

Exposure of students to crime in the Fruitvale District of Oakland

In the Fruitvale District of Oakland there are almost 30 schools and day care centers, there is also a high rate of crime. According to [CrimeMapping.com](#), within a two-mile radius of the corner of Foothill Blvd. and Fruitvale Ave., there have been more than 300 crimes that have been reported in the month of May. Elizabeth Guerra, a Student Coordinator and After School Teacher at Learning Without Limits, a school within the Fruitvale District, says that in eight years of experience in working with students after school she has worked with many students who have been affected by crime. Guerra has had students whose families have been victims of home invasions, whose “mother’s have been robbed”, and has even “done a memorial for a student [who was] murdered.”

View [Fruitvale Schools](#) in a larger map. Infographic by Natalie Rodriguez

and



Jefferson School in the Fruitvale District of Oakland, Calif. Elizabeth Guerra is a Student Coordinator and After School Teacher at Learning Without Limits, one of two schools within this campus. Photograph taken on June 22, 2013. (Photograph by: Natalie Rodriguez/Full Sail University).

The [Unity Council](#) defines the Fruitvale District as a two and a half square mile area bordered by High St., 14th Ave., Interstate 580, and the Oakland Estuary. The list of crimes reported by [CrimeMapping.com](#), which is linked through the [City of Oakland's Police Department](#), includes crimes such as robbery, assault, prostitution, and burglary. Of approximately 375 reported incidents of crime, 86 of them were assaults, 51 were theft related, and 48 of them were burglaries. Crimes were reported the seven days of the week. There is a high concentration of crimes bellow the Foothill Blvd, which is where more than half of the schools are located.

Guerra believes that students are affected and exposed to crime in schools that are "more down towards that area." "That" area is what she considers to be "down bellow Foothill." International Blvd., which is bellow Foothill Blvd., has made headlines because of [prostitution](#). The Fruitvale

District is considered one of the “hot spots” for robberies in the article [“Oakland: Robbery capital of America.”](#)

Oakland and Bullies Say, “Snitches Get Stitches, ” But

A well-known tactic of intimidation amongst the youth of Oakland is the saying that “Snitches get stiches,” which means that if students speak up about wrongs that they know of or are victims of, or “snitch”; they will suffer violent consequences. In the city of Oakland, violence is nothing new, however with increasing attention to the issue of bullying and talks of Federal Anti-Bullying legislation, the Oakland Unified School District is avidly doing its part to put a stop to it.

According to the [Huff Post Politics](#), although 49 states already address the issue of bullying in some way, currently, there is no Federal legislation in place; which is why Senator Bob Casey’s Safe Schools Improvement Act would hold schools accountable for collecting data on incidence and response.

Oakland and Schools Create A Culture To End The Problem



The entrance to the Oakland Unified School District in Oakland, Calif., on Sunday, June 23, 2013.
(Photograph by: Natalie Rodriguez/Full Sail University)

California is one of the 49 states with [Anti-Bullying Laws and Policies](#) in place. Under these laws and policies, federally funded schools are required by law to address and investigate cases of bullying. Troy Flint, Director of Public Relations at the Oakland Unified School District, says OUSDs policy on bullying “is that protection should be more than protection. Students need to be taught to respect difference whether it’s ethnic, religious, people with disabilities, or gender or sexual orientation.”

As a part of their effort to eradicate bullying, the district offers training for principals on how to recognize and prevent bullying, counselors who intervene in bullying cases, and complaint procedures. Flint talks about the opportunity that all middle and high school students were given to attend a screening of the Lee Hirsch documentary, [Bully](#) with an introduction and question and answer session with the director. Later the district formed a curriculum related to the film.

When Flint mentions that this issue is receiving increasing attention he also says, “I think attitudes are changing about what constitutes bullying and the impact it can have not only on a child’s social life, but on their affinity for school, and their willingness to learn.”

The fear of “snitches” getting “stiches” may be a real one, but the OUSD is making sure that its students know that they are not alone, they are watching, and

they are working to create a
culture of respect.