

MISSOURI SAFE SCHOOLS

Newsletter of the Missouri Center for Safe Schools

February 2004

FROM THE DIRECTOR . . .

Congratulations on the fourth year of successful Safety Coordinator Training. I want to commend the safety coordinators for their commitment and dedication to the safety of our children. I am impressed by the varied range of positions of those who act as safety coordinators. It reflects the broad scope of school safety. That may explain the increase in the number of schools, which have divided the safety coordinator duties between two or three different individuals.

I encourage administrators to routinely conduct tabletop exercises. Listed below are reasons for conducting a tabletop exercise:

1. Organizers are able to evaluate how plans will work under a variety of situations and conditions, detecting the need to modify existing plans.
2. A full-scale simulation exercise is often time and labor intensive, whereas a tabletop exercise is not.
3. Participants are oriented to a new plan or to the revision of an existing plan.
4. It evaluates how various hazards may impact a school.
5. Opportunities are created for group problem-solving.
6. It provides orientation to the functions and concerns of other implicated agencies.

7. Available resources are assessed for field exercises, or for a real potential emergency.
8. Tactics and procedures are evaluated without actual commitment of resources or public attention.

Because of the fine work by our safety coordinators, we have elevated the standards for safety in all of Missouri's Schools. It is a reason to be proud as we begin 2004.

Glenn Berry

FROM SUSAN . . .

As everyone knows, the 2003-2004 school year has presented unique challenges for every school board, school district, administrator and teacher in Missouri. We are all making the best with limited resources, and difficult professional pressures while still doing our best to preserve the mission of helping all kids grow and succeed. In most cases the spirit that makes educators who they are has prevailed and sure enough, the kids are thriving despite tough times.

In December, I was invited to a lovely holiday brunch, hosted by the students of Horizons, at the Laker Educational Center in Camdenton. Horizons is an alternative program that has been the recipient of Safe School funds. Those funds, combined with consistent local commitment, have made the program stable

and amazingly successful. I was just one of many guests that included city dignitaries, members of the Missouri General Assembly, school board members, school administrators, parents, teachers and present and past students. Ms. Paula Brown, the guiding force for Horizons has helped the students make the school a place of pride for the district and the community. Horizons students know where they are going, how they will get there, and they are doing it with support and help from lots of directions.

Horizons is not the only alternative, Safe School recipient with that kind of success. Many communities can point to similar circumstances. As we keep trying to thrive in tough times we need to look to the kids at Horizons and kids who are making it because of help from likely and unlikely places. If they can do it, everyone else can too. The key is to involve all stake-holders in the lives of all kids. We can use the Horizons program as inspiration for a positive 2004 for every Missouri student.

Susan Cole, Coordinator
State Programs
DESE

PREVENT POISONING

The American Association of Poison Control Centers will help your district become proactive in preventing and responding to harmful pranks. AAPCC is urging school districts to post the national poison emergency hotline (800-222-1222) next to administrative phones. Callers are connected to the closest poison control center for immediate help. For non-emergency questions, you also can get

information from the hotline's Website at:
www.1-800-222-1222.info

SCIENCE LAB SAFETY

As discussed in the November newsletter, the Missouri Center for Safe Schools collected data in order to prepare a grant application for the purpose of helping school districts properly dispose of excess and expired chemicals and organic material located in science laboratories or storage areas. Only those schools that submitted data by December 20, 2003 are included in the grant application that is being prepared. The Center hopes to find grant funding that will allow for the identified materials to be properly disposed of at no cost to participating school districts. There is no assurance that the proposed grant will receive funding.

We received applications from around 92 school districts (105 public schools), 1 charter school, and 1 parochial school by the December 20 deadline. We met with the project committee on January 8, 2004 to review the applications. We are now involved in screening the applications for chemicals which can be locally disposed of under accepted protocols. We will be sending those protocols to many of the applicants, along with information regarding mercury exchange programs, in order to narrow down the list to items that must be handled by a HAZMAT disposal contract. We are working to develop cost estimates for each of those items in our stack of applications. Once the costing is done (hopefully by the end of February) we will be presenting the information to potential grant funders for their consideration. We

would not anticipate having responses from them until April.

ONLINE SAFETY TOOLKIT FOR SCHOOL OFFICIALS

Sprint, through its sponsorship of the Consortium for School Networking's (CoSN) Safeguarding the Wired Schoolhouse initiative, is providing the "Promoting Online Safety" toolkit to local schools and community organizations. The toolkits are designed to make it easy for local officials to present information about safety strategies they are pursuing to parents and community members:

To order a toolkit visit
www.safewiredschools.org/toolkit

SEEKING NOMINATIONS FOR ANNUAL PEER MEDIATION AWARDS

Nominations are now being accepted for the Heartland Mediators Association 2004 school peer mediation awards. Grades K-12 school mediation programs are eligible for the award. The winning programs from Kansas or Missouri will be honored at the HMA Annual Conference on April 16-17, 2004, in Overland Park, Kansas.

Application requirements include submitting a brief essay describing the program and why it should be chosen for this award. The essay should be suitable for publication in the HMA newsletter. The description may be written by a sponsor or by a student participant.

Last year's winners were Glenwood R-8, West Plains, MO, and Concordia Elementary School, Concordia, KS.

Applications should be received before February 28, 2004. The judging panel will consist of previous award winners and HMA members.

Additional information may be obtained from Peg Nichols, P.O. Box 382, Olathe, KS, 66051-0382, (913)782-0189 or Rhonda Harris, rhonda_harris@kcmo.org, phone#(816)513-1836 .

HOMELAND SECURITY AND SCHOOL CODES: TERRORISM, BIOTERRORISM AND ACTIONS SCHOOLS CAN TAKE

Does your school know what to do – specifically – when Homeland Security announces a Terror Alert Color Code? School Administrators have enough on their plates now without having to become Terrorism Experts. Keys to Safer Schools.com has developed a comprehensive training designed to familiarize school staffs with the realities of international terrorism, it may effect schools as soft-targets and specific actions that can be taken (with budget restrictions in mind) by the school to enhance the safety of their students.

Mr. Frank Green, Executive Director, Keys to Safer Schools.com will be a keynote speaker on April 13, 2004 at the State Emergency Management Agency(SEMA)/Missouri Emergency

Preparedness Association 16th Annual Conference, April 11-14, 2004, Tan-Tar-A Resort, Osage Beach, Missouri.

SEMA invites school officials to attend this one-day session, April 13th, at a fee of \$50.00 which includes lunch. Log-on to SEMA's website at www.sema.state.mo.us to print out the conference registration form.

Please indicate on the bottom of the form that you would like to attend this one-day session for \$50.00. Payment can be made by check or by purchase order. A copy of the purchase order must accompany your registration form. If you need to make room reservations at Tan-Tar-A, call 573-348-3131 – reservations, and tell them you would like to attend the Emergency Management Conference in order to get the \$74.00 room rate.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Cathy Zumwalt, Conference Coordinator, at 573-526-9146 or e-mail at cathy.zumwalt@sema.dps.mo.gov.

PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES—AT SCHOOL AND HOME

Emergencies – a tornado, fire, flood, earthquake or even a terrorism event – can happen at any time. Each year schools take steps to prepare students for emergencies that might occur while they're in school. Families also need to be prepared for emergencies, and on March 3, 2004, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services will be launching its "Ready in 3" statewide educational program to inform Missouri residents on what they can do at home, school and work.

According to a recent statewide survey, one in four families is not convinced it is necessary to prepare for an emergency, and almost 40 percent are unsure about what to do to prepare. To educate families on steps they can take now to prepare, the department developed a family safety guide, "Planning for Emergencies: Three Steps to be Prepared." This booklet describes the three steps: create a plan for you and your family; prepare an emergency kit for your home, car and work; and listen for information in the event of an emergency. The guide includes a family emergency kit checklist.

The Department of Health and Senior Services and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education are asking school administrators to distribute copies of the family safety guide to students during March, the month designated as "preparedness month," and the time when schools are probably conducting tornado and fire drills. Teachers are encouraged to use the booklet as a teaching tool.

The family safety guide is free, available in English and Spanish, and can be ordered online:

www.dhss.mo.gov/BT_Response/School_ReadyIn3.htm.

Place your order by February 16 to ensure delivery to your school by March 1. With your order we can also include a sample lesson plan for teachers to use.

If you have questions, please contact the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Office of Public Information, at 573-751-6062 or at huntec@dhss.mo.gov. A copy of the family safety guide and additional "Ready in 3" materials are available on the DHSS web site: www.dhss.mo.gov/BT_Response/BT_Response.html, and additional lesson plans are available on the SuccessLink web site at www.successlink.org.

Mary Kay Hager
MO Department of Health
and Senior Services

GET THIS NEWSLETTER QUICKER

We are now distributing the *Missouri Safe Schools* newsletter electronically. When the newsletter is finalized, we first distribute it via e-mail, then we send a copy out for duplication and mailing. Therefore, the e-mail will reach you around 2 weeks faster than the hardcopy. By providing us your e-mail address for electronic receipt of the newsletter, you receive the newsletter quicker, we save paper, and we eliminate the duplication and postage expense. We will continue to mail a hardcopy to each superintendent. For all others, we would like to include you on our electronic

distribution list. Please send your e-mail address to thompsonrs@umkc.edu using the subject line: Electronic Newsletter Distribution.

If you are a District Safety Coordinator and you have already provided us your e-mail address, disregard this notice. We will include our Safety Coordinator distribution list with other addressees when we send out the newsletter on line.

Dr. Russ Thompson, Associate Director of the Missouri Center for Safe Schools, is the newsletter editor. If you would like to submit an article for a future *Missouri Safe Schools Newsletter*, please send him your submission by e-mail to thompsonrs@umkc.edu or mail it to:

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Check out the web page for the Missouri Center for Safe Schools at <http://www.umkc.edu/safe-school> and call us at our offices in the School of Education, University of Missouri-Kansas City, (816) 235-5656.