



News Coverage

Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont Regional School Districts
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[Mohawk Trail Regional School District plans trainings following staff misconduct allegations](#)

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BUCKLAND — The Mohawk Trail Regional School District plans to use a team effort to move forward from recent allegations of staff misconduct and inappropriate relationships with students, and has outlined a plan to learn about such cases and how to report them.

Superintendent Sheryl Stanton told the School Committee on Wednesday that the district is working with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments and Enough Abuse, a nonprofit dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse, as part of FRCOG's Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).

"Child sexual abuse prevention is a critical component of the plan with a goal of increasing child sexual abuse prevention policies, systems and environmental changes at youth-serving organizations and schools in our region," Stanton said. "I think we know why we're doing this. However, just to add some national context, the U.S. Department of Education reported that 4.5 million or 10% of K-12 students across the country report sexual misconduct by school personnel. Students in our district have experienced sexual misconduct by adults in our own schools."

Stanton said the district's leadership team has met with Enough Abuse and reviewed the screening tools used when hiring employees, and the team is working to develop professional development training for the entire staff. This will be added to the yearly staff trainings to complement required 51A trainings for mandatory reporters. The district also is looking to bring in family-based and student-based resources and curriculum to identify boundary-crossing behaviors that can lead to grooming and abuse.

Stanton also said the district is planning to update its hiring and personnel policies to include specific questions about prior Department of Children and Families (DCF) investigations and situations where someone chose to resign in lieu of termination. The district leadership team also plans to conduct building walk-throughs and survey students about unsafe spaces, and will work to create an environment where students are safe and feel comfortable coming forward with concerns.

"To all of you who have emailed me and shared your survivor's stories, I am very sorry that you have carried the trauma of those experiences with you. I am sorry that we have not created the spaces in our schools, wherever those schools are or were, that were safe for you, but I will also say 'enough,'" Stanton said. "I am asking every one of you in our communities to say 'enough.' Our schools will be safe spaces for our students. They will be spaces where our adults can bring forward concerns without fear of retaliation or being dismissed."

Allegations against coach, school resource officer

The school district's plans come in response to news of two misconduct allegations. Last month, a former student filed a [civil lawsuit](#) against former Mohawk Trail ski coach Sean Loomis, alleging that he sexually assaulted her during her high school years.

Two members of the alleged victim's family came to Wednesday's School Committee meeting to demand an apology from the school district for its handling of the situation and the lack of repercussions for Loomis, whose contract to be ski coach for Mohawk Trail wasn't renewed for the 2024-2025 school year.

Additionally, last week the [Berkshire District Attorney's Office](#) concluded an investigation on another case that was reported in January. The office determined there was reason to believe that Shelburne Police Detective Tucker Jenkins, who was serving as Mohawk Trail's school resource officer and co-taught a forensic science class, had a relationship with an 18-year-old student that went "beyond that of a teacher/student." However, the DA's probe determined that no crime had occurred as the student was over the age of consent, which in Massachusetts is 16 years of age.

School Committee Chair Martha Thurber said the district followed its policies and reported the allegation to the police and DCF as soon as administrators became aware of it. School district policy and state privacy laws prevent them from commenting on the situation while it is being actively investigated.

"That's the most exhausting part — during the investigation we're not able to comment," Thurber said. "It's never the district's intention to withhold or hide information."

Thurber said she understands the community's frustration with the lack of communication during that time and as part of the district's work moving forward, they plans to review those policies to improve transparency.

In a letter to the superintendent that was shared with the School Committee during Wednesday's meeting, Shelburne Police Chief Gregory Bardwell said the district's plans for moving forward were "commendable." However, Bardwell expressed that Stanton's March 31 email to the school community spread an "egregious misrepresentation of the facts" of the case.

"The report from the Berkshire County District Attorney's Office explicitly indicates that there was reasonable suspicion based only on secondhand information," Bardwell wrote. "It is crucial that we maintain a commitment to factual accuracy and due process, especially in such sensitive matters.

"The implications of your statements can have lasting repercussions for individuals who have yet to be proven guilty of any misconduct," Bardwell continued. "It is imperative that we uphold our responsibility to protect the rights and reputations of all individuals until conclusive evidence is presented."

Members of the public in attendance at Wednesday's meeting also spoke in support of Jenkins, and called for an apology from the school district and the nemedia.

“His sense of duty and caring is not specific to us, but to the entire community,” said John Musacchio, a Heath resident and family friend of Jenkins. “It’s young people like Tucker that have restored my hope for the future. Whatever opportunity Tucker is presented with, he will show extreme gratitude and his potential to grow through his dedication, ability and character.”

Musacchio was later removed from the building for interrupting the regular business portion of the meeting, and for shouting and swearing at committee members.

“This has become war, and I will fight tooth and nail until Tucker is exonerated,” Musacchio said, “and given the due praise he deserves, and that it be made public in the media with apologetic overtones. Let the battle begin.”

School Committee policy states that the public comment period is not a public forum. Committee members can listen to comments and take notes to address later, however, they cannot respond and engage in discussion at that time. However, seemingly in response to public comments, Stanton reminded the audience that the district was not engaging in “a war.”

“This is going to take all of us, no matter who we are and what side we’re on. This is not a war. This is something we have to deal with together. We have to do this together,” Stanton said. “I promise you this will be our work going forward because we all have to say ‘enough.’”

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