

Students Policy # 2305 – Bullying Prevention and Intervention

The Regional School District 18 Board of Education is committed to creating and maintaining an educational environment free from bullying, harassment and discrimination. In accordance with state law and the Board’s Safe School Climate Plan, the Board expressly prohibits any form of bullying behavior on school grounds; at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program, whether on or off school grounds; at a school bus stop; on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education; or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the Board of Education.

The Board also prohibits any form of bullying behavior 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. Discrimination and/or retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying is likewise prohibited.

Students who engage in bullying behavior shall be subject to school discipline, up to and including expulsion, in accordance with the Board’s policies on student discipline, suspension and expulsion, and consistent with state and federal law.

For purposes of this policy, “Bullying” means the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, or a physical act or gesture directed at another student attending school in the same school district that results in one or more of the following:

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

Bullying shall include, but not be limited to, a written, verbal or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and 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.

For purposes of this policy, “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.

Consistent with the requirements under state law, the Regional School District 18 Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent or his/her designee(s), along with the Safe School

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Climate Coordinator, to be responsible for developing and implementing a Safe School Climate Plan in furtherance of this policy. As provided by state law, such Safe School Climate Plan shall:

1. Enable students to anonymously report acts of bullying to school employees and require students and the parents or guardians of students to be notified annually of the process by which students may make such reports;
2. Enable the parents or guardians of students to file written reports of suspected bullying;
3. Require 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 oral report;
4. Require 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 reports made under this section;
5. Require the safe school climate specialist to review any anonymous reports; however, no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report;
6. Include a prevention and intervention strategy for school employees to deal with bullying;
7. Provide for the inclusion of language in student codes of conduct concerning bullying;
8. Require each school to notify the parents or guardians of students who commit any verified acts of bullying and the parents or guardians of students against whom such acts were directed not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation;
9. Require each school to invite to separate meetings the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying and the parents or guardians of the student against whom such act was directed to a meeting to communicate to such parents or guardians the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the student against whom such act was directed and to prevent further acts of bullying;
10. Establish a procedure for each school to document and maintain records relating to reports and investigations of bullying in such school and to maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying in such school and make such list available for public inspection and annually report such number to the Department of Education and in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education;
11. Direct the development of case-by-case interventions for addressing repeated incidents of bullying against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual that may include both counseling and discipline;

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12. Prohibit discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying;
13. Direct the development of student safety support plans for students against whom an act of bullying was directed that address safety measures the school will take to protect such students against further acts of bullying;
14. Require the principal of a school, or the principal's designee, to notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when such principal, or the principal's designee, believes that any acts of bullying constitute criminal conduct;
15. Prohibit 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 a local or regional board of education, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the local or regional board of education, and (B) outside of the school setting if such bullying (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;
16. Require, at the beginning of each school year, each school to provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of the school district's safe school climate plan; and
17. Require that all school employees annually complete the training described in Connecticut General Statute §10-220a.

The notification required pursuant to subdivision (8) (above) and the invitation required pursuant to subdivision (9) (above) shall include a description of the response of school employees to such acts and any consequences that may result from the commission of further acts of bullying. Any information provided under this policy or accompanying Safe School Climate Plan shall be provided in accordance with the confidentiality restrictions imposed under the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act ("FERPA") and the district's Confidentiality and Access to Student Information policy and regulations.

The Safe School Climate Committee shall 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 (defined in Connecticut General Statutes 10-222d) and report such information, as necessary, to the District Safe School Climate Coordinator and to the appropriate school personnel.

The Safe School Climate Coordinator shall 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 only required once).

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Per Public Act 11-232, the Regional School District 18 Board of Education approved the Safe School Climate Plan prior to January 1, 2012 and submitted such plan to the Department of Education. In addition, the Board has made such plan available on the web site of the Board and each school in the school district, and ensured that the Safe School Climate Plan can be accessed through each school's student handbooks and other publications of rules, procedures and standards of conduct.

Legal References:

Public Act 11-232, An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws
Connecticut General Statutes 10-145a
Connecticut General Statutes 10-145o
Connecticut General Statutes 10-220a
Connecticut General Statutes §10-222d
Connecticut General Statutes 10-222g
Connecticut General Statutes 10-222h
Connecticut General Statutes §§10-233a through 10-233f