SAFE Schools
NEWSLETTER

DoDEA

June Is National Safety Month

June has been designated National Safety Month by the National Safety Council. This year's theme is "Celebrating Community Preparedness" and focuses on the following areas:

- ◆ Workplace Safety
- ◆ Driving Safety
- ◆ Emergency Preparedness
- ◆ Safety in the Home and Community

For more information about preparedness and how both individuals and organizations can reduce the incidence of "non-job-related" accidents, visit the National Safety Council Web site at www.nsc.org/nsm/. A free subscription to *Family Safety and Health* is available. ■

Inside This Issue

DoDEA Parents Enhance a Safe School Climate

Extensive research by Karen Mapp, a lecturer at Harvard University, and Anne Henderson, a fellow at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, has shown the value of parental involvement in schools. "When parents take a positive interest in what students are learning, students display more positive attitudes toward school and behave better both in and out of school." While parental involvement is often associated with increased achievement and reduced drop-out rates, it also enhances school security.

According to Henderson and Mapp, parent-school partnerships are built on a foundation of communication. Cummings Elementary School (CES), at Misawa Air Force Base in Japan, uses every opportunity to communicate with parents. According to school counselor Debby Young, "The CES staff actively elicits parent involvement. Having parents in our school sends a strong message to students that their education is highly valued and important."

The school uses its extensive Web site to keep parents informed about their children's education. Classroom Web pages offer at-home activities that parallel the class lessons and involve parents in the learning process. A parent newsletter on the site provides further information. Photographs of the children help deployed parents stay engaged in school activities. School security is maintained by offering these materials within a password protected section of the Web site that is not available for public access.

Parents volunteer in the classroom, at recess, and in the PTO. According to Counselor Debby Young, this enhances school safety. "Their presence is evident daily in the hallways of the school," notes Young. "Simply having more trusted adults in the school makes it a safer place."

Henderson and Mapp's new book, *Beyond the Bake Sale*, offers a useful guide for creating effective parent-school partnerships. It is available at www.thenewpress.com. ■

Character Counts! Materials Now Available

Character Counts!, profiled in the Spring 2007 *DoDEA Prevention Programs Guide,* is based on six "pillars" of good character. These pillars include trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.
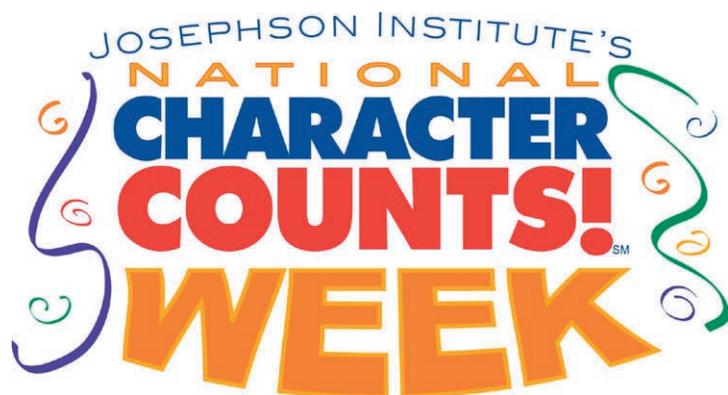
Over 800 organizations (including the National Association of Elementary Teachers and the National PTO) plus thousands of schools currently use *Character Counts!* Together, they reach over six million children per week. The program has also been modified for many organizations and localities, including the United States Army Child and Youth Services. The Program takes no stand on religion or politics; it simply stresses that good character is necessary to any healthy society.

This year, Character Counts! Week will be held October 21-27, 2007. Schools do not need to use the entire prevention program to take part in this week of activities devoted to reinforcing good character. Educators interested in participating can now access the first installment of the 2007 planning guide available on-line. Materials include a Google calendar and extensive resources about ways to incorporate the concept into extra-curricular activities and standards of learning.

The materials also include a worksheet to assist students in writing a press release about their school's character education activities.

In *Character Counts!* surveys conducted in schools across the country, the program enhanced school safety in the following ways:

▶ Reducing the number of school violence incidents. (Numerous schools report reductions in student fights.)

▶ Reducing risk factors for violence. (One school in Florida saw disorderly behavior drop 89 percent.)

▶ Improving social climate in schools. (In South Dakota, 40 percent of teachers said students treated each other better within one year of using the program.)

▶ Strengthening protective factors against violence by raising intolerance of misbehavior and increasing commitment to the school.

In 2006, DoDEA schools took part in *Character Counts!* Week in a variety of ways. At Bechtel Elementary School in Okinawa, Japan, students displayed posters illustrating the "pillars" of good character. They made special morning announcements to raise awareness of the importance of good character.

At Fort Benning, Georgia, School Age Services involve parents in *Character Counts!* activities. Each day a different pillar was assigned and parents rewarded children for good character using "character dollars." At the end of the week, the students shared their new insights with one another and were able to exchange their awards for school supplies in the *Character Counts!* store.

To access materials for the week of *Character Counts!* events, visit www.charactercounts.org. A one-time registration is necessary. The materials are free and available by download only. The DoDEA Prevention Programs Guide is available at http://dodea.edu/offices/safety/docs/ss_PreventionPrograms_2007Spring.pdf. ■

Plan Now to Conduct Drills Next Year

Protective Action Drills (e.g., lockdown, shelter-in-place, take cover, and evacuation) are an essential component of Safe School Planning. Now is the time to prepare for drills during the upcoming school year. Some administrators in U.S. public schools admit they delay practicing protective actions to avoid unnecessarily alarming students or parents/sponsors.

Here are some suggestion to assist administrators in preventing anxiety among parents and students. Plan to tell parents, students, and staff about how drills fit into your Safe School Plan. Explain that the school has a comprehensive safe school plan that includes protective action drills. Many administrators use staff and student orientations as well as PTO meetings to familiarize everyone with protective actions. Early communication avoids alarming students or parents later. The following tips describe ways to prepare the school community to conduct a protective action drill:

◆ Start communicating with parents well in advance. Administrators should reassure parents that their school has a comprehensive plan for protecting students during any type of incident.

◆ Include a "school security infomercial" during PTO meetings. This could be a skit performed by students involved in a limited way with your Safe School Committee.

◆ Without going into great detail, consistently reiterate the theme of preparedness. Explain to parents where the parent-child reunification center will be in the event of a major incident.

◆ Review sign-out procedures so parents understand they will need to show identification. Remind parents they must allow school staff to account for all students before it will be possible to begin releasing students.

◆ The week before the drill, send a letter home informing parents of the purpose of the drill. Explain that the purpose of the drill is to ensure that the staff and students know how to respond and that the school can protect their children.

◆ During the drill, use simple, direct language.

◆ Show that you are in-control by using a firm, steady voice to announce the protective action. This will reassure adults throughout the school, and students will pick-up on their teachers' demeanor.

◆ Spell-out the procedures verbally when you make the formal announcement. For example, some administrators initially say "Lockdown, lockdown, lockdown." This ensures that if someone is doing something noisy during the announcement, they have more than one opportunity to hear the signal. Following the initial announcement, veteran administrators often say: "Teachers, please go to your door, check the hall for students who might be in the halls and bring them into your classroom. Lock your door, cover your exterior windows, turn off your lights and move your students out of sight."

Plan Now to Conduct Drills Next Year (Continued)

Finally, it is possible to communicate with students without scaring them. A principal at a public school in Virginia, uses the following message to introduce a lockdown drill to her pre-school and elementary students:

> "We want to be able to protect you no matter what happens and it is possible that some day we might have a mean, angry person at the door. We would not want them to be able to get to you, so we practice lockdown, the same way we practice fire drills. Now here is what I want you to do . . ."

This principal walks children through the steps verbally on the PA before conducting the drill. This avoids creating anxiety with the first drill of the year. For checklists to assist administrators in preparing protective action drills, see Tool 14 in DoDEA's *Safe Schools Handbook*. Procedures for implementing protective actions can be found in *DoDEA's Crisis Management Guide* at www.dodea.edu/instruction/crisis/resources/docs/DoDEA_Crisis_Manag_Guide_07.pdf. Specific lockdown procedures required by DoDEA are spelled out in DoDEA Regulation 4700.2 "Internal Physical Security," Section E2.2.1.3, available at www.dodea.edu/foia/iod/pdf/4700_2.pdf. ■

Software for Tracking Security Incident Patterns

The School Crime Operations Package (School COP) is a free downloadable software application for "entering, analyzing, and mapping incidents that occur in and around schools." It was developed by Abt Associates Inc. in cooperation with the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the research, development, and evaluation agency of the U.S. Department of Justice. The project was monitored by Mapping and Analysis for Public Safety, "an NIJ program to advance applied and basic research involving the spatial analysis of crime."

School COP enables administrators and security officials to track incidents of violence, crime, or other rule violations in individual schools as well as school districts. The program can be customized to include incident data from a single school or several schools. Each incident record can include specific information such as what happened, who was involved, and where it occurred. The program can search by types of crime, location, time frame of incidents, or any combination thereof.

The software is designed to automatically find and present the trends of incidents that occur in a school. To show crime trends, School COP produces maps showing the location of incidents within school buildings or on school property. The program can also produce graphs and charts to supplement the maps. The software includes pre-formatted report forms that organize data in logical categories to help users summarize and review specific incidents and see where and when they occurred.
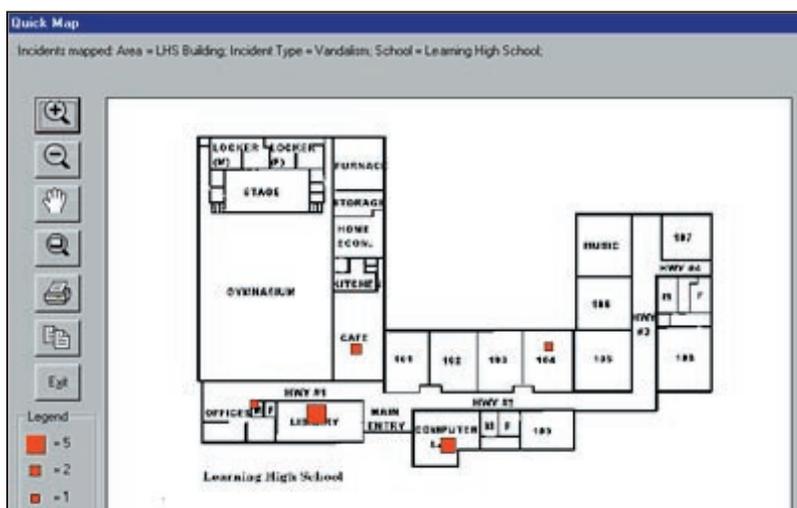
School COP comes with a sample database that allows users to explore its features before tracking the trends in their own school. The program could be used as an additional tool to identify problems during Phase 1 of the Five-Phase Process in the *DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook*. The trends from School COP can easily be combined with patterns from the Incident Worksheets (Tool 1) to help formulate objectives during Phase 2. For more information on School COP, go to www.schoolcopsoftware.com. A training video is available on-line at www.schoolcopsoftware.com/COPS-3.html. ■

Understanding Social Networking Web Sites

Students today are in constant communication through the use of technology, including social networking Web sites such as Facebook and MySpace. Due to the mature nature of the content, DoDEA policy prohibits access to these social networking sites. And therefore, students' access to these sites is blocked from school computers.

Nancy Willard, Director of the Center for Safe and Responsible Internet Use writes, "Young people have fully embraced the Internet as both an environment and a tool for socializing." These Web sites are so popular, in fact, that Alexa, a Web information company, reported that both MySpace and Facebook are among the ten most visited Web sites in the United States. In order to help teens stay safe while communicating and interacting on-line, it is helpful to understand how these social networking sites operate.

What are social networking Web sites?
They are interactive Web sites that allow each user to create personal profiles, write in on-line journals or "blogs," join associated groups, and post digital media such as photos, music, and videos. Most social networks on the internet are public, allowing anyone to join as long as they have an active e-mail account and are of a minimum age. (Many sites, such as MySpace, have automatic privacy restrictions for younger users.) Users can contact and connect with others via an electronic request and approval system on each site. Users can also choose to join one or more participating networks within the sites such as school, geographic location, or company.

How do social networking Web sites work?
Social networks on the Internet are designed to mirror the communities of their users. Different Web sites offer different levels of customization of personal profiles. Users can post as much or as little personal information as they like, including e-mail address, home address, class schedule, hobbies and interests, etc. As in real life, users can create groups for their friends, teams, or clubs. They can also schedule actual events with invitations, guest lists, and event details, allowing other users to RSVP. All personal, group, and event profiles can be protected by an administrator so that only certain users can have access to the information.
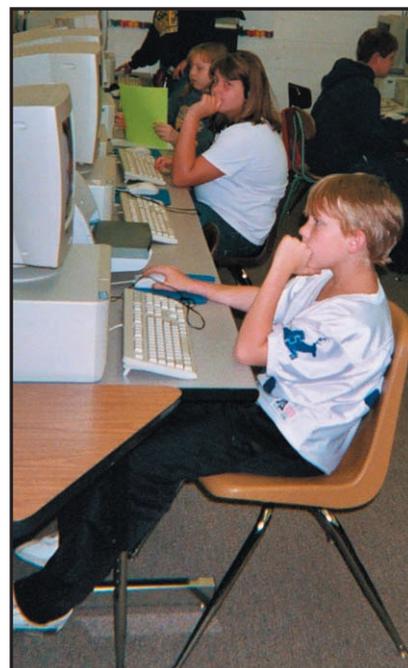
What security measures are available?
Most social networking Web sites provide security and privacy settings to protect personal information. According to Facebook.com, "You should have control over your information and who sees it. In addition to the basic visibility rules (only your friends and people in your networks can see your profile) we also give you granular control over the information you post to the site." Most other social networking services have similar methods for letting users protect personal information, however, default settings might be lower than a user would like. Also, the Web sites have procedures for users to report abuse of the system, such as cyberbullying or sexual harassment.

For more information on each on-line social network, you can visit their respective Web sites. To request a *MySpace School Administrators Guide*, contact the Safe Schools Team at safeschools@csc.com. More information about the safe use of the Internet by today's students is available at www.growingupdigital.com or www.cyberbully.org. For other programs that address cybersecurity concerns in your school, download the 2007 DoDEA Prevention Programs Guide at http://www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/docs/ss_PreventionPrograms_2007Spring.pdf. ◼

The Great Body Shop

The 2007 *DoDEA Prevention Programs Guide* includes a unique program that is now used by school districts and municipalities across the United States as part of their substance abuse prevention programs. The Great Body Shop (GBS) is a comprehensive health, substance abuse, and violence prevention curriculum developed by the Children's Health Market. It offers 40 weekly lesson plans, for pre-K through middle school, that focus on the following health topics:

- ▶ Personal Safety
- ▶ Community Health and Safety
- ▶ Violence Prevention
- ▶ Self-Worth
- ▶ Self-Growth
- ▶ Substance Abuse Prevention
- ▶ Consumer Health and Physical Fitness

The Great Body Shop has been available for two decades. Continual revisions have been made to ensure the program addresses current health issues. A 2006 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) study indicated that the program was highly effective at reducing the use of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana by students. The program is now endorsed by SAMHSA. In 2002, it was one of 87 different programs evaluated and rated by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). It achieved exemplary scores for promoting self-management and responsible decision-making, providing professional development, providing student assessment measures, and fostering family partnerships. Additionally, the program was rated as promising in the areas of self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, classroom implementation tools, school-wide coordination, and community partnerships.

The Great Body Shop also promotes social and emotional health. It has been proven effective in schools seeking additional emphasis in the prevention of substance abuse, violence, and bullying.

Using data collected over a period of several years in Minnesota schools, researchers found that the more students are exposed to the program, the greater the benefits. For example, students exposed to GBS programming over extended time periods reported significantly more family caring, higher self-esteem, lower emotional distress, and less antisocial behavior compared to students who had no exposure to the program but who lived in similar communities.

The program includes colorful cartoon-like characters that entertain while teaching valuable lessons. It has been praised for its affordability and its ease of use. The GBS kit comes with extensive support materials including newsletters, handbooks, parent brochures, and the 40 lessons that are the core of the program. The student materials are available in English and Spanish and the parent materials come in four additional languages.

For more information about *The Great Body Shop* visit www.thegreatbodyshop.net. The 2007 *DoDEA Prevention Programs Guide* is available online at http://dodea.edu/offices/safety/docs/ss_PreventionPrograms_2007Spring.pdf. ■