

# RESEARCH BRIEF

Department of Research Services

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## Parents, Students, and Staff Grade High School Safety

This brief research report is one in a series of ancillary analyses of selected data from the annual School Climate Survey conducted by the Department of Research Services. This report is based on data collected in January 1999 and focuses on the opinions of parents, students, and staff on high school safety.

### The Selection of Schools

Under the assumption that safety is a greater issue in large high schools, the schools included in this study were restricted to all regular high schools with January 1999 membership levels above 1500 students.

### The Survey Questions

The School Climate Survey has three major forms -- one for parents, one for students, and another for staff. All three forms have similar questions regarding school safety. The specific items selected for reporting in this study were:

#### PARENT FORM:

My child's school is safe and secure.  
The school and law enforcement authorities effectively work together to keep my child's school free of:  
... violence.  
... gang activity.  
... substance abuse.

#### STUDENT FORM:

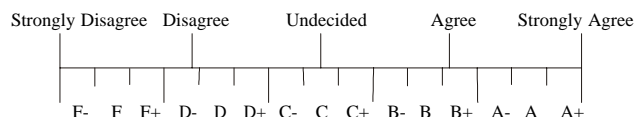
I feel safe at my school.  
Violence is a problem at my school.  
Gangs are a problem at my school.  
Student drug and alcohol use are problems at my school.

#### STAFF FORM:

At my school I feel safe and secure.  
My ability to do the best possible job at this school is limited by:  
... school violence.  
... student gang activity.  
... student substance abuse.

### The Coding of Responses

The survey recipients were asked to respond to each item on a five-point scale from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. The safety items on some forms were worded in the positive sense (strongly agree is a positive indication for the school) and on other forms in a negative sense (strongly disagree is a positive indication for the school). For this analysis, all responses were recoded to make positive indications unidirectional. Furthermore, the response categories were recoded into grade equivalents using the following scale.



This recoding into the grading scale allows the representation of single-number group averages in a format that is readily interpreted.

### Additional Objective Data

The School Climate Survey asks for opinions only. Although opinions make up a real aspect of school environment, they may differ from the factual situations at the schools. For comparison purposes, objective data concerning the safety of the school environments are included in this report. These data come from the 1998-99 School Environment Safety Incident Report as reported in the annual School Advisory Council Report. Generally, this report documents the number of incidents of crime and violence occurring on school grounds. The categories

reported here include *Substance Abuse* (combined drug and alcohol incidents), *Fighting, Disorderly Conduct, Threat/Intimidation*, and *Total* number of reported incidents for all classifications. The numbers reported here are relative frequencies per 1000 students at each school.

### Discussion of Results

The data are presented in the table below. The schools are ordered with respect to the relative total number of reported incidents of crime and violence. Perhaps the most striking aspect of the results is the generally positive grades given to most of the high schools by all survey respondent groups. Nonetheless, there is considerable variation in the opinions of school safety across the different high schools. The staff, as a

group, tend to grade the safety of the schools slightly higher than either the parents or the students. Still, the ordering of the schools shows appreciable agreement between staff and students, with parents only slightly differing. The reader should bear in mind that the Safety Report may not reflect all incidents of violence and crime actually occurring at any individual school. Likewise, discrepancies between real and perceived safety environments may indicate nothing more than public relations problems for the schools. However, in general, the ordering of schools based on the opinions of survey participants is in agreement with the objective ordering based on reported incidents with few exceptions, and the members of the school community appear to be mindful of real safety concerns.

School # School Name	Students				Staff				Parents				Incidents per 1000 Students				
	Safety	Violence	Gangs	Drugs	Safety	Violence	Gangs	Drugs	Safety	Violence	Gangs	Drugs	Substance Abuse	Disorderly Conduct	Fighting	Threat/Intimidation	Total
7531 MIAMI SUNSET SR.	B+	B+	A-	C+	A	A-	B+	B-	B	B	B-	B-	3	0	11	1	29
7511 MIAMI SPRINGS SR.	B	B	B+	C+	B	B	B-	B-	B-	B-	B-	B-	1	0	13	1	35
7051 BRADDOCK, HOLMES G. SR.	B-	B-	B	B-	A-	B+	B+	B-	B-	B-	B-	B-	4	1	12	2	38
7361 MIAMI KILLIAN SR.	B-	B-	B	C+	A-	B	B	B-	B-	B-	B-	C+	4	3	15	1	47
7101 CORAL REEF SR.	B+	A	A	B+	A	A	A	A-	A-	A-	B+	B	1	0	8	0	51
7461 MIAMI SR.	C+	C+	B-	C+	B	B	B	B-	C+	B-	C+	B-	2	0	25	2	56
7111 HIALEAH SR.	C	B-	B+	C+	B-	B	B+	B-	C	C+	C+	C+	2	0	23	2	63
7071 CORAL GABLES SR.	B-	B	B+	C+	A-	B+	B	B	B	B	B	C+	1	0	24	1	66
7431 MIAMI PALMETTO SR.	B	B-	B	C-	A-	B+	B+	C+	B	B-	B-	C+	8	1	17	2	67
7201 MIAMI BEACH SR.	C+	C+	B-	C	B+	B	B	B-	B-	B-	C+	C+	3	1	29	1	69
7721 SOUTH MIAMI SR.	B	B	B	C+	A-	B+	B+	B	B+	B	B	B-	5	1	24	1	69
7141 KROP, DR. MICHAEL SR.	B+	A-	A	C+	A	A	A-	B+	A-	B+	B+	B	3	1	22	5	73
7731 MIAMI SOUTHRIDGE SR.	B-	B	B+	C+	A-	B	B	C+	B	B	B	B-	4	3	36	3	75
7741 SOUTHWEST MIAMI SR.	B	B+	A-	B-	A-	A-	B+	B	B	B	B-	B-	5	1	17	2	78
7751 GOLEMAN, BARBARA SR.	B	B	B+	B-	A-	B+	B+	B-	B+	B+	B	B-	3	1	24	3	81
7341 MIAMI JACKSON SR.	C	C+	B-	B-	B	B-	B	B-	C+	B-	B-	B-	1	1	52	4	81
7271 MIAMI CORAL PARK SR.	B	B+	A-	B-	B	B	B+	B-	B	B	B	B-	7	0	15	3	83
7011 AMERICAN SR.	C+	C+	B	C+	B	C+	B-	C+	C+	B-	B-	C+	2	0	43	3	83
7591 NORTH MIAMI SR.	D+	D+	C+	C+	B	B-	B-	B-	C-	C	C	C	4	1	42	5	87
7131 HIALEAH-MIAMI LAKES SR.	C+	C	B-	C	B+	B-	B-	B-	B-	B-	B-	C+	2	2	41	7	91
7541 NORTH MIAMI BEACH SR.	C-	D+	C	C	C	D+	D+	D+	C	C	C	C	3	3	18	3	97
7381 MIAMI NORLAND SR.	D	C	B	C	D+	C	B-	C+	C-	C	C+	C	0	2	39	2	99
7231 MIAMI CAROL CITY SR.	C	C+	B	B-	B+	B	B+	B	B-	B-	B	B-	1	0	70	6	100
7301 MIAMI EDISON SR.	C	C	C+	B-	B+	B-	B	B-	B-	B-	B-	B-	0	2	58	3	108
7411 MIAMI NORTHWESTERN SR	D+	D	C+	C	C-	C-	B	C+	C-	C-	C	C-	0	1	51	4	108
7701 SOUTH DADE SR.	C+	C+	B	C-	A-	B	B+	C+	C+	B-	C+	C	4	2	63	0	127
7151 HOMESTEAD SR.	C	C-	C+	C	C	C-	C+	C+	C+	C+	B-	C+	6	4	61	4	135
7251 MIAMI CENTRAL SR.	D-	D	D+	C	C+	C	C	C	C+	B	B-	B+	2	2	81	10	157