



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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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....3
Executive Summary4
Update Status 2023–2024.....5
Table 1: Weapons in Schools 2023–2024.....5
Table 2: Weapons in Public Schools 1-year Trend5
Graph 1: Public and Private School Incidents 2-year Trend.....6
Conclusion and next steps.....6
Legal Notice8

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The Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) was originally enacted on March 31, 1994, as part of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Public Law 103-227).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 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.

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 2023–2024 school year, 2,180 incidents involving the possession of a weapon were reported by public and private schools in Washington State. Of those, 263 incidents involved the possession of a firearm. There was a 15.2% decrease in weapons incidents reported during the school year 2023–2024 compared to those reported in the school year 2022–2023.

The reported 2,180 incidents involving the possession of a weapon resulted in 2,022 exclusionary interventions (note: data on interventions is only reported by public schools). In the 2023–2024 school year, there was also a 14.4% decrease in suspensions and a 4.0% decrease in expulsions reported compared to those reported in the 2022–2023 school year.

UPDATE STATUS 2023–2024

Table 1: Weapons in Schools 2023–2024

Weapon Type	Incidents		Interventions*	
	Public K–12	Private K–12	Suspensions	Expulsions
Handgun	91	0	56	29
Rifle or Shotgun	3	0	3	0
Multiple Firearms	5	0	2	3
Other Firearms	82	3	70	5
Knife or Dagger	1007	5	917	9
Other Weapon	905	0	835	15
Firearm and Other Weapon	79	0	67	11
Total	2172	8	1950	72

*Data on interventions is only available for public schools.

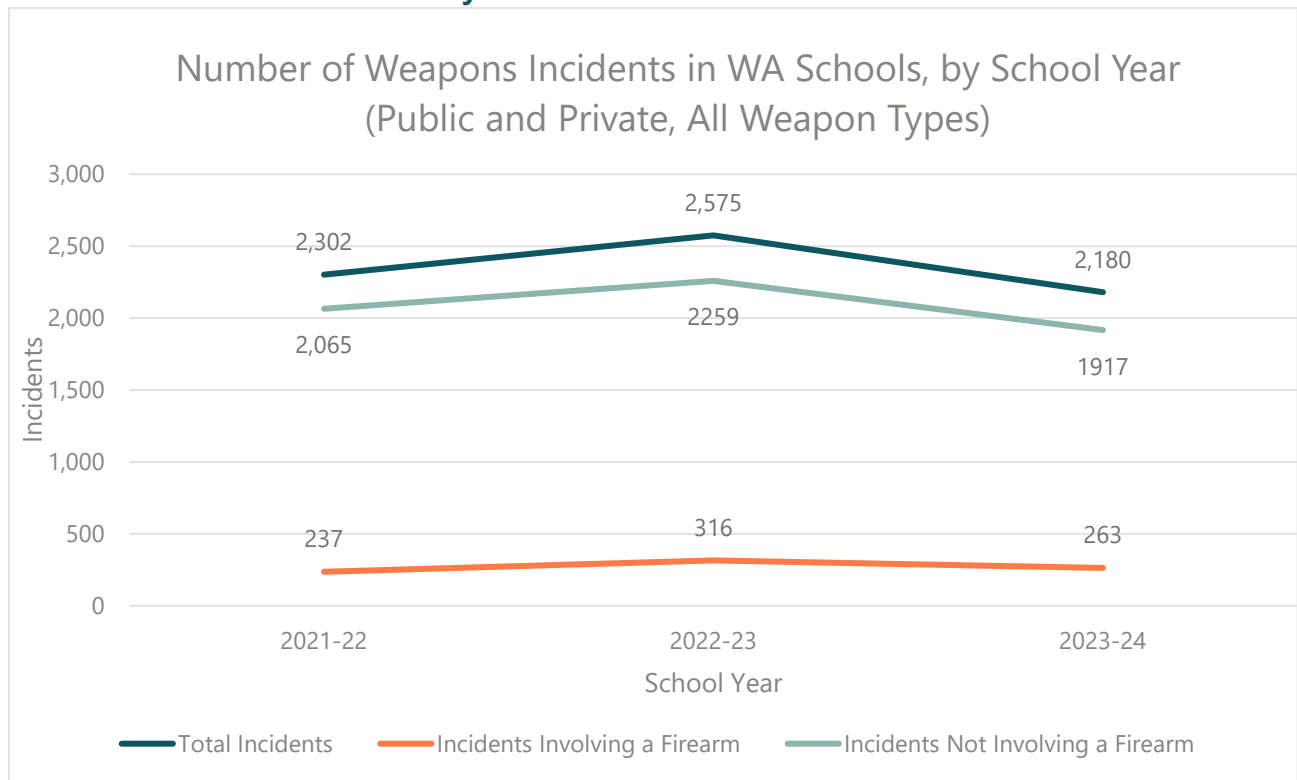
Source: Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). Data is collected annually for private schools through the Education Data System (EDS).

Table 2: Weapons in Public Schools 1-year Trend

	2022–23	2023–24	Difference	% Change
Incidents (Public Schools)	2,560	2,172	-388	-15.16%
Suspensions (Public Schools)	2,279	1,950	-329	-14.44%
Expulsions (Public Schools)	75	72	-3	-4.00%

Source: Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS).

Graph 1: Public and Private School Incidents 2-year Trend



Source: Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). Data is collected annually for private schools through the Education Data System (EDS).

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The Washington Statewide K–12 Safety Network is a partnership between the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) School Safety Center and the Association of Educational Service Districts (AESD) Regional School Safety Centers. There are nine (9) Regional School Safety Centers. This network has actively worked with districts to enhance school safety and student well-being since 2019. The network provides critical services including threat assessment training and coordination, suicide prevention, behavioral health support, and comprehensive school safety and emergency response planning. The safety network's initiatives promote safer school environments through emergency planning, proactively addressing potential threats and providing early interventions.

OSPI will continue to report yearly data to the legislature.

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