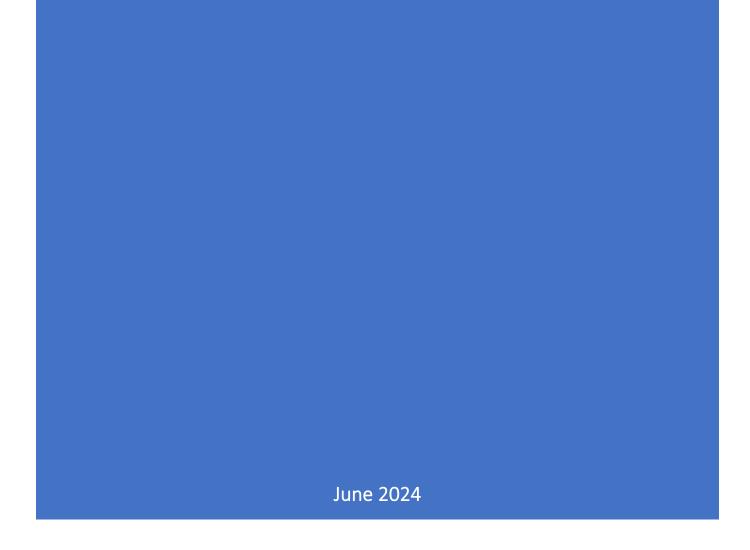Online Student Incident Reporting & Report It! Campaign

Phase 2 Pilot Summary Report

June 2024

Student Incident Reporting
Report It! Campaign Pilot Summary Report

Introduction

The Public Schools Branch (PSB) and its schools work together with students, families and the community to create learning environments that are welcoming, supportive and safe for students. It is important that students know that there are people who want to help and support them if an issue arises.

During the fall of 2022, the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate presented several recommendations to the PEI Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Education and Economic Growth. One of the recommendations was related to student incident reporting. The recommendation stated:

"Education Authorities should continue to consult with children and youth and the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate in the development and implementation of new operational student reporting policy and procedure documents that are child and youth-friendly and respect the right of students to be meaningfully heard".

In response to this recommendation, the PSB has developed a pilot campaign with students, staff and other stakeholders to encourage students to report an incident when they need support and in the way that is most comfortable for them. The campaign was branded, Report It!.

Jurisdictional Scan, Research, and Interviews

The PSB conducted research across the country and most provinces have a tool for students to report an incident online and to report anonymously.

In October of 2023, interviews were held with senior staff of Halifax Regional Centre for Education and the BC Ministry of Education, as well as a school principal of a high school in the Peel District, Ontario. The consulted jurisdictions spoke positively about having an online reporting option for students and felt the anonymous reporting option was a key component.

Pilot - Report It! Campaign – Phase 1

Phase 1 of the pilot Report It! campaign ran from April to June 2023 within the Three Oaks Family of Schools, chosen for its size, experienced administrators and diverse student body. The following are the highlights from Phase 1. The full report for Phase 1 can be viewed here: Phase 1 Pilot Summary Report

Development and Implementation:

Stakeholder Engagement: Meetings with principals, student focus groups, and consultations with the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate were held to gather feedback.

Technical Support: The Web Digital Office helped create the online student incident report form, accessible via a QR code on promotional materials.

Communication Efforts: Updates were provided to the Home and School Federation, Board of Trustees, unions, staff, and parents/guardians. An in-person information session was held for students and parents/guardians.

Promotional Materials: The campaign featured a Report It! logo, various size posters, bookmarks, and a website.

Key Insights:

Student Preferences: Students preferred multiple reporting options, including verbal, written, and online, with an anonymous option being crucial due to fear of retaliation.

Incident Reporting: A total of 15 online reports were received, detailing incidents such as bullying, threats, harassment, and discrimination, all related to peer interactions.

Evaluation and Feedback:

Survey: Conducted from May 23-June 2, 2023, feedback indicated support for continuing online reporting with the anonymous option. Suggestions for improvement included additional promotional materials, teacher training, and expanded outreach.

Concerns Addressed: The potential for misuse of the online form was considered, with insights from other jurisdictions indicating minimal issues with false reports. It was also identified that a false report, identifiable or anonymous, exists without the online student reporting option.

Pilot - Report It! Campaign – Phase 2

The second phase of the Report It! campaign started in October 2023 and was expanded to all PSB schools. Additional materials and resources were created including a promotional video, a teacher's reference guide, FAQ sheet, and 5X7 stickers to put on school busses.

Discussions about the Report It! campaign were held with school principals at the principals' meeting on August 27, 2023.

On September 21, 2023, the Director of the PSB Tracy Beaulieu sent a message to all PSB staff about the Report It! campaign and the plan to expand to include all PSB schools in mid-October.

On October 10th, school principals were advised that the Report It! campaign would launch in all schools on October 18th. Posters and bookmarks were sent to schools and Principals were asked to ensure posters were put up in visible main areas of the school and to pass out Report It! bookmarks on October 18th.

School based staff were advised of same on October 12th. Emails sent on these days included information about the goals of the Report It! campaign, the importance of actively promoting the campaign to students, suggestions for kicking off the campaign, and general information about the process of taken with online report submissions. The Teacher Reference Guide, Report It! FAQs, Printable Poster, Report It! logo, and Report It! video were attached to these e-mails.

Phase 2 – Student Incident Reports

Similar to Phase 1, determining an increase in the number of incidents reported to parents, staff, or community partners over the course of the Report It! campaign was not possible. Online reports received totaled 95, addressing 89 incidents. Reports from students numbered 66, while parents submitted 29. Among the 66 student reports, 45 were submitted anonymously, and 21 included contact information. Of the 29 parent reports, 15 were anonymous, and 14 provided contact info for follow-up. Four (4) reports were easily identified as unfounded after investigation by the school administrator. School administrators also noted that, in several cases, the details on the incident form were inaccurate or incomplete, as the individual making the report might not have had the complete picture of the incident. Reports related to peer-to-peer interactions numbered 71, operational issues accounted for 11 reports, and staff and student issues were the subject of 13 reports.

The reports received identified incidents of bullying (on the playground, bus and on social media), violence, threats, harassment, verbal abuse, discrimination, racism and invasion of privacy. Most reports cited multiple behaviors. Reports received involving staff and students were primarily about a student or parent being unhappy with teaching style or being unhappy with a discipline decision.

Phase 2 Evaluation

From April 29 – May 10, 2024 feedback from students, staff, parents/guardians and other stakeholders was once again sought to evaluate the campaign's successes and challenges, and to assist the PSB to make the necessary improvements and plan for further continuation of the campaign. A short survey, similar to the survey sent in Phase 1, was developed and was sent to all school staff, parents/guardians, and students in grades 7-12 in all PSB schools. The survey contained five (5) questions and an option for the respondent to provide additional comments if they wished.

A total of 1357 survey responses were collected. Responses included 257 from school staff, 231 from students, and 866 from parents/guardians. Results in Phase 2 were consistent with the results in Phase 1.

The following are highlights from the survey with respect to:

- Online reporting continuing with the anonymous option.
- The concern for misusing the online form.
- Suggestions for improvement.

Online Reporting Option

In terms of the online reporting option continuing, the survey suggested the following:

School Staff

Of the school staff that responded to the survey:

- 67% indicated online student reporting should continue with the anonymous option
- 28% indicated online student reporting should continue without the anonymous option
- 5% indicated online student reporting should not continue

Students

Of the students who responded to the survey:
- 90% indicated that online student reporting should continue with the anonymous option
- 6% indicated online student reporting should continue without the anonymous option
- 4% indicated that online student reporting should not continue

Parents

Of the parents who responded to the survey:
- 83% of parents indicated online student reporting should continue with the anonymous option
- 13% of parents indicated online student reporting should continue without the anonymous option
- 3% of parents indicated online student reporting should not continue

Concern for Misuse

The survey identified concerns around the potential for misuse, though perhaps not as prevalent as survey results in Phase 1. These concerns came mostly from staff who felt vulnerable to false allegations being made about them. It is recognized that the concern for misuse exists, however data from Phase 1 and Phase 2 is consistent with what other jurisdictions told us about false reports – they are often silly in nature and are easy to identify. Two (2) false reports were received in Phase 1 within the Three Oaks Family of Schools and increased only to four (4) false reports in Phase 2 when the Report It! campaign was expanded to all 56 PSB schools. It should also be noted that prior to the online reporting option the potential to make a false report including anonymously existed.

General Feedback

Valuable feedback was gathered from all groups, revealing some main themes. This feedback will guide the Report It! campaign going forward.

Some school staff voiced challenges in effectively handling anonymous reports. However, they also acknowledge the crucial importance of ensuring students feel safe and comfortable when reporting incidents. One administrator's comment underscores this sentiment:

"I like that the student can be anonymous and feel safe but it does limit what we can do for the student and it does limit letting them know we've addressed the situation."

The majority of parents indicated they were glad the Report It! campaign and the online student incident form are available to students should they need it. One parent summed it up by saying:

"This is a great program and I commend the PSB for working with students to develop it. It is important to listen to what the students want and need. Their opinions matter. Well done PSB."

Many parents also said that more messaging, promotion and regular reminders were needed.

"Increase the campaign messaging to reach parents. I've barely heard anything about it. Also continue to promote the program to students. It has the potential to be an extremely valuable tool for students".

Students also expressed the same sentiment:

"Bring more awareness, more posters are needed in school and on classrooms, on buses and on the school social media."

"I like this. I believe this should be promoted and introduced to students more often."

"I haven't heard much about this campaign and I think it needs to be introduced to everyone. Like telling leadership classes about the it and they can spread the word to other students. If another student is telling their peers about the help it can provide them, it is much more likely for the student that is struggling to reach out to have success and using the resource."

Conclusion

The Report It! campaign has successfully engaged students, staff, parents, and community partners in addressing student incidents. The feedback collected from the pilot phases demonstrates the campaign's importance and the support for its continuation. The data highlights the need for diverse reporting options, particularly the value of anonymous reporting in making students feel safe and supported. While the campaign has shown positive results, there are areas for improvement to ensure its effectiveness and address concerns raised by stakeholders.

Recommendations

1. Enhance Promotion and Awareness:
    -   Increase the visibility of the campaign through more posters, bookmarks, and social media presence.
    -   Regularly remind students and parents about the availability of the Report It! platform.
    -   Adding additional promo materials (pencils, stickers for back of bathroom doors or in other private areas, swag, computer screen saver)
2. Training and Support:
    -   Provide additional training for teachers and administrators on handling reports, especially anonymous ones.
    -   Develop a support system for staff to manage the potential stress related to handling false reports.
3. Address Concerns About Misuse:
    -   Educate students on the importance of truthful reporting and the consequences of false reports.
    -   Develop a process for identifying and handling false reports.

It is essential to recognize the importance of building strong relationships so that students feel comfortable seeking help when needed from someone at home, at school, or from a community partner. Trust and open communication within these relationships can significantly enhance students' willingness to report incidents in person. However, having an online reporting feature that allows anonymity remains essential. This option is particularly important for those students who fear retaliation or feel uncomfortable

discussing sensitive matters face-to-face. The online platform ensures that all students, regardless of their circumstances, have a safe and accessible way to seek help. By implementing these recommendations, the PSB can strengthen the Report It! campaign, ensuring it remains an effective tool for creating a safer and more supportive school environment.