

West Hartford Public School District

Agenda Item: Safe School Climate and Discipline Report

Meeting Date: June 6, 2017

From: Andrew Morrow, Assistant Superintendent for Administration

Through: Tom Moore, Superintendent of Schools

This year's safe school climate and discipline report provides feedback on K-12 school climate, as well as data that reflects student behavior in our secondary schools that resulted in suspensions and expulsions. Overall, the data indicates that the overwhelming majority of our students conduct themselves appropriately and contribute to a safe and orderly learning environment in our schools.

In addition to school discipline data, we have reviewed the results of the safe school climate surveys which show that, overall, students feel safe at our schools.

This year we have reviewed and updated all of our safety protocols with the assistance of the West Hartford Police Department, as well as completed an All-Hazards Safety and Security Plan with local agencies.

Andrew Morrow, Andrew Clapsaddle, Steve Cook, and Joy Wright will be presenting an overview of the report and sharing the work being done at the middle school level to build positive connections and community. They will also be available to answer questions.

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Infractions

A **summary of serious infractions**, as defined by the State of Connecticut, is included in the following chart. This year there were 221 suspensions for serious infractions in all five secondary schools from a population of approximate 5,200 students. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of all suspensions were served in school. Last year at this time there were 220 suspensions for the same type of offenses from a population of approximately 5,200 students. This year there were 8 verified cases of bullying at the secondary level and 1 case of verified bullying at the elementary level. For reference, in 2015-16 there were 10 verified cases of bullying at the secondary level and 1 at the elementary level.

Detail of Serious Offenses Resulting in a Suspension State Definition – 2016-17 School Year – Through 5/5/17

Serious Offenses Defined by the State of Connecticut

<u>Code</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>BRISTOW</u>	<u>KPM</u>	<u>SEDGWICK</u>	<u>CONARD</u>	<u>HALL</u>
1100	Arson					
1400	Burglary/Breaking and Entering					
1410	Theft/Stealing	0	0	0	3	0
1420	Robbery	0	0	0	1	0
1700	Fighting/Altercation	3	7	10	3	11
1710	Physical Altercation	7	3	8	7	2
1711	Verbal Altercation	1	1	1	3	10
1712	Incite Fighting/Riot					
1720	Battery					
1730	Throwing Object at Victim	0	0	4	0	0
1800	Harassment—Non Sexual	0	4	4	10	5
1810	Threat/Intimidation/Verbal Harassment	2	2	3	7	4
1811	Racial Slurs/Hate Crimes	0	1	1	2	0
1813	Hazing					
1900	Harassment—Sexual	1	5	2	4	2
1910	Sexual Battery					
1920	Sexual Offense					
2000	Homicide					
2100	Stabbing					
2200	Blackmail					
2300	Kidnapping/Abduction					
2700	School/Bomb Threat					
3500	Vandalism	0	0	0	0	1
3700	Weapons	0	3	1	4	3
3800	Drugs/Alcohol/Tobacco	0	0	13	22	30
	Totals	14	26	47	66	68

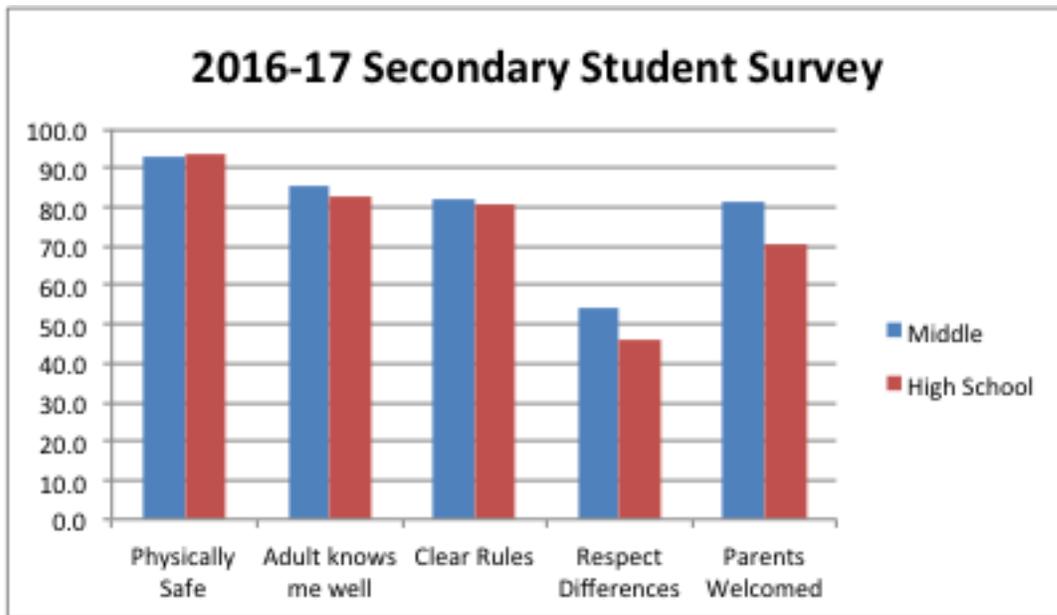
There have been a total of 5 expulsions this year. There were 22 in 2010-11, 10 in 2011-12, 10 in 2012-13, 9 in 2013-2014, 4 in 2014-15, and 11 in 2015-16. This year there have been 3 expulsions at the high school level and 2 at the middle school level.

We will continue to support the REACH and STRIVE programs, as well as the Alternative Education Program (AEP) for students who have been expelled. Appropriate guidance, support, and ongoing professional development have been implemented and have improved the learning environment in our schools. To better support students and families, we added an additional transition classroom to the STRIVE program that has been a success. We will also examine new ways and ideas to improve behavior for all of our students, and engage our entire school community in ways to keep our children safe. For example, any time we see an increase in a particular activity at a school, we meet together to discuss what has happened, case by case, to see if the behaviors could have been headed off. In addition, statistics from surveys, referrals, and suspensions will go to the Safe School Climate Committee for discussion with parents, teachers, and school resource officers.

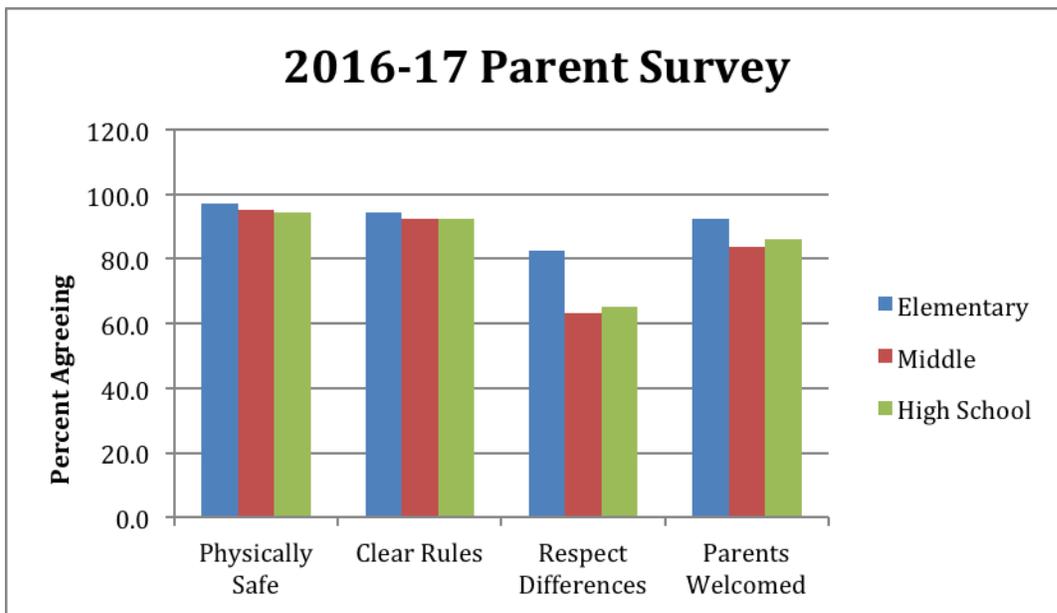
Our review of discipline in the schools indicates that our schools are safe learning environments for students and staff. Administrators speak frequently with students, parents, teachers and members of the community to gain additional information about the learning environments. Input from all segments of the school community is reviewed and considered in developing and adjusting policies, procedures and programs to improve the learning environment. This discipline data will be used to instruct any necessary changes in professional development and/or programmatic changes necessary to keep our buildings safe learning environments for all students.

Safe School Climate Committees/State of CT Climate Surveys

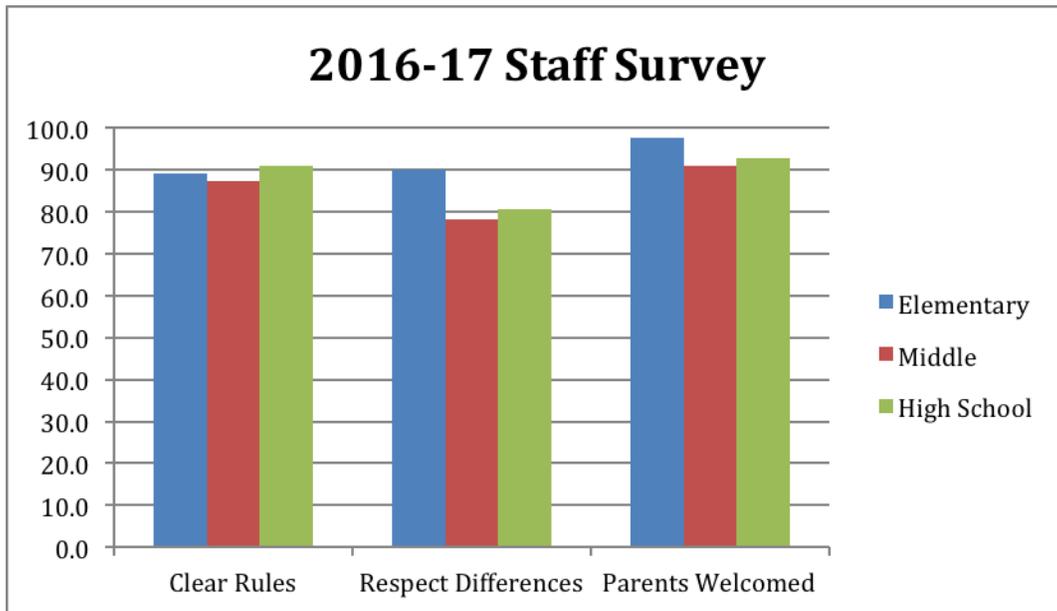
Each school has a safe school climate committee comprised of teachers, administrators, parents, and at the high school level, students. Each committee has examined data from their school that speaks to the environment for students there. Each school committee will look at the results of the safe school climate committee survey to tailor specific school plans to meet each building's needs, both for policies and for professional development. There is much to be learned from the climate survey questions that we administered to students, parents, and staff in the district.



Ninety-three percent (93%) of both our middle and high school students who responded to the survey agreed with the statement “I feel physically safe at school.” Eighty-five percent (85%) of middle school students responded that “At least one adult at school knows me well,” while this number was slightly lower (84%) at the high school level. In response to the question “In my school, there are clear rules against physically hurting other people (for example, hitting, pushing, or tripping),” 82% of middle school students agreed, while 4% disagreed. Eighty-one percent (81%) of high school students agreed with this question, with 6% disagreement. Fifty-four percent (54%) of middle school students agreed “Students in this school respect each other's differences (for example, gender, race, culture, disability, sexual orientation, learning differences, etc).” Sixteen percent (16%) disagreed, while 30% were unsure. A similar pattern emerged at the high school level with 46% agreement from students, while 20% disagreed and 34% reported as neither agreeing or disagreeing. Lastly, eighty-one percent (81%) of middle school students agreed with the statement “My Parents/guardians are made to feel welcome at my school.” Two percent (2%) disagreed, with the remaining 17% unsure. At the high schools, seventy-one percent (71%) reported agreement with the statement, with 6% disagreement and 23% unsure.



As part of our climate feedback and collection, we also survey parents at each school to help understand concerns and identify areas to target for improvement. This year’s parent survey data is positive and provides good feedback for principals and for climate committees to continue their work at each building. Of the survey respondents, ninety-seven percent (97%) of elementary school parents agreed with the statement “I feel that this school is physically safe,” followed by 95% of middle school parents and 95% of high school parents. In response to the question “In my child’s school, there are clear rules against physically hurting other people (for example, hitting, pushing, or tripping),” 94% of elementary school parents, and 93% of middle and high school parents agreed. Eighty-two percent (82%) of elementary school parents agreed “Students in my child’s school respect each other’s differences (for example, gender, race, culture, disability, sexual orientation, learning differences, etc.)” Three percent (3%) disagreed, while 15% were unsure. Sixty-three percent (63%) of middle school parents agreed with the statement, with 8% disagreeing and 29% undecided. A similar pattern emerged at the high school level with 65% agreement from parents, while 10% disagreed and 25% reported as neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Lastly, ninety-two percent (92%) of elementary school parents agreed with the statement “Parents/guardians feel welcome at my child’s school.” Two percent (2%) disagreed, with the remaining 6% unsure. At the middle schools, eighty-four percent (84%) reported feeling welcomed, with 5% disagreement and 11% unsure. Similarly at the high schools, eighty-six percent (86%) reported agreement with the statement, with 4% disagreement and 10% unsure.



In attempting to capture as many data points as possible, we also include building climate questions in our annual staff surveys. Of the respondents, eighty-nine percent (89%) of elementary school staff agreed with the statement “In my school, there are clear rules against physically hurting other people (for example, hitting, pushing, or tripping),” 87% of middle school staff, and 91% of high school staff agreed. Ninety percent (90%) of elementary school staff agreed “Students in my school respect each other's differences (for example, gender, race, culture, disability, sexual orientation, learning differences, etc).” One percent (1%) disagreed, while 9% were undecided. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of middle school staff agreed with the statement, with 6% disagreeing and 16% undecided. A similar pattern emerged at the high school level with 80% agreement from staff, while 3% disagreed and 17% reported as neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Lastly, ninety-eight percent (98%) of elementary school teachers and staff agreed with the statement “Parents/guardians feel welcome at my school.” zero percent (0%) disagreed, with the remaining 2% unsure. At the middle school level, ninety-one percent (91%) of staff agreed with the statement, with 2% disagreement. At the high school level, ninety-three percent (93%) of staff agreed with the statement, with 1% disagreement.

All of these survey results are being provided to each school, question by question, so that the safe school climate committees can look for areas of concern, or celebration, within their own school community. Having the district numbers as a whole will help each school to see where they fit. The fact that we now have multiple years of survey data will allow us to also identify and target trends.

As we say every year, numbers can be used in a variety of ways, depending on the motivation. What is important to remember is that each number is a child and one student feeling unsafe, or not liking school, or feeling disliked by peers is one child too many. Each school will look at this data so that they can try to find ways to reassure those children who are unhappy, and, if possible, get them the help that they might need.

School Security

Over the course of the year, we continue to meet with the West Hartford Police Department on a regular basis in order to ensure that our schools, and our children, are safe. Ongoing plans include:

- Increased security presence and drills at both secondary and elementary schools
- Increased police patrols/familiarization with school layouts
- Continued review of security protocols with all building principals and WHPD
- Continued review of fire code compliance with WHFD
- Upgrading door entry access controls
- Installed new exterior camera systems at secondary and elementary schools
- Installed new classroom door lock system
- New secure entry office configuration at Hall HS and Sedgwick MS
- Joint security/police training during school year and in summer
- Police/school principal walkthroughs in summer as part of safety plans reviews
- Development of standard response guidelines and an “All Hazards” approach training for school leaders

We continue, as a district, to maintain as our highest priority, keeping our children safe. The past and recent tragedies in schools remind us all of the incredibly difficult undertaking we task our teachers with. They have to plan, to teach, to discipline, and to protect these children. In West Hartford, we are thankful for our partnership with our families in this endeavor and for the assistance of the West Hartford Police and Fire Departments.