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**Legislative Update**

In 2011, during the regular session of the 82nd Texas Legislature, lawmakers decided legislative action was necessary to ensure school districts respond to reports of bullying in a consistent and proactive manner. The following is a brief description of the laws that were passed and enacted into law:

**SB 407**-Requires the Texas School Safety Center to develop education programs that address “sexting” (sexually explicit materials or photos sent by text message) and provides for non-felony responses to incidents of sexting by minors.

**SB 471 and HB 1942**- Starting in 2012-2013- Expands the requirements on school districts to address bullying and harassment, such as parental notification, education programs for students and staff, providing counseling to bullies and victims, and protecting those who report bullying.

**HB 1942**-Expands the definition of bullying and allows school districts to transfer the bully to another classroom or campus within the district.

**HB 1386**- Requires the development of intervention and prevention programs to train staff to recognize potential suicide victims, to include students targeted.

**THE LAW**

**The Fort Bend ISD Freedom from Bullying policy** [Board Policy FFI (Local)](http://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Search/483?filter=Board%20Policy%20FFI%20(local)) addresses written or verbal expression or physical conduct that would be considered bullying of its students. The District policy defines bullying, timely reporting, reporting procedures, district action and confidentiality. If this type of activity is a concern at school, please contact your school administrator so they can help resolve these problems. We want all of our students to feel welcome, physically safe, emotionally secure and happy. <http://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Search/483?filter=bullying>

**Bullying Definition:**

Bullying means engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that occurs on school property, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, or in a vehicle operated by the District and that:

• Has the effect or will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student’s property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student’s person or of damage to the student’s property; or

• Is sufficiently severe, persistent, and pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening or

abusive educational environment for a student.

**This conduct is considered bullying if it:**

• Exploits an imbalance of power between the student perpetrator and the student victim through written or verbal expression or physical conduct; and

• Interferes with a student’s education or substantially disrupts the operation of a school.

The District prohibits retaliation by a student or district employee against any person who in good faith makes a report of bullying, serves as a witness, or participates in an investigation. A student who intentionally makes a false claim, offers false statements, or refuses to cooperate with a District investigation regarding bullying shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

 

**Bullying Basics**

**Who is Most at Risk?**

• Children who belong to a minority, racial or ethnic group

• Children with mental or physical disabilities

• Children who are overweight

• Children who are new to the community

• Children who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender

• Children who don’t “fit in” or are perceived as different

**We now know that:**

Bullying is **NOT**..........prewired, harmless, or inevitable

Bullying **IS**..................learned, harmful, and controllable

Bullying **SPREADS**......if supported or left unchecked

Bullying **INVOLVES**.....everyone – bullies, targets, and bystanders

Bullying **CAN BE**.........effectively stopped or entirely prevented

**Most bullying is not reported because children:**

• Don’t recognize bullying

• Are embarrassed

• Don’t want to appear weak

• Want to belong

• Fear retaliation

• Don’t know how to talk about bullying

• Don’t have a trusted adult in whom to confide

• Think adults don’t understand

• Think nothing can be done about bullying

**Characteristics of Those Involved in Bullying**

**The Bully**

Students that engage in bullying behavior towards their peers are called bullies. Often, these students require support to change their behavior and address any other challenges that may be influencing their behavior. Students who bully are more likely to:

• Report poorer academic achievement

• Perceive the school setting as a negative environment

• Take part in frequent fights

• Steal and/or vandalize property

• Use drugs, alcohol, and tobacco

• Lack the ability to empathize

• Be truant and/or drop out of school

• Carry a gun

• Have a positive attitude towards violence

**The Target (Victim)**

• Social isolation

• Fragile or vulnerable

• Lack of assertiveness

• Submissive and anxious

• Low self-esteem

• Higher rates of depression

• Physical or mental disabilities

• Gender, religious, racial or cultural differences

**The Bystander**

• Generally passive

• Likely to be fearful of bullies

• May empathize with the target

**Guidance For Students**

**What you should tell bullies:**

• Stop the bullying immediately.

• Bullying behavior will not be tolerated.

• Bullying hurts you and the target.

• Bullying sets a bad example for other students.

• Bullying may cause you to lose friends.

• Every student deserves to be treated well.

• Ask for help if you don’t know how to stop

 bullying.

**What you should tell targets:**

• You are not responsible for a bully’s behavior.

 It is not your fault.

 www.tolerance.org



• Don’t respond to bullies by giving in or

 getting upset.

• Sometimes the best response is to walk away.

• Report bullying to a trusted adult.

**What you should tell bystanders:**

• Your involvement makes a difference.

 Don’t just stand by and watch.

• Stand up for the person being bullied. If you

 feel safe, tell them to stop.

• Don’t participate in the bullying. It may

 make it worse.

• Help the target walk away. A target may be

 too afraid to leave but will do so with the

 help of a friend.

• Encourage other bystanders to help

 the target.

• Report the bullying to a trusted adult.

• After the incident, let the target know that

 you feel bad about what happened to the

 target. Encourage the target to talk to an

 adult.

• Be a friend and include the target in

 activities.

**Tips for standing up to bullies:**

• Take a deep breath.

• Sit or stand tall, head up.

• Maintain eye contact.

• Keep your facial expression positive and confident.

• Speak in a calm, confident voice.

• Avoid name calling and threatening gestures.

• Reply briefly and directly.

• Avoid bringing up past issues.

**On the Spot Interventions for Staff**

• Immediately stop the bullying.

• Support the bullied child in a safe way.

• Name the bully behavior and reference

 school rules when addressing the student

 who bullied.

• Empower the bystanders with praise

 and/or guidance.

• Impose immediate consequences for

 the student who bullied as required by

 campus and district procedures.

• Intensify observation and follow up with

 a bullied student on a regular basis.

**To Prevent Cyberbullying:**

• Keep computers in visible places to monitor use.

• Talk with students about safe and responsible use

 of the Internet and cell phones,

• Discuss what to do when cyber bullying occurs.

• Remind students not to share personal information

 online.

• Encourage students to report cyber bullying.



**Prevention Methods**

* Assess bullying with a survey.
* Post bullying rules.
* Increase adult supervision in bullying “hotspots.”
* Create or utilize an existing committee to implement a comprehensive campus bully plan.
* Encourage staff to document bullying incidents.
* Promote participation in extracurricular activities.
* Raise awareness of district bullying initiative.
* Integrate bullying prevention material into existing curricula.
* Create a culture of respect.

 

**SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

**Elementary**

* [**Prevention Rules**](http://www.fortbendisd.com/cms/lib09/TX01917858/Centricity/Domain/73/Bully%20Rules%20flyer%2014%20Elementary.pdf)
* Sign the [**Pledge**](http://www.fortbendisd.com/cms/lib09/TX01917858/Centricity/Domain/73/Anti%20Bully%20Pledge%20poster%20Kid%202014%20Elementary.pdf)**.** Classroom copies will be sent to the Principals.
* Webisodes and discussion questions from [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov) and <http://www.netsmartz.org/Educators>
* **Pacer Center Classroom Toolkits**: <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/toolkits/classroom/> Complete classroom guides and lesson plans for discussing bullying prevention during National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month. Features free download of daily activities, games and videos.

**Secondary**

* [**Morning Announcements**](http://www.fortbendisd.com/cms/lib09/TX01917858/Centricity/Domain/73/Morning%20Announcements.pdf)
* Display [**Taking Action Together Poster**](http://www.fortbendisd.com/cms/lib09/TX01917858/Centricity/Domain/73/Taking%20Action%20Bully%20Poster%202014%20Secondary.pdf)
* Sign the [**Pledge**](http://www.fortbendisd.com/cms/lib09/TX01917858/Centricity/Domain/73/Anti%20Bully%20Pledge%20poster%20Teen%20%202014%20Secondary.pdf)
* New Bullying Resource from the Texas School Safety Center: Brief education [video](http://vimeo.com/60566817)
* Webisdoes and discussion questions from <http://www.netsmartz.org/Educators> and <http://www.netsmartz.org/Teens>
* Pacer Center Classroom Toolkits: <http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/toolkits/classroom/> Complete classroom guide for discussing bullying prevention during National Bullying Prevention Awareness Month.

**\*\* NEW RESOURCE:** [**KnowBullying APP**](http://www.stopbullying.gov/videos/2014/10/things-kids-feel-knowbullying-app.html)**: free bullying prevention APP from SAMSHA ; includes conversation starters for parents, social media tips, and a section for educators.**

<http://store.samhsa.gov/apps/bullying/?from=carousel&position=2&date=10012014>



**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:** [Bullying Prevention Resources](http://www.fortbendisd.com/cms/lib09/TX01917858/Centricity/Domain/73/Bully%20Prevention%20Resource%20List%20Revised%20November%202014-%20for%20District%20Update.docx) 