

Students

Bullying

Safe School Climate Plan

The Board of Education is dedicated to promoting and maintaining a positive learning environment where all students are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school, socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically. The purpose of this Safe School Climate Plan is to address the existence of bullying in the District's schools.

A. Bullying Defined

"Bullying" is defined by law as (1) the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying and teen dating violence directed at or referring to another student attending school in the same school District, or (2) a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same school District, that:

- (a) Causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property;
- (b) Places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property;
- (c) Creates a hostile environment at school for such student;
- (d) Infringes on the rights of such student at school; or
- (e) Substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bullying shall include, but not be limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

"Cyberbullying" means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications.

"Teen dating violence" means any act of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening that occurs between two students who are currently in or have recently been in a dating relationship

B. Bullying Prohibited

Bullying and teen dating violence is prohibited on school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional Board of Education, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the local or regional board of education.

Bullying and teen dating violence is also prohibited outside of the school setting if such bullying results in any of the following: (1) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying was directed, (2) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was directed at school, or (3) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Any form of discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying is also strictly prohibited.

Any student who engages in bullying or teen dating violence as defined in this policy may be subject to discipline up to and including expulsion.

Any school employee who fails to respond to bullying and/or teen dating violence as required by this policy and the District's Safe School Climate Plan may be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

C. Roles and Responsibilities

"**Safe School Climate Coordinator**" is appointed by the Superintendent of Schools and is responsible for:

1. Implementing the District's Safe School Climate Plan;
2. Collaborating with the safe school climate specialists, the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools to prevent, identify and respond to bullying in the schools of the District;
3. Providing data and information, in collaboration with the Superintendent of Schools of the District, to the State Department of Education regarding bullying, in accordance with state law; and
4. Meeting with the safe school climate specialists at least twice during the school year to discuss issues relating to bullying in the school District and to make recommendations concerning amendments to the District's Safe School Climate Plan.

"Safe School Climate Specialist" is the Principal of each school or designee responsible for:

1. Investigating or supervising the investigation of reported acts of bullying in the school in accordance with the district's Safe School Climate Plan;
2. Collecting and maintaining records of reports and investigations of bullying in the school; and
3. Acting as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying and responding to reports of bullying in the school.

"School Employees" are responsible for reporting acts of bullying to Safe School Climate Specialist when they either witness the bullying or receive a report from a student or parent. This term includes:

1. A teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school Superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by a local or regional Board of Education or working in a public elementary, middle or high school; or
2. Any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a public elementary, middle or high school, pursuant to a contract with the local or regional Board of Education.

D. Reporting Procedures

1. Any student who believes he or she has been the victim of bullying and/or teen dating violence may report the matter to any school employee. Students may anonymously report acts of bullying to school employees.
2. Parents or guardians of students may file written reports of suspected bullying and/or teen dating violence.
3. School employees who witness acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence or receive reports of bullying and/or teen dating violence are required to orally notify the Safe School Climate Specialist (or another school administrator if the Safe School Climate Specialist is unavailable), not later than one school day after such school employee witnesses or receives a report of bullying and/or teen dating violence, and to file a written report not later than two school days after making such an oral report.

E. Investigation

1. The Safe School Climate Specialist shall investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written reports.

2. The Safe School Climate Specialist shall review any anonymous reports, except that no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
3. After a prompt investigation, the investigator should ascertain whether the alleged conduct occurred and whether such conduct constitutes bullying and/or teen dating violence as defined by law.

F. Response to Verified Acts of Bullying

1. Each school shall notify the parents or guardians of students who commit any verified acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence and the parents or guardians of students against whom such acts were directed not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation. This notification shall include a description of the response of school employees to such acts and any consequences that may result from the commission of further acts of bullying.
2. Each school is required to invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying and/or teen dating violence and the parents or guardians of the student against whom such act was directed to a meeting to communicate to such parents or guardians the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the student against whom such act was directed and to prevent further acts of bullying. This invitation shall also include the description of the response of school employees to such acts and any consequences that may result from the commission of further acts of bullying. Except in rare circumstances, such meetings with parents and guardians should be held separately.
3. A student safety support plan shall be developed for any student against whom an act of bullying and/or teen dating violence was directed. The plan shall address safety measures the school will take to protect such students against further acts of bullying.
4. Case-by-case interventions shall be developed to address repeated incidents of bullying and/or teen dating violence against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual that may include both counseling and discipline.
5. The Principal of a school, or designee, shall notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when such Principal, or designee, believes that any acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence constitute criminal conduct.

G. Prevention and Intervention Strategy

Students shall be provided with a variety of prevention and intervention strategies which may include, but are not limited to:

1. Implementation of a positive behavioral interventions and supports process or another evidence-based model approach for safe school climate or for the prevention of bullying identified by the State Department of Education;

2. School rules prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation and establishing appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts;
3. Adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur;
4. Inclusion of grade-appropriate bullying education and prevention curricula in kindergarten through high school;
5. Individual interventions with the bully, parents and school employees, and interventions with the bullied child, parents and school employees;
6. School-wide training related to safe school climate;
7. Student peer training, education and support;
8. Promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions.

H. Documentation and Record Keeping

1. Safe school specialists shall establish a procedure for each school to:
 - a. Document and maintain records relating to reports and investigations of bullying in such school.
 - b. Maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence in such school and make such list available for public inspection. This public list must not contain any personally identifiable information about any student or information that might reasonably lead to the identification of any student.
2. The District's Safe School Climate Coordinator shall annually report the number of verified acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence in the District's schools to the Department of Education in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education.

I. Training

All school employees must annually complete training on the prevention, identification and response to bullying and teen dating violence and the prevention of and response to youth suicide as follows:

1. Teachers, administrators and pupil personnel who hold the initial educator, provisional educator or professional educator certificate shall receive in-service training. (Such in-service training may not be required if the district implements any evidence-based model approach that is approved by the State Department of Education and is consistent with state law.)

2. All other school employees shall receive such training as provided or made available by the State Department of Education.

J. Safe School Climate Committee

For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, the Principal of each school shall establish a committee (or designate at least one existing committee in the school) to be responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate and addressing issues relating to bullying in the school. Such committee shall include at least one parent or guardian of a student enrolled in the school appointed by the school Principal. Parents or guardians who serve on such committee shall not participate in the activities described in subparagraphs (1) and (2) below or any other activity that may compromise the confidentiality of a student. The Safe School Climate Committee of each school shall:

1. Receive copies of completed reports following investigations of bullying;
2. Identify and address patterns of bullying and teen dating violence among students in the school;
3. Review and make recommendations to amend school policies relating to bullying;
4. Review and make recommendations to the District Safe School Climate Coordinator regarding the District's Safe School Climate Plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school;
5. Educate students, school employees and parents and guardians of students on issues relating to bullying;
6. Collaborate with the District Safe School Climate Coordinator in the collection of data regarding bullying, in accordance with the law;
7. Perform any other duties as determined by the school Principal that are related to the prevention, identification and response to school bullying.

K. Periodic Assessment of School Climate

1. On and after July 1, 2012, and biennially thereafter, each school in the District shall complete an assessment using the school climate assessment instruments, including surveys, approved and disseminated by the State Department of Education based on the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI). The assessments for each school in the District shall be submitted to the State Department of Education so that the state can monitor bullying prevention efforts over time and compare each District's progress to state trends.
2. Assessment tools may also be used by Safe School Climate Committees to review and make recommendations for revisions to the District's Safe School Climate Plan.

L. Notice Requirements

1. At the beginning of each school year, each school will provide school employees with a written or electronic copy of the school District's Safe School Climate Plan.
2. Students and the parents or guardians of students shall be notified annually of the process by which students may make reports of bullying and/or teen dating violence.
3. Language concerning bullying and/or teen dating violence shall be included in student codes of conduct.
4. The District's Safe School Climate Plan shall be made available on the websites of the Board of Education and each individual school.

The Superintendent of Schools is authorized to develop regulations to implement the District's Safe School Climate Plan.

Legal References: Connecticut General Statutes

[10-15c](#) Discrimination in public schools prohibited

[46a-58](#) Deprivation of rights

[10-145a](#) Certificates of qualification

[10-145o](#) Teacher education and mentoring program

[10-220a](#) In-service training

[10-222d](#) Policy on bullying behavior

[10-222g](#) Prevention and intervention strategy re: bullying

[10-222h](#) Analysis of bullying policies

P.A. 11-232 "An Act Concerning the Strengthening of Bullying Laws"

Policy adopted: December 13, 2011, March 10, 2015, and January 26, 2016

5131.911

Students

Bullying

Safe School Climate Plan

This regulation implements the Board's Safe School Climate Plan (Board Policy # [5131.911](#)).

I. Definitions

State law has established definitions for the following terms:

A. "Bullying" means (1) the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, and/or teen dating violence directed at or referring to another student attending school in the same school District, or (2) a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same school District, that:

1. Causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property;
2. Places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property;
3. Creates a hostile environment at school for such student;
4. Infringes on the rights of such student at school; or
5. Substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bullying shall include, but not be limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

B. "Cyberbullying" means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications.

C. "Teen dating violence" means any act of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening that occurs between two students who are currently in or have recently been in a dating relationship

D. "Mobile electronic device" means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted.

E. "Electronic communication" means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo-electronic or photo-optical system.

F. "Hostile environment" means a situation in which bullying and/or teen dating violence among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate.

G. "Outside of the school setting" means at a location, activity or program that is not school related, or through the use of an electronic device or a mobile electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a local or regional Board of Education.

H. "School employee" means:

1. A teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school Superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by a local or regional Board of Education or working in a public elementary, middle or high school; or

2. Any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a public elementary, middle or high school, pursuant to a contract with the local or regional Board of Education.

I. "School climate" means the quality and character of school life with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community between and among students and adults.

II. Notice

A. School employees: The Safe School Climate Coordinator shall ensure that at the beginning of each school year, all school employees receive a written or electronic copy of the District's Safe School Climate Plan.

B. Students and the parents/guardians of students shall be notified annually of the process by which they may make reports of bullying and/or teen dating violence.

C. The District's Safe School Climate Plan and forms for reporting incidents of bullying and/or teen dating violence shall be made available on the websites of the Board and each school.

D. Student handbooks: The prohibition against bullying and/or teen dating violence shall be publicized by including the following statement in the student handbooks of each school:

Bullying behavior by any student is strictly prohibited. Such conduct may result in disciplinary action, including suspension and expulsion. "Bullying" means (1) the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, and teen dating violence directed at or referring to another student attending school in the same school District, or (2) a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same school District, that:

1. Causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property,
2. Places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property,
3. Creates a hostile environment at school for such student,
4. Infringes on the rights of such student at school, or
5. Substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bullying shall include, but not be limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

Bullying and teen dating violence is prohibited on school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional Board of Education, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the local or regional Board of Education.

Bullying and teen dating violence is also prohibited outside of the school setting if such bullying and/or teen dating violence results in any of the following: (1) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying was directed, (2) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was directed at school, or (3) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Any form of discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying and/or teen dating violence is also strictly prohibited.

How to Report Bullying

Students and/or parents may make verbal or written reports of suspected bullying behavior and/or teen dating violence, and students are permitted to anonymously report acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence to school employees. Reporting forms are available online and in the main office of each school. Any report of suspected bullying behavior and/or teen dating violence will be promptly reviewed by the Safe School Climate Specialist. If acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence are verified, the school will take prompt corrective action that is reasonably calculated to stop the bullying and/or teen dating violence and prevent any recurrence of such behavior. The District's Safe School Climate Plan sets forth this prohibition and the related procedures in detail, and are posted on school and Board websites and available to students and their parents/guardians upon request.

III. Reporting

- A. Any student who believes he or she has been the victim of bullying and/or teen dating violence may report the matter to any school employee.
- B. Parents or guardians of students may file written reports of suspected bullying and/or teen dating violence.
- C. School employees who witness acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence or receive verbal reports of bullying and/or teen dating violence from students or parents must orally notify the Safe School Climate Specialist (or another school administrator if such person is unavailable), not later than one school day after such school employee witnesses bullying behavior and file a written report not later than two school days after making such an oral report.
- D. Written reports: Forms for filing a written report of an alleged act of bullying and/or teen dating violence shall be made available to students and parents at each school and on school websites. All written reports of bullying and/or teen dating violence shall be sent or forwarded to the Safe School Climate Specialist.
- E. Anonymous reports: Each school shall establish a process for students to anonymously report acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence. When a student reports bullying and/or teen dating violence to a school employee but wishes to remain anonymous, the Safe School Climate Specialist shall meet with the student to discuss the request for anonymity and the impact that maintaining anonymity may have on the investigation of the complaint and possible remedial action. At such meeting, the student shall be given the choice as to whether to maintain the anonymity of the complaint. Anonymous complaints shall be reviewed and reasonable action will be taken to address the situation, to the extent such action may be taken that (1) does not disclose the source of the complaint, and (2) is consistent with the due process rights of the student(s) alleged to have committed acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence. No disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

IV. Investigation

A. Duties of the Safe School Climate Specialist / Investigator:

1. Investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and/or teen dating violence and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written reports.
2. Review any anonymous reports, except that no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
3. Assess whether there is a necessity to take immediate interim measures to prevent further allegations of bullying and/or teen dating violence or retaliation of any kind while the investigation is pending.
4. Remind involved parties that any form of discrimination or retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying and/or teen dating violence is strictly prohibited.
5. At all times the investigator must be mindful of the requirements regarding the confidentiality of education records and follow the Board policies related to student privacy rights.

B. Behavior that potentially violates a student's civil rights: If the allegations of bullying and/or teen dating violence involve acts that may also constitute unlawful harassment or discrimination based upon a student's race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression, the investigator shall notify the District's Title IX Coordinator. At the same time, the investigator shall provide the student who has reported the bullying and/or teen dating violence and his/her parent or guardian with information about the District's policies and procedures regarding nondiscrimination and the complaint procedure available to them pursuant to such policies.

C. Identification of conduct as bullying: After a prompt investigation, the investigator should ascertain whether the alleged conduct occurred and whether such conduct constitutes bullying and/or teen dating violence as defined by law.

In accordance with the legal definition of bullying and/or teen dating violence, the following factors should be considered before identifying conduct by a student or group of students as bullying and/or teen dating violence in violation of Board policy. The determination that conduct does not constitute bullying and/or teen dating violence does not restrict the right of the school district to impose appropriate disciplinary consequences for student misconduct.

1. Repeated misconduct. Bullying behavior and/or teen dating violence in violation of Board policy must be "repeated" in the sense that there are repeated incidents of bullying and/or teen dating violence directed at the same student (or group of students) or repeated incidents by the same perpetrator(s) directed against other students. An isolated incident, however egregious, is not "bullying" under state law and Board

policy. Single acts of misbehavior may violate other student codes of conduct and should be responded to accordingly, but without the element of repetition, isolated acts are not "bullying."

2. Impact of conduct. In addition to there being some form of repeated acts directed at a student(s), there must also be harm. The repeated acts must have one of the following impacts:

- a. Causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property;
- b. Places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property;
- c. Creates a hostile environment at school for such student;
- d. Infringes on the rights of such student at school; or
- e. Substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

4. Conduct on school grounds, refers not only incidents that take place in school buildings or on school grounds, but also to incidents that occur:

- a. On school buses and other school owned or leased vehicles
- b. At school bus stops
- c. At school-sponsored or school-related activities, functions or programs that take place off school grounds (such as athletic competitions, dramatic presentations, musical performances, field trips).
- d. During the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the school district.

5. Conduct that occurs outside the school setting may violate the policy prohibiting bullying and/or teen dating violence only if the conduct results in any of the following:

- a. Creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying and/or teen dating violence was directed.
- b. Infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying and/or teen dating violence was directed at school.
- c. Substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

V. Response to Verified Acts of Bullying

A. If it is determined that bullying and/or teen dating violence has occurred, the school will take prompt corrective action that is reasonably calculated to stop the bullying and/or teen dating violence and prevent any recurrence of such behavior. As part of such remedial action, the offender may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action which may include, but is not limited to one or a combination of the following: counseling, awareness training, reassignment, detention, suspension, or expulsion.

B. Each school shall notify the parents or guardians of students who commit any verified acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence and the parents or guardians of students against whom such acts were directed not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation. This notification shall include a description of the response of school employees to such acts and any consequences that may result from the commission of further acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence.

C. Each school is required to invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying and/or teen dating violence and the parents or guardians of the student against whom such act was directed to a meeting to communicate to such parents or guardians the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the student against whom such act was directed and to prevent further acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence. This invitation shall also include the description of the response of school employees to such acts and any consequences that may result from the commission of further acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence. Except in rare circumstances, such meetings with parents and guardians should be held separately.

D. A student safety support plan shall be developed for any student against whom an act of bullying and/or teen dating violence was directed. The plan shall address safety measures the school will take to protect such students against further acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence.

E. Case-by-case interventions shall be developed to address repeated incidents of bullying and/or teen dating violence against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying and/or teen dating violence incidents by the same individual that may include both counseling and discipline.

F. The Principal of a school, or designee, shall notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when such Principal, or designee, believes that any acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence constitute criminal conduct.

G. Disciplinary action for the misconduct of "bullying" is NOT appropriate in the following situations:

1. The evidence is based solely upon an anonymous report.
2. The conduct took place off school grounds and was not seriously disruptive of the educational process.

3. The perpetrator engaged in only one incident and did not act in concert with others who also directed bullying-like behavior toward the same target. Such behavior may be subject to discipline based upon other codes of conduct, but if the perpetrator has not engaged in repeated acts (including a single act that is in concert with others' acts), the offense as it relates to the perpetrator is not "bullying."

VI. Intervention and Prevention

A. In addition to reporting complaints, school employees are encouraged to address the issue of bullying and/or teen dating violence in other interactions with students. Teachers and other professionals may find opportunities to educate students about bullying and/or teen dating violence and help eliminate bullying behavior through class discussions, counseling, and reinforcement of socially appropriate behavior.

B. School employees should intervene promptly whenever they observe student conduct that may lead to bullying behavior and/or teen dating violence even if such conduct does not meet the formal definition of "bullying."

Regulation approved: December 13, 2011

Revised adoption: March 10, 2015 and January 26, 2016