

# Mediation in Okinawa?

## The Challenges of Providing a Spectrum of Special Education Conflict Management Services in a Worldwide School System

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## DoDEA (the Department of Defense Education Activity):

- A DoD Field Activity providing pre-K to grade 12 education to the dependents of members of the armed forces and some DoD civilians
  - 194 schools
  - 14 districts
  - 12 foreign countries and the US
  - Employs approximately 8,700 educators to serve more than 86,000 students



# DoDEA's Mission

To Provide an Exemplary Education that Inspires and Prepares All DoDEA Students for Success in a Dynamic, Global Environment.

# Military Dependents

- 1.2 million school-age military children
- Only 7% are in DoDEA schools
- So . . . 93% are being educated elsewhere, mostly in stateside public schools
- Lesson: This special population, its characteristics, and its issues may be creating challenges for your schools, as well

# DoDEA Schools – OCONUS\*

- DoDDS (DoD Dependents Schools)
  - 130 schools for eligible dependents of active duty military and DoD civilians overseas
  - 9 districts
  - 12 foreign countries: Bahrain, Belgium, Cuba, England (UK), Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey

\*Outside the Continental United States



## dodea - Europe

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY



# Locations

## dodea - Pacific

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# DoDEA Schools – CONUS\*

- DDESS (Defense Dependents Elementary and Secondary Schools)
  - Serve eligible dependents of active duty and DoD civilians who reside on certain military installations
  - 64 schools at stateside locations
  - 5 districts
  - 7 states and 2 territories: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Guam, and Puerto Rico.



# dodea - Americas

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY

The map displays the following military bases and locations in green:

- West Point
- Ft. Knox
- Ft. Campbell
- Ft. Benning
- Maxwell AFB
- Ft. Rucker
- Quantico
- Dahlgren
- Ft. Bragg
- Camp Lejeune
- Ft. Jackson
- Laurel Bay
- Ft. Stewart
- Guantanamo Bay
- Ramey
- Ft. Buchanan

On the left side of the map, there are five circular military branch emblems: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Space Force. On the right side, there is a vertical column of flags representing various countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and others. A globe is located in the bottom left corner.



# DoDEA and Special Education

DoDEA provides a free appropriate public education in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) through 20 USC § 921 and 10 USC § 2164 and as implemented by DoD Instruction 1342.12, "Provision of Early Intervention and Special Education Services to Eligible DoD Dependents."



# DoDEA and Special Education

## Formal Conflict Resolution

The Defense Office of Hearings and Appeals (DoHA) administers formal special education due process for DoDEA. DoHA provides mediators, defense counsel, and hearing officers.

# CEDR

DoDEA's Center for Early Dispute Resolution is a neutral, confidential resource that assists DoDEA and its employees in addressing and managing conflicts and disputes constructively.

CEDR's conflict management services include those related to special education conflict.

# Communication and Conflict Management in Special Education

- Series of four pilot trainings
  - Fort Campbell
  - Vicenza
  - Camp Lejeune
  - Fort Stewart
- Two-day interactive training



# Training Participants

- Superintendents
- Principals and Assistant Principals
- Child Study Committee (CSC) Chairs
- Special Education Teachers
- Teachers' Union Representatives

## CEDR's Approach to Special Education Conflict

- Prevention – Training on Communication and Conflict Management in Special Education
- Mediation
- IEP Facilitation
- Informal creative problem-solving options developed in the field



# What Characteristics of DoDEA Schools and Students Create Challenges to Communication and Conflict Resolution?

# Military Dependents

- Move about once every three years
- Deployment of one or both parents
  - Anticipation
  - Separation and absence
  - Challenges of reunion
  - Injuries and death





- Schools are embedded within command and control communities (although teachers are DoD civilians)
  - Rank-based power differentials
  - Tendency to complain to base command hierarchy, Director of DoDEA, Secretary of Defense, rather than following IDEA processes
  - May have little familiarity with collaborative decision making
- Geographic dispersion
- Differing local cultures

# Additional Complications Overseas

- Active duty military families with special needs members are supposed to identify themselves to Exceptional Family Member Program so they can be assigned to places with appropriate services
- Sometimes they don't
  - Stigma?
  - Potential conflict between parent's desired assignment/career trajectory and availability of services

## Complications Overseas (cont'd)

- Less orientation toward special education parents' support services than parents in the state system
- Parents may face language and cultural barriers to special education system
- Role of the command



# How Do These Characteristics and Challenges Affect Training Design?



# Training Contents

- Awareness of Conflict and the Self in Conflict
  - Nature of Conflict
  - Sources of Conflict
  - Responses to Conflict
  - Continuum of Conflict Resolution Options



# Training Contents (cont'd)

- Skills
  - Listening
  - Positions and Interests
  - Problem Solving Process
- Role Plays to Apply Skills

# Training Modifications

- Lessons learned from earlier trainings led to changes in the training over time
  - More effective at creating DoDEA-appropriate role plays and scenarios
  - Increased focus on problem-solving



## Structure of Problem Solving

- ✓ **Sharing Information**
- ✓ **Identifying Interests**
- Generating Options
- Evaluating Potential Solutions
- Reaching Agreement



# Training Effectiveness

- Paper evaluation form at end of training session
- Follow-up evaluations for behavioral change at two and six months after the training ended (on-line forms)
- All evaluations were anonymous

# Evaluation, End of Training

(Scale: 1=Poor, 5=Excellent)

	Fort Campbell	Vicenza	Camp Lejeune	Fort Stewart
The presentation content was <i>relevant</i> to my work.	4.4	4.6	4.9	4.9
Information from this presentation will be <i>useful</i> in my work.	4.5	4.5	4.9	4.9
The materials used and presented were of <i>high quality</i> .	4.2	4.3	4.7	4.6**
The presenters were knowledgeable.	4.8	4.8	5.0	4.9
**Some shipped materials for distribution did not arrive for this session. The ideas and activities presented were interesting.	4.2	4.4	4.7	4.8

## Evaluation, Post-training Use of Skills and Knowledge

- Participants in each training selected areas of knowledge and skill from the training on which they wanted to focus in the next six months
- On-line evaluation instrument approximately two and six months after training
- Self assessment of behavioral change in three areas, period since training compared with same period in previous year



# Questions

- HOW OFTEN do you use the skills/concepts in your work?
- How much INCREASED COMFORT do you experience in using them?
- How much do you use them to IMPROVE YOUR EFFECTIVENESS in communicating during conflict?



# Ratings Scale

- Likert scale
- Frequency:
  - 1 = The same amount or less
  - 4 = More often
  - 7 = Much more often
- Increased comfort, improved effectiveness:
  - 1 = Not at all
  - 4 = To some extent
  - 7 = To a great extent



# Response Rates

First evaluation (~ 2 months):  
62% of training participants

Second evaluation (~ 6 months):  
41% of training participants



# Results

	Frequency of Use				Increase in Comfort				More Effective Communication			
	1st Evaluation		2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation		1st Evaluation		2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation		1st Evaluation		2 <sup>nd</sup> Evaluation	
	More often (4-7)	Much more often (6-7)	More often (4-7)	Much more often (6-7)	More often (4-7)	Much more often (6-7)	More often (4-7)	Much more often (6-7)	More often (4-7)	Much more often (6-7)	More often (4-7)	Much more often (6-7)
Keeping your focus on the other person and listening with care and empathy (4 trainings)	72%	33%	68%	42%	79%	42%	87%	38%	81%	46%	87%	38%
Using listening skills, open-ended questions, and other strategies to respond to high energy people (4 trainings)	75%	31%	79%	36%	79%	40%	79%	34	77%	37%	83%	30%
Checking for understanding of what you have heard/Reflecting back (4 trainings)	82%	40%	84%	35%	86%	49%	84%	39%	86%	42%	84%	29%
Generating options for solutions that address underlying interests (3 trainings)	56%	27%	74%	40%	70%	38%	81%	42%	78%	35%	79%	35%
Consciously choosing a conflict style to use in addressing a particular conflict (3 trainings)	70%	25%	55%	26%	75%	35%	65%	26%	82%	28%	77%	23%

## Informal Efforts in the Field

- DoDEA does not have dedicated dispute resolution professionals in the field
- Time zone and geographic constraints have restricted rapid conflict resolution resources from HQ
- Development of “Honest Brokers”
  - Content specialists, skilled facilitators, distinct from school IEP team





# Mediation

- Rarely used
- Now available at any stage of the process
- Challenges of providing special education mediators in a fiscally-responsible and timely fashion



# IEP Facilitation

- Provided once, very successful
- External IEP Facilitators are rare outside US
- Option: Develop own IEP Facilitator cadre
- Challenges
  - All internal
  - Cannot be teachers, per union contract
  - Trained facilitators are likely to move, taking expertise with them (and leaving some locations without services)
  - In light of school dispersion, difficult to arrange co-facilitation and mentoring



What Approaches Can DoDEA Take to Address these Challenges?



# Wrap Up/Questions

# Thank you for learning with us!

If you would like further information or have questions that arise after the session, please contact:

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