



DoDEA

SAFE Schools

NEWSLETTER



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Drill Resources

The National School Safety Center, state governors, and many superintendents have proclaimed October 16-22 “America’s Safe Schools Week.” This is an excellent time to practice protective action drills: lockdown, shelter-in-place, take cover, and evacuation.

Administrators have a wealth of resources to assist them in preparing for drills. Start with your District Safety & Security Officer. Review DoDEA Regulation 4700.2 (page 11, paragraph E2.2.1.3) available at: www.dodea.edu/regs/regs_num.htm, for specific lockdown procedures. Also, see Tool 14 in *DoDEA’s Safe Schools Handbook* for checklists to help conduct drills. ■

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Perfecting Lockdowns

The proper lockdown procedures for your school can best be determined by considering the specific layout and the unique needs of your school. Then, coordinate your response with your District Safety and Security Officer (DSSO) and local security officials. Administrators can consider several best practices when developing procedures for their school, including:

- ◆ **Use Staff Effectively** – Identify staff members to act as “sweepers.” Sweepers collect stragglers from common areas and check that exterior doors are locked.
- ◆ **Spell Out Actions Needed** – Some principals accompany the lockdown signal with a verbal reminder of the actions needed, stating “bring all students inside your classroom, lock your doors and move students away from the windows.” Verbally reiterating the steps makes it easier for staff to execute their duties.



Signals and/or Verbal Codes

At this public elementary school, the school’s mascot is the buffalo, so the lockdown code became “Herd the Buffalo.” Some teachers misunderstood the signal and evacuated instead of locking down.

- ◆ **Take Attendance** – Teachers and staff need to take attendance and report the results to the principal so the principal can account for all students and staff. A reporting requirement provides the ability to know when you have completed the protective action. The principal should be able to say with certainty that the school is locked down.

The principal and first responders should not be meeting for the first time during a crisis incident. Coordinating and practicing lockdown procedures will improve your response capabilities. **Practice, coordinate, practice!** ■



Face Checking: A Low-Tech Approach to Violence Prevention

Principals, throughout the country, are emphasizing personal interaction with their students as a component of school security.

As an example, T.C. Williams High School in Alexandria, VA, has all of the modern security equipment, personnel and security measures that one would expect in an urban school. However, Principal John Porter says some of his best violence prevention measures involve human interaction. He routinely uses a technique he refers to as “face checking” as a barometer of school climate.

Mr. Porter, and many other administrators, increasingly practice “reading the faces of the students” for indicators of a pending incident. A savvy administrator can tell if a youth is distressed by observing the student’s behavior, facial expressions, and body language.

Mr. Porter offered these additional insights:

- ◆ Maintain a close working relationship with local security officials. Consider coordinating with the law enforcement/local security officials to arrange for the school to receive updates on relevant incidents in the community.
- ◆ Students might not reveal whether another student has marijuana, but they’ll alert you if a student has a gun or a knife and plans to hurt someone.
- ◆ If boys align into groups, and suddenly the girls walk away from the boys, that is a sign that a fight or other danger is imminent.

If you have other low-tech, but effective techniques for preventing school violence, we’d love to hear about them. Please send us your ideas via e-mail at: safeschools@csc.com. ■

Capping Inhalant Abuse

Sometimes the cheapest highs are the most dangerous. The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) reports that between late childhood and early adolescence, 9.7 percent of students experiment with intoxicating inhalants. ONDCP warns that “easy accessibility, low cost, and ease of concealment make inhalants one of the first substances abused.” Typical household or commercial products that contain the volatile solvents necessary to produce a “high” include: adhesives, cleaning solutions, shoe polish, paint, glue and paint products.



DoDEA educators might recognize warning signs that could indicate inhalant abuse, including: sudden student apathy, memory loss, learning problems, or chronic absences. Unfortunately, one experiment with inhalants can result in permanent effects such as damage to the liver, kidney, or lungs. To prevent abuse, alert adults to the warning signs and educate youth about the risks of inhalant use. For additional information, see the ONDCP fact sheet at: <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/factsht/inhalants>. ■

DoDEA Safe Schools Program Managers
Ed Englehardt, Rose Chunik

Safe Schools Newsletter Editorial Staff
Bob Michela, Keith Shaver, Brian McKeon

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Practice Makes Perfect

As the saying goes, “you play the way you practice.” This common refrain among football coaches is applicable to Incident Response Planning (IRP) for school administrators. Remember, IRP includes the four Protective Actions (e.g., lockdown, shelter-in-place, take cover, evacuate) for responding to a threat. A plan for Protective Actions can be fully thought out and handsomely documented, but it won’t be successfully implemented unless it is practiced.

Many benefits are realized by practicing Protective Actions. Administrators are encouraged to practice, or drill, in order to identify weaknesses in plans and ensure that all parties concerned are familiar with their roles and responsibilities during actual implementation. Unless you test your plan, you will never know if it works.

Give your plan a good test. Invite outside experts, such as your District Safety & Security Officer (DSSO), to provide candid and objective observations about the procedures exhibited during the drill. Administrators will know better than anyone else how much to involve students in drills and/or exercises.

Don’t forget to keep parents informed about your plan for conducting drills throughout the school year as part of your ongoing Safe Schools Program. Also, don’t neglect DoDEA Regulation 4700.2, “DoDEA Internal Physical Security,” available at www.dodea.edu/regs/regs_num.htm, and DoDEA’s *Safe Schools Handbook* as resources to help you plan your drills. ■

Common Lockdown Problems and Solutions

Here is a summation of difficulties experienced during actual lockdown drills and ideas on how to address them. The most common problems occur in the categories of maintenance, communications equipment, and security awareness.

Maintenance

Missing keys and broken locks account for many of the unlocked doors identified during lockdown drills. Some of the recurring explanations include:

- ✓ We knew that lock was broken and we have requested a repair.
- ✓ We have requested new keys, but they have not yet been made.
- ✓ That door sticks, so we need to leave it open.

The solution is to make requests for repairs a high priority. Categorizing key and lock repairs as security vulnerabilities, rather than maintenance items, can increase the priority of these requests. Effective lockdown procedures have already saved lives in schools from Muree Christian School, Pakistan, to Bull Run Middle School, Virginia. However, an unsecured door could leave students exposed to a hostile threat.



Common Lockdown Problems and Solutions (Continued)

Communications Equipment

Two types of communications problems frequently hamper lockdown implementation:

- ✓ Ineffective use of walkie talkies and cell phones.
- ✓ The internal communication system is inadequate to alert everyone, including personnel in portable classrooms and personnel outside the main school building.

A carefully planned and organized distribution of walkie talkies, and thorough training on radio protocol, can make a limited supply of radios very effective. Each school will have different needs. Ask yourself who the principal really needs to communicate with in order to manage the school during an incident. As part of your planning, you should seek technical assistance from your DSSO, or other local experts, regarding the use of walkie talkies and cell phones. Their use inside the building, during a bomb threat, could detonate an explosive device.

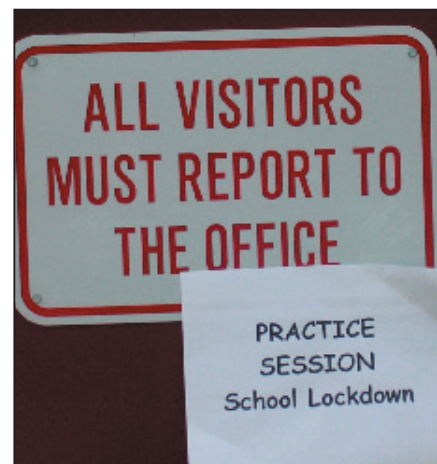
All DoDEA schools are now required to have internal communication systems capable of broadcasting into every classroom (see paragraph E2.2.1. of DoDEA Regulation 4700.2, “DoDEA Internal Physical Security”). However, if you need equipment changes or repairs to ensure a protective action command can be heard clearly throughout the school, remember that this is a security issue and can be funded with combating terrorism funds. Contact your DSSO for assistance with resources.

Security Awareness

Two concerns that can be addressed by emphasizing security awareness include:

- ✓ Students not taking the drill seriously.
- ✓ Staff or students uncertain or unaware of proper procedures.

The problem of students not taking drills seriously can be addressed by educating students about the purpose of a drill. Middle and high school students will usually respond to a rational explanation that these drills are for their protection so that the school will be prepared to respond in an emergency.



A less obvious solution concerns orientations for new staff, substitute teachers, or new students. Many principals design a short Protective Action briefing that becomes part of the usual orientation provided for these people. Substitute teachers should receive printed copies of lockdown procedures in the same packet with the attendance roster and lesson plans. DoDEA schools can include similar security briefings for students at student orientations and in the student handbook, with updates throughout the year at student assemblies, in newsletters, and in other communications to the student body.

The week before school starts would be a good time to address lockdown procedures. Many administrators explain the procedure at the regular faculty orientation. The staff then rehearses the procedures with regular lockdown drills throughout the year. Finally, discussing a specific scenario during a faculty meeting gives everyone an opportunity to think through how they would respond and sharpens reactions in the event of an actual incident.

For assistance conducting lockdown drills consult your DSSO, as well as the lockdown procedures on page 11 of DoDEA Regulation 4700.2, “DoDEA Internal Physical Security,” available at: www.dodea.edu/regs/regs_num.htm. Tool 14 of *DoDEA’s Safe Schools Handbook* also has checklists for use in planning lockdown drills. ■

New Report Emphasizes the Need for Anti-Bullying Programs

A July 2005 report by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) offers insight into the harm caused by bullying. *Student Reports of Bullying – Results from the 2001 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey* gathered data from students between the ages of 12 and 18 at both private and public schools. The report provides analysis and insight into the complexity of bullying. The report examined the frequency of bullying by grade level, the types of bullying, and victim behavior.

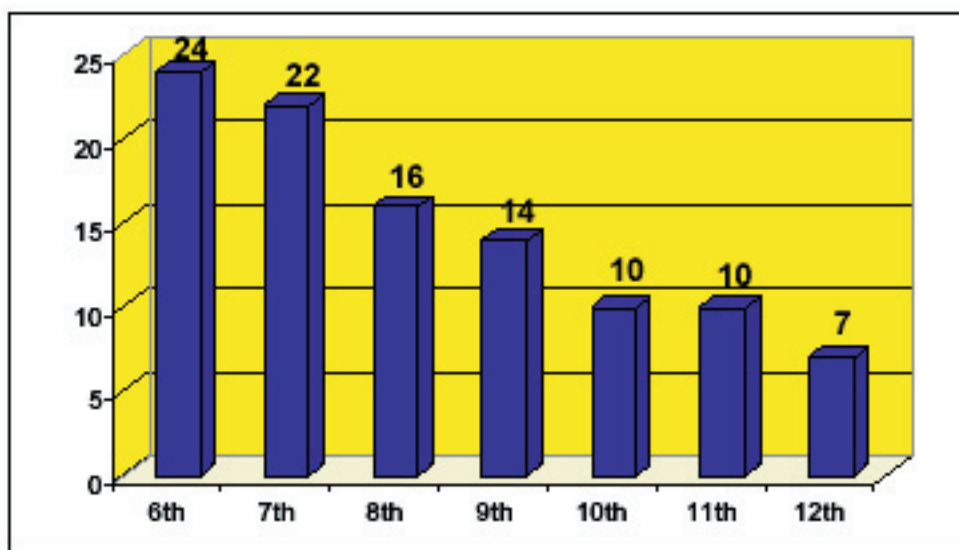
Types of Bullying

In this 2001 survey, approximately 14 percent of students reported being a victim of bullying at school. However, this report further separates bullying into two subtypes: direct and indirect. Direct bullying involves physical aggression or violence, as well as specific demands, such as requests for money. Indirect bullying is defined as social isolation or exclusion. The term “indirect” is not meant to imply that the victim was unaware of the bullying. Direct bullying is more typical among boys, indirect more typical for girls. Some students, however, report being the victims of both direct and indirect bullying.

Frequency by Grade Level

The reported incidence of bullying decreases as the grade level increases. For example, 24 percent of 6th graders reported being the victims of bullying compared to 7 percent of 12th graders. Researchers offer a number of reasons to explain this difference. Bullying could be a way to establish dominance in social structures starting in middle school, and then declining as “dominance hierarchies are solidified” in the upper grades. Another possibility is that younger students are more often victimized by older ones.

Percentage of Students Reporting Bullying by Grade



Victim Behavior

Although the report stresses that the research does not show causality (e.g. does not allow us to know which event occurred first), it does show a relationship between bullying victims and certain types of behaviors. Victims of bullying are more likely to skip school than those who have not been bullied (4 vs 1 percent) and are also four times more likely to have carried a weapon to school. Although some victims of bullying are passive, others become agitated and even aggressive. Fifteen percent of bullied students reported being involved in a physical fight at school compared to only 4 percent of non-victims.

This report provides administrators with hard data to support having an anti-bullying program in their school. The NCES web site offers a free downloadable copy of *Student Reports of Bullying* at: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid+2005310>. ■



A Bullying Prevention Program for Parents

Fight Back With Love: Every Adult has a Responsibility to Prevent Bullying is a unique bullying prevention program, designed to be used by adults. Designed for use by parents, it can also be used by educational professionals, community groups, businesses, or neighborhood associations. The program includes a 20-minute video, available in English or Spanish, a curriculum guide for group leaders, and a viewing guide for participants. *Fight Back With Love* strives to make adults aware of the problems bullying causes and encourages parents to take action.

The well-produced video includes expert interviews, interspersed with statistics and role-played scenarios. The dramatizations include a diverse mix of students that realistically mirrors the population seen in many schools.

Interviews with students constitute the most compelling part of the video. Some students speak candidly about bullying other children, while others talk about what it is like to be bullied. This program also provides a comprehensive discussion of bystanders – the majority of students who are neither bullies nor victims – and the role they can play in preventing bullying.

The curriculum guide suggests using this program with parents whose children are either bullies or the victims of bullying. Some administrators require students to complete this program as a prerequisite for returning to school after a bullying-related suspension. The program also raises the possibility of addressing bullying in gender-specific groups (mothers and daughters, fathers

and sons) since girls and boys tend to experience bullying differently.

Excellent group discussion questions are included with the curriculum materials. The questions ask parents to examine the behaviors they model at home. Additionally, web sites and other resources are provided for interested adults. These resources can be accessed at the Maricopa County, Arizona web site at: <http://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/juvenileprob/bullying/index.asp>.

The video, *Fight Back With Love*, was produced by the Maricopa County Juvenile Probation Department through a grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. For more information about the program, please contact Margaret Daggett at: (602) 506-4350 or mardag@juvenile.maricopa.gov. ■

Did you know . . . ?

. . . Bullying occurs at both public and private schools?

. . . Victims of bullying are more likely to report receiving Ds and Fs than their non-bullied peers?

. . . Fewer students reported bullying in schools that had security officers or hall monitors?

– Confirmed by results taken from *Student Reports of Bullying – Results from the 2001 School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey.*