

## Safe School Ambassadors (SSA)

The **Safe School Ambassadors (SSA)** Program recruits and enlists student, opinion leaders, from formal and informal groups on school campuses to serve as allies with adults in preserving positive campus climates. It was predicated on the premise that students see, hear, and know things about campus interpersonal dynamics that adults do not know, and that they can intervene as influence agents in ways that adults cannot. Safe School Ambassadors intervene with specific diplomatic communication skills in non-classroom settings to defuse conflicts, provide support to targets, distract or reason with aggressors, and neutralize cruel humor, harmful gossip, rumors and intergroup prejudice. Following initial training provided onsite by the Department of Safe Schools' trainers, school site advisors meet with SSAs regularly to supervise, de-brief, and encourage them.

This expanding international program is owned by *Community Matters*, a non-profit organization housed in Santa Rosa, California. Because of early District contributions to the model, the District has an exclusive agreement to present the program free of charge to schools in Palm Beach County.

This SSA Program directly supports Objective 1 by building a cadre of skilled students who model, utilize, and extend high-level social and emotional learning skills on elementary and secondary campuses. The program not only helps keep the peace on campuses, it maximizes the social and emotional learning skills of the Safe School Ambassadors and advisors so they can utilize positive approaches to problem-solving in classrooms, at home and in the community. Action Logs of SSAs reveal that the average member intervenes in two incidents per week. Using that average, it could be estimated that District SSAs have intervened over **20,000** times in FY-2018.

While participation in this program is voluntary and participation ebbs and flows based on leadership priorities and the presence of motivated advisors, over **60** District schools have undertaken the program since its inception. During the 2017-2018 school year, **16** schools had active programs, with three new schools requesting initial training in August 2018 (FY-2019).