

What's new: more language classes, AP changes

By [Jennifer H. Svan](#), Stars and Stripes
Pacific edition, Sunday, August 26, 2007

The dog days of summer are over for scores of school-age kids across the Pacific.

The first bell of the 2007-08 school year rings bright and early Monday, when more than 23,000 students in kindergarten through grade 12 are expected to report to Department of Defense Dependents Schools-Pacific and Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools-Guam.

No significant academic changes are in store, though the military school system will continue its push to increase foreign language proficiency.

"Foreign language in the elementary schools is expanding significantly, and the same with Mandarin Chinese" at the secondary level, said Dr. Nancy Bresell, now in her 10th year at the helm of DODDS-Pacific and DDESS-Guam.

Spanish language instruction will reach 12 more elementary schools, with lessons provided three times a week in kindergarten and first grade. Eight Pacific schools that began the program last fall in those grades will add Spanish in grades 2-3.

Schools to offer Mandarin Chinese are: Seoul American Middle School, Seoul American High School, Kubasaki High School, Kadena High School, Kadena Middle School, Lester Middle School, E.J. King High School (7-12), Guam High School, and an exploratory program at Commander William C. McCool Middle School and Guam Middle School.

For the first time, students in their second or fourth year of foreign language study will take a year-end proficiency exam, Bresell said.

"We will then probably address curriculum and proficiency



Jimmy Norris / S&S

Danielle Rodriguez gets her kindergarten classroom at Seoul American Elementary School - at Yongsan Garrison - ready for the coming school year.

BUY



Jimmy Norris / S&S

Students and parents gather in front of the Seoul American Elementary School gym to find out which classrooms the children will be assigned to for when school

expectations after this first run with the exam," she said.

This school year also marks the first that all high school advanced-placement courses will have endorsement from the College Board. AP teachers last spring submitted their syllabi to the College Board — a not-for-profit membership association of more than 5,200 schools, colleges, universities and other educational organizations. With the endorsement, Bresell said, students can be assured that their AP coursework is commensurate with college studies.

"That might scare some kids away from taking the course, but it is truly going to be what it should be and that is college-level work," she said.

Looking ahead at the fiscal year starting Oct. 1, Bresell said all indications are that the budget will be better than the current one. Any staffing cuts would be based on Department of Defense Education Activity criteria and declining enrollment, she said.

Enrollment throughout the Pacific appears to be holding steady with previous years, school officials said. This year's student body is projected to be 23,793.

Budget cuts last year forced some DODDS-Pacific schools to suspend field trips. Bresell said this year "it is our intent, to the extent circumstances will allow," to support trips. She noted they must be "curriculum-based and in line with our standards."

Staff members will be especially focused this year on helping ease the transition for students and families as they move between schools and maintaining close contact with families of deployed servicemembers, Bresell said.

"We want our parents who are going to be deployed or who are deployed this year to know that our schools will continue to provide continuity and consistency with your children," she said.

The student-to-student welcoming committee for new high schoolers will be expanded to all high schools this year, Bresell noted, with training to be conducted in October.

Teams of at least two students and a teacher sponsor new arrivals, helping them learn the layout of the school, meet others and transition into the community.

There will be a slew of fresh faces at the head of the class this year as DODDS-Pacific/DDESS- Guam welcomes 228 new teachers. Most are coming from DODDS-Europe, Bresell said, noting that 114 of the new staffers are transfers, 41 come from the United States and 73 are local hires.

"I'm eager to see all those fresh, young and enthusiastic faces," she said.

begins Monday.

BUY

Highlights and changes for the 2007-08 DODDS school year

- Yokota East Elementary School at Yokota Air Base, Japan, near Tokyo has a new name: the Joan K. Mendel Elementary School. Mendel, who died last fall, was one of the first teachers at the school when it opened in 1973. She taught there for 34 years. "She was in many respects the spirit of that school," said Dr. Nancy Bresell, Department of Defense Dependents School-Pacific and Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools-Guam director. "The parents loved her. The kids loved her. It's a fitting tribute."
- Spanish language instruction at the elementary school level will expand to 12 more schools. Mandarin Chinese will be offered at 10 high schools and middle schools.
- Secondary students in the second or fourth year of foreign language instruction will be required to take a year-end proficiency exam.
- New curriculum guidelines for math will provide teachers with research-based information on how students learn math as well as additional online resources for instruction and assessment.
- Starting with this year's seniors, DODDS-Pacific/DDESS-Guam students will need three semesters of physical education to graduate.
- This is the first year that all advanced-placement courses have been endorsed by the College Board.
- Most students across the Pacific start Monday — except on Guam, where the high school starts Wednesday in a new building.
- The projected student enrollment this year is 23,793 in mainland Japan, Okinawa, Guam and South Korea. New teachers number 228, a majority of them transfers from DODDS-Europe.

DODDS-Pacific set to move on from rocky year

By [Jennifer H. Svan](#), Stars and Stripes
Pacific edition, Sunday, August 26, 2007

In welcoming 228 new teachers to military schools in the Pacific this year, Dr. Nancy Bresell, Department of Defense Dependents Schools-Pacific and Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools-Guam director, has a message of personal responsibility directed at all staff members.

"We want to have a culture of conduct to always remember that we are educators, that we are teaching children of parents that may be deployed in harm's way and we're representing the United States of America," she said.

Bresell's words come following a tough year for DODDS-Pacific. In recent months, two educators at Kubasaki High School on Okinawa ran into legal trouble. Social studies teacher David Jones is on administrative leave and awaiting trial on alleged marijuana possession. Former science teacher Jack Russell Hubbard, retired from DODDS-Pacific this summer, is facing rape and sodomy charges in Kentucky, where he taught high school science in the late 1970s.

In May, a Yokota Middle School teacher was placed on administrative leave following allegations by some in the school community that "inappropriate photos" were seen on a school computer used by the teacher.

Bresell said Tuesday she believes the Yokota teacher will be starting the school year on administrative leave. The issue, she said, "is still being worked by school administrators at Yokota."

While acknowledging that it was a rocky year, Bresell defended her staff.

"I am not sure that these recent incidents reflect anything like what our workforce" is really like, she said. "There's no greater honor to educate our youth, particularly our military children ... The vast majority of our work force exercises good judgment and holds itself accountable."

Bresell this year hopes to bolster communication between schools and parents to stay abreast of issues facing the military community, she said.

At all the schools, but especially in South Korea, where the issue surfaced last year, student bullying will be closely watched, Bresell said.

"If it flares up this year, we will address it immediately," Bresell said.

She also said schools are provided with training and materials to discourage bullying and to guide students toward making better choices.

"We want our schools to remain positive places for our students to learn," she said. "Our goal is to maintain safe schools."

Improving students' health, wellness

By [Jennifer H. Svan](#), Stars and Stripes
Pacific edition, Sunday, August 26, 2007

Between academics and study breaks, students at Department of

Defense Dependents Schools in the Pacific may learn how to strike a tai chi pose this year.

As part of an increased emphasis on health and wellness across the Department of Defense Education Activity, this year's seniors will be the first class to need three semesters of physical education to graduate. Part of the requirement is a "physical activity and nutrition" course that introduces students to alternative, noncompetitive sports and physical activities such as tai chi, yoga, aerobics and Pilates, according to Dr. Peggy Bullion, education division chief for DODDS-Pacific and Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools-Guam.

While the course has been offered before, this is the first year seniors need it to graduate, Bullion said.

The new graduation requirements come as DODDS-Pacific and DDESS-Guam schools introduce a new health and physical education curriculum aligned with DODEA standards, Bullion said.

New instructional materials were bought for all grades, she said, with teachers trained either last year or the previous spring.

The focus is on helping students make healthy life choices when it comes to physical activity, nutrition and recreational behavior, Bullion said.

"In the days that many of us went to school, physical education and health were (about) helping students look for ways to increase physical strength and endurance," she said. "Now the focus is on helping students achieve their personal best, in terms of a healthy body and mind" and giving students knowledge to prevent disease, injuries, and substance and alcohol abuse.

In the past several years, Bullion said, Pacific schools have added technological devices into classrooms to support DODEA health and physical education standards. These include age-appropriate heart monitors and computer software that students and teachers can use to track individual physical fitness progress.

This year the schools have added to and upgraded materials, Bullion said.

The healthful lessons are to start young: The schools this year are adopting an early childhood curriculum called "Sports Play and Active Recreation" (or "SPARK") for pre-kindergarten and Sure Start students — children ages 3 to 5, generally, Bullion said.

"We think it's important for young children to start practicing developmentally appropriate movements and to understand how food and other substances affect their bodies," she said.

DODEA sometime this year also expects to implement a new health and wellness policy that will require its districts to set local policies on wellness aimed at capturing existing initiatives and meeting U.S. Department of Agriculture requirements, according to DODDS-Pacific/DDESS-Guam spokesman Charles Steitz.

Bullion said she doesn't know yet what specifics will be spelled out in the new DODEA policy.

"I'm hoping the DODEA policy will look at not only the health and wellness of students but also staff as a way of modeling healthy lifestyle practices for students," she said.



Christopher B. Stoltz / S&S

Thirty-two students from Camp Zama High School condition during women's volleyball team tryouts as the run laps around the track at Camp Zama, Japan on Tuesday. The women's volleyball coach, Dennis Decker, said 28 will make the team.

BUY

Many teachers hit the books during summer

By [Vince Little](#), Stars and Stripes
Pacific edition, Sunday, August 26, 2007

June. July. August.

Pages on a calendar to some. For others, three of the best things about being a teacher.

Most Department of Defense Dependents Schools teachers in the Pacific took full advantage of their summer break, whether that meant heading off for adventure, advancing academic pursuits or just staying put and relaxing.

Yokota Middle School seventh-grade science teacher Naif Shahady and his wife, Sandy, joined another couple on an RV ride around the American Southwest.

But about 17 days into the four-week odyssey, a member of the party required an emergency appendectomy that brought the trip to "a raging halt" in Moab, Utah, Sandy Shahady said.

Still, the experience was unforgettable, she said.

Among the sights they saw: Arches National Park and an old western church in Utah that's appeared in more than 50 movies, cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado that once housed Ute Indians and Petroglyph National Monument, N.M., and its ancient rock drawings and carvings.

Uvella Knight, 46, the DODDS-Japan district educational technologist, spent six weeks at the family home in Ko Olina, Hawaii. But her time on Oahu wasn't all fun in the sun.

Knight, who's been with DODDS for 17 years, took three doctorate-level classes online: educational research strategies, arts and science of adult education, and applied statistics. She had a 16-week window to complete the coursework but pushed herself to finish in six.

"I don't care if you're in paradise, statistics is brutal," said Knight, who works with administrators, teachers and students at every grade level in the Japan district. "I knew if I went home, I'd be free of distractions and could get it done ... (But) I would have preferred being at the beach or pool a lot more than I got there."

Knight says she has eight more classes to go before earning a doctorate in educational training and development leadership.

Agnes Fields, who teaches family and consumer science, lodging management and health at Seoul American High School in South Korea, also took coursework this summer.

She spent a week at the Marriott Courtyard in Newark, Del., getting her second level of certification in lodging management.

Fields, who's been with Seoul American for two years, also took a health course online through the University of Phoenix so she could become certified to teach health. It required her to turn in six papers in two weeks.



Jimmy Norris / S&S

Seoul American High School teacher Agnes Fields used part of her summer break to tackle certification coursework in health and lodging management. That included a week at the Marriott Courtyard in Newark, Del.

BUY

Brian Barnes, who teaches chemistry and physics at Osan High School, attended a five-day advanced-placement chemistry conference at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Wash.

The seminar included blowing up gummy bears, vaporizing copper and making fireballs with denatured alcohol and gelatin.

"If this is how every AP conference will be, I'll go back every year," said Barnes, who's beginning his second year at Osan and fourth year with DODDS.

Meanwhile, three staffers from the DODDS-Okinawa district went on a bike ride across Iowa this summer. Laurie Arensdorf, 32, a Kinser Elementary School teacher; Sally Wilkinson, 32, a Kadena Elementary School teacher; and Laura Stoller, spokeswoman for the Okinawa school district, cycled almost 500 miles in seven days.

The annual ride, sponsored by the Des Moines Register, drew 15,000-20,000 participants.

"I did it five years ago," said Arensdorf, who is from Iowa. "Laura and Sally were the ones I knew that if I could hook them, they would last the whole way."

It's no place for Lance Armstrong; participants routinely show up in hula skirts, Superman capes and other costumes, she said.

But neither is it for the faint of heart.

"Iowa is not flat," Wilkinson said. "The eastern side of Iowa definitely gets hilly. Going up the hills I got a little winded."

Wilkinson said the trio routinely hit the road at about 6 a.m. and pedaled up to nine hours a day, spending evenings in an RV.

"I think the physical challenge and the mental challenge that I put myself through every day is what I am most proud of," she said.

Stars and Stripes reporters Jimmy Norris and Will Morris contributed to this story.

Guam high schoolers get new building, athletic fields

By [Teri Weaver](#), Stars and Stripes
Pacific edition, Sunday, August 26, 2007

High school students at the military-run high school on Guam will start two days later than their younger peers, but the older students' first day should be worth the wait.

The ninth- to 12th-graders will start classes Wednesday in a new \$27.5 million school, according to Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools officials on Guam.

The new school puts more computers in classrooms, offers a shooting range for the JROTC and includes home courts and fields for the Panthers sports teams, said Dr. Rita Williams, principal at the school.

"It's definitely a big change," Williams said Thursday in a phone interview.

The new school, near U.S. Naval Hospital Guam, will hold this year's 475 enrolled students, but it can

grow to about 550, said Michael Diekmann, superintendent for Guam's base schools. The previous school was on Nimitz Hill and originally was a military building, Williams said.

Now, teachers and students will have science labs, a counseling center, and a wing for special-needs students that teaches life skills. Some classrooms have sliding walls that double the teaching space, allowing for joint history and English classes, Williams said.

The facility also includes a regulation-size gymnasium, complete with locker rooms, storage and a classroom. Home games at the new football field will have to wait until next year to let the sod settle, she said.

"At the old school, we didn't have our own fields," Williams said. "We had to play home games at McCool middle school." Now, plans for softball and baseball field are in the works, she added.

JROTC also has its own area, complete with a firing range for pellet ammunition, she said.

The school's official ribbon-cutting ceremony is planned for Oct. 2.

DODDS-Pacific welcoming new faces

Whether new to the system or transferring in, 228 new teachers arrive in the Pacific

By [Jimmy Norris](#), [Bryce S. Dubee](#) and [Will Morris](#), Stars and Stripes Pacific edition, Sunday, August 26, 2007

When the bell rings in the first day of school on Monday for the 2007-08 year, plenty of fresh new faces will be roaming the halls of Department of Defense Dependents Schools throughout the Pacific.

About 230 of them will be teachers.

For some, it will be a first job with a base school. Others are transferring from within the system.

The following are typical of new arrivals to Pacific schools:

Okinawa

Linda Arndt, 27, a self-described "Army brat," said she joined DODDS because she wanted to travel.

"I kinda missed being overseas and I knew about DODDS because I had been in it," said the new librarian for Killin Elementary School.

"I loved it. I loved moving around and seeing new places. I got to see all of Europe. I was in Germany when the wall fell. I was really lucky," she said.

Arndt said she thinks her childhood experiences make her a better DODDS educator.

"You can relate a little better to what the children are going through," she said.

Before getting her master's degree in library science, Arndt taught middle and high school in North Carolina. She said being a librarian lets her work on projects with teachers and work with students of all age groups, getting them excited about obtaining information.

Arndt, who had never been to Asia before, said she likes Okinawa.

The hardest part for her has been finding a place to live.

"I have been out with a million rental agencies, I've climbed a million stairs," she said. "I haven't found that house that sings to me."

Japan

A teacher for more than 20 years, Diane McDaniel will start her first job with DODDS at Yokota Air Base, where she will be the speech and language pathologist at the elementary, middle and high schools.

"I love my job," she said. "The best part is when you see kids improve; it really can change their whole lives."

A native of Oceanside, Calif., she has worked in the United States and overseas, including Japan two decades ago.

"I may be new to DODDS, but I've been around the block a few times," she said, adding that she chose to come to a base school after hearing "good things about DODDS from friends and colleagues who had taught for them."

A benefit of working on a military base, she said, is that the tight-knit community will allow her to have more contact with the parents so that she can best meet their children's needs.

Outside of the classroom, McDaniel said that she is looking forward to living in Japan and getting the chance to travel throughout Asia.

She also wants to brush up on her Japanese.

"You forget a lot in 20 years," she laughed. "But some is already starting to come back to me."

South Korea

Sometimes teachers come in pairs.

Scott and Karen Morris come to Seoul from a DODDS school in Hanau, Germany, where Scott taught Spanish and Karen taught special education.

Scott, 51, will teach the same subject at Seoul American Elementary School and Karen, 48, will stay with her specialty at Seoul American High School.

Both have worked with DODDS for four years. Karen, a teacher for 13 years, was placed in South Korea after a series of school closures in Germany last year. Because of the downsizing, Scott was able to accompany her.

The El Paso, Texas, native said she decided to teach after assisting deaf children in the Philippines while working as an audiologist with the Peace Corps.

The two also have taught at civilian schools in El Paso and Flagstaff, Ariz.

"It's different, but I think we're going to like it," Karen said about the contrast between teaching in Germany and South Korea. She said she'll miss the bread and beer in Germany, but likes Korean food and thinks the people are very friendly.

Moving is something she's come to expect after working for DODDS.

"If you're not up for change, you're working for the wrong people," she said. "I'm glad to be here experiencing something different."

Guam

Not only will students at Guam High School, McCool Middle School and Andersen Middle School receive a new teacher when Victor Leister, 45, begins classes Monday, they'll get a whole new subject as well.

Leister will teach Chinese at all three schools. This year marks the first time Defense Department schools on Guam will offer the language.

"It was a chance to build the Chinese program here," he said. "I find that exciting."

This will be his first year working with military family members, but not his first year teaching.

Leister learned Chinese after participating in an international exchange program when he was 19, leaving his hometown in Sunnyvale, Calif., for China.

"That opened a whole new world for me," he said.

He went on to major in East Asian studies at George Washington University.

Leister has taught around the world, including in Japan, Thailand, China and the Middle East.

He most recently taught second grade and Chinese in Las Vegas.

In addition to teaching Chinese, Leister said part of his job on Guam is to "drum up support" for the new program.

"I'm hoping that (teaching military dependents) is one of the positive aspects to teaching with the DOD," Leister said. "I expect military kids will have a lot more structure in their lives than at public schools."

Changes in store for Korea District schools

By [Ashley Rowland](#), Stars and Stripes
Pacific edition, Saturday, August 25, 2007

The Korea district's nearly 4,000 students will see some changes when they return to Department of Defense Dependents Schools on Monday.

Among them will be a new annex — and a new name — at Daegu American School, and a new discipline system for Seoul American Elementary School.

The discipline plan defines and ranks offenses based on severity, and sets punishments for each category of offenses. Students can receive harsher punishments based on the number of times they have committed an offense.

About a dozen parents attended a forum in January to address bullying at Seoul American. About 60 people attended another meeting in February about bullying at Korea District schools, with parents

specifically citing Seoul American Elementary School for disciplinary and classroom problems.

School officials said they would add extra monitors and train them to deal with bullying behavior.

A committee of administrators, teachers and parents reviewed and rewrote the Seoul American discipline plan.

It aims to give parents a clearer understanding of consequences related to certain offenses and repeat offenses, said Tony Harris, chief of staff for the Korea District Superintendent's Office.

DODDS officials declined to comment on the plan, which was discussed with parents during orientation sessions earlier in the week. They said written copies of it would be sent home with students after school begins.

Around the district, Korea schools are at 84 percent capacity and have "ample" space for all required students, Harris said. Enrollment for students from non-command-sponsored families and families unaffiliated with U.S. Forces Korea will be considered, he said.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new building at Daegu American — formerly Taegu American — will be held at 11 a.m. Monday. The building houses music rooms that will allow the school's music program to triple in size, kindergarten classrooms, two computer labs and a state-of-the-art JROTC center that includes an indoor firing range.

"We had outgrown the previous building," said Corrine Vail, education technologist at Daegu American School. "This has allowed us to expand classrooms and update programs." Vail said officials changed the school's name to match the updated English translation for the city of Daegu.

Charles Toth, superintendent of Korea District schools, said the district will focus on improving math and reading skills this year, and on meeting the Department of Defense Education Activity's Community Strategic Plan, its school improvement process.

"Personally, I am approaching the upcoming school year with great anticipation, much enthusiasm, and high expectations," he said.

Other changes include:

Facility improvements, include newly installed artificial turf at Seoul American High School's athletic field, and ongoing construction on Osan Middle School plus an addition to Osan High School is under way. An expansion of the Foreign Language in the Elementary School program (FLES) from kindergarten through third grade at Seoul, Osan and Humphreys; from kindergarten through second grade at CT Joy Elementary School; and kindergarten and first grade at Daegu Elementary School. FLES students study Spanish for 90 minutes a week. An expansion of the math pilot program in elementary schools, including the addition of a second math coach to provide training to all math teachers for grades two through five. An updated reading program for students in kindergarten through fifth grades who need additional reading and language support. New equipment for the district's video technology program.

Schools director sees strides, struggle in women's equality

By [Will Morris](#), Stars and Stripes
Pacific edition, Sunday, August 26, 2007

TORII STATION, Okinawa — "You've come a long way, baby." (But you still have a way to go.)

On Friday afternoon, Nancy Bresell, director of Department of Defense Dependents Schools-Pacific, told an audience that women have made great strides in the race for equality but still face significant challenges, particularly in the area of wages.

Bresell spoke to about 200 people at the Torii Station theater for the Army's 10th Support Group's observance of Women's Equality Day. The day commemorates the ratification of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote.

"Our country was founded in contradiction. First, we had a declaration, a belief that all men are created equal, a declaration that catapulted America into a beacon of hope and prosperity for the world," Bresell said. "Yet, some of the men who signed their names to this self-evident truth owned other individuals as property and treated women as second-class citizens who had no right to vote."

Bresell told the audience that when she was a child, options for women weren't as plentiful as they are today. They were funneled into teaching, nursing and secretarial professions.

Now, even though women have many more career field options, women's wages still range from 70 percent to 75 percent of men's, Bresell said, citing studies conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Government Accountability Office. Bresell also said only 11 percent of executive positions in the federal government are held by women.

Even in the field of education, a profession dominated numerically by women, men still claim most administrative positions, Bresell said.

Despite these figures, women have made great contributions to the country, she said.

Bresell noted several of those women, including Capt. Rosemary Hogan, who was held in a Japanese prison camp for three years in World War II after she refused to abandon wounded American soldiers in Bataan when the island was overrun.

"Women's Equality Day is a great opportunity for us to pay tribute to the many courageous women who plowed the way," she said. "The world is opening up for women in all areas of life, but it is up to us as women to reach out and take advantage of the opportunities."

Army Col. Kenneth Lundgren, the commanding officer of 10th Support Group, said the presentation was educational.

"It makes people realize where we came from and helps them improve in the future," he said.

Lundgren, who has served in the Army for 24 years, said opportunities keep opening up for women in the services.

"Once they get a job, they are judged by their performance, not their gender," he said.

Melanie Bales, Pacific coordinator for AVID, a college preparatory program in DODDS, agreed that the number of male administrators to female educators is disproportional, but she said it's not as bad as it was when she started teaching 24 years ago.

"I've seen a big turnaround in the number of women who have become leaders," she said.