



# Shrewsbury Public Schools

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Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

September 14, 2016

To: School Committee  
Re: Bullying Prevention and Intervention – Annual Report

The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy adopted in December 2010 indicates that *the superintendent or a designee shall report annually to the School Committee regarding the frequency of bullying behaviors during the prior school year and to update the Committee regarding steps being taken in the schools to minimize such behaviors while promoting the continuous improvement of learning environments.* This report satisfies this policy requirement.

## Frequency of bullying behaviors

It is important to note that, in order for behavior to be deemed “bullying,” it must involve *repeated* behaviors that cause physical and/or emotional harm. Therefore, only situations that meet this standard are reported as “bullying.” There are, of course, many times where students do not treat each other according to our school communities’ expectations, but these are usually not scenarios where the same aggressor repeatedly acts inappropriately towards the same target, thereby qualifying as “bullying.”

There were no incidences of bullying at the preschool level. The following tables provide statistics for grades K-12 for the 2015-2016 school year and, for comparison, the statistics for the previous year. You will see that the statistics are overall almost exactly the same.

| <b>2015-2016</b>  | Allegations of Bullying | Qualifying as Bullying | Aggressors | Targets  |
|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------|----------|
| Elementary Level  | 8                       | 1                      | 2          | 1        |
| Middle Level      | 7                       | 2                      | 2          | 3        |
| High School Level | 12                      | 2                      | 1          | 2        |
| <i>Total</i>      | <i>27</i>               | <i>5</i>               | <i>5</i>   | <i>6</i> |

| <b>2014-2015</b>  | Allegations of Bullying | Qualifying as Bullying | Aggressors | Targets  |
|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------|----------|
| Elementary Level  | 9                       | 3                      | 4          | 3        |
| Middle Level      | 9                       | 1                      | 1          | 3        |
| High School Level | 8                       | 1                      | 2          | 1        |
| <i>Total</i>      | <i>26</i>               | <i>5</i>               | <i>7</i>   | <i>7</i> |

The following table shows the type of incidents and locations that were documented as bullying in the past year (some incidents were included in more than one category).

| <b>2015-2016</b>  | Verbal | Physical | Cyber | At School | Outside School |
|-------------------|--------|----------|-------|-----------|----------------|
| Elementary Level  | 1      | 0        | 0     | 1         | 0              |
| Middle Level      | 0      | 1        | 1     | 1         | 1              |
| High School Level | 2      | 0        | 1     | 2         | 2              |

Again, it is important to note that these statistics refer to situations defined as bullying. There were certainly many more instances of problematic behavior that were addressed, but that did not qualify under the definition of being repeated between the same aggressor(s) and target(s).

Actions that are taken by school administrators to resolve situations of bullying and problem behavior generally may include conferences with the children involved and their parents; loss of privileges; assigned seating in class or on the bus; and other typical disciplinary actions. For the most serious cases, changes of the aggressor's class

assignment or schedule, in-school or out-of-school suspensions given to the aggressor(s), and “safety plans” created to ensure the actions were not repeated towards the target are additional steps that may be taken.

#### Ongoing work to minimize bullying

The very small number of situations that qualified as “bullying” can be viewed as very positive data regarding our schools’ culture and climate and how students treat one another. As always, it remains important for our school communities to continue to reinforce expectations regarding respectful behavior, as well as to help promote a climate where students are willing to share concerning behaviors with a trusted adult.

The ongoing work our schools have been doing to focus on social competencies, to provide explicit anti-bullying instruction in health classes, and to use school-wide approaches during all school meetings or assemblies has helped to promote positive school climates. As stated in this report last year, work still needs to be done to raise the consciousness of families regarding students’ online behavior, which can spill over into the school setting (even when it doesn’t technically qualify as bullying), which is why our district and school goals continue to focus on digital citizenship. Bullying intervention and prevention training for new staff has been provided during new teacher orientation, while yearly maintenance training also is provided for all staff. Our schools continue to focus on the quality of our school cultures in order to maximize kind, respectful behavior and minimize the number of situations where students treat each other inappropriately.

Connecting students to positive environments through productive academic and co-curricular programs is very important for making students feel part of the school community. The additional part time adjustment counselor positions we added last year at both Sherwood and Oak provided more capacity to address mental and behavioral health needs among students, and we will continue to assess how we can best provide support in this area, which continues to be a concern, not only in our school district but within our society.

I look forward to answering any questions you have on this topic.