

Students

Bullying

The East Lyme Board of Education promotes a safe and caring school climate that is free from threat, harassment, and any type of bullying behavior. The Board believes that a school environment in which students feel safe, supported, engaged and challenged is optimal for learning and healthy development. The Board seeks an environment in which students and adults feel socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe, and is free from harassment, intimidation and bullying. Therefore it shall be the policy of the Board that bullying of a student by another student is prohibited.

Students who engage in any act of bullying on school grounds; at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program; whether on or off school grounds; at a school bus stop; on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the Board of Education (including students in transit from Salem); or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the Board of Education; or outside of the school setting are subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including suspension, expulsion, and/or referral to law enforcement officials.

Definitions

“**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 school district, or a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same school district that:

- A. causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student’s property,
- B. places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property,
- C. creates a hostile environment at school for such student,
- D. infringes on the rights of such student at school, or
- E. substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

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. *(The student against whom the activity is directed must be attending school in the same district as the students engaged in the activity.)*

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Bullying (continued)

Examples of bullying include, but are not limited to:

1. physical violence and attacks
2. verbal taunts, name-calling and put-downs, including ethnically-based or gender-based verbal put-downs
3. threats and intimidation
4. extortion or stealing of money and/or possessions
5. exclusion from peer groups within the school
6. The misuse of electronic communications for the purpose of bullying, harassing, or sexually harassing other students within school or out of school (“cyberbullying”)
7. Targeting of a student based on the student’s actual or perceived “differentiating” characteristics such as race; color; religion; ancestry; national origin; gender; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; socioeconomic or academic status; physical appearance; or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability.

“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;

“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.

“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.

“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. (and reflects norms, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices and organizational structures.)

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Bullying (continued)

“**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.

Authority

The Superintendent of Schools is authorized to develop rules and procedures to carry out the provisions of this policy. Procedures shall include the following:

1. Appointment of a District Safe School Climate Coordinator to oversee the implementation of administrative regulations developed to support this policy;
2. Appointment of building level Safe School Climate Specialists to implement the provisions of this policy and accompanying regulations at the school level;
3. Publication of the provisions of this policy in student handbooks and other appropriate publications;
4. Annual notification of the complaint process;
5. Professional development activities to ensure that all school employees understand their individual and collective responsibilities to administer this policy;
6. Clearly identified disciplinary procedures to address incidents of bullying behavior;
7. Appropriate prevention and intervention strategies, as required by C.G. 10-221d, that:
 - a. Strives to develop school and home environment characterized by warmth, positive interest and involvement by adults
 - b. Establishes firm limits to unacceptable behavior
 - c. Ensures that non-hostile, non-physical consequences are consistently applied in cases of unacceptable behavior
 - d. Promotes adults as positive role models and authorities
 - e. Ensures that students are included in efforts to improve school climate.
8. Reporting obligations to parents of the perpetrator and the victim of any acts of bullying;
9. Required reporting responsibilities to the CSDE and the public.

Safe School Climate Plan

As part of this policy, the Board of Education shall approve a Safe School Climate Plan for each school in the East Lyme Public Schools District, as recommended by the Superintendent of Schools, to address the existence of bullying behaviors in its schools. Such plan shall establish deadlines for reporting investigations, notification of parents and guardians about bullying incidents, prohibition of retaliation against those who report bullying, and notification by school officials to law enforcement officials when it is believed that bullying conduct constitutes a crime.

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Bullying (continued)

Safe School Climate Assessment

The Board requires each school in the District, on and after July 1, 2012, and biennially thereafter, to complete an assessment using school climate assessment instruments, including surveys, approved and disseminated by the Department of Education pursuant to C.G.S. 10-222h, as amended by PA 11-232. The Board will collect the school climate assessments of each District school and submit them to the Department of Education.

This policy shall not be interpreted to prohibit a reasonable and civil exchange of opinions or debate that is protected by state or federal law.

(cf. 0521 - Nondiscrimination)
(cf. 5114 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process)
(cf. 5131 - Conduct)
(cf. 5131.21 - Violent and Aggressive Behavior)
(cf. 5131.8 – Out of School Misconduct)
(cf. 5131.912 – Aggressive Behavior)
(cf. 5131.91 - Hazing)
(cf. 5144 - Discipline/Punishment)
(cf. 5145.4 - Nondiscrimination)
(cf. 5145.5 - Sexual Harassment)
(cf. 5145.51 - Peer Sexual Harassment)
(cf. 6121 - Nondiscrimination)
(cf. 6121.1 - Equal Educational Opportunity)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-15b Access of parent or guardian to student's records. Inspection and subpoena of school or student records.

10-222d Policy on bullying behavior as amended by PA 08-160

PA 06-115 An Act Concerning Bullying Policies in Schools and Notices Sent to Parents or Legal Guardians.

Policy adopted by the Board: January 21, 2003
Policy revised by the Board: October 9, 2007
Policy revised by the Board: September 14, 2009
Policy revised by the Board: April 24, 2012

EAST LYME PUBLIC SCHOOLS
East Lyme, Connecticut