

Task Force to Study School Climate

Created for the Co-Chairs by the

Connecticut Commission on
Women, Children *and* Seniors



CWCS



Senate Bill No. 179

Public Act No. 16-188

AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION ISSUES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2016*) The State Board of Education, in consultation with the Department of Veterans' Affairs, shall award, upon receipt of a request, an exemplary veterans education program distinction to those local and regional boards of education that offer a program that provides students with opportunities to learn about the contributions of veterans, as defined in section 27-103 of the general statutes, or collaborate with local veterans organizations. Such opportunities may include, but need not be limited to, classes, extracurricular activities, presentations or symposiums. A local or regional board of education may submit, at such time and in such manner as the state board prescribes, a request for such distinction by providing details about such board's program to the state board. The state board shall make information about the distinction available on the Department of Education's Internet web site.

Sec. 2. Section 10-221s of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2016*):

(a) Each local and regional board of education shall post the

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telephone number for the Careline operated by the Department of Children and Families, pursuant to section 17a-103a, as amended by this act, and the Internet web site address that provides information about the Careline in a conspicuous location frequented by students in each school under the jurisdiction of the board. Such posting shall be in various languages that are the most appropriate for the students enrolled in the school.

(b) A local or regional board of education shall permit and give priority to any investigation conducted by the Commissioner of Children and Families or the appropriate local law enforcement agency that a child has been abused or neglected pursuant to sections 17a-101a to 17a-101d, inclusive, and section 17a-103. Such board of education shall conduct its own investigation and take any disciplinary action, in accordance with the provisions of section 17a-101i, upon notice from the commissioner or the appropriate local law enforcement agency that such board's investigation will not interfere with the investigation of the commissioner or such local law enforcement agency.

Sec. 3. Section 17a-103a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

The Commissioner of Children and Families shall [provide a telephone hotline] establish and operate the telephone Careline for child abuse and neglect that shall be dedicated to receive reports of child abuse [. Such hotline] or neglect and to provide information concerning child abuse or neglect. The Careline shall accept all reports of child abuse or neglect regardless of the relationship of the alleged perpetrator to the child who is the alleged victim and regardless of the alleged perpetrator's affiliation with any organization or other entity in any capacity. The commissioner shall classify and evaluate all reports pursuant to the provisions of section 17a-101g.

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Sec. 4. Subsection (a) of section 10-16b of the 2016 supplement to the general statutes, as amended by section 1 of public act 15-94, is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2016*):

(a) In the public schools the program of instruction offered shall include at least the following subject matter, as taught by legally qualified teachers, the arts; career education; consumer education; health and safety, including, but not limited to, human growth and development, nutrition, first aid, including cardiopulmonary resuscitation training in accordance with the provisions of section 10-16qq, disease prevention and cancer awareness, including, but not limited to, age and developmentally appropriate instruction in performing self-examinations for the purposes of screening for breast cancer and testicular cancer, community and consumer health, physical, mental and emotional health, including youth suicide prevention, substance abuse prevention, safety, which shall include the safe use of social media, as defined in section 9-601, and may include the dangers of gang membership, and accident prevention; language arts, including reading, writing, grammar, speaking and spelling; mathematics; physical education; science; social studies, including, but not limited to, citizenship, economics, geography, government and history; computer programming instruction; and in addition, on at least the secondary level, one or more world languages and vocational education. For purposes of this subsection, world languages shall include American Sign Language, provided such subject matter is taught by a qualified instructor under the supervision of a teacher who holds a certificate issued by the State Board of Education. For purposes of this subsection, the "arts" means any form of visual or performing arts, which may include, but not be limited to, dance, music, art and theatre.

Sec. 5. (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a task force to

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review, streamline and align state policies relating to school climate, bullying, school safety and social-emotional learning. The task force shall examine the manner in which local and regional boards of education are implementing the safe school climate plans, pursuant to section 10-222d of the general statutes, and any issues resulting from such implementation. The task force shall make recommendations relating to (1) school climate standards for local and regional boards of education to use to develop and implement safe school climate plans, and (2) an accountability methodology that uses the results from student surveys to assess the effectiveness of such safe school climate plans.

(b) The task force shall consist of the following members:

(1) The chairpersons of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education;

(2) One representative from each of the following associations, designated by the association: The Connecticut Association of Boards of Education, the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, the Connecticut Association of Schools, the Connecticut Federation of School Administrators, the Connecticut Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers-Connecticut and the Connecticut PTA;

(3) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee;

(4) The executive director of the Commission on Children, or the executive director's designee;

(5) The director of the Center for Behavioral Education and Research in the Neag School of Education at The University of Connecticut; and

(6) The director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence.

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(c) The chairpersons of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education shall serve as the chairpersons of the task force. Such chairpersons shall schedule the first meeting of the task force, which shall be held not later than sixty days after the effective date of this section.

(d) The administrative staff of the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education shall serve as administrative staff of the task force.

(e) Not later than January 1, 2017, the task force shall submit a report on its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes. The task force shall terminate on the date that it submits such report or January 1, 2017, whichever is later.

Sec. 6. (*Effective July 1, 2016*) (a) For the school years commencing July 1, 2016, to July 1, 2025, inclusive, the local board of education for the East Haven school district shall participate in a pilot program to provide school transportation services for resident students to attend an equivalent nonpublic school located in the New Haven school district. For purposes of this subsection, "resident student" means any student who is a resident of the town of East Haven and, for the school year commencing July 1, 2015, was enrolled in a nonpublic school located in the school district that ceased operations on or after January 1, 2016.

(b) The East Haven school district shall be reimbursed only for the cost of such transportation as is required by this section upon the same basis and in the same manner as such school districts are reimbursed pursuant to section 10-281 of the general statutes.

Sec. 7. (*Effective from passage*) The local board of education for the

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Franklin school district shall be reimbursed for any special education and transportation costs charged to and paid by such board during the fiscal years ending June 30, 2012, to June 30, 2014, inclusive, for any child who was (1) receiving special education and related services, (2) in the custody of the Department of Children and Families, and (3) involved in a proceeding for the termination of parental rights at any time during such period. Such reimbursement shall be paid out of the Excess Cost-Student Based account in the Department of Education.

Sec. 8. (*Effective July 1, 2016*) Notwithstanding the provisions of subdivision (3) of subsection (a) of section 10-261 of the general statutes, concerning the definition of net current expenditures, the total current educational expenditures for the town of Newtown for purposes of calculating payments under section 10-76g of the general statutes for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2015, to June 30, 2017, inclusive, shall not include any funds received from the United States Department of Justice or under Project SERV (School Emergency Response to Violence) administered by the United States Department of Education in fiscal years ending June 30, 2014, to June 30, 2016, inclusive. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017, the town of Newtown shall receive a payment under section 10-76g of the general statutes in an amount equal to (1) the difference between the amount received in the fiscal years ending June 30, 2015, and June 30, 2016, and the amount that would have been received during such fiscal years as calculated under this section, plus (2) the amount the town of Newtown is entitled to receive as calculated under this section for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017.

Approved June 9, 2016



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Public Act No. 11-232

AN ACT CONCERNING THE STRENGTHENING OF SCHOOL BULLYING LAWS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Section 10-222d of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2011*):

(a) As used in this section and sections 10-222g, as amended by this act, 10-222h, as amended by this act, and sections 4 and 9 of this act:

(1) "Bullying" means (A) 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 (B) a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same school district, that: (i) Causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property, (ii) places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property, (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for such student, (iv) infringes on the rights of such student at school, or (v) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Bullying shall include, but not be limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any

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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;

(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) "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;

(4) "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;

(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) "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 a local or regional board of education;

(7) "School employee" means (A) a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor,

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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; and

(8) "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.

(b) Each local and regional board of education shall develop and implement a [policy] safe school climate plan to address the existence of bullying in its schools. Such [policy] plan shall: (1) Enable students to anonymously report acts of bullying to [teachers and school administrators] school employees and require students and the parents or guardians of students to be notified annually of the process by which [they] students may make such reports, (2) enable the parents or guardians of students to file written reports of suspected bullying, (3) require [teachers and other school staff] school employees who witness acts of bullying or receive [student] reports of bullying to orally notify [school administrators in writing] the safe school climate specialist, described in section 9 of this act, 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 [school administrators to investigate any] 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, [and] (5) require the safe school

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climate specialist to review any anonymous reports, except that no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report, [(5)] (6) include a prevention and intervention strategy, as defined by section 10-222g, as amended by this act, for school [staff] employees to deal with bullying, [(6)] (7) provide for the inclusion of language in student codes of conduct concerning bullying, [(7)] (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 [, and invite them to attend at least one meeting, (8) require each school] not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation described in subdivision (4) of this subsection, (9) require 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) 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 [, within available appropriations,] annually report such number to the Department of Education, [annually] and in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education, [(9)] (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, [and (10) identify the appropriate school personnel, which may include, but shall not be limited to, pupil services personnel, responsible for taking a bullying report and investigating the complaint] (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

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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 section 10-220a, as amended by this act, or section 6 of this act. The notification required pursuant to subdivision [(7)] (8) of this subsection and the invitation required pursuant to subdivision (9) of this [section] subsection shall include a description of the response of school [staff] employees to such acts and any consequences that may result from the commission of further acts of bullying. [For purposes of this section, "bullying" means any overt acts by a student or a group of students directed against another student with the intent to ridicule, harass, humiliate or intimidate the other student while on school grounds, at a school-sponsored activity or on a school bus, which acts are committed more than once against any student during the school year. Such policies may include provisions addressing bullying outside of the

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school setting if it has a direct and negative impact on a student's academic performance or safety in school.]

(c) Not later than [February 1, 2009] January 1, 2012, each local and regional board of education shall [submit the policy] approve the safe school climate plan developed pursuant to this section and submit such plan to the Department of Education. Not later than [July 1, 2009, each] thirty calendar days after approval of such plan by the local or regional board of education, the board shall make such plan available on the board's and each individual school in the school district's Internet web site and ensure that [the policy] such plan is included in the school district's publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools and in all student handbooks.

(d) On and after July 1, 2012, and biennially thereafter, each local and regional board of education 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 pursuant to section 10-222h, as amended by this act. Each local and regional board of education shall collect the school climate assessments for each school in the district and submit such school climate assessments to the department.

Sec. 2. Section 10-222g of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2011*):

For the purposes of section 10-222d, as amended by this act, the term "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 identified by the Department of Education, (2) [a school survey to determine the prevalence of bullying, (3) establishment of a bullying prevention coordinating committee with broad representation to review the

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survey results and implement the strategy, (4)] school rules prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation and establishing appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts, [(5)] (3) adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur, [(6)] (4) inclusion of grade-appropriate bullying education and prevention curricula in kindergarten through high school, [(7)] (5) individual interventions with the bully, parents and school [staff] employees, and interventions with the bullied child, parents and school [staff] employees, [(8)] (6) school-wide training related to safe school climate, (7) student peer training, education and support, and [(9)] (8) promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions.

Sec. 3. Section 10-222h of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2011*):

(a) The Department of Education shall, within available appropriations, (1) [review and analyze the policies submitted to the department pursuant to section 10-222d, (2) examine the relationship between bullying, school climate and student outcomes, (3)] document school districts' articulated needs for technical assistance and training related to safe learning and bullying, [(4)] (2) collect information on the prevention and intervention strategies used by schools to reduce the incidence of bullying, improve school climate and improve reporting outcomes, [and (5)] (3) develop or recommend a model [policies] safe school climate plan for grades kindergarten to twelve, inclusive, [for the prevention of bullying] and (4) in collaboration with the Connecticut Association of Schools, disseminate to all public schools grade-level appropriate school climate assessment instruments approved by the department, including surveys, to be used by local and regional boards of education for the purposes of collecting information described in subdivision (2) of this subsection so that the

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department can monitor bullying prevention efforts over time and compare each district's progress to state trends. On or before February 1, 2010, and biennially thereafter, the department shall, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, submit a report on the status of its efforts pursuant to this section including, but not limited to, the number of verified acts of bullying in the state, an analysis of the responsive action taken by school districts and any recommendations it may have regarding additional activities or funding to prevent bullying in schools and improve school climate to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education and to the select committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children.

(b) The department may accept private donations for the purposes of this section.

Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2011*) (a) The Department of Education, in consultation with the State Education Resource Center, the Governor's Prevention Partnership and the Commission on Children, shall establish, within available appropriations, a state-wide safe school climate resource network for the identification, prevention and education of school bullying in the state. Such state-wide safe school climate resource network shall make available to all schools information, training opportunities and resource materials to improve the school climate to diminish bullying.

(b) The department may seek federal, state and municipal funding and may accept private donations for the administration of the state-wide safe school climate resource network.

Sec. 5. Subsection (a) of section 10-220a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2011*):

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(a) Each local or regional board of education shall provide an in-service training program for its teachers, administrators and pupil personnel who hold the initial educator, provisional educator or professional educator certificate. Such program shall provide such teachers, administrators and pupil personnel with information on (1) the nature and the relationship of drugs, as defined in subdivision (17) of section 21a-240, and alcohol to health and personality development, and procedures for discouraging their abuse, (2) health and mental health risk reduction education which includes, but need not be limited to, the prevention of risk-taking behavior by children and the relationship of such behavior to substance abuse, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV-infection and AIDS, as defined in section 19a-581, violence, teen dating violence, domestic violence, child abuse and youth suicide, (3) the growth and development of exceptional children, including handicapped and gifted and talented children and children who may require special education, including, but not limited to, children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder or learning disabilities, and methods for identifying, planning for and working effectively with special needs children in a regular classroom, (4) school violence prevention, conflict resolution, the prevention of and response to youth suicide and the identification and prevention of and response to bullying, as defined in subsection (a) of section 10-222d, as amended by this act, except that those boards of education that implement [an] any evidence-based model approach [,] that is approved by the Department of Education and is consistent with subsection (d) of section 10-145a, as amended by this act, subsection (a) of section 10-220a, as amended by this act, sections 10-222d, as amended by this act, 10-222g, as amended by this act, and 10-222h, as amended by this act, subsection (g) of section 10-233c and sections 1 and 3 of public act 08-160, shall not be required to provide in-service training on the identification and prevention of and response to bullying, (5) cardiopulmonary resuscitation and other emergency life saving procedures, (6) computer and other information

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technology as applied to student learning and classroom instruction, communications and data management, (7) the teaching of the language arts, reading and reading readiness for teachers in grades kindergarten to three, inclusive, and (8) second language acquisition in districts required to provide a program of bilingual education pursuant to section 10-17f. Each local and regional board of education may allow any paraprofessional or noncertified employee to participate, on a voluntary basis, in any in-service training program provided pursuant to this section. The State Board of Education, within available appropriations and utilizing available materials, shall assist and encourage local and regional boards of education to include: (A) Holocaust education and awareness; (B) the historical events surrounding the Great Famine in Ireland; (C) African-American history; (D) Puerto Rican history; (E) Native American history; (F) personal financial management; (G) domestic violence and teen dating violence; and (H) topics approved by the state board upon the request of local or regional boards of education as part of in-service training programs pursuant to this subsection.

Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2011*) The Department of Education shall provide, within available appropriations, annual training to school employees, as defined in section 10-222d of the general statutes, as amended by this act, except those school employees who hold the initial educator, provisional educator or professional educator certificate, on the prevention, identification and response to school bullying, as defined in section 10-222d of the general statutes, as amended by this act, and the prevention of and response to youth suicide. Such training may include, but not be limited to, (1) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying among students in school and outside of the school setting, (2) developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate and effective interventions to stop bullying, (3) information regarding the interaction and relationship between students committing acts of

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bullying, students against whom such acts of bullying are directed and witnesses of such acts of bullying, (4) research findings on bullying, such as information about the types of students who have been shown to be at-risk for bullying in the school setting, (5) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying, as defined in section 10-222d of the general statutes, as amended by this act, (6) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying, or (7) information on the incidence of youth suicide, methods of identifying youths at risk of suicide and developmentally appropriate strategies for effective interventions to prevent youth suicide. Such training may be presented in person by mentors, offered in state-wide workshops or through on-line courses.

Sec. 7. Subdivision (1) of subsection (e) of section 10-145o of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2011*):

(e) (1) Beginning teachers shall satisfactorily complete instructional modules in the following areas: (A) Classroom management and climate, which shall include training regarding the prevention, identification and response to school bullying, as defined in section 10-222d, as amended by this act, and the prevention of and response to youth suicide; (B) lesson planning and unit design; (C) delivering instruction; (D) assessing student learning; and (E) professional practice. Beginning teachers shall complete two modules in their first year in the program and three modules in their second year in the program, except as otherwise provided by the Commissioner of Education, or as provided for in subsection (h) of this section.

Sec. 8. Subsection (d) of section 10-145a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2011*):

(d) Any candidate in a program of teacher preparation leading to professional certification shall [be encouraged to] complete a school

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violence, bullying, as defined in section 10-222d, as amended by this act, and suicide prevention and conflict resolution component of such a program.

Sec. 9. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2011*) (a) For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, the superintendent of each local or regional board of education shall appoint, from among existing school district staff, a district safe school climate coordinator. The district safe school climate coordinator shall: (1) Be responsible for implementing the district's safe school climate plan, developed pursuant to section 10-222d of the general statutes, as amended by this act, (2) collaborate with the safe school climate specialists, described in subsection (b) of this section, the board of education for the district and the superintendent of schools of the school district to prevent, identify and respond to bullying in the schools of the district, (3) provide data and information, in collaboration with the superintendent of schools of the district, to the Department of Education regarding bullying, in accordance with the provisions of subsection (b) of section 10-222d of the general statutes, as amended by this act, and subsection (a) of section 10-222h of the general statutes, as amended by this act, and (4) meet with the safe school climate specialists at least twice during the school year to discuss issues relating to bullying in the school district and to make recommendations concerning amendments to the district's safe school climate plan.

(b) For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, the principal of each school, or the principal's designee, shall serve as the safe school climate specialist and 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) act as the primary school official responsible for

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preventing, identifying and responding to reports of bullying in the school.

(c) (1) For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, the principal of each school shall establish a committee or designate at least one existing committee in the school to be responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate and addressing issues relating to bullying in the school. Such committee shall include at least one parent or guardian of a student enrolled in the school appointed by the school principal.

(2) Any such committee shall: (A) receive copies of completed reports following investigations of bullying, (B) identify and address patterns of bullying among students in the school, (C) review and amend school policies relating to bullying, (D) 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, (E) educate students, school employees and parents and guardians of students on issues relating to bullying, (F) 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 of the general statutes, as amended by this act, and subsection (a) of section 10-222h of the general statutes, as amended by this act, and (G) 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.

(3) Any parent or guardian serving as a member of any such committee shall not participate in the activities described in subparagraphs (A) and (B) of subdivision (2) of this subsection or any other activity that may compromise the confidentiality of a student.

Sec. 10. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2011*) (a) No claim for damages shall

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be made against a school employee, as defined in section 10-222d of the general statutes, as amended by this act, who reports, investigates and responds to bullying, as defined in said section 10-222d, in accordance with the provisions of the safe school climate plan, described in said section 10-222d, if such school employee was acting in good faith in the discharge of his or her duties or within the scope of his or her employment. The immunity provided in this subsection does not apply to acts or omissions constituting gross, reckless, wilful or wanton misconduct.

(b) No claim for damages shall be made against a student, parent or guardian of a student or any other individual who reports an act of bullying to a school employee, in accordance with the provisions of the safe school climate plan described in said section 10-222d, if such individual was acting in good faith. The immunity provided in this subsection does not apply to acts or omissions constituting gross, reckless, wilful or wanton misconduct.

(c) No claim for damages shall be made against a local or regional board of education that implements the safe school climate plan, described in section 10-222d of the general statutes, as amended by this act, and reports, investigates and responds to bullying, as defined in said section 10-222d, if such local or regional board of education was acting in good faith in the discharge of its duties. The immunity provided in this subsection does not apply to acts or omissions constituting gross, reckless, wilful or wanton misconduct.

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APRIL 11, 2012

Questions?

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The New Bullying Statute: Best Practices and Frequently Asked Questions

INTRODUCTION

Public Act 11-232, An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws, made significant changes in the bullying statute, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222d, which was first adopted in 2002, amended in 2006 and again in 2008. The new statute broadened the definition of bullying, and imposed significant new responsibilities on school personnel. This document is intended to provide guidance on the implementation of some of the new provisions of this law and to address the practical challenges imposed by the new law. (Public Act 11-232 is available online at <ftp://ftp.cga.ct.gov/2011/act/PA/pdf/2011PA-00232-R00SB-01138-PA.PDF>).

WHO IS COVERED UNDER THE LAW?

1. **Can bullying occur between students attending different schools?**

Technically, no. The provisions of 10-222d apply only to students attending schools within the same school district. Bullying is defined as communications or acts “by one

or more students” which refer to, or are directed at, “another student attending school in the same district.” Thus, all individuals involved must be students and must attend school in the same school district. However, the students do not need to attend the same school within the district.

2. **Does this new law prohibit bullying by teachers or directed at teachers or other staff members?**

No. Public Act 11-232 addresses only bullying by “one or more students” directed at “another student in the same school district.” Teachers who are concerned about student behavior directed at teachers or other staff members should utilize existing protocols for reporting incidents of misconduct or making referrals for interventions. Students or parents who believe a teacher is acting inappropriately should bring such concerns to the administration.

3. **Does Public Act 11-232 apply to private schools?**

No. Public Act 11-232 continues to apply only to “local and regional boards of education.”

4. Does the new bullying law apply to magnet schools? Charter schools? Privately endowed academies?

Yes. Public Act 11-232 has not changed which schools must comply with the requirements of Conn. Gen. Stat.

§ 10-222d. As did prior law, the new bullying law continues to apply to all public schools, which include those operated by local or regional boards of education, or those which assume the responsibilities of a local or regional board of education, such as magnet and charter schools. Privately endowed academies which have been granted authority to act and serve as a board of education for certain towns are likewise required to comply with the mandates of Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-223.

5. Does the new bullying law apply to adult education programs?

Yes. If the adult education program is operated by a local or regional board of education, the board is required to have a safe school climate plan which complies with the requirements of Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222d. However, given that most individuals who attend an adult education program may not constitute “students,” most of the provisions of the bullying law and the safe school climate plan will not apply to the students in the adult education setting.

DEFINING AND IDENTIFYING BULLYING

6. How do we define bullying?

Effective July 1, 2011, bullying is now defined as the:

. . . repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal 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.

By statute, bullying also expressly includes, but is not 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.

7. When must school officials prohibit and investigate bullying?

School officials must investigate bullying when it occurs:

- 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.

8. Does the new definition of bullying include cyberbullying?

Yes. This is a change from prior law. Under the new law, bullying is defined to include cyberbullying, defined as “any act of bullying using the internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices, or any electronic communications.”

9. Must the behavior happen at school in order for it to be bullying?

No. The definition of bullying does not depend

on where the behavior occurred. Districts are required by law to prohibit bullying both on and off campus. However, the standards for determining whether the behavior constitutes bullying are different for on campus and off campus behavior. Therefore, in determining whether conduct constitutes bullying, school officials must consider where such behavior is taking place and apply the appropriate statutory criteria.

10. When does a school need to intervene for student behavior which occurs off campus?

School districts are required to respond to bullying behavior if the behavior has a direct nexus or impact at school.

Specifically, the new law requires schools to prohibit and investigate bullying when it occurs outside of the school setting if such bullying:

- a) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying was directed;
- b) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was directed at school; or
- c) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

11. If a student is using a privately owned (not school provided) personal electronic device to engage in bullying behavior, is this considered on-campus or off-campus bullying?

It depends. If the device is being used on school grounds, or at a school-sponsored event, the behavior is considered to be

occurring on campus, regardless of the fact that the bullying behavior or message is being communicated through a privately owned electronic device. Likewise, if a student is using a school-provided electronic device (*i.e.* laptop) away from school to engage in bullying behavior, the fact that the device is provided through the school also makes the behavior part of a school-sponsored activity over which the school may assert greater authority.

However, if a student is using a privately owned electronic device off campus to engage in bullying behavior, this would be considered off-campus bullying and thus the school's authority to intervene is limited to situations where the bullying has demonstrated an impact at school (*i.e.* creates a hostile environment; infringes on the rights of the student; or substantially disrupts the education process).

12. What is the school district's responsibility for bullying behavior taking place before a child reaches a school bus stop?

Districts are required to prohibit bullying behavior on a school bus, and at a school bus stop. Districts are also required to prohibit bullying behavior which occurs outside of school (*i.e.* off campus), but only if such bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the victim, infringes on the rights of the victim at school, or substantially disrupts the education process or orderly operation of the school. Thus, if the behavior is happening before students arrive at the bus stop, it is considered off campus behavior and a school would be required to investigate and intervene to the same extent it would for other off-campus misconduct.

Parents should be advised to contact local law enforcement for additional assistance regarding behavior occurring in the community which may or may not affect a child in school, or otherwise affect the "orderly operation of the school."

13. Can one incident of misconduct constitute bullying?

No. By definition, bullying requires the "repeated use" of a "written, oral or electronic communication" directed at another student, or a physical act or gesture "repeatedly directed at another student."

14. Must the acts be perpetrated by the same individual or group of individuals in order to constitute bullying?

Bullying is defined to require repeated acts by "one or more students." The statute does not indicate if each act must be perpetrated by the same student or group of students. Accordingly, districts should consider whether the series of alleged acts represents concerted activity between and among the alleged perpetrators. Bullying is more likely to be found where the facts suggest concerted activity by one or more students in committed individual acts that cumulatively amount to bullying.

For example, if a school receives a complaint alleging three incidents of bullying, each allegedly perpetrated by different students against the same victim, the school should consider the frequency of the acts, whether the perpetrators had knowledge of the prior acts, and whether the location, timing or other facts suggest that the individual perpetrators acted in a concerted manner that suggests the acts were related. It is possible that

the first incident may not fit the definition of bullying, but that after repeated acts, the cumulative behavior may amount to behavior directed at, or referring to, a student in such a way that fits the definition of bullying.

15. Must the acts be directed at the same student in order to be bullying?

No. The definition of bullying merely requires that there be repeated communications, acts or gestures directed at or referring to “another student.” Thus, it is possible that an individual perpetrator could engage in bullying against multiple students if there is a pattern of behavior by the perpetrator that fits the definition of bullying.

16. May a school district consider a student’s intent or ability to knowingly engage in bullying conduct when deciding whether to verify bullying?

Yes. Although the new law revises the definition of bullying to remove prior language requiring “intent to ridicule, harass, humiliate, or intimidate,” this change does not mean that school officials are prohibited from exercising professional judgment when considering the totality of the circumstances and facts surrounding any individual complaint of bullying.

For example, when investigating bullying, it would be appropriate for school officials to consider factors such as:

- a) the relative ages of the students involved;
- b) the nature of the misbehavior;
- c) the impact on the targeted student;
- d) the frequency of the misconduct;
- e) the temporal proximity of alleged events;

f) a student’s capacity to understand and knowingly engage in bullying behavior;

g) the victim’s capacity to accurately perceive social situations and the conduct of others;

h) the context of the alleged bullying, and

i) the existence of a power imbalance between and among the students involved.

17. Is there a statute of limitations for bullying conduct, i.e. may conduct not be bullying because there was too much time between incidents?

The statute does not set forth a “statute of limitations” or other requirement concerning how close in time actions must be in order to be bullying, and the previous reference to “the school year” was deleted in the 2011 revisions. However, it is reasonable to interpret the statutory element of “repeated” conduct to require that conduct be reasonably related in time or nature. One incident in fourth grade and another in seventh grade may not be related so as to be repeated. Each situation must be considered on its own facts.

18. Is bullying different from protected class harassment?

Yes. The definition of bullying does not require that behavior be targeted toward a student on the basis of a legally protected, differentiating characteristic in order to fit the definition of bullying. While the law recognizes that bullying may include communications, acts and gestures directed at a student based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic (such as race, color, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance etc.) bullying represents

a power imbalance between students that is not dependent upon the victim's classification or inclusion in any particular class of individuals.

In contrast, there are other laws which prohibit discrimination on the basis of enumerated protected characteristics, including race, color, disability, national origin, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. Protected class harassment is a form of discrimination based on at least one of these protected characteristics. Typically, in order to be considered discriminatory, harassment must be either severe or pervasive and must, in the aggregate, have the effect of impacting a student's ability to participate in a district's educational programs. Unlike bullying (which must be repeated) a single incident of protected class harassment, if sufficiently severe, may constitute protected-class harassment. When investigating reports of bullying that may also involve protected-class harassment/discrimination, school officials should keep in mind applicable investigation protocols under other board policies, such as those addressing Title IX, Section 504 and Nondiscrimination. See United States Department of Education, "Dear Colleague" Letter, dated October 26, 2010.

Regardless of how behavior is characterized, however, school districts have a responsibility to address any inappropriate behavior that violates school rules, or impacts another student's ability to effectively participate in school programs.

19. How can we distinguish between bullying other student-student conflict that may be developmentally "typical"?

Districts and parents alike should be careful about being quick to label student behavior as bullying, particularly with early elementary-aged students. In receiving a report of alleged bullying, care should be taken to emphasize age-appropriate intervention and education, regardless of whether behavior fits the statutory definition of bullying.

In determining whether behavior meets the statutory definition of bullying, school administrators must exercise a degree of professional judgment in evaluating the objective reasonableness of student response and perception as well as the subjective response of each student involved. In addition to the statutory criteria, the Safe School Climate Specialist (or designee) should consider the totality of the circumstances, including

- a) the relative ages of the students involved;
- b) the nature of the misbehavior;
- c) the impact on the targeted student;
- d) the frequency of the misconduct;
- e) the temporal proximity of alleged events;
- f) a student's capacity to understand and knowingly engage in bullying behavior;
- g) the victim's capacity to accurately perceive social situations and the conduct of others;
- h) the context of the alleged bullying, and
- i) the existence of a power imbalance between and among the students involved.

Even after consideration of the totality of these factors, parents and school officials may not agree as to whether the allegations constitute bullying, as defined. More

importantly, however, regardless of the conclusion, school officials, parents and students should work cooperatively to develop appropriate interventions and supports in recognition of the fact that social dynamics between and among students evolve and may escalate over time.

INVESTIGATION OF BULLYING REPORTS

20. Must a district investigate an anonymous report of bullying?

Yes, to the extent possible. The statute provides that school officials must “review” anonymous complaints. However, it also provides that students may submit anonymous reports of bullying and/or may request that their identity not be shared in connection with an investigation. While this may have the practical effect of hindering a district’s ability to conduct a thorough investigation, some investigation is advisable because, of course, the goal is to deal with bullying if and when it occurs. No disciplinary action may be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report. It is therefore important to ensure that the district has information to corroborate such anonymous report before imposing discipline, although the school may take other measures to intervene that are not disciplinary in nature.

21. Are there timelines for reporting bullying?

Yes. A school employee who receives a bullying complaint must orally notify the safe school climate specialist within one school day after witnessing bullying or receiving a complaint. The school employee must also file a written report (presumably with the safe

school climate specialist) within two school days of making the oral report.

22. Is there a timeline for parents/student to report allegations of bullying?

No. As discussed in Question # 17, there is no “statute of limitations” for bullying conduct; nor does the new law impose a requirement that parents and/or students report bullying within a certain timeframe in order to be investigated. From a practical perspective, school districts and parents should work collaboratively to ensure timely reporting of bullying complaints in order to effectively address misconduct in an effective and meaningful manner.

School officials who receive reports of bullying that relate to prior school years should endeavor, to the extent possible, to investigate the reports and consider any prior history between or among students. Parents should be advised that untimely reports make it difficult for school officials to conduct thorough investigations. When determining whether reported incidents constitute bullying, school officials should consider the frequency of the reported incidents, the proximity in time of each report and whether prior incidents are related to current allegations.

23. Who may make reports of bullying?

Students may make reports (including anonymous reports) to any school employee. Parents or guardians of students may make written reports; and teachers and any other school employees who witness or receive reports of bullying are required to report such information to the safe school climate specialist.

24. Who must report bullying?

Under the new law, any school employee who witnesses acts of bullying or receives reports of bullying must report the allegation to the Safe School Climate Specialist. By definition, a 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.” This definition excludes volunteers, but is quite broad and may include non-certified personnel such as bus drivers, cafeteria staff and non-teaching personnel who interact with students on a regular basis.

25. Given that behavior must be repeated in order to meet the definition of bullying, how will a school employee know if witnessed behavior constitutes bullying?

A school employee may not necessarily know if mean-spirited behavior directed towards another student will ultimately be verified as bullying, or whether the behavior will meet the required elements to constitute bullying. However, any school employee who witnesses behavior directed towards another student, which if repeated might constitute bullying, should intervene and consider whether a report should be made. Factors to consider include the relative ages

of the students involved, the nature of the behavior, the impact on the targeted student, any particular vulnerabilities of the targeted student (to the extent known), and whether there is reason to believe the acts represent a pattern of behavior that is occurring over time.

26. Are school districts responsible for investigating cyberbullying?

Yes, under certain circumstances. School districts are explicitly required to prohibit and investigate reports of bullying and Connecticut’s bullying prevention and intervention legislation now expressly recognizes cyberbullying as a form of bullying. Cyberbullying is defined as “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.” Cyberbullying is merely one form of bullying and may take place either on or off campus, using school-provided technology or personal electronic devices.

27. How should a school official investigate a complaint of cyberbullying?

A school official should first focus on the threshold issue of whether the cyberbullying is “on campus,” *i.e.* happening at school, or school grounds or otherwise using the school’s computers. If the allegation is related to “off-campus” cyberbullying, the school official should consider the impact on the victim in school. Specifically:

- a) Does the cyberbullying create a hostile environment for the student at school?
- b) Does the cyberbullying infringe on the rights of the victim at school?

c) Does the cyberbullying substantially disrupt the educational process or the orderly operation of a school?

As part of the investigation process, school officials should ask for any printouts of any text messages, instant messages, or electronic postings and meet with the alleged perpetrator(s) to present evidence of any such messages or postings. School officials should invite the alleged perpetrator(s) to provide other evidence of such interactions. School officials should consider reporting any allegation that potentially threatens the health or safety of a student to local law enforcement. Regardless of whether the school's authority extends to alleged off-campus behavior, parents should be advised of their ability to contact local law enforcement if a child is being targeted outside of school or is being subjected to bullying behavior outside of the scope of the school's authority to intervene, as law enforcement is often better suited to conduct such investigations.

28. When should a school official verify bullying?

School officials must determine if the facts fit the statutory definition of bullying:

- a) Was there concerted activity by "one or more students?"
- b) Did the conduct cause physical or emotional harm to the student or damage the student's property?
- c) Did the conduct place the student in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself or of damage to his/her property?
- d) Did the conduct create a hostile environment at school for the student?

e) Did the conduct infringe on the rights of the student at school?

f) Did the conduct substantially disrupt the educational process or orderly operation of the school?

Off campus bullying should be verified only if one or more of the last three questions is answered "yes" (d-f).

29. Who determines whether the conduct caused harm or whether the student's "fear of harm" was "reasonable?"

The Safe School Climate Specialist (or designee) is responsible for the investigation of bullying reports. In making decisions about bullying, the Specialist (or other administrative designee) must exercise a degree of professional judgment. Factors to consider when determining the reasonableness of any perceived harm include:

- a) the relative ages of the students involved;
- b) the nature of the behavior;
- c) the actual impact on the targeted student;
- d) the frequency of the misconduct and temporal proximity of alleged events;
- e) the perpetrator's capacity to understand and knowingly engage in bullying behavior;
- f) the victim's capacity to accurately receive social situations and the conduct of others;
- g) the overall context of behavior;
- h) the existence of a power imbalance between and among the students involved;
- i) any particular vulnerabilities of the targeted student (to the extent known), and
- j) whether there is reason to believe the

acts represent a pattern of behavior which is occurring over time.

30. What is a “hostile environment” for purposes of determining bullying?

The statute defines “hostile environment” as “a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate.” The statute defines “school climate” as “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.” In determining whether bullying creates a “hostile environment,” school officials should consider whether the bullying behavior denies or limits the ability of a student(s) to participate in, or otherwise benefit from, school programs and activities.

31. How should a report of bullying be investigated?

Reports should be investigated promptly, with care to protect the confidentiality of student information. School officials must be vigilant about student confidentiality concerns. Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA”), the identity of the student (or parents) as the complainant is personally identifiable information that can be disclosed only with the consent of the parent (or eligible student).

Relevant individuals should be interviewed (*i.e.* witnesses, students, teachers).

Obtaining student written statements may be appropriate, depending on the age of the students. Students should be admonished that the investigation is a confidential matter that they should not discuss with other students. Anonymous reports must

be reviewed, but they may be investigated, provided that no disciplinary action may be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report. School officials should document the investigation.

32. What is the timeline for the completion of the investigation?

The statute provides that the investigation must be completed “promptly.”

RECORD KEEPING AND DOCUMENTATION

33. Are bullying reports considered public records?

Not likely. Any record maintained by the district which contains personally identifiable student information is considered confidential and is protected from disclosure under FERPA, the federal law governing access to and privacy of education records.

However, even if such records are not generally available to the public, school staff should keep in mind that parents have the right to access their child’s education records. In addition, even documents protected under FERPA may be subject to disclosure under certain circumstances, such as in response to a subpoena or in the event of a health or safety emergency. Accordingly, school employees completing incident reports or other bullying reports should be educated as to appropriate information to include in reports.

34. What information must be maintained in the public log?

The law continues to require that each school

“maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying in such school” and that each school “make such list available for public inspection.” Consistent with the district’s obligations under FERPA, the log should not contain any personally identifiable student information, or any information that alone, or in combination, would allow a reasonable person in the school community to identify the students involved. Accordingly, the log should be limited to basic information such as the number of verified acts of bullying, name of school and/or grade level and relevant date(s) of verified acts. Given that any determination of bullying involves repeated acts, each investigation that results in a verified act of bullying for that school year should be tallied as one verified act unless the specific actions that are the subject of each report involve separate and distinct acts of bullying. The list should be limited to the number of verified acts of bullying in each school and should not set out the particulars of each verified act, including but not limited to any personally identifiable student information.

35. *What is the status of a school staff member’s personal notes from the investigation?*

The personal notes (as compared to a report shared with others, even if handwritten) made by the Safe School Climate Specialist or other administrator, are not subject to disclosure under Connecticut’s Freedom of Information Act. Personal notes that are not shared with anyone else are also not subject to disclosure under FERPA. They may be subject to subpoena, however, if they are retained by the staff member.

36. *Does the school district have to prepare a written report for every allegation of bullying?*

No. The statute does not explicitly require that the school generate a formal written report for each allegation of bullying. However, the new law does require that the district’s safe school climate plan must “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.” Thus, some written evidence of the investigation is required. School officials should develop forms and procedures to ensure consistent practices with respect to documenting bullying investigations.

37. *What must the school do to notify parents of the results of the investigation?*

If bullying is verified, school officials must notify the parents of the perpetrator and the parents of the targeted student within forty-eight hours of the completion of the investigation. There is no explicit notification requirement if bullying is not verified. The statute also does not require that the notice to parents be written. However, districts should develop protocols and forms to provide written confirmation of the investigation outcome (bullying or not) in order to provide consistency in the investigation process. In developing standard forms, a district must keep in mind its FERPA obligation not to disclose personally identifiable information about either child to the other family involved, without written consent. Thus, it would

be advisable to have different forms for notification to the perpetrator and the victim to avoid inadvertent disclosure regarding the other student.

In addition to providing parent notice, both sets of parents must also be invited 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.” Each of the meetings should be separate. There is no requirement that parents attend such meetings. Notifications to parents concerning these meetings should be documented in writing.

38. Can the district share the results of the investigation (or report) with the parents of the victim or of the perpetrator?

The law requires that the parents of the perpetrators and victims be “notified” if bullying is verified. As noted above, there is no explicit requirement that a formal report be generated or that this notification be in writing. If a formal report is generated, any report would likely include personally identifiable student information. Disclosure of such information to the persons other than the parent (or eligible student) would violate FERPA.

When a record relates to more than one student, access can be granted only to information that can be separated (e.g., disciplinary action taken should be documented separately). Moreover, FERPA simply requires that parents (or eligible students) have access to student records;

and to preserve the confidentiality of such information more generally, it is inadvisable to provide a copy of any completed internal report to the parents.

39. How long does a school district have to maintain bullying records?

Neither the statute nor the applicable retention schedule for education records sets forth a minimum retention period for bullying records. Under the new law, school districts are directed to “establish a procedure for each school to document and maintain records relating to reports and investigations of bullying in each school.”

Therefore, school districts should develop standard report forms, investigation summary forms and develop a process for identifying where such records shall be maintained in district. Particular care should be given to ensuring the transfer of records to new schools as students advance from grade to grade within the district to ensure that information about prior history between students is shared with a receiving school. Given that there is no timeline for bullying reports, it is advisable to maintain prior written reports of bullying, as well as formal investigation summaries, for individual students consistent with timelines for maintaining other incident reports. Current record retention guidelines for educational records may be found at: Office of the Public Records Administrator, Retention Schedule M8-Education Records, Revised 2/2005, available at <http://www.cslib.org/retschedules.htm>.

INTERVENTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

40. What is a school district's responsibility for intervention?

When acts of bullying are verified, school officials must develop "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." When there are repeated, verified acts of bullying against a single individual student or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual, school officials must develop case-by-case interventions that may include both counseling and discipline. Even if bullying is not verified, school officials should consider whether appropriate measures should be taken to provide support, counseling and/or other interventions to prevent bullying.

41. If bullying is verified, does this mean the school must suspend or expel the perpetrator?

No. Under the law, when bullying is verified, the notice to the parents of the student who committed a verified act of bullying must 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." Disciplinary action is not always required, and may not be appropriate given the totality of the circumstances. As with any decision to impose discipline, school officials must continue to follow existing law and policies governing the imposition of traditional disciplinary measures such as in-school suspensions, suspension and expulsion.

Of particular note is the fact that Public Act 11-232 does not change the requirements of current law with respect to the conditions under which a school district may suspend or expel students for off campus misconduct. Therefore, school officials are reminded that (with the exception of a few enumerated exceptions requiring mandatory expulsion) pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stats. §§ 10-233a-10-233e, school officials may suspend or expel a student for behavior that occurs off campus only when the student has violated a publicized policy of the board and such behavior is seriously disruptive to the educational process of the school. The term "seriously disruptive of the educational process" has been interpreted to mean conduct which "markedly interrupts the day-to-day operations of the school." In making such determination, school officials may consider factors such as whether the incident occurred in close proximity to the school, whether it involved other students or gang involvement, whether it involved violence, threats of violence or unauthorized use of weapons, whether injuries occurred and whether or not it involved the use of alcohol.

Finally, it should be noted that discipline against the perpetrator may not be an adequate response. The Office of Civil Rights of the United States Department of Education has advised that bullying conduct may constitute discrimination under federal law, and sometimes other interventions to remedy such civil rights violations may be necessary, including training for the perpetrator(s) and the larger school community, additional services to the victim(s), issuance of new policies or procedures for reporting harassment, and wide distribution of the

contact information for the district's Title IX and Section 504/Title II Coordinator. See United States Department of Education, "Dear Colleague" Letter dated October 26, 2010.

42. How should a school district address bullying if the perpetrator or victim is a child with a disability?

In addition to following bullying investigation procedures applicable to all students, reports of bullying involving students with disabilities should also be considered through the respective Section 504 Team or Planning and Placement Team process to determine if changes to a student's accommodation plan or individualized education program ("IEP") are necessary for the district to continue to provide a free, appropriate public education.

In addition, it is imperative that school districts adhere to state and federal law, and to refrain from disciplining a student for behavior that is caused by or directly related to his/her disability. Therefore, prior to any significant change in placement, PPTs and Section 504 teams must consider whether any misconduct, including behavior related to bullying, is a manifestation of a student's disability. If the answer is yes, the district may not discipline a student for such behavior.

In cases where traditional disciplinary measures would not appropriate, it would be important for a 504 Team or PPT to review current plans to ensure that appropriate behavior supports, services and educational placement remain appropriate to meet the child's needs and minimize recurrence of such behavior. For "victims," school officials must also understand that, even if another student of the same age or grade level might

not be offended or experience feelings of fear or harm, if a disabled child is perceiving situation in a negative way due to his/her particular disability, it is important to address such perceptions through regular and special education supports, as appropriate. For example, a team may consider a student's need for social skills groups, social skills instruction, access to counseling or similar interventions designed to help a disabled student cope with difficult social situations.

Finally, districts must again be mindful of FERPA obligations when responding to reports of bullying involving students with disabilities. School officials may not disclose personally identifiable student information, including whether a child has a disability or the nature of such disability, without written parental consent.

43. How do school districts know if an act constitutes criminal conduct? When must a school district report such misconduct to the police?

Public Act 11-232 requires that when the principal or his/her designee believe that any acts of bullying "constitute criminal conduct, he/she must notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency."

School administrators are not required to determine that a crime has in fact been committed, as this decision is left to the appropriate law enforcement authorities. Rather, once a school has verified that the conduct is bullying, then principals or their designees must consider whether the conduct could also constitute a crime under state law, such as the following:

a) Assault – An individual commits assault when he or she acts with the intent to cause physical injury to another person, and causes such injury to that person (or a third person); when an individual recklessly causes serious physical injury to another person, or when an individual acts with criminal negligence, causing physical injury to another person by means of a deadly weapon, a dangerous instrument or an electronic defense weapon. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53a-61.

b) Bias Crimes – A person commits intimidation based on bigotry or bias when such person maliciously, and with specific intent to intimidate or harass another person because of the actual or perceived race, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression of the other person, causes serious physical injury to such other person or to a third person. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53a-181j. An individual also commits intimidation based on bigotry or bias when such person maliciously, and with specific intent to intimidate or harass another person because of the actual or perceived race, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression of such other person:

- i) causes physical contact with such other person;
- ii) damages, destroys or defaces any real or personal property of such other person, or
- iii) threatens, by word or act, to do either (i) or (ii), if there is reasonable cause to believe that an act described in either (i) or (ii) will occur. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53a-181k.

c) Harassment – An individual criminally harasses another person when, by telephone, he or she addresses another in or uses indecent or obscene language; or when, with the intent to harass, annoy or alarm another person, he or she communicates with a person by telegraph or mail, by fax, by computer network, or by any other form of written communication, in a manner likely to cause annoyance or alarm; or, with the intent to harass, annoy or alarm another person, he or she makes a telephone call, whether or not a conversation ensues, in a manner likely to cause annoyance or alarm. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53a-183.

d) Larceny – A person commits larceny when, with the intent to deprive another of property or to appropriate the same to himself or a third person, he or she wrongfully takes, obtains or withholds such property from an owner. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53a-119. If, during the course of committing a larceny, the individual uses or threatens the immediate use of physical force upon another person for the purpose of preventing or overcoming resistance to the larceny, the individual commits robbery. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53a-133.

e) Sexting/Child Pornography – Possession of, or transmission of, any visual depiction of child pornography (any visual depiction of an individual under sixteen years of age engaging in sexually explicit conduct) is a crime. Conn. Gen. Stat. 53a-196h.

f) Criminal Threats – An individual commits criminal threatening when, by physical threat, he or she intentionally places or attempts to place another in fear of imminent serious physical injury; when an individual threatens

to commit a crime of violence with the intent to terrorize another person, or when an individual threatens to commit such a crime of violence in reckless disregard of the risk of causing such terror. Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53a-62.

Excerpt from “*When Bullying Behavior May Also be Criminal Behavior*,” Leander A. Dolphin, March 2012, available at CAS/CIAC website: http://www.casciac.org/scripts/show_pics.cgi?BULLYINGLEANDERMAR12

MISCELLANEOUS

44. What training requirements are imposed by the new law?

All certified school employees must complete training on school violence prevention, conflict resolution, the prevention of and response to youth suicide and the identification and prevention of and response to bullying, except that those boards of education that implement any evidence-based model approach that is approved by the State Department of Education and is consistent with statutory obligations shall not be required to provide in-service training on the identification and prevention of and response to bullying.

Other school employees must complete training provided by the State Department of Education “within available appropriations” on the prevention, identification and response to school bullying and the prevention of and response to youth suicide. “Such training may include, but not be limited to,

a) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying among students in school and outside of the school setting,

b) developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate and effective interventions to stop bullying,

c) information regarding the interaction and relationship between students committing acts of bullying, students against whom such acts of bullying are directed and witnesses of such acts of bullying,

d) research findings on bullying, such as information about the types of students who have been shown to be at risk for bullying in the school setting,

e) information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying,

f) Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying, or

g) information on the incidence of youth suicide, methods of identifying youths at risk of suicide and developmentally appropriate strategies for effective interventions to prevent youth suicide. Such training may be presented in person by mentors, offered in state-wide workshops or through on-line courses.”

45. What is the role of a safe school climate committee?

Under the new law, starting with the 2012-2013 school year (and for each school year thereafter), the principal of each school is required to establish a committee (or designate at least one existing committee in the school) to be responsible for “developing and fostering a safe school climate and addressing issues relating to bullying in the school.” Each school must have such committee and it must include at least one

parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the school.

The safe school climate committee shall:

- a) received copies of completed reports following bullying investigations;
- b) identify and address patterns of bullying among students in their school;
- c) review and amend school policies related to bullying;
- d) review and make recommendations to the safe school climate coordinator regarding the safe school climate plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school;
- e) educate students, school employees and parents/guardians on issues relating to bullying;
- f) collaborate with the coordinator in the collection of data regarding bullying, and
- g) perform any other duties as determined by the principal that are related to the prevention, identification and response to school bullying.

46. *May members of the safe school climate committee have access to individual reports and documentation related to bullying investigations?*

No. In fact, Public Act 11-232 specifically prohibits parents serving on this committee from participating in any activity “which may compromise the confidentiality of any student, including, but not limited to, receiving copies of investigation reports, or identifying patterns of bullying among students in the school.”

Even beyond the provision pertaining to parents, school officials must adhere to the requirements under FERPA when sharing any

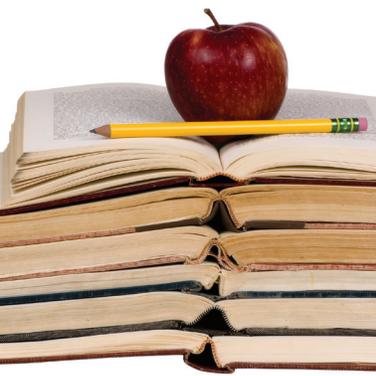
data, reports or other personally identifiable student information with any member of the committee. Under FERPA, personally identifiable student information may not be shared without written parental consent, although an exception exists which allows a district to share information with “school officials” who have a “legitimate educational interest” in having such information in order to fulfill their professional responsibilities. Despite this exception, however, it is clear that the role of the committee is not to investigate or make independent decisions regarding individual reports or allegations of bullying. Given the size of many schools and school districts within the state, school officials must be cautious when disseminating information for the committee’s review to ensure that any personally identifiable student information is removed in order to protect student privacy.

47. *What are the rights of students, parents and staff who report bullying?*

Safe school climate plans must include a prohibition against discrimination and retaliation against a person who reports or assists in the investigation of a bullying complaint.

48. *If despite a school’s best efforts, a student is harmed through bullying, will an individual school employee or the school district be liable?*

The statute provides for immunity from damage claims for a school employee (and for the school district) when the school employee or the board of education “reports, investigates and responds to bullying, in accordance with the provisions of the safe



school climate plan, if such school employee was acting in good faith in the discharge of his or her duties or within the scope of his or her employment.” However, this immunity is lost if the actions of the school employee constitute “gross, reckless, willful, or wanton misconduct.”

More generally, the provisions of Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-235 protect school employees by indemnifying them from liability for actions taken in the scope of their employment, as long as their actions are not wanton, reckless or malicious.

The statute also confers immunity from liability for “a student, parent or guardian of a student or any other

individual who reports an act of bullying to a school employee, in accordance with the provisions of the safe school climate plan . . . if such individual was acting in good faith.” However, this immunity is lost if the actions of the school employee constitute “gross, reckless, willful, or wanton misconduct.”

QUESTIONS OR ASSISTANCE?

If you have any additional questions, please contact Julie Fay at jfay@goodwin.com or 860-251-5009 or Tom Mooney at tmooney@goodwin.com or 860-251-5710.

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National School Climate Standards

**BENCHMARKS TO PROMOTE EFFECTIVE TEACHING,
LEARNING AND COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

The logo of the National School Climate Council is a large, light blue graphic consisting of three concentric circles. The innermost circle is a solid light blue. The middle circle is a slightly darker shade of blue and is partially filled. The outermost circle is the darkest shade of blue and is mostly empty, with the inner circles visible through it.

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INTRODUCTION

There is growing appreciation that school climate—the quality and character of school life¹—fosters children’s development, learning and achievement. School climate is based on the patterns of people’s experiences of school life; it reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, and organizational structures that comprise school life. The increased attention to school climate reflects both the concern for improving schools and the need for preparing students to address the myriad of challenges they will face in the 21st century.

A growing body of empirical research shows that a sustainable, positive school climate reduces drop-outs and fosters youth development and academic achievement, as well as the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for students to be responsible and productive members of society². All learners want and need to be safe and happy: to be supported, cared for, valued, appropriately challenged and engaged in ways that touch our hearts as well as our minds. Empirical research has also shown that when school members feel safe, valued, cared for, engaged and respected, learning measurably increases, and staff satisfaction and retention are enhanced.

The National School Climate Council stresses that a sustainable, positive school climate is one that fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. Such a climate includes:

- Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe;

- Members of the school community who are engaged and respected;
- Students, families and educators that work together to develop, and contribute to a shared school vision;
- Educators who model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits and satisfaction that can be gained from learning; and,
- Members of the school community who contribute to the operations of the school and the care of its physical environment.

These factors matter and show the importance of school climate. Practices are designed to promote a positive climate that fosters the environment which ensures all students have an equal opportunity to succeed and become socially conscious and ethical members of society. Furthermore, such practices play a critical role in the graduation of young people who will go on to lead satisfying lives, care about the common good, engage in the democratic process, possess the skills and abilities to work with others in the workplace and in their communities, and who are productive members of society.

Given that all efforts to improve schools benefit from being based on a well developed set of standards and indicators, leaders from across the country have collaborated on the development of the following *National School Climate Standards*³.

¹This definition of school climate was consensually developed by members of the National School Climate Council (2007). The terms “school climate”, “school culture” and “learning environment” have been used in overlapping but sometimes, quite different ways in the educational literature. Here, we use these terms interchangeably.

²For information about school climate research, see the following reports: Adelman & Taylor, 2005; Cohen, et. al. 2009; Freiberg, 1999; National School Climate Council 2007.

³See Appendix A for details about how these standards were developed.

ABOUT THE STANDARDS

The National School Climate Standards present a vision and framework for a positive and sustainable school climate. They complement national standards for Content, Leadership, and Professional Development and the Parent Teacher Association's National Standards for Family School Partnerships Standards.

This framework is comprised of five standards that support effective school climate improvement efforts:

- 1. The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate.**
- 2. The school community sets policies specifically promoting (a) the development and sustainability of social, emotional, ethical, civic and intellectual skills, knowledge, dispositions and engagement, and (b) a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.**
- 3. The school community's practices are identified, prioritized and supported to (a) promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical and civic development of students, (b) enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities; (c) address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage those who have become disengaged; and (d) develop and sustain an appropriate operational infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.**
- 4. The school community creates an environment where all members are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.**
- 5. The school community develops meaningful and engaging practices, activities and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice.**

The *National School Climate Standards* provide a research based framework and benchmark criteria for educational leaders (School Boards, State Departments of Education, Superintendents, Principals and After School leaders) to support and assess district and school efforts to enhance and be accountable for school climate⁴. They also provide guidance for professional preparation and continuing education. Appendix C includes a glossary of terms.

As with most standards, School Climate Standards do not recommend or detail specific assessment, curricular, leadership, professional development, and related systemically informed programs, curricula, or services. Each state and/or school community must consider how best to translate these standards into practice in ways that build on past experiences, values, strengths, priorities, and contextual needs of the local school community.

The five standards presented below include sixteen indicators for supporting student learning, positive youth development and teaching. Thirty-sub indicators further delineate essentials.

⁴See Appendix B for research related to each of the five standards.

NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE STANDARDS

School Climate Standard #1

The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

1.1 School policies and practices support school, family, youth and community members working together to establish a safe and productive learning community.

1.1.1 School, family, community and youth members agree to work on strategies to be implemented for ongoing school climate improvement.

1.1.2 Policies and practices are regularly assessed to ensure continual refinement that enhances the quality of a safe and productive learning community.

1.1.3 School, family and youth members collaboratively develop, publicize and model codes of conduct that support positive and sustained school climate.

1.2 Schools gather accurate and reliable data about school climate from students, school personnel and parents/guardians for continuous improvement and share it regularly with the school community.

1.2.1 Educational leaders regularly assess and monitor policies and practices and revise as necessary to determine the effectiveness of school, family and community members working together to support student learning, teaching and positive youth development.

1.2.2 Schools use multiple evidence-based methods of collecting data, such as surveys, observational methods and behavior reports, that recognize the range of factors that shape school climate (e.g., social norms, school connectedness, sense of safety, discipline, learning/teaching, leadership, absence rates and mobility).

1.2.3 School, family, community and youth leaders establish procedures for using school climate findings (including disaggregated data) to establish instructional and/or school-wide improvement goals and implementation strategies that will enhance student learning and positive youth development.

1.2.4 School climate reports are periodically provided that communicate effectively with all school community members and families about goals, benchmarks and progress.

1.3 Capacity building is developed over time to enable all school community members to meet school climate standards.

1.3.1 Capacity building includes developing infrastructure, classroom and school-wide prevention and intervention strategies/practices, and developing policy and systemic changes that promote positive school climate.

School Climate Standard #2

The school community sets policies specifically promoting (a) the development and sustainability of social, emotional, ethical, civic and intellectual skills, knowledge and dispositions and (b) a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

2.1 Policies and mission and vision statements that promote social, emotional, ethical and civic, as well as intellectual, skills and dispositions are developed and institutionalized.

2.1.1 Policies promote curriculum content, continued monitoring and standards for social, emotional, ethical and civic learning and are fully integrated into the classroom and school in ways that align with 21st century learning and with students' prevailing cultures, circumstances and languages.

2.1.2 Policies for instructional and assessment processes and standards are personalized in ways that model and promote mutual respect, caring and a psychological sense of community.

2.1.3 Accountability measures and data are used and monitored that directly demonstrate the impact of efforts to promote social, emotional, ethical and civic learning.

2.2 Policies and mission and vision statements are developed and institutionalized that promote a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.

2.2.1 Policies promote engagement and address barriers to learning and teaching while reengaging disconnected students through an intervention framework that generates a comprehensive and cohesive system of learning supports as delineated in Standard 3.

2.2.2 Policies ensure continuing development and sustainability of a comprehensive and cohesive system of learning supports.

2.2.3 Accountability measures, data and monitoring are used that directly demonstrate the impact of efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging students who have become disengaged.

2.3 Policies promote use and monitoring of natural and informal opportunities (e.g., recreational and extracurricular aspects of classroom and school life, formulation of codes of conduct and fair enforcement of rules, mentoring, and informal interactions among and with students) to ensure they support the helpful norms of learning and teaching that foster mutual respect and caring; engagement; safety and well being; civil, pro social, responsible behavior; and a psychological sense of community.

2.4 Policies ensure the operational and capacity building mechanisms (including staff and student development) related to this standard are fully integrated into a school's infrastructure and are effectively implemented and sustained.

School Climate Standard #3

The school community's practices are identified, prioritized and supported to (a) promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical and civic development of students, (b) enhance engagement in teaching, learning and school-wide activities; (c) address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; and (d) develop and sustain an appropriate operational infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

3.1 Specific practices are designed to enhance engagement of every student through classroom-based social, emotional, ethical and civic learning and in school-wide activities.

3.1.1 Instructional and engaging practices focus on cognitive and behavioral learning as well as social, emotional, ethical and civic engagement.

3.1.2 Practices facilitate students' desire and ability to share their perceptions readily (e.g., to enter into dialogues with adults and peers at school), emphasize interests and needs, stress options and choices and a meaningful role in decision making, provide enrichment opportunities, provide a continuum of guidance and support and minimize coercive interactions.

3.1.3 Based on research about intrinsic motivation, practices are designed to maximize feelings of competence, self-determination and connectedness to others and to minimize threats to such feelings. Practices are designed to minimize psychological reactance by not overemphasizing social control strategies and not over relying on extrinsic motivation to promote positive social, emotional, ethical and civic behavior and learning.

3.2 Teachers and school administrators design specific classroom and school-wide practices to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged.

3.2.1 Practices include a full continuum of integrated systems of intervention designed to:

- Promote healthy development and prevent negative problems;
- Respond as early after problem onset as is feasible;
- Provide for those whose serious, pervasive and chronic negative problems require more intensive assistance and accommodation.

3.2.2 Classroom and school wide interventions are designed to:

- Enhance regular classroom strategies to enable learning (e.g., improving instruction and classroom management practices for maximum engagement and reengagement of all students and to pursue response to intervention practices for those with mild to moderate learning and behavioral problems)
- Support transitions (e.g., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other transitions);
- Increase home and school connections;
- Respond to and, where feasible, prevent crises;
- Increase community involvement and support (e.g., outreach to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers and community resources that fill priority gaps in the system of supports);
- Facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed;

- Provide multiple opportunities for students to have leadership roles that enhance their commitment to school and to the development of themselves and others.

3.2.3 Classroom and schoolwide practices are designed to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; these practices are developed into a comprehensive and cohesive system of learning supports that weaves together school and community resources.

3.3 School leaders develop and sustain a comprehensive system of learning supports by ensuring an appropriate operational infrastructure that incorporates capacity building mechanisms.

3.3.1 The school has administrative leaders who are responsible for the development, operation and sustainability of high quality practices related to this third standard (Practices are identified, supported and prioritized that (a) enhance engagement in teaching, learning and school-wide activities; (b) address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; and (c) develop and sustain an appropriate systemic infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.). These responsibilities are delineated in job descriptions.

3.3.2 Sufficient staff are assigned to developing and sustaining such high quality practices.

3.3.3 Leadership and staff are provided continuous professional development in order to develop and sustain practices related to this third standard.

3.3.4 An effective school family community operational infrastructure is in place for weaving school and community resources together and for ongoing planning, implementing and evaluating the comprehensive system of learning supports.

3.3.5 The operational and capacity building systems related to this third standard are fully integrated with the school's mechanisms for improving instruction, management and overall governance.

School Climate Standard #4

The school community creates an environment where all members are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

4.1 School leaders promote comprehensive and evidence-based instructional and school-wide improvement efforts designed to support students, school personnel and community members feeling welcomed, supported and safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.

4.2 Students, their families, school staff and community stakeholders are regularly surveyed and are asked to indicate what the school should do to further enhance a welcoming, supportive and safe environment.

4.3 School leaders monitor and evaluate the prevention and intervention strategies designed to support people feeling welcomed, supported and safe and use that data to improve relevant policies, practices, facilities, staff competencies and accountability.

School Climate Standard #5

The school community develops meaningful and engaging practices, activities and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

5.1 Students and staff model culturally responsive and ethical behavior. This reflects continuous learning that builds knowledge, awareness, skills, and the capacity to identify, understand, and respect the unique beliefs, values, customs, languages, and traditions of all members of the school community⁵.

5.1.1 Curriculum and instructional practices promote curiosity, inquiry into and celebration of diverse beliefs, customs, languages, and traditions of all members of the school community.

5.1.2 Students have ongoing opportunities to provide service to others in meaningful and engaging ways in their school and in the larger community.

5.2 Relationships among and between staff and students are mutually respectful, supportive, ethical and civil.

5.2.1 Every student is connected to a caring and responsible adult in the school.

5.2.2 Social norms in the school support responsible and positive peer relationships.

5.2.3 Discipline procedures are aligned with the goals of supporting students in their learning and being respectful of all individuals; the goals are enhanced with authentic student-driven opportunities for reconciliation when appropriate.

5.3 Students and staff are actively engaged in celebrating milestones and accomplishments as they work to achieve meaningful school and community life.

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⁵This definition of culture competence has been adapted from the State of Ohio's Governors Cabinet Council.

APPENDIX A

HOW THESE STANDARDS WERE DEVELOPED

Acknowledgements

The National School Climate Standards are the product of the efforts of many individuals and groups.

In July 2008, the National School Climate Council agreed to develop National School Climate Standards. Over the course of the following year a series of drafts were developed, critiqued and revised as detailed below. The National School Climate Council Development Team, members of the National School Climate Council and additional groups of reviewers provided essential counsel to develop these standards.

The Development Team, comprised of Jonathan Cohen, Mary Lou Rush and Bonnie Hedrick (with able support from Robert Canning), developed a first draft of the standards. This first draft built on the Ohio School Climate Guidelines as well as a recent and exhaustive review of school climate research. The National School Climate Development Team critiqued and helped to revise this draft. Over the course of several months many new drafts were completed, critiqued and revised.

In December 2008, the University of Missouri Review Team (noted below) met to conduct a thorough review of work that had been done to that date. This team engaged in the following activities: (1) Generating a list of characteristics that define a positive school climate and/or delineating our vision of an ideal school; (2) Critically and constructively assessing the definition for a positive and sustained school climate developed by the National School Climate Council; and, (3) Using findings that emerged from the two activities noted above to critique a new draft of the standards. As a result of this process, the University of Missouri Review Team recommended that we continue to include the five basic standards with a number of recommended modifications resulting in a 5th draft of the standards. This draft was reviewed by members of the National School Climate Council resulting in a 6th draft.

In the spring of 2009, over forty principals, superintendents, mental health professionals, educational researchers, and state and national leaders (noted below) reviewed the 6th draft. Their feedback and recommendations resulted in the 7th draft of the standards.

On September 17, 2009, the New England Equity Assistance Center and New England College hosted a meeting at Brown University to offer feedback on the evolving set of National School Climate Standards. Forty of New England's educational equity advocates and school leaders were in attendance (noted below). Attendees included teachers, administrators, professors, consultants and officials from state and city departments of education from New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. The goals of this meeting were: 1) to ensure that the standards help schools effectively and equitably address school climate issues, and 2) to ensure that the standards help schools and communities equitably address the specific, unique needs and common challenges faced in schools by children and families from diverse, minority and underprivileged communities. The group spent the day reviewing the draft School Climate Standards and discussing how each of the five standards might help schools and communities better understand and address the needs of students from various racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, disability and religious groups.

In late September, the National School Climate Council Standards Development Committee reviewed the recommended changes that the New England Equity Assistance Center and New England College group suggested. Many of the suggestions and recommendations have helped to make these standards even more clear, fair and just.

We are also grateful to Jennifer Morton, Ph.D., Emily Stork, Marcy Borten, and Gene Browne who helped in revising and organizing these standards.

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APPENDIX B

RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR THE NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE STANDARDS

1. The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate.

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3. The school community's practices are identified, prioritized and supported to (a) promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical and civic development of students, (b) enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities; (c) address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; and (d) develop and sustain an appropriate operational infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.

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APPENDIX C

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accountability refers to the notion that people (e.g., students or teachers) or an organization (e.g., a school, school district, or state department of education) should be held responsible for improving student achievement and should be rewarded or sanctioned for their success or lack of success in doing so. Accountability measures and data refer to the specific measurement systems (e.g., an academic grade or a school climate pattern) that school leaders use to make decisions about student learning and/or school improvement efforts.

Assessment is the measurement of knowledge, skills and beliefs to determine the level of student achievement in a particular content area (e.g., performance-based assessments, written exams, quizzes).

Awareness refers to how knowledgeable we are about a given topic. It does not relate to our inclination to learn or act in a given way or to what extent we are actually able or skilled to do so.

Barriers to learning refers to external and internal factors that interfere with academic and social success at school. They stem from a variety of widely recognized societal, neighborhood, familial, school, and personal conditions.

Benchmark is a description of a specific level of student achievement expected of students at particular ages, grades, developmental levels, or during a specific point in the school year.

Best Practice is a technique or methodology that has been proven to reliably lead to a desired result through research and experience.

Capacity building refers to the process of creating a school environment with appropriate policy and human resource development that will support school reform in an ongoing manner.

Coercive interactions refers to the process of educators using force or authority to make a person do something against his or her will.

Codes of conduct delineate explicit or implicit principles, values, standards, or rules of behavior that guide the decisions, procedures and systems of a school (or other organizations) in a way that (a) contributes to the welfare of its key stakeholders, and (b) respects the rights of all constituents affected by its operations.

Culturally responsive educational systems are grounded in the belief that culturally and linguistically diverse students can excel in academic endeavors. Culturally responsive pedagogy and practice facilitates and supports the achievement of all students. In culturally responsive classrooms and schools, effective teaching and learning occur in a culturally-supported, learner-centered context, whereby the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured and utilized to promote student achievement.

Curriculum refers to the course of study offered by a school.

Data-driven decision making is a process by which district leaders, school leaders, teachers and parents review cause and effect data to determine strengths and prioritize areas in need of improvement to inform instruction, curriculum and policy decisions to positively impact student achievement.

Disaggregated data refers to the presentation of data broken into segments of the student and/or parent-guardian and/or

school personnel populations instead of the entire student/parent-guardian-school personnel population. Typical segments, for example, might include students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial or ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English fluency. Disaggregated data allows the school community to understand how various sub-groups within the school perceive school climate.

Dispositions refers to the tendency to act in given ways.

Engagement (disengaged and reengaged) is defined in three ways in the research literature:

- *Behavioral engagement* draws on the idea of participation; it includes involvement in academic and social or extracurricular activities and is considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing dropping out.
- *Emotional engagement* encompasses positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, and school and is presumed to create ties to an institution and influence willingness to do the work.
- *Cognitive engagement* draws on the idea of investment; it incorporates thoughtfulness and willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills. (School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence” (2004) by J. Fredricks, P. Blumenfeld & A. Paris. Review of Educational Research, 74, 59-109.)
- *Disengaged students* are those who do not manifest behavioral engagement. The source of the disconnect may be either emotional or cognitive, or both. Reengaging such students usually requires addressing intrinsic motivational needs with strategies that maximize student feelings of competence, self-determination, relatedness to significant others and minimizing threats to such feelings.

Evidence-based practices in education refers to instructional and/or school-wide improvement practices which systematic empirical research has provided evidence of statistically significant effectiveness.

Formative assessment is the process used by teachers to determine how to adjust instruction in response to student needs, and by students to adjust learning strategies. Formative assessments are used to inform and adjust instruction, and are not used to evaluate student progress for a grade.

Instructional practices refers to teaching methods that guide interaction in the classroom.

Knowledge refers to the information or understanding that a person has.

Learning community refers to a group of people who share common values and beliefs and are actively engaged in learning together from and with each other.

Learning supports are the resources, strategies and practices that provide physical, social, emotional and intellectual assistance to directly address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students. A *comprehensive system* of learning supports provides interventions in classrooms and school-wide settings and is fully integrated with efforts to improve instruction and management at a school. In keeping with public education and public health perspectives, the system is designed to enable holistic student development while addressing negative social, behavioral, academic and emotional problems.

Mobility refers to how often families move from one school community to another within or outside of a school district.

National School Climate Council is a group of educational policy and practice leaders devoted to narrowing the socially unjust gap between social school climate research on the one hand and school climate policy, practice and teacher education on the other hand (www.schoolclimate.org/climate/council.php).

Operational infrastructure is defined as the set of mechanisms developed to carry out an organization's major functions. Examples of such mechanisms include leaders, teams and workgroups. The manner in which they are supported, developed and organized shapes their effectiveness. In education, the need to weave together the resources of school, home and community requires both horizontal and vertical operational infrastructures to interconnect related operations at school, families of schools, district, regional and state levels.

Positive, sustained school climate is one that fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. Such a climate includes: norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe; members of the school community who are engaged and respected; students, family members and educators who work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision; and educators who model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits and satisfaction that can be gained from learning. Members of the school community contribute to the operations of the school and the care of its social, emotional, intellectual and physical environment.

Positive youth development refers to the intentional effort to support the healthy development of youth.

Professional Learning Community (PLC) is a collegial group of educators who are united in their commitment to continuous adult and student learning who work and learn collaboratively to realize a common mission, visit and review other classrooms, and participate in decision making.

Safety – physical, social, intellectual and emotional. Safety refers to being free from danger. Feeling and being safe is a fundamental and basic need. Feeling safe and being safe are not synonymous. Schools measure rates of physical violence and as a result tend to focus primarily on physical safety. Social safety refers to feeling and being safe interpersonally. Mean-spirited, bullying behaviors, exclusion and harassment undermine social safety. Emotionally safety refers to feeling sufficiently comfortable with our own internal feelings, thoughts and impulses. Feeling emotionally safe supports learners to reach their academic potentials. Intellectual safety refers to being able to take academic risks, to engage in necessary questioning and dialogue when one does not know, and to feel comfortable with being confused.

Skill refers to the ability to do something.

School climate refers to patterns of people's experiences of school life; it reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, as well as the organizational structures that comprise school life.

School connectedness refers to student perceptions that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals. Connectedness is measured in terms of how much/often students feel close to people at school, are happy to be at school, feel a part of the school, feel that teachers treat them fairly and feel safe at school.

Social, emotional, ethical and civic learning refers to the intentional process of promoting students' social, emotional, ethical and civic skills, knowledge and dispositions. There are two major, overlapping educational 'camps' in America today that are focused on social, emotional, ethical and civic teaching and learning: character education and social emotional learning.

Social justice refers to the idea that all people are entitled to full access to life's chances, human dignity, peace, and genuine security. Social justice exists when all members of a society lead lives committed to respectful treatment of all and nondiscrimination and non-repression of others.

Social norms are the behavioral expectations and cues within a society or group. These expectations and cues are the rules that a group uses for appropriate and inappropriate values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. These rules may be explicit or implicit.

Summative assessment is an assessment that is employed mainly to assess cumulative student learning at a particular point in time.

Twenty-first (21st) century learning refers to the essential skills, knowledge and dispositions that our students need to succeed as citizens and workers in the 21st century.

Reactance is an emotional reaction in direct contradiction to rules or regulations that threaten or eliminate specific behavioral freedoms. It can occur when someone is heavily pressured to accept a certain view or attitude. Reactance can cause the person to adopt or strengthen a view or attitude that is contrary to what was intended and also increases resistance to persuasion.

Reliable data refers to information that is accurate and dependable.

Vision and mission statements refers to K-12 school goal setting documents that – in theory – act as organizing anchors for all school improvement efforts. Different schools and districts define vision and mission statements in somewhat different ways. Generally, a *vision* statement is the school’s clear, motivating description of the desired outcome of K-12 education. Vision statements also define the purpose of K-12 education. A mission statement delineates what the school will do to actualize the school’s vision statement.





Westbrook Public Schools School Climate Policy

Presented to

The Westbrook Board of Education
March 19, 2014

Revised & Re-adopted November 11, 2014

Westbrook Public Schools
158 McVeagh Rd.
Westbrook, CT 06498

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References

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Appendix C - Dimensions of Climate Chart

Appendix D - Template for School-based Climate Improvement Plan

Forms

Incident Reporting Form/Investigation Summary

Daisy ICARE Form

Consent to Release Student Information

Background and History

The Westbrook Public School District actively works to promote and sustain positive climates in all schools, the ultimate remedy for Bullying. Since the passage of Connecticut's first "anti-bullying" statute in 2002, the District has always met requirements in the letter of the law and gone beyond mere statutory compliance. After the first round of amendments to the original 2002 statute, in November 2006, individuals representing a broad range of organizations and agencies in the Westbrook community met to develop a "bullying" brochure to send a consistent message about what bullying is, how to address it, and where to turn for help if a community member needed it. This brochure has been updated each time the law and definitions have been amended (2008 and 2011). In 2013, the District took a very bold and important step to honor the spirit of the anti-bullying legislation (to create physically, emotionally and intellectually safe environments). The Westbrook Board of Education adopted the National School Climate Standards as official Board policy for *all school and district improvement*. Subsequently, on March 19, 2014, the Board of Education unanimously adopted the District School Climate Policy (Policy # 5131.914) as the "umbrella" policy for all relevant district policies, among them the district's Safe School Climate Plan (Policy # 5131.911).

Westbrook schools persist in their efforts to provide a number of programs, practices and strategies to address any kind of hurtful, mean-spirited behavior including, but not limited to bullying and harassment by working first and foremost to foster positive learning climates. In part, to achieve this critical goal, the district is committed to having every district certified and non-certified employee trained in School Climate. This process began in 2013 and will continue until every adult has minimally been through Basic Training. Additionally, all schools surveyed parents, students, and staff in spring 2011 to determine areas of strength and areas for continued focus as we work continuously to provide safe and caring environments throughout the district. This survey process has continued annually and currently extends into the community. Since 2012, the district uses a valid and reliable national school climate assessment (Comprehensive School Climate Instrument/"CSCI") to collect data from students, faculty/staff, parents/guardians and community members. Students in grades 6-12 also participated in the Search Institute survey in 2008 and again in 2011 to help us gauge how Westbrook youth feel about their schools, home and community. These surveys provide insight into what our children and adolescents need to become caring, healthy and responsive adults. This rich climate assessment data, along with other important quantitative and qualitative data informs each individual school's actionable School Climate Improvement Plan.

Currently, Public Acts 11-232, 13-3, 14-172, 14-232 and 14-234 collectively place the importance of diminishing bullying and fostering positive school climates in the forefront for school personnel and students. Westbrook Public Schools will redouble its efforts to ensure that every school community member, student and adult, experiences the opportunity to learn, teach and socialize in environments that are free from any kind of hurtful, mean-spirited behavior including, but not limited to bullying and harassment by working first and foremost to foster positive learning climates. This document outlines our response to the requirements of these statutes through the Westbrook School Climate Policy. Contained within it, is the statutorily required Westbrook Safe School Climate Plan.

School Climate Policy
Westbrook Connecticut

Policy Statement

All schools must support and promote teaching and learning environments where each and every student achieves academically and socially, has a strong and meaningful voice and is prepared for democratic life and successful transition into the 21st century workplace. A positive school climate is an essential element of achieving these goals. Rigorous implementation of the following set of guiding principles and systemic strategies will promote these desired outcomes.

The Westbrook Board of Education (the “Board”) adopts this Policy that is guided by the fundamental belief that each and every school community member should be treated with dignity, should have the opportunity to learn, work, interact and socialize in physically, emotionally and intellectually safe, respectful and positive school environments, as well as the opportunity to experience high quality relationships. Schools, therefore, have the responsibility to promote conditions designed to create, maintain and nurture positive school climate.

This Policy sets forth the framework for an effective and democratically 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 expectations of the five National School Climate Standards,¹ as detailed herein.²

The Board recognizes that there is not one best way to improve school climate. Each school needs to consider its history, strengths, needs, and goals. This Policy will support and promote the development of research-supported action plans that will create and/or sustain physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe learning environments that foster social, emotional, ethical and academic education.

Definitions

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

¹ Appendix A.

² School Climate Improvement is more encompassing than any individual program that might be implemented as a strategy for improving one or more dimensions of school climate.

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.

“Positive Sustained School Climate” is the foundation for learning and positive youth development and includes:

1. Norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe;
2. People who treat one another with dignity, and are engaged and respected;
3. A school community that works collaboratively together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision;
4. Adults who model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning; and
5. A school community that contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

“Safe School Committee” (the “Committee”) means the committee appointed at a specific school building by the Specialist to perform the duties described herein.

“Safe School Climate Coordinator” (the “Coordinator”) means the Superintendent or the certified administrator appointed by the Superintendent to oversee the implementation of the district's Safe School Climate Plan and perform the duties described herein.

“Safe School Climate Plan” means the district plan developed and implemented pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 10-222(d), containing provisions pertaining to bullying, filing complaints and conducting investigations, and posted on the district website.³

“Safe School Climate Specialist” (the “Specialist”) means the certified administrator appointed by the Coordinator at a specific 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.

³ Appendix B.

“School Climate” means the quality and character of the school life with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community between and among students and adults. School climate is also based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices and organizational structures.⁴

“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 13 Dimensions of Climate” (Appendix C) and “The National School Climate Standards” (Appendix A).

“School Climate Survey” (the “Survey”) shall mean a well-established reliable and valid survey, approved by the Connecticut State Department of Education, with additional external confirmation of its strength through third party evaluators and research studies, 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.⁵

“School employee” means (1) a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school Superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by the Board; or (2) 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.

“Social Justice” means a community that *enables* its members to be fulfilled as fully engaged contributors to their community. It provides the foundation for a healthy and thriving school community that takes care of all of its members, especially those with the least advantage. A socially just community insures that there is complete and genuine fairness and equality. To that end, each and every school community member (students, faculty/staff, parents/guardians, family members, community members, etc.) no matter his or her age, role, power base, privilege, advantage, etc.:

1. Has value, worth and is treated with dignity;
2. Is assured protection of his/her liberties, rights and opportunities;
3. Is honored and celebrated for his/her unique background, culture, language, gifts and/or challenges;
4. Has fair and equal access to all curricular, extra-curricular educational and social programs;
5. Is provided the opportunity to have a meaningful voice in decision making and policy creation; and
6. Feels physically, emotionally and intellectually safe to exercise his/her voice, participate freely and contribute to the wellbeing and benefit of the entire school community.⁶

Declarations

⁴ National School Climate Council (2007). The School Climate Challenge: Narrowing the gap between school climate research and school climate policy, practice guidelines and teacher education policy. On: <http://www.schoolclimate.org/publications/policy-briefs.php>.

⁵ Faster, D. & Lopez, D. (2013). School climate and assessment. In Dary, T. & Pickeral, T. (ed) (2013). School Climate Practices for Implementation and Sustainability. A School Climate Practice Brief, Number 1, New York, NY: National School Climate Center.

⁶ This definition is a compilation of dozens of definitions of Social Justice provided by philosophers, religious leaders, social, civic and community organizers, lawyers, ethicists, journalists, authors and educators.

I. Applicable Standards:

A. *For School Employees:*

1. 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.
2. All school employees are accountable for compliance with the policies and procedures of the Board applicable to personnel, including, but not limited to non-discrimination, conduct and professional rights and responsibilities.

B. *For Students:*

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

C. *For Board Members:*

1. 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:*

1. 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 and procedures of the Board generally applicable to persons on school property.

E. *For Other Participants in the School Community:*

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

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

A. This Policy is aligned with C.G.S. 10-222(d), “An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws.”

B. In order to be in compliance with applicable law, all individual schools in the District of Westbrook must adhere to the following requirements:

1. In order to develop and maintain an “Effective School Climate Improvement Process,”⁷ 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 Westbrook 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.
2. 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

⁷ <http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/process.php>.

appointment of Specialists at each school building by the Coordinator, and (d) the establishment of a Committee at each school building.⁸

III. Safe School Climate Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities:

- A. The Superintendent shall assume the role of, or appoint from among existing school district administrators, a district Coordinator.
- B. The duties of the Coordinator shall include those enumerated under C.G.S. Section 10-222(d) and the Westbrook Board of Education's Regulation Section 5131.911. at a minimum, and shall also include the following:
 - i. Overseeing the implementation of the district's Safe School Climate Plan;
 - ii. Preventing, identifying and responding 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;
 - iii. Providing 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;
 - iv. Meeting with the Specialists at least twice during the school year to: (i) identify 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) make 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) oversee completion of each individual school's "School Climate Survey;" and
 - v. Providing leadership for the following activities:
 - 1. 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
 - 2. 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.

IV. Safe School Climate Specialist Roles and Responsibilities:

- A. At the beginning of each school year, the Principal of each school, or the Principal's designee as approved by the Coordinator, shall serve as the Specialist for the individual school to which he or she is assigned.
- B. The Specialist's duties shall include those enumerated under C.G.S. Section 10-222(d) and the Westbrook Board of Education's Regulation Section 5131.911. In addition to these duties, the Specialist shall:
 - a. Investigate, or supervise the investigation of, reported acts of mean-spirited behaviors including, but not limited to reports of alleged bullying and harassment in the school in accordance with this Policy;
 - b. Collect and maintain records of such reports in the school;
 - c. Act as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying and

⁸ In the National dialogue, this Safe School Climate Committee is often referred to as a Safe School Climate Team, see http://schoolclimate.org/climate/stages_tasks_challenges.php.

- responding to such reports in the school and leading efforts to improve school climate;
- d. Chair or co-chair the Committee and establish the meeting calendar for the Committee meetings; and
 - e. 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.

V. Safe School Climate Committee Roles and Responsibilities:

- A. In collaboration with the Coordinator, the Specialist at each school building shall form a representative Committee consisting of a demographically representative group of students enrolled in the school (if developmentally appropriate); parents of students enrolled in the school; school personnel, including, but not limited to teachers, administrators, student support personnel; other medical and mental health experts where available; and community members.
- B. Such Committee shall be formed no later than 30 days from the effective date of this Policy.⁹
- C. Committee composition/membership shall be reviewed annually by the Coordinator and the Specialist.
- D. The duties of the Committee shall include those enumerated under C.G.S. Section 10-222(d) and the Westbrook Board of Education's Regulation Section 5131.911. In addition to these duties, the Committee shall, at a minimum, perform the following duties:
 - i. Supervising the scheduling and administration of "School Climate Surveys" to students, staff, parents, and community members;
 - ii. Setting goals and tracking survey completion;
 - iii. Reaching out to staff and parents before administering the Survey;
 - iv. Providing Survey data to the Coordinator;
 - v. Reviewing and analyzing the school-based school climate assessment data;
 - vi. Using the data and other appropriate data and information to identify strengths and challenges with respect to improving school climate;
 - vii. Using the data to create and/or update the school-based School Climate Improvement Plan;
 - viii. Overseeing the implementation of the school-based School Climate Improvement Plan;
 - ix. Implementing the School Climate Improvement Plan and monitoring the progress of school climate improvement, in collaboration with the Coordinator;
 - x. Overseeing the implementation of annual school climate assessments at the school;
 - xi. Reviewing and making recommendations to the Coordinator regarding the safe school climate plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school;
 - xii. Overseeing the education of students, school employees and parents/guardians of students on issues relating to improving school climate;
 - xiii. Holding meetings at least four times each year, at which minutes

⁹ As of July 1, 2012, pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-222(d), every school should have identified a "Safe School Climate Committee." Satisfaction of this Policy's requirement of establishing a Safe School Climate Committee may have been satisfied previously by complying with these C.G.S. Section 10-222(d) requirements.

- shall be kept and made available to the public; and
- xiv. Performing 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.

VI. School Climate Surveys:

- 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.¹⁰

VII. School Climate Improvement Plans:

- A. In collaboration with the Coordinator, each Specialist shall develop and/or update an Improvement Plan based on the findings of the School Climate Survey.¹¹
 1. The Specialist and the Committee shall develop and/or update the Improvement Plan, using the School Climate Improvement Plan template¹² (Appendix D), 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.¹³

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.

¹⁰ When using school climate data as a "flashlight" and not a "hammer," stakeholders will be more fully engaged, and the findings will be more useful for long-term improvement. To promote such a spirit of trust, school leaders should also consider key preparation and planning issues before administration, such as: how representative their Committee is, and to what extent stakeholders work and learn in a culture of blame or distrust as opposed to a more collaborative problem solving culture. For instance, are parents/guardians, students and personnel present to lend their unique perspectives? Differing viewpoints can create powerful discussions and build a transparent culture where members feel valued, trusted, included and actively engaged in the school community.

¹¹ Pursuant to C.G.S. Section 10-222(d), all districts are required to have submitted and posted on their District website a Safe School Climate Plan, which contains provisions pertaining to bullying, filing complaints and conducting investigations.

¹² The District Safe School Climate Plan is placed within the School Climate Improvement Plan.

¹³ See Appendix A for exact wording of the Standards.

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-September of each school year. The Coordinator may provide feedback to the Committee with respect to amendments to the Improvement Plan.

VIII. 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 individual's 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.¹⁴ 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.

IX. Professional Development

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

X. Funding

The District shall budget sufficient funding to satisfy the requirements of this Policy. Such funding shall be distributed accordingly, with Superintendent approval, for

¹⁴ Alameda County School Health Services (California) The seven principles of restorative practice are: (1) voluntary participation, (2) respect for everyone involved, (3) inclusion of all the people impacted, (4) a focus on the harms, needs, and causes that have arisen, (5) consensus-based decision-making focused on how to repair the harm and prevent future harm, (6) opportunity for dialogue that aligns with the above principles, and (7) expanding the capacity of the community to create a just and fair response.

assessments and professional development, as well as for community outreach, training, coaching, and technical assistance.

XI. Accountability¹⁵

- a. 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:
 - A. Take collective responsibility for what has been accomplished and/or not accomplished;
 - B. Learn from what has been done well and not so well;
 - C. Work together to improve the quality and character of school life;
 - D. Create a highly effective professional learning community (PLC) whose responsibility it is to:
 1. Establish norms, values and goals that encourage and support collaborative and courageous leadership;
 2. Model and provide high quality academic, social, emotional and ethical learning; and
 3. Engage in ongoing reflection and evaluation.
- b. The Board shall hold itself, its individual members, and the Superintendent to the standards of this Policy and promote its intent and goals.
- c. The Superintendent shall hold himself/herself, the staff, the students and other members of the school community to the standards of this Policy.

XII. 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.

XIII. 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.

Policy adopted: March 19, 2014
 Rev. Nov. 11, 2015

Westbrook Public Schools
Westbrook, Connecticut

¹⁵ Because the school improvement process is considered a continuing systemic process of learning and evaluating goals and objectives as they impact a diverse group of learners, the School Climate Survey shall be administered, at minimum, annually, at the same time of year each year.

National School Climate Standards

**BENCHMARKS TO PROMOTE EFFECTIVE TEACHING,
LEARNING AND COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

The logo of the National School Climate Council is a large, light blue graphic consisting of three concentric circles. The innermost circle is a solid light blue, the middle one is a slightly darker shade, and the outermost one is the lightest shade, creating a subtle gradient effect.

NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE COUNCIL

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INTRODUCTION

There is growing appreciation that school climate—the quality and character of school life¹—fosters children’s development, learning and achievement. School climate is based on the patterns of people’s experiences of school life; it reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, and organizational structures that comprise school life. The increased attention to school climate reflects both the concern for improving schools and the need for preparing students to address the myriad of challenges they will face in the 21st century.

A growing body of empirical research shows that a sustainable, positive school climate reduces drop-outs and fosters youth development and academic achievement, as well as the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for students to be responsible and productive members of society². All learners want and need to be safe and happy: to be supported, cared for, valued, appropriately challenged and engaged in ways that touch our hearts as well as our minds. Empirical research has also shown that when school members feel safe, valued, cared for, engaged and respected, learning measurably increases, and staff satisfaction and retention are enhanced.

The National School Climate Council stresses that a sustainable, positive school climate is one that fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. Such a climate includes:

- Norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe;

- Members of the school community who are engaged and respected;
- Students, families and educators that work together to develop, and contribute to a shared school vision;
- Educators who model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits and satisfaction that can be gained from learning; and,
- Members of the school community who contribute to the operations of the school and the care of its physical environment.

These factors matter and show the importance of school climate. Practices are designed to promote a positive climate that fosters the environment which ensures all students have an equal opportunity to succeed and become socially conscious and ethical members of society. Furthermore, such practices play a critical role in the graduation of young people who will go on to lead satisfying lives, care about the common good, engage in the democratic process, possess the skills and abilities to work with others in the workplace and in their communities, and who are productive members of society.

Given that all efforts to improve schools benefit from being based on a well developed set of standards and indicators, leaders from across the country have collaborated on the development of the following *National School Climate Standards*³.

¹This definition of school climate was consensually developed by members of the National School Climate Council (2007). The terms “school climate”, “school culture” and “learning environment” have been used in overlapping but sometimes, quite different ways in the educational literature. Here, we use these terms interchangeably.

²For information about school climate research, see the following reports: Adelman & Taylor, 2005; Cohen, et. al. 2009; Freiberg, 1999; National School Climate Council 2007.

³See Appendix A for details about how these standards were developed.

ABOUT THE STANDARDS

The National School Climate Standards present a vision and framework for a positive and sustainable school climate. They complement national standards for Content, Leadership, and Professional Development and the Parent Teacher Association's National Standards for Family School Partnerships Standards.

This framework is comprised of five standards that support effective school climate improvement efforts:

- 1. The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate.**
- 2. The school community sets policies specifically promoting (a) the development and sustainability of social, emotional, ethical, civic and intellectual skills, knowledge, dispositions and engagement, and (b) a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.**
- 3. The school community's practices are identified, prioritized and supported to (a) promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical and civic development of students, (b) enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities; (c) address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage those who have become disengaged; and (d) develop and sustain an appropriate operational infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.**
- 4. The school community creates an environment where all members are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.**
- 5. The school community develops meaningful and engaging practices, activities and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice.**

The *National School Climate Standards* provide a research based framework and benchmark criteria for educational leaders (School Boards, State Departments of Education, Superintendents, Principals and After School leaders) to support and assess district and school efforts to enhance and be accountable for school climate⁴. They also provide guidance for professional preparation and continuing education. Appendix C includes a glossary of terms.

As with most standards, School Climate Standards do not recommend or detail specific assessment, curricular, leadership, professional development, and related systemically informed programs, curricula, or services. Each state and/or school community must consider how best to translate these standards into practice in ways that build on past experiences, values, strengths, priorities, and contextual needs of the local school community.

The five standards presented below include sixteen indicators for supporting student learning, positive youth development and teaching. Thirty-sub indicators further delineate essentials.

⁴See Appendix B for research related to each of the five standards.

NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE STANDARDS

School Climate Standard #1

The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

1.1 School policies and practices support school, family, youth and community members working together to establish a safe and productive learning community.

1.1.1 School, family, community and youth members agree to work on strategies to be implemented for ongoing school climate improvement.

1.1.2 Policies and practices are regularly assessed to ensure continual refinement that enhances the quality of a safe and productive learning community.

1.1.3 School, family and youth members collaboratively develop, publicize and model codes of conduct that support positive and sustained school climate.

1.2 Schools gather accurate and reliable data about school climate from students, school personnel and parents/guardians for continuous improvement and share it regularly with the school community.

1.2.1 Educational leaders regularly assess and monitor policies and practices and revise as necessary to determine the effectiveness of school, family and community members working together to support student learning, teaching and positive youth development.

1.2.2 Schools use multiple evidence-based methods of collecting data, such as surveys, observational methods and behavior reports, that recognize the range of factors that shape school climate (e.g., social norms, school connectedness, sense of safety, discipline, learning/teaching, leadership, absence rates and mobility).

1.2.3 School, family, community and youth leaders establish procedures for using school climate findings (including disaggregated data) to establish instructional and/or school-wide improvement goals and implementation strategies that will enhance student learning and positive youth development.

1.2.4 School climate reports are periodically provided that communicate effectively with all school community members and families about goals, benchmarks and progress.

1.3 Capacity building is developed over time to enable all school community members to meet school climate standards.

1.3.1 Capacity building includes developing infrastructure, classroom and school-wide prevention and intervention strategies/practices, and developing policy and systemic changes that promote positive school climate.

School Climate Standard #2

The school community sets policies specifically promoting (a) the development and sustainability of social, emotional, ethical, civic and intellectual skills, knowledge and dispositions and (b) a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

2.1 Policies and mission and vision statements that promote social, emotional, ethical and civic, as well as intellectual, skills and dispositions are developed and institutionalized.

2.1.1 Policies promote curriculum content, continued monitoring and standards for social, emotional, ethical and civic learning and are fully integrated into the classroom and school in ways that align with 21st century learning and with students' prevailing cultures, circumstances and languages.

2.1.2 Policies for instructional and assessment processes and standards are personalized in ways that model and promote mutual respect, caring and a psychological sense of community.

2.1.3 Accountability measures and data are used and monitored that directly demonstrate the impact of efforts to promote social, emotional, ethical and civic learning.

2.2 Policies and mission and vision statements are developed and institutionalized that promote a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.

2.2.1 Policies promote engagement and address barriers to learning and teaching while reengaging disconnected students through an intervention framework that generates a comprehensive and cohesive system of learning supports as delineated in Standard 3.

2.2.2 Policies ensure continuing development and sustainability of a comprehensive and cohesive system of learning supports.

2.2.3 Accountability measures, data and monitoring are used that directly demonstrate the impact of efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging students who have become disengaged.

2.3 Policies promote use and monitoring of natural and informal opportunities (e.g., recreational and extracurricular aspects of classroom and school life, formulation of codes of conduct and fair enforcement of rules, mentoring, and informal interactions among and with students) to ensure they support the helpful norms of learning and teaching that foster mutual respect and caring; engagement; safety and well being; civil, pro social, responsible behavior; and a psychological sense of community.

2.4 Policies ensure the operational and capacity building mechanisms (including staff and student development) related to this standard are fully integrated into a school's infrastructure and are effectively implemented and sustained.

School Climate Standard #3

The school community's practices are identified, prioritized and supported to (a) promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical and civic development of students, (b) enhance engagement in teaching, learning and school-wide activities; (c) address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; and (d) develop and sustain an appropriate operational infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

3.1 Specific practices are designed to enhance engagement of every student through classroom-based social, emotional, ethical and civic learning and in school-wide activities.

3.1.1 Instructional and engaging practices focus on cognitive and behavioral learning as well as social, emotional, ethical and civic engagement.

3.1.2 Practices facilitate students' desire and ability to share their perceptions readily (e.g., to enter into dialogues with adults and peers at school), emphasize interests and needs, stress options and choices and a meaningful role in decision making, provide enrichment opportunities, provide a continuum of guidance and support and minimize coercive interactions.

3.1.3 Based on research about intrinsic motivation, practices are designed to maximize feelings of competence, self-determination and connectedness to others and to minimize threats to such feelings. Practices are designed to minimize psychological reactance by not overemphasizing social control strategies and not over relying on extrinsic motivation to promote positive social, emotional, ethical and civic behavior and learning.

3.2 Teachers and school administrators design specific classroom and school-wide practices to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged.

3.2.1 Practices include a full continuum of integrated systems of intervention designed to:

- Promote healthy development and prevent negative problems;
- Respond as early after problem onset as is feasible;
- Provide for those whose serious, pervasive and chronic negative problems require more intensive assistance and accommodation.

3.2.2 Classroom and school wide interventions are designed to:

- Enhance regular classroom strategies to enable learning (e.g., improving instruction and classroom management practices for maximum engagement and reengagement of all students and to pursue response to intervention practices for those with mild to moderate learning and behavioral problems)
- Support transitions (e.g., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other transitions);
- Increase home and school connections;
- Respond to and, where feasible, prevent crises;
- Increase community involvement and support (e.g., outreach to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers and community resources that fill priority gaps in the system of supports);
- Facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed;

- Provide multiple opportunities for students to have leadership roles that enhance their commitment to school and to the development of themselves and others.

3.2.3 Classroom and schoolwide practices are designed to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; these practices are developed into a comprehensive and cohesive system of learning supports that weaves together school and community resources.

3.3 School leaders develop and sustain a comprehensive system of learning supports by ensuring an appropriate operational infrastructure that incorporates capacity building mechanisms.

3.3.1 The school has administrative leaders who are responsible for the development, operation and sustainability of high quality practices related to this third standard (Practices are identified, supported and prioritized that (a) enhance engagement in teaching, learning and school-wide activities; (b) address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; and (c) develop and sustain an appropriate systemic infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.). These responsibilities are delineated in job descriptions.

3.3.2 Sufficient staff are assigned to developing and sustaining such high quality practices.

3.3.3 Leadership and staff are provided continuous professional development in order to develop and sustain practices related to this third standard.

3.3.4 An effective school family community operational infrastructure is in place for weaving school and community resources together and for ongoing planning, implementing and evaluating the comprehensive system of learning supports.

3.3.5 The operational and capacity building systems related to this third standard are fully integrated with the school's mechanisms for improving instruction, management and overall governance.

School Climate Standard #4

The school community creates an environment where all members are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

4.1 School leaders promote comprehensive and evidence-based instructional and school-wide improvement efforts designed to support students, school personnel and community members feeling welcomed, supported and safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.

4.2 Students, their families, school staff and community stakeholders are regularly surveyed and are asked to indicate what the school should do to further enhance a welcoming, supportive and safe environment.

4.3 School leaders monitor and evaluate the prevention and intervention strategies designed to support people feeling welcomed, supported and safe and use that data to improve relevant policies, practices, facilities, staff competencies and accountability.

School Climate Standard #5

The school community develops meaningful and engaging practices, activities and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

5.1 Students and staff model culturally responsive and ethical behavior. This reflects continuous learning that builds knowledge, awareness, skills, and the capacity to identify, understand, and respect the unique beliefs, values, customs, languages, and traditions of all members of the school community⁵.

5.1.1 Curriculum and instructional practices promote curiosity, inquiry into and celebration of diverse beliefs, customs, languages, and traditions of all members of the school community.

5.1.2 Students have ongoing opportunities to provide service to others in meaningful and engaging ways in their school and in the larger community.

5.2 Relationships among and between staff and students are mutually respectful, supportive, ethical and civil.

5.2.1 Every student is connected to a caring and responsible adult in the school.

5.2.2 Social norms in the school support responsible and positive peer relationships.

5.2.3 Discipline procedures are aligned with the goals of supporting students in their learning and being respectful of all individuals; the goals are enhanced with authentic student-driven opportunities for reconciliation when appropriate.

5.3 Students and staff are actively engaged in celebrating milestones and accomplishments as they work to achieve meaningful school and community life.

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⁵This definition of culture competence has been adapted from the State of Ohio's Governors Cabinet Council.

APPENDIX A

HOW THESE STANDARDS WERE DEVELOPED

Acknowledgements

The National School Climate Standards are the product of the efforts of many individuals and groups.

In July 2008, the National School Climate Council agreed to develop National School Climate Standards. Over the course of the following year a series of drafts were developed, critiqued and revised as detailed below. The National School Climate Council Development Team, members of the National School Climate Council and additional groups of reviewers provided essential counsel to develop these standards.

The Development Team, comprised of Jonathan Cohen, Mary Lou Rush and Bonnie Hedrick (with able support from Robert Canning), developed a first draft of the standards. This first draft built on the Ohio School Climate Guidelines as well as a recent and exhaustive review of school climate research. The National School Climate Development Team critiqued and helped to revise this draft. Over the course of several months many new drafts were completed, critiqued and revised.

In December 2008, the University of Missouri Review Team (noted below) met to conduct a thorough review of work that had been done to that date. This team engaged in the following activities: (1) Generating a list of characteristics that define a positive school climate and/or delineating our vision of an ideal school; (2) Critically and constructively assessing the definition for a positive and sustained school climate developed by the National School Climate Council; and, (3) Using findings that emerged from the two activities noted above to critique a new draft of the standards. As a result of this process, the University of Missouri Review Team recommended that we continue to include the five basic standards with a number of recommended modifications resulting in a 5th draft of the standards. This draft was reviewed by members of the National School Climate Council resulting in a 6th draft.

In the spring of 2009, over forty principals, superintendents, mental health professionals, educational researchers, and state and national leaders (noted below) reviewed the 6th draft. Their feedback and recommendations resulted in the 7th draft of the standards.

On September 17, 2009, the New England Equity Assistance Center and New England College hosted a meeting at Brown University to offer feedback on the evolving set of National School Climate Standards. Forty of New England's educational equity advocates and school leaders were in attendance (noted below). Attendees included teachers, administrators, professors, consultants and officials from state and city departments of education from New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island. The goals of this meeting were: 1) to ensure that the standards help schools effectively and equitably address school climate issues, and 2) to ensure that the standards help schools and communities equitably address the specific, unique needs and common challenges faced in schools by children and families from diverse, minority and underprivileged communities. The group spent the day reviewing the draft School Climate Standards and discussing how each of the five standards might help schools and communities better understand and address the needs of students from various racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, disability and religious groups.

In late September, the National School Climate Council Standards Development Committee reviewed the recommended changes that the New England Equity Assistance Center and New England College group suggested. Many of the suggestions and recommendations have helped to make these standards even more clear, fair and just.

We are also grateful to Jennifer Morton, Ph.D., Emily Stork, Marcy Borten, and Gene Browne who helped in revising and organizing these standards.

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APPENDIX B

RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR THE NATIONAL SCHOOL CLIMATE STANDARDS

1. The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate.

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2. The school community sets policies specifically promoting (a) the development and sustainability of social, emotional, ethical, civic and intellectual skills, knowledge, dispositions and engagement, and (b) a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.

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3. The school community's practices are identified, prioritized and supported to (a) promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical and civic development of students, (b) enhance engagement in teaching, learning, and school-wide activities; (c) address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; and (d) develop and sustain an appropriate operational infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.

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5. The school community develops meaningful and engaging practices, activities and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice.

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APPENDIX C

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accountability refers to the notion that people (e.g., students or teachers) or an organization (e.g., a school, school district, or state department of education) should be held responsible for improving student achievement and should be rewarded or sanctioned for their success or lack of success in doing so. Accountability measures and data refer to the specific measurement systems (e.g., an academic grade or a school climate pattern) that school leaders use to make decisions about student learning and/or school improvement efforts.

Assessment is the measurement of knowledge, skills and beliefs to determine the level of student achievement in a particular content area (e.g., performance-based assessments, written exams, quizzes).

Awareness refers to how knowledgeable we are about a given topic. It does not relate to our inclination to learn or act in a given way or to what extent we are actually able or skilled to do so.

Barriers to learning refers to external and internal factors that interfere with academic and social success at school. They stem from a variety of widely recognized societal, neighborhood, familial, school, and personal conditions.

Benchmark is a description of a specific level of student achievement expected of students at particular ages, grades, developmental levels, or during a specific point in the school year.

Best Practice is a technique or methodology that has been proven to reliably lead to a desired result through research and experience.

Capacity building refers to the process of creating a school environment with appropriate policy and human resource development that will support school reform in an ongoing manner.

Coercive interactions refers to the process of educators using force or authority to make a person do something against his or her will.

Codes of conduct delineate explicit or implicit principles, values, standards, or rules of behavior that guide the decisions, procedures and systems of a school (or other organizations) in a way that (a) contributes to the welfare of its key stakeholders, and (b) respects the rights of all constituents affected by its operations.

Culturally responsive educational systems are grounded in the belief that culturally and linguistically diverse students can excel in academic endeavors. Culturally responsive pedagogy and practice facilitates and supports the achievement of all students. In culturally responsive classrooms and schools, effective teaching and learning occur in a culturally-supported, learner-centered context, whereby the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured and utilized to promote student achievement.

Curriculum refers to the course of study offered by a school.

Data-driven decision making is a process by which district leaders, school leaders, teachers and parents review cause and effect data to determine strengths and prioritize areas in need of improvement to inform instruction, curriculum and policy decisions to positively impact student achievement.

Disaggregated data refers to the presentation of data broken into segments of the student and/or parent-guardian and/or

school personnel populations instead of the entire student/parent-guardian-school personnel population. Typical segments, for example, might include students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial or ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English fluency. Disaggregated data allows the school community to understand how various sub-groups within the school perceive school climate.

Dispositions refers to the tendency to act in given ways.

Engagement (disengaged and reengaged) is defined in three ways in the research literature:

- *Behavioral engagement* draws on the idea of participation; it includes involvement in academic and social or extracurricular activities and is considered crucial for achieving positive academic outcomes and preventing dropping out.
- *Emotional engagement* encompasses positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academics, and school and is presumed to create ties to an institution and influence willingness to do the work.
- *Cognitive engagement* draws on the idea of investment; it incorporates thoughtfulness and willingness to exert the effort necessary to comprehend complex ideas and master difficult skills. (School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence” (2004) by J. Fredricks, P. Blumenfeld & A. Paris. Review of Educational Research, 74, 59-109.)
- *Disengaged students* are those who do not manifest behavioral engagement. The source of the disconnect may be either emotional or cognitive, or both. Reengaging such students usually requires addressing intrinsic motivational needs with strategies that maximize student feelings of competence, self-determination, relatedness to significant others and minimizing threats to such feelings.

Evidence-based practices in education refers to instructional and/or school-wide improvement practices which systematic empirical research has provided evidence of statistically significant effectiveness.

Formative assessment is the process used by teachers to determine how to adjust instruction in response to student needs, and by students to adjust learning strategies. Formative assessments are used to inform and adjust instruction, and are not used to evaluate student progress for a grade.

Instructional practices refers to teaching methods that guide interaction in the classroom.

Knowledge refers to the information or understanding that a person has.

Learning community refers to a group of people who share common values and beliefs and are actively engaged in learning together from and with each other.

Learning supports are the resources, strategies and practices that provide physical, social, emotional and intellectual assistance to directly address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage disconnected students. A *comprehensive system* of learning supports provides interventions in classrooms and school-wide settings and is fully integrated with efforts to improve instruction and management at a school. In keeping with public education and public health perspectives, the system is designed to enable holistic student development while addressing negative social, behavioral, academic and emotional problems.

Mobility refers to how often families move from one school community to another within or outside of a school district.

National School Climate Council is a group of educational policy and practice leaders devoted to narrowing the socially unjust gap between social school climate research on the one hand and school climate policy, practice and teacher education on the other hand (www.schoolclimate.org/climate/council.php).

Operational infrastructure is defined as the set of mechanisms developed to carry out an organization's major functions. Examples of such mechanisms include leaders, teams and workgroups. The manner in which they are supported, developed and organized shapes their effectiveness. In education, the need to weave together the resources of school, home and community requires both horizontal and vertical operational infrastructures to interconnect related operations at school, families of schools, district, regional and state levels.

Positive, sustained school climate is one that fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. Such a climate includes: norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe; members of the school community who are engaged and respected; students, family members and educators who work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision; and educators who model and nurture an attitude that emphasizes the benefits and satisfaction that can be gained from learning. Members of the school community contribute to the operations of the school and the care of its social, emotional, intellectual and physical environment.

Positive youth development refers to the intentional effort to support the healthy development of youth.

Professional Learning Community (PLC) is a collegial group of educators who are united in their commitment to continuous adult and student learning who work and learn collaboratively to realize a common mission, visit and review other classrooms, and participate in decision making.

Safety – physical, social, intellectual and emotional. Safety refers to being free from danger. Feeling and being safe is a fundamental and basic need. Feeling safe and being safe are not synonymous. Schools measure rates of physical violence and as a result tend to focus primarily on physical safety. Social safety refers to feeling and being safe interpersonally. Mean-spirited, bullying behaviors, exclusion and harassment undermine social safety. Emotionally safety refers to feeling sufficiently comfortable with our own internal feelings, thoughts and impulses. Feeling emotionally safe supports learners to reach their academic potentials. Intellectual safety refers to being able to take academic risks, to engage in necessary questioning and dialogue when one does not know, and to feel comfortable with being confused.

Skill refers to the ability to do something.

School climate refers to patterns of people's experiences of school life; it reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, as well as the organizational structures that comprise school life.

School connectedness refers to student perceptions that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals. Connectedness is measured in terms of how much/often students feel close to people at school, are happy to be at school, feel a part of the school, feel that teachers treat them fairly and feel safe at school.

Social, emotional, ethical and civic learning refers to the intentional process of promoting students' social, emotional, ethical and civic skills, knowledge and dispositions. There are two major, overlapping educational 'camps' in America today that are focused on social, emotional, ethical and civic teaching and learning: character education and social emotional learning.

Social justice refers to the idea that all people are entitled to full access to life's chances, human dignity, peace, and genuine security. Social justice exists when all members of a society lead lives committed to respectful treatment of all and nondiscrimination and non-repression of others.

Social norms are the behavioral expectations and cues within a society or group. These expectations and cues are the rules that a group uses for appropriate and inappropriate values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. These rules may be explicit or implicit.

Summative assessment is an assessment that is employed mainly to assess cumulative student learning at a particular point in time.

Twenty-first (21st) century learning refers to the essential skills, knowledge and dispositions that our students need to succeed as citizens and workers in the 21st century.

Reactance is an emotional reaction in direct contradiction to rules or regulations that threaten or eliminate specific behavioral freedoms. It can occur when someone is heavily pressured to accept a certain view or attitude. Reactance can cause the person to adopt or strengthen a view or attitude that is contrary to what was intended and also increases resistance to persuasion.

Reliable data refers to information that is accurate and dependable.

Vision and mission statements refers to K-12 school goal setting documents that – in theory – act as organizing anchors for all school improvement efforts. Different schools and districts define vision and mission statements in somewhat different ways. Generally, a *vision* statement is the school's clear, motivating description of the desired outcome of K-12 education. Vision statements also define the purpose of K-12 education. A mission statement delineates what the school will do to actualize the school's vision statement.



APPENDIX B

Students
Bullying

5131.911

BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICY

The Westbrook Board of Education is committed to creating and maintaining an educational environment that is physically, emotionally and intellectually safe and thus free from bullying, teen dating violence, 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 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, 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:

- 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; or
- 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.

For purposes of this policy, "**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.

Consistent with the requirements under state law, the Westbrook Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent or his/her designee(s), along with the Safe School 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 include, but not be limited to provisions which:

- (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 at the beginning of each school year 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 and that the parents or guardians of the student alleged to have committed an act or acts of bullying and the parents or guardians of the student against whom such alleged act or acts were directed receive prompt notice that such investigation has commenced;
- (5) 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 and teen dating violence;
- 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 the parents or guardians of a 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 policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying;
- (10) require each school to invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying to a meeting, separate and distinct from the meeting required in subdivision (9) above, to discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying;
- (11) 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;
- (12) 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;
- (13) prohibit discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying;
- (14) 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;
- (15) 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;
- (16) 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;
- (17) 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
- (18) require that all school employees annually complete the training described in Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-220a.

The notification required pursuant to subdivision (8) (above) and the invitation required pursuant to subdivisions (9) and (10) (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.

Not later than August 12, 2014, the Westbrook Board of Education shall approve this Safe School Climate Plan developed pursuant to this policy and submit such plan to the Department of Education. Not later than thirty (30) calendar days after approval by the Board, the Board shall make such plan available on the Board's and each individual school in the school district's web site and ensure that the Safe School Climate Plan is included in the school district's website publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools and student handbooks. (Hardcopies of the plan are also available in each school's main office.)

Legal References:

Public Act 11-232, *An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws*

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-145a

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-145o

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-220a

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222d

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-222g

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-222h

Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 10-233a through 10-233f

Public Act 13-3 "An Act Concerning Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety"

Public Act 14 – 172 "An Act Concerning Improving Employment Opportunities Through Education and Ensuring Safe School Climates"

Public Act 14-232 "An Act Concerning The Review and Approval of Safe School Climate Plans by the Dept. of Education and a Student Safety Hotline Feasibility Study"

Public Act 14 – 234, "An Act Concerning Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault"

7 – 28-14

SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE PLAN

The Board is committed to creating and maintaining a physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe educational environment free from bullying, teen dating violence, harassment and discrimination. In order to foster an atmosphere conducive to learning, the Board has developed the following Safe School Climate Plan, consistent with state law and Board Policy. This Plan represents a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying, cyberbullying and teen dating violence, sets forth the Board's expectations for creating a positive school climate and thus preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying and teen dating violence.

Bullying behavior ~~is~~ and teen dating violence are strictly prohibited, and students who are determined to have engaged in such behavior are subject to disciplinary action, which may include suspension or expulsion from school. 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 positive school climate in which bullying will not be tolerated by students or school staff.

I. Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation

- A. The Board expressly prohibits any form of bullying behavior on school grounds and teen dating violence; 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 Board of Education.
- B. 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;
- C. The Board further prohibits any form of teen dating violence outside of the school setting if such violence substantially disrupts the educational process;
- D. In addition to prohibiting student acts that constitute bullying, the Board also prohibits discrimination and/or retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying.
- E. Students who engage in bullying behavior in violation of Board Policy and the Safe School Climate Plan 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.

II. Definition of Bullying

- A. **“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 district that:
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; or
 5. substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.
- B. 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.

III. Other Definitions

- A. **"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.
- B. **"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;
- C. **"Hostile environment"** means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate;
- D. **"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;
- E. **"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 a local or regional board of education;

- F. **"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 identified by the Department of Education, (2) school rules prohibiting bullying, 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 is likely to occur, (4) inclusion of grade-appropriate bullying education and prevention curricula in kindergarten through high school, (5) individual interventions with the bully, parents and school employees, and interventions with the bullied child, parents and school employees, (6) school-wide training related to safe school climate, (7) student peer training, education and support, and (8) promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions.
- G. **"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.
- H. **"School employee"** means (1) 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 (2) 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.
- I. **"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.
- J. **"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.

IV. Leadership and Administrative Responsibilities

A. Safe School Climate Coordinator

For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, the Superintendent shall appoint, from existing school district staff, a District Safe School Climate Coordinator ("Coordinator"). The Coordinator shall:

1. be responsible for implementing the district's Safe School Climate Plan ("Plan");

2. collaborate with Safe School Climate Specialists, the Board, and the Superintendent to prevent, identify and respond to bullying in the district schools;
3. provide data and information, in collaboration with the Superintendent, to the Department of Education regarding bullying ;
4. meet with Safe School Climate Specialists at least twice during the school year to discuss issues relating to bullying the school district and to make recommendations concerning amendments to the district's Plan.

B. Safe School Climate Specialist

For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, the principal of each school (or principal's designee) shall serve as the Safe School Climate Specialist. The Safe School Climate Specialist shall investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying and act as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying and responding to reports of bullying in the school.

V. Development and Review of Safe School Climate Plan

- A. For the school year commencing July 1, 2012 and each school year thereafter, the Principal of each school shall establish a committee or designate at least one existing committee ("Committee") in the school to be responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate and addressing issues relating to bullying in the school. Such committee shall include at least one parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the school, as appointed by the school principal.
- B. The Committee shall: 1) receive copies of completed reports following bullying investigations; 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 Coordinator regarding the Safe School Climate Plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school; 5) educate students, school employees and parents/guardians on issues relating to bullying; 6) collaborate with the Coordinator in the collection of data regarding bullying; and 7) perform any other duties as determined by the Principal that are related to the prevention, identification and response to school bullying.
- C. Any parent/guardian serving as a member of the Committee shall not participate in any activities which may compromise the confidentiality of any student, including, but not limited to receiving copies of investigation reports, or identifying or addressing patterns of bullying among students in the school.
- D. Not later than January 1, 2012, the Board of Education shall approve the Safe School Climate Plan developed pursuant to Board policy and submit such plan to the Department of Education. Not later than thirty (30) calendar days after approval by the Board, the Board shall make such plan available on the Board's and each individual school in the school district's web site and ensure that the Safe School Climate Plan is included in the school

district's publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools and in all student handbooks.

VI. Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Complaints of Bullying

- A. Students and parents (or guardians of students) may file written reports of bullying. Written reports of bullying 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, and the names of potential witnesses. Such reports may be filed with any building administrator and/or the Safe School Climate Specialist (i.e. building principal), and all reports shall be forwarded to the Safe School Climate Specialist for review and actions consistent with this Plan.
- B. Students may make anonymous reports of bullying to any school employee. Students may also request anonymity when making a report, even if the student's identity is known to the school employee. In cases where a student requests anonymity, the Safe School Climate Specialist or his/her designee shall meet with the student (if the student's identity is known) to review the request for anonymity and discuss the impact that maintaining the anonymity of the complainant may have on the investigation and on any possible remedial action. All anonymous reports shall be reviewed and reasonable action will be taken to address the situation, to the extent such action may be taken that does not disclose the source of the report, and is consistent with the due process rights of the student(s) alleged to have committed acts of bullying. No disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
- C. School employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying shall orally notify the Safe School Climate Specialist or another school administrator if the Safe School Climate Specialist is unavailable, **not later than one (1) school day** after such school employee witnesses or receives a report of bullying. The school employee shall then file a **written report not later than two (2) school days** after making such oral report.
- D. The Safe School Climate Specialist shall be responsible for reviewing any anonymous reports of bullying and shall investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written reports. The Safe School Climate Specialist shall also be responsible for promptly notifying the parents or guardians of the student alleged to have committed an act or acts of bullying, and the parents or guardians of the student against whom such alleged act or acts were directed, **than an investigation has commenced**. In order to allow the district to adequately investigate complaints filed by a student or parent/guardian, the parent of the student suspected of being bullied should be asked to provide consent to permit the release of that student's name in connection with the investigation process, unless the student and/or parent has requested anonymity.
- E. In investigating reports of bullying, 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 will result in disciplinary action.

VII. Responding to Verified Acts of Bullying

- A. Following investigation, if acts of bullying are verified, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall notify the parents or guardians of the students against whom such acts were directed as well as the parents or guardians of the students who commit such acts of bullying of the finding **not later than forty-eight hours** after the investigation is completed. This notification shall include a description of the school's response to the acts of bullying. In providing such notification, however, care must be taken to respect the statutory privacy rights of other students, including the perpetrator of such bullying. The specific disciplinary consequences imposed on the perpetrator, or personally identifiable information about a student other than the parent/guardian's own child, may not be disclosed except as provided by law.
- B. In any instance in which bullying is verified, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall invite the parents or guardians of the student 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 policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying. The Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall also invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying to a meeting, separate and distinct from the previously described meeting, to discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying. The invitation may be made simultaneous with the notification described above in Section VII.A.
- C. If bullying 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 was directed. Such support plan will include safety measures to protect against further acts of bullying.
- D. A specific written intervention plan shall be developed to address repeated incidents of bullying against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying 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.
- E. Notice to Law Enforcement
- If the Principal of a school (or his/her designee) reasonably believes that any act of bullying constitutes a criminal offense, he/she 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 his/her designee, may consult with the school resource office, if any, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.
- F. If a bullying complaint raises concern about discrimination or harassment on the basis of a legally protected classifications (such as race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability or gender identity), 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 etc.)

VIII. Teen Dating Violence

- A. The school strictly prohibits, and takes very seriously any instances of teen dating violence, as defined above. The school recognizes that teen dating violence may take many different forms and may also be considered bullying and/or sexual harassment.
- B. Students and parents (or guardians of students) may bring verbal or written complaints regarding teen dating violence to any building administrator. The building administrator shall review and address the complaint, which may include referral of the complaint to the Safe School Climate Specialist and/or Title IX Coordinator.
- C. Prevention and intervention strategies concerning teen dating violence shall be implemented in accordance with Section X below. Discipline, up to and including expulsion, may be imposed against the perpetrator of teen dating violence, whether such conduct occurs on or off campus, in accordance with Board policy and consistent with federal and state law.

IX. Documentation and Maintenance of Log

- A. Each school shall maintain written reports of bullying, along with supporting documentation received and/or created as a result of bullying 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 written prior consent of a parent, guardian or eligible student, except as permitted under Board policy and state and federal law.
- B. The Principal 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. Consistent with district obligations under state and federal law regarding student privacy, the log shall not contain any personally identifiable student information, or any information that alone or in combination would allow a reasonable person in the school community to identify the students involved. Accordingly, the log should be limited to basic information such as the number of verified acts, name of school and/or grade level and relevant date. 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.
- C. The Principal of each school shall report the number of verified acts of bullying in the school annually to the Department of Education in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education.

X. Other Prevention and Intervention Strategies

- A. 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 to teen dating violence. While conduct that rises to the level of “bullying” or “teen dating violence” as defined above, will generally warrant traditional 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 of bullying. As discussed below, schools may also consider appropriate alternative to traditional disciplinary sanctions, including age-appropriate consequences and other restorative or remedial interventions.
- B. A specific written intervention plan shall be developed to address repeated incidents of bullying against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual. This plan may include safety provisions, as described above, for students against whom acts of bullying have been verified and may include other interventions such as counseling, discipline, and other appropriate remedial or restorative actions as determined by the responsible administrator.
- C. The following sets forth possible interventions which may also be utilized to enforce the Board’s prohibition against bullying:

i. Non-disciplinary interventions

When verified acts of bullying are identified early and/or when such verified acts of bullying do not reasonably require a disciplinary response, students may be counseled as to the definition of bullying, its prohibition, and their duty to avoid any conduct that could be considered bullying. Students may also be subject to other forms of restorative discipline or remedial actions, appropriate to the age of the students and nature of the behavior.

If a complaint arises out of conflict between students or groups of students, peer or other forms of 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.

When an act or acts of teen dating violence are identified, the students involved may be counseled as to the seriousness of the conduct, the prohibition of teen dating violence, and their duty to avoid any such conduct. Students may also be subject to other forms of restorative discipline or remedial actions, appropriate to the age of the students and nature of the behavior.

ii. Disciplinary interventions

When acts of bullying are verified or teen dating violence occurs, and a disciplinary response is warranted, students are subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences. Anonymous complaints, however, shall not be the basis for disciplinary action.

In-school suspension and suspension may be imposed only after informing the accused perpetrator of the reasons for the proposed suspension and giving him/her an opportunity to explain the situation, in accordance with the Board's Student Discipline policy.

Expulsion may be imposed only after a hearing before the Board of Education, a committee of the Board or an impartial hearing officer designated by the Board of Education in accordance with the Board's Student Discipline policy. This consequence shall normally be reserved for serious incidents of bullying and teen dating violence, and/or when past interventions have not been successful in eliminating bullying behavior.

iii. Interventions for bullied students and victims of teen dating violence

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

- a. Referral to a school counselor, psychologist or other appropriate social or mental health service;
- b. Increased supervision and monitoring of student to observe and intervene in bullying situations or instances of teen dating violence;
- c. Encouragement of student to seek help when victimized or witnessing victimization;
- d. Peer mediation or other forms of mediation, where appropriate;
- e. Student Safety Support plan; and
- f. Restitution and/or restorative interventions.
- g. Periodic follow-up by the Safe School Climate Specialist and/or Title IX Coordinator with the bullied student or victim of teen dating violence;

iv. General Prevention and Intervention Strategies

In addition to the prompt investigation of complaints of bullying and direct intervention when acts of bullying are verified, other district actions

may ameliorate potential problems with bullying in school or at school-sponsored activities. Additional district actions may also ameliorate potential problems with teen dating violence. 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. Such prevention and intervention strategies may include, but are not limited to:

- a. School rules prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation and establishing appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts;
- b. Adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom and other specific areas where bullying or teen dating violence are likely to occur;
- c. Inclusion of grade-appropriate bullying and teen dating violence education and prevention curricula in kindergarten through high school, 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;
- d. Individual interventions with the perpetrator, parents and school employees, and interventions with the bullied student, parents and school employees;
- e. 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;
- f. Student peer training, education and support; and
- g. Promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions;
- h. 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;
- i. Respectful responses to bullying and teen dating violence concerns raised by students, parents or staff;
- j. 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;

- k. Use of peers to help ameliorate the plight of victims and include them in group activities;
- l. Avoidance of sex-role stereotyping;
- m. Continuing awareness and involvement on the part of school employees and parents with regards to prevention and intervention strategies;
- n. Modeling by teachers of positive, respectful, and supportive behavior toward students;
- o. Creating a school atmosphere of team spirit and collaboration that promotes appropriate social behavior by students in support of others;
- p. Employing classroom strategies that instruct students how to work together in a collaborative and supportive atmosphere.
- q. Culturally competent school-based curriculum focusing on social-emotional learning, self-awareness and self-regulation.

D. In addition to prevention and intervention strategies, administrators, 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. Administrators, teachers and other professional employees should intervene promptly whenever they observe mean-spirited student conduct, even if such conduct does not meet the formal definition of “bullying.”

E. Funding for the school-based bullying intervention and school climate improvement strategy may originate from public, private, federal or philanthropic sources.

XI. Improving School Climate Westbrook has undertaken a major turn to focus our efforts on preventing behaviors that lead to unsafe environments for teaching and learning; students and adults. The goal is to set the conditions where such conditions will not support any mean-spiritedness or behaviors leading to more serious/harmful affects. A dislike of the unlike or animus toward one another within the “bricks and mortar” settings would be as abhorrent between the members of the school community as it would be if perpetrated by external individuals. Understanding the research that unkind behaviors and more serious fallout from such within the cyber/electronic media always begins in the face-to-face arena, this work extends to our approaches to dealing with cyber-attacks of any kind. Predicated on the foundation that all adults and students must have a quality daily experience, positive & supportive relationships between adults, between adults and students and between students, and opportunities to partner in the work of creating and sustaining a positive school climate, the school district has embarked on an ambitious process to train every in Basic School Climate. The training is mandated for all staff (administrators, certified professionals and classified personnel). The purpose of the training is to provide insight into this balanced approach to creating safe and secure environments in which to learn and work and to provide all staff with

strategies for working with students as partners. Administrators have been trained in Basic, Advanced and Restorative Practices. Lead-Teachers have also been invited to train in Restorative Practices. Students must be connected to school and their own education as resources and these trainings delve more deeply into how students can be seen as resources, not as objects or recipients only of adult wisdom. Basic School Climate trainings have been developed for students as well and will continue to be offered to them. As such this work is intended to reach levels of collaboration between and among adults and students so that co-learning inter-generationally is valued.

Further, Westbrook Public School district has formed a districtwide School Climate Committee, Co-chaired by the Superintendent and the Director of Special Education and Student Support Services. Its membership includes the superintendent (and current Safe School Climate Coordinator), school administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, parents/guardians, student support professionals, school nurses, and students. Its purpose is to meet a minimum of four times per year to review and assimilate district climate data and the work of each school-based climate committee (see school sections below). It is also the umbrella for all other committees to report their interface with school-based climate committees. It currently has one subcommittee, the District Wellness Committee, under its auspices. The Wellness Committee is chaired by the Director of Special Education and Student Support Services.

:

Daisy Ingraham School

Ruth Rose, Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist)

The School Climate Committee is made up of the principal, psychologist, a representative from each grade level, special education staff, special area teachers, and paraprofessionals, parents/guardians. The School Climate Committee meets monthly to consider schoolwide efforts to address our focus on kindness as our mission and mean-spirited behavior being held as totally unacceptable in any member of the school community. Items such as the district School Climate policy and the terms of current legislation are understood. We understand that we all need to stand up for others who are being treated unkindly. The role of the bystander has been identified as another area of focus. At the elementary level, we try to take advantage of the “teachable moment” and process unacceptable behavior at every opportunity. Toward that end, we will be bridging with the use of Restorative Practices in day-to-day school operations and we will move into the realm of Social Thinking as a means to foster relationships and a working knowledge of how we all impact one another in a classroom, cafeteria, playground, hallway, etc.

All staff have had Basic Climate training, many have elected to attend Advanced Climate trainings. Restorative practices training will be added to the store of knowledge around the efforts to approach adults and students from the restorative perspective, intended to provide both prevention and intervention strategies for adults and students.

Daisy Ingraham administration does not wait for accusations of bullying or inappropriate behaviors that cause intentional or unintentional harm to investigate. Rather, any and all mean-spirited behaviors, that may cause harm are investigated and, more importantly, become the catalyst for restoration. At Daisy, “circles” as part of daily routine serve as a helpful basis for drawing adults and students together to repair harm and prevent any further harm. Parents/guardians, Early Childhood Development staff,

Youth and Family Services personnel, etc. are all made cognizant of these schoolwide preventive efforts.

Westbrook Middle School

Cori-Ann DiMaggio, Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist)

At the beginning of the school year the Safe School Climate Specialist meets with each grade level to review school and safety rules. In the fall, students will participate in team building activities to develop a sense of belonging, community, while fostering a respectful and trusting environment. Students and staff will participate in the team building activities.

The majority of staff members have attended basic climate training and several members have attended additional climate trainings. As a result of our trainings, facilitated discussions have led to changes in how we will approach advisory sessions, school-wide recognitions, and *Student of the Month* criteria. The Safe School Climate Committee consists of staff and parents who work collaboratively with the entire staff to support a positive climate and our school-wide expectations of Respect, Responsibility, and Safety. As a result of our work with staff, we have redesigned our advisory lessons and schedule to teach our students lessons related to topics such as, empathy, perseverance, acceptance of others, etc. Such projects in conjunction with the Safe School Climate Committee include: the PTO undertaking of the Empty Bowls Project to benefit soup kitchens and local food pantries. This effort engaged the school and wider community in intergenerational learning as well as awareness efforts around those less fortunate in our own community.

This year, a Student Advisory Group will meet monthly with the principal to discuss issues and share ideas to promote a more positive school climate. Students will become a part of developing positive culture in our school. In addition, the staff will continue to participate in additional climate trainings that are scheduled by the building principal. Such trainings will consist of staff meetings dedicated to reading and processing the Safe School Climate BOE Policy, The CT Code of Responsibility for Educators, and Restorative Practices facilitated by Joann Freiburg from the CSDE.

Westbrook High School

Tara Winch, Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist)

At the beginning of the year, the Safe School Climate Specialist meets with staff and students to review the Safe School Climate Initiative and to understand the importance of building a positive school community where everyone feels safe, valued, and connected. The Safe School Climate Committee, which consists of administration, support staff, teachers, and students, meets regularly to assess the focus and purpose of programs, interventions, and restorative practices that promote and enhance a safe school climate.

Nearly all WHS staff members have participated in Basic and Advanced Climate Training. Westbrook High School is unique in that the students are taking the lead on promoting the School Climate Initiative and are actively promoting school climate to other schools and organizations. In May 2015, WHS students were recognized by the Connecticut Association of Schools for their outstanding School Climate presentation at the National Honor Society

Conference. They continue to positively contribute to improving school climate and to create opportunities to make their school a better place for everyone.

In addition, School Climate topics, including mental health issues, will be incorporated into Advisory to allow for open student/Advisor discussion about issues that impact personal safety and wellness. The Camp Hazen Freshmen Retreat, Spirit Week/ Field Day, Veterans' Day Assembly, Holiday Assembly, as well as bi-monthly Advisories highlight just a few opportunities scheduled throughout the year to promote school spirit, acceptance, and connectedness enhancing each student's high school experience. Of particular note, is the student-led School Climate messaging project which was conducted in the last few months of the 14-15 school year, created a school-wide student perspective on the issues that can impact positive connectedness among students.

XI. Annual Notice and Training

- A. Students, and parents or guardians of students shall be notified annually of the process by which students may make reports of bullying.
- B. The Board shall provide for the inclusion of language in student codes of conduct concerning bullying.
- C. 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 as required by law.

XII. School Climate Assessments

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.

Legal References:

Public Act 11-232, *An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws*

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222d

Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 10-233a through 10-233f

Connecticut State Department of Education Circular Letter C-8,
Series 2008-2009 (March 16, 2009)

11/11/14
Revised



The 13 Dimensions of School Climate Measured by the CSCI

Dimensions	Major Indicators
Safety	
1 Rules and Norms	Clearly communicated rules about physical violence; clearly communicated rules about verbal abuse, harassment, and teasing; clear and consistent enforcement and norms for adult intervention.
2 Sense of Physical Security	Sense that students and adults feel safe from physical harm in the school.
3 Sense of Social-Emotional Security	Sense that students feel safe from verbal abuse, teasing, and exclusion.
Teaching and Learning	
4 Support for Learning	Use of supportive teaching practices, such as: encouragement and constructive feedback; varied opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills; support for risk-taking and independent thinking; atmosphere conducive to dialog and questioning; academic challenge; and individual attention.
5 Social and Civic Learning	Support for the development of social and civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions including: effective listening, conflict resolution, self-reflection and emotional regulation, empathy, personal responsibility, and ethical decision making.
Interpersonal Relationships	
6 Respect for Diversity	Mutual respect for individual differences (e.g. gender, race, culture, etc.) at all levels of the school—student-student; adult-student; adult-adult and overall norms for tolerance.
7 Social Support—Adults	Pattern of supportive and caring adult relationships for students, including high expectations for students' success, willingness to listen to students and to get to know them as individuals, and personal concern for students' problems.
8 Social Support—Students	Pattern of supportive peer relationships for students, including: friendships for socializing, for problems, for academic help, and for new students.
Institutional Environment	
9 School Connectedness/Engagement	Positive identification with the school and norms for broad participation in school life for students, staff, and families.
10 Physical Surroundings	Cleanliness, order, and appeal of facilities and adequate resources and materials.
Social Media	
11 Social Media	Sense that students feel safe from physical harm, verbal abuse/teasing, gossip, and exclusion when online or on electronic devices (for example, facebook, twitter, and other social media platforms, by an email, text messaging, posting photo/video, etc.).
Staff Only	
12 Leadership	Administration that creates and communicates a clear vision, and is accessible to and supportive of school staff and staff development.
13 Professional Relationships	Positive attitudes and relationships among school staff that support effectively working and learning together.

Westbrook Public Schools
 Policy 5131.914 Appendix D
 Safe School Climate Plan Template*

*This is a suggested Safe School Climate Plan Template that could serve as a framework and format.

School Year ____ - ____

District: _____

School: _____

(To be completed at the School Level, submitted to the Safe School Climate Specialist and forwarded to the District Safe School Climate Coordinator for use in Creating the District Safe School Climate Plan)**

**This suggested Safe School Climate Plan Template follows/mirrors the Safe School Climate Rubric which should be used as a reference in completing the Template.

National School Climate Standard	Current School Status (informed by data***) To What Extent is This Evident? *** It is recommended that the "Multiple Measures of Data" document be used as a guide for the kinds of data that would be important to review and include.	Areas Identified as Needing Improvement	Identified Strategies to Realize Improvement	Measurement and Documentation Options for Determining Improvement	Time Line for Reaching Improvement Goals
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National School Climate Standard	Current School Status (informed by data) To What Extent is This Evident?	Areas Identified as Needing Improvement	Identified Strategies to Realize Improvement	Measurement and Documentation Options for Determining Improvement	Time Line for Reaching Improvement Goals
<p>Standard 1: Shared Mission</p> <p>Is it evident that all members of the school community are committed to physical, emotional and intellectual safety of the learners?</p>					
<p>Standard 1: Shared Mission</p> <p>Do participants share a vision of what a positive school climate looks, feels, and sounds like?</p>					
<p>Standard 1: Shared Values</p> <p>What are the shared values?</p>					
<p>Standard 1: Shared Goals</p> <p>What are the shared priorities?</p>					

National School Climate Standard	Current School Status (informed by data) To What Extent is This Evident?	Areas Identified as Needing Improvement	Identified Strategies to Realize Improvement	Measurement and Documentation Options for Determining Improvement	Time Line for Reaching Improvement Goals
Standard 2: Shared School Policies Are there policies that promote the development of skills, knowledge and engagement?					
Standard 2: Shared School Policies Are there policies in place to address barriers to learning?					
Policies on Dealing with P.A. 11-232 Bullying Allegations: Does the Plan include the specific requirements in An Act Concerning The Strengthening of School Bullying Laws? (This is generally the component of the plan provided to the district by the Law Firm advising the district.)					

National School Climate Standard	Current School Status (informed by data) To What Extent is This Evident?	Areas Identified as Needing Improvement	Identified Strategies to Realize Improvement	Measurement and Documentation Options for Determining Improvement	Time Line for Reaching Improvement Goals
Standard 3: School Practices Are there practices in place to promote positive youth development?					
Standard 3: School Practices Are there practices in place that enhance teaching and learning?					
Standard 3: School Practices Are there practices in place to address barriers to learning?					
Standard 3: School Practices Are there practices in place that develop and sustain infrastructure and capacity building?					

National School Climate Standard	Current School Status (informed by data) To What Extent is This Evident?	Areas Identified as Needing Improvement	Identified Strategies to Realize Improvement	Measurement and Documentation Options for Determining Improvement	Time Line for Reaching Improvement Goals
<p>Standard 4: Safe Environment Is the school providing for a physically, emotionally, intellectually safe, healthy and welcoming environment?</p>					
<p>Standard 5: Social Justice Is the school engaging in practices that promote the social and civic responsibilities and a sense of social justice within school community?</p>					
<p>Continuous Improvement: Is there a clear understanding that school climate improvement is an ongoing organic process integral to wider school improvement?</p>					

National School Climate Standard	Current School Status (informed by data) To What Extent is This Evident?	Areas Identified as Needing Improvement	Identified Strategies to Realize Improvement	Measurement and Documentation Options for Determining Improvement	Time Line for Reaching Improvement Goals
Family/Community Partnerships: Are all stakeholders' interests represented and reflected in the school climate improvement efforts?					
Impact on Results: Is progress monitoring inherent in the school climate improvement process?					

Westbrook Public Schools (PA 11-232 compliant)

Incident Intake/Report Form (rev.8/30/13)

Today's Date: 0/00/00

Verbal reports must be reported within one (1) school day to the Safe School Climate Specialist (SSCS).

A written report must be filed with the SSCS within 48 hours on this intake form.

Name of district employee who received the report: Position:

Who reported the incident? Targeted Student/Anonymous/Parent/ District Employee/Bystander Date reported: 00/00/00

Name(s) of alleged target child(ren) Grade(s)

Name(s) of alleged perpetrator(s) Grade(s)

Where did the incident occur?

Date of Incident: 00/00/00 At what time did the incident occur? : AM : PM

Description of the incident:

[Large empty box for description of incident]

Teacher/Employee response:

[Large empty box for teacher/employee response]

To your knowledge, has this occurred more than once? Yes No If Yes, then how many times?

Are there immediate physical safety concerns? Yes No

Signature of Employee reporting :

Date: 00/00/00

THIS SECTION IS FOR PRINCIPAL/SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE SPECIALIST USE ONLY

Findings of investigation:

[Large empty box for findings of investigation]

Actions taken:

Conclusion:

Attach a copy of all letters (parent and otherwise) sent home, per PA 11-232, as needed, and send to the Assistant Superintendent.

Did this incident appear to be sexual harassment? Yes No

If yes, send a copy of paperwork to Title IX District Coordinator.

Signature of Principal/Safe School Climate Specialist Date: 00/00/00

iCARE

Grade: _____ Teacher's Name: _____

I am worried about someone named _____

I am worried because _____

Who is being mean? _____

Who else saw it happen? _____

Where did you see this happen? _____

You may write your name below or leave it blank.



Thank you for caring about each other!



**Westbrook Public Schools
Consent to Release Student Information**

Date: _____

Name of Student: _____

School: _____

To Parent/Guardian:

A report of inappropriate behavior(s) has been filed alleging your child as the Victim or Targeter. In order to facilitate a prompt and thorough investigation of the report, the Westbrook Public Schools may need to disclose the name of your child and/or other information connected to this investigation which may otherwise disclose your child's identity.

(Please check one):

_____ I hereby give permission for the Westbrook Public Schools to disclose my child's name, along with any other information necessary to permit the district to adequately and appropriately investigate such report, to third parties contacted by the district as part of its investigation.

_____ I do **NOT** give permission for the Westbrook Public Schools to disclose my child's name, along with any other information necessary to permit the district to adequately and appropriately investigate such report, to third parties contacted by the district as part of its investigation.

Signature

of Parent/Guardian

Date

Name (Please print)

Glossary

Bullying

Bullying means (A) 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 (B) a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same school district, that: (i) Causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property, (ii) places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property, (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for such student, (iv) infringes on the rights of such student at school, or (v) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Bullying shall include, but 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.¹

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports

An application of a behaviorally-based systems approach to enhance the capacity of schools, families, and communities to design effective environments that improve the link between research-validated practices and the environments in which teaching and learning occurs. Attention is focused on creating and sustaining Tier 1 supports (universal), Tier 2 supports (targeted group), and Tier 3 supports (individual) systems of support that improve lifestyle results (personal, health, social, family, work, recreation) for all children and youth by making targeted behaviors less effective, efficient, and relevant, and desired behavior more functional.²

Restorative Practice

Restorative justice focuses on repairing harm to relationships instead of assigning blame and dispensing punishment [Lucille Eber, 7th Annual NYC PBIS Leadership Summit, June 13, 2014]. Restorative Practices, inspired by this philosophy of restorative justice, are a framework for building community and for responding to challenging behavior through authentic dialogue, coming to understanding, and making things right [IIRP website, 2013].³

¹ State of Connecticut PA 16-188

² PBIS Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports. (2016). *What is School-wide PBIS?* Retrieved from: <https://www.pbis.org/school>

³ SERC. (n.d.) *Embedding Restorative Practices Within a PBIS Framework to Support Student Success.* Retrieved from: <http://www.ctserc.org/index.php/news/item/395-restorative>

School Climate

School climate, which is defined as the quality and character of school life, is an essential element in the success of a school. One of the National School Climate Standards developed by the Center for Social and Emotional Education is: “the school community creates an environment where all members are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.”⁴

Social Emotional Learning

The process of integrating thinking, feeling, and behaving in order to become aware of the self and of others, make responsible decisions, and manage one’s own behaviors and those of others.⁵

Title IX

Title IX is a comprehensive federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity. The principal objective of Title IX is to avoid the use of federal money to support sex discrimination in education programs and to provide individual citizens effective protection against those practices.⁶

⁴ Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center. (2016). *School Climate and Bullying*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cpacinc.org/hot-topics/bullying/>

⁵ Brackett, M. & Rivers, S. (2016). Transforming students’ lives with social emotional learning. *Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence*. Retrieved from: <http://ei.yale.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Transforming-Students%E2%80%99-Lives-with-Social-and-Emotional-Learning.pdf>

⁶ The United States Department of Justice. (2015). *Overview of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. A§ 1681 ET.SEQ.* <https://www.justice.gov/crt/overview-title-ix-education-amendments-1972-20-usc-1681-et-seq>