

REINFORCING POSITIVE STUDENT  
BEHAVIOR TO IMPROVE SCHOOL  
SAFETY

An Evaluation of Affirm

Ajay Khashu  
Thomas Mariadason  
Daniel Currie  
Robin Campbell

Vera Institute of Justice  
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Additional copies can be obtained from the communications department of the Vera Institute of Justice, 233 Broadway, 12<sup>th</sup> floor, New York, New York, 10279, (212) 334-1300.

Requests for additional information about the research described in this report should be directed to Ajay Khashu at the above address or to [akhashu@vera.org](mailto:akhashu@vera.org).

## Executive Summary

Across the United States, public schools are acquiring police and security officers in rapidly increasing numbers, but these officers receive mixed messages about how they are expected to make schools safe. Although some teachers and administrators urge police officers to focus exclusively on enforcement, many educational leaders and police chiefs are encouraging school safety personnel to play a more rounded role, enforcing discipline codes and criminal laws when necessary, while also engaging with students in positive ways to encourage and reinforce good behavior. Can school safety officers be effectively trained to play this more rounded role, and can safety officers—even with the best training—make schools safe?

To answer those questions, researchers from the Vera Institute evaluated a training program on positive reinforcement techniques delivered between April 2002 and June 2003 to 644 police personnel assigned to New York City public schools and another 84 school personnel. The training program, Affirm, consisted of a one-day classroom component followed by 30 days of field coaching. Researchers surveyed 379 of the trainees immediately following the training, and interviewed a sample of 31 safety agents at the end of the field coaching. Researchers observed the behavior of 85 agents before and after the training, measuring the ratio of positive to corrective interactions each had with students. Finally, researchers conducted school climate surveys of 538 students and 299 teachers in four schools, both before the training and again six months after the training.

The results show that school safety agents can be effectively trained to play this more complex role; but the training of safety agents alone is insufficient to improve the overall climate of safety in the absence of a coordinated effort among all school staff. The training was effective in that it was well received by the safety agents and produced a modest overall impact on their behavior, but surveys of students and teachers showed no improvement in school safety.

The results suggest that school officials, police chiefs, and the public in general should resist suggestions that police officers—even with the best training—can noticeably improve the climate of safety in schools on their own. We expect that real improvements in safety can be achieved only through the coordinated efforts of all professional staff in a school.

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## Introduction

Over the past several years, the number of law enforcement personnel in schools in the United States has grown substantially. A national survey of 1,234 school principals found that in 1997 31 percent of high schools utilized some combination of full- or part-time law enforcement personnel and metal detectors.<sup>1</sup> The following year, in 1998, the federal Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) office created the COPS in Schools program (CIS) to help jurisdictions around the nation increase the number of school-based law enforcement personnel, who are frequently referred to as school resource officers (SROs). Since that time, COPS has awarded \$715 million in grants to law enforcement agencies to hire 6,150 additional SROs.<sup>2</sup>

Most school resource officers share a similar beat—a school’s building and grounds. However, their roles, responsibilities, and strategies vary greatly from district to district and even from school to school. For some, the primary mandate is to investigate disruptive incidents and arrest students who break the law. Others see their job more complexly: their responsibilities may include counseling students on their problems and encouraging them to resist drugs or avoid gangs. A 2003 survey of school-based police personnel conducted by the National Association of School Resource Officers—a Florida-based nonprofit organization that serves as a national resource for SROs—found the most frequently cited task to be “one-on-one counseling of students,” followed by “calls for service to classrooms.” The complete list from that survey, listed below in Table 1, illustrates just how numerous and varied these roles can be.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Violence and Discipline Problems in U.S. Public Schools: 1996-97* (Washington, DC: USDOE, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> USDOJ, Office of Community Oriented Police Services, COPS FACT SHEET.

Table 1: Tasks Performed by School Resource Officers<sup>3</sup>

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER TASKS	PERCENTAGE OF SURVEYED OFFICERS WHO PERFORM TASK
One-on-one counseling with students	93
Calls for service to classrooms	88
Crisis preparedness planning	83
Security audits/assessments of school campuses	82
Special safety programs/presentations	78
Faculty/staff in-service presentations	75
Truancy intervention	70
Group counseling with students	69
Supervising/coordinating non-athletic extracurriculars	60
Field trip chaperone	57
Parent organization presentations	57
Coaching athletic programs	30

In many quarters, however, there is a belief that SROs are not being put to their most effective use. As the number of law enforcement personnel in schools increases, more and more school officials are turning their attention to defining the school resource officer role and balancing its responsibilities. They want SROs to enforce the law, but they also want them to build a healthy rapport with students and serve as role models in ways that do not create unrealistic expectations or lead to inappropriate relationships. By examining the effects of Affirm—a training program of the Vera Institute in cooperation with the New York City Department of Education and the New York Police Department (NYPD)—this report hopes to shed light on how one approach, teaching SROs to use positive reinforcement to prevent violence, might be used to address the complex issue of how law enforcement staff can interact with students most effectively.

### **School Safety Agents in New York City**

New York City has had law enforcement personnel in its public schools since 1969. These agents were originally recruited, trained, and managed by the city’s Board of Education, but in 1998, following several high profile incidents, these responsibilities

<sup>3</sup> National Association of School Resource Officers, *School Safety Threats Persist, Funding Decreasing: NASRO 2003 National School-Based Law Enforcement Survey* (Sarasota, Florida: NASRO, 2003.)

were transferred to the police department. Approximately 4,000 unarmed School Safety Agents (SSAs) now protect more than a million New York City public school students. Each high school has between 10 and 20 safety agents, three to five agents work in each middle school, and one or two work in each elementary school. The mission of the NYPD's School Safety Division is to "provide a safe environment where students and faculty can be free from hostility and disruptions."<sup>4</sup> They do this by monitoring entrances and overseeing metal detectors that scan students for weapons, patrolling school hallways and other non-classroom areas, and challenging unauthorized personnel who want to enter school buildings or grounds. When necessary, they may also work with police officers to issue summonses, and under certain circumstances they are permitted to arrest students.

SSA recruits go through eight weeks of classroom training at the NYPD's School Safety Training Unit. This course covers three main topics: police science, law, and behavioral science. While the behavioral science section emphasizes communication skills, including "verbal judo"—a technique to "deflect critical insults and break through resistance"—it is designed to help agents react to problem situations, not to prevent them. Following the in-class training, recruits are paired with experienced safety agents in schools around the city for two weeks, during which time they watch as the senior agents operate scanning equipment, interface with students, and patrol the school.

As part of the planning process for Affirm, Vera staff attended a training unit session for SSAs; observed SSAs at work in schools; researched other programs; and conducted focus groups with school safety agents, students, and parents. The focus groups revealed that many agents were discouraged from interacting with students for any purpose other than to interrupt or respond to a criminal or violent incident. One agent from a Manhattan high school said that he avoided talking with students altogether, for fear of being reported for engaging in unprofessional behavior. His comment, while extreme, accurately reflected a police department concern that without boundaries on their behavior, safety agents might become overly friendly with students or get involved in inappropriate relationships.

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<sup>4</sup> New York City Police Department, "School Safety Division." <http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/pct/school.html>, (September 25, 2003).

Yet the focus groups also showed that it is not uncommon for students to turn to school safety agents for attention and support. SSAs, who are predominantly African-American and Latino, are more racially and ethnically similar to New York City’s public school students than many of the other adult figures in schools, such as principals, assistant principals, and teachers. As one tenth grader from Brooklyn put it, “A lot of [school safety agents] can relate to you. They live in your neighborhood and understand your background and what you’ve been through. They’re interested in your life and want to help.”

Indeed, many safety agents were eager to take on this additional responsibility. “We could reach kids more effectively if we had a larger role in their lives,” said an agent at one Brooklyn high school. “It would allow kids to see us as something more than an authority figure.” Yet the academy training regimen, with its focus on identifying and responding to negative behavior, did not prepare safety agents to play this larger role. Those who did take the initiative to support students and encourage positive behavior did so without instruction about which behaviors to reinforce or how to do it effectively.

### **Demonstrating Affirm**

Studies show that saying or doing something positive after a student exhibits a desirable behavior can increase the likelihood that the student will continue the behavior, seek additional positive support, and avoid future negative behaviors.<sup>5</sup> Affirm offered SSAs instruction in specific techniques for reinforcing positive student behavior, using a curriculum developed in collaboration with the Oregon Social Learning Center.<sup>6</sup> The project differed from most school-based intervention strategies by targeting more than just youth identified as “troublemakers.” Affirm operated, instead, on the assumption that establishing and reinforcing expectations can be a preventative measure for the entire student body, including those students who merely test the waters of misbehavior to gauge the repercussions.

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<sup>5</sup> Hema Sareen, *Reinforcing Positive Student Behavior to Prevent School Violence* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> The Oregon Social Learning Center has successfully implemented programs that rely on positive reinforcement as a strategy to reduce aggression and improve healthy development among children and adolescents.



Affirm staff provided the training in two phases. The first part consisted of a full day of classroom training led by an Affirm trainer. This portion explained the theory behind positive reinforcement and was organized into five subtopics: how behavior is learned; how to become a skilled observer of positive student behavior; what student behaviors are appropriate to reinforce; techniques for reinforcing positive student behavior; and how to use the positive reinforcement techniques to improve behavior. The second part of the training consisted of a month of on-the-job field support.<sup>7</sup> During this phase, Affirm field trainers worked alongside SSAs in their assigned schools, providing coaching and feedback on how and when to apply positive reinforcement, and conducting ongoing assessments of the agents’ strengths and skills that needed improvement.

A total of 726 attendees, including SSAs, deans in charge of school safety, and other related personnel from 15 different schools participated in the classroom training (phase 1); 275 school staff members—SSAs, predominantly—participated in the field coaching (phase 2).<sup>8</sup> Table 2, below, provides a breakdown of which groups participated in each of the two phases.

Table 2: Breakdown of Affirm trainees

	<b># PARTICIPATING IN PHASE 1: CLASSROOM TRAINING</b>	<b># PARTICIPATING IN PHASE 2: FIELD COACHING</b>
Training Academy recruits	337	0
School Safety Agents	257	201
On-site Supervising School Safety Agents	30	22
NYPD School Safety Division Supervisors	20	1
Deans of Discipline	48	24
School Administrators	4	0
School Aides	30	27

<sup>7</sup> Affirm field trainers worked with each agent during two class periods each week.

## Methodology

In our evaluation of Affirm we sought to determine whether law enforcement personnel in schools could effectively learn and apply positive reinforcement and, if so, whether the resulting increase in the use of positive reinforcement techniques improved school climate. Our assessment could not utilize an experimental design because Vera’s researchers could not randomly assign schools to experimental or control conditions. (Programmatic considerations, not research design issues, governed the NYPD School Safety Division’s decisions about which schools would participate in the training.) Instead, we used a design that compared pre- and post-intervention assessments from individual SSAs and students’ responses to school climate surveys.

In carrying out the evaluation, we followed a model developed by Donald Kirkpatrick that is well-suited for assessing police training.<sup>9</sup> Kirkpatrick’s model measures outcomes at four levels.

- Level 1 (*Reactions*) describes how participants react to the training course—whether they enjoyed the training and found it relevant to their work, for example. Kirkpatrick calls this a measure of customer satisfaction.
- Level 2 (*Learning*) is defined as the extent to which participants change attitudes, improve knowledge, or increase skill as a result of participating in a training program.
- Level 3 (*Behavior*) gauges the extent to which behavior changes as a result of attending a training program.
- Level 4 (*Results*) refers to the ultimate outcomes that the training is intended to achieve.

Our evaluation focused on three of the four levels: reactions—we sought to measure whether SSAs found the Affirm training relevant to their work; behavior—we wanted to measure whether the Affirm training changed the agents’ use of positive reinforcement on the job; and results—we wanted to learn whether any improvements in school climate

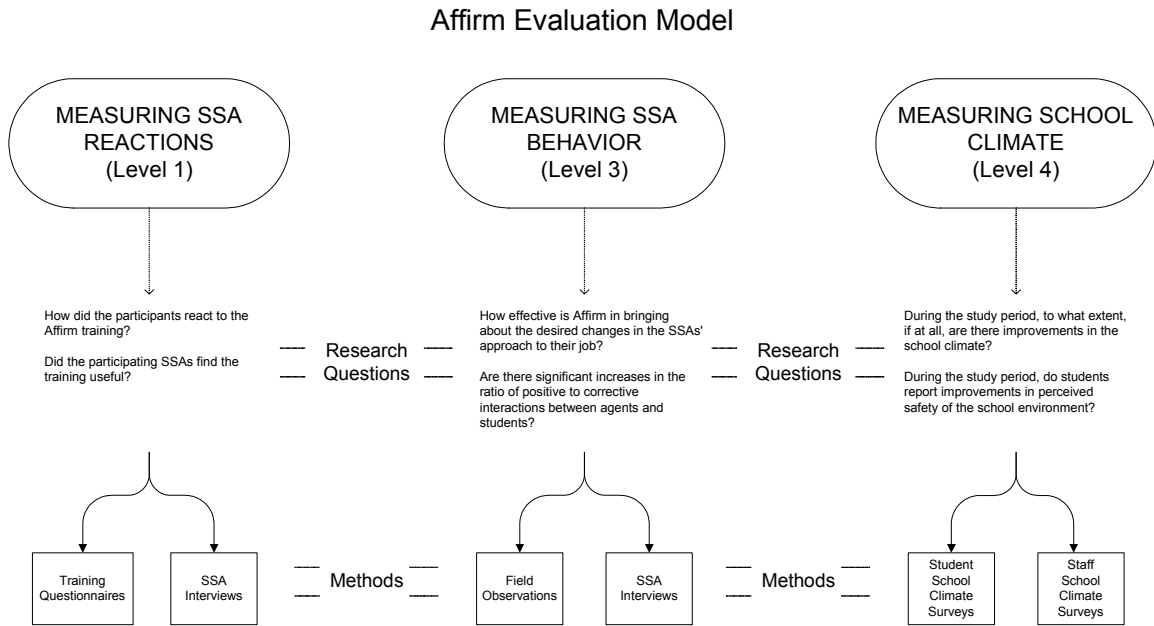
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<sup>8</sup> Several months into the demonstration, Affirm was asked to provide an abbreviated version of the classroom training to the School Safety Training Unit’s new class of SSA recruits. The program was not asked to provide the field training to these agents.

<sup>9</sup> Donald L. Kirkpatrick, *Evaluating Training Programs* (San Francisco: Barrett-Koehler, 1998). See also Jeff Bumgarner, “Evaluating Law Enforcement Training,” *Police Chief* 68, no. 11 (2001).

were evident after the Affirm training was completed. Figure 1 illustrates our research strategy.

Figure 1: Affirm Research Model



To assess SSA reactions to the Affirm training, we administered a questionnaire at the end of each day-long classroom session and interviewed a sample of agents from each participating school at the end of the field coaching component. The training questionnaires asked agents to describe their enjoyment of the classroom training and to rate the utility of each of its five components. The interviews invited the agents to elaborate on the overall experience and describe those aspects that were more or less useful. They also asked the agents to identify any barriers they faced in trying to apply any lessons they learned. The interviews were taped and transcribed, with participants' knowledge and consent.

To measure how effective the program was in changing behavior—getting school safety agents to use the positive reinforcement techniques they learned—Vera evaluators observed SSA interactions with students prior to and after the training. The observers classified each interaction they witnessed as either corrective (the traditional response to misbehavior), neutral, or positive (an encouraging response to good behavior). While we cannot precisely ascertain why SSAs might change their behavior, we interpreted changes

in the ratio of positive to corrective interactions from the first observation period to the second as evidence of the program's impact on the way agents interacted with students.

Ideally, researchers could have measured the results of the Affirm training—its impact on overall school climate—by examining official school incident data. However, the New York City Department of Education and the New York Police Department document only the most serious incidents: suspensions and criminal incidents. While informative, this data does not account for the range of low-level behavioral problems that Affirm sought to reduce. Neither does it illustrate how safe individuals feel at school—an important component of the overall school climate.

To better understand the program's impact, Vera researchers designed surveys to examine the perceptions and experiences of students and teachers both before, and six months after the Affirm training took place. (See Appendix A, Survey Instruments.) The confidential surveys, which were given to students by teachers, and to teachers by Affirm staff, elicited information about three experiences of school safety:

- students' and adults' experience of violent or disruptive behavior,
- their perception of safety in school, and
- students' trust in various adults within the school to respond helpfully to their school safety problems.

The surveys constituted an important source of data on the incidence of violence and other disruptive behavior, including incidents that were not reported or found in official records. But they should be interpreted with caution: because they were conducted at different times of the year at each school, changes in enrollment and attendance patterns might have influenced the results. Still, it seems reasonable to expect that if changes in SSA behavior influence school climate, the effect should be largely independent of the student population.

Scheduling and resource constraints prevented us from conducting all phases of the evaluation at each school where Affirm was implemented. The following table shows which levels of the assessment apply to each school. Our discussion of the SSAs' responses to Affirm is based on questionnaire and interview data collected from a total of 12 schools. The SSA behavior section is based on field observations from eight of these schools. And finally, we were able to conduct school climate assessments at four schools.

Throughout this report, we refer to individual schools using pseudonyms. We have done this to ensure the confidentiality that was promised to those schools that participated in the study.

Table 3: Schools participating in each level of the Affirm evaluation

SCHOOL	REACTIONS (LEVEL 1)	BEHAVIOR (LEVEL 3)	SCHOOL CLIMATE (LEVEL 4)
Magnolia	√	√	
Willow	√		
Cedar	√	√	√
Maple	√		
Pine	√	√	
Dogwood	√		
Beech	√	√	
Chestnut	√	√	√
Redwood	√	√	√
Cherry	√	√	
Hickory	√	√	
Poplar	√		√

## Findings: How Did Affirm Affect SSAs and School Climate?

### Measuring SSA Reactions (Level-1 Outcomes)

*Training questionnaires.* Evaluating the school safety agents' reactions to the Affirm classroom training is much like measuring customer satisfaction. For training to be effective and have lasting effects, trainees need to react to it favorably. Otherwise, they will not be motivated to absorb the lessons or transfer the experience to their everyday work. We measured SSA reaction to the Affirm training by handing out a short questionnaire at the end of each classroom session. Among other questions, the questionnaire asked agents to give an overall numerical rating of the training. The questionnaire also asked agents to rate the usefulness, or relevance, of the various components of the classroom training.

Table 4 draws from responses to the questionnaire presented to participants at the end of the day-long classroom session. It includes the overall ratings of the experience as reported by recruits who attended at the NYPD’s School Safety Training Unit and SSAs already assigned to schools. Seventy-five percent of attending SSAs rated the training as “good” or “excellent.” Among new recruits the training was even more popular: 86 percent rated it “good” or “excellent.” On a five-point scale that scored “poor” as 1 point and “excellent” as 5 points, the average overall rating provided by the academy recruits and SSAs was 4.4 and 4.1 respectively.<sup>10</sup>

Table 4: Overall Rating of Classroom Training

	<b>POOR</b>	<b>FAIR</b>	<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>GOOD</b>	<b>EXCELLENT</b>
Academy recruits	0%	3%	12%	32%	54%
SSAs	2%	3%	20%	30%	45%

Table 5 shows that 55 to 67 percent of the SSAs rated the various components of the training as “very useful.” Again, the academy recruits rated the training even higher. Seventy-six to 87 percent of these agents rated the various training topics as “very useful.” These ratings suggest that the Affirm training is more compelling to inexperienced agents who are about to begin their first assignments in schools. It is also worth noting that the agents found three topics to be somewhat more useful than others. These topics were: an introduction to the theory behind how behavior is learned, lessons on how to deliver verbal reinforcement, and lessons on how to deliver non-verbal reinforcement.

<sup>10</sup> There are no universal standards of acceptable ratings of training programs. Instead, Kirkpatrick recommends that each program establish a standard of acceptable performance based on past ratings of other trainings that program offers. Unfortunately, the School Safety Training Unit does not conduct a thorough evaluation of its in-service training programs.

Table 5: Usefulness Ratings

	% FINDING TRAININGS NOT VERY USEFUL		% FINDING TRAININGS SOMEWHAT USEFUL		% FINDING TRAININGS VERY USEFUL	
	Academy recruits	SSAs	Academy recruits	SSAs	Academy recruits	SSAs
Understanding how behavior is learned	0	5	13	29	87	66
How to give verbal positive reinforcement	1	5	12	29	87	66
How to give non-verbal positive reinforcement	2	5	16	28	82	67
How to shape positive behavior	1	7	23	38	76	55
How to model positive behavior	1	5	17	40	82	55
Understanding adolescent development	1	7	13	35	86	59

*Interviews.* The post-training interviews with SSAs provided additional insight into how the agents assessed the program and its usefulness. Those who had been on the job for fewer than five years and who had been trained by the New York Police Department tended to express a higher opinion of the training and a greater interest in incorporating new techniques in their day-to-day activities.<sup>11</sup> Not coincidentally, these were often the same agents who showed interest in pursuing advancement in the NYPD or the NYPD School Safety Division. Conversely, those who expressed doubts about the positive reinforcement training were more likely to express no interest in advancement in the division; often, these agents had been on the job longer and had been trained by the Board of Education.

When asked about their overall impressions of Affirm, many of the younger agents identified specific, positive changes in their own behavior or attitude towards students:

*If I hadn't taken the training I would've seen the kids as the brats that I saw them as before.*

<sup>11</sup> In December 1998, New York City transferred the supervision of its school safety agents from the then Board of Education to the New York City Police Department. See Hema Sareen, *Reinforcing Positive Student Behavior to Prevent School Violence* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2001.)

*...when I first came, I wasn't saying anything to the students. Now it's "Hi, how are you doing?" I got to know more kids as time went by and it helped out. A lot of kids know me now; they say "Oh, she's cool, she's a nice person." You hear them when they walk in the hallway.*

*The training helps a lot... Sometimes [kids] need a little reinforcement and the positive reinforcement will help you if you do it.*

*We're addressing them as young men and young ladies and saying "please."*

Some of the more experienced agents also praised the training, saying it offered them a fresh perspective on their jobs:

*When I first came to the job, I didn't know how to deal with children. The Vera training taught me how to talk to the kids...how to say good morning...to give them a reason to come to school. Vera taught me how to deal with kids. I think it's very effective....*

*It was an excellent program. Basically, we don't know it all. It brought up a lot of things I wasn't aware of. [It] helps you to take a conflict situation and calm it down.*

In a few cases, agents considered the training repetitive or, at best, useful for others:

*The training...was nothing new. I learned all of that in behavioral science [classes at the academy].*

*It's pretty much stuff that you do all the time.... Actually, I learned a lot more about how [agents] at other schools work, like the guy who called the kids "knuckleheads," which made me think that some of these guys really need it.*

But even some of those more experienced participants who said they were already applying positive reinforcement expressed appreciation for the way the training validated the techniques they were already using:

*...what we did with [the field trainers], we were already doing. But they showed me some more techniques that I can add to my skills about positive reinforcement. Like sometimes the kids might need a "good morning" or a "keep up the good work."*



*It helped me in a way of how I can use the words in different ways and how to approach the person in a different way than I probably normally would have, giving me more options.*

*I think it's reinforcing things [we learned in the academy]. It is just coming from a different angle and it's a way to keep us on our toes. It's a good reminder to show respect.*

Among those agents who expressed changed attitudes toward students as a result of the training, some specifically noted that they had developed a greater sensitivity to students' backgrounds and home lives:

*I kind of like, you know, always think about their background. So I try to just give them a little pat on the back.*

*We now try to turn bad kids around; he might have problems at home, but we try to use positive reinforcement.*

### **Measuring SSA Behavior (Level-3 Outcomes)**

The preceding section reflected on whether or not participants were engaged in the training, and therefore whether or not they were likely to learn the concepts. We now turn our attention to the outcomes of the Affirm training itself. As a proximal indicator of the program's influence we looked to find changes in agent behavior in the wake of their involvement with Affirm. More specifically, we wanted to learn whether or not agents who had been through the training changed how they interacted with students. Our field observations allowed us to construct a ratio of positive to corrective interactions.

We observed a total of 85 SSAs both before and after they participated in the Affirm training. Taken as a whole, we observed a statistically significant improvement in their ratio of positive to corrective interactions. Figure 2, below, compares the combined before and after ratio and the ratios at each of the schools where observations were conducted.

Figure 2: Summary of Field Observations

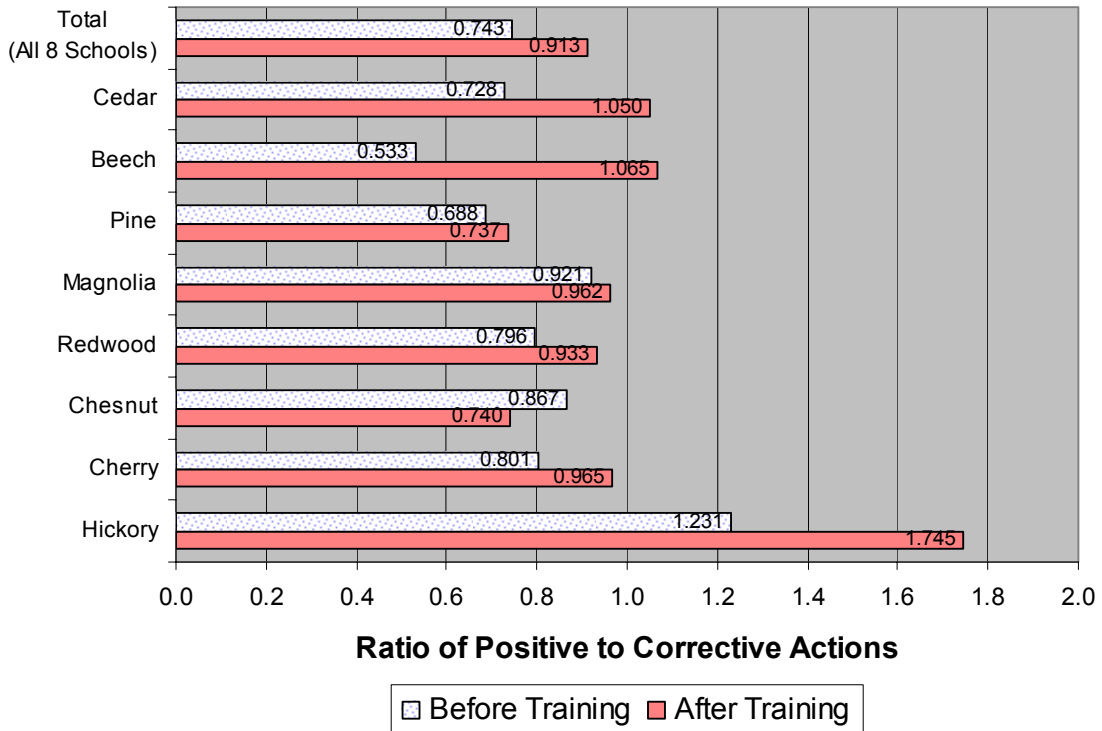


Table 6 presents the same information somewhat differently, by including a translation of each ratio into the equivalent number of positive reinforcements that occurred out of every 100 SSA-student interactions observed. At Cedar, for example, the overall ratio of positive to corrective interactions for SSAs was .728 before the training; in other words, for every 100 interactions observed, 42 of them were positive. After the training, the average ratio increased to 1.050, or 51 positive interactions out of every 100 observed. The resulting change, which appears in far right column, is nine additional positive interactions per every 100 total interactions, or an improvement of 21 percent.

Table 6: Field Observation Translated Ratios

SCHOOL	BEFORE TRAINING		AFTER TRAINING		CHANGE
	Ratio	Positives out of 100	Ratio	Positives out of 100	
<i>Total (All 8 Schools)</i>	.743	43	.913	48	5*
Cedar	.728	42	1.050	51	9*
Beech	.533	35	1.065	52	17*
Pine	.688	41	.737	42	2
Magnolia	.921	48	.962	49	1
Redwood	.796	44	.933	48	4
Chestnut	.867	46	.740	43	-4
Cherry	.802	45	.965	49	5
Hickory	1.231	55	1.745	64	8*

\* statistically significant at .05 level

When we combined the data from all eight schools, we found that the overall ratio of positive to corrective interactions increased from .743 to .913. This change is statistically significant. SSAs increased their proportion of positive to correction interactions with students at seven of the eight schools studied.<sup>12</sup> However, when we tested each school individually, we found that the improvements were significant at only three of the schools—Cedar, Beech, and Hickory.

Only one school, Hickory, had more positive interactions than corrective ones at the outset of the program. The before training ratio was 1.231, meaning that 55 out of every 100 interactions were positive. The improvement to a ratio of 1.745, or 64 positive reinforcements out of every 100 interactions observed after the training, suggests that Affirm training may have been useful even among agents who were already predisposed to providing students with positive reinforcement.

We looked to see if there were factors that set these three schools apart from the others, but found no clear pattern. These three trainings were conducted by two different members of the Affirm staff. The trainings also occurred at different points in the school year. In addition, there were no discernable differences in the demographic makeup of the SSAs at these schools or their level of experience. Moreover, the school climate differed

from one school to another at the point the Affirm training was introduced. Compared to Hickory, Cedar and Beech were both schools that experienced a relatively high number of school safety incidents. If we had additional resources it would be useful to return to these three schools to interview administrators, teachers, and school safety supervisors. We suspect that what set these schools apart was a greater level of cooperation and support for the goals of the training on the part of other segments of the school community.

### **Affirm's Influence on School Climate ( Level-4 Outcomes)**

The Affirm project was created with the ambitious goal of improving school climate. Consequently, in assessing the program's impact, we had to scrutinize the participating schools for evidence that such changes had occurred. The results from the student surveys we conducted before, and six months after, the training are discussed below.

*Experience of violent or disruptive incidents.* Our surveys asked students if, over the past 30 days, they had been victimized in any of five ways: had they been 1) hit, punched, or slapped, 2) kicked or tripped, 3) pushed or shoved, 4) hit with an object, or 5) threatened through use of body language. Table 7, below, indicates the percentage of respondents who answered affirmatively to these questions in each of the four schools that were surveyed.

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<sup>12</sup> The decline in the ratio of positive to corrective interactions observed at Chestnut High School may seem conspicuous. However, this result should not be interpreted any differently from the other four schools where no statistically significant change was observed.

Table 7: Incidents in the “last 30 days”

SCHOOL	HIT, PUNCH, OR SLAP YOU		KICK OR TRIP YOU		PUSH OR SHOVE YOU		HIT YOU WITH AN OBJECT		USE BODY LANGUAGE TO THREATEN YOU	
	Before Training	After Training	Before Training	After Training	Before Training	After Training	Before Training	After Training	Before Training	After Training
Cedar	10	15	8	9	21	25	13	13	18	22
Chestnut	5	3	2	4	11	9	8	3	12	13
Redwood	3	6	0	3	14	17	4	3	11	11
Poplar	5	5	4	5	18	18	8	10	11	17

We found no statistically significant changes in students’ experience of incidents during the study period. None of the four schools yielded a significant change in the number of students reporting that they were victimized in one of the five ways cited in our surveys.

*Perceptions of safety.* The surveys also asked students to describe how safe or unsafe they felt in three areas of the school: hallways, cafeterias, and the adjacent neighborhood. For each of these questions, they were given a seven-point scale with 1 indicating “extremely unsafe” and 7 “extremely safe.” Table 8 indicates the average ratings before and after the training at each of the four schools.

Table 8: Perceived safety in areas of school

SCHOOL	HALLWAYS		CAFETERIA		NEIGHBORHOOD AROUND SCHOOL	
	Before Training	After Training	Before Training	After Training	Before Training	After Training
	(Average Ratings: 1=extremely unsafe → 7=extremely safe)					
Cedar	4.42	4.42	4.11	3.92	3.85	4.07
Chestnut	4.37	4.34	4.41	4.31	3.91	4.22
Redwood	5.00	4.64	4.94	4.82	4.57	3.85*
Poplar	4.57	4.02*	4.22	4.09	4.21	3.78*

\* statistically significant at .05 level

We found no positive changes in students’ perceived level of safety during the study period. In fact, in our post-training assessment at one school, Poplar High School,

students reported that they felt less safe in the hallways than they had before the training was implemented. At two high schools, Redwood and Poplar, students’ reports indicated that after the training they felt less safe in the neighborhood around their school. When all three areas were taken into consideration, Redwood High School emerged as the school where students reported feeling the safest. This is despite the fact that there were no significant differences between the schools in terms of students’ perception of the neighborhood surrounding their schools.

*Students’ trust in adults.* We measured trust in various adults within the school—teacher, principal, guidance counselor, dean, and SSA—by asking students how likely they would be to consult with each in the event of a school safety-related problem. Students scored each category on a five-point scale, with 1 indicating they were “very unlikely” and 5 indicating they were “very likely” to trust them. Table 9 indicates the average scores before and after the training at each of three schools.

Table 9: Resource ratings (How likely are students to seek help from various adults?)

SCHOOL	TEACHER		PRINCIPAL		GUIDANCE COUNSELOR		DEAN		SSA	
	Before Training	After Training	Before Training	After Training	Before Training	After Training	Before Training	After Training	Before Training	After Training
Chestnut	3.17	2.89	3.26	2.69*	3.41	2.77*	3.37	2.83*	3.28	2.71*
Redwood	2.78	2.37	2.51	2.09	2.49	2.53	3.07	2.37*	2.72	2.11*
Poplar	2.86	2.49*	2.90	2.41*	3.18	2.68*	3.11	2.53*	3.09	2.45*

(Average Ratings: 1=very unlikely → 5=very likely)

\* statistically significant at .05 level

We found no positive changes in students’ reports of how likely they would be to go to an SSA were they to have a school safety problem. In fact, at all three schools where these questions were asked, there were significant declines in the students’ ratings of SSAs. It is interesting to note that there were significant declines in ratings for other staff categories as well. For example, students at all three schools reported declines in the likelihood that they would go to deans for help. At two of the three schools students’ ratings of principals and guidance counselors declined.

These findings suggest that over the course of the study period, students became less likely to perceive the various staff groups as a resource in the event of a school safety-related problem. The existence of the Affirm training at these three schools did not lead to improvements in the students' perceptions of SSAs.

## Discussion

In sum, we found that SSAs, especially those with less experience, responded positively to the Affirm training. Overall, the training led to modest improvements in the interactions agents had with students. However, these improvements reached statistical significance at only three of the participating schools and did not translate to any measurable improvements in school safety climate or students' experience of violence.

These findings raise two questions: why didn't the Affirm training have a more dramatic impact on SSAs' behavior towards students? And why didn't schools experience any measurable improvements in school climate?

### **Impact on SSA Behavior**

To answer the first question, it is useful to look again at the broad literature on training evaluation. Kirkpatrick argues that in order for behavior change to occur as a result of participation in a training program, four conditions must be present:

- 1) The trainee must be receptive to the concepts taught in the training.
- 2) The trainee must know what to do and how to do it.
- 3) The trainee must work in a climate that supports the goals of this training program.
- 4) The trainee must be rewarded for changing his or her behavior.

Our interviews with agents and their responses to training questionnaires make us confident that the SSAs were receptive to the concept of positive reinforcement. In the interviews, most agents described appropriate examples of using positive reinforcement, suggesting that they understood the concept and knew how to apply it to their work.

However, the interviews also revealed that many agents received conflicting signals from supervisors, teaching staff, and school administrators about the approach they should take in their work. When asked to describe the most important aspects of their

jobs, only a few agents explicitly discussed the use of positive reinforcement techniques and preventing problem behavior. Yet most of the agents described their role as being child-centered, and many said that they believed they were there to *help* students rather than just to punish or correct negative behavior. In their own view, the SSA's role encompassed a variety of tasks and skills that includes space for positive reinforcement:

*I describe it more like being a social worker and a parent and maybe even sometimes a parole officer.*

*I wear like 25 hats in here. I'm like a mom, a dad, security, and a counselor.*

In some schools, other adults did not share this view. Several agents told us that teachers and administrators had very different expectations about how SSAs should approach their jobs. Many said that instructional staff often expressed opposition to SSAs interacting with students in ways other than to correct behavior. In one school, teachers expressed opposition after an event was held that honored the positive reinforcement work of SSAs.<sup>13</sup> Many administrators, teachers, and deans we talked to expected SSAs to have minimal contact with students. In some cases, these individuals openly complained about the degree to which SSAs engage students.

The mixed support of other adults likely blunted enthusiasm for a positive reinforcement approach to school safety among the SSAs. It is also reasonable to suppose that these mixed messages may cause the impact of the training to diminish over time, though resources only allowed us to capture two data points. The words of two SSAs illustrate this tension:

*Some teachers think that we're here just to protect them. I mean, it's part of the job, but basically we're here for the kids more than for the teachers and administration.*

*Teachers don't know our jobs. They want us to clear out rooms. They don't know what we do.*

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<sup>13</sup> A letter that circulated among teachers complained that the event sent an improper message by encouraging SSAs to socialize with students.



The ambivalence of other adults toward a more positive approach by the SSAs might be overcome by a strong internal culture within the school safety administrative structure that includes incentives for applying the lessons from the training. However, leveraging the support of supervisors was a difficult task. Although Affirm worked closely with senior management in the NYPD's School Safety Division, individual supervisors had substantial discretion in their implementation and support of the program at the school level. Enthusiastic supervisors could promote the program, while those with a more corrective orientation had the ability to maintain that approach.

Supervisory support, alone, might not be sufficient to ensure greater behavioral change. Affirm might have been more broadly embraced if changes in behavior were tied to other factors, such as supervision, evaluations, salary reviews, and promotions. One of the techniques introduced by the Affirm program, for example, was a positive reinforcement letter that agents could distribute to students they observed behaving well or who improved their conduct. School safety supervisors could require agents to distribute a certain number of these letters on an ongoing basis. It might also be useful for supervisors to engage in an outreach campaign to school staff to clarify the role of school safety staff. Such an effort would help other school staff understand why SSAs take a particular approach and reinforce to the SSAs themselves that they are expected to engage in positive reinforcement.

Achieving this level of "buy-in" is a difficult task. Still, the limited evidence we have here suggests that to produce more marked change requires a greater degree of consensus about the training's aims and orientation than Affirm produced.

### **Impact on School Climate**

Affirm hoped that by changing SSA behavior it could improve the broader school safety climate. This is a worthy goal. It is also very ambitious, as the factors contributing to school climate are numerous, complex, and often related to factors outside of the school. A lack of parental supervision, exposure to violence in the media, and involvement with drugs and alcohol are among the external factors that observers have credited with

shaping school climate.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, as past research focused on the broader outcomes of police training has found, it is difficult to achieve far-reaching results from a training program alone.<sup>15</sup> However, Affirm planners reasoned that taking a positive reinforcement approach to school safety might lead to the same outcomes as reported in studies of community policing. Those studies showed that while implementing community policing did not reduce reported crime rates, it had a positive impact on people's fear of crime and disorder.<sup>16</sup>

It is tempting to reason that school climate did not improve because of the modest change in SSA behavior. This is, no doubt, a large contributing factor—along with the ambivalence of some staff and administrators involved in the training program. We believe, however, that there are other forces at work, as even in schools that saw statistically significant changes in SSA behavior, school safety climate remained static.

We suspect that Affirm failed to improve school climate because it did not reach a large enough segment of the school community. At the high schools where the training took place, SSAs are only a small fraction of the adult presence. Although Affirm staff met with principals and other key administrators to discuss the goals and logistics of the training, it targeted only one segment of the school community—school safety personnel; the broader school community remained largely unaware of Affirm. Given our findings that students often go to adults other than SSAs when they encounter safety problems at school, and given that modest changes in SSA behavior had no effect on school safety climate, it may be that large changes in SSA behavior alone are unlikely to produce climate change. Instead, as some studies have suggested, establishing consistency among

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<sup>14</sup> *The American Teacher, 1993: Violence in America's public schools. The Metropolitan Life survey* (New York: Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., 1993).

<sup>15</sup> For example, a randomized field experiment to test the impact of a Detroit program to train police recruits to be more sensitive and responsive to the psychological needs and reactions of crime victims found that police officers in the experimental group were more sensitive to the psychological impact of crime on victims, but this difference was not reflected in surveys of victims. See Arthur J. Lurigio and Dennis P. Rosenbaum, "The Travails of the Detroit Police-Victims Experiment: Assumptions and Important Lessons," *American Journal of Police* 11, no. 3 (1992).

<sup>16</sup> R.C. Trojanowicz and D.W. Banas, *The Impact of Foot Patrol on Black and White Perceptions of Policing* (Michigan: National Center for Community Policing, 1985.)

adults in approach and philosophy on school discipline is essential to improving school climate.<sup>17</sup>

Other efforts to improve school safety have shown that broad, multifaceted campaigns, particularly ones that involve administrators, teachers, parents, and students are likely to produce stronger effects. This is, in fact, how the Affirm training was implemented at two particularly challenged high schools this past year (see Appendix B).

## Conclusion

School safety remains contested terrain. The larger debates about the effects of a police presence on student perceptions and on safety itself find expression in the day-to-day work of frontline school safety staff. SSAs receive conflicting messages from supervisors, teaching staff, and Affirm trainers about how to interact with students. Consequently, despite a modest positive impact on SSA behavior, the training fell short of its ultimate goal to improve school climate.

These findings suggest important lessons about the conditions under which Affirm training—indeed, training in general—might be more useful. Support for a positive reinforcement strategy should be widespread among school staff, and incentives should be designed to put concrete meaning behind that support. To the extent resources allow, staff other than SSAs should receive the same training. Finally, we suspect that Affirm training would work best as one piece in a comprehensive effort to improve school safety.

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<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, *Safeguarding Our Children: An Action Guide*, 2000.

## Appendix A: Survey Instruments

# School Climate Survey

Vera Institute of Justice

Student Questionnaire

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**Instructions:** The students at your school have been chosen to fill out this survey about school safety and other issues. This is not a test. These questions have no right or wrong answers. However, please do your best to answer these questions truthfully. Read each question carefully before answering and mark the appropriate answer on the **attached answer sheet**. **Do not** mark your answers on this questionnaire. Mark only one answer per question unless the instructions tell you to “mark all that apply”. To ensure your privacy, please **do not** write your name on the answer sheet. Fill in the circles completely and darkly using a pencil or pen. Do not make any other marks on the answer sheet.

Q1. How old are you?

1. 12 or younger
2. 13
3. 14
4. 15
5. 16
6. 17
7. 18
8. 19
9. 20 or older

Q2. What is your official grade?

1. Ninth
2. Tenth
3. Eleventh
4. Twelfth

Q3. Are you repeating this grade?

1. Yes
2. No

Q4. Are you a male (boy) or female (girl)?

1. Male
2. Female

Q5. How do you describe yourself ethnically?  
(mark *all* that apply)

1. White
2. Black (African-American)
3. Hispanic (Latino)
4. Asian
5. Pacific Islander
6. American Indian
7. Other

Q6. In the **last 30 days**, have you ever had any of the following stolen from you while you were at your current school?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
a. Backpack, bag, wallet or purse .....	1	2
b. Clothing or shoes .....	1	2
c. Jewelry .....	1	2
d. Books .....	1	2
e. Calculator or other school supply ...	1	2
f. Bicycle or other sports equipment .	1	2

Q7. How often do the following things occur in your school?

	<u>Never</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Very often</u>
a. Murder.....	1	2	3	4	5
b. Rape .....	1	2	3	4	5
c. Physical conflicts among students .....	1	2	3	4	5
d. Physical conflicts against teachers/staff .....	1	2	3	4	5
e. Student possession of weapons .....	1	2	3	4	5
f. Theft .....	1	2	3	4	5
g. Vandalism, graffiti .....	1	2	3	4	5
h. Student lateness .....	1	2	3	4	5
i. Student absenteeism .....	1	2	3	4	5
j. Class cutting .....	1	2	3	4	5
k. Student alcohol use .....	1	2	3	4	5
l. Trespassing .....	1	2	3	4	5
m. Student drug use.....	1	2	3	4	5
n. Student tobacco use .....	1	2	3	4	5
o. Verbal abuse of teachers/staff	1	2	3	4	5
p. Racial tensions .....	1	2	3	4	5
q. Gang involvement .....	1	2	3	4	5

Q8. How safe or unsafe do you feel in the following places?

	<u>Very Safe</u>	<u>Somewhat Safe</u>	<u>In between</u>	<u>Somewhat Unsafe</u>	<u>Very Unsafe</u>
a. The school overall.....	1	2	3	4	5
b. School entrance .....	1	2	3	4	5
c. Hallways .....	1	2	3	4	5
d. Stairwells .....	1	2	3	4	5
e. Classrooms .....	1	2	3	4	5
f. Bathrooms .....	1	2	3	4	5
g. Cafeteria .....	1	2	3	4	5
h. School playground or field ...	1	2	3	4	5
i. Parking Lot .....	1	2	3	4	5
j. Gymnasium .....	1	2	3	4	5
k. The neighborhood around the school .....	1	2	3	4	5

Q9. If something or someone in your school made you feel unsafe, how likely would you be to go to the following people for help?

	<u>I Would Go</u>	<u>I Might Go</u>	<u>In-between</u>	<u>I Might Not Go</u>	<u>I Would Not Go</u>
a. A teacher.....	1	2	3	4	5
b. A principal, asst. principal, or other administrator	1	2	3	4	5
c. A guidance counselor.....	1	2	3	4	5
d. A school dean.....	1	2	3	4	5
e. A school safety agent.....	1	2	3	4	5
f. A school nurse.....	1	2	3	4	5
g. A school aide.....	1	2	3	4	5
h. A friend.....	1	2	3	4	5

Q10. In the **last 30 days**, did anyone do any of the following to you on purpose **at school or on school grounds**?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
a. <i>Hit, punch, or slap you</i> .....	1	2
b. <i>Kick or trip you</i> .....	1	2
c. <i>Push or shove you</i> .....	1	2
d. <i>Hit you with an object</i> .....	1	2
e. <i>Use body language to threaten you (i.e. get in your face).....</i>	1	2

If you answered “**No**” to all of the options under question #10, skip to question #14.

Q11. If you answered “**Yes**” to **any** of the options under question #10, us where did these things happen? (mark *all* that apply)

1. School entrance
2. Hallway
3. Stairwell
4. Classroom
5. Bathroom
6. Cafeteria
7. School playground or field
8. Parking lot
9. Gymnasium
10. The neighborhood around the school

Q12. If you answered “**Yes**” to **any** of the options under question #10, did you tell any adult at your school about these incidents?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

If you answered “**No**” to question #12, skip to question #14.

Q13. If you answered “**Yes**” to question #12, whom did you tell about the incident(s)? (mark all that apply)

- 1. A teacher
- 2. A principal, assistant principal, or other school administrator
- 3. A school safety agent
- 4. A guidance counselor
- 5. A school dean
- 6. A school nurse
- 7. A school aide

Q14. In the **last 30 days**, have you done any of the following things because you were worried that someone might hurt or bother you at school?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
a. Take a special route to get to school? .....	1	2
b. Stay away from certain places in the school? .....	1	2
c. Stay away from certain places outside the school? .....	1	2
d. Try to stay in a group? .....	1	2
e. Stay home from school? .....	1	2

Q15. Have you ever brought something to school to protect yourself from being attacked or harmed?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

Q16. Do you know if any other students have brought weapons into this school?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No



Q17. Some different ways to describe the **teachers** who work in your school are listed in **bold** letters below. Please fill in the bubble that best describes the **teachers** at your school.

**a. Caring/Uncaring**

Extremely Caring	Very Caring	Somewhat Caring	In-between	Somewhat Uncaring	Very Uncaring	Extremely Uncaring
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

**b. Fair/Unfair**

Extremely Fair	Very Fair	Somewhat Fair	In-between	Somewhat Unfair	Very Unfair	Extremely Unfair
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

**c. Helpful/Unhelpful**

Extremely Helpful	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	In-between	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Extremely Unhelpful
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

Q18. Some different ways to describe the **school safety agents** who work in your school are listed in **bold** letters below. Please fill in the bubble that best describes the agents at your school.

**a. Caring/Uncaring**

Extremely Caring	Very Caring	Somewhat Caring	In-between	Somewhat Uncaring	Very Uncaring	Extremely Uncaring
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

**b. Fair/Unfair**

Extremely Fair	Very Fair	Somewhat Fair	In-between	Somewhat Unfair	Very Unfair	Extremely Unfair
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

**c. Helpful/Unhelpful**

Extremely Helpful	Very Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	In-between	Somewhat Unhelpful	Very Unhelpful	Extremely Unhelpful
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

Q19. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>In between</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>
a. I feel welcome and comfortable in the school.....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
b. Everyone knows the school rules. ....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
c. The school rules are fair.....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
d. The school rules are too strict.....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
e. The school makes sure that students follow the rules.....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
f. If a rule is broken, students know its punishment.....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
g. The punishment for breaking school rules is the same for everyone.....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
h. Adults in the school explain the reasons for rules.....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
i. Students treat each other respectfully. ....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
j. Students treat teachers respectfully. ....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
k. Teachers treat students respectfully. ....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
l. School safety agents treat students respectfully.....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
m. Guidance counselors treat students respectfully.....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
n. Administrators listen to students' complaints.....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
o. A few bad students can ruin the class for everyone.....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

# School Climate Survey

Vera Institute of Justice

Staff Questionnaire

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**Instructions:** The staff at your school have been selected to participate in a survey about school climate issues. Staff from schools throughout New York City will be completing this survey. To protect your privacy and the secrecy of your answers, **DO NOT** write your name anywhere on this questionnaire or on the attached answer sheet. Please read each question carefully before answering. Mark your responses on the attached **answer sheet**. Do **not** mark your answers on this questionnaire. Mark only one answer per question unless the instructions advise otherwise. Make heavy, dark marks that completely fill the circles. If you want to change an answer, erase it completely and then fill in your new choice.

Q1. Are you male or female?

- 1. Male
- 2. Female

Q2. Which of the following best describes your highest level of education?

- 1. Did not complete high school or GED
- 2. Completed high school
- 3. Some college or trade school
- 4. Completed a bachelor's degree
- 5. Some graduate or professional school after college
- 6. Completed a graduate degree

Q3. How many years have you worked at this school?

(mark your response on the answer sheet)

Q4. How many years **in total** have you worked in the education field?

(mark your response on the answer sheet)

Q5. What is your current occupation?

- 1. Administrator
- 2. Custodian
- 3. Dean
- 4. Guidance Counselor
- 5. School Aide
- 6. School Safety Agent
- 7. Teacher
- 8. Other School Personnel

Q6. How often do the following things occur in your school?

	<u>Never</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Very often</u>
a. Murder .....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
b. Rape .....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
c. Physical conflicts among students .....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
d. Physical conflicts against teachers/staff .....	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

Q6., cont. How often do the following things occur in your school?

	<u>Never</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Very often</u>
e. Student possession of weapons .....	1	2	3	4	5
f. Theft.....	1	2	3	4	5
g. Vandalism, graffiti .....	1	2	3	4	5
h. Student lateness .....	1	2	3	4	5
i. Student absenteeism .....	1	2	3	4	5
j. Class cutting .....	1	2	3	4	5
k. Trespassing .....	1	2	3	4	5
l. Student drug use .....	1	2	3	4	5
m. Student tobacco use .....	1	2	3	4	5
n. Student alcohol use.....	1	2	3	4	5
o. Verbal abuse of teachers/staff..	1	2	3	4	5
p. Racial tensions .....	1	2	3	4	5
q. Gang involvement.....	1	2	3	4	5

Q7. How often do fights or disruptions occur in the following places?

	<u>Never</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Often</u>	<u>Very Often</u>
a. School entrance .....	1	2	3	4	5
b. Hallways .....	1	2	3	4	5
c. Stairwells .....	1	2	3	4	5
d. Classrooms.....	1	2	3	4	5
e. Bathrooms.....	1	2	3	4	5
f. Cafeteria.....	1	2	3	4	5
g. School playground or field .....	1	2	3	4	5
h. Parking Lot.....	1	2	3	4	5
i. Gymnasium.....	1	2	3	4	5
j. The neighborhood around the school .....	1	2	3	4	5

Q8. In the **last 30 days**, has anyone attacked or threatened you on school property in any of the following ways?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
a. Hit, punch, or slap you .....	1	2
b. Kick or trip you .....	1	2
c. Push or shove you .....	1	2
d. Hit you with an object .....	1	2
e. Use body language to threaten you.....	1	2

Q9. If you answered yes to any of the items in question #8, did you report the incident?

1. Yes
2. No

If you are a teacher, continue on to question #10. Otherwise, skip to question #12.

Q10. How often has disruptive student behavior interfered with your ability to teach your classes?

1. Never
2. Rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Often
5. Very often

Q11. If you are a teacher, have you received professional development in the following subjects?

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
a. Classroom management .....	1	2
b. Violence prevention .....	1	2
c. Other safety topics .....	1	2

Q12. Does your school use any of the following and if so, how effective are they?

	<u>Not used</u>	<u>Not at all Effective</u>	<u>Somewhat Effective</u>	<u>Very Effective</u>
a. Metal detectors .....	1	2	3	4
b. Student ID cards .....	1	2	3	4
c. Staff ID cards .....	1	2	3	4
d. Surveillance cameras .....	1	2	3	4
e. Cutting/holding room(s) .....	1	2	3	4
f. Hallway sweeps .....	1	2	3	4
g. Token economy/program for rewarding positive student behavior .....	1	2	3	4

Q13. How effective are your school safety agents (SSAs) at ...

	<u>Not at all Effective</u>	<u>Somewhat Effective</u>	<u>Very Effective</u>
a. Preventing incidents .....	1	2	3
b. Breaking up incidents .....	1	2	3
c. Reporting incidents .....	1	2	3

Q14. How would you describe the relationship between **school safety agents** and the following groups at your school?

	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Excellent</u>
a. Teachers.....	1	2	3	4	5
b. Administration.....	1	2	3	4	5
c. Other Staff .....	1	2	3	4	5
d. Students.....	1	2	3	4	5
e. Parents .....	1	2	3	4	5

Q15. How would you describe the relationship between **teachers** and the following groups at your school?

	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Excellent</u>
a. Administration .....	1	2	3	4	5
b. Students.....	1	2	3	4	5
c. Parents .....	1	2	3	4	5

Q16. How would you characterize the following in your school?

	<u>Very Positive</u>	<u>Somewhat Positive</u>	<u>Somewhat Negative</u>	<u>Very Negative</u>
a. Teacher morale .....	1	2	3	4
b. Student attitudes toward achievement ...	1	2	3	4
c. Parental support for student achievement	1	2	3	4
d. Availability of resources in the classroom	1	2	3	4

Q17. Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Somewhat Disagree</u>	<u>In between</u>	<u>Somewhat Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>
a. I feel welcome and comfortable in the school. ....	1	2	3	4	5
b. Everyone knows the school rules. ....	1	2	3	4	5
c. The school rules are fair. ....	1	2	3	4	5
d. The school makes sure that students follow the rules.	1	2	3	4	5
e. If a rule is broken, students know its punishment. ....	1	2	3	4	5
f. The punishment for breaking school rules is the same for everyone. ....	1	2	3	4	5
g. Adults in the school explain the reasons for rules. ...	1	2	3	4	5
h. Students treat each other respectfully. ....	1	2	3	4	5
i. Students treat teachers respectfully. ....	1	2	3	4	5
j. Teachers treat students respectfully. ....	1	2	3	4	5

## Appendix B: Implementing Affirm as Part of a Comprehensive Strategy

In November 2002, the New York City Department of Education asked Vera to assist it in improving safety conditions within its “high priority schools,” those schools that experience a comparatively high frequency of safety incidents. The Department of Education identified 10 such schools, based on their having the highest incident rates for New York City high schools with a population more than 500 students. From December 2002 through June 2003, Affirm program and research staff conducted comprehensive needs assessments and provided strategic planning support to two of these schools. In partnership with school administrators and staff, Vera worked to identify and prioritize safety concerns, recommend short- and long-term solutions, and implement solutions.

Participating staff at both schools concluded that a comprehensive system to reward positive student behavior was needed. These schools also had difficulty establishing and consistently enforcing their discipline code. They concluded that both education and school safety staff needed to provide consistent, positive reinforcement of good student behavior in order to make their discipline system effective. The Affirm training was implemented at both of these schools as a way to bolster the use of positive reinforcement. These schools offer an interesting opportunity to test the efficacy of the Affirm training where it is implemented as one part of a broad school-wide strategy to promote positive student behavior.