

DISTRICT NOTIFICATIONS

Please refer to your *District Handbook for Student & Families* for complete information about the school district, its policies and practices, and expectations for student behavior. The handbook is available on the website and in print. A few important district notifications are highlighted below.

DISCRIMINATION & SEXUAL HARASSMENT COMPLAINTS

The public schools shall be open to all children five years of age or over who reach age five on or before the first day of January of any school year, and each such child shall have and shall be so advised by the appropriate school authorities, an equal opportunity to participate in the activities, programs and courses of study offered in such public schools, at such time as the child becomes eligible to participate in such activities, programs and courses of study, without discrimination on account of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation; provided boards of education may, by vote at a meeting duly called, admit to any school children under five years of age.

The Norwalk Board of Education ("the Board") is an equal opportunity employer. Furthermore, it is the policy of the Board to educate all children within the Norwalk Public Schools in an atmosphere that is free of discrimination/sexual harassment. As part of the Board's commitment to these policies, the Board has established the Human Relations Office for the Norwalk Public Schools, located at the Board's offices at 125 East Avenue, Norwalk, Connecticut. The Human Relations Office is supervised by the Director of Human Relations at 854-4013.

BULLYING/ SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATE PLAN

I. PURPOSE

The Board of Education (the "Board") is dedicated to promoting and maintaining a positive learning environment where all students are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school, socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically. The purpose of this policy is to address the existence of bullying in schools and to establish the guidelines for the development of the district's Safe School Climate Plan.

The Board expects prompt and reasonable investigations of alleged acts of bullying. The principal of each school or his/her designee is responsible for handling all complaints of alleged bullying.

II. BULLYING PROHIBITED

A. Bullying activities of any type are inconsistent with the educational goals of the school district and are prohibited at all times. No student, employee, volunteer, or contractor of the school district shall encourage, aid, or consent to bullying. No student, employee, volunteer, or contractor of the school district shall permit, condone, or tolerate bullying. Apparent permission or consent by a student being bullied does not lessen the prohibitions contained in this policy.

B. Bullying is prohibited on school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, 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 local or regional board of education.

C. Bullying is also prohibited outside of the school setting if such bullying results in any of the following: (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.

D. Any form of discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying is also strictly prohibited.

E. Any student who engages in bullying as defined in this policy may be subject to discipline up to and including expulsion. Any school employee who fails to respond to bullying as required by this policy and the district's Safe School Climate Plan may be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. "Bullying" means (1) 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 (2) 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.

B. "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.

C. "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.

D. "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;

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

F. "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;

G. "Safe School Climate Coordinator" means the individual appointed by the Superintendent of Schools from existing staff who is responsible for:

1. Implementing the district's Safe School Climate Plan;
2. Collaborating with the safe school climate specialists, the Board and the Superintendent of Schools to prevent, identify and respond to bullying in the schools of the district;
3. Providing data and information, in collaboration with the Superintendent of Schools of the district, to the State Department of Education regarding bullying, in accordance with state law; and
4. Meeting with the safe school climate specialists at least twice during the school year to discuss issues relating to bullying in the school district and to make recommendations concerning amendments to the district's Safe School Climate Plan.

H. "Safe School Climate Specialist", Principal, Reginald Roberts, or his designee who is responsible for:

1. Investigating or supervising the investigation of reported acts of bullying in the school in accordance with the district's Safe School Climate Plan;
2. Collecting and maintaining records of reports and investigations of bullying in the school; and
3. Acting as the primary school official responsible for preventing, identifying and responding to reports of bullying in the school.

I. "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 a local or regional board of education or working in a public elementary, middle or high school; or
2. 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.

J. "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.