



Community Matters

Empowering Youth

Transforming Communities

Provider of:

- Consulting
- Strategic Planning
- Presentations
- Trainings
- Programs



“Young people are uniquely equipped to change the world because they dream. They choose not to accept what is, but to imagine what might be.”

—Desmond Tutu, *Our Time Now: Young People Changing the World*

Who We Are

Community Matters is recognized as an innovative and thought-leading organization committed to improving the social-emotional climate of our nation's schools and communities.

Founded in 1996, Community Matters (CM) has evolved from its earliest focus on youth development and bullying prevention to become a widely respected consulting, training and presenting organization. CM provides programs and services for educational, youth-serving and governmental entities.

During the past two decades, Community Matters has worked with more than 1,200 schools, agencies and organizations across 32 states, Puerto Rico, Guam and Canada. Our work has been featured in numerous media outlets, and we have presented to audiences at the local, state, regional and national levels.

As a 501(c) (3) nonprofit headquartered in Sonoma County, California, CM derives its funding from a variety of public and private sources, including:

- Corporate partnerships and underwriting
- Private foundations
- Government grants
- Donors and service organizations
- Revenues from programs and services



Our Mission

“To collaborate with schools and communities in creating safe and inclusive environments where all youth and adults thrive.”

The Community Matters Difference

Principles - We understand that it is not possible to legislate civility or punish young people into being tolerant. That's why we focus on the school climate: the staff and students and their relationships with each other, the families and the broader community, and the discipline policies and practices.

Process - We collaborate and build sustainable relationships with the people we serve. We listen, ask questions, assess their efforts and provide recommendations. We design and deliver a variety of programs and services, equipping everyone involved with the knowledge, tools and resources to:

- Make measurable and sustainable improvements
- Collect and report quantifiable results

Results - Our programs and services improve the overall school climate. They reduce bullying, harassment and cyber-bullying, positively affecting attendance as well as academic achievement, and help young people develop into capable, connected and contributing members of society.

Media Coverage

Today Show, CNN, TV news in major cities, NPR and multiple radio and print coverage pieces

Presentations

National School Boards Association, National Association of Secondary Principals and more, Executive Director Rick Phillips was also a featured speaker at the Clinton School of Public Service

Publications

Book: Safe School Ambassadors, Jossey Bass 2008
National Report: Ten Years After Columbine: A Report Card on School Violence Prevention

Awards and Recognition

James Irvine Foundation finalist for innovation and leadership award, Congressional resolutions, Huffington Post award

The Challenges Facing Our Schools and Communities

As recent events have demonstrated, bullying, cyber-bullying and other forms of mistreatment continue to permeate our schools.

The Problem: Did You know?

- Each year, some 900,000 youth report being cyber-bullied.¹
- 50% of high school students bullied someone in the past year.²
- 90% of elementary students have been bullied by their peers.³

These dangerous behaviors are occurring at younger ages and are more pervasive and therefore more challenging for adults to identify.

Worse, the growing indifference and increase in bystander behavior has had the unintended consequence of 'normalizing' incivility and intolerance.

The Outside-In Approach to School Safety

Since 1999, our nation has invested more than \$10 billion in school safety and climate improvement measures. The vast majority of those dollars have been expended on an 'Outside-In Approach,' which relies heavily on the power and authority of adults to keep the school safe. This approach places primary importance on controlling student behavior through measures like cameras, security personnel, metal detectors and zero-tolerance policies.

In spite of this enormous investment, and the fact that nearly all 50 states have passed anti-bullying laws, too many students in too many schools still experience high levels of bullying, harassment and cyber-bullying.

The Outside-In Approach

Characterized by:

- Security
- Adult-Driven
- Punitive Policies
- Controlling Behavior



(1) U.S. Department of Education, *Bullying Prevention Summit, August 11, 2010*. (2) Josephson Institute of Ethics: *2010 Report Card*. (3) Tarshis & Huffman, *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*, 2007, 28, 125-132. (4) National Association of Secondary School Principals, in Barbara Coloroso, *The Bully, The Bullied, and the Bystander*, 50. (5) Winsper, et al, *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 2012, 51:3, 271-282. (6) Losen, D. (2011). *Discipline Policies, Successful Schools, and Racial Justice*. National Education Policy Center.

The Outside-In Approach Isn't Enough

In its 2009 landmark publication, "Ten Years After Columbine: A Report Card on School Violence-Prevention," Community Matters summarized data from national surveys and studies. Bottom line: the Outside-In Approach has not achieved its desired results.

The Conclusion

Schools will not become safer without a change in direction, priorities and allocation of resources.

The data shows that the key to creating safer schools – as well as increasing attendance, achievement and graduation rates – is to adopt a new approach: an 'Inside-Out Approach.'

The Costs: Did You know?

- Every day, more than 160,000 students stay home from school because they are afraid to attend.⁴
- Bullied children are 6 times more likely to have suicidal thoughts.⁵
- National suspension/expulsion rates nearly doubled since the 1970s.⁶

Inside-Out Approach: A Solution that Works, and Why



"The principal objective of school violence-reduction strategies should be to create cultures and climates of safety, respect, and emotional support within educational institutions." ⁷

–U.S. Secret Service and Department of Education

"Bullying interventions need to change the conditions in the social environment that permit bullying to occur." ⁸

–Dr. Dorothy L. Espelage, bullying researcher

The Inside-Out Approach

Characterized by:

- Relationships
- Student-Centered
- Formative and Restorative Policies
- Social Norms Change

The Community Matters Inside-Out Approach

Our Inside-Out Approach focuses on interpersonal dynamics as the fundamental way to improve safety and climate. It is based on 15 years of research, development and testing, and consists of four core elements:

1. **Relationships** - creating opportunities for students, staff, parents, families and the broader community to know one another, to build trust and mutual respect, and to maintain open channels of communication.
2. **Student-Centered** - empowering young people by involving them in real problem-solving, decision-making and implementing solutions.
3. **Formative and Restorative Policies** - utilizing practices – like peer courts and community service – that help students learn from their mistakes and make amends to those they've wronged, in order to improve future behavior.
4. **Social Norms Change** - improving behavior not through punitive rules and policies, but rather through changing attitudes and beliefs, which are influenced and largely established by students.



Positively Impacting School Climate

When leaders commit to the Inside-Out Approach, the result is a more positive school climate. Students experience a sense of safety, have healthy adult and peer relationships, feel respected and empowered, and are more likely to succeed academically and socially.

Successfully implementing and institutionalizing the Community Matters Inside-Out Approach requires a commitment to utilizing school climate as the foundation – the 'bricks and mortar' – for building a safe, thriving and high-performing school.

(7) R. Fein et al, *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Safe and Drug-free Schools Program and U.S. Secret Service, National Threat Assessment Center, 2004), 5-6, (8) Espelage, D. L. (2004). *An Ecological Perspective to School-Based Bullying Prevention*. *The Prevention Researcher*, 11(3), 3-6.

The Importance of School Climate

The climate of a school is the visceral, almost palpable, 'sense' of safety and belonging that people experience on site. It can be described as warm or cool, safe or unsafe. Though there is no single, formal definition, scholars seem to agree that the climate is the sum total of attitudes and behaviors elicited by the:

- School's policies, practices and physical environment.
- Staff interactions with peers and students.
- Opportunities for student engagement and leadership.
- Beliefs and attitudes students bring to the school from their families and their communities.



Climate influences individual behavior and performance ... and more importantly, individuals influence the climate.



What Determines School Climate?

1. Organization - The vision and leadership of educational leaders and their commitment to using school climate as the guiding principle for creating safer and higher-performing schools.

2. Staff - The ways school staff relate to each other and to students; their classroom management and disciplinary practices, and the priority they place on being hall-friendly asset builders who demonstrate care for students' well-being.

3. Students - The degree to which students are engaged in leadership opportunities and the ways students relate to one another and to adults. Seeing and treating students as contributors and not consumers goes a long way in gaining their involvement and their commitment to speak up and resolve conflicts peacefully.

4. Families - The values, beliefs, and practices that are instilled and reinforced in children by parents and other relatives, especially regarding how to behave with adults in authority and how to resolve differences with peers, and also the value placed on education, tolerance, communication and nonviolence.

5. Community - The values, beliefs, and practices that are evident outside the walls of school and home, particularly the value a community places on its children and youth. How community members treat youth when they encounter them in their neighborhoods, and how they invest time and resources to support youth development.

"Positive school climate has been associated with better student academic achievement, graduation, and behavioral outcomes, and has been the target of several recent initiatives for school reform."

—A Climate for Academic Success: How School Climate Distinguishes Schools That Are Beating the Achievement Odds. Report Summary by WestEd, San Francisco, CA

Whole School Climate Framework: Inside-Out Solutions

The **Whole School Climate Framework** is a comprehensive, cost-effective model that provides educational leaders with a clearly defined roadmap for accomplishing the outcomes that schools are mandated to achieve.

The Framework is aligned with emerging national school climate standards and current research. It focuses on five determinants of climate including: "Organization", "Staff", "Students", "Families" and "Community". The Framework is modular in nature so that a district or school can choose any determinant as a starting point.

The **Programs and Services** listed below address each specific determinant. They can be implemented in a way that doesn't overwhelm staff, increases stakeholder buy-in and leads to systemic and sustainable improvements.

➔ 1. Organization

We help organizational leaders develop a deeper understanding of the vital role that school climate plays in creating safer and higher-performing schools.

- **The Whole School Climate 360 Audit** - offers a comprehensive, district-wide assessment and analysis process that identifies strengths, weaknesses and gaps in your districts climate improvement efforts. It provides specific solution-based recommendations to enhance school safety and reduce suspensions, while also:
 - improving attendance
 - increasing academic achievement; and
 - recovering a significant percentage of the time and money expended dealing with disciplinary incidents.

"Community Matters' professionalism and skill with school climate improvement is second to none."

—Dr. Ken Wallace, Superintendent, Maine Township High School District 207, Park Ridge, IL

- **Leadership Development** - provides training and resources for administrators to lead school climate improvement efforts, develop clear and shared visions, review and align policy and practices, and implement best-practice strategies.

Suspension Loss and Cost Calculator

What will bullying, cyber-bullying and harassment cost your school this year?

Do our easy calculation in under 5 minutes to see how much you could recover and save, just by reducing suspensions. Visit: community-matters.org/calculator



The Five Determinants of School Climate

➔ 2. Staff

We help schools and other educational organizations engage, empower, and equip their staff – certified, classified and administrative – to reduce bullying, build a positive climate and promote educational excellence.

- **School Climate Training** - helps staff members understand the importance of school climate, its connection to educational outcomes, and what they can do to improve it, including:
 - Building supportive relationships with students
 - Noticing the pervasive forms of bullying and mistreatment
 - Intervening effectively using relational, not positional power
- **Cyber-Bullying Training** - offers guidance for assessing and improving policies and practices to keep up with emerging cyber trends and changing laws and imperatives. It provides the resources, tools and skills to notice, report and effectively intervene on incidents of cyber-bullying. The training also identifies best practice programs and strategies for enrolling students to intervene when their peers are engaged in electronic aggression.
- **Diversity Training** - prepares educational leaders to assess and improve policies and practices to ensure compliance with legal requirements as well as equal access and fair treatment for LGBTQ students.

3. Students

We help schools engage, empower and equip students to work in partnership with adults to create and maintain a positive climate.

- **Safe School Ambassadors (SSA)** - a research-based and field-tested program that engages the socially influential leaders of a school's diverse cliques, and equips them with effective non-violent communication and intervention skills they can use with their peers to prevent, stop or report bullying, violence or other forms of mistreatment.

The Results: A recent program evaluation showed that, when implemented as designed, the [SSA program reduced suspensions by 33%](#). This contrasts with control schools, where suspensions increased by 10% during the same time period.

- **Waking Up Courage Assembly (WUCA)** - a high-energy event that delivers a compelling message to all students: bullying is not OK, and silence isn't, either. The experience unites and empowers students to speak up when they see bullying and violence among their peers. It introduces youth-friendly language and skills that students can use to safely and effectively defuse, de-escalate and stop bullying behavior.
- **Connect and Respect** - a one-day program for smaller school communities that strengthens relationships, increases tolerance and improves overall climate.
- **Youth Forum** - a one-day event that initiates dialogue and builds bridges of understanding among diverse student leaders.



"Safe School Ambassadors is a proven approach to decreasing violence in schools through youth empowerment. It is the only sane solution for ensuring security in our society."

–Deepak Chopra, world renowned author and speaker

4. Families

We help schools engage and educate families about how to protect their children and all young people from bullying, harassment and cyber-bullying.

- **Parent Workshop** - helps parents understand bullying and cyber-bullying, how to improve their communication skills and develop stronger relationships with their children. This workshop also helps parents understand how to intervene when they see bullying and how to work effectively with school staff.
- **Diversion Course** - as an alternative to costly suspension or school reassignment, this course provides parents – together with children – tools and skills to help students change behavior patterns and get back on the right track toward school success and graduation.



"Everyone left the Symposium with the connections, resolve and plans to make our schools safer and more supportive... I was particularly impressed with Community Matters' follow-up and support after the event."

–Vicki L. Barber, Superintendent, El Dorado County Office of Education, CA

5. Community

We help communities bring together all the stakeholder groups responsible for raising, educating and protecting children and youth. We also provide facilitation, presentations and trainings for a range of community and governmental organizations.

- **Safer Schools Symposium** - a one-day event designed to build consensus and collaboration among youth-serving organizations and to develop an effective plan for creating safer schools.

Return on Investment (ROI)

Investing in a climate-based, Inside-Out Approach returns significant, tangible and practical results. For example:

Reduce Suspensions, Increase Attendance, and Improve Academic Achievement

Over a five-year period, the Petaluma City School District (CA) adopted and implemented an Inside-Out Approach. They replaced school resource officers with student and family support specialists, replaced punitive disciplinary policies with formative ones, provided extensive training and support for staff. They also invested in engaging and empowering students to be contributors. While more than doubling its population of Limited English Proficiency students, the district experienced:

- 34% fewer suspensions, and 28.5% fewer suspension days
- 2% increase in attendance, resulting in \$950,000 more revenue annually
- 11% performance improvement on state standardized tests

"I had the opportunity to observe the (Safe School Ambassador) training we funded, and I was very impressed! The students were involved and excited to make a difference in bullying and other issues on campus. Community Matters is a wonderful resource."

**—Amanda Quiralte, Member Services Coordinator
North Bay Schools Insurance Authority, CA**

Fewer Alternative Education Placements (AEPs)

The Clear Creek Independent School District (TX) implemented the Safe School Ambassadors program in all of its secondary schools, and over two years experienced:

- 37% reduction in mandatory disciplinary AEPs
- \$255,000 average annual cost reduction



A Call to Courage and Action

In the face of decreasing budgets and increasing challenges, our children and youth need us now more than ever. We cannot let the economic and political conditions distract us from our commitment to our children. They are watching, and it is up to each of us to stand up and to speak up. Young people need us to be courageous, to believe that we can make a difference and for us to believe the same about them.

The research and results speak for themselves. It is time for bold and decisive action – to move forward in collaboration to implement solutions.

Imagine this Future

Imagine... a school and a community where young people are valued as contributors and not consumers, where they acquire the skills to be leaders, change agents, and peace-makers. Envision a school where the staff is invested in building caring relationships with students and working with them as allies.

When we have achieved these goals, we will have empowered a generation of young people who have the courage and competence to stand up and speak up when they see intolerance and injustice. We will have passed the torch to a new generation of young leaders who are prepared to prosper, problem solve and peacefully coexist in a diverse, changing and complex world.



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