

Safe School Climate Plan

High Road Schools of Connecticut

2024-2025 School Year

Updated 8.1.2024

The High Road Schools of Connecticut Safe School Climate Plan addresses the mandated areas of compliance which are required under C.G.S. 10-222d as amended by P.A. 11-232. High Road Schools commit to update the Plan and its implementation biennially in order to best serve its stakeholders.

High Road Schools promote a positive school climate, conducive to teaching and learning, that is free from threat, harassment, and any type of bullying behavior. Therefore, it is the policy of High Road Schools that bullying of a student by another student is prohibited.

I. DEFINITION

As defined in Connecticut General Statutes 10-222d (2022),

“Bullying” is defined as an act that is direct or indirect and severe, persistent or pervasive, which

- (A) Causes physical or emotional harm to an individual,
- (B) Places an individual in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm, or
- (C) Infringes on the rights or opportunities of an individual at school.

Bullying shall include, but need not be limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or 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.

“Teen dating violence” means any act of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening, that occurs between two students who are currently in or who have recently been in a dating relationship.

II. HIGH ROAD SCHOOLS POLICY

A comprehensive plan, involving everyone in the schools and the community, to address bullying at all school levels is essential to reducing incidences of bullying. Such a plan must involve interventions at all levels-schoolwide, classroom and individual.

1. Parents and students will be notified in writing annually of the process by which they may report bullying. Anonymous reports of bullying by students and written reports by parents/guardians are permitted. Students may anonymously report by providing a note to their teacher, school social worker, or school administrator. The note/bullying report form can be folded in half and stapled shut for confidentiality and left on a social worker's desk. No name is required.
2. Teachers and other school staff are required to notify school administrators in writing of bullying acts they witness and students' reports of bullying they receive.
3. School administrators/the Safe School Climate Specialist are required to investigate parent/guardian written reports and review students' anonymous reports, except that no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
4. The school will develop a case-by-case intervention strategy for school staff to address bullying incidents committed more than once against any student during the school year that may include counseling and discipline.
5. The school will include language about bullying in student codes of conduct.
6. The school will provide notice to parents/guardians of students who commit any verified acts of bullying and the parents/guardians of students against whom such acts were directed and invite them to attend at least one meeting. The notice will describe the school's response to such acts and any consequences that may result from further acts of bullying.
7. The school will maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying and make such list available for public inspection. The school will report such number to the Department of Education annually and in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education.
8. The school will identify appropriate school personnel responsible for taking a bullying report and investigating the complaint.
9. All school employees will be provided with a written or electronic copy of the Safe School Climate Plan, and will receive annual training about the plan.

High Road Schools commit to prompt and reasonable investigations of alleged acts of bullying. The administrator of each school or his/her designee is responsible for handling all complaints of alleged bullying.

This policy shall be included in all parent/student and employee handbooks, and will be posted on the school website.

III. INVESTIGATIONS

Parents/guardians of a student may file a written report of suspected bullying. School employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying with orally notify the Safe School Climate Specialist or a school administrator no later than one school day after they have witnessed or received a report of bullying. School employees will then file a written report not later than two school days after making the oral report.

The Safe School Climate Specialist will investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and ensure that investigations are completed promptly. They will also ensure that the parent/guardian of the student alleged to have committed bullying and the parent/guardian of the student against whom the alleged bullying was directed will be promptly notified that an investigation has commenced.

Students may anonymously report acts of bullying to school staff. The safe school climate specialist will review any anonymous reports, but per state legislation, no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying is prohibited.

A written report of the investigation will be prepared when the investigation is complete. The report will include finding of facts, a determination of whether the acts of bullying were verified, and, when acts of bullying are verified, a recommendation for intervention, including any disciplinary action. When appropriate, witness statements will accompany the report.

Parents/guardians of students who commit any verified acts of bullying and the parents/guardians of students against whom such acts were directed will be notified by the school verbally and by electronic mail (if electronic mail addresses are known) not later than forty-eight (48) hours after the completion of the investigation. The school will be required to invite the parents/guardians of a student against whom bullying was directed to a meeting to communicate the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of their child, and to review the policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying. The school is also required to invite the parents/guardians of a student who committed a verified act of bullying to a separate meeting to discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying.

The school will maintain a copy of the letter substantiating or not substantiating the incident of bullying in the student's official school record. Reports and investigations will be maintained by school administration. A list of the number of verified acts will be maintained, and available for public inspection upon request. In addition, the school will report the number of verified acts of bullying to the Connecticut State Department of Education as prescribed by the Commissioner of

Education.

IV. CONSEQUENCES

Bullying is prohibited on school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the school, or through the use of an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school. In addition, it is prohibited outside of the school setting if such bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the student against who it was directed, or if it infringes on the rights of the student against whom it was directed, or if it substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school. Students who are determined to be the perpetrator of a verified bullying act are subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including suspension, expulsion and/or referral to law enforcement officials. No disciplinary action will take place solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

V. INTERVENTIONS FOR BULLIED STUDENTS

A student safety support plan will be completed for all verified acts of bullying to address safety measures the school will take to protect such students against further acts of bullying.

Additional intervention strategies for a bullied student may include but are not limited to the following:

- Increased school counseling
- Increased supervision and monitoring of student to observe and intervene in bullying situations
- Encouragement of student to seek help when victimized or witnessing victimization
- Peer mediation when appropriate
- Peer support from positive peer
- Bullying curriculum

The school administrator may notify the local law enforcement agency when they believe that any act of bullying constitutes criminal conduct.

VI. GENERAL PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Aside from conducting prompt investigations and direct interventions when acts of bullying are verified, efforts will be dedicated to the prevention of bullying.

Prevention efforts may include but are not limited to:

- Schoolwide positive behavior support model
- Safe School Climate assessments will be provided to students, staff and parents and re-implemented biennially
- Establishment of a Safe School Climate Committee to foster safe school climates within the region
- Incorporation of anti-bullying curriculum and activities into social skills lessons to promote positive peer relationships
- Constant adult supervision of students during less structure times of the school day
- Planned professional development activities for staff to increase awareness and training surrounding safe school climate
- Modeling by all school employees of positive, respectful and supportive behavior toward each other and students

XII. SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE COMMITTEE AND POSITIONS

High Road School employees have the opportunity to serve on the Safe School Climate Committee, where surveys and any reports of bullying will be reviewed for ongoing efforts to improve and maintain the therapeutic milieu High Road Schools provide.

There will be a Safe School Climate Coordinator, assumed by the role of the Region Director, who will implement the Plan, collaborate with the staff to prevent and respond to bullying among the schools, provides data derived from the Plan's assessments to the State Department of Education, and will be an active member of the Safe School Climate Plan committee.

There is also a Safe School Climate Specialist, assumed by the role of Regional Director, who will investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying in the schools in accordance with the Plan, collect and maintain records of reports and investigations and acts as the primary official responsible for preventing and responding to bully reports.

Safe School Climate Coordinator for High Road Schools:

Deana Tyler, Regional Director
(203) 265-5507

Safe School Climate Contact for High Road Schools:

Jennifer Johnson, Regional Director
(860) 695-7950

Title IX remains a critical federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex (including sexual harassment) in our schools. It protects male and female

students and employees in any educational entity that receives federal funds. In addition, Title IX protects transgender students and students who do not conform to sex stereotypes. State law also prohibits discrimination based on gender (sex), gender expression, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Senate Bill 1375 strengthens and expands the Title IX and state sex equity in education requirements.