

PEOPLE SKILLS

How to Frame the Issues

People skills or how we approach school staff, parents, students and community is important to our effectiveness; in fact, it can mean the difference between being welcomed or dismissed. We can either sensitively work with allies in the school, winning over more and more “undecided” school community members, or we can aggressively present “our way” which fractures and creates resentment. If we come on strong or critical, we may diminish our chances of making a difference at the school. Our goal is not to get immediate results or agreement for our position, but involves a long range plan of working with the entire school community to change the school climate in multiple ways. Consider the following:

- Find sympathetic persons to work together with. Parents can help arrange to speak at a PTA or Leadership Council meeting, and will lead you to other parents who may be responsive to this concern. Teachers can arrange for a classroom presentation, and include the *Arlingtonwest Documentary* or the *Addicted to War* text as part of their curriculum. Student groups or clubs may want to take on this issue, and develop an extensive approach including tabling at lunch or Back to School Night, making presentations for parents or having workshops. And community leaders can be supporters in many of the Adopt A School actions. (See the strategy section)
- Most often the school administration is resistant to addressing militarism in the schools. Even if the Principal is sympathetic, he or she may not support this effort. This can be a concern to probationary teachers, or those who have clashed with the administration. Use your judgment on how far to nudge, and be sure that you have the support of other staff. Also be sure that you know your legal rights (see legal rights booklet).
- There are usually a few counselors in a large school who do not feel comfortable with the military recruitment taking place in the school. Supportive teachers can usually tell you who these counselors are. These counselors have important information such as whether there are sufficient physical education classes, which counselors are involuntarily placing students into JROTC, and what student concerns are.
- There are counselors who will be very pro military and align themselves with the administration. Counselors may openly place students into JROTC involuntarily, give out privacy information to military recruiters, or track students into the military. We may want to sensitively confront them, and remind them about the district policy which they may be violating intentionally or unintentionally.
- Find ways to link issues and connect with members of the school community. Militarism in the schools is one manifestation of social injustice, the criminalization of youth, discrimination towards the disenfranchised, lack of funding for education and the slashing of alternatives for our youth. At the same time, be aware that our primary purpose is not to get others to agree with us politically, or to focus on U.S. imperialism. Stick with the issue of military recruiting of minors in public schools.

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- Refer to the Department of Defense documents as much as possible. For example this includes their statistics regarding enlistment quotas, sexual abuse monitoring of the military, and the *Army's School Recruiting Handbook* among others. Show the school staff the Army's goal of "penetrating the K-12 market" as stated in the Army Recruiting Handbook.
- Highlight for the students the enlistment contract Section 9B, "Laws and regulations that govern military personnel *may change without notice to me*. Such changes may affect my status, pay, allowances, benefits and responsibilities as a member of the Armed Forces **REGARDLESS of the provisions of this enlistment/reenlistment document**. In other words, students become "**military property**" and lose all of their individual rights and freedoms.
- When discussing the issue of militarism in the schools, it can be approached from the following perspectives: as a privacy issue, the poverty draft (or economic injustice), or as a moral issue i.e., students told misinformation, lies or withheld information as minors. Depending on the context, the issue should be framed accordingly. For example, there are some persons who respond strongly to the privacy issue, and that is an initial step for them to understand the broader context of the militarism of young people. However be sure that in your communication they realize that Opt Out will not STOP the military recruitment of their child and especially in poor working class communities. The issue of the moral obligation may be the most compelling. Who can argue with telling students truthful and honest information about what could be the most important decision of their lives? Who could argue with protecting children from marketing strategies used to entice them into enlistment? When students are at a vulnerable stage in life, not yet adults and can't even vote, how can one justify sending them to war?

HOW TO HANDLE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Teachers have stated that they are sometimes in an uncomfortable position when students ask them what they think. Their teaching position as representatives of the State puts them in a position to respond thoughtfully and carefully. Since the issue of military recruiting is laden with emotional overtones and raises the issue of patriotism, it can be a difficult subject to discuss objectively and rationally. How do we handle the difficult questions? Consider this:

- Students do not like to be told what to do or not do. Listen to their feelings and thoughts and respond to them. Encourage them to not get off on tangents, generalizations or assumptions. Keep focused on the main issues.
- There are many reasons for students to feel positively about the military including:
 - Money for college
 - A history of military service in the family
 - Patriotism and honor
 - Lack of options, and financial needs
 - Loss of job
 - Influence of the media, and glamorized violence (“It’s cool”)
 - Appeal of discipline
 - Appeal of free health care, fitness program, housing and basic necessities
 - Wanting to prove themselves or do something with their lives
 - It’s something I’ve always wanted to do (a feeling)
 - Not knowing what to do with their lives
 - I don’t know why
 - Other

Each of these reasons expresses a situation or feeling that needs to be addressed. Avoid being judgmental and making assumptions about what they are feeling or thinking. Try to listen to what they are saying and answer with the truth about military recruitment. When they state, “I don’t know why I want to enlist” help them to explore possible reasons. Encourage the student to find out why, realizing that this is one of the most important decisions he/she will make. Use an analogy to underscore the importance of having a reason for enlistment, such as entering into marriage or a job. We make a decision about those areas of life based on a reason or purpose, don’t we?

How to respond when a student says.....

I am joining the military because I need money for college.

- Financial aid is available to 7 out of 10 students without joining the military
- It is estimated that between half to 66% receive NO education benefits from the military for college, and additionally 23% receive only half their maximum benefit.
- The maximum benefit is only available to a small number of “high quality” recruits who enroll in the College Fund in addition to the regular GI Montgomery Bill. Recruits must

score in the top half of the military entrance exams and accept a military job no one else wants.

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- There are strings attached to the college money such as paying a nonrefundable \$1200 the first year of your money into the program, and meeting requirements of status and length of service.
- Bonus money must be paid back if you do not meet the enlistment terms and depends on work being done. It is not a “bonus” in the usual sense of the word.
- YOU DON'T HAVE TO JOIN THE MILITARY TO PAY FOR COLLEGE. THERE ARE BETTER ALTERNATIVES.

(See www.objector.org for Financing College Without Joining the Military, and CAMS Higher Education Brochure)

I want to learn a career

- There are nonfatal job opportunities. Check out the CAMS Alternatives Brochure for job training, apprenticeship programs, and career opportunities. www.militaryfreeschools.org
- Military training is for military jobs.
- It is difficult to estimate the actual transfer of job skills into the military, but from accounts given by veterans, the percentage is very low.
- The Pentagon has already ordered over 40,000 soldiers to stay in Iraq beyond their agreed return dates. This is the only job where you may not leave, even if you want to.
- THERE ARE BETTER WAYS TO HAVE A CAREER, CHECK OUT YOUR OPTIONS.

I am doing it so my family will be proud of me.

- What will your family be proud of? They will not be proud of you in a body bag, or your suffering from depleted uranium, post traumatic stress disorder, or life long physical injuries. (www.beyondtreason.org, www.snowshoefilms.com/depleteduranium.html)
- What does it really mean to wear a fancy uniform or have metals on your chest? Look beyond the clothes and tradition, really think about it. It's your future and life.
- The primary mission of the military is to wage war. It may put you in a situation where you will have to kill or be killed. Imagine what your family would feel if you were to die in military action.
- You can make your family proud by loving them, being there for them, going to college without joining the military, and finding a career that will be of service to others and satisfying to yourself.

The military is just something that I've always wanted to do.

- It's also the most important decision you could make in your life. Find out about the realities of war from those who have had first hand knowledge such as family members or friends and the recent Gulf War and Iraq veterans. Also see the *Arlingtonwest Documentary* for insight into what people experience. (www.arlingtonwestfilm.com)
- Perhaps you feel that way because you were conditioned as a child from our movies, television shows and songs to glamorize violence and see the military as a manly choice for men or independent strong choice for women. Know where your feelings come from.

I think the F-16 planes are so cool. I am fascinated by them.

- It's one thing to be captivated by them, another to actually fly them for the purpose of killing others (show pictures of children and civilians who are victims of the bombs).
- Evaluate the reality of your fascination. War is real, bullets, and bombs kill defenseless human beings.

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Joining the military will help me get my citizenship.

- Immigrants often see enlisting in the military as a patriotic duty. Military service as a path to assimilation has a long tradition in Spanish-speaking communities in the U.S. However at the same time it is noteworthy that there are a number of high profile Latino war resisters and conscientious objectors such as Camilo Mejia, Pablo Paredes and Aidan Delgado.
Is obtaining citizenship worth losing your life on foreign soil in unnecessary and questionable wars?
- There is **NO** citizenship promise with military enlistment; this means that the standard waiting period for citizenship is shortened to APPLY for citizenship. It is not guaranteed. Consider the soldier who was sent to Iraq for one combat tour, was then turned down for citizenship by immigration, and then ordered back to for a SECOND deployment to Iraq. Try telling such a person that enlistment promises citizenship.
- Do you want citizenship posthumously? There have been over 40 dead soldiers who have a posthumous citizenship award which is honorary with no benefits. This is the risk you take.
- Less than half that have applied for citizenship have received it over the past 3 years. Think about it, why does the government use citizenship to entice you to enlist? And what about the deportation of wives whose husbands were serving in the military as in the case of Mrs Patricia Delgado Acosta. Is it patriotic to deport family members while you fight for the US military?
- Carlos Mejia Godoy, a Nicaraguan born former staff sergeant in the U.S. Army became a conscientious objector. He said, "I didn't want to die in a war that wasn't mine, a war that is unjust and immoral."
- Check out www.guerreroazteca.org , <http://jorgemarisca.blogspot.com> and www.ProjectYANO.com

It will make me a man and give me discipline and strength

- Think about it. Does training with weapons make you a man? Does dropping bombs on innocent civilians make you a man?
- There are many ways to become a man. You must decide for yourself how you will become one. You can be a man by working for peace and justice, by caring for humanity. (See *So you Want to Be A Man*, www.ProjectYano.org).

I'll get free health care, free housing, free room and board

- It's not free, and on the contrary you have given up every right to **free** choice when you signed the military contract. You could be in the military indefinitely during times of war.
- Consider the health care, boarding and food you'll have **AFTER** your service when you return as a veteran **WITHOUT** adequate veteran's benefits because of the shameful lack of commitment in this country to provide for our veterans. Did you know one third of the homeless are veterans of war?

The recruiter said I wouldn't be sent to Iraq

- And what else were you told, that you would be playing in the Marine Corps Band or play soccer in the Army? It's a common joke among veterans to find out who is the most gullible among them and believed the best lie.

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- Military recruiters CANNOT make that promise to you, it is beyond their control. Their job is to convince you to enlist, so that they will meet their job requirement.
- The primary concern of military recruiters is to convince YOU to join. Why do they want you so badly? (besides your being so smart and good looking that is)

How to Respond When a Parent says.....

It's a family tradition, my husband, sister and grandfather were in the military

- And they may have come out fine, and even benefited from some aspects of the military (such as buying a home, making a decent salary, and having health benefits). Today's soldier is a completely different story. For example, with nuclear, chemical and biological warfare, if your child serves in combat, there is a greater than 50% chance that he/she will be infected with depleted uranium. This inhaled nuclear waste is known to cause cancers, birth defects and genetic-related diseases for generations.
- A family tradition alone is no reason for one to enlist in the military. Your family can gain honor, respect and service in many other ways. Think about how your family may have been negatively affected which was never acknowledged. Many who have gone to war don't come back the same person, and the family is deeply affected.

I think the discipline will do him/her good

- Maybe it has been difficult these past years and your child needs discipline. There are many ways for you to receive support and help as a parent. Check the resources at your school, community organizations or city facilities such as libraries for parenting classes and support groups. There are also community or school resources available for your child, ask at your local school.
- Military discipline comes down to obeying what you are told, without being able to question or think on your own. In fact, there is a mental breakdown that your child will go through which will force conformity and following orders. Is that what you really want for your child? True discipline is having inner control, with the ability to make sound decisions and judgments.

