



ALEXANDRIA CITY HIGH SCHOOL



Glenn Hernandez

TOPIC

Student Safety and Security at Alexandria City High School (ACHS)

TOPIC DESCRIPTION

Student safety at Alexandria City High School is a major concern, primarily due to frequent fighting and violence between students. This issue affects all students, especially those in hallways, the library, and cafeteria, as well as teachers and staff who must manage disruptions and ensure a safe learning environment. Many students report feeling only moderately safe (mostly 3/5 on surveys) and experience distractions that interrupt their ability to focus on schoolwork. It matters at ACHS because the school is Northern Virginia’s largest high school, serving a diverse student body across two campuses. Ongoing fights have led to lockdowns, injuries, police involvement, and even virtual learning days. Improving safety is essential for creating the supportive school climate needed for academic success and student well-being in Alexandria.

CYCP GOAL & STRATEGIC AREA

Goal 1: All Children, Youth, and Families will be Physically Safe and Healthy (from Alexandria’s Children & Youth Community Plan).

How it fits: This goal emphasizes creating safe school environments free from violence and supporting students’ sense of belonging and security. Student fights and inadequate security directly undermine this priority. Addressing school safety at ACHS contributes to the broader citywide aim of reducing exposure to violence and building trauma-informed, supportive schools.

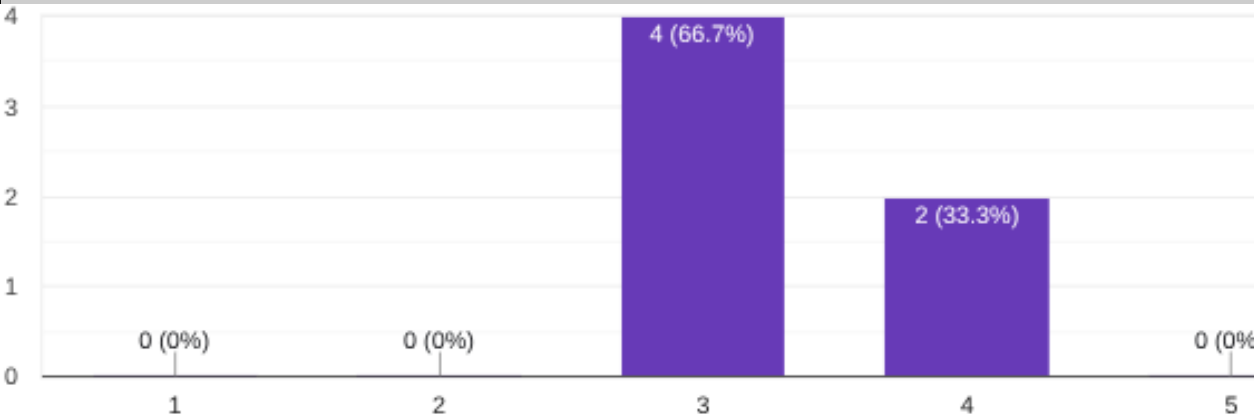
BASELINE DATA & GOAL

What Do We Know? From a student survey of 5 ACHS respondents (mostly 12th graders):

- 100% identified fighting or violence between students as their top safety concern.
- 60% said there are not enough security measures at ACHS.
- 40% have personally witnessed or experienced safety issues this year (mainly fights).

Measurable Goal: Increase the percentage of students who feel safe or very safe (4 or 5 on a 5-point scale) at ACHS from the current 40% to 75% by the end of the 2025-2026 school year.

WHAT IS HAPPENING RIGHT NOW?



Graph 1: Student Safety Rating at ACHS

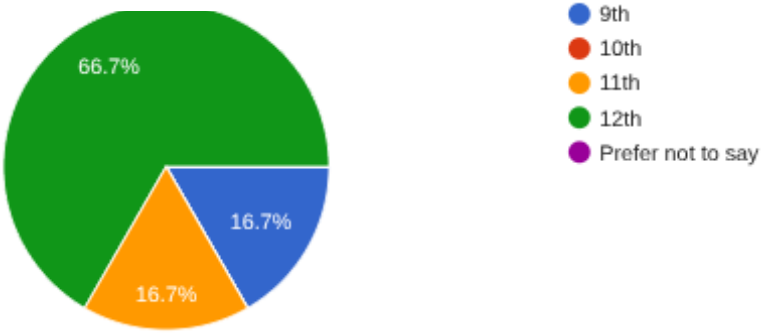
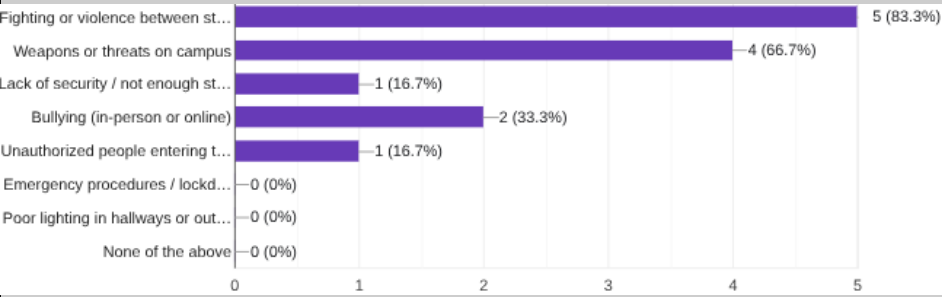
What does the data show? The bar graph shows that out of 5 student responses, 60% rated their general feeling of safety at ACHS as a 3 out of 5 (moderate), while 40% rated it a 4 out of 5. No students rated the school as “Very Unsafe” (1) or “Very Safe” (5).

Why does this matter? This data reveals that most students feel only moderately safe at school. A lack of strong safety feelings can increase anxiety, reduce focus on learning, and contribute to a negative school climate. Even though no one feels extremely unsafe, the absence of “very safe” responses shows there is clear room for improvement in creating a secure environment.

Graph 2: Top Safety or Security Concerns

What does the data show? The bar graph shows that 100% of the 5 respondents selected “Fighting or violence between students” as their top safety concern. The next highest concern, “Weapons or threats on campus,” was selected by 60%, while other issues such as bullying and lack of security each received only 20%.

Why does this matter? Fighting is clearly the dominant safety issue at ACHS according to students. Because it affects every single respondent, it creates frequent disruptions, leads to lockdowns, and makes students feel unsafe in common areas like hallways and the library. Addressing student-on-student violence should be the top priority for any safety improvement plan.



Graph 3: Are There Enough Security Measures?

What does the data show? The pie chart shows that 60% of students feel there are not enough security measures (cameras, guards, metal detectors, bag checks, etc.), 20% feel there are enough, and 20% are unsure or feel there are too many.

Why does this matter? A majority of students believe current security is insufficient. This perception, combined with the high concern about fighting, suggests that existing measures are not fully effective or visible enough. Student buy-in and confidence in security systems are essential for any safety plan to succeed.

After major fights in December 2024, ACPs added more security officers, increased hall sweeps, reviewed camera placement, and strengthened weapons screening. The school also shifted some protocols for better coverage.

Are they working? Partially — incidents continue, and student survey data shows 60% still feel security is insufficient and 80% rate current policies as only moderately effective (mostly 3/5). More consistent enforcement and better-trained staff are still needed.

WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN TRIED?

The school and district have responded to recent fights by:

- Adding extra School Security Officers (SSOs).
- Increasing hall sweeps and duty stations.
- Reviewing security protocols and camera systems.
- Enforcing stricter student code of conduct with consequences up to expulsion.

How well is it working? Student feedback indicates these steps help but are not enough. Security guards are often seen as not fully effective, and fighting remains the dominant concern.

WHO CAN HELP?

Mr. Lance Harrell
Executive Principal

Mr. Lee Conroy
Director of Safety and Security Services



WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR?

Quantity: What actions have been taken? After a series of student fights in December 2024 that led to early closure and virtual learning, Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) implemented several new safety measures starting January 2025. These include:

- Adding extra School Security Officers (SSOs) at both the King Street and Minnie Howard campuses.
- Increasing hall sweeps and creating security duty stations in high-traffic areas.
- Enhancing supervision during lunch periods.
- Reviewing and adjusting camera placements and weapons screening protocols.
- Staggered dismissals to reduce hallway congestion.
- Stricter enforcement of the Student Code of Conduct with stronger consequences for fighting.

Quality: How well are those actions working? While these steps show the district is responding to the problem, student feedback from the recent survey indicates the changes have only been partially effective. Many students still report frequent fighting and feel that security staff need better training and more consistent presence.

IS IT ACTUALLY HELPING?

According to the student survey responses

- 100% of students still listed fighting/violence as their #1 safety concern.
- 60% believe there are not enough security measures.
- 80% rated current school security policies as only moderately effective (a 3 out of 5).
- Many students mentioned seeing fights (e.g., in the library) and feeling that security guards are not fully doing their job.

Conclusion: The new measures (extra guards, hall sweeps, etc.) are a positive step and may have reduced some incidents compared to December 2024. However, students do not yet feel significantly safer. Fighting remains the dominant issue, and a majority still want stronger, more effective security. People are somewhat better off than before the changes, but more improvement is clearly needed to create a truly safe learning environment.

WHAT SHOULD CHANGE? (YOUR SOLUTION)

Implement a Comprehensive School Safety Enhancement Plan focused on:

- Better training and accountability for security guards (students’ top request).
- Increased visible presence of trained staff during transitions and high-risk areas.
- Clearer protocols for quick response to fights.
- Student-led initiatives (peer conflict resolution, safety ambassadors).

Supported by Survey Data:

- 100% of students flagged fighting as the #1 issue.
- 60% want more effective security measures.
- Many called specifically for guards to “actually do their job” and better training.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT?

If implemented, fewer fights will occur, leading to fewer disruptions, lockdowns, and injuries. Students will feel safer (moving toward the 75% goal), which will reduce distractions and improve focus on learning. Teachers can teach more effectively, and the overall school climate will improve. Primary beneficiaries: ACHS students and staff, with ripple effects on families and the broader Alexandria community.

CITATIONS

Eickert, C. (2025). Titan Changemaker Listening Session Handout [Handout].
Alexandria City Public Schools. (2024-2025). Safety & Security Updates. [Eickert, C. \(2025\). Titan Changemaker Listening Session Handout. Alexandria City Public Schools. \(2024-2025\).](#)

[Safety & Security Updates. City of Alexandria. \(2025\). Children & Youth Community Plan.](#)
Alexandria City Public Schools. (2025). SY24-25 School Safety Data Review (Q1 & Q2). [Eickert, C. \(2025\). Titan Changemaker Listening Session Handout. Alexandria City Public Schools. \(2024-2025\).](#)

[Safety & Security Updates. City of Alexandria. \(2025\). Children & Youth Community Plan.](#)
City of Alexandria. (2025). Children & Youth Community Plan (CYCP) 2025. [Eickert, C. \(2025\). Titan Changemaker Listening Session Handout. Alexandria City Public Schools. \(2024-2025\).](#)

[Safety & Security Updates. City of Alexandria. \(2025\). Children & Youth Community Plan.](#)
Alexandria City Public Schools. (2024, December 20). Important updates regarding ACHS safety & security. [Eickert, C. \(2025\). Titan Changemaker Listening Session Handout. Alexandria City Public Schools. \(2024-2025\).](#)

[Safety & Security Updates. City of Alexandria. \(2025\). Children & Youth Community Plan.](#)

LEARN MORE

- Alexandria Children & Youth Community Plan (CYCP) – Safety & Belonging section.
- ACPS Office of Safety and Security policies and updates.
- Student survey results (this project’s primary data).