



Christie Administration Announces Positive Trends in Annual Violence & Vandalism in Schools Report

For Immediate Release

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Date: October 13, 2015

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Trenton, NJ – The New Jersey Department of Education today released the Violence, Vandalism and Substance Abuse in New Jersey Public Schools report for 2014-2015, showing overall incidents of violence are down, incidents of bullying are down, while anti-bullying programs and trainings have increased.

The report is produced each year to share self-reported incidents from districts that include violence, vandalism, weapons offenses, substance offenses, and harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB). The 2014-2015 school year represents the fourth full year of school districts reporting HIB incidents in a separate category.

"It's the goal of every educator and every school leader to improve and maintain a safe and positive school climate," said Education Commissioner David C. Hespe. "I'm pleased to see school districts are reporting a steady, continued decrease in harmful incidents. The efforts at the local level, coupled with initiatives at the state level, help to promote a safe and supportive learning environment in schools."

Key findings from 2014-2015 include:

- Schools reported a total of 18,332 incidents through the New Jersey Department of Education's (NJDOE) electronic reporting system, a 4 percent decrease from last year.
- A third (34 percent) of all incidents were categorized as harassment, intimidation, or bullying (HIB), down 5 percent compared to 2013-14.
- School districts provided 20,725 various programs – primarily directed at students – to reduce HIB incidents, a notable increase from the 17,729 programs reported the previous year and 13,718 reported in the 2012-13 school year.
- School districts offered 14,810 trainings – primarily to staff – related to the reduction of HIB, a substantial increase from past years, when there were 14,473 trainings in 2013-14 and 11,199 trainings in 2012-13.
- The number of bullying incidents peak at the middle school level, as seen in previous years.
- The most common disciplinary action following HIB incidents was out-of-school suspension. Offenders commonly received remedial actions, including conferences and individual counselling, to prevent future occurrences of HIB.
- The most commonly reported violent incident category, fights, slightly increased by 3 percent from 2013-14 to 2014-15.
- Among the 1,036 weapons incidents, the most commonly reported weapons were sharp objects such as knives, which increased by 6 percent from 2013-14. Six handgun incidents were reported in New Jersey schools. There was an increase in airgun incidents, from 81 in 2013-14 to 110 in 2014-15.
- There has not been a sizeable change in school reports of substance abuse from the previous two years. Seventy-seven percent of the 2,982 substance abuse cases in 2014-2015 involved marijuana on school grounds. Alcohol represented 14 percent of the total substance abuse incidents.
- Police were notified in 29 percent of all reported incidents. Weapons incidents were most likely to be reported than other types of incidents; HIB incidents were least likely to be reported to police.
- Weapons and substance abuse incidents were more likely than other incidents to result in 10-day or longer suspensions.

In addition to collecting and reporting data, the NJDOE has taken a number of steps to assist districts in identifying programs, practices and other resources to improve school climate. Some examples include

implementing recommendations of the Anti-Bullying Task Force; examining evidence-based practices and research in the fields of social-emotional learning and tiered systems of supports to develop approaches to serve New Jersey students; and updating the memorandum of agreement between education and law enforcement officials that outlines protocols for reporting and addressing incidents of violence, vandalism and substance abuse in public schools.

The violence and vandalism report, which is presented annually to the Governor and Legislature, transparently communicates the changes in self-reported incidents from year to year. However, the report does not analyze the reasons for the changes. Changes from one year to the next may be attributed to more accurate reporting from districts or may reflect the results of local school policies and programs to address violence, vandalism, substance abuse and bullying.

The violence and vandalism report and summaries of district- and school-level data are available on the [NJDOE's website](#).