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CASS: Creating a Safe School®: The Ophelia Project School Program



CASS: Creating a Safe School®

CASS: Creating a Safe School® is a multifaceted change process that brings together a community of caring adults (administrators, teachers, staff, and parents) with students to change the social culture in a school or district. Its primary goal is to positively impact the social norms in a school community by addressing the hurtful, covert behaviors of peer aggression and identifying, teaching and modeling a more positive set of normative behaviors for educators, students and parents. Evaluation is part of all CASS programs.

CASS Components

While components may be utilized individually, in a school that has a full CASS program, most of them are present! Please see individual component handouts for more detailed descriptions.

◆ **Assessment:** Often the starting point (baseline) for a program, CASS Assessment includes collection of both qualitative and quantitative data to give a picture of a school's climate. Recommendations for strategies are provided.

◆ **Consulting:** Ophelia Project consultants work with school administrators/staff to identify issues, problem-solve solutions, develop school-wide practices and policies, and create programming and strategies that fit the needs of the school community.

◆ **Mentor Programs:** After training that focuses on the “kid-in-the-middle,” mentors provide lessons to their younger peers. Adult facilitators work with mentors using Ophelia Project curriculum, as well as provide support and supervision. Through use of curricula, student role-modeling and role play, guided discussion, story-telling, and interactive activities, CASS mentor

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programs promote development of social-emotional and leadership skills in both mentees and mentors. The Ophelia Project also offers pilot leadership programs that focus on creating safe social climates, but do not necessarily have a mentoring component. Programming is tailored to meet the needs of individual schools.

◆ Teacher Training: The Ophelia Project provides teacher education in a variety of topics related to building safe social climates, including relational aggression, classroom norms and strategies, adolescent development, accountability, bullying and special needs, etc.

◆ Parent Involvement: Workshops on topics similar to those above are adapted to include a family-friendly approach. Parent involvement may also include book groups and CASS participation as a facilitator.

◆ Curriculum: The Ophelia Project offers a variety of original curriculum for K-12 students.

Questions asked of the students:

Please rate your agreement with the following items:

		DISAGREE		UNSURE	AGREE	
		NO!	No	Unsure	Yes	YES!
1.	There are clear rules about how to treat others at my school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.	The adults at school encourage me to do my best.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.	I feel like I am part of this school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How often have OTHER KIDS in school done these things to YOU?

		Never	Rarely	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
4.	Told lies about you just to be mean.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5.	Hit, slapped, pushed, kicked or physically hurt you.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6.	Threatened to stop being your friend if you didn't do what they wanted.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How often have YOU done these things in school?

		Never	Rarely	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
7.	Told lies about someone just to be mean.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.	Hit, slapped, pushed, kicked or physically hurt someone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.	Threatened to stop being someone's friend if they didn't do what you wanted.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How OFTEN do you...

		Never	Rarely	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
10.	Stick up for someone who is being made fun of?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11.	Encourage someone else with positive words when they get picked on?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12.	Include new people in your group of friends?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Questions asked of the teachers:

How often have you seen the students at your school:

		Never	Rarely	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
13.	Students threatening to exclude others from their social group.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14.	Students spreading rumors about another student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15.	Students telling lies about someone just to hurt his or her feelings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16.	Students threatening to beat up another student.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17.	Students threatening to stop being another student's friend.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18.	Students have a way to report aggression or threats anonymously to school staff.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

CASS: Creating a Safe School® Mentor Program

The CASS™ Mentor program prepares and coaches adult facilitators and middle and high school students to serve as positive role models in a mentoring capacity to middle school students. The mentors present lessons aimed at reducing relationally aggressive behaviors, and strengthening positive participation of bystanders (the “kids-in-the middle”) who typically represent the majority of a school population. Through the use of story-telling, role-playing and RA awareness- building, students are taught how to deal with aggression and to engage in healthy peer interactions.

Mentor Program Goals

- Positively influence the beliefs and behaviors of both middle school students and high school mentors
- Build leadership skills in high school mentors
- Develop healthy peer relationships that are based on trust

Mentor Program Core Beliefs

We CAN change the social climate in our schools. Peer aggression is everyone’s responsibility. We are all involved in addressing this issue.

Every member of the school community is valuable. Students, teachers, administrators, support staff and parents all work together toward creating safe social climates.

Mentorship is a powerful way to create safe social climates. Mentors have the ability to help others implement new normative behaviors and support healthy friendships.

The negative impact of peer aggression must be recognized and everyone must be held accountable for their actions. *All* forms of peer aggression are hurtful.

Prevention is the ultimate goal. We work toward the time when students enter our schools with normative beliefs that foster cooperation, respect and effective conflict resolution.

CASS Component: Parent Involvement

Parents are a vital part of programming to create safe and productive learning communities.

◆ Workshops

Topics addressed in workshops offered for parent groups include:

- Relational aggression and healthy relationship development
- Cyberbullying
- Adolescent and child development
- Creating safe social climates at home and school
- Accountability

The Ophelia Project tailors workshop content to meet a group's needs.

◆ Tips for Parents

See www.opheliaproject.org for more tips!

- Teach and model: emotional control, positive social problem-solving, reflection.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Create a safe social climate at home.
- Establish a positive relationship with your child's school.
- Understand a bit of child and adolescent development.

◆ Parent Study Circles

All the Rage (Relational Aggression, Girls Empowered) is a guide for parents interested in participating in a reading and discussion group. The guide provides session outlines, resources and discussion questions for parents to address challenges faced by youth. Topics include:

- Relational aggression
- Media images and role-modeling
- Creating positive and prosocial environments

◆ Parents as facilitators in CASS Mentor Program

As part of the CASS Mentor Program, adult facilitators work with students on curricula and activities that they in turn use to teach younger students. Activities address bullying prevention, friendship, becoming a proactive “kid-in-the-middle,” etc. CASS provides a valuable opportunity for parent facilitators to partner with school staff.

Assessments

The Ophelia Project[®] offers CASS: Creating a Safe School[®] Assessments, recommended as the first step for schools and organizations serious about understanding relational aggression and creating safe social climates.

CASS: Creating a Safe School[™] two-day assessments of one school begin at \$3,000 and include:

Up to 12 hours on-site and 6 hours off-site consultation

Up to two members of The Ophelia Project[®] consultation team

A minimum of one meeting with organizational leadership to determine the current status of the social climate, identify relational aggression incidence, targets and triggers, review policies and procedures

Facilitation of a minimum of four learning discussion groups including teachers, administrators, parents and students who make up a cross section of the school population

A final meeting with organizational leadership to discuss findings and support development of an action plan

An executive summary of current climate, complete with personalized recommendations for affecting change

*Contact us at 888-256-5437 to schedule your consultation today,
and begin creating safe social climates in your organization tomorrow.*

Please note: Additional transportation and lodging costs apply.

Consulting

The Ophelia Project offers CASS: Creating a Safe School™ Consulting Services, short-term and long-term consultation that meets the specific needs of your school, school district or community organization. This service empowers leaders to examine the conditions that contribute to the social climate. It also guides them through construction of an action plan that increases the social and emotional safety of the children, as well as the adults in the community.

This consultation can include:

- Addressing a specific problem that requires immediate intervention, such as a recent bullying incident
- Developing a policy on relational aggression in your organization, school, after-school program or camp
- Planning a strategy for building awareness about relational aggression and the social climates in your school or organization
- Developing a systemic, long-term plan to engage your community in creating safe social climates
- Adapting The Ophelia Project current curriculum, programs or trainings
- Consulting leaders in addressing issues of relational aggression which may include how to:
 - Develop and structure a CASS: Creating a Safe School™ task force
 - Review and revise relational aggression and bullying policies and procedures
 - Identify and promote schoolwide normative behaviors
 - Recognize covert aggression in the workplace
- Coaching leaders in personal and professional development
 - Discovering possibilities for effective action
 - Strengthening communication skills
 - Building more trusting relationships

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The Ophelia Project®

The Five Critical Steps™

1. *Recognize the Behavior (SEE IT)*

- Expand your thinking to include all forms of overt and covert aggression
- Consider your own past experiences
- Challenge your normative beliefs
- Become a careful observer

2. *Name the Behavior Using the Shared Language of Peer Aggression (NAME IT)*

- Teach students the language of feelings and peer aggression
- Describe the behavior that you are observing and call it aggression

3. *Establish Positive Norms to Create a Safe Climate in Your Classroom (STATE IT)*

- Write down pro-social norms and display them in your classroom
- Hold your students accountable for demonstrating these norms
- Express your behavioral expectations to students clearly and frequently
- Model these norms in the way you structure and conduct your classes

4. *Create a Pro-Social, “CASS: Creating a Safe School™” Classroom/Learning Environment (CREATE IT)*

- Teach pro-social skills to enhance empathy, emotional intelligence, relationship building, and conflict resolution
- Develop intervention strategies to deal with peer aggression when it occurs
- Support and encourage the ‘kids in the middle’ to speak out in appropriate ways
- Take advantage of teachable moments to reinforce the norms and integrate them into your lesson plans
- Reinforce the new behaviors in your day-to-day interactions with students, colleagues, and parents
- Integrate the concepts into your ongoing curriculum
- Teach students alternative positive strategies for dealing with conflict and friendship issues

5. *Expand to a School Wide Environment (EXPAND IT)*

- Create schoolwide policies and procedures to address peer aggression;
- Make common school areas safer social environments (cafeteria, playground, school buses, hallways, bathrooms)
- Develop a reporting system that encourages students to take care of one another
- Empower all constituents in the school community - especially students - to make a difference