

Connecticut School Climate Policy

This Connecticut School Climate Policy was developed by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) with technical and substantive guidance from the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity (CWCSEO) and other members of the statewide Social Emotional Learning and School Climate Collaborative.¹

The policy was developed to provide districts guidance on recent revisions to Connecticut's school climate law, Public Act 23-167. In accordance with Public Act 23-167, An Act Concerning Transparency in Education, for the school years commencing July 1, 2023, and July 1, 2024, each local and regional board of education **may adopt** and implement the Connecticut School Climate Policy, in lieu of implementing the provisions of sections 10-222d, 10-222g to 10-222i, inclusive, 10-222k and 10-222p of the general statutes.

For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, **each local and regional board of education shall adopt** and implement the Connecticut School Climate Policy.

This policy **does not modify or eliminate** any rights or obligations under state and federal laws, including any constitutional and civil rights protections or any other applicable policies and procedures or collective bargaining agreements.

December 2023

¹ Chapter 170 – Boards of Education (ct.gov)

Suggested replacement for existing policy, 5131.911, adopted 12/20/21, which has been revised.

Students

Connecticut School Climate Policy

Policy Statement

All schools must support and promote teaching and learning environments where all students thrive academically and socially, have a strong and meaningful voice, and are prepared for lifelong success.

Implementation of the following set of guiding principles and systemic strategies will promote a positive school climate, which is essential to achieving these goals.

This policy sets forth the framework for an effective and informed school climate improvement process, which includes a continuous cycle of (i) planning and preparation, (ii) evaluation, (iii) action planning, and (iv) implementation, and serves to actualize the Connecticut School Climate Standards, as detailed herein.

The Board recognizes that improving school climate is contextual. Each school needs to consider its history, strengths, needs, and goals. Furthermore, this policy will support and promote the development of restorative action plans that will create and sustain safe and equitable learning environments.

The _____ District Board of Education adopts this policy.

Definitions

1. **“School climate”** means the quality and character of the school life, with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community, and which is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and that reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices and organizational structures within the school community.
2. **“Positive Sustained School Climate”** is the foundation for learning and positive youth development and includes:
 - a. Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, culturally, racially, intellectually, and physically safe.
 - b. People who treat one another with dignity and are engaged, respected and solve problems restoratively.
 - c. A school community that works collaboratively together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision.
 - d. Adults who model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning; and
 - e. A school community that contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

Students

Connecticut School Climate Policy

Definitions (continued)

3. **“Social and emotional learning”** means the process through which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.
4. **“Emotional intelligence”** means the ability to (A) perceive, recognize, and understand emotions in oneself or others, (B) use emotions to facilitate cognitive activities, including, but not limited to, reasoning, problem solving and interpersonal communication, (C) understand and identify emotions, and (D) manage emotions in oneself and others.
5. **“Bullying”** means unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.
6. **“School environment”** means a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program, whether on or off school grounds, including at a school bus stop or on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education, and may include other activities, functions or programs that occur outside of a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program if bullying at or during such other activities, functions or programs negatively impacts the school environment.
7. **“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 other electronic communication.
8. **“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.
9. **“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.
10. **“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, photoelectronic or photo-optical system.

Students

Connecticut School Climate Policy

Definitions (continued)

11. **“School climate improvement plan”** means a building-specific plan developed by the school climate committee, in collaboration with the school climate specialist, using school climate survey data and any other relevant information, through a process that engages all members of the school community and involves such members in a series of overlapping systemic improvements, school-wide instructional practices and relational practices that prevent, identify and respond to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment.
12. **“Restorative practices”** means evidence and research-based system-level practices that focus on (A) building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community, (B) holding each student accountable for any challenging behavior, and (C) ensuring each such student has a role in repairing relationships and reintegrating into the school community.
13. **“School climate survey”** means a research-based, validated and developmentally appropriate survey administered to students, school employees and families of students, in the predominant languages of the members of the school community, that measures and identifies school climate needs and tracks progress through a school climate improvement plan.
14. **“Connecticut school climate policy”** means the school climate policy developed, updated and approved by an association in the state that represents boards of education and adopted by the Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative, established pursuant to section 10-222q of the general statutes, as amended by this act, that provides a framework for an effective and democratically informed school climate improvement process that serves to implement Connecticut school climate standards, and includes a continuous cycle of (A) planning and preparation, (B) evaluation, (C) action planning, and (D) implementation.
15. **“School employee”** means (A) a teacher, substitute teacher, administrator, school superintendent, school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, school nurse, physician, paraeducator or coach employed by a local or regional board of education, 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 school, pursuant to a contract with a local or regional board of education.
16. **“School community”** means any individuals, groups, businesses, public institutions and nonprofit organizations that are invested in the welfare and vitality of a public school system and the community in which it is located, including, but not limited to, students and their families, members of the local or regional board of education, volunteers at a school and school employees.

Students

Connecticut School Climate Policy

Definitions (continued)

17. **“Challenging behavior”** means behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.
18. **“Evidence Based Practices”** in education refers to instructional and school-wide improvement practices that systematic empirical research has provided evidence of statistically significant effectiveness.
19. **“Effective School Climate Improvement”** is a restorative process that engages all stakeholders in the following six essential practices:
 - A. Promoting decision-making that is collaborative and actively involves all stakeholders (e.g., school personnel, students, families, community members) with varied and meaningful roles and perspectives where all voices are heard;
 - B. Utilizing psychometrically sound quantitative (e.g., school climate survey, discipline data) and qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups) data to drive action planning, preventive and intervention practices and implementation strategies that continuously improve all dimensions of school climate, including regularly collecting data to evaluate progress and inform the improvement process;
 - C. Tailoring improvement goals to the unique needs of the students, educators, and broader school community. These goals shall be integrated into overall school improvement efforts thereby leveraging school strengths to address evidence-based areas of need, while sustaining the improvement process over time;
 - D. Fostering adult learning in teams and/or professional learning communities to build capacity building among school personnel and develop common staff skills to educate the whole child;
 - E. Basing curriculum, instruction, student supports, and interventions on scientific research and grounding in cognitive, social-emotional, and psychological theories of youth development. Interventions include strength-based programs and practices that together represent a comprehensive continuum of approaches to promote healthy student development and positive learning environments as well as address individual student barriers to learning and adult barriers to teaching; and
 - F. Strengthening policies and procedures related to:
 - a. climate and restorative informed teaching and learning environments;
 - b. infrastructure to facilitate data collection, analysis, and effective planning;
 - c. implementation of school climate improvement plans with the goal of becoming restorative;
 - d. evaluation of the school climate improvement process; and
 - e. sustainability of school climate and restorative improvement efforts.

Students

Connecticut School Climate Policy (continued)

School Climate Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities

For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, the superintendent of schools for each school district, or an administrator appointed by the superintendent, shall serve as the school climate coordinator for the school district.

The school climate coordinator shall be responsible for:

1. providing district-level leadership and support for the implementation of the school climate improvement plan for each school;
2. collaborating with the school climate specialist, for each school to (A) develop a continuum of strategies to prevent, identify and respond to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to, alleged bullying and harassment in the school environment, and (B) communicate such strategies to the school community, including, but not limited to, through publication in the district student handbook;
3. collecting and maintaining data regarding school climate improvement, including, but not limited to, school discipline records, school climate assessments, attendance rates, social and emotional learning assessments, academic growth data, types and numbers of alleged and verified bullying complaints submitted by members of the school community, types and numbers of challenging behaviors addressed using the restorative practices response policy, and data concerning the implementation and outcome of restorative practices; and
4. meeting with the school climate specialist for each school at least twice during the school year to (A) identify strategies to improve school climate, including, but not limited to, by responding to challenging behavior and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, such as restorative practices, (B) propose recommendations for revisions to the school climate improvement plan, and (C) assist with the completion of the school climate survey.

School Climate Specialist

For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, the principal of each school, or a school employee who holds professional certification pursuant to section 10-145 of the general statutes, is trained in school climate improvement or restorative practices and is designated as the school climate specialist by the school principal, shall serve as the school climate specialist for the school.

The school climate specialist shall be responsible for:

1. leading in the prevention, identification, and response to challenging behavior, including, but not limited to, reports of alleged bullying and harassment;

Students

Connecticut School Climate Policy

School Climate Specialist (continued)

2. implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including, but not limited to, restorative practices;
3. scheduling meetings for and leading the school climate committee; and
4. leading the implementation of the school climate improvement plan.

School Climate Committee

For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, each school climate specialist shall appoint members to the school climate committee who are diverse, including members who are racially, culturally, and linguistically representative of various roles in the school community.

The school climate committee shall consist of:

1. the school climate specialist;
2. a teacher selected by the exclusive bargaining representative for certified employees chosen pursuant to section 10-153b of the general statutes;
3. a demographically representative group of students enrolled at the school, as developmentally appropriate;
4. families of students enrolled at the school; and
5. at least two members of the school community, as determined by the school climate specialist.

Membership of the school climate committee shall be annually reviewed and approved by the school climate specialist, in coordination with the school climate coordinator.

The school climate committee shall be responsible for:

1. assisting in the development, annual scheduling, and administration of the school climate survey, and reviewing of the school climate survey data.
2. using the school climate survey data to identify strengths and challenges to improve school climate, and to create or propose revisions to the school climate improvement plan.

Students

Connecticut School Climate Policy

School Climate Committee (continued)

3. assisting in the implementation of the school climate improvement plan and recommending any improvements or revisions to the plan.
4. advising on strategies to improve school climate and implementing evidence and research-based interventions, including, but not limited to, restorative practices, in the school community.
5. annually providing notice of the uniform challenging behavior and/or bullying complaint form, or similar complaint form used by the school, to the school community.

School Climate Survey

For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and biennially thereafter, the school climate committee, for each school, shall administer a school climate survey to students, school employees and families of students, provided the parent or guardian of each student shall receive prior written notice of the content and administration of such school climate survey and shall have a reasonable opportunity to opt such student out of such school climate survey.

School Climate Improvement Plan

For the school year commencing July 1, 2025, and each school year thereafter, the school climate specialist, for each school, in collaboration with the school climate coordinator, shall develop, and update as necessary, a school climate improvement plan. Such plan shall be based on the results of the school climate survey, any recommendations from the school climate committee, including the protocols, supports, and any other data the school climate specialist and school climate coordinator deem relevant. Such plan shall be submitted to the school climate coordinator for review and approval on or before December thirty-first of each school year. Upon approval of such plan, a written or electronic copy of such plan shall be made available to members of the school community and such plan shall be used in the prevention of, identification of and response to all challenging behavior.

Additionally, districts may place the school climate improvement plans into their district and school improvement plans.

Training

For the school year commencing July 1, 2024, and each school year thereafter, each local and regional Board of Education shall provide resources and training to school employees regarding:

1. social and emotional learning;
2. school climate and culture and evidence and research-based interventions; and
3. restorative practices.

Students

Connecticut School Climate Policy

Training (continued)

Such resources and training may be made available at each school under the jurisdiction of such board and include technical assistance in the implementation of a school climate improvement plan. Any school employee may participate in any such training offered by the board under this section. The school climate coordinator, shall select, and approve, the individuals or organizations that will provide such training.

Funding

The school district shall in its discretion allocate sufficient funding to satisfy the requirements of this policy for all schools in the district. Such funding shall be distributed accordingly, with Superintendent approval, for assessments and professional development, as well as for school community outreach, training, and technical assistance.

Accountability

The Board shall adopt and allocate adequate resources to support the Connecticut School Climate Policy and adhere to state regulations set forth in Public Act 23-167.

Connecticut School Climate Standards

1. The school district community² has a shared vision and plan for promoting and sustaining a positive school climate³ that focuses on prevention, identification, and response to all challenging behavior⁴.
2. The school district community adopts policies that promote:
 - a. a sound school environment that develops and sustains academic, social, emotional, ethical, civic, and intellectual skills; and
 - b. a restorative school environment focused on overcoming barriers to teaching and learning by building and supporting meaningful school-wide relationships, and intentionally re-engaging any disengaged students, educators, and families of students in the school community.

² School Community means any individuals, groups or businesses, public institutions and nonprofit organizations invested in the welfare and vitality of a public school system and the community in which it is located, including, but not limited to, students and their families, members of the local or regional board of education, volunteers at a school and school employees.

³ School climate means the quality and character of the school life, with a particular focus on the quality of relationships within the school community, and which is based on patterns of people's experiences of school life, and that reflects the norms, goals, values and interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices and organizational structures within the school community.

⁴ Challenging behavior means behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk of interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee.

Students

Connecticut School Climate Policy

Connecticut School Climate Standards (continued)

3. The school community's practices are identified, prioritized, and supported to:
 - a. promote learning and the positive academic, social, emotional, ethical, and civic development of students;
 - b. enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities;
 - c. address barriers to teaching and learning; and
 - d. develop and sustain a restorative infrastructure that builds capacity, accountability, and sustainability.
4. The school community creates a school environment⁵ where *everyone* is safe, welcomed, supported, and included in all school-based activities.
5. The school community creates a restorative system that cultivates a sense of belonging through norms and activities that promote social and civic responsibility, and a dedication to cultural responsiveness, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Policy adopted:

cps 11/23

⁵ School environment means a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program, whether on or off school grounds, including at a school bus stop or on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education, and may include other activities, functions or programs if bullying at or during such other activities, functions, or programs negatively impacts the school environment.

Challenging Behavior Reporting Form

This form is not required by law or policy but serves as a model challenging behavior reporting form that local and regional boards of education may adapt and adopt.

Instructions

This form is for **students, parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school, and school employees** to report any alleged challenging behavioral incidents. Challenging behavior is behavior that negatively impacts school climate or interferes, or is at risk with interfering, with the learning or safety of a student or the safety of a school employee. This form should also be used to report alleged bullying incidents, meaning: unwanted and aggressive behavior among children in grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.

Complete this form electronically, or in writing, or go to your school climate specialist (principal, vice principal, or other certified administrator) who will assist you with completing this form. All completed reports require a response from the school climate specialist, and every student, parent or guardian, and school employee **who completed this form** will receive a copy of the "Response Process(es) Notification Form" describing the action steps taken, within three (3) school business days after an assessment has been completed.

The school climate specialist will assess the facts of a challenging behavior incident and complete the "Response Process(es) Notification Form" (located on page 5 of this document). A confirmation of receipt of the "challenging behavior reporting form" will be provided to the individual who completed this form within **three (3) school business days**, and the behavioral assessment will be finalized within a reasonable amount of time.

If this is an emergency, and you feel that you or someone else is in imminent danger, please call 911, or your municipal police department.

Name: First _____ Last _____ or check here for any student who would like to submit anonymously.

I am a: Student, Parent and/or Guardian or School Employee

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

Contact me by: Phone Email

Was this previously reported to any school employee prior to this report? If yes, identify to whom, when, and what was reported? _____

Where did the incident occur? _____

Check any boxes that apply.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> On school property | <input type="checkbox"/> On a school bus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At a school-sponsored activity or off school property | <input type="checkbox"/> On the way to/from school |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electronic communication, internet, and social media | <input type="checkbox"/> Outside of school |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Approximate date of incident (if known): _____

This form does not modify or eliminate any rights or obligations under state and federal laws, including, any constitutional and civil rights protections, or any applicable policies and procedures or collective bargaining agreements. All students' private and personal information will remain confidential throughout this process, subject to any waiver rights or disclosure responsibilities as permitted or required by law.

Please note: when a student exhibits challenging behavior, our priority is to ensure the safety of the students and the school, and to work with the student(s) to prevent the recurrence of such behavior, including making amends for any challenging behaviors that occurred. Federal law protects the privacy of each student. Therefore, you cannot be provided with any specific information concerning the student alleged to have engaged in the challenging behavior.

Please describe what happened?

Of the following statement(s) check any that may describe or include what happened:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teasing, name-calling, intimidating, or threatening, in person or through electronic communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Making intimidating, and/or threatening gestures or remarks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spreading rumors or gossip | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting another person to do any of the behaviors listed above |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, hair pulling, or throwing something or other acts of physical aggression | <input type="checkbox"/> Unwanted contact of a sexual nature (verbal, non-verbal, physical) |

Do you believe that the reported instance(s) of challenging behavior was in reference to a student's perceived or actual age, ancestry, color, learning disability, marital status, intellectual disability, national origin, physical disability, mental disability, race, religious creed, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, and status as a veteran? If so, why?

If known, provide the name(s) of any witness(es) of the alleged incident: _____

Date form submitted: _____

***For school climate specialist use only:**

Date received by school climate specialist: _____

Signature of receipt by school climate specialist: _____

This form does not modify or eliminate any rights or obligations under state and federal laws, including, any constitutional and civil rights protections, or any applicable policies and procedures or collective bargaining agreements. All students' private and personal information will remain confidential throughout this process, subject to any wavier rights or disclosure responsibilities as permitted or required by law.

Please note: when a student exhibits challenging behavior, our priority is to ensure the safety of the students and the school, and to work with the student(s) to prevent the recurrence of such behavior, including making amends for any challenging behaviors that occurred. Federal law protects the privacy of each student. Therefore, you cannot be provided with any specific information concerning the student alleged to have engaged in the challenging behavior.

Investigation Form

The purpose of this form is to provide a streamlined process to assess reported instances of challenging behavior.

This form is to be completed by the school climate specialist within a reasonable amount of time. Pursuant to the Federal Education Confidentiality Law (FERPA), students, parents or guardians, and school employees that completed the challenging behavior reporting form **cannot** receive a copy of this "Investigation Form" but will be provided with a copy of the "Response Process(es) Notification Form" after an assessment is completed.

Date "Challenging Behavior Reporting Form" received: _____

Today's Date: _____

Name of school climate specialist who received the report: _____

Were these events already reported to any school employee? If yes, please identify to whom, when, and what was reported _____

Name of school community member who is reporting the incident: (student, parent or guardian, school or district employee, bystander, anonymous): _____

Name of student or students who were allegedly subjected to the challenging behavior: _____

Name of person or persons who allegedly engaged in the challenging behavior: _____

Where did the alleged incident occur? _____

Date and time alleged incident occurred: (if known): _____

Description of the alleged incident: _____

What investigative processes occurred? Answer all of the following questions below. A single incident may require an assessment into multiple areas. Please check all that apply.

Was this investigated as bullying? YES NO

Was this a verified act of bullying? YES NO

Was this investigated as cyberbullying? YES NO

Was this a verified act of cyberbullying? YES NO

Was this investigated as teen dating violence? YES NO

Was this verified teen dating violence? YES or NO

Was this investigated as an assault? YES NO

Was this a verified assault? YES or NO

Was this investigated as an act of physical violence?

YES NO

Was this a verified act of physical violence?

YES or NO

Was this investigated as a protected class violation/harassment? YES NO

Was this a verified protected class violation/harassment? YES NO

Was this investigated as a Title IX violation? YES NO

Was this a verified Title IX violation? YES or NO

Was this a verified act of challenging behavior not listed above? YES NO

This form does not modify or eliminate any rights or obligations under state and federal laws, including, any constitutional and civil rights protections, or any applicable policies and procedures or collective bargaining agreements. All students' private and personal information will remain confidential throughout this process, subject to any wavier rights or disclosure responsibilities as permitted or required by law.

Please note: when a student exhibits challenging behavior, our priority is to ensure the safety of the students and the school, and to work with the student(s) to prevent the recurrence of such behavior, including making amends for any challenging behaviors that occurred. Federal law protects the privacy of each student. Therefore, you cannot be provided with any specific information concerning the student alleged to have engaged in the challenging behavior.

What was the response by the school climate specialist? (E.g., utilization of restorative practices, school-based threat assessment, safety plan, student support services) Additionally, provide the date of each response.

If applicable, please provide any additional notes, observations, or actions taken as a result of this incident:

Signature or E-signature of responding school climate specialist: _____

Printed name: _____

Date of response: _____

This form does not modify or eliminate any rights or obligations under state and federal laws, including, any constitutional and civil rights protections, or any applicable policies and procedures or collective bargaining agreements. All students' private and personal information will remain confidential throughout this process, subject to any wavier rights or disclosure responsibilities as permitted or required by law.

Please note: when a student exhibits challenging behavior, our priority is to ensure the safety of the students and the school, and to work with the student(s) to prevent the recurrence of such behavior, including making amends for any challenging behaviors that occurred. Federal law protects the privacy of each student. Therefore, you cannot be provided with any specific information concerning the student alleged to have engaged in the challenging behavior.

Response Process(es) Notification Form

The purpose of this form is to provide a template for transparency and accountability to a person(s) that submit(s) a report of challenging behavior.

The school climate specialist will complete and submit this form within three (3) school business days **after an assessment has been finalized** and submit it to the student(s), parent(s), or guardian(s), and/or school employee(s) who completed the "Challenging Behavior Reporting Form".

Describe the steps taken to address and prevent future instance(s) of challenging behavior(s). Responses may include:

- utilization of restorative practices;
- the completion of a school-based threat assessment;
- safety plan for student(s) involved in the instance of alleged challenging behavior;
- student support services;

Signature or E-signature of school climate specialist: _____

Printed name: _____

Date completed: _____

Definitions and Clarifying Terms

Restorative Practices: Evidence and research-based system-level practices that focus on (A) building high-quality, constructive relationships among the school community, (B) holding each student accountable for any challenging behavior, and (C) ensuring each such student has a role in repairing relationships and reintegrating into the school community.

School Based Threat Assessment: An evidence-based systematic evaluation process used to prevent violence, help troubled students, and avoid over-reactions to challenging behavior.

This form does not modify or eliminate any rights or obligations under state and federal laws, including, any constitutional and civil rights protections, or any applicable policies and procedures or collective bargaining agreements. All students' private and personal information will remain confidential throughout this process, subject to any wavier rights or disclosure responsibilities as permitted or required by law.

Please note: when a student exhibits challenging behavior, our priority is to ensure the safety of the students and the school, and to work with the student(s) to prevent the recurrence of such behavior, including making amends for any challenging behaviors that occurred. Federal law protects the privacy of each student. Therefore, you cannot be provided with any specific information concerning the student alleged to have engaged in the challenging behavior.

Students

Hazing

Bullying

The Woodbridge 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. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the Board that bullying of 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, and bullying.

Definitions

"Bullying" means an act that is direct or indirect and severe, persistent, or pervasive which:

- A. causes physical or emotional harm to an individual;
- B. places an individual in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm; or
- C. infringes on the rights or opportunities of an individual at school.

Bullying shall include, but need 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.

"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.

"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, photoelectronic, or photo-optical system.

"Hostile environment" means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate;

"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 the Board.

"School employee" means (a) a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor, school counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional, or coach employed by the Board or working in a District 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 District school, pursuant to a contract with the District.

"School climate" means the quality and character of school life based on students', parents', guardians' and school employees' experiences of school life, including, but not limited to, norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures.

"Positive school climate" means (a) a school climate in which the norms, values, expectations, and beliefs that support feelings of social, emotional, and physical safety are promoted, (b) students, parents/guardians of students, and school employees feel engaged and respected and work together to develop and contribute to a shared school vision, (c) educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning, and (d) each person feels comfortable contributing to the operation of the school and care of the physical environment of the school.

"Emotional intelligence" means the ability to (a) perceive, recognize, and understand emotions in oneself or others, (b) use emotions to facilitate cognitive activities, including, but not limited to, reasoning, problem solving, and interpersonal communication, (c) understand and identify emotions, and (d) manage emotions in oneself and others.

"Social and emotional learning" means the process through which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Examples of bullying include, but are not limited to:

1. physical violence and attacks
2. verbal taunts, name calling, and put-downs, including ethnically-based or gender-based verbal put-downs
3. threats and intimidation
4. extortion or stealing of money and/or possessions

~~5. exclusion from peer groups within the school~~

~~6. The misuse of electronic communications for the purpose of bullying, harassing, or sexually harassing other students within school or out of school ("cyberbullying")~~

~~7. 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.~~

~~Such conduct is disruptive of the educational process; therefore, bullying is not acceptable behavior in the Woodbridge School District and is prohibited.~~

~~Students who engage in any act of bullying 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 Woodbridge Board of Education; or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased, or used by the Woodbridge 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 disciplinary action up to and including suspension, expulsion, and/or referral to law enforcement officials.~~

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

~~The District's program:~~

~~1. Requires the development and implementation of a Safe School Climate Plan by the Woodbridge Board of Education to address the existence of bullying and teen dating violence in its schools and requires at the beginning of each school year that students and their parents/guardians be notified of the process by which students may make such reports;~~

~~2. Permits anonymous reports of bullying by students to school employees and written reports of suspected bullying by parents or guardians and requires at the beginning of each school year that students and their parents/guardians be notified of the process by which students may make such reports;~~

~~3. Requires school employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying 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 an oral report;

4. ~~Requires the Safe School Climate Specialist to investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written report, and that the parents or guardians of the student alleged to have committed an act or acts of bullying 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. ~~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 or teen dating violence, including language about bullying in student codes of conduct and in all student handbooks;~~

7. ~~Provides for the inclusion of language in student codes of conduct concerning bullying;~~

8. ~~Requires each school to notify parents/guardians of all students involved in a verified act of bullying not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation of the results of such investigation and verbally and by electronic mail, that such parents/guardians may refer to the plain language explanation of the rights and remedies posted on the District's website (available under CGS 10-4a and 10-4b);~~

9. ~~Requires each school to invite the parents/guardians of a student against whom such act was directed to a meeting to communicate to such parents/guardians the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the students against whom such act of bullying was directed and the policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying;~~

10. ~~Requires each school to invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying to a meeting, separate and distinct from the meeting of the parents/guardians of the student against whom the act of bullying was directed, to discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying and teen dating violence;~~

11. ~~Establishes a procedure for each school to document and maintain records relating to reports and investigations of bullying 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 against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual that may include both counseling 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 or teen dating violence;~~

~~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 acts of bullying constitute criminal conduct;~~

~~16. Prohibits bullying (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 (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying was directed, (ii) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was directed at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school;~~

~~17. 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 preventing and responding to youth suicide;~~

~~18. Requires students and the parents/guardians of students to be notified at the beginning of the school year of the process by which they may make reports of bullying or teen dating violence;~~

~~19. As required, the Board shall approve the Safe School Climate Plan developed pursuant to statute and submit such plan to the Department of Education for its review, analysis, cooperative assistance, and approval; and~~

~~20. Requires that, not later than thirty calendar days after approval by the State Department of Education, 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.~~

~~The Board expects prompt and reasonable investigations of alleged acts of bullying and teen dating violence. The Safe School Climate Specialist of each school is responsible for handling all complaints of alleged bullying and teen dating violence. The Safe School Climate Specialist shall investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and teen dating violence promptly.~~

~~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 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.~~

Prevention and Intervention Strategy

~~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 interventions 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, teen dating violence, 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 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 or student who commits teen dating violence, parents/guardians, and school employees, and interventions with the students against whom the acts of bullying and teen dating violence are directed, parents/guardians, 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 and teen dating violence prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings, and individual interventions.~~
- ~~9. Culturally competent school-based curriculum focusing on social-emotional learning, self-awareness, and self-regulation.~~

District Safe School Climate Coordinator

~~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.~~

~~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 teen dating violence in District schools;~~
- ~~3. Provide data and information derived from the safe school climate assessments, in collaboration with the Superintendent, to the Department of Education;~~
- ~~4. Respond to bullying and teen dating violence in District schools;~~

~~5. Meet with the Safe School Climate Specialists at least twice during the school year to discuss bullying and teen dating violence issues in the District and make recommended changes to the District's Safe School Climate Plan.~~

~~6. Successfully complete, for the school year commencing July 1, 2014, the mental health first aid training provided by the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services. (Such training is only required once.)~~

Safe School Climate Specialist

~~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.~~

~~The Specialist in each school shall:~~

- ~~1. Investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying 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 and teen dating violence in the school; and~~
- ~~3. Act as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying, and responding to bullying and teen dating violence reports in the school.~~

Safe School Climate Committee

~~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.~~

~~Beginning July 1, 2021, and each school year thereafter, such committee shall also include: (a) school personnel, including, but not limited to, at least one teacher selected by the exclusive bargaining unit representative for certified employees, (b) medical and mental health personnel assigned to such school, and (c) at the high school level at least one student enrolled at the school. The student is to be selected by students in a manner determined by the school Principal.~~

~~The Safe School Climate Committee shall:~~

- ~~1. Receive copies of completed reports following investigations of bullying;~~
- ~~2. Identify and address patterns of bullying and teen dating among students in the school;~~
- ~~3. Implement the provisions of the school security and safety plan (developed pursuant to Section 87 of PA 13-3) regarding the collection, evaluation, and reporting of information relating to instances of disturbing or threatening behavior that may not meet the definition of bullying or teen dating violence (defined in Connecticut General Statutes 10-222d) and report~~

~~such information, as necessary, to the District Safe School Climate Coordinator and to the school's security and safety committee.~~

~~4. Review and amend school policies relating to bullying and teen dating violence;~~

~~5. 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;~~

~~6. Educate students, school employees, and parents/guardians of students on issues relating to bullying and teen dating violence;~~

~~7. Collaborate with the District Safe School Climate Coordinator in the collection of data regarding bullying and teen dating violence; and~~

~~8. Perform any other duties as determined by the School Principal that are related to the prevention, identification, and response to school bullying and teen dating violence for the school.~~

~~Parent/guardian and student members of the Safe School Climate Committee are excluded from activities #1 and #3 or any other activity that may compromise the confidentiality of a student.~~

Administrative Responsibility

The Superintendent shall cause the development of rules, procedures, and forms to carry out the provisions of this policy.

~~(cf. 0521—Equal Opportunity Plan/Nondiscrimination)~~

~~(cf. 4131—Professional Development)~~

~~(cf. 5114—Suspension/Expulsion; Student Due Process)~~

~~(cf. 5131—Conduct)~~

~~(cf. 5131.912—Aggressive Behavior)~~

~~(cf. 5144—Discipline/Punishment)~~

~~(cf. 5145.4—Nondiscrimination)~~

~~(cf. 5145.5—Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment)~~

~~(cf. 5145.511—Sexual Abuse Prevention and Education Program)~~

~~(cf. 6121—Nondiscrimination)~~

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, PA 11-232, PA 14-172 and PA 18-15 and PA 19-166~~

~~10-22k District safe school climate coordinator. Safe school climate specialist. Safe school climate coordinator (as amended by PA 21-95, Section 14)~~

~~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.~~

~~PA 14-172 An Act Concerning Improving Employment Opportunities through Education and Ensuring Safe School Climates.~~

~~PA 14-234 An Act Concerning Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault~~

~~PA 19-166 An Act Concerning School Climate~~

~~**Policy adopted: December 20, 2021**~~

~~WOODBIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Woodbridge, Connecticut~~