



Shrewsbury Public Schools

Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.
Superintendent

September 6, 2023

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 two incidents of defined bullying at the elementary level, one at the middle level, and seven at the high school level. The following tables provide statistics for grades K-12 for the 2022-2023 school year and, for comparison, the statistics for the previous year.

2022-2023	Allegations of Bullying	Qualifying as Bullying	Aggressors	Targets
Elementary Level	5	2	2	2
Middle Level	13	1	1	1
High School Level	20	7	16	7
<i>Total</i>	38	10	19	10

2021-2022	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

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).

2022-2023	Verbal	Physical	Cyber	At School	Outside School
Elementary Level	2	1	0	2	0
Middle Level	1	0	0	1	0
High School Level	7	1	2	6	3

Race & ethnicity of students

This 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 (10 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” (ten) is more than the previous year, mainly due to the increase of five cases at SHS. Last year we noted that we saw a significant uptick in generally unacceptable behavior among students in 21-22, as many students struggled with re-acclimating to school expectations after a year of hybrid instruction and demonstrated very difficult behaviors. The consensus among administrators was that the 2022-2023 school year was much more stable with regard to student behavior, so I caution against extrapolating the increased number of incidents that qualified as bullying – still very small – to student behavior in general.

As always, 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 to work with our educators on social emotional curriculum and effective interventions for undesirable behaviors, while school administrators will be considering ways to improve our effectiveness with preventing and responding to significantly disruptive or inappropriate behaviors.

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. We received 17 reports that were submitted during the 2022-2023 school year. A very small number were related to bullying-type allegations 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.