Achieving Safer Schools From the “Inside-Out”:
A Youth Empowerment Strategy

Rick Phillips, M.S. Ed.

www.community-matters.org
Community Matters Mission

“To wake up the courage of students and adults to create schools that are safe, welcoming and inclusive.”

Diagram showing the relationship between Organization, Community, School Climate, Staff, Families, and Students.
The Student Determinant of Whole School Climate
School Safety: The Changing Landscape

• School Shootings (1995 – 99)
• Violence, Bullying (2000 – 09)
School Safety: The Changing Landscape

- School Shootings (1995 – 99)
- Violence / Bullying (2000 – 09)

(2009 – present)

Cyber-Bullying
Relational Aggression
Indifference
Intolerance & Incivility

It’s not your typical playground bully anymore…

Younger
Meaner
More Pervasive
Harder to Identify
24/7 On & Off Campus

Other’s Pain as “Entertainment”
More Accepted as Normal
Fights
Weapons
Gangs
Physical bullying

Reactive
Catch
Discipline
Suspend
Expel

Unwanted contact
Relational aggression
Exclusion
Put-downs
Rumors
Cyberbullying
Harassment

Pro-active
Prevent
Intervene
De-escalate
Leveraging the Power & Potential of Students

• See, hear and know things adults don’t
  (In 88% of bullying incidents, peers are present)

• Can effectively intervene in ways adults can’t

• First to arrive on the scene of mistreatment

• Set the tone and social norms on campus
The Dynamic of Bullying & Other Mistreatment

Targets

Aggressors

Bystanders = 85%

The Passive Majority
Why Don’t Bystanders Get Involved?

Fear of retaliation

Afraid they’ll make things worse

Worry about losing social status

Belief that adults won’t listen

Don’t know what to do or say
Empowering Youth: The Formula

The 3 “P’s”
(Purpose, Power and Place)

+ 

The 3 “E’s”
(Engage, Equip, and Empower)

= 

The 3 “C’s”
(Competent, Caring and Contributing)
Criteria for Strong Youth Development Programs

1. Enroll diverse student leaders
2. Equip students with skills
3. Provide staff support and guidance
4. Collect data and measure impact
5. Celebrate successes
Increasing Student Voice
(in both formal & informal settings)

- Leadership Opportunities, e.g., serving on a Climate Committee
- Bystander Education & Empowerment
- Peer Helping & Mentoring
- Peer Mediating
- Service Learning
Safe School Ambassadors®

A SAMHSA NREPP Listed, evidenced-based, field-tested program that engages, equips and empowers student bystanders to reduce bullying and other forms of mistreatment.

Developed by Community Matters | Empowering Youth Transforming Communities
Empowering the Bystanders

Wake up **Courage**

Foster **Empathy**

Teach Skills to Gain **Competence**

...to intervene safely and effectively
“Alpha” Students

Cliques

- Socially-influential / Others follow their lead & model their behaviors
- Loyal / Have a tendency to speak up on behalf of others within their clique
- Outgoing by nature / Highly verbal

Diverse Student Leaders
Identifying the “Alpha” Leaders

Student and Adult Surveys
Safe School Ambassadors®
Program Orientation

- Introduce potential Ambassadors to the program
- Appeal to their self-interest
- Acknowledge their status as social leaders
- Give them the opportunity to CHOOSE
Safe School Ambassadors® Training

- Two Days
- On- or Off-Site

- 30 to 40 Diverse Student Leaders
- 4 to 8 Adults
SSA 2 Day Training Flow

**DAY 1**
1. Foundation & Community Building
2. Understanding the Problem of Mistreatment
3. Ambassador’s Job
4. Actions: Overview & Practice
   1. Balancing
   2. Supporting
   3. Reasoning
   4. Distracting
   5. Directing
5. Meet with adults

**DAY 2**
6. Welcome & Launch
7. Review
8. More Amb Actions
   1. Listening
   2. Getting Help
9. Actions: Overview & Practice
10. Implementation: Safe School Ambassador Program Operation
11. Closure
12. Meet with adults
5 Types of Mistreatment

1. Exclusion
2. Put-downs
3. Bullying/cyber-bullying
4. Unwanted physical touch
5. Acts against campus
Six Skills for Ambassadors

- Balancing
- Supporting
- Reasoning
- Distracting
- Directing
- Getting Help
Ambassador in Action

Video: De Monte Smith
Ongoing Support & Supervision: Family Group Meetings

- Connect & Inspire
- Regularly-Scheduled
- Deepen Skills
- Debrief Experience
- Collect Data
Safe School Ambassadors® Are Active

A minimum of
2 “Actions” per week
x 40 Ambassadors =
80 Actions per week

34 Weeks x 80 Ambassador Actions =
More than 2,700 Actions per school year
Click the “report” button to record an action log.
Select one or more locations from the list by clicking on the phrase. Then click “Done”
Select one or more Types of Mistreatments from the list by clicking on the phrase. Then click “Done”. If you select “Other” a new text field will appear and you can type in a unique reply.
## SSA Impact Over Time

### Healdsburg Junior High Discipline Data

**Safe School Ambassadors 2005-2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>05-06</th>
<th>06-07</th>
<th>07-08</th>
<th>08-09</th>
<th>09-10</th>
<th>10-11</th>
<th>11-12</th>
<th>12-13</th>
<th>Decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>499</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>424</td>
<td>-1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detentions</td>
<td>1366</td>
<td>1247</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>-97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspensions</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Referrals</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>149</td>
<td></td>
<td>-76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Safe School Ambassadors®
Are Effective

A two year study by two different universities found statistically significant evidence of positive impact:

Suspension rates were 33% lower than prior to SSA implementation,

while suspension rates
at demographically matched non-SSA control schools
increased 10% in the same period.

Based on the results of the two-year study, the Safe School Ambassadors® Program is now listed in SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices

“It’s easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.”

Frederick Douglass
For More Information:
707-823-6159
www.community-matters.org
Erica Vogel
erica@community-matters.org