BIAS RESPONSE SYSTEMS

Contents

Bias Response Systems

09/11/2023

Investigations

Number of states that have them:
22 plus District of Columbia

Number of total districts: **115**

Number of total schools: **4,565**

Number of total students: **2,492,241**

(Scroll to bottom to see our list of districts that employ these bias response systems.)

What is a Bias Response System?

A bias response, or reporting system, is a means in which students and staff, and sometimes the community, can report incidents of bias or biased actions perpetrated against an individual or group. While definitions can vary among institutions, according to Edwin O. Smith High School in Connecticut, a "bias-related incident" is an "incident that negatively targets, intimidates, or threatens an individual or group due to race, ethnicity, ancestry, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, physical, mental, and intellectual disabilities, as well as past/present history of mental disorders."

As part of the bias response system, many schools have in place specific individuals or teams that become involved in the process

of both preventative and responsive actions. These actions can include counseling, remediation, restorative justice, or more punitive consequences.

Many districts, such as Acalanes Union High School District, offer students the option of making anonymous reports. Other districts only give reporters the option of using identifiable information.

According to "Responding to Hate and Bias at School," a publication of Learning for Justice (a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center), "everyday acts of intolerance manifest themselves in many ways: name-calling, slurs, sexual harassment, casual putdowns regarding race, ethnicity, gender, size, abilities,

perceived sexual orientation or gender identification." The document states that the "issue is less about intent…and more about impact." It continues: "If, for example, they allow a bigoted comment to go unchecked, they are offering tacit approval of similar comments."

The document also lays out a checklist of examples of bias or potential bias events which include "casual pejoratives," "school 'pride'," "assemblies and holidays," and "student recog-

nition." The document states that "student recognition" can become a bias event because "long-standing traditions may contribute to a sense of entitlement among some students, and feelings of frustration or inadequacy in others." Additionally, it asks "who is spotlighted and who is ignored? Is there a perception—fair or not—that athletes, advanced placement (AP) students and student leaders enjoy privileges or are disciplined less severely for misconduct?"

Why is This Important?

Bias response systems, while intended to create a safe and "inclusive" environment, offer young children access to an anonymous snitch system. One which is vulnerable to abuse and misuse by not only children, but potentially by community members. While the intent is often meant with good intentions, these systems have also been used to stifle free speech.

According to a recent article in The Chronicle of Higher Education, the author states that while a bias response system is "designed to reduce anxiety among people who experience what they feel are bias incidents," it is "in effect a mental-health intervention, acquiring the liabilities associated with any such intervention." They conclude that "it is hard to find any evidence that they work."

A Few Examples:

ACALANES, CALIFORNIA

Acalanes Union High School District in California has a "Bias Incident Reporting System" page that states its system is "**for students to report incidents of harm – acts of racism, bias, sexism, microaggressions, etc.**" District students are allowed to make reports **anonymously**. The reporting system is "part of AUHSD's effort to promote safe environments where all students can learn." Describ-

ing what the district bias incident reporting system is "not," it states that it is **"not the thought or speech police."** It continues: "We do not tell people how to think or talk."

A district document titled "Equity Definitions" defines bias as "an inclination or preference either for or against an individual or group that interferes with impartial judgment." The docu-

ment also defines microaggressions as "The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs or insults **whether intentional or unintentional** which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based on their membership in **historically marginalized group** membership." Additionally, it includes "microassault," "microinsult," and "microinvalidation."

According to the district reporting procedures, examples of "disciplinary incidence" include "using the N-word," "hate speech" and "bullying." Examples provided for restoration include "a student saying something insensitive" or "commits a micro-aggression."

Microaggressions: The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs or insults whether intentional or unintentional which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based on their membership in historically marginalized group membership

- Microassault: Overt discrimination.
- Microinsult: Comment that communicates the demographic group is not respected.
- Microinvalidation: Comment or action that dismisses the historically disadvantaged group members.

AUHSD Bias Reporting Procedures

Step 1: A Bias report is made documenting an act of racism, sexual harassment, homophobia, cyberbullying, micro-aggression, discrimination or hate speech. Students may make a report online or in person.

    a. If there is an immediate need for intervention, the site admin will follow up as appropriate with law enforcement and other measures.

Step 2: Help for the reporter: Within 24 hours, wellness staff is notified so that support can be provided for the reporter.

Step 3: Bias Incident committee meets (diversity chair, site staff, wellness staff, one designated admin) and determines the appropriate intervention: disciplinary, restorative or both.

    a. Disciplinary incidence examples: Using the N-word, sexual harassment of a student, hate speech, bullying, cyberbullying

    b. Restorative examples: a student says something insensitive, commits a micro-aggression.

If there is a need for Disciplinary action	If there is a need for restorative practices
Incident is documented as a Bias incident	Incident is documented as a Bias Incident
Incident is documented in a student's discipline file under appropriate coding	Bias Incident Team works on resolution, which can include restorative conversations, counseling, apologies, educational project/assignment
Code of Conduct/Matrix is used to issue progressive discipline Can also include restorative measures	
Parents are informed	Parents are informed

Step 4: Incident is documented as a bias incident (+ AERIES as a disciplinary incident if warranted) In the case of discipline, both offenders and victims (reporters) are entered.

Step 5: Closing the loop: a committee member is designated to meet back with the reporter to let them know of the resolution (if they did not participate in a restorative practice) when possible.

Step 6: Bias Incident Committee examines monthly data reports to see if patterns are emerging that call for staff development, work with all students, etc.

MONROE COUNTY, INDIANA

The Monroe County Community School Corporation (IN) "Anti-racism" board policy states that its purpose is to **"confront, mitigate and eliminate racism, racist behaviors and microaggressions in all forms."** The policy proclaims that the district will "commit to disrupt and dismantle any and all practices and behaviors that do not center equity and that result in disparate educational outcomes between racial and other marginalized groups." Included in the district policy is the establishment of an **"incident reporting system to make it clear that any act of racial discrimination** (which may include race-based bullying and harassment, and other behaviors or threats of harm) by administration, staff, or students will not be tolerated in MCCSC schools."

Additionally, district policy objectives provide "opportunities that include diverse student perspectives, voice, and lived experiences in the development of corporation and school wide programs, practices and procedures." The district offers students the opportunity to apply to be "Student Equity Ambassadors," who participate in giving input and creating the district's anti-racism policy.

Student responses to why they want to become a Student Equity Ambassador include wanting to "cause change in the school" because of enduring "microaggressions on the daily, mainly be primarily unaware teachers." Another student "experienced first-hand moments of bias from teachers skipping my name to not pronounce it to being called a slur by a classmate." Additionally, a student states that "as a female, I can bring the point of view of being a societal minority, however, I do want to be honest that as a middle-class Caucasian I am in a place of immense privilege."

The Indiana school district provides students, staff, and the community with an online anonymous tip line to report "bullying, harassment, abuse, or safety concerns."

On their application, each Student Equity Ambassador answered the following questions:

Why do you want to be a Student Equity Ambassador? Why do you want to participate in creating an anti-racism policy?

MCCSC

WHAT DO YOU THINK? WE WANT TO KNOW

BE THE CHANGE

Applications due Aug. 19

What do you want to see in an anti-racism policy for MCCSC? Scan the QR code and apply to be a Student Equity Ambassador. Meet with other students to discuss this topic and share your ideas.

Their responses are listed below.

"I want to be a student equity ambassador because I believe that everyone in the MCCSC should be treated with respect as we all do our part to change the world regardless of your gender, race, or ethnicity. I want to help on making this anti-racism policy as this can change student behavior on all schools in the MCCSC."
-BHSN Grade 9

"I want to be a student Equity ambassador because I want to cause change in the school. I am a black student who takes primarily AP and honors classes. Unfortunately, many of these classes are filled almost exclusively with white students and taught by primarily white teachers. This leads to me having to endure microaggressions on the daily, mainly by unaware teachers. Though they tend not to be directed towards me, but more general statements, they make me uncomfortable and make me believe that the classroom is not a safe place to share my opinions or beliefs. I know many of the other POC students feel the same way and we shouldn't have to. I want to be able to share my opinions and experiences to better the school and be part of the change."
-BHSN Grade 11

"I want to be an equity ambassador because I believe that there has not been enough done to prevent this issue. As a student, I've noticed a lot of unacceptable behavior that is often ignored. Having students who care about anti-racism participate in creating an anti-racism policy will be beneficial because we are aware of problems around us and the possible solutions. I also believe that a corporation-wide policy is very important, especially for elementary school kids. Creating an educational environment that is actively anti-racist will lead to the younger kids having the awareness of this issue, which they will carry with them for their whole lives."
-BHSN Grade 12

"I want to be a Student Equity Ambassador because I want to be a part of the force that addresses the racism in our schools. Our schools do have racism or unfair treatment, despite what many say, and I would like to directly help fix that. As an Asian American, I mostly receive indirect racism or stereotyping. However, I know there is an abundance of (very) direct racism towards some others. In short, I have experienced racism myself and am very aware of the racial struggles others go through. Considering what is going on in our school and the world regarding racism, I think right now is a great time to improve MCCSC with this anti-racism policy, and I would love to be a part of the process!"
-BHSS Grade 11

MCCSC Tip Line

Please use the form below to report bullying, harassment, abuse, or safety concerns. The information you provide will be emailed to appropriate school staff who will be able to follow-up DURING SCHOOL HOURS. If you or someone you know is in IMMEDIATE DANGER, CALL 911. Note: This system is CONFIDENTIAL and ANONYMOUS. However, providing your name and contact information is helpful.

Building

Please Select ⌄

Please write your concern in the box below.

Submit

JEFFERSON COUNTY, KENTUCKY

In Kentucky, Jefferson County Public Schools contracts with Calls Plus to operate the district "Compliance Hotline." Students have the ability to report incidents anonymously such as bullying, discrimination, and "racial intolerance."

There is no definition provided for "racial intolerance;" however, it was revealed in the Cracked Foundations report that the district's Affirming Racial Equity Tool defines **"diverse" as "pertaining to any and all cultures that are NOT heterosexual, male-centered, white, Western, and/or Christian."**

Content Integration
Teachers regularly utilize examples from a wide variety of cultures and groups in lessons and units.

Lesson Descriptors	Lesson/Unit Plans for Implementation
The lesson's materials reflect diverse cultures and identities.	
The lesson's tasks reflect diverse cultures and identities.	
The lesson's secondary resources reflect diverse cultures and identities.	
The lesson's materials/tasks/secondary resources reflect the students in the class. (Mirrors)	
The lesson's materials/tasks/secondary resources allow students to explore/understand others' experiences. (Windows)	
The content within the lessons is validating to individuals/groups that are typically underrepresented.	

Notes on Use

For the purposes of this component, "diverse" will be defined as pertaining to any and all cultures that are NOT heterosexual, male-centered, white, Western, and/or Christian. When considering identity and intersectionality in a text, keep in mind that marginalization can exist across "minority" groups in reference to age, ability, class, gender, education, ethnicity, language, location, nationality, race, religion, and/or sexuality. Allow for intersectionality within lessons and units and know that this is not an exhaustive list of identities to consider.

WEBSTER GROVES, MISSOURI

In 2021, Webster Groves School District (MO) passed its equity policy which states that the district "rejects all forms of racism and bias as destructive to the district's mission, vision, values and goals." According to its "Moving Toward Equity" document, district faculty, staff, and community "participated in a four-day social justice workshop focused on developing and/or deepening their understanding of privilege and oppression." Teachers also attended a "Witnessing Whiteness Program" and "anti-racism/anti-bias training" program.

The district's "Bias Incident Reporting" system is in place to create awareness of "incidents that may hinder" the "growth" of a "culture of dignity." The reporting system is to be used to "document and address" incidents and "provide resources and support to students who experienced the bias." The page states:

We encourage you to report any incidents that negatively impact our campus culture, especially those that are biased-related. The report should reference bias incidents – example racism, bias, sexism, microaggressions, etc. You may report on an incident that was done to you or to someone else. While bias incidents sometimes target specific individuals, they can also violate and offend an entire group or community. Thus, you may also report bias incidents such as defaced fliers, graffiti that includes offensive language, etc.*

The "Student & Staff Bias Reporting System" form allows the individual to make an anonymous response of incidents that "negatively impact" district culture.

Webster Groves School District
Inspiring students' lives and communities through learning

MENU   DISTRICT HOME   SELECT A

EQUITY

Webster Groves SD › Find It Fast › Equity › Bias Incident Reporting › Rep

WGSD Student & Staff Bias Reporting System

This form is for students to report bias incidents that take place during the school year. This form is also for employees to report bias incidents. You may choose to make your report anonymous.

If you are being physically threatened or there is an immediate safety concern, please call 911 or contact your school's administration.

MASON CITY, OHIO

Mason City Schools' (OH) bias reporting system calls upon students to report "acts of racism, sexism, ableism, classism, homophobia, religious intolerance, and other forms of harassment" through an anonymous "SafeSchools Tipline." The district explains that "even when an act of bias is unintentional, the impact remains the same."

REPORT AN ACT OF BIAS

In Mason City Schools, every Comet (student, staff, community member) is called to Step Up Against Bias. Acts of racism, sexism, ableism, classism, homophobia, religious intolerance, and other forms of harassment hurt our Comet Culture and have no place in our schools. Even when an act of bias is unintentional, the impact remains the same. Working together to challenge bias and respond is a crucial step toward creating the safe learning community that every Comet deserves. If you or your child has experienced or witnessed an act of bias, please report the incident utilizing the **SafeSchools Tipline**.

The MCS Bias Acts Reporting Team (which includes Central Office and School administrators) receives a notification each time there is an entry in the tipline. If you are willing to share your contact information, a member of the team will connect with you about your report, and offer support within 48 hours. You may, however, choose to leave an anonymous tip.

NEW MEXICO

In 2021, New Mexico passed House Bill 43 titled the "Black Education Act." The bill required "racial sensitivity and anti-racism training or professional development for school personnel." Also included in the bill is the requirement to establish a statewide "hotline for reporting racially charged incidents and racialized aggression." Schools are also legally required to link to the hotline on its website.

The "Anti-Racism/Anti Oppression (ARAO) Hotline" is a "resource created by the Black Education Act (House Bill 43) that is available for students, families, staff, community members, and other stakeholders to report school-based incidents of racism."

The state website does not address or clarify specifics on what constitutes reportable incidents.

List of Districts

CALIFORNIA

Acalanes Union High School District

Alameda Unified School District

San Francisco Unified School District

Santa Clara Unified School District

COLORADO

Englewood Schools

Poudre School District

CONNECTICUT

Edwin O Smith High School

Farmington Public Schools

GEORGIA

City Schools of Decatur

ILLINOIS

Chicago Public Schools

Illinois Math and Science Academy

McLean County Unit District 5

INDIANA

Monroe County Community School Corporation

KENTUCKY

Jefferson County Public Schools

MARYLAND

Montgomery County Public Schools

MASSACHUSETTS

Acton-Boxborough Regional School District

Belmont Public Schools

Boston Public Schools

Bridgewater-Raynham Regional School District

Cambridge Public Schools

Central Berkshire Regional School District

Concord- Carlisle Regional School District

Lowell Public Schools

Mount Greylock Regional School

Newton Public Schools

Revere Public Schools

Wellesley Public Schools

MICHIGAN

Birmingham Public Schools

Bloomfield Hills Schools

Plymouth-Canton Community Schools

Troy School District

MISSOURI

Webster Groves School District

NEW JERSEY

North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional School District

NEW MEXICO

Alamogordo Public Schools

Albuquerque Public Schools

Aztec Municipal School District

Belen Consolidated Schools

Bernalillo Public Schools

Bloomfield School District

Capitan Municipal Schools

Carlsbad Municipal Schools

Carrizozo Municipal Schools

Cimarron Municipal Schools

Clayton Municipal Schools

Cloudcroft Municipal Schools

Cobre Consolidated School District

Corona Public Schools

Cuba Independent School District

Deming Public Schools

Des Moines Municipal Schools

Dora Consolidated Schools

Elida Municipal Schools

Espanola Public Schools

Estancia Municipal School District

Eunice Municipal Schools

Farmington Municipal Schools

Floyd Municipal Schools

Fort Sumner Municipal Schools

Gadsden Independent School District

Gallup-McKinley County Schools

Hagerman Municipal Schools

Hatch Valley Public Schools

Hobbs Municipal Schools

Hondo Valley Public Schools

Las Cruces Public Schools

Mora Independent School District

Pojoaque Valley School District

Raton Public School District

Rio Rancho Public Schools

Ruidoso Municipal Schools

Socorro Consolidated Schools

New York

Amherst Central Schools

Barker Central School District

Canandaigua City School District

Horseheads Central School District

Jamesville-Dewitt Central School District

New Paltz Central School District

New York City Public Schools

Newburgh Enlarged City School District

Niskayuna Central School District

NORTH CAROLINA

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools

OHIO

Mason City Schools

OREGON

Bend-La Pine Schools

Corvallis School District

Greater Albany Public Schools

Lake Oswego School District

Lincoln County School District

Neah-Kah-Nie School District

Oregon City School District

Parkrose School District

Phoenix- Talent School District

Portland Public Schools

Roseburg Public Schools

Salem-Keizer Public Schools

VERMONT

Essex Westford School District

WASHINGTON

Mukilteo School District

WASHINGTON D.C.

D.C. Public Schools

WISCONSIN

School District of Cudahy

Waunakee Community School District