



Baltimore County Public Schools

Raising the bar, Closing gaps, Preparing for our future.

Frequently Asked Questions School Safety and Security Baltimore County Public Schools

School Safety and Climate

Question: What is BCPS doing to ensure the safety of students and staff given the uptick in school fights and incidents?

Answer: BCPS staff clearly communicate behavioral expectations and hold students accountable by administering logical consequences appropriate for their behaviors. Fights are handled following Board policies, Superintendent's rules, and state law (COMAR). School staff started the year re-introducing students to the school environment, including getting used to a face-to-face environment.

Question: How are BCPS students held accountable for disruptive and/or violent behaviors?

Answer: Student accountability for inappropriate behavior is outlined in the board's disciplinary policies on student conduct. The [Student Behavior Code \(Policy 5550\)](#), for example, lists the offenses for which a student may be suspended or expelled from school. [Policy 5560 \(Suspensions and Expulsions\)](#) outlines the discipline process that principals are to use when a student violates the student code of conduct. Holding students accountable for their behavior begins with school administrators determining that a code of conduct violation has occurred. Administrators then determine a logical consequence for the behavior. A logical consequence is proportionate to the offense and is *reflective, restorative, and instructional* in its design. Depending on the severity of the offense, a principal may issue a suspension of 1-3 days or 4-10 days.

When a student's behavior is chronically and extremely disruptive, or a student's behavior poses an imminent threat of serious harm, the principal may recommend to the superintendent that the student be removed from school longer than 10 days.

When such a recommendation occurs, the principal asks to meet with the Student Conduct Hearing Officer (SCHO), the superintendent's designee for student disciplinary cases. After the principal presents an argument for the student's removal, the SCHO decides how long the student is removed from the student's home school. The SCHO may decide to issue an extended suspension (11-44 days) or an expulsion (45+ days) as a logical consequence.

For an extended suspension or expulsion, the student is assigned to one of the school system's alternative programs: e-learning, extended day learning, home instruction, or an alternative school. When/if the student returns to the home school, the principal or designated staff members works with the student in a reflective, restorative, and instructional activities to reduce the likelihood of the student repeating the behavior.

Question: What is the county's position on installing metal detectors/magnetometers in all county high schools? What steps is the system taking to prevent a school shooting here in BCPS?

Answer: Our approach to school safety is comprehensive. A metal detector only provides some control over the entrance where it is placed. Our school buildings have multiple entrances. Several individuals would be needed to monitor each entry and be able to check every item that causes a beep from a metal detector. Staff manning a metal detector are not available to monitor other areas of the building. Metal detectors create a significant delay in getting students into buildings, often causing long lines for students and exposing them to any potential outdoor threats and weather. All secondary schools have at least one School Resource Officer (SRO) who works closely with staff to keep students safe and intervene when necessary. Much of this work is about establishing relationships with students who are encouraged to report any safety concerns they may have.

SROs also work closely with police investigators on all serious cases, including those involving weapons. BCPS is notified by police of all serious offenses, and additional safety measures may be put in place at the school where the offense occurred for several days following an incident.

Our SROs participate in our threat assessment process. In addition, SRO roles include mentorship, law related education and law enforcement. SROs are encouraged to build a rapport with students and discuss consequences for criminal activity. Baltimore County Police also assists with providing additional safety measures following threats. Students and parents are encouraged to report threats to the police immediately.

Question: How does BCPS address cyberbullying and other forms of bullying and harassment?

Answer: Preventing or stopping bullying, including cyberbullying, involves a team approach. Staff participates in professional development to make sure they recognize bullying and know how to intervene, investigate cases, and protect students. Students work on bullying prevention skills, recognizing and stopping abusive behaviors, developing healthy relationships, and conflict resolution. BCPS also has a student-inspired, year-round Mind Over Matters campaign. October is National Bullying Prevention Month, a time during which we focus on bullying prevention for students and staff. On October 20, National Bullying Prevention Day, BCPS engages all staff in annual bullying awareness training. BCPS addresses all forms of bullying, harassment, and intimidation through policy and rule 5580. This information can be found in the links below which include policy 5580, rule 5580, and the Student Handbook.

- [https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/bcps/Board.nsf/files/BXA2WY7A3B1D/\\$file/PO L5580_041420_Finalized.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/bcps/Board.nsf/files/BXA2WY7A3B1D/$file/PO L5580_041420_Finalized.pdf)
- [https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/bcps/Board.nsf/files/BZ5QVP6A25B0/\\$file/RULE%205580_050520_Finalized.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/mabe/bcps/Board.nsf/files/BZ5QVP6A25B0/$file/RULE%205580_050520_Finalized.pdf)
- https://p3cdn4static.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_31979837/File/PS/BCPS_2021-2022_Student_Handbook.pdf

Question: How can parents/members of the community report incidents of bullying and harassment?

Answer: Any witness to a bullying event can report the incident to a school administrator by using the Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation Reporting Form found at the link below. They can also report the incident to any staff member if they are unable to complete a form.

- https://scs.bcps.org/departments/school_safety/bullying_harassment_or_intimidation

Question: What is the process for investigating an online social media threat of violence against a school?

Answer: Any time a social media threat or threats of violence against a school or individuals is received, they are immediately directed to Baltimore County Police for investigation. BCPD conducts investigations often in partnership with BCPS. Based on the outcome of the investigation, BCPS will provide consequences for inappropriate

behaviors. Students may also face criminal charges.

Question: What is BCPS doing to address student drug use?

Answer: Substance use is addressed preventatively through education via health education that includes discussion regarding healthy decision making and relationships related to substance use. Staff are provided with access to professional learning that includes Mental Health First Aid course that introduces common mental health challenges, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations. At the middle and high school levels Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment-SBIRT/Teen Screen is an evidence-based screening tool that can be used to identify students involved with substances, provide brief interventions to reduce substance use, and refer them to treatment that is being piloted with consideration for expansion to all middle and high schools. Additionally, BCPS also has enlisted the partnership of community mental health providers to facilitate access to substance use care. BCPS also engages in awareness and prevention efforts through the annual Mind Over Matters Campaign to raise awareness and promote wellness for students and staff. Middle school SROs are certified and required to teach Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) or Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT). Many of these lessons have a drug education component. High school SROs are required to appear in classes as guest speakers to discuss these topics.

Question: Can parents volunteer in schools as hall monitors?

Answer: Parents have a variety of opportunities to volunteer in BCPS schools. If interested, they should contact their child's school.

Question: What can be done to expedite information to parents concerning possible serious incidents at the schools?

Answer: School staff communicate information as quickly as possible to parents and other stakeholders. It is important that information that is communicated is accurate. Assuring accuracy may cause delays in communication. There is an approval process that helps staff provide as many details as possible without compromising an investigation or sharing individual student information.

Question: Will students and parents be held more accountable to help change the rising culture of violent and disruptive behavior both in the schools and on the school buses?

Answer: Students are held accountable for their school-related behaviors regardless of where they occur. Their behaviors will be handled in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Violent incidents are reported to BCoPD and criminal charges may be filed against offenders.

Question: How do BCPS staff respond to a student who may be in crisis and having a violent episode?

Answer: Managing the crisis needs of students to ensure safety is outlined in Policy 3720 Behavior Threat Assessment whereby there is an established school-system level oversight team that supports the provision of guidance and professional learning provided to school level teams. At the school level there are established school level Behavior Threat Assessment Teams (BTAT) that collaborate to support the crisis response process and discern levels of threats resulting in mobilization of resources to meet the students' needs. In some situations, this requires the partnership of the community, for example Behavioral Health, Baltimore County Crisis Response, or emergency responders.

Question: How is the county addressing improper use of cell phones during the school day?

Answer: BCPS developed Policy and Rule 5552, Use of Personal Electronic Communication Devices which identifies the standards, guidelines, and compliance of electronic communication devices including cell phones.

Social-Emotional Wellness and Resources

Question: How will you ensure that social emotional support staff, such as school counselors and school social workers, are used appropriately so they can provide mental health services to students?

Answer: BCPS is focused on supporting the needs of our students, including the provision of as well as the connection to community resources to support mental health. Student Support Team members play an integral role in meeting needs that are supported by communication of role and responsibilities as well as advocacy for additional staff members.

Question: Will schools be given more counselors that are trained to deal with mental health issues? Schools are overwhelmed with kids that have these issues and don't have

the tools to help them.

Answer: BCPS is continuously advocating for staffing to meet the needs of students and families. Ongoing professional learning is a focus to ensure that staff are equipped with the skills to foster a supportive relationship with students and families.

Question: What is BCPS doing to help students develop resiliency?

Answer: Each of us has a different degree of resiliency. In an effort to create that supportive and safe environment, school leaders and teachers engage in social emotional learning practices that is complemented by establishing expectations, structures and routines that foster resilient learners, schools and classrooms. Additional efforts in universal prevention and education are provided through the annual Mind Over Matters campaign and continuing to provide access to professional learning to continue to grow resilient communities.

Question: What data is available from BCPS or MSDE to show the effectiveness of restorative justice policies and practices?

Answer: Restorative Practices are a **framework** for *building community* and for *responding to challenging behavior* through authentic dialogue, coming to understanding, and making things right as stated by iIRP. There is a wealth of data and information specific to restorative practices in [Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices](#).

Question: What schoolwide programs have been put in place to help students reintegrate into group settings after over a year of being isolated?

Answer: BCPS has focused on prioritizing the embedding of social emotional learning practices to support reintegration. Professional learning was provided to BCPS staff members to prepare for establishing welcoming and connected spaces where students and families can engage and feel safe. Additionally, providing flexible learning spaces that include ongoing access to support staff including school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists when stronger emotions impact learning.

School Resource Officers

Question: How are school resources officers utilized in high schools for incidents when a student violates school policy? For example, fighting, threatening violence with

weapons, social media threats of violence, assault on staff members.

Answer: When a student is involved in any criminal activity, he or she may face criminal charges. SROs also participate in conflict resolution, mediation, and other alternatives to discipline when appropriate. BCoPD also manages the Juvenile Offenders in Need of Supervision program (JOINS). JOINS is a diversion program that rehabilitates juveniles who are first time offenders. If juveniles complete the program the case will not be submitted to DJS and the juvenile will not have a criminal record. The JOINS program is only for misdemeanor offenses. Felony cases and sex offense cases are forwarded to DJS and the States Attorney's office.

Question: What are the legal and school consequences for making a threat to shoot up a school? How do these consequences differ from other violent threats such as bomb threats?

Answer: If an investigation reveals that a student has made a threat against the school or a person, he/she may be charged criminally with Threats of Mass Violence and/or Disruption of School Activities. BCoPD works in collaboration with BCPS to conduct a thorough investigation to administer the appropriate consequences.

Question: When there is an incident at school where a student has assaulted another student, what is the accountability of the offender's parent?

Answer: BCoPD may charge the student with first- or second-degree assault depending on the severity of the case. The parent may be required to ensure that the offender appears in court or completes the JOINS program if applicable.

Question: What can be done to use School Resource Officers to build relationships with all students in the school?

Answer: Building relationships with students is important to the work of school resource officers. In addition to serving as law enforcement personnel, school resource officers also serve as teachers and informal counselors. Some participate in extra-curricular activities. They can also participate in restorative conferences. These activities help them build relationships with students.

