

**STAMFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE PLAN**

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INTRODUCTION

This document is the Stamford Board of Education’s (“the Board”) Safe School Climate Plan (the “Plan”). This Plan describes measures to address the existence of bullying and teen dating violence behaviors in the Stamford Public Schools and includes procedures to report, investigate, document, and maintain records of bullying and teen dating violence investigations, and contains prevention and intervention strategies that may be used by school employees to address bullying behavior and teen dating violence committed by students against other students.

The Board has adopted a school climate policy (Policy 5131.914¹) and a policy prohibiting bullying behavior (Policy 5005). The Plan should be read in conjunction with these policies and their associated regulations.

Bullying behavior and teen dating violence are strictly prohibited, and students who are determined to have engaged in such behaviors may be subject to disciplinary action, which may include suspension or expulsion from school. Staff who are determined to have engaged in such behaviors may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination. The district’s commitment to addressing bullying behavior and teen dating violence, however, involves a multi-faceted approach, which includes education and the promotion of a school atmosphere in which bullying and teen dating violence will not be tolerated.

¹ The School Climate Policy (Policy 5131.914) was originally numbered as policy 1316.1. It was renumbered administratively in February 2023, with no substantive change to the actual policy.

DEFINITIONS

(1) “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.

In accordance with this definition, the following factors should be considered before identifying conduct as bullying in violation of Board policy. The determination that conduct does not constitute bullying under state law and Board policy, however, does not restrict the right of the Administration and of the Board of Education to impose appropriate disciplinary consequences for misconduct.

- A. Location. Bullying behavior in violation of Board policy may occur on or off school grounds, at a school-sponsored activity, or on school transportation. Conduct that occurs off-campus, (e.g. physical intimidation in the community) is considered bullying under the Board's Policy and this Regulation if it has a direct and negative impact on a student's academic performance or safety in school. Cyber-bullying, which is the use of electronic equipment to commit acts of bullying, is also considered bullying.
- B. Types of conduct. Bullying can take many forms and can include many different behaviors. Examples of conduct that could constitute bullying include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Physical violence and/or attacks;
 - 2. Verbal taunts, name-calling and put-downs, including taunts based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or other protected and/or individual characteristics such as socioeconomic status or physical appearance;
 - 3. Threats and intimidation (through words and/or gestures);
 - 4. Extortion or stealing of money and/or possessions; and/or
 - 5. Cyberbullying.

It is imperative that bullying be identified only when the specific elements of the definition are met, because the designation of conduct as bullying carries with it special statutory obligations. Any misconduct, whether or not appropriately defined as bullying, however, will subject the perpetrator to disciplinary action in accordance with the Board's policies.

(2) “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;

(3) “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;

(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) “Hostile environment” means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate.

(6) “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.

(7) “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 of Education.

(8) “Positive school climate” means a school climate in which (A) the norms, values, expectations and beliefs that support feelings of social, emotional and physical safety are promoted, (B) students, parents and 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.

(9) “School climate” means the quality and character of school life based on patterns of students’, parents’ and 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.

(10) “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 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 Board of Education.

(11) "School-Sponsored Activity" shall mean any activity conducted on or off school property (including school transportation) that is sponsored, recognized or authorized by the Board of Education.

(12) “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.

(13) "Safe School Climate Coordinator" (the "Coordinator") means the Superintendent or their designee who shall oversee the implementation of the district's Safe School Climate Plan and perform the duties described herein.

(14) "Safe School Climate Plan" (the "Plan") means the district plan developed and implemented pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 10-222(d), containing provisions pertaining to school climate, bullying, filing complaints and conducting investigations, as same may be amended from time to time. The Safe School Climate Plan shall be posted on the district website.

(15) "Safe School Climate Specialist" (the "Specialist") means the person appointed by the Coordinator at each school building to oversee the implementation of the District's Safe School Climate Plan within the building, oversee the implementation of the School Climate Improvement Plan within the building, and perform the duties described herein. Generally, the Principal or the Principal's designee shall serve as the Safe School Climate Specialist.

(16) "School Climate Improvement Plan" (the "Improvement Plan") means the building-specific plan developed by the Committee using the Survey data and developed in accordance with the process described herein. An Improvement Plan must include the requirements of the Safe School Climate Plan, but has the larger purpose of improving school climate on a more global level and actualizing The National School Climate Standards (Section VII. School Climate Improvement Plans).

(17) "School Climate Survey" (the "Survey") shall mean a well-established reliable and valid survey that is vigorously field tested, measures the core district populations (including students, parents/ guardians, all school personnel - administrators, educators, certified and noncertified staff) and, when available, the wider community, and is easy and quick to administer. It shall also be administered in the predominant languages used by the population being surveyed.

(18) "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.

APPLICABLE STANDARDS

A. For School Employees

All certified educators in the State of Connecticut are accountable for compliance with the regulations enacted by the Connecticut State Department of Education and the Bureau of Education Standards and Certification, including, but not limited to the Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility For Teachers, Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, (Section 10-145d0400a) and the Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility For Administrators, Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies (Section 10-145d0400b) (collectively "Codes"), as they may be amended from time to time.

All school employees are accountable for compliance with the policies, regulations and procedures of the Board applicable to personnel, including, but not limited to non-discrimination, conduct and professional rights and responsibilities.

B. For Students

All students are accountable for compliance with applicable codes of student conduct, policies and procedures for student participation and behavior.

C. For Board Members

Board Members are accountable for compliance with the Board's Code of Ethics and applicable Board By-laws governing Board member conduct.

D. For Persons Contracted to Provide Services to the Board

Persons contracted to provide services to the Board (such as bus drivers, consultants, evaluators or the like) are accountable for compliance with such codes of ethics as may apply professionally, the terms of any such contract, as well as the policies, regulations and procedures of the Board.

E. For Other Participants in the School Community

Parents/guardians, family members, visitors and other persons on school property or otherwise participating in programs or services of the Stamford Public Schools are accountable for conducting themselves in accordance with applicable policies and procedures pertaining to such participation.

F. Alignment with Conn. Gen. Statutes Section 10-222(d)

This is aligned with C.G.S. 10-222(d), "An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws." In order to be in compliance with applicable law, all individual schools in the District of Stamford must adhere to the following requirements:

G. Effective School Climate Improvement Process

In order to develop and maintain an "Effective School Climate Improvement Process," schools must develop and implement "Improvement Plans," administer and utilize the findings of "School Climate Surveys," and engage in a continuing systemic process of learning and evaluating identified goals and objectives. The vision of the Stamford Board of Education is to support a vibrant and thriving school community by removing any

barriers to teaching and learning, and reengaging those who may have become disengaged.

In order to implement an “Effective School Climate Improvement Process”, qualified and effective leadership is required. Such leadership shall be developed through (a) the implementation and satisfaction of appropriate professional development, (b) the Superintendent or the appointment of a Coordinator by the Superintendent, (c) the appointment of Specialists at each school building by the Coordinator, and (d) the establishment of a Committee at each school building.

H. Accountability.

1. The Board shall establish, foster, support and maintain a "no fault" framework and promote a culture of trust. Such a framework and culture is evident by a shared intent to:
2. Take collective responsibility for what has been accomplished and/or not accomplished;
3. Work together to improve the quality and character of school life;
4. Work together to improve the quality and character of school life;
5. Create a highly effective professional learning community (PLC) whose responsibility it is to:
 - i. Establish norms, values and goals that encourage and support collaborative and courageous leadership;
 - ii. Model and provide high quality academic, social, emotional and ethical learning; and
 - iii. Engage in ongoing reflection and evaluation.
6. The Board shall hold itself, its individual members, and the Superintendent to the standards of this Policy and promote its intent and goals.
7. The Superintendent shall hold himself/herself, the staff, the students and other members of the school community to the standards of this Policy.

I. Compliance with Other Applicable Laws.

This Policy does not modify or eliminate a school's obligation to comply with state and federal constitutional protections and civil rights laws applicable to schools.

J. Liberal Interpretation.

The design of this Policy being to facilitate the operation of the school district in a positive manner and to advance justice, the Policy provisions will be interpreted liberally in any case where it shall be manifest that a strict adherence to them will work surprise or a manifest injustice.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE PROCESS

A. An "Effective School Climate Improvement Process" is one that engages all stakeholders in the following six essential practices:

(1) Promoting decision-making that is collaborative, democratic, 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;

(2) Utilizing psychometrically sound quantitative (e.g. survey) and qualitative (e.g. interviews, focus groups) data to drive action planning, preventive/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;

(3) Tailoring improvement goals to the unique needs of the students 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;

(4) 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;

(5) 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

(6) Strengthening policies and procedures related to:

- a. climate informed teaching and learning environments;
- b. infrastructure to facilitate data collection, analysis, and effective planning;
- c. implementation of school climate improvement plans;
- d. evaluation of the school climate improvement process; and
- e. sustainability of school climate improvement efforts.

B. School Climate Improvement Plans.

In collaboration with the Coordinator, each Specialist shall develop and/or update an Improvement Plan based on the findings of the School Climate Survey.

1. The Specialist and the Committee shall develop and/or update the Improvement Plan

- taking into consideration the needs of all key stakeholders, with sensitivity to equity and diversity.
2. The Improvement Plan shall support the actualization of the following five Standards:

Standard 1: Develop a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate.

Standard 2: Develop policies that promote social, emotional, ethical, civic and intellectual learning as well as systems that address barriers to learning.

Standard 3: Implement practices that promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical and civic development of students and student engagement as well as addressing barriers to learning.

Standard 4: Create an environment where all members are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.

Standard 5: Develop meaningful and engaging practices, activities and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice.

3. Each Improvement Plan shall be submitted to the Coordinator for approval and implementation no later than mid-October of each school year. The Coordinator may provide feedback to the Committee with respect to amendments to the Improvement Plan.

PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING, TEEN DATING VIOLENCE & RETALIATION

- A. The Board expressly prohibits any form of bullying and teen dating violence 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 the Board of; or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the Board.
- B. The Board also prohibits any form of bullying behavior or teen dating violence outside of the school setting if such conduct (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying or teen dating violence was directed, (ii) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying or teen dating violence was directed at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school;
- C. In addition to prohibiting student acts which constitute bullying or teen dating violence, the Board also prohibits discrimination and/or retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of such acts;
- D. Students who engage in bullying behavior or teen dating violence in violation of Board Policy and the Safe School Climate Plan may 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.
- E. Members of Staff who engage in bullying or other behavior in violation of Board Policy and the Safe School Climate Plan may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

In general, it is the responsibility of all school employees who witness acts of bullying or teen dating violence or receive reports of bullying or teen dating violence to report the behavior both orally and in writing as described in this Plan. In addition, specific personnel have further responsibilities regarding prevention, investigation, and response to bullying, as described herein.

A. Safe School Climate Coordinator

Each school year the Superintendent shall appoint, from existing school district staff, a District Safe School Climate Coordinator (“Coordinator”).

The duties of the Coordinator shall include those enumerated under C.G.S. Section 10-222d and C.G.S. Section 10-222k, and the Stamford Board of Education's Regulations, as all may be amended from time to time. In addition, the Coordinator shall:

1. Be responsible for implementing the District’s Safe School Plan (“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 regarding bullying in collaboration with the Superintendent, to the Department of Education;
4. Meet with Safe School Climate Specialists at least twice during the school year to discuss issues relating to bullying and teen dating violence in the school district and to make recommendations concerning amendments to the district’s Plan. This includes, but is not limited to, (i) identifying strategies to improve school climate that promotes high quality relationships among all school community members, and, as a result, is designed to eliminate intentional and unintentional mean-spirited behaviors including, but not limited to, bullying and harassment, (ii) making recommendations concerning amendments to the District's Safe School Climate Plan, as well as to make recommendations concerning amendments to each individual school's "School Climate Improvement Plan," and (iii) overseeing completion of each individual school's "School Climate Survey."
5. Develop strategies to prevent, identify, and respond to any kind of mean-spirited behavior including, but not limited to, reports of alleged bullying and harassment in the schools of the District, in collaboration with the Specialists, as well as the Board and the Superintendent as appropriate;
6. Provide data and information regarding school climate improvement to the Connecticut State Department of Education, in collaboration with the Superintendent, as may be required by law; and

7. Provide leadership for the following activities:
 - (a) Advancement of evidence-based policy and best practices to improve school climate, foster high quality relationships, and promote physical, emotional, and intellectual school safety; and
 - (b) Development and dissemination of resources and training materials for Specialists, Committees, school staff and community members about issues of school climate and school climate improvement efforts and activities.

B. Safe School Climate Specialist

Each school year the Principal of each school (or Principal's designee, with approval of the Coordinator) shall serve as the Safe School Climate Specialist (the "Specialist") for the individual school to which they are assigned.

The duties of the Specialist shall include those enumerated under C.G.S. Section 10-222d and C.G.S. Section 10-222k, and the Stamford Board of Education's Regulations, as all may be amended from time to time. In addition, the Specialist shall:

- 1) Investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying or teen dating violence;
- 2) Collect and maintain records or reports and investigations;
- 3) Act as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying and responding to reports of bullying and teen dating violence in the school;
- 4) Act as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying and responding to such reports in the school and leading efforts to improve school climate;
- 5) Chair or co-chair the Safe School Climate Committee and establish the meeting calendar for the committee meetings; and
- 6) Serve as the primary supervisor of the school's School Climate Improvement Plan for the implementation and the monitoring of the School Climate Improvement Plan.

C. Safe School Climate Committee

Each school year the Principal of each school shall establish a committee (or designate an existing school committee) to be responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate and addressing issues relating to bullying and teen dating violence in the school (the "Committee"). Such committee shall include at least one parent or guardian of a student enrolled in the school appointed by the school principal, school personnel, including, but not limited to, at least one teacher selected by the exclusive bargaining representative for certified employees chosen pursuant to [section 10-153b](#), medical and mental health personnel assigned to such school, and in the case of a committee for a high school, at least one student enrolled at such high school who is selected by the students of such school in a manner determined by the school principal.

Any parent or guardian or student serving as a member of any such committee shall not participate in any activity (including those identified as numbers 1, 2 and 3, below) that may compromise the confidentiality of a student.

Committee composition/membership shall be reviewed annually by the Coordinator and the Specialist.

The duties of the Committee shall include those enumerated under C.G.S. Section 10-222d and C.G.S. Section 10-222k, and the Stamford Board of Education's Regulations, as all may be amended from time to time. In addition, the 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) Implement the provisions of the school security and safety plan, developed pursuant to [section 10-222m](#), regarding the collection, evaluation and reporting of information relating to instances of disturbing or threatening behavior that may not meet the definition of bullying;
- 4) Review and amend school policies relating to bullying;
- 5) Review and make recommendations to the district safe school climate coordinator regarding the district's safe school climate plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school;
- 6) Educate students, school employees and parents and guardians of students on issues relating to bullying;
- 7) Collaborate with the district safe school climate coordinator in the collection of data regarding bullying, in accordance with the provisions of subsection (b) of [section 10-222d](#) and subsection (a) of [section 10-222h](#),
- 8) 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;
- 9) Supervise the scheduling and administration of School Climate Surveys to students, staff, parents, and community members;
- 10) Set goals and tracking survey completion;
- 11) Reach out to staff and parents before administering the Survey;
- 12) Provide Survey data to the Coordinator;
- 13) Review and analyzing the school-based school climate assessment data;
- 14) Use the data and other appropriate data and information to identify strengths and challenges with respect to improving school climate;
- 15) Use the data to create and/or update the school-based School Climate Improvement Plan;
- 16) Oversee the implementation of the school-based School Climate Improvement Plan;
- 17) Implement the School Climate Improvement Plan and monitoring the progress of school climate improvement, in collaboration with the Coordinator;
- 18) Oversee the implementation of annual school climate assessments at the school;
- 19) Review and making recommendations to the Coordinator regarding the safe school climate plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school;
- 20) Oversee the education of students, school employees and parents/guardians of students on issues relating to improving school climate;
- 21) Hold meetings at least four times each year, at which minutes shall be kept and made available to the public; as appropriate, and
- 22) Perform any other duties as determined by the Specialist and/or the Coordinator that

are related to improving school climate in the school, or required by law.

D. School Climate Surveys and Assessments

1. Annual School Climate Survey

(a) Each school, supported with oversight by the Coordinator and under the guidance of the Committee, shall administer, on an annual basis, at the same time of year each year, the School Climate Survey in order to assess a school's strengths and challenges.

(b) Preparation for Survey Administration: All survey participants should be made aware of the purpose and value of the survey as determined by the Committee prior to administration, so that the school will receive authentic data to help drive decisions that will benefit the entire school community.

(c) In collaboration with the Coordinator, each Specialist shall develop and/or update a School Climate Improvement Plan based on the findings of the School Climate Survey, and in accordance with the School Climate Policy and Regulation (5131.914 and R5131.914)

2. Biennial School Climate Assessment

(a) On and after July 1, 2012, and biennially thereafter, the Board shall require each school in the district to complete an assessment using the school climate assessment instruments, including surveys, approved and disseminated by the Department of Education. The Board shall collect the school climate assessments for each school in the district and submit such assessments to the Department.

E. Annual Notice and Training

1. Students, and parents or guardians of students shall be notified at the beginning of each school year of the process by which students may make reports of bullying and teen dating violence, including the ability to make anonymous reports.
2. The Board shall provide for the inclusion of language in student codes of conduct concerning bullying and teen dating violence.
3. At the beginning of each school year, each school shall provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of the school district's safe school climate plan and require that all school employees annually complete training on the identification, prevention and response to bullying, teen dating violence and youth suicide as required by law.

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING & INVESTIGATING ALLEGATIONS OF MISCONDUCT

A. Reporting

All school administrators are charged with the responsibility of taking reports of bullying and appropriately investigating them. Reports may be made to any building administrator.

1. Written Reports.

Students and parents (or guardians of students) may file written reports of bullying and teen dating violence. Written reports of bullying and teen dating violence shall be reasonably specific as to the basis for the report, including the time and place of the alleged conduct, the number of incidents, the target of the suspected bullying or teen dating violence, and the names of potential witnesses. District reporting forms will be made available at each school as well as on the district website. Such reports may be filed with a building administrator and/or the Safe School Climate Specialist (e.g. building Principal), and all reports shall be forwarded to the Safe School Climate Specialist for review and actions consistent with this Plan.

2. Verbal Reports by Students.

Students may also make verbal complaints of conduct that they consider to be bullying or teen dating violence by verbally reporting to any school employee or any other individual who, in the performance of their duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of district students pursuant to a contract with the Board. Such verbal complaints shall be reasonably specific as to the actions giving rise to the suspicion of bullying, including time and place of the conduct alleged, the number of such incidents, the target of such suspected bullying, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. The individual recipient who receives a verbal complaint shall promptly reduce the complaint to writing, including the information provided. Such written report by the recipient of the verbal complaint shall be promptly forwarded to the building principal (or other responsible program administrator) for review and action in accordance with this Plan and Board policy.

3. Anonymous Reports.

Students who make complaints of bullying or teen dating violence to a teacher, administrator, or other professional employee (such as a guidance counselor, school psychologist, nurse, social worker or therapist), may request that their name be maintained in confidence by the staff member who receives the complaint. Should anonymity be requested, the principal or their designee shall meet with the student to review the request for anonymity and the impact that maintaining anonymity of the

complaint may have on the investigation of the complaint and/or possible remedial action. At such meeting, the student shall be given the choice as to whether to maintain the anonymity of the complaint. Anonymous complaints shall be reviewed and reasonable action will be taken to address the situation, to the extent such action may be taken that (1) does not disclose the source of the complaint, and (2) is consistent with the due process rights of the student(s) alleged to have committed acts of bullying.

B. Staff Responsibilities and Intervention Strategies

1. School employees who witness acts of bullying or teen dating violence or receive reports of bullying or teen dating violence shall orally notify the principal and Safe School Climate Specialist or another school administrator if the Safe School Climate Specialist is unavailable, **not later than one school (1) school day** after such school employee witnesses or receives said report. The school employee shall then file a **written report not later than two (2) school days** after making such oral report.

2. In addition to addressing both verbal and written complaints, teachers and other professional employees are encouraged to address the issue of bullying in other interactions with students. Teachers and other professional employees may find opportunities to educate students about bullying and help eliminate bullying behavior through class discussions, counseling, and reinforcement of socially-appropriate behavior. Teachers and other professional employees should intervene promptly whenever they observe student conduct that has the purpose or effect of ridiculing, harassing, humiliating, or intimidating another student, even if such conduct does not meet the formal definition of "bullying" or "teen dating violence."

C. Discrimination and Retaliation.

Discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an alleged act of bullying or teen dating violence is prohibited.

D. Investigating.

After receipt of any written reports made under this Plan, the Safe School Specialist will investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and teen dating violence and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly.

The Safe School Climate Specialist will investigate any anonymous reports, except that no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

The Safe School Climate Specialist shall promptly notify the parents or guardians of the student alleged to have committed an act or acts of bullying or teen dating violence and the parents or guardians of the student against whom such alleged act or acts was committed that an investigation has commenced.

In investigating reports of bullying and teen dating violence, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegations and the ages of the students involved. The Safe School Climate Specialist will interview witnesses, as necessary, reminding the alleged perpetrator and other parties that retaliation is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action.

When a student making a verbal complaint has requested anonymity, the investigation of such complaint shall be limited as is appropriate in view of the anonymity of the complainant. Such limitation of investigation may include restricting action to a simple review of the complaint (with or without discussing it with the alleged perpetrator), subject to receipt of further information and/or the withdrawal by the complaining student of the condition that their report be anonymous.

A written report of the investigation shall be prepared when the investigation is complete. Such report shall include findings of fact, a determination of whether acts of bullying were verified, and, when acts of bullying are verified, a recommendation for intervention, which may include disciplinary action. Where appropriate, written witness statements shall be attached to the report.

RESPONDING TO VERIFIED ACTS

A. Notification of results.

Following investigation, if acts of bullying or teen dating violence are verified, **not later than forty-eight (48) hours** after the investigation is completed, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall:

- (1) notify the parents or guardians of the victim(s) and the perpetrator(s) of the results of the investigation;
- (2) provide both verbal and email notification that such parents or guardians may refer to the plain language explanation of the rights and remedies available under [sections 10-4a](#) and [10-4b](#), as published on district's website; and
- (3) Include as part of the notification a description of the school's response to the acts of bullying or teen dating violence and any consequences for that may result from the commission of further acts of bullying or teen dating violence.

B. Notification to the parent or guardian of the victim

If after investigation, acts of bullying or teen dating violence against a specific student are verified, the building principal (or other responsible program administrator or designee) shall notify the parent or guardian of the victim of such finding. In providing such notification, care should be taken to respect the statutory privacy rights of the perpetrator(s) of such bullying. The specific disciplinary consequences imposed on the perpetrator(s), as reflected in the student's educational records, shall not be disclosed to the parents or guardian of the victim(s), except as provided by law.

In addition, if bullying or teen dating violence is verified, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall also invite the parents or guardians of the student against whom such act was directed to a meeting to communicate the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the student/victim and to prevent further acts of bullying or teen dating violence. The invitation must include a description of the school's response to such acts, along with consequences, as appropriate.

C. Notification to the parent or guardian of the perpetrator

If after investigation, acts of bullying by a specific student are verified, the building principal (or other responsible program administrator or designee) shall notify the parent or guardian of the perpetrator in writing of that finding. If disciplinary consequences are imposed against such student, a description of such discipline shall be included in such notification.

If bullying or teen dating violence is verified, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall also invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits verified acts of bullying or teen dating violence shall be invited to a meeting to discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying or teen dating

violence. The invitation must include a description of the school's response to such acts, along with consequences, as appropriate. This meeting shall be separate and distinct with the meeting of the parent or guardian of the victim.

D. Verified acts of bullying

Verified acts of bullying shall result in intervention by the building principal (or other responsible program administrator) or designee that is intended to address the acts of the perpetrator and the needs of the victim and to assure that the prohibition against bullying behavior is enforced with the goal that any such bullying behavior will end as a result.

E. Bullying or teen dating violence verified

If bullying or teen dating violence is verified, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall develop a student safety support plan for any student against whom an act of bullying or teen dating violence was directed. Such support plan will include safety measures to protect against further acts of bullying or teen dating violence.

F. Intervention Plan

A specific written intervention plan shall be developed to address repeated incidents of verified bullying or teen dating violence against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying or teen dating violence incidents by the same individual. The written intervention plan may include counseling, discipline and other appropriate remedial actions as determined by the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee, and may also incorporate a student safety support plan, as appropriate.

G. Communication

Communication with parents/guardians of verified bullying or teen dating shall be recorded on a standardized District Form.

H. Notice to Law Enforcement

If the Principal of a school (or designee) reasonably believes that any act of bullying or teen dating violence constitutes a criminal offense, they shall notify appropriate law enforcement. Notice shall be consistent with the Board's obligations under state and federal law and Board policy regarding the disclosure of personally identifiable student information. In making this determination, the Principal or designee, may consult with the school resource officer, if any, and other individuals the Principal or designee deems appropriate.

I. Bullying or teen dating complaint

If a bullying or teen dating violence complaint raises concern about discrimination or harassment on the basis of a legally protected classification (such as race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age or disability), the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall also coordinate any investigation with other appropriate personnel within the district as appropriate (e.g. Title IX Coordinator, Section 504 Coordinator, Safe School Climate Coordinator, etc.). In instances where a student's

actions potentially form the basis of a discrimination complaint, a separate investigation by an appropriate district civil rights coordinator may be required.

DOCUMENTATION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

A. Each school shall maintain written complaints of bullying and teen dating violence along with supporting documentation received and/or created as a result of bullying and teen dating violence investigations, consistent with the Board's obligations under state and federal law. Any educational record containing personally identifiable student information pertaining to an individual student shall be maintained in a confidential manner and shall not be disclosed to third parties without prior written consent of a parent, guardian or eligible student, except as permitted under Board policy and state and federal law. These records shall be placed in a secure location designated for this purpose and maintained by the school's Safe School Climate Specialist.

B. The Principal or the Safe School Climate Specialist of each school shall maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying in the school and this list shall be available for public inspection upon request. Given that any determination of bullying involves repeated acts, each investigation that results in a verified act of bullying for that school year shall be tallied as one verified act of bullying unless the specific actions that are the subject of each report involve separate and distinct acts of bullying. The list shall be limited to the number of verified acts of bullying in each school and shall not set out the particulars of each verified act, including, but not limited to any personally identifiable student information, which is confidential information by law. A District Form shall be used for this purpose. A separate list of verified acts of teen dating violence may be maintained by the Safe School Climate Specialist. There is no legal obligation to maintain such a list or report verified acts of teen dating violence to the Department of Education.

C. The Principal or designee shall report the number of verified acts of bullying in each school annually to the Department of Education in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education.

PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

“Prevention and intervention strategy” 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 the student who commits teen dating violence, parents and school employees, and interventions with the bullied child or student who was the subject of teen dating violence, parents 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 prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions, and (9) culturally competent school-based curriculum focusing on social-emotional learning, self-awareness and self-regulation.

A. Response

Bullying behavior and teen dating violence can take many forms and can vary dramatically in the nature of the offense and the impact the behavior may have on the victim and other students. Accordingly, there is no one prescribed response to verified acts of bullying or acts of teen dating violence. While conduct that rises to the level of “bullying” or “teen dating violence”, as defined herein, will generally warrant disciplinary action against the perpetrator of such bullying or teen dating violence, whether and to what extent to impose disciplinary action (e.g., detention, in-school suspension, suspension or expulsion) is a matter for the professional discretion of the building Principal (or responsible program administrator or his/her designee). No disciplinary action may be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous complaint.

1. A specific written intervention plan shall be developed on a case by case basis to address repeated incidents of bullying or teen dating violence against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual or incidents of teen dating violence. This plan may include safety provisions, as described above, for students against whom acts of bullying or teen dating violence have been verified and may include other interventions such as counseling, discipline, and other appropriate remedial actions as determined by the responsible administrator.

The following sets forth possible interventions which may also be utilized to enforce the Board’s prohibition against bullying and teen dating violence:

B. Non-disciplinary interventions

1. When verified acts of bullying or teen dating violence are identified early and/or when such verified acts of bullying or teen dating violence do not reasonably require a disciplinary response, students may be counseled as to the definition of bullying or teen dating violence, its prohibition, and their duty to avoid any conduct that could be considered bullying.
2. If a complaint arises out of conflict between students or groups of students, peer mediation may be considered. Special care, however, is warranted in referring such cases to peer mediation. A power imbalance may make the process intimidating for the victim and therefore inappropriate. In such cases, the victim should be given additional support. Alternatively, peer mediation may be deemed inappropriate to address the concern.

C. Disciplinary interventions

1. When acts of bullying or teen dating violence are verified and a disciplinary response is warranted, students are subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences that apply to on campus and off campus conduct. Anonymous complaints, however, shall not be the basis for disciplinary action.
2. In-school suspension and suspension may be imposed only after informing the accused perpetrator of the reasons for the proposed suspension and giving them an opportunity to explain the situation, in accordance with the Board's Student Discipline policy.
3. Expulsion may be imposed only after a hearing before the Board, a committee of the Board or an impartial hearing officer designated by the Board in accordance with the Board's Student Discipline policy. This consequence shall normally be reserved for serious incidents of bullying or teen dating violence and/or when past interventions have not been successful in eliminating bullying behavior or teen dating violence.
4. In those cases where bullying behavior or teen dating violence has occurred off campus (and outside of any school-sponsored activity), discipline for such conduct may be imposed if such conduct violates a publicized policy of the Board and is seriously disruptive of the educational process.

D. Interventions for bullied students or students subject to teen dating violence

The Safe School Climate Specialist or building Principal (or other responsible program administrator) or his/her designee shall intervene in order to address multiple incidents of bullying or teen dating violence against a single individual. Intervention strategies for a bullied student or a student subject to teen dating violence may include the following:

1. Counseling;
2. Increased supervision and monitoring of student to observe and intervene in bullying situations;
3. Encouragement of student to seek help when victimized or witnessing victimization;

4. Peer mediation where appropriate;
5. Student Safety Support plan.

E. General Prevention and Intervention Strategies

In addition to the prompt investigation of complaints of bullying and teen dating violence and direct intervention when acts of bullying and teen dating violence are verified, other district actions may ameliorate potential problems with bullying and teen dating violence in school or at school-sponsored activities. While no specific action is required, and school needs for specific prevention and intervention strategies may vary from time to time, the following list of potential prevention and intervention strategies shall serve as a resource for administrators, teachers and other professional employees in each school:

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, including any such program identified by the Department of Education;
2. School rules prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation and teen dating violence 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, which may include instruction regarding building safe and positive school communities including developing healthy relationships and preventing dating violence as deemed appropriate for older students;
5. Individual interventions with the perpetrator, parents and school employees, and interventions with the bullied student or student subjected to teen dating violence, parents and school employees;
6. School-wide training related to safe school climate, which training may include Title IX/Sexual harassment training, Section 504/ADA Training, cultural diversity/multicultural education or other training in federal and state civil rights legislation or other topics relevant 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. Respectful responses to bullying and teen dating violence concerns raised by students, parents or staff;
10. Planned professional development programs addressing prevention and intervention strategies, which training may include school violence prevention, conflict resolution and prevention of bullying and teen dating violence, with a focus in evidence based practices concerning same;
11. Use of peers to help ameliorate the plight of victims and include them in group activities;
12. Avoidance of sex-role stereotyping;

13. Continuing awareness and involvement on the part of staff and parents with regards to prevention and intervention strategies;
14. Modeling by teachers of positive, respectful, and supportive behavior toward students;
15. Creating a school atmosphere of team spirit and collaboration that promotes appropriate social behavior by students in support of others;
16. Employing classroom strategies that instruct students how to work together in a collaborative and supportive atmosphere;
17. A school survey to determine the prevalence of bullying; and
18. Establishment of a bullying prevention coordinating committee with broad representation to review school climate survey results and implement appropriate strategies;

F. In addition to prevention and intervention strategies, administrators, teachers and other professional employees may find opportunities to educate students about bullying and teen dating violence and help eliminate bullying behavior and teen dating violence through class discussions, counseling, and reinforcement of socially-appropriate behavior. Administrators, teachers and other professional employees should intervene promptly whenever they observe student conduct that has the purpose or effect of ridiculing, harassing, humiliating or intimidating another student, even if such conduct does not meet the formal definition of “bullying” or “teen dating violence.”

G. Professional Development

1. Mandated school climate trainings shall be provided by individuals and/or organizations deemed qualified service providers by the Superintendent and/or the Coordinator.
2. All school employees, as defined in this policy, shall participate in any mandated school climate trainings and update sessions.
3. The District shall provide necessary on-site coaching and/or technical assistance in the implementation phase of school climate improvement.

H. Codes of Conduct

Codes of conduct for both students and adults shall be amended to reinforce positive school climates by detailing, and consistently recognizing and supporting positive behavior, applying appropriate graduated and restorative responses for inappropriate conduct, in order to address the root causes of the individuals specific conduct, while promoting physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe and supportive teaching and learning environments for all students and adults in the school community. Restorative practice builds community, celebrates accomplishments, transforms conflict, rebuilds and strengthens relationships. Such responses shall be educative and restorative and be chosen in response to the context of each situation to support relationship-building and improvement, and with particular attention to issues of equity. These responses may include, but are not limited to one or more of the following:

- a. Reflective activities;
- b. School counseling support;

- c. Anger management;
- d. Health counseling or intervention;
- e. Mental health counseling;
- f. Skill building such as social and emotional, cognitive, and intellectual skills;
- g. Resolution circles and restorative conferencing;
- h. Community service;
- i. Conflict resolution or mediation; and
- j. Other actions detailed in accordance with Board policies and procedures such as those regarding:
 - i. Participation in extracurricular activities;
 - ii. Student discipline (including detention, in or out of school suspension, and expulsion); and
 - iii. Adult/employee professional responsibility, conduct, separation/disciplinary actions.