

**Superintendent Dr. Terry Alban's Comments on FCPS Efforts to Stop Bullying**  
**October 10, 2012**

This week, there has been a lot of media attention surrounding bullying concerns at one of our high schools. Bullying is a complex issue – it's not about one school, or one community, one county, or one state. It's a national issue that we're all focused on. Indeed, FCPS had long planned to discuss the wide range of our bullying prevention and response efforts at the October 24 meeting of the Frederick County Board of Education.

We welcome the dialogue that recent incidents and reports have fostered. I appreciate the conversation that has begun in Brunswick. FCPS plans to have staff and resources for families at the anti-bullying event planned for this coming Friday. We'll be there to support the anti-bullying message, listen to the community, and encourage dialogue.

I have observed FCPS teachers, counselors, administrators, and Central Office staff responding quickly and effectively to address concerns when they are informed about them (by students, parents, or community members) or when they observe issues firsthand. I expect our staff members to aggressively and appropriately respond to any and all information concerning bullying. Unfortunately, many students and/or parents are hesitant to report bullying or harassment behavior until it has seriously escalated – but at FCPS, we actively promote a school culture that encourages students, parents, and community members to come forward. We do so because when staff members are aware of concerns, they can formulate the quickest, best intervention. There are three things parents and the community can do to help their schools to root out bullying.

First, it is very important to inform school personnel when bullying occurs.

Second, it is also important to complete a bullying form. While we certainly don't wait for forms to be filled out before we respond to bullying, these forms are crucial in helping FCPS document incidents and identify patterns of behavior. I have reminded staff that they have an obligation to complete bullying reporting forms themselves – even if parents or students are hesitant. The forms are also valuable in providing information about concerns when a student moves from one school to another. If no one steps forward to report the bullying or harassment, it is virtually impossible for staff to know about every incident and to respond to wider patterns of behavior.

Third, one of the most difficult aspects of bullying today is the prevalence of social media—cruel messages, threats, teasing, and retaliatory conversations can spread at light speed via Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, texting, or other electronic tools. FCPS teachers, staff, and central office personnel are committed to partnering with parents and community members in teaching students about proper, responsible, and safe use of social media tools. It is also very important that parents let teachers, principals or other school personnel know when they see inappropriate messages being posted about a student or situation in our schools.

Cyber bullying and online teasing can spill over into the school setting, and staff members often need to address these concerns. But we want to address bullying (in all its forms) as quickly and aggressively as possible – we don't want to wait to hear about online postings long after the fact. Parents and the community can help children – and teachers – by staying aware of what's going on in their corner of the cyber world and sharing information with their partners in the schools.

We want to protect all of our children from bullying, teasing, and harassment. We're committed to ensuring that our schools continue to be safe, healthy environments for learning. It will take a concerted effort by parents, students, teachers, school counselors, administrators, and community members to Stop Bullying and I can assure you that FCPS is committed to leading that cause!