



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Youth Court:

Making the Case for
Student Ownership
of School Culture



Volunteers for Youth Justice

For over 43 years, Volunteers for Youth Justice (VYJ), a youth-serving non-profit based in Shreveport, Louisiana, has been providing diversion and intervention programs for the local juvenile justice system.





Volunteers for Youth Justice

VYJ's community-based Teen Court Program has been in operation for the past 28 years. Seven years ago, VYJ ventured into the school-based Teen Court setting as a means to prevent the school-to-prison pipeline. We seek to find ways to intervene with youth to prevent their involvement in the court system.



The Road to Raider Court

Raider Court

Implementation of Raider Court at Huntington.

August 2019

Huntington High School

Dr. Mitchell's first year at Huntington which has a business and law magnet component.

August 2018

Lakeshore Middle School

Lakeshore Middle School closed and Dr. Mitchell becomes Principal of Fair Park.

May 2017

Fair Park Middle School

Fair Park opens as a middle school. We implemented Tribal Court, the first school-based peer court in the state of Louisiana.

August 2017





Volunteers for Youth Justice

CULTURE & CLIMATE 2017-2018

Prior to coming to Huntington

Classroom referrals total = 2473

Total number of students on campus = 780

Freshman on campus = 249





Volunteers for Youth Justice

CULTURE & CLIMATE 2018-2019

without Raider Court
1st year as Principal

Classroom referrals total = 1423

Total number of students on campus = 884

Freshman on campus = 286



RAIDER COURT

What is it?



Raider Court is a school-based, student-administered court that hears cases of students who commit minor rule infractions at Huntington High School in Shreveport, Louisiana.

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The respondent must admit that he or she is guilty in order to participate in the Raider Court.



RAIDER COURT

Objective



The philosophy of Raider Court is to utilize peer pressure as a positive force, help young people accept accountability for their actions while educating respondents and members of the court about the legal system.

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It is a goal of Raider Court to create a sense of school pride and community while also creating productive active citizens.



THE RAIDER COURT PROCESS

Referrals come from the Assistant Principal and together with the Raider Court Coordinator, they determine which cases would be appropriate for Raider Court.

The Assistant Principal obtains permission from parent/guardian for student to participate in Raider Court.

Case is placed on the Raider Court Docket (within 24-48hrs of infraction).

After hearing the case, notification is sent to Involved Teacher, Assistant Principal, and Principal to inform of outcome of case.

Successful Completion or Non-Completion documentation is placed in Student's Discipline File.

Court Members follow up with respondents weekly for mentoring, grade checks, and tutoring if needed.



RAIDER COURT

Common Infractions

- Willful disobedience
- Disrespect to teacher/authority
- Misuse of technology
- Disruption to class
- Horse-playing

Possible Sentences

- Written apology
- Essay
- Detention
- Helping the offended teacher
- School beautification projects
- Life skills videos

RAIDER COURT

Members

The members of the Court are Juniors or Seniors who are enrolled in a Debate or Law Studies class.

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They serve as Master Jurors, Bailiffs, and/or Clerks.

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Court members DO NOT determine guilt but DO impose sanctions that reflect restorative justice and accountability for peers.



RAIDER COURT

Member Requirements



- Must maintain a 2.75 GPA or higher throughout the school year
- Expected to maintain an exemplary disciplinary record
- Expected to accumulate 20+ hours of Community Service throughout the school year
- Must demonstrate sensitivity and maturity
- Must maintain strict confidentiality of court proceedings





*Raider Court Members
Swearing-In Ceremony*



RAIDER COURT

Member Benefits



- Opportunity to be a campus leader by taking a stand and encouraging others to make better choices
- Interaction, instruction, and mentorship from adult attorneys and volunteers
- Meet new people and form friendships
- Gain knowledge of the Court System and its functions



RAIDER COURT

Member Benefits



- Foster and cultivate public speaking skills which can translate into self-confidence and pride
- Acquire volunteer service hours which is looked upon favorably by universities, scholarship committees, fraternities/sororities, and the community
- Develop a love for the legal field that may encourage a future in it



RAIDER COURT:

Key Strategies for Ensuring a Restorative Approach

- Train court members to understand that the purpose of a peer court is to repair harm and alter behavior, not to punish.
- Train court members to use strategies that help the respondent understand the effects of their behavior and make amends for that behavior.
- Recognition of respondents completing the sanctions and encouraging respondents to become members of peer court in the future.

RAIDER COURT:

Key Strategies for Ensuring a Restorative Approach

- Implement court as a Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS), providing a constructive alternative to in and out of school suspension, as well as other disciplinary practices.
- Involve students in decisions that affect them by listening to their views and genuinely taking their opinions into account through juror deliberations.
- Make sure that respondents clearly understand the reasons for the sanctions and what is expected of them.



Volunteers for Youth Justice

CULTURE & CLIMATE 2019-2020 1st year with Raider Court

Classroom referrals total = 778

Freshman only = 303

Total number of students on campus = 1019

Freshman on campus = 320

(Our last day on campus that school year was March 13, 2020. This was 8 weeks prior to the end of school.)





Volunteers for Youth Justice

Then the pandemic happened and everything changed in schools across the country, so we made adjustments to fit the needs of our students.

Many of our students fell behind while participating in virtual learning. When they returned to in-person learning we saw a need to help these students catch up academically.



RAIDER COURT:

Peer Tutoring

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- Many times, infractions occur in classes in which a respondent is struggling academically.
 - Raider Court members offer tutoring in the subject matter the student needs assistance.
 - Because the Raider Court members are upper-classmen, they have the experience to offer the freshmen respondents academic help.
 - With the tutoring component, 9th grade instructors have seen a visible improvement in the performance of those struggling students.
 - The Raider Court tutoring services are now being utilized by other members of the student body who are not involved in the Raider Court process.

RAIDER COURT:

Peer Mentorship

- Raider Court members follow-up with respondents to ensure they are successful in remaining out of trouble.
- Members achieve this by doing weekly check-ins. This includes visiting the respondents' classroom where the infraction occurred.
- Speaking to the teacher to get his/her opinion on how the student is doing in the class since the infraction
- Observing the respondents' interactions with their peers
- Speaking to the respondents to determine how they are doing and if they need any additional assistance from the Raider Court mentor.

RAIDER COURT:

Conflict Resolution/Mediation

- Raider Court members offer Conflict Resolution and Mediation Services to students who the disciplinarian has identified as part of a potential volatile situation that could escalate into a physical altercation.
- Members meet with both groups of opposing parties in order to give voice to the conflict from each group's perspective.
- Members then work to facilitate solutions that both groups agree to implement.
- This peer-led interaction empowers the students to know that they have the power to choose the right solution in resolving conflict.





Volunteers for Youth Justice

CULTURE & CLIMATE 2021-2022 with Raider Court

Classroom referrals total = 823

Freshman only = 267

Total number of students on campus = 1123

Freshman on campus = 362

(SY 2020-2021 was not represented in the data
due to virtual learning.)





Volunteers for Youth Justice

CULTURE & CLIMATE 2022 -2023 with Raider Court

Classroom referrals only = 696

Freshman only = 201

Total number of students on campus = 1164

Freshman on campus = 337





Volunteers for Youth Justice

CULTURE & CLIMATE

2023 -2024

with Raider Court

(1st year without Dr. Mitchell)

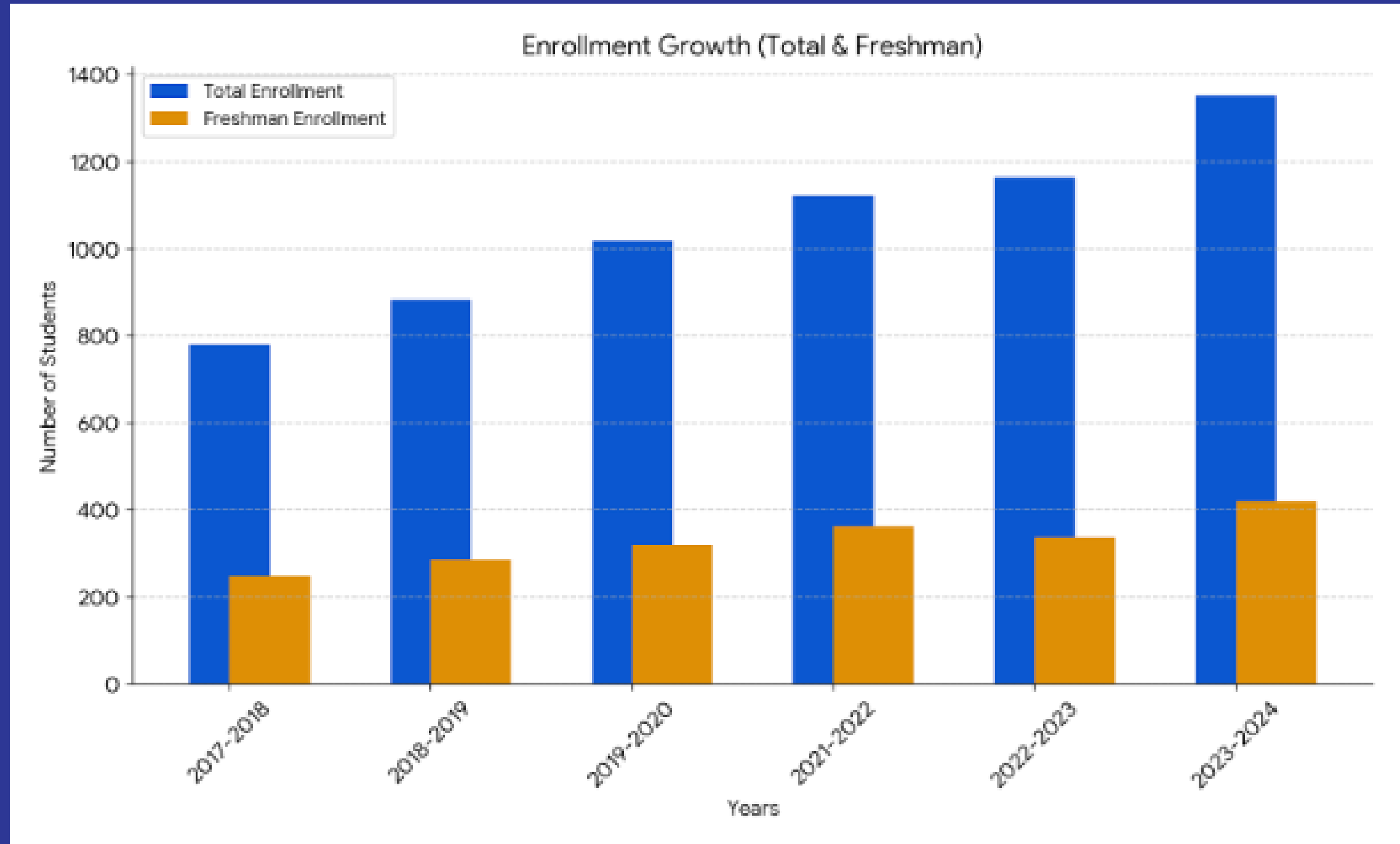
Classroom referrals only = 927

Freshman only= **279**

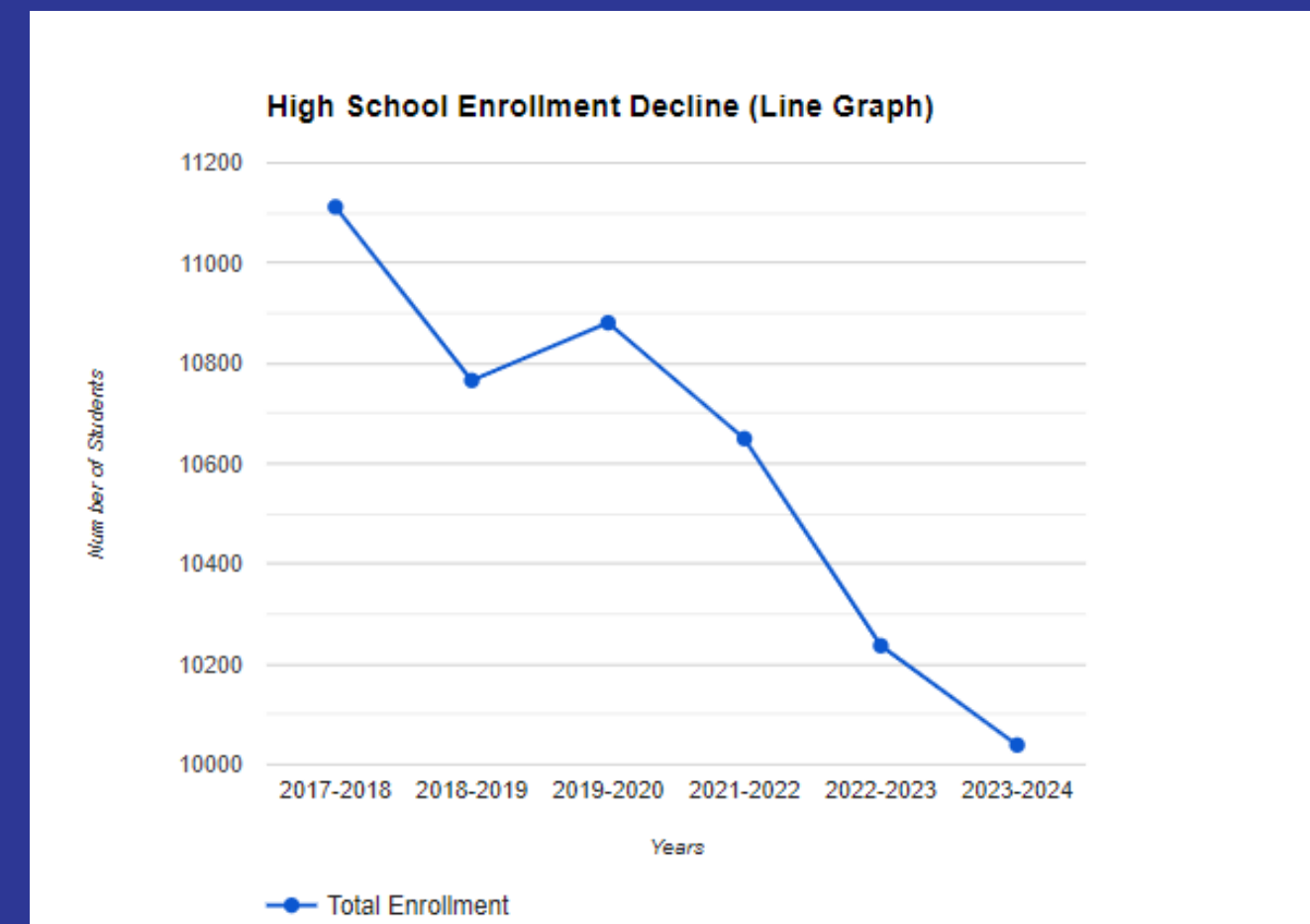
Total number of students on campus = 1308

Freshman on campus = 420

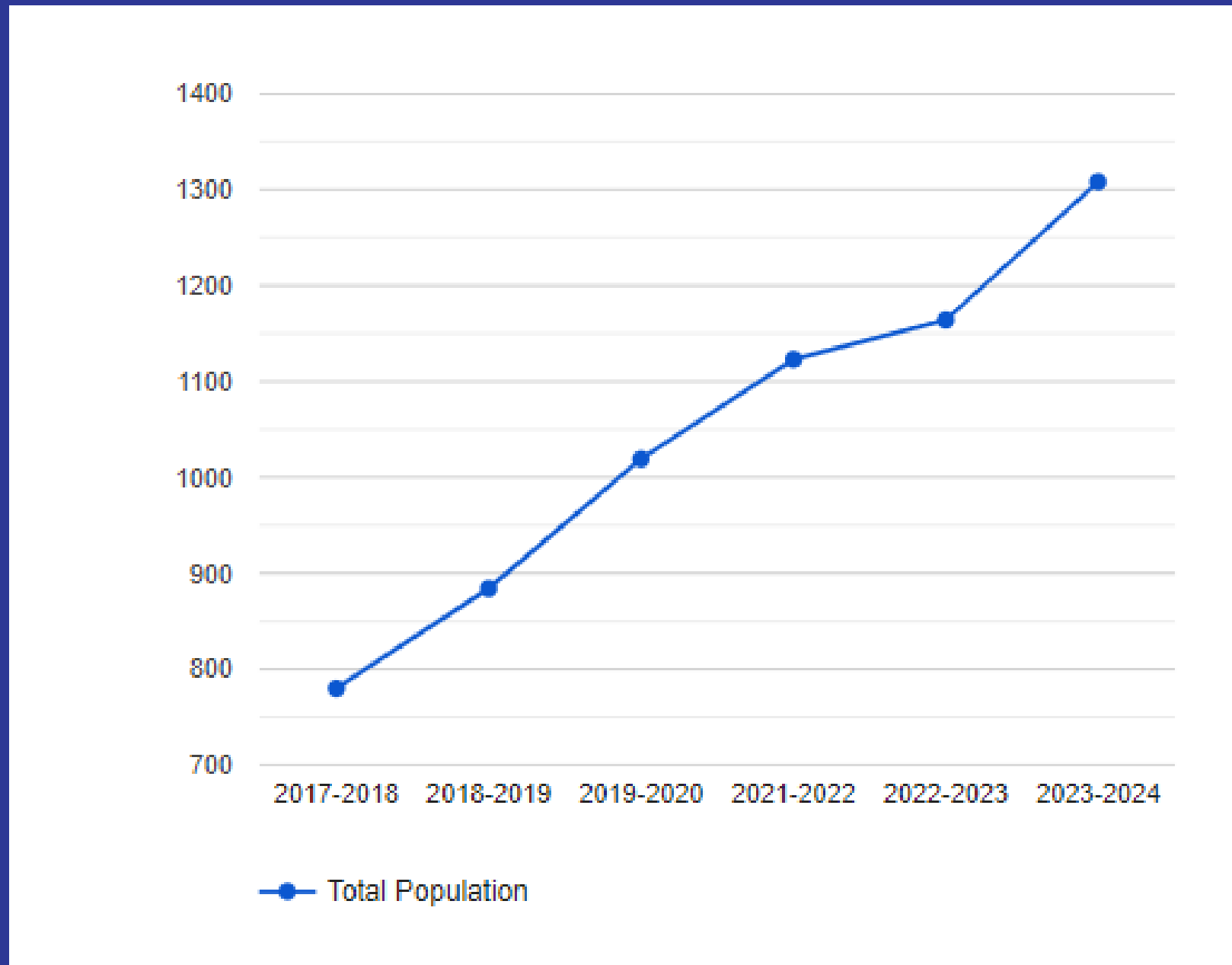
Total enrollment at Huntington continues to increase...



Despite the decline in the number of high school students district-wide.

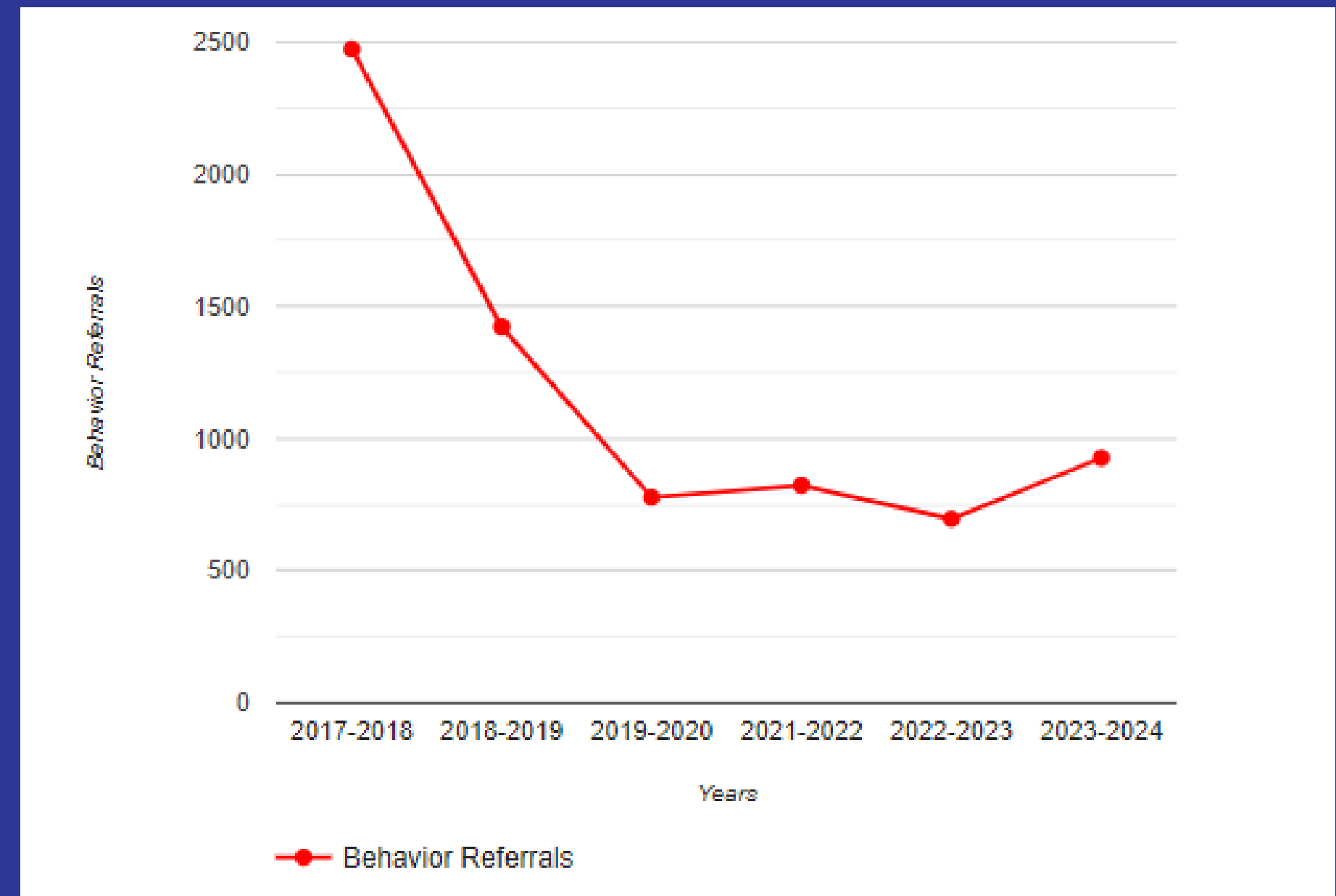


AS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS GREW...



Raider Court was implemented in 2018-2019

THE OVERALL NUMBER OF REFERRALS HAS IMPROVED.

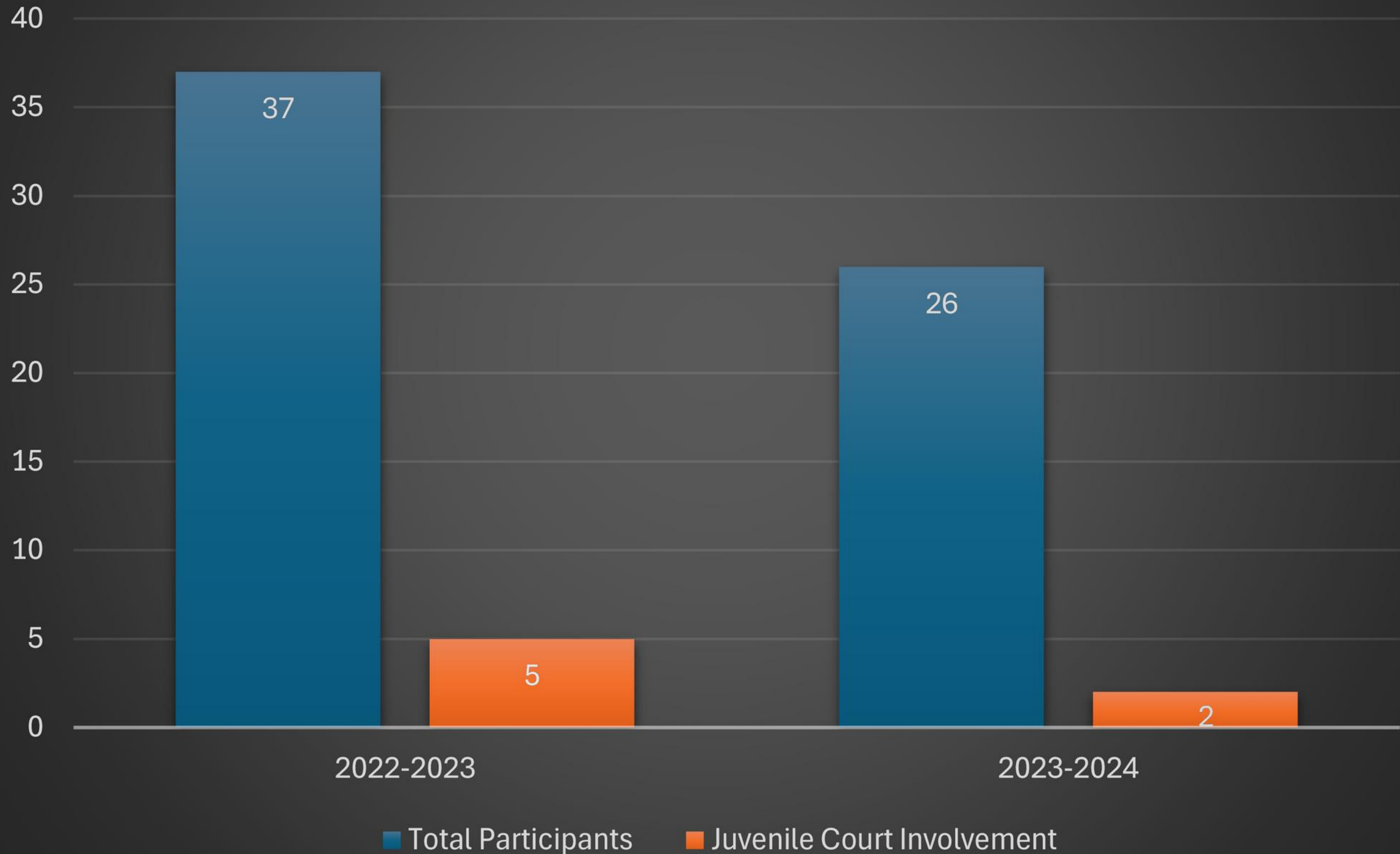


RAIDER COURT:

Why is it effective?

- Provides positive Peer Pressure and Constructive Consequences
- Focuses on repairing harm to the Victim
- Helps Respondents understand the harm caused by the infraction and builds skills to prevent future infractions
- Avoid Suspension, consequently, keeping students in class to receive valuable instruction time
- Raider Court Members follow-up by serving as peer mentors and tutors to Respondents

Number of Participants vs. Juvenile Court Involvement



RAIDER COURT:

Tips for Successful Implementation

- Administrator and staff must buy in to the peer court model.
- Facilitator must have the time in his/her schedule to run the peer court properly .
- Be mindful of when the class is scheduled (certain times of the day could interfere with program success).
- There must be a good relationship/communication between the disciplinarian and the teacher/sponsor.

RAIDER COURT:

Tips for Successful Implementation

- Facilitator needs to keep all parties informed of the outcome of the cases (Principal, Assistant Principal over discipline, and the referring teacher).
- There must be thorough follow up by the court facilitator to ensure all sentences are carried out.
- There must be consequences for any non-compliance.
- Members must conduct themselves as leaders on your campus.
- Members must understand the idea of compassion and that we are there to help and not judge.





Student Testimonials



“My experience in Raider Court is way better than I thought it would be. We take things serious and understand the impact that we have on our peers. We get to see first-hand how we can change a student’s perception of situations and of teachers also. I think that we are not only changing school behavior, but we are changing life perceptions too.

We are making a difference. “

-Kayja Chitman

“Raider Court has surprised me honestly. At first, I didn’t think people would change. I’ve noticed once they come they don’t come back. That is because Raider Court actually works! Their (the respondents) behavior has changed. Their grades have improved. Raider Court has changed them for the better. Too bad it wasn’t around during my freshman year.”

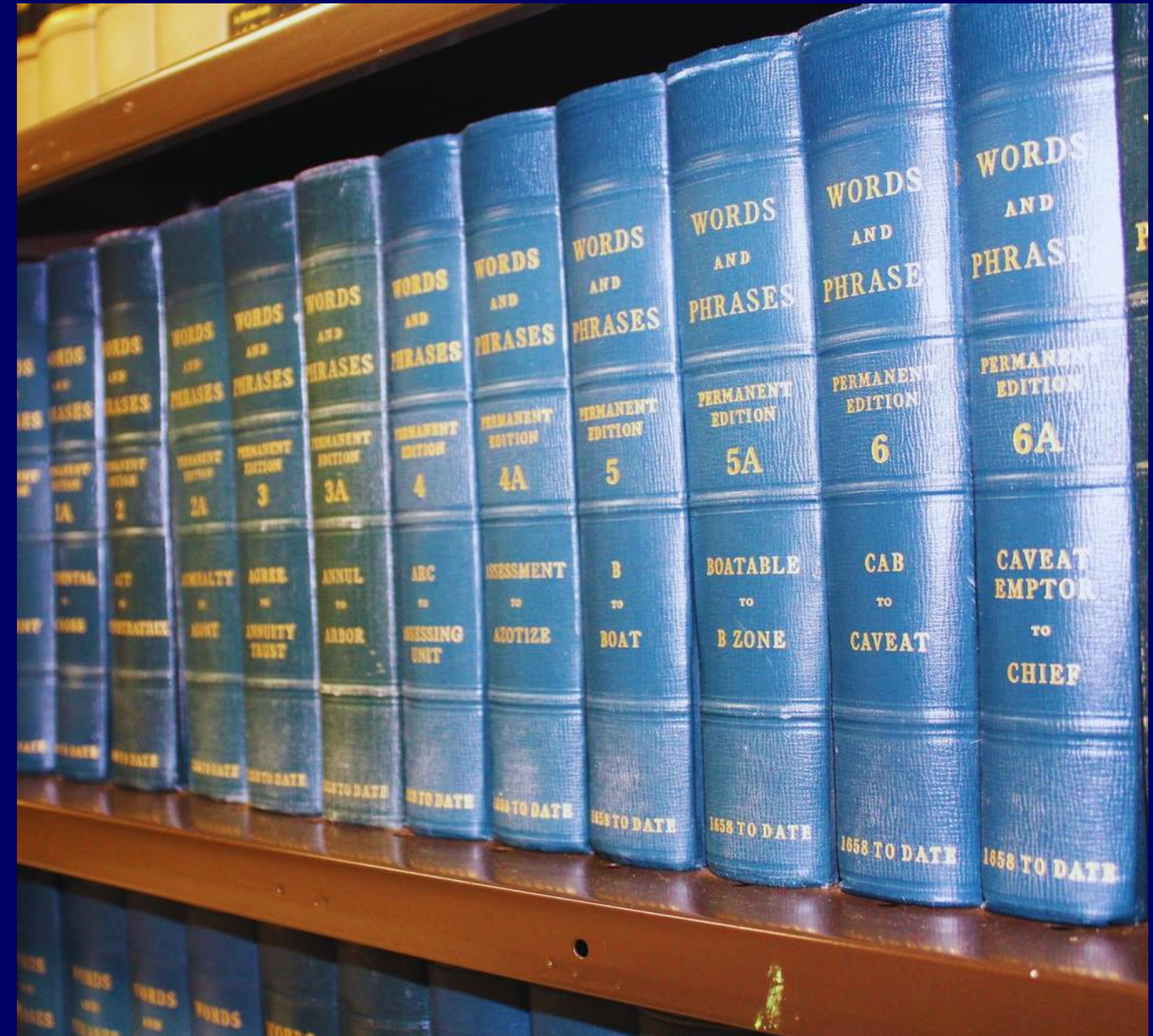
-Jewel Coleman

“Raider Court is one of the best things that has happened to Huntington. Raider Court helps the jurors and the respondent. I have done Tribal Court and Raider Court and this has made me consider being a lawyer even more. The respondent could change their behavior and take a different route in life. All in all, Raider Court has impacted a lot of people in the school and we are hoping to spread it across the world. “

-Jamarcia Taylor

“I love the impact Raider Court has made on the freshman and myself. Before Raider Court, I looked at freshman in a crazy “why are they like this” way. Now I understand them and get why they act the way they do. I actually have a connection with them and check in with them. Mostly, they check in with me and tell me their progress and I love that!” -

Jamiya Lee



Raider Court

RAIDER COURT

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