

SCHOOL SAFETY & SECURITY IN ACPS

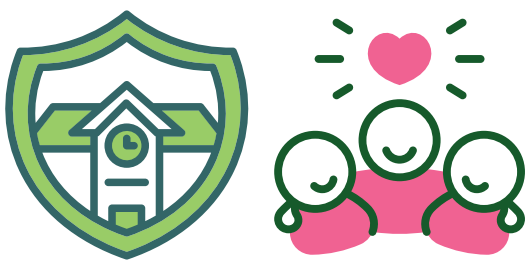
DESCRIPTION

My Civic Action Project addresses how students in the ACPS community feel unsafe and unsecured in the school community, concerns about school safety and student well-being in Alexandria City Public Schools, and highlights the causes and consequences of unsafe school environments for students.

RESULT

85-100%

percent of students should feel safe in ACPS schools



SIGNIFICANCE

SCHOOL SAFETY FOR STUDENTS IS ESSENTIAL FOR STUDENTS IN ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (ACPS). WHEN STUDENTS DON'T FEEL UNSAFE IN A SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT, IT CAN ALTER THEIR ABILITY TO LEARN AND DEVELOP NEW KNOWLEDGE ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS THAT CAN BE BENEFICIAL IS ONE'S EVERYDAY LIFE.

RECENTLY, THERE HAVE BEEN MORE FIGHTS AND INCIDENTS AT ACPS SCHOOLS. FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR, THERE WERE 82 FIGHTS AND ASSAULTS IN JUST THE FIRST HALF OF THE YEAR. BECAUSE OF THIS, ALEXANDRIA CITY HIGH SCHOOL HAD TO CANCEL CLASSES FOR TWO DAYS IN DECEMBER 2024 AFTER SOME BIG FIGHTS OCCURRED DURING THE SCHOOL DAY. IN THE SCHOOL YEARS OF 23-24, MULTIPLE BOMB THREATS WERE ALSO REPORTED AT ALEXANDRIA CITY HIGH SCHOOL. THIS SHOWCASES HOW THAT SAFETY ISSUES AND VIOLENT INCIDENTS CAN DISRUPT ONE'S EDUCATION AND MAKE STUDENTS FEEL ANXIOUS AND SCARED WHEN GOING TO SCHOOL AND BEING APART OF A SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT.

TO SOLVE THESE ISSUES, ACPS HAS IMPLEMENTED NEW SAFETY MEASURES. THEY'VE PUT IN WEAPONS DETECTORS AT SOME SCHOOLS, LIKE ALEXANDRIA CITY HIGH SCHOOL AND TWO MIDDLE SCHOOLS. DUE TO THIS, WEAPON-RELATED INCIDENTS HAVE GONE DOWN BY 71% FOR ACPS. ALSO, MOST PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY SUPPORT THESE CHANGES. IN A SURVEY, 85% OF THE 4,400 PEOPLE WHO RESPONDED SAID THEY WERE IN FAVOR OF USING THE WEAPONS DETECTORS. THIS SHOWS THAT BOTH STUDENTS AND PARENTS WANT SCHOOLS TO BE SAFER FOR A BETTER LEARNING AND EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT.

HOWEVER, HELPING STUDENTS DEAL WITH THEIR FEELINGS AND MENTAL HEALTH ALSO CONTRIBUTES TO A PRODUCTIVE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT. ACPS HAS BEEN WORKING ON THIS BY OFFERING MORE SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND TEACHING THEM HOW TO HANDLE CONFLICTS BETTER. THEY'VE ALSO BROUGHT BACK SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS (SROS) TO HELP KEEP SCHOOLS SAFE, IN ADDITION TO AN INCREASE IN SUPPORT FROM THE ALEXANDRIA POLICE DEPARTMENT AND LAW ENFORCEMENT.

THESE ARE ALL COMMENDABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS YET THERE IS STILL SO MUCH MORE WE CAN DO!

CYCP GOAL AND STRATEGIC AREA

ALL CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN ACPS HAVE POSITIVE EXPERIENCES

STRATEGY - IMPROVE SCHOOL SAFETY, YOUTH VIOLENCE, AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEMS

HOW ARE WE DOING?

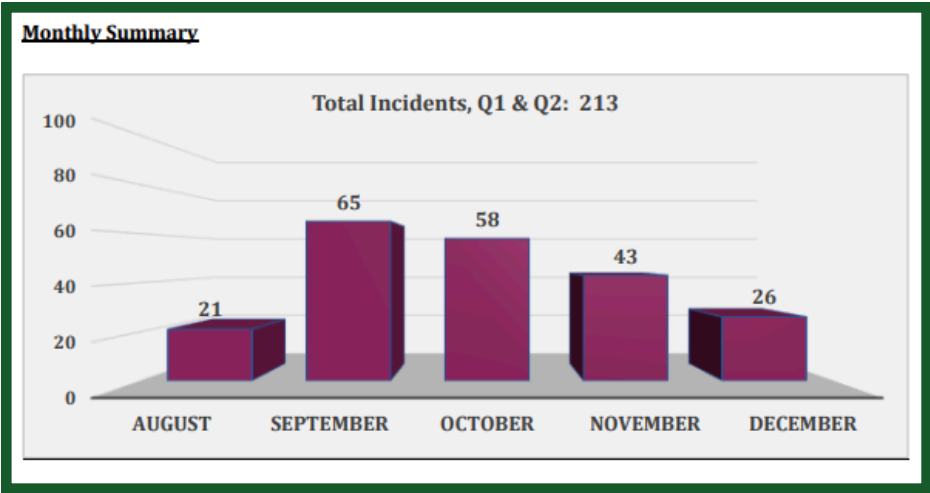
2023 ACPS SURVEY: 46% OF STUDENTS REPORT FEELING UNSAFE AT SCHOOL

TOTAL OF 213 INCIDENTS IN 2024 & 43 REPORTS OF STUDENTS WITH INJURIES/MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

56 REPORTS OF ASSAULT

DISCIPLINARY INCIDENTS INCREASED BY 15% IN THE LAST SCHOOL YEAR (2024)

95 INCIDENTS ON A HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL



IMPLEMENTATION

- INSTALL ADDITIONAL SECURITY CAMERAS AND STAFFED ENTRANCES
- LAUNCH PEER MEDIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROGRAMS
- CONDUCT ANNUAL SAFETY AUDITS WITH STUDENT INVOLVEMENT
- HOST FAMILY & STUDENT SAFETY WORKSHOPS
- EXPAND ACCESS TO PHYSICAL SPACES WITH TRUSTED ADULTS/STAFF WHERE YOUTH CAN FEEL SAFE IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL
- PREVENT BULLYING AND MINIMIZE SCHOOL VIOLENCE BETWEEN STUDENTS
- STRENGTHEN AND MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIP WITH ALEXANDRIA LAW ENFORCEMENT

PARTNERSHIPS

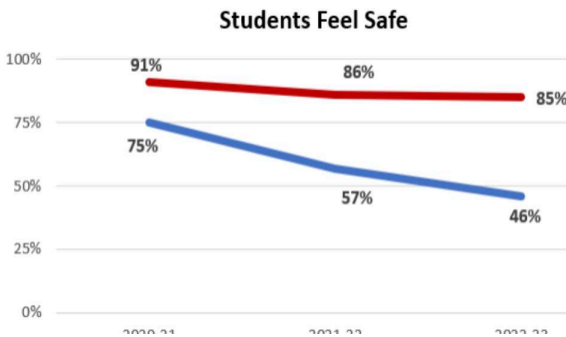


- ALEXANDRIA POLICE DEPARTMENT
- SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS (SROs)
- PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS (PTAs)
- SLEP/ALX POLICE DEPARTMENT
- CITY COUNCIL (ALX)
- CIP IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM



PERFORMANCE EFFORT

- TRACK INCIDENT REPORTS QUARTERLY/MONTHLY
- CONDUCT STUDENT SAFETY SURVEYS EACH QUARTER
- LOG ATTENDANCE AND DISCIPLINARY TRENDS
- HAVE COUNSELORS DISCUSS SAFETY AND MENTAL HEALTH WITH STUDENTS
- ENFORCE DISCIPLINARY ACTION FOR VIOLENT BEHAVIOR FROM STUDENTS



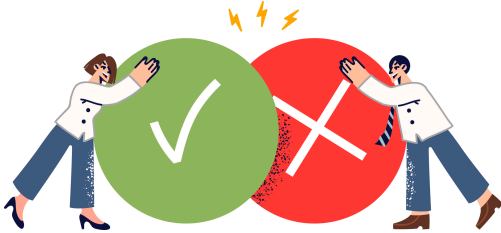
PERFORMANCE EFFECT

POSITIVE: INCREASED STUDENT TRUST AND LOWER BEHAVIORAL REFERRALS

NEGATIVE: BUDGET CONSTRAINTS, INCONSISTENT POLICY ENFORCEMENT

POSITIVE: BETTER ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE FROM STUDENTS & INCREASED GRADUATION RATE

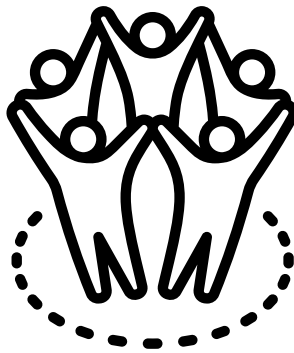
NEGATIVE: PRIVACY CONCERNS & COMPLAINTS OF SLOW SCHOOL ENTRY/EXIT



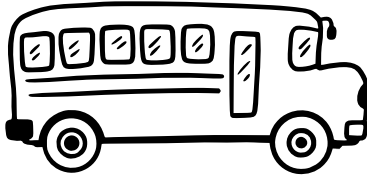
RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICY OR PRACTICE CHANGES PROPOSED :

- MANDATE MENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING FOR ALL STAFF
- INCREASE COUNSELOR-TO-STUDENT RATIO
- ADD ANONYMOUS REPORTING TOOLS FOR STUDENTS
- ENGAGE FAMILIES IN SAFETY PLANNING
- INCREASE COUNSELOR AND STUDENT INTERACTIONS/COUNSELING SERVICES



COMMUNITY



ONLINE

- SCHOOL SAFETY AND DATA REPORT 23-24
- SCHOOL SAFETY AND DATA REPORT 24-25
- ALX NOW
- FOX 5 NEWS
- CHILDREN AND YOUTH MASTER PLAN 2025
- WTOP NEWS
- 2024 SAFETY ACPS REPORT CARD



CITATIONS

1. ALXNOW STAFF. "ACPS SAFETY REPORT SHOWS INCREASE IN FIGHTS BUT OVERALL DECREASE IN INCIDENTS." "ALXNOW", 24 FEB. 2025, [WWW.ALXNOW.COM/2025/02/24/ACPS-SAFETY-REPORT-SHOWS-INCREASE-IN-FIGHTS-BUT-OVERALL-DECREASE-IN-INCIDENTS] (HTTP://WWW.ALXNOW.COM/2025/02/24/ACPS-SAFETY-REPORT-SHOWS-INCREASE-IN-FIGHTS-BUT-OVERALL-DECREASE-IN-INCIDENTS). ACCESSED 8 MAY 2025.
2. ASSOCIATED PRESS. "VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL CANCELS CLASSES AFTER A SERIES OF FIGHTS." "AP NEWS", 19 DEC. 2024, APNEWS.COM/ARTICLE/64F180B21E3886F52081BE6DB87DD6BE. ACCESSED 8 MAY 2025.
3. WUSA9 STAFF. "FINAL DAY FOR SURVEY ON WEAPON SCANNERS IN ALEXANDRIA." "WUSA9", 17 JAN. 2023, [WWW.WUSA9.COM/ARTICLE/NEWS/EDUCATION/FINAL-DAY-FOR-SURVEY-ON-WEAPON-SCANNERS-IN-ALEXANDRIA/65-52BBA1B-35D1-4BBC-B2C8-0F033D6E09F5] (HTTP://WWW.WUSA9.COM/ARTICLE/NEWS/EDUCATION/FINAL-DAY-FOR-SURVEY-ON-WEAPON-SCANNERS-IN-ALEXANDRIA/65-52BBA1B-35D1-4BBC-B2C8-0F033D6E09F5). ACCESSED 8 MAY 2025.
4. DUNAWAY, BRIDGETTE. "'YOU CAN'T PUT A PRICE ON THE SAFETY OF OUR STUDENTS': ACPS TO INSTALL WEAPONS DETECTORS IN SCHOOLS." "ALEXANDRIA TIMES", 2 MAR. 2023, ALEXTIMES.COM/2023/03/YOU-CANT-PUT-A-PRICE-ON-THE-SAFETY-OF-OUR-STUDENTS-ACPS-TO-INSTALL-WEAPONS-DETECTORS-IN-SCHOOLS. ACCESSED 8 MAY 2025.
5. MCLEAN, JENNIFER. "ALEXANDRIA ENDS SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAM." "ALEXANDRIA LIVING MAGAZINE", 8 OCT. 2021, ALEXANDRIALIVINGMAGAZINE.COM/NEWS/ALEXANDRIA-ENDS-SCHOOL-RESOURCE-OFFICER-SRO-PROGRAM-ACPS. ACCESSED 8 MAY 2025.
6. FISHER, JACK. "ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO LAUNCH NEW SAFETY MEASURES AFTER FIGHTS LEAVE STUDENTS, STAFF INJURED." "WTOP NEWS", 21 DEC. 2024, WTOP.COM/ALEXANDRIA/2024/12/ALEXANDRIA-CITY-PUBLIC-SCHOOLS-TO-LAUNCH-NEW-SAFETY-MEASURES-AFTER-FIGHTS-LEAVE-STUDENTS-STAFF-INJURED. ACCESSED 8 MAY 2025.

IN PERSON

- STUDENT/STAFF SURVEYS (2023-2024) & (2024-2025)
- STUDENT NEWS/TMA INTERVIEWS