

SAFE SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER



Issue 2

October 2000

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This is an unofficial publication produced by DynMeridian, Inc. on behalf of the Department of Defense Education Activity Safety & Security Office. The material herein is presented for informational purposes and does not constitute official policy of the Department of Defense. All comments and questions should be directed to Bob Michela at 703-461-2000 or michelar@dyncorp.com



LOOKING FOR NEWSLETTER FEEDBACK

The monthly DoDEA Safe Schools Newsletter will continue to reflect the needs of the DoDEA community. Comments from the field have begun to come in and each and every one is very much appreciated. Feel free to comment on the format as well as the content of the Newsletter. Please let us know what issues you would like to see addressed in the future. If you wish to use the Newsletter for a means of communicating to the DoDEA community at large, send us your news. Letters to the Editor are also welcome.

STUDENT ARTICLE CONTEST COMING

During the second semester, we would like to publish articles on school violence written by DoDEA students. We will be including the rules and the schedule in next month's Newsletter. Please let us hear from you if you wish to provide your thoughts on timing, age group limitations, or length of article.



MORE SAFE SCHOOLS WORKSHOPS

During last year's Safe Schools Workshops, conducted by Bob Michela and Mike Heaney, many requests were received for attendance that could not be accommodated. Additional workshops are possible if the DSOs wish to support them. Make your interest and request known to the DoDEA Safety & Security Office.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

DoDEA is interested in knowing the extent and effectiveness of the Safe Schools Program implementation. DynMeridian has been contracted to help determine the answers to these two questions and will begin contacting administrators later this year for feedback from the field.

Did You Know?

The National PTA (www.pta.org) offers information on school safety including:

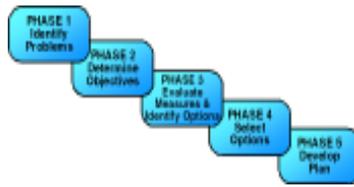
- Safeguarding Children
- Effective Parenting Skills
- Conflict Management
- Peer Mediation
- Coping With Violence in the Media
- Recognizing Warning Signs
- School-Community Partnerships

CONSULTATIVE SERVICES AVAILABLE!!!

DoDEA's contract with DynMeridian includes providing services to administrators. DoDDS and DDESS administrators should feel free to contact Bob Michela directly for assistance regarding school security matters. DynMeridian can provide assistance in a wide variety of areas such as physical security devices, intervention programs, policy matters and best practices. Bob may be contacted via internet at michelar@dyncorp.com, by phone at (703) 461-2000, or facsimile at (703) 461-2020.

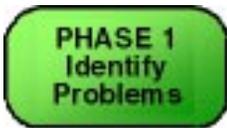
KAYLA ROLLAND – ADULT RESPONSIBILITY

February 29, 2000 was the fateful day that Kayla Rolland was shot and killed by her 6-year-old classmate, just before 10 a.m. at Theo J. Buell Elementary School in Mount Morris Township, Michigan. One of the youngest perpetrators of a killing to date leaves unanswered questions regarding how the legal system should respond to such an incident. On September 11, 2000 Jamelle James, 20, received a sentence of up to 15 years in prison for letting a 6-year-old boy gain access to the pistol he allegedly used to kill Kayla. The young boy has not been charged with any crime.



Applying the 5 Phase Process

PHASE ONE – IDENTIFY PROBLEMS



In last month's article, about the Five-Phase Process, the focus was on the overall approach and the importance of finishing the process with a Plan. This month the focus is on **Phase One - Identify Problems**. Categorize each problem as either a **Security Problem** or a **Climate Problem**. A Security Problem is either Real/Actual or Potential/Perceived. Identify Security Problems using Tools 1, 2, 3 and 4. Identify Climate Problems using Tool 5.



Use the Incident Worksheet to record Real/Actual problems. Obtain these types of problems from your database of disciplinary administration. Because these problems actually occurred they are of a historical nature and are considered Real/Actual. Tool 1 worksheets are filled out by type of incident.

The purpose of Tool 1 is to provide you with a means of determining a pattern for each type of incident.



Use the questionnaires to determine problems perceived by the students and staff. Modify the questionnaires if you deem appropriate. There are various ways of obtaining information from your school community. Telephone Hot Lines, Suggestion or Bully Boxes, Open Door Policies and good old fashioned face to face communications are other means of connecting with people who know what is going on in the trenches.



The purpose of Tools 2 and 3 is to collect information about perceived or potential problems.



The Law Enforcement Questionnaire may not be of great use for an existing school. It was designed for a newly built school to connect with local police for information that might be helpful to overall school security planning when a lack of historical data exists upon which to base planning. However, military communities are ideal environments for strong partnerships between the Provost Marshall and school administrators.

The important point to remember is that Tool 4 embodies the concept of partnership with local law enforcement officials.

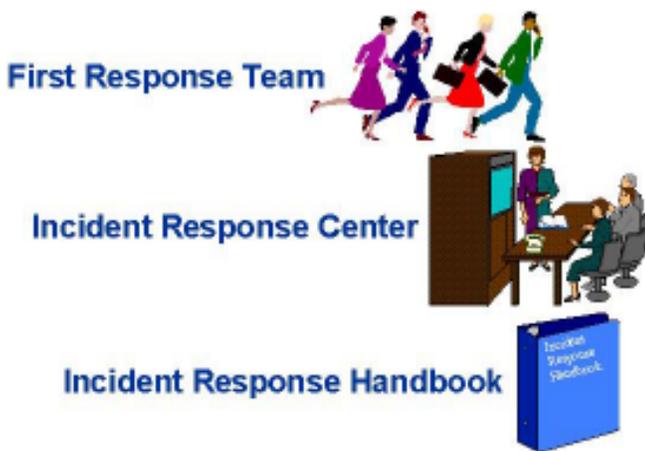


Use the Climate Worksheet to identify conditions about the school's environment. You may wish to modify the Worksheet to add other factors to the five areas for evaluation. ***The purpose of Tool 5 is to determine climate problems.***

INCIDENT RESPONSE PLANS (IRPs)

An Incident Response Plan (IRP) is different from a Safe School Plan (SSP). An IRP is reactive. An SSP is proactive. It is important to recognize this significant distinction. An IRP should be a part of an SSP. An IRP should achieve these two objectives:

- Minimize the incident's consequences
- Reduce the possibility of the incident becoming a crisis



Essential IRP Elements

OPERATIONALIZING AN INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN (IRP)

When developing an IRP, the key considerations for maximizing operational utility are **organization, content, assignment of responsibilities, and rehearsal.**

- **Organization** facilitates a rapid response capability and helps relieve the pressure of a stressful situation. An IRP Handbook must be constructed with a system (e.g., tabs,

flip-tabs, etc.) for easily locating the incident specific information required.

- The **Content** of the IRP Handbook should not be so voluminous that it becomes cumbersome and difficult to use and thereby time consuming in its use. Strike a balance between sufficient/necessary detail and too much information. The people who must use the IRP will be the measure of the correct balance.
- **Assignment of Responsibilities** helps ensure that staff members designated to lead the school in emergencies (i.e., First Response Team) will understand their responsibilities and that they will carry out their responsibilities in a deliberate and knowledgeable yet expedient manner.
- **Rehearsals**, practices, drills, and exercises are all terms used to describe preliminary familiarization with process and procedure. Familiarization must take place in order to be prepared. This can occur in a number of ways. The least disruptive approach is to conduct a meeting of just the key individuals to review responsibilities and procedures. The most disruptive approach is to conduct an all-hands (i.e., the entire school community) exercise. And, the middle of the road approach is to conduct a table-top exercise involving key individuals from the school community but not including any students. Next month we will address the pros and cons of drills and exercises.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION VERSUS PEER MEDIATION

U.S. school administrators often choose conflict resolution (CR) programs over other intervention strategies. CR programs decrease school violence by teaching students communication skills and a system for solving interpersonal conflicts without violence. CR programs sometimes include peer mediation. However, a helpful distinction is *CR occurs between two people or groups, while peer mediation involves another participant*. Two students who cannot solve their dispute using CR strategies, take their problem to an independent peer mediator.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAMS THAT WORK

CR programs teach communication skills, careful listening, critical thinking and problem solving techniques that also enhance students' academic performance. Descriptions of effective conflict resolution programs can be found in the *DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook* (pp.185-199) or DoEd/DoJ's *Conflict Resolution: A Guide to Implementing Programs in Schools, Youth-Serving Organizations, and Community and Juvenile Justice Settings*, www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles/conflic.pdf. The National Crime Prevention Council and the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (www.colorado.edu/cspv/) also suggest various programs listed on their internet sites.

HOW CONFLICT RESOLUTION WORKS

Below are six steps taught by successful CR programs and described by factsheets available from the NCPC and DoJ (www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles/fs-9755.pdf).

1. Identify the problem.

Sometimes people argue about different problems. Write the problem as each participant defines it. Consider alternative statements of the problem. Participants may redefine the problem as options are considered.

2. State the need or actual problem, not the participants' positions.

Discuss participants' needs, fears, desires, and concerns. Resolving problems together benefits all participants. The resulting agreement works because both participants choose to implement it.

3. Ask the other participant what he or she needs.

Identify the other person's needs. Concentrate on problems not people.

4. Recognize shared interests or concerns.

Participants that disagree about decisions may discover they are interested in the same cause or result.

5. Suggest alternatives.

Together, suggest alternative answers to problems. Suggest several ideas, and concentrate on realistic options. Use independent criteria so participants can check compliance with the agreement.

6. Decide who is responsible for specific actions and write a plan.

Describe actions needed. Identify who needs to accomplish each action and when it should be completed.

FBI STUDIES SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

On September 6, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released its results of a comprehensive two-year study examining violence in United States schools. The report, titled *School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective*, was created to develop a better understanding of adolescent violence through threat assessment, intervention and prevention methods.

In May 1998, the FBI's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC), Critical Incident Response Group, began an in-depth review of specific cases of actual school shootings and foiled attempts. The FBI's behavioral psychologists looked at each event from a threat assessment perspective. The FBI was able to have access to some of the school shooters, family members, witnesses, and others involved with each event. They studied the incident itself, the shooter, his background, the school, and other social elements, which may have influenced the crime.

To supplement the research, NCAVC held a symposium on school shootings and threat assessment in July 1999. The symposium included mental health professionals, teachers and administrators from the schools included in the study, NCAVC staff members, law enforcement officers and the prosecutors involved in investigating each incident. Experts in adolescent violence, mental health, suicide, as well as school and family dynamics also attended the symposium.

The FBI, fully aware of the controversy surrounding the practice of profiling, was

careful to mention that they are not proposing targeting individuals before a threat. They stress that the list was not meant to profile students, but to alert teachers, parents and administrators of a child in need of help.

The report listed traits that could be found in a threatening student. Examples of some of these traits are listed below.

- Racial intolerance
- Poor coping skills
- Low tolerance for frustration
- Alienation
- Depression
- Lack of empathy
- Exaggerated sense of entitlement
- A pathological need for attention
- Inappropriate humor
- Rigid views
- Low self-esteem
- Fascination with violence-filled entertainment

Several other factors should be taken into account along with this list including the child's relationship with his or her parents, access to weapons, and whether the child has been exposed to excessive violence through movies or video games. Use of drugs and alcohol can also contribute to the potential for violence.

The report encourages school officials to be proactive, to encourage student reporting of potential threats and to develop a threat-assessment coordinator and team which should include a law enforcement official.

You can view *School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective* on the FBI's website at www.fbi.gov/library/school/school2.pdf.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: WHAT WORKS

The National PTA criteria for evaluating parental involvement programs recommend:

- Meaningful communication between home and school
- Promotion of parenting skills
- Assistance with student learning
- Parent volunteering opportunities
- Including parents in school decision making
- Parent-student service learning projects in the community.

SKILLS OF EFFECTIVE PARENTS

(from Dr. Anthony Scannella)

- Plan prevention rather than responding to their child's behavior.
- Listen and show "understanding" before responding to their child.
- Respect their children and help them feel needed in the family.
- Work on changing only selected behaviors.
- Include children in discussions about mutual expectations and establishing rules.
- Provide children with appropriate opportunities to solve problems, make decisions, and be responsible for themselves.

Dr. Anthony Scannella is the Director of Professional Development for the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA). Excerpt adapted from *Click: The Discipline Program that Works* NJPSA (609) 860-1200.

SOURCES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES

- The *DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook* includes specific parental involvement strategies (Intervention Strategies).
- The DoDEA internet site describes valuable techniques to encourage parental involvement at school ("School Home Partnership" www.odedodea.edu/shp/tier2.html).
- National PTA's *Building Successful Partnerships: A Guide for Developing Parent and Family Involvement Programs* helps a school or school district organize a parent and community involvement plan: (\$18.95 from National Education Service, (800) 733-6786 www.nes.org/whatsnew).
- "Working Parents Are Getting More Involved in Their Children's Education" 9/23/00 *Seattle Times*.
- John Beaulieu & Alex Granzin *Working Parents Can Raise Smart Kids* (\$13.45 www.amazon.com or see www.peertutorpress.com).

