



Joining Forces Initiative Celebrates Military Children

First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, wife of the Vice-President, launched Joining Forces, a national initiative to mobilize all sectors of society around providing support to military families. These include job training and opportunities for spouses, improvements in health care, and an increase in services and programs that support the education and well-being of military children.

In response, businesses, nonprofit groups, and individuals announced programs for military families to assist them with everything from employment and education to mental health and wellness. The Writer's Guild of Los Angeles, for example, promised to include more military stories in upcoming films, programs, and digital media.

Federal agencies are also fulfilling commitments they made in response to the Presidential Study Directive, "Strengthening our Military Families" released in January 2011. That study listed enhanced "Overall well-being and psychological health of the military family" as the primary objective.

Mrs. Obama and Dr. Biden approached several organizations already offering support to military families and asked them to partner with Joining Forces. One program, Reach Out and Read, a research-proven school readiness program, has been providing free children's books to children on U.S. military installations since 1997. Research indicates that reading to children helps insulate children from deployment related psychological stress. Now, thanks to Joining Forces, Reach Out and Read plans to put free books in the hands of 200,000 military children by 2013.

Addressing students at Camp Lejeune at the program kickoff event, Mrs. Obama noted that military life equips children with special skills such as responsibility and flexibility. Then she told the children, "And when you use that knowledge alongside what you'll be learning in these math and science courses, and other classes, there's no telling what you guys will be able to do and achieve." The Joining Forces program is growing rapidly. Administrators can stay abreast of resources and public service opportunities at www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces. ■



Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden join Muppets Elmo and Rosita to spread the word about Joining Forces.

Inside This Issue

News & Updates

Joining Forces Celebrates Military Children.....	1
DoDEA Lends a Hand to Prevent Bullying.....	2
Guide Helps Educators Maintain Professional Image Online	2

Safe Schools Planning

Schools Invited to Join "National Shake Out" Drill	3
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Education Issue

New Insights into School Security	4
---	---

Cybersecurity

How to Plan an Internet Safety Seminar.....	5
---	---

Prevention Programs

Together We Can Reduce Workplace Injuries from Slips, Trips, and Falls.....	6
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DoDEA Lends a Hand to Prevent Bullying

DoDEA is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students. Acting Director Marilee Fitzgerald recently emphasized that bullying prevention is a top priority for DoDEA as we begin the 2011-2012 school year. Bullying prevention is most effective when all members of the school community commit to educating themselves and raising awareness of the signs, costs, and proven techniques for reducing bullying at school. In a brief video-message available on the DoDEA homepage, Ms. Fitzgerald succinctly describes the steps DoDEA is taking to prevent bullying in our schools:

A safe and secure environment, where your children can learn, grow, achieve, and develop is an essential pillar of your child's educational journey. Your child's safety and well-being at school is our top priority. That's important to us.

One thing that undermines safety, though, is bullying. And that's why DoDEA is joining forces with the Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, and Justice to empower everyone in the school and community to put an end to bullying.

Stop Bullying Now, Take a Stand, Lend a Hand calls on everyone — students, parents, and teachers — to take an active role in recognizing the warning signs of bullying; dealing with bullying behavior; communicating with children, teachers, and administrators about bullying; and developing a community of caring, concerned, and involved citizens.

Preventing and eliminating bullying is something we can do together and something that

will make a difference. Our teachers, counselors, and administrators are eager to work with you and your children to make all schools bully-free zones. Together, we can build a strong community and pave the path for a safe, secure, and sound community for all of our students."

By now, all DoDEA schools should have received the *Stop Bullying Now, Take a Stand, Lend a Hand* program materials. To learn more about how individuals can help prevent bullying, visit: www.stopbullying.gov/topics/warning_signs/index.html. To play Ms. Fitzgerald's comments for a parent or faculty audience, visit www.dodea.edu/back_to_school/2011_12.cfm?cld=bully&sld=Home. ■

Guide Helps Educators Maintain Professional Image Online

Sometimes online security sounds complicated. However, in a recent memo, DoDEA Acting Director Marilee Fitzgerald just made this a little easier. Her memo noted a useful guide, "A Teacher's Guide to Using Facebook" that is available at no cost at <http://bernadetterego.org/articles-and-publications/>.

The author, Bernadette Rego, compiled her personal tips on how to use security settings and convey a professional image when using social networking sites.

Ms. Fitzgerald is not endorsing this guide and encourages all DoDEA employees to familiarize themselves with other free and publicly available resources to maintain a safe and professional image while using social media. ■

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Schools Invited to Join the “National Shake Out” Drill

In most parts of the world where earthquakes happen frequently, school and community officials already practice earthquake response procedures regularly. To increase awareness of earthquake response, however, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools (OSDFS) has teamed up with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to encourage schools to participate in the “National Shake Out Drill” during October.

Last year over 7.9 million people across the United States participated in the National Shake Out Drill to practice the basic actions of “Stop, Drop, and Hold On.” This year, OSDFS and FEMA invite schools to practice their Take Cover procedures at 10:20 a.m. on October 20, 2011.

Essential Stop, Drop, and Hold On Technique

The objective of earthquake procedures is to prevent unnecessary bodily injury, particularly injuries to the head and neck caused by falling debris. Interrupt whatever activity is in progress and move under a table or desk. By getting down on the ground before the earthquake knocks one down, individuals have already prevented one source of injury: falling. The surface of the table or desk provides a layer of cover that will either deflect objects or interrupt the fall of debris. By holding on to the leg of the table or desk, individuals prevent it from moving away from them or ensure that they move across the floor with it to maintain their position in relation to the protective surface.

Debunking Myths

Experts from the U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS) and FEMA acknowledge that this procedure involves a slight change from previous practices such as running outside or moving under a door frame. They have carefully studied the aftermath of earthquakes over the past two decades and realized that in developed countries most structures are designed well enough that the injuries result not from a catastrophic collapse of the building, but instead from objects falling from the ceiling or tumbling off of shelves.



Experts from the USGS and FEMA explicitly warn people not to heed the advice circulated in an e-mail titled “the Triangle of Life” that recommended individuals lie down on the floor beside a table instead of under it. They note that buildings rarely collapse straight down like a “pancake” during an earthquake. Instead, buildings tend to collapse at an angle due to the shaking, so the logic of the Triangle of Life advice is flawed. The USGS and FEMA also note that the Stop, Drop, and Hold On procedure is now advocated by authorities around the world.

Individuals with Special Needs

Experts recommend that people who use wheel chairs for mobility adjust the procedures as necessary for their particular situation but do not attempt to flee outside. If it is difficult to walk across a floor that is jiggling back and forth at a rate of six feet per second; it is even harder to roll a wheel chair across it. Instead, authorities recommend that individuals who normally use wheel chairs lower themselves to the ground and crawl under a table and plan to have a designated staff member assist them following the drill. If that is not possible, think through the particular circumstances to determine how best to cover one’s head and neck and plan for assistance during earthquakes.

The U.S. Department of Education and FEMA have teamed up to sponsor a series of webinars on preparedness. For more information about how to access these webinars contact safeschools@csc.com. For information on

New Insights into School Security

Every two years, the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, asks public school principals about the frequency of incidents, such as physical attacks, robberies, and thefts, in their schools. The results of the 2009–10 survey, *Crime, Violence, Discipline, and Safety in U.S. Public Schools: Findings from the School Survey on Crime and Safety for 2009–10*, were published in May of this year.

Schools within DoDEA do not participate in these surveys. The findings, however, offer a glimpse of trends in school safety and security that have not yet been explored by other studies:

- ▶ During the 2009–10 school year, principals in U.S. public schools reported 20.8 violent incidents per 1,000 students.
- ▶ Some 46 percent of schools reported at least one student threat of physical attack without a weapon, compared to eight percent of schools reporting such a threat with a weapon. When students did make threats with or without a weapon, it was more likely to happen in large (more than 1,000 students) middle and high schools. The actual number of reported threats with a weapon was 19,180.
- ▶ About a quarter of schools reported at least one occurrence of the distribution, possession, or use of illegal drugs. This percentage is higher than the percentage for alcohol and prescription drugs. These were nearly even at 12 and 14 percent. Large schools were, by far, the most likely to report the use of illicit substances.
- ▶ Bullying occurred twice as often in middle schools as primary or high schools. About 14 percent of middle and high school principals reported that “Student acts of disrespect for teachers, other than verbal” happened daily or at least once a week in their schools.
- ▶ Cyber bullying among students happened most frequently at large middle and high schools (more than 1,000 students). These schools were more likely to be situated in towns and suburbs than in cities. Approximately 10 percent of schools reported that cyber bullying affected their school climate.
- ▶ The majority of schools (95 percent) reported having written plans for dealing with natural disasters. Nearly as many schools had a plan in place for dealing with a bomb threat. Those numbers dropped dramatically for hostage situations (74 percent), chemical threats (71 percent), and suicide threats (74 percent). Primary schools and those situated in cities tended to be the least likely to have a written plan for crisis management.
- ▶ Drills and exercises related to natural disasters took place in about 80 percent of public schools. Only half of U.S. public schools conduct lockdown drills. Even fewer conducted shelter-in-place drills to practice their response to a threat from clouds of aerosol agent due to chemical spills and environmental hazards. Small schools (fewer than 300 students) were the least likely to conduct drills.



Overall, principals reported three factors limited their ability to reduce or prevent crime “in a major way.” These included “inadequate funds; a lack of, or inadequate alternative placements or programs for disruptive students; and federal, state, or district policies on disciplining special education students.” To request a copy of the full report, contact safeschools@csc.com. Additional statistical data related to school security and safety can be found at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>. ■

How to Plan an Internet Safety Seminar

Most adults find it hard to keep up with the constantly evolving technologies that teens seem to absorb naturally. This can cause anxiety for parents who want to keep track of what their children are doing online. In response to this concern, some schools, such as Byrd Elementary School in Japan, offer Internet safety presentations to educate parents about how to keep their family safe online. Planning such an event is surprisingly straightforward and can make a dramatic difference in the level of cyber safety practiced in the school community. The following five basic steps can help with the process:



1. Choose which topics to address. Solicit input from the community to narrow the focus of the event so that a selected topic can be addressed comprehensively without overwhelming the audience with too much data. Potential topics include: smart phones, sexting, social networking, parental tracking software, online ethics, and cyber bullying.
2. Determine the style and type of presentation and audience. Some options include: open forum discussion, panel discussion, question and answer session, hands-on workshop, or small group activity. The style of the presentation will be constrained by the time available. A longer program may provide an opportunity for more than one approach. The style of the presentation will also be shaped by the intended audience. If students are invited to the presentation, a panel discussion might not hold their interest as well as a workshop.
3. Select a moderator and invite expert presenters. A moderator keeps the program on track and manages distractions. An expert presenter provides a focus for the presentation and offers key information to ensure that attendees come away with knowledge they can use. When Gwen Baxter-Oakley, principal of Byrd Elementary School, planned her Cyber Smart Kids program, she invited an officer from the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) to speak to parents. Other alternatives include military police, the chaplain's office, or a knowledgeable teacher. A panel discussion might even include technologically savvy high school students who can offer the teen perspective, for example: letting a high school student discuss the need to respect other students' privacy.
4. Choose a location and get the word out. On a small installation, the school is an obvious choice. Also consider the library or community center. Decide if the event will be open to the larger community or just to school families and staff. Use newsletters, fliers, the school website, and the installation newspaper to generate interest in the event.
5. Have fun and ask for feedback. Even though this is a serious topic, research shows that people retain information better when the learning process includes rewards. Consider ways to make the program both entertaining and informative. Door prizes, Internet safety quizzes, and snacks can lighten the mood and increase involvement. After the session is complete, ask attendees for feedback about what worked, what they learned, what they liked, and what could be improved next time.

The most important message is to encourage parents to talk to their students about Internet safety. Sometimes just empowering parents and teachers to begin the conversation is enough to remind teens that the adults in their lives do care about their security and are monitoring their Internet use. Resources that educators can offer to parents to help students stay safe online include the FBI Parent's Guide to Internet Safety available at www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/parent-guide and the Be Net Savvy Guide available at www.bnetsavvy.org/wp/. ■

Together We Can Reduce Workplace Injuries from Slips, Trips, and Falls

Every school year, DoDEA loses nearly 800 days of instructional and administrative time due to accidents and injuries, many of which are related to slips, trips, and falls. Sometimes a simple fall can lead to injuries from which it is difficult to recover. The majority of those injuries can be avoided by raising awareness of personal safety techniques and adopting a few simple procedures to make sure that the school environment is safe.

According to Donald Golaszewski, DoDEA Safety and Occupational Health Program Manager, most reported staff injuries involving slips, trips, and falls fit into one of three categories: reaching for high places, slipping on puddles of water, or tripping over objects left on the floor. Mr. Golaszewski urges DoDEA administrators to educate their staff about the following concerns and adopt procedures to keep staff safe from slips, trips, and falls.

Reaching for High Places

One of the easiest ways to avoid injuries is by using proper equipment to reach high shelves. Few people think twice before climbing onto the nearest chair or table in order to reach something. Chairs and tables are not designed for this purpose. While Mr. Golaszewski acknowledged the difficulty in going to find a ladder or step stool, he cautioned teachers not to stand on furniture, especially chairs with wheels. “Don’t cut corners,” he urged. “Take the time to use proper equipment to reach high places.”



Resist the urge to stand on chairs.

Water, Water Everywhere . . .

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports that the majority of fall-related injuries (65 percent) occur as a result of falls from same-level walking surfaces. During rainy weather, when puddles form in hallways, they can be difficult to see, increasing the chances that someone will slip. “People come into a building, wipe their feet, start walking, and then they hit a puddle,” said Mr. Golaszewski. These situations can be prevented by taking the following actions:

1. Identify areas where puddles tend to form (i.e., near entrances and water fountains).
2. Ensure the school has enough signage to mark wet areas. On rainy days, schools may need multiple cones and should plan for this possibility.
3. Periodically check that rubber mats are in good condition. Plan ahead to replace mats that are worn out.
4. Educate the school population to identify and report puddles. Let everyone know where the “wet floor” signs are stored and encourage their use.
5. Communicate with custodians about implementing a plan for keeping floors dry during inclement weather. “Sometimes the priorities for a certain day have to change to keep floors as dry as possible,” he noted.

Good Housekeeping Matters

Mr. Golaszewski urged administrators to work with custodians to keep hallways and stairwells properly lit and clutter-free. Teachers should check that all areas are free of trip hazards, such as back packs, boxes, electrical cords, and clothing. “Use cord covers or cord ducting when electrical cords extend across walking areas,” said Mr. Golaszewski. He added, “Principals should work with the host installation prior to and during the winter season to get walkways and parking areas cleared of ice and snow before staff members arrive in the early morning.”

For more information about ways to prevent injuries, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) offers possible solutions and recommended work practices. The fact sheet “Healthcare Wide Hazards: Slips, Trips, and Falls” is available from OSHA at www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/hospital/hazards/slips/slips.html. ■