

# SAFE SCHOOLS

# NEWSLETTER



Issue 6

February 2001

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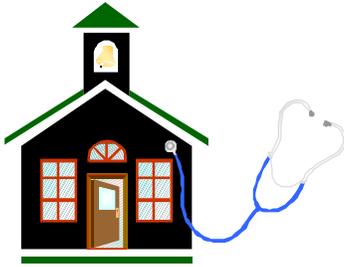
## Safe Schools NEWS

### Student Articles

Thank you to all the students and educators in the DoDEA school community who participated in the student article project. In response to our request for articles on school violence, we are happy to announce that forty-one students submitted articles. To give the readership the benefit of the articles selected for publication, we will include student articles in the February 2001 newsletter and several future newsletters.

Although space limitations of the newsletter prevent us from sharing all of the articles, we wanted to provide an opportunity for DoDEA students to express their views on school violence. We selected articles that were well written, relevant to other DoDEA students, and showed original thinking or shared specific experiences.

Congratulations to all of the young people whose writings are included in the newsletters, and to all of the DoDEA students who used the newsletters as a vehicle to articulate their ideas and feelings about school violence to the DoDEA community. We thought the students showed a perceptive understanding of consequences of school violence and the challenges of prevention. We hope you benefit from reading their work.



## Surgeon General's Report on School Violence

On 1/17/01, U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher, reported that despite a decrease in the official indicators of youth violence, a large percentage of youth report involvement in violent behavior (<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/youthviolence/>). Official indicators such as the number of homicides by youth, arrests for serious crimes, and hospital emergency room visits have decreased since 1994. However, 30-40% of male youths and 15-30% of female youths report having committed a serious violent offense. The report attempts to reconcile these “contradictory conclusions about youth violence” by explaining that the use of guns and weapons at school decreased since 1994. However, further work is needed to change students’ attitudes about participating in violence.

The Surgeon General included fact sheets with suggested actions to be taken by school officials and parents. School administrators and teachers were urged to improve school climate and be honest in identifying security problems. “According to reports, bullying and drugs are the major problems they [students] have to deal with at school, but these often are not acknowledged in the school system.” Parents were urged to learn about their child’s friends since “the most critical risk factor for your children is the behavior of their peers.”

The report describes twenty seven specific youth violence prevention programs that “are not only effective at preventing youth violence but cost-effective as well.” Three Health and Human Services (HHS) agencies cooperated in preparing the report: The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

## White House Youth Violence Internet Site



In his 1/13/01 radio address, P r e s i d e n t C l i n t o n

described White House efforts to prevent youth violence including the establishment of an Internet site ([www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org)) and reference center to provide information on prevention strategies. The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center (NYVPRC) includes a fax line and toll free phone number: (866) 723-3968. The White House Council on Youth Violence worked with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention to provide Internet links to youth violence prevention information at other federal agencies.

President Clinton also described a new parents’ guide produced by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that helps parents identify problem behaviors, improve family communication and locate outside assistance for troubled students.



## Video Game “Report Card”

On Thursday, 1/25/01, the National Institute for Media and Families (NIMF) issued a “report card” on the video and computer game industry’s attempts to limit sales of violent video games to youth ([www.mediafamily.org](http://www.mediafamily.org)). The report evaluates industry efforts in marketing & advertising, ratings enforcement, and ratings education. David Walsh, NIMF President, said that the industry made progress in avoiding marketing violent video games to youth. The industry also attempted to better educate the public about video game ratings. However, several retail stores do not prevent youth from purchasing inappropriate video games. The report found that FuncoLand and Target stores were the only stores that usually enforced policies prohibiting youth from purchasing adult video games.

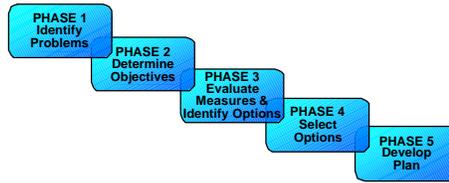
The report includes updates on research regarding how playing violent video games affects youth. According to the report:

- ♦ Youths who play more violent video games reported more involvement in physical fights.
- ♦ “At-risk” boys play video games significantly more than their peers, and they play more violent video games.

NIMF recommends parents educate themselves about the ratings system. The report suggests the KidScore ratings system could be used for electronic games, television programs, films and video tapes. Specific suggestions for parents on how to limit the affect of violent video games on their children include:

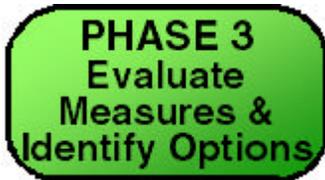
1. Limit the amount of time children can play video games.
2. Play with your child to become familiar with the games.
3. Provide alternative activities for your child.
4. Require that your child complete home-work and jobs before playing video games.
5. Do not put video games in your child’s room.
6. Talk about the content of the video games with your child.
7. Ask your video store to require parental approval before children can obtain video games.





# Applying the 5 Phase Process

## PHASE THREE - Evaluate Measures & Identify Options (continued)



**CONDUCTING A PROGRAM REVIEW** is the second “P” in “P.P.R.” and is the subject of this month’s

feature. Intervention Programs are often used to enhance the educational process by teaching normative values and life skills (e.g., anger management, empathy and perspective taking, social problem solving, media and social resistance, communication, and general social skills).

Since the high-profile incidents of violence in recent years, experts have been concentrating on expanded research efforts in an attempt to determine what can be done to help prevent behavioral aberrations that culminate in acts of violence. Because experts believe that violence is a learned behavior, the prevailing opinion is that the path to influencing good student behavior is through the use of character building programs. There are many programs from which to choose, but the difficulty lies in knowing which programs are the best suited for a given school, its students, and its community. The options are now extensive enough that to choose the proper intervention programs for a particular school is a difficult process. It is not a trivial matter to select the intervention programs that will be the most cost-effective because each school has a unique student body and associated culture.

**TOOL 6 – POLICY AND PROGRAM REVIEW**, is essentially a checklist that is designed to help administrators identify all the possible areas of consideration for establishing intervention programs to address both climate improvement and risk reduction objectives.

The DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook contains a Program Identification Matrix



as an aid to help administrators select specific programs in order to address specific targeted behaviors that may have

been identified. Furthermore, the Handbook has over a hundred intervention programs that administrators may consider to address bullying, behavior management, conflict resolution, gang prevention & resistance, hate prevention, life skills, parental involvement, sexual harassment & assault prevention, substance abuse and suicide prevention. The Policy and Program Review (Tool 6), the Program Identification Matrix (p. 153), and the Index of Intervention Strategy Programs (pp. 154-157) are designed to assist school officials in choosing specific programs that will best meet the needs of their students.

Research suggests that some of the most promising intervention strategies involve education and skills training – things schools are uniquely qualified to do, both because they have young people as a captive audience and because teachers know how to educate students.

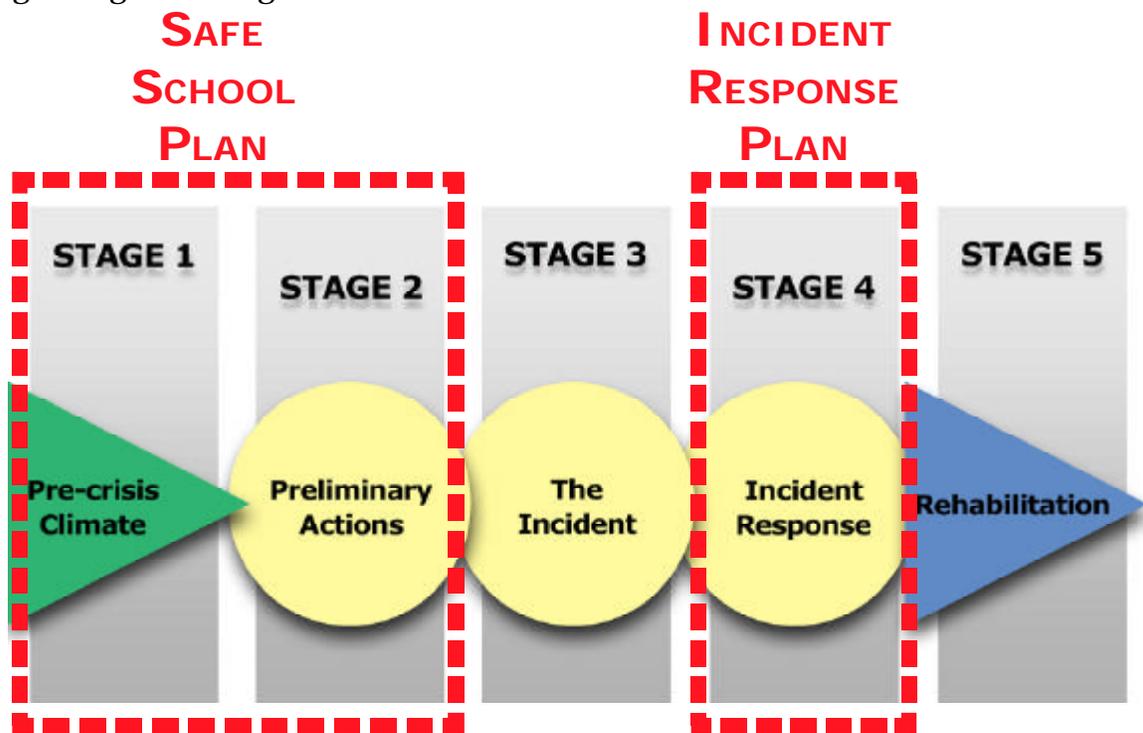
## Incident Response Planning in Perspective

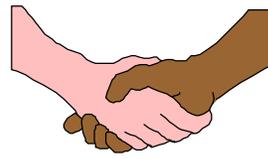
It is instructive to contrast *planning for an emergency* with *planning to reduce the risk that an emergency will occur*. Experience indicates that officials confuse Incident Response Plans with Safe School Plans – as defined in the DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook.

The Five Phase Process, detailed in the DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook, is planning to reduce the risk that an emergency will occur. The process is designed to help identify vulnerable areas of school policy, intervention programs, and physical security so that measures can be taken in each of these areas in order to reduce the likelihood that vulnerabilities will be exploited. The result is a comprehensive plan that combines policies, intervention programs and physical security measures into a budgeted and scheduled implementation; hence, the risk-assessment model - the Five Phase Process, and risk reduction based planning.

On the other hand, emergency planning is based upon the many possible contingencies that could conceivably arise and the corresponding actions to take in response. Once the possibilities have been identified, a comprehensively thought out plan of action, for each contingency, is identified and written into an Incident Response Plan. And, as discussed in the November Safe Schools Newsletter, these plans are often rehearsed or practiced.

The Crisis Analysis Model, discussed during the Safe Schools Workshops last year, is an excellent schematic upon which the contrast can be drawn. Emergency Planning should be directed to Stage 4, Incident Response. Safe School Planning should be directed to Stage 1, Pre-crisis Climate and Stage 2, Preliminary Actions. Review your Handbook (p. 147) for more detail regarding each stage.





# Intervention Strategies

## Service Learning

Research by Brandeis University indicates service learning improves school climate by modestly improving students' academic performance and involvement with school. DoDEA students and school officials planning projects to fulfill their service learning requirement, might consider efforts that enhance school security. Service projects contribute to school security by improving physical security, increasing security awareness in the school community, or providing support for at-risk youth. To obtain Brandeis University's evaluation of the Learn and Serve America program, visit <http://www.nicsl.coled.umn.edu/>; select National Evaluation of Learn and Serve America Summary Report.

Service learning differs from community service because service learning projects relate to students' academic classes. Service learning involves students in:

- preparing for the service project
- performing the service
- writing/discussing service experiences
- celebrating accomplishments

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) provides fact sheets describing how students can improve security in their community by planning drug abuse prevention education or public relations efforts. (Visit OJJDP "Youth in Action" document summaries <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/youthinactionsum.html>; select "Youth Preventing Drug Abuse", "Working with the Media" or "Hands Without Guns").

Teens, Crime and the Community (TCC) provides materials to prevent youth from becoming victims of crime. It includes the guide *Community Works: Smart Teens make Safer Communities* (<http://www.nationaltcc.org/commtext.htm>) and a textbook "*Teens, Crime and the Community: Education and Action for Safer Schools and Neighborhoods*. *Community Works*, a teachers notebook, provides thirty one lesson plans and participatory activities to teach youth about security topics such as handguns & violence, shoplifting, hate crimes, substance abuse, conflict management, vandalism, dating violence, reporting a crime, and designing a community action project. TCC (<http://www.nationaltcc.org/>) is a cooperative effort by the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) and Street Law, Inc.

At Taos High School, New Mexico, students taught drug education classes for elementary schools; sponsored a student/police basketball game as part of an anti-violence public relations effort; and wrote about their service projects discussing their experiences in weekly classes.

At Wakulla Middle School, Florida, service learning was included in alternative education programs for at-risk students. At-risk students, along with high achieving students, worked together improving recreational facilities for the Parks & Recreation Department. Service projects, accompanied by an organized group discussion, were designed to improve social, behavioral and academic skills. Teachers used the service experiences to illustrate academic lessons in the classroom.

## Does Popular Music Help Prevent or Contribute to Youth Violence?

*“I love this country, but how come we sell records all over the world, and these things (mass shootings) only seem to happen in the United States.”*

*Ozzy Osbourne, Heavy Metal Musician*

“I may disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.” This quote was attributed to Voltaire almost 200 years ago, but it is just as relevant today. He was sent to prison for preaching democracy in the French monarchy. A noble cause through our American eyes, but to the French in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this theory of freedom of speech was considered a danger to society. Strangely enough, in modern America we are facing a similar debate yet again. This time musicians, not philosophers are the target. The concern comes from the impact violent lyrics can have on children.

The power of music should not be underestimated. Of course, there is a positive effect. To some teens, music is their only comfort in times of confusion and frustration. To others it constitutes a means of escaping an apparent unfair world filled with the pressures of parents, peers, school, and society as a whole. Teens often feel overwhelmed and misunderstood. Blocking out the rest of the world by putting on headphones and listening to someone articulate those feelings can provide immeasurable comfort. It gives a feeling of not being alone; a feeling that someone else out there can identify with the pressures that confront kids today.

But does the music always help? In Washington state, jurors in a Seattle courtroom watched Pearl Jam’s “Jeremy” video, while hearing arguments in the murder trial of 16-year-old Barry Loukaitis. Loukaitis was accused of killing his algebra teacher and two students at Frontier Junior High in Moses Lake on February 2, 1996. His attorneys say the “Jeremy” video helped trigger his rage. The Superior Court jury found Loukaitis guilty of first degree murder.

The “Jeremy” clip, which won Best Video of the Year at the 1993 Video Music Awards, tells the story of a tormented teenage boy who goes on a classroom-shooting spree after being taunted by classmates and ignored by his parents. Eddie Vedder, the lead singer to the popular, politically active, and socially conscious rock group, was inspired to write “Jeremy” by a true incident of a Texas teen pushed over the edge. It appeared to be an example of life, imitating art, imitating life. Vedder wrote the song to bring attention to the problems associated with bullying, parents neglecting children, and the availability of guns.

It is a familiar scene on Capitol Hill...a government subcommittee looking into the effect anti-social pop songs may have on the behavior of its listeners. While the issue has been at the forefront of the music industry for several years, it reached a crisis point most recently when the names of two rock bands surfaced in the aftermath of the Littleton, Colorado shootings.

The two teen-age suicidal assailants in the massacre reportedly listened to

Rammstein, an industrial-metal group based in Germany, and KMFDM — one of the first big-selling industrial-rock bands, formed in Paris in 1984. Some observers, including Rep. Henry Hyde, Republican of Illinois, say they think there may be a cause-and-effect relationship between violent lyrics and violent acts.

The charge that violent lyrics lead to violent actions is not a new one, and it's one that British heavy metal artist Ozzy Osbourne has faced. "It happens every five years," said Osbourne in an MTV interview. Osbourne has faced three different lawsuits from parents all claiming that his song "Suicide Solution" encouraged their sons to commit suicide. He won each case.

Regarding the controversy surrounding his music Osbourne says "One of the things I must address is, I'm not knocking this country. I love this country, but how come we sell records all over the world, and these things only seem to happen in the United States. There's something about that there."

Osbourne's statement brings up tough questions for Americans. These school massacres are basically unique to the United States. Yet the movies and music that conservative forces claim to be responsible for such killings, are marketed all over the world (without parental advisory stickers, or being subject to the strict American rating system). Is the music to blame? Or could it be the availability of guns? Or possibly the "latchkey kids" culture, where children and parents spend precious little quality time with each other? The debate is likely to continue for another 200 years.

## VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY RATINGS



EARLY CHILDHOOD (EC)



KIDS TO ADULT (KA)



EVERYONE (E)



TEENS (T)



MATURE (M)



ADULTS ONLY (AO)



RATING PENDING (RP)

## Youth Awareness

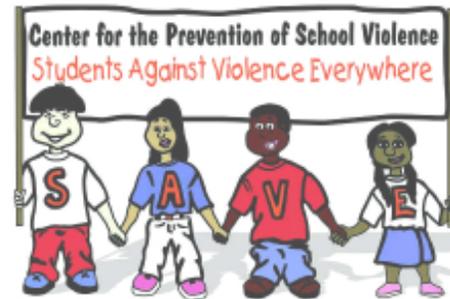
This article describes the characteristics of effective Youth Awareness (YA) programs and identifies sources of assistance and information for organizing student groups at your school. YA programs enhance school security by increasing student responsibility for school safety. Students become personally involved in school security by assisting with security supervision, preparing Safe School plans and teaching security awareness.

Activities planned by YA student groups and their adult advisor to encourage personal responsibility for school security include:

- ★ Assisting with security supervision at school events
- ★ Providing drug and crime prevention education
- ★ Establishing anonymous crime reporting systems

The DoDEA Safe Schools handbook provides tools principals can use to include students in identifying the school's security needs. Students can assist in administering the student and teacher security questionnaires (Tools #2 and #3) or help inspect the physical security of the school using the Physical Security Review (Tool #7).

Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) began in response to the shooting of student Alex Orange, at W. Charlotte High School, Charlotte, N.C., in 1978. SAVE now has student groups in twenty eight States and Canada. N. Carolina's Center for Prevention of School Violence (CPSV) provides organizational support



and guidelines for starting a SAVE group at your school (<http://www.ncsu.edu/cpsv/save.html>).

Youth Crime Watch of America (YCWA) includes student groups at elementary, middle and high schools (<http://www.ycwa.org/>). Materials provided to assist schools in establishing YCWA groups include:

- ★ An operations guide, youth handbook, and video tape
- ★ Examples of how youth can assist with security
- ★ Safety and crime prevention presentations for use in elementary schools

### Results of Youth Awareness

On Thursday, 2/1/01, a student at Royal Valley High School, Jackson County, Kansas provided information to the principal and School Resource Officer regarding students planning a Columbine High School-style attack on the school. On Friday, 2/2/01, police officers searched the homes of three youths and found bomb-making materials, a modified assault rifle, ammunition and floor plans of the school, according to reports in the *Topeka Capital-Journal* and the *Associated Press*. The searches resulted in arrests of the three students.



*With this newsletter we have included two student articles on school violence.*

*As you will see, we have chosen to present the students' work as they submitted it, complete with their own spelling and punctuation, to preserve the literary voice of the students. We hope you appreciate their views.*

## Violence In Schools

*By Sarah Sheldon, 7th Grader*

*"I am afraid of it even though there are several security measures in place to prevent violence, like metal detectors and police patrols."*

When I thought about the subject I had to write about, "Violence in Schools", right away I felt the need to write about three different things. I am going to write about how I personally feel about violence in schools, about an experience I had last year when I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and about a High School in Oklahoma.

I think violence in schools is bad and I am very afraid of it. I am afraid of it even though there are several security measures in place to prevent violence, like metal detectors and police patrols. It makes me nervous because I know that kids are still getting into schools with weapons. Plus, I know no one can stop a kid from bringing "their fists" into school, which they could use to bully and punch someone.

Last year when I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade; the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grade had bully problems. Our counselor and a few other people got together to develop a way to show a bully how the person they are hurting or

bothering feels. They came up with a theatre group that performed skits called "The Sunshine Players." The Sunshine Players were students from 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grade. We were divided into 4 groups. We had to create our own skits of different types of bullying (like peer pressure). We presented our skits for the school, our parents, and we got to present them at the Young Author conference in Heidelberg, Germany. In the end we all learned how it felt to be the predator and the prey. None of us liked the way it felt to be the prey.

When I lived in Lawton, Oklahoma my house was close to a High School. I moved to Garmisch, Germany before I had to go there, but my friend goes there now. My friend says they have terrible bad violence problems at the school. Before they go into school building in the morning they have to go through a metal detector and get checked by a police officer for weapons and drugs. Also, during the day the police and their dogs will patrol the school ground to make sure no weapons or drugs are on the property. I personally think that this is a terrible way of going to school for my friend.

Now you know how I feel about violence, about last year when I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and about a High School in Oklahoma.

*Garmisch American School, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany*

*Olaf Zwicker, Principal; Dovie Jones, Teacher, Brenda Lynch, Counselor*



## Peer Pressure, Lack of Parental Supervision Blamed for Violence in American Schools

By Kyle Walsh, 10<sup>th</sup> Grader

*“Whether because of the Zero Tolerance Policy or the sense of security students feel at a small school on a military base, students at Menwith Hill High School feel safe.”*

Schools today must deal with a broken world that sometimes seems violent beyond the power of anyone to fix.

In May, 1998, high school shooter Kip Kinkel, aged 15, first shot his parents to death and the next day opened fire on his Thurston High School classmates in Springfield, Oregon, murdering two and injuring 25.

At Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, 12 students and one teacher were killed while 28 others were wounded by two teens—Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold—in a well-planned, military-style attack April 20, 1999.

Exactly one month later, another shooting took place. This time, 15-year-old T. J. Solomon, upset over a broken romance, opened fire at Heritage High School in Conyers, Georgia, injuring six people and putting four in critical condition.

These shootings in Columbine, Heritage and Thurston high schools terrified children and parents around the world.

So, What do the researchers say about school violence?

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 36 percent of students concur that the lack of parental supervision at home is the major factor contributing to violence in schools.

However, 34 percent of those surveyed said the second major factor is the presence of gang or group membership and group peer pressure.

Several recent studies indicate that peer-group pressure is perhaps the fastest growing and most disturbing cause of acts of violence among youth, whether in school or out.

When a fight occurs, for example, especially if it is outside the classroom, other students are not likely to try to stop it. On the contrary, students are more likely to “egg on” their peers.

This behavior reflects attitudes often seen in adult society, a belief that it is better to be “safe” by not getting involved. Children spend thousands of hours each year absorbing scenes of violence in the media, in their homes and in the community. They are the products of a culture created by adults and saturated with violence. It is little wonder youth exhibit violent behavior in school.

What have Department of Defense schools done in response to parental and staff concerns about school violence? All DODDS schools now have a zero-tolerance policy with regards to weapons or replicas of weapons.

The policy bans weapons and replicas of weapons at all school functions or activities, including the bus rides to and from school and extracurricular events.



A pamphlet explaining the policy says students caught with weapons or replicas will face “severe, corrective and punitive actions” and that “no leniency will be shown towards violators.” Among items classified as weapons are knives brought to scout meetings at school and an item that can be used to harm, frighten or threaten someone.

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*“Our concern for student safety and a secure facility is paramount! We tend to think that because we are not in the U.S., we are safer. Not true!”*

*Gene Perillo, Principal  
Menwith Hill Elementary/High School*

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Whether because of the Zero Tolerance Policy or the sense of security students feel at a small school on a military base, students at Menwith Hill High School feel safe.

Mark Streer, MHS eighth grader, said, “I don’t feel that there is a lot of school violence and even if there was, it wouldn’t be that serious. I feel that all the school violence in the states was caused by being in a bad neighborhood or being gang-related.”

It must be said, however, that the incidents in Columbine, Thurston and Heritage high schools occurred in suburban areas where students reported feeling safe before the shootings occurred.

Alex Haynes, a high school sophomore, said, “I feel school violence should be taken seriously for all the deaths and sorrow it has caused students and parents in the states and in other

countries; however, here at MHS I feel safe and secure.”

Gene Perillo, MHS principal, said, “Our concern for student safety and a secure facility is paramount! We tend to think that because we are not in the U.S., we are safer. Not true!”

*Menwith Hill Elementary/High School,  
Harrogate, North Yorkshire, England  
Dr. Eugene Perillo, Principal; Susan  
Culbertson, Journalism Teacher*

*Please feel free to email us your responses and thoughts about the articles ([mckeonb@dyncorp.com](mailto:mckeonb@dyncorp.com)).*

