

CSBA Sample Board Policy Bullying

CSBA Sample With Revisions

BP 5131.2
Students

***Note: Education Code 234.1 and federal law mandate that the Governing Board adopt policy prohibiting discrimination, harassment, intimidation, retaliation, and bullying based on specified characteristics; see BP 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment for language fulfilling this mandate. ***

***Note: In its October 2010 Dear Colleague Letter: Harassment and Bullying, the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) clarified that misconduct that falls under a district's general anti-bullying policy may also trigger responsibilities under one or more federal antidiscrimination laws if the bullying is on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, and/or other legally protected category. If so, federal law requires the district to investigate or otherwise determine what occurred and, if it finds that unlawful discrimination did occur, take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to end the discrimination, eliminate any hostile environment and its effects, and prevent the discrimination from recurring. ***

***Note: In addition, OCR's August 2013 Dear Colleague Letter: Bullying of Students with Disabilities points out that any bullying of any student with disabilities that results in the student not receiving meaningful educational benefit constitutes a denial of a free appropriate public education and must be remedied under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. As necessary, the school may need to convene the student's individualized education program (IEP) team to determine whether the student's needs have changed as a result of the bullying and, if so, revise the IEP to ensure that the student continues to receive appropriate special education and related services. ***

***Note: Thus, while this policy is intended to prevent and address all types of bullying incidents among students, school officials need to know that when "discriminatory bullying" is committed (i.e., discrimination based on the actual or perceived status of the alleged victim which is protected by law, such as race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, age or disability), and the bullying is sufficiently serious to create a hostile educational environment for the alleged victim or to otherwise deny or limit his/her educational benefits and services, including denial of a free appropriate public education, the alleged victim must be afforded the protections specified under relevant state and/or federal law. ***

***Note: CSBA staff met with representatives from California Department of Education (CDE) and OCR to discuss this policy as it relates to the uniform complaint procedure (UCP) requirements. As a result, this sample policy has been drafted to go beyond the minimal

Comment [WT1]: Updated policy after discussion with CDE and OCR.

requirements under California's UCP laws and regulations in an attempt to address issues and concerns raised by CDE and OCR. While CDE and OCR have not approved or signed off on them, CSBA believes that the additional details provided herein may help school districts and county offices of education during any compliance check by CDE or in the event that a CDE or OCR investigation occurs. ***

The Governing Board recognizes the harmful effects of bullying on student learning and school attendance and desires to provide safe school environments that protect students from physical and emotional harm. District employees shall establish student safety as a high priority and shall not tolerate bullying of any student.

The Board recognizes that the California Education Code provides guiding characteristics regarding bullying. The district further clarifies bullying with a definition that bullying occurs "When someone says mean or does hurtful things repeatedly and on purpose to another person who is made to feel less powerful."

Comment [B2]: This section is added to clarify the definition of bullying and is brought forward from current PSD policy

No individual or group shall, through physical, written, verbal, or other means, harass, sexually harass, threaten, intimidate, retaliate, cyberbully, cause bodily injury to, or commit hate violence against any student or school personnel.

(cf. 5131 - Conduct)
(cf. 5136 - Gangs)
(cf. 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment)
(cf. 5145.7 - Sexual Harassment)
(cf. 5145.9 - Hate-Motivated Behavior)

***Note: Pursuant to Education Code 48900, the definition of "bullying" for purposes of establishing grounds for suspension or expulsion includes bullying via an electronic act such as posting of messages on social media networks; see AR 5144.1 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process. AB 256 (Ch. 700, Statutes of 2013) amended Education Code 48900 to redefine "electronic act" to include acts that originate off campus; see the section "Discipline" below. ***

***Note: In addition, Penal Code 653.2 makes it a crime to distribute another person's personally identifiable information electronically with the intent to cause harassment by a third party and to threaten a person's safety or that of his/her family (e.g., placing a person's picture or address online so that he/she receives harassing messages). ***

Cyberbullying includes the creation or transmission of harassing communications, direct threats, or other harmful texts, sounds, or images on the Internet, social media, or other technologies using a telephone, computer, or any wireless communication device. Cyberbullying also includes breaking into another person's electronic account and assuming that person's identity in order to damage that person's reputation.

(cf. 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression)

***Note: Education Code 32282 encourages districts to include bullying prevention policies and procedures in their comprehensive safety plan; see BP 0450 - Comprehensive Safety Plan. In addition, Education Code 52060-52077, as added by AB 97 (Ch. 47, 2013), requires the Board to adopt and annually update a local control and accountability plan which includes, among other specified state priorities, goals for addressing school climate; see BP/AR 0460 - Local Control and Accountability Plan. Pursuant to Education Code 52060, school climate should be measured by student suspension and expulsion rates and other local measures, including surveys of students, parents/guardians, and teachers on the sense of safety and school connectedness, as applicable. ***

Strategies for addressing bullying in district schools shall be developed with involvement of key stakeholders, including students, parents/guardians, and staff, and may be incorporated into the comprehensive safety plan, the local control and accountability plan, and other applicable district and school plans.

(cf. 0420 - School Plans/Site Councils)
(cf. 0450 - Comprehensive Safety Plan)
(cf. 0460 - Local Control and Accountability Plan)
(cf. 1220 - Citizen Advisory Committees)
(cf. 1400 - Relations Between Other Governmental Agencies and the Schools)
(cf. 6020 - Parent Involvement)

***Note: Because bullying is not limited to one environment, collaboration among a variety of community agencies and organizations that serve youth may be helpful in preventing and responding to bullying. For further information about building a collaborative, see CSBA's publications *Safe Schools: Strategies for Governing Boards to Ensure Student Success* and *Building Healthy Communities: A School Leader's Guide to Collaboration and Community Engagement*. ***

As appropriate, the Superintendent or designee may collaborate with law enforcement, courts, social services, mental health services, other agencies, and community organizations in the development and implementation of joint strategies to promote safety in schools and the community and to provide services for alleged victims and perpetrators of bullying.

(cf. 1020 - Youth Services)

Bullying Prevention

To the extent possible, district schools shall focus on the prevention of bullying by establishing clear rules for student conduct and implementing strategies to promote a positive, collaborative school climate. Students shall be informed, through student handbooks and other appropriate means, of district and school rules related to bullying, mechanisms available for reporting incidents or threats, and the consequences for engaging in bullying.

(cf. 5137 - Positive School Climate)

***Note: California content standards related to student education about bullying and violence prevention (e.g., recognizing the characteristics of bullying, examining the effects of bullying on others, demonstrating what to say and do when witnessing bullying) are addressed within the health education content standards adopted by the State Board of Education. ***

***Note: 47 USC 254 mandates districts that receive e-rate discounts to adopt a policy which addresses educating students about appropriate online behavior, including the interaction with other individuals on social networking web sites and in chat rooms, as well as providing information about cyberbullying awareness and response. See BP 6163.4 - Student Use of Technology for language implementing this mandate. ***

As appropriate, the district shall provide students with instruction, in the classroom or other educational settings, that promotes effective communication and conflict resolution skills, social skills, character/values education, respect for cultural and individual differences, self-esteem development, assertiveness skills, and appropriate online behavior.

(cf. 6142.8 - Comprehensive Health Education)
(cf. 6142.94 - History-Social Science Instruction)
(cf. 6163.4 - Student Use of Technology)

***Note: Education Code 32283.5, as added by AB 1993 (Ch. 418, Statutes of 2014), requires the CDE to develop an online training module to assist all school staff, school administrators, parents/guardians, students, and community members in increasing their knowledge of the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including, but not limited to, identifying acts of bullying or cyberbullying and implementing strategies to address such acts. ***

Staff shall receive related professional development, including information about early warning signs of harassing/intimidating behaviors and effective response.

(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)
(cf. 4231 - Staff Development)
(cf. 4331 - Staff Development)

Based on an assessment of bullying incidents at school, the Superintendent or designee may increase supervision and security in areas where bullying most often occurs, such as classrooms, playgrounds, hallways, restrooms, and cafeterias.

Intervention

Students are encouraged to notify school staff when they are being bullied or suspect that another student is being victimized. In addition, the Superintendent or designee shall develop means for students to report threats or incidents confidentially and anonymously.

***Note: Although Education Code 234.1 requires the district to adopt a policy requiring school

personnel who witness acts of unlawful discrimination, harassment, intimidation, retaliation, or bullying against students based on the actual or perceived status of the student belonging to a protected class to take immediate steps to intervene when it is safe to do so, it is recommended that districts apply this policy equally to all students; also see AR 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment. ***

School staff who witness an act of bullying shall immediately intervene to stop the incident when it is safe to do so. (Education Code 234.1)

When appropriate based on the severity or pervasiveness of the bullying, the Superintendent or designee shall notify the parents/guardians of victims and perpetrators and may contact law enforcement.

***Note: Education Code 48900.9, as added by AB 1455 (Ch. 229, Statutes of 2014), authorizes referrals to case management, counseling, and restorative justice programs, as provided below. ***

The Superintendent, principal, or principal's designee may refer a victim, witness, perpetrator, or other student affected by an act of bullying to a school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, child welfare attendance personnel, school nurse, or other school support service personnel for case management, counseling, and/or participation in a restorative justice program as appropriate. (Education Code 48900.9)

(cf. 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services)

Complaints and Investigation

***Note: Pursuant to Education Code 234.1, districts are required to adopt a process for receiving and investigating complaints involving unlawful discrimination, including discriminatory bullying, based on race or ethnicity, nationality, gender, sex, sexual orientation, religion, or any other characteristic contained in the definition of hate crimes in Penal Code 422.55. 5 CCR 4600-4633, as amended by Register 2013, No. 38, provide that the UCP utilizing compliance officer(s) must be used for this purpose. In addition, federal regulations require districts to adopt procedures providing for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints of unlawful discrimination, including discriminatory bullying, on the basis of sex (34 CFR 106.8), disability (34 CFR 104.7 and 28 CFR 35.107), and age (34 CFR 110.25). ***

***Note: Although some bullying incidents may not fall within the provisions of Education Code 234.1 or federal civil rights regulations, CSBA strongly recommends that districts use the UCP to investigate and resolve all bullying incidents (whether discriminatory or nondiscriminatory) to ensure consistent implementation by district staff. Additionally, it is not always easy or possible for staff to know at the time of the incident whether a student was bullied because of his/her actual or perceived membership in a legally protected class. Districts that are concerned about the capacity of a single district compliance officer to handle a possible increase in the number of UCP complaints, or that prefer to handle certain incidents at the school site level whenever possible,

may designate multiple compliance officers in accordance with AR 1312.3 - Uniform Complaint Procedures. ***

***Note: The following optional paragraph provides that all complaints regarding bullying will be investigated and resolved using the district's UCP. Districts that choose to use another complaint procedure for bullying incidents that are not covered by Education Code 234.1 should revise the following paragraph accordingly. ***

Comment [WT3]: Update for policy; the following section has been revised to include further clarification for investigating complaints regarding bullying.

Any complaint of bullying, whether it is discriminatory or nondiscriminatory, shall be investigated and resolved in accordance with law and the district's uniform complaint procedures specified in AR 1312.3 - Uniform Complaint Procedures.

(cf. 1312.3 - Uniform Complaint Procedures)

***Note: The following reporting process may be revised to reflect district practice. ***

Any student, parent/guardian, or other individual who believes that a student has been subjected to bullying or who has witnessed bullying may report the incident to a teacher, the principal, a compliance officer, or any other available school employee. Within one business day of receiving such a report, a staff member shall notify the principal of the report, whether or not a uniform complaint is filed. Within two business days of receiving a report of bullying, the principal shall notify a district compliance officer identified in AR 1312.3. In addition, any school employee who observes an incident of bullying involving a student shall, within one business day, report his/her observation to the principal or a district compliance officer, whether or not the alleged victim files a complaint.

***Note: Districts have the authority to monitor student use of the district's Internet system and to conduct individual searches of student accounts if there is reasonable suspicion that a user has violated district policy or the law; see BP/AR 5145.12 - Search and Seizure and BP/AR 6163.4 - Student Use of Technology. ***

When the circumstances involve cyberbullying, individuals with information about the activity shall be encouraged to save and print any electronic or digital messages that they feel constitute cyberbullying and to notify a teacher, the principal, or other employee so that the matter may be investigated. When a student uses a social networking site or service to bully or harass another student, the Superintendent or designee may file a request with the networking site or service to suspend the privileges of the student and to have the material removed.

When a report of bullying is submitted, the principal or a district compliance officer shall inform the student or parent/guardian of the right to file a formal written complaint in accordance with AR 1312.3. The student who is the alleged victim of the bullying shall be given an opportunity to describe the incident, identify witnesses who may have relevant information, and provide other evidence of bullying.

Discipline

***Note: Pursuant to Education Code 48900-48900.4, "bullying" is a ground for suspension or expulsion; see AR 5144.1 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process. ***

***Note: The courts have generally upheld discipline for off-campus student conduct that posed an identifiable threat to the safety of other students, staff, or school property or presented a risk of substantial disruption of school activities, provided that the district was able to document the impact or disruption that the conduct had, or could be expected to have, on school activities (e.g., Wynar v. Douglas County School District, Lavine v. Blaine School District). In addition, courts have analyzed the reasonableness of the district's policy and whether the disciplinary action taken by the district was in proportion to the student's misbehavior. For example, the court in J.C. v. Beverly Hills Unified School District found that the district would be able to discipline a student for a video recorded off campus and posted on YouTube, but that the discipline imposed on this particular student was not justified since the district did not present evidence of specific facts that led school officials to predict that the video would cause substantial disruption (e.g., the video was not violent or threatening nor did it lead to any confrontations between the students). ***

***Note: Consistent with these interpretations, AB 256 (Ch. 700, Statutes of 2013) amended Education Code 48900 to define bullying by means of an electronic act to include creation or transmission originating on or off the school site. Thus, for purposes of determining whether the conduct may be subject to suspension or expulsion, the act does not necessarily need to have been committed while at school, while coming to or from school, or during a school-sponsored activity. Nevertheless, the act needs to satisfy the criteria specified in the definition of "bullying" in Education Code 48900 (i.e., a severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of placing a reasonable student in fear of harm to his/her person or property, causing a substantially detrimental effect on his/her physical or mental health, causing substantial interference with his/her academic performance, or causing substantial interference with his/her ability to participate in or benefit from school services, activities, or privileges). ***

***Note: When the conduct does not rise to the level specified in Education Code 48900, the district may implement interventions other than suspension or expulsion to address the bullying. For further information, see CSBA's policy brief Cyberbullying: Policy Considerations for Boards. Also see BP 5131 - Conduct and BP 5145.2 - Freedom of Speech/Expression. ***

***Note: Additionally, districts should note that, in the context of discriminatory bullying on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or disability, federal law and regulations require school districts to impose discipline on students, up to and including suspension and expulsion, where necessary to remedy the effects of a hostile environment and prevent the discrimination from recurring. ***

Corrective actions for a student who commits an act of bullying of any type may include counseling, behavioral intervention and education, and, if the behavior is severe or pervasive as defined in Education Code 48900, may include suspension or expulsion in accordance with district policies and regulations.

(cf. 5138 - Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation)
(cf. 5144 - Discipline)
(cf. 5144.1 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process)
(cf. 5144.2 - Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process (Students with Disabilities))
(cf. 6159.4 - Behavioral Interventions for Special Education Students)

Any employee who permits or engages in bullying or retaliation related to bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

(cf. 4117.3 - Dismissal)
(cf. 4118 - Suspension/Disciplinary Action)
(cf. 4119.21/4219.21/4319.21 - Professional Standards)
(cf. 4218 - Dismissal/Suspension/Disciplinary Action)

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

200-262.4 Prohibition of discrimination
32282 Comprehensive safety plan
32283.5 Bullying; online training
35181 Governing board policy on responsibilities of students
35291-35291.5 Rules
48900-48925 Suspension or expulsion
48985 Translation of notices
52060-52077 Local control and accountability plan

PENAL CODE

422.55 Definition of hate crime
647 Use of camera or other instrument to invade person's privacy; misdemeanor
647.7 Use of camera or other instrument to invade person's privacy; punishment
653.2 Electronic communication devices, threats to safety

CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 5

4600-4687 Uniform complaint procedures

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 47

254 Universal service discounts (e-rate)

CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS, TITLE 28

35.107 Nondiscrimination on basis of disability; complaints

CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS, TITLE 34

104.7 Designation of responsible employee for Section 504

106.8 Designation of responsible employee for Title IX

110.25 Notification of nondiscrimination on the basis of age

COURT DECISIONS

Wynar v. Douglas County School District, (2013) 728 F.3d 1062

J.C. v. Beverly Hills Unified School District, (2010) 711 F.Supp.2d 1094

Lavine v. Blaine School District, (2002) 279 F.3d 719

Management Resources:

CSBA PUBLICATIONS

Final Guidance: AB 1266, Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students, Privacy, Programs, Activities & Facilities, Legal Guidance, March 2014

Providing a Safe, Nondiscriminatory School Environment for Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Students, Policy Brief, February 2014
Addressing the Conditions of Children: Focus on Bullying, Governance Brief, December 2012

Safe Schools: Strategies for Governing Boards to Ensure Student Success, 2011

Building Healthy Communities: A School Leaders Guide to Collaboration and Community Engagement, 2009

Cyberbullying: Policy Considerations for Boards, Policy Brief, July 2007

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2008

Bullying at School, 2003

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS PUBLICATIONS

Dear Colleague Letter: Bullying of Students with Disabilities, August 2013

Dear Colleague Letter: Harassment and Bullying, October 2010

WEB SITES

CSBA: <http://www.csba.org>

California Department of Education, Safe Schools Office: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ss>

Common Sense Media: <http://www.common sense media.org>

National School Safety Center: <http://www.schoolsafety.us>

ON[the]LINE, digital citizenship resources: <http://www.onthelineca.org>

U.S. Department of Education: <http://www.ed.gov>

(3/12 4/13) 10/14