



Life Skills Advisor

STYC

December 2022

Sample of letter sent to South Texas  
Representatives and Senators.

## We the Students

Dear Friend:

We are high school students from the Rio Grande Valley and members of the South Texas Youth Congress.

We ask you to consider our proposal, Life Skills Advisors. This proposal is similar to previous House Bills. HB 1640 in 2019 and HB 4023 in 2021. Both passed the House by wide margins, however each time they stalled in the Senate.

Each Bill has this Caption

*relating to establishing a pilot program to employ a life skills counselor at public high school campuses in certain counties.*

In our proposal we think that an Advisor best captures our purpose rather than Counselor.

We also see a Life Skills Advisor as a first responder to an incidence in which the police is at times the first response.

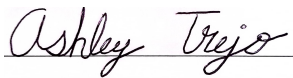
There are many things we do with school. And there is work and home life. This creates stress for many, some withdraw, some can not cope and build resentment. Rivalries break out. We see how some students are troubled by their mental health.

Our proposal includes an idea we call, Life Skills Circle. We have more on this in the proposal.

We try to keep focus on the employment of Life Skills Advisors in public schools. Advisors trained to identify students who require mental health care. Provide help on priorities, time management, engage a curriculum. Coordinate special resources and also with law enforcement. Hold discussion time with student's school life. An Advisor would preside over a student-led Life Skills Circle.

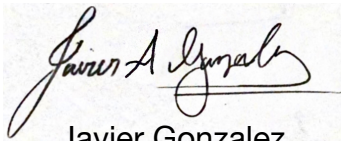
For more please see Life Skills proposal.

Thank you, respectfully submitted in behalf of STYC members:



Ashley Trejo

Junior Rivera HS  
Brownsville, Texas



Javier Gonzalez

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**LISA**

Proposal

For more information please contact:

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**STYC**

STYC and iCharla Podcast are initiatives of the Dream Forward Foundation (DF).  
IRS 501c3 organization operating in Texas.

# LISA Proposal

December 2022

Life Skills Advisors  
For Healthy and Safe Public Schools

## Welcome

by Ashley, Javier, Jesse James

Our proposal includes four main points.

- Student's Stress
- First Responder
- 'Harden'
- Life Skills Circle

We would like to share this with you.

The covid pandemic showed us that schools were not prepared to deal with poor bandwidth, not capable to deliver content classroom style. Symptoms of isolation rose. When we began to return to school there were health and sanitation measures against the virus. And we wonder about students in crowded hallways intensifying transmission and tension.

Today, nearly two years after the lockdown school is open but not like before. We know that many kids in one place will create disruption in which a student is charged violating school policy. Here we see a Life Skills Advisor serving as a first responder instead of the police as the first response.

The hectic pace of school produces stress in our lives.

We see that school 'Harden' sends a message of insecurity which leads to tension.

The Life Skills Circle is an idea we believe deserves consideration.

Please see the [Links](#) page, for clips and studies.

Thank you.

## Student's Stress

by Ashley Trejo

Bell rings and students rush along crowded noisy hallways. The class start time bell rings and it takes ten minutes for everyone to settle in and get their supplies out. Then five minutes for roll call. This leaves the teacher about 25 minutes for instruction. And before the next bell we take around five minutes to pack up before we are back in the hallway. It goes on like this eight times each school day.

It doesn't end there, many of us have extracurricular activities that go for two hours. And some days we don't leave school until eight at night. And mid-night sometimes because of games.

This system affects our academic performance because it's hurry hurry to the next thing. Which produces guess what, more stress.

One example is that sometimes our grades are not turned in on time. Not knowing the status of our grade brings on stress.

Pressure mounts in our junior and senior year with the weight and rush of college applications. And everyone dreads the STAAR test. Online connection is not always good and we are logged off and unable to log back in and receive an incomplete.

We don't need this anxiety in our school life.

School for many of us it is like a second home because we live most of our time there.

Our proposal has more about a Life Skills Advisor which we think can provide methods to ease and relax anxiety and stress. An Advisor to hold discussion time on student's school and home life.

Shouldn't it be a healthy learning environment.

## Advisor as **First Responder**

by Javier Gonzalez

In previous Life Skills proposals the term Counselor was used. We now believe that Advisor best captures our purpose instead of Counselor.

We see a Life Skills Advisor as a first responder to an incidence in which the police is at times the first response.

For instance, one day I saw two female students arguing in the hallway. Right away an on-campus police stepped in between them to break up the argument. This escalated the situation and the officer slammed one of the girls onto the concrete floor. I have seen police come into a classroom to handle a disruption. They end up being handcuffed and arrested and taken away in a police car with everyone looking on. When the police are involved the student has a record in the youth criminal system.

I believe a different approach could have been taken.

An advisor could have handled the scuffle between the students differently. The advisor would be known, not a threat, and trained to relax tensions. The advisor would schedule time to meet with the students for an initial interview.

This can help relief reliance on police enforcement. And avoid the severe consequences of a police record. What is gained with this punishment? In marking a student with an arrest record for an incident that could have been handled differently by an advisor.

I imagine an advisor as someone trained to help guide students to cope, help adjust priorities and time. And recommend adjustments to a student's schedule.

From what I have seen, police are not trained to deal with students. Some studies, and among enforcement groups, point out that the police prefer not to do school duty.

No matter what, students will at times disrupt class. I see it in my school. Many small incidences are heighten by police presence.

An atmosphere of fear, intimidation, and mistrust is not a good learning environment. It produces low academic performance and less attendance.

We prefer an alternative. Students being part of the solution.

## **'Harden'**

by Jesse James Guerra

For me school safety means community safety.

Today harden is more and more beginning to look like a reactive response to school shootings. Some measures make students feel overwhelmed, closed in.

I have looked at clippings, and read reports and some studies. The way I understand the word Harden as used by some tends to mean measures like one school entrance, police on campus, gates, dogs to sniff out weapons and drugs. These are measure proposed by some and many are already in use but want to further Harden. Harder and restrictive action make students feel on edge.

I do understand that certain measures are needed to secure a campus. But the measure of one entrance is something that even large retailers do not do. And I wonder what the Fire Marshall has to say.

Some reports point out how billions in public funds are being invested to secure schools and how an industry of vendors now supply Harden services and devices.

Maybe a second look can help find a balance of resources for a new Harden and for Life Skills Advisors. This can help relief current Harden measures.

Among students there are grudges, disagreements, disruptions and fights breakout. A student can reach their breaking point and have access to a gun and take out resentment at the school. Early detection and attention by advisors can help avoid this.

I think that a campus can be made to feel secure and include life skills advisors.

Some aspects of 'Hardin' and police presence heighten tensions, students become uneasy.

Our focus is the employment of a life skills advisor because hard measures create stress and then we have poor academic performance. It affects our life.

## Life Skills Circle

by Ashley, Javier, Jesse James

A life skills advisor is an alternative to the cost of calling the police for school disciplinary problems. Police prefer not to do this. Many studies have been done, please see the [Links](#) page.

Learning how to conduct a circle is good for students because the process involves us as part of the solution.

The Circle would be an alternative to police involvement. And give the student a second chance.

A circle could be 5-7 students. Advisors and school administration would select students to serve in a circle. An Advisor would preside over the student-lead circle. The school would provide a space to hold the circle. Where students are seen and included in the solution.

The circle would hold an open discussion with the student to hear their side of the incident. Next the circle would ask questions, call witnesses and review evidence. They would issue a recommendation and submit it to school administration. The recommendation could include both, restricting certain non-academic school activities and community service.

If the student is found by the circle to not have violated school policy as charged, the circle would issue an open letter in the student's favor and submit it to school administration to consider in their decision making. This could serve as a platform for other student groups.

We see how bad peer pressure creates disruptive behavior. And think that the peer presence of fellow students in a circle make a healthy learning environment.

## Closing remarks:

by Ashley, Javier, Jesse James

Working on this proposal has been a challenge. We have talked about our school and home schedule and the stress of it all.

So why did we make time to work on a proposal. Last month we took on the work on putting one together. We joined STYC last May. We visited with Armando in person and met many times online. A few weeks ago he told us that we had to turn in a proposal this month.

We had never done anything like this. He said something like no big deal two groups before you have done it. He advised us to stay focus and review the [podcast](#) we did with state representative JM Lozano. To use that and previous Life Skills proposals as a guide.

At first online meetings seemed chaotic. Then in each meeting we began to zoom in on four main points. And off we were thinking about it, rewriting, doing edits online. The more we worked on it the answer of why began to appeared.

We do this because we have an opportunity unlike any where else. Where can a group of high school students produce a proposal for action. Probably an experience unlike any in Texas for us. And work to produce a proposal which can be reflected in a legislative bill. And go to Austin to visit members at the Capitol to promote for Life Skills Advisors.

We would like to make a comment.

The presence of police and security services heighten tensions among students. It is a huge distraction on an already hectic school schedule. Police in a classroom to handle a disruption has a cost on school budgets. The cost to handcuff students, arrest and take away in a police car. For everyone to see. What is the cost of that?

No matter what, students at times will disrupt class. We are teenagers and school is a large part of our lives.



Eight months ago the shooting in Uvalde happened. It was last May. We were near the end of our school year when everyone got the news. Children gun down. Our first reaction was disbelief. But also not a complete surprise. Like routine, and the arguments go on and on.

Schools are made secure yet we mostly do not feel safe. On campus police and security services and students in a confined space is not a good mix.

There is a phrase previous STYC members have used in different ways. One is, Our Destiny is your Legacy, another group turned it around to, Your Legacy is our Destiny. There are other variations. We now say Legacy is Destiny.

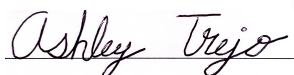
We continue to learn and have come to understand the word investment to mean to pay now for progress.

We enjoy contributing our part. Because healthy schools and safe communities are connected.

Help us to continue our work for Life Skills Advisors in public schools.

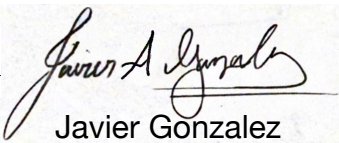
Thank you,

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