



Brooklyn Bridge
ALLIANCE
for YOUTH



OSSEO AREA SCHOOLS
ISD  279

The Anti-Hate Project

Building Effective Strategies to Address Identity-Based Harm in Schools

A Partnership Between the Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth and Osseo Area School District with Funding from Hennepin County

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Youth Participatory Evaluation Inters: Mercy Nyamo, Alice Apaloo, Alondra Armenta, Bolatito Ikotun, Kristina Thomas

ABSTRACT

The Anti-Hate Initiative empowers students to document and explore their experiences with hate and inclusivity in their school environment. This initiative is funded through Hennepin County and implemented through the Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth (BBAY) in partnership with Osseo Area School District (OASD). A mixed method approach to evaluate the implementation of the Identity-based Harm Response Protocol was used throughout the youth participatory evaluation process. Several young people who attend the schools were hired in partnership with the project. As part of the project, we assessed the implementation and initial impacts of the protocol, raised awareness of identity-based harm, and provided recommendations moving forward.

INTRODUCTION

The Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth (BBAY) launched a Youth-led Anti-Hate Campaign in 2022 to better understand young people's experiences in our community. The youth-led project included:

- A marketing and communications campaign to educate, inform and empower youth in schools to fight back against hate in the forms of crime and identity-based bullying.
- Youth and adult interviews were conducted to better understand their experiences and to learn what key messages might be needed to inform the community of what to do if they experience or if someone they know experiences a hate crime, incident, or bullying.

In January 2023, Osseo Area School District (OASD) approved a NEW protocol and handbook on *Identity-Based Harm Response* focused on awareness and response to supporting victims and communities who experience identity-based harm at OASD.

**OASD Identity-Based Harm Response Protocol attached in supplemental documents*

The purpose of this project was to conduct an implementation process evaluation to identify the strengths and challenges of the schools' current approach and develop evidence-based recommendations to iteratively build on their new protocol and continue to provide a safer and more inclusive school environment for students.

To do this, we:

1. Assessed and evaluated the implementation and initial impacts of the Identity-Based Harm Response protocol in Park Center and Osseo Senior High Schools.
2. Raised awareness of identity-based harm and the support services of OASD, including how data is currently tracked and recommendations for improving data tracking.
3. Convened stakeholders to explore the efficacy of this new protocol to be implemented in their own school districts, and in other settings where identity-based harm occurs.

Research Questions:

- To what extent was the Identity-Based Harm Protocol implemented as intended?
- What were the strengths and challenges of the new Identity-Based Harm Protocol?
- What are youth needs in order to feel safe and supported by their schools from identity-based harm? And how do these align with the protocol?

Anti-Hate Project Team

Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth

- Rebecca Gilgen, Executive Director
- Chia Xiong, Data, Evaluation and YPAR Coordinator
- Marwok (Mo) Gure, Data Assistant and Youth Program Evaluation Specialist
- Alice Apaloo, Youth Intern (Park Center Sr. High School)

- Alondra Armento, Youth Intern (Osseo Sr. High School)
- Mercy Nyamao, Youth Intern (Osseo Sr. High School)
- Bolatito Ikotun, Youth Intern (Park Center Sr. High School)
- Kristina Thomas, Youth Intern (Park Center Sr. High School)

Osseo Area School District

- Bryan Bass, Assistant Superintendent of Equity & Achievement
- Thomas Watkins, Data & Assessment Coordinator
- Jenna Johnshoy-Aarestad, Data & Assessment Coordinator
- Gao Thor, Data & Assessment Analyst

Hennepin County

- Ifrah Jama, Anti-Hate & Violence Prevention Program Coordinator

METHODOLOGY

Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE)

The Anti-Hate Project team identified the need for collaboration with youth from both Park Center and Osseo Senior High Schools to implement various parts of the evaluation work. In doing so, up to 6 Youth Interns would be hired as part of the team to learn skills of evaluation, create materials, and implement the evaluation. Youth Interns would also be essential in providing their insights and experiences in data validation and meaning making.

The BBAY works closely with the City of Brooklyn Park as the city provides Human Resources services and is the fiscal agent to BBAY. When Anti-Hate Youth Interns were hired, they would be onboarded through the City of Brooklyn Park's HR process. As part of onboarding, Youth Interns are provided a deep dive of BBAY's history of the previous Anti-Hate projects. The Anti-Hate Project team met numerous times in the beginning to learn different evaluation methods in order to prioritize which methods of data gathering for the project. Based on an Action Planning session with Anti-Hate Project staff, Youth Interns, and staff from the OASD Data Team, these were identified as key actions in the evaluation work:

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Focus groups
- Record of data
- Marketing and communications

The Anti-Hate Project team (BBAY staff and Youth Interns) used a mixed method approach in gathering information in order to simultaneously raise awareness on identity-based harm, the OASD protocol, and gather information from students.

1. **Photovoice** - Implemented by Anti-Hate Youth Interns in May and November at Park Center and Osseo.
2. **Youth to Youth Survey** - Implemented by the Youth Data Squad from July to September in the Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center area (with questions created by the Anti-Hate Youth Interns). **The 2024 Youth to Youth Survey provided a unique opportunity to add identity-based harm questions to a wider youth survey already being implemented by BBAY.*
3. **Survey** - Implemented by Anti-Hate Staff and Youth Interns in November at Park Center and Osseo.
4. **Interview** - Implemented by Anti-Hate Staff and Youth Interns in December at Park Center and Osseo.
5. **Focus Group** - Implemented by Anti-Hate Staff and Youth Interns in December virtually with students from Park Center.

The Anti-Hate Project team of BBAY staff and 3 Youth Interns met on a regular schedule from February to May with a break in the summer months and regathered in September to December with 2 additional Youth Interns hired (as previous 2 Youth Interns graduated and moved onto college). Between and throughout the evaluation process, discussions were held in learning opportunities and gathering input from the project team. The Anti-Hate Youth Interns provided their unique insights from attending the schools in order to further provide meaning and validate the information gathered from their peers.

Overall, Anti-Hate Youth Interns expressed their interest in involvement with the project due to the added leadership opportunity, furthering their learning, and wanting an impact on their schools. They also indicated how much they enjoyed tabling at their schools during lunch time to gather input from peers during the surveys and interviews. The project provided a different insight into their schools and learned more about the protocol and systems at school. The need for more engagement with students and expanding efforts to gather input from various affinity groups at school was a limitation of the project identified by the Youth Interns.

PHOTOVOICE

The 'Anti-Hate in Osseo Area Schools: A Photovoice Project' empowers students to document and explore their experiences with hate and inclusivity in their school environment. Through the Photovoice method, participants capture images that represent their personal and shared encounters, fostering deeper understanding and dialogue. This approach aims to combat hate and promote a more inclusive school culture by giving students a visual voice to express their perspectives.

Introduction

Hate and discrimination in schools significantly impact students' mental health and overall well-being. This project addresses these issues by empowering students to express their experiences and perspectives through photography. Using the Photovoice method, we aim to highlight existing challenges and promote a more inclusive, supportive school environment.

Three youth participants are involved: one from Park Center Senior High School and two from Osseo Senior High School. These students bring diverse perspectives, reflecting the varied experiences within Osseo area schools. Through their photographs and discussions, they provide valuable insights into themes of hate, inclusivity, and community in their school environments.

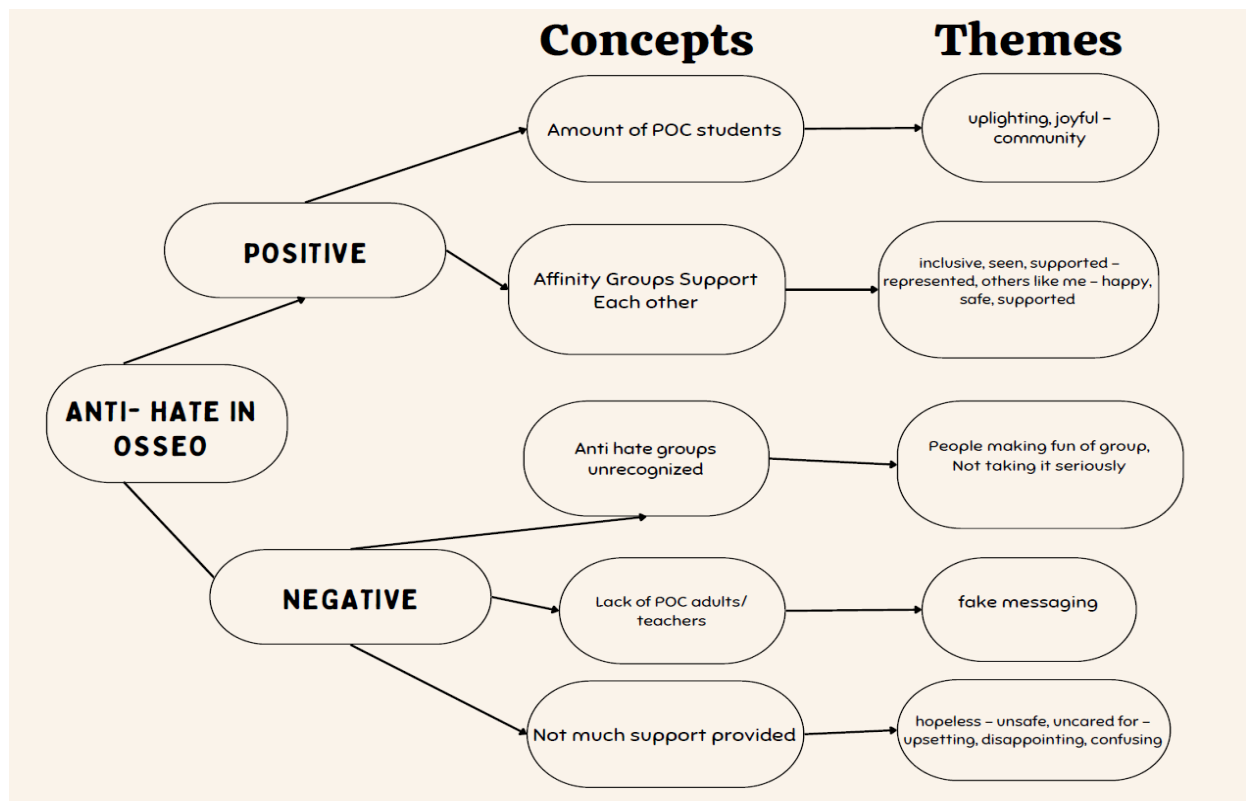
By documenting moments, spaces, and interactions, these young photographers capture the nuanced realities of student life. Their visual narratives offer valuable perspectives to school administrators, teachers, and policymakers. This approach not only empowers participants to address school climate issues but also sparks constructive conversations and inspires actions towards creating more equitable educational spaces.

Methodology

The project involved students from Osseo Area schools as participants, selected to represent diverse perspectives within the district. These students began by creating concept maps to identify and organize themes like hate and inclusivity within their schools. This initial step allowed participants to reflect on their experiences and prioritize the issues they felt were most significant. Using these maps as guides, they then took photographs representing their personal experiences and observations related to these themes, capturing both overt and subtle manifestations of hate and inclusivity in their school environments.

After the photo-taking sessions, students engaged in group discussions to analyze and interpret their images. These conversations, guided by reflection questions, were designed to encourage deeper exploration of the themes and foster open dialogue among participants. The discussions were audio recorded and transcribed to ensure accurate capture of insights. Thematic analysis of the conversations revealed key patterns and perspectives, with students sharing personal anecdotes that provided rich context for their photos and illuminated the complex realities of their school experiences.



The project's findings will be disseminated through presentations and discussions with school and district administration, as well as the broader Osseo community. This multi-faceted approach to sharing results aims to ensure that the insights and recommendations generated contribute effectively to ongoing efforts to combat hate and promote inclusivity in Osseo area schools.


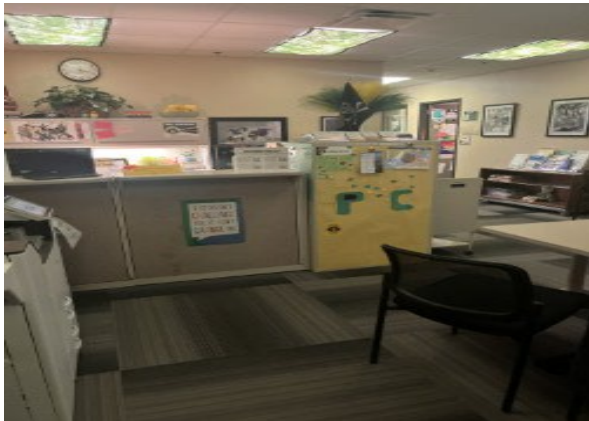



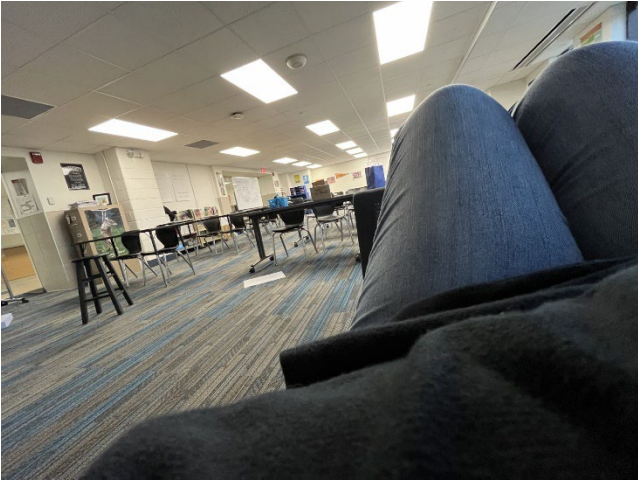


Note: This is the concept map the youth created, identifying positive and negative anti-hate concepts, that lead to themes they would like to explore in their photography.



Results

Through the process of taking photographs, engaging in discussions, and reflecting on their experiences, the youth participants connected to several key themes and shared personal anecdotes that showcased their school's relationship to anti-hate.

Theme	Photo with Respondent + Title	Description and Reflection (what are we seeing + why you chose the photo)
Inclusivity	<p>Respondent #1 - Shades of Osseo</p> 	<p>[4 hands, one hand has henna, the other looks tan and the other 2 are different shades of brown.]</p> <p><i>I felt like it currently showcases how diverse Osseo is and can be. I was trying to convey how an environment like this can make it easier for students to feel represented and seen.</i></p>
Community	<p>Respondent #1 - untitled</p> 	<p>[5 hands in fists all shade of brown, some darker than others.]</p> <p><i>I wanted to showcase the depth of blackness in Osseo. Too often black students are grouped into one, but the reality is far from the truth. Blackness comes in all shades/cultures. I also choose this because within my friend group, I have gained lots of knowledge about different cultures within the black community.</i></p>

<p>Safe and Supported</p>	<p>Respondent #2 - Library</p> 	<p>[Students in Park Center gather in the library for study hall and free time]</p> <p><i>It documents how this space is active and live with students and knowing it positively benefits the school day.</i></p> <p><i>*This picture has been edited to protect the anonymity of the youth at the school.</i></p>
<p>Uplifting</p>	<p>Respondent #2 - Counselor's Office</p> 	<p>[The Counselor's office where a student is walking in]</p> <p><i>Students go here when they have concerns about school or their personal life. They also use this as a safe space to connect with their favorite staff and check in with them.</i></p>
<p>Inclusive/ safe, supported</p>	<p>Respondent #2 - Flex Space</p> 	<p>[Photo of the flex space at Park Center, where students go to work quietly.]</p> <p><i>The school is making changes to the space to benefit students through the school day and provide them an area to enforce a calming mental state.</i></p>

<p>Seen and Supported</p>	<p>Respondent #3 - Teacher's Room</p> 	<p>[English Teacher's room where I am laying down]</p> <p><i>I know that a lot of people that have issues, go here during the day and I know that if they have issues they can stay there.</i></p>
<p>Inclusivity</p>	<p>Respondent #4 - untitled</p> 	<p>[A classroom with desks and chairs. There appears to be a guitar in the front. One brown hand and fair hand of 2 different students.]</p> <p><i>The photo represents inclusivity as different people from different cultural backgrounds are made part of our school life and its inclusivity.</i></p>
<p>Inclusivity</p>	<p>Respondent #4- untitled</p> 	<p>[Maybe a heart in an orchestra classroom where students gather together.]</p> <p><i>This theme of inclusivity allows for diversity and helps people feel welcome in our school. It also leads to the appreciation of cultural backgrounds.</i></p>

Unity	<p>Respondent #5 - untitled</p> 	<p>[Two students holding hands]</p> <p><i>In the first picture, I see two hands holding in the center. This shows unity to me.</i></p>
Safe Space	<p>Respondent #5 - untitled</p> 	<p>[Setup of someone working in a quiet (assume) library.]</p> <p><i>This shows a safe space in the school for students.</i></p>

Limitations

Students struggled to visually capture negative experiences in school, not due to their absence, but because of the subtle nature of many incidents. One student asked, "How can I capture a microaggression?", highlighting this challenge. Other limitations included

avoiding photographing other students' faces and difficulty in visually representing emotion-based themes. These obstacles made it hard to document negative situations, even when they were occurring.

Initial Discussions

Initial discussions revealed both differences and similarities in participants' photographic focus. Respondent #1 captured race-based issues, highlighting racial identity and experiences. Respondent #2 emphasized community and inclusivity, showcasing a sense of belonging and unity among students. Respondent #3 depicted locations in the school where students felt safe.

Despite these individual approaches, all participants identified recurring themes of community, unity, and inclusion. They recognized their schools' efforts to implement these values and captured various aspects of these initiatives. Respondent #1's photos highlighted personal experiences and race-related themes, while Respondent #2 focused on physical spaces fostering inclusivity and community. Respondent #3 chose images representing areas where students, including herself, experienced a sense of belonging and safety.

A key insight emerged: everyday moments and spaces often conveyed profound messages about hate and inclusivity. Participants realized their seemingly ordinary photographs carried significant meaning within the context of their experiences. They discovered the power of documenting authentic, daily interactions rather than staged moments.

The discussions also highlighted the potential for these photographs to spark change within school administration. Participants believed sharing their photos with staff and administrators could emphasize the importance of diversity, inclusion, and community from a student perspective. They hoped their work would inspire the creation of more intentional, inclusive spaces supporting all students.

The project yielded personal insights for each participant. Respondent #1 became more aware of previously unnoticed anti-hate efforts, feeling that documenting these moments heightened her awareness of positive initiatives. Respondent #2 gained a deeper understanding of the subtle biases and challenges faced by students from different backgrounds. Respondent #3 reflected on the importance of safe spaces, noting that while few students of color frequented her personal safe areas, those who did found security and comfort there. She hoped her photos would help staff recognize the significance of these spaces and support students' need for safe environments.

Project Reflections

Group discussions and reflections unveiled several recurring themes, with safe spaces emerging as a critical concept. Students identified diverse locations where they felt secure and supported, emphasizing the individual nature of these spaces. Participants stressed

the need for greater diversity among staff, teachers, and higher-level administration, highlighting the importance of adults who can connect with students on cultural and personal levels to foster a more inclusive environment.

The project exposed social hierarchies within the school that impacted students' experiences and their ability to seek support. Youth participants recognized the necessity of addressing these issues to create a more inclusive school community. They emphasized the importance of staff awareness regarding students' safe spaces, urging teachers not to assume students were avoiding responsibilities when seeking these areas. The youth saw teachers' recognition and understanding of safe spaces as crucial steps toward nurturing a supportive environment.

Engaging in the Photovoice project heightened participants' awareness of intragroup harm, such as judgment within identity groups towards members who deviate from perceived norms. This realization underscored the need for ongoing dialogue and reflection within student groups to promote inclusivity and reduce internal biases.

The discussions highlighted how seemingly ordinary photographs carried significant meaning within the context of students' experiences. Participants discovered the power of documenting authentic, daily interactions rather than staged moments, revealing deeper insights into school dynamics and student needs. The project provided valuable perspectives on creating a more inclusive school environment. It emphasized the importance of diverse representation, understanding of safe spaces, addressing social hierarchies, and promoting intragroup acceptance. These insights offer a student-centered approach to fostering a supportive and inclusive educational community.

Key Insights

- 1. Diversity Among Students vs. Staff:** The discussions revealed a pressing need for greater diversity among staff and teachers, not just the student body. Participants noted that having teachers and staff who shared similar cultural backgrounds, interests, and languages with the students could create a more relatable and supportive environment. They emphasized that diversity among higher-level administration, such as principals, was equally important. The youth felt that a diverse administration could better understand and address the unique needs of a varied student body.
- 2. Need for Community from Administration:** There was a consensus for the administration to be more welcoming rather than solely focused on enforcing rules, such as bathroom passes. The participants expressed that a community-oriented approach from the administration would make the school environment feel more inclusive and less punitive. They stressed the importance of administrators being visible and approachable, engaging with students in a manner that promotes trust and safety.

- 3. Adult-Student Relationships:** The participants highlighted the significance of adult-student relationships in creating a welcoming and safe environment. They discussed the importance of adults in the school being responsive to students' emotions and avoiding conflict. There was a call for teachers and staff to establish clear boundaries while also ensuring that all students receive equal treatment. The youth pointed out that certain students, such as athletes or those from particular racial or identity groups, often received preferential treatment, which contributed to feelings of inequality and exclusion among other students.
- 4. Social Hierarchies:** The existence of social hierarchies within the school was another prominent theme. The participants noted that these hierarchies made it difficult for some students to reach out or feel supported by staff. They emphasized the need for staff to recognize and validate the safe spaces that students create for themselves, without assuming that students were avoiding class or responsibilities. The recognition and respect of these spaces by teachers were seen as crucial for fostering a supportive and inclusive school environment.
- 5. Teachers Creating Safe Spaces:** The role of teachers in creating and maintaining safe spaces was underscored throughout the discussions. Participants shared that when teachers understood and respected the need for safe spaces, it greatly contributed to a positive school experience. However, there was also a noted disconnect between teachers' efforts to create these spaces and the administration's policies, which sometimes undermined these efforts. The youth called for better alignment and communication between teachers and administrators to ensure that safe spaces were recognized and supported at all levels.
- 6. Subtle Bias:** Engaging in the Photovoice project made participants more aware of the subtle biases they experienced. They discussed instances of intragroup harm, where students within the same identity group judged those who deviated from the norm. This included judgments based on fashion choices, cultural backgrounds, or interests. The participants highlighted the need for greater awareness and ongoing dialogue to reduce these biases and promote a more inclusive environment.
- 7. Examples of Harm:** Participants provided specific examples of harm, such as a student who dressed alternatively and faced judgment from peers, which discouraged her from expressing her style. Another example involved the Latinx affinity group, which initially experienced discord due to cultural differences but eventually learned to celebrate these differences and acknowledge their similarities. There was also a discussion about students bullied for their enjoyment of activities like Beyblade, particularly when the players were neurotypical. This highlighted the need for greater understanding and support for neurodivergent students, who might not always be aware of the harm they face.

Addendum:

Fall/Winter Intern Perspectives

The Photovoice project expanded during the Fall/Winter period to include two additional interns from Park Center Senior High School. Their contributions reinforced existing themes while offering fresh perspectives on anti-hate and inclusivity initiatives within Osseo Area Schools.

Visual Documentation and Reflections

The first intern focused on capturing scenes that represented the school's commitment to inclusivity. Their photographs included a classroom setting featuring a guitar and the hands of two students with different skin tones, symbolizing both the creative atmosphere and diverse student body. They also documented a heart-shaped arrangement in an orchestra classroom, emphasizing the themes of unity and belonging that emerged in earlier project phases.

The second intern's photographs centered on spaces of inclusion and support within the school environment. Their images included joined hands representing student unity and library spaces that serve as sanctuaries for learning and mental well-being. These visual narratives aligned with and expanded upon the safe spaces theme identified by earlier participants.

Connections of the Themes

The interns' work reinforced several key themes from the initial project phase while providing additional depth:

Both interns emphasized how everyday interactions between students from different backgrounds contribute to an inclusive environment. Their documentation of these moments provided concrete examples of how diversity manifests in daily school life.

The interns' focus on specific locations within the school, such as the library and creative spaces, expanded upon earlier participants' identification of safe spaces. Their reflections highlighted how these areas serve multiple purposes, supporting both academic needs and emotional well-being.

Similar to earlier participants' challenges in capturing negative experiences, the interns found themselves drawn to documenting positive aspects of school life. This parallel suggests a consistent pattern in how students choose to represent their school experiences visually.

Impact and Future Implications

The interns' contributions strengthened the project's overall narrative about the importance of student-led initiatives in promoting inclusive school environments. Their reflections emphasized that creating an inclusive environment requires attention to both physical spaces and interpersonal dynamics. This insight complements earlier findings about the need for diverse representation among staff and administration.

Conclusion

By capturing and reflecting on their experiences, the students provided valuable insights and recommendations that could guide future initiatives to combat hate and promote a more inclusive school environment. The project highlighted the importance of safe spaces, the need for diversity among staff and administration, and the critical role of adult-student relationships in creating a welcoming and supportive school community.

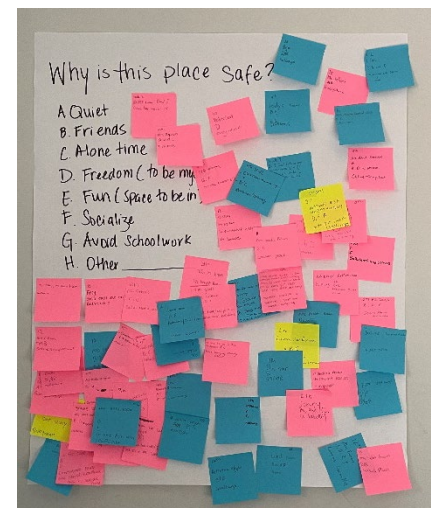
The project emphasizes the importance of ongoing dialogue, reflection, and action to address issues of hate and inclusivity. By understanding and addressing the unique needs and experiences of all students, Osseo Area Schools can work towards creating a more equitable and supportive environment for everyone. The youth participants' contributions through the Photovoice project serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of valuing the voices of students in creating positive change within the school community.

References

Lemon, E. D., Mera Nieto, K. S., Serrano Laguna, L. Y., Flores, Y. A., Niño-Suastegui, M., Peraza Campos, J., Fuentes, V., Lozada, K., Ling, A., & Woods-Jaeger, B. (2023). "I Can Never Feel Safe": Latinx Youth Voices on Psychosocial Impacts of 287(g) in Georgia. *Health Education & Behavior*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10901981231193695>

SURVEYS

In January 2023, Osseo Area School District (OASD) implemented a new Identity-Based Harm Response protocol. This evaluation from the Brookly component examines student experiences to assess protocol implementation and identify areas for enhancement. This report presents findings from student surveys conducted at Park Center and Osseo Senior High Schools as part of the Anti-Hate Project evaluation of the Identity-Based Harm Response protocol implementation. The analysis reflects responses from 112 students regarding safe spaces and experiences with identity-based harm in their school environments.



Methodology

Data was collected through student surveys at both Park Center and Osseo Senior High Schools. The survey captured:

- Demographics
 - Grade: 9-12
 - Gender Identity collected based on color of sticky note
 - Ethnicity Information: We asked each student before taking the survey and marked it on a separate sheet.
- Student-identified safe spaces in the school and the community
- Characteristics that make spaces feel safe
- Locations where students observe identity-based harm
- Respondents: 112 students across grades 9-12 at both Osseo Senior High (68 respondents) and Park Center Senior High (44 respondents)

Key Findings: Student Safety Networks

Students identified multiple types of safe spaces within schools:

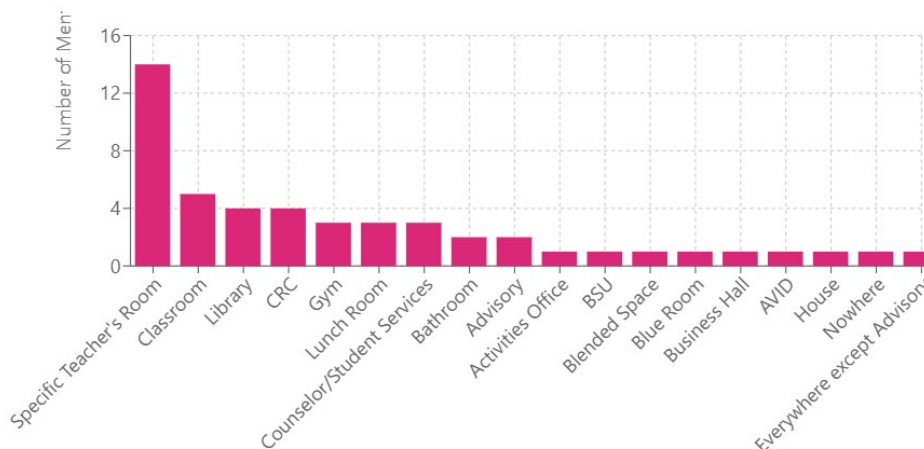
Park Center:

- Flexspace and bathrooms are the most mentioned (6 each)
- More mentions of general spaces rather than specific teachers' rooms
- Student Support/Office and Gym are tied for third most mentioned

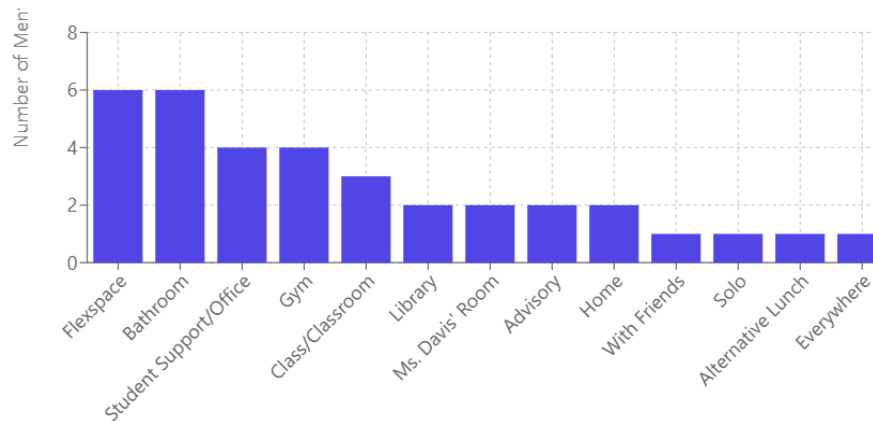
Osseo:

- More variety in mentioned spaces overall
- Specific teacher rooms are overwhelmingly the most mentioned (14 times)
- CRC appears as a unique safe space
- More mentions of specific programs (BSU, AVID)

Osseo Safe Spaces (n=57 students)



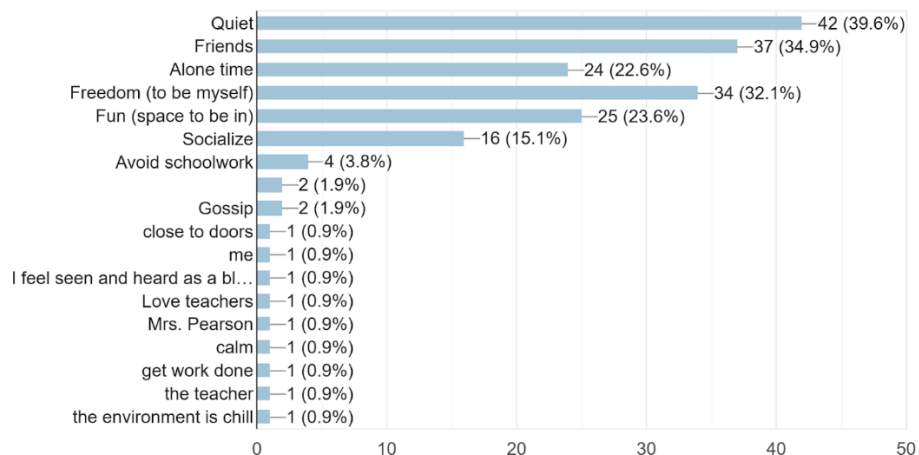
Park Center Safe Spaces (n=32 students)



- Individual teacher relationships and designated quiet spaces emerge as crucial safety factors for students.
- Specific teacher rooms at Osseo include: Mrs. Boldt, Mrs. Byron, Mrs. Zieba, Ms. Waller, Ms. Peterson, Mrs. Heifort, Mrs. Ebners, Mrs. Gammersuard, Mrs. Grittner, and other named teachers

What makes a safe physical space safe? Pick up to 2.

106 responses

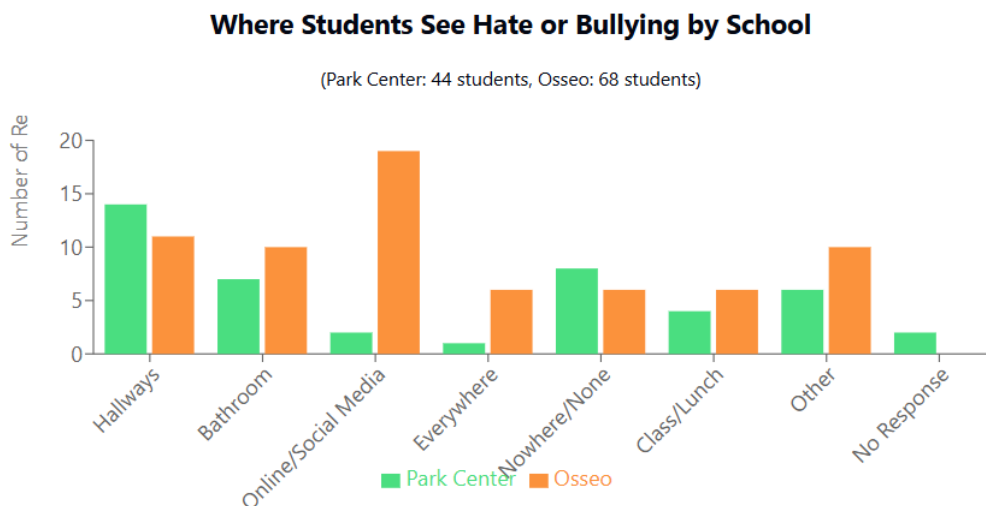


This graph shows the reasons why students at both schools chose their safe spaces. The top reasons being “Quiet”, “Friends”, “Alone time”, “Freedom (to be myself)”, and “Fun (space to be in)”.

Identity-Based Harm Patterns

The survey revealed a concerning pattern of where students encounter identity-based harm. Physical spaces like hallways, bathrooms, and locker areas continue to be hotspots for concerning behavior. However, a new frontier of concern has emerged in digital spaces,

particularly on platforms like Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok. This online dimension adds complexity to the challenge of creating safe school environments. There were also responses from several students who reported experiencing identity-based harm "everywhere," suggesting that for some students, there's no reliable escape from these challenges.



Identity Based Harm Protocol Implementation Insights

The implementation of the Identity-Based Harm Response protocol in January 2023 has shown promising results. Strong teacher-student relationships and established safe spaces demonstrate that the protocol is making a difference. However, clear challenges remain:

- Online harassment often falls outside the protocol's reach
- High-risk areas still suffer from inconsistent supervision
- Student awareness of support resources varies significantly
- The digital landscape presents new challenges for protecting student safety

As we consider the future of student safety in these schools, the data points to several key areas for focus: Bridging the digital divide in harassment prevention, strengthening supervision in identified high-risk areas, building on the success of teacher-student relationships, expanding awareness of support resources and addressing the needs of students who feel unsafe "everywhere".

The survey data reveals both strengths and areas for improvement in the current Identity-Based Harm Response protocol implementation. While established safe spaces and strong teacher relationships demonstrate protocol success, challenges remain in addressing digital harassment and ensuring comprehensive coverage of all school spaces.

INTERVIEWS

In January 2023, Osseo Area School District (OASD) implemented a new Identity-Based Harm Response protocol. This evaluation from the Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth examines student experiences to assess protocol implementation and identify areas for enhancement. This report presents findings from student interviews conducted at Park Center and Osseo Senior High Schools as part of the Anti-Hate Project evaluation of the Identity-Based Harm Response protocol implementation.

Methodology

Data was collected through structured interviews with students at both Park Center and Osseo Senior High Schools. The interviews explored the following key questions:

1. Have you ever been a target of hate or bullying based on your identity?
2. Are you comfortable reporting hate or harm incidents to school staff?
3. Do you think teachers and staff care about stopping hate at your school?
4. Have you seen staff members successfully intervene in situations of hate or bullying?
5. What role do peers play in stopping hate or harm at the school?

The interviews provided nuanced insights into student perceptions and experiences, capturing voices often absent from traditional survey methodologies. We also collected the racial demographics of the students and asked if they have heard of the identity based harm protocol.

Respondents: 45 students total, Osseo Senior High (20 students), Park Center Senior High (25 students)

Demographics of Awareness

The interview data revealed significant gaps in awareness of the Identity-Based Harm Response protocol and any anti-bias information provided by the school across demographic groups: (Aware: No / Yes)

Osseo Senior High	Park Center Senior High
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Black/African American: No: 14, Yes: 0• Hispanic/Latino: No: 2, Yes: 0• White: No: 1, Yes: 0• Asian/Pacific Islander: No: 1, Yes: 0• Other/Biracial: No: 9, Yes: 0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Black/African American: No: 9, Yes: 0• Hispanic/Latino: No: 2, Yes: 0• White: No: 1, Yes: 0• Asian/Pacific Islander: No: 5, Yes: 0• Other/Biracial: No: 1, Yes: 0

Key Findings of Interviews

- 1. Experiences as Targets of Hate or Bullying:** The majority of respondents across both schools reported not being direct targets of hate or bullying based on their identity. However, notable exceptions emerged:
 - Osseo High School: One student shared a significant experience of being targeted due to their gender identity, which escalated to classroom disruptions and slurs.
 - Park Center: A small number of students recalled instances of identity-based bullying, though many noted these occurred in earlier grades, such as elementary or middle school.
- 2. Comfort in Reporting Incidents:** Students expressed varied levels of comfort in reporting hate or harm incidents to school staff. Some students felt confident in staff responses, stating, "Yes, I'd report it." *Others cited concerns* about anonymity, fear of being labeled a "snitch," and perceived ineffectiveness of reporting processes.
- 3. Perceptions of Teachers and Staff:** Students had divided opinions on whether teachers and staff care about stopping hate:
 - A segment of students acknowledged caring staff, with one student stating, "Some teachers care deeply about stopping hate."
 - Others criticized staff inconsistency, highlighting that some only intervene when behavior disrupts their classrooms. One Osseo student remarked, "Some staff feel entitled and above accountability."
 - Some students noted variability, stating, "It depends on the teacher."
- 4. Effectiveness of Staff Interventions:** When asked whether staff successfully intervene in incidents of hate or bullying, the responses revealed patterns:
 - Students observed staff effectively breaking up physical fights and de-escalating conflicts.
 - Many respondents noted rarely seeing staff address subtler forms of bullying, such as verbal harassment.
- 5. Role of Peers:** The role of peers in addressing hate and harm was seen as both positive and passive:
 - Some students highlighted peer accountability, with one stating, "Peers have a big influence and can hold others accountable."
 - Others emphasized that many peers avoid involvement, saying, "Most just mind their business," or "They might record it but not intervene."

Insights from Identity-Based Harm Protocol Implementation

While the Identity-Based Harm Response protocol has introduced important frameworks, challenges remain:

- Many students were unfamiliar with the protocol or its objectives leading to gaps in awareness.
- Online harassment on platforms like Snapchat and Instagram complicates the school's ability to address identity-based harm.
- While strong teacher-student relationships exist, staff intervention often varies by individual, leading to inconsistent staff engagement.
- Students expressed a need for greater empowerment for peers to actively prevent and address harm.

What Students Want to See

1. Launch a targeted communication campaign to ensure students and staff are fully informed about the Identity-Based Harm protocol.
2. Expand the scope of the protocol to include digital platforms, with clear strategies to address online harm.
3. Provide comprehensive training for all staff to ensure consistent and effective responses to incidents.
4. Create peer-led initiatives to encourage students to actively support their classmates and discourage harmful behaviors.
5. Regularly assess the protocol's effectiveness through student feedback and adapt strategies as needed.
6. Students want to evaluate teachers themselves.

Conclusion

The data from Osseo and Park Center Senior High Schools underscores both the successes and challenges of the Identity-Based Harm Response protocol. While students recognize safe spaces and individual teacher efforts, gaps in consistency, digital harassment, and peer engagement highlight areas for improvement. By implementing the recommendations outlined, OASD can strengthen its commitment to fostering safe and inclusive school environments for all students.

FOCUS GROUP

The Anti-Hate Youth Participatory Evaluation (YPE) conducted multiple methods of information gathering from youth at both Park Center Sr. High School and Osseo Sr. High School. As we explored the various methods of gathering the perspectives of young people in a safe and assuring manner, focus group conversations were suggested as one of the methods for the Anti-Hate Initiative. We had proposed numerous opportunities for focus groups to be conducted, but due to time and other circumstances, we were able to conduct one virtually.

Methodology

The Anti-Hate YPE Interns worked to curate a list of questions to be asked during the Focus Group Conversations. The list of questions was supplemented from the Youth as Facilitative Leaders Training (YFL) the BBAY conducts twice a year. The questions were created from a list of sample questions used as part of a focused conversation. The Anti-Hate YPE team worked together to create questions for students to feel safe and supported in providing their lived experiences to the project to be shared with the schools and district.

The focus group conversation was conducted with a diverse group of youth from Park Center High School. The students are part of the BBAY's Youth OnBoard program. It was conducted over a virtual Zoom meeting due to a snowstorm and the convenience of getting everyone together. There were 4 students plus 2 adults from the Youth OnBoard program and 2 youth interns plus 2 adults from the Anti-Hate YPE initiative that took part in the conversation. The overall group were racially/ethnically diverse—although it was not recorded of their specific racial or ethnic background.

Questions asked in the focus group discussion:

1. What do you think of when I say the word "HATE"?
2. What do you notice about the policies at school around hate, harming others, or bullying?
3. What seems to be most important in addressing hate (bullying, harmful language, or hurtful messages) within schools?
4. What challenges do you think schools have in addressing hate at school?
5. What do you think of as a "safe space"?
6. What are some first steps needed to promote kindness, safety, and "anti-hate"?

Discussion

In our conversation, youth expressed their concerns of hate and harm being done in their school surrounding school policies, reactions to harmful incidents, and their perceptions of reporting such incidents. Topics of interest ranged from (1) perceptions of judgement from others, (2) teachers' roles, (3) actions of other students, and (4) the school system as a whole.

Themes:

1. **Perceptions of judgement from others.** Students expressed their perception of hate in schools represent feelings of bias, dislike, anger, and violence. They also stated how other students may be untrustworthy in situations of reporting harm or hate at school. Some steps towards promoting anti-hate within their schools included students working within themselves to be "less judgy and mend their business" in order for others to "let people to be themselves."

2. **Teachers and staff roles.** Students indicated how they see relationships and roles of adults (teachers, staff, administrators) pertaining to hate and harm at school. Some felt adults don't do anything, and at times, nothing was done unless it became physical amongst students. Students also felt teachers were too friendly with students whereas teachers aren't seen as having authority. It was also said how some teachers seemed more scared of being confrontational with students, and how there are students who are not afraid of the adults at school.
3. **Actions of other students.** There were various incidences of hate and harm that was stated within the focus group. Incidences the focus group personally experienced or heard about included hate speech, slurs, and attitudes. Many of the students implied how other students get away with harmful language in various ways, (1) mixing in positive and negative language together, (2) starting off small to progressively more harmful language, (3)
4. **School system.** Students felt the school system is not strict whereas someone could be bullying others and not be taken seriously. There were also multiple mentions of incidences where nothing is done unless it get physical (harm words vs. fighting). The process of resolving conflict within schools was also mention where someone would apologize, but other students felt it was "faked" or not authentic and nothing was learned from the situation. Students also mentioned being scared of reporting due to being called a "snitch" or potential retaliation resulting in fighting or rumors spreading.

Other significant findings from the student focus group conversation were scenarios of situations students have either experienced or have heard of. One stated how people grow up differently whereas culture or their upbringing may play a role in how students perpetuate harm or promote anti-hate at school. It was also noted that parents of students may or may not be helpful in situations of anti-hate. Other notions mentioned were of when teachers, staff, or administrators are those who are causing harm or hate within the schools either to other adults or to students. There is little mention of this information within policies or the protocol.

Recommendations

Some recommendations from the focus group ranged from the various themes indicated above.

- Need for a plan in place created by adults with insights from youth on how to promote kindness, safety, and anti-hate at school and within the community.
- Changing the policies and rules to be stricter as well as making sure rules are enforced equally with students and adults at school (addressing bias).

- The adults onsite at schools need to be on the same page to establish their authority within the school to combat conflict amongst students.
- Places for students to turn to someone to “hash it out” whether that is someone to just listen, to help process, or to resolve a situation (depending on how the student wants to resolve for themselves).
- Changes within ourselves to be less judgmental and for folks to mind their business to let people be themselves among others – how can schools help promote this within their school culture or values.
- Consider the implications of reporting and retaliation after reporting.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Marketing & Communication

Part of the Anti-Hate Project with OASD is marketing and communication plan on raising awareness of identity-based harm. This was occurred in multiple ways:

1. Outreach and engagement during lunch tabling opportunities alongside surveys and interviews held.
2. Artwork created in previous Anti-Hate Campaign was decided to be used for marketing within this project instead of creating new artwork - stickers and posters were printed as giveaways.
3. Other giveaway items to promote anti-hate messaging involved lanyards during lunch tabling, sweaters for Youth Interns and staff, and water tumblers for participants in the photovoice and focus group.

Anti-Hate Artwork can be seen and downloaded on the BBAY webpage: <https://www.brooklynallianceforyouth.org/anti-hate-initiative>

Outreach and Awareness at OASD Schools



Between November 21, 2024, and December 19, 2024, a series of youth engagement events were conducted to gather input from students at Park Center Senior High School and Osseo Senior High School. The events consisted of lunch tabling sessions focused on surveys and interviews, as well as a virtual focus conversation with members of the Youth OnBoard (YOB) at Park Center and general BBAY resource information. Over the course of five events, a total of 142 students were engaged, providing critical feedback and insights on various topics related to youth’s outlook on anti-hate. The highest turnout occurred during the lunch tabling survey event at Osseo Senior High on

November 26, where 50 students actively participated. Staff members Bolatito, Kris, Alondra, Chia, and Mo played pivotal roles in facilitating the events, ensuring a welcoming environment that encouraged students to share their thoughts. Notably, the virtual focus conversation with Park Center YOB allowed for more in-depth discussions, with a smaller group of four participants. The data collected from these events will serve as an important foundation for improving the implementation of the Identity-Based Harm Protocol, ensuring that student voices are at the center of ongoing efforts.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

2024 Youth to Youth Survey Insights

The Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth conducts a biennial survey to capture the experiences and insights of young people in the Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center area. This year's Youth to Youth Survey provided a unique opportunity for collaboration with the Anti-Hate Project in adding questions related to identity-based harm and safety. The Youth to Youth Survey utilizes a Youth-led Participatory Action Research (YPAR) approach in collaborating with youth in equipping them with the knowledge and skills to collect and evaluate data as they engage their community. A Youth Data Squad (YDS) was created with 2 BBAY staff and 6 Youth Interns in order to create, implement, and conduct surveys through the 2024 summer months into the fall. The survey engaged youth and captured the diverse perspectives and lived experiences of youth today throughout the Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center area. The YDS surveyed 411 youth at 34 community events.



There were six themes throughout the Youth to Youth Survey. In collaboration with the Anti-Hate Initiative, questions were added to address safety and anti-hate. The Anti-Hate Youth Interns created survey questions pertaining to incidences of hate or bullying (#17) and likelihood of reporting incidences (#18) which were added to the 2024 Youth to Youth Survey. Additional questions pertaining to safety included questions from previous Youth to Youth Surveys on rating safety in their home, school, and neighborhood (#19) and an open-ended question to further gather input of how to make spaces safer (#20)*.

**Please refer to the 2024 Youth to Youth Survey.*

Discussion

Overall, 1 in 5 youth indicated they have been a target of hate or bullying based on their identity at school within the last school year. Overall, it was also indicated that 53% of youth would likely report an incident if it happened to them. There were significant

differences in how likely youth would report incidences at school depending on the situations identified: (1) if it happened to them, (2) if they witnessed it, (3) if it was between students, (4) if it was a student towards a teacher/adult, and (5) if it was a teacher/adult towards a student.

Those who answered yes to being a target of hate for bullying ranged from 10-23 years of age with a bulk of youth being 12 to 17 years old. Out of the 84 who reported an incident within the last school year, about 58% answered they would likely report an incident if it happened to them. We are unsure whether they did or did not report their previous incident of hate or bullying. They were also more likely to identify as being female and Black American or African.

When Osseo Area School District youth is disaggregated from the overall surveyed youth, 17% reported being a target of hate or bullying in the last school year. The likelihood of youth reporting from OASD is represented in the table below.

	Target of hate or bullying in last school year	Likely to report if happened to them	Likely to report if witnessed it	Likely to report if it was between students	Likely to report if it was a student towards an adult	Likely to report if it was an adult towards a student
Yes	17%	47%	41%	27%	35%	55%
No	64%	13%	22%	31%	29%	20%
Maybe	13%	36%	32%	36%	29%	20%

Youth were also asked about safety at home, at school, and in their neighborhood. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being Never and 5 being Always), 26% of youth from OASD answered they “Always” felt safe at school (36% rated “4” and 32% rated “3: Sometimes”). Youth were also asked suggestions of making spaces safer on the 2024 Youth to Youth Survey. Within the district, youth provide a range of comments:

- Less weapons and less violence
- More security (cameras, law enforcement, at schools, within community)
- Spaces or people to turn to for help and support
- Spread kindness, positivity, and collaboration

**Osseo Area School District is represented by youth ages 11-17 years old and from Brooklyn Middle, North View Middle, Osseo Middle, Maple Grove Middle, Osseo HS, and Park Center HS. All percentages (%) are rounded up to the whole number. Percentages are not 100% due to some who skipped to answer. For more information regarding data from the 2024 Youth to Youth Survey, please contact Chia Xiong, chia.xiong@brooklynsallianceforyouth.org.*

Trainings

As part of the larger BBAY work, we provided multiple training opportunities for the Anti-Hate Project Team. The Youth as Facilitative Leaders (YFL) Training was provided for Youth Interns and the ToP Facilitative Methods Training was provided to BBAY staff as part of the Anti-Hate Project.

Youth as Facilitative Leaders (YFL): The YFL Training is a youth-adapted version of the ToP Facilitative Methods of Focused Conversations and Consensus Workshop. One of our Youth Interns co-facilitated a YFL training and other Youth Interns were able to attend the other trainings held. Overall, YFL provided a resource for youth to use in developing materials for various parts of the evaluation of the Identity-based Harm Protocol.



ToP Facilitation Methods: The BBAY hosted a ToP Facilitation Methods Training for staff to attend in developing their skills in facilitation. This was essential in leading discussion and workshops for the project team as well as for the different evaluation methods used. It also served as a resource in the YFL training and materials for our Youth Interns to use.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Anti-Hate Project with its Youth Participatory Evaluation work provided a mixed methods approach to gathering insights and the experiences of identity-based harm from students. Throughout the project, we recognized various levels of harm being done at school to students and how it may look differently for all. Students mentioned how harm is done in different ways:

- Slurs
- Name-calling
- Microaggressions
- Gestures
- Fights (physical)
- Online social media posts
- Acts of favoritism
- And so many more...

Each section of the evaluation provided different recommendations, but throughout the project, there were some overall themes of addressing identity-based harm at Park Center and Osseo Senior High Schools.

Awareness

Students were unaware of the OASD Identity-Based Harm Response Protocol or they were unaware of efforts to reduce identity-based harm within the schools. Most students are aware of the STOP IT app, although many expressed they don't hear about it often and they have never used the app. There were also little mentions of identity-based harm information in general and how it may differ from bullying or fighting at school (awareness on the differences). Students want a larger role in providing feedback on the school environment and protocols or policies in place.

Feedback

Tied to the previous statement on providing feedback on various topics at school, students also expressed wanting to provide feedback on school spaces and teachers or adults at the schools. The need for anonymity is important to provide a safe and inviting space for such feedback. This could be in the form of teacher evaluations and general feedback on rules or school spaces. The encouragement of positive and negative feedback would help to promote areas to celebrate and areas of improvement. This was seen in the Photovoice and Surveys where specific teachers and school spaces were identified as safe and protective spaces students appreciated - How do we celebrate and highlight this?

Online

In numerous instances, students identified online harm and bullying. Social media is recognized as a pillar in youth's lives today. Student identified how social media provides a platform for youth to express themselves, but in identity-based harm, it can be used as a tool to spread hate. As schools are not inherently involved in their student's online usage, it must be recognized how use of online platforms can spread harm or hate at school. Students identified how harm being done online towards other students affect the school environment and their learning. It is also imperative in addressing online use of identity-based harm within the school community as well as the impending school phone policies' views of this.

Adult vs. Student Roles

Students expressed the importance of having safe spaces and what that may look like. The need for a system where students feel safe to talk to an adult about a situation where they may want to (1) simply speak out loud and have adult listen, (2) be able to process with an adult, or (3) look to an adult for action or resolve.

There were also mentions of the roles of adults and students at school. The power dynamics within schools shifts the role of responsibility to respond on adults within the space -- although it was also recognized how students want to feel empowered in reducing harm and promoting kindness. Importantly, students want adult figures at school to recognize any harm they may causing due to bias or inaction of incidences of harm. Further training was suggested for teachers and other adults at school for (1) awareness-building of identity-based harm, (2) how to respond to harm effectively (little and big incidences), (3) reduce bias and favoritism among student body, and (4) fair punishment for all. Students also acknowledge the role of parental figures of students and their role in reducing harm in schools - whether that is family culture or parent involvement in incidences of harm at school.

Promote Anti-Hate within Schools

Lastly, it is everyone's role to promote anti-hate within the school and community. The project highlighted where students see harm as well as safe and protective spaces. Students want to move forward in promoting a safe and welcoming environment within the school. Ultimately, they want school to be a place of FUN. Suggestions of ways to promote anti-hate include:

- Balance power dynamics at school - collaborate with students in every day school-life
 - More student-led opportunities (pep fest, afterschool events, lunch tabling)
 - Student-led announcements of celebrations (birthdays, holidays) and updates on school information (activity changes)
 - Music!
- Communication & marketing
 - Student advertised opportunities to promote their activities or clubs through social media and posters
 - Better student-to-student communication about activities and things happening at school