Pennsylvania's Failing, Violent Schools

More than 106,000 children are enrolled in the 144 public schools comprising Pennsylvania's lowest performing 5 percent on student proficiency. These schools reported more than 5,400 violent incidents on students and staff in the 2008-2009 school year.

Academic Achievement in the 144 Failing Schools

- In the 2009-2010 school year, fewer than 53 percent of students were proficient in reading and math on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) in any of the 144 failing schools.

  ⇨ In more than 30 schools, fewer than 25 percent of students were proficient in reading and math.

  ⇨ Students in Philadelphia's University City High School scored the lowest, with only five percent proficient in reading and math.

  ⇨ The PSSA itself is a low standard—more than 80 percent more students reach proficiency on the PSSA than the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

- In 2009-10, 106,269 students attended these 144 failing public schools.

School Violence in the 144 Failing Schools

- In 2008-2009, these schools reported **5,430 violent incidents on students and staff** to the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Recorded Violent Incidents in 144 Lowest-Performing Schools, 2008-09

Incident	Total	Incident	Total
Assaults on Student	1983	Robbery	163
Assaults on Staff	1027	Theft	593
Rape	7	Rioting	2
Involuntary Sex	1	Bomb Threat	26
Sex Assault	4	Terroristic Threat	31
Indecent/Aggravated Assault	121	Weapon Charges	554
Indecent Exposure	30	Burglary	20
Kidnapping/Interference with Child Custody	4	Arson	107
Reckless Endangering	38	Vandalism	548
Criminal Trespassing	171		
Source: Safe Schools Online Reporting (www.safeschools.state.pa.us)			

- On average, there were five violent incidents (detailed on the table above) per 100 students.

  ⇨ Violent incidents ranged from zero at Meadville Area High School in Crawford Central

School District to 46 incidents per 100 students at Elizabeth D. Gillespie Middle School in Philadelphia.

- Student assaults on other students were by far the most pervasive violent acts across the 144 schools—there were 1,983 total assaults. Of those assaults:
    - ⇨ Harrison-Morton Middle School in Allentown recorded 199 assaults on students; or one for every four students.
    - ⇨ Central Elementary School in Allentown witnessed 72 assaults on students, **nearly one for every 10 elementary students.**
    - ⇨ Abraham Lincoln High School in Philadelphia recorded the highest number of violent incidents, totaling 299. The school proved to be the most dangerous school for teachers, with 59 assaults on school staff.

- In addition to student assaults, a number of serious crimes were committed against fellow students and school facilities:
    - ⇨ In the 73 failing schools in Philadelphia there were **seven rapes.**
    - ⇨ Hannah Penn Middle School in York dealt with 14 illegal weapon charges.
    - ⇨ Thirty-three incidents of criminal trespassing occurred at William Allen High School in Allentown.
    - ⇨ On 36 occasions, students or neighborhood residents vandalized South Philadelphia High School.

Five Failing Schools with Highest Violence Rates

School District	School Name	Students Not Proficient in Reading and Math	Violent Incidents Per 100 Students
Philadelphia	Eliz D Gillespie MS	70.2%	46
Allentown	Harrison-Morton MS	52.1%	34
Philadelphia	Strawberry Mansion HS	50.6%	21
Philadelphia	South Philadelphia HS	85.6%	18
Philadelphia	Abraham Lincoln HS	75.6%	17

School Choice: A Lifeline

- More than 100,000 Pennsylvanian children are trapped in failing and dangerous public schools that they are assigned to by their zip code.

- Allowing parents to choose the best school for their children has been shown to increase academic achievement, and will help families find a safe learning environment for students.

- School choice will enable competition in the public school system; improving the educational quality for all students.

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