



DoDEA

# SAFE Schools

## NEWSLETTER



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### Copy Cat Shooting Alert

In the wake of the Red Lake, MN shootings, copy cat incidents are possible. Heidelberg DSSO, Gene Hindle, uses the mnemonic “be alert, be aware, be alive” to remind staff to be vigilant. Historically, many school violence incidents have occurred during the spring semester. For information about copy cat shootings, see the May 2001 (p.5) and April 2002 (p.3) newsletters at: <http://www.dodea.edu/schools/newsletters.htm>.

Lockdowns are an appropriate response to a shooting incident. For recommendations on lockdown procedures see DoDEA Regulation 4700.2, *Internal Physical Security* (Paragraph E2.2.1.3.) at: [http://www.dodea.edu/foia/iod/pdf/4700\\_2.pdf](http://www.dodea.edu/foia/iod/pdf/4700_2.pdf). ■

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### Bullying and Obesity Often Connected

A number of factors contribute to bullying, such as race, religion, hair color, material wealth, and school performance. Increasingly, however, overweight children are becoming victims of “weight-related” bullying.

Dr. Ian Janssen and colleagues from the University of Toronto examined the relationship between bullying behaviors (physical, verbal, relational, and sexual harassment) and weight. Researchers studied 5,749 boys and girls, ages 11–16. Results of the clinical study were presented in the journal *Pediatrics*. The article is titled, “Associations between Overweight and Obesity with Bullying Behaviors in School-Aged Children.”

All children were classified as normal weight, overweight, or obese, based on standardized International Body Mass Index values that are age and gender specific. Results showed that “Overweight and obese school-aged children are more likely to be the victims and perpetrators of bullying than their normal-weight peers. These tendencies may hinder both the short and long-term social and psychological development of overweight and obese youth.”



Study findings showed that the likelihood of “bullying behaviors increased when moving from the normal weight to overweight group, with further increase when moving from the overweight group to the obese group.” Researchers say that, in addition to offering anti-bullying programs, schools need to teach students healthier lifestyles. Researchers contend that incorporating more nutritious meals and exercise into the school day could help combat this issue.

Researchers also stated that they “hope anti-bullying programs will be modified in the future” to take into account youth weight issues. To view an abstract of the article, go to the *Pediatrics* web site at: <http://pediatrics.aapublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/113/5/1187>. ■



## Tips for Conducting Surveys

Increasingly, administrators are using tailored student and staff surveys to determine if their Safe School Plan security objectives are being realized. Success in meeting objectives can be measured by analyzing your Incident Worksheet (Tool One from the *Safe Schools Handbook*) data and survey responses.

A focused year-end student or staff survey can provide you meaningful information. For example, survey results can indicate whether your anti-bullying or character education program is changing student attitudes and behavior. Survey implementation tips are listed below:

- ◆ Limit the questionnaire to five questions about a targeted area. This decreases the time required for recipients to complete their responses.

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- ◆ Use Zoomerang or a similar automated tool. Zoomerang allows you to create your own questionnaire that can be completed on-line. Zoomerang tabulates the results and provides a summary which is then sent to you via e-mail.
- ◆ Identify a sample set of students or staff rather than asking the entire school population to complete the survey. Select sets such as: all of the English classes; all of the 5th graders; or, one class from each grade level. This technique offers a manageable way to measure improvement.
- ◆ Ask students and staff to complete the survey on-line in the computer laboratory. Conducting the survey on-line simplifies the survey process.

Using the on-line survey makes it easy to tabulate results. Compare results from surveys at the end of the school year with responses from the beginning of the school year to measure progress.

For additional information on Zoomerang's free on-line survey service, visit their web site at: [www.zoomerang.com](http://www.zoomerang.com). For examples of survey questions, see Tool 2 in the *DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook* or e-mail DoDEA Safe Schools Technical Support at: [safeschools@csc.com](mailto:safeschools@csc.com). ■



## Spotting Terrorist Activity – An Online Video



The Michigan State Police Homeland Security Section (MSPHSS) created a seven-minute video, “The Seven Signs of Terrorism.” In an interview with Sgt. Jerry King, the spokesman in the video, he stated: “Everyone needs to be educated about activities they notice during their daily routine that could point to possible terrorist activity. We all have a duty to stay alert and report any suspicious activities to law enforcement officials – an act that could be the crucial step in thwarting a terrorist event.”

According to Sgt. King, terrorist events are planned, organized, and carried out by individuals acting alone or in groups. The “Seven Signs of Terrorism” video, originally created for police and students, includes information about “what you should be looking for and what should be reported.” The signs are:

- 1) **Surveillance** – Terrorists usually assess the strengths and weaknesses of a particular target before attacking. Surveillance can include recording or viewing activities, creating diagrams, or collecting floor plans of places such as high technology companies, government buildings, or banks.
- 2) **Elicitation** – This act refers to an attempt to gain information about a place or its employees. Attempts to gain information can be made by fax, e-mail, phone, or in person. Areas vulnerable to these events include: power plants, bridges, shopping malls, and schools.
- 3) **Tests of Security** – Walking or driving into sensitive or secure locations for the purpose of generating a response and then observing security or law enforcement response techniques and response times.
- 4) **Acquiring Supplies** – This can include purchasing or stealing law enforcement or military decals, and uniforms. Attempts to obtain explosives, weapons, ammunition, harmful chemicals, airline information, or flight plans could indicate terrorist activity.
- 5) **Suspicious Persons That Don’t Belong** – This could include someone in a workplace, building or neighborhood who appears “out of place.” It could also include someone asking unusual questions or behaving oddly.
- 6) **Dry Runs or Trial Runs** – Before carrying out a terrorist event, terrorists will rehearse. Some signs could include strange people practicing their routines or doing something unusual.
- 7) **Deploying Assets or Getting into Position** – Terrorists could be putting people in position to carry out an act. This can include placing people or equipment at a location.

Sgt. King also explains to citizens that terrorist activities may occur months or years apart. To improve your anti-terrorism efforts, share the “Seven Signs of Terrorism” video with students, staff, parents and the school community. To access the video, go to: [www.wzzm13.com/clix/videoclixdefault.asp?cmd=view&articleid=4179](http://www.wzzm13.com/clix/videoclixdefault.asp?cmd=view&articleid=4179). ■



## Ecstasy Use Decreasing

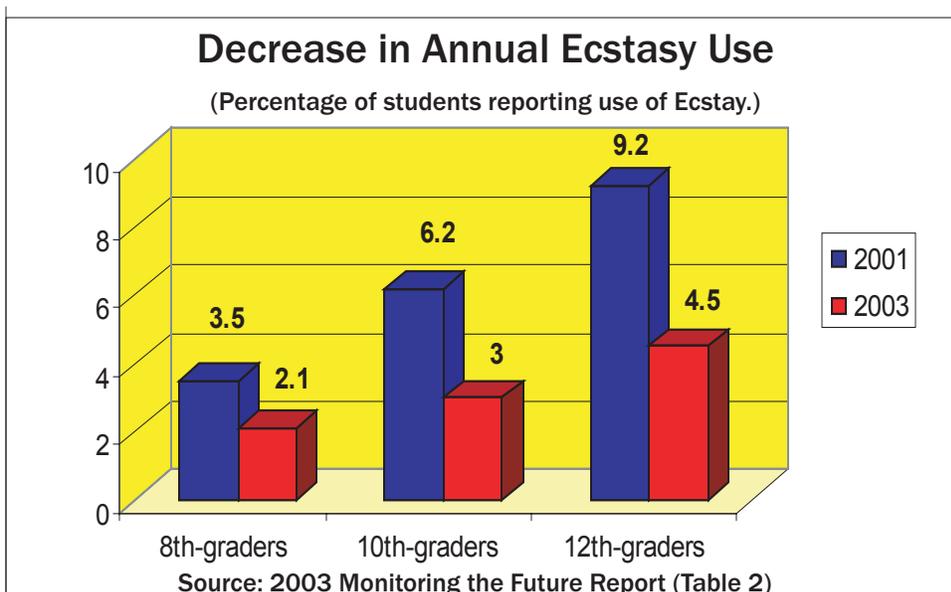
Student use of the drug Ecstasy decreased due to better education about the risks. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), results from the *Monitoring the Future Survey* indicated that although the number of students reporting Ecstasy use rose from the early 1990s to 2000, it decreased by 50 percent from 2001 to 2003 (see chart at right.)

NIDA attributes the decrease to “increased awareness about the harmful effects of Ecstasy.” Previously,

students ventured into Ecstasy use unaware of the hazards. Educating youth about the harmful effects of Ecstasy enables them to make healthier personal choices and spread the word to their peers that ecstasy is not a “safe” illegal drug. A recent NIDA Research Report highlights the harmful effects of ecstasy:

- ◆ **Potential Dangers** - Ecstasy causes a high level of physical activity for long periods of time, which can lead to cardiovascular failure. Other effects include dehydration, increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure, heart wall stress, nausea, chills, sweating, muscle cramping, or blurred vision.
- ◆ **Behavioral Effects** – Ecstasy impairs memory. Users may find it difficult to perform skilled activities, such as driving a car. In the week following moderate exposure to the drug, many abusers reported feeling anxiety, irritability, and even deep depression.

For information to increase awareness about the dangerous effects of ecstasy and for information about illicit drugs, see the complete Research Report on the NIDA web site at: [www.drugabuse.gov/ResearchReports/](http://www.drugabuse.gov/ResearchReports/). ■

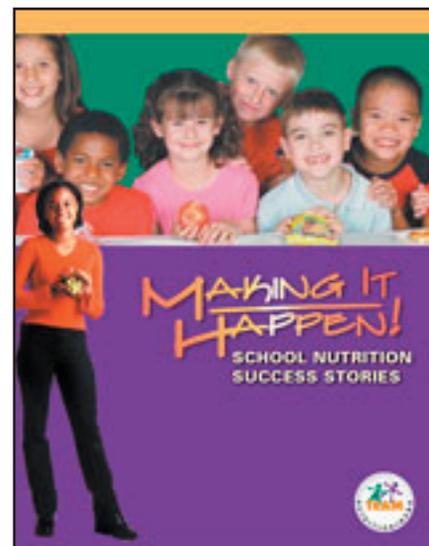


## School Nutrition Helps to Avert Obesity

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) shares *Making It Happen! School Nutrition Success Stories* to help battle poor nutrition, avert obesity, and improve the quality of snack foods in vending machines. This report tells the stories of schools that implemented the Program created by the USDA. This Program recommends several approaches:

- ◆ Establish nutrition standards for vending machines.
- ◆ Make more healthful foods and beverages available.
- ◆ Limit student access to junk foods.
- ◆ Use fund raising activities and rewards that support student health.

To order or download your free copy of *Making It Happen!*, visit USDA’s web site at: [www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/makingithappen.html](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/makingithappen.html). ■



## Caught in the Act: A DoDEA Civility Program

DoDEA Administrators have expressed an interest in hearing how other DoDEA schools improved their climate. Last month's guest article on the lack of civility in schools resonated with readers. That article prompted Ronald Lathrop, Assistant Principal, Hohenfels Elementary School, Bavaria, to contact us about a successful civility program called, Caught-in-the-Act. School counselor Cynthia Nicholson has created and implemented this Program with great success.

Mr. Lathrop said, "When Cynthia (a.k.a. Ms. Nick) came to Hohenfels Elementary School, she was asked to develop a civility program to promote personal and social development for students in grades K-6. In October 2003, she responded with Caught-in-the-Act, a program based on the six pillars of character from the national organization, Character Counts! The six pillars are: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.



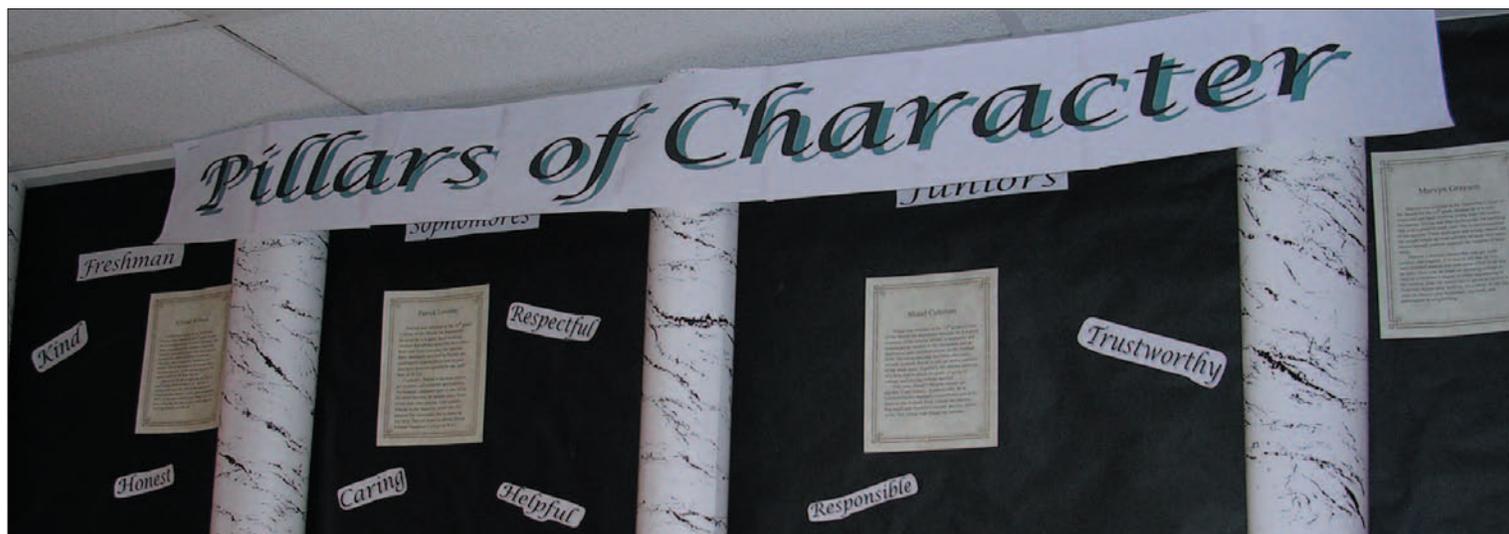
Shown here is a Caught-in-the-Act student with her mother and little baby sister. The mom has the "Caught in the Act" certificate in her hand.  
(Photo from Mr. Lathrop).

In his E-mail to the Safe Schools Staff, Mr. Lathrop described the Caught-in-the-Act Program:

*Ms. Nick introduces a new character trait every two months by writing a short statement about what the trait means. She then shares it with faculty, staff and students via the daily bulletin. Nomination forms are distributed to everyone on staff, from administration and faculty to the school supply clerk. When a student is "caught" doing a random act that portrays the character trait for that time period, his/her name is turned in to Ms. Nick. The character trait for January and February was caring.*

*The following morning during announcements, Ms. Nick reads the names of the "caught" students for everyone to hear. The best part comes at the end of each month when Ms. Nick holds a luncheon and ceremony. At the luncheon, the students receive a certificate and have their picture taken with their family.*

("Caught-in-the- Act" continued on page 6)



*("Caught-in-the-Act" continued from page 5)*



*Hohenfels Elementary School.*

*Ms. Nick feels her biggest challenge is making sure all students are considered, even those who may not be as visible. Aside from the Caught-in-the-Act Program being an example of a school-home partnership in action, it also supports the DoDEA Counseling Based Competency Program. Ms. Nick would like to see this program continue indefinitely because, as she puts it, "we've got everyone involved." Her most rewarding moments are when parents of the nominated students tell her how much they appreciate their child being recognized.*

Students love the Caught-in-the-Act Program. One fourth grader said, "I was proud of myself for doing the right thing. I am confident that I can do it again." Lathrop shared that a second grader said, "I was not caught in the act, but my sister was and I went with her to the ceremony. I was happy to see students who had been nice to others." Another fourth grader said, "It felt good to do the right thing and be recognized for it."

All school stakeholders are excited about the Caught-in-the-Act Program. Teachers say the program's impact has improved students' self-esteem. Parents love the program. One parent stated, "The Caught-in-the-Act Program encourages students to be more aware of helping others..." Another added, "...it [the program] has had a tremendous school-wide impact on all of our students, staff, and faculty." Yet, another parent shared, "...they [students] are able to perform a "character" check on themselves daily."

For more information on the Caught-in-the-Act Program, contact: [Ron.Lathrop@eu.dodea.edu](mailto:Ron.Lathrop@eu.dodea.edu) or [Cynthia.Nich](mailto:Cynthia.Nich)

[olson@eu.dodea.edu](mailto:olson@eu.dodea.edu). Further information about the Character Counts! Program can be found on page 3-35 of the *DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook for Practitioners*. The program is also described in the *July 2002 Intervention Strategies Guide* located on the DoDEA web site at: [www.dodea.edu/schools/pdf/ISGuide\\_jul02.pdf](http://www.dodea.edu/schools/pdf/ISGuide_jul02.pdf). ■

## Limiting Exaggeration in Surveys

District Safety and Security Officers and DoDEA administrators have previously requested information about how to ensure that students will take surveys seriously, and answer the questions honestly. Veteran counselor, Donna Pethtel from Alban Elementary School in St. Alban's, WV, has found the solution. Pethtel's method minimizes "survey exaggeration" and helps students better understand the survey questions.

First, Ms. Pethtel brings one class, at a time, into the computer laboratory to complete an on-line survey. Ms. Pethtel begins the survey process by telling students that the school needs their honest input to evaluate the current measures in place to protect them. Ms. Pethtel leads the class through the survey, and has students answer one question at a time. She reads each question aloud and asks whether everyone understands the question. This technique allows students the opportunity to ask questions, clarify wording, or resolve anything else they may not understand.

A good example of this process involved a survey question that asked students to estimate the number of students in their school who used alcohol. One student asked whether that meant, "at school during the school day," or "outside of school."

After clarification and answering questions, the class moves to the next question together. Ms. Pethtel notes that "walking the class" through the survey, question-by-question, takes only a few extra minutes, but improves the quality and accuracy of responses. Contact the DoDEA Safe Schools Technical Support Team for additional ideas on administering student surveys, e-mail: [safeschools@csc.com](mailto:safeschools@csc.com). ■

