



GOOSE CREEK

CONSOLIDATED INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



A Baytown Junior student helps Helen Perdue, Safe School Ambassadors presenter, with some brainstorming ideas during a recent training session.



Gentry Junior School students take part in the recent Safe School Ambassadors training at their school.

Safe Schools Ambassadors program aims to keep the peace on campus

How do you impact the culture of a campus?

Many programs designed to address bullying or violence prevention are focused on directing the training to the adults who work with students.

Safe School Ambassadors (SSA) program does the exact opposite, it targets those individuals on the campus who know and see everything, the students.

SSA trains students and key adults on the campus over a full two-day to recognize and intervene when viewing various forms of bullying, exclusion, put-downs, intimidation, physical contact, and acts against the campus such as vandalism or graffiti.

SSA is a whole-school approach that requires all stakeholders—students, teachers and administrators to be involved in the process and to assist in creating and maintaining a culture that does not condone any form of mistreatment to others.

By the end of the October, Goose Creek CISD will have trained more than 240 students and 30 teachers, and administrators at each junior school campus and Lee High School.

"As a district we are to provide a safe environment for students to learn. Safe School Ambassadors program is a proactive approach to teaching empathy, increasing awareness, and ultimately empowering students by giving them skills to communicate and intervene by seeking help from an adult," said Janci Alexander-Alfaro, GCCISD Director of Guidance and Counseling.

"The ultimate goal of the program is to facilitate a sustainable, long-term solution to school violence."

Gentry Junior School was the first school to receive SSA training. Gentry Assistant Principal, Ryan Rodriguez took over the reins in regards to program organization and implementation.

"The two-day training is the beginning of the process. We are planning to have the Group Leaders (Teachers) and students meet weekly," Rodriguez said.

"If this positively impacts only one student ambassador, and they in turn positively impact only on other student, the time was well spent," added Gentry teacher Donna Woods-Stellman.

The first day of training began with the SSA trainer, Helen Purdue from Oakland, California sharing her own personal experiences in school as a target of a bully.

"I am here because I don't want you to have to go through the pain and torment I went through as a young girl," she said. "If one person would have told someone or stood beside me, I might not have to endure the extent of the bullying and harassment that I received. I am here to teach you one thing; you can make a difference in your school that impacts someone else. You can change the climate of your school. You set the norms of your school and you see everything.

"Raise your hand if you believe that students see things in the school that adults know nothing about?"

Each student's hand went up.

"I felt that all schools should be a part of this program because it will help the school become closer, better, and safer for everyone," said Gentry student Malik Michel. "It will also make the students feel more comfortable about learning and actually want to go to school."

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