

**BRANFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS'
SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE PLAN**

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**BRANFORD -PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE PLAN**

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**** Items in red are changes/additions to original document**

Substitute Senate Bill No. 1138

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 Section 10-222d of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2011*):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

(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 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 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 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 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 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, willful 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, willful 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, willful or wanton misconduct.

Approved July 13, 2011



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THE NEW BULLYING STATUTE: BEST PRACTICES

Thomas B. Mooney

I. INTRODUCTION:

Public Act 11-232 makes significant changes in the bullying statute, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222d, which was first adopted in 2002 and amended in 2006 and again in 2008. The new statute broadens the definition of bullying, and it imposes significant new responsibilities on school personnel. In the following, we will describe the changes in the statute and review 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>).

II. THRESHOLD QUESTIONS:

Before reviewing the receipt, investigation and disposition of bullying complaints, we must answer some threshold questions:

*** *How do we define bullying?***

✓ Old definition:

Any OVERT acts by a student or 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.

✓ New definition:

✓

REPEATED USE by one or more students of a WRITTEN, VERBAL, OR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION, such as CYBERBULLYING, or a PHYSICAL ACT OR GESTURE REPEATEDLY DIRECTED AT OR REFERRING TO another student attending school in the same school district that:

(A) causes PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL HARM to the student or DAMAGE to the student's property;

- (B) places the student in REASONABLE FEAR OF HARM to himself or herself, or of DAMAGE to the student's property;
- (C) creates a HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT at school for such student (bullying among students is sufficiently severe and pervasive as to alter the conditions of the school climate);
- (D) infringes on the RIGHTS of the student at school; or
- (E) SUBSTANTIALLY DISRUPTS the educational process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bullying explicitly includes, but is not limited to:

A written, verbal, or electronic communications, or physical acts or gestures that are based on any ACTUAL OR PERCEIVED DIFFERENTIATING CHARACTERISTICS, such as race, 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 is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

CYBERBULLYING DEFINED:

Any act of bullying using the INTERNET, INTERACTIVE and DIGITAL technologies, CELLULAR MOBILE TELEPHONE or other MOBILE ELECTRONIC DEVICES, or any ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS.

*** *When must school officials 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.

*** *Who may report bullying:***

- ✓ Students:

Written reports.

Anonymous reports.

NOTE: There are two kinds of anonymous reports -- those when the student wishes to remain anonymous and those that are truly anonymous. The safe school climate specialist must review anonymous reports, but no disciplinary action may be taken solely on the basis of any anonymous report.

- ✓ Parents: Written reports only.

*** Who must report bullying?**

- ✓ School employees who:
witness acts of bullying or
receive reports of bullying.

“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.

*** What notification requirements are imposed?**

- ✓ Student codes of conduct must include language concerning bullying.
- ✓ Students and parents or guardians of students must be notified annually of the process by which they may file complaints of bullying.
- ✓ No later than thirty days after the local or regional board of education approves its safe school climate plan as specified by the statute (no later than January 1, 2012), the plan must be (a) published on the Internet website of the school district and of each individual school, and (b) included in the school district’s publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools and in all student handbooks.
- ✓ At the beginning of each school year, each school must provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of the school district's safe

school climate plan.

* ***What new positions must be created?***

- ✓ Safe school climate coordinator, to be appointed from existing school staff by July 1, 2012 and for every school year thereafter.

“The district safe school climate coordinator shall: (1) Be responsible for implementing the district's safe school climate plan (2) collaborate with the safe school climate specialists, the board of education and the superintendent of schools 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 as required by statute, 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.”

- ✓ Safe school climate specialist, either the school principal or his/her designee, to be appointed by July 1, 2012 and for every school year thereafter.

The safe school climate specialist must “(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 preventing, identifying and responding to reports of bullying in the school.”

III. RECEIVING AND INVESTIGATING BULLYING COMPLAINTS:

* ***Who may receive bullying complaints?***

Any school employee (as defined above) may receive and must report any bullying complaint received, whether anonymous or by an identified parent or student.

* ***What must be done upon receipt?***

The school employee who receives a bullying complaint must:

within one school day of receipt orally notify the safe school climate specialist of the complaint.

within two school days of such notification file a written report (presumably with the safe school climate specialist).

NOTE: *That report may be subject to public disclosure. Employees should be trained, and less may be better. Consider asking for such reports in draft form in the first instance.*

*** How should the complaint be investigated?**

- ✓ Be vigilant about FERPA concerns. 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).
- ✓ Student 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.
- ✓ Document your investigation.

*** How do I investigate complaints of cyberbullying?**

- ✓ Focus on the threshold issue first: what is the impact on the victim in school:

Does the cyberbullying create a hostile environment for the student at school?

Does the cyberbullying infringe on the rights of the victim at school?

Does the cyberbullying substantially disrupt the educational process or the orderly operation of a school?
- ✓ Ask for printouts of any IMs or postings.
- ✓ Confront the alleged perpetrator(s) with the IMs or postings and invite the alleged perpetrator(s) to provide other evidence of such interactions.

*** What is the status of my personal notes from the investigation?**

Your personal notes (as compared to a report shared with others, even if handwritten) are not subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”) or the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA”). They

may be subject to subpoena, and you should retain them.

*** *What is the timeline for the completion of the investigation?***

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

*** *When should I verify bullying?***

- ✓ Focus on the definition of bullying:

Was the conduct repeated?

Did students act in concert?

QUERY: Is concerted action by “one or more students” required?

Did the conduct cause physical or emotional harm to the student or damage to the student’s property?

QUERY: Who decides whether the conduct caused emotional harm?

Did the conduct place the student in reasonable fear of harm to him- or herself, or of damage to his/her property?

Did the conduct create a hostile environment at school for such student?

NOTE: 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.”

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

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

NOTE: Cyberbullying should be verified only if one or more of the last three questions are answered yes.

IV. DISPOSITION OF BULLYING COMPLAINTS:

*** Do I have to prepare a written report?**

✓ The statute requires 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."

NOTE: The report of findings in the bullying investigation should be different from the list, and it should follow district guidelines for such reports. Consistent with district obligations under state and federal law regarding student privacy, the list 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. The list should be limited to basic information such as the number of verified acts, name of school and/or grade level and relevant date.

✓ Some written evidence of the investigation is therefore required.

*** Can I share my report with the parents of the victim or of the perpetrator?**

- ✓ The statute simply requires that parents of perpetrators and victims be "notified" if bullying is verified.
- ✓ 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 cannot 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 report to the parents.

*** What must I do to notify parents of the results of the investigation?**

✓ **Within forty-eight hours of the completion of the investigation**, school officials must notify parents of any student who commits a verified act of bullying and the parents of any student against whom any such act of

bullying was committed.

- ✓ Such parents must 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.
- ✓ Annually, the number of verified acts of bullying in a school district must be reported to the State Department of Education in such manner as the Commissioner of Education may prescribe.

*** *What are my responsibilities 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.

*** *How may I take appropriate disciplinary action when acts of bullying are verified?***

- ✓ The notification to parents of a 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.
- ✓ Where appropriate, disciplinary action is authorized, including in-school suspension, suspension or expulsion.
- ✓ Be cautious about hearsay, *i.e.* statements about what a person said made by another to prove the truth of the matter asserted. Use of hearsay in expulsion hearings raises due process concerns.
- ✓ Note 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.](#)

*** *When must I report to the police?***

- ✓ 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.

V. OTHER GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:

*** *What training requirements are imposed?***

- ✓ 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 Department of Education and is consistent with statutory obligations shall not be required to provide inservice 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, (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 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, (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."

*** *What is a prevention and intervention strategy?***

- ✓ The safe school climate plan must include a “prevention and intervention strategy,” as defined in Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222g.
- ✓ Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222g provides that 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) 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.

*** *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.

*** *How will we monitor our efforts to combat bullying?***

- Commencing July 1, 2012, and every two years thereafter, all schools will be required 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.” That statute provides, *inter alia*, that “in collaboration with the Connecticut Association of Schools, [the Department of Education shall] 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 . . . so that the department can monitor bullying prevention efforts over time and compare each district's progress to state trends.” Each local and regional board of education is required to collect the school climate assessments for each school in the district and submit such school climate assessments to the Department of Education.

*** *If despite our best efforts, a student is harmed through bullying, will I 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.”

PHILOSOPHY

Branford Public School community believes that it is the responsibility of all staff to maintain a secure and safe school climate, conducive to teaching and learning that is free from threat, harassment and any type of bullying behavior in school, school-sponsored activities on or off school grounds and transportation to and from school. Therefore, bullying behavior, of any form, will not be tolerated. Bullying takes many forms and may include many different behaviors, such as, but not limited to:

1. Physical violence and attacks;
2. Verbal harassment or taunts, name-calling and use of disparaging language, including disability-, ethnically- or racially-based verbal abuse and gender-based disparaging language;
3. Sexual harassment including unwanted sexual attention or insulting or degrading sexual remarks or conduct;
4. Harassment, threats and intimidation;
5. Extortion or stealing of money and possessions;
6. Exclusion from the peer group;
7. Using the Internet as a means of harassment and intimidation (i.e., Cyber-bullying).

DEFINITIONS:

“Bullying” is defined as 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 in the same school district that: (A) Causes physical or emotional harm to the student or damage to the student’s property, (B) places the 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 (a hostile environment is a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive as to alter the conditions of the school climate), (D) infringes on the rights of the student at school, or (E) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. This definition of “bullying” includes, but is not limited to, written, verbal, or electronic communications, or physical acts or gestures that are 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.

“Cyberbullying” - 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. In order for it to be identified as “cyberbullying” requiring school/program intervention, the students involved must attend school in the same district.

“School Climate” - 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” - 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 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.

“Off Campus Bullying” - The new law explicitly requires school districts to prohibit bullying which occurs outside of the school setting if such bullying 1) creates a hostile school environment for the victim; 2) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or 3) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

“Harassment” – Any physical or verbal hostility toward someone with legally protected status. Such status pertains to race, color, religious creed, sex, age, national origin, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, disability (Including past or present history of mental disability), physical disability, learning disability, mental retardation, genetic information, prior criminal conviction, or other lawfully protected status. Such hostility can be severe, persistent, or pervasive.

BRANFORD PUBLIC SCHOOL SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE PLAN

As of November 2011, Branford Public School has appointed a safe school climate coordinator.

The coordinator's duties include:

- Monitoring and implementing the safe school climate plan;
- Collaborating with the safe school climate specialists on matters pertaining to

bullying;

- Providing data to the superintendent, district, and CSDE regarding bullying;
- Meeting at least twice annually with the safe school climate specialists to make

recommendations concerning amendments to the district's safe school climate

plan.

Each school in the district has designated a safe school climate specialist. This specialist will be the program administrator or a designee of the administrator.

The specialist's duties include:

- Investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying in

accordance with the district's safe school climate plan;

- 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.

- Chair the Safe School Climate Committee at their school..
- Each school will establish a committee (or designate an existing committee) no later than July 1, 2012 that is responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate and addressing issues related to bullying in school, school related activities, on transportation vehicles to and from school sponsored activities

- Each school specialist must appoint at least one parent or guardian of a student enrolled in the school to the committee. It is recommended that the Safe School

Climate Specialist is the chair of the committee.

The responsibilities of the Safe School Climate Committee are to:

- Review data from bullying investigations;
- Identify and address patterns of student bullying;
- Review and amend school practices related to bullying;
- Review and make recommendations to the district's Safe School Climate

Coordinator regarding the districts safe school climate plan;

- Educate all school community members (students, school employees, parents/guardians) on issues related to bullying;
- Collaborate with the district's Safe School Climate Coordinator in the collection of data (allegations and verified acts of bullying; school climate assessment results); and
- Perform other duties determined by the principal/program administrator related to the identification, prevention and response to school bullying;
- Any parent/guardian serving on this committee may not have full access to information that would compromise the confidentiality of any individual student(s).

Professional Development

Branford Public School district will minimally provide annual in-service training program to all school employees that must include information addressing the prevention of, identification of, and response to bullying, and the prevention of and response to youth suicide. This professional development will be determined by the Safe School Climate Specialists and the Safe School Climate District Committee. It may also include:

- Classroom management;
- Positive youth development;
- Positive relationship building;
- Managing the cyber-arena;
- Conflict resolution;
- Cultural and gender diversity training;
- Violence prevention.

Assessment

Require each school will on or after July 1, 2012 and at least biannually thereafter, complete a school climate assessment, and submit the assessment to the CSDE. While required biannually, it is recommended that the assessment is completed annually if prior survey data or bullying data supports a need for improvement. Each program within a unit will contribute data for the unit assessment. The assessment should align with the National School Climate Standards that provide a comprehensive and standards-based approach to overall school climate. Safe School Climate Committee will utilize the school climate assessment instruments developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education. The Safe School Climate Plan will be monitored using the assessment data from these school climate assessment instruments December 2011, a base line assessment was given to all students in grade 3-12, staff members and parents.

The Essential Requirements of the Safe School Climate Plan

The safe school climate plan must:

- Be approved by the Safe School Climate Committee and the Branford Board of Education and submitted to the Connecticut State Department of Education no later than January 1, 2012.
- The plan will be available on the Branford Public School website, and on each individual school's website;
- Be included in each program's publication of rules, procedures, and standards of conduct for schools, and in all student handbooks;
- Require each school to provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of the plan at the beginning of each school year;
- Prohibit discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports, or assists in the investigation of, an act of bullying;
- Prohibit bullying on school grounds; at a school-sponsored or school-related activities, whether on or off school grounds; or school bus stop, school bus; through the use of an electronic device or electronic mobile device owned, leased, or used by the district.
- Prohibit Bullying Outside of the School Setting if bullying creates a hostile environment for the victim infringes on the rights of the victim in school substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the school

Reporting Requirements

- Enable students to report acts of bullying to any school employee;
- Provide student mechanisms to anonymously report bullying to any school employee (i.e. Bullying Box);
- Require students and their parents be annually notified of the process for reporting acts of bullying;
- Parents are encouraged to call school employees or school/program administrators if they feel bullying has occurred and will be asked to submit a written request to initiate an investigation;
- School employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying must immediately contact the Safe School Climate Specialist not later than one school day and must then submit a written report not later than two school days after making their oral report;
- Safe School Climate Specialist to investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying promptly after the receipt of the written report;
- Safe School Climate Specialist must review all anonymous reports provided that no discipline or action be issued solely on the basis of an anonymous report;
- School/program administrators or designee must notify the appropriate law enforcement agency when they believe any act of bullying constitutes criminal conduct;
- Program administrator or designee (e.g. Safe School Climate Specialist) will notify parents/guardians of any student who commits any verified acts of bullying and parents/guardians of students against whom such acts were directed not later

than 48 hours after the completion of the investigation;

- Program administrator or designee (e.g. Safe School Climate Specialist) will invite the parents/guardians of the perpetrator and victim of the bullying to separate meetings to communicate the measures being taken to ensure the student's safety and prevent further acts of bullying;

- Each school will document and maintain records related to reports and investigation of bullying using designated log and maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying using designated log (see appendix);

- Verified acts of bullying log must be available to the public in main offices and submitted to the CSDE annually;

Intervention Measures:

The swift and consistent actions of the staff and administrators will contribute to building a social climate in which students feel that they can trust that all adults are involved in their safety. Therefore, consistent steps of intervention must be taken upon awareness of an incident, or continued threatening situation.

Steps for intervention may include the following:

- Intervene immediately to stop the bullying behavior;
- Talk to the student who engaged in the bullying behavior and the student who was victim of this behavior separately. If there are several students who engaged in bullying behavior, separate them also;
- Inform the student who engaged in the bullying behavior and the student who was victim of this behavior of the unacceptable nature of the behavior and the consequences imposed through the school discipline plan;
- Inform the parents of both the student who engaged in the bullying behavior and the student who was victim of this behavior, invite them to at least one meeting to discuss the matter, and construct a plan of action to prevent the reoccurrence;
- If peer mediation is deemed appropriate, give special consideration to the intimidating nature of this situation and preserve a balance of power;
- If students are frequent victims, involve this student in social skills groups, or assertiveness skills development sessions;
- Monitor the behavior of the student who engaged in the bullying behavior and the student who was victim of this behavior and the victim regularly as intimidation may continue unseen;

- If the bullying circumstances do not change, despite concerted efforts by school staff, consider options such as, change in class assignment, rearrangement of transportation, etc...as consequence, he/she, not the victim, may be removed from the class or situation;
- Develop on a case-by-case basis interventions for students, who repeatedly bully or are bullied repeatedly, such as counseling or discipline.

Prevention Measures:

In order to perpetuate a safe social climate free of bullying, Branford Public Schools will:

- Adopt and Implement a District program focusing on positive restorative practices ,
Safer, Saner schools intervention program prek-12 and supports; this program will enhance
Responsive classrooms as well as advisory programs
- Implement procedures to confront bullying in any form;
- Listen to all parties involved in incidents;
- Investigate as fully as possible all written and anonymous reports;
- Treat all verified acts of bullying that are similar in nature and severity in a
consistent fashion;
- Inform parents of both the perpetrators and the victims of bullying incidents and
invite them to at least one meeting, if necessary;
- Promote via grade appropriate bullying prevention curricula the use of a range of
teaching and learning styles and strategies that challenge bullying behavior and
promote a safe school climate;
- Promote open management styles that facilitate communication and consultation
throughout each school setting;
- Maintain an accurate log of verified bullying acts (see appendix);
- Provide annual training in bullying and safe school climates as well as prevention
of and response to youth suicide;

- Require Beginning Teachers involved in the TEAM Program to include training regarding the prevention and identification of, and response to, school bullying as well as youth suicide in their Classroom Management and Climate module;
- Promote the use of interventions that are least intrusive and most effective.
- Hold regular discussions about bullying with administration, staff, students, and parents;
- Develop an anonymous method of student reporting of incidents;
- Support victims of bullying by means of individual and peer counseling;
- Initiate efforts to change the behavior of those students who have engaged in bullying behavior through class discussions, counseling, reinforcement and sanctions, where appropriate;
- Utilize resources from the CSDE that have been created as part of their state-wide Safe School Climate Resource Network;
- Annually submit a letter to all parents about bullying and reporting procedures (see appendix);
- Designate a week in October where each school will conduct safe school climate awareness activities.

Sample Parent Letter

Dear Parents and Families,

In recent years, the Connecticut legislature has passed various laws and amendments concerning bullying behavior in schools. This year the Connecticut Legislation passed a new School Bullying Law with significant changes. Consistent with this legislation, we are asking that parents/guardians immediately inform school personnel (e.g., your child's teacher, program administrator) of suspected bullying behavior directed against your child or another child.

Bullying has been re-defined (see reverse side of letter). You may formally notify any school employee in writing or feel free to call either your child's teacher or program administrator if you feel bullying has occurred.

It is also important for you to know that consistent with this legislation your child may report acts of bullying to any school employee including his/her teacher, other educational personnel (e.g., school nurse, school psychologist, school social worker), non-certified staff member (i.e., bus aid, teacher assistant) and /or program administrator. If your child is uncomfortable making such a report, they may anonymously make a report by leaving a note using a bullying box at school.

When possible, please encourage your son/daughter to make such reports, if they feel they have been bullied or if they have witnessed another student being bullied. Bullying behavior is prohibited by our student discipline policy/codes of conduct and may lead to counseling or disciplinary action, including suspension from school or in more severe cases, dismissal or expulsion. The law requires us to notify 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 48 hours after the completion of the investigation. It also requires us to invite parents/guardian of the perpetrator and victim of bullying to separate meetings to discuss acts and to communicate the measures being taken to ensure the student's safety and prevent further acts

of bullying.

We are fully aware that incidents of bullying are rarely committed in view of the supervising adults. Victims are most vulnerable in situations beyond the eyes of staff, such as, playground, buses, restrooms, and bus stops. 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 this, the school personnel are uninformed and therefore, unable to intervene to stop this behavior. It is important that the school staff and the parents continue to work together to protect the safe environment of the school. If there is a custodial parent who does not live at your child's primary residence, please note that the recent law changes requires us to make a copy of bullying notices available when requested. Please inform your child's program administrator if you or they would like us to make a copy of this notice available to such a parent and provide us their name and address in case it is not presently part of our records.

We thank you for your understanding of this important matter. Feel free to contact the administrator of your child's school if you have any questions.

Sample Letter

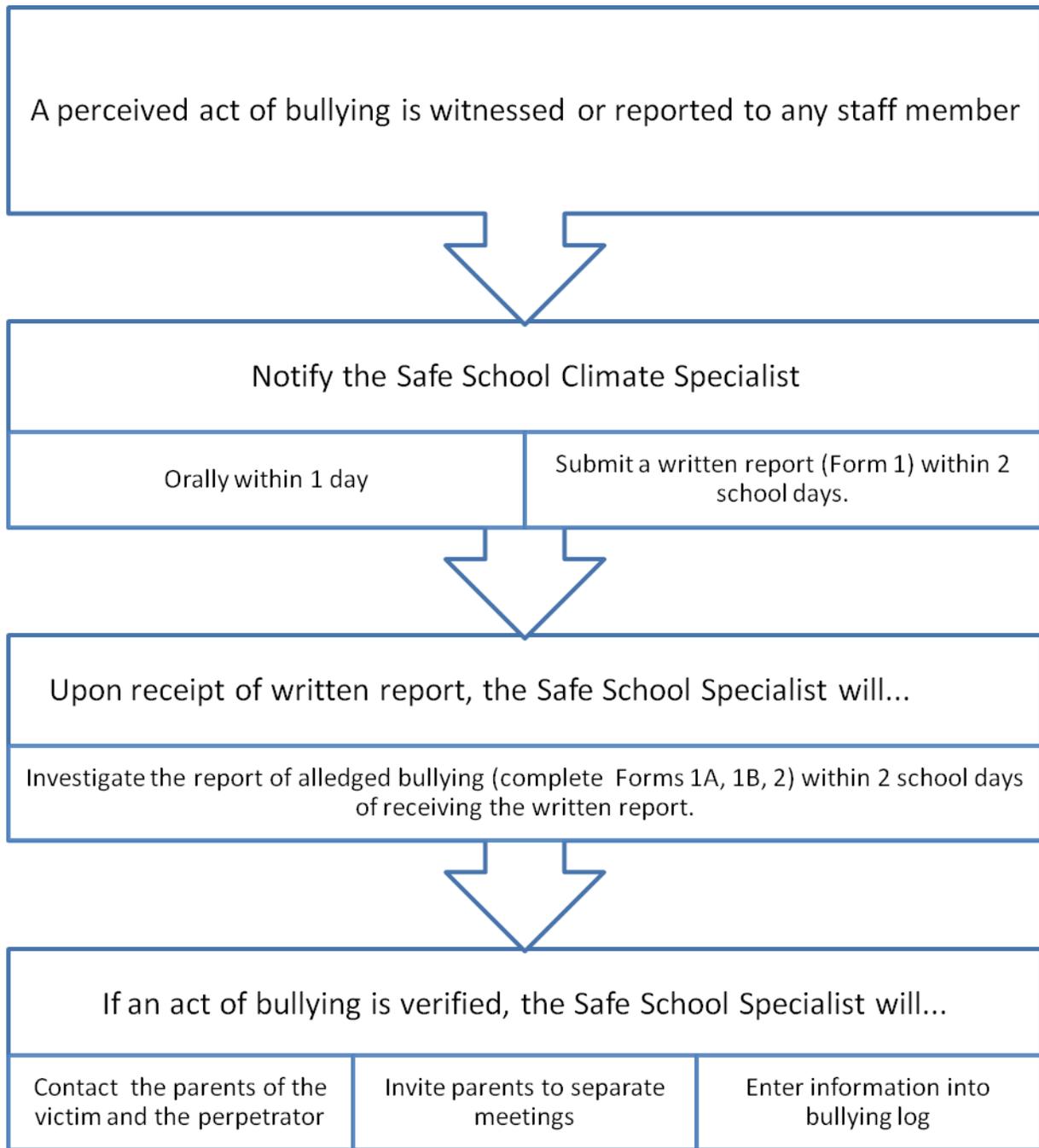
Dear Indian Neck School Parents and Caregivers,

In recent years, Connecticut legislature has passed various laws and amendments addressing bullying behavior in schools. This year, Connecticut Legislation has passed a new School Bullying Law that contains considerable changes. In the Branford school district it has always been a priority that all schools provide a secure and safe school climate that promotes teaching and learning. In light of this new legislation, the district has renewed its commitment to the preservation of a safe school climate for all and is proactively approaching this topic through establishment of a district-wide Safe School Climate Plan. This plan will align with new measures regarding reporting and investigation of suspected bullying behavior. It will also include a new program for conflict resolution known as Restorative Practices. Restorative Practices is a program that has proven successful in other school districts in reducing conflicts within educational settings.

We realize that bullying is a topic that may not be prevalent in preschool programs when compared to elementary, middle, or high school. However, in accordance with the district's philosophy of a safe and secure school climate and the new measures being taken to support this belief, the Early Years Center will be establishing a Safe School Climate Committee that will be responsible for responding to any reports of bullying and employing Restorative Practices initiative being used by the district. We will begin establishing the committee and the use of Restorative Practices in early spring following professional development sessions for staff members.

Please be aware that a parent or caregiver is the most likely adult to be informed by a student who feels bullied. Therefore, if your child should come to you with such information we encourage you to contact us with any concerns so that we can address the situation. It is important that staff and parents work together to protect the safe environment of the school. Please feel free to contact our program administrator if you have any questions in regard to this letter; and thank you for understanding this important matter concerning our student's education environment.

PROCEDURAL FLOW CHART



Branford Public Schools
BULLYING REPORT FORM

The Branford Board of Education promotes a secure and positive school climate, conducive to teaching and learning that is free from threat, harassment, and any type of bullying behavior. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the Board that bullying of a student by another student is prohibited.

Complainant (student reports may be anonymous): _____

Describe relationship to alleged victim(s)/bully(ies): _____

Home address: _____

Work address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Date(s) of alleged incident(s): _____

Location(s) of alleged incidents(s): _____

Name(s) of alleged bully(ies): _____

Name(s) of alleged victim(s): _____

List any witness(es): _____

Describe the incident(s) as clearly as possible, including such things as: what force or physical contact, if any was used and any verbal statements such as threats, requests, demands, etc. (attach additional pages if more space is needed)

I hereby certify that the information I have provided in this complaint is true, correct, and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Complainant Signature

Date: _____

Received by: _____

Date: _____

Branford Public Schools
BULLYING INVESTIGATION REPORT FORM

Date: _____

1. Name(s) of person(s) investigating alleged incident(s): _____
Name(s) of alleged bully(ies): _____
Name(s) of alleged victim(s): _____
2. Date(s) of alleged incident(s): _____
3. Duration of bullying: _____
4. Name(s) of person(s) reporting alleged incident(s): (Note: Student reports may be anonymous, specify if anonymity is requested.) _____
5. Did the alleged incident(s) occur on school property or at a school-sponsored activity?

6. Location(s) of incident(s): _____
7. Is the alleged incident(s) recurring or first time incident(s)? _____
8. Describe alleged incident(s):

9. Did the alleged incident(s) occur in the presence of witness(es)? Yes / No

10. Interview witness(es) and document findings: _____

11. Does the alleged incident(s) meet the definition of bullying? Yes / No
Please explain: _____

Branford Public Schools

BULLYING INVESTIGATION REPORT FORM

(continued)

12. Have the parent(s)/guardian(s) of all students involved been notified of the results of the investigation? Yes / No

12a. If Bullying Verified, Report Sent to Parents of Students?

Parents' Names: _____

Date Sent: _____

(Attach bullying complaint, witness statements, and notification to parents of students involved if bullying is verified)

13. Remedial Action(s) Taken: _____

(Notification should include a description of the bullying act and consequences if any further acts of bullying continue. Student's identifiable information must remain confidential to ensure the student's due process rights. Do not disclose the perpetrator's name or parents/guardians of the perpetrator to the victim. Do not disclose the disciplinary consequences of the perpetrator to the victim. The notification can include a description of measures to prevent further acts of bullying.)

**Branford Public Schools
Report of Bullying Form/Investigation Summary**

School _____ Date _____

Location(s) _____

Reporter Information:

Anonymous student report	_____	Name _____
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: _____

For Staff Use Only: _____

Action of Reporter: _____

Administrative Investigation Notes (use separate sheet if necessary):

Bullying Verified? Yes _____ No _____

Remedial Action(s) Taken: _____

Branford Public Schools
Report of Bullying Form/Investigation Summary
(continued)

If Bullying Verified, Report Sent to Parents of Students?

Parents' Names: _____

Date Sent: _____

(Attach bullying complaint, witness statements, and notification to parents of students involved if bullying is verified)

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

Date: _____

Name of Student: _____

School: _____

To Parent/Guardian:

A complaint of bullying has been filed 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 complaint, the Branford Public Schools may need to disclose the name of your child and/or other information which may otherwise disclose your child's identity.

(Please check one):

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

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

Signature of Parent/Guardian Date

Name (Please print) Date

Restorative Practices

In schools that use restorative practices, students learn to confront their unacceptable behavior, repair the harm they've done and build and strengthen community and relationships.

The philosophy that guides restorative practices is that human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when they feel they have been part of the restorative process when addressing behaviors of concern. Students are able to confront their unacceptable behavior and assume personal responsibility for their actions. School Communities that use restorative practices arrive at solutions collaboratively, generating buy-in from people involved and from others who have been affected by their behavior (derived from Education Leadership, September 2011, Vol. 69, No. 1).

Questions That Can Make Things Right

Questions for wrong doers include:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking about at that time?
- What have you thought about since the incident?
- Whom do you think has been affected by your actions? In what way?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?

Questions for those affected by wrong doing include:

- What did you think when you realized what happened?
- What effect has this incident had on you and others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

SCHOOL COMMITTEE SUMMARIES

Early Years Center Summary

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 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 Summary

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 principal, a regular education teacher, a parent, and the Safe School Climate Specialist. 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 July 2011 changes in school anti-bullying legislations. 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 will also be integrating addition supportive activities that address the requirements of the new 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 our safe school climate was Francis Walsh Intermediate.

Branford High School Summary

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 this safe school climate Branford in its tradition of being proactive has taken steps to formulate and implement a Safe School Climate Plan. This plan which will be directly in line with the new reporting procedures concerning the reporting and investigation of suspected bullying

Branford High School Summary (Continued)

incidents will also include a new form of conflict resolution entitled Restorative Practices. This plan has shown a great deal of promise in many of the other school systems where it has been implemented in various areas of the student body and has shown great promise in reducing the number of conflicts in the educational environment.

These programs and new initiatives will be implemented in the high school setting in various stages. By utilizing the advisory program, professional development sessions for the staff and by continued research these plans will be implemented at Branford High School in the upcoming months.

OVERVIEW OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT

1. Safe School Climate Committee meetings will meet to review school climate and establish any trends or patterns of behavior to be addressed. Each school's committee will have designated parent representation along with school support team, climate specialist, and student when appropriate.
2. Parents will be educated in a variety of modes throughout the school year to address issues concerning anti-bullying legislation.

ELEMENTARY STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

69 responses

Summary [See complete responses](#)

Check School:

Murphy **41** 59%

Sliney **8** 12%

Tisko **20** 29%

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

The culture and emotional climate of the school is positive and supportive.

Strongly Agree **36** 52%

Agree **21** 30%

Disagree **10** 14%

Strongly Disagree **2** 3%

There are clear-cut practices and procedures in my school to address behavior/discipline.

Strongly Agree **16** 23%

Agree **33** 48%

Disagree **18** 26%

Strongly Disagree **2** 3%

I feel like I am part of a school community (shared mission, values, efforts and goals).

Strongly Agree **40** 58%

Agree **20** 29%

Disagree **7** 10%

Strongly Disagree **2** 3%

I feel like my professional judgment is respected.

Strongly Agree **31** 45%

Agree **28** 41%

Disagree **6** 9%

Strongly Disagree **4** 6%

I feel my opinion is valued.

Strongly Agree **27** 39%

Agree **33** 48%

Disagree **6** 9%

Strongly Disagree **3** 4%

I feel respected by students.

Strongly Agree **36** 52%

Agree **27** 39%

Disagree **5** 7%

Strongly Disagree **1** 1%

I hear colleagues speaking inappropriately.

Often **5** 7%

Sometimes **24** 35%

Rarely **24** 35%

Never **16** 23%

I feel it is my responsibility to assist with supervision and address misbehavior outside of my classroom.

Yes **59** 86%

No **10** 14%

I contact parents to share positive news _____ times per month.

0 **10** 14%

1-2 **40** 58%

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

163 responses

Summary [See complete responses](#)

I consistently follow and enforce school policies and procedures.

Strongly agree **100** 61%

Agree **59** 36%

Disagree **1** 1%

Strongly disagree **3** 2%

I feel like I am part of a team (shared mission, values, efforts, and goals).

Strongly agree **61** 37%

Agree **84** 52%

Disagree **10** 6%

Strongly disagree **8** 5%

I feel supported by the school administrative team.

Strongly agree **46** 28%

Agree **96** 59%

Disagree **17** 10%

Strongly disagree **4** 2%

I receive constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Strongly agree **39** 24%

Agree **94** 58%

Disagree **24** 15%

Strongly disagree **6** 4%

I feel comfortable going to at least one member of the administrative team if I have a problem.

Strongly agree **84** 52%

Agree **67** 41%

Disagree **9** 6%

Strongly disagree **3** 2%

I feel respected by students.

Strongly agree **62** 38%

Agree **82** 50%

Disagree **15** 9%

Strongly disagree **4** 2%

I do NOT feel treated fairly at school with respect to my:

Race **5** 3%

Gender **4** 3%

Sexual Orientation **2** 1%

Religion **3** 2%

None of the above **147** 96%

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

If I observe student misbehavior outside of my classroom and in the hallways, I address it.

Yes **149** 91%

No **14** 9%

In a typical week, I refer students out due to misbehavior in my classroom _____ times.

0 **133** 82%

1-3 **28** 17%

4-6 **1** 1%

More than 6 **1** 1%

In reference to cyberbullying, I am aware of what constitutes cyber-bullying.

Yes **150** 92%

No **13** 8%

If you answered "Yes" to the above, how many times in a typical week do you address cyberbullying?

0 **119** 73%

1-3 **31** 19%

4-6 **0** 0%

More than 6 **0** 0%

Number of daily responses

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

772 responses

Summary [See complete responses](#)

Please select your grade level:

5 **17** 2%

6 **87** 11%

7 **54** 7%

8 **13** 2%

9 **153** 20%

10 **180** 23%

11 **158** 20%

12 **110** 14%

I feel physically safe at school.

Very much **502** 65%

Somewhat **229** 30%

Very little **20** 3%

Not at all **21** 3%

I feel I am treated respectfully by students.

Very much **312** 40%

Somewhat **364** 47%

Very little **60** 8%

Not at all **36** 5%

I feel there are adults in the school who will help me if I need help.

Very much **435** 56%

Somewhat **252** 33%

Very little **55** 7%

Not at all **30** 4%

I feel my trip to and from school is a positive/safe experience.

Very much **509** 66%

Somewhat **208** 27%

Very little **30** 4%

Not at all **25** 3%

How often does this happen to you in the classroom? - Another student in class says something nice.

Never **61** 8%

Sometimes **462** 60%

Often **249** 32%

How often does this happen to you in the classroom? - Another student in class says something mean to me.

Never **362** 47%

Sometimes **348** 45%

Often **62** 8%

How often does this happen to you in the classroom? - Another student in class teases me.

Never **433** 56%

Sometimes **281** 36%

Often **58** 8%

How often does this happen to you in the classroom? - Another student in class excludes me from activities.

Never **515** 67%

Sometimes **213** 28%

Often **44** 6%

How often do you? - Say something nice to someone in your class.

Never **39** 5%

Sometimes **381** 49%

Often **352** 46%

How often do you? - Say something mean to someone in your class.

Never **549** 71%

Sometimes **193** 25%

Often **30** 4%

How often do you? - Tease someone in your class.

Never **530** 69%

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS (CONTINUED)

772 responses

Summary [See complete responses](#)

Sometimes **207** 27%

Often **35** 5%

How often do you? - Exclude someone in your class.

Never **640** 83%

Sometimes **102** 13%

Often **30** 4%

How often does this happen to you? - Another student is mean to me on the bus.

Never **639** 83%

Sometimes **100** 13%

Often **33** 4%

How often does this happen to you? - Another student is mean to me in the halls

Never **576** 75%

Sometimes **163** 21%

Often **33** 4%

How often does this happen to you? - Another student is mean to me in the lunch room.

Never **591** 77%

Sometimes **142** 18%

Often **39** 5%

How often does this happen to you? - Another student is mean to me in the locker room.

Never **648** 84%

Sometimes **94** 12%

Often **30** 4%

This is how safe I feel in each of these places. - Classroom

Very safe **593** 77%

OK **160** 21%

Not safe **19** 2%

This is how safe I feel in each of these places. - Hallways

Very safe **420** 54%

OK **310** 40%

Not safe **42** 5%

This is how safe I feel in each of these places. - Lunch room

Very safe **471** 61%

OK **257** 33%

Not safe **44** 6%

This is how safe I feel in each of these places. - On the bus

Very safe **468** 61%

OK **251** 33%

Not safe **53** 7%

This is how safe I feel in each of these places. - Locker room

Very safe **480** 62%

OK **244** 32%

Not safe **48** 6%

Do you feel cyberbullying is a problem at your school?

Very much **136** 18%

Somewhat **269** 35%

Very little **205** 27%

Not at all **162** 21%

Number of daily responses

PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

212 responses

Summary [See complete responses](#)

My child attends:

Murphy **23** 11%

Slaney **26** 12%

Tisko **35** 17%

Walsh Intermediate **89** 42%

Branford High **81** 38%

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

My child generally feels safe at school.

Strongly Agree **77** 36%

Agree **121** 57%

Disagree **10** 5%

Strongly Disagree **4** 2%

My child enjoys learning and looks forward to coming to school.

Strongly Agree **82** 39%

Agree **109** 51%

Disagree **18** 8%

Strongly Disagree **3** 1%

At my child's school, teachers respect the students.

Strongly Agree **83** 39%

Agree **115** 54%

Disagree **12** 6%

Strongly Disagree **2** 1%

Students at my child's school trust the teachers.

Strongly Agree **81** 38%

Agree **119** 56%

Disagree **9** 4%

Strongly Disagree **3** 1%

Teachers listen to my child when there is a problem.

Strongly Agree **58** 27%

Agree **123** 58%

Disagree **27** 13%

Strongly Disagree **4** 2%

Teachers care about my child's success.

Strongly Agree **70** 33%

Agree **127** 60%

Disagree **13** 6%

Strongly Disagree **2** 1%

At my child's school, teachers are fair to everyone.

Strongly Agree **44** 21%

Agree **119** 56%

Disagree **42** 20%

Strongly Disagree **7** 3%

My child and I know the school rules

Strongly Agree **107** 50%

Agree **101** 48%

Disagree **2** 1%

Strongly Disagree **2** 1%

Teachers and Administrators enforce the school rules.

Strongly Agree **61** 29%

Agree **119** 56%

Disagree **23** 11%

Strongly Disagree **9** 4%

The school is doing a good job.

Strongly Agree **66** 31%

Agree **112** 53%

Disagree **28** 13%

Strongly Disagree **6** 3%

Number of daily responses