

Welcome to

# *The Ambassador*

*The Collegial Support Newsletter for the Safe School Ambassadors program*

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## **Harnessing the Power of Youth**

As you look ahead to next year, it is vitally important to involve your Ambassadors in the process of implementing the program, giving them a voice and leadership roles. Know (and reassure your Family Group Facilitators) that you don't have to be the experts and have the answer to every question. You can engage students in the process of problem solving how to reduce violence and increase respect and tolerance at the school you share. It is easy to get stuck because you may feel like you don't have the answers to the problems your Ambassadors are having as they create social change at your school. Remember (and remind your Ambassadors) that this kind of change is not always easy. If it were easy, the problem would already be fixed.

## **What's Working**

- "Breakfast meetings where I bring my biscuits and gravy seem to be the best attended :) We did a bowl-a-thon as a fundraiser and plan to do it again and invite other groups to join us next year." -Cindy Skinner, PA & Counselor, Rifle HS, Rifle, Colorado

- "Thanks to some donations, and the support of the Windsor Education Foundation, I am taking our 8th grade Safe School Ambassadors to the Four Winds Ropes Course on Tuesday, May 24th." - Loren Barker, PA & Principal, Windsor MS, Windsor, California

- One of the first "articulated" Safe School Ambassadors models in the nation - In Santa Rosa, California, 6<sup>th</sup> grade Ambassadors from Brook Hill Elementary School will be welcomed into the SSA program at Herbert Slater Middle School next fall. Likewise, 8<sup>th</sup> grade Ambassadors graduating from Slater will be welcomed into the program at Montgomery High School. Already this year, MHS Ambassadors have helped lead all-Ambassador meetings at Brook Hill and Slater, helping their younger counterparts sharpen their skills and get inspired to continue their work.

Thanks to the Program Advisors and their teams - MHS AP Jack Schipper & teacher Michael Atcheson, HSMS Art Teacher Wendy Anderson, and BHES Principal Karen Arter - for making this "great idea" a reality for their students.

- "One of my Ambassadors did the right thing! He saw a girl in the cafeteria Friday morning showing off a knife she had in her possession. He went to an A. P. because he

didn't want to risk taking it from her. The weapon was recovered by administration ... I am excited. The program works!" - Linda Camardella, PA, Conniston MS, W Palm Beach, Florida

## **Program Operations – P A Handbook Section 4**

### **Recruiting – Chapter 4.1**

If you would like a more steady supply of Ambassadors for your middle school or high school SSA program, please call us; we can help you work with your district Safe & Drug-Free Schools coordinator and/or with your counterpart at your feeder school(s) to launch the program there.

You might also want to ask your current Ambassadors to recommend peers for the program, but be sure they understand what kind of person you are looking for

### **Training – Chapter 4.3**

Next Year Kickoff Take time **this year** to plan a kick-off meeting for your returning Ambassadors. Set a date and time, ideally within the first 3 days of school; the immediacy says "you, and the work you are doing, are important." See PAH section 1.3.a.iv for agenda ideas and PAH 4.5.k for some content ideas; the essential components are:

- reconnect, story-telling, relationship-building among Ambs and with adults
- skill refresher
- motivation to act

Call if you would like additional support with the design of your kick-off.

Next Year Expansion Will your program be more effective if you have more Ambassadors? In your year-end planning, assess the "reach" of your current group - what cliques are without Ambassadors? how many Ambassadors will graduate, move, or simply drop out? Based on your answers, determine how many Ambassadors you want to add (from what grades & groups). Then determine how you will train them. Do you and your team want to replicate the initial training, or would you like Community Matters to conduct an Expansion Training for you? Determine your target training dates and get them on the school calendar so others are aware; contact us if you'd like us to do the training.

### **Family Groups – Chapter 4.5**

Consider doing a circle of appreciations as one of the last meetings. May want to "prime the pump" by asking group members: "What are some of the things you remember about our meetings this year?" Then shift to appreciations:

- popcorn style: any person in any order can appreciate anyone else;
- modified popcorn: the "speaker" role moves sequentially around the circle;

- fishbowl: the person being appreciated sits or stands in the center of the circle and faces the person speaking (recommend having each person speak in sequence);
- paper: each person puts their name on a sheet of paper; pass the papers around

Also consider a brief evaluation: one of the best parts of Family Group; compliment for FG Facilitator; suggestion for something s/he could do to improve meetings; one way to improve the SSA program, or other questions important to you.

## **Data - Chapter 4.6**

Survey the National Scene - The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual National Year-End Surveys are ready! With your help, this will be the biggest-ever collection of data from Ambassadors, Family Group Facilitators, and Program Advisors across the nation, generating vital information to:

- improve and strengthen the program model
- further demonstrate program impact
- attract regional and national funding sources.

Please download instructions and survey forms from the website:

[www.safeschoolambassadors.org](http://www.safeschoolambassadors.org). Click on "Program Tools" and log in. If you need your school's username and password, please send an email to [chris@community-matters.org](mailto:chris@community-matters.org) with "SSA Username" in the subject line. Please collect surveys back by June 3 and mail to us by June 10. More details in the instructions; call with any questions.

Get it together! The data, that is... make it a priority for Ambassadors to generate some "paper" evidence of their work, preferably by filling out (set a goal) at least 2 Action Logs in each of the remaining Family Group Meetings. If the Action Log form is still difficult for your Ambassadors, consider a "Family Group Log Jam" in which they report their ACTIONS on post-its (the problem noticed; the action taken, how effective it was) and slap those up on a sheet of flipchart paper. Once each group has done that, a volunteer (Ambassador, other student, parent, elder, intern, etc.) can tabulate to provide at least SOME documentation. Consider saving the charts for a presentation at the next meeting of your staff, Board, Rotary Club or other prospective funder/supporter.

Summarize & share - Total or tally the Action Logs using the Action Log Summaries in the Program Advisor Handbook on pages 137-147 (v 1.2). Report it back to your Family Group Facilitators, your Ambassadors, your Principal and staff, with your Superintendent and Board. While you're at it, have a few Ambassadors come along and speak to those people about their work. Please send your "report" (or summary) to Community Matters.

## **Recognition and Celebration - Chapter 4.7**

Quantity Matters Too - On April 4, roughly 400 Ambassadors and Program Advisors in Palm Beach County, Florida, converged on the local college with some 1400 other students involved in service programs for a day of workshops, speakers, recognition and celebration. Coordinated by Rick Lewis, Director of Training in the Safe Schools Department of Palm Beach County Schools, the Youth Millennium Conference provided these students and adults with an incredibly energizing opportunity to connect with other like-minded people and be recognized for their contributions to their schools and communities.

Other Multi-school recognition events are scheduled in:

- El Paso, Texas (3 schools)
- Elk Grove, California (12 schools)
- greater Aspen Valley, Colorado (9 schools)

If you'd like to have something similar for your Ambassadors, consider:

- participating in (or setting up) a district-wide recognition event for students involved in all kinds of service programs; and/or
- working with us to help launch the SSA program at other schools in your district.

What's the Incentive? - As you look toward next year, consider instituting an incentive system (chance slips for Action Logs turned in; a point system to help change un-Ambassador-like behavior). Perhaps let Ambassadors know they have to be "in good standing" (i.e. have no un-cleared points against them) to participate in the year-end celebration. See PAH 4.5.f for further information.

## **Program Organization - PA Handbook Section 3**

### **Fund Raising - Chapter 3.7**

Harvest - have your FGFs ask current Ambassadors to "data dump" their connections to area businesses, civic/social clubs (e.g. Rotary), and even foundations.

Year-End Appeal - depending on your school and district policies, you may want to consider asking the parents of your Ambassadors for financial or other help to sustain your program. If the Band and football team can have a Boosters club, why not Ambassadors? Consider incorporating such a request into your year-end recognition event.

Presentation Outline - If you have the opportunity to do a presentation to gain or increase support for your program, whether to School Board or service club, consider the following flow:

- the need:

- the scope/extent of mistreatment that students experience,
- its costs; to targets, to the school as a whole
- what's needed in a solution: students see, hear and know what adults don't...
- how the Ambassador program works
  - recruiting: socially influential students
  - training: powerful non-violent communication & intervention skills  
[have Ambassadors demonstrate several interventions]
  - Family Groups, Action Logs, recognition & celebration
- Impact
  - on the school [Ambassadors speak about how the program has changed the school]
  - on individuals [Ambassadors speak about how the program has changed them]
- the ask: what you need to sustain your program

### **Roles & Responsibilities - Chapter 3.5**

From their positions in the Prevention & Intervention Department of the Elk Grove (California) School District, SSA program "champions" Shirley Hiyakumoto, Tami Silvera, and Karen Gibson have launched the SSA Program in 12 of the District's middle and high schools. To provide further support and coordination, they have hosted 2 meetings for Program Advisors of those schools in January and March of this year. Approximately 2-3 hours each, the meetings have provided a forum for sharing successes and challenges, allowed PAs to learn from each other, and have helped with the planning of a District-wide Ambassador recognition event on May 12.

### **Measurement and Evaluation - Chapter 3.8**

This is the time of year to:

- a. Prepare a brief statistical summary of your program
  - b. Review school discipline and attendance data, compare to your baseline data, and explain any differences or changes; perhaps your Ambassadors' impact will be evident here;
  - c. give your Ambassadors a questionnaire (see 4.5 above)
  - d. set aside time with your Program Management Team for a debrief meeting and goal review;
  - e. complete the National Year-End Surveys (for Ambassadors, FGFs, and yourself).
- Please return to us by June 10!

More detail on all of these is in Chapter 3.8 of the Program Advisor Handbook.

*"I would like to thank all of you for helping me become who I am today. You all turned me into the kid I am today. When I entered this program I was the person that was*

*starting the problems. If a kid messed around or wanted to fight, then I would fight. Being in this program taught me how to avoid these problems and taught me how to solve them.” - Ambassador, Stanford Middle School, Long Beach, California*

We always want to hear about your Safe School Ambassadors (SSA) program and if there are ways that we can assist you better. If you have any questions or feedback, please contact us by phone, fax and e-mail.

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