

SINGLED OUT:

Islamophobia in the Classroom and the Impact of Discrimination on Muslim Students



The Council on American-Islamic Relations is the largest American Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States. CAIR-California is the organization's largest and oldest chapter, with offices in the Greater Los Angeles Area, the Sacramento Valley, San Diego, and the San Francisco Bay Area.

Our Vision: To be a leading advocate for justice and mutual understanding.

Our Mission: To enhance understanding of Islam, protect civil rights, promote justice, and empower American Muslims.

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7.

**EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY**

In this report, the California Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CA) provides an analysis and evaluation of the current school climate for American Muslims in California. The purpose of this report is to understand the extent to which Islamophobia, defined as the closed-minded prejudice against or hatred of Islam and Muslims, manifests itself in the school environment in the form of bullying and discrimination. As such, this report focuses on anti-Muslim bullying: the unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-age children or perpetrated by educators and administrators that involves a real or perceived power imbalance based on the student's Islamic faith.

As the Trump administration continues to promote Islamophobic rhetoric and policies in the mainstream, many students, parents, and educators fear the negative impact the normalization of Islamophobia could have on Muslim students and the Muslim population

in the United States as a whole. In the face of this challenge, CAIR-CA has continued to advocate zealously to best protect civil rights and empower American Muslims. This report shows the impact of CAIR-CA's advocacy over the past seven years. CAIR-CA's continued legislative efforts and direct legal services combating anti-Muslim bullying are specifically outlined in this report.



This report is the result of a 2018-2019 survey that examined how Muslim students felt about their school environment, how they express or maintain their Muslim identity, and the extent of anti-Muslim bullying and harassment students experience. It compares response patterns to CAIR-CA's 2016 school bullying survey. The 2018-2019 survey was conducted by the four CAIR-CA offices covering the Greater Los Angeles, Sacramento Valley, San Diego, and San Francisco Bay Area regions. It surveyed approximately 1,500 Muslim students between the ages of 11 and 18 who were enrolled in public and private schools statewide.

Specifically, key findings of the survey illustrate minimal improvement in school environments for Muslim students: Only 70% of respondents reported feeling welcome and respected in school, compared to 69% in 2016. Additionally, only 72% of Muslim students reported feeling comfortable letting others know that they are Muslim, which decreased 5 percentage points from the 2016 survey in which 77% reported the same.

One factor leading to discomfort among Muslim students was their peers' negative activity online. Specifically, 35% of the 2018 survey respondents reported that their peers make offensive statements and posts about Islam and Muslims online.

Despite experiencing bullying based on their religious identity at a lower rate than previous years, Muslim students continued to report higher rates of discrimination and bullying compared to other students. In the 2018-2019 survey, 40% of respondents reported that students at school were bullied for being Muslim. This is double the national statistic for students being bullied at school.¹ The 2018-2019 survey also found an increase in discrimination against those who are more visibly Muslim. Another key finding was an increase in students witnessing other students getting bullied for being Muslim. In 2018-2019, the rate was 39%, which was up 20 percentage points from 2016, during which only 19% reported the same.

“ ... 35% of the 2018 survey respondents reported that their peers make offensive statements and posts about Islam and Muslims online. ”

In addition to showing a decrease in peer-to-peer bullying, the survey results showed a decline in offensive comments from teachers, administrators, and other officials from 38% in 2016 to 29% in 2018-2019. Furthermore, survey respondents reported a decrease in Muslim students being targets of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying involves posting or sending electronic messages,

including text, pictures, or videos, aimed at harassing, threatening, or targeting another person through a variety of media and social media platforms.² In the 2018-2019 survey, 13% of respondents reported being victims of cyberbullying, down from 26% in the 2016 survey.

CAIR-CA also considered gender-based differences in survey responses. More female students reported experiencing bullying, with 44% of female respondents reporting being bullied compared to 37% of male respondents. In addition to analyzing gender-based differences, CAIR-CA also focused on age-based differences. The data revealed that high school-age student respondents were bullied at a higher rate than lower grades, with a shocking 48% of 12th-grade respondents reporting being bullied, the highest rate based on age/grade.

The findings of this report show that while there has been a decrease in anti-Muslim bullying in public schools, the need to continue monitoring anti-Muslim bullying is still crucial until all forms of bullying are eradicated.



Senator Mariam Jijawi

Senator Seher Ali

Senator Danyah Ghoul

Senator Wafaa Awwad

2.

COMBATING ISLAMOPHOBIA AT SCHOOL



I. IMPORTANCE OF IDENTIFYING, INTERVENING, AND ADVOCATING FOR BULLIED STUDENTS

Bullying is generally understood in the school context as causing one to feel unsafe, fearful, or unable to fully participate in school.³ Bullying is a form of violence. It involves a real or perceived imbalance of power, with the powerful child or group attacking those who are less powerful. Bullying may be physical (hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing), verbal (taunting, malicious teasing, name calling, threatening), or emotional (spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, extorting, intimidating).⁴ Bullying can occur in person, through the spreading of rumors, or electronically, through making a public post or sending a message, text, sound, or image.⁵

Just as bullying takes on many forms, so too does bullying intervention. It is well established that taking steps to eliminate bias in the classroom can promote equity, excellence, and empowerment.⁶ Educators can better ensure they provide an unbiased approach to education about Islam and Muslims and improve student learning by re-examining their prejudices and focusing on being open-minded and aware of how cultural inter-



tations affect learning. Furthermore, allowing for reasonable religious accommodations promotes the inclusion of Muslim students in schools and discourages feelings of isolation and otherness. As a starting point for educators and administrators, ensuring that an anti-bullying policy is properly implemented provides a framework for a consistent schoolwide approach to bullying and supports an environment that rejects bullying culture. For anti-bullying policies to be effective, schools must ensure the policies are effectively disseminated and implemented. Research indicates that school anti-bullying policies can fail to make differences in the lives of students who are being bullied if the policies are not well-developed and effectively implemented.⁷ Effective laws and policies are only the first step in providing guidance to educators, students, and families to create positive school climates and to reduce bullying among school-age youth.⁸

Without effective policies, students who are bullied are left to defend themselves against bullies. This unrealistic and cruel burden can create environments where peers, teachers, and parents act as mere bystanders, contributing to the hostile environments where bullying thrives. Therefore, there is a special responsibility that falls on the school community to combat bullying and to advocate for students who are not empowered to do so on their own behalf. This includes actual intervention when witnessing bullying and/or providing bullied students or their families with the proper resources to utilize advocacy networks dedicated to combating bullying, such as CAIR-CA.

II. CAIR-CA'S ANTI-BULLYING LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY EFFORTS AND SUCCESSES

Over the past two decades, CAIR-CA has led the advocacy effort to combat Islamophobia in schools across the state. While each of the four CAIR-CA offices provides direct legal services to students who have been subjected to religious-based bullying, CAIR-CA has also focused a substantial amount of resources and advocacy efforts on legislative action to force schools and school districts to address and remedy bullying on campuses. Specifically, the results of CAIR-CA's direct legal services, research, surveying, and publication of our anti-bullying reports have aided in convincing state legislators to take a stand on bullying. Additionally, CAIR-CA has substantially contributed to advocacy efforts through our annual Muslim Day at the Capitol (MDAC), which has become California's largest Muslim civic engagement event. MDAC brings

hundreds of Muslim community members from across the state to gather in Sacramento and play a critical role in shaping policies that impact California's Muslims. Participants speak to Assembly members and state senators about pro-

posed legislation impacting the participants and the greater Muslim community. Each year anti-bullying bills are a major part of MDAC agendas. MDAC has been a powerful mechanism and force behind much of the crucial anti-bullying legislation passed by the state.

In 2012, CAIR-CA supported efforts to introduce and pass Seth's Law, which strengthened existing state anti-bullying laws to help protect all California public school students. Seth's Law required public schools in California to update their anti-bullying policies and programs, with a focus on protecting students who are bullied based on their actual or perceived protected characteristics, namely sexual orientation and gender identity/gender expression, as well as race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, disability, and religion.⁹

“ ... a staggering 55% of Muslim students in California reported being subjected to some form of bullying based on their religious identity, more than twice the national average for bullying in school. ”

After Seth's Law was passed, CAIR-CA's 2015 bullying report found a staggering 55% of Muslim students in California reported being subjected to some form of bullying based on their religious identity, more than

twice the national average for bullying in school.¹⁰ Similar figures were reported by The Sikh Coalition: 50% of Sikh students and 67% of turbaned Sikh-American students nationally reported having experienced school bullying.¹¹

In response to these figures, in September 2016 Governor Jerry Brown signed the “Safe Place to Learn Act” (AB 2845), which was enacted to address the bullying of South Asian, Muslim, and Sikh students, as well as those perceived as belonging to those groups. The Safe Place to Learn Act provided school staff with school-site and community resources and required the superintendent of public instruction to publish anti-bullying resources related to religious and perceived religious affiliation online.¹² In addition to sponsoring the bill, CAIR-CA brought students from impacted communities who played an instrumental role in getting the bill passed by testifying in front of Assembly members about their personal experiences of being bullied. The bill passed unanimously in the California Assembly 79 to 0 and passed 34 to 3 in the California Senate.

In 2018, “Bullying Bill” AB 2291, another major bill that was part of CAIR-CA’s MDAC agenda, was signed into law.¹³ This bill requires schools to offer annual training to teachers and counselors to create a safe learning environment for Muslim, LGBTQ, immigrant, and other students who may be subject to bullying. AB 2291 requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to develop guidelines to protect students before bullying begins. While the CDE does provide resources for students who have been bullied, previously there was no requirement to provide proactive guidance to prevent bullying or cyberbullying. The bill helps educators and parents stop bullying before it happens by equipping them with the proper tools they need in the classroom and at home.

CAIR-CA’s advocacy efforts seek to ultimately equip the state and schools with preventative

measures, better education, and more resources for young people who are subjected to bias-based bullying. These efforts and outcomes represent progress toward ensuring that students who are targeted by bullies know where and how to get help and further CAIR-CA’s mission to empower American Muslims and protect civil rights.

III. IMPLEMENTING AND ENFORCING ANTI-BULLYING LAWS

Although the language and intent of California’s anti-bullying laws are laudable, the purpose of these laws cannot be realized unless there is a way to ensure enforcement of and compliance with the mandates of anti-bullying statutes.

It is the responsibility of the state and the greater school community, including educators, parents, students, and advocates, to ensure that anti-bullying laws are enforced and that the policies are adopted by local school districts.

All students have the right to learn in a safe and protected environment, free from discrimination and harassment. If a student is being bullied, treated differently, and/or discriminated against based on a protected characteristic, then that student has a right to file a complaint with their school and school district.¹⁴ Students, parents, or an advocate can file the complaint on the student’s behalf. Additionally, schools must make readily available their anti-bullying policies and information related to the complaint process. This information should be available on the school or district’s website. If a school or district fails to post its anti-bullying policies online, they are in violation of California’s anti-bullying laws.¹⁵

This complaint process is called the Uniform Complaint Procedure (UCP) and it is codified in the California Code of Regulations.¹⁶ Under the UCP, local educational agencies (LEAs)—which are primarily school districts and county offices of education—are responsible for investigating most complaints. The CDE is responsible for processing any appeals of LEA investigation results. UCP Complaints should be as detailed as possible, outlining the *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, and *why* regarding the incident. CAIR-CA attorneys are qualified to assist families in preparing and filing these complaints on behalf of students who have been bullied based on their religion or any related characteristic.

When a student files a complaint with the school and district, the principal is required by law to investigate and fix the problem. The school, including teachers and administrators, is required by law to protect the student and must take the necessary steps to stop any form of bullying. The district has 60 days from when they notify the complainant that the complaint has been received to investigate and respond about what they plan to do. If the complainant is not satisfied with the school district's investigation or results, he or she has the right to appeal to the CDE. However, the timeline to appeal is very short and must be done within

15 days of receiving the school district's written response.


Litigation is another powerful advocacy tool to promote education equity. In extreme circumstances where the CDE fails to act in the student's interest and enforce remedies that the school districts must undertake, students and parents may consider taking their cases to court and litigating bullying claims under state and federal laws. Litigation in court can be used by bullying victims and their families to seek justice as well as systemic changes within school districts through injunctive relief and damages awards.





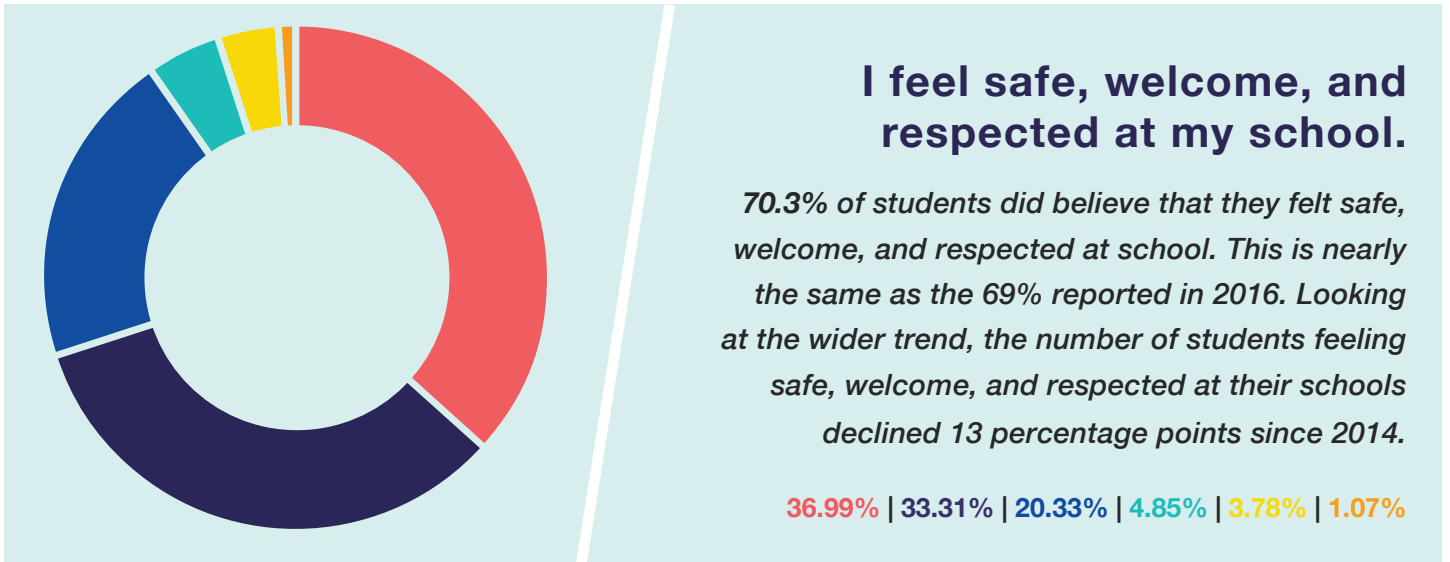
3.

**SURVEY
FINDINGS**

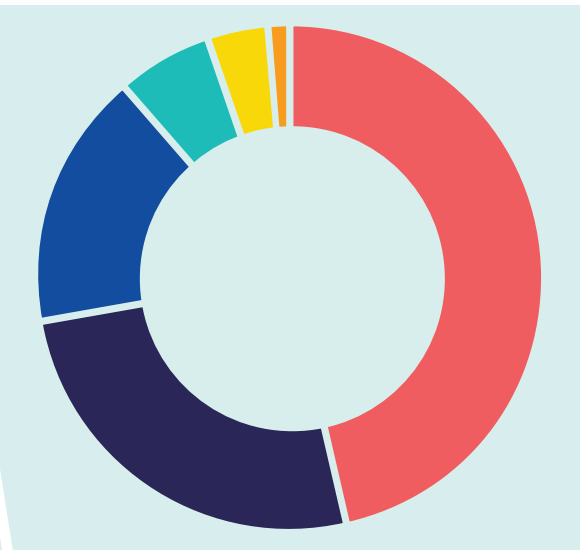
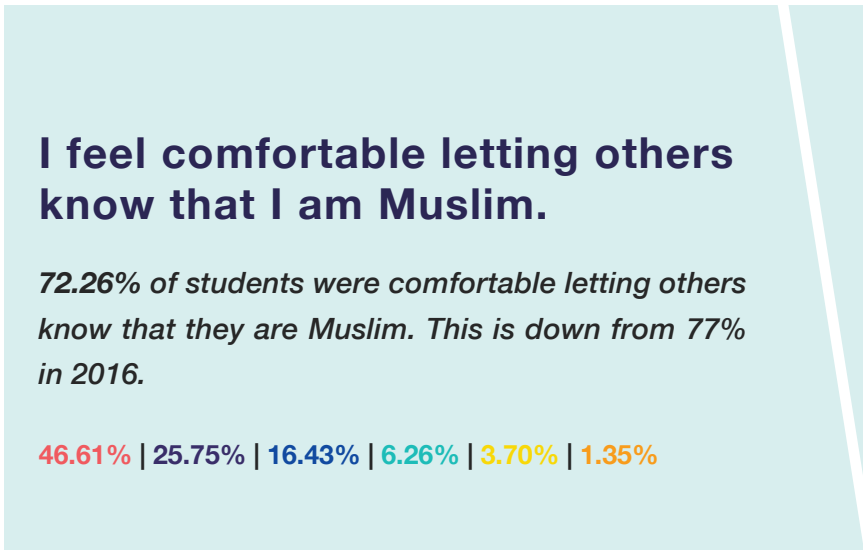


During the 2018-2019 academic year, CAIR-CA surveyed 1,505 students between the ages of 11 and 18 who were enrolled in public and private schools in California. The 2018-2019 survey serves as a follow-up to the previous three CAIR-CA school bullying surveys from 2012, 2014 and 2016. Over the years CAIR-CA has modified the surveys to better understand the difficulties that Muslim students experience in the face of bullying and discrimination at school. The changes in the 2018-2019 survey include reformatting and rewording existing questions. The survey is divided into three main sections. The first section asks for respondents' demographic information. The second section asks respondents about how they perceive their school environment. The third section requests information about the type of bullying and discrimination respondents experienced at school as either the target or bystander.

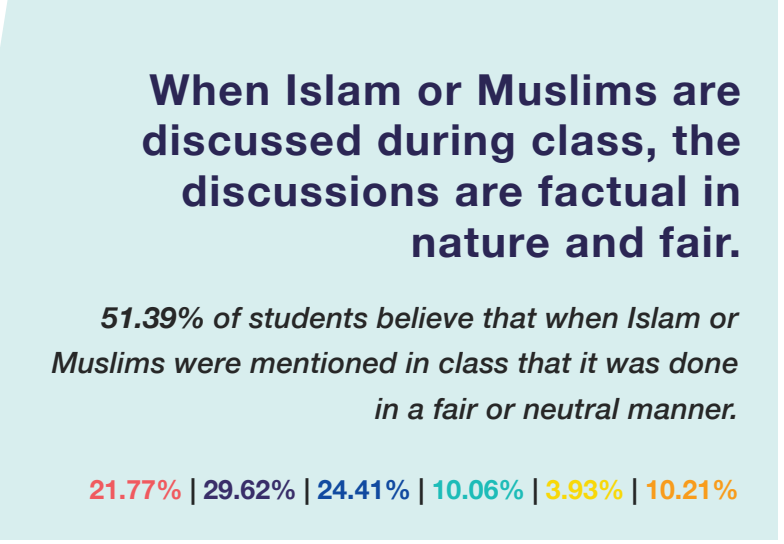
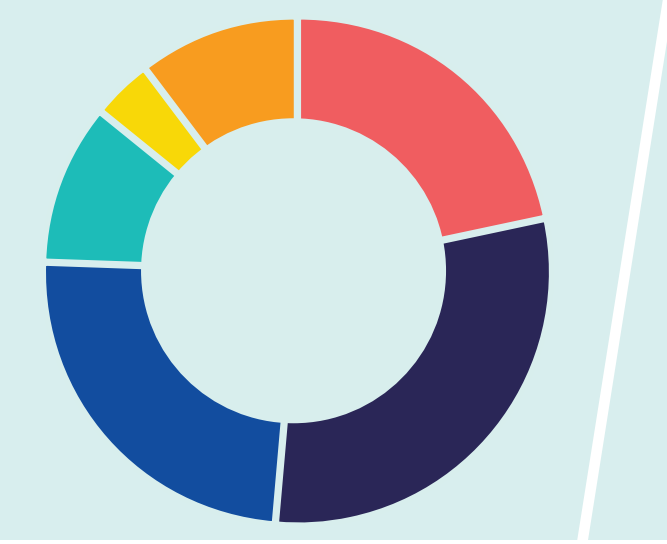
I. SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT



● STRONGLY AGREE
 ● AGREE
 ● NEUTRAL
 ● DISAGREE
 ● STRONGLY DISAGREE
 ● NOT APPLICABLE



● STRONGLY AGREE
 ● AGREE
 ● NEUTRAL
 ● DISAGREE
 ● STRONGLY DISAGREE
 ● NOT APPLICABLE

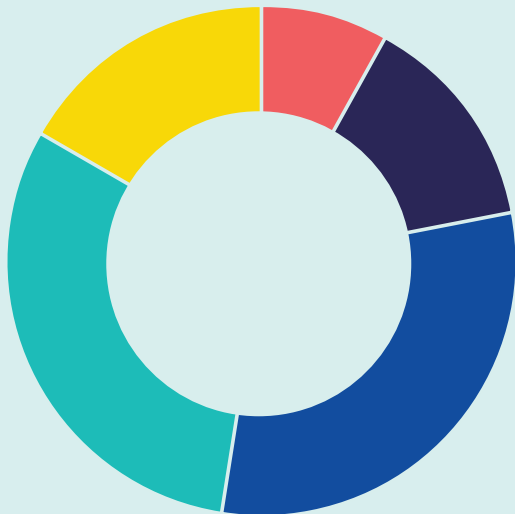
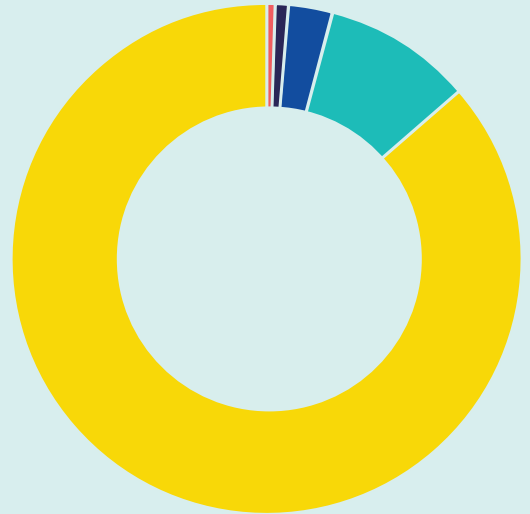


● STRONGLY AGREE
 ● AGREE
 ● NEUTRAL
 ● DISAGREE
 ● STRONGLY DISAGREE
 ● NOT APPLICABLE

How often have you missed school because you felt unsafe, unwelcome, or uncomfortable at school?

13.76% of students report that they have missed school because they felt unsafe, unwelcome, or uncomfortable at school.

0.57% | 0.99% | 2.62% | 9.57% | 86.24%



How often are Islam or Muslims mentioned during class at school?

83.44% of students report that Islam or Muslims are mentioned at least once in school over the academic year.

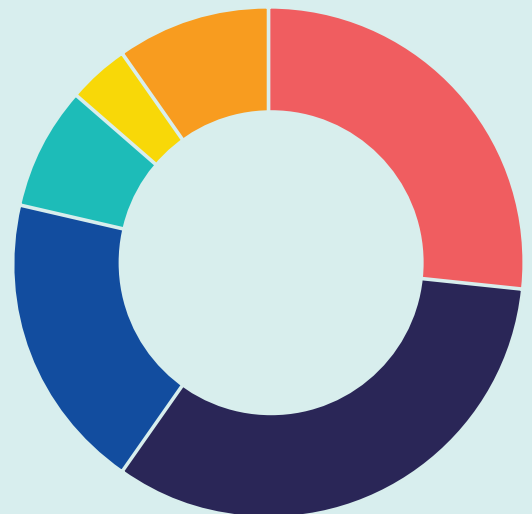
8.32% | 13.79% | 30.49% | 30.85% | 16.56%

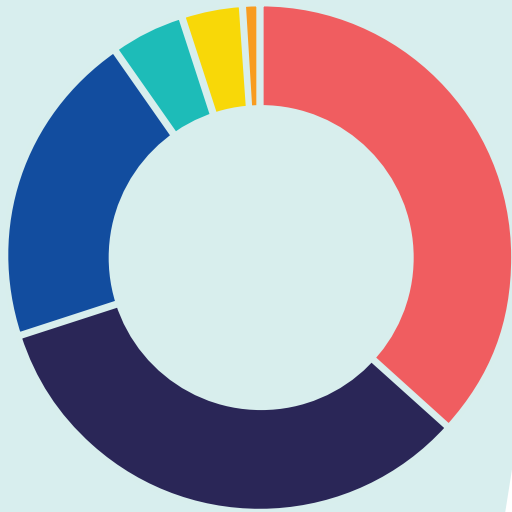


When my teachers taught lessons about Islam, they did so in a neutral, fair and factual manner.

11.84% of students felt that their teacher did not teach about Islam in a neutral, fair, or factual manner.

26.89% | 33.02% | 18.76% | 7.77% | 4.07% | 9.49%





When I have asked for an accommodation because of my religious needs, my teachers and administrators have been responsive (e.g. they gave me time for prayer, an excused absence for Eid, alternative food options, allowed me to wear a different P.E. uniform, etc.).

61.62% of students believe that the school administration has been responsive to requests for religious accommodations.

38.45% | 23.17% | 16.56% | 5.40% | 2.77% | 13.56%



II. BULLYING & DISCRIMINATION

How often do students at your school make offensive comments or posts about Islam or Muslims on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram?



3.75% | 4.75% | 9.35% | 17.14% | 65.01%

34.99% of students report seeing posts containing offensive comments about Islam or Muslims on social media. This is down from 57% in 2016.



How often do students at your school make offensive comments or posts about Islam or Muslims directed towards YOU through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram?

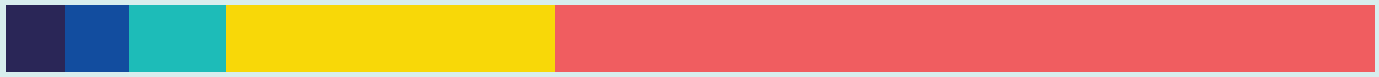


1.06% | 1.49% | 3.19% | 6.45% | 87.81%

12.19% of students report that students at school have made offensive comments or posts about Islam or Muslims directly to them on social media. This is down from 26% reported in 2016.



How often have you been bullied at school for being Muslim?



4.26% | 4.67% | 7.07% | 24.04% | 59.96%

40.04% of students report being bullied for being Muslim.



Have you seen another student at school being bullied for being Muslim?



3.31% | 4.62% | 8.48% | 22.61% | 60.99%

39.01% of students report seeing another student being bullied for being Muslim. This has gone up significantly by 20 percentage points since 2016, where only 19% of students reported seeing another student be bullied for being Muslim.



How often do teachers, administrators, or other adults at your school make offensive comments about Islam or Muslims?



1.73% | 2.50% | 6.52% | 18.60% | 70.65%

29.35% of students report that school staff has made offensive comments about Islam or Muslims at school, compared to 38% in 2016.



How often do teachers, administrators, or other adults at your school make offensive comments towards YOU about Islam or Muslims?

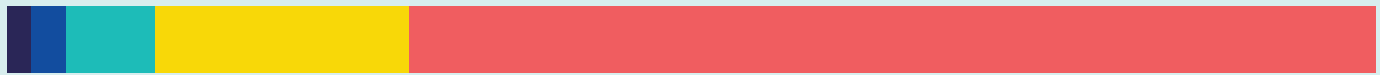


0.98% | 1.05% | 2.46% | 10.26% | 85.24%

14.76% of students report that school staff has made offensive comments about Islam or Muslims to them directly.



When I told a teacher, administrator, or another adult at my school about an issue I faced because I am a Muslim, it helped solve the problem.”



14.72% | 15.86% | 20.34% | 18.60% | 70.65%

29.35% of students report that school staff has made offensive comments about Islam or Muslims at school, compared to 38% in 2016.



Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “When I told a teacher, administrator, or another adult at my school about being bullied, it helped solve the problem.”



14.70% | 15.06% | 17.90% | 6.18% | 3.98%

29.76% of students reported that telling an adult about being bullied helped solve the problem. This is down from 32% in 2016.



III. DEMOGRAPHICS

Survey Respondents by County

CAIR- Greater Los Angeles Area Office: 390

- Orange County: 136
- Los Angeles County: 111
- San Bernardino County: 80
- Riverside County: 37
- Ventura County: 24
- Kern County: 1
- Santa Barbara County: 1



CAIR- San Diego Office: 137

San Diego County: 137



CAIR- San Francisco Bay Area Office: 685

Alameda County: 289

Santa Clara County: 217

Contra Costa County: 131

San Mateo County: 17

San Francisco County: 12

Marin County: 9

Stanislaus County: 4

Santa Cruz County: 4

Monterey County: 1

Sonoma County: 1



CAIR- Sacramento Valley/Central California Office: 239

Sacramento County: 153

San Joaquin County: 46

Placer County: 19

Fresno County: 13

Yolo County: 3

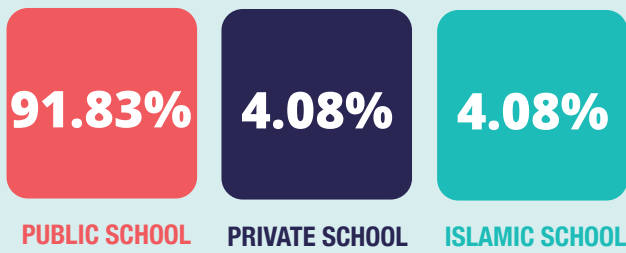
El Dorado County: 2

Lake County: 1

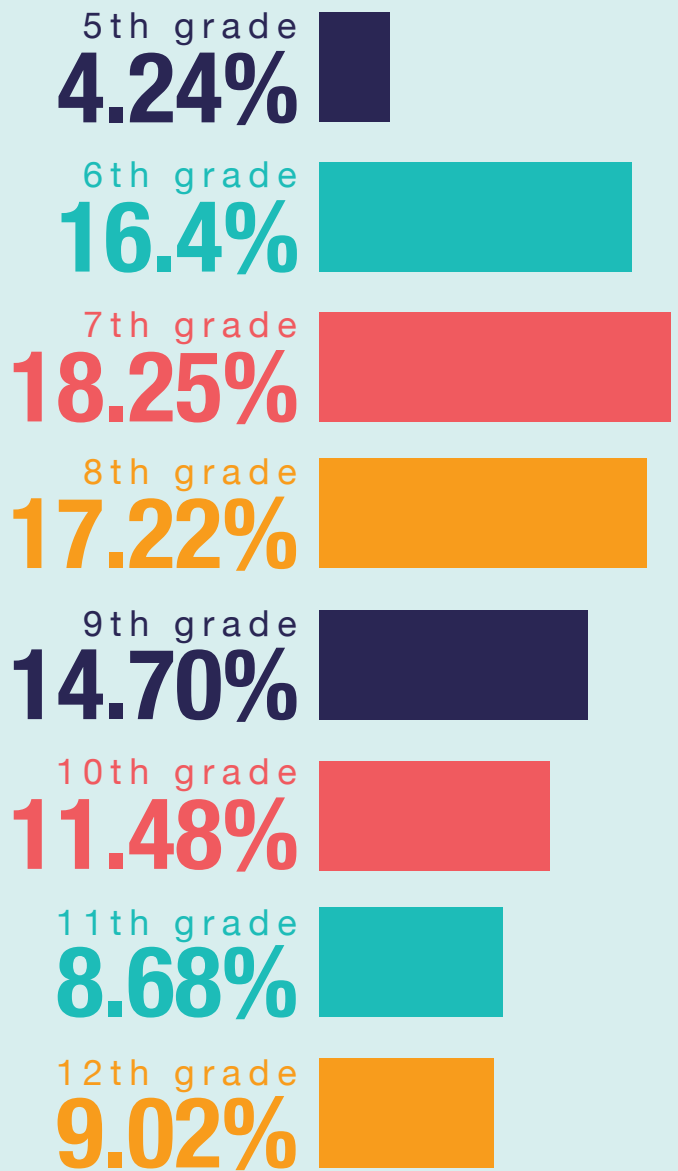
Shasta County: 1



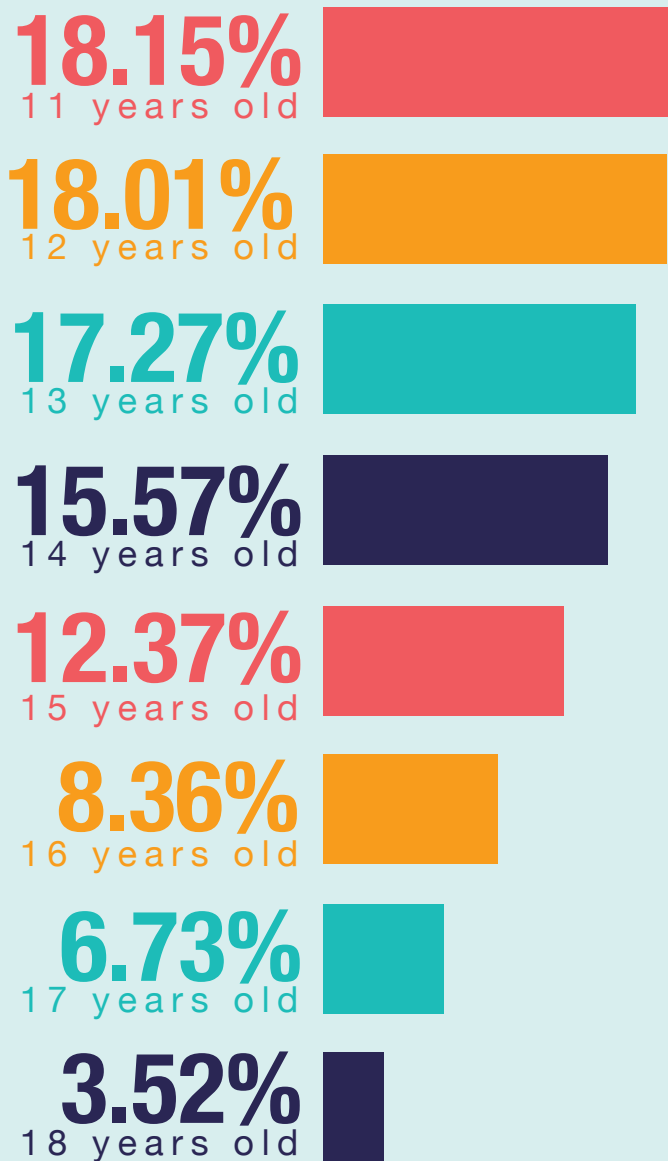
What kind of school do you attend?



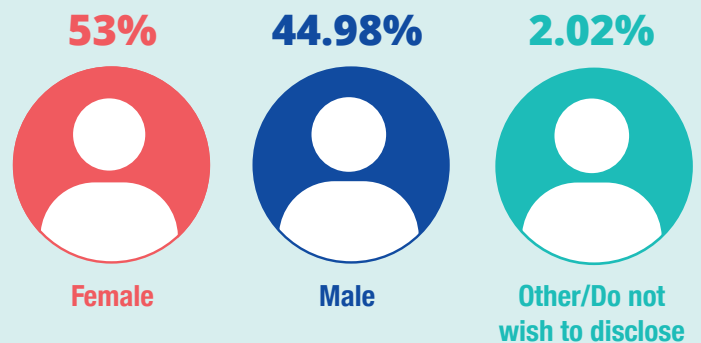
What grade are you in?



How old are you?



What is your gender?



What is your race/ethnicity?



Black/African American 5.5%



Middle Eastern 36.52%



North African 4.41%



White/Caucasian 2.31%



Latino/Hispanic 0.41%



East Asian 2.31%



South Asian 34.49%



Central Asian 2.85%



Pacific Islander 0.27%



Multiethnic 7.54%



Other 3.39%

Is English the primary language spoken at your home?

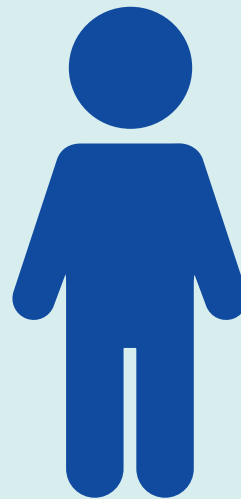


No 47.28%

Yes 52.72%

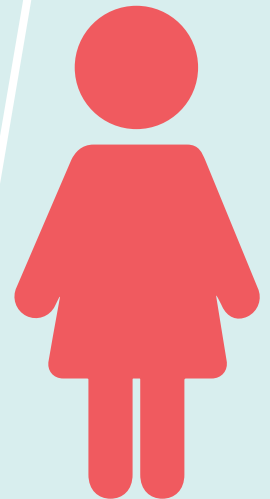
Complex Breakdown by Demographic

Gender:



37.07%

of male respondents reported being bullied.



43.52%

of female respondents reported being bullied.

Ethnicity:



39.47%

of Black/African American respondents reported being bullied.



40.92%

of Middle Eastern respondents reported being bullied.



39.34%

of North African respondents reported being bullied.



30.3%

of White/Caucasian respondents reported being bullied.



16.67%

of Latino/Hispanic respondents reported being bullied.



52.94%

of East Asian respondents reported being bullied.



41.37%

of South Asian respondents reported being bullied.



33.33%

of Central Asian respondents reported being bullied.



0%

of Pacific Islander respondents reported being bullied.



32.28%

of Multiethnic respondents reported being bullied.



3.39%

of Other respondents reported being bullied.

Grade/Age:

percentage of respondents who reported being bullied.

5th grade

37.1%



6th grade

34.33%



7th grade

36.98%



8th grade

35.74%



9th grade

44.29%



10th grade

45.34%



11th grade

43.04%



12th grade

47.97%



IV. MUSLIM STUDENTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS:



ONE TIME IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, I DECIDED TO WEAR MY HIJAB FOR CULTURAL AWARENESS DAY, AND PEOPLE MADE FUN OF ME, TUGGED ON IT. AND I HAVE NEVER WORN IT TO SCHOOL AGAIN TO THIS DAY. I DID NOTHING AND REGRET IT.



A lot of my classmates once in 4th grade thought that Muslims shouldn't be allowed in the country and one person said to me that Muslims are terrorists.

Sometimes people might say, *'Hey, gonna bomb the school now?'*

[My] teacher stereotyp[ed] Muslims and call[ed] on me to be 'expert' to explain horrific acts carried out [by people in rural places of some Muslim countries I had never been too.

People called me butthole, they made fun of my religion and name. I would go home and tell my mom and cry in my room.



They always say you can find so and so by following the ticking of a bomb.

I have been called a terrorist before and said that I did 9/11.

Belonging to a stigmatized religious group may lead to increased feelings of rejection and discrimination.¹⁷ This is especially true for Muslim students in the current sociopolitical climate. Below are CAIR-CA's recommendations that educators, families, and lawmakers can utilize to combat Islamophobia at school.



4.

RECOMMENDATIONS



I. FOR EDUCATORS

In addition to implementing anti-bias curriculum, as set forth above, schools should conduct a thorough assessment of their campus climate as it relates to bullying and harassment. After a proper assessment has been completed, schools should implement a policy-based action plan, train school administrators and teachers, and work to engage Muslim families in the school's community. Educators should foster a diverse and multicultural environment to create an inclusive climate for all students. It is important for educators to be familiar not only with the various religious identities of their students but also their racial, ethnic, sexual, and gender identities.

To understand the climate and environment at a school, administrators should conduct assessments in which all members of the school's community, including teachers, students, counselors, coaches, and parents, are surveyed and asked about their views on Muslims and Islam.¹⁸ The information collected from the assessment should be used to implement action plans and specific policies on prevention and response procedures to incidents of bullying. Policies should clearly define what bullying and harassment are, including setting standards and thresholds for verbal bullying. Action plans should consider how to incorporate bystander involvement in preventing bullying instead of acting as passive observers. Likewise, school policies should implement procedures on how teachers should intervene in bullying incidents and ensure that teachers receive training on how to prevent bullying and harassment in their



classrooms.

Teachers often report that they do not have sufficient training to address such incidents.¹⁹

Many schools enact policies where a single administrator is responsible for investigation and discipline of reported bullying, which results in teachers ignoring conflicts between students and viewing their responsibility as limited to reporting. Training for teachers and school administrators should include unbiased competency training from experts about the religious practices and beliefs of their Muslim students in order to allow educators to anticipate and identify areas of bullying.²⁰ Teachers should be trained to be sensitive to the lesson plans and class discussions about Islam and current global politics that may impact Muslim students. Muslim students should not be made to feel that they must answer for all Muslims. Many



American Muslim students feel pressured by their peers and teachers to speak authoritatively on these subjects when they may not be equipped to do so. Instead, teachers who do not have training to present on these subjects should look for professionals in their community who are qualified through resources such as WhyIslam.org, Islamic Network Group (ING), and the Southern Poverty Law Center's (SPLC) Teaching Tolerance Program. Additional recommendations

if the bullying is taking place online. The increase in cyberbullying in recent years requires parents to closely monitor their children's online activity.

Additionally, parents should immediately assert their children's right to learn in a bias-free environment. California state law requires schools to have policies and procedures in place to respond to complaints of bullying and harassment. Parents should use the stated procedures to make complaints, then follow up to ensure a response from the school. Parents should also report all instances of bullying and discriminatory harassment to their local CAIR-CA office.

II. PARENTS & STUDENTS

Parents should be vigilant in looking for signs of bullying and harassment. Signs can include physical manifestations such as scrapes, bruises, and property stolen from their child. Other subtler changes in behavior may indicate bullying, such as a child becoming withdrawn and/or anxious, incurring excessive absences from school, or demonstrating a change in their desire to attend school.²¹ Unfortunately, children often do not inform their parents that they have been bullied. Thus, parents must foster relationships of trust with their children so that they feel comfortable telling them. Parents must also understand that it is not a child's fault if they are bullied nor should it be considered a natural part of growing up. They should also make sure that their children understand this. Moreover, parents need to teach their children what to do if they are bullied, particularly



III. LAWMAKERS

While the Trump administration has announced the scaling back of investigations of civil rights violations at public schools and universities by the Department of Education,²² federal legislators and state lawmakers should ensure that the appropriate laws are passed to protect vulnerable students from bullying and violence at school. Congress should amend Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. While California law explicitly identifies religious-based discrimination as being legally actionable, Title VI does not prohibit discrimination based on religion. Amending Title VI would allow targets of religious-based bullying to seek redress against schools receiving federal funding and would allow for accountability for failing to prevent bullying and harassment based on religion.

Additionally, no current federal law directly addresses bullying. As such, Congress should pass the Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA). The SSIA would prohibit bullying and harassment based on a student's religion, race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.²³ This bill amends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to require states to direct their local educational agencies (LEAs) to establish policies that prevent and prohibit conduct, including bullying and harassment, that is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to: (1) limit students' ability to participate in, or benefit from, school

programs; or (2) create a hostile or abusive educational environment that adversely affects students' education.²⁴ School districts would then be required to adopt codes of conduct specifically prohibiting bullying and harassment. The SSIA would also require that states report data on bullying and harassment to the Department of Education.²⁵ The Department of Education would then be required to provide Congress with a report on the state-reported data every two years. This report is intended to contain information on programs and policies to combat bullying and harassment in elementary and secondary schools.²⁶ The National Center

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for Education Statistics shall collect state data to determine the incidence and frequency of the conduct prohibited by LEA disciplinary policies.²⁷ This would create a very important enforcement

and monitoring tool, which would ensure that policies aimed at preventing bullying operate efficiently and effectively.

III. WHAT CAIR-CA DOES

Students and parents should report incidents of bullying to their local CAIR-CA office. CAIR-CA provides free educational workshops to the American Muslim community to train parents and children on how to address and prevent bullying at their schools and educate them about the protections available to them under state and federal laws.

Upon request, CAIR-CA also provides cultural competency training to schools and works with students, parents, and school administrators in dealing with issues relating to Muslim students. Additionally, CAIR-CA conducts focus groups, listening sessions, and community surveys to understand the problems American Muslim students face in schools. Parents and students should reach out to CAIR-CA if the student is experiencing bullying or discrimination at school. If a situation so requires, CAIR-CA offers free legal services for those experiencing civil rights violations, which includes discrimination at school and bullying.



RESOURCES

ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES ON ISLAM

Islamic Networks Group (ING)
www.ing.org

Islamic Speakers Bureau of Southern California
<http://www.isbsocal.org>

Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center
www.teachingtolerance.org

Unity Productions Foundation
<http://www.upf.tv>

WEBSITES WITH BULLYING PREVENTION RESOURCES

Korematsu Institute
<http://www.korematsuinstitute.org/curriculum-kit-materials/>

WhyIslam
www.WhyIslam.org

Sikh Coalition
<https://www.sikhcoalition.org/>

Act to Change
<https://acttochange.org/>

Islamic Networks Group (ING)
www.ing.org

National Education Association
www.nea.org

National Crime Prevention Council
www.ncpc.org

PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center
www.pacer.org

Teaching Tolerance: A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center
www.teachingtolerance.org

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
www.stopbullying.gov

Crisis Text Line
www.crisistextline.org

REPORTS ON BULLYING AND PREVENTION

Know Your Rights as a Muslim Youth At School
CAIR-California
<https://ca.cair.com/sfba/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Kids-Know-Your-Rights-Pocket-Guide.pdf>

MISLABELED: The Impact of School Bullying and Discrimination
CAIR-California
<https://ca.cair.com/sfba/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CAIR-CA-2015-Bullying-Report-Web.pdf>
Growing in Faith: CA Muslim Youth Experiences with Bullying
CAIR-CA

<http://ca.cair.com/downloads/GrowingInFaith.pdf>
Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU)
<https://www.ispu.org/social-policy/youth/>

Bullying Prevention Guide
Islamic Networks Group
http://www.ing.org/downloads/ING_Bullying_Prevention_Guide.pdf

Go Home Terrorist
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund & Sikh Coalition
<http://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/go-home-terrorist.pdf>

State of American Muslim Youth: Research & Recommendations

Institute for Social Policy and Understanding
http://www.ispu.org/pdfs/ISPU_FYI_Report_American_Muslim_Youth_Final.pdf

CALIFORNIA LAWS RELATING TO BULLYING

California Education Code § 234 - 234.5 (Safe Place to Learn Act)

California Education Code §32261 - 32262 (Interagency School Safety Demonstration Act of 1985)

California Education Code §32265

California Education Code §32270

California Education Code §32282

California Education Code §32283

FEDERAL LAWS RELATING TO HARASSMENT

DISABILITY

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

RACE, COLOR & NATIONAL ORIGIN

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

SEX

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

STATE & FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REPORTING AGENCIES

California Department of Education

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cp/>

Department of Education Office of Civil Rights
www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html

Department of Justice Civil Rights Division
www.justice.gov/crt/

ENDNOTES

¹U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2018*, NCES 47 (2019), <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2019/2019047.pdf>.

²United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *School Violence and Bullying, Global Status Report*, 2017, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002469/246970e.pdf>.

³CA Education Code Section 48900(r)(1).

⁴Counseling and Student Support Office, California Department of Education, *Bullying at School*, 2003, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ss/se/documents/bullyingatschool.pdf>.

⁵Id.

⁶Sarah Fiarman, *Unconscious Bias: When Good Intentions Aren't Enough*, Educational Leadership, November 2016.

⁷Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, *Anti-bullying interventions in schools – what works?*, 2017, https://antibullying.nsw.gov.au/media/documents/Anti-Bullying-in-Schools_What-Works.pdf.

⁸Importance of Anti-Bullying Laws, <https://www.stopbullying.gov/research-resources/importance-of-anti-bullying-laws/index.html> (last visited 7/1/2019).

⁹CA Education Code Sections 234 et al.

¹⁰COUNCIL ON AMERICAN-ISLAMIC RELATIONS-CALIFORNIA, *Unshakable: The Bullying of Muslim Students and the Unwavering Movement to Eradicate It* 6 (2017), https://ca.cair.com/sfba/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2018/04/2017_CAIR-CA_School_Bullying_Report.pdf?x93160.

¹¹<https://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/go-home-terrorist.pdf>

¹²Bill AB-2845, also known as the “Safe Place to Learn Act,”; <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/california-gov-signs-law-address-muslim-sikh-south-asian-american-n658486>

¹³California Assembly Bill No. 2291.

¹⁴California Code of Regulations, Title 5 Section 4600, *et seq.*

¹⁵Id.

¹⁶Id.

¹⁷Laura Mahalingappa, Terri Rodriguez, Nihat Polat, *Supporting Muslim Students, A Guide to Understanding the Diverse Issues of Today's Classrooms*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2017, pg. 23.

¹⁸Laura Mahalingappa, Terri Rodriguez, Nihat Polat, *Supporting Muslim Students, A Guide to Understanding the Diverse Issues of Today's Classrooms*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2017, pg. 114-115.

¹⁹Leslie Tillerson, “Teachers Say That Training Must Support Laws,” Michigan State University School of Journalism, *The New Bullying*, February 13, 2012, available at: <http://news.jrn.msu.edu/bullying/2012/02/13/teacher-anti-bullying-training-schools/>.

²⁰Laura Mahalingappa, Terri Rodriguez, Nihat Polat, *Supporting Muslim Students, A Guide to Understanding the Diverse Issues of Today's Classrooms*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2017, p. 116.

²¹U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, *Warning Signs*, stopbullying.gov, <http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/warning-signs/>

²²Erica L. Green, “Education Dept. Says It Will Scale Back Civil Rights Investigations,” *The New York Times*, June 16, 2017, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/16/us/politics/education-department-civil-rights-betsy-devos.html?mcubz=0>

²³Safe Schools Improvement Act of 2017, H.R. 1957, 115th Congress (2017-2018), bill summaries available at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1957/amendments>

²⁴Id.

²⁵Id.

²⁶Id.

²⁷Id.

Our Vision: To be a leading advocate for justice and mutual understanding.

Our Mission: Our mission is to enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil rights, and empower American Muslims.



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