

**Albemarle County Bullying Prevention Program
Spring 2009 Survey Results
Executive Summary**

Bullying at school continues to be a nationwide concern, as reflected in recent news reports of students who committed suicide in reaction to chronic bullying. Among the cases were:

- 11 year old Carl Joseph Walker-Hoover
<<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/MindMoodNews/story?id=7328091>>
- 11 year old Jaheem Herrera
<<http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/04/23/bullying.suicide/>>
- 14 year old Cherelle Clark
<<http://blogs.timesunion.com/schools/?p=25>>
- 17 year old Eric Mohat
<<http://abcnews.go.com/Health/MindMoodNews/story?id=7228335&page=1>>

Teacher survey

As part of Albemarle County's bullying prevention effort, 101 elementary and 105 middle school teachers completed a short questionnaire on their bullying prevention efforts.

- *Bullying is a common problem in Albemarle schools:* 93% of elementary teachers and 92% of middle school teachers reported taking action to address an incident of bullying or teasing in the past 30 days, with approximately one-fourth of teachers reporting 5 or more such incidents.
- *Teachers are holding class meetings about bullying:* 88% of teachers have held at least one classroom meeting about bullying in the past 30 days, and 46% have held 3 or more meetings.
- *More training is needed:* When asked to rate their level of training in the county's bullying prevention program, 18% reported "none", 54% reported "some" training, and 26% reported "substantial" or "extensive" training.

Student survey

Each elementary and middle school administered the School Climate Bullying Survey to 2,649 students in grades 3-5 and 2,339 students in grades 6-8. Detailed reports were sent to each school. There are notable variations across schools, with some schools showing decreases in bullying and others showing increases. Bullying rates overall appear to be comparable to national statistics. Several selected survey items are presented on the following pages:

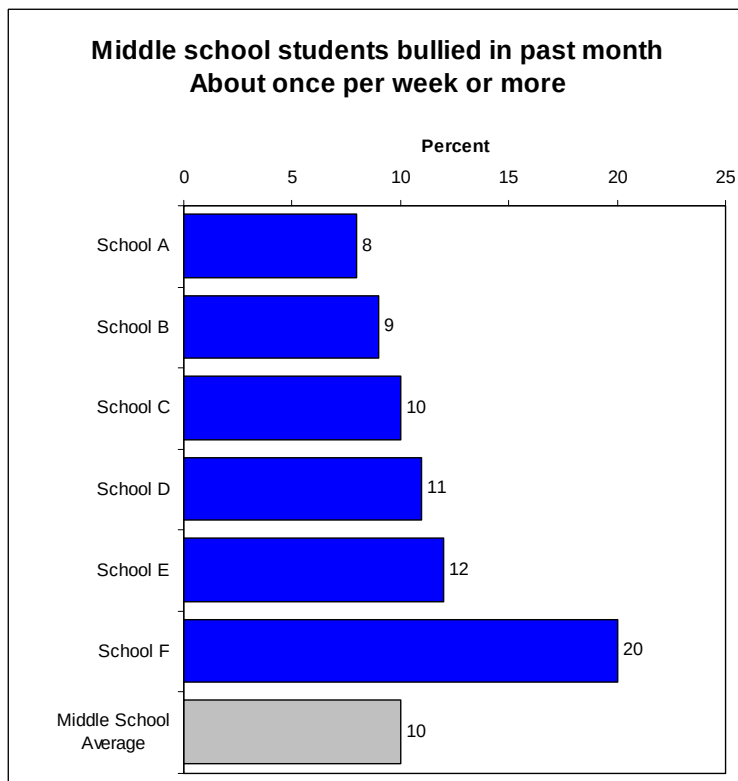
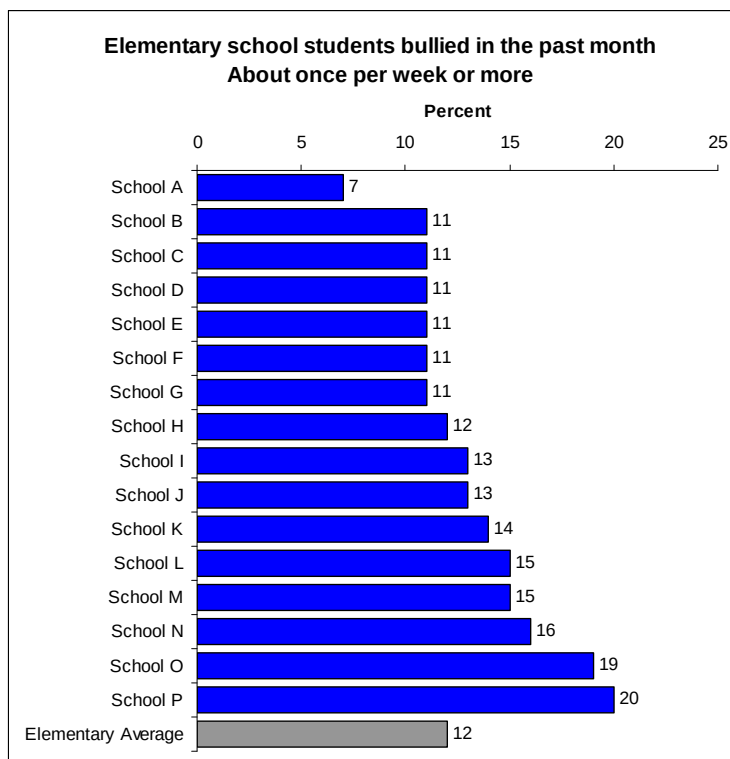
All students were taught about bullying in class and presented with a standard definition on the survey form. Many also watch a short video that explains what bullying is.

Approximately 12% or one in eight elementary students (grades 3-5) reported being bullied at least once per week in the past month.

Rates of bullying varied substantially across elementary schools, with the rate at school P nearly 3x greater than the rate at school A.

Approximately 10% of middle school students (grades 6-8) reported being bullied at least once per week in the past month. With the exception of School F, bullying rates were within a narrow range of 8 to 12 percent.

One barrier to reducing bullying is that the surveys are completed anonymously. To overcome this limitation, some schools have started to use a peer nomination question as part of the survey. The peer nomination question asks students to write down the names of any students who they have seen *being bullied*. If a student is named repeatedly by classmates, the school counselor can interview the student to find out whether he or she is being bullied. The peer nomination form does not ask students to identify bullies.



Both the elementary and middle school versions of the survey ask a series of questions about school climate. One important question concerns whether the student feels there is an adult at the school he or she could talk to about a problem.

Most students agree or strongly agree that there is an adult at school they could talk to about a problem, but there is room for improvement.

Students were asked to identify the locations where bullying occurs. Elementary students most often reported bullying outside the building and in classrooms, whereas middle school students most often reported bullying in the hallways and cafeteria.

Both elementary and middle school students reported that the most common form of teasing was teasing about personal appearance. Middle school students also reported a lot of teasing about sexual topics.

Approximately 20% of elementary students and 26% of middle school students reported that students often get put down because of race or ethnicity.

Each school has a detailed report that can be used to identify specific problems and concerns in each grade. Bullying prevention requires a schoolwide effort to change peer norms about bullying and teasing, as well as concerted efforts to identify victims and stop bullying when it is identified.

