

RAFER JOHNSON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL "HOME OF THE OLYMPIANS"

1300 STROUD AVE.
KINGSBURG, CA 93631
PHONE: (559) 897-1091 FAX: (559) 897-6867

Dr. Laurie Goodman
Principal

Sally Robinson
Learning Director

The need for a Safe School Ambassadors program for Rafer Johnson Junior High School (RJH) would mirror the same needs evident throughout the valley. Middle school students are at critical time in their lives that require adults to help them make wise decisions and understand the responsibility of their actions. Before SSA was started at RJH, we had a number of students that would stand by and even encourage students to engage in conflict with each other. They did not realize that their role in this type of situation became a role of someone that affirms the actions of a bully. The overall social-emotional climate was one of a normal middle school where conflict is expected as part of the dynamic of the grade level configuration.

Sally Robinson has been our lead throughout this year during the implementation and execution of the SSA program. Her background in counseling along with the program components have resulted in trainings every week to two weeks as well as on-going monitoring of the program and its effectiveness for the 2008-09 school year. Sally Robinson as the lead has five adults that lead 35 students in small groups. Facilitators have noted that they are impressed with the leadership of the students in their groups and the desire of students to develop skills that align with the programs purpose and goals.

The impact on the Ambassadors came in many forms. First, the Ambassadors knew from the onset of the program that they would be required to represent the school and themselves in a way that demonstrated the highest level of respect and citizenship. Second, the students recognized the importance of positive behaviors and being able to

recognize forms of mistreatments, which increased their involvement in all areas of school and achievement. We have seen the attitude of the students change over the year. Being a SSA is considered an honor, and students who are part of the program have proclaimed with pride, "I am an Ambassador, and I was chosen by my peers". Parents have also commented on the fact that their child felt honored to be chosen by peers for this program. Finally, some of our students that are Ambassadors this year have requested to be Ambassadors next year because they recognized the value of the program.

The impact on our school and community has been significant. Students have been aware that the standard of behavioral norms for all students and adults on campus since the beginning of SSA because of the intensive focus of the program. In fact, two months after the program started, one student threatened to beat up another student right after school on campus. The student that was being threaten called her father, who then came to the school. He was told by a Safe School Ambassador when he came on the school grounds that no fight would have been allowed to occur because students would have stopped it from happening. The parent came to my office and told me that he did not feel that it was the students' responsibility to stop violence at school sites. I was able to tell him about the purpose of the program and celebrate the fact that the purpose had been met.

We are looking forward to another year of the Safe School Ambassador Program at our site. We are also looking forward to welcoming new students from our feeder school that have already been trained in the program and have knowledge about the tactics that need to be used to stop violence. Special thanks should be extended to Fresno County Office of Education for their financial support, Kingsburg Elementary School District for their support, and Sally Robinson, learning director of Rafer Johnson Junior High School for her planning and leadership of the program.