

Albemarle County Schools Safety Report November 12, 2009

Discipline, Crime and Violence Report and Other Data

In 1991, school divisions began reporting data on discipline, crime, and violence, to the Department of Education as required by section 22.1-279.3:1 of the Code of Virginia. Since that time, the reporting process has gone through various revisions. These revisions have been necessary due to: 1) changes in federal and state reporting requirements; 2) aligning state reporting process with federal reporting requirements; and 3) use of electronic reporting systems. Comparisons from year to year are difficult because of changes in reporting requirements. The Division reports offenses that occur in the school in which the student's membership and attendance is maintained. If the offender is unknown or is not a student, then the school in which the incident occurs reports the offense. Reportable incidents include those that occurred on school property, on a bus or bus stop, or at a school-sponsored activity. It is important, however, to understand that statistical significance is limited, especially preparing ranked comparisons between and among school divisions or between school years. The process is one of school self reporting, and must take into account variances within each school that may affect the reporting process. In addition, federal and state reporting requirements are subject to change annually, which affect year-to-year comparisons. Reports are also received by the Superintendent from the Department of Juvenile Justice about offenses committed by students enrolled at school, if the offense would be a felony if committed by an adult or would be a violation of the Drug Control Act. These reports are shared with the principal of the school in which the student is enrolled as required by state law.

In general, during the 2008-09 school year the number of incidents reported in most categories remained about the same or showed small increases or decreases. Assaults against students, disruptive demonstrations, minor physical altercations, sexual harassment, theft of student property and possession of stolen property showed an increase. Assaults against staff, bullying, inappropriate use of cell phones, disrespect and defiance of authority, classroom disruptions, minor insubordination, fighting, harassment, misrepresentation, offensive sexual touching, computer violations, theft of staff property, threats and vandalism declined. Incidents of tobacco use and tobacco possession declined. Incidents in the weapons category declined and the numbers of incidents for both years remain small. Short term suspensions (10 days or less) decreased by 76 incidents indicating that schools are using alternative methods to keep students in school, thus preserving teaching and learning time.

In 2008-09, the School Board heard 6 discipline cases as compared to 26 in 2007-08. This decrease resulted from the changes in School Board policy allowing the Superintendent or the Superintendent's Hearing Officer to handle more cases. The Hearing Officers heard 194 cases in 2007-08 up from 170 in 2006-07. For 2008-09, the Hearing Officers heard 198 cases. These 198 cases resulted in 30 long-term suspensions for the remainder of the semester or year (more than 10 days) and 12 were provided with homebound services during their suspension period. Of these 30 long-term suspensions, one student remains on homebound and 4 are no longer in Albemarle County Schools. The remainder has either returned to their base school or to an alternative placement. The School Board has acted upon the most serious of these cases to assure the safety of the students and staff in all of the schools in the Division.

Some students were involved with the courts and some had conditions placed on their return such as participating in a threat assessment, mediation, or random drug testing. Attendance related discipline reports declined dramatically from 173 in 2007-08 to 61 in 2008-09.

For the 2007-08 school year, the Board's Policy JFC-RI on the training rule went into effect so that athletes who self disclosed substance abuse issues that did not involve use or possession on school grounds could be dealt with by the Athletic Directors in a different manner and receive counseling. Twelve students took advantage of this program in 2008-09, down from 16 the previous year.

The Police Department School Resource Officer (SRO) Program

The program had seven officers and one supervisor covering all schools in 2008-09. Additionally, the Lieutenant of Community Policing worked with the schools on an as needed basis. Sutherland and Jouett do not have full time SROs. Six officers were stationed in schools. The seventh officer was stationed at CATEC and was a floating officer to provide back up to the other officers and serve the rest of the schools. There has been an increased need for officers to respond to elementary schools. Officers answered numerous calls for service in the schools, with the majority being disorderly and disruptive students. The costs of the school resource officers are shared between the schools and the Police Department. School officials collaborate with officers to create safety strategies that promote a positive school climate free of drugs, violence, intimidation, and fear. Additionally, the Police Department assists in providing a safe and orderly environment on school campuses and assists in crisis situations.

During the summer of 2009, the Resource Officers participated in regular police patrol duty and most attended the Virginia School Safety Conference in July.

School Safety Audit, Crisis Plans and Drills

In September, all schools completed the Virginia School Safety Audit. Results can be found on the web at <http://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/vcss/audit/index.cfm>.

Each school has a crisis team which updates the crisis plan annually. The certification of this update is given to the School Board in August along with sample crisis plans. There is a Division crisis team which is part of a wider community crisis network. This team is organized annually and provides crisis training or updates for school staff or people new to our school community. The Division crisis team is available to any school which experiences a crisis situation such as the loss of a student or staff member. Safety drills are practiced on a regular basis, including lockdown and tornado drills. Each of these drills is practiced at least once prior to September 30 of each year. Fire drills are practiced more frequently on a schedule determined by the fire marshal.

Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Grant

Albemarle County Schools received \$37,881 in funds from the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Grant for 2008-09. This figure was down slightly from \$38,042 for the previous school year. The initiatives funded by these monies are a continued partial local effort. These funds have supported a SRO position in a middle school, Region Ten counseling for elementary and middle schools, the elementary substance abuse awareness program (Too Good for Drugs Too), and peer mediation training in all schools.

Safe Schools/Healthy Students (SS/HS) Grant

As presented earlier to the School Board, this recently awarded grant will assist Albemarle County in expanding and enhancing some of the programs which are of interest in improving student health and safety. The SS/HS grant will assure a safe school environment and violence prevention by expanding the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program to all schools and implementing Restorative Practices in all schools. The Program will support alcohol and drug prevention activities by expanding in-school prevention and early intervention to seven previously un-served schools using the Pennsylvania Student Assistance Model and Second Step. The Program will provide student behavioral, social and emotional supports by implementing Responsive Classroom in four elementary schools and by providing Life Skills training to high risk students. The Program will improve mental health services providing eight clinicians who will use Teen Intervene and Motivational Interviewing. Finally, the grant will offer early childhood social and emotional supports by creating a second three-year-old High Scope classroom and providing additional family support workers for publicly funded pre-schools.

June Jenkins has been hired to be the Director of the grant-provided services. Other staff charged with assisting the schools in carrying out these services and programs are in the process of being hired.

Instruction in Health, Safety, and Driver's Education

Each student in grades K-10 receives instruction in health, safety and wellness issues. Education on substance abuse and tobacco issues are included in appropriate grade levels. Driver's Education occurs as a part of the Health II curriculum, with a separate behind the wheel portion. A copy of the Teen Safety Report involving Drivers' Education for 2008-09 is attached.

Building Security

Each school has motion detector alarms that are armed when the building is not occupied. The police and a school official respond to any incidents of the alarms being activated. The building is then checked and the alarm is reset. A door numbering system was completed in the summer of 2008 by the SROs. Building Services works to maintain the existing systems as well as the camera systems previously installed.

Training on Bullying and Gangs

Albemarle County Schools were the recipient of services from a grant that was awarded to the University of Virginia to address bullying issues. This grant paid for training in setting up and operating anti-bullying programs for three Albemarle County staff members. The training was on one of the best-researched and most widely used intervention models called the Olweus Bullying Prevention Model. The model was developed by Professor Dan Olweus, a psychologist at the University of Bergen in Norway. The stated goals of the program are to (1) reduce existing bully/victim problems among elementary, middle, and junior high school students within and outside the school setting; (2) prevent the development of new bully/victim problems; and (3) improve peer relations at the school. The approach is both systems-oriented and individual-oriented. It focuses on altering the school environment, as well as addressing issues with individual students. Interventions are implemented at four levels: school-wide, classroom elements, individual interventions, and community efforts. In Albemarle

County, five middle schools have been trained as well as five elementary schools. During the 2008-2009 school year a joint effort between schools and Support Services funded John Halligan's visit to Albemarle County. He presented Ryan's Story to students at several schools and to 2 parent groups. Ryan Halligan committed suicide in 2003 after being bullied at school. Students and parents were greatly affected by those presentations.

School-based administrators have received ongoing information on gang related issues including the role parents play in gang prevention. There is a group in the community called the Youth Development Network (YDN) which has the goal of working in the schools and community through outreach and education to prevent youth from becoming involved with gangs. They will coordinate the parallel efforts that exist in the community to promote accessible youth development activities and services for all youth, especially high-risk youth, to prevent high-risk behavior, including gang involvement. Staff development for school staff is a continuing effort. Gang activity in our community is an issue of concern to The Commonwealth Attorney. She hosted a person from Richmond to present seminars for parents in May 2009 to raise awareness and solicit them as active partners in the work against gangs. These seminars were advertised through the schools, the county website and Parent Council.

Incidents of Discrimination

As part of the Equity and Diversity Initiative, Albemarle County Schools has collected data on discrimination incidents reported in the school division. Discrimination incidents are reported to the Coordinator of Equity and Diversity on the incident form. The Executive Director of Community Engagement reviews each report for the type and severity of incident, and for action taken. In every incident involving students, the parents of all participants were notified and appropriate discipline or intervention assigned. The following data summarize the reported incidents in 2005-2009 as compared to the data collected in previous years. For purposes of reporting this information, individual schools are not identified because of confidentiality and the sensitivity of identifying specific students. Most reported incidents over the past four years are racially motivated.

In 2007-08, four elementary, two middle, two high schools and CATEC reported at least one incident and as many as five incidents of discrimination. In 2008-09, five elementary, two middle and 3 high schools reported as at least one incident.

	# incidents	# Schools	# Victims	Gender Related	Ethnicity Related	Other
2005-06	31	11		19%	77%	4%
2006-07	65	11	117	32%	17%	51%
2007-08	21	9	20	5%	95%	
2008-09	19	10	17 plus	12%	88%	

Employee Safety and Health

The safety of Albemarle County employees remains a high priority of both the Board of Supervisors and the School Board. While numerous laws and policies exist in order to

ensure that we as an organization take the necessary steps to create a safe working environment, a true culture of safety awareness and practice is not possible without the input and assistance of all employees.

1. *Workers' Compensation:* This program for the school system continues to be administered by the Sedgwick/Comp Management, Inc. Although we continue to provide aggressive case management for all claims, we are seeing an increase in accidents. In order to address this, we have made numerous safety presentations to employees in an effort to raise awareness. We have also involved the principals/department managers in the accident investigation. We have seen improvement with timely reporting of claims and the use of the physician panel.
2. *Health and Safety:* Safety audits are also being performed in conjunction with our insurance company. It is our goal to start departmental safety teams in the areas with the highest number of claims and eventually in every school and department.
3. *Wellness:* We have seen an increase in participation with our employee wellness activities. We have sponsored numerous events such as the Charlottesville Women's 4 Miler, the Charlottesville Men's 4-Miler, the Presidential Fitness Challenge and the Stress-less challenge. We continue to offer prevention programs such as mobile mammography and flu shots to our employees and it is our goal to offer a skin cancer screening as our next prevention program. Our wellness team meets on a monthly basis to oversee and promote wellness at each location.

Student Behavior Management Committee

This committee has been at work since the spring of 2006 with the assistance of Bob Garrity, a community resource person. During the 2008-09 school year there was a focus on the things that make a difference for students: good transitions, restorative practices and dropout prevention. Each of these topics has a sub-committee associated with it. On January 20, 2009 there was a seminar on Restorative Practices featuring the trainers from the Institute for Restorative Practices in Pennsylvania. During the summer Behavior Management Workshops Bob Garrity presented an introduction to Restorative Practices to all K-12 administrators. Many administrators are interested in beginning to use restorative practices as a method to assist students in changing their behavior. The challenge now is to move Restorative Practices from the administrative team to the classroom. At least one elementary school is piloting this effort. The dropout prevention subcommittee looked at the students who dropped out last year to identify common characteristics and look for causes that lead them to leave school before graduation. The markers which are nationally recognized are present in the student who dropped out of Albemarle County Schools. Below level reading and math on entry to middle school and high school and poor attendance patterns are common. Hopefully, the data stated previously on attendance related discipline will begin to show effects in decreased numbers of dropouts. This however is an effort that will span more than one year.

The Behavior Management Handbook for administrators which contains policies and agreed upon procedures related to school discipline and recording practices was used during 2008-09 and updated in the spring of 2009. During the summer workshops updates were reviewed and an emphasis was placed on involvement with law enforcement as required by state law.

Other Safety Related Issues

Internet safety workshops for students, parents, community members and staff as well as follow up with school technology leaders and administrators occurred in 2008-09. The Internet Safety Program will be revised during the 2009-10 school year to reflect central office restructuring, new technologies, and new requirements.

Albemarle County Schools has a partnership with Region 10 to provide substance abuse counseling services in our schools, mostly in the high schools. A grant has just been submitted to add an additional counselor for a middle school. These people serve to counsel students who have used substances on school grounds and students who have self-reported through the athletic program. They also serve as a resource to the other counselors and run substance prevention groups and see individual students as needed.

Again this fall a crossing guard training was conducted. This was arranged by the Sheriff's department and taught by a representative from VDOT. Four people from various schools were trained. These people are supplied with appropriate clothing (reflective vests, etc.) to do this job. They are now certified to stop traffic on the roads to allow cars to enter or exit schools and allow pedestrians to cross roads. The crossing guards are not allowed to direct traffic at major intersections such as on Hydraulic Road or on Rt. 250. The Henley and Western exits onto Rt. 250 have been a concern. The Sheriff's department has had to decrease its commitment to directing traffic for our schools so the Western and Henley exits are this year covered by the Sheriff's Reserve Unit and a hired security company whose employees were also trained as crossing guards at the 2009 fall training.

Several elementary schools in the division are using a program called the Responsive Classroom. This program emphasizes relationships in the school community between and among parents, staff and students. The use of respectful language is encouraged to improve relationships and consequently improve learning. Staff is asked to reflect on what is said to students in the classroom that could encourage or discourage them. Morning class meetings are held so that students start the day with a sense of belonging. There is great interest in increasing the number of schools using this program.

Enterprise Center

The Enterprise Center was established in 2000 to serve as an alternative short term placement for students with chronic behavior issues or issues which deemed them inappropriate in a regular school setting. High school and middle school students have been served. A limited number of students are recommended to the Enterprise Center by their principals, but most students are referred for placement by the Superintendent's hearing officer or by the School Board. The goal of placement at the Enterprise Center is to remove the student from a placement that is problematic at the time, and to work with that student so that he/she may return to the regular school setting as a productive member of that school community. Academic progress is a key component with the staff individualizing the program for each student. A computerized online system is used for the high school so students can gain credits in many areas. The middle school works more on a program to intervene in areas of deficit as well as middle school subjects to prepare students for high schools. The goal of the Enterprise Center is to prepare students academically and behaviorally to return to their base schools, although a few

students have attended for their entire high school careers. Parents are involved in the student's progress whenever possible.

For 2008-09 46 high school and 16 middle school students were served. 21 enrolled as 9th grade students, 13 enrolled in grades 10-12. 12 enrolled in the Tutoring Assistance Program (TAP) only which included 4 students who began as Enterprise center students. TAP serves students who are preparing for the GED but who do not yet meet the state requirements to enter the ISAEP Program. During or at the end of the school year, 21 students were recommended to return to a regular school setting. One student obtained a GED and 2 others completed requirements to earn their diplomas. The remainders moved, are no longer in school or have been placed in other educational settings.

Students at the Enterprise participate in work or in service learning by participating in a community based program called Teens Give. From 2003-2005 the Enterprise Center was awarded a contract from the State Department of Education for suspended students to participate in service learning while attending school at the EC. The School Board provided local funding and support to continue our partnership with Teens Give beginning in the 2005-2006 school year. During the 2003-2008 academic years the partnership has contributed approximately 6,000 hours of community service. For the 08-09 school year approximately another 1,000 student community service hours were contributed. This partnership was recognized and presented to the State Superintendent and Judges Liaison meeting on community/school collaborative service learning programs with at-risk youth. It has been recognized as one of three outstanding programs by State Department of Education for service learning and at risk students. Additionally, this partnership has been selected to represent Virginia National Civic Star Award competition sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators.