

DODDS-Europe drops 'American' from official school names



Ramstein High School faculty members walk past a "Ramstein American" painting. The word "American" is being dropped from DODDS schools in Europe.

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KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — Department of Defense Dependents Schools-Europe told administrators this week that schools will have to drop the word "American" from their official names. Also, any schools named after a person will have to be called by a moniker more reflective of its location.

That means Ramstein American High School will simply be known as Ramstein High School. And David Glasgow Farragut High School in Rota, Spain, will take on the shorter name of Rota High School. The school in southern Spain is named for the U.S. Navy's first admiral.

School administrators were notified of the changes in a memo sent out earlier this week. The name changes are only for schools in Europe.

DODDS-Europe spokesman Dennis Bohannon said the changes are to make the names more consistent, in the case of eliminating "American," and to help people more easily match where a school is by name.

"Someone back in the United States, if they know that they're coming to Wiesbaden, they may want to try and look up Wiesbaden High School not knowing that it's called

H.H. Arnold," he said. That school is named for the aviation pioneer and founding father of the U.S. Air Force. "This is just to make it easier to identify exactly where that school is at."

That doesn't mean seniors have to rip off the names of their schools from their letter jackets.

Schools can keep the original names on signs, fliers, doormats and letterheads, but the official name of the school will reflect its location in official school publications, Bohannon said. DODDS-Europe's Web site already refers to schools by their official names.

Kyla Jeffries, a 12-year-old at Naples High School in Italy, applauded the measure to remove "American" from schools' names. "I think that is acceptable. More people of different heritages might feel more welcome now, not like they have to feel like they're just American," said the seventh-grader, who has a mixed heritage of Japanese, Puerto Rican, black and white.

Necole Yeager had a mixed reaction. On one hand, the parent of a seventh-grader said, few people she knows used the full name of Naples American High School; opting instead for just Naples High School. "So in a way, it doesn't really matter," Yeager said. But, she said, the name was a small way of staying connected to the States while living overseas. "It's one way of keeping American pride without exploiting it in huge quantities," she said. "It's one way to keep a piece of America wherever we go."