

Bullying Allegations and Incidents reported in Delaware Public Schools

Annual Report

2021-2022 School Year



Brian N. Moore, MBA

Program Manager

Office of School Climate

Delaware Department of Education

Collette Building

35 Commerce Way

Dover, Delaware 19904

Executive Summary

Bullying is best defined as repetitive conduct designed to harm another individual either physically, mentally or emotionally as well as to create an imbalance of power between two individuals. The impacts of bullying can include long term mental health issues as well as negative educational outcomes. Nationally, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) notes that close to 40% of secondary school students have been bullied on at least one occasion in the past twelve months. (Control, 2015, 2017) That number is close to what is reported from the 5,000 students who answered the YRBS in Delaware.

These students do not often share their victimization with staff members, other adults or their parents. Based upon the far lesser numbers of recorded allegations from district and charter schools. If we use the same data rule to compare the self-reporting from the YRBS and the statewide reported allegations which districts and charter schools must record in E-School, less than 1% of the students who self-reported in the YRBS survey that they were victims of bullying actually reported to their schools that they were allegedly victims or bullying, either physical or cyber.

As a State, we realize that this means students simply are not reporting that they are being victimized. In some cases, adults discover the bullying and correct it, even if the students fail to report it. Nationally nearly 70% of students stated that they witnessed bullying in some form but failed to notify anyone or take any action. Of the students who witnessed it and attempted to intervene, the bullying stopped within an estimated 53 seconds.

Yet another significant consequence of bullying is highlighted in the most recent US Secret Service Threat Assessment Study of school shootings, which notes that 60% of the school shootings between 2004 and 2017 had a nexus to bullying victimization (Center, 2019). Students who conducted physical attacks in schools had either been significantly victimized or felt as if they had been significantly victimized. In 34% of those cases, the school was aware of the alleged victimization prior to the attack.

With students returning to the classroom environment after nearly two years of limited personal interactions with peers and others in the normal school community, it could be expected that there would be some difficulty in students becoming adjusted to what normal and appropriate interactions look like once again. Staff members focused on levels of respect and sense of community in their interventions to help students to return to their normal sense of school community and respect.

Responding to Bullying through School Climate Improvements

While there is no simple answer to solving the issue of bullying, schools that attempt to create a climate of inclusivity and civility can help students take ownership of their school “community” and reduce tolerance for bullying among their peers. The most telling statistic from the national surveys is the note regarding what happens when a bystander attempts to intercede. When a peer attempts to intervene, the act of bullying tends to end within approximately 53 seconds. Their intervention tends to be successful and sets a positive example to other bystanders that intervention can lead to a positive outcome.

This form of supportive community would also increase the support that victims receive from not only staff and mental health workers, but from their own peer group. Staff can help create a more universal community of caring by implementing trauma informed practices and professional development for their staffs. Administrators should support trauma awareness and utilizing restorative disciplinary practices if they wish to develop a stronger sense of community within their school.

As a state, the number of allegations was higher than any previous year, mostly due to the focus of the staff to be aware of such inappropriate contact and try to minimize the negative impacts of bullying on students, especially in a time of returning to normalcy and not knowing what the nature of our students’ lives have been for the previous two years. Students experienced various levels of familial and community trauma and that could impact a student return to normal social activities. The focus on all school staff has been to ensure that the mental health needs of students was a paramount consideration, which also impacted the way schools recognized and responded to reports of bullying behaviors.

That being said, the overall percentage of bullying incidents when comparing to other reported incidents remain relatively low. This could be because bullying behavior may not have been identified as part of the overall incident which may have led to a consequence (i.e. an offensive touching incident which was created due to alleged bullying but staff was not made aware that bullying had any role in the incident.)

Overall, as with the other data collected from the 2021-2022 post Pandemic year will serve as the benchmark for efforts to move forward in a positive way to continue to monitor and report these critical issues in schools.

Figure 1. 2021-2022 Reports of Allegations, Bullying Incidents and comparison with other reported incidents.

Name	Number of Alleged Bullying Incidents	Bullying Incidents	Total Incidents	Percent Bullying	Bullying Offenses*
Academia Antonia Alonso	16	3	436	0	3
Academy of Dover Charter School	2	2	91	0	3
Appoquinimink School District	151	34	4619	0	42
Brandywine School District	67	20	964	0	25
Caesar Rodney School District	141	41	2415	0	47
Campus Community School	2	0	131	0	0
Cape Henlopen School District	52	17	1632	0	23
Capital School District	48	11	3693	0	11
Charter School of New Castle	0	0	18	0	0
Charter School of Wilmington	0	1	824	0	1
Christina School District	130	55	11501	0	70
Colonial School District	73	19	4227	0	21
Delaware Military Academy	0	0	20	0	0
Delmar School District	13	2	1004	0	2
Early College High School at Del State	1	1	28	0	1
East Side Charter School	11	3	160	0	5
Edison (Thomas A.) Charter School	0	0	59	0	0
First State Military Academy	0	2	140	0	2
First State Montessori Academy	0	0	9	0	0
Freire Charter School Wilmington	0	0	48	0	0
Gateway Lab School	0	0	73	0	0
Great Oaks Charter School	0	0	137	0	0
Indian River School District	84	31	3993	0	35
Kuumba Academy Charter School	0	5	136	0	5
Lake Forest School District	17	10	1932	0	10
Las Americas Aspira Academy	4	1	159	0	1
Laurel School District	49	33	3522	0	37
Milford School District	43	11	2159	0	11
MOT Charter School	7	1	48	0	1
New Castle County Vocational-Technical School District	8	15	3940	0	25
Newark Charter School	19	1	29	0	1
Odyssey Charter School	44	3	80	0	3
POLYTECH School District	0	0	176	0	0
Positive Outcomes Charter School	1	0	55	0	0
Providence Creek Academy Charter School	0	3	380	0	3
Red Clay Consolidated School District	256	33	3385	0	39
Seaford School District	1	3	2911	0	3
Smyrna School District	9	7	3116	0	7
Sussex Academy	0	0	1	0	0
Sussex Technical School District	3	1	316	0	1
Woodbridge School District	5	0	1991	0	0

Section 2. Random Desk Audit Compliance

Since this was a return to the regular school environment, instead of random audits of various schools for compliance with various reporting and notification efforts, the Program manager chose to perform a complete policy and practice compliance audit for all of the district and charter schools statewide. As a result, all of the Board and District policies can be located on the School Climate Bullying Compliance Page here: [DOE School Bullying Policy Page](#)

In addition, training was given to all of the District and Charters to ensure a return to compliance with the Department of Justice Ombudsman Letter procedures as required by Code. This included updated copies of the DOJ Letter and training in how to record and investigate bullying allegations. Next year we will return to the detailed random school audits as previously administered.

References

- Center, U. S. (2019). *Analysis of Targeted School Violence*. Washington DC: US Secret Service.
- Control, C. f. (2015, 2017). *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*. Washington DC: CDC.gov.