

Teacher to Teacher

A DoDEA Teachers of the Year Publication

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2006 DoDEA TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Patricia Salerno

**2006 Mediterranean District
Teacher of the Year
and
2006 DoDEA
Teacher of the Year**

Examples of Life-Long Learners

As the 2006 DoDEA Teacher of the Year, my message is "Keep Learning." Whether you are a student, teacher, parent, grandparent, or a single adult with no children, keep learning. Read, learn how to use a computer, take a class, and read some more. Improve your vocabulary with crossword puzzles, build something new, cook something new, or plant a garden. Explore! As an adult, you are a twenty-four hour a day example (good or bad), to every young person who sees you. It's up to you whether or not you have a positive or negative impact on that child who sees or hears you. It was interesting last summer to notice how most adults passed time on a nine and a half hour plane trip from Munich to Philadelphia. I saw many reading, but many were obviously bored. The movies offered were not very good, but some watched them just for something to do. Some talked the entire trip (those people usually sit right behind me), and some played hand-held video games. Others brought their own CD players (I dare to hope they were listening to books on tape), while a few worked on a laptop, paced back and forth, or slept. Some appeared to be examples of life-long learners who valued literacy and some were not. You decide.

A child who sees an adult enjoying learning a new activity is getting the idea that learning is something you do all of your life. A child who watches you recycle instead of litter knows you care about the environment. A child who hears you speak politely to salespeople in a store or sees you being helpful to others learns polite, helpful behavior. An adult who ignores the playing of the national anthem or shuffles paperwork during the pledge of allegiance is teaching disrespect for these symbols of our country. Teachers especially have a huge influence on every child who passes through their classes. Those students remember everything from your manner of speaking to your personal habits. When we follow a health lesson on nutrition by eating a lunch of chips and soda or no lunch at all, what are we telling them? If we have just had a visit from the DARE (Drug Awareness and Responsibility Education) officer and come to school reeking of cigarette smoke, what message are we sending? We can

preach safety and social responsibility, but are we examples of those qualities? Never let a child see you driving with a cell phone in hand or without a seat belt fastened. You lose all credibility when you don't practice what you teach.

I'm not saying all adults and especially teachers should be perfect. We all know that is impossible. It's that seeking to better ourselves academically, mentally, physically, emotionally, and socially that is our legacy to the next generation of citizens. We all have an awesome responsibility, not just to teach curriculum and standards, but also to teach by example.

2006 DoDEA Teacher Forum



Joseph Tafoya, Director, DoDEA, Patricia Salerno, and Irene Lee, 2005 DoDEA Teacher of the Year

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The Education of Change: Life as a Military Child

Rick Burcham
with son, Aaron Burcham

**2006 Heidelberg District
Teacher of the Year**

A typical first day in a middle school classroom often includes a time for students to share some background information about themselves. When I moved to Heidelberg, Germany four years ago, I employed this same “get to know you” activity with my new 6th grade class. I knew military kids moved a lot, but when I began asking each student about his/her personal life and past, I realized that I had entered a very different community from the one I had previously known. Whereas most of the inhabitants of my last residence of 20 years in Collinwood, Tennessee are born, bred, and raised in the same place and will likely go on to live there and work there for the remainder of their lives, military children face the reality of rarely having a predictable, long-term home or support group other than their family.

“Where are you from?” A quick examination of this sentence reveals a very general and even routine inquiry. In order to understand another human being, we frequently identify them based on their home place, the deep ties of identity we call roots. However, for the children of military servicemen and women, the simple question becomes a complicated web of constant moves, temporary duty in various locations around the globe, and the frequent act of leaving close friends. The answer many of my students gave ultimately became “everywhere and nowhere.” Although military children’s lives are characterized by the challenges of separation and lack of a permanent home, the hardships they face instill within them a willingness to experience life in spite of possible pitfalls and an open-minded attitude that allows them to become truly worldly.

This worldly behavior results from a military family’s ability to travel to the various countries surrounding their station. Children of service persons in foreign countries generally get to see “more of the world than most Americans will see in a lifetime” (qtd. in Greeley). Although the military life contains the many joys that go along with having the world so accessible, the children perceive great challenges usually at an early age. With the privilege to travel the world comes the price of never getting to remain in any part of it. Whereas the civilian inhabitants of a typical stateside town or city grow up together and spend years building friendships and trust, military children are forced to contend with these difficult emotions on a regular basis. As a result of these obstacles, military children acquire social survival skills that give them more of a gung-ho, carpe diem mentality that reflects their experiences. When a child realizes that they may go from living in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, to Taegu, South Korea, to Heidelberg, Germany, and finally to Aurora, South Dakota, all in the space of five years, he/she tends to immediately take a very proactive stance on life and generally scrap more of the feelings or worries of “Will I be good enough?” A child of a military serviceperson, Micheal

Hall, writes in a personal account that “my upbringing gave me some handy tools, like the illusion that I could keep reinventing myself” (Army Brat). Inversely, the kids who have lived in an area for an extended period of time (extended generally being at least five years in the same place for military personnel) just as quickly invite the newcomers with open arms into their groups. Patricia Long, a writer for Psychology Today, suggests that “military children tend to accept newcomers readily, perhaps because no one stays the ‘new kid on the block’ for long.” Students do not possess enough time to be picky or specific about with whom they spend their time. Although students generally do not force themselves to hang out with people they do not like, they do appear more likely to try new things and often become great friends with people they might not have otherwise given the time of day.

Without a clear notion of home, a military child creates an identity based on the various locations, experiences, and lives he/she has lead. Along with the hardships of leaving one’s past comes the ability to create a new life significantly independent of previous decisions and actions. A military child gets the chance to start over. Oftentimes the fears in our lives result from what is unknown to us. Changes serve to rock our world and shake up what can become an otherwise overly familiar pattern. They alter the status quo. When change becomes routine however, the fear melts way and objectivity takes its place. Survival is one of the greatest assets a military child gains from the sum total of his or her experiences of dealing with frequent change. By surviving the hardships inherent in the military way of life, a military child becomes more adept at dealing with any and all other challenges in life.

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*The mediocre teacher tells.
The good teacher explains.
The superior teacher demonstrates.
The great teacher inspires.*

~ William Arthur Ward

DoDEA teachers inspire!



A Philosophy of Teaching

Susan DeLoach

**2006 South Carolina/
Ft. Stewart District
Teacher of the Year**

All students excel in some area of education. Students deserve to know that they have something worthwhile to contribute to the classroom society. They deserve the chance to feel good in a classroom where the teacher teaches with a genuine affection for students. Students need the chance to learn and practice the correct way to socialize. They need to know they are in a safe environment and that the teacher will keep them safe.

My personal set of teaching standards are demonstrated by maintaining a classroom society where students feel good about themselves. Students' strengths are emphasized and used to improve areas of less strength. I do not have a quiet classroom. Rather, I have a classroom that to some may seem like controlled chaos, because I encourage socialization among students. I feel the best way to learn to get along with others is by having the opportunity to practice getting along. I consider my students my classroom family and encourage them to think this way, also. We take care of each other. We keep each other safe. We help out new classroom family members and keep in touch with classroom family members who have moved away. Students from former years know they are always welcome to drop by and say hello. Just because they are no longer in my classroom does not mean they are no longer important to me. I enjoy my former students visiting with their spouses and children.

The rewards I find in teaching would probably seem unimportant to others not in the field. I like watching a shy child who once played alone play with other children for the first time. I like watching as that child slowly, sometimes over days or weeks, finds enough courage to play with another child. I like watching as that same child is tagged "It" and runs along with a large group of children that only a few weeks before she would have just watched from far, far away. I like whispering the "secret" of learning to read to a child who has always struggled with anything more than the arduous sounding out of individual letters. I like seeing the "secret" click in his head as his smile shines from his eyes when the first big word is read. I like watching the pride in that child as he shares the "secret" with another struggling reader, not wanting me to notice, but deep-down hoping that I do, so that he knows that I know he's achieved the ultimate mastery, the teaching of another. I like hearing my favorite sayings repeated by the children when I least expect it. I like hearing the children mimic me when they are reading aloud. I know that among them possibly sits another generation of future teachers.



The New PE

Debbie Bryant

**2006 North Carolina District
Teacher of the Year**

What an awesome time for students to participate in the new physical education courses offered by DoDEA high schools! 'The New PE' is not just 'gym class' anymore, nor is it 'just another elective'. Three new, mandatory courses introduce students to important concepts and strategies needed to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle. A variety of athletic activities, nutrition, and personal habits are introduced to help students continue personal fitness practices throughout their lifetimes.

Personal Fitness is a mandatory, semester class for ninth graders. Students have the opportunity to learn how to attain a healthy lifestyle by participating in some non-traditional, physical fitness activities. These activities include: weight lifting, aerobics, circuit training, stretching, plyometrics, agility training, walking programs, and endurance/core strength activities. In addition, students learn about the food pyramid and how to create a personal, nutritionally sound, food plan. Students are taught to keep a journal and a food diary to collect and analyze data about their daily fitness activities and nutritional habits.

Lifetime Sports is another mandatory, semester physical education class. This course introduces students to basic skills, strategies, and rules in a variety of lifetime sports available beyond the high school campus. Students discover how to locate and to participate in these activities within the greater community. Activities include: cricket, softball, basketball, flag football, hockey, team handball, soccer, badminton, racquetball, volleyball, table tennis, tennis, pickle ball, archery, bowling, golf, and billiards.

Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) is a mandatory course designed to provide a variety of opportunities for students to experience alternative, non-competitive, non-traditional physical activities. Students learn how to balance daily physical activity and proper nutrition for lifelong fitness. Students explore community resources that are available for their personal fitness development for a lifetime. These activities include: yoga, tai chi, pilates, step aerobics, spinning, dance, biking, hiking, walking, canoeing, fishing, kayaking, climbing, skiing, orienteering, skating, and where available, aquatics and horseback riding.

Physical education instruction has gone high-tech to accommodate and compliment all physical education course offerings. Teachers utilize hand-held PCs to track daily fitness data, Polar watches to monitor cardiovascular data, and Tri-Fit machines to check each student's fitness level and to help students develop personal fitness plans. These technologies aid in immediate feedback for teachers and for students. Teachers can use the data to reflect on a lesson and to help them differentiate instruction when needed. Students create a fitness portfolio to keep track of their daily and overall progress. With the help of new technologies and a new, more comprehensive overall focus, 'The New PE' helps all students to develop life skills that will carry them beyond 'the gym' into healthy lifestyles. If you are interested in tracking your daily fitness and nutrition goals, go to <http://mypyramid.gov/>. This is a free site and has some great information. Don't delay, start today for a "new you".





Educational Trends and Issues

Shawn Rodman

2006 Bavaria District
Teacher of the Year

The major educational issue I see today is differentiation in instruction and adapting coursework to meet student needs. We all, teachers and students alike, learn in different ways. We come to the classroom with different strengths and weaknesses. I think it is critical to our student's success that educators adapt to what the student needs to ensure a higher level of success.

I recently had a situation with a player on my football team, who, by his own admission was too heavy and out of shape. On the first day of conditioning the team was doing pushups. I noticed that he could do about five while the rest of the team was doing 20. It was not because he was not trying, he just could not do it. I stopped him, told him to get some water and jog around the field. When he returned, he was crying. I explained to him that it did not make sense to have him lying on the ground attempting to do something he could not do. In the future, he was to do as many pushups as he could do and then get up and jog around the field. He said that he wanted to do what the team was doing. I told him that my plan was to have him do what the team was doing too, but we needed a different plan to get him there. Five weeks later he is up to 15 pushups and he isn't crying when he finishes his lap around the field. In fact, his entire attitude is changing, and he is becoming a contributing member of our team and a better student.

The same is true in the classroom. Why continue to teach students the same way, class after class, year after year, when some students just don't understand what is going on? They need a different plan to get them to the point that they can be productive in the classroom. If teachers give students assignments that they simply don't have the ability to do, then students are unproductive and don't improve. If teachers notice the abilities students bring to the classroom and give them doable tasks, students will gain confidence and begin to contribute to their own learning. The first part of the school year is critical to student success. We need to try to put students in a position to be successful from the first assignment, so make the first couple of assignments a lesson in success. The assignments don't need to be easier, just different enough so that success will happen for all students.

Teachers do what they do in the classroom because most of the time what they did was successful. With the recent push for standard-based education, teachers feel the pressure to get through the course to meet the standards. We need to be aware that there are many ways to meet one standard and to allow students to meet standards in different ways. In fact, if teachers explained the standards to students and what the goals and objectives of a class are, students may be able to come up with their own plans to meet the standards. If we

let students learn the way they learn best, school could be a much more productive place.

Teachers often say that it is too difficult to differentiate instruction. I do not think that it takes more work, just more communication. Talk to students and listen to what they think they need to learn. Let students make the plan to meet the standards and in the end, teachers will not have to do more work, just different work. After all, teachers would never accept being told that they have to teach their classes in the same manner as every other teacher in the school or district. Why then would we expect students to learn in the same way as every other student in the school or district?

HQ Reception



Diana Ohman, Director DoDEA-Europe congratulates Teachers of the Year.



Nora Alman and Alberta Clemmer speak with Susan Karlesses, DoDEA Secondary ELA Coordinator.



Anne Muse, DoDEA Business Manager; Frank O'Gara, DoDEA Communications Chief; and Nancy Bresell, Director DoDEA-Pacific enjoy the celebration.



Character Education

Strategies that Help Create an Environment that Dignifies Each Student and Guides Every Educator to Strengthen and Increase School's Unity and Morale

Jizela Dutka-Chirichetti

2006 Guam District Teacher of the Year

Character education is an essential tool for schools to be able to achieve the goal of developing moral character and civic virtue in our nation's youth. It is a way to create a more compassionate and responsible society. Education must encompass the learning not only of the subject matter, but also of qualities that will help develop respect for self and others. Only a full-orbed education will enable children to become responsible and productive citizens in the world.

Teachers should model exemplary citizenship in their daily lives and interactions with our youth. When embracing this profession, educators must be aware that their actions will always be watched and analyzed by youngsters whose minds are being formed and whose characters are developing. When teachers show a caring attitude towards a student's problem, or model the process of conflict resolution, or some other positive social value during our daily classroom interactions, students can see that a person's character is defined by her/his actions and not by words. Character education does not have to be passive, but methods and models can be incorporated into our schools' daily teaching activities.

One excellent vehicle is the Virtues Project. This educational methodology provides clear strategies that are easy to use. I have used these strategies in my classes for many years and have seen many students transform their behaviors in a matter of weeks! The Five Strategies of the Virtues Project help us to model purposeful lives, to develop a culture of character in our schools, and inspire excellence and service in the workplace. These strategies build foundations for safe and caring communities. The following is a brief description of the strategies, extracted from the book "The Virtues Project Educator's Guide: Simple Ways to Create a Culture of Character" by Linda Kavelin-Popov.

Strategy 1: Speak the Language of the Virtues

Language shapes character. The way we speak, and the words we use, have great power to discourage or to inspire. The language of virtues helps us to replace shaming and blaming with personal responsibility and respect. It is a frame of reference for bringing out the best in children and ourselves.

Strategy 2: Recognize Teachable Moments

Recognizing the gifts and life lessons in our daily challenges helps us to cultivate character in ourselves and others. When we have the humility and confidence to learn from our mistakes, every stumbling block becomes a stepping stone.

Strategy 3: Set Clear Boundaries

Virtues-based boundaries focus on respect, restorative justice and reparation to create a climate of peace and safety. Personal boundaries help us to build healthy relationships and protect our time, our energy and our health.

Strategy 4: Honor the Spirit

This strategy begins with respect for the dignity of each person and encourages us to make time for reflection, reverence,

and beauty. It is expressing what is meaningful in our lives by participating in the arts, honoring special life events, and sharing our stories.

Strategy 5: Offer Spiritual Companionship

By being deeply present and listening with compassion and detachment, we help others 'to empty their cup'. This counseling approach empowers others to recognize teachable moments and to reflect on their virtues. It supports moral choice, respect in relationships, and peaceful conflict resolution.

Our schools need to be a place where each individual is involved in enhancing and protecting an educational environment that creates continuous learning and productive citizenship. In order to make our schools a healthy organ in the body of our society, every cell, which is each person involved in the learning process, must be accountable for his/her actions and be willing to change for the better. The strategies described in this article provide some creative ways to reach each individual and inspire them to become flexible and ready to change. Character education is the preventive medicine that will keep our schools healthy and functioning, as they must be, in order to provide responsible people that will be able to carry on the work of keeping our society happy and healthy.



Dr. Chu, Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness; Taffy Corrigan, DoDEA Acting Associate Director for Education; Eric Combs, Joseph Tafoya, Director, DoDEA

Eric Combs Ohio Teacher of the Year

Shares Insights with DoD Schools

Eric Combs shared his journey from military member to teacher at an educational forum hosted by the Department of Defense Education Activity on 1 August. Combs, selected as the 2006 Teacher of the Year for the state of Ohio made the transition from soldier to citizen and teacher through the Troops to Teacher Program. As Ohio Teacher of the Year, Combs shares his experiences with teachers and educational leaders across the state and nation.

Combs brings to the classroom 20 years of experience in the United States Air Force (USAF) Security Forces. He trained with the world's elite soldiers and lived in communities throughout Europe, the Middle East and Asia.

Combs is known for his leadership in the professional development realm. "My message to teachers," says Combs, "is threefold: serve the students first, master your subject, and always defy mediocrity."



2006 DoDEA Teachers of the Year

Standing: Steven LaSalle, Puerto Rico District/Cuba; Shawn Rodman, Bavaria District; Deborah Jane Newman, Kentucky District; Jizela Dutka-Chirichetti, Guam District; Louise Thompson, Okinawa District; Nora E. Alman, New York/Virginia District; William F. Wilder, Korea District; Rick Burcham, Heidelberg District; Irene Lee, 2005 DoDEA Teacher of the Year

Sitting: Athanasia Lionikis, Kaiserslautern District; Debra Bryant, North Carolina District; Sherri O. McKendree, Georgia/Alabama District; Patricia Salerno, 2006 DoDEA Teacher of the Year; Susan DeLoach, South Carolina/Fort Stewart District; Alberta Clemmer, Isles District



A Tribute to DoDEA Teachers

Athanasia Lionikis

**2006 Kaiserslautern District
Teacher of the Year**

Isn't it amazing how DoDEA teachers are from all over the world? They are not only from the 50 United States, but from the Philippines, Korea, France, Austria, Africa, Greece, all over. Yet we have the unity and sense of purpose needed in order to design and implement a top notch education system, where learning will adequately prepare our students for the future. We perform to the highest standards in establishing quality education programs for our military child.

Teaching is the business of preparing our young people to take responsibility for the future and to develop the lifelong learning skills that will enable them to meet and take on new challenges. We are exposing our students to a world that is different from the one in which we were raised. Through our interactive classrooms, we are continuing to help students understand the bigger picture of the world. We are helping to close the gaps between countries, religions, races, and ethnic groups through our demonstration of positive goals and understanding. With our guidance, students are learning tolerance and understanding.

We have helped students look outside of their own immediate circle of family, friends, and activities to see where and how they fit into the world around them and how they can contribute in a positive way to that world.

But we also need to remember that the education of a child involves more than the teacher and student. In this global world, we are required to collaborate not only with our students, but also with parents and the community as a whole. The more input each part of this team provides, the more successful is student education.

DoDEA teachers demonstrate their leadership in this continuing and sometimes complex endeavor. There is not a group of teachers in the world that face the kinds of challenges that confront the teachers of the military child. Not only do we work in close collaboration with parents and the community, but also in many cases the community is situated on foreign soil. DoDEA teachers and administrators meet these challenges on a daily basis. We are all modeling excellence, tolerance, and good will to the military community and, in some cases, international communities as well.

We instill the importance of work ethics, honesty, caring for others, and working together with people. In our hands lie the future of our society and the future of our world. Let us all, teachers and the school community, individuals and groups, take upon ourselves the responsibility of creating and maintaining the most productive, positive, and very best education system there is for the good of our children and the good of our world.