



### Motivated Students + Dedicated Staff = Red Ribbon Success

Giving students a leadership role in substance abuse prevention activities strengthens their commitment to making smart life choices. During Red Ribbon Week (October 25-29, 2010), students at Vilseck Elementary School planned and led many of the activities. The students, some as young as six years old, researched and brainstormed ideas about how to bring the message of living drug-free to their peers.

Teachers nominated classroom representatives to the student planning team led by counselor Febbie Ramsey. The students learned about the history of Red Ribbon Week and developed a list of activities that would help convey its underlying importance. “It was interesting to see how different students internalized the message,” noted Ms. Ramsey. “They each expressed themselves in a way that reflected their individualities.”



*Vilseck Elementary School counselor Febbie Ramsey works with a student.*

Red Ribbon Week activities ranged from creative, such as having younger students write their personal goals on strips of paper and assemble them into a paper chain, to dramatic. The latter included an outdoor rally and a visit from the local military police (MP), who brought along Samantha, a drug-sniffing canine (K-9), who is a certified MP. Ms. Ramsey agreed to act as a decoy for the K-9 presentation. “I took off running,” she recalled with a chuckle, “but because of the dog’s speed, I was thrown to the ground with a loud thud.” Students watched in astonishment as Ms. Ramsey, who was wearing protective gear, was helped up by MPs. “You could have heard a pin drop,” she noted.

Staff and teachers felt the time invested in planning the activities paid off when they saw the response from students. “Time management, flexibility, and keeping a cool head allowed us to stay the course,” Ms. Ramsey reflected. One second-grader pledged to avoid drug use because, “I want to be a vet and if I used drugs it might hurt the animals.” Another noted that drug use might interfere with her plans for space exploration. Statements such as these, coming from young children, reassure Ms. Ramsey and the entire Vilseck team that Red Ribbon Week impacts academic achievement and personal expectations, as well as health and well being. Ms. Ramsey added, “It makes me feel fantastic that we are touching the lives of these kids.” ■

### Inside This Issue

#### News & Updates

- Motivated Students + Dedicated Staff = Red Ribbon Success ..... 1
- Innovative Programs Help Administrators Counter Marijuana Use ..... 2

#### Safe Schools Planning

- Tackling the Tough Topics ..... 3

#### Education Issues

- New Study Finds Buffers for Compassion Fatigue..... 4

#### Cybersecurity

- “Hyper-texting” Linked to Poor Health Habits ..... 5

#### Prevention Programs

- Celebrate DoDEA Counselors ..... 6

## Innovative Programs Help Administrators Counter Marijuana Use

Innovative programs offer school administrators new ways to counter the trend toward increased marijuana use among teens. Although news media coverage of the debate over medical use of marijuana has eroded student inhibitions about using the drug, two traditional deterrents to usage are still effective: parental disapproval and fear of arrest.



***“Parents are the most potent and underused tool in preventing substance abuse.”***

– Joseph A. Califano, CASA Chairman

On December 14, 2010, researchers from the University of Michigan discussed the 2010 Monitoring the Future Survey, sponsored by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). This study surveyed 46,000 eighth, tenth, and twelfth grade students. Marijuana use, which had declined for a decade from the 1990s until 2007, increased in all three grade levels during the past three years.

The survey indicated fewer eighth graders disapprove of using marijuana. Lloyd Johnston, Ph.D., the principal investigator for the study, explained the impact of this change in attitude on future useage. The researchers

know that by the time they conduct the survey again in two years, when today’s eighth graders will be in tenth grade, they will see more tenth graders using marijuana.

Similar research, conducted for NIDA by the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University, indicated that students choose not to use marijuana when they perceive the risk is too great. For students, the risk includes four factors:

- ◆ Physical harm,
- ◆ Parental disapproval,
- ◆ Peer disapproval, and
- ◆ Fear of arrest.

Students’ perception of the health risk has diminished, in part, due to reports in the news media that 15 states have allowed the use of marijuana for medical purposes. Peer disapproval diminishes when individual students no longer believe marijuana is harmful.

Fortunately, the U.S. Department of Education’s expert panel has identified several prevention programs that work. A two year review by the Safe, Disciplined, and Drug Free Schools Expert Panel designated several programs “exemplary” or “promising” in preventing substance abuse. Two programs for middle schools that experts found demonstrated evidence of effectiveness were Life Skills Training and Project Alert. For additional information and suggestions on programs for all ages, visit the U.S. Department of Education at [www2.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ORAD/KAD/expert\\_panel/drug-free.html](http://www2.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ORAD/KAD/expert_panel/drug-free.html). For additional information on prevention programs visit the DoDEA Office of Safety and Security at [www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/](http://www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/); click on Safe Schools Program in the menu on the left. ■

### DoDEA Headquarters Personnel

Rose Chunik, Chief, Office of Safety and Security  
 Adam Bergstrom, Program Manager, Antiterrorism  
 Jennifer Jones, Program Manager, Physical Security  
 Kim Perino, Program Manager, Emergency Preparedness

### CSC Safe Schools Newsletter Editorial Staff

Sarah Markel, Brian McKeon, Bert Garcia

The material herein is presented for information purposes only and does not constitute official policy of the Department of Defense (DoD), or the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), nor does it constitute endorsement by DoD or DoDEA of any non-federal entity or its programs. All comments and questions should be directed to [safeschools@csc.com](mailto:safeschools@csc.com).

## Tackling the Tough Topics

Welcome to the “productive plateau” of the school year. With the slopes of one semester scaled, and the end of school year summit barely visible in the distance, this vantage point in the school calendar offers a unique opportunity to consider some of the tough planning issues of Crisis Management. Following are three questions that often stymie school leaders. Use the next available Crisis Management Team meeting to discuss these questions as a group. Together, identify solutions that work in light of the school floor plan and local logistics. Following each question is a brief discussion of relevant issues to consider.

### 1. What will we do if a student is left in the hall during lockdown?

Issues to consider: Teachers check the hall as they lock their doors during a lockdown to sweep students into the safety of the nearest classroom. However, the possibility exists that a child could be left in the bathroom or a hallway. If the principal and crisis management team determine it is necessary to check the rest room for students, let the teacher closest to the bathroom accomplish that task. The key factor to consider is how best to limit the exposure of individual’s to the threat of a violent perpetrator. Usually this involves limiting the time that students or staff are exposed in the hallways. Remind students of specific actions they can take to protect themselves, such as hiding in one of the bathroom stalls.



### 2. Do we have an alternate evacuation site?

Issues to consider: Where would students go if an incident forced students and staff to evacuate to another building? Students could walk to an adjacent school, community center, or some other installation facility. Creative alternatives have included: the recreation center, District Schools Office, Officers’ Club, Base Exchange, movie theater, or cooperative restaurants. Select a location that has bathrooms and preferably the ability to serve food and water or at least dry snacks. Contact the person who manages the facility and obtain a written memorandum of agreement (MOA). Coordinate access to these sites ahead of time and practice evacuating to this indoor evacuation point.



*Lloyd Elementary School Principal Julita Martinez discusses alternate evacuation sites with DDESS Safety and Occupational Health Manager Victor Padilla.*

### 3. How do we handle complex transportation issues?

Issues to consider: Sometimes there is no suitable building within appropriate walking range for young children. In these situations, carefully consider options for transporting students and staff to another facility. Contact the transportation office to determine whether the school has access to buses that could respond during a crisis event. Explore whether installation officials have vehicles suitable to transport students and staff members during an emergency.

The answers to the above questions will be affected by school location, staff size, population considerations, and other factors. Taking the time to think through potential solutions enhances the responsiveness and cohesion among team members. For assistance with specific questions, or answers regarding how others have addressed similar concerns, contact [safeschools@csc.com](mailto:safeschools@csc.com). ■

## New Study Finds Buffers for Compassion Fatigue

Caring for the emotional well-being of students exposed to trauma is often emotionally draining for counselors and school psychologists, especially over time. New studies, however, have identified strategies to protect care givers from “compassion fatigue.” A study published in the November 17, 2010 edition of *Psychiatric Times* determined that compassion fatigue consists of two subsets: job burnout and secondary trauma. The study also produced a needs assessment tool to help determine whether counselors need support. Fortunately, this study also revealed that the intrinsic reward of seeing the difference they made in victims’ lives served as a “resiliency factor” to protect counselors from the cumulative psychological stress of listening to repeated descriptions of trauma.

The research team noticed that some mental health workers were more resilient to compassion fatigue, and identified specific characteristics or life experiences that indicated an individual might be more susceptible to job burnout or secondary trauma. Factors associated with vicarious trauma included experience of trauma in one’s own life, greater involvement in the disaster, and lack of self-confidence. Signs that counselors might be vulnerable to job burnout included negative life events, being single, decreased mental health status, and greater lifetime exposure to trauma.

In a surprising finding, the team reported: “Exposure to traumatized patients increased vicarious trauma, but not job burnout.” In other words, listening to victims describe traumatic experiences repeatedly, might raise stress levels for counselors, but would not exhaust their ability to empathize with patients. Researchers chose to study social workers because their high case loads, direct interaction with patients, and limited social support left them vulnerable to compassion fatigue.

The study, conducted for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and Florida State University, examined the impact on more than 1,000 social workers in New York City who worked with victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks. Researchers determined that listening to patients describe their traumatic experiences resulted in secondary trauma for some social workers, and had a cumulative effect on some others.

The assessment tools or “scales” used in the study can now be used to help other counselors. The scales are expected to be included in the next edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) which is currently under review. The researchers also identified remedies that strengthen counselors’ ability to continue serving their constituents, including:

- ✓ Increased resiliency skills.
- ✓ Use of “self-care” strategies.
- ✓ Improved social support from others, including co-workers.
- ✓ Further development of care-giving skills.



*Maj. Stanley Arnold, family life chaplain at Fort Campbell, KY, talks with two Army spouses about strategies for addressing compassion fatigue among volunteers.*

The authors of the study concluded that, “The characteristics that bring people into the caring professions are, ironically, the very factors that make them vulnerable to vicarious trauma and job burnout.” Armed with the study results, however, counselors and school psychologists can use the assessment tools to detect whether they are slipping into either category. The care givers can then adjust their personal routines and support group procedures to take corrective action. ■

## “Hyper-texting” Linked to Poor Health Habits

A recent study examined whether excessive use of tech-savvy networking among teens can present health concerns. Public health experts at Case Western Reserve University found that teens sending upwards of 120 text messages daily – called “hyper-texters” – are more likely to use alcohol and/or drugs, engage in risky sexual behavior, and get in physical fights than their seldom-texting peers. While texting itself was not found to be a negative behavior, the study found that excessive texting could alert parents to other risky behaviors.

The study does not claim that texting is the cause of poor life choices. Instead, researchers theorize that the students who are most attracted to hyper-texting and excessive online socializing were also the students most vulnerable to risky behaviors that could negatively impact their overall well-being, perhaps due to poor coping skills or insufficient parental oversight.

The research team concluded that nearly 20 percent of surveyed students were “hyper-texters,” sending more than 120 text messages on a school day. The study also concluded that more than ten percent were “hyper-networkers” spending more than three hours daily on social networking Web sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter. More than 4,200 students at 20 public high schools in the United States were surveyed.

The average number of texts-per-day sent and received among the surveyed population was 118 messages, although a subset of that group sent far more texts per day. These students were more likely to participate in the following risky behaviors:

- ▶ 40 percent more likely to have tried cigarettes
- ▶ Two times more likely to have tried alcohol.
- ▶ 43 percent more likely to be binge drinkers.
- ▶ 41 percent more likely to have used illicit drugs.
- ▶ 55 percent more likely to have been in a physical fight.
- ▶ Nearly three-and-a-half times more likely to have had sex.



Students who spent excessive time on social networking Web sites were even more likely to try these behaviors. Additionally, they were more often associated with stress, depression, and suicide.

Students possibly addicted to texting also reported having “permissive” or absent parents. Only 14 percent of students reported having rules set by parents to limit their text messaging. Researchers theorized that the extra exposure or susceptibility to peer pressure could also influence these hyper-connected students to make poor health decisions.

Parents and educators can help students by encouraging appropriate cell phone use and setting limits. The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) offers a contract for responsible cell phone use which may be a helpful means of initiating a discussion with students about appropriate use of personal technology. The contract template is available from NCPC at [www.ncpc.org/resources/files/pdf/misc/Contract%20For%20Responsible%20Wireless%20Phone%20Use.pdf](http://www.ncpc.org/resources/files/pdf/misc/Contract%20For%20Responsible%20Wireless%20Phone%20Use.pdf). ■

## Celebrate DoDEA Counselors

School counselors play a critical role in the lives of students, especially in DoDEA where transitioning students often meet with the counselor immediately prior to and after a transition. Counselors often share knowledge that helps students succeed in life, such as how to tackle homework, deal with psychological stress, or adjust to a parent/sponsor's deployment. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) urges administrators to use National School Counseling Week, February 7 through 11, 2011, to raise awareness of the benefit of having access to a counselor.

Today's professional school counselor serves as a resource for every level of the student population. Counselors provide prevention programs for the general population of students and intervention programs for selected groups of students experiencing unique challenges.



*At Faith Middle School, administrators discover they are sitting under the "Talk to Your Counselor" poster while discussing strategies for enhancing service to students. Pictured (left to right) are: Assistant Principal Cheryl Lusane; Dr. Renee La Fata, Instructional Systems Specialist, Pupil Personnel Services, DDESS Area Office; Professional School Counselor Delisa Brown.*

For individuals who need intensive support, counselors provide targeted interventions or referrals to specific resources. In addition, counselors help teachers by integrating prevention programs into the academic curriculum. Incorporating life skills and citizenship values into regular lessons helps students master these skills and concepts while maintaining the academic schedule. Finally, counselors possess cultural competence and understanding that enables them to extend an invitation to parents who might not feel comfortable contacting the school.

Following are three ways that educators can further integrate school counselors into students' lives:

**Counselor Cameo** – Arrange for the counselor to speak for five minutes at an upcoming Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) meeting to remind parents how they can help their child benefit from the resources in the counseling office. Counselor Cameos are also suitable for a faculty meeting to remind teachers how to leverage the counseling resources or refer a student who appears to be struggling with stress or work load.

**Parent Bridge** – Some parents may be reluctant to contact the school because they did not enjoy their own experience in school. Counselors often possess the cultural competence and sensitivity to extend an invitation that eventually results in enthusiastic support for a child's learning.

**Self-Efficacy Coach** – Whether working with students directly, or providing a fact sheet with tips for teachers and parents, counselors play a vital role by reminding the school community that it is no longer sufficient to praise students to boost their self image. Rather, adults should strive to reinforce students' sense of self-efficacy by helping them appreciate how they used their skills, talents, and strategies to accomplish goals.

For copies of the "Talk to Your Counselor" poster contact Elaine Kanellis at the DoDEA Office of Communications. Ms. Kanellis is available via the DoDEA global e-mail directory, DSN 425-3265, or commercial line (703) 588-3265. For materials to reinforce the message of school counseling week, visit ASCA at [www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org). ■