

## SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE

The Newtown Board of Education promotes a secure and positive school climate, conducive to teaching and learning, that is free from threat, harassment and any type of bullying behavior. Therefore it shall be the policy of the Board that bullying of a student by another student or adult is prohibited.

Bullying is defined as 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 or a physical act or gesture directed at another student in the same school district that:

1. causes physical or emotional harm to the 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 the 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 perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

Cyberbullying includes the following misuses of technology: any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic or photo-optical system to harass, tease, intimidate, threaten or terrorize another person.

Students who engage in any act of bullying while at school, at any school function in connection to or with any district sponsored activity or event, or outside of the school setting 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 the Newtown Board of Education are subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including suspension, expulsion and/or referral to police.

Some student misconduct that falls under this policy may also trigger responsibilities under one or more of the federal antidiscrimination laws enforced by the Department's Office for Civil Rights (OCR). The statutes enforced by OCR include:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin.
- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex/gender.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.
- Title II of the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Title II) which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.

No claim for damages shall be made against a school employee who reports, investigates and responds to bullying, in accordance with the provisions of the safe school climate plan, if such employee was acting in good faith in the discharge of his or her duties or within the scope of his or her employment. The immunity provided in this subsection does not apply to acts or omissions constituting gross, reckless, willful or wanton misconduct.

No claim for damages shall be made against a student, parent or guardian of a student or any other individual who reports an act of bullying to a school employee, in accordance with the provisions of the safe school climate plan, if such individual was acting in good faith. The immunity provided in this subsection does not apply to acts or omissions constituting gross, reckless, willful or wanton misconduct.

No claim for damages shall be made against the board of education that implements the safe school climate plan, and reports, investigates and responds to bullying, if such board of education was acting in good faith in the discharge of its duties. The immunity provided in this subsection does not apply to acts or omissions constituting gross, reckless, willful or wanton misconduct.

Citation(s):

CABE Policy 5131.911

Legal Reference(s):

Connecticut General Statute 10-222d (as amended by PA11-232)

PA 06-115 (An Act Concerning Bullying Policies in Schools and Notices Sent to Parents or Legal Guardians)

Cross Reference: Board Policy (Suspension, Expulsion, Sexual Harassment, Hazing)

Adopted 1/14/03

Revised 4/7/09, 1/10/12

## SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE PROCEDURES

DISTRICT

1. Provide annual training in any evidence-based model approach that is approved by Department of Education or on the identification and prevention of and response to bullying for school employees (teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional, coach) or any 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, pursuant to a contract with the Newtown Board of Education.
2. Not later than January 1, 2012, develop and implement the safe school climate plan to address the existence of bullying in its schools to be submitted to the Department of Education. Not later than thirty calendar days after approval of such plan, the board shall make such plan available on the board's and each individual school's Internet web site, included in the district's publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools and in all student handbooks.
3. On and after July 1, 2012, and biennially thereafter, require each school in the district to complete an assessment using the school climate assessment instruments, including surveys, approved and disseminated by the Department of Education, collect the safe school assessments from each school and submit such assessments to the department.
4. For the school year commencing July 1, 2012 and each school year thereafter, the Superintendent shall appoint, from among existing school district staff, a safe school climate coordinator.
5. Include grade-appropriate bullying education and prevention curricula in kindergarten through high school.
6. Implement school-wide training related to safe school climate that may include student peer training, education and support.
7. The Safe School Climate Coordinator shall:
  - a. Implement the district's safe school climate plan.
  - b. Collaborate with the safe school climate specialists, the superintendent and board of education to prevent, identify and respond to bullying in the schools in the district.
  - c. Provide data and information, in collaboration with the superintendent, to the Department of Education regarding bullying.

- d. Meet 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.

## SCHOOL

The Safe School Climate Specialist shall:

1. 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 for the school year commencing July 1, 2012.
2. Appoint at least one parent or guardian of a student enrolled in the school on this committee with the understanding that any parent or guardian serving as a member of such committee shall not participate in the activities that may compromise the confidentiality of a student described in the following section.
3. Ensure that the committee shall:
  - a. Receive copies of completed reports following investigations of bullying.
  - b. Identify and address patterns of bullying among students in the school.
  - c. Review and amend school policies relating to bullying.
  - d. Review and make recommendations to the safe school climate coordinator regarding the district's safe school climate plan based upon issues and experiences specific to the school.
  - e. Educate students, school employees and parents and guardians of students on issues relating to bullying.
  - f. Collaborate with the safe school climate coordinator in the collection of data regarding bullying.
  - g. Perform any other duties as determined by the school principal that are related to the prevention, identification and response to school bullying for the school.

The building safe school climate specialist shall:

1. Be the principal of each school, or the principal's designee, for the school year commencing July 1, 2012 and each school year thereafter.
2. Maintain a system for anonymous reporting by students to school employees.
3. Notify students and parents or guardians annually of the anonymous reporting process.

4. Receive reports to investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying in the school in accordance with the district's safe school climate plan and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written report.
5. Investigate parents' written reports and review students' anonymous reports. However, no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
6. Collect and maintain records of reports and investigations of bullying in the school.
7. Act as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying and responding to reports of bullying in the school.
8. Notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when s/he believes that any acts of bullying constitute criminal conduct

Each school shall:

1. Provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of the school district's safe school climate plan.
2. Maintain a publicly available list of the number of verified bullying acts that occurred there, and within available appropriations, report such number to the Department of Education annually and in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education.
3. Have prevention and intervention strategies, as defined by statute, for school employees to deal with bullying, including language about bullying in student codes of conduct and all student handbooks.
4. Notify the parents or guardians of all students involved in a verified act of bullying not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation and invite them to attend at least one meeting. The notice shall be simultaneously mailed to the parent/guardian with whom the student primarily resides and to the other parent/guardian if required. This notice must describe the school's response and any consequences that may result from further acts of bullying.
5. Develop case-by-case interventions for addressing reported incidents of bullying against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incident by the same individual that may include both counseling and discipline.
6. Notify students periodically of the process by which they may make reports of bullying.

7. Establish rules prohibiting bullying, harassment, and intimidation and identifying consequences for those who engage in such acts.
8. Provide adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur.
9. Provide individual intervention with the bully, bullied child, both sets of parents and school employees.
10. Promote parental involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions.

#### TEACHER/STAFF

1. Any school employee or individual working within the school setting with knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying, whether by witnessing such conduct or by receiving student reports of bullying, must take an action and shall orally report the alleged acts immediately and not later than one school day to the safe school climate specialist or another school administrator if the safe school climate specialist is unavailable and to file a written report on the "Suspected Bullying Intake Report Form" included in this document not later than two school days after making an oral report
2. Implement prevention and intervention strategy(ies) to deal with bullying as determined by the district's safe school climate plan.
3. Implement positive behavioral interventions and support process or evidence-based model approach as determined by the district.

#### STUDENT

1. May anonymously report acts of bullying to any school employee including teachers, counselors, adult staff members and school administrators.
2. Will be notified annually how to make such anonymous reports in each school building.
3. Will find language concerning bullying included in codes of conduct.

#### PARENT/GUARDIAN

1. May file written reports of suspected bullying to his/her child's safe school climate specialist.

2. Will be notified by the school through personal communication (ex., phone call, letter) not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation and invited to meet with school staff if his/her child commits a verified act of bullying in order 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
  
3. Will be notified by the school through personal communication (ex., phone call, letter) not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation and invited to meet with school staff if a verified act of bullying was directed against his/her child in order 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