

2008-2009
STUDENT ASSISTANCE SERVICE
ANNUAL REPORT

I INTRODUCTION

The Student Assistance Service is committed to providing high quality, professional prevention and early intervention services to students. The counseling staff is made up of skilled social workers specially trained in various prevention techniques including comprehensive universal, selected and indicated services for students. SAS can play a vital role in assisting the schools to deal with all kinds of issues through its; own workshop offerings, consultation, and resource databank. A vital component of the SAS program is to evaluate our level of effectiveness. SAS annually reviews the work that has been done to determine if we have accomplished our goals. This report details these efforts.

Since 1988 SAS has grown from 5 counselors in 5 school districts to 30 counselors providing services to 30 schools in 14 component school districts and 3 BOCES sites! Over the past 22 years, we have provided drug and alcohol prevention and early intervention services to over 57,000 youngsters in Suffolk County. We have expanded SAS to include such programs as Reconnecting Youth, Learn to Be Tobacco Free/Health Smart Curriculum in conjunction with the Suffolk County Department of health, BASES Mentoring Program, K-12 Violence Prevention, Council for Unity Anti-Gang program, and Conflict Resolution training and services. More detailed information about all of these programs is contained in this report.

The program has continued to provide its core group programs which include newcomers groups (for all students new to the school), At-Promise social skills groups (emphasizing pro-social bonding, self-efficacy, autonomy, problem solving and goal setting), and COSA groups (children of substance abusers). Additional support and educational groups that were provided this year in response to expressed needs included:

- Bereavement/Loss
- Changing Family/Divorce
- Anger Control
- Friendship
- Smoking Cessation
- Study Skills/Student Responsibility
- Early Users (ATOD)
- Reentry/Recovery
- Academic Motivation
- Social Aggression
- Academic Motivation

Other programs and activities provided this year initiated either by the counselor or by school request included:

- Natural Helpers Program
- Peer Mediation Programs
- Conflict Resolution Services
- Teens as Teachers (T.A.T) Tobacco focused
- T.A.T. Sun Safety focused
- Transitional programs/activities
- Student role play troupes
- Parent Education and Support Groups
- Crisis Response Programs
- Social Aggression/Harassment Prevention and Education
- Second Step Violence Prevention Program
- Self-injury education and early intervention
- Drug and Alcohol Education and Prevention presentations for parents and students
- Wellness and Student Awareness Programs
- Summer Resources for Students
- Multi-Cultural Activities

II PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

The guiding principles that direct the activities and programs that the SAS embarks upon have been derived from a growing body of research that clearly demonstrates that youth have been shown to be able to overcome adversity in their lives and grow up to become successful adults. As stated by researcher Dr. Emmy Werner, these youth are not unscarred by their experiences but have been able to adaptively distance themselves from the dysfunction around them and are able to “work well, play well, love well and expect well.” Overall, they have become functioning and contributing members of society.

The research on resilience has validated prior research in human development that has shown the biological imperative that exists for growth and development in humans and which seems to unfold in the presence of certain environmental attributes (Benard, 1995). These attributes are described as protective factors and include: caring and supportive relationships (particularly with a caring adult role model), positive and high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful involvement. These characteristics if present in the important domains that surround youth -- those being the family, the school and the community – appear to alter or even reverse predictions of negative outcomes and enable individuals to deal with life stressors (Benard, 1995).

A broader and wider look at social competency as a vital component of resilience may be seen in the theory of social and emotional learning (SEL). A definition offered by the Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) states that SEL involves processes through which

children and adults develop fundamental emotional and social competencies to recognize and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations constructively. Simply stated SEL covers the breadth and scope of all the services offered through SAS by addressing the five core competencies as also defined by (CASEL). These are: Self-awareness, Self-management, Social Awareness, Relationship skills, and Responsible decision-making. It is our intent to weave SEL into the SAS/EAP fabric at every opportunity and level of programming. The EAP's work through its educational workshops with district and library personnel also addresses many SEL components, which ultimately have the potential to positively impact climate and student connectedness in a positive way.

Groups that are run or programs that are provided by the SAS staff are based on the belief that all students have the capacity to develop resiliency. The counselors take the approach that students can face and overcome adversity and deal with whatever obstacles might get in the way. They convey caring, instill high expectations that are realistic, and look for opportunities to involve youth in meaningful activities that will assist them in the development of a positive self-image and life purpose. The counselors are trained to utilize a developmentally appropriate, competency-based, and solution-focused method of dealing with students. They look beyond the negative behaviors that are so often referred to them and look for the times when the negative behaviors are not dominating the student. This strengths-based perspective offers a broader spectrum of both prevention and intervention possibilities. Thus, the number and variety of offerings that SAS has provided in the way of connecting with students has increased dramatically as the program has grown.

III PROGRAM RESEARCH

A vital component of the SAS program is to evaluate our level of effectiveness. SAS reviews the work that has been done to determine if we have accomplished our goals. We are particularly interested in encouraging students to develop abilities to help them manage their lives in healthy ways in spite of adversity or dysfunction that may go on around them. Protective factors that encourage the development of resiliency include:

1. Caring and Support
2. High Expectations
3. Participation and Involvement in Meaningful Activities

Elementary Results

Research by David Hawkins has identified academic failure in elementary school and a lack of commitment to school as major risk factors for not only substance abuse problems, but also delinquency, teen pregnancy and dropping out of school. Conversely, Emmy Werner has identified protective factors that if present in a child's life improve the likelihood that adversity can be overcome. CASEL has articulated the connection between the SEL competencies and improved academic performance.

At the conclusion of student participation in one of the SAS groups, we asked teachers to complete an observation form that we use to measure whether the desired outcomes were achieved (see Addendum B). The form attempts to determine whether the group has had a positive impact on students in any of the following areas that are deemed to be important in building in protective factors and social competency:

- Peer relations
- Classroom behavior
- Grades

The Student Assistance Counselors were also asked to determine whether there have been changes based on their observations in similar areas.

Of the 252 students who participated in groups at the elementary level, there were 192 returned teacher forms. The following are some of the results as reported from both teacher and counselor observation:

1. When asked about improvement in peer relations:
 - Counselors felt 66% of the students showed improvement
 - Teachers stated 86% demonstrated improvement
2. When asked about classroom/school behavior:
 - Counselors felt 43% of the students demonstrated improvement in school behavior.
 - Teachers stated that 82% had shown improvement in classroom behavior.
 - Teachers stated that 88% of students showed improvement in participation in class.
3. With regard to improvement in grades:
 - Counselors stated 14% of the students had improvement
 - Teachers stated that 74% showed improvement

Observation: *Using either result, it appears that SAS group programs are having a positive impact on students who participate in groups.*

Middle School Results

The Student Assistance Service bases the group work that is done on the belief that all students have the capacity to develop resiliency. The resilient child possesses social competence, problem solving skills, autonomy and a sense of purpose and future. The personality characteristic most consistently associated with a resilient outcome is a sense of self-efficacy. Michael Rutter (1994) considers self-efficacy to be “a feeling of your own worth, as well as a feeling that you can deal with things...that you can control what happens to you.”

In order to determine whether we have had a positive impact on students in our COSA/Social Skills groups in the above areas, we asked students to complete a post-group questionnaire. (See Addendum C.) We look for changes in social competency, decision-making, self-esteem,

achievement, self-efficacy, and participation in extracurricular activities. We also asked counselors to state whether they felt students had improved in areas such as grades, attendance, and family relations.

There were a total of 847 students who participated in groups. Of these, 489 (58%) completed post-group questionnaires. Based on counselor report as well as student responses the results are as follows:

1. Regarding peer relations and friendships:
 - Counselors felt that 84% of their students had improved peer relations.
 - 62% of the students responding felt they had better relationships with their friends.
2. In regard to academics and school behavior:
 - Counselors felt that 20% of the students had better grades and 69% improved their school behavior.
 - 37% of the students felt they were doing better in school.
3. With regard to participation in extracurricular activities:
 - Counselors thought 56% had become involved in some kind of activity since joining group.
 - 61% of the students said they became more involved.
4. Improvements in self-concept were as follows:
 - 75% of the students had improved self-concept as a result of group based on counselor report. 12% of the students had improved attendance based on counselor report.
 - 52% of the students stated they would say no to a friend if asked to do something they did not want to do and 58% of the students stated they viewed themselves more positively since participating in group. (Please note that although these are different questions, we believe they address issues of self-efficacy.)
5. The final area that we compared counselor response to student response was in improved family relationships.
 - 19% of the counselors thought that there was improvement in this area.
 - 35% of the students thought that there was improvement in relationships with their family.

Observation: *As with the elementary results, based on counselor or student report, it appears that SAS group programs were successful in building protective factors.*

High School Results

On the high school level a post-group questionnaire was given to students. (See Addendum B) Counselors were surveyed, based on their observations to assess whether there was improvement in certain areas such as grades, attendance, and family relations as a result of group. A total of 394 students participated in groups and 195 (49%) students completed questionnaires.

Results from what the counselors said and what the students reported were compared. Following are the results:

1. In the area of peer relationships:
 - 36% of the students had improved peer relations based on counselor report.
 - 50% of the students said they had better relationships with friends.
2. In regard to academics and school behavior:
 - Counselors felt that 22% of the students in group had improved grades and 28% had improved school behavior, 31% of students attendance improved.
 - 51% of the students felt that they were doing better in school.
3. As far as participation in extracurricular activities:
 - Counselors stated that 14% of the students became involved in extracurricular activities.
 - 40% of the students stated they became involved.
4. In regard to improvements in self-concept:
 - Counselors stated that 48% of students in group had improved self-concept.
 - 55% of the students said they would say no if a friend asked them to do something they did not want to do.
 - 56% of the students viewed themselves more positively as a result of group.
5. With regard to improved family relations:
 - Counselors felt that 23% of the students had improvement in this area.
 - 42% of the students said that there was improvement.

28% of the students stated that they *decreased* their drug usage as a result of group. 47% said they never used.

Observation: *Here again, the overall impression is that participation in an SAS group was helpful in building overall protective factors.*

The grid (Addendum D) is a summary of the totals of the post-group questionnaire given to Middle and High School students.

Student Feedback

Perhaps even more impressive than numbers, reading what students wrote when offered the opportunity to comment on their group experiences speaks volumes. Here are just some of the things that students had to say about their SAS experience: (MS denotes middle school, HS denotes high school)

- “This group was good because it helped me a lot with my behavior and my grades. I liked the group because I started doing activities for school which helped me too.” (HS)

- “It helped me out a lot and let me get a better chance of passing.” (HS)
- “I have learned to identify a boundary and not to cross it.” (MS)
- “After joining group I feel that I have someone to always talk to and express myself.”
- “Emotional help for my family problems.” (MS)
- “It made me feel that I know someone like Mrs. S. will always be there when I need someone to talk to; to help me with my problems and anything that I’m going through.”

During the 2008-2009 school year, services were provided to **3,976** students by Student Assistance Counselors. In addition, there were **145** classroom series presentations – that is, the counselor went into the classroom on 3 or more occasions to provide lessons. Approximately **3,000** students were impacted via these presentations. **These may have included such research-based curricula as *Second Step, Life Skills, and Why Try.*** Counselors also went into **700** classrooms, on one or two occasions, speaking on such topics as gang awareness, drug/alcohol issues, and decision-making, impacting approximately **12,000** students.

A vital component of the work done by both SAS and EAP involves connecting students and their families to outside resources when deemed appropriate. The EAP/SAS databank is the source turned to most often to assist the counselors in making effective referrals to trusted resources. Over the course of the school year, there were a total of **556** referrals made for outside services. Based on counselor report, **66%** of these were accepted.

IV OTHER INITIATIVES

TOBACCO INITIATIVE

In May 2002, Eastern Suffolk BOCES Student Assistance Service entered into an agreement with the Suffolk County Department of Health Services to conduct a countywide School Health Education Initiative. The mandate was threefold: to help districts implement a comprehensive K-12 health curriculum consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s guidelines for school health programs to prevent tobacco use and addiction; to assist secondary schools in implementing cessation programs for those students who use tobacco products; and to support districts in strengthening their tobacco policies. Subsequent to our first year and at the suggestion of our Advisory Board, we expanded the initiative to include a Youth Empowerment component as well. Young people who are placed in positions of leadership are less likely to engage in risky behaviors. This facet of the program not only complements the other activities of the tobacco initiative, but also is consistent with the SAS philosophy of building resiliency through increasing protective factors.

As the seventh year of the initiative comes to a close, we have continued to make a great deal of progress through the collective efforts of the partners and subcontractors of the initiative. Monthly planning meetings are used to chart direction and have included the participation of the Suffolk County Department of Health Services which funds the initiative, and Eastern Suffolk BOCES staff. Highlights of the 2008-2009 school year include:

- Continued teacher training and distribution of a comprehensive health curriculum that meets or exceeds the National and New York State standards for health education. The K-12 curriculum, entitled *HEALTHSmart*, addresses the 6 areas of risky behaviors (including tobacco use) as identified by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. **Thus far we have trained 2,184 teachers from 46 school districts, 13 BOCES sites and seven private schools.**
- We continue to assist ETR Associates, the publisher of *HEALTHSmart* with an evaluation of the curriculum to examine the impact of the program on selected health knowledge, attitude, and behavior outcomes among upper elementary school students. This is the first study of its kind and we are very excited to be a part of this groundbreaking research.
- Training of school and community-based agency personnel continues in two smoking cessation programs entitled TAP/TEG (Tobacco Awareness Program/Tobacco Education Group) and N-O-T (Not-On-Tobacco). To date, we have trained a total of 77 school and community agency personnel available to provide youth smoking cessation services. Although the number of active cessation and alternative-to-suspension programs are few, we are pleased to see an increase from previous years.
- As part of our policy efforts, we continue to distribute “Welcome to our Tobacco-Free Zone” signs and resource cards listing free smoking cessation resources. Additionally, we continue to partner with Western Suffolk BOCES to assist them in their state-funded policy initiative.
- High school and middle school youth empowerment conferences were held in December and May, respectively. Approximately 400 students from 30 districts attended and/or presented workshops at the conferences whose theme was “The Impact of Technology on Today’s Youth.” Teacher and student evaluations were extremely positive. In addition, we held another Tobacco “Teens as Teachers” training for 70 high school and middle school youth from eight school districts as well as a “Peer Education in Sun Safety” training modeled on the tobacco TAT program. Seventy students from five districts were in attendance.
- As the result of our successful partnership in 2005 with the New York State Department of Health, we offered our fifth teacher training in the SunWise curriculum, a skin cancer prevention program for Kindergarten – Grade 3 teachers involved in *HealthSMART*. Another 35 staff from 5 districts participated in the *SunWise* Training. We also equipped teachers trained during the previous four years with additional incentives (hats, UV wristbands, sunglasses and sunscreen.) Approximately 10,000 students will be reached through this year’s initiative which, in addition to schools, will include libraries and summer camps.
- As part of our comprehensive approach to health and wellness, we co-sponsored a Wellness Forum for school districts in Suffolk County with the Heart Links Program based at Stony Brook University. The forum featured a keynote presentation by Dr.

Josephine Connolly followed by a panel presentation given by representatives of six school districts that have implemented innovative nutrition practices in their cafeterias and classrooms. The half-day conference was a unique opportunity for school, community and governmental agencies to join together to discuss best practices to improve nutrition and increase physical activity among our young people. Over 100 attendees from 44 districts participated. We are planning to continue to partner with Heart Links and Mather Hospital's "Just Ask Us!" initiative which focuses on helping restaurants add healthy choices to their menus.

Initially, we had planned to move slowly by targeting just a few school districts for implementation of the prevention curriculum. However, overwhelming interest in the initiative has helped us move forward with far greater reach than anticipated. We look forward to continuing to expand our program so that all districts who wish to participate are provided the services we offer.

HEALTHSmart Participating Districts:

Academy of St. Joseph	Mount Sinai
Amityville	North Babylon
Babylon	Our Lady of Lourdes
Bay Shore	Oysterponds School
Bayport-Blue Point	Port Jefferson
Brentwood	Riverhead
Bridgehampton	Rocky Point
Center Moriches	Sachem
Central Islip	Saint Anthony's
Commack	Saint John the Baptist
Comsewogue	Saint Martin of Tours
Connetquot	Sag Harbor
Deer Park	Sayville
East Islip	Shelter Island
East Moriches	Shoreham-Wading River
East Quogue	Smithtown
Eastern Suffolk BOCES	Smithtown Christian School
Eastport/South Manor	South Huntington
Elwood	Southampton
Hauppauge	Southold
Islip	Springs
Ivy League School	Three Village
Little Flower School	West Babylon
Longwood	West Islip
Mattituck-Cutchogue	Westhampton Beach
Middle Country	William Floyd
Montauk	Wyandanch

RECONNECTING YOUTH

Reconnecting Youth is an effective research based school-based prevention program that targets young people in grades 9 through 12 who show signs of poor school achievement, potential for dropping out of High School, and multiple problem behaviors such as substance abuse and poor social skills. The three major outcome goals of the program are to increase school attendance and performance, to decrease drug involvement, and to decrease suicide risk. Students monitor their daily attendance and grades in class. The class is designed to be a semester long and students receive credit.

SAS received the first Reconnecting Youth (RY) grant in the fall of 1999. The following are the 11 districts that are now participating:

- Bayport-Blue Point UFSD
- Comsewogue UFSD
- Longwood CSD
- Riverhead CSD
- South Country CSD
- Three Village CSD
- West Islip UFSD
- William Floyd UFSD
- East Islip UFSD
- Deer Park UFSD
- Sayville UFSD

In eight of the districts, the program is being run as a “9th period” or after the regular school day. In one site, it is being held during the PM or Alternative School. In two schools classes ran during the school day. A total of 139 students participated in Reconnecting Youth classes over the course of the year. (Classes are designed for 10 – 12 students per class.) 74% of these students stated they engaged in some use of drugs and/or alcohol, which suggests we are reaching our target population.

Students were asked to complete a pre-post school performance questionnaire (see Addendum G.) We analyzed 70 pre and post questionnaires. The scale below was used to answer the questions.

0 (Very Poor) 1 2 Average 4 5 6 (Outstanding)

The following questions were answered as follows:

My overall performance at school has been:

- Pre-test: 27% answered 4, 5 or 6
- Post-test: 52% answered 4,5, or 6.

My overall attitude about school has been:

- Pre-test: 26% answered 5 or 6
- Post-test: 51% answered 5 or 6

My attendance in all my classes has been:

Possible answers ranged from Rarely attended (0) – Rarely Missed (6)

- Pre-test: 45% answered 5 or rarely missed
- Post-test: 69 % answered 5 or rarely missed

My attendance in my least favorite class:

Possible answers ranged from Rarely attended (0) – Rarely Missed (6)

- Pre-test: 32% answered 0, 1, or 2 41% answered 5 or 6
- Post-test: 15% answered 0, 1, or 2 58% answered 5 or 6

My grades in all my classes :

Possible answers ranged from A's and B's (1) – Failing (6)

- Pre-test: 59% answered "1, 2"
- Post-test: 74% answered "1, 2"

My grades in my least favorite class:

- Pre-test: 39% said 5 or 6
- Post test: 58% said 5 or 6

School attendance and performance have increased as a result of the Reconnecting Youth class.

We also asked students to complete a pre-post drug usage questionnaire (see Addendum H). 72 questionnaires were matched and analyzed. The following are the results we were able to obtain:

⇒ I used alcohol and/or other drugs.

- 53% said they used once a week or 3-5 times a week or everyday on the pre-tests
- 24% said they used once a week or 3-5 times a week or everyday on the post-tests

⇒ I drank hard liquor:

- 38% said "never used" in the past 30 days on the pre-test. 9% said 3 – 5 times a week or everyday on the pre test.
- 54% said "never used" in the past 30 days on the post-test. 0% said 3-5 times a week or everyday on post test.

⇒ Smoked marijuana:

- 21% said everyday on the pre-tests.
- 3% said everyday on the post tests.

⇒ When I drank alcohol, I did not stop with just one or two drinks.

- 29% said sometimes, often or a lot on the pre-tests.
- 18% said sometimes, often, or a lot on the post tests.

⇒ Used drug/alcohol at school:

- 12% said sometimes, often, or a lot on pre-tests.
- 0% said sometimes, often, or a lot on the post tests.

On the post-tests, we also asked students how their drug/alcohol usage has changed since being part of the RY class.

Those who had used were asked to rate how they were doing on a scale of -10 to +10. (-10 representing “using much more”, 0 being “the same”, and +10 “using much less”).

- 85% responded that they had decreased their usage to some extent
- 42% responded between 7 and 10
- (13% responded “did not use”)

What we can see from our results is that the RY class is having a positive impact on decreasing these high-risk students’ usage of drugs and alcohol.

RY – Facilitators:

“C. showed great improvement in his outside school activities. Joined the track team!”

“J. pulled up his grades, so very proud of his accomplishments – made Student of the Month.”

“D. quit smoking! Improvement in attitude, attendance? Actually likes school, forming relationships with his teachers.”

“Angela was in a tumultuous relationship with her boyfriend early in the school year and this topic dominated our discussions for a few months. We truly believe that the group helped her through this as she ultimately broke up with the boy and her personal and academic life improved. This connected everyone and made the group stronger and even more supportive as the year came to a close.”

“One of the most difficult sections for the students was on anger management and impulse control. Students had strong convictions that their impulsive behaviors were appropriate and just. As the year went on, students were able to recognize some of their behavior and begin to use the tools to modify their impulses. WE then began to see a more consistent attendance and self monitoring system in place by February.”

Student Comments:

“There were 3 things I got out of class. Attitude is one of them – my attitude used to be really bad, Then I went to this class and my attitude started changing dramatically. Another thing that changed has been my attendance. Mr. R. helped me with my attendance. The 3rd thing is my mood. Before I would act on my mood. Get into fights, etc. When I came here it helped me straighten my mood out.”

“RY was a fun experience for me. It helped me in a lot of ways. They help you and give you advice and support. Everybody opened up to each other after everyone talked. It helps you to learn how to control your anger, stress, drugs, and school. You set small goals for yourself and by the end of the course you notice how far you’ve been going. You can also see what you need to improve in.”

“I learned how negative behavior can ruin mu life. I’m trying to get it together.”

“My mom is so proud of me. My grades have never been so good!”

“I love this class and my friends. I really connected and my report card shows it.”

“I quit smoking!!!! I can’t believe it.”

“I quit smoking with my friend in RY! I even like school better. I learned to cope better.”

“RY was very helpful it made me realize that drugs have a great effect on my life and attitude towards life. I have learned that drugs may directly or indirectly get in the way of your education, social life, and may diminish work-ethic.”

“From the beginning of the school year until now, I’ve made drastic improvement. Group has helped me along the way to make important decisions and talk about things I would be uncomfortable to talk with my own family. In the beginning of this year I wasn’t sure if I would be graduated. Now I’m proud to say I wil be graduating. Before, I wasn’t sure if I would graduate also because of my suspensions and anger, ... I’ve been able to make better decisions in school and outside of the classroom.”

CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

A number of years ago, the SAS developed a Crisis Response Team to assist districts in handling and recovering from traumatic events such as the death of a student and a faculty member, natural disaster, or acts of violence. When a crisis occurs, either we contact the building affected and offer our services or the district contacts us. Counselors in districts where tragedies took place provided assistance to students in their respective sites. This year, we responded to two buildings where there was a crisis, as well as provided phone consultations with four additional buildings.

BASES Mentoring

In June 2005 Eastern Suffolk BOCES Student Assistance Service was notified we were the recipient of the three year US Department of Education mentoring grant. As of the end of our grant, December 2008, we had established programs in ten school sites: John S. Hobart Elementary School, Joseph A. Edgar Intermediate School, William Paca Middle School, Rocky Point Middle School, William Floyd Elementary School and the following Eastern Suffolk BOCES sites: Brookhaven Academic Center, Jefferson Academic Center, Sayville Learning Center, Westhampton Beach learning Center, and William Floyd Learning Center. These sites were identified as schools which serve students with special needs, disabilities or who are struggling to achieve in conventional school settings. The program was named BASES – BOCES Academic Social Emotional Support.

We assisted each site in selecting a liaison and provided training for them. We also worked at setting up an advisory council in each building who assisted with framing out the program to meet the unique needs of their site, reviewing all forms and correspondence, and who assisted with the selection and matching process taking into account the mentees and mentors schedules, interests, and backgrounds. These advisory councils continued throughout the grant period.

Screenings were completed on each potential mentor, and permission was given by the parent/guardian of each potential mentee. After trainings, the matches began. All sites participated in kick-off festivities to announce the programs commencement as well as end of year celebrations to acknowledge the programs success. At the end of each of the three years, we invited the liaisons, principals, and superintendents of each building to attend a presentation highlighting the year and thanking them for their assistance.

BASES partnered with the Mentoring Partnership of Long Island who provided trainings for the BASES staff, liaison training, mentor and mentee trainings, materials, technical advice, as well as trainings on specific topics such as goal setting and sustaining the relationship. One of our mentees received an award as Mentor of the Year at the Mentoring Partnerships annual conference.

Mentors and mentees participated in various activities ranging from creating science and art projects to learning to sew, learning how to play the piano, shooting baskets to playing board games. They also participated in field trips to The Long Island Petting Zoo, Theatre Three, Harbes Country Farm, Atlantis Marine World, Long Island Cradle of Civilization, Wetlands Discover Cruise and canoeing on the Nissequogue and Carmen's Rivers. Every school, except Wm. Floyd Elementary which began working with BASES in the late fall of '07; participated in at least 1 field trip during the project period. (Field trip dates are on the attached Program Activity Breakdown – note: at several sites more than 1 date will be noted in the same month – this was to accommodate the school by taking ½ the group at a time in order to reduce the number of teachers out of the building at any one time) For three years, the Islanders Hockey Team provided us with tickets that we gave to all those interested in attending. One mentee entered an essay contest where he had to write about his mentor and her special qualities – he won a VIP day at Jets Stadium!

Our CMSS's met individually with mentors to discuss the mentoring experience, provided refresher trainings and meetings supported by the Mentoring Partnership of LI consultants; and conducted group mentee/mentor social events, and mentor recognition and thank you events.

Some of the comments were received from mentees:

“She’s there for me when I am sad or mad, she puts me back on track when I am doing bad, she gives me good advice....”

“I didn’t know homework was important until I met my mentor...”

Some comments from mentors:

“Thank you for letting me do my job as a human and give some of myself to someone else who I ‘don’t have to’, it is because I want to.”

“I am glad I followed my heart and joined the program; it’s had a positive effect on us both and many here at school. Creating positive experiences in a school setting is important for all children, and this program lets some children shine under the guidance of a caring adult, who might not have had the chance otherwise.”

A parent comment:

“Thank you for allowing me to comment on the mentoring program that my children are involved in at school. I have found the relationship that has been born, between yourself and my kids is truly amazing. You being in their lives at a time when all else was falling apart was truly a God send. You gave them one more reason to want to go to school. One more person they could count on. One more person to talk to. One more friend. I can’t thank you enough for being there.

When we first wrote the grant we had approached the Superintendents to determine their willingness to participate with us. Initially, we were to be in 2 districts, and the various BOCES sites. Once we received the grant, notified districts, and began contacting the principals of the various sites, we found that one district was not going to be workable. Due to union issues, cooperation was not forthcoming, and we sought out another district that was similar demographically. (with DOE permission) We learned that although a Superintendent may be interested in a program, getting the Principals and staff on-board is another issue. We did meet with some resistance at first, but once BASES got going, it took off. During the last months of the project, we conducted exit interviews with the principals. The following are some of their comments:

“I’ve seen a remarkable difference in the mentees; there have been fewer infractions, better decision making as well as a noticeable difference in how much more connected they seem to feel to their school.”

Dr. Joseph Centamore, Principal, Rocky Point Middle School

“It is just great, no a phenomenal concept... it is a fabulous experience, the idea that a student has an important person in their life who supports, coaches them... someone they can tell anything to... someone who accepts them for who they are, not based on their behavior is great. Our students may not have adults who can unequivocally care and love them, the program offers

them hope. Because our students have no roots and are very transient, this experience is a real skill builder for them. We have had a regular surge of calls from parents who want their children in the program, but mostly our students are very vocal themselves. “Why can’t I have a mentor?”, they ask. They are basically clamoring for a mentor. It seems to have turned a life around, a former mentee returned to show their report card to their former teacher even though they weren’t even a student here any more!”

Susan Goltz, Principal, Jefferson Academic Center

“It’s good for the kids, they look forward to seeing their mentor, but I think the adults are getting more out of it than the kids – the mentors seem more linked to the school and more involved because of their mentee.”

Carol Tvelia, Principal, Joseph A. Edgar Intermediate School

Our own research has shown how:

- Mentors got a lot out of the relationship both personally and professionally
We were surprised when mentors said they were more motivated at work because of their mentoring relationships.
- Beyond grades and attendance there are other school benefits that mentees received – increased self-confidence and improved classroom participation.
- That students state a marked change in school – grades, attendance, interest. The fact that they connected improvement in these areas and mentoring, says the relationship strongly impacted them.

Over the course of the project period, we made 369 matches!! We are happy to report that all but one of the sites is going strong.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION INITIATIVE

The student Assistance Service (SAS) utilizes professionally trained staff to provide effective and promising prevention initiatives to students grades K-12. The goal is to reduce and prevent violence as well as drug, alcohol and tobacco use among youth. The solutions to substance abuse, violence, gang involvement, and other high risk behavior among youth lie in comprehensive and strategically organized efforts of the Violence Prevention Specialist.

The success of an effective prevention/intervention strategy lies in the Violence Prevention Coordinator’s ability to assess the needs of the learning community, provide resources based on that assessment and assume a leadership role throughout program implementation. They have the ability to establish powerful alliances and partnerships with various constituent groups within the district (i.e. students, staff, administration, parent and community groups). By working collaboratively and articulating service delivery between and among buildings in the district, an effective “safety net” of programs and services can be woven to address the academic and social/emotional needs of the student population. A strengths-centered focus is the foundation upon which strategies are developed and services are delivered. It is also the operating foundation upon which BOCES Student Assistance Service (SAS) is based.

It is important to note that we consistently seek to align our work with the New York State Standards for Education and many of our programs meet various requirements for performance indicators under Social Studies English Language Arts, Health, Physical Education, Family and Consumer Sciences, Career Development and Occupational Studies. Our work incorporates the five core standards of social/emotional competency as outlined by the Collaborative for Social Emotional Learning (CASEL). These include self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. Educational research consistently supports the fact that the mastery of these 5 areas (referred to as Social Emotional literacy) not only enhances school performance, but is requisite for academic success.

Intervention/prevention strategies utilized by the violence Prevention Coordinators can be characterized as “universal” (i.e. an assembly program presented to the entire school community), “selected” (i.e. targeting a group of students who may be at risk of failure or risky behavior), or “indicated” (i.e. students who are already performing the at-risk behavior such as gang involvement, poor academic performance or substance abuse). The ultimate objective of all strategies employed is to increase positive behaviors, create a safe and healthy school environment and foster positive change.

Highlights for 2008/2009

- **Collaborate with PPS team:** The BOCES VP-SAS counselors worked closely with building support staff and administration to provide assessment, referral, and intervention with selected and indicated populations. The number of students seen was 747.
- **Classroom Presentations:** The BOCES VP-SAS counselors presented various classroom and assembly presentations on topics that addressed specific building needs i.e: bullying, sexual harassment, trustworthiness, decision making, diversity, cultural awareness and other character ed initiatives. In total there were 274 presentations.

Additionally, we have implemented a comprehensive classroom based curriculum called WhyTry. WhyTry Classroom series is a comprehensive classroom based curriculum that has been research-demonstrated to reduce truancy, enhance academic success and increase graduation rates in a variety of school settings. Using a series of visual analogies taught in a multi-sensory modality, students are taught the skills to set goals, overcome barriers to success and ultimately achieve opportunity, freedom and self-respect.

- **Building Wide – Climate Enhancing Activities:** The BOCES VP-SAS counselors researched and implemented various climate enhancing activities throughout the school year. Working closely with building level PPS staff the activities address various SEL goals and building level initiatives. Examples of programs there developed and implemented in 2008/2009 were:
 - Character Counts Week
 - Cultural Diversity Week

- SAVE
- School Beautification Projects
- Community Service Learning Project
- Kids With Character Monthly Recognition
- Anonymous Acts of Kindness
- Sprit Week
- Shanelle Gabrielle – Spoken Word Workshops
- Ruby Payne – Understanding Generational Poverty
- Student Mentoring Program
- Council For Unity – Gang Prevention And Intervention Program

The unique breadth and scope of the Violence Prevention effort includes staff development, Character Ed programs and classroom presentations for all middle school students. At the other end of the continuum we have provided very specialized assessment, crisis intervention and referral services for the at-risk students and their families. The Violence Prevention specialists have worked with administration and staff to research and implement initiatives that enhance social emotional learning goals and provide climate enhancing activities. Research shows that by engaging at risk students we not only help them in the counseling sense, but we increase their connection to a person in school resulting in an increase in academic achievement.

As a county wide collaboration of many districts both the Employee Assistance and Student Assistance Service collectively develop and share resources as well as evidence based initiatives, special programs and projects. Our prevention/intervention activities enable us to affect a decrease in discipline events and an increase in pro-social behavior, which helps to improve the school culture and academic achievement. The Violence Prevention initiative has presented at several national conferences sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education.

PEER MEDIATION

Eight school districts and Eastern Suffolk BOCES contracted conflict resolution and mediation services during the 2008-2009 academic year. Some districts employed our services in more than one school.

Approximately 260 students as well as staff were trained in mediation methods. Trainees acquired the skills necessary to assist peers in taking responsibility for their actions and finding peaceful alternatives to end disputes in a win/win outcome. This goal was accomplished by teaching trainees methods of clear communication, problem definition, diffusing anger, active listening, perspective taking, maintaining neutrality, facilitating discussions, creative negotiating, generating peaceful options and effective agreement writing. These trainings also enabled and empowered trainees to effectively manage their own anger thus resolving their personal conflicts peacefully.

V. SUMMARY

As can be seen from this report, our services are varied, responsive to student/school needs, and most importantly, effective. We are proud of the cooperative relationships we have with our participating districts. Unfortunately, our BASES mentoring program grant ended this year, but we are thrilled that the majority of the participating buildings see it as a wonderful addition to their buildings and are maintaining it. At the end of the school year, we were notified that we were the recipients of a new DOE grant – ACES – Alcohol Coalition of East Suffolk. We look forward to getting this new initiative started in Rocky Point and Shoreham school districts in the 2009-2010 school year.