



NEW HANOVER COUNTY SCHOOLS

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17 Oct 24

From: New Hanover County Schools (NHCS) Board of Education
To: File

Subj: INTERNAL REPORT

Ref: (a) Settlement Agreement and Release of Claims of July 27, 2023

Encl: (1) 2023-24 Say Something Training Roster 2023-2024
(2) Program Profile: Shifting Boundaries (Classroom Curriculum and Schoolwide Intervention), National Institute of Justice, 21 Apr 24
(3) NHCS Shifting Boundaries Hotspot Mapping Report of 2023-2024
(4) 2023 Darkness to Light Roster
(5) NHCS-Coastal Horizons Contract of 12 Feb 24
(6) Title IX Staff Training
(7) Title IX Base Presentation
(8) Compilation of Title IX cases for 2021-2024
(9) Title IX Training for 2023-2024
(10) NHCS Policies and Procedures

1. The NHCS Board of Education made and entered a Settlement Agreement and Release of Claims, reference (a), on July 27, 2023, with John Does 1 to 14. Section 2.2 of reference (a) lists the non-monetary commitments for NHCS and John Does 1 to 14. One of the Board's commitments is to prepare an internal report on its efforts to "improve policies, procedures, and practices related to this case." Specifically, the internal report will include the following:

a. Detailed summaries of staff and student training provided related to sexual abuse and the recognition of such abuse.

b. Title IX training and compliance.

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c. Changes to policies or procedures within the school system to improve protections against sexual abuse within schools.

2. Summary of Staff and Student Training

a. NHCS has provided the following training related to sexual abuse and the recognition of sexual abuse to staff and students:

(1) Say Something. Say Something is an anonymous reporting system sponsored by Sandy Hook Promise linked to the NHCS website. Sandy Hook Promise is a national nonprofit organization founded by family members of students and adults killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14, 2012. Their mission is to educate and empower people, especially youths, to prevent violence in schools through an evidence-informed program that teaches students and adults to recognize, intervene, and get help for individuals who may be socially isolated or at risk of hurting themselves. Enclosure (1) lists each school's completion date and point of contact at each school for the See Something Training.

(2) Bringing in the Bystander. Bringing in the Bystander is a community responsibility approach that teaches bystanders how to safely intervene in situations where incidents of sexual assault and relationship violence may be occurring. Facilitated by the Coastal Horizons Center, a private, non-profit service delivery Corporation, NHCS included Bringing in the Bystander in its high schools' Health and Physical Education classes in School Year (SY) 2022-2023. NHCS replaced this training with its "Healthy Relationship" curriculum in 2024. See paragraph 2(a)(6) below.

(3) Shifting Boundaries. Shifting Boundaries is an evidence-informed intervention to raise awareness and prevent harassment and bullying. Facilitated by Coastal Horizons Center, NHCS included Shifting Boundaries in its 6th-grade Health and Physical Education classes. See enclosure (2). Coastal Horizons created a "Hotspot Mapping Report." The Report surveyed NHCS 6th graders during SY 2023-2024 about safety, bullying, and harassment at school and identified common trends. Enclosure (3).

(4) Darkness to Light. Darkness to Light is an organization committed to empowering adults to prevent child

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sexual abuse. Their training helps adults become aware of the scope of child abuse, take actionable steps toward preventing and responding to abuse, and create safer environments for children. Enclosure (4) lists each school's completion date and audience.

(5) Beginning of the Year Training. NHCS conducts this training through Vector, an online platform. The training reviews NHCS Policies that require mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse, staff-student relations, standards of professional conduct, staff responsibilities, and social media communications involving students.

(6) Healthy Relationships (Primary Prevention Programming). In February 2024, NHCS contracted Coastal Horizons to develop a "Healthy Relationships" curriculum for 9th-grade students for the Spring/Summer of 2024. This curriculum teaches critical social and life skills, such as internet safety, recognizing and reporting red flags in interpersonal relationships, and understanding consent, that assist students in gaining the ability to interact with others safely. Moreover, Coastal Horizons agreed to train NHCS staff to effectively deliver the curriculum to the students. NHCS staff members must attest that they have received the training. Enclosure (5)

(7) Family Life Curriculum. NHCS offers a family life unit in the Health and Physical Education (PE) courses for 5th-8th graders. The family life units cover Interpersonal Communication and Relationships (ICR) standards. These standards include sexual harassment, sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and abusive relationships, depending on the grade level. The topics are covered in MyLife and Stepping Stones, which parents can opt into for their children. In high school, the unit is part of the Health and PE course, and all students will receive the family life unit unless a parent has opted out for their child. NHCS included this training into its "Healthy Relationship" curriculum in March 2024.

(8) Digital Citizenship. NHCS has partnered with a digital citizenship content provider, Neptune Navigate, to facilitate this training. Navigate provides comprehensive online digital citizenship modules that teach students about appropriate online behavior, including interacting with others on social networking websites and chat rooms and sending inappropriate images. All NHCS K-12 students are required to complete Neptune Navigate modules annually. NHCS has utilized Neptune Navigate

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since the 2022-23 school year, and school library media coordinators facilitate this training.

(9) Duty to Report. NHCS has emphasized an employee's duty, requirement, and obligation to report suspected child abuse, harassment, and discrimination in its policies and training to its employees. NHCS has created Policy 1710 (Discrimination and Harassment Prohibited by Federal Law), 1725/4035/7236 (Title IX Sexual Harassment-Prohibited Conduct and Reporting Processes), 3610 (Counseling Program), and 4240/7312 (Child Abuse and Related Threats to Child Safety) making it mandatory for employees to report discrimination, harassment, maltreatment, and child abuse. See enclosure (10).

b. Title IX Training and Compliance

(1) The Title IX office conducts training for all NHCS employees. See enclosure (6). The training reviews Title IX definitions, notes reporting duties and methods, and explains NHCS policies on Title IX and other related policies. Enclosure (7) is a base Title IX presentation. The instructors may tailor this presentation to the intended audience. NHCS provides this training annually to its employees through various platforms such as Vector. Also, NHCS provides this training to individual schools or departments through classroom instruction throughout the school year.

(2) Enclosure (8) is a compilation of Title IX cases.

(3) NHCS created full-time Title IX Coordinator and Title IX Investigator positions in 2020. NHCS initially employed lawyers in these positions, although they were not required. Currently, a lawyer serves as the Title IX Coordinator and non-lawyer serves as the Title IX Investigator. A Title IX administrative assistant supports the Coordinator and the Investigator.

(4) Enclosure (9) lists the training that the Title IX staff has received.

c. Policies and Procedures

(1) Enclosure (10) lists the policies and procedures within the school system that improve protections against sexual abuse within schools. I highlight the following:

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(i) Fingerprints. NHCS adopted Policy 7100 (Recruitment and Selection of Personnel) on 4 Jan 22 and revised it on 12 Mar 24. This policy requires NHCS to conduct criminal history checks and a check of sex offender registries on all final candidates for employment. Additionally, the policy requires NHCS to ask a final candidate for employment to consent to be fingerprinted and provide any other identifying information required to check the candidate's criminal history in the State and National Repositories of Criminal Histories. The Board of Education shall consider refusal to consent when making employment decisions.

(ii) Staff-Student Relationships/Social Media. NHCS adopted Policy 4040/7310 (Staff-Student Relations) on 4 May 21 and revised it on 1 Feb 22, 3 Oct 23, 5 Dec 23, 2 Jul 24, 3 Sep 24, and 4 Feb 25. NHCS adopted Policy 7335 (Employee Use of Social Media) on 2 Feb 21 and revised it on 3 Sep 24. These policies govern an employee's social media communications with students and prohibit employees from communicating with current students through non-school-controlled social media. This allows NHCS to monitor and access social media communications between its employees, contractors, and students to ensure compliance with policy, regulations and laws and to deter employees and students from acting inappropriately.

(2) Say Something. See paragraph 2(a)(1) above.

(3) Ethix 360. Initiated in December 2019, Ethix 360 is an internet-based anonymous reporting system hosted by Star Compliance, an independent third party. Reporters can anonymously report bullying, sexual harassment, or any other concerns.

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