



**COMMUNITY
MATTERS**

Safe School
Ambassadors®

Safe School Ambassadors Program Premise, Overview and Expected Outcomes

Premise

The overarching goals of the Safe School Ambassadors® (SSA) program are to build, maintain and sustain a positive school climate, which empowers teachers to educate more effectively and students to learn and grow more successfully.

SSA is a long-term prevention and early intervention program. The core element of the program's approach is empowering and equipping a diverse group of socially influential students to shift the social norms on a campus (and over time, in a community) by changing their own behavior, leading by example and encouraging their friends to do the same. School climate and social norms do not change overnight; they change over time. Therefore, the SSA program is most successful when it is implemented and championed with a long-term strategic approach in mind.

The SSA program is most effective when implemented over a 3-year timeframe, which allows it to develop strong roots that anchor it firmly into school culture and practice. After the first three years of Community Matters providing the SSA Training, schools are provided the opportunity to move into a Training of the Trainer (TOT) model. When schools move to the TOT, Community Matters partners with the school to support the program in a long term sustainable way. With this approach, the SSA program and the premises on which it stands, become imbedded into the school practices as a way of thinking, communicating and behaving.

Overview

The program engages socially-influential student leaders from the school's social groups and cliques across campus. These leaders are carefully identified through student and staff surveys. They are selected based upon specific criteria, such as: strong position and influence in their peer group, good communication skills, and a history of standing up for friends. They participate in a two-day interactive training along with several adults who serve as program mentors. The training gives student Ambassadors the motivation and skills to safely resolve conflicts, defuse incidents, and support isolated and excluded students. After the training, Ambassadors meet in small groups called Family Groups on a regular basis. These meetings, led by the adult mentors, provide time for strengthening skills, data collection of Ambassador

interventions, and inspiring student and adult commitment to the program. On average student Ambassadors intervene with actions learned in the training 2+ per week. During a school year, these individual actions often add up to more than **2,400** interventions, which impacts the whole school in a positive way.

Expected Outcomes

During a multi-year study of the SSA program (submitted to the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices and the California Healthy Kids Resource Center) found that during the designated time period of the study:

- SSA schools showed suspension rate **decreases of 33%**

While conversely:

- Non-SSA control schools showed suspension rate **increases of 10%**

When the SSA program is implemented and delivered with fidelity, the following results are reported:

- Decreased incidents of bullying, harassment, cyber bullying, violence, exclusion and other forms of harmful behaviors and mistreatment
- Increased attendance and academic performance
- Improved relationships among and between students and adults
- Increased respect for diversity and different ways of thinking and acting
- Increased feelings of connectedness to school and each other

When students observe the interventions of Ambassadors, they start to feel more comfortable and motivated to act and speak up; ultimately turning bystanders into upstanders. This shift creates a ripple effect on campus that over time results in changing the schools' social norms. Norms of ambivalence and acceptance of cruel behavior fade and are replaced with a school climate where students take pride in caring for each other and it is socially acceptable and encouraged to get help when needed.

For more information on SSA and other Community Matters programs and services please contact LeeAnn at leeann@community-matters.org or 707-823-6159 x111.