



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Weapons in Schools

2024

Authorizing Legislation: [RCW 28A.320.130](#)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

State law (Revised Code of Washington [RCW] [28A.320.130](#)) requires the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to annually report to the Legislature the number of incidents in violation of [RCW 9.41.280](#), which involves the possession of weapons on school premises, transportation systems, or in areas of facilities while being used exclusively by public or private schools.

In the 2022–23 school year, 2,275 incidents involving the possession of a weapon were reported by Washington’s public and private schools. This marks an 11.6% increase in weapons incidents from the 2021–22 school year. Of these incidents, 316 involved the possession of a firearm, all reported at public schools.

The incidents involving possession of a weapon resulted in 2,354 interventions in the 2022–23 school year. As compared to the 2021–22 school year, there was a 12.05% increase in suspensions and a 49.32% decrease in expulsions.

INTRODUCTION

The Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) was originally enacted on March 31, 1994, as part of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Public Law 103-227). The GFSA was reauthorized on October 20, 1994, as part of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-382), and again reauthorized as part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110). The GFSA requires each state receiving federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA) funds to have in effect a state law requiring school districts to expel from school, for a period of not less than one year, a student who was determined to have brought a weapon to school. The GFSA also requires that the state's law allows the chief administering officer of the student's school district to modify the expulsion requirement on a case-by-case-basis.

Washington state enacted the Weapons in Schools legislation in 1994 in response to the federal GFSA requirement. The Weapons in Schools legislation was modified in 1997 to include "look-alike firearms," allowing a school district to suspend or expel a student for up to one year if the student acts with malice as defined under [RCW 9A.04.110](#) and displays an instrument that appears to be a firearm on public school premises, public school-provided transportation, or in areas of facilities that are being used exclusively by public schools.

UPDATE STATUS 2022–2023

Table 1: Weapons in Schools, 2022–2023

	Incidents		Interventions	
	Public K–12	Private K–12	Suspensions	Expulsions
Handgun	82	0	41	38
Rifle or Shotgun	5	0	4	1
Multiple Firearms	7	0	7	0
Other Firearms	117	0	101	8
Knife/Dagger	1,248	12	1,129	12
Other Weapon	996	3	905	9
Firearm & Other Weapon	105	0	92	7

Source: Data are collected annually at the district level and reported to OSPI through the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). Data is collected annually for private schools through the Education Data System (EDS).

Table 2: Weapons in Public Schools, 1-year Trend

	2021–22	2022–23	Difference	% Change
Student Enrollment (Public schools)	1,091,343	1,096,695	5,352	0.49%
Incidents (Public schools)	2,294	2,560	266	11.60%
Suspensions (Public schools)	2,034	2,279	245	12.05%
Expulsions (Public schools)	148	75	-73	-49.32%

Source: Student Enrollment Data is reported from the OSPI Report Card. Incident Data is collected annually at the district level and reported to OSPI through the Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). Data is collected annually for private schools through the Education Data System (EDS).

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