American Education Week

Did you know that more than 75 U.S. legislators are former educators? Learn this and more as part of the National Education Association (NEA) Celebration of American Education Week (November 12-17). Each day of the week is devoted to a different theme, each celebrating the role of teachers in providing quality education to America's youth. For more information about how your school can take part in such activities as "Invite Parents to School Day," or "Educator for a Day," visit the NEA special events page at www.nea.org/aew/index.html. ■

Inside This Issue

Club USA Provides Support for Children of Deployed Soldiers

At Holbrook Elementary School at Fort Bragg, counselor Maryann Williams has developed an after-school club for children of soldiers deploying in Operation Enduring Freedom. The original purpose of Club USA was to bring children together to talk about their experiences and feelings while their parents were away. Williams uses art activities to help children articulate difficult concepts such as loneliness, worry, and fear. The club meets once a week for ten weeks, takes part in community service activities, and sends letters to soldiers.

Last year, a group of students in grades one through four wrote a book called *Deployment Guide: Kids Are the Experts*. Using a "Dear Abby" format, students offered a different perspective on the challenges of deployment. "They really are the experts. I just wanted to give them a voice," said Williams.

Hailey, a student at Holbrook Elementary School at Fort Bragg, reads from her page of the Deployment Guide.

Williams recently moved to Bowley Elementary School, also on Ft. Bragg, where she is introducing Club USA to a new community of students. The club offers her the ideal means of getting to know her students. The creative activities and group discussions help her quickly identify children who may need extra support. "You can tell a lot from their drawings," said Williams. "Especially the younger kids."

Perhaps most importantly, though, this is an opportunity for Williams to help students take a break from the stresses typically associated with having a family member deployed. According to Williams, Club USA offers a chance for them to "make friends, celebrate their families, and feel good about being kids." ■

Hygiene and Education Can Reduce the Spread of "Staph" Infections

While "staph" infections have been around for years, infections caused by the antibiotic resistant strain of the bacteria have been rare in schools. However, several outbreaks of Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) during this school year underscore the need for increased awareness of the disease. By informing students, encouraging proper hygiene, and disinfecting facilities, school officials can help counter the spread of staph infections among students.

MRSA Facts

Research published in the October 2007 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* indicates that an estimated 19,000 Americans died of MRSA infections in 2005, and that 94,000 became ill. The majority of these cases appeared in hospitals and health care facilities; however, about 12 percent of cases occur outside these medical institutions.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) investigated concentrations of MRSA among various groups such as preschoolers and student athletes. Recently, a student's death in Virginia has heightened concerns in school communities.

Fast Facts: MRSA

According to the CDC, the following factors are associated with the spread of MRSA:

▶ Close skin-to-skin contact
▶ Contaminated items and surfaces
▶ Crowded living conditions
▶ Poor hygiene

Prevention

Because the bacteria live on the skin, proper hygiene appears to be the best way of preventing the spread of MRSA, according to several studies. The CDC recommends the following measures for preventing the spread of MRSA:

◆ Keep hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based sanitizer.

◆ Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.

◆ Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.

◆ Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, razors, and cosmetics.

◆ Disinfect mats, benches, and other shared athletic equipment after each game or practice.

◆ Clean contaminated surfaces using EPA-registered cleaners or bleach solutions. Because reintroduction of the bacteria is possible, routine cleaning is necessary.

Treatment

While MRSA does not respond to most antibiotics, medical treatments are available. However, it is important that MRSA be identified in order for the correct treatments to be used. Teachers, coaches and parents should be alert for open wounds. Mild infections may look like a pimple or boil and can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. Refer students with wounds that are draining or contain pus to the school nurse. For more information on MRSA go to www.cdc.gov/ncidod/. ∎

Using the Policy and Program Review (Tool 8)

Because a Safe School Plan is never static, November offers an excellent opportunity to re-examine Tool 8 in the *DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook*: Policy and Program Review (PPR). By this point in the school year, the Safe School Committee has had a chance to familiarize themselves with the data available on school security and establish security objectives for their school.

Use the information on security incidents that has already been gathered. The committee can query the Student Information System (SIS) for information on student behavior, and the SIR/AIR Reporting System to access Serious Incident Reports and Accident/Injury Reports. An administrator and counselor can help the Safe School Committee evaluate existing policies and prevention programs.

The PPR uses the same organization of incident categories as the other risk reduction tools in the Safe Schools Handbook (i.e., type of incident, time period, location, perpetrators). This logical organization allows administrators to efficiently consider the best practices used throughout the United States. It also simplifies the process of identifying improvements that directly address the security objectives established for their particular school. Using the tool as it is formatted, the crisis management team will be able to rapidly answer two questions:

> 1) Does the school have this procedure or prevention program?

> 2) Are the existing measures appropriate to the current needs?

Not all policies and prevention programs described in the PPR are the right fit for all schools. Rather, the PPR attempts to address the range of possibilities. Only the members of the Safe Schools Committee will be able to determine, based on their knowledge of the school, which security measures are appropriate and necessary. The following are steps that can facilitate the PPR process and enhance the accuracy of the review:

- ◆ Limit the size of the group to three or four people. Agree to limit discussion to avoid becoming side tracked by one particular option. Effective teams can complete the review within 30 to 40 minutes.

- ◆ Use the rating system on the upper left of the worksheets to assign a priority to each incident category. Decide whether this is a high, medium, or low priority based on how closely it addresses a security objective.

- ◆ Determine if existing programs have achieved their goals.

- ◆ For existing prevention programs, ask what percentage of the target population are benefiting from the program.

- ◆ On the bottom of the worksheets, note new measures that can be adopted in the future.

The priority ranking allows administrators to concentrate available resources on their greatest needs. At the conclusion of the review, there should only be three or four worksheets requiring action, rather than 36.

The PPR helps the Safe School Committee rapidly consider best practices used in U.S. schools and select only those measures appropriate for a given school. For relevant DoDEA policies on access control and internal security, see: DoDEA Regulation 4700.2 "Internal Physical Security" at www.dodea.edu/foia/iod/pdf/4700_2.pdf. For discipline policies and student rights and responsibilities, see the DoDEA Administrators Manual at www.dodea.edu/foia/iod/pdf/1005_1.pdf. For tips on using the PPR see pages 1-18 to 1-19 in the *DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook*. ◼

Deciphering Chat Abbreviations

Educators across the United States have asked how to recognize when abbreviations in students' messages signal trouble. Decoding chat abbreviations can help teachers understand what their students are saying on-line. Knowing, for example, that *TOS* means *teacher over shoulder*, could help teachers recognize that a student is not on task and is most likely doing something inappropriate. If teachers are more savvy about these chat abbreviations, they may be able to recognize bullying or threats of violence.

Text messaging, instant messaging, and chatting are increasingly popular forms of communication and social interaction for young people using mobile phones and computers. Each different kind of messaging uses short-hand forms of commonly used words and phrases. This "text speak" or "text talk" increases the efficiency with which students can communicate while decreasing the amount of time spent typing. While students intuitively understand what various messages mean, many adults find it difficult to penetrate the meaning of sentences composed of abbreviations.

Messaging works this way: Commonly used phrases are abbreviated using only a few characters such as letters, numbers, and sometimes, symbols. For example, *OMG* means *Oh my God!*, and *IDK* stands for *I don't know*. Even colloquialisms such as *talk to you later* have become so commonplace that they have been abbreviated, in this case, as *TTYL*.

The letters *B*, *C*, *R*, *U*, and *Y* often replace the words *be*, *see*, *are*, *you*, and *why*. Numerically speaking, digits, such as *2*, *4*, and *8* are used to replace words or syllables, as in *2* (*to*), *b4* (*before*), and *l8r* (*later*). Sometimes the number of letters in each word can symbolize the meaning, such as *143* which stands for *I love you*. In other cases, removing the vowels can shorten a word, changing *people* to *PPL*. Sometimes the meaning is more obvious, such as *411* which stands for the word *information*.

Like all forms of slang, chat abbreviations are constantly changing. Educators looking for ways to stay informed may find one of the many on-line lexicons helpful. Both www.netlingo.com/emailsh.cfm and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_SMS_abbreviations are regularly updated Web sites that provide extensive lists of abbreviations. ■

Test Your Knowledge of the Lingo

Match the chat abbreviation with the correct definition or term. Answers are on the bottom of page 6.

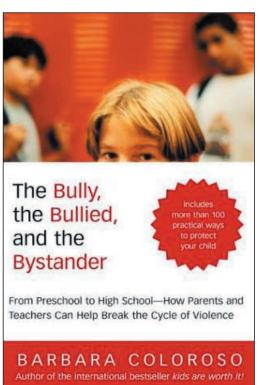|	
1. DYOH	A. Face-to-Face
2. BRB	B. Download
3. DL (or D/L)	C. Marijuana
4. JK	D. Keeping Parents Clueless
5. LOL	E. Be Right Back
6. LMIRL	F. Male or Female?
7. POS	G. What's your Age/Sex/Location?
8. F2F	H. Laughing Out Loud
9. KPC	J. Do Your Own Homework
10. A/S/L?	K. Just Kidding
11. 420	L. Let's Meet In Real Life
12. MorF?	M. Parent Over Shoulder

Author Interview: Barbara Coloroso

Many educators and families within DoDEA are already familiar with the work of writer Barbara Coloroso. In 2004, Coloroso gave a series of talks to the Ramstein, Germany community about her book *The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander* which addresses ways schools and communities can work together to end bullying. Coloroso is also a regular presenter at Fort Carson and Camp Lejeune where she speaks about parenting, grief related issues, and how families can manage the challenges of deployment. Recently Coloroso spoke with the Safe Schools program about what she calls "the three P's" of bullying prevention.

Policy
The first step to stopping bullying, said Coloroso, is establishing a strong anti-bully policy, "which doesn't allow students to exclude others from their circle of moral concern." Coloroso points out that many policies fail because they define bullying too broadly, using terms such as "systemic or repeated acts of aggression." Another reason policies fail, noted Coloroso, is because some teachers refuse to "see" bullying in the classroom, interpreting bullying behavior as a rite of passage or simply teasing. "It is important to ensure everyone on staff understands bullying includes verbal, physical, and relational aggression."

Procedure
The second component of a strong bullying prevention program involves putting in place procedures to deal with the bully, his or her targets, and any bystanders who may have contributed explicitly or implicitly by condoning the behavior. Too often, said Coloroso, schools punish the bully, but fail to teach bystanders how they can stop bullies.

Program
Finally, Coloroso remarked, the most important step a school can take is having a strong program in place that works against a culture of bullying. "This need not be a formal program that you purchase, just something that doesn't allow children to exclude others." Coloroso said all schools need to offer what she calls "antidotes to bullying" such as teaching kids friendship skills which include how to join groups and how to welcome newcomers into one's circle of friends.

Coloroso takes a practical approach to teaching – her books and seminars are rich in handouts that teachers can use in the classroom. Coloroso has graciously provided a packet of handouts to the Safe Schools Program containing information about how to define and address bullying, provide antidotes to bullying, and teach ethics. DoDEA educators interested in receiving these handouts can request them by sending an e-mail to safeschools@csc.com. Coloroso's Web site, www.kidsareworthit.com also contains useful reference material for free download. *The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander* is available for free preview via Google Book search at http://books.google.com. To listen to Coloroso speak about ethics via podcast, go to www.electricsky.net/barbara-coloroso/. ▪

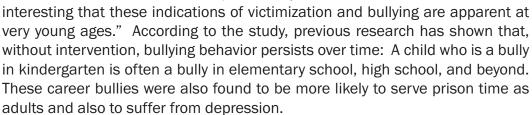## Study: Most Elementary Students Have Been Bullied

A recent study sponsored by the National Institute of Health (NIH) reveals information about the prevalence of bullying in elementary schools and the different forms it can take. The study defines "direct" bullying as the threat of abuse or actual physical harm; "indirect" bullying can include spreading rumors about peers or ostracizing them.

"Nine out of ten elementary students have been bullied by their peers, according to a simple questionnaire developed by researchers at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital and the Stanford University School of Medicine," the article reports. "Nearly six in ten children surveyed in the preliminary study reported participating in some type of bullying in the past year."

The questionnaire surveyed 270 children in grades three through six. The study found that students who are routinely victimized exhibit higher levels of depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts than do non-victims, thereby underscoring the importance of identifying at-risk youth and assessing the effectiveness of interventions.

Lynne Huffman, M.D., Associate Professor of pediatrics and psychiatry at the Stanford School of Medicine, said it was "particularly interesting that these indications of victimization and bullying are apparent at very young ages." According to the study, previous research has shown that, without intervention, bullying behavior persists over time: A child who is a bully in kindergarten is often a bully in elementary school, high school, and beyond. These career bullies were also found to be more likely to serve prison time as adults and also to suffer from depression.

Child psychiatrist Tom Tarshis, M.D., lead author of the study, claims that bullying occurs across all demographics. "It was a little distressing how prevalent the problem is even in the middle-to-upper-middle class schools we surveyed." Tarshis believes that "positive peer pressure is an important component of effective intervention. When uninvolved students step up and let the perpetrator know that their behavior is not acceptable, it's a powerful message."

The study was published in the April Issue of the *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*. The U.S. Department of Education offers a free pamphlet that defines the different types of bullying. Contact the Safe Schools team via e-mail at safeschools@csc.com for a copy of the pamphlet. For more information on anti-bullying programs for schools, see the 2007 *DoDEA Prevention Programs Guide*, available on the DoDEA Office of Safety and Security Web site at www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/docs/ss_PreventionPrograms_2007Spring.pdf.

Test Your Knowledge of the Lingo

Answer Key (From Page 4)

1. J 2. E 3. B 4. K 5. H 6. L 7. M 8. A 9. D 10. G 11. C 12. F