

Threats to School Safety

An analysis of iSTAR incidents from
2016-2020

Independent Analysis Unit

Los Angeles Unified School District

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The views expressed herein are those of the Independent Analysis Unit and do not necessarily reflect those of the District, the Board of Education, or any individual Board Member.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	II
INTRODUCTION	1
ABOUT THE DATA	2
SCHOOL SAFETY-THREATENING INCIDENTS	5
The most prevalent incident categories were suicidal behavior, aggression, threats, inappropriate sexual behavior, illegal substances, bullying, and weapons.....	5
The prevalence of threats varied by school level.....	7
Male students were more often suspects in fighting, threats, sexual misconduct, and weapons incidents than girls. Girls were more often the victims of sexual misconduct than boys.	10
THREATS TO STUDENT SAFETY AND LIFE: MORE ON SUICIDE, VIOLENCE, AND SHOOTINGS	11
Suicidal behavior was the most reported incident type—by far.	11
Three out of four incidents did not involve physical violence, and those that did seldom resulted in injury	12
Shooting incidents made up <1% of incidents.....	13
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	14
RECOMMENDATIONS	15
Suicidal behavior—the largest threat—needs continued and increased attention.	15
Middle school students are most at risk – review and revisit Middle School Collaborative findings and recommendations.	16
Male aggression and female victimization are distinct problems that warrant special attention...	17
APPENDIX	A1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On average, between August 2016 and June 2020, **District schools and other sites reported approximately 21,440 unduplicated incidents per year into the Incident System Tracking Accountability Report (iSTAR) database**, an electronic tool that school employees use to record incidents that affect school safety. Incidents can be categorized in iSTAR in 57 ways. This analysis included 35 categories that reflect person-involved safety threats and exclude environment hazards or facilities failures.

Of the 35 incident categories included in this analysis, **7 categories made up 80% of all incidents reported**. Incidents involving suicidal behavior were the most prevalent threat to student safety and made up approximately 40% of all reported incidents, on average. Incidents involving fighting or physical aggression, threats, sex crimes or inappropriate sexual behavior, illegal or controlled substances, bullying, and weapons were the next most frequent (in that order).

Incidents occurred across local and Board Districts with relative parity; however, **school level and gender disparities exist**. Incidents involving suicidal behavior, fighting, threats, sex crime or inappropriate sexual behavior, and bullying occurred at greater rates in middle schools compared to other school levels. Incidents involving illegal or controlled substances occurred at the highest rate in high schools.

Furthermore, male students were implicated as aggressors in incidents of fighting, threats, and sex crimes (or sexual misconduct) at a greater rate than female students. Inversely, girls were the victims of suicidal behavior incidents and sex crimes or sexual misconduct at a greater rate than boys.

Most incident categories captured in iSTAR occurred in L.A. Unified schools at a rate equal to or less than that experienced by schools nationwide.

This analysis used data solely from the iSTAR database and did not include other data sources that may contain information about threats to school safety. For example, this analysis did not examine calls made to the L.A. Unified school police department (LASP). For this reason, results of this analysis should be viewed as estimates—probably underestimates—of threat occurrence. In addition, comparisons between locations and persons-involved may contain inaccuracies due to uneven use of iSTAR at different schools and should be viewed as estimates as well.

Nevertheless, this analysis identifies the relative magnitudes of several threats and functions as an initial step to help school leaders understand how to prioritize their efforts to improve school safety. With this framing in mind, this report suggests that **District leadership should develop a comprehensive understanding of the circumstances surrounding, and ways to effectively address, suicidal behavior incidents, middle school student involvement in risky behavior, and gender disparities in student aggression and victimization.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Students learn and achieve the most when they feel safe—safe from physical danger, insecurity, fear, and anxiety. Consequently, school safety is one of the top priorities of any school. Recently, L.A. Unified began to reimagine school safety. In June of this year, in the wake of national and local civil unrest in response to the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, District leadership formed a School Safety Taskforce to understand the role of school police. In complement to this work, the Independent Analysis Unit (IAU) undertook an assessment of the threats to personal security that confront students and staff, which is one component. Understanding the threats to student safety—how often, where, and to whom they occur—is the first step to recognizing what schools need in terms of support and resources to ensure safe learning environments.

To develop a comprehensive threat assessment, the IAU analyzed data from the District’s Incident System Tracking Accountability Report (iSTAR) database, which is an electronic tool that school employees use to record some of the incidents that affect the safety of the District’s students, employees, and surrounding communities.¹ The guiding question for this analysis was: ***In a typical school year, what threats to safety do members of the L.A. Unified school community experience and report, and how do these threats vary across the District?***

The analysis found that, **on average, schools and District divisions reported about 21,440 unduplicated threatening incidents per year over the 4-year period, 40% of which involved suicidal behavior.** The other most prevalent threats to safety included fighting or physical aggression and threats. Less common, but still prevalent and certainly serious,

were incidents involving sex crimes or inappropriate sexual behavior, illegal or controlled substances, bullying, and weapons. Each of these types of incidents occurred at different rates across school types. **Middle schools reported incidents in several incident categories at the highest rate of any school level.** Several of these incident types also affect males and females differently.

The report begins with an overview of all incidents recorded in iSTAR in the last 4 years, how prevalent they were overall in the District over 4 years, and how their prevalence varied by student age and gender. The next part of the report then considers 3 incident types that represent serious threats to safety: suicidal behavior, physical violence, and shootings (along with arrests).

This report is an important first step in reimagining school safety and is the first in a series of reports by the IAU on the topic of school safety. However, this report presents an incomplete picture of the safety threats faced by our school communities in a typical school year because not all incidents that occur on or near District property are recorded in iSTAR; some are recorded in other ways, such as in calls to L.A. School Police. Also, reporting in iSTAR may be uneven, with some schools reporting more incidents or categorizing incidents in different ways. Finally, to produce a plausible estimate of safety threats in a typical year, this analysis used data from the most recent 4 school years. We included 2019-20 (though anomalous in several ways) but weighted incident counts for that year to account for the period of school facilities closures. For these reasons, counts and prevalence rates in this report should be viewed as estimates—probably underestimates—of the actual threats facing L.A. Unified schools. Comparisons between locations and persons involved may contain inaccuracies and should be viewed as estimates as well.

2. ABOUT THE DATA

At school sites, all principals and division heads have automatic access to iSTAR and use it to record details about events that represent threats to persons, property, environmental hazards, or facility-related failures. When an incident occurs, a principal, division head, or designee inputs information into iSTAR related to the incident's type, location, date and time, people involved (e.g. name and affiliation with school community), and a summary of the event. To categorize incidents, school staff members tag each record with as many type codes as needed, choosing from a list of 57 pre-defined incident types. Each incident, therefore, can belong to several different types or categories.⁵

Key Terms

High Black and Latino Student Enrollment (HBLSE): schools with 75% or more Black or Latino students

High Free or Reduced Student Meals (FRPM) Student Enrollment (High FRPM): schools with 75% or more students who qualify for FRPM

iSTAR: an electronic tool that school employees use to record incidents that affect the safety of the District's students, employees, and surrounding communities.²

Physical violence: this analysis considers incidents physically violent if one could intuit that suspects involved put hands on other suspects or victims or if suspects involved made serious threats of violence.

Property-related incidents: incidents that involve the school facility or a non-school District facility, including the following types: burglary, vandalism or property damage, trespassing, and loitering.

Safety: the protection of students from violence, exposure to weapons and threats, theft, bullying, and the sale or use of illegal substances on school grounds.³

Violence: any act of physical, verbal or emotional aggression, and represents a continuum of behaviors that includes threats, violence, harassment, bullying, stalking, vandalism, emotional abuse, intimidation, and other forms of conduct that create anxiety, fear, and a climate of distrust in the educational setting.⁴

For this report, the IAU conducted an analysis of *incident type, location, persons involved, and involvement roles* using data that were collected in the iSTAR database over 4 school years, from 2016-17 to 2019-20.⁶

Incident types include – but are not limited to – suicidal behavior, aggression, weapons, threats, theft, bullying, harassment, vandalism, and illegal and controlled substances, all of which relate to the definition of safety as the protection of students (and staff) from “violence, exposure to weapons and threats, theft, bullying, and the sale or use of illegal substances on school grounds.” Incidents can be categorized in iSTAR in multiple ways. For example, an incident can be categorized as both fighting and bullying. Many categories also have sub-categories and incidents can be assigned multiple sub-categories within each category. For instance, within fighting, incidents could be sub-categorized as both *threatened injury* and *willful use of force*. The fact that incidents can belong to more than one category or sub-category means that frequency tables of incidents by category count incidents more than once.⁸ Incident types with the highest frequencies are defined in Table 1 (35 of the 57 incident types were analyzed). See Appendix A for the full list of incident types that were included and excluded from this analysis.

Other characteristics of incidents included in this analysis are defined as follows:

- **Location categories** are *on campus, off campus, or on District property* (e.g. a bus)
- **Persons involved categories** are *students, parents, employees, and facilities* (for property-related incidents).
- **Involvement roles** included in this report are *perpetrators* (also referred to as “suspect”), and *victims*⁹

Table 1. Incident Type Definitions for High-Frequency Incidents

Category	Definitions
Suicidal behavior	Suicidal behavior or ideation, (i) non-injury or (ii) injury: Any observable behavior or statement (verbal, written, drawing) that may signal the presence of suicidal thinking, including previous suicidal behaviors, that either (i) do not result in or (ii) results in physical injury to the student.
	Self-injury or cutting: Observable bruises, scars, cuts, or burns that are frequent or unexplained by the student. Other risk-taking behaviors such as substance abuse or sexual acting out are included in this category.
	Hospitalization (51/50): An involuntary or voluntary psychiatric hold of an individual who is assessed to pose a risk to self or others.
Fighting	Any person who: “(1) unlawfully fights in a public place or challenges another person in a public place to fight, (2) maliciously and willfully disturbs another person by loud and unreasonable noise, and (3) uses offensive words in a public place which are inherently likely to provoke an immediate violent reaction.”
	Types include: aided or abetted the infliction of physical injury to another, assaulted or battered school employee; serious physical injury/not self-defense; threatened, caused, or attempted physical injury; willful use of force/violence – not self-defense
Threats	A “threat to commit a crime which will result in death or great bodily injury to another person, with the specific intent that the statement, made verbally, in writing, or by means of an electronic communication device, is to be taken as a threat, even if there is no intent of actually carrying it out.”
	Types include: threatened, caused, or attempted physical injury; terroristic threats (threat to cause death, great bodily injury).
Sex crimes or inappropriate sexual behavior	Refers to the manner in which humans experience or express their sexuality via inappropriate sexual practices or activities.
	Types include: indecent exposure, incest, pornography, rape, sexual battery, pedophilia, voyeurism, and other.
Illegal or controlled substances	Refers to the possession of use of illegal drugs or controlled substances on campus or at school activities.
	Major types include: alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and the selling of illegal or controlled substances.
Bullying	Any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct including one or more acts committed by a pupil or group of pupils, directed towards one or more pupils that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the following effects on a pupil: (1) fear or harm to person or property, (2) substantial detrimental effect on physical or mental health, (3) substantial interference in academic performance, and (4) substantial interference with ability to participate in or benefit from school services, activities, or privileges.
	Types include: cyber, indirect, nonverbal, physical, psychological, social, or verbal.
Weapons	Any instrument which is used in a threatening manner against another person with the intent and the ability to cause great bodily injury.
	Major types include: possession of a dangerous object, explosives, a knife, a firearm, an imitation firearm as well as assault with a deadly weapon or brandishing a knife.

Note: Incident types with the highest frequencies are defined in Table 1. In total, 35 of the 57 incident types in iSTAR were analyzed. See Appendix A for the full list of incident types that were included and excluded from this analysis

Source: iSTAR¹⁰

L.A. Unified recognizes school violence as a “continuum of behaviors” that has three characteristics: severity, frequency, and recency.¹¹ To differentiate types of violence for this analysis, we created a flag for incidents that involved perceived *physical* violence based on whether one could intuit that suspects involved put hands on other suspects or victims or if suspects involved made serious threats of violence. Incidents were flagged for physical violence if they fell under one of the following categories: abduction, robbery, all subcategories of fighting or physical aggression, all subcategories of threats, hate violence, physical bullying, shootings, sexual battery, rape, assault with a deadly weapon, brandishing a knife at another person, and possession of an explosive device.

Incident frequencies are presented as average counts. Because the frequency of incidents can vary from year to year, average frequencies provide a useful indicator for what resources need to be available consistently to

address threats to school safety. In creating these averages, the IAU assigned a reduced frequency weight to data from the 2019-2020 school year to account for school facilities closing on March 16.¹⁵

Demographic analyses at the student-level in this report are limited in scope because incident records are not linked to student IDs, though incident reports often include data on the gender identity of the suspects and victims involved. However, most incident reports are linked to school sites. Incident frequencies are analyzed by school levels (i.e., elementary, middle, or high school) and across schools with varying demographic characteristics. Using school-level demographic data,^{16,17} schools were categorized as *high Black or Latino student enrollment* (HBLSE) schools if they enrolled 75% or more Black or Latino students. Schools were also categorized if 75% or more of students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals (FRPM) as *high FRPM enrollment* schools.

Limitations of this Analysis

Three limitations affect the interpretation of the results presented in this report. First, this analysis uses data solely from the iSTAR database, which are derived from incident reports that school staff members entered over the last 4 years. Not all threatening or personal safety-related incidents that occurred on schools or involved students, employees or the school community during this time were recorded in the database. For instance, calls to the L.A. Unified school police department (LASP) are recorded in another database. Because we did not use police call data in this analysis, our results may underrepresent safety-related incidents to the extent that calls to the LASP reflect additional incidents that were not recorded in iSTAR. An unknown number of other personal safety-related incidents may occur that do not appear in iSTAR.

Second, data from iSTAR may be less than 100% reliable. In its annual iSTAR reports, the Division of Operations warns that “incidents may be unreported or erroneously reported in the iSTAR system.”^{12,13} School leaders may inconsistently categorize incidents within their schools and some schools may report more frequently than others, though the Division of Operations has taken steps to ensure universal understanding of reporting requirements and increase the reliability of iSTAR data.¹⁴ It is unclear how widespread error related to reliability in the iSTAR system might be.

To estimate the typical prevalence of safety threats, this report contains 4-year averages of incident frequencies, percentages and rates, including the most recent completed school year: 2019-20. However, school facilities closures in 2019-20 school year meant that year was atypical. Though we weighted the 4-year average to reflect the shortened year, factors besides days of instruction may have affected the incident reporting last year. Therefore, the 4-year average may contain inaccuracies.

For these three reasons, summative results should be viewed as estimates—probably underestimates. Comparisons between locations and persons-involved may contain inaccuracies and should be viewed as estimates as well.

3. SCHOOL SAFETY-THREATENING INCIDENTS

Over the 4 years included in this analysis, staff at L.A. Unified schools reported 21,442 total unduplicated incidents of the 35 types (non-injurious and injurious) on average per year,¹⁸ which represents a District-wide rate of about 50 incidents per 1,000 students. At least one incident of one of the incident types used in this analysis occurred at almost every school.

Most incidents (79%) take place on campus, though 20% take place off campus and about 1% of incidents take place on District buses or vehicles. Geographically, incidents occur (across Board and local districts) with relative parity, though Board District 1 and Local District West are slightly overrepresented in overall incidents reported (see Appendix B). Incident prevalence did not vary significantly between high Black or Latino student enrollment (HBLSE) schools and schools that enrolled lower numbers of these students, nor between schools that enroll high numbers of students who qualify for free or reduced meals, and schools that do not enroll high numbers of these students.

To understand the threats to school safety that are typical and common, this analysis uses average counts over four years (weighted for the short length of 2019-2020). First, to explore how threats differ between school levels, Table 2 shows average counts and percent shares of all incidents at elementary, middle and high schools. The highest absolute average count of incidents occurred at the elementary school level, which is to be expected, since elementary schools contain over half (53%) of the District's student enrollment. However, proportionally, middle schools experienced a higher rate of incidents compared to other school levels, since

Table 2. Weighted Average Counts of Incidents per Year by School Level

School Level	W. Avg. Count (%)	Avg. Student Enrollment (%)
Primary	76 (0%)	4,699 (1%)
Elementary	7,152 (33%)	237,195 (53%)
Middle	6,113 (29%)	74,074 (16%)
High	5,734 (27%)	103,146 (23%)
Span	1,443 (7%)	30,588 (7%)
Non-school site	924 (4%)	N/A
Total	21,442 (100%)	451,901 (100%)

30% of all incidents were recorded at middle schools even though they contain only 16 % of the District's students.

A. The most prevalent incident categories were suicidal behavior, aggression, threats, inappropriate sexual behavior, illegal substances, bullying, and weapons

Eighty percent of incidents reported in iSTAR fall into one of 7 categories. The most common incident type reported in the District by far involved suicidal behavior, which was reported nearly 4 times more often on average over 4 years than the next most common category, which was fighting (Table 3). The overall prevalence of top occurring incident categories is summarized below (for more detail related to the top recurring incidents, see Appendix C).

Suicidal behavior

Schools and other departments across the District reported approximately 8,400 suicidal behavior incidents on average per year. These incidents break down into 4 subcategories, shown in Table 4.¹⁹

Table 3. Weighted Average Count of Top Recurring Incident Categories per Year

Incident Category	W. Avg. Count (%)	Incidents per 1,000 students
Suicidal Behavior	8,419 (39%)	19
Fighting/Physical Aggression	2,796 (13%)	6
Threats	2,090 (10%)	5
Sex Crimes/Inappropriate Sexual Behavior	1,368 (6%)	3
Illegal Substances	892 (4%)	2
Bullying	855 (4%)	2
Weapons	778 (4%)	2

Note: Subcategory column percentages add to more than 100% because incidents can be categorized in multiple ways (e.g. fighting and bullying). Percentages are percent of unduplicated weighted per year averages (21,442 incidents/year).

Table 4. Weighted Average Count and Rates of Suicidal Behavior Incident Subcategories per Year

Subcategory	W. Avg. Count (%)	Incidents per 1,000 students
Non-injurious	5,951 (70%)	13
Injurious	514 (6%)	1
Self-injury or cutting	2,002 (24%)	4
Hospitalizations	835 (10%)	2

Note: Subcategory column percentages add to more than 100% because incidents can be categorized in multiple ways (e.g. injurious and self-injury/cutting). Percentages represent percentage of total suicidal behavior incidents (8,419 incidents/year).

Fighting

Incidents that involved fighting or other acts of physical aggression were the second most reported incident type across the District. Of fighting incidents, approximately 1,400—about half—involved individuals who threatened, attempted, or caused physical injury of other people per year on average (see Table 5). In a typical year, just under 1,000 fights involved willful use of force or violence and about 570 were assault involving employees

(about 30% and 20% of all fighting incidents, respectively). Of records that included information about persons involved, most involved students. Only a small number involved students and adults.

Threats

Threat incidents were the third most common (10% of all incidents, rate of 5 per 1,000 students). On average, schools and other sites report approximately 1,360 threat incidents involving individuals who threatened, attempted, or caused physical injury to other people per year making up 65% of all threat incidents. Schools and other sites report about 760 incidents involving terroristic threats per year – 35% of all threat incidents (see Table 6). As with fighting, most reports of threat incidents in iSTAR do not contain information about suspects and victims, which is plausible given that threats can be made without intent to harm a specific victim. Of threats that did involve specific victims, at least 30% of incidents occurred between students and 10% of incidents occurred between students and adults.

Sex Crimes or inappropriate sexual behavior

Sex crimes or inappropriate sexual behavior incidents were the fourth most reported incident type (6% of all incidents at a rate of 3 per 1,000 students). On average, these incidents involve serious issues such as indecent exposure (17%), sexual battery (15%), and pornography (10%). Less prevalent, but very serious, issues such as rape, pedophilia, incest, and voyeurism are also present. Most sex crime or sexual misconduct cases (55%) were categorized as “other” which tells us little about the sexual inappropriate behavior involved. Half of all incidents in this category occurred between students, and another 40% included no

Table 5. Weighted Average Count and Rates of Fighting or Physical Aggression Incident Subcategories per Year

Subcategory	W. Avg. Count (%)	Incidents per 1,000 students
Aided and abetted infliction of physical injury	231 (8%)	<1
Assault or battered school employee	567 (20%)	1
Serious physical injury	120 (4%)	<1
Threatened, attempted, or caused physical injury	1,413 (51%)	3
Willful use of force	974 (35%)	2

Note: Subcategory column percentages add to more than 100% because incidents can be categorized in multiple ways (e.g. caused physical injury and willful use of force). Percentages represent percentage of total fighting incidents (2,796 incidents/year).

Table 6. Weighted Average Count and Rates of Threat Incident Subcategories per Year

Subcategory	W. Avg. Count (%)	Incidents per 1,000 students
Threatened, attempted, or caused physical injury	1,365 (65%)	3
Terroristic threats	759 (35%)	2

Note: Percentages represent percentage of total threat incidents (2,090 incidents/year).

record of the relationship between suspect and victim.²⁰

Other prevalent incidents

Illegal or controlled substances (4% of all incidents, rate of 2 per 1,000). On average, about 40% of illegal or controlled substance incidents reported involved marijuana. Expectedly, a majority of these incidents (90%) only involved suspects.²¹

Bullying (4% of all incidents, rate of 2 per 1,000). On average, about one-third of bullying incidents are verbal, and a quarter are physical. More than two-thirds of bullying incidents occurred between students.²²

Weapons-related incidents (4% of all incidents, rate of 2 per 1,000). On average, 40% of weapons-related incidents involved the possession of a knife and 20% involved the possession of a dangerous object. About 80% of all weapons-related incident reports indicated no suspect-victim relationship.²³

B. The prevalence of threats varied by school level

Some threats occur evenly across all school levels, but others occur more often at one type of school or another. Elementary schools have relatively low levels of suicidal behavior incidents and, as expected, drug and weapons-related incidents. Middle schools have high levels of incidents related to suicidal behavior, fighting or physical aggression, threats, and sex crime or inappropriate sexual behavior, compared to other school levels (see Table 7). High schools have the highest number of incidents related to illegal or controlled substances.

Middle school students faced more threats in several categories compared to elementary and high school students.

Middle schools reported more fighting, threats, sex crime or sexual misconduct incidents, and bullying per 1,000 students than other school levels (see Table 7). Incidents involving illegal or controlled substances were somewhat less common in middle school than in high school, but more common than in elementary schools. Middle schools reported fewer weapons-related incidents on average per year relative to high schools,

Table 7. Weighted Average Count of Top Recurring Incident Categories per Year

Incident Category	Elementary School		Middle School		High School	
	W. Avg. Count	Incidents per 1,000	W. Avg. Count	Incidents per 1,000	W. Avg. Count	Incidents per 1,000
Suicidal Behavior	1,969	8	3,092	42	2,337	23
Fighting/Physical Aggression	1,140	5	700	10	690	7
Threats	915	4	500	7	460	4
Sex Crimes/Inappropriate Sexual Behavior	570	2	330	4	340	3
Illegal Substances	100	<1	250	3	450	4
Bullying	415	2	200	3	160	<2
Weapons	235	<1	215	3	260	3

Note: Rates are relative to the school level (e.g., elementary school rates should be interpreted as rates per 1,000 elementary school students).

though the rate of incidents involving weapons was about the same at both secondary school levels (see Table 7).

L.A. Unified middle school findings related to safety threats match those found in the rest of the country. Results from a nationally distributed survey indicate that middle schools across the country experience physical attacks (fights), threat incidents, and bullying at higher rates than are experienced by middle schools in the District.²⁴ However, weapons and illegal or controlled substance incidents occur at similar rates in middle schools nationwide as in the District (Appendix D1).²⁵

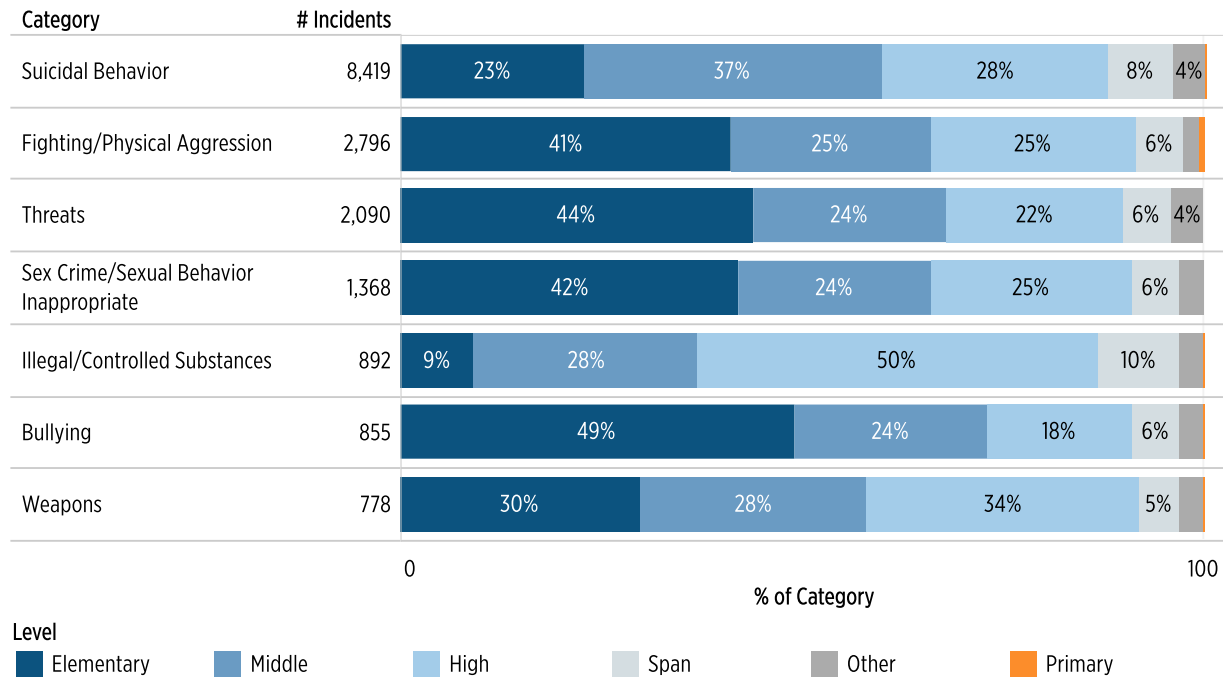
A large share of bullying, threats, fighting, and inappropriate sexual behavior incidents occurred at elementary schools.

According to the iSTAR data, elementary schools experience about a half of all bullying reported across the District. However, bullying incidents occur at a lower rate in elementary school than in middle school because – while elementary schools report twice the number of bullying incidents than middle schools – elementary schools enroll more

than 3 times as many students than middle schools. Somewhat less than half (approximately 40%) of all incidents involving fighting, threat, and sex crimes or inappropriate sexual behavior also occur at elementary schools (see Figure 1.). Therefore, these incidents, though relatively less common in elementary school compared to other school levels, are still prevalent. Weapons-related incidents and illegal or controlled substance incidents occur less frequently on elementary school campuses relative to other incident categories and much less than other school levels.

Similarities exist between L.A. Unified elementary school safety findings and those of the rest of the country. Results from a nationally distributed survey indicate that elementary schools across the country experience physical attacks (fights), threat incidents, and bullying at higher rates than are experienced by elementary schools in the District.²⁶ However, weapons and illegal or controlled substance incidents occur at similar rates in elementary schools nationwide as in the District (see Appendix D2).²⁷

Figure 1. Percentage Share of Most Prevalent Incident Categories by School Level



Note: School level category “other” refers to non-school sites (e.g., District division offices) and District campuses that host more than one school where no specific school site was identified.

High schools faced the highest rates of illegal or controlled substances.

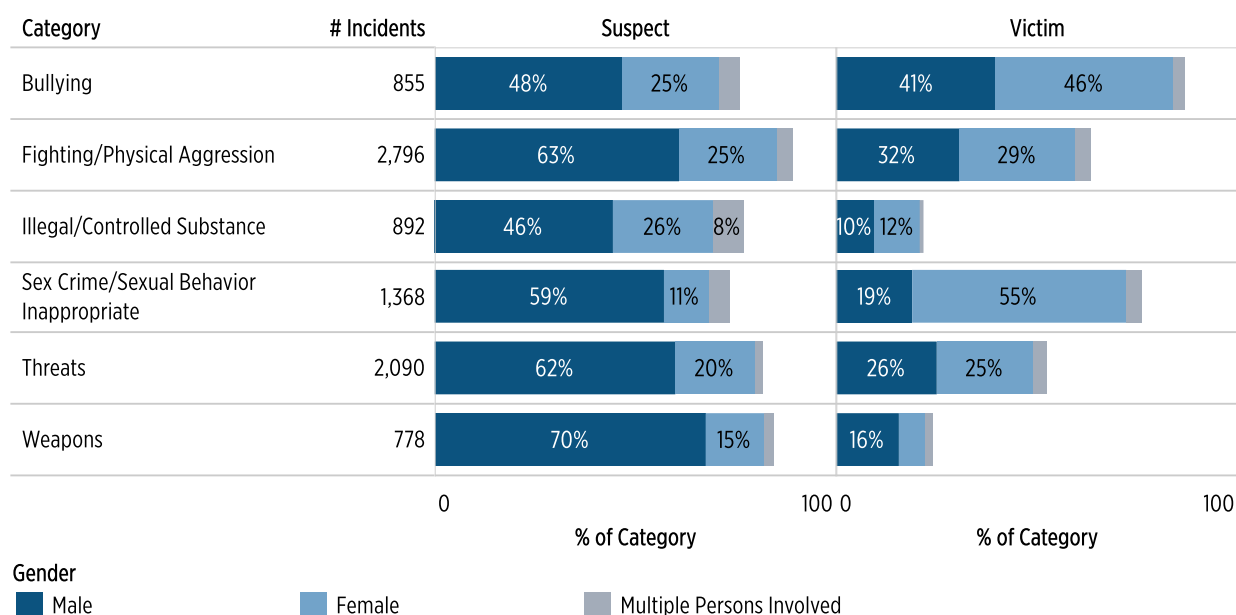
Compared to other school levels, high schools report most (50%) of the total District-wide incidents involving illegal or controlled substances (see Figure 1). The rate of drug-related incidents per 1,000 students in high school is also somewhat higher than was found in middle school (see Table 7).

Incidents that involved threats, sex crimes or inappropriate sexual behavior, and fighting or physical aggression were somewhat less common per 1,000 students in high school compared to middle school. Out of all school levels, high schools reported the greatest total number of incidents involving weapons districtwide, but the rate of weapons incidents per 1,000 students was comparable to the rate in middle schools.

High schools are noteworthy underrepresented in incidents of bullying. High schools reported 160 incidents involving bullying per year on average over 4 years at rates of less than 2 incidents per 1,000 students per year.

Similarities exist between L.A. Unified high school safety findings and those in the rest of the country. Results from a nationally distributed survey indicate that high schools across the country experience physical attacks (fights), threat incidents, illegal or controlled substances, and bullying at higher rates than are reported by high schools in the District.²⁸ However, weapons incidents occur at similar rates in high schools nationwide as in the District (see Appendix D3).²⁹

Figure 2. Percentage Share of Incident Categories by Type of Involvement and Gender



Note: Not all incident reports capture the gender identity of the victim or suspect, as a result, row percentages do not add to 100%.

C. Male students were more often suspects in fighting, threats, sexual misconduct, and weapons incidents than girls. Girls were more often the victims of sexual misconduct than boys.

Schools and departments in the District report incidents involving male students as suspects more often than female students in several incident categories. On average, boys are involved as suspects in almost two-thirds of incidents of fighting per year (see Figure 2) at a rate of about 8 incidents per 1,000 students. In comparison, girls are involved as suspects in a quarter of fighting or physical aggression incidents per year at a rate of about 3 incidents per 1,000 students.

Threat incidents also follow this pattern of boys being the most frequent perpetrators. On average, boys are involved as suspects in just under two-thirds of threat incidents per

year at a rate of about 6 incidents per 1,000 male students. In contrast, girls are involved as suspects in one-fifth of threat incidents per year at a rate of about 2 incidents per 1,000 female students.

Again, in terms of sex crimes or inappropriate sexual behavior, boys are suspects about two-thirds of the time — a rate of about 3 incidents per 1,000 students compared to girls who are suspects in fewer than 10% of sexual misconduct incidents per year (a rate of less than 1 incident per 1,000 students). Consistent with boys being suspects in sexual misconduct incidents, girls are involved as *victims* at higher rates. On average, girls are reported as victims of just over half of all sex crimes or inappropriate sexual behavior incidents per year, a rate of about 3 incidents per 1,000 students compared to boys who are involved as victims in just under one-fifth of sexual misconduct incidents per year (a rate of about 1 incident per 1,000 students).

Table 8. Weighted Average Count of Suicidal Behavior Incidents per Year by School Level

School Level	W. Avg. Count (%)	Avg. Student Enrollment (%)
Primary	8 (0%)	4,699 (1%)
Elementary	1,969 (24%)	237,195 (53%)
Middle	3,092 (39%)	74,074 (16%)
High	2,337 (28%)	103,146 (23%)
Span	654 (8%)	30,588 (7%)

Note: Weighted average counts of suicidal behavior by school level do not total 8,419 because not all incidents occur at school sites.

Gender disparities in all incident categories are reflected in national statistics regarding school crime and safety. A greater percentage of boy respondents to a national survey reported involvement in fights, threats, and weapons-related incidents than are reflected in L.A. Unified data.³⁰

4. THREATS TO STUDENT SAFETY AND LIFE: MORE ON SUICIDE, VIOLENCE, AND SHOOTINGS

Several categories of safety-related incidents warranted additional analysis. Suicidal behavior is the most reported incident type, and, as potentially life-threatening behavior, is highly concerning. Likewise, physical violence—which can accompany several of the incident types—is of paramount concern because of its potentially serious consequences. Arrests and shootings are rare but count as the most serious incidents than can occur on a school campus and are justifiably one of the greatest safety-related concerns of families and Board members.

A. Suicidal behavior was the most reported incident type—by far.

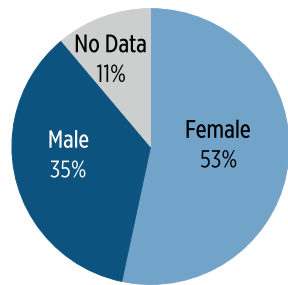
Incidents involving suicidal behavior make up almost 40% of the incidents reported in iSTAR, a rate of nearly 20 incidents per 1,000 students. This is the most occurring incident type by a long way. The next most common incident, fighting, comprises only 13% of all incidents, at a rate of only 6 per 1,000 students—less than a third as often. Suicidal behavior incidents occur throughout the District with relative parity.³¹ However, they vary significantly by grade level (see Table 8) and gender.

Middle school students were most at risk of being involved in a suicidal behavior incident, followed by high school students.

Middle schools reported, on average, about 3,100 suicidal behavior incidents per year (see Table 8).³² Suicidal behavior incidents occurred in the District’s middle schools at an average rate of 42 incidents per 1,000 students, a rate nearly twice as large as the rate observed in high schools (22 of every 1,000 students), and more than 4 times as large as the rate in elementary schools (8 out of every 1,000 students).

The prevalence of suicidal behavior incidents in middle and high schools in L.A. Unified are comparable to, but less than the prevalence of incidents involving suicide and suicidal behavior nationwide. In 2018, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) reported that suicide was the second leading cause of death for individuals ages 10-24 and from 2007 to 2014 the rate of suicide among middle school students nationwide doubled, according to the CDC.^{33,34,35} Results from a 2019 nationally distributed survey indicated that approximately a quarter of middle school students in the greater Los Angeles area have considered

Figure 3. Percentage Share of Suicidal Behavior Incidents by Gender



suicide while around 10% of students actually attempted.³⁶

Female students were more at-risk of being involved in a suicidal behavior incident than male students.

Schools and departments across L.A. Unified reported approximately 4,500 incidents (about half) involving suicidal behavior among female students per year on average

(see Figure 3), a rate of about 20 incidents per 1,000 students. However, under 3,000 suicidal behavior incidents were reported for male students over the 4-year period— a rate of about 10 suicidal behavior incidents per 1,000 students. Gender differences in suicidal behavior incidents in L.A. Unified mirror those of the rest of the country.³⁷

B. Three out of four incidents did not involve physical violence, and those that did seldom resulted in injury

Taken together, physically violent incidents made up a large portion of total incidents reported (approximately 5,630 incidents, making up a quarter of all types of incidents). However, of these only approximately 305 (5%) resulted in injury.

Further analysis provided insight into why so few of the physical violence incidents did not result in injury. About 50% of the incidents identified as physical violence (2,780) were characterized as “threatened/at-tempted/caused physical injury.”³⁸ On average, approximately only 135 of these incidents (5%) were flagged for injuries; therefore, most were probably threatened or attempted, rather than caused, violence.

The next most common incident issue types flagged for physical violence were those that involved willful use of force, terroristic

Incidents that Involve Arrests in L.A. Unified

Incidents involving arrests can be categorized in iSTAR in multiple ways (e.g. arrest and fighting) to help District officials understand circumstances that lead to arrests in school communities. However, this can lead to double counting.

On average over 4 years, L.A. Unified schools and other departments reported 280 unduplicated incidents involving arrests per year at a rate of less than 1 incident per 1,000 students. While arrest incidents did not vary among schools significantly according to Black or Latino enrollment or FRPM-qualifying enrollment, arrests did occur at significantly different rates at different school levels.

On average, high schools reported about 180 unduplicated incidents involving arrests per year at a rate of about 2 incidents per 1,000 high school students (see Appendix G), and nearly all arrest incidents involved students (~90%). High school students were arrested for a variety of reasons including suicidal behavior, threats, sex crimes, and property damage. Most commonly, high schoolers were arrested for incidents involving fighting and weapons (both representing about a quarter of all high school arrests) and illegal or controlled substances (about 15%) per year.

Middle schools reported approximately 50 unduplicated arrest incidents per year at a rate of less than 1 incident per 1,000 middle-school students, and as in high school, most arrest incidents involved students (85%). Also, like high school students, middle school students were arrested for reasons involving illegal substances and weapons. However, most middle school arrest incidents involved fighting (36%) and a smaller percentage involved threats per year on average.

threats, and assaulted/battered school employee, which sound violent, but an analysis of these incidents by school level shows that many of them occurred in elementary school. Young children are presumably less likely to cause injury, either to each other, or to adults, compared to older students (see Figure 4).³⁹

The rates of occurrence of physically violent incidents in L.A. Unified may reflect safer-than-average conditions compared to other parts of the country. Results from a nationally distributed survey indicate that schools across the country experience physical violence at a higher rate than are experienced by schools in the District—about 20 incidents per 1,000 students compared to the District’s 12 incidents per 1,000 students.⁴⁰ Nationally, fights make up a majority of violent incidents, as they do in the District.⁴¹

C. Shooting incidents made up <1% of incidents.

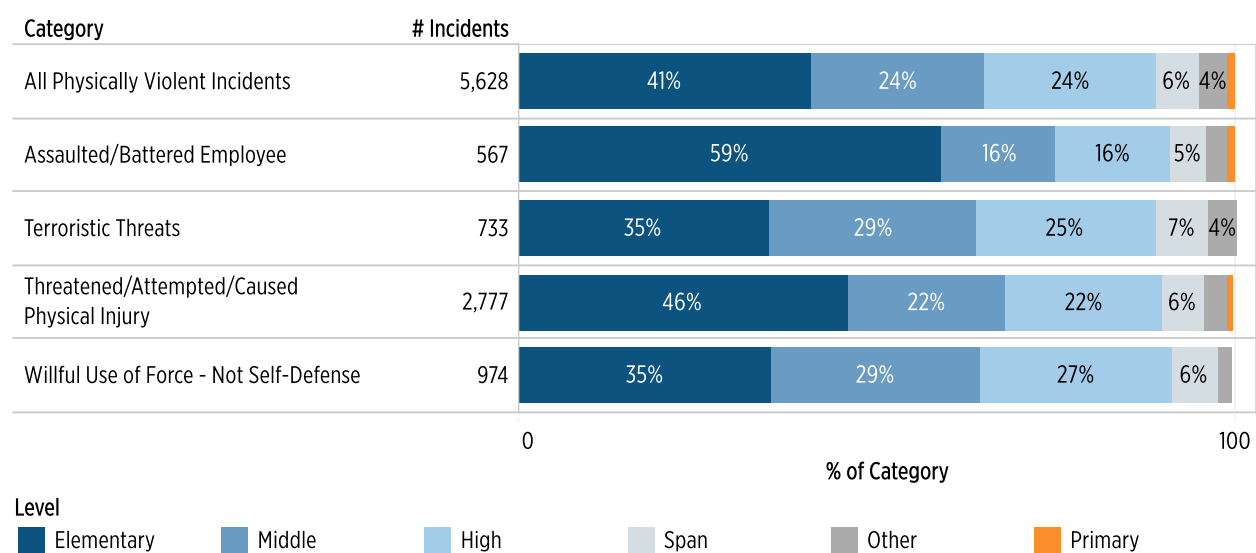
Shooting incidents in L.A. Unified over the 4 years of this study were very rare. In total, L.A. Unified schools and other sites reported 159 incidents involving shootings in 4 years.

Even though shooting incidents accounted for virtually 0% of total incidents in the District, the seriousness of school shootings warrants further investigation.

Analysis of shooting incidents identified a statistically significant difference between the rate of shooting incidents at high Black or Latino student enrollment (HBLSE) schools and non-HBLSE schools. Though HBLSE schools make up only 75% of District schools, they accounted for a sizable majority of shooting incidents that took place on or near a school site. There was also a statistically significant difference in the rate of shooting incidents at schools that with high enrollment of students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals (FRPM) and their counterpart schools. High FRPM schools make up about 75% of District schools but accounted for a sizable majority of shooting incidents that took place on or near a school site.

Importantly, almost all of the 159 shooting incidents in the District took place off campus. Of these 141 shooting incidents, most involved students and a subset involved parents. Additionally, a one-third of off campus

Figure 4. Percentage Share of Most Prevalent Incident Categories Flagged for Physical Violence by School Level



shootings were flagged for community violence.⁴²

In total, these numbers represent a rate of less than 1 student-involved injurious shooting incident on a school campus a year, which is evidence that in some areas of the city, schools are the safest place to be.

Nationally, schools reported a total of 251 on campus school shooting incidents from 2015-2019.⁴³

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Overall, according to this analysis of iSTAR data and a comparison with prior research, L.A. Unified schools appear to be relatively safer than schools nationwide in terms of the top safety-threatening incidents. However, for reasons explained above, this threat assessment probably underestimates the rate at which several threat categories occur in District schools. Still, it is certain that L.A. Unified students face substantial threats of several types that cannot be ignored or diminished. They face aggression or violence, either physical or verbal, in the form of bullying, fights, threats, and inappropriate sexual behavior as well as, to a lesser extent, weapons. Schools also must contend with the problems of illegal drugs or controlled substances. The biggest threat students face, however, is self-harm in the form of suicidal behavior.

These threats vary by school level, with many of the top 7 incident types most prevalent in middle school. Threats also vary according to who is the victim. Females are most often the victims of inappropriate sexual behavior. Males are both the victims and suspects most often in incidents involving physical aggression. This analysis produced no evidence that safety-related incidents varied significantly in different parts of the District or that the

prevalence of incidents was related to the proportion of students with different socioeconomic statuses or race/ethnicities at different schools.

Few of these findings are surprising. Since 2014, suicide has been the second leading cause of death among adolescents nationwide.⁴⁴ Issues related to suicidal behavior have also been present in L.A. Unified for many years. The annual reports from the Division of Operations have long listed suicidal behavior as a top concern and many school and District leaders have focused efforts and resources to address this issue. L.A. Unified requires all employees to participate in an annual Suicide Prevention and Awareness Training and requires all school sites to create a School Site Suicide/Threat Assessment Team as a part of their integrated safe schools plans (ISSPs).⁴⁵ Each Suicide/Threat Assessment Team is required to have a Suicide/Threat Prevention Liaison, from whom

Property-related Incidents in L.A. Unified

On average, schools reported approximately 775 property-related incidents per year making up about 4% of all incidents reported in the District. Property-related incidents occurred, on average, at a rate of about two incidents per 1,000 students per year.

Incidents were considered property-related if categorized in iSTAR as loitering, trespassing, vandalism, or burglary. Most property-related incidents were categorized in multiple ways (e.g. trespassing and loitering). Trespassing incidents were the most frequent property-related incident type with about 320 incidents reported per year on average (40% of all property-related incidents). Schools and divisions also reported about 220 incidents of vandalism and about 200 burglary incidents per year on average (see Appendix H).

Approximately half of trespassing incidents, on average, involved parents and about 20% involved students. Two-thirds of loitering incidents – on average – involved parents and 20% involved students. Burglary and vandalism incidents did not capture the suspect's affiliation with the school community. Instead, all burglary and vandalism incidents were flagged as involving facilities.

school staff may seek support when they are concerned about a student's suicidal or homicidal ideation or behavior.⁴⁶

Findings related to school levels are also not surprising. In elementary schools, bullying is the issue that should probably be the most concerning, but District elementary schools are safer in terms of aggressive behavior, threats and bullying than similar schools around the country, which may reflect the efforts of the District and the effectiveness of disciplinary policy revisions after the 2013 Board Resolution, "School Discipline Policy and School Climate Bill of Rights." This resolution led to the implementation of restorative justice and revision of the School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) plans.⁴⁷ Officials have long known also that middle schools are hotspots for safety-related concerns. The Board itself recognized the personal security-related challenges faced in the middle grades when it created a *collaborative to focus on middle grades* in 2016. This group produced a series of recommendations, including many that focused on expanding social-emotional guidance and support.

Male aggression – both sexual and otherwise – is also a well-known problem for schools and for female students. Males are more often than females the suspects in fights, threats and inappropriate sexual behavior. Though this pattern reflects conditions in schools nationwide, it warrants special attention from school leaders.

This information is a first step to help school leaders understand how to improve school safety. It is evident that many of the threats described in this report require different approaches and responses—an appropriate response to a bomb threat in high school is much different from the appropriate response to bullying in elementary school. Still,

problems and behaviors that seem dissimilar may be interrelated. Teachers, administrators, social workers, counselors—even coaches—can help support a student's social-emotional wellbeing and prevent suicidal behavior, for instance, before it leads to life-threatening action directed inward or outward. Clearly, multi-year, multidimensional supports are needed. To effectively provide such supports to schools, District officials should next explore the factors and conditions that are associated with, cause, or contribute to threatening incidents.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

A threat assessment—especially one based on iSTAR alone—cannot lead to specific recommendations for how the District should allocate resources to ensure safe schools for all. Resource allocation decisions would require, in addition to this threat assessment, analyses of how schools are staffed⁴⁸ now and what measures are already in place to promote safe learning environments, as well as an understanding of the factors that drive threatening or otherwise unsafe behavior and what we know about the practices, policies and programs that are proven to be successful at addressing these threats.

However, the present analysis identifies the relative magnitudes of threats and therefore can help inform how the District prioritizes its efforts. The following recommendations for focusing and prioritizing efforts are based on the findings of this analysis.

A. Suicidal behavior—the largest threat—needs continued and increased attention.

Incidents involving suicidal behavior are consistently the most prevalent threat to

safety faced by students in L.A. Unified and across the country. L.A. Unified recognizes suicide and other related behaviors as serious public health issues, and, as such, has drafted extensive policy to govern suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention efforts. District leadership has also worked with state officials to invest \$105 million into the District's highest need schools over 3 years to support whole child initiatives (which includes, among other things, increased access to counselors).⁴⁹

Given the pervasiveness of suicidal behavior both nationally and in the District, more needs to be done to support students as they navigate emotions that might lead them down the path of self-harm. Findings of this analysis indicate a substantial need to focus efforts to understand (1) trends – if any – in circumstances surrounding suicidal behavior incidents as well as (2) how efforts to promote safe learning environments by increasing access to mental health supports have succeeded.

B. Middle school students are most at risk – review and revisit Middle School Collaborative findings and recommendations.

The transition from elementary school to middle school is often a period of high stress related to social and academic changes for many adolescents. Prior Board action created a Middle Grades Collaborative charged with identifying the needs of middle school students and creating a framework to address those needs and better prepare them for the academic and emotional demands of secondary school.⁵⁰

The Collaborative identified 5 areas of need among middle grade students, several of which could help explain the

overrepresentation of middle school students in risky behavior incidents. These areas of need include: (1) student/identity and relationships,⁵¹ (2) mindset and social-emotional learning (SEL),⁵² and (3) authentic student choice.^{53,54}

The Collaborative drafted a wide array of recommendations to address middle school student need, many involving programs and strategies currently being used by some District schools. The recommendations most relevant to this analysis include:

1. Expanding restorative justice programming which entails – among other things – movement away from punitive or exclusionary disciplinary practices that depend on deterrence to prevent risky behavior to instead focus efforts on “community-building to improve relationships thereby reducing the frequency of punishable offenses while yielding a range of benefits.”⁵⁵

2. Expanding social emotional guidance and support which entails – among other things – trauma informed instruction, student court, bridge programs for transitions to 6th and 9th grades, full-time psychiatric social workers or counselors, peer mediation and conflict resolution, and peer mentoring programs.⁵⁶

The Board needs to know to what extent these and other recommendations made by the Collaborative have been implemented throughout the District. Therefore, we recommend that District leadership revisit and review the findings and recommendations of the Collaborative in a renewed effort to address middle school behavioral issues.

C. Male aggression and female victimization are distinct problems that warrant special attention.

This analysis as well as national studies examining school safety have identified persistent gender disparities in risky behavior and victimization at school sites. These findings warrant a prioritized effort to investigate why boys exhibit aggressive behavior at greater rates than girls. Furthermore, these findings indicate an expressed need to explore the circumstances in which boys and girls engage in inappropriate sexual behavior, often involving boys as aggressors and girls as victims.

The recent creation of single-gender schools and a social and gender equity magnet school indicates a willingness among District leadership to tackle gender disparities in student participation and achievement in innovative ways. It is unclear, however, if the District has taken action to address gender disparities related to school and student safety. Therefore, we recommend District leadership focus efforts on understanding these disparities and how to focus resources to improve inter-gender relations.

NOTES

1 L.A. Unified. (2013). *Incident System Tracking Accountability Report (iSTAR) BUL-5269.2*. Retrieved from <https://achieve.lausd.net/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=38665&dataid=52106&FileName=iSTAR%20V4%206.12.13.PDF>

2 Ibid.

3 (n.d.). Safety. *National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments*. Retrieved from <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/topic-research/safety>.

4 L.A. Unified. (2012). *Threat Assessment and Management (Student-to-Student, Student-to-Adult) BUL-5799.0*. Retrieved from <https://achieve.lausd.net/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=23778&dataid=25786&FileName=BUL-5799%200%20THREAT%20ASSESSMENT%20%20MANAGEMENT%20FINAL.pdf>

5 L.A. Unified. (2013). *Incident System Tracking Accountability Report (iSTAR) BUL-5269.2*.

6 Data fields in iSTAR can be updated by reporting personnel to more accurately reflect incident type, location, and person involvement categories. This report pulled data from iSTAR in October 2020 and analyzed data related to incidents as they were categorized in iSTAR at this time.

7 (n.d.). Safety. *National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments*.

8 This analysis double counts incidents that are categorized in multiple ways **across** incident categorizes for the purpose of presenting a comprehensive picture of the types of threats to safety faced by students and staff. For example, if an incident is categorized in iSTAR as an incident of fighting and bullying, then that incident is counted in the per-year average of fighting incidents *and* bullying incidents. However, when an incident is categorized in multiple ways **within** an incident category (e.g. self-injury and hospitalization, both subcategories of suicidal behavior), then that incident is not double counted in the presentation of the per-year average of that incident category, but is double-counted in discussions of subcategory findings as are noted in tables where percentage total surpass 100%. The District's per-year average of reported incidents is also based on an unduplicated count of total incidents reported each year over the four years included in this report.

9 iSTAR also captures information related to witnesses, which was excluded from this analysis.

10 iSTAR is the primary data source for tables and figures in this report unless otherwise noted.

11 L.A. Unified. (2012). *Threat Assessment and Management (Student-to-Student, Student-to-Adult) BUL-5799.0*.

12 L.A. Unified Division of Operations. (August 2019). *iSTAR Annual Report 2018-2019*. Retrieved from

<https://ca01000043.schoolwires.net/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=38665&dataid=84067&FileName=iSTAR%20Annual%20Report%202018-2019%20-%20Final%20%20112619.pdf>

13 L.A. Unified Division of Operations. (October 2018). *iSTAR Annual Report 2017-2018*. Retrieved from <https://ca01000043.schoolwires.net/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=38665&dataid=70939&FileName=iStar%20Annual%20Report%202017-2018.pdf>

14 Administrators and other school staff who are granted access to iSTAR must participate in a trainings related to the system. Additionally, definitions of incident categories are readily available for users to promote universal understanding of categories and reduce error.

15 Incident counts are based on a weighted average calculation of incidents from the 2016-17 school year through the 2019-20 school year. School years 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 were weighted at 100%. The 2019-20 school year was weighted at 68% since students were only in school facilities for 68% of the school year.

16 Enrollment data from the California Department of Education (CDE) is based on Census Day counts rather than Norm Day counts (as is the District's enrollment data). Because it is based on Census Day counts, CDE enrollment data is more static and, as a result, functions as a better metric for comparison than enrollment data based on Norm Day counts.

17 (n.d.). Downloadable Data Files. *California Department of Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/dd/>

18 We used the following formula: $((Yr1 * 1) + (Yr2 * 1) + (Yr3 * 1) + (Yr4 * .68)) / 3.68$. Actual number used were: $((2016-2017=21,204 * 1) + (2017-2018=23,163 * 1) + (2018-2019=22,674 * 1) + (2019-2020=17,447 * .68)) / 3.68 = 21,442$ incidents per year on average.

19 Incidents involving suicidal behavior may fall under multiple subcategories (e.g. injurious suicidal behavior/ideation and self-injury/cutting). As a result, percentage share of suicidal behavior incident types exceed 100%.

20 For more information regard sex crimes or inappropriate sexual behavior incident subcategories, see Appendix C1.

21 For more information regarding illegal or controlled substance incident subcategories, see Appendix C2.

22 For more information regarding bullying incident subcategories, see Appendix C3.

23 For more information regarding weapons incident subcategories, see Appendix C4.

24 Diliberti, M. et. al. (July 2019). Crime Violence, Discipline, and Safety in U.S. Public Schools: Findings from the School Survey on Crime and Safety: 2017-2018.

National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019061.pdf>

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Wang, K. et al. (July 2020). Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2019. *National Center for Education Statistics*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020063.pdf>

³¹ See Appendix E for a more detailed analysis on geographic occurrence of suicidal behavior incidents in the District.

³² A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between school level and suicidal behavior incident reporting. The relation between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(1, N=84)=8.9, p=0.000$. Middle schools were more likely than other school levels to report suicidal behavior incidents.

³³ Safai, Yalda Dr. (March 2020). 8% of children have suicidal thoughts, new study says. *ABC News*. Retrieved from <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/children-suicidal-thoughts-study/story?id=69552464>

³⁴ (November 2016). QuickStats: Death Rates for Motor Vehicle Traffic Injury, Suicide, and Homicide Among Children and Adolescents ages 10-14 Years – United States, 1999-2014. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6543a8.htm?s_cid=mm6543a8_w#suggestedcitation

³⁵ Nadworny, Elissa. (November 2016). Middle School Suicides Reach An All-Time High. *National Public Radio Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/11/04/500659746/middle-school-suicides-reach-an-all-time-high>

³⁶ (n.d.) Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System Middle School Results. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Retrieved from <https://nced.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx>

³⁷ Crosby, A. et al. (August 2020). Suicidal Ideation and Behaviors Among High School Students – Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2019. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/su/su6901a6.htm>

³⁸ See Appendix L for exhaustive breakdown of physically violent incidents by category.

³⁹ For more information regarding physically violent incidents in L.A. Unified, see Appendix F.

⁴⁰ Diliberti, M. et al. (July 2019). Crime Violence, Discipline, and Safety in U.S. Public Schools: Findings from the School Survey on Crime and Safety: 2017-2018. *National Center for Education Statistics*.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² The purpose of this report is to determine and discuss the most prevalent safety threats reported and faced by school communities. If the Board is interested in

examining less prevalent—but very serious—safety threats such as on-campus shootings in detail, then leadership should consider requesting a confidential study of these incidents that would allow the IAU to protect the identities of people involved in these sensitive events.

⁴³ Wang, K. et al. (July 2020). Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2019. *National Center for Education Statistics*.

⁴⁴ Vanorman, A. & Jarosz, B. (June 2016). Suicide Replaces Homicide as Second-Leading Cause of Death Among U.S. Teenagers. *Population Reference Bureau*. Retrieved from <https://www.prb.org/suicide-replaces-homicide-second-leading-cause-death-among-us-teens/>

⁴⁵ Per CA Ed Code Section §32280-9, District schools must prepare school safety plans that address violence prevention, emergency preparedness, traffic safety and crisis intervention.

⁴⁶ L.A. Unified. (October 2019). *Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention (Students) BUL-2637.4*. Retrieved from https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/domain/416/friday%20brief%20mar-apr/BUL-2637.4%20Suicide%20Prevention_with%20Attachments.pdf

⁴⁷ L.A. Unified. (March 2017). *Discipline Foundation Policy: School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support*. Retrieved from https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/domain/651/pdfs/swpbis%20resources/SWSP-BIS_Handbook_March_2017.pdf

⁴⁸ An analysis by the IAU that examines the relationship between school staffing data and school threat assessment data is forthcoming.

⁴⁹ Los Angeles Unified School District. (June 2019). Media Release “Superintendent Beutner Proposes 2019-20 Budget Focused on Increasing Student Achievement.”

⁵⁰ Res-018- 15/16 “Creating a Collaborative Focus on the Middle Grades”

⁵¹ The Collaborative identifies 3 student needs: (1) guidance in shaping their identities, (2) guidance in forming positive relationships, and (3) guidance in responding to peer pressure.

⁵² The Collaborative identifies middle school students as needing adult support in “interpreting the actions of others, in appropriate response, and in self-management.”

⁵³ The Collaborative argues that students need the opportunity to make “authentic choices in their learning” to aid in their development of a complete sense of self across multiple contexts and situations.

⁵⁴ L.A. Unified. (June 2016). *Middle Grades Resolution Framework for Action*. Retrieved from <https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib08/CA01000043/Centricity/domain/542/mglearninggrp/Draft%20Framework%20Posted%206-2-16.pdf>

⁵⁵ Fronius, T. et al. (March 2019). Restorative Justice in U.S. Schools: An Updated Research Review. *West ED Justice and Prevention Research Center*. Retrieved from

<https://jprc.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/RJ-Literature-Review-Update-2019.pdf>

⁵⁶ L.A. Unified. (June 2016). *Middle Grades Resolution Framework for Action*

APPENDIX

Appendix A: The universe of iSTAR incident categories

Table A. All Incident Categories in iSTAR by Those Included in Analysis

Incident Category Included in Analysis	Incident Category Not Included
Abduction	Air conditioning problem
Accident ^a	Bells out of order
Alarm activation investigation ^a	Custody issue
Altercation (verbal)	Environmental hazard/odor
Arrest	Fire
Bullying	Fire alarm sprinkler
Burglary	Fire sprinkler broken
Child annoyance	Fraud allegation
Damaged/attempted to damage school or private property	Gas leak/odor
Death ^a	Heating system problem
Discrimination/Harassment	Inappropriate conduct
Disrupted online learning sessions	Job Action
Disrupted schoolwide activities	Lost Keys
Disruptive person	Medical
Fighting/Physical aggression	Missing/Runaway
Hate violence	Public shelter
Hazing	Rodent/Insect problems
Illegal/Controlled substance	Sewer problems
Injury ^a	Technology failure
Intergroup conflict	Testing
Law enforcement activity	Unsecured access to school site
Lockdown or shelter in place ^a	Utility failure
Loitering	
Robbery	
Sex crime/sexual behavior- inappropriate	
Shooting	
Suicidal behavior	
Theft	
Threat	
Trauma/Violence exposure	
Trespass	
Vandalism/Property damage	
Walkout/Demonstration ^a	
Weapons	

^a These categories were included in the analysis as flags and not counted as their own incidents

Appendix B: Geographic incident occurrence

Table B1. Weighted Average Count of Incidents per Year by Board District

Board District	W. Avg. Count (%)	Avg. Student Enrollment (%)
1	3,420 (17%)	48,641 (11%)
2	3,685 (18%)	75,646 (17%)
3	2,448 (12%)	67,090 (15%)
4	1,834 (9%)	41,365 (9%)
5	2,864 (14%)	72,772 (16%)
6	3,001 (15%)	64,970 (14%)
7	3,266 (16%)	81,420 (18%)

Source: iSTAR and Focus data

Table B2. Weighted Average Counts of incidents per Year by Local District

Local District	W. Avg. Count (%)	Avg. Student Enrollment (%)
Central	4,020 (19%)	78,773 (17%)
East	3,226 (15%)	78,832 (17%)
Northeast	3,400 (16%)	69,667 (15%)
Northwest	2,378 (11%)	74,099 (16%)
South	3,210 (15%)	79,189 (18%)
West	4,425 (21%)	67,147 (15%)
XS	60 (0%)	2,135 (0%)
XY	130 (1%)	- (0%)
ZA	593 (3%)	2,024 (0%)

Source: iSTAR and Focus data

Appendix C: Weighted average counts and rates of several of the top recurring incident types and their sub-categories

Table C1. Weighted Average Count and Rates of Sex Crime or Inappropriate Sexual Behavior Incident Subcategories per Year

Sex Crime or Inappropriate Sexual Behavior Subcategory	W. Avg. Count (%)	Rate per 1,000 students
Indecent exposure	227 (17%)	1
Other	752 (55%)	2
Pedophilia	36 (3%)	<1
Pornography	131 (10%)	<1
Rape	59 (4%)	<1
Sexual battery	199 (15%)	<1
Incest and Voyeurism	26 (2%)	<1

Table C2. Weighted Average Count and Rates of Illegal or Controlled Substance Incident Subcategories per Year

Illegal or Controlled Substance Subcategory	W. Avg. Count (%)	Rate per 1,000 students
Alcohol	144 (16%)	<1
Drug paraphernalia	140 (16%)	<1
Electronic cigarettes	71 (8%)	<1
Marijuana	447 (50%)	1
Other	228 (26%)	1
Tobacco	34 (4%)	<1
Sold controlled substance	42 (5%)	<1
Substitute of controlled substance	14 (2%)	<1

Table C3. Weighted Average Count and Rates of Bullying Incident Subcategories per Year

Bullying Subcategory	W. Avg. Count (%)	Rate per 1,000 students
Cyber	169 (20%)	<1
Indirect	40 (5%)	<1
Nonverbal	29 (3%)	<1
Other	63 (7%)	<1
Physical	317 (37%)	1
Psychological	45 (5%)	<1
Social	102 (12%)	<1
Verbal	396 (46%)	1

Table C4. Weighted Average Count and Rates of Weapons Incident Subcategories per Year

Weapons Subcategory	W. Avg. Count (%)	Rate per 1,000 students
Assault with deadly weapon	21 (3%)	<1
Brandished knife	60 (8%)	<1
Possession of imitation firearm	81 (10%)	<1
Possession of knife	313 (40%)	1
Other	188 (24%)	<1
Possession of dangerous object	162 (21%)	<1
Possession of firearm	32 (4%)	<1

Appendix D: Rates of several top recurring incident categories in L.A. Unified compared to national statistics

National school safety statistics were obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics’ (NCES) School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS). The safety categories in SSOCS correspond to the safety categories captured in iSTAR to varying degrees.

- Fighting. SSOCS counts of *fighting* represent all fights or physical attacks without a weapon, which aligns closely with the subcategories of the *fighting or physical aggression* incident category in iSTAR.
- Bullying. SSOCS counts of *bullying* capture any unwanted aggressive behavior by another youth or group of youths, which aligns with the subcategories of the *bullying* incident category in iSTAR.
- Threats. SSOCS records threats of physical attack without a weapon but does not capture terroristic threat incidents, which are included in the iSTAR threat category.
- Drugs. SSOCS rates of incidents involving alcohol, illegal and prescription drugs are reported separately. For comparison purposes, we use only SSOCS counts of illegal drug use incidents and compare them to iSTAR incidents that involve any illegal or controlled substances.
- Weapons. SSOCS records incidents involving the possession of a firearm or explosive separately from incidents involving a knife or sharp object, whereas iSTAR rates include all incidents involving weapons as well as assaults or threats of assaults with weapons. In the tables below, we only use SSOCS rates of incidents involving possession of a knife or sharp object only because those incidents are the most prevalent kinds of weapons-related incidents recorded in iSTAR.

In general, because the SSOCS and iSTAR definitions of safety categories are imperfectly aligned, national rates should be interpreted as somewhat lower than they actually would be if they counted all of the incidents included in iSTAR data. For example, if the nationwide rate of incidents related to illegal or controlled substances included all the substances counted in iSTAR, the national rate would be somewhat higher. Therefore, nationwide and L.A. Unified comparisons are approximate and presented here to provide rough perspective.

Table D1. Rates per 1,000 Students of Incident Categories in L.A. Unified Middle Schools vs. Nationwide Middle Schools

Incident Category	L.A. Unified	Nationwide ^a
Fighting or physical aggression	10	18
Threats	7	<10
Bullying	3	28
Illegal or controlled substances	3	3
Weapons	3	2

^aNational rates are estimates and should be interpreted with caution.

Table D2. Rates per 1,000 Students of Incident Categories in L.A. Unified Elementary Schools vs. Nationwide Elementary Schools

Incident Category	L.A. Unified	Nationwide ^a
Fighting or physical aggression	5	12
Threats	4	6
Bullying	2	9
Illegal or controlled substances	<1	<1
Weapons	<1	1

^aNational rates are estimates and should be interpreted with caution.

Table D3. Rates per 1,000 Students of Incident Categories in L.A. Unified High Schools vs. Nationwide High Schools

Incident Category	L.A. Unified	Nationwide ^a
Fighting or physical aggression	7	9
Threats	4	6
Bullying	<2	16
Illegal or controlled substances	4	7
Weapons	3	2

^aNational rates are estimates and should be interpreted with caution.

Appendix E: Geographic occurrence of suicidal behavior-related incidents

Table E1. Weighted Average Counts of Suicidal Behavior Incidents per Year by Local District

Local District	W. Avg. Count (%)	Avg. Student Enrollment (%)
Central	1,176 (21%)	78,773 (17%)
East	1,526 (18%)	78,832 (17%)
Northeast	1,391 (17%)	69,667 (15%)
Northwest	1,039 (12%)	74,099 (16%)
South	1,106 (13%)	79,189 (18%)
West	1,227 (15%)	67,147 (15%)
XS	25 (0%)	2,135 (0%)
XY	54 (1%)	- (0%)
ZA	276 (3%)	2,024 (0%)

Source: iSTAR and Focus data

Appendix F: Data regarding physically violent incidents

Table F1. Weighted Average Count of Physically Violent Incident Categories per Year

Incident Category	Incident Issue Type	W. Avg. Count (%)
Abduction	Attempted Abduction	32 (0.5%)
	Completed Abduction	--
Bullying	Physical	317 (5.0%)
Fighting/Physical aggression	Aided or abetted the infliction of physical injury to another	231 (3.7%)
	Assaulted/battered school employee	567 (9.0%)
	Serious physical injury/not self-defense	120 (1.9%)
	Threatened/caused/attempted physical injury	1,413 (22.3%)
	Willful use of force/violence - not self-defense	974 (15.4%)
Hate violence	Hate Violence	18 (0.3%)
Robbery	Robbery	133 (2.1%)
Sex crime/sexual behavior- inappropriate	Sexual Battery	199 (3.1%)
	Rape	59 (0.9%)
Shooting	Shooting	41 (0.6%)
Threat	Terroristic threat (threat to cause death, great bodily injury)	759 (12.0%)
	Threatened/caused/attempted physical injury	1,365 (21.6%)
Weapons	Assault with deadly weapon	21 (0.3%)
	Brandished knife at another person	60 (1.0%)
	Possession of explosive (M80 or greater)	--

Table F2. Suspect-Victim Relationship in Physical Violent Incidents by Weighted Average Percent Share

Suspect-Victim Relationship	W. Avg. %
No Relationship	40%
Peer to Peer	38%
Student to Adult	14%
Adult to Student	3%
Adult to Adult	2%
Multiple Victims	2%

Table F3. Weighted Average Counts of Physically Violent Incidents per Year by Local District

Local District	W. Avg. Count (%)	Avg. Student Enrollment
Central	1,002 (18%)	78,773 (17%)
East	745 (13%)	78,832 (17%)
Northeast	771 (14%)	69,667 (15%)
Northwest	600 (11%)	74,099 (16%)
South	988 (18%)	79,189 (18%)
West	1,339 (24%)	67,147 (15%)
XS	18 (0%)	2,135 (0%)
XY	21 (0%)	- (0%)
ZA	143 (3%)	2,024 (0%)

Source: iSTAR and Focus data

Appendix G: Data regarding incidents involving arrests

Table G1. Weighted Average Count of Arrest Incidents per Year by School Level

School Level	W. Avg. Count (%)	Avg. Student Enrollment (%)
Primary	0 (0%)	4,699 (1%)
Elementary	17 (6%)	237,195 (53%)
Middle	53 (21%)	74,074 (16%)
High	176 (67%)	103,146 (23%)
Span	14 (5%)	30,588 (7%)

Source: iSTAR and Focus data

Appendix H: Data regarding property crimes

Table H1. Weighted Average Count of Property Crimes per Year by Subcategory

Subcategory	W. Avg. Count (%) ^a
Burglary	202 (26%)
Loitering	100 (13%)
Trespassing	320 (41%)
Vandalism	218 (28%)

Note: Subcategory column percentages add to more than 100% because incidents can be categorized in multiple ways (e.g. burglary and trespassing). Percentages represent percentage of total property crime incidents (775 incidents/year).