



**DoDEA**

# SAFE Schools

## NEWSLETTER



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### Free Security and Safety Resources

Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE) equips educators and students with free health and safety information. Over 30 federal agencies formed a working group in the 90's to make hundreds of federally supported teaching and learning resources available. Updated monthly with archived materials, the FREE website provides a link to the Gateway to Educational Materials (GEM), which offers over 24,000 education resources across more than 400 web sites. Safety and security-related offerings include: disaster resources for parents and teachers, emergency planning for schools, and more! For further information, link to: [www.ed.gov/free/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/free/index.html). ■

### Some Dangerous Schools in the U.S. Not Reporting

To date, only fifty-two schools of the 91,000 public schools in the United States have been identified as a "persistently dangerous school" in response to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. The NCLB Act includes a provision requiring states to identify persistently dangerous schools in order to give parents the option to send their children to a different school. Although DoDEA schools do not receive funding from the Department of Education and are not directly affected by the legislation, DoDEA administrators have asked to be updated on policy trends affecting school security.

because they are not required to until year three of the act. The legislation provides a three-year implementation of the persistently dangerous schools provision. Schools identified as persistently dangerous during year one are counseled and given an opportunity to improve during year two. For schools that are still deemed persistently dangerous during year three, the legislation requires sanctions. Since the legislation allows the schools to take corrective action for three consecutive years, some states plan to implement the legislation over a three-year period and do not anticipate announcing any persistently dangerous schools until the 2006-2007 school year. For further information, visit: [www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/unsafeschoolchoice.pdf](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/unsafeschoolchoice.pdf). ■

Many states are not yet reporting any persistently dangerous schools,

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### German Students and Violence

As reported by Agence-France Press, a University of Bremen, Germany study released in late August 2003, indicated that eight percent of juveniles bring weapons to school. Of the students surveyed in this north German port city, one-in-ten said they are either blackmailed or bullied. Of the 4,000 pupils surveyed in twelve schools, nearly 90 percent reported that they thought violence was justifiable as a form of self-defense.

Furthermore, three percent of the students said they had threatened or injured another student with a weapon. The choice of weapons ranged from knives and brass knuckles to guns. Additionally, one-in-twenty students said they had robbed or stolen belongings from fellow pupils within the last year. ■

## School Bus Safety

School administrators, working with the local news media, can enhance school bus safety by reminding drivers to be careful near school zones. A Progressive Insurance Survey identified the need for public awareness to enhance school bus safety. Many of the bus safety problems identified have obvious remedies. To coincide with school bus safety, State governors and superintendents have designated the third week in October 2003 as “School Safety Week.” ■

### School Bus Safety Challenges

Problem	Response
<b>10</b> percent of respondents have accidentally driven past a school bus that was displaying flashing red lights; women (11 percent) were more likely to do this than men (8 percent).	Distribute a letter to parents reminding them of school bus safety procedures. (Share the statistics.)
<b>25</b> percent of respondents reported that children do not have a proper school bus stop location (i.e. protected from traffic, adequate lighting, sheltered from weather.)	Review locations of school bus stops and adjust them if necessary. Work with the community or local PTO to create new bus stops, if needed.
<b>35</b> percent of respondents with children said that they have turned around to reprimand a child while carpooling or driving children to school.	Include safer alternative discipline suggestions in a letter to parents (i.e. pulling the car off the road until children behave).
<b>44</b> percent of respondents experienced a child darting out into the street, without looking both ways, to board their school bus before it departed. Many are almost hit by on-coming traffic.	Character Education and leadership classes already emphasize the importance of timeliness and planning ahead with students. Caution students about approaching a school bus.
<b>65</b> percent of respondents knew the location of the bus stops in their residential area.	The school bus office needs to publicize bus stop locations to parents by residential area well before the school year starts.
<b>72</b> percent of respondents reported seeing children crossing the road without looking for oncoming traffic.	Use teachers, parents and the media to reinforce existing traffic safety lessons (i.e. look both ways for students, older students, and adults.

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## Preparedness Through Protective Actions

As a part of your emergency preparedness planning to protect your student body, there are two basic protective actions to consider - either evacuate the school building, or seek protection inside. Protection inside the school is appropriate when the posing threat is located outside or when the threat is close enough inside the school to prevent evacuation. There are three levels of inside protection:

1. **Lockdown** – Ensures that the threat cannot gain easy access to those who are locked-down within the school. Doors and windows are secured with locks. Personnel must remain in place until the threat is cleared. During a lockdown there should be no student movement inside the school and students should be locked in their classrooms. Administrators must ensure that no students are isolated in a bathroom or hallway.
2. **Shelter-in-Place** – Protects students and personnel from an atmospheric threat (i.e., airborne contaminants resulting from chemical, biological or radiological attacks or accidents.) Personnel must remain in the innermost rooms of the building, if possible, and steps must be taken to seal windows and outside doors against the threat (i.e., fumes, aerosol, vapor, radiation.) The heating ventilation and cooling system (HVAC) must be turned off to prevent outside air from being forced into the school. Minimize outside air infiltration by placing available materials under the door and in the openings of the air vents.
3. **Take Cover** – Provides protection from outside threats with overwhelming over-pressures such as tornadoes, hurricanes, and nearby explosions. If possible, take cover in basements and interior rooms. Personnel/students should seek cover under sturdy desks, tables or similar objects.

The decision to evacuate or remain in the building must be made on a case-by-case basis and will depend on the location of the threat, its mobility, and possible contain-

ment. **The guiding principle is to avoid moving students toward the threat.** To decide whether an evacuation is appropriate, determine if students can safely exit the building without moving toward the threat. If it appears an evacuation would place students in greater jeopardy, seek protection within the school.

For some DoDEA administrators, dividing protective actions into lockdown, shelter-in-place, take cover and evacuation might be a new idea. The distinction helps administrators plan a response appropriate to the threat. For example during an incident with a violent armed intruder, a general lockdown would be appropriate. On the other hand, if students take cover from an advancing typhoon, it would be more appropriate to let students move from their classroom to an interior room.

During a lockdown it is important to secure all classroom doors so that an intruder cannot enter a classroom from the hallway. However, during a shelter-in-place in response to an aerosol cloud from an ammonia leak, locking the interior doors would not be necessary, but covering windows and doors and turning off the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system would be advisable.

Real life situations are often more complicated than drills, but the more you familiarize school staff with procedures, the better they can respond during a crisis. Consider this caveat with the violent intruder scenario, if it is possible to confine the perpetrator within a certain area of the school, partial evacuation procedures could be implemented to move students who are not in jeopardy outside, and further away from the threat. ■



## Six Tips for Conducting Student Surveys

According to DoDEA administrators the key to surveying students begins with convincing students to take the questionnaires seriously. Some DoDEA schools, such as Kadena Middle School, in Japan, have had success using surveys. Below are six suggestions on how to implement your surveys effectively:

1. **Limit the number of questions you ask...**Select only questions relevant to your school. Consider selecting twelve to fifteen questions from the student survey in the Safe Schools Handbook.
2. **Limit the number of students participating in the survey...**If you only have a few personnel to administer surveys, include a representative cross-section of the student body. The modest sized survey group will yield some useful information.
3. **Plan how you will use the results...**Picture how you will use the answers to your survey as you select the questions. For example, an elementary school might include the question: "I see other kids picking on students at school." The answers might result in a line in their report to the Safe Schools Committee stating, "20 percent of our students observed bullying behavior by other students."
4. **Use Instructions to Limit Student Exaggeration...**Pre-empt this response by asking survey administrators to explain to students, "The administrator and Safe School Committee care about student safety and security at this school, but they need your honest answers to understand how to improve security." Impress upon students that their answers matter and will be used to improve the school climate. A brief sobering introduction usually improves the thoughtfulness of student responses.
5. **Perception Equals Reality...**Surveys unveil the respondent's perceptions of school security, and believe it or not are their reality. If students report they are concerned about their personal safety in a specific location (i.e. bathrooms) then that is a security concern, even if it seems to you that there is no rational reason for their fear. Student perceptions of danger can be addressed by increasing lighting or supervision in that area.

6. **Evaluate Repeatedly...**Survey students again three months later and compare the results to determine whether your revised measures are working. Did improving lighting in the bathrooms help students feel safer? Did increasing adult supervision decrease bullying? Surveys provide powerful documentation to support your decisions and help you fine-tune your Safe School Plan. For more information on student surveys, go to: [www.greenbush.org](http://www.greenbush.org) [www.pridesurveys.com](http://www.pridesurveys.com) or [www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed417244.html](http://www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed417244.html). ■

## A Word About Student Surveys

Student Surveys are intended to help the administrator and safe school committee identify problems and write policy, program and physical security measures that address these concerns. Whether you are attempting to improve school safety or security, begin by surveying your students to gain their perceptions of your school's progress. Then implement security measures in response to any problems your surveys unearth.

Finally, measure student attitudes later to determine the effect of any new measures you have implemented. As President Bush recently stated during his September visit to a Tennessee elementary school, "unless you measure [your students' perceptions] you don't know whether expectations are being achieved." ■

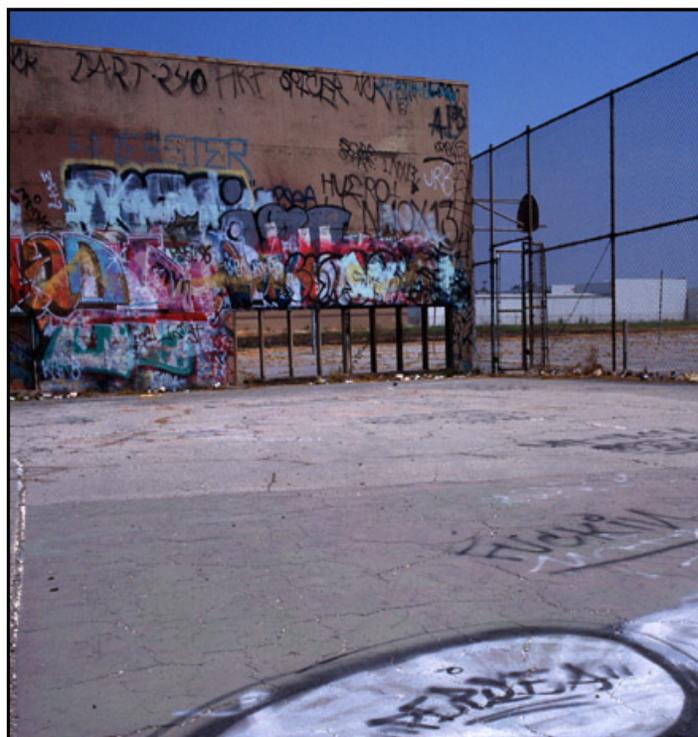


Don't forget to e-mail us at: [safeschools@csc.com](mailto:safeschools@csc.com) with any questions you may have about student surveys.

## Involve Students in School Safety

The National School Safety Center (NSSC) notes that students are both the cause and victims of much of the crime and misbehavior in school. NSSC outlines several activities administrators can use to help students take responsibility for school security. Use the following six actions to involve students in your school's safety efforts:

1. **Promote Student Responsibility:** Create a Student Safety Committee to identify safety and security problems and solutions.
2. **Encourage Student Input:** Select two students from each grade level to sit on a committee to review policies at the beginning and end of every semester.
3. **Teach Conflict Resolution:** Implement conflict resolution programs to teach students how to avoid disagreements.
4. **Establish Student Safety Groups:** Consider establishing local chapters of student safety groups. Groups such as Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) and Arrive Alive offer guidance on how students can sponsor alcohol-free social activities.
5. **Develop a Buddy System:** Assign current students to "newcomers" to facilitate safe transitions for incoming students. Also appoint older, bigger students to look out for students who are being harassed.



6. **Start a School Beautification Campaign:** Recruit a work crew of students and volunteer administrators to clean up and repaint vandalized areas of the school. Planting flower gardens, repainting the school entrance and creating attractive signs welcoming visitors are inexpensive projects that allow students, parents, and school staff to work together. These projects enhance the appearance of the community and develop a strong sense of pride among students and staff.

Students who participate in security activities are more likely to feel a sense of ownership in the school and alert school staff to potential safety and security problems. As students encourage each other to avoid conflict and report bullying, school climate and academic performance will improve. ■

## Working With Parents to Create a Safer School Environment

Strengthening partnerships between parents and teachers improves the school climate and decreases the risk of incidents of violence. The National Parent Teachers Association (PTA) publication, *Discipline: A Parent's Guide*, outlines ideas you can adapt to your school. The PTA guide states that a parents' main responsibility is to set a good example: "Children learn more by parents' actions than from their words. Parental pride and involvement in the school sets a positive example for their children."

The following suggestions derived from the PTA guide have been modified for applicability to DoDEA school administrators:

- ◆ **Make time for students' parents.** Listen first — parents often just need to be heard. Try to conclude your conversation with parents with a commitment of support and a plan of action. The National PTA recommends that administrators and educators treat parents "with respect and courtesy — as colleagues in the education and development of their children."
- ◆ **Create an open-door policy that makes it simple for parents to visit your school.** Organize two to three monthly brown bag lunches for parents to meet teachers and administrators. Accommodate working parents with flexible hours. Let parents know you are open late for their convenience.
- ◆ **Develop a procedure for parent meetings.** Ensure that teachers and administrators welcome parents warmly and have a plan for how to respond to a surprise visit by parents (i.e., discuss your safe school plan or academic progress). The National PTA understands that "Many parents are concerned about their children's educational progress and safety, about school policies and programs, and about taking a proactive part in bettering the school climate."

- ◆ **Proactively contact parents.** Call parents at home or e-mail them to congratulate them on a child's special achievement or thank them for support on a project. Thank you notes and a message on an answering machine are well received.

Student behavior and academic performance improves when children realize that their parents and teachers are working together to support their success in school. ■



Please share your ideas on prevention programs and safe schools news with us.

Consider submitting an article or just a few tips for your colleagues for the next issue of this DoDEA sponsored newsletter!

**Send your ideas or an article to: [safeschools@csc.com](mailto:safeschools@csc.com), or phone us toll-free at: 1-(866) 711-6477.**