



SAFE Schools

NEWSLETTER



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NBC Dateline Highlights Internet Concern

Recently, NBC Dateline presented its third special on sexual predators: "To Catch a Predator III." These shows have highlighted a growing concern for school aged children – sexual predators on the Internet.

According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, "By knowing the dangers and how to avoid them, youth can take advantage of the positive aspects of the Internet while avoiding most of its pitfalls." For tips on how educators can help protect students, see the article on page 5 of this newsletter, or visit i-SAFE at: www.isafe.org, or SafeKids at: www.safekids.com. ■

Confronting Racism, Prejudice and Stereotypes

Dana Williams, from the not-for-profit educational organization Teaching Tolerance, offers important tips to educators on handling incidents involving racism or racial prejudice. Ms. Williams offers the following tips for administrators and teachers:



A hero in the fight against prejudice, Coretta Scott King, was laid to rest on February 7, 2006.

- ◆ **Be Direct** – Explain to students that racism and prejudice exist in real life and play a role in many incidents.
- ◆ **Remain Calm** – Racism and prejudice are emotional topics that frequently involve anger. If adults respond well by managing their own emotions before responding to students, then students will feel comfortable reporting future incidents.
- ◆ **Talk Regularly** – We all struggle with prejudice, bias and stereotypes. Open discussion can decrease tensions and prevent incidents. Ms. Williams recommends talking with students before incidents occur in your school.

One way to start this dialogue is to use current events that students hear and see in the news as a basis for discussion. Begin to discuss and dissect stereotypes with students. Teaching Tolerance offers free materials to educators that include case studies for high school students and age appropriate teaching kits for students in grades K-8.

Ms. Williams notes that children learn their attitudes from the adults around them. She concludes however, that adults can actively help children develop healthy racial attitudes. For more information, visit Teaching Tolerance at: www.tolerance.org/parents/kidsarticle.jsp?&ar=43, or Family Education online magazine at: <http://life.familyeducation.com/race/equality/37422.html>. ■

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Handwashing Prevents Spread of Disease

Handwashing – rubbing your hands together with soap and water – reduces the spread of infection from one person to another. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states: “Frequent handwashing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.” According to the CDC, people pick up germs from other sources and infect themselves when they touch their eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs then spread to others or to surfaces that other people touch. Handwashing limits the danger by reducing the bacteria on your hands.

The Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics (APUA) reminds students when to wash. APUA suggests washing:

- ✓ Before eating and cooking.
- ✓ Before treating a cut or wound or tending to someone who is sick.
- ✓ Before inserting or removing contact lenses.
- ✓ After using the bathroom.
- ✓ After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- ✓ After playing with pets.

According to the online magazine *KidsHealth*, the four things to remember when washing your hands are:

1. Use warm water (not cold or hot).
2. Use soap. (Antibacterial gels also work.)
3. Work up a lather and wash all surfaces thoroughly with soap, including wrists, palms, back of hands, between your fingers, and around your fingernails.

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4. When drying your hands, use a clean or disposable towel if possible.

KidsHealth recommends washing for 15 to 20 seconds or about the length of time it takes to sing the “Happy Birthday” song two times quickly.



Reminding students to wash their hands decreases the number of school days lost due to sickness. According to the CDC, there are 52 million cases of the common cold each year among Americans under the age of 17. Nearly 22 million school days are lost due to the common cold. The American Society for Microbiology (ASM) notes that some viruses and bacteria can live for up to two hours on cafeteria tables, door knobs and desks. ASM’s Clean Hands Campaign explains that people unconsciously touch their nose, mouth and eyes several times per day, exposing themselves to these germs.

There are several resources available to assist DoDEA educators in teaching students about personal hygiene. DoDEA Manual 4942.0, “DoDEA School Health Services Guide” offers guidance on handwashing and universal precautions. The CDC offers a fact sheet that recommends traditional handwashing with soap and water as well as alcohol-based hand rubs as “a sensible strategy for hand hygiene.” The fact sheet is available at: www.cdc.gov/od/oc/media/pressrel/fs021025.htm. *KidsHealth* offers instructions for children on how to wash your hands at: www.kidshealth.org/kid/talk/qa/wash_hands.html.

Finally, the School Network for Absenteeism Prevention (SNAP) offers a “tool kit” to help middle school administrators educate their students about handwashing. The tool kit comes in English and Spanish and includes posters to publicize the effort, and specific handwashing instructions (i.e., sing the “Happy Birthday” song two times while washing your hands). The kit is available at: www.itsasnap.org/index.asp. ■

Emergency Planning for Special Needs Requirements

A recent nationwide survey of local school jurisdictions, commissioned by the National Organization on Disability (NOD), found that among those schools that currently have an emergency preparation plan, only 54 percent included plans for dealing with students with disabilities. School safety has seen many positive changes since the tragic events of 911 in 2001 and Beslan in 2004. However, the survey results indicate that the consideration of special needs students is one priority that needs more attention (i.e., evacuating physically handicapped students in the event of a bomb scare).

School administrators and officials need to consider the unique needs of students with disabilities. This should not be done separately from other emergency planning for protective actions, but should be conducted as an integral part of the same process. Several well thought-out steps can make most existing emergency action plans inclusive for students with disabilities. There is no single answer because special needs for each situation are dictated by your school population. However, here are several “baseline questions” for understanding and incorporating special needs student and faculty safety requirements into your emergency plans:

1. Ensure there are appropriate communication systems to alert students in the event of an emergency situation. Students and teachers who are deaf or have hearing difficulties may not be able to hear fire alarms or other audible emergency signals. Strobe lights or flashing lights may be an appropriate alternative.
2. Evaluate and understand the need and requirement for medicines and/or medical devices during an emergency. Different protective actions may require different planning. Evacuation or shelter-in-place could extend for a prolonged period. Develop plans appropriate to your population and medical needs. Staff communication with outside medical professionals may be necessary and/or appropriate for prolonged situations.
3. Assess evacuation procedures and ensure that the physical and sensory limitations of students are evaluated and incorporated into the plans. If your population has students with mobility impairments, not all building exits may be accessible.
4. Implement appropriate alternate methodologies and techniques for students and faculty with visual impairments to identify evacuation routes and lockdown procedures.
5. Have appropriate dialogue concerning safety planning and student disabilities between administrators and parents. Open dialogue is essential to understanding, confidence and trust.
6. Coordinate with your emergency responders. Ensure they have up-to-date maps of the school, details of special needs students, their locations during normal operations, and plans for emergencies.



With careful consideration, the needs of students and staff with disabilities can be integrated into your plans; thereby making your school safe for everyone. To make your school more accessible for students and staff in the event of an emergency, visit the National Organization on Disability at: www.nod.org. ■

D.A.R.E. Progress Report

A new study of DoDEA's drug prevention program of choice for grades K-8, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.), indicates that D.A.R.E. is demonstrating progress. D.A.R.E. is starting its fifth year using the new curriculum *Take Charge of Your Life*.



The revamped curriculum presents factual information to help students resist both the direct, and the subtle pressures of experimenting with alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other controlled substances.

In a December 2005 interview, Ron Lard, D.A.R.E. International Coordinator, explained that reinforcing the lessons is the key to sustaining D.A.R.E.'s effectiveness. Some DoDEA schools achieve this "booster shot" of prevention by teaching D.A.R.E. in the fifth or sixth grade in elementary school, and again in the seventh grade in middle school.

The Institute for Health and Social Policy at the University of Akron is conducting a longitudinal study based on surveys of 19,000 students at 122 middle schools in six U.S. cities — Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Newark and St. Louis. Researchers also surveyed teachers, parents and principals. The January 2006 progress report indicates:

- ◆ **97%** of teachers rated the program "good" or "excellent."
- ◆ **92.8%** of parents agreed that DARE teaches students to say no to drugs and violence.
- ◆ **86%** of principals believe students completing the DARE curriculum will be less likely to use drugs.
- ◆ **94.5%** of parents recommend the DARE Program be continued, based on their child's experience.

DoDEA benefits from the cooperation of a variety of local security/law enforcement personnel. Military security personnel, police officers, and Safe Neighborhood Awareness Program Coordinators complete a rigorous

two-week program to become D.A.R.E. instructors. The instructors view themselves as "coaches" and share factual information and appropriate personal experiences. For additional information, visit the D.A.R.E. America Web site at www.dare.com. ■

Internet Safety Tips for Students

Syndicated columnist and author Lawrence Magid hosts the Web site www.safekids.com to help keep children safer in cyberspace. The following Internet safety tips have been adapted from his pamphlet "Child Safety on the Information Highway." This pamphlet is available for free from The Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

- ✓ I will not give out personal information such as my address, telephone number, parents' work address/telephone number, or the name and location of my school without my parents' permission.
- ✓ I will tell my parents right away if I come across any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.
- ✓ I will never agree to get together with someone I "meet" online without first checking with my parents. If my parents agree to the meeting, I will be sure that it is in a public place and bring my mother or father along.
- ✓ I will never send a person my picture or anything else without first checking with my parents.
- ✓ I will not respond to any messages that are mean or in any way make me feel uncomfortable. It is not my fault if I get a message like that. If I do, I will tell my parents right away so that they can contact the online service.
- ✓ I will talk with my parents so that we can set up rules for going online. We will decide upon the time of day that I can be online, the length of time I can be online, and appropriate areas for me to visit. I will not access other areas or break these rules without their permission.

For further information visit: the Center for Missing and Exploited Children at www.missingkids.com or www.safekids.com. ■

Anti-bullying Books for Elementary School Children

Children's books reinforce the anti-bullying messages taught in prevention programs. Below, Kristin Levine, a teacher who has taught K-12 in Germany and the U.S., reviews a selection of books suggested as additional resources in the U.S. Department of Education pamphlet, *Preventing Bullying: A Manual For Schools and Communities*. Levine reminds educators, "By using books about bullying in language arts, science, or art, the anti-bullying message can be integrated across the curriculum." Below are Ms. Levine's reviews of three books that elementary school teachers could use in the classroom to help reinforce the anti-bullying message.



1. *Chrysanthemum*, by Kevin Henkes, Greenwillow Books, New York, 1991.

Chrysanthemum is the story of a little mouse with a long and unusual name. Chrysanthemum loves being named after a flower until she gets to school and the other mice start to tease her. With the help of her parents and a music teacher named Mrs. Delphinium Twinkle, Chrysanthemum soon comes to appreciate her own unique name. The book helps children understand their intrinsic self-worth so their self image does not depend on what their peers say about them. Teaching that lesson early could reduce tension and fights in later years.

The bright and colorful pictures in *Chrysanthemum* would appeal primarily to pre-kindergarteners through third graders. It could also be used in an elementary science lesson on the different types of flowers.

2. *Monster Mama*, story by Liz Rosenberg, illustrations by Stephen Gammell, Philomel Books, New York, 1993. When children verbally bully each other, insults about a person's family are common. *Monster Mama* takes this idea and runs with it. In this book, Patrick Edward's mama really is a monster. She's "ugly, scary, and lives in a cave." But she's also loving and kind. Patrick Edward must learn how to deal with three boys who steal his money and taunt him about his unusual mother. Children learn not to be overly sensitive and overreact to teasing about their families.

The imaginative pictures might be a bit scary and too intense for younger readers. However, second to fourth graders would likely think *Monster Mama* was wonderful!

3. *Finding the Green Stone*, by Alice Walker, paintings by Catherine Deeter, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, New York, 1991.

Finding the Green Stone, a children's book by the award-winning author of *The Color Purple*, is a haunting, allegorical story about a boy, Johnny, who loses his precious green stone. As stated on the cover:

"Johnny lives in a town where everyone has a green stone. Johnny has one too until his mean spirited behavior causes him to lose it. Accompanied by his family and the whole community, Johnny begins his search, but soon discovers that he alone can find the green stone, when he finds the love that glows bright within his heart."

His sister, who still has her own green stone, agrees to help him look for it. Johnny has been mean and nasty lately to his neighbor, Mr. Roseharp, and to his father, a truck driver. He has even been resentful of the time his physi-

Anti-bullying Books for Elementary School Children (Continued)

cian mother spends helping others. It is only by acknowledging and changing his bullying behavior towards those he cares about, that Johnny is finally able to discover the whereabouts of his own green stone.

This story provides a unique look into the point-of-view of a bully. Beautiful paintings of an idyllic African-American community make this book a joy to look at and read. The allegorical story makes it a “picture book” for older readers (third to sixth grade). Finding the Green Stone is a book that makes its readers think, and it could spark a wonderful writing assignment for a language arts class, as students grapple with the question of what the green stone is supposed to represent.

Finding The Green Stone teaches students to treat their family and friends with respect. As stated on the rear cover, Alice Walker’s book “teaches us that our love for family and friends brings us the most powerful peace and happiness of all.”

The books discussed in this article are available from www.amazon.com and other major book retailers. For more suggestions of books about bullying, order a free copy of Preventing Bullying at: www.edpubs.org/webstore/Content/search.asp. If you have comments about these books, or would like to suggest others you have successfully used as part of your prevention programs, please contact us at: safeschools@csc.com. ■



Conflict Resolution for Middle School Students

Learning the benefits of collaboration versus competition helps students avoid conflict and perform better in group activities. The Program for Young Negotiators (PYN) is a conflict resolution and violence prevention program. The program teaches students how to identify and achieve their personal goals; explore how empathy, trust, and active listening contribute to effective problem solving; and develop options for solving problems at school and at home. Students also practice the key elements of “principled negotiation,” including:

- ◆ Separate people from the problem.
- ◆ Focus on interests, not positions.
- ◆ Invent options for mutual gain.
- ◆ Insist on objective criteria.



The Department of Education recognized PYN as a promising program. The curriculum targets middle school students because they are at a critical point in their social and academic development. The course can be presented in ten 90-minute lessons or twenty 45-minute classes. For further information visit the program Web site at: www.channing-bete.com/positiveyouth/pages/PYN/PYN.html or see: www.westernjustice.org/schools.htm. ■