

Model Bullying Prevention Plan

1. Introduction

As a result of Act 117 of 2004, An Act Relating to Bullying Prevention Policies, and Act 58 of 2011 which changed the definition of bullying and expanded schools authority to discipline for off campus misconduct, the following is intended as the Vermont Department of Education's model prevention plan for use in addressing bullying in schools.

Bullying is a form of dangerous and disrespectful behavior that will not be permitted or tolerated. Bullying may involve a range of misconduct that, based on the severity, will warrant a measured response of corrective action and/or discipline. Behaviors that do not rise to the level of bullying, as defined in Section 2. below, still may be subject to intervention and/or discipline under another section of the discipline plan or a discipline policy.

Effective school-wide prevention and intervention embeds bullying prevention strategies into a overarching system of school discipline procedures that include:

- Statement of a common purpose & approach to discipline
- Clear set of positive expectations & behaviors
- Procedures for teaching expected behavior
- Continuum of procedures for encouraging expected behavior
- Continuum of procedures for discouraging inappropriate behavior
- Procedures for on-going monitoring & evaluation

The addition of the following school-wide expectations can serve as the basis for teaching and empowering by-standers to take appropriate action:

- We will not bully others.
- We will try to help students who are bullied.
- We will try to include students who are left out.
- If we know that somebody is being bullied, we will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

2. Definition

Bullying means any overt act or combination of acts, including an act conducted by electronic means, directed against a student by another student or group of students and which:

(A) is repeated over time;

(B) is intended to ridicule, humiliate, or intimidate the student; and

(C) (i) occurs during the school day on school property, on a school bus or at a school- sponsored activity or

(ii) does not occur during the school day on school property, on a school bus, or at a school sponsored activity and can be shown to pose a clear and substantial interference with another student's right to access educational programs.

3. Notice of Prohibition Against Bullying and Anti-Bullying Interventions

The _____ School District recognizes that students should have a safe, orderly, civil and positive learning environment and that bullying has no place and will not be tolerated in its schools. The _____ School District shall:

(a) Include the prohibition against bullying in the student or school handbook and in other ways make students and parents aware of the prohibition against bullying, the penalties for engaging in bullying, and the procedures for reporting bullying.

Inform students and parents that bullying that *does not* occur during the school day, on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored event still may be subject to disciplinary action, pursuant to 16 V.S.A. §§ 11(a) (32) and 1162(a)(3), if the misconduct can be shown to pose a clear and substantial interference with another student's equal access to educational programs.

Inform students and parents that any student, who knowingly makes false accusations regarding bullying, may be subject to disciplinary action

(b) Develop strategies for school staff to prevent and intervene in bullying

(c) Encourage parents to talk to their children about the harmful affects of bullying and to monitor their children's internet use.

4. Reporting, Investigating, and Notifying Parents of Bullying Reports

To address bullying, the _____ School District shall:

(a) Encourage students to report personally or anonymously to teachers and school administrators acts of bullying. The _____ School District has established the following methods for such reporting:

Anonymous Reporting: [provide location of drop box and/or describe other means here]

and

Personal Reporting: [provide name, title, mailing address, phone number of person designated to take bullying complaints here].

(b) Encourages parents or guardians of students to file written reports of suspected bullying. *See (a) above.*

(c) Requires teachers and other school staff, including contractors, who witness acts of bullying or receive student reports of bullying to promptly notify *[insert title of person identified in*

(a) above].

(d) Requires *[insert title of person identified in (a) above]* to accept and review all reports of bullying, including anonymous reports. If after initial inquiry, an anonymous or oral report appears to warrant further investigation, _____ school district shall promptly continue with an investigation. School administrators shall promptly investigate any written reports of misconduct that meet the definition of bullying.

(e) As with any other disciplinary action, require school staff to notify the parent or guardian of a student who commits a verified act of bullying of the response of the school staff and consequences that may result from further acts of bullying.

(f) To the extent permitted under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, (FERPA),¹ require school staff to notify the parent or guardian of a student who is a target of bullying of disciplinary action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying. (this requires the consent of the parents of the disciplined student or the student if he/she is over the age of 18 and not under legal guardianship).

(g) If necessary, develop a safety plan for the student who is the target of bullying, in consultation with his/her parent or legal guardian, to prevent further bullying.

5. Data Gathering

The _____ School District delegates the responsibility of data collection to: *[provide title of person]*. He/she shall collect data on the number of reported incidents of bullying and the number of incidents that have been verified and to make such data available to the Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Education and to the public. See the Department's Safe Schools Web page (www.state.vt.us/educ/new/html/pgm_safeschools.html#data) for further information on data gathering.

6. Strategies for Bullying Prevention and Intervention

The _____ School District shall employ the following strategies:

- Focus on whole school environments
- Assess bullying at each school
- Garner staff/parent support
- Form a group at each school to coordinate bullying prevention/ intervention activities
- Provide training for ALL staff members
- Establish and enforce school rules and policies regarding bullying
- Increase adult supervision in “hot spots” for bullying Intervene consistently and appropriately in bullying incidents
- Focus some classroom time on bullying prevention and intervention
- Continue efforts over time

¹ FERPA is a federal law governing the confidentiality of student records. See 34 C.F.R. §§ 99.1 *et seq.*

Appendix A: Quick Reference on Bullying Prevention & Intervention Possible Strategies for Prevention

- Assess the school environment.
- Adopt a comprehensive approach that considers the bully, the target and bystanders.
- Provide bullying prevention and intervention training to all faculty and staff.
- Closely supervise all areas of the school.
- Update discipline plan and procedures; adopt all legally required related policies.
- Utilize multiple means for publicizing clear behavioral standards/rules.
- Consistently and fairly enforce standards/rules.
- Establish an anonymous reporting system.
- Encourage parent and community involvement in bullying prevention.
- Use classroom management techniques for response to classroom behavior and when needed, use appropriate discipline.
- As warranted, refer victims and bullies to school counselors or mental health professionals.

The framework of Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) and the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program are comprehensive measures that schools can employ to reduce incidents of bullying, improve school climate and improve the academic achievement for all students.

Possible Steps for Intervening in Bullying Situations

- Intervene immediately to stop the bullying.
- Talk to the bully and the victim separately. If more than one student is involved in bullying behavior, talk to each separately, in quick succession. (Expect bullies to minimize [or] deny their actions.)
- Remind the bully about school and classroom rules, reiterate what behavior is expected, and discuss sanctions that will be imposed for future bullying behavior.
- Reassure the targeted student that everything possible will be done to prevent a recurrence.
- Make other students aware of the consequences of the bullying behavior. Reiterate the school's policy of zero tolerance toward bullying.
- Phone the parents of both the bully and the targeted student as soon as possible. If possible, involve the parents in designing a plan of action.
- Continue to monitor the behavior of the bully and the safety of the targeted student.
- Consult administrators, teachers, and staff members to alert them to the problem and to get a better understanding of it.
- If the situation doesn't change, remove the bully - not the targeted student from the classroom.

Education World citing The Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System of the London Family Court Clinic. www.education-world.com/a_issues/issues103.shtml

For bullying prevention and intervention, see also:

1. BEST: Building Effective Supports for Teaching Students with Behavioral Challenges. Call Anne Dubie, (802) 656-5775 or visit <http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/best/>.

2. Bullying Strategies That Work, Education World. www.education-world.com/a_issues/issues103.shtml
3. Blueprints for Violence Prevention. www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/
4. Think You Know What A Bully Looks Like? Think Again... National PTA. www.pta.org/bullying/
5. Project on Teasing and Bullying, Wellsley Centers for Women, www.wcwonline.org/bullying/
6. A World of Difference Institute. www.adl.org/education/edu_awod/awod_classroom.asp