## Practice Key to Effective Crisis Management

Conducting tabletop exercises to prepare for a major incident can help crisis management team members respond to the minor incidents which occur in schools every day. Tabletop exercises force officials to make decisions under pressure. As principals, commanders, or crisis team members participate in these types of exercises, they improve their readiness to respond flexibly to actual incidents.

During tabletop exercises school officials work together to respond to crisis events that might not materialize (i.e., terrorist attacks, tornadoes, and school shootings). Participation in the exercise helps each Crisis Management Team member understand the roles and responsibilities of the other members. Team members also learn about the resources available to help students. However, the lessons learned in tabletop exercises also help counselors, administrators and educators address the minor challenges that they confront on a daily basis. For example, an educator might learn how to obtain additional support for a student concerned about deployed parents.



*Tabletop exercises force officials to make decisions under pressure.*

Tabletop exercises prepare crisis management teams for both minor challenges that occur on a daily basis and crisis events. Making decisions under simulated stress helps crisis team members respond better to actual incidents. Exercises enhance preparedness and teach teams to function with speed and cohesion. An added benefit is that regular communication addressing daily incidents can also help improve response to major crisis events.

"Research shows that people respond in a variety of ways when under stress," notes Ft. Campbell school psychologist, Alan Scheuerman, Ph.D. "When anxiety rises, judgment and critical thinking diminish. The crisis team, if well-prepared, can assist the administrator in ensuring the best possible decisions are made regarding the welfare of staff and students." The *Crisis Management Guide* is available online at www.dodea.edu/instruction/crisis/resources/scmt.htm. ■

## Inside This Issue

## DoDEA Safety and Security Officers Reaffirm Commitment to Security

DoDEA Headquarters, Area and District Safety and Security Officers gathered in Wiesbaden, Germany from June 23 through 26, 2008 to coordinate upcoming security initiatives and discuss implementation. Mr. Kevin Kelly, DoDEA Associate Director for Finance and Business Operations, opened the conference by commenting on the critical role of the security officers in creating learning environments where staff and students can feel safe and secure. He also noted that in the future, all budget requests would require rigorous justification.

Dr. Bruce Jeter, Deputy Director, DDESS, summarized the goal of the World-Wide Office of Safety and Security Conference (WOSS) when he told participants during his concluding comments: "DoDEA is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all of our students, and we appreciate the work that you, the Area and District Safety and Security Officers do to maintain our high standards of security."

Dr. Jeter participated throughout the conference. In his concluding remarks, he issued a "call to action" challenging security officers to keep thinking positively, and reminding them that "the ability to excel comes from those who maintain a positive attitude about what can be accomplished."

*Headquarters, Area, and District Safety and Security Officers gathered in Wiesbaden, Germany for the annual World-Wide Office of Safety and Security Conference.*

The DoDDS-Europe Area Safety and Security Office hosted the meeting. Mr. Wayne Cox, Chief, Office of Safety and Security, conducted the meeting assisted by presentations from representatives throughout the world. Presentations covered a variety of security topics ranging from Continuity of Operations and all hazards planning to updates regarding available training resources.

Participants (depicted in the accompanying photograph) included representatives from Korea, Japan, Okinawa, Guam, Italy, Germany, the UK, and the United States. The meeting was the fifth consecutive WOSS. Wayne Cox noted that the Safety and Security Officers shared a commitment to assisting DoDEA administrators in complying with DoDEA regulations on antiterrorism, safety, and internal physical security. ◼

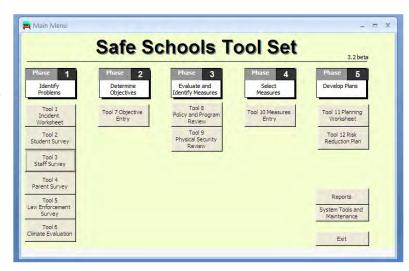## Safe Schools Now Only a Click Away

Several administrators requested an automated version of the tools in the Safe Schools Handbook. In response to these requests, a CD-ROM with automated tools has been developed. It was recently delivered to each principal in DoDEA.

This Microsoft Access program allows users to enter incident data once, analyze incidents for patterns, and automatically include the data in the final report. The automated tools follow the same logical sequence as the Risk Reduction Planning Tools in Chapter 1 of the DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook: Identify Needs, Determine Objectives, Evaluate Measures, Select Measures, and Develop a Plan. A tab has also been included to allow DSSOs to review Antiterrorism considerations.

For specific instructions on using the tools see the "Read Me" file on the CD-ROM, or contact the Safe Schools team at safeschools@csc.com; 703.461.2073. If you did not receive your copy, please contact safeschools@csc.com. On Friday, September 26, 2008, an online tutorial will be conducted at three times to make it convenient for all time zones; see the accompanying text box for details on how to participate. ■

## How to Join the Online Demo

The 30-minute online demonstration consists of a conference call and Web site where the presenter will demonstrate how to use the automated tools that accompany the DoDEA Safe Schools Handbook. All sessions will be held on Friday, 26 September 2008. The staggered timing allows each area one opportunity to attend at lunch and a second opportunity in the early evening.

**How to register:** All that is needed to participate is a phone and a computer with Internet access. Send an e-mail to safeschools@csc.com stating the session you would like to attend. Three sessions have been planned at staggered times to allow people in each area to attend at times convenient to their time zone. Each person who registers will receive a **confirmation e-mail with a pass code to access the site** and phone conference. The confirmation e-mail includes a list of call-in phone numbers for each country.

**How to participate:** At the appointed time, call the designated phone number for your country and sign on to the web site. Please mute your phone until the question and answer period. You can also ask questions via the chat window, or "raise your hand" electronically to attract the attention of the facilitator.

**Sessions and Times:**

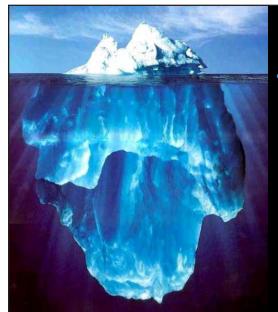| Session | U.K. | Germany & Italy | Japan & Korea | Guam | U.S. Central | U.S. Eastern |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0330 | 0430 | 1130 | 1230 | 2130 | 2230 |
| 2 | 1130 | 1230 | 1930 | 2030 | 530 | 630 |
| 3 | 1730 | 1830 | 130 | 230 | 1130 | 1230 |

# DoDEA Keeps Watch for Mental Health "Icebergs"

Many counselors and psychologists in DoDEA are using a new assessment tool to identify students who may be at risk for harming themselves or others. This new tool, called the Risk Assessment Worksheet of Violent Juvenile Behavior, can be used when a child verbally or non-verbally threatens violence against him/herself or others. This means that teachers now have the capability to act on their intuition that a student might need additional emotional support, without that student having to articulate a need for help.

Most people assume that a person's behavior is an automatic indicator of their emotions; however for psychological professionals there exists an understanding of the dangers of "jumping to conclusions" about a person. This tool provides trained professionals a means of clinically assessing the "whole child" and quantifying types of behavior within the larger spectrum of instruments available, explains Alan Scheuermann, a psychologist for DDESS, who uses the assessment with his students at Ft. Campbell.

Marlene Wong, Ph.D., Director of Crisis Counseling for Los Angeles Unified School District originally developed the assessment. She is also the primary trainer for the "Recovery Phase" of the U.S. Department of Education's "Emergency Response and Crisis Management" initiative. At the February 2008 DoDEA Worldwide School Psychologists Training, Dr. Wong used the metaphor of an iceberg to show how the assessment works.

Just as an iceberg reveals only a fraction of itself above the surface of the water, Wong argues that a child's behavior is often the indicator of a vast range of issues which can reflect a student's potential risk. These include a potential crisis a child may be having, a child's personality, current youth culture, the school and community environment, family, developmental issues, and social and emotional foundations. Together these factors influence a child's behavior.



**Observable Behaviors**

**Psychological Stress**

**Individual Personality**

**Youth Culture**

**Community Environment**

**Family Influences**

The assessment tool allows trained psychologists and counselors to examine each of those areas as a team to determine whether or not a child's behavior is indicative of something more, notes Alan Scheuermann. He cautions that the tool should not be used by teachers to assess students' behavior. "It is just one of many tools we use to assess students, but we don't use it to diagnose them."
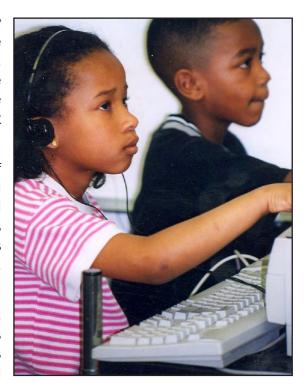
The "take-home message" for teachers, said Scheuermann, is that "this instrument makes it easier for them to act on their professional hunches." If a student seems to be undergoing stress of any kind or upset, teachers can refer them to the PPS Team, including the counselors, psychologists and administrators who can then gather and evaluate the data to determine the potential for risk. If a student does indicate during an assessment that he or she may be at risk to himself or others, counselors and psychologists then work closely with mental health services and the student's family to ensure they get the psychological support they need. To learn more about the assessments, talk to your school psychologist. For additional information on the relationship between behavior and wellness visit the National Association of School Psychologists at www.nasponline.org. ◾

## Cybersecurity Awareness Growing

The Safe Schools Team often receives requests for information about cybersecurity. In response to this growing interest, the Newsletter will feature a number of articles that help educators teach students how to stay safe online. Although DoDEA schools block access to some of the "cyber" applications below, students can still access many of the sites from their home computers. Following is an introduction to some applications which will be discussed in the coming months:

◆ **Social Networks** (i.e., Facebook and MySpace) are designed to mirror the communities of their users. An active e-mail account is all that is needed to create a personal profile on a social network. This allows users to contact others through a request/approval system to become "friends," thus creating links between profiles. Social networking Web sites also allow users to schedule events, share files, chat, and play online games. While personal privacy settings are always available, they are sometimes ignored. Without them, personal information is accessible to anyone, and users can be contacted by strangers.

◆ **Instant Messaging** (IM) programs allow users to communicate in real-time via computers. Many Web sites such as Gmail and Facebook have simple messaging programs imbedded. As high-speed internet access expands, programs like Skype have added video chatting. These IM programs allow for simple, live communication, but there is a downside. Students have no way of knowing that the people they communicate with online are really who they say they are.

◆ **Blogs** are online journals. Unlike Web sites, blogs are easily updated by entering text into a template. Blogs can include images, music, videos, and links to other sites. The authors, called "bloggers," can allow readers to leave comments. Some people do not understand that blogs are Web sites that anyone can access. The security vulnerability arises because student bloggers may disclose too much personal information.

◆ **YouTube** is a video sharing Web site. There are millions of videos currently available on YouTube and anyone can upload content. Videos on blogs and social networks are often linked from YouTube or similar sites. Recently, video sharing sites have come under some scrutiny by educators because students have posted videos with inappropriate content, including fights, threats, and sexual innuendo.

◆ **Forums and Message/Discussion Boards** are usually public, topical web sites that allow users to create and respond to posts on particular issues. Forums allow users to view discussions grouped by subject. Sometimes forums can generate heated discussions that can lead to harassment (commonly called "flaming").

Because online communication has become so integral to the lives of youth, the challenge for administrators is to keep abreast of current technology. An understanding of how these applications work and affect the social lives of students gives teachers an additional set of tools with which to keep students learning in a productive and safe environment. For more information on cyber security, or to suggest topics that you would like to learn more about, contact safeschools@csc.com. ■

## Federal Program Database Available

In the past, educators have had to visit numerous sites to gather information about federal educational resources. The Department of Education, however, now offers Federal Resources for Educational Excellence (FREE), a one-stop site for the 1,500 federally supported teaching and learning resources from dozens of federal agencies.

While the majority of the programs are academic in nature, for example "Outline of U.S. History" presented by the Department of State, there is a diverse range of programs related to wellness, violence prevention and tolerance. For example, ToxMystery, presented by the National Library of Medicine, features an animated game which helps elementary students learn about household hazards.

Additionally, there are more than forty programs devoted to exploring the Civil Rights movement, while over thirty programs are designed to increase understanding of gender bias. Several programs are specifically devoted to substance abuse prevention and maintaining positive body images. These can be implemented in the classroom or at the school level.

The site also offers a free Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed allowing educators to directly receive information about new programs. To access the site, go to http://free.ed.gov/. ∎

## Enhancing Student Security Awareness

Several organizations designate the third week in October as an opportunity to enhance student awareness of safety and security. Previously DoDEA schools have sponsored security awareness activities during this week to support Character Counts, National School Safety Week, and Red Ribbon Week. Red Ribbon Week suggests the following "Five Fun Ways Elementary School Students Can Participate":

◆ Have students make large red tissue-paper flowers and give them to parents as a pledge to stay "Drug Free."

◆ Have students form a circle around the school and hold a red ribbon. Then, have each person say why they are "Drug Free."

◆ Organize a Fun Run, with pledges being "Drug Free."

◆ Add a red ribbon to your Halloween costume.

◆ Have students create spooky, "Drug Free" messages (Drugs are Scary!).

If you are planning activities that encourage school safety or character education in October, please send us examples so we can share them in future newsletters. Email your ideas to safeschools@csc.com. ∎

## Meet the Team: *Bob Michela, Program Director*

Bob Michela founded the Safe Schools Program with Paul Hersey in 1995. Bob brings a lifetime of strategic and tactical expertise to the Safe Schools Program. A retired Army colonel and a graduate of West Point, he holds a Master's Degree in Guided Missile Engineering from the University of Texas. During a 28 year military career, Bob served two tours in Vietnam, commanded a nuclear capable field artillery battalion, and worked on weapons inspection teams for the Army Inspector General.

Both of Bob's daughters attended schools in DoDEA. He knows from personal experience that safe and secure schools provide military personnel with the peace of mind to do their jobs effectively.

"Napoleon famously said that an Army marches on its stomach," notes Michela, "But I think the entire military also marches on the knowledge that its families are in good hands. That is what the Safe Schools Program is about: taking care of families." Contact Bob at rmichela@csc.com. ∎