



WOODBIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

40 Beecher Road – South
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MEMORANDUM

Jonathan S. Budd, Ph.D. – Superintendent
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TO: Woodbridge Board of Education
FROM: Jonathan S. Budd, Ph.D., Superintendent
DATE: December 17, 2021
RE: Proposed Revision of Policy 5131.911, “Bullying”

Based on this morning’s meeting of the Policy Committee, please find attached a proposed revision of Policy 5131.911 to update this mandated policy based on current recommendations of the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE) that encompass all relevant statutes, including Connecticut Public Act 19-166, “An Act Concerning School Climates.” The policy revision, which is total, is represented in red.

The proposed revised policy is brought forward to you tonight for adoption.

Students

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 plan 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: