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#### **Early Intervention Transforms Struggling Students**

For some students, performing well at school is second nature. Other children struggle in school and need additional support to succeed. While DoDEA has several programs in place to ensure the academic success of high needs learners, sometimes what makes the difference for a child is the attention of one caring individual. At Tarawa Terrace II Elementary School (TTES), Camp Lejeune, Principal Leigh Anne Kapiko recently observed two students who have "turned around" behaviorally and academically thanks to the intervention of caring teachers.

First grade teacher Tracy Abalos' colleagues recognize her particular skills in helping high needs learners. She recently worked with a student who was easily agitated and disruptive. "Tracy was masterful at working with the parents and helping this child take ownership of his behavior," said Ms. Kapiko, explaining that Ms. Abalos conveyed firm, but loving rules for the child and helped the parents do the same. "Last year this child needed constant one-on-one supervision. Now, I walk into that class and you couldn't tell 'our friend' from any other student."

Teacher Tyais Garrett is new to TTES this year, but she hit the ground running. She started working from day one with a little boy who had severe behavioral problems. The child was having tantrums and being disruptive in the halls last year. This year his behavior has improved dramatically thanks to the loving attention from Garrett. "I don't spend a lot of extra time, it's just an awareness of what he needs," she explained.



Sometimes she differentiates work because, despite being intelligent, the student is behind his peers. She also gently enforces standards of behavior. "We don't baby him," she said with pride. "He has to act like a first grader." Ms. Garrett uses praise as a motivator, even finding ways to praise him when his behavior is less than perfect. "We are not there yet, but I expect great things of [this child] one day."

Both teachers work closely with the special education teacher, Kevin Conner, and teacher assistant, Lori Collins. They share ideas and when something does not work, they brainstorm alternative approaches. Ms. Kapiko pointed out that later difficulties can be averted if behavioral problems are addressed when a child is young. "I think these are two prime examples of little boys who would be lost if not for this kind of intervention very early."

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# Independent Thinkers Work as Teams on eCybermission

One of the benefits of the proliferation of online learning is that students learn to work independently. Learning to work as a team, however, is an important life skill. The eCybermission Science Competition offers an intellectually challenging way for students of all capabilities to learn to work together on teams while also achieving recognition for their academic strengths.

Sponsored by the U.S. Army, eCybermission is open to students from families in all military services and public school students throughout the United States. The eCybermission program is a free, web-based Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) competition for students in grades six through nine. Teams compete for state, regional, and national awards while working to solve problems in their communities. The program is one of several camps, contests, and initiatives sponsored by Department of Defense agencies in an effort to encourage student interest in STEM. For eCybermission, students identify their collaborative projects from categories such as Alternative Energy Sources, Ecosystems, Environment, Health and Fitness, Nanotechnology, National Security, Robotics. and Speed, Velocity, Acceleration, Vectors, and Scalars (measures of length, area, volume, speed, etc.).

The competition is conducted entirely online. Students select a topic, develop a mission plan, construct a hypothesis, research the topic, test the hypothesis, and summarize their findings. The group analyzes their findings and submits their conclusions for review.

The eCybermission program has produced impressive projects in the past. Some of these projects have appli-



cations in the adult world. In 2010, "The Oreo" team, from Rainbow Elementary School in Ansbach, Germany was recognized by judges for improving awareness of pet care in their military community. The team of sixth graders hosted a pet food drive, created fliers, brochures, posters, and a video, and donated to their local animal shelter in order to increase awareness.

The students observed a change in awareness among people to whom they presented their information. The team plans to continue encouraging their community to be aware of the importance of taking care of pets.

The team "We R the Champions," from Vilseck High School in eastern Bavaria, built upon knowledge and experience they had gained in real life and applied to their virtual invention. They were recognized for attempting to create a safe way for drivers and pedestrians to listen to music without using ear-covering devices, which distract the user from hearing and processing their surroundings. The team was inspired by a rule forbidding drivers and bicyclists on the installation from wearing earbuds and they hoped their invention could make it safe for people to enjoy music while travelling on post.

The deadline for registration is December 16, 2011. Teams can schedule an orientation for students by contacting Nicole Forrester at eCybermission: Nicole.Forrester@ecybermission.com. Additional information is available at <a href="https://www.ecybermission.com">www.ecybermission.com</a>.

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# SEFE

### Safe Schools Planning

#### **DoDEA Students Display Resiliency**

Although it can be difficult for students moving to a new location to re-establish themselves, DoDEA students often develop two attributes that are highly valuable later in life. They understand how to look beneath the surface and view people from other cultures or backgrounds as interesting individuals, and they demonstrate the resilience of character needed to overcome temporary adversity. This personal resilience is a cross between perseverance and self-knowledge.

Some DoDEA graduates have noted that the experience of adjusting to new school settings provided a life-long advantage in adjusting to new situations in college and the workplace. As one former DoDEA student put it, "Even though we cannot measure them, there are intangible benefits to growing up with exposure to the Mona Lisa."



Several impartial observers have commented on the resilience of DoDEA students. During a visit to Ashurst Elementary School at Quantico Marine Corps Base, bullying prevention expert Trevor Romain noted, "With military kids the amazing thing is their resilience. We want to tap into that so they can take care of not only themselves, but also their buddies."

During his interview on the DoDEA Office of Communications *Chat Room*, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, noted that all three of his children had transitioned several times between DoDDS schools and U.S. public schools. He related the following anecdote to describe the resilient character of DoDEA students: a young child from an Army family went to a civilian school for the first time. As the teacher explained to the other children, "Johnny's parents are in the military so he has to find a new home every few years," Johnny interrupted the teacher and said, "No we just need to find a new house, we're always home; home means family."

Former Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, emphasized the same characteristic resiliency, as well as integrity and courage, when he addressed the graduates of Kaiserslautern High School in June 2010. And First Lady, Michelle Obama, applauded similar qualities of DoDEA students when she addressed the 2011 graduating class of Quantico Middle/High School.

"You already know how to navigate different cultures. You already have a skill set that so many employers are seeking, one that will position you for success both in the career you choose and the life you build for yourself with your family. So I have to tell you, I am in awe of you. I'm in awe of how, dealing with the stresses of military life has actually strengthened your family bonds, rather than weakening them . . . spending time apart has actually brought you even closer together."

-- Michelle Obama, Quantico Middle/High School, June 3, 2011

Several DoDEA schools have implemented formal programs to assist students in cultivating resiliency and making a smooth transition to a new school. In Vicenza, student ambassadors escort new arrivals around the school and check in with them for the first three months. At Yokosuka Middle High School, the student Dragon Core introduces new students to current students and accelerates their integration into the school community.

DoDEA students continually set an example for adults by demonstrating resiliency and maturity as they endure sacrifice and transitions, learn to accept new friends, and explore new cultures. To share your strategies for helping students cultivate resiliency, or to find additional tips on programs that have worked at other DoDEA schools, contact <a href="mailto:safeschools@csc.com">safeschools@csc.com</a>.

# SiFE

#### **Education Issues**

#### Study Emphasizes Suicide Risk among Hispanic Females

Most school administrators are aware that the rate of suicide among students in U.S. public schools has tripled over the past four decades. Public education efforts have succeeded in raising awareness that specific groups such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth are at heightened risk of committing suicide, but one demographic subset — Hispanic females — is often overlooked and is particularly at risk for attempting suicide.



Suicide rates for the general population of high school youth appear high: 13.8 percent considered and 6 percent attempted suicide. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports, however, that 25 percent of teenage Hispanic females considered suicide and 15 percent, more than 1 in 7, attempted.

A study published in the journal *American Psychologist* cited the conflict between traditional family expectations and American cultural pressures as a particularly intense source of psychological stress on Hispanic female students. Researcher Luis Zayas, Ph.D., of Washington University in St. Louis Missouri, who has published numerous studies on Latina suicide, compares the conflicting cultural pressures to a dance: "A more apt description might be that of an intricate dance that she must learn to bring together the many cultures and identities that she encounters while the ground is shifting beneath her feet. It is an integration process . . . a transitional process of bringing two or more cultures together in forging her identity." (*Latinas Attempting Suicide*, page 135.)

#### Warning Signs

Youth contemplating suicide often feel worthless, alone, and may believe they are a burden on their parents. They sometimes feel misunderstood by their peers and adults. They are often ultra sensitive to criticism, scared to make mistakes, feel unable to cope, and believe these feelings will last indefinitely or that nobody can help them.

While several risk factors such as depression, mental illness, alcohol or drug abuse, a sudden loss, or a life event can leave a young person at risk for suicide, these factors are not always obvious. The following indicators, however, are observable behaviors that teens may exhibit when contemplating suicide:

- Lack of interest or variations in energy level.
- Dramatic changes in eating habits or sleep patterns.
- Loss of concern about personal appearance.
- Increase in anxiety or anxiety-related illness (headaches, stomach aches).
- Preoccupation with death, dying, or suicide.
- A sudden elated mood following a period of depression.
- Increase in risky behavior: alcohol or drug use, or risky behavior such as driving recklessly.
- Exit behavior: giving away prized possessions, writing a will, saying good-bye.

#### **Prevention Resources**

The National Association of School Psychologists recommends that individuals take the following actions to help prevent a youth from committing suicide: remain calm, ask the youth directly if he or she is thinking of suicide, and listen generously. Avoid sounding judgmental or leaving the youth alone. Remove any means of self harm, and seek help.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) distributed the Signs of Suicide (SOS) program to DoDEA schools. The SOS program teaches students that if they learn a friend is contemplating suicide, they should **acknowledge** their friend's pain, let the friend know that they **care**, and go with their friend to **tell** a trusted adult. For information about SOS visit <a href="www.MentalHealthScreening.org">www.MentalHealthScreening.org</a>. Additional OSD resources on suicide prevention are available from <a href="www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/default.asp">www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/default.asp</a> and <a href="www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/default.asp">www.militaryonesource.mil</a> (see menu on the left).



#### How to Remove Identifying Information from Photos

Digital cameras and phones automatically add metadata to photographs. These metadata include the date and time the photo was taken, the camera model and settings, the original photo thumbnail, and in some cases, even the geographical coordinates of the location where the photo was taken. This information, when posted online, can unintentionally reveal personal details about individuals which in turn, can make them vulnerable to online snooping and various other types of predatory behavior.

Automatic metadata is called EXIF (for Exchangable Image File format). It differs from the type of metadata which users choose to add to their photographs for cataloguing purposes. For example, artists add metadata in order to maintain copyright of their images. While there are many reasons a private person may find metadata useful, for personal security purposes, all EXIF metadata should be removed before loading images onto the Internet.

Removing metadata sounds complicated, but it is quite easy. The simplest approach is to adjust the camera settings, especially on phones, so that geographical data is not recorded. For personal computers, there are several software programs, including some "freeware" which, once installed, will remove metadata from photographs automatically. The quality of these programs ranges. Check user ratings and consumer reviews to determine which program to download. Some of the better metadata removal programs also perform other "clean up" tasks to jpeg files to maintain image integrity. Such programs can be found by entering the terms "removing EXIF from photos" into an online search engine.

Users of photo editing software can remove metadata manually, though the process is slightly more time consuming. To understand the specific commands needed, it helps to think of the information in electronic images as layers of information stacked like pancakes on a plate. Deleting the layer beneath the visible image, or consolidating layers to make the file suitable for portable devices or the Web, discards any unnecessary information such as the metadata. Two ways to remove EXIF in recent versions of Adobe Photoshop are:

1. Select and "copy" the image. Open a new document (Photoshop will suggest a new document with the exact dimensions of the clipboard). Paste the image in the new document. Select the "Flatten" command from the image menu (or image palette) to squash the layers of the image together, and "Save" the file.

2. Select "File." Click "Save for Web & Devices." As long as the "Metadata" is set to "None," the extraneous information is deleted outcometically.

information is deleted automatically.

According to a study conducted in 2010, approximately half of all social networking sites remove metadata for users when they upload photographs. Some sites only remove metadata from thumbnail images and allow it to remain on full sized images. Users should err on the side of caution and edit their images even before uploading to the sites which claim to remove that information. Check images once they are posted online to ensure the data is deleted.

Even without metadata, the photos themselves can contain revealing information. Look closely at any photo before uploading it to the Internet to ensure that nothing is revealed inadvertently, such as license plate numbers, house numbers, street signs, or identification badges. It does not take much information for a predator to create a profile based on a few scraps of data.



Sometimes images in the background of a picture can reveal the location. In the image above, the well known mural identifies this elementary school. Hover the cursor over the picture for the name of the school.

# Tchools

## **Prevention Programs**

#### **CDC Creates Concussion Prevention and Awareness Program**

According to research conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the rate of concussion among student athletes rose by 60 percent between 2001 and 2009. The activities most commonly associated with head injuries in this study include football, bicycling, playground activities, basketball, and soccer.

In response to these findings, which were gathered from data submitted by 66 U.S. hospitals, the CDC developed the "Heads Up: Concussion in High School Sports" initiative and materials. Heads Up provides coaches, parents, and student athletes with important information about how to recognize the symptoms of concussion. Participants learn how to respond to head injuries on the sports field and how to develop a pre-season "action plan" for determining when it is appropriate for an injured student to return to the game.



Because medical definitions of concussion, also known as Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (MBTI), have evolved over time, community education is an important component of the Heads Up Program. The term "concussion" formerly implied a brief loss of consciousness with no actual brain damage. That definition has changed dramatically in recent years. The CDC now recognizes concussion as involving "any temporary impairment in brain function without necessarily losing consciousness." A student who experiences double vision after a head injury is now classified as "mildly concussed."

Signs that **coaches**, parents, peers and bystanders should look for in students include:

- Appears dazed or stunned.
- Is confused about assignment or position.
- Forgets an instruction.
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent.
- Moves clumsily.
- Answers questions slowly.
- Loses consciousness (even briefly).
- Cannot recall events prior to the impact.

The signs that **athletes** themselves should be alert to, and report to coaches, include:

- Headache or feeling of pressure in the head.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Balance problems or dizziness.
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, or groggy.
- Concentration problems.
- Confusion.

The brain is a complex organ and a concussion affects each person differently. The Heads Up program offers general warning signs for coaches, but the foregoing list is not exhaustive; additional symptoms may be experienced. Program literature also describes subtle symptoms such as increased sensitivity to light and sound which athletes may experience after a head injury but may not be apparent to a bystander. The bottom line is that "if something doesn't seem right, it probably isn't."

While no athlete wants to sit out the game, it is important for student athletes to report concussion symptoms to coaches and teachers. Some



of the signs of concussion are also indicators for other health concerns such as heat injury, dehydration, and over exertion. The Web site for the Heads Up program offers a range of promotional materials including posters, wallet cards, t-shirts, and booklets to assist in creating a successful concussion prevention program at the individual school level. For more information, visit <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/youth.html">www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/youth.html</a>.