

Students

HAZING

BULLYING

In accordance with state law, it is the policy of the Stonington Board of Education that any form of bullying behavior, whether in the classroom, on school property or at school-sponsored events, is expressly forbidden.

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.

For purposes of this policy, **“Bullying”** shall mean the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying directed at or referring to another student attending school in the same school district or a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same school district that:

- A. causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student’s property,
- B. places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property,
- C. creates a hostile environment at school for such student,
- D. infringes on the rights of such student at school or,
- E. substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school

Bullying shall include, but not be limited to, a written, oral, or electric 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. *(The student against whom the activity is directed must be attending school in the same district as the student engaged in the activity.)*

5131.911(b)

“**Cyberbullying**” means any act of bullying through the use the internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications.

“**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 or 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 the School Setting**” means at a location, activity or program that is not school related, or through the use of an electronic device or a mobile electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education.

“**School Employee**” means (a) a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by a local or regional board of education or working in a public elementary, middle or high school; or (b) any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a public elementary, middle or high school, pursuant to a contract with the local or regional board of education.

“**School Climate**” means the quality and character of school life with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community between and among students and adults (and reflects norms, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices and organizational structures.)

For purposes of this policy, “**School-Sponsored Activity**” shall mean any activity conducted on or off school property (including school buses and other school-related vehicles) that is sponsored, recognized or authorized by the Board of Education.

5131.911(c)

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 (“cyber bullying”)
7. targeting of a student based on the student’s actual or perceived “differentiating” characteristic 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.

Students who engage in bullying behavior on school grounds, at a school-sponsored activity, function or program whether on or off schools ground; at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the board of education, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the board of education, and outside of the school setting if such bullying;

1. creates a hostile environment at school for the victim,
2. infringes on the rights of the victim at school, or
3. substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school,

shall be subject to school discipline up to and including expulsion in accordance with the Board’s policy on student discipline, suspension and expulsion.

PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION STRATEGY

A comprehensive program, to improve the school climate, involving everyone in the schools and the community, to address bullying at all 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 board of education to address the existence of bullying in its schools;
- (2) enables students to anonymously report acts of bullying—and written reports of suspected bullying by parents or guardians;

5131.911(d)

(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;

(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, 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 schools to notify both the parents and guardians of students involved in a verified act of bullying not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation. The notice shall be simultaneously mailed to the parent/guardian with whom the student primarily resides and to the other parent/guardian if requested. The notice must describe the school's response and any consequences that may result from further acts of bullying;

(9) requires each school to invite 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) 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 publically available and report such number in a manner prescribed by the commissioner of education;

11) requires 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;

5131.911(e)

(12) prohibits discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying;

(13) requires the development of student safety support plans for students against who an act of bullying was directed that addresses safety measures the school will take to protect such students against further acts of bullying;

(14) requires the principal of a school or the principal's designee, to notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when such principal or principal's designee believes that any acts of bullying constitute criminal conduct;

(15) prohibits bullying (a) on school grounds, at a school-sponsored event, 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 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) requires at the beginning of each school year for each school to provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of the school district's safe school climate plan, and

(17) requires all school employees to annually complete the training required by the c.g.s. 10-220a, as amended. Such training shall include identifying and responding to bullying and preventing and responding to youth suicide; *note: certified employees are required to complete annual training on the prevention and identification of bullying and response to bullying and the prevention and response to youth suicide. The state department of education, within available appropriations, is required to provide annual training to non-certified school employees.*

(18) requires students and the parents/guardians to be notified annually of the process by which they make reports of bullying.

(19) as required, but not later than January 1, 2012, the board of education shall approve the safe school climate plan developed pursuant to statute and submit such plan to the department of education for its review, analysis and cooperative assistance; and

(20) requires that not later than thirty calendar days after approval by the board, the safe schools climate plan shall be made available on the board's and each individual school in the district's publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools and in all student handbooks.

5131.911(f)

The board expects prompt and reasonable investigations of alleged acts of bullying. The safe schools climate specialist of each school is responsible for handling all complaints of alleged bullying. The safe climate specialist shall investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bully promptly.

District Safe Schools 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 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 in districts schools;
3. Provide data and information derived from the safe schools climate assessments, in collaboration with the superintendent, to the department of education; and
4. Meet with the safe schools climate specialists at least twice during the school year to discuss bullying issues in the district and make recommended changes to the district's safe school climate plan.

Safe Schools 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 in the school in accordance with the district's safe school climate plan.
2. Collect and maintain records of reports and investigations of bullying in the school; and
3. At as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying and responding to bullying 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 least one parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the school, appointed by the principal.

5131.911(g)

The safe school climate committee shall:

1. Receive copies of completed reports following investigations of bullying;
2. Identify and address patterns of bullying among students in the school;
3. Review and amend school policies relating to bullying;
4. Review and make recommendations to the district safe school climate coordinator regarding the districts safe climate plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school;
5. Educate students, school employees, parents/guardians of students on issues related to bullying;
6. Collaborate with the district safe school climate coordinator in the collection of data regarding bullying; and
7. 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.

Parent members of the safe school climate committee are excluded from activities #1 and #2 above and from any other committee activities that may compromise student confidentiality.

Safe School Climate Plan

The board of education shall develop and implement a safe school climate plan to address the existence of bullying in its schools. Such plan shall:

1. Enable students to anonymously reports acts of bullying to school employees and require students and the parents/guardian of students to be notified annually of the process by which they make such reports;
2. Enable the parents or guardians of students to file written reports of suspected bullying;
3. Require school employees who witness such acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying to orally notify the safe school climate specialists, 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, except that 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;

5131.911(h)

8. Require each school to notify parents or guardians of student who commit any verified acts of bullying and the parents or guardians of students against whom such acts were directed not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation. the required notification and invitation shall include a description of the response of school employees to such acts and any consequences that may result for the commission of further acts of bullying;
9. Require each school to invite the parents or guardian 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 to ensure the student's safety 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 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;
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 addresses safety measures the school will take to protect such student against further acts of bullying;
14. Require the principal of the school, or the principal's designee, to notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when such principal or the principal's designed, 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 the board or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used buy 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 the 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 a training described in c.g.s. 10-220a, as amended.

5131.911(i)

Safe Schools Climate Assessment

The board requires each school in the district, on and after July 1, 2012 and biennially thereafter, to complete an assessment using school climate assessment instruments, including surveys, approved and disseminated by the department of education pursuant to the c.g.s. 10-222h, as amended by pa11-xx. The board will collect the school climate assessments of each district school and submit them to the department of education.

Note: The department of education within available appropriations is required by the amended c.g.s. 10-222h, to approve in collaboration with the Connecticut association of schools (cas) and disseminate to all public schools grade-level appropriate school climate assessment instruments, including surveys, to be used by the boards of education for the purpose of collecting information pertaining to a district prevention and intervention strategy in order to enable the department to monitor bullying efforts over time and to compare each district's progress to state trends.

A safe school climate resource network is to be established by the department of education in consultation with the state education resource center, the governor's prevention partnership and the commission on children within available

Appropriations for the identification, prevention and education of school bullying in the state. This network will make available to all schools information, training opportunities and resource materials to improve school climate to diminish bullying.

The district shall implement, as required by C.G.S. 10-221d, as amended, a prevention and intervention strategy which may include, but is not limited to:

1. Implementation of a positive behavioral intervention and supports process or another evidence-based model approach for safe school climate or for the prevention of bullying identified by the department of education.
2. Establish school rules prohibiting bullying, harassment, and intimidation and establishing appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts.
3. Provide adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom, and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur.
4. Include grade-appropriate bullying education and prevention curricula in kindergarten through high school.
5. Administer individual interventions with the bully, parents; and school employees, and interventions with the bullied child, parents; and the school employees.

5131.911(j)

6. Provide school wide training related to safe school climate.
7. Provide student peer training, education and support.
8. Promote parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meeting, training, and individual interventions.

This policy shall be included in all student and faculty handbooks and shall be disseminated to the public in a manner to be determined by the superintendent.

This policy shall not be interpreted to prohibit a reasonable and civil exchange of opinions, or debate that is protected by state or federal law.

(CF.0521-nondiscrimination)

(CF.4131-staff development)

(CF. 5114 -suspension and expulsion/due process)

(CF. 5131-conduct)

(CF. 5131.21-violent and aggressive behavior)

(CF. 5131.8 –out- of- school misconduct)

(CF. 5131.912- aggressive behavior)

(CF. 5131.913-cyberbullying)

(CF.5131.91-hazing)

(CF.5144-discipline/punishment)

(CF. 5145.4- nondiscrimination)

(CF.5145.5-sexual harassment)

(CF.5145.5-peer sexual harassment)

(CF. 6121-nondiscrimination)

(CF. 6121.1-equal educational opportunity)

Legal References: Connecticut General Statutes

10-15b Access of Parent or Guardian to Student's Records.
Inspection and Subpoena of School or Student Records.

10-222d Policy on Bullying Behavior as Amended by PA
08-160 AND PA 11-232.

10-233a Definitions.

10-233b Removal of Pupils from Class.

10-233c Suspension of Pupils.

10-233d Expulsion of Pupils.

10-233e Notice as to Disciplinary Policies and Action.

5131.911(k)

10-233f In-school Suspension of Pupils. Reassignment.

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.

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STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Stonington, Connecticut