



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



SERIES: 2010 – 2011
CIRCULAR LETTER: C-8

TO: Superintendents of Schools
Executive Directors of State-Approved Nonpublic Special Education Programs
Executive Directors of Regional Education Service Centers (RESA)
State Education Resource Center (SERC)

FROM: George A. Coleman
Acting Commissioner of Education

DATE: January 13, 2011

SUBJECT: Bullying Policies

On December 16, 2010, the U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan issued a letter and provided illustrations around aspects that ought to be included in any states' anti-bullying legislation. This letter can be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/secletter/101215.html>. At the present time, 45 states have passed anti-bullying legislation. Connecticut passed Section 10-222d of the Connecticut General Statutes, (Policy on Bullying Behavior) originally in 2002. It has been amended twice, in 2006 and again in 2008. Additional changes may well be made in the current legislative session. Many states, including Connecticut, continue to amend their legislation because the phenomenon of bullying continues unabated.

Secretary Duncan's letter follows on the heels of the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, October 2010 "Dear Colleague" letter providing guidance around identifying and taking responsibility for managing harassment in schools. The full text of this letter, along with a fact sheet, can be found at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201010.html>. In this letter, Secretary Duncan emphasizes the need to "*work together to ensure equal access to education and to promote safe and respectful schools for all of our students.*" The Connecticut State Board of Education adopted a Position Statement on Creating a Healthy Learning Environment that is Physically, Emotionally and Intellectually Safe on February 3, 2010. This can be found at http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/LIB/sde/pdf/board/Creating_Learning_Environment.pdf. Bullying is unacceptable in our schools. The ultimate remedy to diminish and eliminate it is to foster a positive school climate in which each child feels safe and respected. This is the *spirit* of the law. When students are connected to school in this way, any form or severity of mean-spirited behavior will not take root and a positive school culture will thrive. This must be our goal: to work toward creating positive school climates rather than merely satisfying the letter of the law and reacting to incidents of bullying after they have been verified.

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To support Secretary Duncan's invitation, I ask that you work collaboratively and systemically at the local level to improve the climate in each and every school in Connecticut. The quality of the school climate matters and it is up to every educator to do his or her part to foster *climates of respect*. Doing so will provide the essential foundation for high quality learning and is the highest leverage strategy known to diminish, and eventually eliminate the epidemic of bullying.

For further information and resources, please go to <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/>. Under Quicklinks, click on Bullying and Harassment. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Jo Ann Freiberg by either e-mail at joann.freiberg@ct.gov or by telephone at 860-713-6598.

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