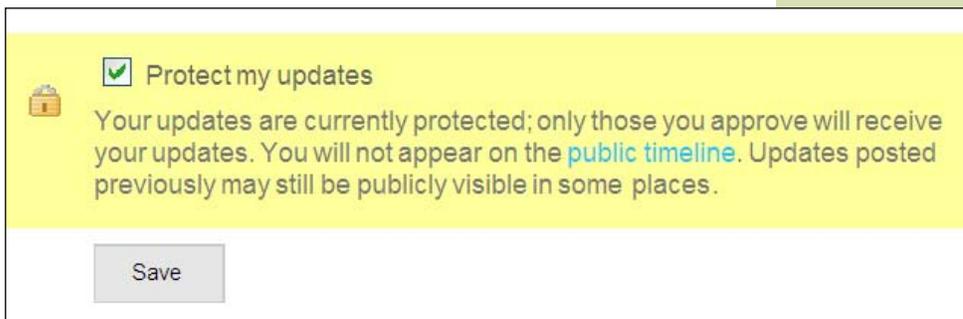
The following facts from the CDC depict the consequences of risky driving in the United States.

- ▶ Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens.
- ▶ More than a third of the deaths of youth ages 16-19 (4,500 per year) are the result of vehicle crashes.
- ▶ Driving at night, driving with a passenger, driving on the weekend, and drinking while driving all increased the risk of crashes.
- ▶ Young people (ages 15-24) constitute only 14 percent of the population, but a quarter of the injuries sustained in automobile accidents.

“Tweeting:” No Longer Just for the Birds

DoDEA computer networks prohibit access to the social networking Web site Twitter. However, DoDEA students and staff can still access Twitter on personal cell phones (or other mobile devices) and from home. For good or ill, millions of people have signed on to Twitter because they consider it an effective communication platform. For example, during post-election protests in Iran, the U.S. Department of State requested that Twitter postpone site maintenance to keep the social network running. Because the information officially available to journalists in Iran was limited, keeping Twitter online allowed the State Department to monitor critical events through the “tweets” of Iranian citizens.

The ease with which Twitter allows information to be shared is its chief asset. For individual users, however, this could also become the principal threat. Because Twitter is designed to help users broadcast their daily activities and thoughts, students may disregard their personal security and privacy by posting too much information online. With some understanding, however, it is easy to help students protect themselves from sexual predators, cyber-bullies, and identity thieves.



The primary vulnerability from Twitter concerns personal privacy. The default privacy settings on Twitter are inherently weak: any user can choose to follow another user’s tweets without their consent. Therefore, it is up to users to manage their own privacy settings. One setting requires that users approve their “followers.” Another allows for users to “block” unwelcome followers.

Twitter’s Privacy Policy states that Twitter “collects personally identifiable information about its users and shares it with third parties.” This means that Twitter can sell any information that a user provides, such as names, e-mail addresses, phone numbers, and any other related information. The privacy policy also states “the site is not directed to persons under 13.” Parents/sponsors who find a young student is using the service without their approval can contact Twitter by e-mailing privacy@twitter.com to have any personal information deleted. More information on Twitter’s Privacy Policy is available online at <http://twitter.com/privacy/>.

While it can be difficult to adjust to new technological applications, there are benefits for informed users. Administrators with questions are encouraged to contact the Safe Schools Program at safeschools@csc.com for assistance. ■

How Twitter Works

Twitter allows users to post “tweets,” or short messages of 140 characters, to their personal page on the site. Users can then “follow” tweets to stay updated on the activities of friends. A “follower” will receive a message on their own account when another user posts a tweet.

Users can update their account from a computer, or, more conveniently, from a cell phone or other mobile device. Simply sending a text message to Twitter will update a user’s account. Users can also choose to receive updates from other users either online or to their phones (via text message) when their friends post tweets.

Twitter can be imbedded in other social networking services. For example, users can directly link their Facebook “status” to their tweets, further publicizing their whereabouts and thoughts. Many bloggers also add twitter applications to their blogs to provide readers with more timely – and sometimes informal or personal – updates.

Using Virtual Reality to Teach Empathy

A generation ago, many considered bullying a normal part of playground behavior; victims were told to “tough it out.” It was believed this built character. Today, educators know that teaching empathy is crucial to preventing bullying. In *Kids are Worth It: Giving your Child the Gift of Inner Discipline*, Barbara Coloroso, frequent DoDEA speaker and author, advises parents and educators to “teach elements of empathy, and particularly perspective taking.” Challenging a child to walk in another’s shoes, notes Coloroso, enables them to reflect on the other child’s pain.

In the United Kingdom, a group of researchers from a consortium of universities are now finding ways to teach empathy using video games. A prototype program emerging from their research, called eCIRCUS, aims to prevent bullying and increase peer acceptance in schools. The name eCIRCUS stands for “Education through Characters with emotional-Intelligence and Role-playing Capabilities that Understand Social interaction.” Researchers at eCIRCUS are developing two experimental, interactive programs that use virtual learning environments to teach students how to avert bullying and accept others. Among the expertise of the researchers at eCIRCUS are topics such as psychology, education, computer science, and information technology.



The researchers at eCIRCUS created the FearNot! and ORIENT virtual role-playing programs to address emotionally driven problems with emotional interventions. The programs allow students to interact and empathize with characters in virtual worlds, “where they can learn to change their thoughts, feelings, and actions.” Each program has a different focus, however.

FearNot! (Fun with Empathic Agents to Achieve Novel Outcomes in Teaching) focuses on elementary school students who could become victims of bullying. It emphasizes the importance of feelings to change how students interact with each other.

The ORIENT program, still in development, focuses on hate prevention among older students. In a similarly structured but more complex virtual world, students learn to accept newcomers from other cultures. Players are given the mission of saving Planet Orient and helping an alien race called the Sprytes. In order to befriend the aliens, students must empathize with them and learn their customs. ORIENT aims to help those in the host community make new students feel welcome.

Though the programs need to continue long-term testing among students, eCIRCUS researchers tested short-term effectiveness of FearNot! over a period of three weeks on over 1,000 students in 30 elementary schools in the U.K. and Germany. “It definitely reduces victimization in the short term,” said eCIRCUS coordinator Ruth Aylett, Professor of Computer Science and an expert in virtual environments and interactive graphics. “It has a significant positive effect even at this low exposure.”

Whether or not these new technologies prevent bullying or hate among students over time remains to be seen. At the very least, innovative programs, such as these, demonstrate that experts in diverse fields are committed to ending peer victimization in schools. To learn more about these experimental programs visit the eCIRCUS Web site at www.ecircus.org. For additional resources about bullying prevention, contact safeschools@csc.com. ■

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