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TOP STORY

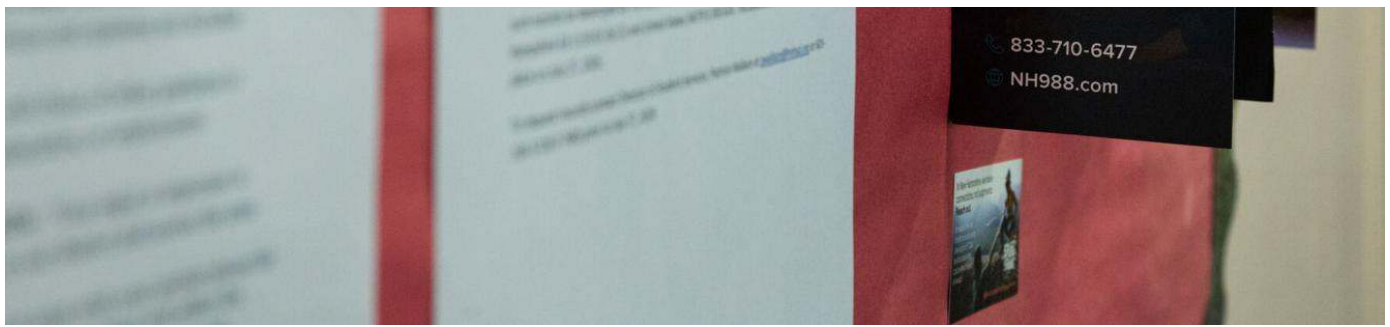
'It was so unsafe for her at that school'

By Noah Diedrich Sentinel Staff
Aug 15, 2026

One Hinsdale mother alleged that, for over a year, her middle-school-aged daughter was sexually harassed and sexually assaulted by a male student in her grade.

But despite her and her daughter reporting this, the mother said it took months for the school to complete its investigation, and she doesn't feel her daughter was adequately protected.





A N.H. Rapid Response Access Point pamphlet on July 28 at the Hinsdale School District office in Hinsdale. The access point offers support for mental health crises and other challenges.

Bailey Stover / Sentinel Staff

Following this investigation, Principal Anna Roth concluded the boy had not engaged in the alleged behavior. She told The Sentinel such investigations can vary significantly in length.

The girl's mother also alleged administrators failed to notify her after a different student physically assaulted her daughter on school grounds.

Ultimately, she withdrew her daughter from Hinsdale Middle/High.

Principal Roth opened the harassment investigation in October 2024, according to a copy of the resulting report the girl's mother shared with The Sentinel.

The girl alleged the boy “touches her inappropriately and suggests that they should engage in conduct of a sexual nature,” according to the report, which is unsigned but lists Roth as the investigator.



The report noted the girl saying the behavior — which she said included the boy touching her thigh and putting his hand between her legs — made her uncomfortable. She said it had been going on, at that point, for months, in addition to during the previous school year, according to the report.

School camera footage from Oct. 17, 2024, shows the alleged perpetrator “loitering outside the middle school bathrooms” and “repeatedly looking at the bathroom entrances” for three minutes while the girl was inside, the report said.

Roth interviewed three other students about the alleged behavior, according to the report, which said two denied seeing or hearing any inappropriate conduct from the boy. The third said she was in the bathroom with the girl on Oct. 17 while the boy was outside. This third student said the girl asked her to walk out with her, as she did not feel safe around him.

These interviews took place within a span of 10 days in October 2024, per the report. But based on that same report, Roth didn’t interview the alleged perpetrator until March 4, 2025.





Hinsdale Middle/High School on July 28 in Hinsdale.

Bailey Stover / Sentinel Staff

In December 2024, the girl's mother emailed Roth, and asked for an update on the investigation.

In her reply to the mother, Roth said the investigation was ongoing, but she needed to interview her daughter to complete it. The report reflects that Roth had interviewed the girl twice two months prior, in October.

Roth told The Sentinel in response to questions for this article that she often interviews the complainant again before closing an investigation to see if they



have anything new to report. In this case, the report does not indicate the girl was interviewed a third time.

“Why is this boy STILL able to speak with her, harass her, make her feel uncomfortable, sit next to her, so on so forth?” the mother wrote in the Dec. 17 correspondence she shared with The Sentinel.

When asked by The Sentinel in July if any efforts were made to mitigate contact between the two students while the investigation was ongoing, Roth said that the girl “was offered but declined supportive measures stating, ‘I just want him to stop.’”

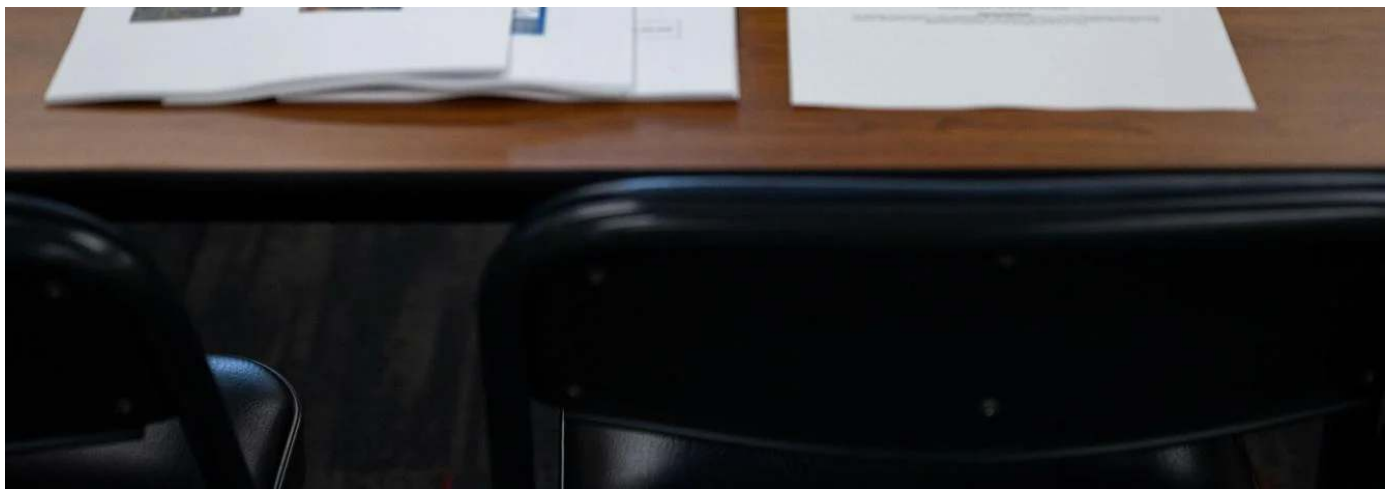
When interviewed March 4, the boy denied all the accusations against him, according to the interview summary included in the report. Per the report, the boy said the girl had “previously accused [him] of behavior that he denies.”

The report lists no other interview with the boy, and Roth did not answer an emailed follow-up question from The Sentinel about whether any others took place.

On March 5 — the day after interviewing the boy — Roth closed the investigation, concluding that, “Based on a preponderance of evidence, I find that [the boy] did NOT touch [the girl] in a sexually inappropriate manner, nor did he make suggestive comments to her in October 2024,” the report said.

For the girl’s mother, that finding was a profound failure.





Hinsdale Middle/High School Principal Anna Roth's nameplate for a school board meeting on July 28 at the Hinsdale School District office in Hinsdale.

Bailey Stover / Sentinel Staff

“Not protecting a child that came forward for protection because the boy claimed he didn’t do it and the cameras didn’t pick it up is exactly why so many [sexual assault] victims fear coming forward,” she said in an email to The Sentinel.

She said she was also troubled by how long it took for Roth to complete the investigation.

“When stuff comes to sexual harassment, that’s a pressing issue that should be addressed pretty soon, not months later,” she said.

Roth told The Sentinel that investigations under Title IX — a federal civil rights law that prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual assault and harassment — can vary widely in length, and that the timeline is often “impacted by a delay in receiving permission from a parent/guardian to move forward with an interview.”

Roth said Title IX investigations require a preponderance of evidence to result in remedial action. She also said that, sometimes, student conduct does not meet the criteria for Title IX but can be addressed afterward through a school’s code of conduct, which would not be shared with the reporting party or their family for confidentiality reasons.

The security camera footage alone, Roth said, “in the absence of other evidence or

corroborating witnesses, was not enough to prove severe and pervasive conduct that would effectively limit any student's access to their education," which is the standard for Title IX.

When asked why the investigative report did not indicate she had asked the boy about the footage, Roth wrote that those reports "include relevant summaries of interviews; they are not full transcripts."

The mother said she reported the situation to Superintendent David Ryan, his administrative assistant and the N.H. Department of Education, but did not receive responses from any of them.

A representative from the state education department did not respond to a reporter's email Tuesday asking for comment.

Ryan told The Sentinel he was copied on a string of emails between the parent, Roth and Assistant Principal Christopher Ponce in December 2024 and January 2025, which ended with the parent accepting an invitation to meet with Roth on Jan. 8.

Ryan said he did not have any record of the parent contacting his assistant or reaching out to him after the January meeting with Roth.

"As with all issues in the schools, we ask that parents work with the school principals on solving issues prior to bringing them to the superintendent level," he wrote in emailed responses to questions for this article.

Ryan said there is no typical timeline between when an allegation is made and when an accused person is interviewed in a Title IX investigation; what is typical, he said, is that the accused person is interviewed last.

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"Should there be delays in gathering the information and evidence because of parental permissions, absences or other impediments to the process, the delay in interviewing the accused can be greater than desired," he wrote.



‘Scared’

In a separate alleged incident in mid-December 2024, the woman said her daughter said she was physically assaulted by another student. Her mother said she didn’t find out about this until her daughter came home from school that day.

School administrators are legally required to inform parents about bullying incidents within 48 hours, the time frame set by a state law that a Hinsdale district policy also cites. Under a different state law, assaults require a written report to law enforcement within 48 hours, and if the alleged victim is a student, the school must immediately notify the person responsible for the student’s welfare.



Rain pools on a window on Aug. 3 in Hinsdale.

Ethan Weston / Sentinel Staff



Speaking on behalf of Assistant Principal Ponce in a Dec. 20, 2024, email to the mother, Roth said that “With respect to the assault, I believe Mr. Ponce left you a

message about this and he extended his apologies for not informing you.”

In July, however, Ponce told The Sentinel in response to emailed questions for this article that the incident was not an assault, but “a mutual conflict that was minor in nature. It was overlooked accidentally, and this was explained to [the girl’s mother] with a sincere apology.”

He also said it was not a bullying matter and did not require reporting.

The U.S. Department of Education defines bullying as “unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time.”

In her Dec. 20 email to the girl’s mother, Roth said the girl “was not injured and was okay upon interview, however the incident was dealt with promptly through our disciplinary process.”

“The safety of our school is our top priority, both physical and emotional,” she wrote. “We look into and respond appropriately to incidences as they are reported and would encourage both you and [your daughter] to continue to report any concerns you have.”

The mother replied to Roth that, though her daughter may not have been physically hurt, “she was scared and emotionally distraught, especially when the same child continued to bully her immediately after the incident and retaliated making false claims against [her].”

The girl’s mother said she withdrew her daughter from the middle/high school that March and now homeschools her.



“I tried so hard to keep [her] in there, because a 13-year-old needs her school and her friends, and she really dragged her feet,” she said. “But at the end of the day, I was like, ‘I can’t anymore.’ It was so unsafe for her at that school.”



The Sentinel is withholding children's names in this article because they are minors. The Sentinel is not identifying the mother to avoid identifying her daughter.



Parents say school failed to protect their daughters

By Noah Diedrich Sentinel Staff  3 min to read



'I saw history repeating itself'

By Noah Diedrich Sentinel Staff  9 min to read



Not believed

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