

STUDENTS**BULLYING & TEEN DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICY**

The Bethel Board of Education is committed to creating and maintaining an educational environment that is physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe, and thus free from bullying, harassment, teen dating violence and discrimination. In accordance with state law and the Board's Safe School Climate Plan, the Board expressly prohibits any form of bullying behavior or teen dating violence 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 van; or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased, or used by Board of Education.

The Board also prohibits any form of bullying or teen dating violence behavior outside of the school setting if such bullying or teen dating violence (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying or teen dating violence was directed, (ii) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying or teen dating violence was directed at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. This includes bullying, harassment, teen dating violence or discrimination that is initiated off-campus through the use of personal electronic devices such as computers or cell phones. Discrimination and/or retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying or teen dating violence are likewise prohibited.

Students who engage in bullying or teen dating violence behavior shall be subject to school discipline, up to and including expulsion, in accordance with the Board's policies on student discipline, suspension and expulsion, and consistent with state and federal law.

For purposes of this policy, "**Bullying**" means 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 attending school in the same school district that:

- 1) causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property;
- 2) places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property;
- 3) creates a hostile environment at school for such student;
- 4) infringes on the rights of such student at school; or
- 5) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

For the purposes of this policy, "**Teen Dating Violence**" means any act of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassment and threatening that occurs between two students who are currently in or have been in a dating relationship.

STUDENTS**BULLYING & TEEN DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICY**

Bullying or teen dating violence 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 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.

For purposes of this policy, "**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.

Consistent with the requirements under state law, the Bethel Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent or his/her designee(s), along with the Safe School Climate Coordinator, to be responsible for developing and implementing a Safe School Climate Plan in furtherance of this policy. As provided by state law, such Safe School Climate Plan shall include, but not be limited to provisions which:

- (1) enable students to anonymously report acts of bullying or teen dating violence to school employees and require students and the parents or guardians of students to be notified annually of the process by which students may make such reports;
- (2) enable the parents or guardians of students to file written reports of suspected bullying or teen dating violence;
- (3) require school employees who witness acts of bullying or teen dating violence or receive reports of bullying to orally notify the Safe School Climate Specialist or another school administrator, 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 the Safe School Climate Specialist to investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying or teen dating violence and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written reports made under this section;
- (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;
- (6) include a prevention and intervention strategy for school employees to deal with bullying or teen dating violence;
- 7) provide for the inclusion of language concerning bullying or teen dating violence in student rules, procedures, and standards of conduct;

STUDENTS**BULLYING & TEEN DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICY**

- (8) require each school to notify the parents or guardians of students who commit any verified acts of bullying or teen dating violence and the parents or guardians of students against whom such acts were directed not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation;
- (9) require each school to invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying or teen dating violence and a meeting, separate and distinct from the meeting of the parents/guardians of the student against whom the acts of bullying or teen dating violence was directed to discuss specific interventions and to prevent further acts of bullying or teen dating violence;
- (10) establish a procedure for each school to document and maintain records relating to reports and investigations of bullying or teen dating violence in such school and to maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying in such school; to make such list available for public inspection, but without any information which could be used to identify specific students; and annually report the number of verified acts of bullying or teen dating violence to the Department of Education and in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education;
- (11) direct the development of case-by-case interventions for addressing repeated incidents of bullying or teen dating violence against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual that may include both counseling and discipline;
- (12) prohibit discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying or teen dating violence;
- (13) direct the development of Student Safety Support Plans for students against whom an act of bullying or teen dating violence was directed that address safety measures the school will take to protect such students against further acts of bullying or teen dating violence;
- (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 or teen dating violence constitute criminal conduct;
- (15) prohibit bullying or teen dating violence (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 van, 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 or teen dating violence (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying or teen dating violence was directed, (ii) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying or teen dating violence was directed at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school;

STUDENTS**BULLYING & TEEN DATING VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICY**

(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 Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-220a.

The notification required pursuant to subdivision (8) (above) and the invitation required pursuant to subdivision (9) (above) shall 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 or teen dating violence. Any information provided under this policy or accompanying Safe School Climate Plan shall be provided in accordance with the confidentiality restrictions imposed under the Family Educational Rights Privacy Act ("FERPA") and the district's Confidentiality and Access to Student Information policy and regulations.

The Bethel Board of Education shall approve the Safe School Climate Plan developed pursuant to this policy and submit such plan to the Department of Education. Not later than thirty (30) calendar days after approval by the Board, the Board shall make such plan available on the Board's web site and on each individual school's web sites, and ensure that the Safe School Climate Plan is included in the school district's publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools and in all student handbooks.

Legal References:

Public Act 11-232, *An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws*

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-145a

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-145o

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-220a

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-222d

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-222g

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-222h

Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-233a through 10-233f

Public Act 14-172 *An Act Concerning Improving Employment Opportunities through Education and Ensuring Safe School Climates*

Public Act 14-234 *An Act Concerning Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault*

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BETHEL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Bethel, CT