



Students Benefit from Meeting BOSS

At Fort Rucker, Alabama, this past September, single soldiers helped lead students on an expedition to a “fishing hole” as part of an activity sponsored by Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS). For children with parents/sponsors deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, the outing provided a fun activity and time with adults. For soldiers who were away from their families, often for the first time, the fishing trip offered an opportunity to contribute to the community by mentoring students.

The BOSS program was established in 1989 to enhance quality of life, provide opportunities for service to the community, and ensure access to leisure activities for single soldiers. For DoDEA administrators, BOSS offers a dependable resource of adults available to support school activities. Activities that leverage the willingness of single soldiers to help students are limited only by the imagination. Soldiers participating in the BOSS program have already helped DoDEA in numerous ways, including:

- ▶ Moving classroom furniture to help Seoul American Middle School set up two new science labs.
- ▶ Leading students in Germany on “Volksmarches” to encourage physical fitness.

With appropriate coordination and background checks, single soldiers can also assist with the following activities:

- ▶ Visiting classrooms to read aloud to students.
- ▶ Assisting with school beautification projects.
- ▶ Guest speaker appearances to share insights on how leadership and academic experiences in school helped the soldiers succeed in life.



Single soldiers help move furniture at Seoul American Middle School.

School officials can access several points of contact to arrange an activity. BOSS programs are managed by a senior enlisted advisor; Morale, Welfare, and Recreation advisor; and the president of the local BOSS chapter. To learn more about how activities sponsored by BOSS can harness the generous spirit of soldiers to meet the needs of students, visit www.boss.armymwr.com. ■

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Combining Alcohol and Energy Drinks Can Prove Lethal

Parents who lost children to the “choking game,” (www.cdc.gov/ncipc/duip/research/choking_game.htm) where children make themselves dizzy by cutting off their air or blood supply, often mentioned that they had not heard about this threat until it was too late. Similar comments were voiced this fall by relatives of a college student who died when she mixed diet pills with a commercially available drink containing both alcohol and caffeine.

These beverages usually contain the alcohol equivalent of six beers, plus the caffeine equivalent of a cup of coffee. The beverages are packaged in brightly colored cans to attract young drinkers and are produced in sweet or fruity flavors, such as chocolate, watermelon, lemon, or cranberry, that mask the taste of alcohol.

These caffeine drinks present a new danger because students can consume lethal amounts of alcohol. Caffeine counters the body’s normal protective mechanisms such as drowsiness, dizziness, and vomiting, allowing drinkers to consume more alcohol. The effect of alcohol varies with body weight, but blood alcohol levels of .08 to .10 are considered unsafe for driving; and levels above .30 can be lethal. According to press reports, students who “experimented” with these beverages have been admitted to hospital emergency rooms with blood alcohol levels of .35 to .40. As a result, on November 17, 2010, the Food and Drug Administration issued warning letters to manufacturers, and was considering a nation-wide ban.

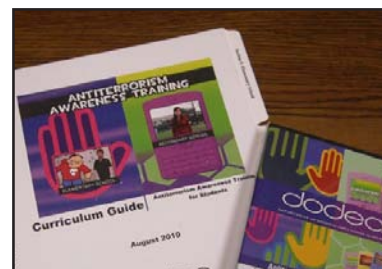
John Knight, M.D., from the Center for Adolescent Substance Abuse Research at Children’s Hospital in Boston, recently explained why these drinks pose a risk to middle and high school students. The drinks appeal

to adolescents who have less experience and judgment, “increasing their chances of alcohol poisoning.” Dr. Knight also suggested a strategy for capitalizing on teens’ marketing savvy and disdain for manipulation. “There are few things a teenager hates more than adults telling them what they *should* like,” he noted.

Dr. Knight recommended that when parents/sponsors see an advertisement or news story about these beverages that they use the opportunity to discuss the marketing strategy with their children. A writing assignment inviting students to respond to the topic could accomplish the same result. Dr. Knight concluded, “Through meaningful conversation, we can arm students with knowledge of what is happening, and hopefully help them make better choices as a result.” ■

Have You Seen Us?

Copies of the Student Antiterrorism Awareness Training DVD and Curriculum Guide were mailed to each DoDEA principal and superintendent in August 2010. If you have not yet received the materials pictured, please contact the Safe Schools Team at safeschools@csc.com to obtain your copy.



The DVD includes two videos: one for elementary students and another for secondary students. In the videos, students talk to other students about topics ranging from personal security to signs of terrorism. The accompanying Web site, described in the Curriculum Guide, reinforces the teaching points. The videos are also available for free on the Office of Safety and Security Web site at www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/anti_terror/index.cfm?sid=8. ■

DoDEA Headquarters Personnel

Rose Chunik, Chief, Office of Safety and Security
Adam Bergstrom, Program Manager, Antiterrorism
Jennifer Jones, Program Manager, Physical Security
Kim Perino, Program Manager, Emergency Preparedness

CSC Safe Schools Newsletter Editorial Staff

Sarah Markel, Brian McKeon, Bert Garcia

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If You See Something, Say Something

Security reminders such as the recent “If you see something, say something” campaign are designed to apply to a broad range of situations. As students and their families prepare to travel during the holidays, educators can challenge students to keep their minds sharp by practicing two security awareness techniques: 1) giving useful descriptions of a suspect, and 2) remembering what to recognize.

First, a good description provides details. “Concentrate on remembering permanent versus temporary characteristics,” suggests Kim Perino, DoDEA Emergency Preparedness Program Manager. “Check the height, build, face/head, and then the clothing in that order,” she notes. Ms. Perino recommends that students make a mental note of the subject’s height in relation to a fixed object: “For example, they were as tall as the floor lamp, or a couple inches taller than the book case.” Using this technique, a magician might be described as: 3 inches taller than the potions cabinet, with a foot-long white beard, wearing a tall pointed blue hat, blue cape, and black shoes with a white wand.



Travelers can pass the time and hone their observation skills by playing the Description Game. Simply open a magazine to a picture, look at it briefly, and then attempt to describe the person in the picture. Take turns to see who can remember the most details. Remember to note hair color, and award each other extra points for remembering distinguishing features such as a unique scar or tattoo. Families can practice this technique anywhere, and it’s fun. This game enhances memory and develops a life skill that can help the entire family keep their security antennae tuned.

Second, keep in mind the warning signs listed below so the family knows how to recognize behavior that might indicate terrorist activity. These terms describe activities that terrorists undertake when planning an attack:

- ▶ **Surveillance:** Terrorists “do their homework” before an attack. Individuals taking pictures or studying an entrance with binoculars merit reporting.
- ▶ **Elicitation:** “Asking suspicious questions” could be an indication of crime or terrorism. If a stranger seems so interested in your travel plans that it makes you feel uncomfortable, report it.
- ▶ **Tests of Security:** Terrorists sometimes purposely walk into restricted areas to see how quickly people will react or to test whether the security procedures are being enforced. Although it is easy to ignore intrusions as a mistake, make an effort to tell security officials what happened.
- ▶ **Gathering Supplies:** Terrorists sometimes steal identification badges or uniforms to gain admission to restricted areas. Guard your identification and report people who sneak into rooms reserved for authorized personnel.
- ▶ **Rehearsals:** Terrorists conduct “dry runs” to practice an attack in advance. If you witness individuals moving in a manner that appears choreographed or unusual, call security.
- ▶ **Deploying Assets:** Immediately before an attack, terrorists will position individuals, equipment, vehicles, and supplies needed for the assault. This might be the final opportunity to warn authorities.

Remember that the possibility of encountering terrorists is remote. Practicing observation skills and knowing the warning signs, however, allows individuals to translate security awareness into action. As Marilee Fitzgerald, Acting Director of DoDEA, stated in the cover note introducing the Student Antiterrorism Awareness Training facilitator’s guide: “In the wake of recent terrorist events, everyone needs to have an awareness of terrorism and the actions individuals can take to protect themselves and their families.” ■

National Prevention Council Seeks Programs that Work

It is better, and cheaper, to prevent disease than heal sickness. On this premise, agencies throughout the Federal government have joined forces to identify proven prevention programs that help students avoid unhealthy behaviors ranging from bullying to substance abuse.



On June 10, 2010, the President signed an executive order establishing the National Prevention Council to coordinate efforts to identify programs that prevent mental and physical health problems. The council has developed a framework that establishes a vision, goals, and “strategic directions” or categories of programs such as: tobacco-free living, avoidance of alcohol/substance abuse, and mental and emotional wellbeing. For additional information, visit the HHS web site at www.hhs.gov/news/reports/nphps.html. ■

Public Officials Speak Out Against Bullying



Several administration officials made public statements recently in response to two highly publicized deaths of students who committed suicide in the wake of sustained bullying. Each official shared their personal perspective. The President pointed out that bullying individuals because of their real or perceived traits contradicts a core American value of tolerance and respect for each individual’s freedom. Excerpts from the remarks of a few administration officials are presented below:

“This week, we sadly lost two young men who took their own lives for one unacceptable reason: they were being bullied and harassed because they were openly gay, or believed to be gay. This is a moment where every one of us – parents, teachers, students, elected officials, and all people of conscience – needs to stand up and speak out against intolerance, in all its forms . . . it is time we as a country said enough. No more. This must stop.”

– Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

“It really does get better. We know that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) students, and those who are perceived to be in these groups, are among the most likely to be targeted by bullies. In fact four out of five LGBT teenagers say they are harassed regularly, and three quarters of high school students say they frequently hear homophobic remarks. Hopefully you have a teacher you can talk to . . . So, please ask for help.”

– Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebellius

“We have to dispel this myth that bullying is just a rite of passage. It’s not. We have an obligation to ensure that our schools are safe for all of our kids. To every young person out there, you need to know that if you are in trouble, there are caring adults who can help. I do not know what it is like to be picked on for being gay. But I do know what it is like to grow up feeling like sometimes you don’t belong.”

“What I want to say is this. You are not alone. . . . You did not do anything to deserve being bullied. So if you ever feel like, because of what people are saying, you are getting down on yourself, then you have to reach out to people you trust . . . your parents, your teachers.”

– President Barack Obama ■

Web Site Offers Cyberbullying Antidote

Administrators are often surprised by student surveys that indicate the presence of bullying because students tend to bully others when adults are not looking. In cyberspace, adults cannot see the bullying messages at all. Learning can still be disrupted, however, when conflicts that started in cyberspace erupt in the classroom.

To address this problem, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, recently launched the “Stop Bullying Now” Website to use cyberspace to convey the message that bullying is not acceptable. The Web site uses sophisticated techniques that involve students through the use of online videos or “Webisodes,” games, and quizzes. HRSA invites students to examine their own behavior and decide for themselves whether they are bullies.

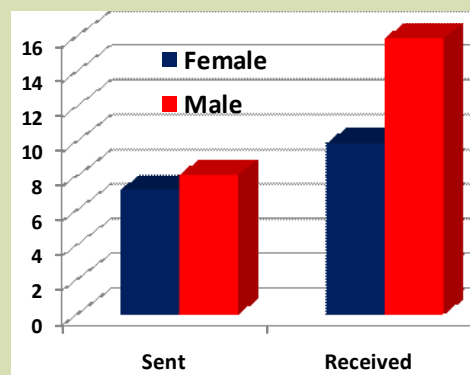
Fortunately, the Webisodes also depict how students can protect others from bullying, and how students should treat friends and acquaintances. The site includes tips for students that suggest what to do if a student sees someone else being bullied. For example, a student can ask the victim the following questions:

- ◆ Did you tell a parent or teacher?
- ◆ Did any students help you?
- ◆ What would make you feel safer?

The Stop Bullying Now Web site is unique for several reasons. The characters and story lines were developed with the help of an advisory committee of teens and tweens who had all experienced bullying. The students also helped develop the campaign theme: Take a Stand, Lend a Hand, Stop Bullying Now. The site has been available since November at www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/kids. ■

Sexting Fact Sheet Provides Tips for Parents

Researchers from the Cyberbullying Research Center, a joint effort between Florida Atlantic University and the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, recently reported on a study of trends in cyberbullying from 2006 to present. The team reported that 8.1 percent of males, and 7.2 percent of females, had sent naked or semi-naked pictures of themselves to others within the past 30 days. Of those students who admitted receiving naked or semi-naked pictures within the past 30 days, 15.9 percent were male and 9.9 percent were female.



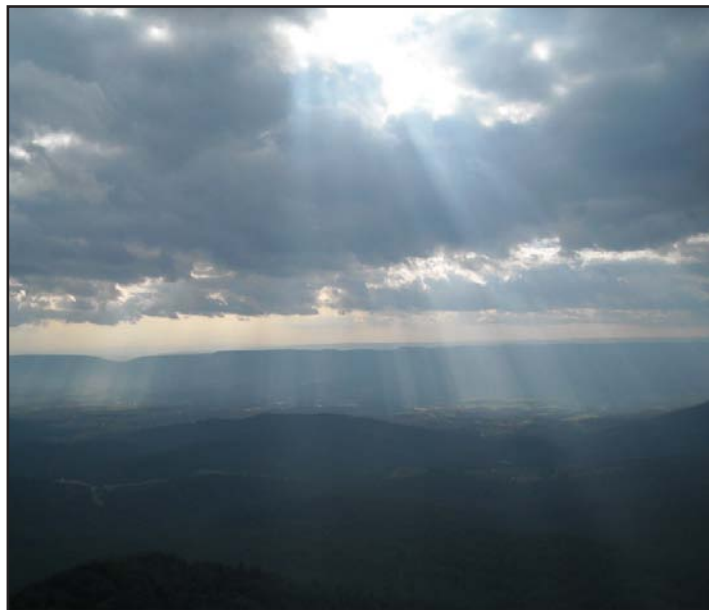
In a fact sheet, titled, “Sexting: A Brief Guide for Educators and Parents,” Sameer Hinduja, Ph.D., and Justin Patchin, Ph.D., note that school personnel need to limit the spread of images, and work with law enforcement to determine the nature of the incident. The researchers cautioned administrators not to forward pictures found on electronic devices, but rather to confiscate them and let law enforcement investigate. The team recommended that school officials let parents explain the negative consequences of the behavior.

The researchers recommended that school officials warn all students about the potential consequences and raise awareness that sexting is not normal or socially acceptable behavior. The researchers concluded that, “Cultivating in youth a deeper measure of self-respect, is one way to insulate them against participation in sexting . . . when faced with very strong peer and cultural pressures.” For additional information visit the cyberbullying research center at www.cyberbullying.us/Sexting_Fact_Sheet.pdf. ■

Program Teaches Stress Reduction Through Mindfulness

Anyone can get the “winter blues.” Throughout the winter season, several factors can contribute to stress, depression, and anxiety. The days become shorter with less sunlight, and the increased obligations and expectations of the holidays can also raise stress levels. In addition, the arrival of cold weather makes getting regular exercise harder, which can dampen one’s mood.

While it is important to distinguish this common problem from clinical depression or seasonal affective disorder, some of the techniques designed to treat clinical depression are also beneficial for stress-related, or seasonal, mood changes. Researchers have found one example of such a program developed at the University of Massachusetts “Stress Clinic,” which involves taking time out of each day to practice mindfulness, can increase coping skills in stressful times and reduce depression and anxiety.



Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is an eight-week program developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D., of the University of Massachusetts Medical School. The program, which has been completed by 17,000 people, teaches participants to increase their awareness of body sensations and sensory experiences through a contemplative activity. This technique often involves focusing on breathing, but for some people it can mean eating slowly enough to savor one’s food, taking a walk, or exercising.

Participants often find that focusing on a repetitive task such as weeding a garden, folding laundry, or “shooting hoops” can create the necessary contemplative frame of mind that allows for relaxation. These sorts of activities break the cycle of rumination that comes with depression or anxiety. Dr. Kabat-Zinn describes this cycle as “being on auto-pilot.”

Learning to focus one’s attention gives people a feeling of control over negative thought patterns. The key to program success, according to Dr. Kabat-Zinn, lies in incorporating mindful relaxation into the daily routine rather than waiting until stressful times occur.

Coming Soon: Mindfulness for Teachers

The University of Massachusetts is currently working on two pilot programs related to using MBSR in an educational setting. One of the new programs is specifically designed to help teenagers manage the day-to-day stresses of school, parental expectations, and physical changes, while the second is designed to help teachers stay energized and focused in the classroom. Both programs are currently in the investigational stage and not yet available to the general public. ■

While MBSR has been around for three decades, interest in its applicability for managing illness has increased recently. Some medical schools, including the University of Virginia, are now requiring students to take a course in MBSR so that physicians can recommend stress reduction techniques as part of their patient care. The Veterans Administration is studying the potential for MBSR as a tool in treating stress disorders. Formal MBSR classes are offered at universities and community centers around the world. For those without access to MBSR classes, books are available in libraries and retail stores; however, some of the benefits can be obtained by simply making a commitment to take a mental break every day, even if it yields only a five minute respite from the busyness of life. To learn more about the University of Massachusetts study, visit www.umassmed.edu/cfm/stress/index.aspx. ■