

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR OPERATIONS

School Climate Plan

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Policy

The Unified School District #2 shall prohibit bullying in any form while maintaining an environment where the quality and character of school life, particularly the quality of the relationships within the school community between and among students and adults is one that promotes a safe and nurturing environment for teaching and learning.

Each USD #2 school shall implement a School Climate Plan consistent with this policy and with the requirements of the State Education Department (SED).

Notification

School Climate Plans shall be made available no later than 30 calendar days after approval and revision via:

- the DCF and USD #2 website;
- the DCF Policy Manual; and
- in all USD #2 publications of rules, procedures and standards of conduct for its schools.

All new students shall, upon enrollment into USD #2, be informed of the School Climate Plan.

At the beginning of each school year USD #2 shall provide a copy of the School Climate Plan to all school employees in either written or electronic format.

Definitions

Bullying means the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, directed at or referring to another student attending school in USD #2 or a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending USD #2 , that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damages such student's property;
- places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- creates a hostile environment at school for such student;
- infringes on the rights of such student at school; or
- 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 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.

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.

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Definitions
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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.

Hostile environment means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate.

Mean-spirited behavior means behavior that humiliates, isolates or diminishes another student. Unintentional mean-spirited behavior presents a “teachable moment” that causes the perpetrator to change his or her behavior. Intentional mean-spirited behavior may meet the definition of bullying and requires early and consistent intervention by all school community members.

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, text messaging and 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.

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 USD #2.

Prevention and intervention strategy may include, but is not limited to, (1) implementation of a positive behavioral interventions and supports process or other evidence-based model identified by SDE 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, lunchrooms and other areas where bullying is likely to occur, (4) inclusion of grade-appropriate bullying education and prevention curricula in all grades (5) individual interventions with the bullying child, 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 and team participation in meetings and trainings.

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.

School employee means (1) a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by USD #2; or (2) any other individual who has regular contact with USD #2 students and who provides education services to or on behalf of USD #2 students.

School-sponsored activity shall mean any activity conducted on or off school property (including school vehicles) that is sponsored, recognized or authorized by the USD #2 of Education.

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District School Climate Coordinator

The Superintendent of USD #2 shall designate, from existing staff, a District School Climate Coordinator, who shall:

- facilitate the District School Climate Team;
- ensure the implementation of the District School Climate Plan;
- provide leadership to the School Climate Specialists;
- plan and implement, along with administrators and School Climate Specialists, annual training for School Climate Team members;
- create, along with School Climate Team members, annual training modules for school employees;
- ensure that all school employees receive annual training;
- provide timely and accurate data to the Superintendent, District, and CSDE as requested and as required by state statute;
- facilitate annual revisions to the District School Climate Plan based on feedback from School Climate Teams; and
- review all reports of suspected bullying and investigation reports.

School Climate Team

The District School Climate Coordinator shall establish a District School Climate Team, membership of which shall include:

- all School Climate Specialists;
- parents; and
- students.

The School Climate Team shall:

- meet quarterly;
- review and amend, as necessary, the District Safe School Climate Plan;
- review all District data and measurements of school climate;
- make recommendations to the Superintendent regarding necessary changes to USD #2 Policy;
- perform any other duties as determined by the School Climate Coordinator related to improving school climate (including, but not limited to the prevention, intervention and response to school bullying); and
- gather and disseminate to School Climate Committees best practice information on the prevention, intervention and response to bullying and youth suicide.

School Climate Specialist

The school Principal shall serve as, the School Climate Specialist for his or her school and shall:

- provide leadership to the school community in the prevention, intervention and response to reports of bullying, discrimination and other mean-spirited behavior in the school;
- ensure implementation of the District's Safe School Climate Plan;
- ensure that all students, parents and school employees are notified annually of how they can make reports of bullying;
- chair the School Climate Committee;

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School Climate Specialist (Continued)

- coordinate the provision of annual training to all staff on the prevention, intervention and response to bullying, discrimination and otherwise mean-spirited behavior in schools and on the prevention, intervention and response to youth suicide in collaboration with the School Climate Committee;
- coordinate the school's efforts in gathering multiple measures of school climate data;
- use the above-mentioned data to lead the development of the School Climate Improvement Plan in alignment with the District plan;
- serve as his or her school's representative on the District School Climate Committee;
- investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying in accordance with the District School Climate Plan and USD #2 Policy;
- ensure the implementation of intervention and response plans for all verified acts of bullying; and
- collect and maintain records of verbal and written reports and investigations of bullying in his or her school.

School Climate Committee

Every school year, each Principal shall designate a committee to be responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate. The Principal shall name the members of the team, which may include staff, students, parents and community members.

The School Climate Committee shall:

- receive copies of completed reports following investigations of bullying (parents, students or community members cannot receive confidential information including identifying information);
- identify and address patterns of bullying among students in the school;
- review and make recommendations to amend school policies and practices relating to bullying;
- review and make recommendations to the School Climate Coordinator regarding the School Climate Plan based on issues and experiences specific to the school;
- educate students, school employees, parents and guardians of students about issues relating to school climate and bullying;
- collaborate with the School Climate Specialist in the collection of data regarding school climate and bullying in accordance with the School Climate Plan and state statute; and
- perform any other duties determined by the Principal to be related to improving school climate and to the prevention, intervention and response to school bullying, discrimination or otherwise mean-spirited behavior for the school.

Note: Any parent or guardian, student or community member serving on the committee shall not participate in activities that may impact students' or families' privacy rights.

Training and Professional Development - All School Staff

USD #2 shall require that all school employees receive annual training which will address prevention, identification and response to bullying, discrimination and otherwise mean-spirited behavior and preventing and responding to youth suicide. This training shall be developed by the District School Climate Team and made available to all School Climate Teams.

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Training and Professional Development - All School Staff
(Continued)

The professional development plan shall be articulated annually as part of the District's professional development plan.

Note: As a part of the school climate improvement process and based upon school climate assessment data, additional training and professional development may be necessary at a specific school.

Training and Professional Development - School Climate Specialists

All School Climate Specialists shall receive annual professional development that will assist in the continuous improvement of school climate. Training may include, but is not limited to:

- conducting bullying investigations;
- intervention and response to bullying for both victim and perpetrator;
- restorative disciplinary procedures;
- school-wide best practices in improving school climate; and
- School Improvement Committee facilitation.

Training and Professional Development - School Climate Committee Members

All School Climate Committee members shall receive annual training to assist with the school climate improvement planning process. This training may include, but is not limited to:

- school climate improvement planning;
- intervention and response to bullying; and
- school-wide best practice initiatives.

Annual Survey and Assessment

Subject to available funding, USD #2 shall conduct an annual survey of students, parents and school employees. This survey shall cover the five dimensions of school climate:

- norms;
- relationships (student to student, adult to student, adult to adult);
- teaching and learning;
- student, family and staff voice and engagement; and
- physical environment.

Assessment survey instruments shall meet the following criteria:

- be reliable and valid;
 - recognize student, parent, guardian and school employee "voices";
 - be aligned between students, parents and school employees;
 - assess the major aspects of school climate;
 - result in a detailed report that provides a summary of findings and in-depth profiles that describe how people responded overall and in key subgroups;
 - provide data to the School Climate Improvement Team and school community within three weeks of completion; and
 - provide practical and concrete information to assist each School Climate Committee in using the data as a springboard for planning.
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School Improvement Plans

As part of the safe school climate process, each school's team shall review annually the current practices meant to create and sustain a positive school climate free from harassment, bullying, discrimination and otherwise mean-spirited behavior. Each school shall submit a Safe School Climate Improvement Plan.

The plan shall describe prevention activities that are aligned with school data and goals for safe school climate improvement. The plan shall be reviewed by the District Safe School Climate Team to allow for best practice sharing between and among schools. The plan shall be published on the USD #2 website.

Activities may include, but are not limited to:

- implementing an evidence-based program utilizing positive behavioral supports;
- implementing evidence-based practices that not only intervene with the perpetrator and the victim, but also with bystanders;
- create, review, revise and implement grade-appropriate bullying prevention curricula;
- ensure annually that all students know how to report any incident of mean-spirited behavior that might be bullying, including anonymous reporting; and
- ensure that all new staff members receive annual training about their responsibility to report incidents and intervene with students.

Bullying Complaints

Students may file:

- verbal reports to school employees;
- written reports; and
- anonymous reports.

Each school shall inform students of the process for anonymous reporting annually.

The Safe School Climate Specialist shall review anonymous reports and prohibit disciplinary action solely based upon an anonymous report.

Parents may file written reports.

School employees who witness acts of bullying, harassment or mean-spirited behavior or receive reports of bullying shall:

- verbally notify the School Climate Specialist (Principal) as soon as possible, but not later than one school day after witnessing or receiving a report; and
- file a written report as soon as possible, but not later than one school day after making a verbal report.

Bullying Investigations

All reports of suspected bullying or discrimination shall be investigated. The School Climate Specialist shall investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying, including anonymous reports, and ensure that such investigations are completed thoroughly and promptly after receipt of a written report.

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Bullying Investigations (Continued)

Upon completion of the investigation, the School Climate Specialist or the investigator shall write a report indicating the nature of the allegation, the actions taken to investigate the report and the conclusion reached concerning the validity of the allegation based upon the investigation.

Verified Acts of Bullying

When the School Climate Specialist concludes that a verified act of bullying has occurred, parents of both the victim and the perpetrator shall be notified within 48 hours after the completion of the investigation. The notice shall:

- describe the school's response and any consequences that may result from further acts of bullying; and
- shall:
 - invite the parents to a meeting with the school to describe the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the student against whom such act was directed;
 - to prevent acts of retaliation against the individual who reported, any individual who assisted in the investigation and the victim; and
 - to prevent further acts of bullying.

Note: The meetings with the parents of the victim and the parents of the perpetrator shall be separate.

Notification to Law Enforcement

The Principal shall notify the appropriate law enforcement agency when any act(s) of bullying constitute criminal activity. When such a report is made, the Principal shall inform the District School Climate Coordinator within one school day of making such report.

School Safety and Intervention Plans

For each verified act of bullying, a written plan shall be developed for both the victim and the perpetrator.

For the victim, this plan shall:

- include a school safety plan that describes what school staff will do to ensure safety in the school environment;
- include an intervention strategy to teach the skills and dispositions necessary to decrease the likelihood of further victimization;
- identify a case manager;
- be provided to the parent and shared with the student; and
- be monitored by the School Climate Specialist or designee (to be identified in the plan) to ensure implementation fidelity and adjusted as necessary to provide a safe environment.

Note: At no time shall the plan for the victim further isolate the victim. If changes to schedules, programs and activities need to be made to provide safety, they shall not negatively affect the victim in any way.

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**School
Safety and
Intervention
Plans**

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For the perpetrator, this plan shall:

- include any discipline imposed;
 - include consequences should bullying occur again;
 - state that retaliation against the victim, the reporter or any individual participating in the investigation is prohibited and will result in disciplinary action;
 - identify a case manager;
 - be provided to the parent and shared with the student;
 - include an intervention strategy designed to teach the skills and dispositions necessary for participation in a safe school climate; and
 - include actions to be taken to restore the student into the community (restorative discipline).
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