



DoDEA

SAFE Schools

NEWSLETTER



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DoDEA Students Score High in Academics

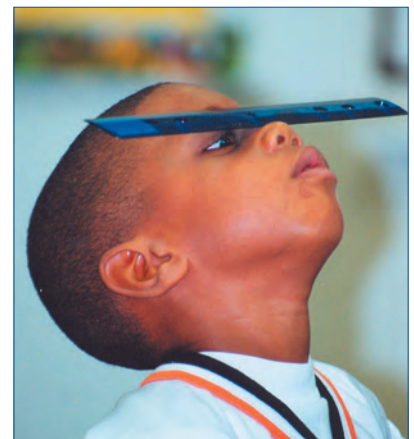
A safe learning environment enables students to learn. According to the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), DoDEA students are excelling at academics. The reading score (271) for DoDEA eighth-graders was the second highest in the U.S. – behind Massachusetts and ahead of North Dakota, Maine, and New Hampshire. DoDEA fourth-graders had the third highest score (226). They were tied with Delaware, Virginia, and Connecticut. Often referred to as “The Nation’s Report Card,” the tests were administered to all U.S. students during Spring 2005. For additional information see: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/>. ■

Stress Busters!

Ask about the problems confronting DoDEA and you are increasingly likely to hear the same answer: stress. Sources of psychological stress that affect DoDEA students and staff include deployment of parents/sponsors, moving from one school to another, and uncertainty about the future. For staff, discretionary commitments of time (i.e., volunteering for too many activities), and financial commitments (bills), impose additional stress.

Henry Berry, from Fort Bragg’s Army Community Services, recently presented suggestions on stress management at a seminar for DoDEA administrators, counselors, and school psychologists. Mr. Berry said, “If you have an issue, deal with it – don’t let it fester.” He suggested removing the sources of stress by limiting the financial and personal commitments that cause people to feel overwhelmed.

Mr. Berry said that sometimes we create stress for ourselves. He noted that managing our time and finances well eases our psychological burden. Such discipline allows staff to conserve energy and maintain mental focus. He described several relaxation techniques including:



- ✓ Progressive muscle relaxation.
- ✓ Deep breathing.
- ✓ Guided imagery (i.e., imagining that you are on a tropical island).
- ✓ Bio-feedback (i.e., listening to your body).

Most DoDEA personnel have access to resources to assist them with stress management, including the Employee Assistance Program and Community Support Services. For additional information on stress management see the American Psychological Association’s “Six Myths About Stress” at: <http://helping.apa.org/articles/article.php?id=17>, visit the Mayo Clinic’s “Family First” site at: www.familyfirst.net/famlife/stresscare.asp, or contact Henry Berry at: goonie.berry@conus.us.army.mil. ■

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Understanding Millennials

The changing attributes of today's youth present new challenges for violence and drug prevention. In their book, *Millennials Rising*, authors Neil Howe and William Strauss dub the children born since 1982, "Millennials." The authors review surveys and research that identify several characteristics of the Millennials. According to Howe and Strauss, Millennials are:

- ▶ **Relationship-Oriented** – Students place a high priority on togetherness and form tight peer bonds.
- ▶ **Technically Savvy** – Millennials demand Internet connections for news, music, and blogs. They use cell phones to text-message their friends.
- ▶ **Civic-Minded** – Today's youth volunteer for service projects, insist on inclusion, and believe they can change society through social activism.

Danny Holland, Executive Director of Parent and Teen Universities, points out that failure to understand and take these characteristics of Millennials into account can lead to problems. Three challenges and strategies for addressing them are:

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Relationship-Oriented

- ◆ **Challenge:** Mr. Holland notes that although Millennials are extremely social and prefer to do things in groups, they often feel starved for attention from adults. If the parents and teachers are not present in their students' lives, teens become susceptible to overtures from drug dealers and gangs.
- ◆ **Strategy:** Be "Relational" – He notes that asking a question, such as "What did you do with your hair?" suggests to the student that the parent or teacher noticed because they care about that individual. Once a connection is established, students are more likely to turn to that adult for support.

Technically Savvy

- ◆ **Challenge:** The technical savvy that makes youth comfortable with information technology also requires creativity in the classroom.
- ◆ **Strategy:** Be "Rousing" – Rather than compete with influences such as movies, video games, and music, use these media to retain students' attention. Start a lesson with an excerpt from a movie, TV show, or commercial and use the example in the lesson.

Civic-Minded

- ◆ **Challenge:** According to research conducted by Howe and Strauss, although Millennials believe they can change society, they do not trust the government or institutions. They respond better to factual information than government warnings.
- ◆ **Strategy:** Be "Real" – Make yourself vulnerable by admitting some minor foible. Students recognize that you are "human" and respond by communicating more openly. Once the connection is established, a statement of personal conviction about society might be more persuasive than a government study.

Mr. Holland's suggestions can help you improve communication with students. For additional information on Mr. Holland and Parent and Teen Universities visit: www.familiesinternational.org/home.htm. ■

Lockdown: A Tough Question

(The following article responds to a question posed by an administrator.)

What do you do if a student is caught in a common area during lockdown? Picture a lockdown where the staff has completed all the expected actions. They:

- ✓ Hear the announcement for lockdown over the PA system.
- ✓ Check the halls for students and hurry them into their classrooms.
- ✓ Lock classroom doors.
- ✓ Move students away from the door and windows.
- ✓ Ensure students are sitting quietly on the floor.
- ✓ Turn out the lights.
- ✓ Cover any interior doors or windows with window shades or pre-positioned window coverings.
- ✓ Report classroom status and attendance to the main office.
- ✓ Classes/persons caught outside, at activities such as gym or recess, either re-enter the school, take available cover, or evacuate to a safer area depending on the nature of the threat.



*A classroom in lockdown: the door locked and window covered.
Tough Question: What do you do if someone comes to the door?*

With the lights out, windows covered, and doors locked, it's difficult to target particular individuals in the classroom. **What if there is a knock at the door and a voice asks to be let into the classroom? Should the staff member open the door?**

This is a "tough question" because if the staff member opens the door, he or she is risking both their own safety and that of the 20 to 30 students in the classroom for the "student" at the door. Consider the possibilities:

1. The "voice at the door" could be a student or staff member who was late to class or caught in the halls.
2. The individual at the door could be a perpetrator or "bad guy."
3. The person at the door could be an innocent hostage. The perpetrator could have a gun to his/her head.

The instinct of many caring faculty and staff members might be to open the door quickly and bring in the "lost sheep." However, the preferable response from a security standpoint is: **DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR ONCE YOU COMPLETE LOCKDOWN** until the all clear signal is given by local law enforcement/security personnel.

(Continued on page 4)

Lockdown: A Tough Question (Continued)



A teacher acts as “sweeper” and hustles children out of the hallway during a lockdown drill at a U.S. public elementary school.

Carefully implementing DoDEA’s guidance on lockdowns can prevent or limit the probability that such a situation could occur. Both DoDEA Manual 1005.1, “Administrators’ Manual” and DoDEA Regulation 4700.2, “Internal Physical Security” (both available at: www.dodea.edu/regs/regs_num.htm) list the following two actions at the beginning of the required lockdown procedures:

1. All students should be cleared from hallways and directed into internal rooms.
2. Bathrooms and utility rooms should be cleared of students and locked, if possible.

Designating “safe rooms,” and training students to go to those rooms if they find themselves stranded will further limit the possibility of such an occurrence. Administrators and their Incident Response Teams

can review their school’s physical layout to find a room where opening the door to admit stragglers will not expose additional students to the threat. Select classrooms or unoccupied rooms at the end of each hall. Consider using the custodian’s office, especially if the custodian already acts as a “sweeper” to check common areas.

In the scenario described above, can the teacher remind the student to go to a safe room, or will that reveal that there are people in the classroom? Drill observations suggest she can. If all the staff perform lockdown properly, all of the occupied classrooms are dark and silent, while empty rooms have the lights on and doors open. ■

Walkie-Talkie Procedures

Walkie-talkies provide for flexibility in two-way communication. However, walkie-talkies require training and delegation of responsibility. Provide training to ensure that all teachers know how to use the devices. Also, tell staff that any teacher heading toward the playground with a class should either have a walkie-talkie in their classroom to take with them, or stop by the office to pick up one of the “shared” walkie-talkies.

Designate responsible individuals to check that walkie-talkies are in their chargers daily at the end of the school day. Family Radio (FRS) and General Mobile Radio (GMRS) Service devices with individual chargers sell for \$50-\$60 per pair and are always ready for use if they are stored in their chargers. It helps to buy more walkie-talkies than you need, so that if one device is lost or broken you still have enough to cover normal operations. Inexpensive FRS/GMRS radios should suffice for many uses in schools. For additional information on walkie-talkies see the DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook (page 3-81) or the April 2002 newsletter (page 7) available at: www.dodea.edu/schools/newsletters.htm. ■



Protecting Students in Online Communities

Many students are taking part in free online networking services such as MySpace, Facebook, and Friendster. Youth can use these Web sites for online communication through interactive networks of photos, user profiles and internal messaging systems.



On many of these sites, students can create a customized web page devoted to their personal interests including photos and private information. MySpace, for example, is an open-forum network that any Internet user can access. Unfortunately, these electronic communities can expose students to sexual predators, drug solicitations, or hate groups.

Although it is a violation of MySpace agreements, some groups that are dedicated to the slandering of racial minorities have formed. Many administrators have begun to restrict access to MySpace from school computers because it has become a haven for student gossip and bullying.

Facebook, available at more than 25,000 U.S. high schools, is an online directory that connects people through social networks at specific schools. This online community is closed to outsiders. It is a free service, but students need a school e-mail address to register. Registered users can only access the profiles of others in their school. Teens may search for others they know at various schools and request that those students confirm their “friendship.” This acknowledgement then links the two students’ profiles. Students can also join groups dedicated to almost any topic they desire, enter

class schedules, and announce upcoming extracurricular activities.

A number of high schools across the U.S. have already blocked access to Facebook on all school computers after students started anti-school groups. Some administrators suspended students that joined Facebook hate groups targeting peers or staff members. At a high school in East Lansing, Michigan, students were threatened with disciplinary action for joining a Facebook slandering their principal.

In most DoDEA schools, the network administrator installs blocking software that prevents users from accessing inappropriate Web sites. “Blocking software” assists administrators, teachers, and counselors in their efforts to keep students safe while students are online.

Complementing technical solutions with security awareness training strengthens students’ ability to protect themselves. Since some of these networks are open to anyone who wants to join, students must realize there are risks to releasing private information.

Tips on teaching cyber security to students are available for free at <http://ilearn.isafe.org>. The materials are produced by i-SAFE America, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to teaching students, teachers, and parents how to protect themselves on the Internet. For suggestions on age appropriate curriculum, including free lesson plans, visit www.i-safe.org. ■

Adult Monitoring of Internet Use

A recent i-SAFE America survey indicated:

- ▶ 54% of parents feel limited in their ability to monitor their children online.
- ▶ 37% of students said their parents would disapprove if they knew what they did, where they went, or with whom they chatted on the Internet.

For details visit www.i-SAFE.org, under “Quick Links,” click on i-EDUCATOR Times (page 5). ■

Understanding Peer Sexual Harassment

Peer sexual harassment is defined as one student subjecting another to sexual comments or jokes, sexual advances, and/or unwanted touching. Like other forms of bullying, it can be either verbal or physical. Peer sexual harassment is sometimes seen as a symptom of a school's culture. In contrast to other forms of sexual harassment, it is often public, occurring in hallways, classrooms, and schoolyards. For some students it can be a daily occurrence.

Peer sexual harassment occurs much more frequently than sexual harassment by teachers. A study funded by the American Association of University Women found that 87 percent of girls and 71 percent of boys reported being sexually harassed by another student. In contrast, the number of students reporting sexual harassment by a teacher was much lower: 20 percent of girls and only 8 percent of boys.

Although both boys and girls report sexual harassment, girls report more severe and physical forms. For boys, sexual harassment is often of a homophobic nature. Calling another boy "gay" is an upsetting insult in many schools, even as more students are openly homosexual.

When assessing the problem of sexual harassment at your school, keep in mind the fact that sexual harassment is a vague term, sometimes covering everything from unwanted jokes to attempted rape. Sometimes



students view sexual harassment as only the most extreme form. When student questionnaires are formulated differently (asking about sexual behavior, for example) surveys can yield quite different results.



Suggestions for implementing a successful program to prevent sexual harassment include:

- ◆ Tie any sexual harassment prevention programs into the existing curriculum. Teachers are already under great pressure to cover required materials.
- ◆ Plan multiple sessions for the program. Students are not expected to learn algebra in one 90-minute lesson. Learning skills to prevent sexual harassment takes time and effort.
- ◆ Evaluate the program to see if it is working.

For an extensive list of resources available on this topic, visit: www.wcwonline.org/harassment/index.html and click on resources. For more information see: www.ericdigests.org/2001-3/preventing.htm or www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2294/is_2003_March/ai_100630995. ■