



Safety Last:
New York City's Public Schools
Are More Dangerous Than Ever

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Key Findings:

- **Alarming Spike in Violence in City Schools:** The number of violent incidents in city schools rose sharply last year, under Mayor de Blasio and Chancellor Carmen Farina's first full year managing the Department of Education -- from 12,978 in 2013-14 to 15,934 in 2014-15, a disturbing 23 percent increase.
- **School Violence Index at Recorded High:** New York City's School Violence Index (SVI) rose by 22 percent in 2014-5, the highest level recorded. New York State uses the SVI to determine which schools are "persistently dangerous," as required by federal law. The School Violence Index is a ratio of violent incidents to enrollment in a school and is determined by the number of incidents, the seriousness of the incidents, and the school's enrollment.
- **Data Suggests de Blasio Administration is Misleading Public:** Data suggests that Mayor de Blasio's assertion that crime in city schools is down 29 percent since 2011-12, most recently invoked during his State of the City this month, is at best an incomplete picture. There were more than twice as many "assaults with physical injur[ies]" reported by city schools to the State Education Department than total number of crimes under Mayor de Blasio's calculations.
- **Students at Grave Risk in City Schools:** The alarming spike in violence in city schools makes it difficult for students to learn and leaves students in serious risk of danger and bodily harm:
 - A violent incident occurs in district schools every 4.5 minutes.
 - A weapon is recovered in district schools once every 28.4 minutes.
 - Few students are protected: 93% of the city's district school students attend schools where a violent incident has occurred over the past year.
 - In the five months since the 2015-2016 school year began, 42 weapons have been confiscated from 36 elementary schools across the city.

Separate, Unequal, and Unsafe:

New York City's schools are profoundly unsafe. Ninety-three percent of students in the city's public schools attend schools where a violent incident has occurred in the past year. [1] A violent incident occurs in New York City schools once every 4.5 minutes. [2] A weapon is recovered once every 28.4 minutes. According to the New York State Department of Education, 2015 was the most violent year recorded in New York City public schools. [3]

If this sounds different than the narrative coming from the de Blasio administration, that's because the reality is indeed different.

In his 2016 State of the City address, Mayor de Blasio claimed "crime in our schools has gone down 29 percent" touting his administration's new approach to school discipline, which has prioritized reducing suspensions while allegedly reducing school crime by a significant margin.

False Progress:

The progress Mayor de Blasio cites is based on the city Department of Education's Agency Performance Report on school safety, which tracks the number of crimes and incidents in city schools on an annual basis. [4]

According to the most recent DOE report, "major crimes" and "other crimes" categories have dropped significantly since 2011, from 4,107 in 2010-11 to 2,900 in 2014-15 – a 29 percent decline. Much of this decline is attributed to Mayor de Blasio's time in office.

But an analysis using the State Education Department's School Violence Index (SVI), which is compiled by schools in order to comply with federal safety law, shows that 2015 was the most violent year on record in New York City's public schools. The number of violent incidents has actually risen sharply - from 12,978 in 2013-14 to 15,934 in 2014-15, a disturbing 22.7 percent increase.

State Data Accurately Records Violent Incidents in City Schools:

The Safe Schools Against Violence in Education Act of 2000 requires all school districts in New York State to record and report violent and disruptive incidents in city schools spanning 20 categories, from homicide to false alarms. Within 24 hours of the incident, the school's incident reporting officer records the incident on the "Online Occurrence Reporting System." The Department of Education's Office of Safety and Youth Development then consults Violent and Disruptive Incident Report (VADIR) guidelines to determine whether the incident should be reported to the State Education Department.

New York State uses VADIR reports to comply with a federal law requiring states to determine which elementary and secondary schools are "persistently dangerous."

The School Violence Index (SVI)

The SVI is a ratio of violent incidents to enrollment in a school and is determined by the number of incidents, the seriousness of the incidents, and the school's enrollment. The table below provides the weights for each type of incident that carries a weight.

Incident Category (All of these Types of Incidents are Considered to be Violent Incidents)	Weight
Homicide	100
Forcible Sex Offenses	60
Other Sex Offenses	45
Robbery	40
Assault with Serious Physical Injury	40
Arson	30
Kidnapping	30
Assault with Physical Injury	30
Reckless Endangerment	25
All Other Incident Categories Involving the Use of a Weapon	25
Weapons Possession	15

Source: NYSED

Unreported Violent and Criminal Activity:

Closer examination of the numbers reported by city schools shows just how out of touch the city’s data is with the reality in our schools. **The city’s total of 6,875 school safety crimes and incidents is impossible to reconcile with the 15,934 violent incidents reported by the state.**

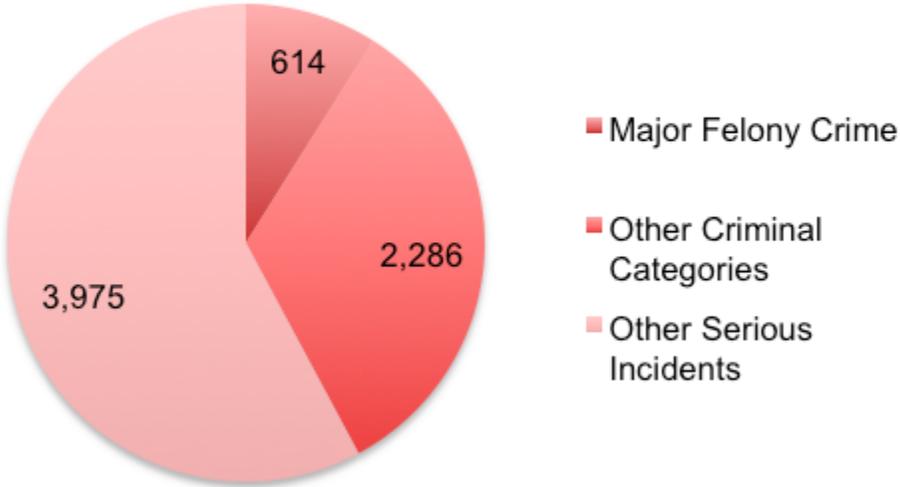
The number of assaults with physical injury reported by the state (7,141) during the 2014-15 school year almost passed the total number of school safety incidents reported by the Department of Education’s Agency Performance Report (6,875).

At most, the city’s data includes just 43 percent of the school violence incidents reported by the state – leaving more than 9,000 assaults, violent sex offenses, weapon possessions and other crimes unaccounted for.

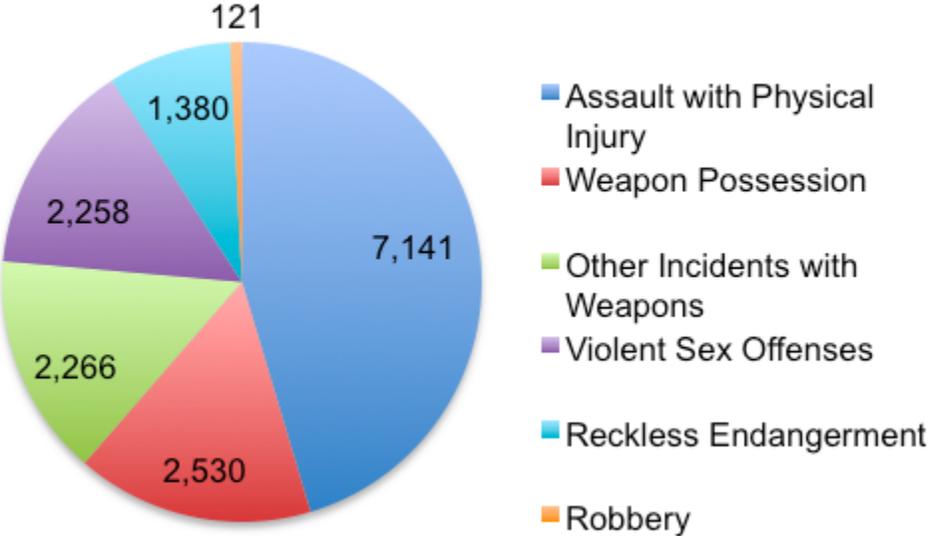
Violent incidents that the Department of Education’s Office of Safety and Youth Development reports to the State Education Department should be counted in the Department of Education’s Agency Performance Report, which is used in the annual Mayor’s Management Reports. Indeed, the categories in the Agency Performance Report span major crimes to non-criminal incidents, such as trespassing and even loitering.

	NYC DOE Agency Performance Report				State Education Department School Violence Data	
School Year	Major Felony Crime	Other Criminal Categories	Other Incidents	Total Incidents	Total Violent Incidents	School Violence Index
2011	801	3089	5119	9009	12902	0.357
2012	812	3295	5365	9472	14542	0.407
2013	699	2626	4350	7675	12940	0.360
2014	654	2485	3811	6950	12978	0.358
2015	614	2286	3975	6875	15934	0.435

School Safety Incidents: De Blasio Administration

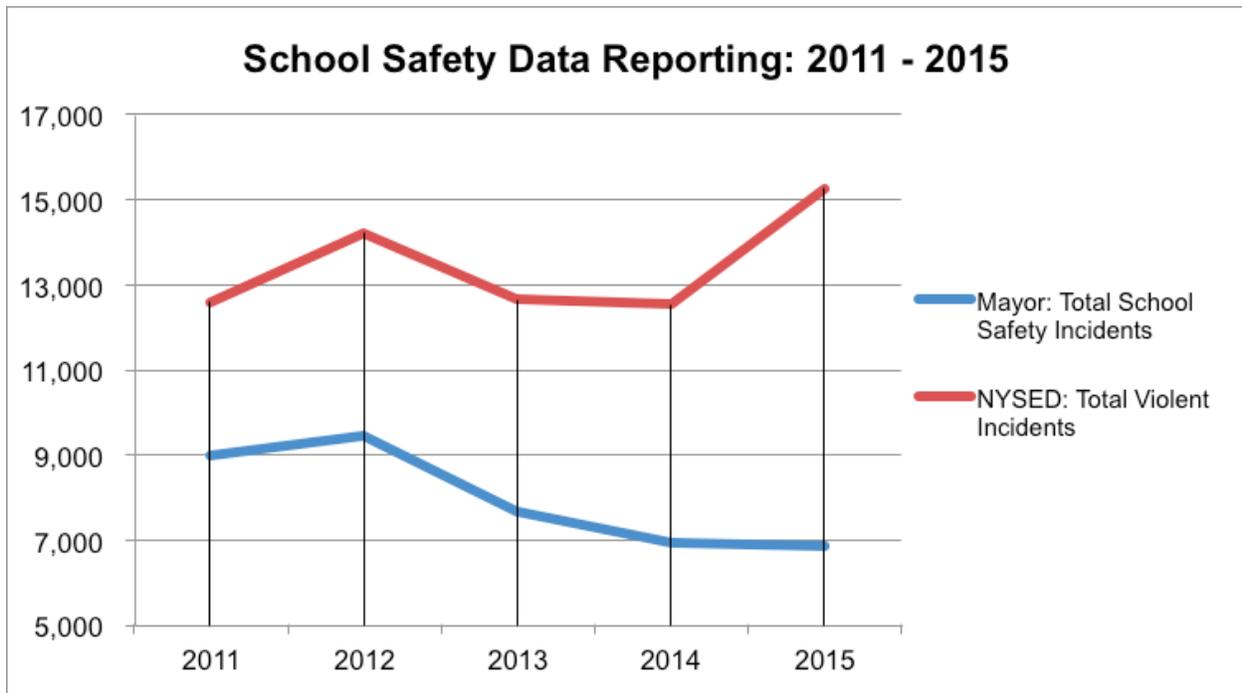


Violent School Incidents: NYSED



Misleading the Public:

In the final years of Mayor Bloomberg's tenure, trends in the city's school safety data tracked closely with state data on school violence – **but under Mayor de Blasio's watch, the city's tally of school incidents deviate sharply from the state's data.** Despite the largest spike in school violence on record by state standards, de Blasio's data shows an improvement in school safety.



The data raises significant questions that the de Blasio administration must be held accountable for. How can the city claim a 29 percent decline in school crime when the state metric designed to measure school safety has school violence rising by 23 percent? Why did trends in the city's school safety data match the state's at the conclusion of Mayor Bloomberg's tenure, but begin to deviate sharply under Mayor de Blasio? Why does the city's data fail to account for more than 9,000 assaults, violent sex offenses, robberies and other crimes?

New York City's parents deserve honest answers to these questions. But more importantly, they deserve a school system that tells the truth about whether their children's schools are safe or not.

A Path Forward:

Almost two years ago, Mayor Bill de Blasio laid out a vision for the city's education system at Riverside Church, stating "that we will save every child, that we will reach every child, that no system is actually working unless every child has opportunity."

No one can disagree with this vision. But before we can save every child, or provide every child with opportunity, we must first provide every child with a safe learning environment. And until now, the de Blasio administration has failed to acknowledge the declining safety in our schools, while taking a victory lap for making our schools safer.

This is simply unacceptable.

A school system where violent incidents are up 23 percent is a system in a state of emergency. It's time for the de Blasio administration to face facts and provide New York City's families with an honest account of how unsafe their schools really are, so that together, we can begin working toward policy solutions that will truly make our schools safer.

Endnotes

[1] [Violent and Disruptive Incident Report](#) (“VADIR”) data is published online by the New York State Education Department’s Information and Reporting Services. Incident categories officially designated as “violent” by the state include: homicide; forcible sex offenses; other sex offenses; robberies; assaults with physical injury; arson; kidnapping; assaults with physical injury; reckless endangerment; weapon possession; and all other incident categories involving use of a weapon. NYSED assigns weighted values to the categories based on severity. The data is current through the 2014-15 school year.

[2] School-year length was calculated based on New York State’s statutorily mandated [180-day minimum](#) and the [6 1/3 hour school day](#) established by NYC’s most recent contract with the teachers’ union. The school year runs approximately 1,140 hours, or 68,400 minutes.

[3] NYSED assigns [weighted values](#) to each violent incident category included in VADIR data. The state determines School Violence Index (“SVI”) scores by calculating the product of each category’s incident total and weighted score value and then dividing by student enrollment. During the 2014-15 school year, New York City district schools reported the largest violent incident total and highest School Violence Index score of any year on record.

[4] The Mayor’s Office of Operations’ [Citywide Performance Report](#) portal reports School Safety incident totals for each fiscal year beginning in 2011.