

## **THE WEBB SCHOOLS SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE PLAN**

The Webb Schools are committed to creating and maintaining a physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe educational environment free from bullying, harassment and discrimination. In order to foster an atmosphere conducive to learning, The Webb Schools have developed the following Safe School Climate Plan, consistent with state law and The Webb Schools Bullying Policy. This Plan represents a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying and sets forth The Webb Schools' expectations for creating a positive school climate and thus preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying.

Bullying behavior is strictly prohibited, and students who are determined to have engaged in such behavior are subject to disciplinary action. The Schools' commitment to addressing bullying behavior, however, involves a multi-faceted approach, which includes education and the promotion of a positive school climate in which bullying will not be tolerated by students or staff.

### **I. Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation**

- A. The Webb Schools prohibit any form of bullying behavior on school grounds; at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds; on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education; or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by The Webb Schools.
- B. The Webb Schools also prohibits any form of bullying behavior outside of the school setting if such bullying (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying was directed, (ii) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was directed at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school;
- C. In addition to prohibiting student acts which constitute bullying, The Webb Schools also prohibits discrimination and/or retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying.
- D. Students who engage in bullying behavior in violation of The Webb Schools' Policy and the Safe School Climate Plan shall be subject to school discipline in accordance with The Webb Schools' policies on student discipline and suspension and consistent with state and federal law.

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**II. Definition of Bullying**

- A. **“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 The Webb Schools 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.
- B. 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 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.

**III. Other Definitions**

- A. **“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.
- B. **“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, photo-electronic or photo-optical system;
- C. **“Hostile environment”** means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate;
- D. **“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;

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- E. **"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;
- F. **"Prevention and intervention strategy"** may include, but is not limited to, (1) 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, (2) school rules prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation and establishing appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts, (3) adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur, (4) inclusion of grade-appropriate bullying education and prevention curricula in kindergarten through high school, (5) individual interventions with the bully, parents and school employees, and interventions with the bullied child, parents and school employees, (6) school-wide training related to safe school climate, (7) student peer training, education and support, and (8) promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions.
- G. **"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.
- H. **"School employee"** means (1) a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school director, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by The Webb Schools; or (2) any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students.
- I. **"School-Sponsored Activity"** shall mean any activity conducted on or off school property (including school buses and other school-related vehicles) that is sponsored, recognized or authorized by The Webb Schools.

**IV. Leadership and Administrative Responsibilities**

A. Safe School Climate Coordinator

For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, the Director shall appoint a Safe School Climate Coordinator ("Coordinator"). The Coordinator shall:

- 1. be responsible for implementing the district's Safe School Climate Plan ("Plan");

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2. collaborate with Safe School Climate Specialists and the Director to prevent, identify and respond to bullying in the schools;
3. provide data and information, in collaboration with the Director, to the Department of Education regarding bullying as needed;
4. meet with Safe School Climate Specialists at least twice during the school year to discuss issues relating to bullying in the schools and to make recommendations concerning amendments to The Webb Schools' Plan.

**B. Safe School Climate Specialist**

For the school year commencing July 1, 2012, and each school year thereafter, the principal of each school (or principal's designee) shall serve as the Safe School Climate Specialist. The Safe School Climate Specialist shall investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying and act as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying and responding to reports of bullying in the school.

**V. Development and Review of Safe School Climate Plan**

- A. For the school year commencing July 1, 2012 and each school year thereafter, the Coordinator of each school shall establish a committee or designate at least one existing committee ("Committee") in the school to be responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate and addressing issues relating to bullying in the school.
- B. The Committee shall: 1) receive copies of completed reports following bullying investigations; 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 recommendations to the Coordinator regarding the Safe School Climate Plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school; 5) educate students, school employees and parents/guardians on issues relating to bullying; 6) collaborate with the 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.
- C. Not later than January 1, 2012, The Webb Schools shall approve the Safe School Climate Plan developed pursuant to The Webb Schools policy and submit such plan to the Department of Education. Not later than thirty (30) calendar days after approval by Council, The Webb Schools shall make such plan available on The Webb Schools's website and

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ensure that the Safe School Climate Plan is included in the school's publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for the schools and in all student handbooks.

**VI. Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Complaints of Bullying**

- A. Students and parents (or guardians of students) may file written reports of bullying. Written reports of bullying shall be reasonably specific as to the basis for the report, including the time and place of the alleged conduct, the number of incidents, the target of the suspected bullying, and the names of potential witnesses. Such reports may be filed with any administrator and/or the Safe School Climate Specialist (i.e. school principal), and all reports shall be forwarded to the Safe School Climate Specialist for review and actions consistent with this Plan.
- B. Students may make anonymous reports of bullying to any school employee. Students may also request anonymity when making a report, even if the student's identity is known to the school employee. In cases where a student requests anonymity, the Safe School Climate Specialist or his/her designee shall meet with the student (if the student's identity is known) to review the request for anonymity and discuss the impact that maintaining the anonymity of the complainant may have on the investigation and on any possible remedial action. All anonymous reports shall be reviewed and reasonable action will be taken to address the situation, to the extent such action may be taken that does not disclose the source of the report, and 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.
- C. School employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying shall orally notify the Safe School Climate Specialist or another school administrator if the Safe School Climate Specialist is unavailable, as soon as possible but **not later than one (1) school day** after such school employee witnesses or receives a report of bullying. The school employee shall then file a **written report not later than two (2) school days** after making such oral report.
- D. The Safe School Specialist shall be responsible for reviewing any anonymous reports of bullying and shall investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written reports. In order to allow the school to adequately investigate complaints filed by a student or

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parent/guardian, the parent of the student suspected of being bullied should be asked to provide consent to permit the release of that student's name in connection with the investigation process, unless the student and/or parent has requested anonymity.

- E. In investigating reports of bullying, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegations and the ages of the students involved. The Safe School Climate Specialist will interview witnesses, as necessary, reminding the alleged perpetrator and other parties that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

**VII. Responding to Verified Acts of Bullying**

- A. Following investigation, if acts of bullying are verified, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall notify the parents or guardians of the students against whom such acts were directed as well as the parents or guardians of the students who commit such acts of bullying of the finding **not later than forty-eight hours** after the investigation is completed. This notification shall include a description of the school's response to the acts of bullying. In providing such notification, however, care must be taken to respect the statutory privacy rights of other students, including the perpetrator of such bullying. The specific disciplinary consequences imposed on the perpetrator, or personally identifiable information about a student other than the parent/guardian's own child, may not be disclosed except as provided by law.
- B. In any instance in which bullying is verified, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall also invite the parents or guardians of the student who commits any verified act of bullying and the parents or guardian of the student against whom such act was directed to a meeting to communicate the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the student/victim and to prevent further acts of bullying. The invitation may be made simultaneous with the notification described above in Section VII.A. The purpose of the meeting is to communicate to parents/guardians the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the student involved and to prevent further acts of bullying. Normally, separate meetings shall be held with the respective parents.
- C. If bullying is verified, the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall develop a student safety support plan for any student against whom an act of bullying was directed. Such support plan will include safety measures to protect against further acts of bullying.

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- D. A specific written intervention plan shall be developed to address repeated incidents of bullying against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual. The written intervention plan may include counseling, discipline and other appropriate remedial actions as determined by the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee, and may also incorporate a student safety support plan, as appropriate.
- E. Notice to Law Enforcement  
If the Principal of a school (or his/her designee) reasonably believes that any act of bullying constitutes a criminal offense, he/she shall notify appropriate law enforcement. Notice shall be consistent with The Webb Schools' obligations under state and federal law and The Webb Schools policy regarding the disclosure of personally identifiable student information. In making this determination, the Principal or his/her designee, shall consult with the school Director and other individuals as deemed appropriate.
- F. If a bullying complaint raises concern about discrimination or harassment on the basis of a legally protected classifications (such as race, religion, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age or disability), the Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall also coordinate any investigation with Title IX Coordinator.

**VIII. Documentation and Maintenance of Log**

- A. Each school shall maintain written reports of bullying, along with supporting documentation received and/or created as a result of bullying investigations, consistent with The Webb Schools' obligations under state and federal law. Any educational record containing personally identifiable student information pertaining to an individual student shall be maintained in a confidential manner, and shall not be disclosed to third parties without prior written consent of a parent, guardian or eligible student, except as permitted under The Webb Schools' policy and state and federal law.
- B. The Principal of each school shall maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying in the school. Consistent with the schools' obligation under state and federal law regarding student privacy, the log shall not contain any personally identifiable student information, or any information that alone or in combination would allow a reasonable person in the school community to identify the students involved. Accordingly, the log should be limited to basic information such as the number of verified acts, name of school and/or grade level and

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relevant date. Given that any determination of bullying involves repeated acts, each investigation that results in a verified act of bullying for that school year shall be tallied as one verified act of bullying unless the specific actions that are the subject of each report involve separate and distinct acts of bullying. The list shall be limited to the number of verified acts of bullying in each school and 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.

- C. The Principal of each school shall report the number of verified acts of bullying in the school annually to the Department of Education in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education.

**IX. Other Prevention and Intervention Strategies**

- A. Bullying behavior can take many forms and can vary dramatically in the nature of the offense and the impact the behavior may have 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 traditional disciplinary action against the perpetrator of such bullying, whether and to what extent to impose disciplinary action (e.g., detention, suspensions, etc. is a matter for the professional discretion of the school principal and the Director or his/her designee. No disciplinary action may be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous complaint. As discussed below, schools may also consider appropriate alternative to traditional disciplinary sanctions, including age-appropriate consequences and other restorative or remedial interventions.
- B. A specific written intervention plan shall be developed to address repeated incidents of bullying against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual. This plan may include safety provisions, as described above, for students against whom acts of bullying have been verified and may include other interventions such as counseling, discipline, and other appropriate remedial or restorative actions as determined by the responsible administrator.
- C. The following sets forth possible interventions which may also be utilized to enforce The Webb Schools’ prohibition against bullying:
  - i. Non-disciplinary interventions

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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. Students may also be subject to other forms of restorative discipline or remedial actions, appropriate to the age of the students and nature of the behavior.

If a complaint arises out of conflict between students or groups of students, peer or other forms of 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.

ii. 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, however, shall not be the basis for disciplinary action.

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 Webb Schools' Student Discipline policy.

iii. Interventions for bullied students

The school principal or his/her designee shall intervene in order to address incidents of bullying against a single individual. Intervention strategies for a bullied student may include the following:

- a. Counseling;
- b. Increased supervision and monitoring of student to observe and intervene in bullying situations;
- c. Encouragement of student to seek help when victimized or witnessing victimization;
- d. Peer mediation or other forms of mediation, where appropriate;
- e. Student Safety Support plan; and
- f. Restitution and/or restorative interventions.

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iv. 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 actions may ameliorate potential problems with bullying in school or at school-sponsored activities. While no specific action is required, and school needs for specific prevention and intervention strategies may vary from time to time, the following list of potential prevention and intervention strategies shall serve as a resource for administrators, teachers and other professional employees in each school. Such prevention and intervention strategies may include, but are not limited to:

- a. school rules prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation and establishing appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts;
- b. Adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur;
- c. Inclusion of grade-appropriate bullying education and prevention curricula in kindergarten through high school, which may include instruction regarding building safe and positive school communities including developing healthy relationships and preventing dating violence as deemed appropriate for older students;
- d. Individual interventions with the perpetrator, parents and school employees, and interventions with the bullied student, parents and school employees;
- e. School-wide training related to safe school climate, which training may include Title IX/Sexual harassment training, ADA Training, cultural diversity/multicultural education, or other training in federal and state civil rights legislation or other topics relevant to safe school climate;
- f. Student peer training, education and support; and
- g. Promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions;
- h. 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;
- i. Respectful responses to bullying concerns raised by students, parents or staff;

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- j. Planned professional development programs addressing prevention and intervention strategies, which training may include school violence prevention, conflict resolution and prevention of bullying, with a focus in evidence based practices concerning same;
  - k. Use of peers to help ameliorate the plight of victims and include them in group activities;
  - l. Avoidance of sex-role stereotyping;
  - m. Continuing awareness and involvement on the part of school employees and parents with regards to prevention and intervention strategies;
  - n. Modeling by teachers 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.
- D. In addition to prevention and intervention strategies, administrators, teachers, clinicians, and other professional employees may find opportunities to educate students about bullying and help eliminate bullying behavior through class discussions, counseling, and reinforcement of socially-appropriate behavior. Administrators, teachers, clinicians, and other professional employees should intervene promptly whenever they observe mean-spirited student conduct, even if such conduct does not meet the formal definition of “bullying.”

### **X. Improving School Climate**

The Webb Schools recognizes that a positive school climate is crucial in reducing or eliminating bullying conduct in its schools. The measures described in this Safe School Climate Plan are designed to promote a positive school climate, and their successful implementation involves a partnership among administrators, teachers, other staff members, parents and students themselves. This Plan is subject to periodic review and revision to assure that it effectively promotes a positive school climate. All members of the school community are encouraged to participate in that effort by conveying to the Safe School Climate Coordinator their questions, concerns and recommendations regarding this Plan and its implementation.

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**XI. Annual Notice and Training**

- A. Students, and parents or guardians of students shall be notified annually of the process by which students may make reports of bullying.
- B. The Webb Schools shall provide for the inclusion of language in student codes of conduct concerning bullying.
- C. At the beginning of each school year, each school shall provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of the school district's safe school climate plan and require that all school employees annually complete training on the identification, prevention and response to bullying as required by law.

**XII. School Climate Assessments**

On and after July 1, 2012, and biennially thereafter, The Webb Schools shall require each school to complete an assessment using the school climate assessment instruments, including surveys, approved and disseminated by the Department of Education. The Webb Schools shall collect the school climate assessments for each school in the district and submit such assessments to the Department.

Legal References:

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

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222d

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

Connecticut State Department of Education Circular Letter C-8,

Series 2008-2009 (March 16, 2009)

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