

# Safe School Climate Plan

## Purpose/Priority Statement

The Preston District is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying. The goal is the establishment of a positive school climate in which norms, values, and expectations make students and adults feel socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process. The District expects that all members of the school community will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

The following plan, “The Preston Public Schools Safe School Climate Plan (Plan),” addresses the mandated areas of compliance which are required under C.G.S.10-222d as amended by P.A. 11-232. In addition to the following current efforts, the administration, faculty and staff of this District commit to continue to improve, enhance, and update both the Plan and its implementation biennially in order to best serve the students, parents, guardians and the community.

The Preston Board of Education promotes a secure and happy 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.

### I. Prohibition Against Bullying

The Board prohibits 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 the Board, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the Board, and (b) outside of the school setting if such bullying (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim, (ii) infringes on the rights of the victim at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or orderly operation of a school.

### II. Definitions

“**Bullying**” means the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, or a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at or referring to 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.

## **Safe School Climate Plan (continued)**

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, development 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.)*

**“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.

**“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.

**“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).

### **III. Reporting and Responding to Bullying and Retaliation (Complaint Process)**

#### **A. Publication of the Prohibition against Bullying and Related Procedures**

The prohibition against bullying shall be publicized by including the following statement in the student handbook of each of the district schools:

“Bullying behavior by any student in the Preston Public Schools is strictly prohibited, and such conduct may result in disciplinary action, including suspension and/or expulsion from school. “Bullying” means the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as

## **Safe School Climate Plan (continued)**

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 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 verbal 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, gender identity, or physical mental, 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.

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, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the Board, and outside of the school setting if such bullying:

1. creates a hostile environment at school 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,

Students and/or parents may file verbal or written complaints concerning suspected bullying behavior, and students shall be permitted to anonymously report acts of bullying to school employees. Any report of suspected bullying behavior will be promptly reviewed. If acts of bullying are verified, prompt disciplinary action may be taken against the perpetrator, consistent with his/her rights of due process. Board policy and regulation (Plan) #5131.911 set forth this prohibition and the related procedures in detail, and are available to students and their parents/guardians upon request.

### **B. Appropriate School Personnel**

All school employees are charged with the responsibility of taking reports of bullying or if witnessing acts of bullying to notify the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) or another administrator when the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) is not available. Reports shall be appropriately investigated by the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) or another administrator when the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) is not available.

## **Safe School Climate Plan (continued)**

### **District Safe School Climate Coordinator**

For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, the Superintendent of Schools or designee shall act as District Safe School Climate Coordinator.

The Superintendent or designee shall:

1. Implement the District's safe school climate plan;
2. Collaborate with the Principals (Safe School Climate Specialists), and Board, to prevent identify, and respond to bullying in District schools;
3. Provide data and information derived from the safe school climate assessments to the Department of Education; and
4. Meet with the Principals (Safe School Climate Specialists) at least twice during the school year to discuss bullying issues in the district and make recommended changes to the District's safe school climate plan.

### **Safe School Climate Specialist**

For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, each school Principal shall serve as the Safe School Climate specialist for the school.

The Specialist in each school 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 bullying reports in the school.

### **C. Annual Notification of the Complaint Process**

The process by which students may make formal, informal, and anonymous complaints as set forth below shall be publicized annually in the student handbook of each of the District schools. In addition, this Safe School Climate Plan shall be placed on the District website and the website of each school.

### **D. Formal Written Complaints**

Students and/or their parents or guardians may file written reports of conduct that they consider to be bullying. Such written reports shall be reasonably specific as to the actions giving rise to the suspicion of bullying, including time and place of the conduct alleged, the number of such incidents, the target of such suspected bullying, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. Such reports may be filed with any school employees, and they shall be promptly forwarded to the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) or another school administrator, if the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) is unavailable, for review and action in accordance with Section IV below.

## **Safe School Climate Plan (continued)**

### **E. Informal/Verbal Complaints by Students**

Students may make an informal complaint of conduct that they consider to be bullying by verbal report to the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) or to any school employee, as defined, or administrator. Such informal complaints shall be reasonably specific as to the actions giving rise to the suspicion of bullying, including time and place of the conduct alleged, the number of such incidents, the target of such suspected bullying, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. A school employee, or administrator or the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) who receives an informal complaint shall promptly reduce the complaint to writing, including the information provided. Such written report by the school employee, administrator, if not the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) shall be promptly forwarded to the Principal for review and action in accordance with Section IV below.

### **F. Anonymous Complaints**

Students who make informal complaints as set forth above may request that their name be maintained in confidence by the school employee who receives the complaint. Should anonymity be requested, the Safe School Climate Specialist, if not the Principal or his/her designee, shall meet with the student to review the request for anonymity and the impact that maintaining anonymity of the complaint may have on the investigation of the complaint and/or possible remedial action. At such meeting, the student shall be given the choice as to whether to maintain the anonymity of the complaint. Anonymous complaints shall be reviewed and reasonable action will be taken to address the situation, to the extent such action may be taken that (1) does not disclose the source of the complaint, and (2) is consistent with the due process rights of the student(s) alleged to have committed acts of bullying. No disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

## **IV. Staff Responsibilities and Intervention Strategies**

### **A. Teachers and Other School Staff**

School employees who witness acts of bullying, as defined above, or who receive reports of bullying shall promptly notify the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) or another school administrator if the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) is unavailable, not later than one school day after such employee witnesses or receives a report of bullying. A written report must be filed not later than two school days after making such an oral report concerning the events witnessed or reported.

School employees who receive student or parent reports of suspected bullying shall promptly notify the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) of such report(s). If the report is a formal, written complaint, such complaint shall be forwarded promptly (no later than the next school day) to the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) or another school administrator if the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) is unavailable. If the report is an informal complaint by a student that is received by a school employee, he or she shall prepare a succinct written report of the informal complaint, which shall be forwarded promptly (no later than the next school day) to the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) or another school administrator if the

## **Safe School Climate Plan (continued)**

Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) is unavailable. If the report is an informal complaint by a student that is received by a school employee, he or she shall verbally report the matter to the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) not later than the next school day.

In addition to addressing both informal and formal complaints, school employees and others are encouraged to address the issue of bullying in other interactions with students. Teachers and other professionals may find opportunities to educate students about bullying and help eliminate bullying behavior through class discussions, counseling, and reinforcement of socially-appropriate behavior. All school employees including teachers and other professional employees should intervene promptly whenever they observe student conduct that has the purpose or effect of ridiculing, humiliating or intimidating another student, even if such conduct does not meet the formal definition of "bullying."

### **B. Responsibilities of the Safe School Climate Specialist**

#### **1. Investigation**

The Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) shall be promptly notified of any formal or informal complaint of suspected bullying received by any school employee. The Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) shall investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying in the school in accordance with the District's Safe School Climate Plan. All such complaints shall be investigated promptly. The investigation must be completed promptly after the receipt by the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) of any written report. In order to allow the District to adequately investigate all formal complaints, the parent of the student suspected of being bullied must complete a consent form that allows their District to release that student's name to those third parties who the District contacts as part of its investigation of that complaint. With regard to the investigation of informal complaints, the parent of the student suspected of being bullied must complete the above-mentioned consent form so long as that student has not requested anonymity.

A written report of the investigation shall be prepared when the investigation is complete. Such report shall include findings of fact, a determination of whether acts of bullying were verified, and, when acts of bullying are verified, a recommendation for intervention, including disciplinary action. Where appropriate, written witness statements shall be attached to the report.

The school shall notify parents or guardians of all students involved in a verified act of bullying not later than forty-eight (48) hours after the completion of the investigation. The notice shall be simultaneously mailed to the parent/guardian with whom the student primarily resides and in the case of a divorced/split situation, to the other parent/guardian if requested. The notice must describe the school's response, measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the students against whom such act was directed, and any consequences that may result from further acts of bullying.

## **Safe School Climate Plan (continued)**

Notwithstanding the foregoing, when a student making an informal complaint has requested anonymity, the investigation of such complaint shall be limited as is appropriate in view of the anonymity of the complainant. Such limitation of investigation may include restricting action to a simple review of the complaint (with or without discussing it with the alleged perpetrator), subject to receipt of further information and/or the withdrawal by the complaining student of the condition that his/her report be anonymous.

### **2. Remedial Actions**

Verified acts of bullying shall result in intervention by the Principal or his/her designee that is intended to address the acts of the perpetrator and the needs of the victim and to assure that the prohibition against bullying behavior is enforced, with the goal that any such bullying behavior will end as a result.

Bullying behavior can take many forms and can vary dramatically in how serious it is, and what impact it has on the victim and other students. Accordingly, there is no one prescribed response to verified acts of bullying. While conduct that rises to the level of "bullying" as defined above will generally warrant disciplinary action against the perpetrator of such bullying, whether and to what extent to impose disciplinary action (detention, in-school suspension; suspension or expulsion) is a matter for the professional discretion of the Principal (or responsible program administrator or his/her designee). The following sets forth possible interventions for principals to enforce the Board's prohibition against bullying. No disciplinary action may be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous complaint.

The following sets forth permissible interventions for building principals (or other responsible program administrators) to enforce the Board's prohibition against bullying.

#### **a. Non-disciplinary Interventions**

When verified acts of bullying are identified early and/or when such verified acts of bullying do not reasonably require a disciplinary response, students may be counseled as to the definition of bullying, its prohibition, and their duty to avoid any conduct that could be considered bullying.

If a complaint arises out of conflict between students or groups of students, peer mediation may be considered. Special care, however, is warranted in referring such cases to peer mediation. A power imbalance may make the process intimidating for the victim and therefore inappropriate. In such cases, the victim should be given additional support. Alternatively, peer mediation may be deemed inappropriate to address the concern.

In any instance in which bullying is verified, the Principal (or other responsible program administrator) shall invite the parents or guardians of the student against whom such act was directed, and the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying, to a meeting to communicate to such parents or guardians the measures being taken by the school to ensure the student's safety and to prevent further acts of bullying. In the discretion of the building Principal or other responsible program administrator, the meeting(s) described in this section may be held jointly or separately.

## **Safe School Climate Plan (continued)**

### **b. Disciplinary Interventions**

When acts of bullying are verified and a disciplinary response is warranted, students are subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences. Anonymous complaints that are not otherwise verified, however, shall not be the basis for disciplinary actions.

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

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

### **c. Interventions for Bullied Students**

The Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) shall intervene in order to address repeated incidents of bullying against a single individual. Intervention strategies for a bullied student may include the following:

- Counseling
- Increased supervision and monitoring of student to observe and intervene in bullying situations;  
Encouragement of student to seek help when victimized or witnessing victimization;
- Peer mediation where appropriate.

## **3. General Prevention and Intervention Strategies**

In addition to the prompt investigation of complaints of bullying and direct intervention when acts of bullying are verified, other District actions may ameliorate any potential problem with bullying in school or at school sponsored activities. A focus will be placed on district and school efforts to improve school climate based upon the National School Climate Standards.

While no specific action is required and school needs for such interventions may vary from time to time, the following list of potential intervention strategies shall serve as a resource for administrators, teachers and other professional staff members in each school:

- a. 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, including any such program identified by the Department of Education;



## Safe School Climate Plan (continued)

- b. A safe school climate assessment on or after July 1, 2012 and biennially thereafter to determine the prevalence of bullying. Such assessments may include, in addition to those approved and disseminated by the State Department of Education, in collaboration with CAS, the National School Climate Standards Self-Assessment Tool and the Connecticut State Department of Education's "Improving School Climate Team Rubric;"
- c. Establishment by the school Principal of a Safe School Climate Committee in each District school or the designation of an existing committee that is responsible for fostering a safe school climate and addressing issues related to bullying in the school.

The Safe School Climate Committee shall:

- 1. Receive copies of completed reports following investigations of bullying;
- 2. Identify and address patterns of bullying among students in the school;
- 3. Review and amend school policies relating to bullying;
- 4. Review and make recommendation to the Superintendent (Climate Coordinator) regarding the District's Safe School Climate Plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school;
- 5. Educate students, school employees and parents and guardians of students on issues relating to bullying;
- 6. Collaborate with the Superintendent (District Safe School Climate Coordinator) in the collection of data regarding bullying; and
- 7. Perform any other duties as determined by the Principal that are related to the prevention, identification and response to school bullying for the school.

Parent members of the Safe School Climate Committee are excluded from activities #1 and #2 above and from any other committee activities that may compromise student confidentiality.

- d. Adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur;
- e. Inclusion of grade-appropriate bullying education and prevention curricula in kindergarten through high school;
- f. Individual interventions with the perpetrator, parents and school employees, and interventions with the bullied student, parents and school employees;
- g. School-wide training related to safe school climate;
- h. Promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions;
- i. Respectful responses to bullying concerns raised by students, parents or staff;

## **Safe School Climate Plan (continued)**

- j. Planned professional development programs addressing bully/victim problems;
- k. Student peer training, education and support. Use of peers to help ameliorate the plight of victims and include them in group activities;
- l. Avoidance of sex-role stereotyping (e.g., males need to be strong and tough);
- m. Continuing awareness and involvement on the part of staff and parents with regards to prevention and intervention strategies;
- n. Modeling by all school employees of positive, respectful, and supportive behavior toward students;
- o. Creating a school atmosphere of team spirit and collaboration that promotes appropriate social behavior by students in support of others;
- p. Employing classroom strategies that instruct students how to work together in a collaborative and supportive atmosphere.

### **V. Reporting Obligations**

#### **A. Report to the Parent or Guardian of the Perpetrator**

If after investigation, acts of bullying by a specific student are verified, not later than forty-eight (48) hours after the completion of the investigation, the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) shall notify the parent or guardian of the perpetrator in writing of that finding. If disciplinary consequences are imposed against such student, a description of such discipline shall be included in such notification. In addition, the school shall invite the parent/guardian of a student who commits any verified act of bullying (after the completion of the investigation) to a meeting to communicate to the parents/guardians the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety and measures being taken by the school to ensure the student's safety and to prevent further acts of bullying. Records will be maintained by the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) of the bullying reports, subsequent investigations and parental/guardian meetings.

#### **B. Reports to the Targeted Student and his/her Parent or Guardian**

If after investigation, acts of bullying against a specific student are verified, the Principal (Safe Climate Specialist) shall notify the parent or guardian of the victim of such finding, not later than forty-eight (48) hours after the completion of the investigation. In providing such notification, care must be taken to respect the statutory privacy rights of the perpetrator of such bullying. The specific disciplinary consequences imposed on the perpetrator, as reflected in the student's educational records, shall not be disclosed to the parents or guardian of the victim, except as provided by law (e.g., court order/subpoena). In addition, the school shall invite the

## **Safe School Climate Plan (continued)**

parent/guardian of the student against whom the verified act of bullying was directed, after the completion of the investigation, to a meeting to communicate to the parents/guardians the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety and measures being taken by the school to ensure the targeted student's safety and to prevent further acts of bullying. Records will be maintained by the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) of the bullying reports, subsequent investigations and parental/guardian meetings.

Notices shall be simultaneously mailed to the parent/guardian with whom the student primarily resides and the other parent/guardian if requested. This mailing requirement shall be in effect for as long as the student attends the school in which the original request is made.

### **C. List of Verified Acts of Bullying**

The Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) of each school shall establish a procedure to document and maintain records relating to reports and investigations of bullying in such school and maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying in the school, and this list shall be available for public inspection upon request. The list shall be reported annually to the Department of Education in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education. Given that any determination of bullying involves repeated acts over time, each report prepared in accordance with Section III (1) above that includes verified acts of bullying shall be tallied as one verified act of bullying unless the specific actions that are the subject of the report involve separate and distinct acts of bullying. The list shall be limited to the number of such verified acts of bullying in the school, and it shall not set out the particulars of each verified act, including but not limited to any personally identifiable student information, which is confidential information by law.

## **VI. Prohibition against Discrimination and Retaliation**

### **A. Safety**

Discrimination and/or retaliation against any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of an act of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is prohibited.

The continuation and perpetuation of bullying of a student through the dissemination of hurtful or demeaning material by any other student is prohibited.

The District will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyberbullying, discrimination or retaliation in our school buildings, on school grounds, or in school related activities. All reports and complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, discrimination and retaliation will be investigated promptly and prompt action will be taken to end that behavior and restore the student's against whom such bullying was directed (target's) sense of safety. This commitment is to be supported in all aspects of the school community, including curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities, parent/guardian involvement.

## **Safe School Climate Plan (continued)**

Before formally investigating the allegations of bullying, discrimination or retaliation, the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged student against whom such bullying was Directed (target) and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but are not limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the alleged victim (target) and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but are not limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the alleged victim (target) and/or the alleged perpetrator in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a "safe person" for the alleged student against whom such bullying was directed (target); and altering the alleged perpetrator's schedule and access to the alleged target. The Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

The Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) will implement appropriate strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a student who has reported bullying or retaliation, a student who has witnessed bullying or retaliation, a student who provides information during an investigation, or a student who has reliable information about a reported act of bullying or retaliation.

Within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) will contact the victim to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If determined necessary, the Principal (Safe School Climate Specialist) will work with the appropriate school staff to implement them immediately.

### **B. Law Enforcement Notification**

The School Principal shall notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when such Principal believes any acts of bullying constitute criminal conduct.

## **VII. Training Requirements for School Staff**

- A. Certified staff of the District shall be provided in-service training on the prevention, identification and response to school bullying and the prevention of and response to youth suicide.
- B. Beginning teachers shall satisfactorily complete instructional modules as required by C.G.S. 10-145a which shall include a module in classroom management and climate, which shall include training regarding the prevention, identification, and response to school bullying and the prevention of and response to youth suicide.
- C. Non-certified staff of the District will participate in annual training to be provided, within available appropriations, by the Connecticut State Department of Education. The training may be presented in person by mentors, offered in statewide workshops, or through on-line courses. Such training may include, but is not limited to:

## **Safe School Climate Plan (continued)**

1. Developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying among students in school and outside 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 about the incidence and nature of cyberbullying as defined in C.G.S. 10-222d, or
6. Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

### **VIII. Notification Requirements**

- A. A copy of this District's Safe School Climate Plan shall be provided in written or electronic format to all District employees annually at the beginning of each school year.
- B. The District's Safe School Climate Plan shall be made available on the Board's website and on the website of each individual school with the District. Such posting shall occur within thirty (30) days of the approval of such plan by the Board.
- C. The District's Safe School Climate Plan shall be included in the District's publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools and in all student handbooks.

### **IX. School Climate Assessments**

- A. On or after July 1, 2012, and biennially thereafter, the Board requires each school within the District to complete an assessment using the school climate assessment Instruments, including surveys, approved and disseminated by the State Department of Education.
- B. Completed assessments shall be shared with the Board and then submitted by the Board to the State Department of Education.

### **X. Bullying Through the Use of Technology (Cyberbullying)**

An emerging form of bullying is the use of technology to threaten, intimidate, ridicule, humiliate, insult, or harass. Technology enables aggressive expression toward others and does not rely on physical strength or physical contact. By using a cell phone or the Internet, a student can quickly and aggressively spread rumors, threats, hate mail, or embarrassing photos through text messages, e-mails, or instant messages.

There are a number of social networking sites (MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) available to our students that can be misused and/or abused for bullying purposes. Any alleged misuse or abuse must be reported to any staff member or the Principal(Safe School Climate Specialist).

## **Safe School Climate Plan (continued)**

The District's discipline policy states that misuse, on or off campus, of electronic devices, for threatening/bullying/hazing or harassment is a violation and can be the basis for discipline on or off campus. When information is received that a student or students are involved in bullying through the use of technology either as the actor or a member of a group, or the victim, the following will be considered:

- If it takes place on campus or at a school sponsored event, disciplinary action will be taken.
- If it takes place off campus a school may take disciplinary action if the incident poses a likelihood of substantial disruption to the educational process or the orderly day to day operations of the school.

### **XI. Relationship to Other Laws**

- A. Consistent with state and federal laws, and the policies of the district and school rules, no person shall be discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town or in obtaining the advantages, privilege and courses of study of such public school on account of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Nothing in the "Plan" prevents the school or district from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under local, state, or federal law, or district policies.
- B. In addition, nothing in the "Plan" is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school or district to take disciplinary action under applicable laws, or local school or District policies in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether the "Plan" covers the behavior.

### **XII. Immunity for Board of Education, School Employees, Others**

Members of the Board of Education and school employees are protected by statute against damage claims in the implementation of a safe school climate plan and, in accordance with a school district safe school climate plan, report, investigate, or respond to bullying. PA 11-232 also extends this immunity to reports of bullying incidents by parents, students, and others to a school employee according to a safe school climate plan.

To be immune, these parties must act in good faith and, in the case of a school employee or Board of Education, within the scope of their duties. The immunity does not cover gross, wanton, reckless, or willful misconduct.