

South-Tolland-Granville Regional School District

Action Plan

The Attorney General (AGO) is working with the Southwick-Tolland-Granville Regional School District (“Southwick School District” or “the District”) to ensure an effective and comprehensive response to the recent racial bullying incidents in the District. In February 2024, several 8th grade students who attend the Southwick School District used the social media platform, Snapchat, outside of school hours to hold a mock slave trade, naming their Black classmates and inviting them to join the chat. The District investigated the incident and disciplined the students engaged in the conduct. The District recognizes the need to support the students who were targeted or otherwise affected by the mock slave trade, while engaging the responsible students in a process of meaningful accountability and education to prevent further hateful conduct. The Southwick School District also recognizes that a systemic, comprehensive, and proactive approach is needed to prevent racist bullying and harassment and other forms of hate in the District moving forward. To accomplish these goals, the AGO has worked with the Southwick School District to develop the following Action Plan:

1. Consistent with AGO recommendations, the Southwick School District will review its policies and procedures, staff training and professional development, and curriculum to ensure that they are in compliance with the Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Act and the Student Anti-Discrimination Act and related regulations. The District will update its policies accordingly and adopt any additional policies and procedures necessary to proactively address and prevent discriminatory bullying and harassment, consistent with the *AGO’s Guidance on Schools’ Legal Obligations to Prevent and Address Hate and Bias Incidents*. The District will submit any revised policies and proposed changes to staff training and student curriculum to the AGO for review prior to implementation. Among the changes the district plans to implement are: expanded staff training on prevention of discriminatory harassment and bullying, and the development of specific action steps to support students vulnerable to bullying and harassment in the district.
2. The Southwick School District leadership team (Superintendent, Southwick Regional School Principal, and the Athletic Director) attended a two-day training on March 22 and 23 on addressing hate and bias in schools, through the AGO-led statewide program, Addressing Hate in School Sports. The training was delivered by Northeastern University’s Center for the Study of Sport in Society (NCSSS).
3. On June 11, 2024, the Northeastern Center for the Study of Sport in Society (NCSSS) delivered a training at a student assembly for grades 7-11 at the Southwick Regional School. The training covered topics such as implicit bias, toxic speech, and bystander intervention.
4. At the beginning of the 2024-25 school year, high school sports team captains, student leaders, and other specifically identified students will participate in a two-day training delivered by NCSS on preventing and addressing hate in school sports.

5. The Southwick School District will continue its partnership with the Hampden District Attorney's Office's (HDAO) Community Outreach and Safety Unit and the HDAO Youth Advisory Board (consisting of 4 students from the Southwick Regional School). On April 23, 2024, the HDAO delivered a presentation for parents and community members on the legal consequences of youth hate crimes, cyberbullying, and other online conduct. The Youth Advisory Board served as a panel at the presentation. On March 5, 2024, the HDAO, including the Youth Advisory Board, presented at two (2) student assemblies tailored to grades 3-6 at Powder Mill School.
6. The Southwick School District will contract with Parents for Peace (P4P) — a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting young people and preventing extremism — to offer education, to each of the students who participated in the racist conduct, that promotes accountability, provides needed support, and instructs them regarding the negative effects of hateful conduct. The District will offer said support to each of the students associated with the conduct who are still enrolled in the District over the course of a six (6) month period.
7. The Southwick School District has contracted with William James College Center for Behavioral Health, Equity, and Leadership in Schools to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment regarding school culture and climate as it relates to equity and bias as well as related behavioral health needs within the District. The needs assessment began on May 2, 2024 and is expected to continue through the summer months, with recommendations offered prior to the beginning of the 2024-25 school year. The District plans to implement recommendations throughout the 2024-25 school year, with check-in points for data review and adjustments at three (3) month intervals.
8. The Southwick School District will partner with a community-based organization to proactively seek input and experiences of students from marginalized communities/groups and their families during the 2024-25 school year.
9. Immediately following any credibly alleged hate-based bullying, harassment, or criminal conduct the Southwick School District will continue to issue communication to the school community, vigorously condemning hate, bullying and harassment and explaining the steps the District is taking to address the incident. The communication will reaffirm the District's commitment to respecting differences, inclusion, equity, and safety for all students. The communication will include contact information for students or families who want to talk or have information to share. Any such communication will comply with laws and regulations protecting student privacy.
10. The Southwick School District will continue to work closely with the AGO during the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school year regarding the implementation of revised policies and procedures, and training for the school community on preventing hate. The District will openly consider any additional partnerships recommended by the AGO that may support its goal to end hate within the school community.

11. The Southwick District will notify the AGO when it becomes aware of any credibly alleged hate-based bullying, harassment, or criminal conduct involving a student in the District through the end of the 2025-26 school year.

12. The AGO will maintain its involvement in supporting the District through the end of the 2025-26 school year.