



BY ALEXANDRIA CITY HIGH SCHOOL



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TOPIC

Teachers should be required to complete a credible safe-space program in order to be trusted adults.

TOPIC DESCRIPTION

This issue focuses on the lack of standardized safe space training for teachers in Alexandria City Public Schools. Current data shows that fewer than 30% of teachers have completed trauma-informed professional development and only 40% of students can identify a trusted adult at school. This gap affects student safety, mental health and equity especially for youth, students of color and those experiencing trauma or poverty.

RESULT

All young people feel safe at school and have access to trained, trusted adults.

~ 42% of acps students can identify a trusted adult

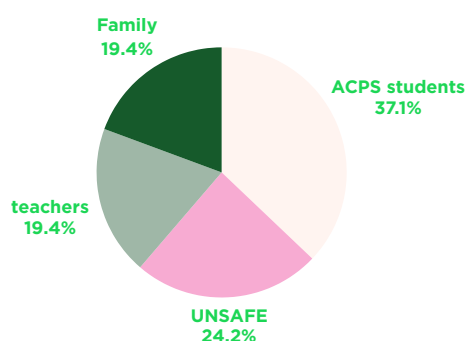
~ 27% report feeling unsafe at school

>30% of teachers have completed safe space training



SIGNIFICANCE

This result matters because emotionally safe schools lead to better attendance, higher achievement and stronger mental health outcomes. When teachers are trying to recognize trauma, bias and identify challenges, students are more likely to seek help and stay engaged. Without standardized training, safety and trust are different from classroom to classroom, which leaves vulnerable students without support. Implementing credible safe-space programs would make safety and belonging a consistent expectation across acps.



CYCP GOAL AND STRATEGIC AREA

Goal 3: All children, youth and families will have positive experiences.

~ All young people feel safe at home at school and in their community.

~ Alexandria is a trauma-informed and resilient community.

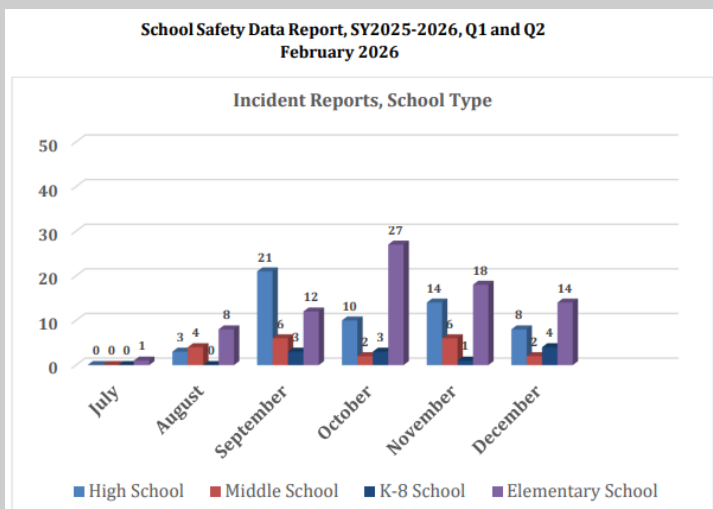
Strategic areas - Educational equity, Wellness, Community resilience and Prevention

HOW ARE WE DOING?

Alexandria's youth report mixed experiences with school safety and trust.

Even though most schools offer general safety training, few require trauma informed or safe space certification. Students from marginalized groups report lower feelings of safety and belonging. The absence of a district-wide policy means progress depends on individual schools and teachers.

42% of students can identify a trusted adult and less than 30% of teachers have completed relevant training



IMPLEMENTATION

- ~ Develop/adopt a credible safe-space training program for all acps staff
- ~ make training required and schedule during paid PD time
- ~ Include student and family input in program
- ~ Design/collect baseline and follow-up data on student safety and belonging
- ~ Provide ongoing coaching not one time workshops
- ~ Publicly share progress through cypc and ACPS dashboards

PARTNERSHIPS

- ~ Acps school board & Department of Student services, ~ school principles / administrators teacher ~ Associations student groups and clubs PTA and family ~ organizations /local youth serving non-profits



PERFORMANCE EFFORT

Quantity

- ~ Data collected from acps and why yrbs surveys
- ~ PD gaps identified for 100+ teachers
- ~ Community partners engaged

Quality

- ~ Use credible, unbiased resources
- ~ Evaluated accuracy
- ~ Aligns with cypc goals

PERFORMANCE EFFECT

IF IMPLEMENTED...

TRAINING WILL ~

- ~ INCREASE THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO CAN IDENTIFY TRUSTED ADULT
- ~ REDUCE BULLYING AND HARASSMENT
- ~ IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH INDICATORS
- ~ STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STUDENTS AND STAFF
- ~ CREATE EQUITABLE EXPERIENCES FOR MARGINALIZED GROUPS

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ~ Adopt a district-wide policy requiring safe space training for all teachers and staff
 - ~ Guarantee protected PD time during the work day
 - ~ Require renewal every 1 to 2 years
 - ~ Student climate surveys to measure progress
- ~ Partner with community organizations for culturally relevant training

ONLINE

- ACPS student services
- Local mental-health and youth nonprofits
- CYCP report card

IN PERSON

- Alexandria youth development office
- Community/trauma centers

CITATIONS

- CDC
- acps climate survey 2025
- alexandria youth the risk
- Behavior survey 2025
- school connectedness report 2024
- cypc 2025 strategic plan