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# Suicide Prevention and Postvention: Lessons Learned

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- Mary Ann Panarelli, Director  
Intervention and Prevention  
Fairfax County Public Schools
- [mmpanarelli@fcps.edu](mailto:mmpanarelli@fcps.edu)

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# PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

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- › Overview of the district, pre-existing school programs to enhance mental health
  - › Recognition and response to an increased incidence of teen suicides
  - › Collaborative intervention and response from schools and community
  - › Gatekeeper training
  - › Teen suicide in age of social media
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# FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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10th largest school division in the country

Primarily suburban, 407 square miles

Diverse student population

- 186,000 students, 196 schools
  - 10% Black, 25% Hispanic
  - 20% Asian, 40% White
  - 5% multiracial
  - 48% speak a language other than English in the home
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# CONCERN ABOUT YOUTH SURVEY DATA

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- 32% report feeling so sad and hopeless over two week period that they could not do normal activities
  - 50% of Hispanic females report these depressive feelings
  - 17% of teens surveyed report considering suicide
  - 48% report being bullied
  - Lower than national averages, but still high numbers of students report use of alcohol and other drugs, intimate partner violence and exposure to domestic violence
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# YOUTH SURVEY ASSETS

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- Direct relationship between youth who report that they have three or more assets and reduced report of depressive or suicidal thinking
    - Involved in community service
    - Involved in extracurricular activities
    - High personal integrity
    - Parent available to help when needed
    - Adult in community available to help
    - Teachers know me and notice when I do good work
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# RESILIENCY PROJECT

<http://www.fcps.edu/dss/ips/resiliency/rb.shtml>

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- Coordinated resiliency-based approach by counselors, psychologists, social workers to common adversity experienced by school-age youth
    - Bullying prevention and intervention
    - Depression awareness and suicide prevention
    - Systematic evaluation and response to threats
    - Crisis response following death of student, teacher or administrator, including postvention following suicide
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# OTHER SCHOOL EFFORTS

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- Universal lessons in Health (middle and high) and counseling (elementary)
  - Use of Signs of Suicide (SOS) program and screener
  - Parent Clinic-a summer offer to any parent to make an appointment to consult privately with a school psychologist or social worker for an hour
  - Student led Wellness Weeks to introduce prevention and stress reduction activities
  - Partnerships established with county youth serving agencies and non-profit groups
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# 2012-2014 INCREASED CONCERN ABOUT TEEN SUICIDE

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- One high school had 7 teens die by suspected suicide in 3 years (2012-2014)
  - Overall county teen suicide rate increased during 2012-2014
  - In both February 2014, and September 2014 there were 4 suspected suicides during the month
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# POSTVENTION PLUS

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- Suicide prevention experts consulted
  - Parent information evening with mental health resources
  - A student response team and additional clinical support and professional development provided via a SAMHSA grant
  - Climate survey, pilot online gatekeeper training, pilot crisis text line at target schools
  - Epi-Aid completed by Center for Disease Control at request of Health Department
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# PARTNERSHIP ACROSS COMMUNITY

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Community Services Board

Neighborhood and Community  
Services

Parent groups- Community of  
Solutions

NAMI, Josh Anderson  
Foundation, American  
Foundation for Suicide  
Prevention

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# ONGOING SCHOOL RESPONSE

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- Crisis numbers posted on every school website
  - Keep in Touch messages sent to parents and students prior to school holidays and exams, providing names of clinical team at school and community resources
  - Youth clubs and leadership classes engaged to develop mental health initiatives to reduce stigma and open conversation with adults
  - Over 18,000 teachers, coaches, staff completed *At Risk*
  - Increased use of Employee Assistance Program Counselors
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# COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD (CSB)

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- Expansion of Youth Mobile Crisis response
  - Initiation of program to address first time psychotic episodes
  - Expansion of outpatient and emergency services for youth
  - Contest for video messages for youth by youth
  - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ika2Vfz-R\\_k](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ika2Vfz-R_k)
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# CSB AND FCPS PARTNERSHIP

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- CSB therapists provided counseling in community settings following teen death
  - CSB created a cohort of Youth Mental Health First Aid trainers, including 20 school psychologists and school social workers
  - Collaboratively developed a Crisis Text line for FCPS students, and a separate line for community members
  - Funded an online, immersive simulation training for gatekeepers in school and community (*At Risk*)
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# COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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- Annual Community Conversation on Teen Stress
  - Fairfax Mental Health Promotion Committee
  - Northern Virginia Regional Suicide Prevention Taskforce
  - Suicide review team
  - Workshops and events for parents and youth group leaders sponsored by private providers and non-profits
  - Stress Less Days – seated massage, yoga, food for teachers; youth led activities, yoga, mindfulness, singing, dancing, therapy dogs for kids
  - Funding provided to youth led school programs and PSA
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# NEXT STEPS

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- Exploring ways to “pre-certify” private practice providers to assist in crisis response or depression screenings
  - Added questions on Youth Survey; added domestic violence questions to suicide risk assessment
  - Project AWARE and Climate Transformation grant
  - Short-Term Behavioral Health Service Program
  - Behavioral Health System of Care Blueprint
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