A LONG AND PROUD HISTORY

The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) has a long and proud history of serving military-connected families at locations around the world. Throughout its 75 year history, each of our organizational entities, past and present, has a rich and proud history of service to military families. Each employee and student (past and present) is an integral part of DoDEA’s history.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The tasks of documenting and preserving the history of the Department of Defense (DoD) school system as well as honoring/celebrating the rich history and traditions of our past is of enormous importance and value to DoDEA, the DoD, and the Nation. Documenting the DoDEA mission changes and growth of delivering a quality education to military-connected children around the globe provides critical history and data for future leaders. The preservation of our system’s history, including individual schools, helps mold the legacy for future generations and for the millions of Americans who were educated overseas and in DoD schools stateside since 1946.

PURPOSE OF THIS TIP SHEET

This tip sheet with help Principals and staff to better understand
Preserving your school’s history and legacy...
Discovering the past, understanding the present, and creating a better future.

and celebrate the remarkable history and story of each local school as well as the unique contributions of employees and students (past and present) in telling our collective story. It is important for us to honor the rich history and traditions of DoDEA’s past and preserve the events, contributions, people and accomplishments today and in the future. It is equally important to promote, highlight, and sustain this ongoing legacy in our schools and communities by:

- Exploring the history of each school to determine how that local educational history relates to both military community and school system development;
- Documenting and maintaining the history of each school;
- Archiving artifacts and memorabilia that support that history; and
- Using the print and digital tools available in our schools/ offices to “tell the stories of our students, teachers and memorabilia/artifacts in commemoration of our 75th Anniversary and preserve these stories for future historical commemorations.

This tool will help you realize the responsibility and role we all share in telling our continuing story to... discover the past, understand the present, and create a better future for each local school and community.

HOW CAN STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM DISCOVERING AND PRESERVING LOCAL SCHOOL HISTORY?

Many state education agencies promote teaching, learning, and student research on the history of schools. Students can benefit in several ways from researching their school’s history.

- Cognitive skills.
- Critical thinking skills.
- Writing skills
- Storytelling (expressing student views on specific developments in school history)

THERE IS A CONNECTION TO OUR STANDARDS!

The DoDEA 4th grade College and Career Ready Standards for History/Social Studies include a section...
on applying the various skills in social studies to the Geography and History of DoDEA from World War II to the present. It is a wonderful way to create a shared understanding among students of who we are and why it is important.

The link below to the social studies standards underscores the value added when students are engaged in local school history and geography. [https://www.dodea.edu/Curriculum/socialStudies/upload/FINAL-DoDEA-SS-K-5-2020-Standards-Document.pdf](https://www.dodea.edu/Curriculum/socialStudies/upload/FINAL-DoDEA-SS-K-5-2020-Standards-Document.pdf)

THE ROLE OF STORYTELLING IN PRESERVING HISTORY AND LEGACY
Source: National Storytelling Network [https://storynet.org/about-nsn/](https://storynet.org/about-nsn/)

The National Storytelling Network defines storytelling as the interactive art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story while encouraging the listener’s imagination.

- Storytelling is interactive.
- Storytelling uses words.
- Storytelling uses actions such as vocalization, physical movement and gesture.
- Storytelling presents a story.
- Storytelling encourages the active imagination of the listeners.

Storytelling can add content and meaning to the artifacts and memorabilia we preserve. Print and digital stories capture the impact and meaning of our experiences to which our students and educators are witnesses. They document the success and impact of the unique culture that each DoD School has created to serve military-connected families.

The National Storytelling Network says “that there are many cultures on earth, each with rich traditions, customs and opportunities for storytelling. All these forms of storytelling are valuable.”

USING STORYTELLING TO CREATE LASTING MEMORIES

Author Kathleen Kennedy, President of the Center for Communication and Engagement, says that one of the most significant factors in setting a district’s brand apart from others can be the quality of the storytelling.

“When it comes to school districts, we have many stories to tell. But we must capitalize on them and bring our audience along for the journey. Think of major college brands and how they use their colors, their mascot, fight songs, even the type fonts in marketing collateral. Then look at how they create a story of how you would feel and fit in on their campus. If you are not doing this yet, you should! Start by asking: How do our students fit in? Why do our teachers make the difference? Create a story using your points of interest and emotional adjectives, by weaving it into the real lives of people your district affects or staff members making a difference every day.” Source: Leading Off: Develop Loyal and Trusting Stakeholders through Authentic’ Branding, [https://www.nspra.org/e_network/2021-03_leading-off](https://www.nspra.org/e_network/2021-03_leading-off).

stories from past and current students/employees. The Museum of the American Military Family & Learning Center has recently published an anthology of stories titled, Schooling with Uncle Sam. A copy of this anthology was sent to every school information center for cataloging earlier this year.

**HOW CAN PRINCIPALS GET STARTED?**

This initial project may not get finished this school year. It is important to start the process of recording the history and having an ongoing plan to add to it as time goes on. Some first steps to consider follow.

- Establish a school-wide committee to review and update your school’s history. Use the references and resources provided to guide your work.
- Engage students in researching and writing a complete history of their school. It may be useful to involve more than one class in this project. Each class could research developments relating to a separate decade or topic.
- Promote the preservation of your local school’s history by using civic participation skills to engage students in a service project.
- Design a bulletin board or display at the school entrance depicting a pictorial history of the school. Underscore the unique contributions and achievements of your schools, students, and employees and document that story.
- Preserve your school’s history by sending memorabilia and artifacts to our archives at the American Overseas Schools Historical Society (AOSHS) in accordance with the DoDEA issuance. [https://www.dodea.edu/aboutDoDEA/AOSHSMemorabilia.cfm](https://www.dodea.edu/aboutDoDEA/AOSHSMemorabilia.cfm)
- Support the AOSHS initiative to digitalize every school yearbook. Ensure that your past and future yearbooks are sent to the AOSHS archives to be preserved and accessible for the future. [https://www.dodea.edu/75/upload/dodea-aoshs-yearbook-initiative.pdf](https://www.dodea.edu/75/upload/dodea-aoshs-yearbook-initiative.pdf)

**WHERE TO LOOK WHEN RESEARCHING YOUR HISTORY**

**Source:** Consider the Source NY: Researching the History of Your School

**HISTORICAL RESOURCES IN THE COMMUNITY:** A variety of historical records and other resources (photographs, video) may be found in the Community Library or in the command’s Public Affairs or Historical Office. Institutions and people in the community can provide other historical records and informational resources.

**SCHOOL RESOURCES:** School yearbooks are wonderful sources of information on local school history. They provide a graphic view of school life, ranging from how students looked to what they did in extracurricular hours. Like yearbooks, school newspapers are a form familiar to students. They reflect the range of school activities, issues of importance to students, and the attitudes of students toward those issues. They are often a lively and amusing resource for student research. Student handbooks show the variety of past rules and regulations. They reveal society’s changing social mores through...
statements on appropriate conduct, proper dress standards, and general behavior requirements.

**SCHOOL MEMORABILIA:** Many people keep a variety of remembrances from their school years. Class photographs, school play programs, concert programs, sports or academic awards, and club activity programs reflect various aspects of school social life.

**PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS:** An interesting way of obtaining individual perspectives and other valuable information is to conduct “oral history” interviews. Students can interview school graduates, teachers, and administrators. People often recall and will share information that is not recorded on paper about past events. These interviews, whether taped or written, are rich resources for understanding the educational system.

**LOCAL NEWSPAPERS/WEBSITES:** Articles frequently appear here on school activities and a variety of educational issues. The newspaper (print or digital) can reflect contemporaneous opinions on a variety of social and educational topics related to the school. Newspaper files also sometimes retain photographs taken or used by the newspaper’s staff.

**FACILITY INFORMATION:** Original military construction and subsequent structural modifications can be traced through building plans. Your school or community facility engineer will have access to past construction projects, and photos

**DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:** Data helps give content to your history and stories is helpful to preserve (enrollment, faculty rosters, school pictures, names of school principals.

**STUDENT ACTIVITIES:** Student activities speak volumes about the culture and climate of a school. Awards and recognition should be an important part of the story.

**NOTABLE ATTENDEES OR GRADUATES:** Military-connected students from schools across the system have gone on to contribute and thrive in every aspect of American life and culture. Some have achieved celebrity status for their accomplishments.

**WHERE SHOULD INFORMATION BE PUBLICIZED AND ARCHIVED?**

- Update and publish a condensed and concise history of each local school on your website and in school handbooks. Each school website has an About Our School tab to highlight this history.
- Build a larger permanent collection related to your school’s history in the local school information center.
- Students can “publish” the history in the school newspaper. The local newspaper/website may be willing to publish the history as well.
- Share your history with:
  - The installation library and the command’s historian or historical office.
  - American Overseas Schools Historical Society (AOSHS)
CONCLUSION... WE ALL HAVE A ROLE IN TELLING THE CONTINUING STORY...

The DoDEA experience is characterized by an enduring commitment to excellence in every facet of teaching and learning – to provide military-connected children with the education they need and deserve.

This is a legacy that we can all promote and sustain in our schools and communities by “telling the stories” of our students and teachers (past and present) in commemoration of our 75th Anniversary!

WHILE THERE HAS BEEN MUCH CHANGE OVER THE HISTORY OF DODEA, ONE THING REMAINS CONSTANT IN EVERY SCHOOL-- STUDENTS ARE AT THE CORE OF EVERYTHING WE DO.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, REFERENCES, AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

• Consider the Source NY: Researching the History of Your School: Suggestions for Students and Teachers. ConsidertheSourceNY.org is a derivative of DocsTeach.org, the online tool for teaching with documents from the National Archives and National Archives Foundation https://considerthesourceny.org/using-primary-sources/researching-history-your-school


• DoDEA's 75th Anniversary Website: https://www.dodea.edu/75/index.cfm

• American Overseas Schools Historical Society (AOSHS): https://aosh.org/
