

Common Ground High School
Safe School Climate Plan
2011-2012

Common Ground seeks to promote a secure and happy school climate, conducive to teaching and learning. A school environment in which students feel safe, supported, engaged and helpfully challenged is optimal for learning and healthy development. The school seeks an environment in which students and adults feel socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe; an environment that is free of harassment, intimidation and bullying. Therefore it shall be the policy of Common Ground that bullying of a student by another student is prohibited.

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 the same school district or a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same school district that:

- A. causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student’s property,
- B. places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property,
- C. creates a hostile environment at school for such student,
- D. infringes on the rights of such student at school, or
- E. substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bullying shall include, but 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. (The student against whom the activity is directed must be attending school in the same district as the students engaged in the activity.)

“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.

“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.

“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;

“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.

“School employee” means (a) a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by a local or regional board of education or working in a public elementary, middle or high school; or (b) any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in a public elementary, middle or high school, pursuant to a contract with the local or regional board of education.

“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. (and reflects norms, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices and organizational structures.)

Examples of bullying include, but are not limited to:

1. physical violence and attacks
2. verbal taunts, name-calling and put-downs including ethnically-based or gender-based verbal put-downs
3. threats and intimidation
4. extortion or stealing of money and/or possessions
5. exclusion from peer groups within the school

6. The misuse of electronic communications for the purpose of bullying, harassing, or sexually harassing other students within school or out of school (“cyberbullying”)

7. Targeting of a student based on the student’s actual or perceived “differentiating” characteristics such as race; color; religion; ancestry; national origin; gender; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; socioeconomic or academic status; physical appearance; or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability.

REPORTING

1. Students may report acts of bullying to any school employee,
2. Students may report acts of bullying anonymously to any school employee (a mechanism to facilitate anonymous reporting will be developed by the safe School Climate Committee)
3. Parents are encouraged to call school employees or school/program administrators if they feel bullying has occurred and will be asked to submit a written request to initiate an investigation
4. School employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying must orally notify the safe school climate specialist or another school administrator if the safe school climate specialist is unavailable, not later than one school day after such school employee witnesses or receives a report of bullying, and file a written report not later than two school days after making such an oral report (the school’s bullying/harassment reporting form should be utilized)

INVESTIGATION AND FOLLOW-UP

1. The safe school climate specialist must investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written report
2. The safe school climate specialist must review any anonymous reports, except that no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report
3. The school must notify parents or guardians of all students involved in a verified act of bullying not later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation. The notice shall be simultaneously mailed to the parent/guardian with whom the student primarily resides and to the other parent/guardian if requested. The notice must describe the school’s response and any consequences that may result from further acts of bullying.

4. The school will invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying and the parents or guardians of the student against whom such act was directed, to a meeting to communicate to such parents or guardians the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the student against whom such act was directed and to prevent further acts of bullying;
5. The school will prohibit discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying
6. The principal of a school or the principal's designee will notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when such principal or the principal's designee believes that any acts of bullying constitute criminal conduct

PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

The school will:

1. Ensure that language about bullying and the school's policy against bullying are clearly stated in student codes of conduct.
2. Utilize a positive behavioral interventions and supports process to promote a safe, school climate
3. Ensure adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom, and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur
4. Provide bullying education and prevention curricula in guidance
5. Develop case-by-case interventions for addressing reported incidents of bullying against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual that may include both counseling and discipline
6. Develop student safety support plans for students against whom an act of bullying was directed that addresses safety measures the school will take to protect such students against further acts of bullying
7. Promote and utilize peer mentoring and mediation programs
8. Promote parent involvement through individual meetings, parent education, and through parent involvement in the Safe School Climate Committee
9. Provide annual training to all staff regarding the identification and prevention of and response to school bullying, as well as the prevention of and response to youth suicide
10. Create a safe school climate committee to develop and foster a safe school climate and address issues related to bullying in the school. The committee will include at least one parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the school.

NOTIFICATIONS

1. Students, parents, and staff will be notified annually of the process by which they may report bullying

2. The Safe School Climate Plan will be given to all school employees, students and parents at the beginning of the school year and posted on the school website
3. All verified acts of bullying will be reported to the state annually.