

**U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT
FOREIGN SERVICE INSTITUTE**

**ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:
OVERSEAS SPECIAL EDUCATION WORKSHOP**

OFFICE OF OVERSEAS SCHOOLS

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(Music.)

PAM WARD: I'm Pam Ward. I'm one of the regional education officers from the Office of Overseas Schools. I'm here to talk about what our office has to do with youngsters in the Foreign Service who have special education needs and their families. Let me tell you a little bit about me. I'm a former Foreign Service officer.

I raised four children in the Foreign Service, two of whom were identified as having special needs. We moved around to eight different countries. It was a very exciting experience. Now, I'm a civil service officer and the REOs in my office are on the road a lot. We travel approximately, oh, six weeks or so in the fall and six weeks or so in the spring in our region to look at educational opportunities for your children.

And one of the reasons I'm saying that is because – if the best the way to contact us – Stan was saying earlier that you should consider calling ECS. The best way to contact us is by e-mail. In – on your disc that you have in your packet, there is a list of all the REOs and all the contact information for our office. If you want a hard copy, it's going to be over there on that table.

If you're – I tend to not be good with looking for things on discs after people give them to me. So I have brought hard copies of all of our handouts. So if you'd like to pick them up, that would be great. But anyway, I had the listing – Dr. B. Cameron is the REO for NEA. She is on the road at the moment. But all of our contact information is here. You've now met Bill and you've met me and you'll have an opportunity this afternoon to meet Connie and Bob.

The Office of Overseas Schools is an interesting phenomenon within the Foreign Service. One of the things – before I go on, though – I'd like to comment on what you said earlier because I don't necessarily agree with my colleagues. I think that posts are very aware of people coming in and tapping into post funds.

We had a group that met about 2 years ago regarding the idea of hubs. And one of the things that came out of the people in the higher levels of the administrative structure within the department is one of the reasons that there could never be designated special education hubs or posts is because no post wanted to have too many special needs kids because of the cost.

And I mean, this was said openly in a meeting. There's no secret and so I really do believe that it does impact you when you are bidding and I've also had financial management officers say to me as I've been traveling that you know, it was really cutting a big whole in their budget because there were several special needs kids. Now, I think that's appalling, but I think it's also true.

Anyway, I'm going to move on – I was afraid I was going to forget that so I wanted to address that straight on. Anyway, our office was formed in the 1960s because it was realized – Jen, if you want to go ahead and go into – all right. (Laughter.) They want to make sure that children of diplomats and other U.S. government employees, civilian employees had appropriate education available at overseas posts for their children.

Now, of course, DOD went in the direction of having a school system. It was decided that those of us who are Foreign Service people tend to want our youngsters to be in school with kids from other countries. So probably we would not select the same direction that DOD did and run a school that was only available to youngsters of DOD employees.

So we decided, or it was decided, that our office would be founded to assist a number of private schools around the world. Right now, it is about 200. And I underscore private because Stanley said earlier to the IDEA legislation. And one of the important things that I need to underscore is that the IDEA legislation or individual – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act does not apply to private schools.

It does not apply to private schools in the U.S. It does not apply to private schools overseas. Quite often, I will have people who will call me or e-mail me and say well, you give a grant to such and such a school. Make them take my child or make them build ramps or hallways or other things. We can't do that. We give the series of 200 schools small monetary grants yearly.

We also a lot of other things for them. By we, I mean my office, but more importantly, the embassy in the community provides all kinds of support from surplus – selling surplus materials and equipment to use of the diplomatic pouch for emergency materials that are needed. There are just a lot of things we do for these schools. But they are still private schools. There are policies for these schools as established by their board of directors and they decide what the policy is going to be for each of the 200 schools that we assist.

We also gather information as we travel. As I say, we're on the road a lot and we gather information not just about our assisted schools and about the resources that are available, but we gather information about other schools as well. For example, schools that might be within the educational structure of the country but that are designed to provide for youngsters with certain kinds of special needs.

For example, we talked earlier about Pretoria which I happen to know because it's in my portfolio. We have identified an array of schools that are within the South African system, private or public and can provide for youngsters that have an array of special needs. Not every child and it's not necessarily easy. I'm not saying sign up to go Pretoria immediately but that we do gather information about what is available at different posts.

We – these are the schools that we assist by number. I'm going to – okay. These are private schools. We give them small monetary grants. It's there – they're small or smaller depending on the size of the school. For example, some of them are little tiny schools are grants

of 30 or \$40,000 are a huge element in their budget. There are big schools in Europe and East Asia that have multi-million dollar budgets. Our grant is but a token.

Actually, the American School in London basically told us not to bother sending them a grant because they had enough money because one of the things that we expect from the schools that we assist is that they will reserve places for our youngsters and this is not something that every school wants or needs to do.

Now – wait a second, do you want to go back? Not subject to IDEA the policies determined by boards of directors and they serve stakeholders from varied cultural backgrounds. And that's an important thing with regard to special needs. You know, we've talked about prejudices and the kinds of things that we as parents of special needs children encounter.

Some cultures make it difficult for our schools to accept and support youngsters with special needs. I mean one of the things that shocked me when I lived in France for four years and the French basically isolate – they are the way our – the U.S. was in the '50s. They keep youngsters with special needs in separate schools away from everybody else. You know, it's very primitive from the U.S. perspective with regard to special needs.

I thought that because it was Western Europe that they were going to be very enlightened, but that wasn't the case at all. In other cultures, it's even more extreme. And so the boards of directors – the stakeholders that are not from the U.S. may not have the same perspective with regard to serving kids with special needs.

And the auxiliary service is something that's extremely important. The – our schools, as much as they have the best of will, do not have auxiliary services – speech therapists, occupational therapists. The – all the kinds of things that we look in an IEP here and the school divisions here are required because of the IDEA legislation to provide the full panel of services.

Some – it sounds like some of you have had some difficulties here finding specialists that you're comfortable with. But international schools by and large do not have specialists. So you may have to work with the community.

This is where your regional medical officer and your CLO are going to be helpful because even if a document, whether it's the database or we put out – someone very nicely mentioned earlier, we put out overseas offerings to children with special needs and this is on your disc and it's – hard copies are over there.

But the front page will tell you very specifically, this information is given to us by the schools and by the communities and is not necessarily up to date. Sometimes, there will be a wonderful, let's say, speech therapist in the community who's the spouse of someone who's in business with the Foreign Service or with an embassy. They move. All right?

So there might have been somebody when we put this together and updated it and this is updated yearly. But you have to check yourself to make sure that that person is still there and the

best people at post are going to be, from my experience in any case, your regional medical officer and the community liaison officer at the post – your post. Sir?

Q: What would be your advice if we become aware as we're doing research and trying to find places and services in posts, if you come across a regional medical officer who's knee-jerk response is oh no, you can't come back here, even if we have found it there? I ask because I know of people who –

MS. WARD: Right.

Q: – who got turned away by an RMO and you know, not all RMOs are created equally. Some of them feel too harried or too busy to want to do that extra work of keeping track of things – (inaudible).

MS. WARD: Sure. One of the things you can do is even if the school has right – presumably you've already communicated with the school and they told you that yeah, they can meet your child's –

(Audio break.)

MS. WARD: Preschool age. Well, it doesn't matter. Go to our assisted school and ask to talk to the director of people services or the school psychologist or whatever people personnel resource person is at the school. And just explain to them that you're considering the post, your child's preschool age but do they know? Because they are living in the community and they're going to be connected to the kinds of resources that are in their community.

If the school has a school nurse. There's one in Dar es Salaam which really amazed me that has this medical clinic with physicians attached to the school. Yeah, it is a good school. That's one of my absolute favorites. You know, call them and ask them. Call somebody in the school and if you get somebody – if you get somebody in the office of administration who tells you that, gee, they don't know.

Say, well, is there someone in school – on school faculty or staff who's been here quite a long time? You may get referred to the school nurse, but you know, keep asking because there are going to be people at the school that even though they don't provide the services, have kids at the school who are receiving services in the community. But make sure you check it back with the medical person.

I ran into one situation in one of my posts where a local school had referred to a speech therapist who was trained in Africa and the medical people at the embassy were aghast because they did not feel that the training was up to their standards. So you know, you want to ask for the person's CV and what their credentials are and where their license and then go back to ECS and say, okay, you know, there's this speech therapist trained in Britain and these are her credentials or his credentials and is this okay?

But don't stop or be put off by some person who seems sort of disinterested or not very knowledgeable. Again, the same thing with CLOs. There are great CLOs and there are CLOs who's been there 30 minutes and really don't know. So, you know, ask around but do not hesitate to use the schools as resources even though your child may not be attending that school.

I mean, our schools know us. They know the Foreign Service. That's one of our jobs, is building and developing and maintaining relationships with our schools. So if you call and say you're a Foreign Service officer with the U.S. government, you know, if you don't get a very cordial and helpful reception from any of my schools, I want to know about it. (Laughter.) You know?

MR. : That actually leads to the other question, which is the one I blanked on earlier. I have a colleague who was trying to go to Munich – very good school in Munich that supposedly offered services for learning disabilities.

MS. WARD: Right.

MR. : Just wasn't interested and there's kind a growing –

MS. WARD: The school wasn't interested or the post wasn't interested?

MR. : The school.

MS. : You know, I went to – I know that school because we were in El Salvador and we were going to Munich and our contact at Starnberg international school – Munich International School and they said they couldn't take our child – but there's –

MR. : There's a growing kind of conventional wisdom out there that there are lot of international schools that are keeping an eye on their international baccalaureate credentials and their test scores and are increasingly turning away kids with learning disabilities because they're bringing test scores down and making it harder for them to –

MS. WARD: I would say that that is – certainly not valid in my region. One of the things that I would like to do – I mean, I was not an Africa fan until I came into this job but I love Africa because there are wonderful open, gracious people there who want to be inclusive of all different kinds of individuals.

The only place the IB test scores matter is at the IB diploma level, which is in 11th and 12th grade. That's the only place they have external examinations. It's possible – there is – it's not an issue unless you have a youngster who's a diploma candidate. Some of our schools will take kids who really aren't up to doing the full diploma and they don't take the examinations.

That is – that is – that is a mythology. I've got a paper that I wrote actually which I have a copy of here which you can pick up if you are interested. It was in the Foreign Service Journal years ago on special needs kids and Foreign Service myths. But – this is – this is on the CD. Now, the hard copies will be over there.

Now, I will say that there are some schools who are oversubscribed. They tend to be in Europe or East Asia where they are high-powered academically and they frankly don't want to mess with special needs kids. That is true. It doesn't really have to do with the IB. I have a lot of IB schools in my region and the IB schools tend to you know, be just as accepting as the non-IB schools. And the examination piece is not an issue because of the, you know, it's not until 11th and 12th grade. But there are some schools that can afford to only accept the exceptional student.

One of my biggest problems in terms of placement and not even special needs kids but kids with 110 I.Q., especially if they're going to Europe or East Asia because what they want are the kids with the 130 I.Q.s. So I don't know if that's answered your question but one of the things that sometimes you will find is that in schools in the developing world are more willing to bend over backgrounds.

I mean it seems intuitive to go to a large European center or a large capital where they would have more services and this may be true if you have a child who is severely impacted or needs a whole array of services. But I have found that certainly in my region in Africa are schools may not be as good but they are a lot more flexible about working with youngsters that have learning disabilities, ADHD, unspecified developmental delay in the early years and so forth.

Yes? Question, comment?

MS. : I thought you had a question.

Q: My question was that – so if you – I think it was his question, I'm not sure if this is a good time to ask. Did he find resources that is the – that they don't – that the post doesn't seem to know about, you can go to the ECS –

MS. WARD: Yeah, Stan, they want to come back to – yeah. And there may well be resources available in the community and those around. As I say, not only don't call just our assisted school but call everybody you can possibly think of and then get their credentials. Get their, you know, who – where they were trained, who they're licensed by and then it's Stan's office that would be the ones that would say, yeah, that sounds like a really good professional. I'm glad you found it and glad that we now know about it.

STAN PIOTROSKI (?): We had a young officer just come in out of the 8100 class and had significantly challenged child and wanted to go to one location and frankly, I wasn't aware of any services there. I said, look, if you want to check this out, I'll work with you. He had special skills. They wanted him – came back, the royal family of that area had just set up a really dynamite program. I called the director. We talked about the child's needs. They went. Nobody knew about it. It was so new. But this parent checked it out. It was valid. I called the director and that was it.

MS. WARD: Yeah. I mean we have some great success stories. There's a youngster who's in a school that doesn't have a special needs program at all in my region that's you know, it's a small school but the parents, they agreed to try it with this child who has to have a shadow with him and the special needs allowance pays for the shadow and it's working out extremely well.

The kids are enormously supportive of him. The parents are thrilled. So sometimes – so don't say oh, well, this is small school, it's not going to work for my child. Or oh well, this is a remote community in the developing world because sometimes, those places work out better than places that would be more intuitive. Jen?

Okay, this is the kinds of things we do for – we also do training, we give grants for – that are specifically for staff to work with special needs kids. We have summer training programs. We're running several this summer. And we really encourage our schools but we also encourage our schools to say no if they can't meet your child's needs because as somebody brought up earlier, the worst scenario is for a family to get to a post, the school has accepted the child and then it's discovered that oh no, the school really can't meet the child's needs or the needs – or the resources are not available in the community.

So if you get a no from a school, sometimes it is one of those situations where they you know, but more likely, it's that they really believe – they've seen their IAP and they have a real strong believe that they cannot appropriately meet your child's needs.

Okay, all right we have an advisory committee on exceptional children and youth. We send consultants out to the field. I just sent a special – special education consultant to Abuja, Nigeria because the director requested it and the post requested it and they had some concerns about how their special ed program is going.

So we really put a lot of emphasis on supporting special education programs in international schools around the world. We, as I say, the publication that overseas schools offerings to support children – this is self-reported, so you've got check it out. That is, the school has told us that they have these resources. So you need to make sure that they're, A, still in place and, B, that they're on the same page that you are.

I want to recommend transitioning to an overseas assignment with a special needs child. This is, again, on your disc if you're comfortable with using your disc, go to it. Otherwise, I brought a stack of them. If somehow we run out or something, Carol Sutherland is our resources – and Carol is traveling in Italy, poor thing. (Laughter.) But she is the one who has worked very hard with everybody in planning our presentation today because I was on the road. But she provides these resources and is always happy to provide the resources.

We also have other things – we have contracted with consultants to provide a number of books. One of them is called “Count Me In,” which is directed toward international schools, encouraging them to adopt an inclusion model, which U.S. parents know about. The most recent book that we've put out is this little pamphlet, which I think is really great for any parent. It's called “Parent Advocacy in International Schools.”

One of the things I always advise parents – actually, I have a grandson who’s in kindergarten and I just talked to my daughter yesterday who’s going in for her – with great trepidation – for her first parent conference. And I said, all right, the rule is polite but persistent and this book expands upon that, but it will help you as a parent and you all know about how important it is that we advocate.

And also as our children get older, that we teach them to advocate for themselves. I’m sure some of you have little people, that some of you have kids who are getting to middle school and high school. It’s important to teach them to advocate for themselves and this book is really great, again, available over on the table for you or it’s on your disc.

And as I say, I want to stress again that the – your REO can always be reached by e-mail. No matter how remote our location, we carry BlackBerrys, most of us, computers, FOBs. We are always responsive. It might take us a few days because I’ve been in a couple countries where even the BlackBerry doesn’t work. Don’t ever go to Angola, if you can help it. (Laughter.)

It’s recent – it’ll sort of decrease but it’ll get better. Okay, because we visit multiple schools and facilities because we want to have current information. So that’s why when you want to know about a school in a region, call us, but most effectively, e-mail us. Sometimes, people will send us lists of 25 schools. Please don’t do that.

Do a short list and then if you get three schools in Africa and two schools in WHA that might work for your child, you’re going to e-mail me and you’re going to e-mail Bill Scotti and we’re going to get back to you as soon as we possibly can but certainly within a couple of days and give you our take on it. But we are also going to tell you to make sure to contact the school and the post. But that’s why we travel; is to gather information for you, as well as to make sure that the schools are as good as they possibly can be.

We work very closely with our other offices. I joke because, you know, I monitor the special needs listserv and one of the things is that people say, Oh well, these offices within the department never talk to each other. We have each other on speed dial. I mean, multiple times a day, with the ECS social workers, with Heather in the FLO office, and with other offices – the office of allowances, mark- up – who can make sure that we are giving you correct and current information. We do network, both formally in events like the one today and informally on a daily basis. Okay, mm-hmm?

Q: (Inaudible, off mike.)

MS. WARD: Oh, okay, that’s where we are physically located. It’s State Annex 1, which is Columbia Plaza. Yeah, it’s not much of a walk-in operation because we travel so much, but it’s right above where the medical people are. And if you want to stop by and say hi, I’d love to see you or my colleagues would love to see you. I suggest if you really want to see us, you make an appointment simply because we do come and go a lot.

Q: (Inaudible, off mike.)

MS. WARD: It's right off the plaza; it's the higher level. Yeah, right where you walk past the place where they have the coffee bar and the drycleaner and so forth, the plaza area; then you walk right in the door and it's on the left side – H328.

Or if you just decide – we also have a collection – as we travel, we collect yearbooks and pamphlets and all kinds of material on schools. And we have a box on each country. Lots of families will come in with their kids and sit down and look through because it often helps kids to look at pictures of the school that they're going to, and we're always happy – and there's always somebody there who can help you with those materials.

Okay, and then we're talking about the process, and we've been through this so I'm going to go through it quickly. But it basically is the process in which you can identify what might be a post that will work for you.

This one, specifically, is if your child starts school or is born overseas and you have questions or the medical people have questions – is this a child who's going to need special education services? If in the U.S., you contact ECS; if you're overseas, contact your regional medical officer.

And one of the things that I would like to strongly recommend: If your child is in school and the school is saying, we think your child has a problem – you know, he won't sit in his seat so he's got, you know, automatically – don't ever let a teacher tell you that your child has something or other. Teachers are not trained to do instant diagnosis. And the school should be doing it; it's not required in schools in the U.S. They should be trying a variety of strategies before you ever even get to the piece where they're doing a formal diagnosis.

So you need to ask that teacher back – if they're telling you, well, your child has this, that, or the other – well, what have you done to see if you can make him or her more attentive or turn in their homework or whatever? So you know, this is something that is really, really important.

Quite frankly, I think a lot of our kids who are identified as having special needs; it's actually the school that has special needs. (Laughter.) Children were not designed to sit in rows quietly – especially children at five, six, 7 years old – in a classroom and listen. That is not the way teaching should be done.

So the other piece of our job is that we're working with teachers and schools to be teaching in a way that is effective with all children – to be differentiating instruction. But be, you know, you need to be proactive as a parent to make sure that the school is working with your child. But if you know your child has special needs, you can start out with coming in.

And somebody said before that schools here in the U.S. do not accept IEPs. Now, they're required by law to accept IEPs from other states, as of the reauthorization of IDEA. But if I was coming from overseas with an IEP, I would go into that public school in the U.S. and say, now,

this is the full equivalent of an IEP that has been done in another state, which I know you're required to accept, so I would like you to accept this IEP from overseas. I mean, they may or may not do it, but sometimes you can be a little –

But certainly, overseas schools, it works the other way. You walk in with your IEP and say, okay, my child had these and these and these accommodations in his last overseas school, or in the U.S., they are very likely to work with you in terms of providing whatever accommodations.

Now, it may not be four hours of pull-out a week, but if we're talking about an issue of, okay, sitting in the front of the classroom or having a notebook that goes home every day to make sure the homework is done – accommodations of that sort – international schools are very likely to do reasonable accommodation, and are often very able to because sometimes you'll have very small classes.

And that's one of the big things. Kids with special needs that couldn't really survive without a lot of support in U.S. public schools often do very well in international schools because we do have small classes and often very hands-on instruction.

So here we have – you know, the question you're going to be asking yourself, can I go overseas with my special needs child? You have the assessment that is done, and if yes, your identified posts would have resources that can meet your child's needs, working with our office, working with ECS.

And if the question is no, then if you have an older child above 12, you may want to consider boarding school, or something you can have a child that remains with – a high-school aged child who remains with extended family. And I've had that work out quite well in some cases. They can stay in the U.S. and there are allowances – if parents are outside of the U.S., there are allowances that will allow a variety of scenarios. People don't generally realize how much flexibility there really is.

Okay, how do you find a school? Identify several posts with your CDO and narrow the list to those that have special needs services because you have consulted this or you have talked with your social worker and they have told you that these posts might work. Then, contact the employee consultation service and your regional education officer; contact the regional medical officer at post, CLOS, and obtain an acceptance letter from a school, and submit the acceptance letter to ECS. Is that right, Stan? Okay. Yes, ma'am?

Q: And then, kind of something that needs to be done – when does that need to be done in the process? Like, before you bid or –

MS. : That's a good question.

Q: Because you have to pay admissions fees to each school.

Q: Well, you have to pay an application fee.

MS. WARD: No, not necessarily. There are a variety of different scenarios. And if it's our assisted school, we will intercede for you. You do not have to pay an application fee for an assisted school.

I, certainly, in my region – Bill, I don't know about your region –

BILL SCOTTI: We have them and it's part of the allowances. There is an application fee; it's covered under the –

(Cross talk.)

MS. WARD: But what if they don't go to the school? Does a parent just have to eat that?

MR. SCOTTI: To get the letter or not to get the letter, you still have to apply. And the reimbursement was years ago that you would only be reimbursed if that child was admitted to that school.

MR. : Well, that's still the case.

MS. WARD: My schools – all the schools in Africa will give you an idea – an acceptance or not informally without paying an admission fee. Go to Africa. It's the best – Marco?

MS. : Marco is from the office of special – (cross talk).

MS. WARD: Of allowances, yeah.

MR. : Nonrefundable one-time fees can be reimbursed to the employee but, yes, if the problem is that the way things are set up now, it can only be the school that the child eventually attends. Those other fees, I'm sorry to say, the way things stand now, are the employee's responsibility. I know that's terribly –

MS. WARD: Yeah, now I –

MR. : I know that's terribly –

MS. WARD: It's really, yeah, it's wrong. I mean, there's a whole list, as you guys know – I'm not telling you anything – of things that –

(Cross talk.)

Q: – of legislative authority for reimbursing the former, or is it purely State Department regulation?

MR. : I would say that it is in regulation because the underlying statute is –

Q: Is more expansive. Okay.

MR. : Well, it's simply vague enough that it's clear, just –

(Cross talk.)

MS. WARD: I will pass on – because Heather had to leave but I think that might be something that FLO in its advocacy role could take up because I really think that if the government is going to require that you get a formal letter – now, as I say, I also will be very happy to work with any of my clients to get an informal – you know, to work informally – and you will accept, like, an e-mail from the school or something that says that they will take your child.

Q: (Inaudible, off mike) – feel the waters before you –

MS. WARD: Yeah, exactly, exactly. I mean, I think it's ridiculous you should have to pay a formal acceptance fee just to get them to look at an IEP or a psycho-ed evaluation or whatever. And as I say, I am –

MR. : We have schools contact us directly and we tell them, all we need from you is you feel you'll be able to meet the needs of this child. And when they say that, that is information that we need because we know you can't put out 150, \$200 for every application you have.

I talked to one school and one school said, well, we don't want to do that. And I said, well you have to –

MS. WARD: Too bad!

MR. : – we need this information from you saying that you can meet the needs of this child. Once they had told us that, that was enough.

MS. WARD: Yeah. Yes, ma'am?

Q: I have a question for you about DOD schools because I found a place that would be a good fit, but I've heard – and I don't know if this is rumor or not – that even if you have an acceptance before you get there, if a military child needs that spot, you're bumped before –

(Cross talk.)

MS. WARD: Yeah, that's true, unfortunately, yes.

Q: Is there any way around that? Because I'm not going to be willing to look at a DOD school if that's the case, especially if that's the only option.

MS. WARD: Stan, you know more about that than I do.

MR. PIOTROSKI: There is not, no.

MS. WARD: Okay, we have – yes, ma'am.

Q: I'm sorry –

MS. WARD: No, no, that's okay.

Q: Back to your comment about if it's an assisted school that, you know, we might have, like, you would be able to exert, perhaps, a little nebulous pressure. And you mentioned the London situation of – aligned to deal with the strings. What are the strings, and are they explicit or implicit, you know, as far as taking –

(Cross talk.)

Q: – not only just for assisting the school generally, but then you also mentioned – I think we kind of went over it quickly on slide six, as far as specific special education assistance. So what are – essentially, are there any strings from these schools to getting money?

MS. WARD: You can choose to send your child to any school that you select. We have assisted schools in various places, okay.

Q: And are they – (inaudible, off mike).

MS. WARD: Oh yeah, there's – (inaudible, cross talk).

Q: I mean, your overseas school list is, like, my Bible, but I didn't really note that that was one of the details. Maybe I'm just looking at schools that are not assisted.

MS. WARD: The assisted schools are in a – I don't have any of them but the little, orange, narrow book – it's a list of about 200 schools that we specifically assist – that is, we give a grant to –

MR. : (Inaudible, off mike.)

MS. WARD: On our, yeah, Web site.

Q: It's a separate list, though, from the specially educated – (inaudible, cross talk.)

MS. WARD: Yes, it is, it is, totally different. Because these are schools that provide general education in places where there are embassies and consulates around the world. Though, we give them small grants, they have to be schools that are nonproprietary, that have an American or international curriculum, English medium, and no religious affiliation.

Now, some parents – in lots of places, there are good missionary schools. When we were in Paris, we sent our child to Marymount, which is a Catholic school. Schools like that, we cannot officially assist because they have religious affiliations.

However, we do keep contact with them, many of them do have very good offerings for youngsters who have special learning needs and we have information about them in our office. We are knowledgeable about those schools even though we do not officially assist them.

Our officially-assisted schools – and also with some of the not officially-assisted schools – I would pick up the telephone or jot off an e-mail to a school and say, this is the situation with this family – I've developed a relationship, as we all do, with the directors of our schools and with the various individuals – and shoot off an e-mail and say, you know, we've got a child that has these needs; do you think you could meet their needs? And I would do that in the case where you had not been successful or they wanted a \$250 application fee or something.

Q: So it's not that there's a string for the money but it's relationship – (inaudible, cross talk).

MS. WARD: Yeah, right, exactly. It's a relationship. And certainly, in some places where there are waiting lists and stuff, they're not going to be very impressed by my telephone call or my e-mail. However – yeah, Bill?

MR. SCOTTI: There is one string to the money, and that string to the money is if a child meets the acceptance requirements – not including special needs because that may be a new program – but if the child meets the normal requirements for admission, they will be admitted even if it's beyond the normal class size. And that has happened in many, many, many instances in my region. So it's a matter of – that's probably why London has –

MS. WARD: Well, it was. I mean, that's a perfectly nice school in London; I'm sure they're perfectly nice people. But they just do not want to have to admit our kids if they have other people in the waiting list.

My time is up and I'm cutting into your lunch hour. If you have any other questions – yeah, please.

Q: No, I was just clarifying that for the purposes of our research, then, whether a school is assisted by you or not doesn't really, really impact the degree to which they'll be receptive to us.

MS. WARD: No.

Q: It's more other factors and relationships and things. So it doesn't necessarily mean that we should focus our attention on schools that are getting your assistance.

MS. WARD: Yeah, that's right, that's true. Although, I would say our assisted schools are schools that, even though the monetary grants we give them are small, we have developed relationships with them over the years. They are more likely – I have some wonderful missionary schools in my region that have no special education resources. However, their obligation – they have to take missionary kids first. And a lot of them have capacity issues.

So in some ways, we kind of do have more clout with our assisted schools in that regard, but I'm not at all suggesting you should overlook any school that might be appropriate for your child. Bill?

MR. : You know they say, make sure the main thing is the main thing? The main thing for me and Pam and our office is that you go to post and do the job at the embassy and your children go to school. That's what our main thing is. Whether it's the assisted school or not assisted school or a Christian school – whatever that school might be, we do have relationships with those schools.

MS. WARD: Yeah, and my feeling is that I won't always be successful, but I'm willing to try whatever I need to do to make sure that something works out for you that you're comfortable with and that's working for your child.

And on that note, you probably are dying to go to lunch but I look forward to talking with some of you this afternoon. And all the handouts and stuff will be over on the table. Please help yourself. I'll also leave some of our business cards, but I have all the contact information for my colleagues, as well. (Applause.)

(END)