



# Shrewsbury Public Schools

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Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

September 9, 2022

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 incidents of defined bullying at the elementary level, two at the middle level, and two at the high school level. The following tables provide statistics for grades K-12 for the 2021-2022 school year and, for comparison, the statistics for the previous year. You will see that while the statistics are higher than the prior year, they continue to show very low rates of bullying overall. It is important to note that with some cohorts of students attending school either remotely or as part of the hybrid learning model due to the pandemic, there were fewer opportunities for in-school bullying behavior during the 2020-2021 school year.

<b>2021-2022</b>	Allegations of Bullying	Qualifying as Bullying	Aggressors	Targets
Elementary Level	9	0	0	0
Middle Level	6	2	2	2
High School Level	11	2	6	2
<i>Total</i>	26	4	8	4

<b>2020-2021</b>	Allegations of Bullying	Qualifying as Bullying	Aggressors	Targets
Elementary Level	2	0	0	0
Middle Level	5	1	1	1
High School Level	3	0	0	0
<i>Total</i>	10	1	1	1

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>2021-2022</b>	Verbal	Physical	Cyber	At School	Outside School
Elementary Level	0	0	0	0	0
Middle Level	1	2	0	2	0
High School Level	2	0	0	2	0

#### Race & ethnicity of students

This past year, we tracked the race and ethnicity of those involved in both allegations of bullying and those in confirmed cases. As the state does with MCAS results, given the small number of cases (four confirmed) and the potential for inadvertently identifying students by revealing these characteristics, these are not being reported here. However, the administration is reviewing them as part of its ongoing work to examine whether

students from a particular group are disproportionately impacted. These statistics will be interpreted with caution given the small sample size.

### Ongoing work to minimize bullying

The very small number of situations that qualified as “bullying” (four) can be viewed as very positive data regarding our schools’ cultures and climates and how students treat one another. That said, it must be noted that last school year we saw a significant uptick in generally unacceptable behavior among students, as many students struggled with re-acclimating to school expectations after a year of hybrid instruction and demonstrated very difficult behaviors. So far, this current school year feels much more stable with regard to student behavior.

Of course, we are always looking to minimize behaviors that are hurtful or harmful, even if they don’t technically constitute bullying. This year, we will continue our focus on the themes of inclusion and belonging and providing various social emotional learning experiences to students, such as by improving upon the advisories at Oak Middle School and Shrewsbury High School that began last year and use the *CharacterStrong* program as their base, while using the companion *Purposeful People* materials with our elementary students.

As a reminder, we added an anonymous incident reporting feature several 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 46 reports total with 14 submitted during the 2021-2022 school 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.



**SHREWSBURY**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Submit School Safety Tip



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We continue to seek ways as a school district to provide support to students to address their social and emotional needs while promoting school cultures of belonging that are safe, positive, and productive places of learning for our students and staff.