

THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF BROOKLINE 333 WASHINGTON STREET BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS 02445

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Office of the Superintendent of Schools William H. Lupini, Ed.D.

September 28, 2011

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Last spring, as part of the Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) efforts to implement a new bullying prevention plan, students in grades 3, 5, 7, and 9 were invited to participate in a survey about school climate and peer relationships, with particular focus on the extent to which students perceive bullying to be occurring in our schools. I am writing today to give you a brief review of our major findings and to describe the next steps for the schools around bullying and student safety.

We were very fortunate to be able to work with Dr. Jennifer Green in the School of Education at Boston University to field this survey and analyze the results. Dr. Green and her staff worked closely with the PSB Leadership Team to create a survey for us that was based on well-established research instruments widely used for this purpose, but that also reflected the needs and experiences of students in our district. Parents/guardians received a letter describing the survey in advance, and students were invited to complete the survey during the first week of May, 2011. Every survey, available in English or any of 7 other languages spoken by our students was completed anonymously, and students could choose not to answer any questions if they preferred not to.

We have now reviewed Dr. Green's reports outlining survey results. [Click here to view the system report; results from individual schools are posted on the individual PSB school sites.] Consistent with state and national data suggesting that many students experience some difficulty with peers, the Brookline data confirm that some students are involved in bullying (our students primarily reported teasing or being called names). We were reassured to learn as well that students in general feel safe, respected, and welcomed in our schools. Most important to our efforts going forward, however, Dr. Green's report has allowed us to look past these general impressions and begin to understand the different ways in which students may experience bullying behavior in and outside of the classroom. The survey results give us a crucial handle on the different ways in which the schools can respond to the challenges students face.

For example, while the highest percentage of bullying behaviors were reported as happening in less supervised areas such as the cafeteria or the playground, a significant percentage of incidents were also reported happening in classrooms. This result was both surprising and helpful because it challenges assumptions about where "most" bullying happens and allows us to focus our efforts in different ways. Some of our principals have already begun discussions with teachers about the data from classrooms; others have begun discussing ways to improve adult supervision and monitoring of common areas and unstructured time in order to give students more options for creating or finding environments that feel safe.

In short, these reports offer us critical detail and information to support and guide the implementation of our comprehensive, system-wide Social Emotional Learning and Bullying Prevention and Intervention plan. These plans and curricula, to be implemented over the course of the next two years, will touch every student and every teacher in the Public Schools of Brookline, and we are committed to continuing use of these sorts of surveys to monitor our progress over time.

I invite you to read about <u>Brookline's Prevention & Intervention Plan</u>. Please note that implementation of the plan calls for a system-wide Coordinating Team, comprised of representatives across all stakeholder groups, including parents, administrators, teachers, students, and school staff. Members of the team will be selected in order to reflect the diversity of our system and to represent our various schools, grade levels, general education and special education, and demographics. If you are interested in participating on this committee, please contact Dr. Jennifer Fischer-Mueller in the Office of Teaching and Learning (617.730.2432).

While creating and maintaining a safe, respectful, and welcoming environment in our schools remains a top priority for me and for everyone in this school system, Dr. Green's survey reminded us that students more often talk to you, the adults at home, than to the adults at school when they have trouble with peers. Successfully implementing these new plans, therefore, depends on continuing a strong partnership with parents and other members of the Brookline community. I look forward to continuing our communication and collaboration with you as we work together to address these important issues.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

William H. Lupini, Ed.D. Superintendent of Schools

William H Lupin