

**BRANFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE PLAN**

**Prepared by:
Branford Public Schools
Safe School Climate Committee**

**Approved by Branford Board of Education on
April 26, 2017**

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PHILOSOPHY

The Branford Public School community 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 and 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 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.

PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING, TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AND RETALIATION

The Board expressly prohibits any form of bullying behavior and teen dating violence 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;

The Board further prohibits any form of teen dating violence outside of the school setting if such violence substantially disrupts the educational process.

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.

Students who engage in bullying behavior or teen dating violence 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.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING:

“**Bullying**” means 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 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.

OTHER DEFINITIONS:

"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.

"Electronic communication" means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic or photo-optical system.

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

"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.

"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.

"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,

- (8) promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions, and
- (9) culturally competent school-based curriculum focusing on social-emotional learning, self-awareness and self-regulation.

"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.

"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.

"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.

"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.

LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Safe School Climate Coordinator

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 district schools;
- (3) provide data and information, in collaboration with the Superintendent, to the Department of Education regarding bullying; and
- (4) meet with 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 Plan.

Safe School Climate Specialist

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, collect and maintain records of reports and investigations of bullying in the school and act as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying and responding to reports of bullying in the school.

DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW OF SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE PLAN

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.

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) implement the provisions of the school security and safety plan, regarding the collection, evaluation and reporting of information relating to instances of disturbing or threatening behavior that may not meet the definition of bullying,
- (4) review and amend school policies relating to bullying;
- (5) review and make recommendations to the Coordinator regarding the Safe School Climate Plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school;
- (6) educate students, school employees and parents/guardians on issues relating to bullying;
- (7) collaborate with the Coordinator in the collection of data regarding bullying; and
- (8) perform any other duties as determined by the Principal that are related to the prevention, identification and response to school bullying.

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.

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.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS OF BULLYING

Written Reports of Bullying

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 or his/her designee), and all reports shall be forwarded to the Safe School Climate Specialist for review and actions consistent with this Plan.

Anonymous Reports of Bullying

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.

Notification to Safe School Climate Specialist

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.

Investigation by Safe School Climate Specialist

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, that 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.

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.

RESPONDING TO VERIFIED ACTS OF BULLYING

Notification to Parents

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 (48) 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, the Branford Public Schools will take care 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.

Required Meetings

In any instance in which bullying is verified, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall invite the parents or guardians of the student against whom such act was directed to a meeting to communicate the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the student/victim and 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.

Student Safety Support Plan

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.

Written Intervention Plan

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.

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 officer, if any, and other individuals the principal or designee deems appropriate.

Harassment

If a bullying complaint raises a concern about discrimination or harassment on the basis of a legally protected classification (such as race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability or gender identity or expression), the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall also coordinate any bullying investigation with other appropriate personnel within the district as appropriate (e.g. Title IX Coordinator, Section 504 Coordinator, etc.), so as to ensure that any such bullying investigation complies with the requirements of such policies regarding nondiscrimination.

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

The Branford Public Schools 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.

Reports of Teen Dating Violence

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.

Prevention and Intervention

Prevention and intervention strategies concerning teen dating violence shall be implemented in accordance with this Safe School Climate Plan.

Discipline for Teen Dating Violence

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.

DOCUMENTATION AND MAINTENANCE OF LOG

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 prior written consent of a parent, guardian or eligible student, except as permitted under Board policy and state and federal law.

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.

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.

OTHER PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

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 alternatives to traditional disciplinary sanctions, including age-appropriate consequences and other restorative or remedial interventions.

Intervention Plans

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.

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.

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 of bullying, 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.

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;
- (f) Restitution and/or restorative interventions; and
- (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.

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, teen dating violence, 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 sex discrimination/sexual harassment prevention 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;
- (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; and
- (q) Culturally competent school-based curriculum focusing on social-emotional learning, self-awareness and self-regulation.

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.”

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

IMPROVING SCHOOL CLIMATE

Early Years Center

At the pre-school level, the Early Years Center will address Safe School Climate and bullying by incorporating Restorative Practice into our pre-school program. The Early Years Center will have a Safe School Climate Committee that will be chaired by the Safe School Climate Specialist, the Early Years Center Program Director (if the Early Years Center Program Director designates a staff member to be the Safe School Climate Specialist) and a special education teacher. This committee will meet monthly to discuss any referrals of bullying to the Safe School Climate Committee, the outcome of investigations and referrals, and strategies to ensure the safety of our students.

Elementary School

At the elementary level, all schools will address safe school climate and bullying by incorporating Restorative Practices into our Responsive Classroom model. Each elementary school will have a Safe School Climate Committee chaired by the Safe School Climate Specialist. The committee will consist of the Safe School Climate Specialist, the principal (if the principal designates a staff member to be the Safe School Climate Specialist), a regular education teacher, and a parent. The committee will meet monthly to discuss the number of referrals of bullying to the Safe School Climate Specialist, the outcome of investigations of those referrals, trends revealed from the referrals, and strategies to ensure the safety our students.

Francis Walsh Intermediate School

Francis Walsh Intermediate School has formed a Safe School committee in response to the anti-bullying legislation. This committee is chaired by the Safe School Climate Specialist, Lisa Alberino. In addition to what our administrators, school staff, and students are already doing with our Character Counts Program on a daily basis, at the middle school level, we have also integrated addition supportive activities that address the requirements of the safe school climate plan. This will be done through our new advisory program, AWAKE, or “All Walsh Advisory Kids Excel”, which will begin this fall. We look forward to creating smaller environments where students feel comfortable interacting not only with their peers but also with their teachers. In is the addition of these small advisory groups that will increasingly foster our commitment to maintain a safe school climate at Francis Walsh Intermediate.

Branford High School

In keeping with Branford High School’s motto of “Improved Learning for Everyone,” the members of the Branford High School faculty and community have set out to insure that the educational environment is not only a productive one, but a safe one as well, conducive to learning and increasing student achievement. In an effort to achieve a positive school climate, the high school will encourage the use of Restorative Practices.

ANNUAL NOTICE AND TRAINING

Students, and parents or guardians of students shall be notified annually of the process by which students may make reports of bullying.

The Board shall provide for the inclusion of language in student codes of conduct concerning bullying.

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.

Any person appointed by the district to serve as district safe school climate coordinator shall complete mental health and first aid training offered by the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

SCHOOL CLIMATE ASSESSMENTS

Biennially, 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 Connecticut State Department of Education. The Board shall collect the school climate assessments for each school in the district and submit such assessments to the Connecticut State Department of Education.

LEGAL REFERENCES

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222d

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222g

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222k

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222l

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

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

**FORMS, AUTHORIZATIONS AND
REPORTING DOCUMENTS**

REPORT OF SUSPECTED BULLYING BEHAVIORS OR TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

**(School Employees Should File with the School Principal)
(Parents and Students May File with the School Principal or Any Other School Employee)**

Name of Person Completing Report: _____

Date: _____

Target(s) of Behaviors/Violence:

Relationship of Reporter to Target (self, parent, teacher, peer, etc.):

Report Filed
Against: _____

Date of Incident(s): _____

Location(s): _____ Time: _____

Describe the basis for your report. Include information about the incident, participants, background to the incident, and any attempts you have made to resolve the problem. Please note relevant dates, times and places.

Indicate if there are witnesses who can provide more information regarding your report. If the witnesses are not school district staff or students, please provide contact information.

Name	Address	Telephone Number
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Have there been previous incidents (circle one)? Yes No

If "yes", please describe the behavior of concern, or the violence that occurred; include the approximate date(s) and the location(s):

Were these incidents reported to school employees (circle one) Yes No

If "Yes", to whom was it reported and when?

Was the report verbal or written?

Proposed Solution:

Indicate your opinion on how this problem might be resolved in the school setting. Be as specific as possible.

I certify that the above information and events are accurately depicted to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of Reporter Date Submitted Received By Date Received

INTERNAL INVESTIGATION NOTES FOR REPORTS OF BULLYING BEHAVIORS

For Staff Use Only:

Has student reporter requested anonymity? Y N

Does the school have parent/guardian consent to disclose that a complaint as to this student has been filed in connection with the investigation? Y N

Administrative Investigation Notes (use separate sheet if necessary):

Bullying Verified? Yes ____ No ____

Remedial Action(s)

Taken: _____

(Attach bullying complaint and witness statements. If bullying is verified, attach notification to parents of students involved, invitation to parent meetings, and records of parent meetings).

**BRANFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
REPORT OF BULLYING FORM/INVESTIGATION SUMMARY**

For Staff Use Only: _____

School _____ Date _____

Location(s) _____

Reporter Information:

Anonymous student report _____

Staff Member report _____ Name _____

Parent/Guardian report _____ Name _____

Student report _____ Name _____

Student Reported as Committing Act: _____

Student Reported as Victim: _____

Description of Alleged Act(s): _____

Time and Place: _____

Names of Potential Witnesses: _____

Action of Reporter: _____

Administrative Investigation Notes (use separate sheet if necessary):

Bullying Verified? Yes ___ No ___

Remedial Action(s) Taken: _____

If Bullying Verified, Has Notification Been Made to Parents of Students Involved?

Parents' Names: _____	Date Sent: _____
Parents' Names: _____	Date Sent: _____
Parents' Names: _____	Date Sent: _____
Parents' Names: _____	Date Sent: _____

If Bullying Verified, Have Invitation to Meetings Been Sent to Parents of Students Involved?

Parents' Names: _____	Date Sent: _____
Parents' Names: _____	Date Sent: _____
Parents' Names: _____	Date Sent: _____
Parents' Names: _____	Date Sent: _____

Date of Meetings:

If Bullying Verified, Has School Developed Student Safety Support/Intervention Plan?

Y N

(Attach bullying complaint and witness statements. If bullying is verified, attach notification to parents of students involved, invitations to parent meetings, and records of parent meetings).

Branford Public Schools
Report of Bullying/Consent to Release Student Information

Date: _____

Name of Student: _____

School: _____

To Parent/Guardian:

A report of bullying has been made on behalf of your child alleging that he/she has been the victim of bullying. In order to facilitate a prompt and thorough investigation of the report, the Branford Public Schools may wish to disclose the fact that this complaint has been filed in connection with investigation.

(Please check one):

_____ I hereby give permission for the Branford Public Schools to disclose the fact that a complaint concerning my child has been filed as part of its investigation of that complaint.

_____ I do **NOT** give permission for the Branford Public Schools to disclose the fact that a complaint concerning my child has been filed as part of its investigation of that complaint.

Signature of Parent/Guardian Date

Name (Please print)

Branford Public Schools
Report of Teen Dating Violence/Consent to Release Student Information

Date: _____

Name of Student: _____

School: _____

To Parent/Guardian:

A report of teen dating violence has been made on behalf of your child alleging that he/she has been the victim of teen dating violence. In order to facilitate a prompt and thorough review of the report, the Branford Public Schools may wish to disclose the fact that this complaint has been filed in connection with its review.

(Please check one):

_____ I hereby give permission for the Branford Public Schools to disclose the fact that a complaint concerning my child has been filed as part of its review of that complaint.

_____ I do **NOT** give permission for the Branford Public Schools to disclose the fact that a complaint concerning my child has been filed as part of its review of that complaint.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Name (Please print)

**BRANFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
LOG OF VERIFIED ACTS OF BULLYING**

SCHOOL: _____

	Date of Verified Act of Bullying	Administrator
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		

HAMLET M. HERNANDEZ
Superintendent

ANTHONY BUONO, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent

DONALD A. NEEL
Chief Operating Officer



BRANFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1111 Main Street, Branford, CT 06405-3717

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www.branfordschools.org

SAMPLE ANNUAL NOTIFICATION LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Dear Families,

In recent years, the Connecticut legislature has passed various laws and amendments concerning bullying behavior and teen dating violence in schools. Consistent with this legislation, we are asking that parents/guardians immediately inform a school employee of suspected bullying behavior and/or teen dating violence.

If your child feels he or she is the subject of bullying or teen dating violence or if your child has witnessed another student being bullied or the subject of teen dating violence, please encourage your child to make a report. Bullying behavior and teen dating violence are prohibited by our Bullying Policy and our Student Discipline Policy and codes of conduct and may lead to disciplinary action for the perpetrator, including suspension from school or in more severe cases, dismissal or expulsion.

If your child is uncomfortable coming forward to make a report, ***please note that when making a report to a school official, your child may request anonymity.*** Additionally, your child may make an anonymous report by placing a note in the “Bullying Reporting Box” in your child’s school. The “Bullying Reporting Box” at **[insert name of school]** is located **[insert location]**.

In cases where a student requests anonymity after reporting to a school official, the Safe School Climate Specialist at your child’s school or his/her designee will meet with your child to review the request for anonymity and discuss the impact that maintaining your child’s anonymity may have on the investigation and on any possible remedial action.

The district will review all anonymous reports and will take reasonable action to address the situation, to the extent action can be taken without revealing the identity of the student requesting anonymity, and consistent with the due process rights of the student(s) alleged to have committed

acts of bullying. However, please note that under state law, the district is prohibited from taking disciplinary action against a student based solely on an anonymous report.

Whenever the district commences an investigation regarding bullying or teen dating violence, the law requires us to provide prompt notice to the parents of the alleged victim and to the parents of the alleged perpetrator. The law also requires us to notify the parents/guardians of students who commit any verified acts of bullying and the parents/guardians of students against whom such acts were directed no later than forty-eight (48) hours after the completion of the investigation.

We are also required by law to invite the parents/guardians of the perpetrator and the parents/guardians of the victim of bullying/teen dating violence to separate and distinct meetings following the completion of the investigation. At the meeting with the parents/guardians of the student against whom a bullying act or teen dating violence was directed, we will communicate the

measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the victim and to describe the policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying/teen dating violence. At the meeting with the parents/guardians of the student who commits a verified act of bullying, we will discuss the specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying/teen dating violence.

We are fully aware that incidents of bullying or teen dating violence are rarely committed in view of the supervising adults. Victims are most vulnerable in situations beyond the eyes of staff members. The most likely adult to be informed by a victim is the parent. Parents are often reticent to inform the school due to the student's fear of reprisal. However, without parent input on these important matters, school personnel may be uninformed and, therefore, unable to intervene to stop the behavior. It is important that school employees and parents continue to work together to maintain a safe environment and a positive school climate.

We thank you for your assistance with these important matters. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

[Name of Principal/Program Director]
[Name of School/Program]

Enclosure

DEFINITION OF BULLYING:

“**Bullying**” means 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 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.

OTHER DEFINITIONS:

"**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.

"**Electronic communication**" means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic or photo-optical system.

"**Hostile environment**" means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate.

"**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.

"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.

"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,
- (8) promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions, and
- (9) culturally competent school-based curriculum focusing on social-emotional learning, self-awareness and self-regulation.

"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.

"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.

“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.

“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.

*SAMPLE NOTIFICATION LETTER TO PARENTS OF VICTIM
REGARDING CONCLUSION OF INVESTIGATION
WHERE BULLYING IS VERIFIED*

HAMLET M. HERNANDEZ
Superintendent

ANTHONY BUONO, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent

DONALD A. NEEL
Chief Operating Officer



BRANFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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www.branfordschools.org

[Insert Date]

Dear **[Parent Name]**:

I am writing to provide you with the school district's conclusion regarding the investigation into **[your/your child's]** report of inappropriate actions directed towards your child, **[Name of Child]**, by another student at **[Insert Name of School]**. These incidents consisted of **[Brief Summary of Problematic Interactions]**.

After investigation of the incidents between your child and the other **[student/students]**, we have verified the other **[student's/students']** actions as constituting acts of bullying under state law and district policy. **[These actions also constitute sexual/racial/disability, etc. harassment.]** Please be assured that the District takes bullying **[and sexual/racial/disability harassment, etc.]** very seriously, and consequently, the District has taken appropriate action with respect to the other **[student/students]** involved in this matter. As you may know, however, the District is prohibited from sharing specific actions taken with specific students other than your child, as that information is confidential student information of the other **[student/students]** and is protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA").

In light of these concerns, the District is implementing a specific safety plan for **[Name of Child]**, the specific elements of which have previously been shared with you in whole or in part. Specifically, the District will implement the following measures for **[Time Frame]**:

Safety Plan for [Name of Child] for the [Time Frame]:

[List Elements of Safety Plan]

I know from our communications about this matter that you are concerned about **[Name of Child]**. We hope and trust that the safety plan, as well as the remedial measures taken with respect to the other student, will serve to alleviate those concerns. We would ask that you report any additional concerns that you may have as soon as possible so that the District may investigate promptly and take appropriate action.

For your information, I also enclose a copy of the District's Safe School Climate Plan, Bullying Policy, **[and Sexual Harassment/Harassment/Section 504, etc. Policy]**. I

would like to meet with you to discuss the investigation and its conclusion. Please contact **[Name]** to arrange a meeting. Please feel free to contact me with any questions that you may have regarding the school's bullying prevention and intervention policies and procedures or if you have concerns now or in the future.

Sincerely,

[Name], [Title]

Cc: **[Name of Child]**, Cumulative file
[Name of Safe School Climate Coordinator], Safe School Climate Coordinator
Dr. Anthony Buono, Assistant Superintendent and District Safe School Climate

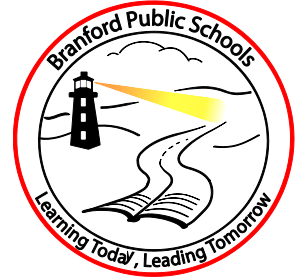
Advisor

SAMPLE NOTIFICATION LETTER TO PARENTS OF VERIFIED BULLYING
REGARDING CONCLUSION OF INVESTIGATION

HAMLET M. HERNANDEZ
Superintendent

ANTHONY BUONO, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent

DONALD A. NEEL
Chief Operating Officer



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[Insert Date]

Dear **[Name of Parent]**:

I am writing to provide you with the school district's conclusion regarding the investigation into the report of inappropriate actions by your child, **[Name of Child]**, towards another student at **[Name of School]**. These incidents consisted of **[Brief Summary of Problematic Interactions]**.

After investigation of the incidents between your child and the other student, we have verified that **[Name of Child's]** actions constitute acts of bullying under state law and district policy. **[These actions also constitute sexual/racial/disability, etc. harassment.]**

The District is implementing a specific written intervention plan for **[Name of Child]** on the basis of this finding, the specific elements of which have previously been shared with you in whole or in part. Specifically, the following plan will be implemented for **[Time Frame]**:

Intervention Plan for **[Name of Child]** for **[Timeframe]**:

[List Elements of Intervention Plan]

I know from our communications about this matter that you are concerned about **[Name of Child]**. We are hopeful that the intervention plan will provide **[Name of Child]** with supports and instruction designed to reduce future instances of inappropriate behavior.

For your information, I also enclose a copy of the District's Safe School Climate Plan and Bullying Policy **[and Sexual Harassment/Harassment/Section 504, etc. policy]**. I would like to meet with you to discuss the investigation and its conclusion. Please contact **[Name]** to arrange for a meeting. Please feel free to contact me with any concerns or questions that you may have regarding the school's bullying prevention and intervention policies and procedures.

Sincerely,

[Name], [Title]

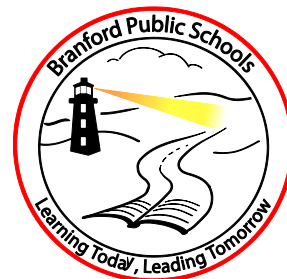
Cc: **[Name of Child]**, Cumulative file
[Name of Safe School Climate Coordinator], Safe School Climate Coordinator
Dr. Anthony Buono, Assistant Superintendent, District Safe School Climate Advisor

*SAMPLE NOTIFICATION LETTER TO PARENTS
REGARDING CONCLUSION OF INVESTIGATION
FOR NON-VERIFIED INCIDENT(S)*

HAMLET M. HERNANDEZ
Superintendent

ANTHONY BUONO, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent

DONALD A. NEEL
Chief Operating Officer



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[Insert Date]

Dear **[Name of Parent]**:

I am writing to provide you with the school district's conclusion regarding the investigation into **[your/your child's]** report of inappropriate actions directed towards your child, **[Name of Child]**, by another student at **[Name of School]**. These incidents consisted of **[Brief Summary of Problematic Interactions]**. As you know, I investigated the reports made as a report of bullying in violation of Board Policy 5131.911 and the Branford Public Schools Safe School Climate Plan **[and as a complaint of sexual/racial/disability harassment in violation of Board Policy [insert Policy number]]**. I also consulted with the district's Title IX/Section 504 Coordinator, **[name]** throughout the investigation.]

The investigation involved **[list specific steps, e.g. interviews with you, your child, and other involved individuals except do not list the names of other students]**. After conducting my investigation, I have found the following facts: **[describe what facts you found without mentioning other student names]**. **[Although this conduct was not appropriate]**, I did not verify the conduct as bullying behavior towards **[Student's Name]**.

[However, the District takes seriously any incidences of inappropriate behavior, whether characterized as bullying or otherwise. Consequences and interventions are imposed after consideration of many factors, including the ages of the student(s) involved, prior history between and among the students, and the context of the behavior.]

As has been previously communicated to you, the district is bound by law to protect the confidentiality of student records and information, including student-related investigatory information or student discipline. Therefore, we cannot divulge confidential information about other students, including information about possible interventions for such other students.

[In light of your concerns, I want you to know that we have already taken steps to develop and implement a student safety support plan for [student's name] for the remainder of the school year, which includes: [List Elements of Safety Plan]].

As always, any future incidences should be reported to me as soon as possible so that we may promptly investigate and intervene as appropriate. In addition, the school

counselor is available so that your child may discuss any remaining or additional concerns that your child may have in a private, supportive environment. Should you have any additional questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at **[insert contact information]**.

Sincerely,

[Name], [Title]

Cc: **[Name of Child]**, Cumulative file
[Name of Safe School Climate Coordinator], Safe School Climate Coordinator
Dr. Anthony Buono, Assistant Superintendent, District Safe School Climate Advisor