SAFE SCHOOLS

Strategies for Governing Boards

to Ensure Student Success

SAFE SCHOOLS: Strategies for Governing Boards to Ensure Student Success

2011 Third Edition

CSBA

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Preface

Providing a safe school environment that ensures both the physical and emotional safety of students creates the conditions necessary to foster academic achievement. Bullying, harassment, violence and even the fear of violence can not only negatively impact school attendance and the concentration and learning of students, but hinder their development as well.

Creating a safe environment requires a deep commitment from teachers, other staff and administrators, in addition to the board. Districts and county offices of education need support from parents, the community, state and federal leaders, the media, and the students themselves in order to be most effective at maintaining a positive school climate. Having supportive peers and adults is a critical component in the prevention of violence, bullying and harassment because students are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors and succeed academically when they feel connected to school.

The role of governing boards and superintendents in these efforts is critical. The governing board can impact the school environment and climate through each of its major areas of responsibility: setting direction, establishing effective organizational structures, providing support for implementation, holding the system accountable and engaging in community leadership and advocacy. By using these key leverage points, the board can place safety as a high priority and provide leadership to ensure that effective strategies are developed.

This handbook provides strategies to help governing boards create positive school environments where students feel safe, supported, connected to others and prepared to learn. It begins with an overview of the types of violent, bullying and harassment behaviors that may occur at schools and the effects that these behaviors have on students, school staff and others (Chapter 1). Chapter 2 details the board's role in ensuring school safety and presents a worksheet to assist the district with policy development. Chapters 3 and 4 present a variety of prevention and intervention strategies that have proven effective in creating positive, safe school climates and in being prepared for any incidents that do occur. The appendices provide more detailed information about key issues, including resources that districts may consult to receive additional information (Appendix A).

HISTORY

This handbook was originally developed by CSBA's School Safety Task Force in 1994, updated in 1999 in response to prominent incidents of school violence, and has now been revised and expanded in 2011 with the assistance of CSBA's School Health Advisory Committee.

This handbook has a particular focus on preventing unacceptable behaviors, such as bullying and harassment. Additionally, because research shows that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students are more likely than some other students to experience bullying and therefore to perceive their school environments as unwelcoming, this handbook specifically addresses ways that governing boards can protect these students and policies that help to prevent harassment and discrimination.

Also new to this edition of the handbook is a section addressing cyberbullying. The 2011-12 CSBA Policy Platform addresses the issue of cyberbullying for the first time, and board members have expressed a desire for resources and information to enact preventative measures.

CSBA POLICY PLATFORM

CSBA's 2011-12 Policy Platform, adopted by the Delegate Assembly as a broad policy framework for implementing the association's mission to set the agenda for the public schools and students of California, contains a section on Conditions of Children which includes the following statements related to school safety:

Students and staff have a right to attend schools that are safe and free from violence. School violence generally reflects violence in our communities, and thus requires both school and societal involvement in solutions. Therefore, CSBA:

20. Supports establishing a positive school climate that reinforces nonviolent solutions to problems and respect for all students and staff.

21. Supports the local development of comprehensive safety plans for districts and school sites.

22. Supports the promotion and establishment of interagency partnerships between schools and law enforcement agencies that enhance a safe school learning environment.

23. Supports providing an environment at schools and school-related activities conducive to learning and free from weapons, imitation weapons, bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, intimidation, gang violence, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, hate crimes and any other factors that threaten the safety of students and staff.

24. Supports the development of laws and regulations for school districts and COEs to clarify their roles, responsibilities and authority surrounding cyberbullying when and wherever it occurs.

25. Supports a comprehensive approach to the appropriate and inappropriate use of cellular phones and other methods of media sharing within school districts and COEs including, but not limited to, the development of appropriate local board policies; student, staff and parent/guardian education; and coordination with local law enforcement.

26. Supports involving the entire community in the prevention and intervention of community violence.

27. Supports identifying and addressing the root causes of violence in order to reduce violence in society and in schools.

28. Supports programs and recreational activities to provide children and youth with positive experiences that build a sense of belonging to the community.

29. Supports the concept that students understand and accept responsibility for their actions in cases of disruptive, violent and other unacceptable behaviors. Accountability for those actions lies with both students and their parents/guardians.

30. Supports the discretion of the governing board for suspension and expulsion for the discipline of students, including special education students.

31. Supports ensuring that all students will be treated equitably in suspension and expulsion cases.

32. Supports having students be subject to the same disciplinary rules under state law as students without disabilities when the behavior of a student with a disability is not directly caused by a disability identified in the student's current Individualized Education Program (IEP).

33. Supports the establishment of safe school zones to and from school, with enhanced sentences for criminal activity.

34. Supports expanded alternative programs to provide education services to students removed from the regular education program. Such programs should include performance standards and should be evaluated for effectiveness.

35. Supports providing adequate communications systems in schools so that school personnel can receive a quick response in situations that threaten the safety of students or staff.

36. Supports the reduction of violent and sexual content in media and entertainment, and supports the development of positive content that demonstrates nonviolent solutions to problems and respect for human life.

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Pat Christie
Secretary Early Childhood, American Federation of Teachers

Mark Cooper
Board Member, Lake County Office of Education

Xilonin Cruz-Gonzalez
Board Member, Azusa Unified School District

Ken Geisick
Superintendent, Riverbank Unified School District

Merry A. Grasska, *MPH, RN, NP*
School Nurse, Newport-Mesa Unified School District

Melissa Janes
Board Member, Tulare City Elementary School District

Dick Jaquez
Board Member, Oxnard Union High School District

Sharon Jarrett
Elementary Administration Coordinator, Los Angeles Unified School District

Kathy Lewis
Vice President and COO, Center for Collaborative Solutions

Bertha Lopez
Board Member, Chula Vista Elementary School District

Dexter Louie
Board Member, Moraga Elementary School District

Garth Maijala
Coordinator of Industrial Hygiene, Schools Insurance Program for Employees

Shelly Masur
Board Member, Redwood City Elementary School District

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Acknowledgments

Executive Summary

School safety is a top priority in every school district and is essential to student achievement. A safe school is one where teaching and learning are not distracted; disruptions are minimized; drugs, violence, bullying and fear are not present; students are not discriminated against; expectations for behavior are clearly communicated; and consequences for infractions are consistently and fairly applied. School districts have a responsibility to ensure a safe school environment that is free of intimidation and harassment and to establish consequences for students and/or staff who engage in discrimination.

For the most part, schools are safer than the community around them. Violent crime in schools has declined in the past two decades and, when it does occur, it typically does not involve weapons or critical injuries. However, bullying continues to be a persistent problem in our schools, with about a third of students reporting having been bullied at school during the school year.

Research shows that some students are at greater risk of victimization than others. Bullying tends to be more prevalent at the middle grades than the high school grades, and cyberbullying most frequently occurs from ages 14-17. When youth are bullied or harassed, the most common reason cited is their race or national origin. Other reasons cited for bullying include religion, gender and sexual orientation. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students are frequent targets of verbal and physical harassment, physical attacks and cyberbullying.

Any incidents of violence, bullying and harassment cannot be tolerated. School climate sets the tone for all the teaching and learning done in the school environment and is predictive of students' ability to learn and develop in healthy ways. Students who perceive their school to be safe are more likely to attend school, be engaged in the classroom and be prepared to learn. On the other hand, physical harm resulting from violence, as well as the fear of physical harm, can create barriers to learning and contribute to low self-esteem, depression, anger and, in extreme cases, school violence or suicide. Negative school climate and school-related violence also have a profound impact on school staff, parents and the community.

The most effective approach to creating safe school environments requires a comprehensive, coordinated effort including schoolwide, districtwide and communitywide strategies. All institutions, organizations and individuals must accept responsibility and should collaborate to establish an appropriate culture. Responsibility lies

with governing boards, school staff, parents, students, community-based organizations, local government and other agencies, and state and federal leaders.

The governing board plays a critical role in ensuring that the schools in its community are safe for students and staff. Working with the superintendent as a governance team, the board provides leadership within the district and the community which is essential to the success of school safety strategies. The board can enhance school safety through each of its major areas of responsibility:

⇨ **Setting direction.** Development of a vision statement and goals for the district provides an opportunity to foster an understanding among the governance team, staff and community about the importance of establishing a safe school environment and the link between safety and student attendance, engagement, learning and academic achievement. In the vision and goals, the board can make a strong statement which recognizes the rights of all students and staff to a safe campus and expresses the board's expectation that harassment, discrimination and violence will not be tolerated. The board can convey a commitment to support proactive approaches and early intervention to curb harassment, discrimination and violence at school.

To prioritize needs and identify potentially effective strategies, the vision and goals should be based on an understanding of the student populations within the district and an assessment of existing conditions within the district and community. The local needs assessment should also include an inventory of district programs, services and community resources that are currently available to address safety concerns. It is important that the board invite input from students, families, staff and the community in the development of its vision statement in order to obtain diverse perspectives and generate new ideas.

⇨ **Establishing effective organizational structures.** Board decisions related to the adoption of policies, curriculum, the district budget and the collective bargaining agreement all impact the district's ability to effectively address school safety.

The fundamental duty to adopt and monitor policies provides the board with an opportunity to establish guidelines and direction that impact the safety of students and staff. Boards are mandated to adopt policies or procedures on nondiscrimination in district programs and activities, sexual harassment of students and suspension/expulsion. They may also adopt an overall policy on school

safety (e.g., comprehensive safety plans), as well as individual policies addressing specific aspects of school safety (e.g., bullying, gang prevention education, hate-motivated behavior). Other policies (e.g., parent involvement, counseling and other student support services, mental health services, alcohol and other drugs, staff development) may reference school safety or be used to promote and maintain school safety.

The board also has a responsibility to ensure that the budget it adopts reflects the goals and priorities set forth in its vision and policies. Some school safety strategies can be implemented at no or low cost, but others do require additional expenditures. If student safety is a priority of the board, funds must be allocated to support related programs and activities. The board can direct staff to explore state, national, local and private funding sources for school safety.

When fulfilling its responsibility to adopt courses of study, curriculum guidelines and instructional materials for the district, the board can strive to provide an educational program that engages students and therefore makes it less likely that students will act out or behave negatively. The board can also adopt curricula that specifically support violence prevention efforts and teach students constructive

ways of dealing with their anger, frustration or other contributing factors to their negative behavior.

Finally, the board can reinforce its commitment to school safety through the collective bargaining process. Employee safety and duties are terms and conditions of employment that, by law, are subject to negotiations with employee representatives. Staff does not have the right to bargain some management decisions (e.g., the board's decision to institute after-school conflict resolution classes); however, the effect of such management decisions may be bargainable (e.g., increased pay for additional instructional hours).

⇨ **Providing support for implementation.** The board can help support the superintendent's and staff's implementation of the district's vision for school safety by backing up its vision and policies with the resources needed to be successful, continually demonstrating its commitment to creating positive school climates that respect the right of all students to attend safe schools, being knowledgeable enough about the district's school safety policies and programs to explain them to the public, and building community confidence in the school system by demonstrating respect and professionalism in its relations with staff and others.

⇨ **Holding the system accountable.** It is the ongoing responsibility of the board to ensure that the district is making progress toward accomplishing its vision and goals. In this case, the board has a responsibility to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to prevent and reduce harassment, discrimination and violence. It is important that the board regularly review existing policies and monitor program outcomes. To fulfill this role, the board should request periodic information on the outcomes of district programs and the overall safety of the schools. The governance team should agree on the data that will be collected and how often such data will be reported to the board. The board, through the superintendent evaluation process, can hold the superintendent accountable for his or her commitment to safe learning institutions and for the performance of other district staff in fostering an appropriate school environment.

As part of its accountability role, the governing board is usually the final arbiter of disputes within the district. Thus, when students are considered for suspension or expulsion, the board serves as a judicial and appeals body. It is essential that discipline procedures are conducted in full compliance with law and ensure protection of students' due process rights.

⇨ **Engaging in community leadership and advocacy.** As district and community leaders, school board members have an opportunity to draw attention to the needs of schools and children and amass the support necessary to address those needs. To promote school safety, the board can communicate the value of safe schools to students, families and others, and seek opportunities to influence legislative and regulatory bodies. The board can also encourage and support collaboration among community agencies and organizations to support the needs of all children, particularly those most at risk of perpetrating or being the victim of harassment, discrimination and violence, and to help improve the availability and quality of prevention and intervention programs.

To the extent possible, it is desirable to proactively define the safety issues that affect district students and communicate these issues to various audiences. An effective communications or advocacy plan should begin with the board's and superintendent's identification of advocacy goals and should outline key messages, target groups, strategies tailored to each group, timelines, district spokespersons and budget implications.

As the board and other key players develop a comprehensive, coordinated approach to ensuring school safety, they should

consider multiple strategies that address both prevention and intervention.

Starting prevention efforts in the early grades can be key. It is critical that schools provide a caring school climate that promotes positive interpersonal relationships and feelings of connected-ness with the schools. Strategies also may address specific types of violence or harassment (e.g., cyberbullying, dating violence) or involve collaboration with other agencies to address root causes of violence (e.g., alcohol or drug use, parental neglect). Development of a comprehensive safety plan, in accordance with California law, ensures a coordinated approach to school safety rather than a variety of piecemeal programs.

Examples of prevention strategies include:

⇨ Clear notification to students and their parents regarding district policies and school rules related to safety and student discipline

⇨ Student education, including health education related to safety, character/values education, multicultural education, social skills development, self-esteem development, media analysis skills, service learning, mentoring programs and instruction in appropriate use of district technology

⇨ Parent education programs and parent involvement in efforts to develop and implement school safety strategies

⇨ Staff development addressing the creation of a positive school climate, ways to de-escalate conflict and other related issues

⇨ Measures to ensure the security of school sites (e.g., assessment of the physical environment of school facilities, video surveillance, metal detectors, security personnel, searches of lockers or students, closed campuses, visitor registration) while at the same time creating an inviting environment

⇨ Safety-related accommodations for LGBT students

⇨ Prevention and intervention of drug and alcohol use

⇨ Suicide prevention strategies

⇨ Gang prevention strategies

⇨ Prompt repair of vandalism and graffiti

Although districts should focus on prevention to the extent possible, they must also be prepared to intervene when acts of violence, bullying and harassment do occur. Effective intervention begins with staff being prepared to interrupt negative behaviors and use these as teachable moments with the students involved and other students who might have witnessed the incident. In addition, clear mechanisms should be established to encourage and facilitate reporting of incidents, and any such reports must be investigated fairly and in a timely manner. Multiple strategies should be established to address the consequences of negative behaviors and to ensure that school safety is maintained.

A variety of responses may be appropriate depending on the seriousness of the reported incident. The parents of both the victim and perpetrator may be notified, participation in programs may be required, the perpetrator may be suspended or expelled, or law enforcement may be notified if the behavior involves a possible crime. Except in cases where expulsion is mandatory by law for certain offenses, the district should consider alternatives to suspension or expulsion for students subject to discipline in order to provide services that can more effectively resolve the problem behavior and prevent recurrence. In addition to implementing consequences for the perpetrator, the district should consider ways it can provide support to the victim and perpetrator through counseling or referral to mental health services.

In their effort to provide safe schools for students and staff, governing boards cannot forget the needs of those students who are considered to be, or have proven to be, a threat to themselves, other students and/or staff. Ideally, these students face the consequences deemed appropriate for the behavior exhibited, then quickly return to school and resume their education. But when removal from the regular school for an extended period of time is necessary, boards must ensure that an educational program (e.g., community day school, juvenile court school, other alternative program) is provided for expelled students during the period of the expulsion. Such students must be helped to become productive members of our society.

1. Introduction

School safety is a top priority in every school district and is essential to student achievement. A safe school is one where teaching and learning are not distracted; disruptions are minimized; drugs, violence, bullying and fear are not present; students are not discriminated against; expectations for behavior are clearly communicated; and consequences for infractions are consistently and fairly applied. School districts have a responsibility to ensure a safe school environment that is free of intimidation and harassment and to establish consequences for students or staff who engage in discrimination.

Creating and sustaining a positive school climate are critical to ensuring that schools are safe. School district governance teams, including board members and superintendents, need to be aware of how unacceptable behaviors such as bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, discrimination and violence can negatively impact school climate and student learning. They should also have an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of key players in a comprehensive, societal approach to keeping children safe.

THREATS TO STUDENT SAFETY

For the most part, schools are safer than the community around them. Furthermore, violent behavior at schools typically does not involve weapons or critical injuries. However, any incidents of violence, bullying and harassment cannot be tolerated.

Bullying consists of repeated physical, verbal or psychological attacks or intimidation directed against a victim who cannot properly defend himself or herself because of size or strength or because the victim is outnumbered or less psychologically resilient. Students may be targeted because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, academic performance, disability, appearance (including clothing, hair and body size), ability to fit in or other personal characteristics.

Definitions

Students are often targeted for discrimination, bullying and harassment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation or gender. As used throughout this handbook:

"Sex" means the biological condition or quality of being a female or male human being. (5 CCR 4910)

"Sexual orientation" means actual or perceived heterosexuality, homosexuality or bisexuality. (Education Code 212.6, Penal Code 422.56)

"Gender" means sex, and includes a person's gender identity and gender-related appearance and behavior, whether or not that identity, appearance or behavior is stereotypically associated with the person's assigned sex at birth. (Education Code 210.7, Penal Code 422.56, 5 CCR 4910)

The following definitions, as provided by the California Safe Schools Coalition, may provide additional guidance in putting these issues into context:

"Gender identity" refers to individuals' deeply held sense or psychological knowledge of their own gender, regardless of the gender they were assigned at birth. Everyone has a gender identity.

"Transgender" describes people whose gender identity is different from their gender assigned at birth.

"Gender expression" refers to the way people express gender, such as clothing, hairstyle, activities or mannerisms.

"Gender nonconforming" describes people whose gender expression differs from stereotypical expectations, such as "feminine" boys, "masculine" girls and those who are perceived as androgenous.

Bullying can be either direct or indirect and may include the following types of actions:

- ⇨ Physical acts such as assault, tripping, pushing

- ⇨ Verbal abuse, taunting, name calling

- ⇨ Threats and intimidation

- ⇨ Hazing

- ⇨ Rumor spreading

- ⇨ Sexual harassment

- ⇨ Unwanted verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature

- ⇨ Isolation/exclusion/ostracism of students

- ⇨ Demands for money

- ⇨ Destruction of property

- ⇨ Theft of valued possessions

- ⇨ Destruction of another's work

Grounds for suspension/expulsion

A student may be subject to suspension or expulsion when he or she commits an offense specifically listed in state law (Education Code 48900, 48900.2, 48900.3, 48900.4, 48900.7), including bullying as defined in Education Code 32261. For these purposes, "bullying" includes sexual harassment, hate violence and other harassment, threats or intimidation against district personnel or students that is sufficiently severe or pervasive that it materially disrupts classwork, creates substantial disorder or creates an intimidating or hostile educational environment. Suspension, expulsion and alternative interventions are discussed in Chapter 4.

Introduction

A newer, but growing, problem is "cyberbullying," sometimes referred to as Internet bullying or electronic bullying. Cyberbullying is defined in Education Code 32261 and 48900(r) for purposes of student discipline as an act of bullying committed through the transmission of a message, text, sound or image or a post on a social networking site by means of an electronic device, including but not limited to a telephone, wireless telephone or other wireless communication device, computer or pager. Like other forms of bullying, cyberbullying is an effort to demonstrate power and control over someone perceived as weaker. Examples of cyberbullying behaviors include:

⇨ Sending mean, vulgar or threatening messages or images

⇨ Posting sensitive, private information about another person

⇨ Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad

⇨ Intentionally excluding someone from an online group

Behavior is considered "harassment" when it is so severe and pervasive that it:

⇨ Affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity

⇨ Creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile or offensive educational environment

⇨ Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with a student's academic performance

⇨ Otherwise adversely affects a student's educational opportunities

All these types of behaviors demand attention by schools – and for good reason. These acts create an atmosphere of intimidation and fear, and interfere with the educational process, negatively impacting the ability to learn. By addressing even the smallest forms of bullying, schools can prevent some of these behaviors from escalating into larger school violence issues. Districts also have an affirmative obligation under state and federal law to provide an equal opportunity for all students and to combat any discrimination based on the actual or perceived characteristics specified in Education Code 220 or disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or association with a person or group with one of these actual or perceived characteristics. It is the responsibility of boards to work toward and set an example for a district culture where a positive school climate, respect and connectedness are valued.

EFFECTS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

School climate sets the tone for all the teaching and learning done in the school environment and it is predictive of students' ability to learn and develop in healthy ways (National School Climate Center, 2010). Students who perceive their school to be safe are more likely to attend school, be engaged in the classroom and be prepared to learn. On the other hand, barriers to learning can be created from actual physical harm resulting from violence, as well as the fear of physical harm.

One consequence of bullying can be that students fear standing out, with that fear causing them to not contribute or raise their hand in class, demonstrating disengagement to the teacher in the classroom rather than the underlying fear of a bully. This fear can cause students to restrict their movements, avoiding certain areas of the school grounds. Emotional and physical energy that could be more usefully applied toward academics is instead consumed by worries over isolation and vulnerability (Seeley, Tombari, Bennett, & Dunkle, 2009).

The link to learning is also demonstrated through a study showing that for every one-point increase on a scale of bullying behavior, there was a 1.5-point decrease in grade point average in

mathematics (Juvonen, Wang, & Espinoza, 2011). Another study showed that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender expression had GPAs almost half a grade lower than students who were less often harassed (2.7 vs. 3.1) (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz, & Bartkiewicz, 2010). Additionally, research has shown that 32.7 percent of LGBT students skipped a day of school in the previous month because of feeling unsafe, leading to a total cost estimated at nearly $40 million per year due to absences (Russell, Talmadge, Laub, & Manke, 2009). In fact, studies reveal that LGBT students are three times more likely to skip school out of safety concerns (Kosciw et al., 2010).

Low self-esteem, depression, anger and, in extreme cases, school violence or suicide have been linked to bullying. Students who have experienced harassment at school because of their gender are twice as likely as their peers to report having carried a gun to school or to have reported attempting suicide (Russell, McGuire, Laub, Manke, O'Shaughnessy, Heck, & Calhoun, 2006).

Students who are perpetrators of bullying have been shown to suffer from many of the same psychological and emotional difficulties as their victims – such as low self-esteem, anger and social isolation – and to exhibit other problem behaviors such as drinking

alcohol, using tobacco, getting into frequent fights and performing poorly academically.

Staff are also at risk from the impact of a negative school climate. Just as students have difficulty concentrating on the task of learning in schools perceived as violent, teachers have difficulty teaching. Disruptive behavior in a classroom interferes with instructional time. Student belligerence combined with increasing intimidation from students and their parents may restrict teachers' ability to provide appropriate discipline.

Furthermore, school-related violence has a profound effect on parents and the greater community. Typical responses by parents to violence at schools include anger toward the adults at the school and feelings of personal failure. These responses are often followed by demands to institute more stringent rules and suspension or expulsion policies. The end result has been a deterioration in the confidence parents and community members have in schools.

REPORTED INCIDENCE OF THE PROBLEM

A number of studies have examined the extent to which various forms of violence and harassment are a problem in our schools. It is possible that these figures underestimate the problem to some extent since they are often based on student reports and students may be reluctant to report their victimization.

Violent crime

Although media coverage of crime at schools has increased, possibly leading students, parents and the public to perceive that school violence is a pervasive problem, violent crime at schools has actually declined in the past two decades. Nationally, 47 out of 1,000 students were victims of nonfatal crimes in 2008, compared to 144 per 1,000 in 1992 (Robers, Zhang, Truman, & Snyder, 2010).

Furthermore, the percentage of youth homicides occurring at school remained at less than 2 percent of the total number of youth homicides between 1992-93 and 2008-09, with 15 homicides occurring in 2008-09 (Robers et al., 2010).

Rates of both serious crimes against students (e.g., rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault) and violent deaths are lower at school than away from school (Robers et al., 2010). In 2008, students ages 12-18 were victims of four serious crimes per 1,000 students at school and eight serious violent crimes per 1,000 students away from school. In each year during the period 1992-93

to 2007-08, there were at least 50 times as many homicides of youth away from school than at school and generally at least 150 times as many suicides of youth away from school than at school.

Nevertheless, any incident of school violence is tragic. During the 2007–08 school year, 85 percent of public schools recorded that one or more incidents of violence, theft or other crimes had taken place, amounting to an estimated two million crimes.

Bullying

Bullying continues to be a persistent problem in our schools. School staff and parents typically believe that bullying is a "mild" to "moderately severe" problem while students consistently report that it is a "severe" problem (Cohen, 2006).

In a 2007 study, about 32 percent of students reported having been bullied at school during the school year (Robers et al., 2010). Of those students who said that they had experienced bullying:

⇨   21 percent said they had been made fun of

⇨   18 percent reported being the subject of rumors

⇨   11 percent said that they were pushed, shoved, tripped or spit on, with 19 percent of those reporting being injured as a result

⇨   6 percent said they were threatened with harm

⇨   5 percent said they were excluded from activities on purpose

⇨   4 percent said that someone tried to make them do things they did not want to do

⇨   4 percent said that their property was destroyed on purpose

Furthermore, of the students who reported having been bullied at school during the school year, 63 percent said that they had been bullied once or twice during the school year, 21 percent had experienced bullying once or twice a month, 10 percent reported being bullied once or twice a week, and 7 percent said that they had been bullied almost daily (Robers et al., 2010).

Introduction

"Feeling safe – socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically – is a fundamental human need. Feeling safe in schools powerfully promotes student learning and healthy development (Devine & Cohen, 2007).

Although many urban and economically disadvantaged schools are plagued by physical violence, most students are not exposed to physical violence (Mayer & Furlong, 2010). Unfortunately, this is not the case for social, emotional and intellectual safety. In fact, bully-victim behavior is a serious public health problem."

National School Climate Center (2010)

Cyberbullying

In the 2007-08 school year, about 4 percent of students reported having been cyberbullied anywhere (on or off school property). Half of those students said that they had experienced cyberbullying that consisted of another student posting hurtful information about them

on the Internet. The other half reported unwanted contact, including being threatened or insulted, via instant messaging by another student during the school year (Robers et al., 2010).

Of the students in 2007 who reported cyberbullying during the school year, 73 percent said it had occurred once or twice during that period, 21 percent said it had occurred once or twice a month and 5 percent said it had occurred once or twice a week (Robers et al., 2010).

Research findings on the prevalence of cyberbullying vary depending on the age and gender of the students in the study and the specific behaviors defined as cyberbullying or online harassment. Some recent studies have found:

⇨ Students of all races and ethnicities are vulnerable to cyber-bullying victimization and offending (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

⇨ Students who are bullied in cyberspace are also more likely to be bullied at school, and to be perpetrators of cyberbullying themselves (Beran & Li, 2007).

⇨ Nearly a third (32 percent) of online teens ages 12-17 have experienced some form of online harassment, such as having had private material forwarded without permission (15

percent), receiving threatening messages (13 percent) and/or having a rumor spread about them online (13 percent) (Lenhart, 2007).

⇨ Harassment via cell phone, either by voice or text, was reported by 26 percent of students (Lenhart, Ling, Campbell, & Purcell, 2010).

⇨ The greatest prevalence of cyberbullying occurs during the mid-teens (ages 14-17) (Lenhart, 2007).

⇨ A greater percentage of female than male students reported being cyberbullied during the school year (5 percent vs. 2 percent) (Robers et al., 2010).

⇨ The type of cyberbullying tends to differ by gender, with females being more likely to spread rumors while males are more likely to post hurtful pictures or videos (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

Targets of bullying and discrimination

Research shows that some students are at greater risk of victimization than others. Bullying tends to be more prevalent at the middle grades: 43 percent of sixth graders have experienced bullying vs. 24 percent of high school seniors (Robers et al., 2010).

When youth are bullied or harassed, the most common reason cited is their race or national origin, with roughly 15 percent of female students and 20 percent of male students in 2006-2008 reporting at least one bullying incident in the past year for this reason. Although the majority of California students in grades 7, 9 and 11 report feeling safe or very safe at school, Caucasian students feel safest (63.6 percent) and African American students feel least safe (50 percent) (kidsdata.org, 2011).

Other reasons cited for bullying include religion (10 percent of students citing one or more incidents in the past year), gender (10 percent), sexual orientation (10 percent) and "any other reason" (20 percent) (Kidsdata.org, 2011).

Studies on bullying tend to reveal that the behaviors of harassers "reinforce expected cultural norms for boys and girls and punish students who don't fit the ideals of traditional gender roles" (Higdon, 2010). LGBT students are frequent targets of bullying: National and California studies (Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Kosciw et al., 2010) reveal that over 80 percent of LGBT students report that they have been verbally harassed, 40 percent report being physically harassed, 20 percent report being physically attacked, and over half

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report being harassed or threatened by their peers via cyberbully-ing. Nationwide, the frequency of sexually prejudiced remarks has remained fairly constant since 2003, but is still high: 89 percent of students report hearing "gay" used in a pejorative way and 72 percent heard other remarks frequently or often at school. Not surprisingly, 61 percent of LGBT students said they feel unsafe at school and 30 percent of LGBT students missed at least one full day of school because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable. CSBA's policy brief *Providing a Safe, Nondiscriminatory School Environment for All Students* provides further information about safety issues pertaining to LGBT students (see Appendix B).

Reluctance to report

Frequently, students who are either victims or witnesses to bullying will not tell a teacher or other adult about an incident. About a third of victims (36 percent of students who were bullied and 30 percent of students who were cyberbullied) notified a teacher or another adult at school about the incident (Robers et al., 2010). Only 25 percent of student bystanders had intervened in a bullying incident they had observed (Craig & Pepler, 1997).

Bullying was more likely to be reported if it involved injury, physical threats, destruction of property, actual physical contact, greater frequency, multiple types, more than one location or occurrence on the school bus. Bullying was less likely to be reported if it involved making fun of the victim or calling the victim names, exclusion of the victim, spreading rumors about the victim, forcing the victim to do things he or she did not want to do, and bullying that occurred somewhere other than the school bus (i.e., school building, outside on school grounds, somewhere else) (Petrosino, Guckenburg, DeVoe, & Hanson, 2010).

Reasons for not reporting included the fear of retaliation, feeling ashamed for not being able to defend oneself, fear of not being believed, not wanting to worry parents and not believing the report would result in any change in the situation. Only one-third of students believed that schools penalize students who engage in intimidation (Rigby, 1995). Thus, it is possible that students will be more likely to report incidents in districts that have clear anti-bullying, anti-discrimination policies and staff who intervene to stop negative behaviors.

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE

The most effective approach to creating safe school environments requires a comprehensive, coordinated effort including schoolwide, districtwide and communitywide strategies. It includes

strategies for intervening with problem behaviors and reacting in the event of a crisis, but is primarily focused on prevention.

All institutions, organizations and individuals must accept responsibility for their critical roles and should collaborate to establish an appropriate culture. Responsibility lies with:

⇨ **Governing boards.** Governing boards have the broadest role in ensuring school safety. Boards create the philosophical foundation that guides decisions and directs future actions. Through their governance role, boards adopt policies, programs and curricula that can contribute to safe environments for all students and staff. As community leaders, board members have the opportunity to encourage comprehensive, communitywide efforts that complement school efforts. It is the role of the board to ensure that the link between safety and opportunity for academic success is publicized to the community. And, as elected trustees, boards are held accountable by the community for conditions within the schools.

⇨ **School staff.** The implementation of school safety strategies is the responsibility of all staff – administrators, certificated staff and classified staff. The superintendent works with the board in its policy and oversight functions; he or she also develops administrative regulations, professional development, programs and curricula to support district policies. School staff develop site safety plans, intervention and alternative discipline strategies, codes of conduct and parental supports that complement district plans but are tailored to the school's students, programs, facilities and resources. School staff have a responsibility to protect students on campus, de-escalate student conflict, support community-school partnerships and assist in providing services to meet the needs of at-risk and violent youth and their families. Staff also have a responsibility to create and sustain an atmosphere that invites mutual respect, provides support and comfort, and engages students in positive extra-curricular and cocurricular activities. School staff must teach and model for students the skills needed to treat others with respect, resolve conflict nonviolently and intervene as an ally when peers are treated unfairly.

⇨ **Parents.** Parents have a responsibility to guide the behavior of their children. Through their guidance and example, children learn acceptable behaviors and how to negotiate conflict. Parents also have a responsibility to support efforts to reduce violence and bullying in their schools and communities by encouraging adherence to school rules and modeling the behaviors expected of their children. In

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the event of disciplinary actions, parents should work with their child, school administrators, teachers and counselors to resolve behavior problems and, if the child is expelled, to follow the steps necessary for reinstatement to the regular school environment.

⇨ **Students.** Students have a responsibility to participate in making schools safe. Adhering to school rules, respecting the rights of others, using nonviolent solutions to conflict, and reporting dangerous or illegal acts and incidents of bullying and harassment to school staff are critical components that students must contribute in order for school campuses to remain safe. Students can also assume a leadership role in forming peer resource groups that encourage safe school climates and in creating a "positive peer pressure" campaign to reinforce positive codes of student behavior.

⇨ **Community-based organizations, local government and other agencies.** The unsafe conditions and unacceptable behavior observed on school campuses are, by and large, products of the complex conditions within the larger community. Identifying and implementing solutions to the social problems that affect our youth require collaboration at all levels among the schools, cities, counties, local law enforcement agencies, social service agencies, mental health agencies, community organizations, other agencies and individual community members. Community solutions are necessary to address community violence.

⇨ **State and federal leaders.** State and federal governments provide funding to schools and offer a variety of grant programs designed to support local school safety efforts. They pass laws and regulations that impact the actions of law enforcement agencies, courts, correctional facilities, schools and other agencies attempting to prevent school violence, and they establish consequences for criminal behavior. Frequently state and federal agencies serve as clearinghouses for information about successful practices. Through all these roles, state and federal leaders can demonstrate a strong commitment to school safety while providing sufficient flexibility to allow school districts and communities to determine how best to invest and allocate resources to maximize school safety.

The "community school" approach

A key strategy to achieving comprehensive, communitywide support and involvement in schools is the "community school" approach, also known as "full-service community schools," "extended service schools" or "community-engaged schools." A community school is a strategy, not a program. It is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources with an integrated focus on academics, services, supports and opportunities that lead to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities.

Schools that use a community school approach show significant gains in academic achievement and in essential areas of nonacademic development that contribute to safer schools and communities. Community schools have been shown to have stronger parent-teacher relationships, increased teacher satisfaction, a more positive school environment, greater community support, increased neighborhood security, heightened community pride and better rapport among students and residents. Families of community school students show increased family stability, communication with teachers, school involvement and a greater sense of responsibility for their children's learning (Coalition for Community Schools, 2009).

See Appendix C for further information about the community school model.

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2. The Board's Role in Creating a Safe School Environment

The governing board is elected to govern the community's schools and thus plays a critical role in ensuring that the schools in its community are safe for students and staff. Working with the superintendent as a governance team, the board provides leadership within the district and the community which is essential to the success of school safety strategies.

A vital part of the governance team's job is to consistently connect all of the district's activities back to an overarching focus on improving student achievement. Recognizing the correlation between a safe school environment and higher student achievement (see Chapter 1), more and more districts are embracing strategies and procedures to address the prevention and intervention of school-related harassment, discrimination and violence as a way to help raise achievement for all children. Districts that have made progress in this arena typically share common characteristics: The governance team has established student and school safety as a priority. It has communicated a clear vision and goal for safe school environments, and allowed time for this to be achieved. It has ensured that organizational

structures are in place to support the goal. It has integrated and aligned a full continuum of safety strategies, including prevention and intervention strategies and formal partnerships with other community resources. It regularly monitors data related to school safety to make decisions regarding the effectiveness of the district's policies and programs. This type of organizational commitment helps to sustain the efforts even during changes in leadership at both the board and staff levels.

As described in this chapter, the board can enhance school safety through each of its major areas of responsibility:

⇨ Setting direction for the district

⇨ Establishing effective organizational structures (e.g., the budget, curriculum, policies, collective bargaining agreement) to support this direction

⇨ Providing support for implementation

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▷ Holding the system accountable by ensuring program and personnel effectiveness and serving as a judicial and appeals body

▷ Engaging in community leadership and advocacy

SETTING DIRECTION

Setting the direction for the district is one of the most important actions the school board takes. A vision or mission statement records what the district wants to achieve for all its students and is a tool that can be used to ensure the district moves in that direction. A well-written vision statement is a document that represents the philosophy by which the board will operate, proclaims broad goals and expectations for students and schools, and reflects the priorities of the board and community. Many districts also develop long-term and short-term goals in strategic areas to measure whether or not the district is making progress toward the vision.

Development of the vision and goals provides an opportunity to foster an understanding among the governance team, staff and community about the importance of establishing a safe school environment and the link between safety and student attendance, engagement, learning and academic achievement. In the vision and

goals, the board can make a strong statement which recognizes the rights of all students and staff to a safe campus and expresses the board's expectation that harassment, discrimination and violence will not be tolerated. The board can convey a commitment to support proactive approaches and early intervention to curb harassment, discrimination and violence at school.

It is important that the board invite input from students, families, staff and the community in the development of its vision statement in order to obtain diverse perspectives and generate new ideas. It is also important that all board members and the superintendent fully support the district's emphasis on school safety. This vision statement will drive everything else in the organization – the district's policies, budget, staff performance goals, professional development and other operations.

To prioritize needs and identify potentially effective strategies, the vision and goals should be based on an understanding of the student populations within the district and an assessment of existing conditions within the district and community. Schools experience varying degrees of safety and may be impacted by a variety of conditions within the community, school and families. Thus, the solutions will need to be tailored to each district's unique needs. The district should reach out to students and the public directly to help determine the needs of children and families. The

board may want to hold a board dialogue session(s) to explore existing research on safety and to discuss any available student and staff data and data trends, including reports of violence, crime, harassment and discrimination as well as health and safety survey results. Do students feel safe at school? Does the perception of safety vary by student population (e.g., by gender; by race/ethnicity; for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students)? Does the rate of violence within the community vary across different neighborhoods and school areas?

The local needs assessment should also include an inventory of district programs and services and community resources that are currently available to address safety concerns. What prevention programs are in place? Has the district established a crisis response process? Are there gaps in services, or duplication of services? The board may want to request periodic staff reports on safety-related activities at regularly scheduled board meetings.

In addition to adopting the district vision statement, the board may be involved in the building of a collective, communitywide vision that recognizes the need for coordinated community efforts to reduce harassment, discrimination and violence in schools and the community. As community leaders, board members may take the initiative to call attention to these issues and encourage a collaborative approach to violence prevention and interven-

Tools for assessing school safety

In order to establish a positive climate in schools, districts need to take into account the perceptions of students about their safety. Districts or communities may choose to develop their own local assessments or may use available instruments such as the California Healthy Kids Survey and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (see Appendix A). In addition, kidsdata.org, a project of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, is an online resource that includes a searchable database with statistics, charts, comparisons and links to research about a variety of topics related to the health of California students. It includes information on child and youth safety and statistics on bullying and harassment at school that can be searched at the district, county and state levels and can be customized by grade level and by demographics.

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tion strategies. The board may work with county supervisors, city councils, community-based organizations and others to assess the needs of the community and develop a commonly held vision of services for children and families.

ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

The board must ensure that organizational structures are in place to support the district's vision and priorities. Board decisions related to the adoption of policies, the district budget, curriculum and the collective bargaining agreement all impact the district's ability to effectively address school safety.

Adopting policy

The governing board leads through the adoption and monitoring of policies. This fundamental duty provides the board with an opportunity to establish guidelines and direction that impact the safety of students and staff.

Written policies communicate expectations and provide a guide for action in the district. The policies state what the board wants and why. There are many reasons that it is important to work through policies:

⇨ Voting on a policy provides clear direction to the superintendent. Board members may not all agree, but the policy development and adoption process ensures a majority of the board comes to agreement, making it possible to provide coherent rather than fragmented policy messages to the staff.

⇨ By creating policies, boards can initiate action or respond to individuals and constituency groups in an appropriate and systematic way.

⇨ A policy manual provides a structural framework to guide and organize the district, and helps clarify district philosophy as well as the roles and responsibilities of the board, the superintendent and staff.

⇨ Policy development, adoption and evaluation are the mechanisms by which district operations remain stable through changes in board members, superintendent or staff.

⇨ Development of sound policies through an effective process increases public confidence by showing that the district is being governed and operated with a focus on student learning and in accordance with law and sound business practices.

▷ Policies help ensure decisions are made thoughtfully, while keeping in mind the larger policy direction of the district. This process can help districts avoid setting a precedent of individual decisions which may be hastily made without taking into consideration the long-term implications.

Well-thought-out board policies are aligned with the district's overall vision, local community values and state and federal laws and regulations. Accompanying administrative regulations developed by the superintendent and his or her staff provide the procedures for implementing and enforcing the policy.

Together, the policies and administrative regulations serve as a strategy for anticipating and solving problems. Under ideal conditions, policy acts as a preventative measure and is in place before the relevant issue arises. Especially in the area of school safety, the importance of having a policy in place beforehand cannot be overstated.

The board and staff can review the district's policy manual to look for opportunities to promote, support and create safe schools. Some of the more salient issues boards face today in terms of improving campus safety for all students and reducing the levels of harassment, discrimination and violence will require a number of strategies. Boards are mandated to adopt policies

or procedures on nondiscrimination in district programs and activities, sexual harassment of students and suspension/ expulsion. They may also adopt an overall policy on school safety (e.g., comprehensive safety plans), as well as individual policies addressing specific aspects of school safety (e.g., bullying, gang prevention education, hate-motivated behavior). Other policies (e.g., parent involvement, counseling and other student support services, mental health services, alcohol and other drugs, staff development) may also reference school safety or be used to promote and maintain school safety.

Some safety strategies that the board might address in policy are discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, although the governance team may identify other policies that can support the district's vision for school safety. The School Safety Policy Development Worksheet at the end of this chapter (see pp. 56-65) is designed to assist districts in developing a systematic, cohesive policy approach to school safety. In addition, Appendix D provides a list of sample policies and regulations available from CSBA on related topics.

Once policies related to school safety are adopted, it is important that district personnel appropriately and consistently implement the policies. Staff should be notified of each policy and provided staff development as needed to ensure they understand the right of all students to a safe environment, complaint procedures that students

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and others can use to report discrimination or harassment, and disciplinary consequences for staff and students who engage in such behavior.

It is also important to make the policies and related administrative regulations readily accessible to students and parents through the policy manual, student handbook, district and school websites, school offices, classrooms and other appropriate venues. By making the policies and regulations widely known, all students will have an explanation of district expectations for student conduct and the disciplinary consequences of engaging in unacceptable behavior. Students who are the targets of bullying or harassment may feel more protected and be less likely to fear reporting this behavior. Research demonstrates that the perception of students from school districts with a specific nondiscrimination policy were more likely to feel safe at school (54 percent vs. 36 percent) and one-third as likely to skip a class because they felt uncomfortable or unsafe (5 percent vs. 16 percent) (California Safe Schools Coalition, 2004).

Adopting the budget

Although the budget is prepared by staff, the board has a responsibility to ensure that the budget it adopts reflects the goals and priorities set forth in its vision. Funds are rarely available to support all of the things the board needs to do and would like to do, so the board must weigh the benefits and costs of competing needs. If student safety is a priority of the board, funds must be allocated to support related programs and activities.

Some school safety strategies can be implemented at no or low cost, but others do require additional expenditures. Harassment, discrimination and violence prevention, and intervention programs need adequate funding to provide effective services. State, federal and local policymakers must make sufficient and ongoing fiscal commitments to keep students safe. In doing so, not all funds should be earmarked for specific programs; districts and schools need flexibility to determine the best use of funds for their unique needs.

The board can also direct staff to explore state, national, local and private funding sources for school safety. A number of foundation and government grants are available to support school safety programs and/or collaborative community efforts to reduce violence.

Resources and in-kind support (e.g., personnel, facilities, utility costs, other operational support) may also be available through city or county agencies, nonprofit organizations or other community partners. Agreements about the resources that will be provided by each partner should be made early in the planning process.

Adopting curriculum

The governing board has the authority and responsibility to adopt courses of study, curriculum guidelines and instructional materials for the district. Through this function it can emphasize curriculum that is relevant; provides students with a rich variety of subjects, experiences and opportunities to succeed; and prepares youth to become active community participants. Students who are engaged in school and who perceive the value of education for their future careers and personal goals will be less likely to act out or engage in negative behaviors.

In addition to ensuring the quality of the core educational program and the availability of interesting cocurricular and extra-curricular activities, the board can adopt curricula that specifically support efforts to reduce harassment, discrimination and violence and teach students constructive ways of dealing with their anger, frustration or other contributing factors to their negative behavior.

As described in Chapter 3, examples of curricula that can build skills, values and understanding are curricula in health education and comprehensive sexual health education, character/values education, multicultural education, service learning, social skills development, self-esteem development and media analysis skills.

Adopting the collective bargaining agreement

The board can reinforce its commitment to school safety through the collective bargaining process. The board is the only representative the public has in the adoption of the collective bargaining agreement. The collective bargaining agreement impacts the educational program, the school district's fiscal condition and the ability to attain the vision, goals and priorities of the district. The board should understand the programmatic and fiscal implications of the collective bargaining agreement, provide policy direction throughout the negotiations and vote on the contract.

Employee safety and duties are bargainable topics, as are the consequences for violations of board policy. Staff does not have the right to bargain some management decisions (e.g., the board's decision to institute after-school conflict resolution classes); however, the effect of such management decisions may be bargainable (e.g., increased pay for additional instructional hours).

PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Although the board is not directly involved in the implementation of programs, it can help support the superintendent's and staff's

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implementation of the district's vision for school safety in a variety of ways.

The board can support implementation by backing up its vision and policies with the resources needed to be successful. Fiscal implications must be weighed before the board agrees to a direction or approves a program; once the district staff has been given the green light to move ahead, it is the board's responsibility to ensure that staff has the tools necessary to implement the direction. This might include funding, staffing, facilities improvements or related professional development. Many districts have established centralized offices or positions for safety directors, coordinators or administrators to help plan, coordinate, oversee and communicate prevention and intervention efforts, and to provide a specific "point person" for addressing safety matters. The board needs to keep its focus on school safety and ensure that other decisions it makes do not undermine its commitment to this priority.

In addition, the board can provide support by continually demonstrating its commitment to creating positive school climates that respect the right of all students to attend schools that are free of harassment, discrimination and violence. Toward this end, the board can communicate its expectations to students, families and staff, including expectations related to student conduct and expectations that discipline rules for inappropriate conduct will be fairly

and consistently enforced. The board must uphold its own adopted policies and ensure that the superintendent and staff are aware of and adhere to these policies.

Board members should be knowledgeable enough about the district's school safety policies and programs to explain them to the public. The board can champion the district's efforts by providing public recognition of successful programs at a board meeting.

The board can also contribute to a positive school climate through good "boardsmanship" — that is, through its own governance. A board that works well with its superintendent, demonstrates trust and respect for staff and the public, and is professional in its relations with each other builds support and confidence in the school system. This leads to a community that is involved in its schools and committed to doing its part to support school safety efforts.

HOLDING THE SYSTEM ACCOUNTABLE

Accountability is a critical but often poorly understood role for boards. It is the ongoing responsibility of the school board to ensure that the district is making progress toward accomplishing its vision and goals. In this case, the board has a responsibility to

monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to prevent and reduce harassment, discrimination and violence.

Ensuring program accountability

The board must ensure accountability to the community for programmatic decisions of the district. It is important that the board regularly review existing policies and monitor program outcomes. To fulfill this role, the board should request periodic information on the outcomes of district programs and the overall safety of the schools.

With the superintendent, the board should establish methods to monitor safety programs, policies and curriculum. The governance team should agree on the data that will be collected and how often such data will be reported to the board. As appropriate, data should be disaggregated by race, gender and offense so that the district can better understand what disparities exist and what types of problems exist on its school campuses. Examples of indicators include:

⇨ Student and staff surveys of school climate and safety

⇨ Number of reports of bullying, cyberbullying, hate-related violence, graffiti or other harassment

⇨ Number of formal complaints and the outcomes of those complaint procedures

⇨ Number of suspensions and expulsions

⇨ Rates of chronic absence and truancy

⇨ Accommodations or strategies that have been implemented to prevent harassment

If improvement is not evident in the pre-established indicators of violence and school climate, the board should explore the reasons and work with the superintendent to develop strategies for improvement (including policy revisions, if necessary). It is the board's responsibility to ensure that appropriate action is taken to meet the needs of students as set forth in the vision statement and policies.

Ensuring personnel accountability

Critical to the development of a safe, secure and caring school climate are the behaviors of the school staff. Staff who have direct contact with students are most likely to observe negative interactions between students or identify early warning signs of violence. Trustworthy, knowledgeable staff familiar with responsibilities and

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procedures are also more likely to elicit reporting information from students who are victims or observers of the negative behavior.

The board's involvement in personnel matters is important, albeit limited. The board does not directly evaluate staff other than the superintendent, but it can ensure personnel accountability through its evaluation of the superintendent and the adoption and monitoring of policy, guidelines and criteria related to the evaluation of other staff.

The evaluation criteria for the superintendent can include his or her commitment to the board's vision and goals for safe, nonviolent learning institutions. It is also appropriate to hold the superintendent accountable for the performance of other district staff, including the extent to which he or she adequately assigns staff to support safety-related responsibilities and the extent to which all staff participate in fostering an appropriate school environment.

The board can support the superintendent in personnel accountability by setting clear board expectations that staff model appropriate behaviors. Education Code 44662 requires the board to establish evaluation criteria for certificated employees, which must include "the establishment and maintenance of a suitable learning environment within the scope of the employee's responsibilities." The governance team also may establish performance

standards for classified staff as these are not mandatory subjects for negotiation.

Unfortunately, some schools that have looked closely at their environment have been surprised to find that staff are exhibiting some of the behaviors which the district strongly discourages and/or prohibits among students. A board that denounces vulgar language, bullying, intimidation and racist behavior must be sure that incidents involving staff as the perpetrator are treated as seriously as those perpetrated by students.

Serving as a judicial and appeals body

The governing board is usually the final arbiter of disputes within the district. Thus, when students are considered for suspension or expulsion, the board serves as a judicial and appeals body.

These proceedings deal with the complicated issues that have not been resolved through the classroom, school site or district procedures. In some cases, these proceedings are initiated in response to state and federal laws which require immediate suspension and a recommendation for expulsion of students under certain circumstances. Thus, the board's discretion in these areas is limited by state and federal law and may also be

limited by any zero tolerance policy the board may have adopted in its district.

Education Code 48918 mandates that the board establish rules and regulations governing procedures for the expulsion of students. The law governing expulsion hearings is detailed, complex and often confusing. Thus, the importance of having clear policies and procedures in this area and communicating them to students, parents and staff cannot be overemphasized. A reliable framework of policies and administrative regulations is essential to a fair and effective judicial and appeals process. Clear procedures help guide staff, parents and students through the process and ensure protection of students' due process rights.

It is essential that discipline procedures are conducted in full compliance with law. When constitutional or procedural questions arise concerning disciplinary matters, the board should consult its legal counsel on all aspects of policy and procedure.

ENGAGING IN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY

As the only local officials elected solely to represent the interests of children, school board members have a profound responsibility to speak out on behalf of children and schools. They have an opportunity to provide leadership in order to draw attention to the needs of schools and children and amass the support necessary to address those needs.

The board must be prepared to react to issues or situations that may occur on its campuses. However, to the extent possible, it is desirable to proactively define the safety issues that affect district students and communicate these issues to various audiences.

To promote school safety, the board can communicate the value of safe schools to students, families and others and seek opportunities to influence legislative and regulatory bodies. The board can also encourage and support collaboration among community agencies and organizations to support the needs of all children, particularly those most at risk of perpetrating or being the victim of harassment, discrimination and violence, and to help improve the availability and quality of prevention and intervention programs.

Advocating for safe schools

Being an advocate means clearly articulating the board's vision for safe schools, the needs of the students and the district's efforts to accomplish its goals.

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A proactive, effective communications or advocacy plan should begin with the board's and superintendent's identification of advocacy goals (e.g., additional funding to support district safety programs, greater presence of law enforcement on or near school sites, reduction of bullying) and a commitment to work together to achieve these goals. It should outline key messages, target groups, strategies tailored to each group, timelines, district spokespersons and budget implications. If the district employs a public information officer, he or she should be involved in the development and implementation of the plan.

Depending on the advocacy goals identified by the governance team, the district might target its communications/advocacy on one or more of the following groups:

⇨ **Students.** Students should be aware of the board's expectations related to student conduct and school safety, including its clear opposition to any form of violence, harassment or discrimination and the consequences for engaging in any such behavior. By publicizing its efforts and providing clear steps for how problems will be resolved, the district can encourage students to feel safe in reporting incidents. Prohibition of harassment based on individual student characteristics, such as gender or race/ethnicity, will be one part of a broader effort to create a safe school environment so that all students have an equal opportunity to attend school, be engaged in the classroom and ultimately to achieve academic success.

⇨ **School staff.** The board and superintendent may agree to focus on achieving the support of school staff for a specific school safety policy, program or strategy. Staff have direct contact with students, parents and others; if they do not understand and support the board's vision, the messages they are imparting could be at odds with those of the governance team.

⇨ **Parents and families.** The board has an important community advocacy role in relation to the parents of district students. The board needs to gain the confidence and support of parents to succeed with its school safety agenda. Without parental support and reinforcement of the rules that schools adopt to protect students, few changes can occur. The first step in this process is to engage parents in the discussion of school safety strategies. Parents, staff and the board can then work together to educate the whole school community and explain how the safety strategies will alleviate parental concerns.

Communications strategies also need to be in place in the event of a violent incident or threat of violence on campus.

The district's crisis communications plan should include specific strategies for contacting parents.

▷ **Community agencies, organizations and leaders.**
Target groups within the community may include businesses, county and city agencies (e.g., law enforcement, courts), elected officials, community organizations, civic groups, places of worship and other community leaders and concerned citizens. Important goals of the board's community leadership are to build support for district programs and to encourage collaboration to promote a culture of safe schools for all students.

▷ **Media.** Many school districts have well-established media relations practices which include a designated school district media contact person and a board spokesperson. Their media outreach strategy may include regular visits and phone calls to editorial boards, education writers and local cable TV and radio stations. Submitting editorials and letters to the editor to the local newspaper and issuing press releases are also common. The school board can use existing media relations practices to raise awareness about the district's activities and needs related to school safety. Local media are also an essential partner in disseminating information in the event of a crisis and should be involved in advanced planning for crisis communication.

▷ **State, federal or local legislative and regulatory bodies.**
State and federal laws greatly impact the board's operations and its discretion in responding to school safety issues. For example, state and/or federal lawmakers have mandated expulsion under certain circumstances, set penalties for school crimes and established processes to protect the rights of students. They also have provided funding opportunities for school safety programs. At the local level, city and county officials make decisions about the number and allocation of law enforcement officers. All these decisions, and more, impact school safety.

Therefore, boards should seek opportunities to influence local, state and federal legislative and regulatory bodies on the legal, fiscal and policy issues that inevitably arise. Board members can also advocate at all governmental levels for programs to improve the conditions of children, thereby reducing some of the identified causes of violence.

Communications strategies should be tailored to the target audience and message. The district can raise awareness about safety-related needs and activities by publishing articles in school newsletters and on the district website, providing frequent updates

at school board meetings, providing reports at site council and PTA meetings, reaching out to the local media and holding regular meetings with other local government representatives. The board might create a district committee or advisory group to obtain feedback on issues related to incidents of harassment, discrimination and violence. District spokespersons can testify at legislative hearings, provide information to agency administrators and work with multidisciplinary task forces to promote a safe-schools agenda.

Conducting student and community forums

A district may find that a good way to start a local conversation about school safety is to hold its own student and/or community-wide forums to discuss student safety needs and launch the development of policies and plans. These forums can help identify the needs and concerns of students, parents and community members. Key questions to explore in the forums might include:

⇨ **Do students feel unsafe at school?**

» Solicit input on conditions that make students feel unsafe at school.
» Solicit input on barriers to report incidents of harassment, discrimination or violence. Some of the barriers may include lack of established and well-known procedures, fear of retaliation or fear of inaction on the part of school staff.

⇨ **How do harassment, discrimination and violence prevention and intervention programs support the district's vision for student achievement?**

» Share the district's vision for student achievement.
» Provide an overview of the research on the relationship between victimization and academic achievement among district students. Providing easy-to-read fact sheets is a useful tool to share information.
» Provide an opportunity for students and community members to ask questions and share their thoughts.
» Share information on the existing resources and services to support students at risk of being victimized or being the perpetrator in harassment, discrimination or violence. If a local needs assessment has been conducted, share findings on the possible demand for these programs.
» Explore students' and the community's interest in the creation of new programs or services.
» Explore students' and the community's preferences about who should provide new programs (e.g., the school district, local government agencies or a partnership).

⇨ **What should a quality program include?**

  » Facilitate a dialogue to explore the community's priorities. This may include discussing goals for student outcomes (academic, socio-emotional, etc.), strategies to support alignment of the district's vision with district policies and procedures and/or strategies to support all student populations through effective and meaningful prevention and intervention programs.

When the forum process is complete, the district could develop a report on what was learned. A district advisory committee could be charged with developing recommendations based on the findings from the forums and an exploration of additional topics. The district could use these recommendations in the development of a strategic plan on safety, identify possible partnerships with other agencies and organizations working on safety issues and/or identify areas where board members could advocate for legislative or regulatory changes. This report, along with information about other prevention and intervention activities, could be communicated throughout the community through the district's website, e-mail, district newsletter, local parent-teacher organization or community partners.

In addition, the board may want to consider adopting a board resolution in support of making schools safe for all students.

Adopting a resolution can help inform the community about the issue, show the board's commitment and support to existing programs and raise awareness among key constituency groups and the media about the district's interest in expanding efforts to reduce incidents of harassment, discrimination or violence in its schools. The adoption of a resolution could be timed to launch the district's involvement in a local collaborative or could follow a series of community forums to ensure that the community has a better understanding of the issue.

Encouraging community collaboration

Harassment, discrimination and violence are not caused by one single element and are not limited to one environment. Therefore, no single solution or institution can eliminate them. The board's willingness and ability to advocate for collaboration and build strong community support are essential for systemic reform and reducing the bullying, antisocial or violent behavior of our youth.

In order for school safety efforts to be effective, the other systems impacting youth must be working toward compatible goals. The board, superintendent and appropriate district staff should reach out early and often to the existing network of systems and agencies. Potential partners include city and county officials,

law enforcement, courts, social services, mental health services, drug prevention and intervention programs, LGBT support organizations, recreation programs, faith-based organizations, community organizations, businesses and charitable foundations.

Many of these partners may already be involved in local or regional efforts to address safety. The board should make a special effort to understand what efforts they have undertaken and in what ways they are interested in helping to meet the challenge of making schools safer for students and the community. Collaboration may be initiated for the purpose of coordinating services for at-risk youth, improving the conditions of children and families in the community, developing joint strategies to keep neighborhoods safe or improving cross-agency communication when students have broken the law or are considered dangerous. Many innovative and successful programs begin as conversations between two people.

Many of the steps toward building a successful collaborative mirror the steps needed to develop strong district programs, and the board's role is similar. An effective system of coordinated services begins with an accurate assessment of the community's needs and existing resources, followed by the development of a collective vision of all the stakeholders in the collaborative. The board may be involved in representing the district's interests in the development of this collective vision. The board can emphasize

and encourage a family-centered, preventative approach to community harassment, discrimination and violence.

Based on the needs of the community and goals established by the stakeholders, members of the collaborative need to develop a plan and organizational structure for achieving these goals. Joint prevention and/or intervention projects or programs need to be agreed upon (e.g., sports leagues to provide alternative activities for youth, community mentorship programs, counseling, parent education, etc.) and roles of participants clearly identified. Through its governance role, the board can take steps to increase collaborative success by ensuring that thorough planning and staff preparation are in place. The board may also ensure that an effective plan is in place by recommending agencies and organizations to be included, approving new services to be offered at school sites or existing school services to be coordinated, and establishing joint powers agreements when feasible.

The greatest impediments to restructuring service delivery tend to be attitudinal barriers, such as apathy, fear, lack of trust and turf protection. The board can help staff and collaborative participants to get past these barriers by providing opportunities to communicate with each other and hiring a coordinator to accomplish the necessary daily tasks. To ensure a prepared staff, the board can include collaboration as one of the superintendent's

performance goals, consider incentives to encourage staff partici-pation in collaboration and provide professional development to teach collaborative skills.

The board has the opportunity to make budget and facilities decisions that support collaboration while improving school safety and reducing harassment, discrimination and violence. Appropriate board roles include allocating resources to support collaboration, approving the use of school facilities for collabora-tive activities and advocating for adequate funding levels and greater funding flexibility. The board also may find that other community or local government agencies can contribute funding, staffing or facilities to support implementation of safety programs.

To ensure accountability for collaborative efforts, the board should ensure that formal evaluations are constructed on a regular basis, ask staff to establish a process and schedule for receiving feedback from all stakeholders, and present that information to the community. Evaluation results should be used to identify needed improvements and justify the district's continued participation in the collaborative.

Building Healthy Communities: An example of community collaboration

The California Endowment is engaged in a 10-year, $1 billion program called Building Healthy Communities, working in 14 communities across the state to help residents create places where children are healthy, safe and ready to learn. The planning process brought together schools, local government, business leaders, neighborhood groups and individuals to develop a communitywide vision.

Primary goals of the initiative include reducing youth violence and improving neighborhood safety. Other activities of this project, such as those related to employment opportunities, education, housing, and unhealthy environmental conditions, also help to address factors that contribute to violence. The initiative is based on the belief that interrelated problems require interrelated solutions.

Additional information is available at www.calendow.org/healthycommunities/background.html.

The Board's Role

School Safety Policy Development Worksheet

The following School Safety Policy Development Worksheet provides a tool for school boards, superintendents, district staff and others to develop and review safety-related policies and regulations.

Part 1 introduces a series of policy components that could be included in the district's safety policies. Sample questions are provided to facilitate the board's discussion.

Part 2 uses a series of questions to help boards, administrators, staff and others assess existing district policies and regulations related to safety in order to determine the need for the development or revision of current policies or regulations.

Part 3 suggests a policy development process to help school boards, administrators, staff and others determine the necessary actions and responsibilities for collecting data and for making recommendations on the relevant board policies and administrative regulations.

Part 4 provides a format for completing policy revisions and developing new policies and regulations.

A workplan and timeline form is also provided to assist in the planning of the policy work and to establish deadlines.

The policy review and development process described in this worksheet is resource intensive. As such, it provides the greatest opportunity for a full understanding of harassment, discrimination and violence within the district. However, it is recognized that it is very unlikely that any two districts will follow the same policy development process. What is important is for districts to find what works for them, and then to proceed accordingly.

Part 1: Initial Discussion of Topic

Link to student achievement and development: The following questions are intended to focus the school board's discussion on the relationship between student safety and the district's vision for student achievement and development. The term "development" includes the social, emotional and physical development of students.

1. Why is school safety important to student achievement and development?

2. What does the research show about the relationship between safety and student achievement and development?

3. How will policies on safety contribute to improved student achievement and development?

Policy topic components: Below are the basic components that a board should understand and/or address in crafting a series of safety-related policies. Component statements are not intended to be policy language. Each component statement is a key concept related to the topic, but not the policy language itself. Each component is intended to frame an issue or identify concerns and interests that the board would want to address in a policy on this

topic. Under each component statement are questions that may help guide the board's discussion of the component.

1. The board believes that safe school environments will support the district's vision for student achievement and development.

    What statements related to school safety are included in the district's vision and goals?

2. All students, regardless of race, ability, gender, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics, have a right to a safe school environment.

    Do students feel safe at school?

    What do district data reveal about trends and patterns of harassment, discrimination and violence at district schools? What types of harassment, discrimination and violence are most common? When and where is it most likely to occur, which students are most vulnerable to being targeted, and who are the most frequent offenders?

    What are the federal and state legal requirements related to nondiscrimination?

3. The district and/or school sites shall maintain comprehensive safety plans which meet the requirements of law and identify effective strategies and programs to be implemented.

   What are the legal requirements related to the development of comprehensive safety plans?

   Does the district have a districtwide safety plan? Does each school site have a safety plan?

   To what extent are the comprehensive safety plans being implemented, monitored and updated as needed?

   What safety-related programs currently exist within the school system and the community?

   Do current programs address prevention, as well as intervention?

   What services does the district provide for student victims and perpetrators of harassment, discrimination and violence?

   What is the estimated cost of providing new programs? What financing options are available to provide programs?

4. The district shall explore opportunities to develop partnerships with other agencies and organizations within the community to help children be safe.

   To what extent is violence a problem within the community?

   What are the key community organizations and agencies that work to support the social and emotional needs of school-age children?

   What processes can be put in place to encourage ongoing collaboration and partnerships between these entities and the school district?

   What role should the district play in supporting safety-related programs within the community?

5. The district shall develop procedures to appropriately handle all reports of harassment, discrimination and violence.

   What procedures are currently in place to handle harassment, discrimination or violence against students? Do these procedures address reporting mechanisms, investigation of reports, and due process for alleged victims, perpetrators and witnesses?

*Are these procedures implemented effectively, from the
perspective of students and families, as well as educators?
What improvements are needed?*

6. Safety-related curriculum shall be age appropriate, shall be
    aligned with state standards and shall reflect the beliefs of the
    community.

    *Which safety-related topics are currently taught in the district?
    In what courses and at what grade levels?*

    *What is the process for piloting and approving the health and
    safety curriculum in the district?*

    *Does the curriculum development process include a review of
    available research-based local, state, national and/or interna-
    tional curriculum models?*

    *Does the curriculum development process include sufficient
    opportunities for input from teachers, administrators, safety
    personnel, parents and others?*

7. Teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators shall receive
    ongoing professional development to both prevent and respond
    to incidents of harassment, discrimination and violence.

*Does the district have a professional development plan to
support school staff in school safety efforts?*

*What are the costs associated with providing training and pro-
fessional development of this kind? Are there sufficient funds
for the district to provide safety training for staff?*

8. The district shall engage parents as essential partners in the
    district's school safety efforts.

    *What processes are or can be put in place to incorporate
    parent input into the district's safety strategies, programs and
    curricula?*

    *What information can be provided to parents to support their
    children's social, emotional and cognitive development and
    to promote attitudes of tolerance and acceptance within and
    beyond the home?*

    *What information and support can be provided to parents to
    help them identify early warning signs that their child may be a
    victim or perpetrator of harassment, discrimination or violence
    and to help them access appropriate complaint procedures and
    support services?*

The Board's Role

9. The board shall continually monitor the effectiveness of safety-related programs.

   What indicators can be used to assess the effectiveness of the district's safety-related policies and programs? Are these indicators aligned with the district's immediate, short-term and long-term goals for the safety programs?

   What type of reports does the board expect to receive, and how often?

   How will the evaluation process be related to program planning?

As part of the discussion of the above policy components related to safety, the board may identify additional related policy components in the district and community. Those components should be listed.

Part 2: Assessment of existing policy

Review the district's current board policies and administrative regulations related to safety based on the following questions. The assessment should determine whether the board's policies include all the policy components identified in Part 1.

1. List the board policy or policies related to safety.

2. Does each policy include a focus on student achievement and development? How?

3. Are the administrative regulations consistent with the board policy?

4. Does district practice comply with policy/administrative regulations?

5. Does the policy reflect current legal requirements?

6. As a result of the board discussion in Part 1 and assessment of policy just completed in Part 2, in what areas does the board need to develop new policy or revise current policy?

Note: Items 7 and 8 are intended to identify issues related to, but not directly part of, the policy topic under consideration. In addition, items 7 and 8 may identify issues that require further attention to ensure the alignment of policy, other key work of boards and other district documents.

7. Has the board's policy discussion and/or policy assessment raised any other policy issues for future review or action?

8. Based on the board's discussion and the policy assessment, do other district documents require future review or revisions?

❏ District/school site comprehensive safety plans

❏ District budget

❏ Collective bargaining agreements

❏ Facilities management plan

❏ Strategic plan

❏ School improvement plans

❏ Staff development plan

❏ Student handbooks

❏ Employee handbooks

❏ Other

The Board's Role

Part 3: Policy development process

As part of the policy development process, the governance team should determine the data needed to effectively address this policy topic. The superintendent and staff should identify where the data may be available, the appropriate allocation of resources for data collection and analysis, and the assignment of responsibility for data collection, analysis and recommendations. The process also should include opportunities for input from affected parties in the district and the community.

1. What data (internal and external) do the board need in order to develop safety-related policies?

2. Who, beyond the governance team, should be involved in the policy development process (e.g., students, parents, teachers, principals, safety director, district security/police officers, director of categorical programs, representatives from community-based, ethnic and faith-based organizations, representatives from city and county government/law enforcement, other interested community members)?

3. What are the recommendations from the individuals listed above?

4. What are the recommendations of staff based on an analysis of the data?

Part 4: Board policy content directions

Content decisions: The board should identify the content components of new or revised policy based on the discussion, assessment, analysis and input in Parts 1 through 3 and a review of the following questions:

1. Which of the policy components listed in Part 1 and those recommended by key stakeholders (identified in Part 3) does the board want included in a new or revised policy?

2. Does the assessment of existing policy completed in Part 2 identify any additional content components the board wants in new or revised policy?

3. Has the board identified any content in existing policy that should not be included in new or revised policy?

4. Do the data and input collected in Part 3 reveal any additional (or new) content components the board wants in a new or revised policy?

Review of draft policy: After the board has completed the process described above, the superintendent, policy committee and/or other appropriate designees should prepare a draft policy,

arrange for legal review of the policy, and bring it to the board for consideration at a public board meeting. The following questions should be used to guide the board's review of draft policy. If any significant revisions are required, some or all of the questions in Parts 1 through 4 may need to be revisited before the policy is formally adopted.

1. Does the draft policy accurately reflect the board's intent? In what ways, if any, should the policy be revised to better communicate the board's direction?

2. Does public, staff or student input add any new issues that need to be addressed?

3. What criteria will the governance team use to determine whether this policy achieves the desired results?

4. What provisions does the draft policy include for periodic review and evaluation?

Note: Following adoption of the policy by the board, the superintendent should develop a plan for communicating the policy to interested parties, as well as a plan to implement the policy. The plan could include agreement on the goals, community outreach, key messages to be communicated, the individuals, groups and media organizations to receive the communication, and, when appropriate, strategies that tailor the messages for each of these groups so people receive the information of most use to them.

Once a policy has been adopted, it is the board's responsibility to support it by providing the necessary funding when a budget is adopted, considering the policy implications of collective bargaining decisions, and monitoring the district's programs.

The Board's Role

Policy workplan and timeline

Activity	Person(s) Responsible	Deadline
Part 1		
Introduction to topic and initial board discussion on broad issues		
Part 2		
Assessment of existing policy		
Part 3		
Data collection and analysis		
Professional staff analysis and recommendations		
District and community input		
Part 4		
Board content directions		
Drafting of recommended policy		
Legal review		
First reading: board initial consideration of draft policy, opportunity for public comment		

Activity	Person(s) Responsible	Deadline
Part 4 (continued)		
Drafting of revised policy, if necessary		
Legal review of revised policy		
Second reading and adoption		
Communication of new policy		
Specifically: (list)		
Implementation by superintendent and staff		
Review and evaluation		
Modification of policy based on review and evaluation		

The Board's Role

3. Prevention Strategies for School Safety

Effective teaching and learning can occur only in an atmosphere where students and staff feel safe. Therefore, it is critical that schools provide a positive, caring school climate and implement strategies to prevent unacceptable behaviors such as bullying, harassment and violence. Starting these efforts in the early grades can be key. Elementary students who attended a school with a bullying/violence prevention program for two or more years were demonstrated to have a higher level of academic achievement than other students (Office of the Surgeon General et al., 2001).

This chapter presents samples of prevention strategies that may be implemented in districts and school sites to promote positive school environments. Strategies also may address specific types of violence or harassment (e.g., cyberbullying, dating violence) or involve collaboration with other agencies to address root causes of student misbehavior (e.g., alcohol or drug use, parental neglect). See Appendix E for further information about factors that may contribute to violent behaviors and that might be addressed through a coordinated, societal approach in order to reduce violence in schools and communities.

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL SAFETY PLANS

California law (Education Code 35294.6) requires each school to maintain a comprehensive school safety plan relevant to the needs and resources of the school site. Districts with 2,500 or fewer students have the option of developing a districtwide safety plan applicable to each school site. However, all districts may wish to consider developing both districtwide and school site safety plans. A comprehensive safety plan ensures a coordinated approach to school safety rather than a variety of piecemeal programs.

Education Code 32282 requires that the districtwide or school safety plan include an assessment of the current status of school crime. It must also contain appropriate strategies and programs that will provide or maintain a high level of school safety and address the school's procedures for complying with existing laws related to school safety. These include:

⇨ child abuse reporting procedures

⇨ routine and emergency disaster procedures

Prevention Strategies

⇨ policies for suspension and expulsion

⇨ procedures to notify teachers of dangerous students

⇨ a discrimination and harassment policy prohibiting discrimination in accordance with Education Code 200 et seq.

⇨ any dress code prohibiting students from wearing gang-related apparel

⇨ safety procedures to and from school

⇨ school discipline rules

⇨ hate crime reporting procedures

⇨ procedures providing for a safe and orderly environment conducive to learning at the school

A balanced, effective safety plan may also include strategies related to the development of a positive school climate, preventative discipline, curriculum that emphasizes prevention and alternatives to negative behaviors, parent involvement, prevention and intervention related to the sale or use of drugs and alcohol, collaboration with other agencies and community organizations, assessment of the

school's physical environment, crisis intervention, and staff training in prevention and intervention of bullying, harassment and violence.

STUDENT EDUCATION

Notification of district policies and school rules

The district should inform students about district policies and procedures regarding bullying, harassment and violence, including what to do if they or someone they know is being bullied and the consequences of improper conduct. Through student handbooks, district and school websites, school assemblies, classroom instruction, classroom notices or other means, the district should ensure that students understand their right to a safe school environment and the available mechanisms to report incidents.

A "contract" signed by the student, his or her parent and the principal is increasingly being used as a method to ensure that students and their parents are aware of district and school rules and each party's responsibilities for ensuring compliance. A contract may include all school rules or be specific to particular subjects. The consequences of violating the contract should be clearly stated.

Health education related to safety

California state content standards related to violence prevention and safety are addressed within the health education content standards adopted by the State Board of Education in March 2008. Relevant standards are primarily included in the categories of Injury Prevention and Safety as well as Mental, Emotional and Social Health and Growth, Development and Sexual Health. Examples at appropriate grade levels include, but are not limited to:

⇨   Describe school rules about getting along with others.

⇨   Recognize the characteristics of bullying.

⇨   Explain the importance of telling an adult if someone is in danger or being bullied.

⇨   Explain the importance of telling a trusted adult if you see or hear about someone having a weapon.

⇨   Examine the effects of bullying and harassment on others.

⇨   Demonstrate what to say and do when witnessing bullying.

⇨   Role play what to do if a stranger at home, in a car, or on the street approaches you.

⇨   List people to go to for help if feeling unsafe or threatened.

⇨   Demonstrate how to ask trusted adults for help.

⇨   Analyze sources of information and services concerning safety and violence prevention.

⇨   Define simple conflict resolution techniques.

⇨   Identify the benefits of using nonviolent means to resolve conflicts.

⇨   Identify refusal skills when in personal-safety situations (e.g., use a clear "no" statement, walk or run away, change subject, delay).

⇨   Express emotions appropriately.

⇨   Show respect for individual differences.

⇨   Identify positive alternatives to gang activity.

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⇨ Recognize that there are individual differences in growth and development, body image, gender roles and sexual orientation.

⇨ Encourage and support safe, respectful and responsible relationships.

The health education standards also include standards that may be helpful in developing or implementing curriculum to raise awareness of dating violence (also called "adolescent relationship abuse"). The standards for middle school include the emotional, psychological and physical consequences of rape and sexual assault and why both should be reported to authorities and trusted adults. At the high school level, the standards discuss the charac-teristics of healthy relationships, dating, committed relationships and marriage.

State standards for Growth, Development and Sexual Health, along with Education Code 51930-51939, set expectations that HIV/AIDS prevention instruction and comprehensive sexual health education will be appropriate for and inclusive of all students. This provides an opportunity for schools to directly engage students in positive discussions designed to break down gender bias, thereby reducing bullying based on sexual orientation, gender or gender identity and contributing to a safer school environment.

Although the state standards are "models" rather than mandates, it is expected that governing boards will adopt local standards that meet or exceed the state standards. District curriculum and instruction should then be aligned with the adopted standards. There are a number of research-based health education curricula and teaching resources that districts may adopt (e.g., instructional materials adopted by the State Board of Education, curricula available through the California Healthy Kids Resource Center). While some districts may develop their own curriculum and/or use local community resources, it is important to ensure that these curricula meet state standards and are accurate, unbiased and research-based.

Character/values education

A values education encourages the development of traits that the governing board, parents, teachers and members of the broader community recognize to be important for a child's personal and social development and future success. Values taught at the school should be those that are recognized by the entire community as positive traits. They should not be based on a particular religious or ideological belief. Character traits and values that are usually universally accepted are honesty, personal responsibility, self-discipline, cooperation and respect for others. These are traits that would encourage nonviolent solutions to problems.

Multicultural education, respect for cultural differences

California is home to children from every corner of the world. As a result, many students enrolled in the state's schools are immigrants or are U.S.-born children of immigrants. The diversity of the student population enriches the learning environment for all students and provides opportunities to learn about a variety of cultures. Schools should also work to unify students of all cultures and backgrounds, and to develop mutual respect and an understanding of shared experiences and values among students. Emphasizing multicultural understanding is an important element of an antiviolence curriculum because many conflicts that arise in schools stem from students' cultural and language differences.

Social skills development

Teaching social skills can provide students with appropriate standards of behavior, a sense of control and improved self-esteem. Social skills development might include instruction in maintaining self-control, building communication skills, forming friendships, resisting peer pressure, being appropriately assertive, forming positive relationships with adults and resolving conflict in nonviolent ways. Districts will need to develop an implementation plan for social skills development by selecting a curriculum using

a process that includes opportunities for input from students, parents and staff.

The implementation plan should consider how social skills development can be integrated throughout the course of study. For instance, comprehensive sexual health education, in addition to providing medically accurate information on sexual health, teaches and reinforces key communication skills such as refusal and negotiation skills.

Self-esteem development

Children's self-esteem – their beliefs that they are persons of worth and that their ideas are valuable – is needed in order to resist peer pressure and reject potentially harmful influences. Schools can help students build self-esteem through positive programs that allow them to solve problems, gain confidence in their abilities and see themselves as important persons in the school community. Schools should look for curriculum that emphasizes problem solving, decision making, planning, goal setting and helping others. School staff also play an integral role in a student's self-esteem development through their actions. Staff can provide support and encouragement, demonstrate a respect for all people and create an environment which rewards individual growth and community participation.

Media analysis skills

With violence in the media thought to be a contributing factor to violence in our society, it is important that students be taught critical viewing and listening skills. Media analysis skills help students recognize stereotypes, distinguish fact from fantasy and identify differences in behavior and values that conflict with their own. The ability to conceive of alternative, nonviolent solutions to resolving problems is a higher level thinking skill that can help a student understand the manipulative effect that mass media have on shaping the larger world.

Service learning

Providing students with opportunities to connect with the community and discover their value and talents can positively impact the school climate and student interactions. Service opportunities within the community can give students from a variety of backgrounds and experiences the chance to interact. Such activities may also provide disaffected, troubled students with a new purpose for continuing their education. Service learning that is integrated into the curriculum or offered through a separate community service class can promote students' recognition of their importance to others, improve self-esteem, strengthen positive values and improve learning by relating coursework to real-life situations.

Mentoring programs

Mentoring programs provide responsible, successful adult role models for troubled students. At some schools, mentoring programs have played an important role in improving graduation rates and reducing suspensions, campus disturbances and violence. Students benefit from the mentor's motivation, academic help and/or discussions of positive social and life skills.

Student use of district technology

Districts have a duty to exercise reasonable precautions against cyberbullying that occurs while using district technological resources. Board policy, as well as the Acceptable Use Agreement, which students and their parents are usually required to sign as a condition of using the district's technological resources, should include an explicit statement that prohibits use of the resources to bully or harass other students or staff.

Reasonable precautions against cyberbullying should include supervision of students while they are using the online services of the district. Classroom teachers, computer lab teachers, teacher librarians, teachers aides, other staff or volunteers overseeing student use of online services should understand their re-

sponsibility to closely supervise students' online activities and should receive training or information about the board's policy on acceptable use. Many districts have blocked access to social networking sites.

In addition, districts have the right to monitor the use of their equipment and systems. If they receive federal Title II technology funds or E-rate discounts, they are obligated under 20 USC 6777 or 47 USC 254 (h) (5) (a) & (b) to enforce the operation of technology protection measures, including monitoring the online activities of minors. Governance teams should discuss how such monitoring will be accomplished, including whether they wish to track Internet use through personally identifiable web monitoring software or other means.

Students should understand that there is no expectation of privacy and that use of school resources can be monitored. Clear notice of this fact may deter improper activity.

The law regarding searches of an individual student's Internet use and computer files, even when there is reasonable suspicion that a student has violated board policy, is complex. Staff is advised to consult legal counsel before conducting any such searches.

PARENT EDUCATION AND INVOLVEMENT

Strong parent-child relationships can reduce the risk of childhood behavior problems and subsequent antisocial behavior and violence. Parent education programs can help parents understand their role in the child's physical and social development and should address the social stresses that can hinder parents' ability to meet their children's needs (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 1993).

In addition, parents should be involved in efforts to develop and implement school safety strategies and should be informed about district and school rules and expectations related to student conduct. Information should be available to parents throughout the district, in a variety of mediums and languages. To the extent possible, all safety-related policies and procedures should be included on the district's website.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Inherent in the meaning of a caring and safe school climate is the ability of students and staff to develop relationships that transcend academics and interact under conditions that are comfortable to both. The importance of staff education in the creation of a positive

Prevention Strategies

school climate cannot be underestimated. School staff interact with students on a daily basis and can serve as positive role models for how to treat others with respect. All school staff should understand the importance of respecting diversity and individual differences, including race/ethnicity, religion, gender and sexual orientation, and should be knowledgeable about warning signs of harassing/intimidating behaviors, related district policies and procedures, and effective prevention and intervention strategies. They should understand how to de-escalate conflict in a manner that does not endanger themselves or students. Students must feel comfortable approaching staff when incidents occur and be able to trust that the staff will respond appropriately.

Staff also needs education in age-appropriate interactions and conversations that encourage student participation and cultivate a feeling of community. To reduce legitimate confusion and uncertainty surrounding staff-to-student displays of concern, affection and support, the district should develop clear definitions, boundaries and protocols. These policies and procedures governing staff-student interactions should be explained and disseminated through a process that ensures all staff understand their role in providing a safe, secure school environment for students.

CAMPUS SECURITY

There are a number of measures that districts can take to improve security of school sites. However, schools should not feel like jails. The goal is to provide strong security, while at the same time create an inviting environment for students, family and staff.

Facilities assessment

Districts should conduct an assessment of the physical environment of each school site or district facility to identify safety needs, including conditions that allow unauthorized access to school facilities. For example, the assessment may look at fencing, the number of school entrances, security of ground-level windows and security needs on the playground or school perimeter. Based on the results of the assessment, districts should immediately address urgent unsafe conditions and may include long-term safety enhancements in their master facilities plan.

Video surveillance

The use of 24-hour security cameras at school entrances and in hallways, lunchrooms and buses may deter school violence and

provide schools with needed information when incidents do occur. Consideration must be given to the building infrastructure compatibility, cost, and precautions necessary to ensure that individuals' privacy would not be compromised. Districts should also consider the potentially negative effects on school climate if the community is not fully informed and supportive.

Metal detectors

Metal detectors are a tool to detect and prevent weapons being brought to school. Searches with metal detectors must be non-discriminatory and random. The Attorney General recommends that advance notice of random searches be given to parents and students. Districts must weigh their security needs against the cost of the equipment and training and any potential infringement on instructional time.

Security personnel

Some districts have developed partnerships with law enforcement in which deputy sheriffs or police officers are assigned to school campuses. This strategy gives law enforcement higher visibility and the ability to respond immediately to a crisis on the campus. It also provides opportunities for positive, nonconfrontational contact between students and law enforcement. Opening up school facilities for use by law enforcement further encourages a reciprocal relationship that benefits both schools and law enforcement.

Other districts employ their own security personnel. Districts should be aware that they may be liable for the intentional wrongdoing or negligence of district police officers acting within the scope of their employment.

Another security option is having a non-sworn youth/community relations officer assigned to the school. Sometimes called "community service officers," they do not carry weapons and their function is more like that of a social worker. Community service officers attempt to identify difficult students and develop trusting relationships with them to prevent inappropriate behavior.

Finally, utilizing parents or other volunteers to monitor the halls, playgrounds and areas surrounding school campuses can improve school climate and deter violence. Having parents in the schools also increases the opportunity for students to interact with responsible adults.

Prevention Strategies

Searches of lockers or students

Districts that maintain lockers should have a policy which clearly states that lockers are school property and that school officials have the right to open and inspect any locker without student permission when they have reasonable suspicion that the search will disclose illegal activity or when odors or smoke emanate from the locker. In accordance with court decisions, all unannounced searches must be based on reasonable suspicion, not on curiosity, rumor or hunch. Another alternative may be to hold regular, announced searches with students standing by their lockers.

In some particularly dangerous circumstances, the physical search of an individual student may be necessary. It is recommended, however, that this strategy be used sparingly and only as a last resort. Whenever possible, the least intrusive search method should be utilized. Under current law, physical searches may be conducted only if the search is justified at its inception and, as conducted, is not excessively intrusive in light of the student's age, sex and nature of the infraction (*New Jersey v. TLO*, 469 U.S. 325, 1985). It is highly recommended that school authorities consult with legal counsel in the development of search policies and prior to conducting a search where authority is not certain.

Closed campus

Requiring students to remain on campus may help keep the campus secure during the day in addition to decreasing afternoon absenteeism. Negative reaction from students may be offset with increases in campus activities and collaboration with other organizations. Other issues the district may need to consider when implementing a closed campus policy are perimeter fencing, gated parking lots, restrictions on entrances, availability of food services and exit plans in the event of an emergency.

Visitor registration

State law (Penal Code 627.2) requires certain types of visitors, defined as "outsiders" in the Penal Code, to register upon entering school premises during school hours. It appears that the district could require other visitors – including parents, board members, district employees, media representatives and others – to register upon entering school premises (Education Code 32212 and 35160). Limiting access to school grounds, posting notices informing visitors of the need to register in the school office and providing a visible means of identification for authorized visitors can reduce disruptions caused by individuals who have no legitimate reason to be on campus. A policy should be in place outlining

access and the appeal procedure for individuals who are denied access or are asked to leave school grounds.

OTHER PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Safety-related accommodations for LGBT students

In developing strategies to address bullying and harassment, districts must pay particular attention to student groups who are often targeted, including LGBT and gender-nonconforming youth. Examples of gender-isolating situations which may subject students to teasing or feelings of being unsafe include gender-specific areas such as locker rooms and bathrooms; division of boys and girls into separate lines to exit or enter the classroom; and "battle of the sexes" games. To the extent that districts can mitigate these situations by choosing another form of grouping students (e.g., by birthday), they should consider doing so.

Students who are transgender or gender-nonconforming may require additional accommodation to ensure their safety. The needs of such students must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Appropriate actions might include allowing the student to dress in accordance with the gender identity the student consis-tently uses at school, directing staff and students to address the student by a preferred name or pronoun, or providing a single-stall bathroom that any student of any gender may utilize. The goal should be to ensure the safety of the transgender or gender-nonconforming student while maximizing the student's social integration and minimizing stigmatization of the student.

Prevention and intervention of drug and alcohol use

Alcohol and other drugs often contribute to violence and other negative behaviors. Therefore, elimination of the illegal use and sale of drugs on campus or at school activities is essential to maintaining a safe and constructive school environment. Policies should be adopted to reflect expectations for drug-free schools and address prevention, intervention, recovering student support and enforcement/discipline techniques.

Student education is a key component of an effective prevention program. Because many youth initially start using drugs or alcohol as a maladaptive response to stress, anger or depression, skill development is an important prevention strategy. The educational program can teach refusal skills, as well as stress management skills that help students recognize alternative, nonviolent outlets for their emotions. Boards should also ensure that preventative

Prevention Strategies

instruction complies with state law (Health and Safety Code 11999.2 and 11999.3; Education Code 51203 and 51260) and makes clear that alcohol use by minors is illegal and students should abstain from all use.

The successful reduction of student alcohol and other drug use is dependent upon the assistance and support of the entire community. The board and superintendent should explore possible avenues for cooperation and collaborative programs among parents, law enforcement and other community organizations.

Suicide prevention

Suicide is a major cause of death among youth and should be taken seriously. In recent years, the media have drawn more attention to student suicides related to incidents of bullying, harassment and violence. To attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students and families, the district may involve students, parents, school health professionals, local health agencies and professionals, school counselors, administrators, other staff and community organizations in planning, implementing and evaluating strategies for suicide prevention and intervention.

A publication from the California Department of Education, *Youth Suicide-Prevention Guidelines for California Schools* (2005), identifies factors that may help build students' resiliency and protect against high-risk behaviors, including, but not limited to, emotional wellness, school engagement, self-perceived ability to cope with problems and positive interpersonal relationships. The state's health education content standards include standards pertaining to mental, emotional and social health at selected elementary and secondary grades, and suicide prevention instruction at grade 7 or 8 and in high school. Such instruction is designed to help students analyze signs of depression and self-destructive behaviors, including potential suicide, and to identify suicide prevention strategies.

Suicide prevention training may be provided to staff to help them identify and respond to students at risk of suicide. The training should be offered under the direction of a district counselor or psychologist and/or in cooperation with one or more community mental health agencies. It might include information on risk factors, warning signs, instructional strategies for teaching health concepts related to mental/emotional health and suicide prevention, school and community resources and services, and procedures for intervening when a student attempts, threatens or discloses the desire to commit suicide. Information about risk factors is available in *Youth Suicide-Prevention Guidelines for California Schools,* as well as through the California Department of Mental Health, Centers for Disease Control

and Prevention, American Association of Suicidology and other health organizations.

District policies and procedures should also address issues of confidentiality and creating an environment where students, staff and youth feel safe reporting suicidal tendencies to appropriate school personnel.

Gang prevention strategies

Schools alone cannot expect to eliminate gang activity completely. However, they can make it much more difficult for gangs to display signs of affiliation, recruit members or engage in violent and illegal activities at the school site.

Districts can work collaboratively with other community agencies and organizations to develop a preventative approach to gang involvement. A successful program builds self-esteem and addresses the factors that draw youth into gangs: disconnection from the family, fear of victimization, peer pressure, lack of education, poor employment skills, a family history of gang involvement and lack of alternatives. Programs that provide direction and motivation for students to resist involvement with

gangs reinforce socially constructive behavior, offer alternative recreational activities, develop educational and occupational goals and experiences and encourage personal responsibility.

District policies can be developed that establish communication links between law enforcement and schools to enable districts to stay abreast of gang activities in the community and student gang involvement. Policies promoting preventative education and early intervention beginning in elementary school can help counteract the gang recruitment efforts and influences in the larger community.

Furthermore, districts can adopt policies on dress, conduct and discipline to inhibit gang activities. For instance, policies on dress codes can reflect the authority granted to California's school boards to approve plans initiated at school sites that prohibit students from wearing gang-related apparel (Education Code 35183). Policies on conduct can be used to send clear signals about the expectations and boundaries for student group behavior. Conduct policies can also be used to emphasize tolerance and respect and to require student training in and use of conflict resolution and mediation techniques. Disciplinary policies have been used in some districts to refer students for additional training in these techniques.

Prevention Strategies

Repair of vandalism and graffiti

Quick removal of graffiti and repair of vandalized facilities reduce the fear, intimidation and intragang communications desired by the perpetrators. After photographing such messages and contacting law enforcement as appropriate, staff should cover over graffiti to help mitigate the effects and discourage future vandalism.

Students who commit an act of vandalism may be subject to school disciplinary measures and/or may be prosecuted through other legal means. State law (Penal Code 640.5-640.6 and Civil Code 1714.1) provides that reimbursement of damages and rewards may be collected from any individual or from the custodial parent of any minor who commits an act of theft or vandalism. If reparation is not made, the district may withhold the student's grades, diploma and/or transcript (Education Code 48904).

4. Intervention Strategies for School Safety

Although districts should focus on the prevention of bullying, harassment and violence to the extent possible, they must also be prepared to intervene when such acts do occur.

Effective intervention begins with staff being prepared to interrupt negative behaviors and use these as teachable moments with the students involved and other students who might have witnessed the incident. Research has shown that students feel safer and are less likely to experience harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation when teachers step in to stop negative comments and slurs based on sexual orientation (Russell, McGuire, Laub, & Manke, 2006).

In addition, clear mechanisms should be established to encourage and facilitate reporting of incidents, and any such reports must be investigated fairly and in a timely manner. Multiple strategies should be established to address the consequences of negative behaviors and to ensure that school safety is maintained. Districts have an obligation to provide a safe school environment for all students and staff while continuing to meet the educational needs of students who commit acts of bullying, harassment and violence.

REPORTS BY STUDENTS

Students should be urged to notify school staff, their parents or another adult when they are being bullied or harassed, they suspect that another student is being victimized or they see a threat posted online. However, because students are often reluctant to report such incidents to an adult, in part because they fear retaliation by the perpetrator or his or her friends, the district should consider ways that students can confidentially and anonymously report incidents (e.g., hotlines for reporting weapons or violence). It is imperative that boards direct staff to establish effective reporting procedures that are understood by both staff and students.

District procedures for responding to a report of bullying, harassment or violence should include processes to quickly determine the legitimacy and imminence of any threat. In some cases, what initially appears to be an online threat may actually be meant as a joke or may be an online fight ("flame war") that is unlikely to result in any real violence. However, the highest priority is to protect against a possible real threat, including notifying law enforcement as appropriate.

Uniform complaint procedure

The most formal reporting process in the state is known as the uniform complaint procedure. This procedure is used for complaints alleging unlawful discrimination against a protected group or a violation of federal or state law within a wide range of programs. State regulations (5 CCR 4622) require that districts annually notify students, parents, employees, the district advisory committee, school advisory committees, appropriate private school officials or representatives and other interested parties of the complaint procedure. Any individual, public agency or organization may file a written complaint with the district in accordance with the timelines and processes specified in law and the district's complaint procedure. Once a complaint is filed, the designated staff person at the district must investigate and resolve the complaint. The district must also maintain the confidentiality of the parties and the facts related to the case and must protect the complainants from retaliation.

Site-level grievance procedures

Districts may choose to encourage more informal resolution of complaints at the site level whenever possible and may establish site-level grievance procedures to reduce the need to use the more complex uniform complaint procedure.

Sample site-level grievance procedure

CSBA and the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights have worked together to develop an optional site-level complaint process or grievance procedure which may be used in addition to the uniform complaint procedure. The process describes timelines, conduct of the investigation and remedies. This process is outlined in CSBA's sample board policy and administrative regulation BP/AR 5145.7 – Sexual Harassment and can apply to other types of complaints against harassment or discrimination. See Appendix C for information about how to access CSBA sample policies and regulations.

Site-level grievance procedures established to handle complaints of harassment may also provide an effective method for reporting complaints of cyberbullying. The student who is being victimized should be encouraged to not respond to the cyberbullying and to save and print out the messages (with full e-mail headers) or pictures as evidence rather than deleting them.

REPORTS BY DISTRICT STAFF

District staff must be prepared to respond when they observe or receive reports of incidents of bullying, harassment or violence against students. In such cases, staff should follow established procedures for reporting the incidents and may intervene to stop the behavior when it is safe to do so. District staff also have a responsibility to report known or suspected incidents of abuse or violence against children even when such incidents do not occur at school or the perpetrators are not other students or school staff.

Child abuse or neglect

Certain district staff (teachers, instructional aides, certificated pupil personnel services employees, classified employees and other employees specified in law) are required to make a report whenever, in their professional capacity or within the scope of their employment, they have knowledge of or observe a child whom they know or reasonably suspect has been the victim of child abuse or neglect. Such mandated reporters must follow the procedures detailed in law, including an initial telephone report to the appropriate agency and a follow-up written report. Districts must provide training to mandated reporters which addresses the identification of child abuse and neglect and reporting procedures,

or else must report to the California Department of Education the reasons that the training has not been provided.

Missing children

District personnel should be encouraged to report missing children to their parents and law enforcement in a timely manner in order to provide those children with a necessary level of protection. District administrators should review reporting procedures on a regular basis with school staff so all personnel may be prepared to report when a child is missing.

In addition, Education Code 32390 authorizes boards to provide a voluntary fingerprinting program for students enrolled in kindergarten or newly enrolled in the district. Boards may contract with any public or private agency, including an appropriate civic or community organization, to provide the fingerprinting. Superintendents or their designee can encourage student participation and ensure student privacy by ensuring that any report or document containing a student's fingerprints will be given to the parents. Documents containing a student's fingerprints may be kept by the district or given to any other private or public entity.

Education Code 38139 requires every school to post, in an appropriate area, information provided by the Department of Justice on missing children. In an elementary school, the information should be posted in an area restricted to adults.

Victims of human trafficking

At first glance, issues related to human trafficking seemingly do not directly affect schools. However, sexual and labor exploitation involving child victims of human trafficking does occur in our country. Children who do not live with their parents are particularly vulnerable. District staff may be provided information to help them recognize victims of human trafficking and use appropriate reporting procedures. The U.S. Department of Education has prepared a fact sheet which discusses warning signs that a student may be a victim, places to report a suspected incident of human trafficking and resources to obtain additional information.

INVESTIGATION OF REPORTED INCIDENTS

Districts must proceed with caution and intentionality when investigating reported incidents of harassment, discrimination or bullying. The procedures for investigating a reported incident should be a feature of the district's uniform complaint procedure or other complaint procedure. In most instances, the victim's privacy should be maintained by the district as the investigation is proceeding to ensure he or she is safe from retaliation. School officials should urge victims to document all instances of harassment and seek to identify the perpetrator as quickly as possible.

For reports of cyberbullying, there may be a way to track the perpetrator through the Internet service provider, even if the individual is using a fake name or someone else's identity. If the district suspects that the cyberbullying is criminal, local law enforcement may be asked to track the individual's identity.

If it appears that the reported incident is initiated off campus, it will be necessary to show that the behavior has caused or is likely to cause a substantial disruption of school operations in order to impose discipline on the student perpetrator (see Appendix F for a discussion of legal issues regarding discipline for off-campus conduct). Thus, the investigation should also include processes for assessing and documenting the impact of the harassment, bullying, cyberbullying, discrimination or violence on students, staff or school operations.

INTERVENTIONS AND DISCIPLINE

A variety of responses may be appropriate depending on the seriousness of the reported incident. The parents of both the victim and perpetrator may be notified, participation in programs may be required, the perpetrator may be suspended or expelled, or law enforcement may be notified if the behavior involves a possible crime. In the case of cyberbullying, districts may also choose to file a complaint with the Internet service provider or social networking site to have the content removed and/or the student's user privileges revoked.

Except in cases where expulsion is mandatory by law for certain offenses, the district should consider alternatives to suspension or expulsion for students subject to discipline in order to provide services that can more effectively resolve the problem behavior and the needs of student perpetrators. The student perpetrator and his or her parents should be informed of the potential consequences to which they may be subjected, including potential civil law liabilities.

In addition to implementing consequences for the perpetrator, the district should consider ways it can provide support to the victim and perpetrator through counseling or referral to mental health services.

Conflict resolution and peer mediation

Many schools have established conflict resolution or conflict management programs to help students learn constructive approaches to settling disputes. These programs operate under the belief that reasonable verbal interaction between students will help prevent the escalation of violent behavior. Students learn that they have choices of behavior when a dispute arises and that it is within their own power to control these choices. Most of these programs include curriculum that helps students develop the means to resolve their own disputes effectively and peacefully, related staff development for teachers and training for students selected as peer mediators.

One approach is to train a small number of students to serve as peer mediators. This type of program is relatively easy to implement; however, having only a few peer mediators with limited training may not have as pervasive an effect on the number of conflicts on campus as a strategy that uses the entire student body through a rotation process (Johnson & Johnson, 1995). With this approach, every student learns how to manage conflicts constructively by negotiating agreements and mediating peers' conflicts.

Another example of a curriculum that teaches dispute resolution is the "student court." Schools are allowed under Education

Code 51220.2 to operate peer or teen court programs as a part of the social sciences curriculum. Through these court programs, students learn about the American judicial system and the roles of key participants, as well as appropriate and effective dispute resolution procedures. Students are given opportunities to act in the various roles while presenting, defending and deliberating about real student offenses. The students committing the infractions have the opportunity to defend their actions and be judged by their peers. Although more time intensive, student courts may provide students with greater opportunities to impact the conditions at their schools; understand the principles of law, order and justice; and gain skills that will help them negotiate future conflicts.

Referral to guidance team for attendance or behavior problems

Irregular attendance is often the first indicator of other problems. Districts should attempt to determine the reasons for a student's truancy or chronic absence and intervene as necessary when attendance problems are related to the student's fear of being bullied or harassed. As appropriate, students with attendance problems, as well as students with behavior problems, may be referred to a student success team (SST), site-level school attendance review team (SART) or a school attendance review board (SARB) to help identify strategies and programs that assist the students.

It is recommended that each school have a site-level guidance team, such as an SST or SART, to attempt to resolve the student's behavior or attendance problems. These teams are an early intervention process that brings together the student, parent, teachers and administrators to identify student needs and develop an improvement plan to address those needs. A meeting with a site-level team is often a preceding step to a formal SARB meeting since it provides an opportunity for a quicker response.

The SARB may operate at the district or county level as a safety net for students with persistent attendance or behavior problems. Education Code 48321 provides several organizational structures for SARBs. They typically consist of a parent, as well as representatives of the school district, county probation department, county welfare department, county office of education, law enforcement agencies, community-based youth service centers, school guidance personnel, child welfare and attendance personnel, school or county health care personnel and school, county or community mental health personnel.

SARBs often recommend or arrange tutoring, student or family counseling, parenting classes or assistance from a variety of community social services agencies. They may also use behavior and attendance contracts or other measures to encourage students and parents to comply with state law and district rules.

Although the goal of SARBs is to keep students in school and provide them with a meaningful educational experience, SARBs do have the power, when necessary, to refer students and their parents to court.

Remediation workshops

Governing boards can require students and their parents to attend remediation workshops to address problem behaviors (Education Code 48263). Students who have been suspended can be required to participate in programs that address their problem behavior and, for some offenses, the board can make the participation of the students' parents a mandatory condition for return to the classroom.

These workshops or family or individual counseling programs may work to address myriad psychosocial issues, such as anger management, drug/alcohol use or depression. These programs may occur during part or all of the school day or as an after-school program. Boards may define whether successful participation in such programs may reduce or eliminate a student's suspension.

Referral to treatment program

When students' negative behavior is linked to their suspected use of drugs or alcohol, some districts give the students an option to participate in a drug/alcohol treatment program in lieu of suspension or with a reduced suspension. These services may be provided through collaboration with community-based organizations, local health agencies or health care providers.

Community service

Community service during nonschool hours may be required instead of or as part of suspension (Education Code 48900.6). This may include work on school grounds or, with parent permission, off school grounds. Examples include outdoor beautification (raking leaves, picking up trash), community or campus betterment, or teacher, peer or youth assistance programs. These programs provide an undesirable consequence for inappropriate behavior while benefitting the school or community. Implementation of weekend work programs may be difficult, however, due to the need for adequate supervision. This option cannot be used for students who have been suspended, pending expulsion, for any of the offenses listed in Education Code 48915 unless the board has decided to suspend the enforcement of the recommended expulsion order.

Suspension/expulsion

A student may be subject to suspension or expulsion when it is determined that he or she committed any of the offenses listed in state law (Education Code 48900, 48900.2, 48900.3, 48900.4, 48900.7). Procedural requirements of law (Education Code 48900-48927) and board policy are designed to protect the rights of all parties and must be strictly followed.

⇨ **Suspension.** In accordance with Education Code 48900.5, suspension may be imposed only when other means of correction have failed to bring about proper conduct, except that a student may be suspended for a first offense if the type of offense is listed in Education Code 48900(a)-(e) or the student's presence causes a danger to persons or property or threatens to disrupt the instructional process. The teacher, principal, principal's designee, superinten-dent and board have the authority to suspend students. Suspensions by the board usually occur when the behavior has been continuous and suspensions by other parties have failed to correct the behavior.

State law provides limits on the number of days a student may be suspended and requires that students and parents be given proper notice. In order to protect the student's privacy, the suspension hearing must be conducted in a closed hearing, unless the student or parent requests that the hearing be open.

⇨ **Supervised suspension classroom.** Although off-campus suspension for serious offenses is necessary to maintain school discipline, supervised suspension classrooms (Education Code 48911.1) may be a better alternative for students who are not perceived to be a danger, especially when the home environment does not have adequate adult supervision. Such programs require students to continue with their coursework in a tightly supervised setting, separate from the regular campus and students. Counseling or referrals for counseling are also included as a component.

⇨ **Expulsion hearings.** State law establishes requirements related to timelines, student due process and the manner in which the hearing is conducted. In addition, state law gives governing boards, hearing officers and administrative panels the power to subpoena parents or witnesses with information relevant to an expulsion decision. Board delibera-tions are held in a closed session, but the decision to expel is made public.

⇨ **Administrative hearings.** Instead of conducting the hearings themselves, many boards contract with an administrative hearing officer. This officer conducts a hearing, conforming to the same due process procedures that apply to the board, and then determines whether to recommend expulsion of the student to the board.

As an alternative to a hearing officer, the board may consider appointing an impartial administrative panel to conduct the hearing. This panel is composed of certificated personnel who are not members of the staff where the student is enrolled. In these cases, the panel conducts a fact-finding hearing and makes a recommendation to the board. If expulsion is not recommended, the student is reinstated immediately.

Regardless of whether the board or the administrative panel has conducted the hearing, the board retains final authority to determine whether expulsion is warranted and the decision to expel must be made by the board in public session.

⇨ **Expulsion appeals to the county board of education.** Students or their parents may appeal an expulsion by the district governing board to the county board of education. As with all expulsion proceedings, strict timelines and procedures are mandated (Education Code 48918-48926).

The review of a district board's expulsion decision by the county board is limited to determining whether the district board acted outside or in excess of its jurisdiction; whether there was a fair hearing before the district board; whether there was a prejudicial abuse of discretion in the hearing; and whether there is relevant material evidence which, in the exercise of reasonable diligence, could not have been produced or which was improperly excluded at the hearing before the district board.

A county board may not reverse the decision of the district board based upon a finding of an abuse of discretion unless the county board also determines that the abuse of the discretion was prejudicial.

In cases where the county board finds that relevant evidence exists that could not have been produced or was improperly excluded at the district hearing, it may either remand the matter back to the school board for reconsideration or grant a new hearing before the county board of education in accordance with Education Code 48923.

In all other cases, the county board enters an order either affirming or reversing the district board's decision. If the county board reverses the district board's decision, it may

direct the district board to expunge the student's and the district's records relating to the expulsion. The decision of the county board is final.

⇨ **Readmission.** Education Code 48916 requires that the board set a readmission review date at the time of expulsion. The board must readmit the student unless the review determines that the student has not met the conditions of the rehabilitation plan or continues to pose a danger. These hearings must be held in a closed session.

⇨ **Suspension/expulsion for individuals with disabilities.** Individuals with disabilities, as defined by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, receive special procedural safeguards in order to ensure that the suspension was not a result of the student's disability or an inappropriate placement in the school. Strict timelines in federal and state law govern each step of the process. Because this area of the law is complex and changes frequently, the board should consult with its legal counsel prior to the expulsion of a special education student.

Education Code 48915.5 and 48916.1 require the district to offer education services to special education students during the term of the expulsion. Such services might include independent study, home instruction or another appropriate alternative program.

Neither state nor federal law requires that the same procedures be applied to students identified under Section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973. However, in some instances, the district may find it appropriate to apply portions of these procedures to students with a Section 504 services plan and should modify its written procedures accordingly.

⇨ **Zero tolerance.** Although the term "zero tolerance" does not appear in law, the federal Gun-Free Schools Act (20 USC 7151) requires a district to expel for one year a student who brings a firearm to school. This requirement has commonly been labeled as "zero tolerance." Education Code 48915(c) also requires the mandatory suspension and recommendation for expulsion of students who possess, sell or furnish a firearm, brandish a knife, sell a controlled substance, commit or attempt to commit a sexual assault or sexual battery, or possess an explosive.

Some boards have broadened zero tolerance grounds to include any type of weapon or drugs, or participation in a violent act (including hate crimes, harassment and discrimi-

nation) on campus or at school-sponsored events. However, the extent to which a district can develop policies mandating a recommendation for expulsion beyond those specified in the Education Code is unclear. In *T.H. v. San Diego Unified School District*, a court upheld a district's zero tolerance policy that went beyond the requirements for "mandatory recommendation" for expulsion in Education Code 48915(c) because the policy did not interfere with a student's statutory right for due process or conflict with the Education Code.

Many communities view zero tolerance policies as the responsible route to safer schools. Such policies place as a top priority the removal of potentially dangerous students from school. In theory, they also ensure fair and equal treatment of all students. Others are concerned that such policies will unfairly punish some "good students" who may be carrying weapons out of fear or for some other sound reason and that students too young to understand the consequences of their behavior will be held to the same standards as older students.

Districts choosing to adopt a zero tolerance approach must be careful not to circumvent state or federal law. For example, the superintendent must consider individual circumstances when making a determination whether to recommend the student for expulsion. Boards also need to take appropriate steps to ensure that staff, students and parents are aware of the policy and that it will be strictly enforced. To accomplish this, some schools have held "violence awareness" assemblies or used parent and student contracts to explain the rationale behind the rules and the consequences of violations.

Another issue that should be addressed by boards considering a zero tolerance policy is the level of evidence necessary to determine if a student has committed the prohibited act. With regards to firearms, state law requires the governing board to confirm, prior to expulsion, that an employee can verify the student's possession of the gun. If the policy is broadened to include behavior such as discrimination or harassment, this same requirement of employee verification might be added. In practice, verifying the possession of a weapon may be more clear-cut and less subjective than verifying whether the student discriminated against or harassed someone. Therefore, it is recommended that districts consult with legal counsel before broadening a zero tolerance policy beyond state or federal mandates.

Restorative Justice

"Restorative justice" refers to a way of thinking about justice as a process for healing rather than for punishment. Rather than focusing on what law was broken, who broke it and what punishment is warranted, it asks:

⇨   Who was harmed?

⇨   What are the needs and responsibilities of all affected?

⇨   How do all affected parties together address needs and repair harms?

The restorative justice approach can be applied in schools and communities. In 2007, an Oakland middle school launched a pilot project to institutionalize restorative discipline alternatives, with the result that violent fights and expulsions were eliminated and suspension rates were reduced by 75 percent. Inspired by its success, the governing board of the Oakland Unified School District passed a resolution in January 2010 adopting restorative justice as a systemwide alternative to zero tolerance discipline and as an approach to creating healthier school communities. The goal is to respond to student discipline problems in ways that reintegrate rather than exclude students, not inconsistent with law. Restorative justice practices support the use of a repertoire of strategies to deal with misconduct, especially for nonmandatory expulsions, including administrative, restorative and skill-building/therapeutic interventions. For further information, visit *www.rjyoakland.org*.

RESPONSE TO CRISIS ON SCHOOL CAMPUS

School districts should have plans in place to respond to a potential crisis or emergency, including a violent incident on campus. These plans should include a contingency for evacuation, notification of parents, notification of law enforcement or other appropriate agencies, communications with the media, follow-up counseling with students, staff development regarding emergency procedures and other related topics.

Communications are of particular importance during a crisis. Access to two-way communications devices allows staff to alert the office or law enforcement of dangerous situations. Some schools have installed telephones in each classroom, allowing for effective emergency communications. Walkie-talkies or personal alert transmitters permit staff to call for assistance from their rooms or from remote locations.

In a survey of 157 California public schools, 88 percent reported having site-specific disaster plans, most of which were annually reviewed. However, only 27 percent had an emergency response team, 29 percent had an emergency preparedness coordinator, and 22 percent had dedicated funding for emergency preparedness (Kano & Bourque, 2007). All these strategies can help districts respond more effectively in the event of a crisis on campus.

Violence that occurs within the community, even if it does not happen at school, also impacts many students, especially if they know someone who has been a victim. Some school districts have established more comprehensive crisis response programs in order to better support student recovery from such events. Community agencies may offer helpful site-based services as a part of this plan, such as mental health programs. These collaborative partners should be engaged prior to a crisis to secure their understanding of the overall crisis plan as well as provision of counseling activities immediately following a crisis or violent incident on campus.

SERVING YOUTH THROUGH ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

In their effort to provide safe schools for students and staff, governing boards cannot forget the needs of those students who are considered to be, or have proven to be, a threat to themselves, other students or staff.

The desire to create and maintain safe learning environments has inevitably led to the removal of those students exhibiting violent or inappropriate behavior. As more schools adopt stricter codes and zero tolerance offenses increase, the need for educational services outside the regular school environment will continue to grow.

Ideally, these students face the consequences deemed appropriate for the behavior exhibited, then quickly return to school and resume their education. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. For particularly dangerous behaviors or for uncooperative students, removal from the regular school for an extended period of time is necessary.

Boards are required to ensure that an educational program is provided for expelled students during the period of the expulsion (Education Code 48916.1). Districts often refer them to district- or county-operated alternative educational programs better prepared to address their behavior. Sometimes private schools accept these students.

The establishment and maintenance of community day schools and juvenile court schools have long been one of the primary responsibilities of county boards of education (Education Code 1980 and 48645.2). Community day schools and juvenile court schools have as their purpose the stabilization and improvement of the student behaviorally and academically, followed by return to the home school. Students in these programs have often experienced alcohol or drug abuse, rape, incest, physical violence, emotional abuse and/or neglect. These students may also live with dysfunctional families and have access to guns and other weapons. In short, these schools typically serve the most troubled students.

County community day schools serve students who are referred by the juvenile court or a probation officer, students expelled from school or referred by a SARB, students referred by their local school district with parental consent and students who are homeless. School districts are also authorized to operate community day schools. A student may be assigned to a district's community day school only if he or she is expelled for any reason, is referred through the probation process or is referred by a SARB or other district-level referral process.

Juvenile court schools are those schools located in group homes, juvenile detention centers or other locations which house youth under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. Students are typically between the ages of 6 and 18 and have been incarcerated in juvenile halls, probation camps or other detention programs. The range of offenses among these wards extends to the most serious crimes, and gang affiliation and drug use are commonplace.

The scope and form of alternative programs are largely determined by the district or county governing board in accordance with state guidelines. Academic programs offered in community day schools must be comparable to those available to students of a similar age in the school district.

However, youth displaying violent or inappropriate behavior are frequently the same youth failing to achieve academically. Thus, the inability of these students to function effectively within the traditional school program compels the various alternative schools to respond differently. It is common for the curriculum in alternative programs to emphasize social, job training and independent living skills much more heavily than in regular school programs. These programs also may modify the curriculum to make the subject matter more relevant to students' daily lives.

In addition, schools serving troubled youth often have lower student-teacher ratios and a variety of support services. Typical services include individual and family counseling, job training programs and other similar supports.

In offering alternative programs, district and county boards are faced with the challenge of providing effective alternative education for troubled youth without conveying the idea that misbehavior is being rewarded with "extra" or "better" programs. The additional services and smaller class sizes required to effectively stabilize and educate these students require greater resources. The allocation of greater resources to these students seems incongruous to many in the face of budget and program reductions at the regular school site.

Students must understand that violence in any form is unacceptable on school campuses and that serious consequences follow inappropriate behavior. At the same time, educators and other service providers need to work with troubled youth to reawaken and suitably channel their innate desire to learn. Communities cannot afford to be without education programs that help youth become productive members of society. Large numbers of youth lacking adequate education, socialization and job skills will only serve to increase crime and violence in our communities and our schools.

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Appendix A – Resources

Attendance Counts is a national and state initiative that promotes awareness of the important role that school attendance plays in achieving academic success. It aims to ensure that every school in every state not only tracks chronic absence data for its individual students but also intervenes to help those students and schools. *www.attendancecounts.org*

California Department of Education provides training, resources and technical assistance to establish a school/community environment which is physically and emotionally safe, well disciplined and conducive to learning. Also provides links for other resources. *www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ss*

California Healthy Kids Resource Center provides curriculum and resources on a variety of health-related topics, including mental health and youth development. *www.hkresources.org*

California Healthy Kids Survey is a statewide survey of resiliency, protective factors and risk behaviors. It assesses health risks including alcohol, tobacco and other drug use; school violence; physical health; resilience and youth development; and school climate. Data for school districts and counties can be accessed through Query CHKS, a partnership among the California Department of Education, WestEd, and the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health and its kidsdata.org website. Companion surveys include the California School Climate Survey administered to staff and the California School Parent Survey. *http://chks.wested.org*

California Safe Schools Coalition is a statewide partnership of organizations and individuals dedicated to eliminating discrimination and harassment on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity in California schools. Goals include evaluating efforts to prevent and remedy discrimination and harassment, holding the State of California accountable for providing a safe school environment for all students and for implementing the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 in every school, spreading quality training and education to more school districts and empowering local activists to advocate more effectively for change. *www.casafeschools.org*

Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice encourages collaboration at the federal, state and local levels to foster the development and adjustment of children with or at risk of developing serious emotional disturbance. The center's website includes links to school violence prevention and intervention resources. *http://cecp.air.org/school_violence.asp*

Center for the Prevention of School Violence, established by the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, is a resource center and "think tank" for efforts that promote safer schools and foster positive youth development. *www.ncdjjdp.org/cpsv*

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence collects research literature and resources on the causes and prevention of violence and provides online searchable databases. The center also offers technical assistance for the evaluation and development of violence prevention programs. *www.colorado.edu/cspv*

International Association of Chiefs of Police, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance, publishes the *Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence*, a comprehensive guide recommending a variety of strategies and approaches for members of school communities to consider when creating safer learning environments. *www.theiacp.org*

National Alliance for Safe Schools is a nonprofit corporation whose purpose is to provide technical assistance, staff training, school safety assessments, safe school plans and emergency response training to individual school and school district personnel. *www.safeschools.org*

National Crime Prevention Council produces tools that communities can use to learn crime prevention strategies, engage community members and coordinate with local agencies, including publications, teaching materials, community and school programs, trainings, public service announcements starring McGruff the Crime Dog and support for crime prevention practitioners. *www.ncpc.org*

National PTA provides resources on child safety to assist parents and other caring adults in creating a healthy school and community environment, including resources on bullying, media safety, Internet safety, school violence and substance abuse. In addition, National PTA launched an initiative in March 2011 to encourage PTAs across the country to lead "Connect for Respect" events that engage school communities in conversations about bullying, how it is affecting their communities and collaborative solutions. *www.pta.org/topic_child_safety.asp*

National School Safety Center provides information about school violence, weapons, crime and bullying, including statistics, causes, prevention strategies, and teacher and parent resources. ***www.nssc1.org***

Safe School Initiative, implemented through the Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center and the U.S. Department of Education's Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, resulted in the publication of *The Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative*, detailing findings of the two agencies related to school-based attacks and the implications of those studies for the prevention of targeted school violence. ***www.secretservice.gov/ntac/ssi_final_report.pdf***

School Bullying Council is dedicated to educating students, parents, teachers and administrators on the dangers of school bullying. ***www.schoolbullyingcouncil.org***

StopBullying.gov provides information from various government agencies on how children, parents, educators and others in the community can prevent or stop bullying.

UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools provides a clearing-house of information on mental health issues, including safe schools and violence prevention. ***http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu***

WestEd, a research, development and service agency, works with education and other communities to promote excellence, achieve equity and improve learning for children, youth and adults. Youth resiliency and school climate are among the many safety-related topics addressed by WestEd. ***www.wested.org***

www.bullying.org and **www.cyberbullying.org** work to increase awareness of bullying and to prevent, resolve and eliminate bullying.

Appendix A

Appendix B – CSBA Policy Brief on Nondiscrimination

PROVIDING A SAFE, NONDISCRIMINATORY SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL STUDENTS

April 2010

State and federal law prohibits discrimination of students based on their actual or perceived sex, gender, ethnic group identification, race, national origin, religion, color, physical or mental disability, age or sexual orientation (Education Code 220, 260; 42 USC 2000d-2000e-17, 42 USC 2000h-2-2000h-6). Thus, governing boards have a responsibility to ensure a safe school environment that is free of intimidation and harassment and to establish consequences for students and/or staff who engage in discrimination.

This policy brief focuses on efforts to prevent discrimination against transgender and gender-nonconforming students, although the strategies may be applied to other types of discrimination as well. Districts and county offices of education (COEs) are faced with the question of how to protect students when they are legitimately expressing themselves in ways that not everyone may understand. Because of societal prejudice and lack of awareness or understanding, children who do not exhibit the interests or behaviors typical of their gender may experience ongoing rejection, criticism or bullying affecting their emotional health and academic achievement.[1] These children, like all others, share in the need for a safe school environment. Districts/COEs are encouraged to develop strategies to minimize social stigmatization for such students and maximize opportunities for social integration so that all children have an equal opportunity to attend school, be engaged and achieve academic success.

Numerous instances of harassment and abuse have been reported throughout California's schools – with implications ranging from poor student attendance and lower student achievement to physical violence perpetrated against students, including death.

Definitions

Education Code 210.7 defines "gender" as a person's gender identity and gender-related appearance and behavior, whether or not these are the same as those typically associated with the person's sex at birth. The following definitions, as provided by the California Safe Schools Coalition, may be helpful in putting this policy issue into context.[2]

⇨   "Gender identity" refers to individuals' own knowledge of their gender, regardless of their sex at birth.

⇨   "Transgender" describes people whose gender identity is different from their sex at birth.

⇨   "Gender expression" refers to the way a person expresses gender, such as behaviors, interests, clothing and hairstyles.

Individuals who are "gender-nonconforming" demonstrate behaviors and interests that are typically associated with the norms of the other sex, such as exhibiting clothing and hairstyles typical of the other sex. For example, while girls may be typically thought to enjoy playing with dolls and boys to enjoy rougher physical play, gender-nonconforming students may not display these typical gender interests. Sometimes these children also want to look and act like the other sex.[3]

"Harassment" includes physical, verbal, nonverbal or written conduct that is so severe and pervasive that it:

⇨   affects a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity;

⇨   creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment;

⇨   has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with a student's academic performance; or

⇨   otherwise adversely affects a student's educational oppor- tunities.[4]

Harassment: Incidence, impact and link to learning

Studies on bullying tend to reveal that the behavior of harassers "reinforce expected cultural norms for boys and girls and punish students who don't fit the ideals of traditional gender roles."[5]

Insults that refer to perceptions of gender roles or sexuality are common among students. Students whose behavior is perceived to be different in some way can often be isolated and harassed. In fact, it is more frequently gender stereotyping and not sexual orientation that is largely responsible for the frequency and severity of bullying directed at students who identify as gay or lesbian. A study of middle school students in the United States reported that two-thirds had been subjected to one or more homophobic epithets in the last week.[6]

The personal effects of harassment can be traumatic and enduring. One study found that "the damage to the victims of bullying may be physical, emotional, and psychological and the resulting trauma can last a lifetime." Students who have experienced harassment at school because of their gender are twice as likely as their peers to report having carried a gun to school or to have reported attempting suicide.[7,8]

Furthermore, when students feel unsafe, they are more likely to be truant or to be academically disengaged. A California Safe Schools Coalition survey found that nearly 109,000 school absences at the middle and high school levels in California each year are due to harassment based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, costing California school districts at least $39.9 million each year.[9]

Other studies of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) children reveal that 31 percent report having missed at least one day of school in the previous month because they did not feel safe at school. In fact, studies reveal that LGBT children are four times more likely to skip school out of safety concerns.[10]

However, in districts with anti-harassment policies that specify sexual orientation or gender expression, students were far less likely to report having skipped classes or whole days of school. Having such a policy in place also can create a significant impact on perceptions of the climate of a school and the feelings of safety by all students. For example, in schools with anti-harassment policies that specify sexual orientation or gender expression, students are more likely to feel very safe at school (54 vs. 36 percent). They are also less likely to report a serious harassment problem at their school and less likely to believe that other students are often harassed in their school because of their sexual orientation (32 vs. 43 percent) or their gender expression (26 vs. 37 percent).[11] Therefore, as part of the policy adoption process, the board should also ensure that a plan for training and staff development are a part of the implementation of the policy.

Although it is difficult to find research showing a direct causal relationship between nondiscrimination policies and student achievement, it is reasonable to expect that the resulting increased

Figure 1. *Relationship between victimization related to sexual orientation and academic achievement among LGBT middle school students*
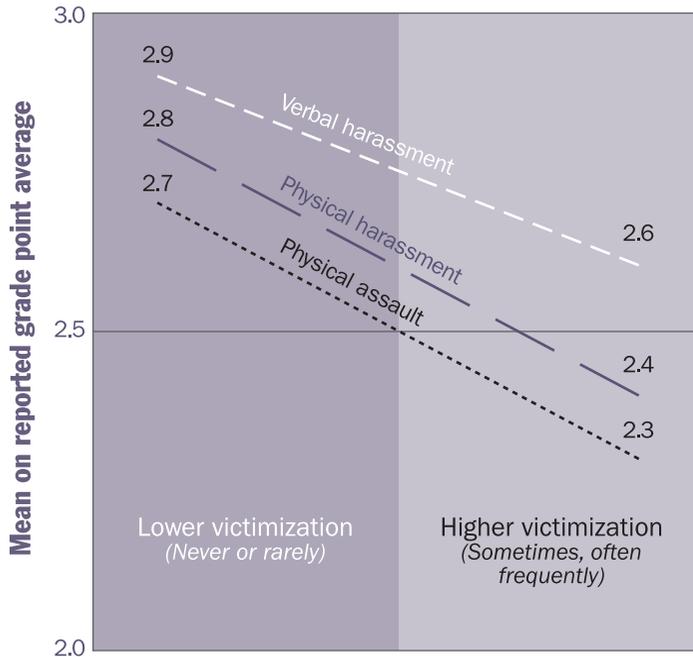
Source: Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Middle School Students: Findings from the 2007 National School Climate Survey.

school attendance and positive school climate would result in more positive student outcomes. Research does indicate that students who have higher GPAs are those who feel safer in their school environments (see Figure 1). When students feel safe in their schools, they are also more likely to plan to go to college.[12]

Role of the governing board

Districts/COEs have a responsibility to protect all students from discrimination and harassment. The governing board, working closely with the superintendent, can promote a culture free from discrimination through each of its major responsibilities:

1. Setting direction for the community's schools

As the board establishes a long-term vision, goals and priorities, it should consider specific statements related to ensuring that all students are safe at school and that harassment is not tolerated. The board has an opportunity to foster an understanding among the district/COE governance team about the importance of establishing a safe school environment and its link to student attendance, engagement, learning and academic achievement.

2. Establishing an effective structure for the district/COE through policy and other decisions

It is recommended that the board adopt policy that defines harassment, establishes consequences for those who do harass students and sets a tone that allows students to feel safe to report harassment. CSBA provides a sample board policy, BP 5145.3 - Nondiscrimination/Harassment, which addresses the nondiscrimination and harassment of students on the basis of sex, sexual orientation and gender. Other policies and administrative regulations address related concepts and should be aligned, such as BP 0410 – Nondiscrimination in District Programs and Activities, BP/AR 0450 – Comprehensive Safety Plan, BP/AR 5131 – Conduct, BP 5137 – Positive School Climate, BP/AR 5145.7 – Sexual Harassment and BP 5145.9 – Hate-Motivated Behavior.

When adopting policy or developing administrative regulations related to nondiscrimination, the governance team should consider specific strategies that might be necessary to protect student safety when a concern arises. It is useful to develop a district-wide plan in advance that staff can enact in order to provide students with appropriate accommodations. While each situation will require case-by-case decision-making, proactive planning to protect students from threatening or potentially harassing or discriminatory

behavior can help students to feel less isolated and make them more likely to report acts of harassment. Examples of the types of actions that may be taken include allowing a student to dress in accordance with the gender identity the student consistently uses at school, directing staff and students to address the student by a preferred name or pronoun, or providing a student with adequate access to appropriate facilities, such as single-stall restrooms and locker rooms as necessary. The use of gender to divide groups of students (e.g., dividing boys and girls into separate lines to exit or enter the classroom) should be discouraged if it forces gender-nonconforming students to identify in a way that may subject them to teasing.

3. Providing support to the superintendent and staff as they carry out the board's direction

Once the policy of nondiscrimination is adopted, it is important that district/COE personnel appropriately and consistently implement the policy. Staff should be notified of the policy and provided staff development as needed to ensure they understand the right of all students to a safe environment, the expectations of the district/COE regarding accommodations that might be implemented to ensure the safety of transgender and gender-non-conforming students, and disciplinary consequences for staff and students who engage in discrimination or harassment.

Appendix B

It is also important to make the nondiscrimination policy and related complaint procedures readily accessible to students and parents through the policy manual, student handbook, Web site, school offices and other appropriate venues. By making the policy widely known and distributing information, students who fear being chronically bullied may be less likely to fear reporting this discrimination or harassment.

4. Ensuring accountability to the public

The board has a responsibility to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to prevent and reduce harassment. The board and superintendent should agree on the data that will be collected (e.g., incidence of hate-related violence, graffiti, suspensions or expulsions; student surveys of school climate; accommodations or strategies that have been implemented to prevent harassment) and how often such data will be reported to the board. The data should be used to recommend policy revisions, if necessary.

5. Acting as community leaders

The governance team should work with parents, community agencies, law enforcement and other stakeholders in efforts that promote a culture of safe schools for all students. Such stakeholders might be involved in developing goals, policy or specific

strategies related to nondiscrimination; providing counseling or other services to assist at-risk students; or assisting in program evaluation.

Through these actions, the board can clearly declare that the district/COE opposes any form of harassment or discrimination on the basis of gender and gender-nonconformity. By publicizing its efforts and providing clear steps for how issues will be resolved, the district can encourage students to feel safe in reporting issues of harassment. Prohibition of harassment based on gender will be one part of a broader effort to create a safe school environment so that all students have an equal opportunity to attend school, be engaged in the classroom, and ultimately to achieve academic success.

Questions to consider

As the governance team discusses and determines how it will address issues of discrimination and harassment based on gender and gender-nonconformity and how it will work to protect the safety of all students, it might consider the following questions:

⇨ Are there policy directives that the board can take to ensure that school climates are safe, that students have confidence

that complaints will be investigated appropriately and that there will not be retaliation for reporting incidents of harassment?

▷ How will the superintendent ensure that there is consistent implementation of policies prohibiting discrimination and harassment on the basis of gender and gender-nonconformity across all grade levels and school sites?

▷ Do students and staff understand how to access the complaint procedures should an incident of discrimination and harassment based on gender and gender-nonconformity occur?

▷ Does the facilities master plan take issues of transgender students into account regarding the placement and availability of single-stall restrooms and locker rooms?

▷ How might issues of privacy and official student records be impacted by this policy? For example, does school personnel understand that intentionally addressing a student by the incorrect name or pronoun may be a form of discrimination?

▷ How might the nondiscrimination policy impact gender-segregated activities like health education classes and physical education classes?

▷ How might policies about dress code, clothing and student appearance be impacted by the nondiscrimination policy?

Resources

California School Boards Association provides sample board policies, policy briefs, publications and other resources on a variety of topics related to school safety. ***www.csba.org***

California Safe Schools Coalition is a statewide partnership of organizations and individuals dedicated to eliminating discrimination and harassment on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity in California schools. ***www.casafeschools.org***

Transgender Law Center is a civil rights organization advocating for transgender communities, connecting transgender people and their families to technically sound and culturally competent legal services. ***www.transgenderlawcenter.org***

Endnotes

1 California Safe Schools Coalition. Safe Schools Research Brief. *School Safety and Academic Achievement.*

2 California Safe Schools Coalition. *Model School District Policy Regarding Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students.*

3 Children's National Medical Center. *Outreach Program for Children with Gender-Variant Behaviors and Their Families.* www.childrensnational.org/GENDERVARIANCE

4 California School Boards Association. Sample board policy, BP 5145.3 – Nondiscrimination/Harassment

5 Higdon, M.J. *To Lynch a Child: Bullying and Gender Non-Conformity in Our Nation's Schools.* University of Tennessee College of Law.

6 Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. *The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Middle School Students: Findings from the 2007 National School Climate Survey* www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/ file/000/001/1475-1.pdf

7 California Safe Schools Coalition. *Anti-Gay Bullying: What's the Big Deal*?

8 California Safe Schools Coalition. Safe Schools Research Brief. *Harassment Based on Sexual Orientation and its Consequences.*

9 California Safe Schools Coalition. Safe Schools Research Brief. *The Economic Costs of Bullying at School.*

10 Kosciw, J.G., & Diaz, E.M. *Involved, Invisible, Ignored: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Parents and Their Children in Our Nation's K–12 Schools.* Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network in Partnership with COLAGE and the Family Equality Council.

11 Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. *The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Middle School Students: Findings from the 2007 National School Climate Survey.* www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/ file/000/001/1475-1.pdf

12 Kosciw, J.G., & Diaz, E.M. *Involved, Invisible, Ignored: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Parents and Their Children in Our Nation's K–12 Schools.* Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network in Partnership with COLAGE and the Family Equality Council.

Additional resources

Transgender Law Center. *Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth - Recommendations for Schools*.

Suicide Prevention Resource Center. *Suicide Risk and Prevention for Lesbian, Gay,Bisexual, and Transgender Youth*.

Van Wormer, K., & McKinney, R. What schools can do to help gay/lesbian/bisexual youth: a harm reduction approach. *Adolescence*. Fall 2003.

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Appendix B

Appendix C – CSBA Policy Brief on Community Schools

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORTING STUDENTS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

October 2010

Research has consistently demonstrated that students' academic achievement is influenced by a variety of conditions outside the school, including their physical, social, emotional and economic circumstances. Therefore, a comprehensive, communitywide approach to meeting the needs of the whole child could potentially make a significant impact on students' educational outcomes and help close the achievement gap among student populations. The creation of "community schools" is a growing trend that is designed to support student achievement through service-based interventions, expanded learning time models and increased community engagement. When implemented together, community school interventions maximize benefits and allow schools to address multiple factors in students' lives.

Although similarly named, the community schools described in this policy brief are not the same as county community schools or district-operated community day schools that provide services for expelled students. Rather, these schools serve all students and provide a variety of services to address multiple challenges facing students and their families.

What is a community school?

A community school is defined as both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources.[1] Sometimes called a "full-service school" or an "extended-service school," it is a "hub of community" where an array of public and private agencies collaborate with the school and its staff to provide a comprehensive set of integrated services designed to meet the full range of learning and developmental needs of the students.[2]

The school district or county office of education may work with other public agencies, community-based organizations, private entities and families to provide and coordinate on-site programs and services, such as academic support programs; social, mental, physical, vision and dental health services; parent and community involvement; family support services; after-school activities; service-learning projects; early childhood education; adult education;

and/or youth and community development activities. Community schools are a convenient location for students and their families to access services.

> "Schools alone cannot address all the challenges of closing the achievement gap and educating all students at high levels. Now more than ever we must develop creative partnerships and collaborate to bring community resources to our schools. School boards can play a pivotal leadership role in ensuring that schools are effective community centers that provide a hub for a wide range of coordinated services to help families and empower parents and their students. Truly effective community schools are more than a collection of services at a site. They are a strategic effort to link the academic program of the school with a set of support services driven by assessing the needs of school families."
>
> –Ed Honowitz, *Pasadena Unified School Board Member*

Key characteristics

Community schools may differ substantially in the way they are organized, staffed and funded, but they share a common purpose and philosophy. Key features of community school models include:

⇨ A shared philosophy and vision throughout the community which is dedicated to meeting the needs of all students in the community and is based on an understanding that student achievement is impacted by conditions of children and families

⇨ Collaboration in leadership, planning, governance and oversight (i.e., "shared leadership" and "shared accountability") among the school district/COE, its community partners, and families

⇨ A core educational program based on high expectations for student learning

⇨ Linkages of school and community resources and alignment of those resources with student learning and the identified needs of students and families

⇨ Expansion of learning opportunities, such as after-school and summer programs, early childhood programs, youth leadership, service learning, extended school calendar and/or use of the community as a resource for learning

⇨ Access to on-site or school-linked services to address issues that are barriers to learning

⇨ Assignment of a community school coordinator (who may be a district staff person or a coordinator on loan from a community agency) and establishment of site-based teams to ensure ongoing focus on school goals and meaningful involvement of stakeholders

⇨ Strong involvement of families in their children's education

Funding

Community schools generally use a combination of resources to fund planning, coordination, implementation and evaluation activities. These will vary depending on the services provided at the school and may include:

⇨ **Resources and/or in-kind support from the district/COE, city and county agencies, health providers, nonprofit organizations or other partners.** Agreements about the resources that will be provided by each partner should be made early in the planning process. In-kind support may include personnel, facilities, utility costs or other operational support.

⇨ **Federal, state and local grants.** Funding for a limited number of community school initiatives is available through the federal Full-Service Community Schools program. Eligible applicants consist of a consortium of one or more local educational agencies and one or more community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations and other public or private entities. In 2010, only 10 new awards were anticipated, with amounts ranging up to $500,000.

Other grants may be available to support specific support services and activities, such as the After School Education and Safety program; 21st Century Community Learning Centers; child care and development funds; Mental Health Services Act funds; Title I funds for educationally disadvantaged students; federal Health Resources and Services Administration grants for school health center facility construction, renovation and equipment and for expansion of federally

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qualified health centers' services into schools; McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act funds; and community development block grants.

⇨ **Support from educational foundations, businesses and private foundations.** Educational foundations and local businesses may be encouraged to provide one-time or occasional donations, supplies or services to address specific needs of the community school. The partnership also should explore private and corporate foundations which may specialize in support for health services or other needs of children and families.

⇨ **Use of volunteers and work-study students.** To supplement the work of staff, community schools may seek assistance from parents, community members, other volunteers and high school and/or postsecondary students paid through work-study funds.

⇨ **Fees and third-party reimbursements.** When allowed by law, students and families may be charged a fee for some services. However, community schools typically provide services at no cost or on a sliding fee scale in order to facilitate access for low-income households. Many school health centers receive billing revenue from health insurance

programs, such as MediCal, for medical and oral health services provided to students.[3]

Tight budgets require districts/COEs to be creative in identifying, securing and sustaining funding. However, the community school model has the potential to reduce costs throughout the community by promoting shared resources, maximizing joint use of facilities and avoiding duplicative services.

Evidence supporting the community school approach

Although more quantitative studies are needed to examine the effectiveness and benefits of the community school approach, early studies of community schools have found significant gains in student achievement, higher student attendance, fewer suspensions, greater parent/family and community involvement with the schools, increased teacher satisfaction and improved school climate, improved mental and physical health for students, increased family stability and increased security and pride in neighborhoods.[4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9]

Other research, while not specifically looking at community schools, has examined the relationship between student learning and the conditions of children. For example, a California

Case Study

Redwood City Community Schools

Redwood City's community schools project, launched in 2003, is designed to unite the most important influences in children's lives—school, families and communities—to create a web of support that nurtures their development toward productive adulthood. Four of the 17 schools in the Redwood City School District have been designated as community schools: Fair Oaks Community School (K–5), Taft Community School (K–5), Hoover Community School (K–8), and Kennedy Middle School (6–8).

Each community school is unique, but they all share common features. The primary emphasis of each community school is student learning, linked to quality instruction and high academic standards. Student learning is supported by strong community partnerships that provide shared leadership and a range of comprehensive services.

The key strategies include safety-net supports; family engagement; school transitions; extended day learning; physical health, mental health and wellness; and coordinated services. Each community school houses a family resource center where students, family and staff can access counselors, parent involvement facilitators and benefit and insurance specialists. Program components include mental health and case management services, referrals to medical care providers, health insurance and county benefits enrollment, family support services, child protective services prevention and early intervention, after-school recreation and academic support/enrichment, tutoring and mentoring, community-based learning experiences, school readiness home visits, parent involvement and leadership, parent/adult education and youth leadership (middle grades only).

At each school site, a community school coordinator has been designated to coordinate and support these programs and services. Programs and services are integrated with each other and with the school's core instructional program.

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Along with the school district, major partners in this initiative include the City of Redwood City, San Mateo County Human Services Agency, Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center, Youth and Family Enrichment Services, John W. Gardner Center at Stanford University, San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, Redwood City Policy Department, Sequoia HealthCare District, San Mateo County Health Department and Cañada College's Community-Based English Tutoring Program.

A 2008–09 evaluation of the Redwood City Community Schools initiative found some encouraging trends as well as some challenges. Two-thirds of students/parents in those schools participated in community school programs, although participation levels were uneven across schools and grades. Program participation was linked to higher school attendance rates, physical fitness and English language development, but did not positively impact math scores. Finding resources to improve the evaluation process itself is also a challenge.

The Redwood City Community Schools are still in development. In addition to the four full community schools, two others are currently emerging (Garfield School and Hawes Elementary School) and others have begun implementing a few community school strategies (primarily after-school programs). According to Sandra Portasio, the district's Director of Community Schools, the vision is to expand community school strategies to most schools in the district.

For further information, see the district's website at www.rcsd.k12.ca.us or Redwood City's website at www.ci.redwood-city.ca.us/manager/initiatives/rwc2020commschools.html, or contact:

Sandra Portasio
Director of Community Schools
Redwood City School District
750 Bradford Street
Redwood City, CA 94063
sportasio@rcsdk8.net
(650) 423-2200

Department of Education report cites evidence of the links between student learning and physical health (e.g., nutrition, physical activity, substance abuse, access to health care), school safety and supportive school environments.[10] Another study found that supportive neighborhoods can mitigate the effects of economic disadvantage and form the foundation for high achievement.[11] These types of research support the community school model by demonstrating that efforts to improve the conditions of children and families can raise student achievement.

Role of the school board

There are opportunities for the governing board to encourage and support the community school model through each of its major areas of responsibility:

Setting direction

When adopting a long-range vision and goals for the district/COE, the board can incorporate statements recognizing the value of parent and community involvement in schools and encouraging the development of community partnerships. These concepts should be woven into the district's strategic plan and other key documents. As partnerships are formed, the board can participate

in the creation of a collaborative vision statement that ensures that the work of the partnership is designed to support the core academic mission of the district/COE.

Goals and priorities related to the establishment or maintenance of community schools should be based on the results of an assessment of student and community needs, an inventory of available and accessible resources in the community, and a determination of the schools that have the greatest need as well as a commitment to implement services.

Establishing structure

Working with the superintendent, the board must ensure that structures and resources are in place to enable effective implementation of community school services and programs. Board decisions related to policy, budget and facilities will impact the success of the community school.

The board can adopt and align policies that encourage and facilitate collaboration, effective service delivery and joint use of facilities. (For example, see CSBA's sample board policies and administrative regulations BP 0000 – Vision, BP 0100 – Philosophy, BP 0200 – Goals for the School District, BP 1020 – Youth Services, BP 1400 – Relations Between Other Governmental

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Agencies and the Schools, BP 1330.1 – Joint Use Agreements, BP/AR/E 5141.6 – School Health Services, BP/AR 5148 – Child Care and Development, BP/AR 5148.2 – Before/After School Programs, BP/AR 5148.3 – Preschool/Early Childhood Education and BP 6142.4 – Service Learning/Community Service Classes.)

The board must approve the level of funding, staffing and other resources that will be contributed by the district/COE toward various programs and services offered at the community school and toward coordination of services. It also should work with its partners to identify available community resources and alternative funding sources and to develop a long-term plan to provide financial stability and flexibility.

When constructing new school facilities or determining the use of existing facilities, the board should consider how school facilities can support the board's vision to expand services for students and families and allow for community use as appropriate.

Any joint use of facilities or joint program delivery should be formalized through a joint use agreement or memorandum of understanding, approved by the board, which spells out the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

Providing support

The board has responsibility—through its behavior and actions—to support the superintendent and staff as they carry out the direction of the board. The board can provide support by continually demonstrating its commitment to the community school model, upholding policies that have been adopted by the board, modeling collaborative behaviors in relationships with other local officials, appointing a board representative to participate on planning/oversight teams and publicly recognizing school accomplishments.

Ensuring accountability

The board must continually monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of community schools in order to ensure accountability to the public. The board and superintendent should work with partners to agree upon desired results and select indicators that will be used to evaluate progress. Examples of indicators may include levels of participation in programs/services; changes in students' school attendance, classroom behavior, academic achievement, health or other outcomes; feedback from students, families and partners regarding program benefits; review of program costs; and other indicators aligned to specific program and school goals. Reports to the board and partners should be scheduled on an ongoing basis and timed to allow evaluation results to inform decision making.

Acting as community leaders

The success of community schools depends on the efforts of key stakeholders throughout the community. In their role as community leaders, board members can help identify these stakeholders and initiate partnerships. Regular communications between board members and other local officials will lead to increased understanding of the operations of various governmental systems and areas of mutual concern. Board spokespersons should share information about collaborative efforts, including program evaluation results, with students, parents and the community in order to publicize the availability of services, garner support and thereby sustain community school efforts.

Resources

California School Boards Association: CSBA provides sample board policies, policy briefs, publications and other resources on a variety of topics related to youth services, student wellness and collaboration, including Building Healthy Communities: A School Leader's Guide to Collaboration and Community Engagement and Expanding Access to School Health Services: Policy Considerations for Governing Boards. With assistance from a grant from the Stuart Foundation, the California School Boards Foundation

is working with the University of California at Davis, School of Education, to help establish a California Center for Community Engaged Schools. ***www.csba.org***

California Department of Education: The CDE provides resources related to student health, nutrition, safety, youth development and parent/community involvement. ***www.cde.ca.gov/ls***

California School Health Centers Association: CSHC helps school districts expand their health services programs and assists community schools in starting school health centers that offer medical, mental health and/or dental services. CSHC facilitates linkages between community health services providers and schools, and supports new and existing school health centers in their applications for federal grant programs. Resources, toolkits and technical assistance services can be found at CSHC's website. ***www.schoolhealthcenters.org***

Center for Community School Partnerships, University of California Davis, School of Education: Housed within the UC Davis Center for Cooperative Research and Extension Services for Schools (CRESS), the Center is a diverse team of professionals invested in strengthening community school partnerships through direct work with youth and community-based leaders and advice to a statewide network of after-school program providers and Healthy

Start service providers. The Center provides technical assistance and training in areas common to the full-service community schools approach: expanded learning opportunities, health services, family support and engagement, school infrastructure to support collaboration, and systems to gather and analyze data. The Center also works closely with community and school partners to evaluate their work for the purpose of identifying effective best practices in the field. *http://education.ucdavis.edu/cress-center/community-school-partnerships*

City County Schools Partnership: The CCS Partnership is a joint effort of CSBA, the League of California Cities and the California State Association of Counties to promote the development of public policies that build and preserve communities by encouraging local collaborative efforts among local governments. The Partnership's work focuses on educating local leaders in the art of collaboration, identifying and promoting examples of successful cross-jurisdictional collaboration and encouraging effective collaboration through the Healthy Children - Healthy Communities Campaign and the Conditions of Children Task Force. *www.ccspartnership.org*

Coalition for Community Schools: The Institute for Educational Leadership's Coalition for Community Schools is an alliance of national, state and local organizations in K–16 education, youth development, community planning and development, family support,

health and human services, government and philanthropy as well as national, state and local community school networks. It works to mobilize the resources and capacity of multiple sectors and institutions to create a united movement for community schools. Its website offers numerous resources on successful practices, including A Handbook for State Policy Leaders: Community Schools: Improving Student Learning/Strengthening Schools, Families, and Communities and Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools. *www.communityschools.org*

Communities in Schools: Communities in Schools is a network of nearly 5,000 professionals in 25 states and the District of Columbia (including three affiliates in California) which works to surround students with a community of support and thereby reduce the dropout rate. It works within the public school system to determine student needs and establish relationships with local businesses, social service agencies, health care providers and parent and volunteer organizations to provide needed resources. *www.communitiesinschools.org*

John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities: The John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University promotes policies and practices to help youth and communities grow. The Center partners with communities to develop leadership, conduct research and effect change to improve

the lives of youth. ***http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu***

National Center for Community Schools: The National Center for Community Schools, created by the Children's Aid Society in 1984, provides consultation, resources and advocacy to facilitate the development of community schools nationally and internationally. ***http://nationalcenterforcommunityschools.childrensaidsociety.org***

National Community Education Association: NCEA provides training, information and advocacy in support of parent and community involvement in public education, the formation of community partnerships to address community needs, and the expansion of lifelong learning opportunities for all community residents. Members include community education directors or coordinators, school board members, superintendents, education professors and others. ***www.ncea.com***

Partnership for Children and Youth: Formerly named the Bay Area Partnership for Children and Youth, the Partnership's mission is to ensure that school-age children and youth living in low-income communities have the support and the opportunities they need and deserve to be successful in school and in life. Its community schools initiative includes school nutrition and school-based health efforts. ***www.partnerforchildren.org***

U.S. Department of Education: USDOE provides information about the federal Full-Service Community Schools grant program, including the program application, Frequently Asked Questions and other resources. ***www2.ed.gov/programs/communityschools***

End Notes

1   Coalition for Community Schools. *Community Schools Fact Sheet.* www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CS_fact_sheet_final.pdf

2   Niebuhr, D., Clayton, S., & Newton, R. (2009, July). *Proposal for a California Full-Service Community Schools Initiative: Closing the Achievement Gap through Student Support and Community Partnerships.* Center for Community Partnerships at University of California Davis, Partnership for Children and Youth, and California School Health Centers Association. http://education.ucdavis.edu/post/proposal-california-full-service-community-schools-initiative

3   California School Boards Association. (2008, November). *Expanding Access to School Health Services: Policy Considerations for Governing Boards*, Policy Brief. www.csba.org/wellness.aspx

4   Coalition for Community Schools. (2010, May) *Community Schools —Results that Turn Around Failing Schools*. www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/Turning_Around_Schools_CS_Results2.pdf

5   *Coalition for Community Schools. Community Schools Research Brief 09*. Washington DC: Author. www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CCS%20Research%20Report2009.pdf

6   Blank, M.J., Melaville, A., & Shah, B.P. (2003). *Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools.* Washington, DC: Coalition for Community Schools. www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/Making_the_Difference_final.pdf

7   Children's Aid Society. *Schools: The Perfect Place to Address the Needs of the Whole Child*. New York: The Children's Aid Society. www.childrensaidsociety.org/files/Schools_0.pdf

8   Dryfoos, J.G. (2000) *Evaluation of Community Schools: An Early Look*. Washington, DC: Coalition for Community Schools. www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/Evaluation%20of%20Community%20Schools_joy_dryfoos.pdf

9   Owen, I. (2010, September). *Breaking the Mold: Combining Community Schools with Expanded Learning Time to Help Educationally Disadvantaged Students.* Washington, DC.: Center for American Progress. www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/09/pdf/elt_community_schools.pdf

10 California Department of Education. (2005). *Getting Results: Developing Safe and Healthy Kids, Update 5, Student Health, Supportive Schools, and Academic Success*. www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/at/documents/getresultsupdate5.pdf

11 Holloway, J.H. (2004, May). Research link: How the community influences achievement. *Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 89–90.

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Appendix D – CSBA Sample Policies Promoting School Safety

The California School Boards Association provides sample board policies and administrative regulations on a variety of issues related to safety. For further information about subscribing to CSBA's policy services, see www.csba.org/Services/Services/PolicyServices.aspx or call 800-266-3382.

Related sample board policies and administrative regulations include, but are not limited to, the following:

BP 0200 – Goals for the School District addresses the adoption of long-term goals focused on the achievement and needs of all district students, which may include goals for maintaining safe and orderly campuses which promote learning

BP 0410 – Nondiscrimination in District Programs and Activities reflects federal and state law which prohibits discrimination in education programs and activities and expresses the board's commitment to equal opportunity for all students.

BP/AR 0450 – Comprehensive Safety Plan reflects state law which requires each school or district to develop a comprehensive safety plan with specified components and to annually review and update that plan.

BP 1000 – Concepts and Roles expresses the board's intention to provide leadership in addressing community issues related to education and to communicate and collaborate with community agencies and organizations.

BP 1020 – Youth Services addresses collaboration with other local governments, businesses, foundations, and community-based organizations to improve the health, safety and well-being of the community's youth.

BP 1112 – Media Relations encourages proactive communications with the media and calls for the development of a crisis communications plan in order to provide timely and accurate information to parents and the community during a crisis.

BP/AR 1250 – Visitors/Outsiders establishes procedures for visitor/outsider registration to ensure the safety of students and staff and minimize interruption of the instructional program.

BP/AR 1312.3 – Uniform Complaint Procedures establishes procedures, consistent with the state's uniform complaint procedures, for investigating complaints alleging failure to comply with applicable state and federal laws and regulations and/or alleging discrimination.

BP/AR 3515 – Campus Security provides for security measures that promote the safety of students, staff and visitors to school grounds including, but not limited to, surveillance systems, lighting, fencing, and control of access to keys.

BP/AR 3515.2 – Disruptions addresses disruption of school activities by nonstudents and circumstances under which an individual may be directed to leave school campuses.

BP/AR 3515.3 – District Police/Security Department is for use by districts that maintain their own police or security department and addresses the qualifications and duties of such officers.

BP/AR 3515.4 – Recovery from Property Loss or Damage expresses the district's intention to seek reimbursement of damages, within the limitations specified in law, from any individual, or from the parent of any minor, who has committed theft or has willfully damaged district or employee property.

BP/AR 3515.5 – Sex Offender Notification establishes procedures for disseminating information, when so authorized, about registered sex offenders residing within district boundaries.

AR 3515.6 – Criminal Background Checks for Contractors requires an agency contracting with the district to certify that any employees who may come in contact with students have not been convicted of a felony, with specified exceptions.

BP/AR 3516 – Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Plan reflects law requiring the development and maintenance of a disaster preparedness plan which details provisions for handling emergencies and disasters (including attacks or threat by an individual or group, bomb threat, or terrorist threat or activity) and which shall be included in the district's comprehensive school safety plan.

AR 3516.2 – Bomb Threats establishes procedures for receiving and responding to bomb threats.

AR 4112.5/4312.5 – Criminal Record Check and AR 4212.5 – Criminal Record Check establish procedures for ensuring that no certificated or classified employee, respectively, has been convicted of a violent or serious felony, unless that person has obtained a certificate of rehabilitation and a pardon.

BP 4119.1/4219.1/4319.1 – Civil and Legal Rights reflects law which limits the liability of all school employees when they are acting within the scope of employment but sets exceptions which include, but are not limited to, circumstances where an employee acted with willful or criminal misconduct, gross negligence, recklessness or a conscious, flagrant indifference to the harmed person's right to safety; violated a federal or state civil rights law; was under the influence of alcohol or any drug at the time of the misconduct; or engaged in crime of violence, act of terrorism or sexual offense.

BP/AR 4119.11/4219.11/4319.11 – Sexual Harassment prohibits sexual harassment of district employees and job applicants, provides examples of behaviors that would constitute sexual harassment, and reflects law requiring employee notifications and training.

BP 4131 – Staff Development *and* **BP 4231 – Staff Development** provide for a program of ongoing professional development for certificated and classified staff, respectively, which includes topics related to student health, safety and welfare.

BP/AR 4158/4258/4358 – Employee Security calls for strategies for protecting employees from potentially dangerous persons and situations and for providing them with necessary assistance and support when emergency situations occur.

AR 5020 – Parent Rights and Responsibilities reflects law delineating explicit rights of parents, including, but not limited to, the right to have a school environment for their child that is safe and supportive of learning and the right to be informed in advance about school rules.

BP 5112.5 – Open/Closed Campus gives districts the option to establish closed campuses in order to keep students in a supervised and safe environment during the school day.

BP/AR 5113.1 – Chronic Absence and Truancy addresses identification of attendance problems and the reasons for those problems and the development of strategies that focus on prevention and early intervention.

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BP 5119 – Students Expelled from Other Districts details the circumstances under which a student expelled from another district may be granted admission to a district school during or after the term of the expulsion.

BP 5131 – Conduct expresses the board's expectation that students will exhibit appropriate conduct that does not infringe upon the rights of others or interfere with the school program while on school grounds, while going to or coming from school, while at school activities and while on district transportation. The policy lists prohibited behaviors that may be subject to discipline and includes a discussion of bullying/cyberbullying.

BP/AR 5131.1 – Bus Conduct addresses bus surveillance systems and establishes rules related to bus driver authority, bus conduct and the suspension of riding privileges.

BP/AR 5131.4 – Student Disturbances addresses the district's response to campus disturbances and disruptions caused by students.

BP 5131.5 – Vandalism and Graffiti requires the development of strategies for preventing graffiti and vandalism on school grounds, including collaborating with local law enforcement and city and county officials as appropriate, and calls for the removal of graffiti as soon as possible.

BP/AR 5131.6 – Alcohol and Other Drugs provides for a comprehensive prevention and intervention program to keep district schools free of alcohol and other drugs in order to help prevent violence and create a well-disciplined environment conducive to learning.

BP/AR 5131.7 – Weapons and Dangerous Instruments prohibits students from possessing weapons, imitation firearms or dangerous instruments of any kind in school buildings, on school grounds or buses, at school-related or school-sponsored activities away from school, or while going to or coming from school.

BP/AR 5132 – Dress and Grooming reflects law and court decisions which allow school sites to initiate a dress code that prohibits students from wearing gang-related apparel, provided there is evidence of a gang presence at the school and actual or threatened disruption or material interference with school activity.

BP/AR 5136 – Gangs establishes strategies to discourage gang affiliation and to deter gang intimidation of students and staff and confrontations between members of different gangs.

BP 5137 – Positive School Climate addresses the desire to provide an orderly, caring and nurturing educational and social environment in which all students can feel safe and take pride in

their school and their achievements. The policy requires strategies to build students' feelings of connectedness with their school and expresses the expectation that staff will demonstrate positive, professional attitudes and respect toward each student and other staff members.

BP 5138 – Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation establishes conflict resolution programs designed to help students learn constructive ways of handling conflict, which may incorporate peer mediation strategies in which selected students are specially trained to work with their peers in resolving conflicts.

BP/AR 5141.4 – Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting details the responsibility of employees who are "mandated reporters," as defined by law, to report all known or suspected incidents of child abuse and neglect.

BP/AR 5141.52 – Suicide Prevention addresses suicide prevention and intervention strategies, including related student education, staff development and appropriate response to a suicide threat or attempt.

BP/AR 5141.6 – School Health Services addresses the provision of health services at or near school sites, which may include mental health services, first aid and treatment of minor injuries.

BP/AR 5142 – Safety focuses on the prevention of injury to students caused by dangerous facilities or other conditions, but also includes rules related to the supervision of students and the release of students during the school day to the custody of an adult.

AR 5142.1 – Identification and Reporting of Missing Children establishes a voluntary fingerprinting program to facilitate the location and identification of missing children, requires schools to post notices of missing children and addresses actions that staff should take in the event that they recognize a student reported as missing.

BP/AR 5144 – Discipline lists a range of options for student discipline and encourages preventative measures whenever possible.

BP/AR 5144.1 – Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process reflects legal requirements related to the grounds for suspension and expulsion and the procedures for considering, recommending and implementing suspension and expulsion.

AR 5144.2 – Suspension and Expulsion/Due Process (Students with Disabilities) establishes procedures for determining whether a student's conduct is a manifestation of his or her disability in order to determine appropriate discipline and/or behavioral intervention plans to address the behavior.

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BP 5145.11 – Questioning and Apprehension by Law Enforcement addresses collaboration with law enforcement officers to carry out their duties on school campus, including the questioning and apprehension of students at school in a way that causes the least possible disruption for the student and school and gives the student appropriate privacy.

BP/AR 5145.12 – Search and Seizure authorizes school officials to search students, their property and district property as necessary to protect the health and welfare of students and staff, and to seize illegal, unsafe or otherwise prohibited items.

BP/AR 5145.2 – Freedom of Speech/Expression addresses students' First Amendment rights to free speech and the limits on such expression, including prohibitions against making any expressions that so incite students as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises, the violation of school rules, or substantial disruption of the school's orderly operation.

BP 5145.3 – Nondiscrimination/Harassment prohibits discrimination, intimidation or harassment of any student by any employee, student or other person in the district and establishes grievance procedures. The policy also reflects the need to provide students with appropriate accommodations when necessary for their protection from threatened or potentially harassing or discriminatory behavior (e.g., on the basis of sexual orientation or actual or perceived gender).

BP/AR 5145.7 – Sexual Harassment addresses harassment of or by students, provides examples of behaviors that would constitute sexual harassment and establishes complaint processes.

BP 5145.9 – Hate-Motivated Behavior addresses prevention of and response to hate-motivated behavior, defined as an act, or attempted act, motivated by hostility towards a victim's real or perceived ethnicity, national origin, immigrant status, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability or any other physical or cultural characteristic.

BP/AR 6142.8 – Comprehensive Health Education addresses the content of the district's health education program. In accordance with state content standards, the health education program may include topics related to violence prevention, bullying and harassment, Internet safety, alcohol and drugs, and mental, emotional and social health.

AR 6159.4 – Behavioral Interventions for Special Education Students establishes procedures governing the use of behavioral interventions and emergency interventions for students with disabilities who demonstrate serious behavioral problems.

BP/AR 6163.4 – Student Use of Technology addresses the safe use of the district's technological resources, including measures designed to restrict students' access to harmful or inappropriate matter on the Internet and to ensure that students do not engage in unauthorized or unlawful online activities.

BP 6164.2 – Guidance/Counseling Services includes the role of school counselors in providing personal counseling to assist students with substance abuse, physical or emotional problems or other personal problems. The policy also addresses the provision of crisis counseling in the event that students are confronted with a traumatic incident.

BP/AR 6164.5 – Student Success Teams encourages the collaboration of parents, teachers, resource personnel, administrators and students in evaluating the strengths and needs of students having academic, attendance or behavioral difficulties and in identifying strategies and programs that may assist the students.

BP/AR 6184 – Continuation Education addresses the provision of a continuation education program with specified support services to meet the educational needs of high school students who are habitually truant or absent or who committed an act that constitutes grounds for suspension or expulsion.

BP/AR 6185 – Community Day School is for use by districts that have established one or more community day schools for expelled students, certain probation-referred students and students referred through a school attendance review board or other formal district process.

Appendix E – Contributing Factors and Warning Signs for Violent Behavior

Research has identified a number of factors that appear to contribute to violent behavior and some early warning signs that might enable educators, families, friends and agencies to get help for an individual before it is too late.

WHAT CAUSES VIOLENT BEHAVIOR?

Although there are no definitive answers as to why people become violent, experts agree that both biological and societal factors are at work. According to the 1993 report of the American Psychological Association (APA) Commission on Violence and Youth, the primary risk factor that leads to an individual's involvement in violence is a history of violence: "Although the form and the absolute level of an individual's aggression varies considerably throughout the lifespan, an individual's relative level of aggression among age-mates shows remarkable continuity and predictability over time" (p. 17). The APA is also quick to note, however, that it is the interaction of a variety of factors that contributes to this consistency, many of which are alterable.

Among the factors cited by research as contributing to violent behavior are biological factors, emotional and cognitive development, family and childrearing conditions, relations to peers, effects of poverty, prejudice and discrimination, social acceptability for violent behavior, alcohol and drug use, and factors in the school environment.

Biological factors

Inherited traits such as temperament, activity levels and hormonal levels may interact with the social environment in ways that encourage aggressive behaviors and responses (APA, 1993). Some theorize that an impulsive, difficult temperament may overlap with a fearless temperament, and when combined with other factors may build a base for later violent behavior. According to Hunt (1993), neurobiological deficits are often present in aggressive children and adolescents. Of those who commit murder, Hunt states, many are cognitively limited (IQs between 70 and 90), many have language deficits and many have abnormal brain function or mild abnormalities in physical appearance, muscle coordination and reflexes. For

females the development of violence may be somewhat different due to biological and sex-role socialization differences (APA, 1993).

Emotional and cognitive development

Lack of impulse control, as well as conditioned responses to anger, play a key role in antisocial or violent behavior. However, research suggests that inadequate control will not put an individual at risk for violent behavior unless aggressive and violent responses have produced past rewards and have become the individual's preferred response (APA, 1993). Much attention has been given to this area of inquiry in response to the growth of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) diagnoses and the potential relation-ship to violence. Research suggests that while most children with ADHD do not develop violent behavior, the cognitive disabilities experienced by some ADHD individuals may inhibit their learning of prosocial skills and moral concepts (APA, 1993).

Family and childrearing conditions

Abusive, neglectful and ineffective parenting are some of the strongest precursors to later violent behavior in both children and adults. As the APA (1993) suggests, "Criminal history or antisocial personality in a parent, parental rejection of the child, and in-consistent and physically abusive parental discipline all seem to contribute to early aggressive behaviors … Abuse at the hands of parents leads children to think and solve problems in ways that later lead to their developing aggressive behavior patterns and to their continuing cycle of violence" (p. 19).

Prothrow-Stith (1991) explains the negative role parents may, often inadvertently, play in fostering violent behavior: "[Parents] feel so overwhelmed by their own problems – money problems, work problems, marital problems, problems with drugs and alcohol – that they do not pay a great deal of attention to their children … This apparent indifference is punctuated by episodes of verbal and physical lashing out … Parents fail to notice and praise what their children do right … Violence may be the only way in which parents address their children" (p. 154).

Educators and other professionals studying youth violence are also concerned about the number of children without adequate supervision or positive adult role models. According to a survey of 2,000 school districts conducted by the National School Boards Association (1993), 84 percent of urban districts, 77 percent of suburban districts and 73 percent of rural districts attributed "changing family situations" as a primary causes for increasing violence.

Conversely, positive parental and adult interactions may serve as protective factors and foster resiliency in spite of other negative conditions.

Relation to peers

Peers play an important role in children's lives and can impact a child's level of aggression and susceptibility to violence.

In the early years, children who are disruptive in class and display antisocial behavior not only do poorly academically, but the behavior often affects their ability to develop normal peer relations. Aggressive children tend to be rejected by their peers. Those peer relationships they do form tend to be with others like themselves, thus reinforcing their antisocial behaviors. Without intervention, those early failures in the academic and social environment may undermine the development of healthy self-esteem and propel an antisocial child into further negative behavior. This pattern contributes to a process in which the expectations and negative reinforcement of teachers play a part in destroying the enthusiasm for school, particularly for African American males (APA, 1993; Walker, 1993).

Later, during adolescence, peers have an even greater impact on behavior. Developmentally, adolescents have two outstanding charac-teristics: (1) they strive for uniqueness while at the same time need to feel part of a group, and (2) peers are often the most important people in their lives – behavior is modeled after them and acceptance from them is sought. These two aspects of adolescence are prominent factors in gang involvement, antisocial acts and substance abuse.

Gang membership entices only a small percentage of youth but is cause for great concern. Admittance to a gang typically requires the youth to commit a violent act and to undergo physical assault by other members. Youth involved with gangs are three times more likely to commit homicide and aggravated assault than are non-gang delinquents (APA, 1993).

According to the APA (1993) and Felger (1992), youth who join gangs are predominantly male minorities living in environments where poverty, unemployment and social inequalities are part of everyday life and where gang membership is often seen as the only option available for gaining status, power, self-esteem and economic advancement. Gangs also provide youth with a sense of belonging and purpose. In many ways, gangs become a surrogate family, establishing values, codes of conduct and boundaries and providing a loyal group ready to protect and defend each individual. Once a youth becomes involved in a gang, the consequences of breaking the unwritten code of loyalty can make detachment difficult and dangerous.

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The incidence of gang involvement is much lower for females, but the likelihood of violence is equally high. For females, gang violence is often both physical and sexual. Female gangs are most often formed as adjuncts to male gangs, with the clear expectation that female members will be sexually available to all male members (Marinucci, Winokur, & Lewis, 1994).

Effects of poverty

Approximately one out of five children in America and in California lives in poverty (National Center for Poverty in Children, 2010). To grow up poor increasingly means to grow up living in substandard housing in violent neighborhoods and to perceive one's neighbors as unable to escape from their current so-cioeconomic niche. Through the emphasis placed on material possessions in our culture, children soon become aware not only of their economic deprivation, but also of their relative deprivation in comparison to others. Repeated frustrations, rejection and apparent lack of opportunity over long periods of time can foster the perception that the world is a hostile place. This "cycle of dis-advantage" breeds violence, frustration and anger prevalent among those who are poor, regardless of race. Those who experience the world as hostile and uncaring soon learn to respond with aggression (Kadel & Follman, 1993).

Prejudice and discrimination

It is only relatively recently that discrimination has been illegal in the United States and penalties imposed for violence against minority groups. The memories and the bias that the past policies of discrimination have engendered are not quickly changed. As the APA (1993) states, "Though many discriminatory laws have been challenged and overturned, others still remain … But even for those that have been overturned, the legacy of fear, hate and pain remains" (p. 25). Furthermore, recent years have seen the resurgence of "hate groups" who target individuals for verbal or physical violence because of their ethnicity, sexual orientation or other characteristics.

Consequently, one of the most pervasive conditions contribut-ing to violence today is prejudice – the belief that one group is not entitled to equal treatment and conditions. "Prejudice and discrimination are not a thing of the past…[S]uch discrimination fosters vast differences in economic status … [I]t also damages the self-confidence and self-esteem of those discriminated against and lays a foundation for anger, discontent, and violence" (APA, 1993, p. 25).

Social acceptability of violent behavior

The degree to which violence is perceived as acceptable or is rewarded within a society or a specific culture plays a substantial role in the development of violent behavior. For example, surveys often cite media violence as a factor contributing to school violence. CSBA's 2011-12 Policy Platform Statement 36 specifically addresses this point, with the declaration that CSBA "supports the reduction of violent and sexual content in media and entertainment, and supports the development of positive content that demon-strates nonviolent solutions to problems and respect for human life."

In addition, acceptance of violence is evident through society's choice of heroes and legends, passion for violent sports and the easy availability of weapons (APA, 1993). The APA notes that "violence is woven into the cultural fabric of American society. . . . [O]ur folk heroes and media images . . . often glorify interpersonal violence on an individual and personal level" (p. 22).

Use of alcohol and drugs

Violence and drug use are integrally related (APA, 1993). Alcohol and other drugs dull inhibitions that prevent people from acting on violent impulses. Once addicted, adolescents, like adults,

may engage in violent activity to ensure a continuous supply. Just as in any other illegal activity involving large sums of money, drug trafficking and distribution are dangerous and violent. Disputes over drug sales, territory and supplies are often the impetus for youth violence and gang warfare.

Negative school environment

Certain aspects of the school environment may increase tension among students and between students and staff which can lead to verbal and physical conflict (Dworkin, Haney, & Telschow, 1998; Novotney, 2009). For instance, large school populations and/or overcrowding may promote students' feelings of danger, decreased control over situations and increased anonymity. Verbal bullying is also more likely to occur at such schools (Lleras, 2008). In addition, if incidents of harassment or bullying are excused or tacitly condoned, these behaviors create a hostile environment and make the school an intimidating, frightening place.

Finally, schools without extracurricular and cocurricular activities that provide opportunities for healthy interactions and outlets for youthful energy, such as sports, clubs, art and music, may increase the levels of alienation students experience and seem less responsive to student needs. Providing additional means for

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students to be connected to adults and peers at school is another way to promote the prevention of violence and harassment. Feeling safe and connected at school promotes student learning and healthy development (Devine & Cohen, 2007).

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Regardless of the cause of violent behavior, it may be possible in some cases to prevent violence by heeding certain warning signs and obtaining help for troubled individuals. A U.S. Department of Education report (Dwyer, Osher & Warger, 1998) reiterates the finding that "most children who become violent toward self or others feel rejected and psychologically victimized. In most cases, children exhibit aggressive behavior early in life and, if not provided support, will continue a progressive developmental pattern toward severe aggression or violence" (p. 8). The authors caution against using checklists to diagnose and stereotype individual children. Early warning signs are useful, however, in referring children who may need help.

These early warning signs include (Dwyer et al., 1998):

⇨ **Social withdrawal.** Gradual and eventually complete withdrawal from social contacts often stems from feelings of depression, rejection, persecution, unworthiness and lack of confidence.

⇨ **Excessive feelings of isolation and being alone.** Although the majority of children who are isolated and appear to be friendless are not violent, research has shown that in some cases feelings of isolation are associated with children who behave aggressively and violently.

⇨ **Excessive feelings of rejection.** Without support, children who experience emotionally painful rejection may be at risk of expressing their emotional distress in negative ways, including violence. Some who are rejected by nonaggressive peers seek out aggressive friends who, in turn, reinforce their violent tendencies.

⇨ **Victimization.** Children who are victims of violence – including physical or sexual abuse – are sometimes at risk themselves of becoming violent towards themselves or others.

⇨ **Feelings of being picked on and persecuted.** Children who feel constantly picked on, teased, bullied, singled out for ridicule and humiliated at home or school may initially withdraw socially and, if not given adequate support, may vent their feelings in inappropriate ways.

⇨ **Low school interest and poor academic performance.** In some situations, when a low achiever feels frustrated, unworthy, chastised and denigrated, acting out and aggressive behaviors may occur.

⇨ **Expression of violence in children's writings and drawings.** Many children produce work about violent themes that for the most part is harmless when taken in context. However, an over-representation of violence in writings and drawings that is directed at specific individuals consistently over time may signal emotional problems and the potential for violence.

⇨ **Uncontrolled anger.** Anger is a natural emotion, but anger that is expressed frequently and intensely to minor irritants may signal potential violent behavior.

⇨ **Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating and bullying behaviors.** Some mildly aggressive behaviors that occur early in children's lives, if left unattended, might later escalate into more serious behaviors.

⇨ **History of discipline problems.** Chronic behavior and dis-ciplinary problems both in school and at home may suggest that underlying emotional needs are not being met and may set the stage for the child to violate norms and rules, defy authority, disengage from school and engage in aggressive behaviors with other children and adults.

⇨ **History of violent and aggressive behavior.** Youth who show an early pattern of antisocial behavior (e.g., aggressive acts directed toward other individuals, cruelty to animals, fire setting, stealing, vandalism, lying, cheating) frequently and across multiple settings are particularly at risk for future aggressive behavior. Research suggests that the age of onset may be a key factor in interpreting early warning signs. For example, children who engage in aggression and drug abuse before age 12 are more likely to show violence later on than are children who begin such behavior at an older age.

⇨ **Intolerance for differences and prejudicial attitudes.** An intense prejudice toward others based on race, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, sexual orientation, ability or physical appearance – when coupled with other factors – may lead to violent assaults against those who are perceived to be different.

⇨ **Drug and alcohol use.** Drug and alcohol use reduce self-control and expose children to violence as perpetrators and/ or victims.

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⇨ **Affiliation with gangs.** Youth who are influenced by gangs (including those who emulate their behavior as well as those who become affiliated with them) may adopt their antisocial values and behaviors and act in violent ways in certain situations.

⇨ **Inappropriate access to, possession of and use of firearms.** Children who inappropriately possess or have access to fIrearms can have an increased risk for violence and a higher probability of becoming victims.

⇨ **Serious threats of violence.** One of the most reliable indicators that a youth is likely to commit a dangerous act is a detailed and specific threat to use violence. Recent incidents across the country clearly indicate that threats to commit violence should be taken very seriously.

It is common for children who are troubled to exhibit multiple signs. Even exhibiting numerous signs, however, does not mean that the situation is hopeless. The potential for violence can be reduced significantly when children have a positive, meaningful connection to an adult – whether at home, at school or in the community. (Refer to Chapters 3 and 4 for additional prevention and intervention strategies.)

IMMINENT WARNING SIGNS

Imminent warning signs indicate that a student is very close to behaving in a way that is potentially dangerous to self or others. Dwyer et al. (1998) explain that these signs are usually presented as a series of overt, serious, hostile behaviors or threats directed at peers, staff or other individuals. They are usually evident to more than one staff person as well as the child's family.

Imminent warning signs may include (Dwyer et al., 1998):

⇨ Serious physical fighting with peers or family members

⇨ Severe destruction of property

⇨ Severe rage for seemingly minor reasons

⇨ Detailed threats of lethal violence

⇨ Possession and/or use of firearms and other weapons

⇨ Other self-injurious behaviors or threats of suicide

These situations demand immediate intervention by school authorities, law enforcement, child and family services, mental health services and/or parents, as appropriate.

Appendix F – Discipline for Off-Campus Conduct

Not all incidents of harassment, discrimination and violence involving students occur at school during school hours. Therefore, districts need to be aware of the extent to which they can become involved in disciplining students when the incidents occur off campus. Board policy and administrative regulations pertaining to discipline should distinguish between incidents initiated on school campus or using school equipment and incidents initiated by students off campus during non-school hours. In the case of cyberbullying, districts have the authority to monitor their own technology systems and to take away computer privileges and impose discipline for improper use. However, questions continue to arise regarding how far districts can go in disciplining students for their off-campus conduct. The need to protect students and staff from harm must be balanced with students' First Amendment right to freedom of speech.

Education Code 48950 provides a free speech right based on what a high school student may do outside of the school environment. That is, if the student's off-campus speech or communication is protected free speech, no discipline may be imposed unless, pursuant to Education Code 48907, the expression is "obscene, libelous or slanderous" or "material which so incites students as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts on school premises or the violation of lawful school regulations or the substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school."

A number of disputes regarding this question have landed in the courts. In an unpublished case in 2009 (*J.C. v. Beverly Hills Unified School District*), a California federal court held that a district may discipline a student for off-campus conduct only if the conduct (1) impacts school activities or is brought to the attention of school authorities, and (2) causes, or is foreseeably likely to cause, a substantial disruption of school activities. In this case, the student recorded a video insulting another student. The video was created off campus, not using district equipment, and was posted on YouTube. The court found that the discipline imposed on this student was not justified because the district did not present evidence of specific facts that led school officials to predict that the video would cause substantial disruption at school. The video was not threatening and did not lead to any confrontation between the students. The court stated that "substantial disruption" goes beyond ordinary personality conflicts, hurt feelings or embarrassment that occurs among middle school students.

Other court decisions from across the country, although not directly applicable in California, underscore the difficulty in disciplining a student for off-campus conduct. For example, in *Layshock v. Hermitage School District* (2010), a Third Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that a Pennsylvania school district violated the free speech rights of a high school student who was disciplined for creating an off-campus parody MySpace profile of the school principal. The student had downloaded the principal's photograph from the school's web site and created what the district considered to be a vulgar, lewd and offensive profile, which other students began accessing on school computers after hearing about it. Nevertheless, the court found that the relationship between the conduct and the school was so attenuated that it could not allow school authorities to "reach into a child's home and control his or her actions there."

On the other hand, in *J.S. v. Blue Mountain School District* (2010), the Third Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of a school district that had disciplined a student for creating an off-campus fake MySpace profile of a principal which used profanity and depicted the principal as a pedophile and sex addict. Even though substantial disruption in school activities had not yet occurred, the court was sufficiently persuaded that the profile presented a reasonable possibility of a future disruption.

Recognizing that the court reached opposite conclusions in two cases with seemingly identical legal issues, the Third Circuit vacated the two decisions and held a new hearing before the entire court. In July 2011, the court issued its ruling on these cases. It held that, in both cases, imposing discipline violated the students' First Amendment rights to free speech. The majority opinion in J.S. hinged on the district's failure to demonstrate substantial disruption or foreseeable disruption of the educational environment and further held that the standard under which lewd, vulgar, obscene and plainly offensive student speech can be regulated does not apply to speech originating off school grounds during non-school hours.

These court decisions, and others that are beginning to emerge, illustrate the need for districts to proceed cautiously when considering student discipline for off-campus conduct, consult with legal counsel, and document, with specific examples, how the speech significantly disrupted, or was likely to disrupt, school activities or the targeted student's educational performance.