



# Shrewsbury Public Schools

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Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

October 2, 2020

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 defined bullying at the preschool and elementary levels, three at the middle level, and none at the high school level. The following tables provide statistics for grades K-12 for the 2019-2020 school year and, for comparison, the statistics for the previous year. You will see that the statistics are lower than the prior year, and they continue to show very low rates of bullying overall. It is important to note that with the early closure of schools due to the pandemic, there were fewer opportunities for in-school bullying behavior.

<b>2019-2020</b>	Allegations of Bullying	Qualifying as Bullying	Aggressors	Targets
Elementary Level	1	0	0	0
Middle Level	4	3	2	3
High School Level	4	0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	9	3	2	3

<b>2018-2019</b>	Allegations of Bullying	Qualifying as Bullying	Aggressors	Targets
Elementary Level	3	0	0	0
Middle Level	6	1	1	1
High School Level	12	1	1	1
<i>Total</i>	21	2	2	2

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>2019-2020</b>	Verbal	Physical	Cyber	At School	Outside School
Elementary Level	0	0	0	0	0
Middle Level	2	1	0	3	0
High School Level	0	0	0	0	0

Again, it is important to note that these statistics refer to situations defined as bullying. There were certainly 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’ cultures and climates and how students treat one another. That said, we are always looking to minimize behaviors that are hurtful or harmful, even if they don’t technically constitute bullying. Given what we have been learning through last spring’s equity audit and subsequent communications from students and alumni regarding concerns about treatment related to differences in race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc., the work we will be doing to look at how students are treating one another through the lenses of equity and anti-racism will be important in the coming year.

As a reminder, we added an anonymous incident reporting feature two years ago that appears with a flag symbol at the top center of each of our website’s pages (see image below) where students can report a “school safety tip.” We have advertised this through email messages in the past and will do so again during this opening phase of the school year. While it has not been used frequently, we have received 21 reports total with 13 submitted since my report last year. A few were related to bullying in a general sense, and all were investigated and resolved to the extent possible based on the information provided.



The work we are doing as a school district to provide specific types of support to students depending on their social and emotional needs should also help us promote school cultures and climates that are safe, positive, and productive places for our students and staff.