

Safe School Ambassadors

The Safe School Ambassadors (SSA) program is a bystander education program that aims to reduce emotional and physical bullying and enhance school climate in elementary, middle, and high schools. The program recruits and trains socially influential student leaders from diverse cliques and interest groups within a school to act as "Ambassadors" against bullying. Ambassadors are trained to speak up when they see harassment and mistreatment among their peers, and through this intervention, positively shape the norms governing other students' behavior. Prospective Ambassadors are identified at the beginning of the school year through student and staff surveys based upon criteria such as strong position and influence in their peer group, good communication skills, loyalty to peer group, and an ability to discern right from wrong even if they sometimes got into trouble. Depending on the school size, about 60–80 of these student leaders are selected and invited to attend a 50-minute orientation about the program. Of those who choose to participate, 30–40 are selected by a program coordinator (typically a school counselor, dean, assistant principal, or influential teacher) to serve as Ambassadors throughout the school year.

Ambassadors participate in a 2-day training along with several adult volunteers recruited from the school or community, who serve as their mentors. During the training, students learn about the problem of mistreatment and the importance of relationships and community; are taught to recognize different types of mistreatment; develop the motivation to intervene in incidents of bullying; and learn specific actions they can take to defuse conflicts and support isolated and excluded students. Continued skill development is provided through small Family Group meetings every 1–2 weeks, during which groups of 7–10 Ambassadors work with their adult mentors to discuss situations in which they have intervened, practice skills, and receive feedback and support for their efforts. Information gathered during the meetings is also used to analyze Ambassador interventions for evaluation purposes.

Ongoing coaching and support are provided to implementing schools via newsletters, telephone support, and Web-based resources. A training-of-trainers approach is used to help experienced schools and districts sustain the program.

Descriptive Information

Areas of Interest	Mental health promotion
Outcomes	Review Date: March 2012 1: Active intervention in bullying or mistreatment of students 2: Suspension rates
Outcome Categories	Education Social functioning
Ages	6-12 (Childhood) 13-17 (Adolescent)
Genders	Male Female
Races/Ethnicities	Asian Black or African American Hispanic or Latino White
Settings	School
Geographic Locations	Urban Suburban
Implementation History	Since 2000, the SSA program has been implemented in more than 1,200 schools in 32 States and 2 Canadian provinces (Ontario and Nova Scotia), with more than 60,000 students participating.

NIH Funding/CER Studies	Partially/fully funded by National Institutes of Health: No Evaluated in comparative effectiveness research studies: No
Adaptations	The SSA program has been adapted for Native/tribal settings. Student and parent materials have been translated into Spanish.
Adverse Effects	No adverse effects, concerns, or unintended consequences were identified by the developer.
IOM Prevention Categories	Universal

Quality of Research

Review Date: March 2012

Documents Reviewed

The documents below were reviewed for Quality of Research. The research point of contact can provide information regarding the studies reviewed and the availability of additional materials, including those from more recent studies that may have been conducted.

Study 1

White, A., Raczynski, K., Pack, C., & Wang, A. (2011). The Safe School Ambassadors program: A student led approach to reducing mistreatment and bullying in schools. Unpublished evaluation report.

Study 2

White, A., Raczynski, K., Pack, C., & Wang, A. (2011). The Safe School Ambassadors program: A student led approach to reducing mistreatment and bullying in schools. Unpublished evaluation report.

Supplementary Materials

Fidelity of Implementation

Program Impact Survey

Recruiting and Selecting Key Students

School Demographics

Outcomes

Outcome 1: Active intervention in bullying or mistreatment of students

Description of Measures

The self-report Ambassador/Key Student Survey was used to assess the frequency with which students actively intervened in the bullying or mistreatment of other students besides their own friends. The survey was administered to participating students in the intervention schools and to demographically matched students in control schools in October (pretest) and May (posttest) of each year during the 2-year study.

The survey included 94 items measuring students' perceptions of bullying and mistreatment (harassment and violence), school connectedness (students' belief that adults and peers in the school cared about their learning as well as about them as individuals), climate (a caring social atmosphere), and norms regarding mistreatment. Two 7-item scales in the survey measured how often students actively intervened in bullying or mistreatment of other students. One scale addressed bullying situations involving friends of the respondent, and the other scale addressed bullying situations involving students who were not friends of the respondent. The latter scale asked students, "How often in the past 4 weeks of school have you, yourself, said or done the following things to help other students who are not your friends?" Examples of the items in this scale included "I told someone to think about how their words or actions make other people feel" and "I got an adult to help handle a situation I didn't think I could handle by myself." Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "never" to "always."

Key Findings

Participants in the study were students from five middle schools in Texas. Three schools implemented the intervention, and two served as control schools receiving no intervention. In the intervention schools, one cohort of Ambassadors received the intervention during year 1 of the study, and a second cohort received the intervention in year 2. The second cohort included returning Ambassadors as well as new Ambassadors who were recruited to replace nonreturning

students. All Ambassadors completed a pretest survey in October and a posttest survey in May; returning Ambassadors completed a third survey in October of their second year. In the control schools, two cohorts of students demographically matched to the Ambassadors (Key Students) received no intervention but completed pre- and posttest surveys.

At the first pretest, first posttest, and second pretest, no significant differences were found between intervention schools and control schools in the frequency of Ambassadors' and Key Students' active intervention in bullying or mistreatment of students other than their own friends. However, at the second posttest, male Ambassadors reported significantly higher frequency of active intervention with students other than friends compared with male Key Students ($p = .007$). No statistically significant results were reported for females.

Studies Measuring Outcome	Study 1
Study Designs	Quasi-experimental
Quality of Research Rating	1.8 (0.0-4.0 scale)

Outcome 2: Suspension rates

Description of Measures	Suspension rates were assessed using the Program Impact Survey, administered to school principals, deans, counselors, and teachers before and after the intervention. The survey included questions about school demographics, enrollment, attendance, discipline (e.g., detentions and suspensions), and bullying prevention and climate improvement efforts. Items related to suspension rates included the total number of suspensions and the number of suspensions for each of 14 different types of suspension (e.g., mutual combat, sale or possession of a weapon, alcohol/drugs, harassment of witness, hazing, bullying, sexual harassment).
Key Findings	<p>Suspension rate data were collected from a sample of 19 elementary, middle, and high schools that had been implementing the Safe School Ambassadors program for at least 3 years, had at least two documented trainings conducted by certified trainers, and had completed at least one year-end survey of program advisors and Family Group facilitators. Data from these schools were compared with data from demographically similar control schools that had not implemented the Safe School Ambassadors program.</p> <p>Suspension rates declined significantly in the 19 schools implementing the intervention, declining 33.1% on average from baseline to posttest (i.e., after 3 or more years of high-fidelity program implementation; $p < .0001$), while control schools showed a nonsignificant 10.4% increase in suspension rates over the same period.</p>
Studies Measuring Outcome	Study 2
Study Designs	Quasi-experimental
Quality of Research Rating	2.0 (0.0-4.0 scale)

Study Populations

The following populations were identified in the studies reviewed for Quality of Research.

Study	Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity
Study 1	6-12 (Childhood)	55.9% Female 44.1% Male	53.4% Hispanic or Latino 35.5% White 8.1% Black or African American 3.1% Asian
Study 2	6-12 (Childhood) 13-17 (Adolescent)	Data not reported/available	Data not reported/available

Quality of Research Ratings by Criteria (0.0-4.0 scale)

External reviewers independently evaluate the Quality of Research for an intervention's reported results using six criteria:

1. Reliability of measures
2. Validity of measures
3. Intervention fidelity
4. Missing data and attrition
5. Potential confounding variables
6. Appropriateness of analysis

For more information about these criteria and the meaning of the ratings, see [Quality of Research](#).

Outcome	Reliability of Measures	Validity of Measures	Fidelity	Missing Data/Attrition	Confounding Variables	Data Analysis	Overall Rating
1: Active intervention in bullying or mistreatment of students	2.0	2.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.8
2: Suspension rates	2.5	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.5	1.8	2.0

Study Strengths

The Ambassador/Key Student Survey and Program Impact Survey have good internal consistency. The surveys were developed from current research, using focus groups to determine the appropriateness of the items, and were pilot tested with age-appropriate respondents. The measures had face validity. Efforts were made to statistically account for missing data. Use of ANOVA and ANCOVA testing was appropriate given the study design.

Study Weaknesses

No evidence of reliability beyond internal consistency was presented. Beyond face validity, there was no evidence of other types of validity for any of the surveys. Although fidelity information was collected, the information was not sufficient to determine whether the program was implemented as planned (e.g., only 40% of Family Group meeting reports were completed), and a psychometrically validated fidelity instrument was not used. Presentation and discussion of missing data and attrition were limited, making it difficult to assess their impact on outcomes. Many confounding variables were not adequately addressed: for example, there were baseline differences between treatment and control schools for school climate and changes in district policy regarding discipline. No power analysis was conducted, and there were problems matching codes across time points.

Readiness for Dissemination

Review Date: March 2012

Materials Reviewed

The materials below were reviewed for Readiness for Dissemination. The implementation point of contact can provide information regarding implementation of the intervention and the availability of additional, updated, or new materials.

Community Matters. (2009). Safe School Ambassadors program advisor's handbook. Santa Rosa, CA: Author.

Community Matters. (2009). Safe School Ambassadors program principal's handbook. Santa Rosa, CA: Author.

Community Matters. (2009). Safe School Ambassadors training manual. Santa Rosa, CA: Author.

Community Matters. (2009). The Safe School Ambassadors program family group facilitator's guide. Santa Rosa, CA: Author.

Community Matters. (2009). The Safe School Ambassadors program student guidebook. Santa Rosa, CA: Author.

Community Matters. (2010). Safe School Ambassadors elementary & secondary programs informational DVD. Santa Rosa, CA: Author.

Handouts for administrators:

- Administrator's Overview of Implementation
- Organization Chart and Roles
- Program Overview, Research Base, Measurement & Impact, Suspension Cost Analysis
- Program Synopsis

Handouts for adult volunteers:

- Action Demos
- Action Logs
- Action Snapshot Campaign Summary
- Adult Role in Training (THANK YOU)
- Adult Roles in Program
- Ambassador Actions Checklist

- Attendance Record
- Family Group Scheduling
- Just By Looking
- Mock Family Group Meeting Agenda
- Steps to Success—Post-Training Implementation Guide
- Success Stories
- Training Evaluation
- Training Participant Non-Disclosure Form

Handouts for students:

- Ambassador Bingo
- Family Group Formation Worksheet
- Review/Preview
- Simulation Development Worksheet
- Training Evaluation

Program Tools Web site, <http://www.community-matters.org/safe-school-ambassadors/program-tools/>

Program Web site, <http://www.community-matters.org/safe-school-ambassadors/>

Training kit:

- Action cards
- Beach balls
- Bungee loops
- Chemistry kit
- Flipcharts
- Playing cards
- Popsicle sticks
- Role cards
- Training CD-ROM
- Training Video Clips [DVD]

Training video clips, <http://www.safeschoolambassdors.org/tot/signin.php>

Other materials:

- Action Snapshot Campaign Summary
- Administrator Instructions for Pre- and Post-Training Surveys (all levels)
- Ambassador Surveys—Pre- and Post-Training
- Discipline Data Collection Forms—Baseline and Comparison
- Newsletters
- Program Benchmarks for years 1–3+
- **School Climate Survey**
- School Climate Survey Instructions
- Year-End Surveys (Program Advisor, Family Group Facilitators, Ambassadors)

Readiness for Dissemination Ratings by Criteria (0.0-4.0 scale)

External reviewers independently evaluate the intervention's Readiness for Dissemination using three criteria:

1. Availability of implementation materials
2. Availability of training and support resources
3. Availability of quality assurance procedures

For more information about these criteria and the meaning of the ratings, see [Readiness for Dissemination](#).

Implementation Materials	Training and Support Resources	Quality Assurance Procedures	Overall Rating
2.9	3.4	2.8	3.0

Dissemination Strengths

The materials clearly articulate preimplementation steps and how to select appropriate participants, how to involve the larger community, and what problems to anticipate during implementation. Implementers are encouraged to appropriately use their staff's expertise and their own data to adapt the program for their school. The 2-day training program conducted at the start of first-year implementation is highly interactive and includes guidance from an on-site coach provided by the developer. Detailed descriptions of the program, activities,

timing, and expectations are also outlined in the materials. The program Web site includes cost information, a cost-benefit tool, and fundraising suggestions that implementers can use to market the program to key stakeholders or raise funds to promote program sustainability. Extensive checklists are provided for implementers to document benchmarks during the first 3 years of implementation. Data collection tools are provided, along with guidance on how to use the data to improve program implementation. Implementers have the option to collaborate with the developer to perform data entry and analysis for quality assurance purposes.

Dissemination Weaknesses

Key materials referenced in the Principal's Handbook are provided only online, rather than being included in complete form in the Handbook or the accompanying DVD. Separate training manuals are not provided for middle school and high school, although the manual does describe age-specific activities for each age group. No observation tool is provided for ongoing evaluation of Family Group facilitators' group management and facilitation skills, which are likely to be a key factor affecting the overall fidelity and quality of implementation. Data collection is highly dependent on the student Ambassador's handwritten self-reporting, of which the quality and accuracy is not corroborated.

Costs

The cost information below was provided by the developer. Although this cost information may have been updated by the developer since the time of review, it may not reflect the current costs or availability of items (including newly developed or discontinued items). The implementation point of contact can provide current information and discuss implementation requirements.

Item Description	Cost	Required by Developer
2-day, on-site Initial Training (includes Principal's Handbook, Program Advisor's Handbook, Family Group Facilitator's Guide, Ambassador's Guidebook, Healthy Programs Checklist, Program Benchmarks, Discipline Data Monitoring Guidelines, Action Snapshot Campaign Guidelines, and Year-End Surveys)	\$4,300 for 30–40 students and 6–8 adults, plus trainer's travel expenses	Yes
Training Manual	\$75 each	No
Training Kit (includes video clips, flipcharts, audio CD, and props used in training)	\$500 per kit	No
1-day, on-site Refresher Training for experienced Ambassadors	\$2,100 plus travel expenses	No
2-day, on-site Expansion Training to add new Ambassadors to existing program	\$4,100 plus travel expenses	No
2-day, on-site Expansion Combo Training (includes experienced Ambassadors in Day 2)	\$4,600 plus travel expenses	No
Coaching via phone and email	Free	Yes
e-Newsletters (reminders and tips)	Free	No
Program Tools Web site, including Help Desk, Data Manager, forms, letters, and other materials	Free	No

Replications

No replications were identified by the developer.

Contact Information

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Consider these [Questions to Ask](#) (PDF, 54KB) as you explore the possible use of this intervention.

Web Site(s):

- <http://www.safeschoolambassadors.org>

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