



Black History Month

February is an opportunity to use themes of diversity and tolerance to supplement the Black History Month curriculum. Lessons about tolerance, hate prevention, and character education help students build core values that are essential for a safe learning environment.

Teaching Tolerance offers advice on “how to make Black History Month relevant” in your school. You can visit the Teaching Tolerance Web site at www.teachingtolerance.org. Resources for character education and hate prevention can be found in the *DoDEA Prevention Programs Guide* at www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/safeSchools.cfm?sid=5. ■

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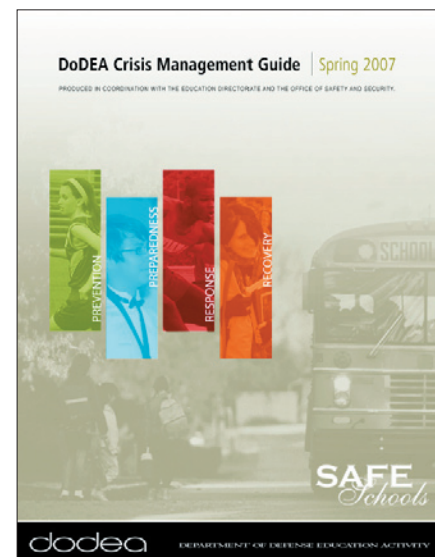
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DoDEA Crisis Management Guide Available Soon

Soon, the *DoDEA Crisis Management Guide* will be electronically distributed to administrators and will be available on the DoDEA Web site. The guide is designed to assist school administrators and other personnel in understanding effective crisis management procedures and the role of the crisis management team.

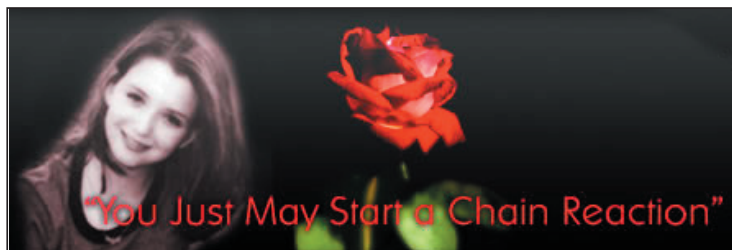
The *Crisis Management Guide* was produced in coordination with the DoDEA Education Directorate and the Office of Safety and Security (OSS). It incorporates practices and procedures from past DoDDS-Europe, DoDDS-Pacific, and DDESS Crisis Management plans. Additionally, it follows the U.S. Department of Education’s four phases of Crisis Management: **Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery:**

- ▶ **Prevention** – Measures a school can take to reduce or eliminate the risk of a critical incident or crisis event.
- ▶ **Preparedness** – Planning and practicing protective actions for use during a crisis event, including a “worst-case scenario.”
- ▶ **Response** – Steps taken during a crisis or critical incident, and the implementation of any protective actions.
- ▶ **Recovery** – Actions that must be completed after a crisis occurs to help a school return to normal operations.



Comprehensive crisis management must start with communication and collaboration among schools, the community, and emergency responders. Each individual must know his or her role and responsibilities before a critical incident occurs. ■

Youth Commit to Helping Create a Peaceful School Climate



Students across America are creating positive change in their school atmosphere by eliminating prejudice and showing more consideration for one another as part of the Rachel's Challenge program. Rachel's Challenge is based on the diaries and writings of Rachel Scott, the first person killed during the Columbine High School tragedy. In her six diaries, Rachel described her personal commitment to improving the world through her actions. "I have this theory that if one person can go out of their way to show compassion, then it will start a chain reaction of the same," Scott wrote.

"I Accept Rachel's Challenge!"

More than 500,000 students across the U.S., Canada and Germany have participated in the program which includes an assembly, break-out sessions, journal writing, and service projects. During the opening assembly, students watch a video that summarizes the background on Rachel Scott and illustrates how her acts of kindness decreased tensions or helped other students. A motivational speaker from Rachel's Challenge then helps students understand how their individual actions can positively affect young people around them who might be troubled. One student who participated in the assembly in Timberlane, New Hampshire, said that in the future he would make an effort to sit with "the quiet kids" and make a point of welcoming new students. The

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assembly concludes with a "call to action" for students to accept Rachel's challenge to:

1. Eliminate prejudice by looking for the best in others.
2. Dare to dream – set goals – keep a journal so you can see how you do.
3. Choose your influences – input determines output.
4. Use kind words – individual acts of kindness have a huge impact.
5. Start a chain reaction with family and friends.

Following the opening assembly, students divide into groups to discuss topics relevant to their school. In Davis County, Utah, students discussed topics such as safe dating, drug prevention, and problem solving. The program provides numerous opportunities for student leadership to plan follow-on activities to help students sustain their commitment. For example, students in art classes can assist by designing a banner for students to sign that states the five elements of Rachel's Challenge.

Parents and community members join students for the concluding assembly. Supplemental training is available for student leaders to help them sustain the program with additional activities, personal action, and community service.



In a letter written to encourage students to participate in Rachel's Challenge, President Bush stated, "Our nation needs Americans who respond to the call to serve others, stand up for the weak, and sacrifice for the greater good. . . . By pledging to help their neighbor, young people help to strengthen our Nation and inspire others in their community to do the same." For additional information on Rachel's Challenge, as well as the full text of President Bush's letter, visit www.rachelschallenge.com. ■

Personal Security Basics

DoDEA school security concepts provide a foundation for personal security practices. At school, staff and students learn about the importance of implementing a school risk reduction plan. Students and their families can incorporate these measures into a personal home safety plan. Principals can share security tips with parents by directing them to the Personal Security Guide available on the DoDEA web site at www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/index.cfm?sid=0. Although written for DoD personnel in the National Capital Area, these tips can be adapted for use throughout the world. The following paragraphs describe some key principles.

Develop Security Awareness

Although many people think of personal security in terms of adding door locks or security devices, developing an awareness of your surroundings is the first step to reducing your risk of becoming a victim of crime. Research has shown that criminals look for vulnerability. For instance, on the street, they tend to avoid individuals who look ahead and seem alert. In neighborhoods, burglars avoid houses with security system warnings, evidence of a dog, and homes that are well lit at night. In other words, they want to avoid difficulty as they carry out a crime and they will choose victims who seem less aware.

Report the Unusual

Awareness includes noticing details in the neighborhood that differ from normal activity. This could enable you to detect and report suspicious activity. Children are often the first to notice when something is different about their surroundings. Possible indicators include suspicious adults watching children, or strangers who appear to monitor arrivals and departures from home.

Teach Your Family How to Respond

A good rule of thumb is that children should not open the door to an unexpected adult, even if the visitor appears to have a legitimate purpose. However, instead of merely telling children not to open the door to strangers, teach them an alternative course of action and practice it with them. Alternatives to opening the door include calling parents or a trusted adult neighbor. If a stranger persists in knocking at the door or ringing the door bell, contact law enforcement immediately.



Maintain a Low Profile

Calling attention to yourself by emphasizing your affiliation with the U.S. or DoD makes you a possible target for terrorists and criminals. Avoid leaving packaging from expensive items like video games or televisions on the curb for trash pick up. Crush cardboard boxes and put them in trash cans or put them out just before trash collection. Be conscious of your clothing choices and stay sensitive to local customs and standards of behavior.



Control Your Living Space

Lock your doors. Time and distance give you an opportunity to react in the event of a home invasion. Do not open doors to strangers or give them easy access. Lock your car, office, and residence and secure the keys. Avoid crowds and volatile situations where you could be susceptible to pick-pockets.

Be Unpredictable

Varying routines helps your family avoid terrorism and crime. Criminals, like terrorists, conduct surveillance before attacking a target. Unpredictability makes it tough to plan and practice an attack. (Continued on page 4.)

Personal Security Basics (Continued)

Secure Personal Information

Hostile action against people often requires details about their jobs, finances, vehicles, schedules, and security measures. Protect your personal information including addresses, cell phones, e-mail, social security number, military IDs, and passwords for on-line banking and computer access.

By practicing smart security measures, parents can teach children a life-long lesson about protecting themselves against crime and terrorism. Students who learn security awareness at school, and practice it at home, will be better prepared to protect themselves in the future. ■

Planning Ahead for Inclement Weather

In January, many areas in northern Europe experienced unusually strong storms that affected the communities around them. Transportation services from England to Germany were shut down because of hurricane-force winds and rain. Businesses, government agencies, and even zoos were shut down as safety measures. These recent storms illustrate the importance of school plans for unexpected incidents including inclement weather and natural disasters.



DoDEA Regulation 1005.1: *Administrators' Manual* states, "In case of inclement weather, the installation commander or his/her designee will coordinate school closure with the school principal . . ." For this type of situation, schools should have established methods for effectively communicating with parents and possibly dismissing students early. For example, administrators and staff should be familiar with school procedures for signing-out students when an installation decides to close the school. Also, parents of younger students need to be aware that they may be responsible for picking up their child if a school dismisses students early. If they cannot, they must arrange transportation for the student with another pre-approved adult. It is a good idea to have alternate dismissal plans in case more parents than usual are picking up their students – and possibly other students as well – directly from school.

DoDEA schools can ensure they are prepared to respond to inclement weather by implementing the protective actions listed in the Safe Schools Handbook. The "Take Cover" technique protects students and staff from sudden natural disasters (i.e., tornado, typhoon, hurricane, etc.). Providing school is in session, there are actions administrators can take to ensure the safety of students and staff: secure windows and doors in case of sudden violent winds, torrential storms, or flying debris; relocate any students in exposed classrooms to safer locations (i.e., enclosed hallway or inner classroom).

Developing reliable methods for communicating with staff, students, and parents is critical to a smooth response to inclement weather and school closures. Parents need to know how to find out if the school is closing because of inclement weather. Schools might consider reminding parents that DoDEA school closures are made in conjunction with the installation commander and might differ from those of the surrounding school districts. In addition to any emergency announcements from the school's installation, posting critical announcements on the school's Web site and/or sending e-mail and text messages to parents are effective ways of notifying the community of changes in the school schedule. Additionally, procedures for disseminating information can be included in each school's student handbook.

DoDEA Regulation 1005.1: *Administrators' Manual* is available from the DoDEA Web site at www.dodea.edu/foia/iod/pdf/1005_1.pdf. Procedures for protective actions such as Take Cover can be found in the *DoDEA Crisis Management Guide* described on page 1 of this newsletter, as well as the Safe Schools Handbook. ■

NASSP Principal of the Year Stresses the Value of Planning

For Ellen Minette, Principal of Heidelberg Middle School and National Association of Secondary School Principals' Principal of the Year, there are three essential components to creating a safe school environment: planning, prevention and caring.

Planning

First, Minette believes that principals must have a plan in place to deal with any crisis events that may arise. These Safe School plans must cover all eventualities, from the inclement weather that recently led to extensive school closures in Europe, to violence prevention and antiterrorism planning. Minette works closely with her two district safety and security officers (DSSOs) to practice lockdown and school evacuation drills.



For example, if Minette's DSSOs alert her to a potential threat, Minette's crisis management team can secure all doors, place staff at all entrances, and oversee student and adult ID checks. They can perform all tasks quickly and without disrupting classes. Minette attributes their success to having an extensive Incident Response Plan in place.

Prevention

The second important aspect of school safety is prevention. For Minette, preventing school violence comes largely in the form of anti-bullying practices. Minette is quick to point out that although name-calling and harassment are sometimes considered typical middle school behaviors, these behaviors are squelched immediately in the DoDEA environment.

"I believe you must take care of the small things. If you don't, the big things will run away from you," says Minette, who recently launched an aggressive anti-bullying campaign to curb such behavior. She and her staff conducted surveys to find out where students felt most vulnerable. They answered overwhelmingly that they felt "safe in class, less so in the hallways, playground, and before and after school." Using that information, Counselor Lynn Mattingly drafted an anti-bullying program centered on building trust among students by creating a "community of caring" within Heidelberg Middle School.

A Caring Community

A community of caring reduces aggression because it helps students empathize with one another. Additionally, they come to see how seemingly minor incidents such as name calling can cause genuine pain to others and spark reciprocal aggression.

A strong community has also helped reduce stress related to the deployment of students' parents. Minette reports that until recently, about 25 percent of the student population had a parent deployed. The school has many programs in place to support students. They also communicate with parents "downrange," and assist as returning service personnel begin the process of reintegrating into their families. "It's not easy," Minette says of the stresses military families face. "We've got to be part of making people feel comfortable." The programs are working: Heidelberg Middle School has had no problems with violence or unruly behavior related to parent deployments.

Support groups, open communication, prevention programs, and a "strong plan," coupled with genuine concern, are all part of Minette's program to prevent violence in her school. For guidance in creating your own Incident Response Plan, see Chapter 2, Section 2 of the Safe Schools Handbook. Templates for school surveys can be found in Chapter 1 of the Handbook. ■

FEMA Resources Available for Educators

“FEMA for Kids” offers many resources for teachers and parents to assist them in helping students prepare for disasters, both natural and man-made, and to recover from them. This Web site, created by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), provides links to related information at the Department of Education and other Web sites of interest. While no one likes to think about disasters, DoDEA schools and students are not immune to the weather, flooding, earthquakes, and other emergencies which occasionally strike their communities.

At first glance, the site appears to be devoted mainly to children’s games and activities. However, FEMA for Kids offers three types of resources for educators. These include academic activities, information on school safety and specialized information on steps schools can take to help students after a disaster. The site also offers many links that provide convenient access to resources that might otherwise be difficult to find.

The curricula and activities include quizzes, numerous lesson plans, and a fire prevention test created by the Lebanon, Pennsylvania Fire Department. There is also an interdisciplinary project designed for middle and high school students which challenges them to formally investigate their community’s disaster preparedness. It requires students to interview local officials and use critical thinking and analysis to address the three phases of a disaster: response, short and long-term recovery. The students then apply their analyses to a disaster scenario. The exercise concludes with students writing reports about how they think their community would fare.



FEMA for Kids devotes a section of its site to School Safety. In addition to providing links to *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools*, the site also offers a chapter-by-chapter summary of this guide. Also, school staff can find descriptions of the types of FEMA training courses available to educators on the site.

The “After a Disaster” section of FEMA for Kids offers in-depth resources about how educators can help students heal from a variety of potentially damaging scenarios. For example, the site offers 12 warning signs that children tend to exhibit after a traumatic event and 27 steps educators can take to help children cope after a crisis. Because most experts agree that it is crucial that children talk about their experiences, the site offers a long list of popular children’s books that can help give kids the words to express the anxiety and stress they may be experiencing.

FEMA for Kids differs from other disaster preparation sites because all of the resources are either provided in portable document format (PDF) or via links to other Web sites. The site gives in-depth material of immediate use to educators, rather than just summary information. For example, it offers the full implementation guide to the FEMA Project Cope School Intervention model in workbook form. This program was used in California schools following the 1989 earthquake and provided a framework for students to explore their experience through scribbling and then use those scribbles to generate discussion.

This site received a grade of “A” from *Education World*, which recommends that educators review the site before the “unthinkable should happen.” For more information, visit the teacher’s section of FEMA for Kids at www.fema.gov/kids/teacher.htm. ■