



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY  
HEADQUARTERS  
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FEB 10 2021

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DEPENDENTS EDUCATION COUNCIL

SUBJECT: Summary of the December 10, 2020 Dependents Education Council

On December 10, 2020, the Dependents Education Council (DEC) convened at the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) Headquarters, 4800 Mark Center Drive, Alexandria, VA. The event was hosted by Mr. Will Bushman, Performing the Duties of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. Mr. Thomas Brady, Director, DoDEA, served as Executive Secretary. A copy of the agenda and list of attendees is attached.

**Opening Remarks:**

Following roll call and introductions, Mr. Brady welcomed council members, introduced Mr. Bushman, and turned to him for opening remarks.

Mr. Bushman expressed his honor to once again host the DEC on behalf of the Honorable Mr. Matthew Donovan, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. Mr. Bushman remarked on how productive the last DEC was in outlying DoDEA's strategy to operate schools in the face of the COVID-19 virus. He said, that although fatigue has led to inconsistencies in our nation - and the international community - in addressing a resurgence of the virus, DoDEA schools continue to implement a comprehensive strategy that maximizes in-school opportunities, while ensuring a seamless transition to remote operations when required.

Mr. Bushman added that while we will continue operating under pandemic driven conditions the remainder of this school year, the purpose of the December DEC is to discuss the priorities and plans for the 2nd school semester.

He concluded his comments by recognizing DoDEA's resolve to ensure quality educational opportunities were provided in a safe, compassionate, and exceptional manner. He then turned the meeting back to Mr. Thomas Brady

Mr Brady emphasized how much partnerships with military leadership contributed to successful school operations the previous semester, and how critical these partnerships will be for the upcoming school year. Following is a summary of his opening remarks to the council:

"Last June, I highlighted the importance of having a plan that permitted flexibility in what educational programs could be offered, and I could not be more proud of my team's ability to adapt to ever changing situations in all three of our regions. In the spirit of flexibility, we made adjustments along the way, and we intend to continue educational options in the same manner during the second half of this school year.

The introduction of a vaccine is exciting, but I do not foresee a vaccine making a significant difference in our operations this school year. We will partner with installation

commanders to open as many of our schools to in-school operations as possible, however, we will also demonstrate the same levels of safety, risk mitigation, and flexibility in our planning and execution, as during the first half of the school year.

Finally, let me thank you for the continued partnership and flexibility that you and your subordinate commands have provided to support our schools. Working together we have provided safe school operations, which ultimately allows us to operate our schools in-person.”

Mr. Brady then asked Dr. Beth Schiavino-Narvaez, the DoDEA Chief Academic Officer, to begin her presentation.

Dr. Narvaez told council members the theme for her brief is “Stronger Together” as it amplifies the importance—*more than ever*—of partnerships, in order to safely operate schools during these unprecedented times. She added, the partnerships forged last spring were critical to opening schools for in-person learning, and making solid, safe decisions, for all families.

Dr. Narvaez explained that her presentation covered three chapters of the DoDEA story as the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded:

1. Preparation.
2. School Operations.
3. Moving Forward.

Highlights from her brief are summarized below:

### **Preparation:**

Throughout the summer and fall of 2020, DoDEA aligned a comprehensive strategy with respective installation leadership, and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). In accordance with this coordination, DoDEA released four iterations of guidance and protocols, to meet changing requirements.

DoDEA preparation also included Table Top Exercises (TTX) with installation leadership. The first TTX was hosted in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and the practice continued across all regions. These scenario based exercises created the muscle memory needed to conduct contact tracing and information sharing.

Last year there was a *soft open* in Korea at the end of the school year, and lessons learned from that process informed the planning for in person learning. However, in areas classified Health Protection Condition (HP CON) Charlie, DoDEA schools were prepared to provide students the best possible learning experience in a remote environment.

There were families who wanted a Virtual School (DVS) option regardless of the school situation at the end of August. This was particularly true for those with certain health vulnerabilities, and in fact, about 15% of DoDEA students wanted this option. To that end, DoDEA created an unprecedented scale-up of DVSs; from a supplementary program for secondary students only, to a full time option for students in Kindergarten to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

This option included accepting students early to the DVS even before a delayed Permanent Change of Station (PCS), and the ability for students who begin the school year in a DVS, to complete the semester with DoDEA, through an Emergency and Extraordinary Expense (EEE) authority that received support from Ms. Penrod, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs

### **Partnerships:**

In conjunction with the Army, Air Force Exchange Stores (AAFES), we put sourcing in place for the supplies and equipment needed to open schools safely. Our Procurement team executed contracts to support VS courseware, and our Facilities team worked with government and contracted specialists, to ensure schools were thoroughly cleaned and sanitized.

Perhaps the most important DoDEA partnership is the one with our parents. At locations where we could open schools, parents signed a form committing to pre-screen - *and keep* - sick children home. Letting our guard down will keep us from being successful, so we rely very much on commanders in the field to help reinforce health and safety practices. To underscore this, Dr. Narvaez played a video from Camp Lejeune, Marine Corps, Sargent Major, Charles A. Metzger, who reiterated leadership's role in encouraging parents to remain vigilant.

### **School Operations:**

Parents were required to commit to the first semester's mode of instruction: select the virtual option, *or* move forward with the local school. Through thousands of emails, helpdesk tickets, and phone calls, our Education Partnership and Resources team joined our Communications Office to keep parents informed of their options. We felt it important not to require parents to make a yearlong commitment, as many other districts did, which allowed parents to make decisions based on their *current* situation.

Dr. Narvaez then presented a video from Kadena High School demonstrating some of the expectations the school set for the start of the school year. After the video she continued her remarks:

Another challenge was expanding virtual schools from a supplemental program to a full-time program. Launching full-time DVS required several tasks:

- Purchasing curriculum designed specifically for the online environment.
- Transferring nearly 600 brick and mortar teachers to VSs and training them to implement the curriculum, in the online environment.
- Supporting students as they moved to online learning, and providing day-by-day live interaction for individual students.
- Expanding services to meet the full-time needs of special education, and English language learners.

Later, Dr. Narvaez presented a chart showing the total COVID cases by month for students and teachers in DoDEA. The chart presented the total current number of cases while highlighting an increase over time - especially over the past month. She added, while DoDEA

understands some want to open up student activities and pull back restrictions, we must remain vigilant in the midst of rising cases throughout America and Europe. She said as the situation

improves, DoDEA will re-evaluate precautionary measures and consider where more opportunities can be provided.

### **Innovative Thinking and Staying Flexible:**

Dr. Narvaez recognized Shelby Stewart, 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Sembach Elementary School for the creative ways she involved her students when her class had to be quarantined, and she praised the work of counselors who created videos around important topics, hosted virtual college and career fairs, and developed sites with support resources for students and families. She added that another example of innovative thinking was the virtual team athletic competitions in Okinawa and across Europe.

### **Moving Forward:**

Dr. Narvaez opened the third part of her presentation by telling the council amid all the challenges brought on by the pandemic, DoDEA maintains the excellence everyone has come to expect. Specifically:

- Opening a world class learning facility in Fort Rucker, Alabama.
- Three DoDEA schools earned the Blue Ribbon Award for academic excellence (Sasebo Elementary School, Heroes Elementary School Camp Lejeune, and Landstuhl Elementary/Middle School).
- Two DoDEA teachers earned the Presidential Award for excellence in math and science teaching (Ms. Alysia Durham of Fort Campbell High School, and Ms. Anna Sansone of Vicenza Middle School).
- Ensuring OCONUS military families could take advantage of the free meals program provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to stateside public schools.

She added that DoDEA wanted to provide the right amount of teacher – student interaction, at the elementary grades, where ongoing interaction is especially critical for learning. She went on to say, while a majority of students report satisfaction with the time spent talking to their teachers, DoDEA does have room for growth in this area. She added that parents are also mostly satisfied with the frequency of communication between their children and teachers, however, as with students, DoDEA continues to work on increasing the opportunities for interaction with teachers. Finally, she said results are mixed when it comes to spending time with friends from school, but DoDEA is trying to bolster ways in which students can interact with their friends.

Dr. Narvaez told the council, as conditions improved in the Americas and Pacific region for the second semester, there was a 1/3<sup>rd</sup> shift of virtual students (3,500) to in-person instruction - especially with elementary grade students. She went on to say DoDEA is *rightsizing* to meet the needs of virtual, and, in-person students. For example, staffing for the second semester must be complete prior to the holiday break, along with safety training for teachers and students. She said while DoDEA is ready to make the transition at the start of the second semester, DoDEA will monitor the pandemic and availability of vaccines to determine future virtual options.

In addition to nearly 70,000 students served, DoDEA also partners with several public schools that serve military-connected students. This partnership resulted in 21 grants this year and was a positive impact for military connected students. For example; teachers in the O’Fallon Township High School (serving students from Scott Air Force Base), used DoDEA grants to purchase new surface pros for remote learning, and when students returned to the classroom, their labs were outfitted to prepare student for careers in science and mathematics.

Before showing the final video from Lachanda Garrison, Europe South District, 2021 DoDEA Teacher of the Year, Bahrain Elementary School, Dr. Narvaez concluded her presentation with the following comments:

“The pandemic has created unique challenges for DoDEA and forced us to respond in creative ways, and some of these innovations will be sustained into the future. Administrators and teachers have adapted to the online environment and we have built significant capacity to sustain a blended learning environment moving forward. A blended learning environment takes the best from *both* environments – in-person *and* online – allowing for more personalized learning equity for those students who thrive in the online environment, capitalizes on flexibility to balance home and school, and builds off of the technical skills of our students.

The other critical capacity we have capitalized on is our enhanced partnership with the military to meet the physical and emotional needs of students. What we have accomplished in opening our schools for in-person instruction this school year, was made possible because of our strong relationship and ongoing support from our military partners. We needed you, and you came through, and we will build off of this partnership into the future.”

**Teacher of the Year:**

Through video, Ms. Garrison gave an impassioned presentation on the positive impact innovative tools and technology had on her ability to ensure students become successful, stay connected and allow teachers to meet DoDEA’s mission (educate, engage, and empower military-connected students to succeed in a dynamic world).

With the presentation complete, Mr. Brady opened the meeting to comments or questions:

Comment: A concern was raised from Europe and the Pacific on the proposal to eliminate additional U.S adult monitors on school busses. Adult bus monitors (U.S) are especially helpful in assisting non-English speaking bus drivers.

Response: Mr. Brady informed the council he understands their concern and he will take another look at this.

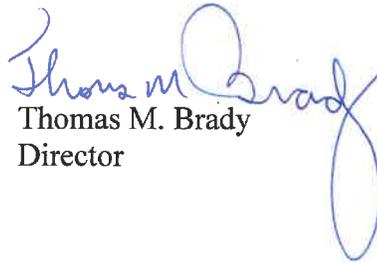
Hearing no additional questions, Mr. Brady invited Mr. Bushman to provide his closing comments.

**Closing comments.**

Mr Bushman thanked Mr. Brady, Dr. Narvaez, the DoDEA staff, and the entire council of DEC representatives, for the exhaustive and comprehensive measures taken to sustain the highest level possible while educating military connected students through the unprecedented turmoil caused by COVID 19. He praised the flexibility, creative use of technology, and above all the commitment of teachers, counselors, students and families to follow the strategic plans set by the DoDEA Director. Mr. Busman also had high praise for the military and DoD leadership who - not only welcomed the partnership with DoDEA – but sought it out. Concluding his remarks, Mr. Bushman told the council as rewarding and productive the DEC is, there is a possibility this will be his last.

Mr. Brady thanked Mr. Bushman for his comments, and he gave accolades to Dr. Narvaez and the DoDEA staff for a productive and relevant presentation. He also reiterated the criticality of the partnership between DoDEA and the military commands and DoD Agencies. He said he looked forward to the next DEC, but assured everyone DoDEA would not waiver in the face of the pandemic to educate, engage and empower military connected children.

The meeting was adjourned.

  
Thomas M. Brady  
Director

Attachments:  
DEC Agenda  
DEC List of Participants

DECEMBER 10 2020 DEPENDENTS EDUCATION COUNCIL (DEC)

HOST:

Mr. Will Bushman

Performing the Duties of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY:

Mr. Thomas Brady

Director, Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA)

AGENDA

OPENING COMMENTS	Mr. Will Bushman  Mr. Thomas Brady
STRONGER TOGETHER: OPENING SCHOOLS SAFELY <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preparation</li><li>• School Operations</li><li>• Moving Forward</li></ul>	Dr. Beth Schiavino – Narvaez, DoDEA Chief Academic Officer
TEACHER OF THE YEAR	Ms. Lachanda Garrison, DoDEA 2021 Teacher of the Year
CLOSING COMMENTS	DEC Council Members Mr. Will Bushman Mr. Thomas Brady

## LIST OF ATTENDEES

Mr. Will Bushman,  
Performing the Duties of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

Mr. Thomas Brady,  
Director, Department of Defense Education Activity

Attendees	Representing
Mr. Armentrout, Charles	Deputy Commander, U.S. Air Forces Europe (Air Forces Africa)
Ms. Balocki, Marie	Commandant of the Marine Corps
Colonel, Barrett, Sean	Commander, U.S. Forces Japan
Lieutenant General, Basham, Steven	Commander, U.S. Air Forces Europe – Air Forces Africa
Dr. Beland, Russ	Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower & Reserve Affairs)
Ms. Biggers, Ann	Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command
Mr. Brady, Robert	DoDEA, Financial & Business Operations
Major General, Braga, Jonathan	Commander, U. S. Army Pacific
Mr. Brindley, Brian	DoDEA, Operations, Plans, Legislation & Policy
Mr. Brinkmann, Michael	Commander, U.S. European Command
Ms. Brown, Meghan	Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Mr. Burcham, Jay	DoDEA, Chief of Staff
Mr. Butler, David	DoDEA, Education Projects Specialist
Mr. Cannon, Ed	Department of the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations
Ms. Carawan, Evonne	Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower & Reserve Affairs)
Mr. Croce, John	Pacific Fleet, Personnel and Family Readiness
Mr. Cunningham, Oliver	Commander, U. S. Forces Korea
Ms. Daily-Rath, Elaine	Commander, Pacific Air Forces
Lieutenant General Evans, Jason T.	Headquarters, Department of the Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-9
Colonel Ferry, Todd	Commanding General, U. S. Marine Corps Installation Comma
Ms. Fischer, Keri	Commander, Marine Corps Forces Pacific
Dr. Freeman, Thomas	National Security Agency
Ms. Frye, Stefanie	Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Manpower & Reserve Affairs)
Ms. Ganote, Dianna	Department of the Air Force, Chief of Staff
Ms. Garrison, Lachanda	DoDEA 2021 Teacher of the Year
Major General Gayler, William	Commander, United States Africa Command
Ms. Geise, Dee	Headquarters, Department of the Army, Deputy Chief of Staff G-9
Mr. Goben, Tom	Commandant of the Marine Corps

Mr. Godfrey, Michael	DoDEA, Operations, Plans, Legislation, & Policy
Rear Admiral Gray, Scott C.	U.S. Naval Forces Europe - Africa
Ms. Grice, Jean	DoDEA, Pacific Region DEC Subject Matter Expert
Captain Harris, Shane	Commander, U.S. Africa Command
Lieutenant Colonel Harrison, Carina	Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Manpower & Reserve Affairs)
Mr. Hashimoto, Mark	Headquarters, Marine Corps Forces Pacific
Mr. Hovanic, Stephen	DoDEA, Americas Chief of Staff
Dr. Howard-Brahaney, Michelle	DoDEA Europe South District, Superintendent
Dr. Kelker, Charles	DoDEA, Europe Chief of Staff
Mr. Larry, Horace	Department of Air Force, Chief of Staff
Major General McKeithen, Timothy	Commander, U. S. Army Pacific
Dr. McMullen, Dell	DoDEA, Europe Director of Student Excellence
Mr. McShane, Steven	Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Dr. Minor, Judith	DoDEA, Americas Director of Student Excellence
Colonel Mueller, Scotty	Commander, U.S. European Command
Ms. Nolta, Christy	Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Manpower and Reserve Affairs)
Ms. Phillips, Mary	Department of the Air Force, Chief of Staff
Ms. Pigg, Nanette	IMCOM Army Schools Program Manager
Ms. Rapp, Lois	DoDEA, Pacific Director of Student Excellence
Colonel Rice, Trina	Commander, U. S. Army Europe
Dr. Schiavino-Narvaez, Beth	DoDEA, Chief Academic Officer
Mr. Schlitz, Todd	DoDEA, Pacific Chief of Staff
Major General Smith, Tammy	Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower & Reserve Affairs)
Lieutenant General Thomas, Jon	Commander, Pacific Air Forces
Ms. Traugott, Christine	Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower & Reserve Affairs)
Brigadier General Wellons, James	Commander, US Forces Japan
Major General Williams, Stephen	Commander, U. S. Forces Korea
Captain Yatko, Lyn	Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command