

Schools under accreditation scope

By Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

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The quality of education that Baumholder's students are receiving is being placed under the microscope over the next three months. All schools are receiving, or have already received, a visit from the North Central Association, the largest school-accrediting agency in the United States.

Smith Elementary School received a visit from the NCA team Feb. 11-13 and Wetzel was put to the test Feb. 17-19. Baumholder High School and Neubrücke Elementary School will have their visits in April.

"It went super. We got high accolades from them. They said our school fit the community perfectly," said Bill Rose, Smith Elementary School principal, after their visit from the NCA.

The official report will be sent out from the NCA in four to six weeks.

One of the inspectors told Smith educators "If you didn't believe in God before you visited Smith, you would now."

"That was just really neat the way she said that," said Rose.

"They were just totally impressed with the caring that went out to the kids. We briefed them on the deployment and what's going on in the community too, but they didn't see that. They just saw loving, caring people, good kids and a good school," said Rose. "Excellent," is how Debbie Brooks, Wetzel Elementary School principal, describes the results of their accreditation visit.

"They want us to apply for another sure start class and that's



Photo by Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

Amy Poole teaches Wetzel kindergarten students the proper use of vowel sounds by playing a recognition game.

what I'm working on right now because we think we're a needy community so we could utilize another class.

"And then they wanted us to make some revisions to our plan by extending it to higher thinking levels. Like, our plan is to improve reading comprehension across the curriculum, and instead of just doing the basic comprehension of recall, they want us to use the higher levels like applications synthesis and deeper understanding. So we're going to be in the process of making some revisions to our plan. We'll see what they have to say when we get the final report but we did really well.

In a note to Brooks after visiting Wetzel, Joan Roberts, NCA team leader, wrote, "Thanks for your thoughtfulness and help during our recent NCA visit. It was such a pleasure to visit Wetzel Elementary School. The staff, students and parents were friendly and eager to represent their school and community. Congratulations on the work you have done to raise student achievement."

"We need to try and improve parent participation in the school improvement plan and also try and get parents more involved in school," said Brooks. But I have to say, at our reading night, a night for parents to come, Command Sergeant

Major Ann McDaniels and myself read our favorite childhood books and we had about 80 parents and kids here. We played reading games and really had a good time. Parents complemented this as they left. In retrospect, Brooks said, "I just think it's been a long hard deployment and maybe as the soldiers return we'll see more participation in the school.

All Department of Defense Dependent Schools are accredited by the NCA. The association accredits more than 9,000 public and private schools in 19 states and the Department of Defense Dependents Schools overseas.

"DoDDS schools must meet high standards and our schools always strive for continuous improvement," said Peggy Schmidt, Kaiserslautern district DoDDS public affairs officer.

At its heart, NCA is an accreditation and evaluation organization. To become a member of NCA, a school must meet NCA's standards, conduct a self-study and adopt a model of continuous school improvement that focuses on improving student performance over a five-year period.

Faculty members at Smith Elementary School say that this model focuses on improving student performance and must be accepted by the entire school staff. The continuous school progress committees of Smith Elementary School have spent the last two and a half years preparing for this visit.

The action plan and target goal statement of Smith is, "Students will increase problem solving skills across the curriculum," said Karen Hargrove, a teacher at Smith Elementary School. All students have been solving problems using the Understand, Plan, Do, Review process, known as "UP Doctor" by faculty and students. Staff members have been planning and implementing lessons using the UPDR process on a regular basis. Problem solving strategies have been taught to improve skills across the curriculum, as well as lessons to improve social interactions. Parents have even been introduced to strategies that help their children solve problems by participating in family problem solving days that are held on a quarterly basis.

"This official accreditation is just one of the many ways that DoDDS works to provide the highest quality education possible," said Hargrove. "By meeting and even exceeding requirements set by the NCA, the staff of Smith Elementary is working daily to improve the education of all students," she said.

"Accreditation from a stateside agency means that our schools engage in a review by a third party, non-governmental association. This review takes place every five years with an on-site visit and through annual reporting by the school," said Schmidt.

The schools must work to meet standards of high quality by:

- Defining appropriate educational goals and providing educational programs to achieve them
- Maintaining a qualified faculty and an effective school organization
- Regularly assessing the quality of the educational program
- Responding to concerns of parents and needs of the local community
- Providing for continuity of quality programs
- Describing with accuracy the content of its services and programs
- Documenting continual educational growth for its students through the school improvement process.

"Official accreditation is just one more way that DoDDS works to provide a high quality education that is comparable to that found in stateside schools. By meeting and exceeding requirements set forth by NCA, our schools are regularly working to improve the educational achievement of all students," said Schmidt.



Photo by Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

Children at Wetzel Elementary School pass by a yellow ribbon board decorated with the names of the many parents who are deployed in Iraq.

Handcuffs, badges replace desert BDU's

By Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

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A company of artillery Soldiers from Missouri has deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom but instead of desert BDUs they have been handed handcuffs, brassards and badges and are now patrolling the Baumholder military community.

They are the Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, A Battery, 1st of the 129th Military Police Company (provisional) who have set aside their artillery pieces, retrained as military police and are now providing law enforcement services here while the 92nd MP Company prepares for a possible deployment.

"The law enforcement slice of the pie, that's what we're covering so that the other platoons that were covering law enforcement can prepare to go down range is needed," said 1st. Lt. Shannon Holaday, platoon leader.

Before deploying they completed a Military Occupational Specialty Qualification Course like any new enlistee and the noncommissioned officers completed a Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course or an Advanced Noncommissioned

Officer Course, which ever was commensurate with their grade and rank. So don't be misled, these are no second string MPs,

They have also received law enforcement indoctrination, Baumholder style, by those who know it best, the soldiers of the 92nd MP Company.

"We went through a week of Baumholder specific law enforcement training where we focused on how things are done in this community," said Holaday. "That was all in the classroom and then after that we went through about two-and-a-half weeks of OJT where we road along with the MPs that were currently patrolling the road.

"We road along side of them the first half and watched them do their thing. In the second half we actually took over and drove and they kind of shadowed us and helped us out if we needed any assistance," said Holaday.

"I can't tell you how good that OJT was, because until you actually experience some things, you don't really put things together. The OJT, or the left seat, right seat, which is what they call it, for the last few weeks has been invaluable, and all my soldiers tell me this," said Capt. Tim Strohmman, company commander.

mander.

With all the classroom training and practical experience behind them, the Missouri National Guardsmen climbed into their cruisers and took over law enforcement duties for the Baumholder military community on March 1. "Our length of stay is approximately one year, but of course that's always subject to change based on the mission and other variables," said Holaday.

Doing business the MP way is a whole new way of thinking for these artillery men but Holaday is confident that his Soldiers are well trained and focused on their mission.

"Initially we didn't really know what to think. You're asking an artillery unit to temporarily transition into an MP way of doing things. It's a different ideology. Artillery men are focused on the field, on doing things there, whereas MP training is not so. You want to keep peace in the community, keep order and show a presence in the community," said Holaday.

"It's just a different way of thinking. All of us didn't quite know what to think to start with but everyone has embraced this mission and is doing very well with it now," said Holaday.

A question that springs to the

forefront from all of this is why retrain artillery Soldiers to become MPs?

"I think what the Army has found, based on the obvious recent events, is that there's a higher need for military police in today's environment. So they naturally sought out National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers that could possibly help fill the MP need," said Strohmman.

"What they found is that some units that weren't being mobilized or utilized could fill the MP need. That's why they sought to convert some artillery units so that we could help out," he said.

Like any soldier who deploys, they are separated from their families and of course the miss them.

"But as far as the mission is concerned, I think you ought to see them," said Strohmman. They're motivated, they know they're making a difference and I think now that we've hit the ground and they're out of training and starting to do their law enforcement duties, we have landed and their glad that it's happening," said Strohmman.

"I think the general reaction at first was that some of them didn't understand the need and were probably really surprised to be retrained

as military police.

"I've always been a firm believer, though, that in times of uncertainty you place faith in the leadership," he said.

"Once we explained the situation, once we understood the situation, everybody learned to grasp the transition, so to speak, and they know what their mission is. They know they are to provide community law enforcement while others are going down range. I think the reaction of uncertainty at first turned into a reaction of support," said Strohmman.

Strohmman explained that community law enforcement was just one aspect of their mission.

"While we're doing community law enforcement, the soldiers that are going down range have more time to train and complete their training so that when they do go down range they'll be more prepared.

"I've explained that to my soldiers and I take it to heart. I'm glad that we are doing something here in support of that because as you know, the more training or the better trained you are, the better that you'll deal with situations. If that helps those soldiers do their mission in Iraq than we can't help but be right," said Strohmman.



Photo by Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

Meg O'Grady helps students prioritize their issues during the AFAP conference Feb. 19.

ACS goes fishing

Army Community Services went fishing for new ideas Feb. 19 and 20 during the annual Army Family Action Plan conference. This year AFAP had a marketing plan and motto. FISH, which is short for Fresh Ideas Start Here, was this year's motto and it clearly tells the AFAP story.

Every year the AFAP staff organizes a conference that gives the community the opportunity to share quality of life issues with the installation and Army leadership.

Baumholder residents, civilians, family members, youth and military all had their chance to let their voice be heard at the annual AFAP conference.

AFAP is a grass roots initiative that allows anyone in the community to issues or recommendations about anything concerning the quality of life here in Baumholder or within the Army community as a whole.

If an issue is beyond the scope of the local community it is forwarded to the next level of command for consideration at an AFAP conference at that level.

Delegates were selected to reflect the various demographics of the community. They were assigned to work groups that discussed the issues solicited from the community with the goal of obtaining resolutions.



Photo by Ignacio "Iggy" Rubalcava

New look and concept

Contract painters apply new paint to the ballroom at the Rod and Gun Club that is scheduled to open in early May with a new a new high class disco look and concept and even a new name. The club will be called Shooters and will feature dining and dancing and variety music to include techno, R&B, rock and country. The new look will include glittering walls and ceiling, a brand new bar, neon lights and a bigger dance floor.

Reintegration training a must for spouses

Across the Baumholder community, from Strassburg to Neubrücke and Smith to Wetzel, the word on the tip of everyone's tongue is redeployment. Baumholder Soldiers will soon return in mass and it is time for everyone to gear up for their homecoming.

The Soldiers have been away from friends and families for almost a year so an acclimatization or as it has become known, a reintegration period, will be a must for every returning soldier.

But soldiers are not the only ones who have been alone. Spouses and family members have had to deal with ample amounts of separation issues as well and will also need some time to reintegrate with their Soldier.

To help smooth out the bumps and waves of this delicate period, Army Community Service is conducting reunion/reintegration training for Soldiers and their spouses. ACS has offered this training since June 2003. Originally the program targeted spouses of deployed Soldiers but in October 2003 the focus shifted to Soldier as they were coming back to Baumholder but the program did an about face Feb. 1 and focus is once again on the spouses and getting them ready for the reunion with their Soldier.

The goal of the reunion/reintegration train-

ing is to reduce reunion stress, improve marital communications and teach family members how to recognize conflicts before they happen. All Soldiers are required to attend this training but it is voluntary for spouses. ACS believes that having both partners in the marriage attend the training makes the adjustment back to daily life much easier on the family unit as a whole.

The reunion/reintegration training can and should be taken without the service member before he or she redeploys to Baumholder. Since trainees will learn how to recognize signals and learn about potential behaviors that may indicate a need for help, it is better to have the knowledge prior to the Soldier's return. For example, there is a discussion group that deals with resolving family conflicts. This might include how to deal with a child's resentment to introducing the Soldier back into the family dynamic as a parent. Another hot topic is couple's communication issues. A point of interest there is how to cope with handling the finances jointly again. These are all issues that if thought about before redeployment, can save families from a lot of tension and frustration.

Any spouse can attend the training held every Wednesday from 8:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.



Photo by Ignacio "Iggy" Rublacava

The renovated Wagon Wheel Theater was filled to capacity during the latest town hall meeting that doubled as a reintegration briefing where all spouses were briefed on the seven-day reintegration plan by Lt. Col. Todd A. Buchs, 222nd Base Support Battalion commander

by calling ACS and reserving a space. Childcare is available provided the children are preregistered with Community Youth Services and reservations are made with ACS in advance. Family readiness groups are urged to contact ACS to schedule training as a group. ACS will even come to you. Ask your FRG leader to contact ACS and schedule your next meeting with ACS. Call mil 485-8188 or civ (06783) 6-8188 to reserve your space or learn more about conducting reunion/reintegration training at your next FRG meeting.

Children - an Army brat's perspective

Commentary by Chaplain Michael Joseph Cerrone III

U.S. Army Chaplain, Baumholder, Germany

Mothers' have their day in May and Fathers have theirs in June. So, since many military fathers and mothers have more than one or two youngsters, why not have a whole month for military children? Weather-wise "March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb." Maybe that's why the Department of Defense suggested this month, thinking of children who, at first, fiercely oppose any move away from their friends and familiar surroundings, but, at the other end, find new friends and even happier times.

March should "march in" to an "upbeat drum" for a whole lot of us who are happy to be "Army Brats," as I myself was during the 1950s and '60s. Of course, I don't mean that military children should be real brats by misbehaving or having a bad attitude. Military parents shouldn't have to become "lion tamers" in order to teach their chil-

dren respect, consideration, and cooperation. Parents do need to become "good shepherds" and model those human virtues and Army values, which enable children to become "gentle as lambs."

That's how the 19th century Italian priest, Saint John Bosco, envisioned the work of his religious society of priests, Brothers and Sisters. He intended his Salesians to be spiritual fathers and mothers, who train and educate disadvantaged boys and girls, not only to be competent workers and good citizens, but also to be saints - morally wholesome and spiritually holy. While he himself was still a young lad, he had a dream, wherein he tried to stop a crowd of boys from fighting with each other, by striking the instigator with his fist. His dream turned into a nightmare when the boys turned into a pack of raging wolves. Suddenly, a beautiful lady appeared and the wolves turned into lambs, happily playing in the meadow. She told John that only by prayer, patience, and kindness could he transform young rowdies and

ruffians into gracious gentlemen. The beautiful lady was the Mother of Jesus. Her lesson to him is a great lesson for us all.

Growing up as an Army Brat meant for me travel with my family to see fascinating places and experience a much wider world than most of my cousins did, who grew up and stayed their whole lives within a 50-mile radius of where they were born. Besides that, March is special to me because it's the month that my mother, an Army wife, gave me my first sister, born at Fort Dix, New Jersey. Among my duties as big brother was to protect and defend her against "all enemies, foreign and domestic," which included neighborhood bullies. The Army family of my childhood would eventually grow to five of us "brats."

But most of all, for my family and for most Army families in those years long ago, faithfulness to God and Country was a way of life. Religiosity and patriotism were never conflicting virtues in my military childhood. In fact, my vocation as a priest in military ministry is rooted

in my family's relationship with the chapel community and our "paratrooper padres," for whom I frequently served at the altar of God. Pro Deo et Patria.

And, don't you know, that Pope John Paul II is himself the son of a career Army man? Speaking to military men and their families a few years ago, he said, "Thank you for your courageous pacification work in countries devastated by absurd wars or natural calamities, without being concerned about the risks you take... Be men and women of peace. And to do this fully, welcome Christ, the author and guarantor of true peace, into your heart. He will give you that evangelical fortitude which enables you to conquer the seductive temptations of violence. It is not easy to be a member of the family of a military man, because one must share the troubles his mission entails. However, the family is the main support for each one of you. What is loved is defended, and where does one learn to love peace and life if not in the family?"

Learning curve
Education Center

Computer literate

Baumholder's Adult Education Program offers a Basic Computer Course beginning March 29. Call mil 485-8891 for more information.

Info systems

The University of Maryland has added the IFSM 300 Course entitled Information Systems in Organizations to the next Term's schedule. Register by March 27. Call mil 485-6178 for more.

Rock on

Idar-Oberstein is the ideal place to make practical use of the University of Maryland's upcoming course in Geology. Register now at the education center.

Growing a child

Central Texas College offers a Child Growth and Development Course at the end of March. The course focuses on physical, cognitive, social, and emotional domains of development. For more information call mil 485-6664.