In the following report, Hanover Research presents research-based strategies for preventing and responding to incidents of bullying and harassment in large public school districts. The report provides an overview of recent research on effective prevention and intervention practices and includes three extensive case studies of successful anti-bullying practices at other large public school districts.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This report contains two sections exploring research-based strategies for preventing and responding to incidents of bullying and harassment in large public school districts. Section I summarizes research on best practices in bullying prevention and response and discusses the relationship between prevention and response strategies. Section II provides detailed profiles of the bullying prevention, reporting, and response strategies at three large public school districts with a proven record of effective anti-bullying programs. Each of these districts ranked as one of the 12 largest public school districts in the United States according to the most recent enrollment data available.

KEY FINDINGS

GENERAL FINDINGS

- Strategies for classifying bullying can vary, but most sources categorize different types based upon the medium (e.g., physical, online, etc.) or the type of harm inflicted (e.g., physical, emotional, reputational, etc.). The mediums and types of behavior included in these definitions determine which types of incidents are treated as bullying by school districts. Most district definitions include cyberbullying, which is defined as bullying or harassment that occurs online, via text messages, or over social media. In addition to physical and emotional abuse, some definitions also include attempts to exclude the victim or damage his or her reputation, and even certain types of property crime such as theft and vandalism.

- Especially in large districts that include dozens or hundreds of schools, developing a comprehensive, flexible relationship between school- and district-level policies is a key consideration for effective bullying prevention and intervention strategies. Effective programs at large districts generally rely on the central district office to draft a universal anti-bullying policy, develop a system for reporting incidents, and provide a general framework to guide bullying prevention and intervention efforts at individual schools. Often, but not always, districts choose flexible bullying education curricula for students and allow component schools to develop age and context-appropriate variations during implementation.

BULLYING PREVENTION

- Bullying prevention strategies should have multiple, tiered levels of education and intervention that provide comprehensive, school-wide bullying awareness and intervention training to all students and targeted, intensive support for bullies and victims. Common prevention curricula include intensive orientation programs on bullying and cyberbullying at the start of the school year. Best practices literature states that bullying incidents are less common in schools where adults model
positive, respectful treatment and also recommends outreach and education for families in order to mitigate bullying or abuse at home.

- **Anti-bullying education curricula should be comprehensive and systematically applied in order to eliminate gaps in programming.** Recent research recommends Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) curricula that foster social and emotional skills and help children master life challenges and thrive in their learning and social environments. While some experts caution against applying out-of-the-box anti-bullying programs without adapting them to local conditions in each district school, commercial SEL programs can be effective.

- **Staff members and even selected populations of students such as student leaders should be thoroughly and recurrently trained to recognize and report bullying and to intervene effectively.** Evidence suggests that mentoring programs between older and younger students and strong, caring student-teacher relationships can prevent bullying and mitigate its effects. Both of these strategies are shown to be particularly effective during the crucial time when students transition to middle school.

**BULLYING RESPONSES**

- **Districts must provide multiple methods for students, parents, and staff to report abuse, ensure that all stakeholders are aware of these communication channels, and respond to all allegations promptly.** Common reporting methods include student and parent forms, telephone hotlines, email reporting, websites, and text message reporting. Many districts provide students with anonymous bullying report forms. Once an incident has been reported, districts or schools should have a procedure in place to investigate and record the incident and hold themselves to a deadline for responding.

- **Once an incident has been reported, district policies need to ensure the safety of the victim, interview witnesses and gather evidence, notify the parents or guardians of affected students, and provide targeted support to the students involved.** Victims may require access to counselors and formal district or court-supported orders to separate them from aggressors. Research has shown that perpetrators benefit from responses such as mediation and restorative justice programs that focus on rebuilding relationships in the wake of an incident, but experts also caution against relying exclusively on ameliorative, rather than punitive, measures.

- **Accurate information about the number, location, and types of bullying incidents should be collected after each occurrence, and schools should conduct annual school climate assessments to identify problematic trends and assess current prevention and response practices.** Once collected, this information can be used to modify anti-bullying strategies, target bullying hotspots (either physical or online locations) for more effective adult oversight, and identify students or groups that need additional support.
SECTION I: BEST PRACTICES IN ANTI-BULLYING STRATEGIES

This section defines various types of bullying as described in prominent academic and government sources. It also examines findings on bullying prevention and intervention best practices from academic studies, government and nonprofit publications and white papers, and meta-studies conducted by other large public school districts.

OVERVIEW OF BULLYING PREVALENCE AND TYPES

The various types of bullying can be classified differently depending on the source. For example, U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education research conducted in 2011 suggests that 37 percent of middle school students report being victims of bullying and classifies bullying as physical, relational, or cyber, depending upon the level of physicality and the role of technology in the bullying itself.1 Alternatively, another resource developed by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) for the U.S. Department of Education classifies the three types of bullying as physical, verbal, and social, which differentiates an attempt to damage the victim’s reputation or relationships from direct physical or verbal abuse. In other words, this classification focuses on the type of harm rather than the medium through which it is inflicted.2 Despite the different ways in which bullying can be classified, most literature appears to agree with StopBullying.gov’s assessment that bullying entails aggressive behavior that includes:

- An Imbalance of Power: Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.3

Regardless of bullying type, researchers do tend to agree that there are certain stages within a youth’s life when he or she is most likely to be influenced by bullying. A December 2011 white paper released by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) summarizes results from a series of OJJDP-funded studies of bullying in public schools. The report’s component studies include a study of the relationship between bullying and school attendance, engagement, and academic

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achievement, a qualitative analysis of bullying’s effects, and a qualitative study of teachers’ strategies for reducing the impact of bullying in schools.\(^4\)

The authors note the transition from elementary to middle school environments as a crucial phase in students’ lives, and one in which the effects of bullying can be amplified. This sharp rise in bullying may stem from the changes precipitated by students’ promotion to middle school. The OJJDP researchers argue that compared to elementary schools, middle schools “tend to distance students from caring adults, dilute effective behavioral supervision, and change instruction from a differentiated, interactive pedagogy […] to a mass instructional pattern” in which students spend limited amounts of time with multiple teachers.\(^5\) The authors of a 2015 study in *Middle School Journal* also note that the proportion of students who experience bullying tends to peak between Grades 6 and 8, with a decline in the upper grade levels. However, they caution that changes in students’ reporting patterns and the transformation of bullying into “more adult forms of aggression such as sexual harassment” may account for the perceived decline.\(^6\)

**OVERVIEW OF ESSENTIAL PREVENTION AND RESPONSE STRATEGIES**

This subsection examines best practices in preventing and responding to bullying in public schools. As requested by the partner, this analysis examines bullying prevention and response practices independently of one another. For the purposes of this report, Hanover defines bullying prevention and response strategies as follows:

- **Prevention Strategies** are any practice meant to foster a supportive school climate, model positive interactions and respect, build relationships between students, staff, parents, and the community at large, teach bullying intervention and reporting practices, and impart effective conflict management skills, empathy, and social maturity.

- **Response Strategies** are those policies, procedures, and actions that allow students, staff, and other parties to report bullying or abuse as well as recommended practices for ensuring the safety of all involved, preventing retaliation, providing appropriate discipline, and restoring relationships and respect for school rules in the wake of an incident. These strategies also include data collection and assessment efforts designed to help determine the scope of bullying issues and identify areas of greatest need.

While prevention and response are treated separately in this analysis, it should be noted that the two strategies tend to be extremely interrelated in practice. For example, effective responses to bullying may prevent future incidents and empower victims and bystanders to act in cases of harassment or abuse. Similarly, prevention strategies often focus on


\(^5\) Ibid. p. 4.

rebuilding relationships and restoring a safe school climate in order to avert future occurrences of bullying. Efforts to prevent bullying could therefore be classified as response strategies, even though this report treats them as prevention tactics.

**BULLYING PREVENTION**

As recently as 2009, an American Institute for Research (AIR) report concedes that “much remains to be learned about best practices in bullying prevention” and that “when schools seek to identify a bullying prevention program to implement, they face a confusing array of interventions, many of which have not been evaluated, or have produced only marginal gains in reducing bullying behaviors.” Despite the fact that knowledge in the field is incomplete, the American Psychological Association maintains that “research shows that bullying can be significantly reduced through comprehensive, school-wide programs designed to change group norms and improve school climate.”

The existing research supports several findings, the most important of which is that comprehensive, multifaceted approaches to reducing bullying are more likely to produce results than single-strategy solutions. Effective prevention components include school-wide elements such as training and education programs that help identify, monitor, and understand bullying, as well as classroom components that help students develop social and emotional skills like problem solving and empathy. AIR’s meta-analysis of 59 well-designed evaluations of bullying interventions determined that the most important components of successful programs are parent training, improved playground supervision, disciplinary methods, school functions to raise awareness of the problem, classroom rules against bullying, effective classroom management, and peer involvement. The pages below look more specifically at strategies and methods for building a positive school culture, enlisting parents and community members to support anti-bullying efforts, selecting a proven anti-bullying curriculum, and meeting the training needs of teachers, staff, and administrators.

**BUILDING A POSITIVE SCHOOL CULTURE AND LEVERAGING PARENT AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

Building a strong school culture requires measures to strengthen relationships within the school and between the school and the community. The OJJDP report suggests that middle school students need three things from their schools in order to mitigate the “impersonal climate of anonymity that provides no time in the daily schedule for students to connect with adults and other students.” These include:

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7 “Social and Emotional Learning and Bullying Prevention.” American Institute for Research. 2009. p. 2. [http://static.squarespace.com/static/513f79f9e4b05ce7b70e9673/t/5367958ee4b0dcb1364dbb7b/1399297422536/3_SEL_and_Bullying_Prevention_2009.pdf](http://static.squarespace.com/static/513f79f9e4b05ce7b70e9673/t/5367958ee4b0dcb1364dbb7b/1399297422536/3_SEL_and_Bullying_Prevention_2009.pdf)
11 Ibid. p. 4.
12 List quoted verbatim from: Ibid. p. 4.
A place of refuge where they can feel safe, appreciated, and challenged in a constructive way

- Responsible adults who can support and sustain them and provide examples of appropriate behavior

- A sense of future possibility to persuade them that staying in school, despite the bullying, promises better things to come

Additional practices advocated by the OJJDP include ensuring that adults within the school building are modeling caring, respectful behavior toward one another and toward students, offering community services and mentoring programs that use both students and teachers as mentors and leaders, and making sure that anti-bullying mentorship and programming is integrated into the curriculum at the elementary school level. The Middle School Journal study also cites the importance of mentoring programs. Evidence suggests that mentoring programs in which older students (eleventh or twelfth grade) mentor much younger students (fourth and fifth grade) provide social gains for both groups.

Existing research also emphasizes the need for strong relationships between schools and communities, especially parents, and a high degree of coordination between educators within schools and districts. The Middle School Journal study calls for increased collaboration between schools and communities such as “family education” about how to recognize and mitigate bullying behaviors in the home and in school. The AIR study is slightly more forceful in claiming that the role of family dynamics in contributing to bullying should not be underestimated. Its authors state that schools should help parents reflect on their own parenting styles and behavior and teach them to handle problems in the home before they morph into behavior problems at school. Parents should also be made aware of how to recognize when their children are bullying perpetrators or victims.

**School Culture Curricula**

Experts agree about the importance of fostering a safe, inclusive school climate but remain somewhat divided about how to accomplish this. Some publications emphasize specific strategies or anti-bullying curricula while others focus on the importance of policies and training. The OJJDP authors urge educators not to resort to prefabricated anti-bullying curricula without offering training to teachers and staff members, achieving buy-in from these stakeholders, and ensuring that the program aligns with the needs and culture of the school(s) in question.

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13 Ibid. pp. 7-8.
15 Ibid. p. 29.
16 Ibid. p. 28.
AIR advocates a strategy called Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), which seeks to develop “a core set of social and emotional skills that help children more effectively handle life challenges and thrive in both their learning and social environments.” Specifically, SEL focuses on five types of social and emotional skills:

- **Self-awareness:** The ability to understand one’s feelings, values, and strengths, and to maintain a sense of self-confidence
- **Self-management:** The capacity to regulate emotions and express them constructively, handle stress, control impulses, and set, monitor, and achieve personal and academic goals
- **Social awareness:** Includes the development of empathy, ability to identify and adhere to societal standards of conduct, and utilize school, community, and family resources
- **Relationship skills:** The ability to establish and nurture healthy relationships, cooperate with others, resist negative peer pressure, manage and resolve conflicts, and seek help when needed
- **Responsible decision making:** Refers to the capacity to consider ethical standards, safety, responsibility, and respect for others when contemplating the consequences of an action; also enables students to contribute to their schools and communities

Students may hone their SEL skills via role-playing and classroom discussions about what it feels like to be bullied or watch a bullying incident. Studies suggest that having the ability to “practice” anti-bullying skills empowers students to take action in real life situations.

AIR recommends implementing an SEL curriculum throughout the school district from preschool to high school and notes that existing curricula and programs can be effective if well-implemented. A white paper by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) also notes that “several hundred studies conducted using experimental designs with control groups have documented the positive effects of SEL programming on children of diverse backgrounds from preschool through high school in urban, suburban, and rural settings.” However, it cautions against using programs or curricula in a piecemeal fashion, since doing so might mean that crucial elements of the program are ignored.

**TEACHER, STAFF, AND STUDENT TRAINING**

Educators and other staff members need to be trained to recognize and respond to bullying incidents before they are faced with a situation in the classroom. The AIR authors recommend a downloadable toolkit called *Eyes on Bullying: What Can You Do?* (2008).

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20 Ibid. p. 13.
21 Ibid. pp. 3-4.
which is designed to help children and adults recognize and respond to bullying. Similarly, the American Psychological Association notes that “intensive, sustained training for students, teachers, school staff, and community members” is highly effective in reducing bullying.

Districts should develop and propagate school-wide rules against bullying that “establish the moral climate of the school.” Ideally, students should be involved in helping to create these rules. There is limited evidence that some students who engage in bullying are “morally disengaged” and view the behavior as acceptable, and that clear standards of school-wide conduct can counteract this attitude and make students who would ordinarily be bystanders into anti-bullying advocates. Rules should include procedures for anonymous reporting and communication between students and adults within the school. A “culture of respect for individual differences and an overall norm of tolerance” is also essential.

Adults also need to model respectful behavior and monitor problem areas (e.g. hallways, playgrounds, cafeterias). Where possible, they should actively engage with students to form relationships and promote cooperative interactions among students, particularly as they transition from elementary school to middle school. Evidence suggests that teachers’ behaviors can have an enormous effect on the classroom climate and the behavioral norms considered acceptable. Specifically, “there is evidence that when teachers are warm and caring to everyone, including aggressive and peer-rejected children, all students in a classroom are less rejecting of their peers.” With this in mind, teachers should work to ensure that peer-rejected students have a valued place in the classroom and foster a classroom community via class meetings, group celebrations, and cooperative work.

RESPONSE TO BULLYING BEHAVIORS

As noted above, bullying response strategies are closely aligned with prevention strategies and may have a role in preventing future incidents of bullying. The paragraphs below discuss the need for frequent bullying and school climate assessments as well as coordinated, multi-tiered responses to incidents of harassment that include key interventions for students who are frequent bullying victims or perpetrators.

CONDUCTING REGULAR SCHOOL CLIMATE ASSESSMENTS

Districts need accurate information to determine the extent of bullying and harassment occurring in their component schools and respond appropriately. The need for data is all the more pronounced because studies show that bullying incidents are chronically

30 Ibid. p. 12.
underreported. 31 For this reason, multiple sources recommend conducting regular assessments—usually in the form of student, parent, or teacher surveys—to understand the social climates of their schools.

StopBullying.gov recommends collecting data on “bullying, climates, and the extent of youth violence,” in order to “raise awareness, monitor where bullying is happening, evaluate the need for training, tailor programs to meet needs, [and] measure efforts.”32 The American Psychological Association also maintains that the first step in an effective anti-bullying strategy is to conduct regular assessments to monitor bullying levels and look for patterns or especially problematic trends (e.g. a rise in cyberbullying). Experts recommend conducting such assessments in the spring, since social dynamics and peer groups tend to be well-established in the latter half of the school year.33 The StopBullying.gov authors caution, however, that any parent, student, or staff surveys need to align with federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) standards.34

A recent Fairfax County Public Schools report on evidence-based anti-bullying strategies provides more detail about what, specifically, bullying and harassment inventories need to measure. The authors state that the end goal for these assessments is to provide information about the efficacy of anti-bullying efforts and help district and school leaders to identify problematic trends and allocate resources more effectively. Ideally, data on bullying should include information about the frequency, types, and locations of incidents and the student and adult responses. It should also be linked to discipline and attendance records.35 Studies have repeatedly shown that increased adult supervision in problem areas and bullying hotspots can reduce the number of incidents, but specific, school-level information is needed in order to determine where educators should focus their attention.36

**COMPREHENSIVE MULTI-TIERED RESPONSES AND TARGETED INTERVENTIONS**

Tiered bullying prevention and response programs are designed to provide customized levels of support to students in various populations and ensure that frequent bullying victims and perpetrators receive targeted, intensive interventions. These solutions must be comprehensive programs that include training for all students and staff, coordinate bullying prevention and response efforts with other programs (e.g. disability support services), and establish a firm, consistent system of behavioral standards with positive and negative consequences.37

In its report on evidence-based best practices, Fairfax County Public Schools cites research supporting multi-tiered strategies in which some students receive targeted interventions and all students and staff receive training and education meant to clarify expectations for behavior and obligations to intervene and report incidents of bullying. The tiered disciplinary and bullying response frameworks used by the School District of Palm Beach County and Fairfax County Public Schools are discussed at length in their respective Section II profiles.

In cases where bullying is alleged or proven, districts should contact the parents of the students involved, seek to mitigate future harm, and provide behavioral support to perpetrators and resources for victims. For example, the *Middle School Journal* study notes that response strategies should include increased cooperation and coordination between teachers and school counselors to “facilitate skill development to combat the negative effects of bullying.” The authors name Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) and Solution Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) as two particularly effective ways to teach coping skills to victims.

The AIR authors also advocate targeted interventions for students who are frequent perpetrators or victims of bullying. In addition to the SEL classroom curriculum, teachers or counselors should provide training in anger management, communication skills, and problem solving for students who engage in bullying behavior. Similarly, counseling resources should be offered to bullying victims in order to ensure that they do not suffer from depression or anxiety. The American Psychological Association also cites multiple studies suggesting that individualized attention for at-risk students is an essential anti-bullying intervention.

Achieving an effective balance between punitive and restorative responses is difficult. StopBullying.gov names a variety of “misdirections” in bullying responses that result in too weak or too strong a response. While they argue against severe, universally enacted “Zero Tolerance” policies, they also note the inadequacy of peer mediation and restorative justice as attempts to restore relationships without correcting the underlying imbalance of power. The authors also question the value of group therapeutic treatments and “simple, short-term solutions” that raise awareness of bullying as an issue without offering a comprehensive plan to address it.

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41 Ibid. p. 13.
SECTION II: ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAM PROFILES

This section provides three in-depth profiles that illustrate how large, diverse school districts prevent, report, and intervene in cases of bullying or harassment. Each of the districts profiled is among the 12 largest in the United States, and each has a robust anti-bullying support structure in place. The districts studied below include the School District of Palm Beach County, Florida, Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia, and Broward County Public Schools in Florida. Each district has been noted for its success in combatting bullying. The two Florida districts have recorded substantial drops in the amount of bullying reported by students in recent years, while Fairfax County Public Schools experience a bullying rate well below the state average despite being the largest district in Virginia.

ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY OF PROFILES

The subsections and tables below summarize and synthesize observations drawn from the extensive profiles that follow. The three summary figures in these sections (Figure 2.1, Overview of Reporting Procedures) summarize the types of prevention, reporting, and intervention systems in place at each district. A dot (●) indicates that the district offers a resource in the category in question, while a dash (-) indicates that no evidence of the service or resource in question could be found in that district’s documents.

It is important to note that the profiles focus on district-level policies. If a program is offered at individual schools within the district or a decision is made or policy enacted at the school level, it is not discussed in Section II. For example, Fairfax County Public Schools does not appear to offer district-level anti-bullying training to students or student groups. Most, if not all, district schools may still offer this service, but it would be administered at the school level rather than the district level. As shown in the profiles below, districts regularly devolve some program, policy, and curriculum choices to their component schools in order to allow administrators and teachers to respond to local needs and conditions. Generally, district policies provide support, training, a set of expectations, and some universal policies or procedures, which individual schools then augment, implement, or modify as needed.

OVERVIEW OF PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Formal policy statements on bullying can be either freestanding documents or part of a broader student handbook. In general, they provide a definition of bullying and summarize the resources available to victims and witnesses. Staff training often includes sessions for all school employees, and sometimes even contractors and volunteers, regarding how to recognize and report bullying and support victims. In some cases, districts provide
additional intensive training for a selected number of employees, who then become their school or department’s main resource for bullying-related issues.

District-level anti-bullying training programs for students are a feature of some district’s anti-bullying efforts, but are not universal. Similarly, some districts mandate an orientation curriculum that teaches age appropriate lessons about bullying, usually at the beginning of the school year, and other districts provide resources and education specific to certain types of bullying like cyberbullying and sexual harassment. Districts may seek to coordinate their anti-bullying curricula and efforts with other community organizations like faith-based organizations and after-school clubs.

Figure 2.1: District-Level Prevention Programs at Profiled Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>POLICY STATEMENTS</th>
<th>STAFF TRAINING</th>
<th>STUDENT TRAINING</th>
<th>ORIENTATION CURRICULUM</th>
<th>CYBER-BULLYING PROGRAM</th>
<th>COORDINATES WITH OUTSIDE GROUPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School District of Palm Beach County</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfax County Public Schools</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broward County Public Schools</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Section II Profiles

**OVERVIEW OF REPORTING PROCEDURES**

Districts generally offer a variety of methods for students, staff, and, occasionally, parents to report bullying. These can include written forms, some of which can be submitted anonymously, as well as phone numbers, hotlines, and text message reporting services.

Figure 2.2: District-Level Reporting Programs at Profiled Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>STUDENT FORMS</th>
<th>ANONYMOUS FORMS</th>
<th>STAFF FORMS</th>
<th>PARENT FORMS</th>
<th>HOTLINE</th>
<th>TEXT REPORTING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School District of Palm Beach County</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfax County Public Schools</td>
<td>●</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broward County Public Schools</td>
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<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OVERVIEW OF INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Figure 2.3 summarizes the bullying intervention strategies used by each of the profiled districts. All three districts impose some sort of disciplinary action on perpetrators, and some districts provide substantial resources for programs that seek to modify the perpetrator’s behavior, provide restitution to the victim, and restore damaged relationships through restorative justice or mediation. Notifying parents and ensuring that victims and perpetrators are separated are high priorities among the districts in this report.

Figure 2.3: District-Level Intervention Programs at Profiled Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>DISCIPLINARY ACTION</th>
<th>RESTITUTION</th>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>RESTORATIVE JUSTICE</th>
<th>PARENTAL NOTICE</th>
<th>SEPARATION OF VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School District of Palm Beach County</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fairfax County Public Schools</td>
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<td>Broward County Public Schools</td>
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</table>

Source: Section II Profiles
The School District of Palm Beach County (SDPBC) is recognized as a “top performing urban school district in Florida,” and served approximately 183,000 students during the 2014-15 school year. The district is notable for having reduced its number of reported bullying cases by 30 percent from 2013 to 2014. SDPBC had been battling the highest bullying rate of any district in the state, and implemented a number of district-wide strategies including “anonymous tip lines and writing programs to help students report and work through bullying,” as well as additional training for staff and teachers. Its interventions are summarized in Figure 2.4. Additional details and context are provided in the profile below.

### Figure 2.4: Bullying Prevention, Reporting, and Response Procedure Summary, School District of Palm Beach County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>PROCEDURES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>Prevention efforts take the form of school wide training programs for staff and students on how to identify bullying or harassment and intervene. The district also has a six day orientation program to shape school culture and inform students’ interpersonal behaviors, as well as student and staff training on online safety and cyberbullying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>Students can report bullying anonymously via short written forms and parents can fill out a longer reporting form at each school’s central office. Students, staff, and parents can also report bullying via a district hotline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>Bullying is treated as a serious disciplinary issue that automatically triggers a response from a School Based Team of teachers, administrators, and other professionals. The Student Code of Conduct outlines a variety of Corrective Responses and Disciplinary Actions including traditional punishments (e.g. suspension) and collaborative solutions such as restorative justice programs and mediation. In severe cases of bullying or dating violence the district may impose a School-Based Stay-Away plan to keep perpetrators and victims apart or seek a restraining order from the county court.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: School District of Palm Beach County profile

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44 “School District of Palm Beach County.” National Center for Education Statistics Common Core of Data. http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/district_detail.asp?Search=1&details=1&InstName=Palm+Beach&DistrictType=1&DistrictType=2&DistrictType=3&DistrictType=4&DistrictType=5&DistrictType=6&DistrictType=7&NumOfStudentsRange=more&NumOfSchoolsRange=more&ID2=1201500


SDPBC has a dedicated webpage devoted to bullying awareness and intervention strategies and also retains a Bullying Prevention/Intervention Coordinator.49 The website serves as the locus for the district’s anti-bullying resources, training, and policies. It was designed to support a state statute—SB Policy 5.002, Prohibiting Bullying and Harassment—and “to safeguard the rights of all students and employees.” In its current form, this homepage appears to be an evolving resource and central link to different anti-bullying strategies and programs the district has enacted or participated in.

The District’s Division of Educational Alternatives and Interventions briefly defines bullying as “inflicting physical or psychological distress on one or more students.” The definition includes teasing and social exclusion.50 While it directs users to a variety of District resources and third party web pages, it is not clear from the site whether or not the District has a unified anti-bullying program in place, or whether its approach to bullying prevention is more decentralized. While it has implemented a robust bullying reporting and response infrastructure, the District does not appear to have a standardized, universally-used anti-bullying curriculum, nor does it rely on a single program or intervention strategy to respond to incidents.51

**PREVENTION**

Most of SDPBC’s bullying prevention initiatives focus on providing educators, parents, and students with information about behavioral expectations, raising awareness about bullying as an issue, and equipping victims and bystanders to intervene. One of the District’s major initiatives is the *Single School Culture Initiative*. This is a district-wide policy that seeks to organize schools around shared norms, beliefs, values, and expectations.52 It provides “the programs and activities intended to create safe, supportive, respectful, and nurturing environments for ALL staff and students.”53 The Single School Culture Initiative provides the following school climate resources for students and staff:54

- Templates and scripts which promote ethical expectations
- Models for procedures that are aligned with policy
- Effective prevention/intervention strategies that are supported by evidence-based practices and programs for specific stakeholders...[including] District and school-wide leadership, classroom teachers, support staff, individual students, parents, and the community

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49 “Bullying Awareness and Intervention.” School District of Palm Beach County.
   http://www.palmbeachschoools.org/ssi/Bullying.asp
51 See: Ibid.
52 “What is Single School Culture?” School District of Palm Beach County.
Each of the district’s 260 schools is able to customize its behavioral guidelines within a District framework for student behavior called the *Universal Guidelines*. These school-wide expectations are called *School Wide Positive-Behavior Supports* and typically involve themes of respect, responsibility, and kindness, as well as programs to instill these values early in the school year. The District also has a program called the *Interpersonal Expectations-Six Day Plan*. The current version “provides a checklist of teacher responsibilities which include interventions, scripts, and other strategies for teachers to create and maintain a climate that reduces incidences of mistreatment, peer abuse, bullying, and harassment.”

Recently, the district’s Single School Culture Initiatives have focused on cyberbullying and social media and Internet safety. In collaboration with the Education Technology Department, Library Media Services, and Information Technology team, educators have provided instruction related to the following technology-related behavioral concerns:

- Legal, ethical, and safe use of technology (both in and out of school)
- Use of District technology resources related to the curriculum, academic development, or school extracurricular activity
- Acceptable use of District resources that sends clear messages related to pornography, cyberbullying, or stalking
- Issues of ‘sexting’ in 4th-12th grade

Recently the District piloted a school-based curriculum called *Words Wound: Delete Cyberbullying and Make Kindness Go Viral* in selected middle schools. Additional student-led anti-bullying efforts include a 4th-12th Grade Safe School Ambassadors program which trains “student opinion leaders from all the formal and informal groups on campus” to recognize bullying and intervene using diplomatic skills. At the high school level a Student County Council has been formed to identify and address issues between groups of students, work closely with adults in the school system, and promote school safety and positive behavior.

**REPORTING**

The District has a variety of systems in place to allow students and parents to report bullying incidents, sometimes as anonymous witnesses or victims. Parents whose children are being bullied or bullying others are encouraged stay calm, obtain and document all of the facts of the incident, and to report it to the District via established channels. The District has devised three methods for reporting bullying, two of which are forms to be completed by the parent or student, and the third of which is a reporting hotline.

55 Ibid.
56 “Accessing the Resources on the Bullying Awareness and Intervention Website.” School District of Palm Beach County. https://www.palmbeachschools.org/ssci/documents/BullyingWebsiteContents2.pdf
58 Ibid.
Parents or children can complete a Student Bullying and Harassment Report while children may file a Bullying/Harassment Anonymous Drop-Box-Report. The former document is an extensive, three page form that identifies the alleged target and the accused, names witnesses of the incident, describes the incident, and provides any additional documentation. Parents can file this form in the main office of their child’s school. The Bullying/Harassment Anonymous Drop-Box-Report, meanwhile, is a one page summary of the event that collects the same information in a more abbreviated format and uses simpler language geared toward younger children. This form is shown below in Figure 2.5.

---

Figure 2.5: SDPBC Bullying/Harassment Anonymous Drop-Box-Report

The School District of Palm Beach County
SB Policy 5.002 Prohibiting Bullying and Harassment

Bullying/Harassment Anonymous 101 Incident Report - Drop Box

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accused Name(s) (last, first, initial)</th>
<th>School/Worksite</th>
<th>Grade/Position</th>
<th>Telephone #/Contact Info.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victim(s) Name(s) (last, first, initial)</td>
<td>School/Worksite</td>
<td>Grade/Position</td>
<td>Telephone #/Contact Info.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Receiving Principal/Director and/or Supervisor (last, first, initial)</td>
<td>School/Worksite</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Telephone #/Contact Info.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When did the incident(s) take place? Date/Day: _____ Time: _____

Where did the incident/things happen?

Please describe in writing, what actually happened, include as much detail as possible.

Who witnessed the incident? Please provide as much information about the witnesses as possible.

List any form of documentation and/or evidence that you have which pertains to this case? (e.g., written notes, emails, computer records, voice recordings or text messages/photos, referrals, incident reports, prior referrals and/or CTO Complaints) Please attach any of this supporting documentation.

*SB Policy 5.002 describes consequences for a student, employee and/or visitor of a public K-12 educational institution who is found to have wrongfully and intentionally accused another of an act of bullying or harassment. The physical location or time access of a computer-related incident cannot be raised as a defense in any disciplinary action initiated.

Source: School District of Palm Beach County63

63 Ibid.
In addition to these reporting forms, the District has also established a *Bullying Anonymous Hotline Telephone Number* for each of its schools. The number is displayed on posters throughout the school. Regardless of the reporting method used, the school conducts an investigation for each incident report. Parents are encouraged to schedule a follow-up conference to discuss the findings of the investigation, determine what actions need to be taken and how best to monitor and support the students involved and deter future incidents. School officials also offer resources to help parents strengthen their children’s psychological resilience.

**INTERVENTION**

The Bullying Awareness and Prevention page contains links to the SDPBC Student Code of Conduct.64 These documents establish behavioral expectations and student rights and describe the consequences and interventions applied to inappropriate behaviors. As of this writing the 2015-16 version is unavailable, and readers are referred to the 2014-15 document. The District publishes separate, but largely similar documents for elementary students and middle and high school students.65

SDPBC’s *Student Code of Conduct* at the middle and high school level classifies bullying as a Level 2 incident on a scale of one to four. Level 2 behaviors are “more serious than Level 1 incidents” and “significantly interfere with the learning process and/or the well-being of others.”66 The list of bullying-related Level 2 incidents, range of corrective strategies, disciplinary actions, and administrative responsibilities in responding to each incident is summarized in Figure 2.6. Non-bullying-related behaviors (e.g. tobacco use) and responses are excluded for brevity.

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64 See: Ibid.
Once an incident occurs, the Student Code of Conduct details the school’s response and lists possible strategies to correct the perpetrator’s behavior and impose disciplinary or restorative measures. Students who need behavioral or academic support are referred to Problem Solving Teams in response to every bullying-related incident, and one or more Corrective Responses are imposed. Problem Solving Teams include administrators, teachers, school counselors, ESOL coordinators, exceptional student education support staff, school psychologists, and other stakeholders. The District’s bullying response steps are briefly described in Figure 2.7.

---

**Figure 2.6: Level 2 Disciplinary Incidents and Responses at SDPBC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEHAVIOR</th>
<th>CORRECTIVE RESPONSE</th>
<th>DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harassment*</td>
<td>Investigation</td>
<td>Parent/guardian contacted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat, non-criminal*</td>
<td>Advertisement</td>
<td>Conference with student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical aggression*</td>
<td>Review of matrix of expectations</td>
<td>Mediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying/Cyber-bullying*</td>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>Behavior contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazing*</td>
<td>Reflective assignment</td>
<td>Plan meeting (IEP, 504, LEP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual harassment*</td>
<td>Apology letter</td>
<td>Daily weekly report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menacing statements / Non-criminal*</td>
<td>Check in-Check out</td>
<td>Voluntary restitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe inappropriate activity*</td>
<td>Restorative justice</td>
<td>Restorative justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ripple Effects</td>
<td>Community service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stay Away Agreement</td>
<td>Loss of privileges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victim Safety Plan</td>
<td>Confiscation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In-school intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In-school suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Days held in abeyance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bus suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Out of school suspension for 1-5 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: School District of Palm Beach County

*Referral to School Based Team Mandatory

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67 Ibid. p. 20.
Figure 2.7: SDPBC Bullying Response Stages

![Figure 2.7: SDPBC Bullying Response Stages](image)

Source: School District of Palm Beach County

Most Corrective Responses are self-explanatory (e.g. Investigation, Apology Letter), but a few may require definition. Check in-Check out, also called the Behavior Education Program, gives students daily and weekly behavioral goals and frequent feedback via regular check ins with an adult throughout the school day. Ripple Effects is a commercially available behavior modification program that comes in several forms specific to students of different age groups, though the version used by the district is not disclosed. In 2012 the District expanded its Restorative Justice program based upon strong evidence that purely punitive measures such as suspension make it less likely that a student will graduate and may not result in a safer school climate. Restorative justice views interpersonal harm as “a violation of individuals, relationships, and communities” that requires restitution to repair the harm and, to the extent possible, restore damaged relationships.

Two documents deserve special mention as important bullying-response resources. The School-Based Stay Away Agreement is a document created by SDPBC. It describes the incident, identifies the parties involved, and spells out an agreement which requires the perpetrator to remain a defined distance away from the victim during all school-related functions, “refrain from talking to, emailing, calling, text messaging, sending messages to or in any other form to [the victim],” and to inform the school administration of changes to his or her schedule or extracurricular activities that may impact the agreement. The first page of this form is reproduced below in Figure 2.8. The second page of the form also allows administrators to impose changes on the student’s schedule in order to ensure that the victim is left alone, specifies the dates for which the agreement is valid, and warns against any form of retaliation.

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69 Ibid. p. 20.
73 Ibid. p. 40.

© 2015 Hanover Research
Figure 2.8: SDPBC School-Based Stay Away Agreement

School-Based Stay Away Agreement

This agreement is to be completed with school administration in a conference with the alleged aggressor and his/her parent or guardian.

Student ID #  | First Name  | Last Name

School Name

Date of Incident  | Date of Parent/Guardian Notification  | Date of Conference with Parent/Guardian

Description of relationship between the parties

Has a court order for protection been issued between the two parties?  □ Yes  □ No

School-Based Stay Away Agreement

I, ________________________________________________, agree to:

□ Stay ___________ feet from ________________________________________________

□ Refrain from talking to, emailing, calling, text messaging, sending messages to or in any other form to ________________________________________________

□ Inform the school administration of changes to my schedule and extra-curricular activities.

__________________________________________  ____________________________
Signature of Student  Date

Source: School District of Palm Beach County

The Victim Safety Plan alluded to in Figure 2.6 most likely takes the form of a court-ordered restraining order, though no example of this document could be found among SDPBC

75 Ibid. p. 1.
publications. The state of Florida required its school districts to create a *Dating Violence and Abuse Policy*. This policy allows students of all genders and sexual orientations who believe they have been victims of dating violence or abuse to request accommodations via the creation of Student Victim Safety Plans and/or School-Based Stay Away Agreements in order to create greater separation between themselves and their dating partner.76

The *Teen Dating Violence and Abuse Policy* defines all relevant terms (e.g. dating, emotional abuse, internet abuse). It trains and empowers district personnel to intervene in cases of dating violence, meet with parents of the students involved, and provide resources for perpetrators and victims. In cases where abuse is alleged, a victim may request “accommodations from the school in order to preserve his or her safety and continued access to meaningful education.”77 Possible interventions include parental notification and follow-up, criminal prosecution, support services for victims, *School-Based Stay-Away Agreements*, and *Court Restraining/Protective Orders*. Victims and perpetrators can also be referred for counseling.78

**FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, FAIRFAX COUNTY, VA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment: 180,616</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Schools: 219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Size Ranking: 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenditures per Student: $14,162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Center for Education Statistics79 and American School and University80

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is a large, suburban district located immediately west of Washington, DC. American School & University ranks FCPS as the eleventh-largest school district in the United States in its 2014 analysis of U.S. public school districts. Despite its diversity and its status as the largest district in Virginia, FCPS ranked well below the state average in the number of bullying incidents per 1,000 students in a 2012 study conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University. Statewide, the study found 4.9 bullying incidents per 1,000 students, while the rate in FCPS was 3.0 incidents for every 1,000 students.81 Figure 2.9 summarizes the bullying prevention, reporting, and intervention methods used by the district.


78 Ibid.


### Figure 2.9: Bullying Prevention, Reporting, and Response Procedure Summary, Fairfax County Public Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>PROCEDURES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>FCPS uses a multi-tiered, school-level behavioral intervention framework called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to address unwanted behaviors (including bullying), promote a positive school culture, and provide additional monitoring and support to students with behavioral issues. Individual schools apply the PBIS framework independently of one another in order to meet their unique needs. The district also coordinates its anti-bullying efforts with local community centers and after school programs and provides them with additional informational resources about bullying prevention and intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>District anti-bullying materials provide information about who students and parents should contact to report incidences of bullying. These publications also provide information about anti-bullying and mental health hotlines and resources. Finally, the district offers guidelines to parents regarding how to document and report bullying and follow up with district officials to ensure that their concerns are addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>Responses involve notifying appropriate parties including the parents or guardians of the students involved. The police are notified in cases of assault or threats, while an IEP team is called when a student with a disability is involved. Disciplinary sanctions for perpetrators are determined on a case-by-case basis and behavioral and psychological resources are made available to perpetrators, bystanders, and victims to reinforce appropriate behaviors and responses. In some cases mediation, conflict resolution, and restorative justice are employed in order to mitigate the harm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Fairfax County Public Schools profile

The FCPS Student Safety and Wellness Office retains a coordinator for anti-bullying efforts and maintains a central website detailing the District’s bullying prevention and intervention resources. In conjunction with the District’s Student Rights and Responsibilities statement, the website defines bullying as “any aggressive and unwanted behavior that is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim.” It “involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor or aggressors and victim and is repeated over time or causes severe emotional trauma.” While the District explicitly includes cyberbullying under this definition, it notes that bullying does not include “ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument, or peer conflict.” According to the District’s definition, bullying can include physical, verbal, and emotional intimidation, excluding or shunning the victim (or encouraging others to do the same), cyberbullying using technology, sexual harassment, and creating a hostile environment.

### PREVENTION

FCPS uses the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model to educate students about bullying and develop school-wide classroom discipline systems based upon

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83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
research-proven strategies. The Northeast Foundation for Children defines PBIS as “continual teaching, modeling, and reinforcing of positive behavior.” It can be used as an anti-bullying strategy, but may also be applied to other behavioral issues as well. In each case, PBIS uses a three-tiered approach to prevent behavioral issues:

- **Primary Prevention:** These are class and school-wide strategies applied to all students in a school and designed to create positive school culture and reinforce desirable behaviors through targeted supervision in potentially problematic areas.

- **Secondary Prevention:** A small, at-risk share of the student population receives additional preventative measures designed to mitigate problematic behaviors. Examples include Check in-Check out strategies, small group or individual behavioral instruction and intervention, and behavioral contracts.

- **Tertiary Prevention:** Tertiary prevention strategies are applied to students who repeatedly engage in problematic behaviors and those with emotional and behavioral disorders. Supports are intensive and customized for each student’s needs.

PBIS is not a curriculum. Instead, it is a conceptual framework that provides schools with a support system for designing, implementing, and evaluating their discipline plans. It is implemented at the school rather than the district level in order to give individual schools the freedom to craft strategies, policies, and instructional programs tailored to their specific needs and situation. The program lays out school-wide procedures and processes for bullying intervention strategies. It is designed to cover all students and staff in every setting where students and staff interact within the school. PBIS also requires individual behavioral supports for the 1-5 percent of students with the most behavioral issues. In order to implement PBIS, teachers are trained in behavior management principles and practices and their application in the classroom.

In addition to its use of PBIS, FCPS works with the Fairfax County Office of Neighborhood and Community Services to ensure that students receive consistent messages about bullying and anti-bullying resources at after school programs, teen centers, and community centers. The District’s anti-bullying website provides additional materials from the U.S. Department of Education and Virginia School Board Association, and maintains a link to a summary of research-based bullying prevention practices.

Finally, FCPS also maintains a standing committee called the Human Relations Advisory Committee. This committee is charged with investigating pressing issues within District schools and producing a report complete with recommendations for program and service

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87 List summarizes content from: Ibid. p. 3.
enhancements.\textsuperscript{90} The Committee’s 2014-15 annual report provides “evaluation and feedback of FCPS efforts related to peer-to-peer behaviors including bullying, harassment, and sexual misconduct.”\textsuperscript{91} Data for the Committee’s evaluation is collected through the District’s data-based training system in place for students, staff, and administrators. This program includes the following components:\textsuperscript{92}

- **Student Orientation:** Student anti-bullying education includes a voice-over PowerPoint on sexual and gender-based harassment for Grades 7-12. This is shown at the beginning of each school year and reviewed again in the second semester along with augmented training sessions on sexting and cyberbullying and harassment. Students in Grades 4-6 receive counseling lessons on bullying and gender-based harassment.

- **Staff Training:** Teachers and administrators are trained to investigate, respond to, and document bullying and gender-based harassment incidents and allegations.

In addition to training for school staff and students, the Human Relations Advisory Committee recommends that additional training be implemented for parents, public health nurses, and school health aids.\textsuperscript{93}

### REPORTING

Bullying reporting mechanisms at FCPS are relatively streamlined when compared to those in place at SDPBC. The District publishes a short, two page parents’ guide to dealing with bullying and cyberbullying. This document provides a list of contacts including district teachers, counselors, administrators, nurses, psychologists, and social workers, as well as the Student Safety and Wellness Office. It also provides numbers for the CrisisLink Suicide Prevention Hotline, as well as a number to text the hotline, and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.\textsuperscript{94} It urges parents to investigate incidents, document accounts and print and save electronic messages, block cyber contact with bullies, contact the school to share information and develop a solution, and follow up with their children to make sure that the issue has been addressed.\textsuperscript{95}

A previous 2010-11 Human Relations Advisory Committee report on bullying provides an example of a bullying reporting form. This form lists the student’s name, asks what the student has done to address the problem, provides space to name the perpetrator, identify the bullying behavior, duration, and location, and tells the student where to submit the form. Figure 2.10 reproduces this form.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{bullying_form.png}
\caption{Example of a bullying reporting form.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{90} See: “Human Relations Advisory Committee.” Fairfax County Public Schools. August 4, 2015. http://www.fcps.edu/hr/ee/hr/relations/hradcomn.shtml


\textsuperscript{92} List summarizes content from: Ibid. p. 8.

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid. p. 8.

\textsuperscript{94} “What you need to know about Bullying and Cyberbullying in Fairfax County.” Fairfax County Public Schools. p. 1. http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/demographics/pdf/youthsurveyfacts_bullying.pdf

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid. p. 1.
INTERVENTION

The bullying intervention procedure at FCPS is summarized below in Figure 2.11. It requires administrators to investigate immediately and organize a response appropriate to the incident. Administrators contact parents or guardians of the students involved and may assign punishments ranging from a conference to a recommendation for expulsion. The police are contacted and charges may be filed in cases where an assault has occurred or

substantial threats have been made. When a student with a disability is involved the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team is consulted regarding additional interventions.97

Figure 2.11: FCPS Bullying Response Stages

![Diagram of FCPS Bullying Response Stages]

Disciplinary consequences appear to be determined on a case-by-case basis. In addition to discipline, school officials also work with counselors, psychologists, and social workers to meet the needs of victims, perpetrators, and witnesses. These interventions ensure that perpetrators comprehend the effects of their actions on their victims, provide support and guidance for victims, and ensure that witnesses and bystanders understand their obligations to respond and intervene when they witness bullying behaviors.99

In addition to these direct responses to bullying incidents, the District also provides services for specific populations of students who are deemed to be at high risk for bullying behaviors or who have a history of harassment. These include a Conflict Resolution and Mediation Services program that trains educators and selected students in conflict resolution strategies and a Gang Prevention Program designed to help educators and parents identify signs of gang activity and involvement and report it to the proper authorities.100 At least some schools have also implemented restorative justice programs, which the District describes as “victim-centered, and also focus[ed] on offender accountability to those who were harmed.”101 There is no indication the restorative justice program applies only in cases of bullying or harassment, however.102

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98 Ibid.
99 Ibid.
BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, BROWARD COUNTY, FL

Enrollment: 260,226
Total Schools: 368
National Size Ranking in 2012-13: 6
Total Expenditures per Student: $10,135

Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) ranked as the sixth largest district in the nation in the most recent American School & University ranking of district sizes. It was the first Florida school district to enact the statewide anti-bullying law that was passed in 2008 and “which prohibits bullying or harassment of a student or employee of a K-12 education institution in the state.”105 Tresha Fletcher, a program specialist in the District’s Diversity, Cultural Outreach, and Prevention Department, noted in a 2014 interview with the Broward-Palm Beach SunSentinel that the District’s anti-bullying efforts include annual classes on the subject and that this additional education has correlated with “a definite decrease in the number of bullying referrals.”106 Figure 2.12 summarizes the bullying prevention, reporting, and response systems in place at BCPS.

Figure 2.12: Bullying Prevention, Reporting, and Response Procedure Summary, Broward County Public Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>PROCEDURES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevention</td>
<td>Starting in 2008, BCPS crafted a comprehensive Anti-Bullying Plan that outlines school and district-level responsibilities and timelines for implementing an anti-bullying curriculum. The program includes staff training, provides parents and the community with anti-bullying resources, and evaluates the effectiveness of the district’s bullying prevention efforts every three years. The policy also defines bullying using an unusually comprehensive definition that include certain types of property crime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>The Broward District Schools Police Department allows students to report bullying or threats to safety via phone, text, email, and online forms. The district also maintains a <strong>Bullying Anonymous Report Form</strong> that allows students or staff to report issues. Non-emergency incidents must be responded to in two working days and resolved promptly. When a formal complaint is made the district must record the relevant details for its records.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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106 Ibid.
### Response

The district notifies the parents or guardians of the students involved, interviews alleged victims, perpetrators, and witnesses, and conducts a threat assessment. In some cases, students are given the option to pursue Informal Resolution via mediation, and no records of the incident are kept if a resolution is achieved. In cases where Formal Resolution procedures apply, detailed records are kept and punishments are imposed according to the district’s Administrative Discipline Matrix, though individual principals can elect alternative forms of punishment. There does not appear to be a strong emphasis on restorative justice, offender education and mentoring, or other forms of non-punitive responses.

Source: Broward County Public Schools Profile

BCPS maintains a centralized website for its anti-bullying policies and resources. The District’s policy was designed by the Office of Prevention Programs and Student Support Services and adopted in July of 2008. The Florida Department of Education opted to use it as a model for updated anti-bullying policies at every district in the state. The policy defines bullying as “systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or employees” and is designed to disclose the consequences of student or staff actions that meet the definition. Its overall aim is to protect students from harm and improve their feelings of safety and belonging.

### Prevention

The Anti-Bullying Policy features an extensive definition of bullying that includes harassment and cyberbullying or stalking. It lists 13 types of bullying as illustrative, but not exhaustive, examples of behaviors the policy covers. These include 1) unwanted teasing, 2) threatening, 3) intimidating, 4) stalking, 5) cyberstalking, 6) cyberbullying, 7) physical violence, 8) theft, 9) sexual, religious, or racial harassment, 10) public humiliation, 11) destruction of school or personal property, 12) social exclusion, including incitement and/or coercion, and 13) rumor or spreading of falsehoods. The District’s definition of bullying is notably broad, since it encompasses destruction or theft of property.

In addition to prohibiting bullying, BCPS also requires that administrators, faculty, and staff collaborate with students, parents, and the community at large to “incorporate systemic methods for student and staff recognition through positive reinforcement for good conduct, self-discipline, good citizenship, and academic success” as outlined in the district’s discipline plan. Prevention and response strategies vary based upon the severity of the incident in question, but the district reserves the right to apply policies from the Anti-Bullying Policy, the Student Code of Conduct, and the district Administrative Discipline Matrix.

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107 “Anti-Bullying Policy.” Broward County Public Schools. http://www.browardschools.com/Privacy-Policy/Anti-Bullying-Policy
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
111 Ibid. p. 4.
112 Ibid. p. 4.
The *Anti-Bullying Policy* was last updated in April 2010, and it lays out a specific set of actions to be undertaken by different sets of District stakeholders in order to enact its bullying prevention strategy. The overall policy is meant to be enacted by Student Support Services working in cooperation with other District departments. However, component actions that have been delegated to other responsible parties within the District, and which contribute to the plan’s enactment, are described below in Figure 2.13. Note that these anti-bullying functions are ongoing in nature. Anti-bullying positions like the Prevention Liaison need to be filled each year by every school, and training and evaluation efforts are likewise ongoing.113

**Figure 2.13: Broward County Public Schools Anti-Bullying Plan Stakeholder Responsibilities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>RESPONSIBLE PARTY</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prevention Liaison</td>
<td>School Principals</td>
<td>Each principal is required to appoint a Prevention Liaison who will serve on all school committees and teams tasked with assessing threats and preventing violence. The liaison will receive prevention training and assist with anti-bullying training at his or her school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement</td>
<td>Student Support Services</td>
<td>Student Support Services collaborates with community organizations, School Resource Officers, faith-based organizations, and other stakeholders to disseminate violence prevention resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence-Based Interventions and Curriculum</td>
<td>Student Support Services</td>
<td>The Student Support Services office coordinates anti-bullying efforts and training throughout the school in order to implement research-based prevention programs and behavioral interventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Participation</td>
<td>Student Support Services</td>
<td>Along with other departments, Student Support Services is tasked with providing opportunities, resources, and encouragement to parents and ensuring that district families have access to school and community-based social and behavioral supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Service Effectiveness</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>The district plans to assess the efficacy of its anti-bullying policies and resources at least every three years and include high-quality data on bullying prevention outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>District and school-level administrators are charged with ensuring that the Anti-Bullying Policy is implemented properly in each school and integrated with local conditions and instructional practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Bullying Training</td>
<td>Administrative Staff</td>
<td>At the beginning of every school year the principal or appropriate administrator reviews the Anti-Bullying Policy, the process for reporting incidents, the investigation and appeals process, and anti-bullying resources with teachers, students, school staff, parents, bus drivers, School Resource Officers, volunteers, and all other stakeholders involved in school activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Broward County School District114

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113 Ibid. pp. 4-5.
114 Ibid. pp. 4-5.
In addition to training for staff members, the District also uses the ABCs of Bullying Prevention curriculum, which contains three grade-specific lessons on bullying prevention and is designed to be taught to each grade on an annual basis. This program discusses the motives and methods of bullying, helps students and teachers to foster a positive classroom climate, develops students’ and teachers’ capacity to recognize and respond to bullying, provides skills and support for bullying victims, and offers resources for parents.

REPORTING

All reports of bullying within a school are handled directly by the principal or his or her designee. Students are permitted to report bullying incidents to any District employee or faculty member. Teachers and school employees must then file a written report of the incident with the principal or face disciplinary sanctions for noncompliance. District employees who suspect that bullying is occurring between adults within the District are “strongly encouraged to report any concerns,” but the Anti-Bullying Policy does not identify a specific reporting procedure for these cases.

Whenever possible, District policy stipulates that bullying reports should be filed in writing and no more than 90 days after the alleged incident. Written reports are then entered into a District data system. The District explicitly provides immunity from legal liability or retribution for any District employee, volunteer, contractor, student, parent, or other affiliate who voluntarily and in good faith reports an act of bullying according to school and District policies. Aside from these district-level policies, reporting procedures are left up to each school to design and implement independently. Principals are responsible for creating and publicizing their school’s bullying reporting policy.

There are two notable methods for reporting bullying, both of which can be anonymous. The first is through the District’s police department. Students can submit anonymous tips to “report anything that’s scaring or endangering you’re your friends, or you family” to the Broward District Schools Police Department. The District police department provides a phone number, an email, a text service, and an online form to facilitate reporting.

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117 Ibid. pp. 6-7.
118 Ibid. p. 7.
Figure 2.14: BCPS Bullying/Harassment Reporting Form

If you have information regarding bullying and would like to report this information anonymously, please fill out the following form to the best of your knowledge. Please note that this form is completely anonymous. (For the purpose of this form, bullying encompasses bullying, harassment, and discrimination.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VICTIM NAME (last, first, middle)</th>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>AGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSED NAME (last, first, middle)</td>
<td>SEX</td>
<td>GRADE</td>
<td>AGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOL</td>
<td>SCHOOL TELEPHONE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRINCIPAL</td>
<td>TODAY’S DATE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where did the incident occur?

When did the incident occur?

Date:            Time:            

Please describe, in as much detail as possible, what happened.

Do you know any of the witnesses involved? If so, please provide as much detail as possible about these people.

List evidence of bullying if any (i.e. letters, photos, etc. – attach evidence if possible)

Thank you, this report will be followed up on within 2 school/work days. If you fear a student is in IMMEDIATE danger, contact their home school, the police or the Broward County Public Schools Special Investigative Unit at 754 321 0911 immediately!

For Office Use Only

Date Received:            Received by:            

Source: Broward County Public Schools

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120 Ibid.
In addition to these methods, the District also allows students to report bullying anonymously using a *Bullying Anonymous Reporting Form*. This one page form requires information about the victim and accused, the school where the incident took place, the incident itself and any supporting evidence, and the staff member who received and processed the form. It promises follow-up within two school or work days and refers students who perceive immediate danger to contact the Broward County Public Schools Special Investigative Unit, which is the part of the District police department charged with investigating bullying.\(^{121}\) The *Bullying Anonymous Reporting Form* is shown above in Figure 2.14.

**INTERVENTION**

Once a bullying incident is reported, the school principal or his or her designee documents all complaints in writing, enters the information in a district-wide data system, and addresses the issue. If the incident is found to fall under the auspices of the District’s Anti-Bullying Policy then the staff investigates. If it falls outside the scope of the policy, is deemed to be a criminal act, or happened outside the district’s jurisdiction, the incident is referred to law enforcement authorities. Finally, if an incident falls outside the District’s jurisdiction and is not a criminal act the parents or guardians of involved students are notified.\(^{122}\)

There are two District procedures for addressing a bullying incident. These are known as Informal Resolution and Formal Resolution. Informal Resolution procedures interview the accused, victim, and witnesses independently of one another and allow the parties involved to resolve the complaint informally. If no Informal Resolution can be reached, District officials file a formal written report on the incident using the *Broward County Public Schools Bullying Complaint Report Form*.\(^{123}\) This two page document lists all of the parties involved, describes the incident, lists witnesses and evidence, and provides space on the second page to summarize the actions and outcomes resulting from the complaint. As shown below in Figure 2.15, it also requires signatures from the complainant and the person charged with receiving testimonies and investigating the incident. Note that bullying incidents between adults must go through a Formal Resolution procedure and that all decisions can be appealed.\(^{124}\)

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\(^{123}\) Ibid. p. 8.

The District’s *Administrative Discipline Matrix* “sets forth the guidelines for assessing consequences for violations of School Board policies” but gives principals the freedom to deviate from the *Matrix’s* policies at their discretion. It lists the District’s potential consequences for the first four occurrences of bullying, as well as subsequent incidents. Consequences unique to each occurrence are described below. Note that for every incident the involved students’ parents or guardians are contacted and a conference is requested. The issue is also referred to the school’s Collaborative Problem Solving (RtI) Team and a Threat Assessment is conducted to evaluate the severity of the problem. Unique elements for each stage include:

- **1st Offense Consequence:** Students may receive a three day out of school suspension
- **2nd Offense Consequence:** Students may receive a six day out of school suspension
- **3rd and Subsequent Offense Consequences:** Students may receive a nine day out of school suspension

Figure 2.16 summarizes the bullying response process at BCPS and briefly describes each step and its possible outcomes. The Informal Resolution process is shown in yellow on the left and the Formal Resolution Process is displayed in green on the right.

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125 Ibid. p. 2.
Figure 2.16: Broward County Public Schools Alleged Bullying Investigation Process

Source: Broward County Public Schools

PROJECT EVALUATION FORM

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