

Creating A Safe Place For All Students

By Julia Taylor for American School Counselor Association

As this is National Youth Violence Prevention Week, here are some tips on how you can help to create a safer school...

- Having a safe school depends on your school and what you staff chooses to react to or ignore. Example: If students know they can be a victim in school -- then your school is not a safe space. On the other hand, if students see policies actively enforced -- your school is a safe place!
- If a student comes to you because he/she is being harassed, don't minimize it! Listen, offer for them to come and talk to you, and help them cope! Try not to tell them "It's going to be OK," "Don't worry about it," or "You won't remember this when you are 18." Those types of comments invalidate every "valid" feeling they have.
- Have students create their own "peace policy." Have them make up the rules and the consequences -- and then sign it. Hang the policy up all year in a visible place. Offer monthly/quarterly awards for following it.
- Know what punishments students don't care about! If the consequences of their actions are no big deal to them -- they are in control! Having "cookie cutter" policies are not always the most effective!
- Issues surrounding bullying/relational aggression negatively affect daily academic performance. If students are being victimized, they are most likely not thinking about their upcoming science test, homework, their future, etc. When it comes to bullying, the key is to know it, name it, then face it!
- Understand that physical fights are usually perpetuated and begin with incidents that adults consider "petty" (rumors, gossip, etc.). Empower students to stop those kinds of behaviors!
- Practice what you preach! Don't hang up "Character Education" posters unless you can follow them yourself!
- Think about yourself and what you want for your students. Do you want your students to go home crying because they are afraid of school?
- Teach your students to practice random acts of kindness! Have them volunteer for community service, have "theme" days, promote group/classroom cohesion, do icebreakers in class, have monthly "goal" parties, etc. Sometimes taking a small "social" break is important -- in the long run students will learn more!

FEATURED RESOURCE: NO MORE TEASING



Being teased is very painful for all children. To some, it can be emotionally devastating. This game is designed to teach children ten ways to deal with being teased including:

- Using confident body language
- Avoiding teasers when alone
- Learning what provokes teasing

A unique feature of the game is an audiotape of different children making teasing comments. Players must respond in appropriate ways in order to win. To find out how you can purchase this unique counseling tool for children ages 6-12, [click here!](#)

ABOUT JULIA TAYLOR

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ABOUT THE AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION

Professional school counselors everywhere share the same vision to support their schools by serving their students. School counselors know that guiding students toward personal and social development leads to improved academic achievement. Through their partnership with principals and teachers, school counselors help prepare today's students to become tomorrow's adults.

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) responds to school counselors' unique needs, helping them grow individually as professionals and providing them with real tools to guide their students. As an international nonprofit organization founded in 1952, ASCA has the benefit of foresight and hindsight. It has grown to fit counselors' changing needs through social and educational movements from desegregation to standardized testing. Responding to the needs of counselors as voiced by counselors has enabled ASCA to remain vital and forward-thinking.

ASCA serves as the voice of school counselors on Capitol Hill and helps members ensure their voices are heard in state legislatures. ASCA has active government affairs representatives who monitor activities in Congress, the Department of Education and throughout Washington to advocate on behalf of school counselors' interests: funding, certification, student-to-counselor ratios and more.

A full-color bimonthly magazine, *School Counselor* provides practical information and how-to articles to help school counselors help their students and themselves. Each issue has a focus on something school counselors care about, from public relations to grief counseling, as well as departments and columns covering a range of topics. Professional School Counseling is ASCA's award-winning bimonthly academic journal, providing peer-reviewed articles on school counseling theory, research, practice and techniques. The journal and the magazine together provide counselors with the most well-rounded and up-to-date information in the field.

For more information, visit www.schoolcounselor.org or call (703) 683-ASCA.

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