

Students

BULLYING

5131.911(a)

The Board of Education (Board) promotes a secure and happy school climate, conducive to teaching and learning that is free from threat, harassment and any type of bullying behavior and teen dating violence. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the Board that bullying and/or teen dating violence committed against a student by another student is prohibited.

The Board believes that a school environment in which students feel safe, supported, engaged and helpfully challenged is optimal for learning and healthy development. The Board seeks an environment in which students and adults feel socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe; an environment that is free of harassment, intimidation, teen dating violence and bullying.

In addition, the norms that are established by adults through consistent enforcement of all policies pertaining to conduct and modeling appropriate behavior at school and at home will reduce the instances and damage of bullying and/or teen dating violence. It is necessary for students to promote the concept that caring for others is a valued quality, one that is accepted and encouraged.

I. Definitions

- A. **“Bullying”** means the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, directed at or referring to another student attending school in the same school district or 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, mental or physical disability (including but not limited to health concerns such as diabetes, food allergies, etc.), 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. *(The student against whom the activity is directed must be attending school in the same district as the students engaged in the activity.)*

Students

BULLYING (continued)

5131.911(b)

- B. **“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 who have recently been in a dating relationship.
- C. **“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.
- 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 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 (a) 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 (b) 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 (and reflects norms, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices and organizational structures).

Students

BULLYING (continued)

5131.911(c)

II. Bullying and Teen Dating Violence Conduct

A. Examples of bullying include, but are not limited to:

1. physical violence and attacks;
2. verbal taunts, name-calling and disparaging language including ethnically-based or gender-based verbal disparaging language (including disparaging language directed toward one's family);
3. sexual harassment including unwanted sexual attention or insulting or degrading sexual remarks or conduct;
4. threats and intimidation;
5. extortion or stealing of money and/or possessions;
6. exclusion from peer groups within the school;
7. the misuse of electronic communications for the purpose of bullying, harassing, or sexually harassing other students within school or out of school ("cyberbullying")
8. teen dating violence;
9. targeting of a student based on the student's actual or perceived "differentiating" characteristics such as race; color; religion; ancestry; national origin; gender; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; socioeconomic or academic status; physical appearance; or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability.

B. Such conduct is disruptive of the educational process and, therefore, bullying and teen dating violence are not acceptable behavior in this district and are prohibited.

C. Students who engage in any act of bullying and/or teen dating violence 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 the Board of Education, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the Board of Education, and outside of the school setting if such bullying:

1. creates a hostile environment at school for the victim,
2. infringes on the rights of the victim at school, or
3. substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school, are subject to appropriate and escalating disciplinary action up to and including suspension and expulsion from school, and/or referral to law enforcement officials.

III. Program to improve school climate

- ##### A. A comprehensive program, to improve the school climate, involving everyone in the schools and the community, to address bullying and teen dating violence at all school levels is essential to reducing incidences of bullying and teen dating violence. Such a program must involve interventions at all levels, school wide, classroom and individual.

Students

BULLYING (continued)

5131.911(d)

B. The District's program: (*Also see 5131.911AR "Safe School Climate Plan"*)

1. Requires the development and implementation of a safe school climate plan by the Board of Education to address the existence of bullying and teen dating violence in its schools.
2. Permits anonymous reports of bullying and teen dating violence by students to school employees and written reports of suspected bullying by parents or guardians.
3. Requires school employees who witness acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence or receive reports of bullying and/or teen dating violence 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.
4. Requires the safe school climate specialist to 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 report made under this section and that the parents or guardians of the student alleged to have committed an act or acts of bullying and the parent or guardians of the student against whom such alleged act or acts were directed receive prompt notice that such investigation has commenced.
5. Requires the safe school climate specialist to review any anonymous reports, except that no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
6. Requires each school to have a prevention and intervention strategy, as defined by statute, as amended, for school employees to deal with bullying and/or teen dating violence, including language about bullying and/or teen dating violence in student codes of conduct and in all student handbooks.
7. Provides for the inclusion of language in student codes of conduct concerning bullying and teen dating violence.
8. Requires each school to notify parents or guardians of all students involved in a verified act of bullying and/or teen dating violence not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation. The notice shall be simultaneously mailed to the parent/guardian with whom the student primarily resides and to the other parent/guardian if requested. The notice must describe the school's response and any consequences that may result from further acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence.

Students

BULLYING (continued)

5131.911(e)

9. Requires each school to invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying and/or teen dating violence 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 the policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence.
10. Requires each school to invite 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 policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence.
11. Establishes a procedure for each school to document and maintain records relating to reports and investigations of bullying and/or teen dating violence in such school and make such list publicly available and report such number to the Department of Education and in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education.
12. Requires the development of case-by-case interventions for addressing reported 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, but are not limited to referrals for counseling, positive behavioral support plans and discipline.
13. Prohibits discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying.
14. Requires the development of student safety support plans for students against whom an act of bullying was directed that addresses safety measures the school will take to protect such students against further acts of bullying.
15. Requires the principal of a school or the principal's designee, to notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when such principal or the principal's designee believes that any act of bullying and/or teen dating violence constitutes criminal conduct.
16. Prohibits bullying and/or teen dating violence (A) 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, and (B) outside of the school setting if such bullying and/or teen dating violence: (1) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying and/or teen dating violence was directed; (2) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying and/or teen dating violence was directed at school; or (3) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Students

BULLYING (continued)

5131.9119(f)

17. Requires at the beginning of each school year for each school to provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of the district's Safe School Climate Plan.
 18. Requires all school employees to annually complete the training required by C.G.S. 10-220a, as amended. Such training shall include identifying and responding to bullying and/or teen dating violence and preventing and responding to youth suicide.
 19. Requires students and the parents/guardians of students to be notified annually, at the beginning of each school year, of the process by which they may make reports of bullying, including anonymous reports.
 20. As required, but not later than, January 1, 2012, the Board of Education shall approve the safe school climate plan developed pursuant to statute and submit such plan to the Department of Education for its review, analysis, and cooperative assistance.
 21. Requires that not later than thirty calendar days after approval by the Board, the safe school climate plan shall be made available on the Board's and each individual school in the District's Internet website and such plan is to be included in the District's publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools and in all student handbooks.
- C. The Board expects prompt and reasonable investigations of alleged acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence. The safe school climate specialist of each school is responsible for handling all complaints of alleged bullying. The safe school climate specialist shall investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying promptly.

Students

BULLYING (continued)

5131.911(g)

IV. Prevention and Intervention Strategy

- A. The District shall implement, as required by C.G.S. 10-222d, as amended, a prevention and intervention strategy which may include, but is not limited to:
1. Implementation of a positive behavioral intervention and supports process or another evidence-based model approach for safe school climate or for the prevention of bullying and teen dating violence identified by the Department of Education.
 2. School rules prohibiting bullying, harassment, teen dating violence 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 and/or teen dating violence is likely to occur.
 4. Inclusion of grade-appropriate bullying and teen dating violence 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.

V. District Safe School Climate Coordinator

- A. For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, the Superintendent of Schools shall appoint, from among existing District staff, a District Safe School Climate Coordinator.
- B. The Coordinator shall:
1. Implement the District's safe school climate plan.
 2. Collaborate with safe school climate specialists, the Board, and the Superintendent to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying and/or teen dating violence in District schools.
 3. Collect and evaluate information relating to instances of disturbing or threatening behavior that may not meet the definition of bullying, in the district schools as reported by the school climate specialist or administration.
 4. Provide data and information derived from the safe school climate assessments, in collaboration with the Superintendent, to the Department of Education.
 5. Meet with the safe school climate specialists at least twice during the school year to discuss bullying and/or teen dating violence issues in the District and make recommended changes to the District's safe school climate plan.

Students

BULLYING (continued)

5131.911(h)

VI. Safe School Climate Specialist

- A. For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, each school Principal shall serve, or designate someone to serve, as the Safe School Climate Specialist for the school.
- B. The Specialist in each school shall:
 1. Investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence in the school in accordance with the District's Safe School Climate Plan.
 2. Collect and maintain records of reports and investigations of bullying, teen dating violence.
 3. Collect and evaluate information relating to instances of disturbing or threatening behavior that may not meet the definition of bullying, in the school.
 4. Report such information, as necessary, to the district safe school climate coordinator.
 5. Act as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying and responding to bullying and/or teen dating violence reports in the school.

VII. Safe School Climate Committee

- A. For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, the Principal of each District school shall establish a new committee or designate at least one existing committee that is responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate and addressing issues related to bullying in the school. The committee must include at least one parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the school, appointed by the Principal.
- B. The Safe School Climate Committee shall:
 1. Receive copies of completed reports following investigations of bullying and/or teen dating violence.
 2. Identify and address patterns of bullying and/or teen dating violence among students in the school.
 3. Review and amend school policies relating to bullying and/or teen dating violence.
 4. Review and make recommendation to the District Safe School Climate Coordinator regarding the District's Safe Climate Plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school.

Students

BULLYING (continued)

5131.911(i)

5. Educate students, school employees and parents and guardians of students on issues relating to bullying and/or teen dating violence.
 6. Collaborate with the District Safe School Climate Coordinator in the collection of data regarding bullying and/or teen dating violence.
 7. Perform any other duties as determined by the School Principal that are related to the prevention, identification and response to bullying and/or teen dating violence for the school.
- C. Parent members of the Safe School Climate Committee are excluded from activities VII. B. #1 and #2 and from any other committee activities that may compromise student confidentiality.

VIII. Safe School Climate Plan

- A. The Board of Education shall develop and implement a Safe School Climate Plan to address the existence of bullying and/or teen dating violence in its schools. Such plan shall:
1. Enable students to anonymously report acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence to school employees and require students and the parents or guardians of students to be notified annually, at the beginning of the school year, of the process by which they may make such reports.
 2. Enable the parents or guardians of students to file written reports of suspected bullying and/or teen dating violence.
 3. Require school employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying and/ or teen dating violence 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 to file a written report not later than two school days after making such oral report.
 4. Require the Safe School Climate Specialist to 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 made under this section and that the parents or guardians of the students alleged to have committed an act or acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence and the parents or guardians of the student against whom such alleged act or acts were directed receive prompt notice that such investigation has commenced.
 5. Require the Safe School Climate specialist to review any anonymous reports, except that no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Students

BULLYING (continued)

5131.911(j)

6. Include a prevention and intervention strategy for school employees to deal with bullying.
7. Provide for the inclusion of language in student codes of conduct concerning bullying.
8. Require each school to notify the parents or guardians of students who commit any verified acts of bullying 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. The required notification and invitation 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.
9. Requires each school to invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying and/or teen dating violence 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 the policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence.
10. Requires each school to invite 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 policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence.
11. Establish a procedure for each school to document and maintain records relating to reports and investigations of bullying and/or teen dating violence in such school and to 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, and annually report such number to the Department of Education, and in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education.
12. Direct the development of case-by-case interventions for addressing 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, but are not limited to referrals for counseling, a positive behavioral support plan, and discipline.
13. Prohibit discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying and/or teen dating violence.
14. Direct the development of student safety support plans for students against whom an act of bullying and/or teen dating violence was directed that addresses safety measures the school will take to protect such student against further acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence.

Students

BULLYING (continued)

5131.911(k)

15. Require the Principal of a school, or the Principal's designee, to notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when such Principal, or the Principal's designee, believes that any acts of bullying and/or teen dating violence constitute criminal conduct.
16. Prohibit bullying and/or teen dating violence (A) 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 the Board or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the Board and (B) outside of the school setting if such bullying and/or teen dating violence: (1) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying and/or teen dating violence was directed; (2) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying and/or teen dating violence was directed at school; or (3) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.
17. Require, at the beginning of each school year, each school to provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of the school district's Safe School Climate Plan.
18. Require that all school employees annually complete the training described in C.G.S. 10-220a, as amended.

IX. Safe School Climate Assessment

- A. The Board requires each school in the District, on and after July 1, 2012, and every other year thereafter, to complete an assessment using school climate assessment instruments, including surveys, approved and disseminated by the Department of Education pursuant to C.G.S. 10-222h, as amended by PA 11-232. The Board will collect the school climate assessments of each District school and submit them to the Department of Education.
- B. The Superintendent shall develop rules and procedures, which carry out the provisions of this policy. In designing administrative regulations (School Climate Plan), the Superintendent will consult with the greater school community, including parents and students. In addition, the Superintendent shall provide that students and parents of students are notified of this prohibition against bullying and/or teen dating violence and the penalties for violating the prohibition by ensuring the posting of such information at each school and by ensuring inclusion of such information in student and parent handbooks.
- C. This policy shall not be interpreted to prohibit a reasonable and civil exchange of opinions, or debate that is protected by state or federal law.

Students

BULLYING

5131.911(I)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
10-15b Access of parent or guardian to student's records. Inspection and subpoena of school or student records.
10-222d Policy on bullying behavior as amended by PA 08-160 and PA 11-232.
PA 06-115 An Act Concerning Bullying Policies in Schools and Notices Sent to Parents or Legal Guardians.
PA 11-232 An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws.
P.A 14-172 An Act Concerning Improving Employment Opportunities Through Education and Ensuring Safe School Climates
P.A. 14-196 (tangentially) An Act Concerning A State-Wide Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness Program
P.A. 14-232 An Act Concerning The Review and Approval of Safe School Climate Plans by the Department of Education and a Student Safety Hotline Feasibility Study
P.A. 14-234 An Act Concerning Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
P.A. 13-3 An Act Concerning Gun Violence Prevention and Childrens' Safety

Adopted 8/29/2004

Revised and Adopted 6/2006

Revised and Adopted 7/2008

Revised and adopted 11/2010

Revised and Adopted 7/2011

Revised & Adopted 11/22/2011

Revised & Adopted 4/7/2015