



Connecticut Association of Boards of Education

Jody I Goeler, Senior Staff Associate for Policy Service

PRESENTS POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

February 14, 2025

Connecticut School Climate Policy Resources

CABE Model Policy on Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process ([5114](#))

CT School Climate Policy ([5131.911](#))

In accordance with Public Act 23-167, An Act Concerning Transparency in Education, for the school year beginning July 1, 2025, each local and regional board of education is required to adopt and implement the Connecticut School Climate Policy.

CABE developed the policy with technical and substantive guidance from the Commission on Women, Children, Seniors Equity & Opportunity (CWCSEO) and other members of the statewide Social Emotional Learning and School Climate Collaborative.

Commonly, “mandated” policies, which embed requirements established in law, allow for boards to draft their policies. The Connecticut School Climate Policy ([5131.911](#)) is required to be adopted as written.

Unlike the previous bullying policy, which triggered a reaction (due process, determination, and punishments) to a bullying allegation, the Connecticut General Assembly’s intention in 23-167 was for districts to establish coherent structures and processes for schools to improve their climate by focusing on prevention of “challenging behaviors” and implementation of restorative practices to prevent those behaviors.

The School Climate Policy is more than just a different name for what districts were required to follow with the previous Bullying policy, beginning with its “Policy Statement” on the first page:

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

The policy then goes on to state that the *implementation of the following set of guiding principles and systemic strategies will promote a positive school climate, which is essential to these goals.*

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

Before proceeding to a series of definitions, the statement ends with: *The Board recognizes that improving school climate is contextual. Each school needs to consider its history, strengths, needs, and goals. Furthermore, this policy will support and promote the development of restorative action plans that will create and sustain safe and equitable learning environments.*

With 11 Public Acts related to bullying statutes since 2002, most of which addressed investigative procedures, reporting requirements and timelines, determinations and punitive measures, it's easy to understand the confusion districts may be experiencing as they prepare to implement the new policy. In some cases, school employees may hear: Don't we care about bullying anymore? So, we do nothing about bullying? Just let kids get away with it? And so on...

It's inevitable that even with all of the structures in place, a highly trained staff, a data-informed School Climate Improvement Plan, and full adherence to the Policy, a determination will be made that a disciplinary response to behavior is warranted. In such cases, CAFE's recently updated mandated policy, "Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process" ([5114](#)), ensures that districts comply with recent legislation in Public Act 24-45, An Act Concerning Education Mandate Relief, School Discipline and Disconnected Youth.

In summary, Public Act 24-45, Sections 13 and 14, reduces the maximum number of consecutive days for in-school suspensions from ten (10) to five (5). In addition, it changes the standard for out-of-school suspensions in preschool – 2nd grade and shortens the maximum out-of-school suspension for these grades from ten (10) to five (5) days.

Specifically, section 13, Subsections (c) and (d) of section 10-233a of the general statutes are repealed and replaced by the following language:

"In-School Suspension" means an exclusion from regular classroom activity for *no more than five consecutive school days*, but not exclusion from school, provided such exclusion shall not extend beyond the end of the school year in which such in-school suspension was imposed.

"Suspension" means an exclusion from school privileges or from transportation services only, provided such exclusion shall not extend beyond the end of the school year in which such suspension was imposed.

Section 14, subsection (g) of section 10-233c substitutes the following key points related to in-school and out-of-school suspensions:

- All suspensions shall be in-school suspensions, except the board may authorize the administration to impose an out-of-school suspension. When making such a determination, the administration must consider the following:
 - The student poses a danger to persons or property or such a disruption of the educational process that the student needs to be excluded from school during the period of suspension or

- The administration determines that an out-of-school suspension is appropriate based on evidence of previous disciplinary issues that have led to suspensions or expulsion of the student.
- Efforts by the administration to address the concerning disciplinary issues through means other than out-of-school suspension or expulsion, including positive behavioral support strategies have been attempted.
- For a student in preschool to second grade (preschool-grade 2), if, as a result of a hearing, the administration determines that an out-of-school suspension is appropriate for the student on evidence that the conduct on school grounds is behavior that causes physical harm.
- Such students are required to receive services that are trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate and align with any behavioral intervention plan, individualized education program or plan pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, for such student's return to school immediately following the out-of-school suspension.
- The administration must consider whether to convene a planning and placement team meeting for the purposes of conducting an evaluation to determine whether such student may require special education or related services.
- An out-of-school suspension for students in grades 3-12 shall not exceed ten days.
- An out-of-school suspension imposed for children in preschool to second grade shall not exceed five days.
- An in-school suspension may be served in the school that the student attends or any school building under the board's jurisdiction.

With these updates, CAGE's Model Policy [5114](#) provides administrators the necessary guidance for addressing student behaviors, including bullying behaviors, requiring a disciplinary response. Unlike the CT School Climate Policy, the board can modify this model policy's language, as long as the statutory requirements and guidelines remain consistent.

Available on the [Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity \(CWCSEO\)](#) website, the SEL Collaborative has developed the following resources for students, parents/guardians, and school employees to assist districts in complying with the CT School Climate Policy.

To find these resources, locate the Children's Subcommittee page, and then proceed to click on Social and Emotional Learning and School Climate Advisory Collaborative, which will take you to the following resources:

[School Climate Improvement Plan Template](#)

[CT School Climate Survey – Students](#)

[CT School Climate Survey – Parents and Guardians](#)

[CT School Climate Survey – School Employees](#)

Challenging Behavior Reporting Form

The challenging behavior reporting form that local and regional boards of education may adapt and adopt. This form is a three-step process. 1) challenging behavior reporting form; 2) investigation form; 3) response process(es) notification form. The challenging behavior reporting form is for students, parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school, and school employees to report any alleged challenging behavior incidents. The investigation form provides a streamlined process for investigating reported instances of challenging behavior and is to be completed by the school climate specialist. Lastly, the response process(es) notification provides a template for transparency and accountability to a person(s) that submit(s) a report of challenging behavior.

Additionally, all forms can be found in CABE's Core Manual under the CT School Climate Policy ([5131.911](#))

([5131.911- Appendix I](#))

([5131.911- Appendix II](#))

([5131.911- Appendix III](#))

([5131.911- Appendix IV](#))