

ADDENDUM TO INTERIM REPORT
OF SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS TASK FORCE
ON PREVENTION OF AND RESPONSE TO
SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

JULY 30, 2015

Introduction

In May 2015, the Seattle Public Schools' Task Force for Prevention of and Response to Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault ("Task Force") conducted a survey of key informants regarding issues of sexual harassment and sexual assault. The survey assessed current understanding and opinions about SPS policy and procedure, training and education needs for both staff and students, and school response to sexual assault and sexual harassment incidents. 230 respondents with a stakeholder interest in this issue (principals, vice-principals, counselors, nurses, health center staff, and teachers specializing in health education), from the full range of grade levels, completed the online survey.

Many of the responses supported the recommendations outlined in the Task Force's Interim Report, submitted to Superintendent Nyland on May 29, 2015. Specifically, the survey respondents provided detailed guidance regarding the need for increased student education and staff support:

Student Education/ Prevention

Sexual assault and sexual harassment are societal issues extending far beyond schools. Nevertheless, the school environment has a significant opportunity and responsibility to play a role in prevention. Schools can provide education for students and foster a safe school climate, which can proactively address the underlying causes of sexual assault.

59.3% of respondents reported that they are teaching curriculum to students that addresses sexual health, violence prevention, or social emotional skill development. The most common curricula are research based and include Second Step, Steps to Respect, and Family Life and Sexual Health (FLASH). When asked how often these types of curricula should be taught, the majority of those who teach the curriculum felt that **once a year was the minimum**. Comments included:

- "It should be an ongoing part of the curriculum, especially considering sexting, snapchat, and student's lack of foresight with social media."
- "This should be built into the curriculum and revisited daily- at least for social emotional skill development."
- "...These issues need to be addressed more than once in 9th grade [health]. Many kids aren't yet ready to hear the message and it becomes more relevant later in high school, so doing it again, yearly, or at a minimum every 2 years is essential."

Staff Education and Training

Effective prevention and intervention initiatives in the schools require comprehensive support and training for building staff, teachers, and administrators. While most staff reported SPS policies and procedures were "very clear" or "mostly clear," they requested clarity on District reporting procedures. Additionally, the survey responses highlighted a lack of understanding about Title IX requirements:

- **58.3% of respondents reported they have not received Title IX training from the District.**
- **79.4% of respondents reported they do not know who their school's Title IX compliance official is.**
- **80.6% of respondents reported they do not know who the District's Title IX officer is.** (*Note that this survey occurred while that position was filled.*)

Respondents also indicated areas in which they have received training, those in which they would like more training, and their preferred methods of receiving training. The majority of respondents (**59.5%**) prefer trainings be taught in-person by experts, as opposed to online, printed materials, or peer

education. One commented, “If the sexual assault trainers could come to each school [in-building trainings] and do a school wide training, I think that would cause a much bigger influence on the subject, instead of having the training downtown for new employees and online.” A closer look at the responses indicated that middle school staff expressed a much stronger need for training in this area than those at the high school or elementary level. Although there was overlap in the training needs across all grade levels, the responses showed differences, particularly as expressed by the elementary staff. In the areas of training most requested, the percent of those who have already received some training is low.

Respondents	Training topics	Would like more training	Have had some training
Elementary School Staff	Sexual behavior in young children: normal vs. problematic	44.2%	31.9%
	How to intervene with people who sexually harass others	44.2%	28.3%
	How to intervene in sexist, homophobic, and inappropriately sexual comments	41.6%	31.9%
Middle School Staff	How to support sexual assault survivors	65.6%	18.8%
	How to intervene with people who sexually harass others	65.6%	26.6%
	Restorative justice in response to incidents	64.1%	12.5%
	How to teach sexual violence prevention	62.5%	15.6%
	How to change school climate and social norms	62.5%	23.4%
High School Staff	How to change school climate and social norms	41.7%	24.1%
	How to support sexual assault survivors	44.4%	22.2%
	How to intervene with people who sexually harass others	43.5%	25.0%
	How to teach sexual violence prevention	40.7%	16.7%

Recommendations in response to staff survey:

- 1. Provide training for building staff based on topics most requested. Trainings should be in person, presented by experts in the field, and tailored to the needs of specific grade levels.**
- 2. Ensure all staff know a) who their points of contact for Title IX are at the school and district level; b) how to implement Superintendent Policy 3208; and c) when mandatory reporting is required.**
- 3. Emphasize social emotional learning and sexual health/relationship skills in student curriculum and instruction. Curriculum and programming should focus both on student skill-building and improving school climate to prevent sexual harassment and sexual assault. The content should be research-based and/or a proven program.**
- 4. Counselor job duties should be supported to follow the objectives of the ASCA model. District leadership must provide appropriate guidance and resources to ensure this happens in every school.**

Please note: the above recommendations are in addition to those included in the Interim Report submitted by the Task Force on May 29, 2015.

These are some additional comments from school staff, providing insight into how the District can help better address issues of sexual assault and sexual harassment in the schools.

Regarding Response to Incidents:

- “If a student reports a sexual assault, the teacher/school staff needs to be reminded that they are mandated reporters, that a criminal act has occurred, and the investigators are law enforcement, NOT the principals.”
- “I’m happy to see something, finally, about this issue ... educating that false accusations are pretty rare and not seeing someone who is accused as a victim of a potential lie, but someone who needs to be investigated would be a start.”
- “Having a specific district official assigned to Title IX issues is very helpful. I called Barbara [former Title IX coordinator] about the issue that came up at my school and she was very responsive.”

Regarding Student Support:

- “Something to help students who ‘perpetrate.’ Such as offering support groups, interventions, and education at all levels. Rather than waiting for the behavior to escalate to a suspendable offense, earlier interventions would be good.”
- “Hire more counselors so all students have access to information and a safe place to talk about problems they are having at home or school.”
- “I searched the SPS website as an outsider and couldn’t find this information.”
- “As we think about building consistency in training and instruction for teachers and students in these areas, I would ask us to include ways to inform and involve parents - a parent education component.”
- “While teaching...curriculum is important, creating safe schools where students feel supported is a more effective way to address violence and mental health. Many of the at-risk populations of students don’t feel that support or connection to the comprehensive high schools.”
- “Too often we expect our children to have a [social emotional] skill set that they are just not prepared for. More education at the school level would set them up for successful social relations that can otherwise impede or stop completely the learning process.”

Regarding Prevention:

- “If we had more prevention at elementary levels we could eliminate many problems at other levels.”
- “Have specific curriculum that ALL students get, with common language, and the time to teach it, that doesn’t affect teachers of tested subjects who don’t want to give up instructional time.”
- “Hire ESA School Social Workers to help facilitate this. You need FTE in the building to help implement policies and education around this.”
- “Require health education in elementary and middle school by highly qualified health educators. Require and compensate for advisors in middle and high school.”
- “It is appalling to me that Health is no longer required to be taught in middle school, such a critical age to learn about and develop skills in these related areas.”
- “The District needs to commit to re-instating a health curriculum and required semester course in Health for middle school students. You cannot expect Science or PE teachers to cover in any depth what used to be covered by health teachers. Middle school is a crucial time; high school is too late.”
- “This is something counselors want to address but are limited ... due to teachers not allowing time for classroom lessons, and the time required [for us] to register students. If we are creating ASCA model counselors, then registration needs to be owned by registration, not counseling, staff”
- “We don’t spend enough time developing a culture in schools that leads to a safe environment for students or adults.”