



To: Senate Education

From: Lauren Thomas & Jay Nichols , Executive Director

Date: Feb 10, 2023

Subject: School Sports Safety & Spectator Behavior

The Vermont Principals' Association supports school leaders to improve the equity and quality of educational opportunities for all students.

For the record, Lauren Thomas and Jay Nichols, Assistant Executive Director in charge of athletics and Executive Director, respectively of the Vermont Principals' Association (VPA). It is important to share data with the committee to both contextualize and depict many of the mitigating steps the VPA and our partners have instituted to provide student-athletes with a playing environment that supports their social, emotional, and physical well-being.

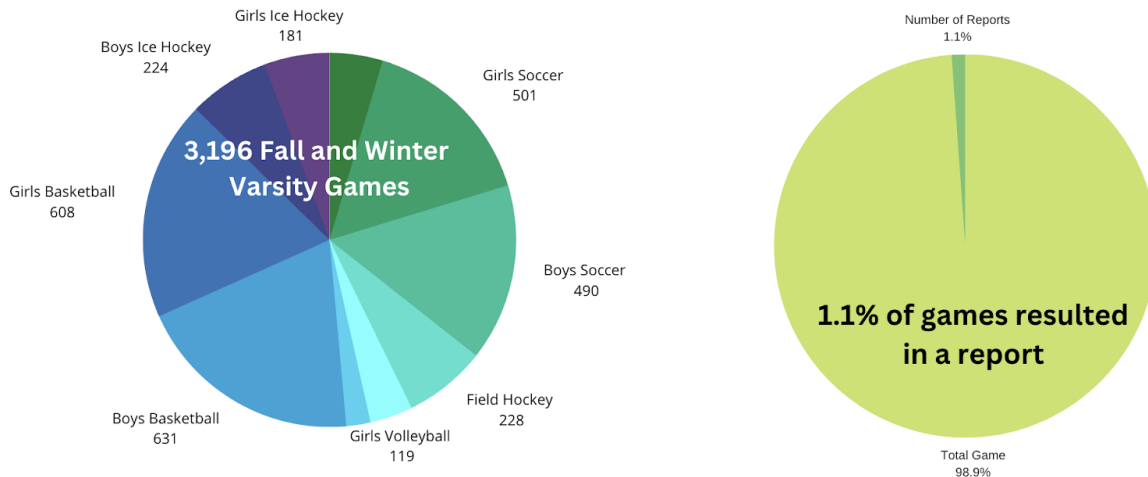
To provide student athletes with access to safe playing environments, the VPA with partners have introduced a number of strategies, many of which we are the first in the nation to implement statewide. Here are a few examples:

- [Link to VPA Hate Speech Policy](#)
- Incident Response Form: [Data](#)
 - Reasons for increased reports:
 - More visibility and access to the reporting form: multiple media exposures, references in pregame statement, QR codes on program and media, conversations and communications to and with athletic directors and school administrators, link in the VPA Hate Speech Policy, increased signage. [Example of Signage](#)
- Our statement that is read at games- [Pregame statement- Various Versions\](#)
- VPA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Athletics and Activities Committee:
 - Monthly meeting of a 24 member committee

- Comprised of Athletic Directors, School Administrators, Students, VPA Staff
- [VPA Guide to Good Sportsmanship](#)

Below are two diagrams that depict information collected at the VPA from Varsity Team Events scheduled on ScoreBook Live (our official record keeping platform for Varsity Sports). These are recorded statistics from the beginning of the school year until February .

Number of games by sport



Secretary of Education, Dan French, has communicated with the VPA and other stakeholders and will be convening a meeting to discuss these issues and work collaboratively with others to try and provide further resources to schools when something inappropriate happens at events and to help us to be as proactive as possible to get the message out to everyone about the necessity of communities and spectators themselves to be upstanders instead of bystanders to address inappropriate behavior at its source.

It is important to note that the increase of uncivil behavior in society since the end of the pandemic has been noted in all sectors. Schools, hospitals, law enforcement and so on. Moreover, this is not just a Vermont problem as Governor Scott mentioned in his press conference earlier this week. However, it is in the sports arena that societal ills often manifest the most prominently. Since the beginning of this year, the VPA and the other 49 states have been working with the National Federation of High Schools (the governing body of high school athletics in the United States) on a Bench Bad Behavior campaign. Here is a resource to this national campaign from NFHS.

<https://benchbadbehavior.com/> and [Bench Bad Behavior Public Service Announcements from the NFHS](#)

