

CIVILITY ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

(Background information for Policy Sub-Committee)

UPDATE MAILING NO. 2

JANUARY 20, 2012

Much attention has been given to the topic of bullying. School districts need to work harder on improving the social climate within our schools. Policies in a number of areas, in addition to bullying, impact the issue of achieving the desired moral and ethical climate desired in our schools. These additional areas include the topics of Nondiscrimination, Suspension and Expulsion, Conduct, Violent and Aggressive Behavior, Sexual Harassment, Racial Harassment, Peer Sexual Harassment, and Equal Educational Opportunity. Samples are available upon request from CAFE.

In today's society there is an increasingly common "in-your-face" model of dealing with conflict. The media and popular culture seem to exemplify the angry argument as the model of communication. However, it is possible for people to disagree but to do it civilly. This could enhance the safe, nurturing culture in the school environment. Therefore, it is appropriate that school districts consider a policy pertaining to civility that provides ground rules for communication among teachers, parents and students.

School districts are now required to prepare a safe school climate plan pertaining to the elimination of bullying behavior in the school setting through the overall improvement of school climate. As an extension of this effort and as part of the effort to improve school climate, boards may want to consider a policy pertaining to civility. Safety policies and plans are designed to respond to crisis situations involving violent behavior or natural emergencies. Incidents occur in schools also which involve parents or other members of the community that do not rise to the level of behavior requiring the activation of the district's or school's safety or crisis management plan. Such behavior, however, may involve hostile and/or aggressive actions.

A board of education has every right to expect civility, respect, and orderly conduct among all individuals on school property or at school events. A powerful example is set for the student population when the district indicates that it expects mutual respect, civility and orderly conduct from the adults with whom the district interacts. A civility policy may be used as a preventative measure to stop or curb incidents of violent or hostile behavior by adults before they become a problem. Such a policy could apply to both school employees and to adult patrons of the school community.

In addition, boards of education, through their actions, should be role models of the desired behavior. Board bylaws related to methods of operation will help ensure the appropriate orderly conduct. The premise of such a policy is that schools must be safe, and even when people disagree, they can do so with an air of civility to each other. This is an important message for the students in our schools, especially in light of the current political climate in our nation. All too often in schools we see examples of loud disruptive behavior by adults and verbally abusive attacks directed toward school administrators and staff. Such incidents impact staff morale. Therefore, the purpose of a civility policy is to promote mutual respect, civility and orderly conduct among district employees, parents and the public. Moreover, through such a policy the board encourages positive communication and discourages violative, hostile or aggressive actions.

CIVILITY ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

(continued)

School boards, through CGS 10-221, are given the authority to “prescribe rules for the management, studies, classification and discipline of the public schools.” The same statute indicates that boards of education have the responsibility for the care, maintenance, and operation of buildings, lands, apparatus and other property used for school purposes. Members of the public are subject to the reasonable rules and policies of the board while in attendance at school events and in and on school facilities.

It is reasonable for a school board to ask its employees and patrons to act civilly toward each other when discussing education concerns. The primary function of the schools is to educate the children. An effective way to perform this vital function is in an environment free of and from interference with teaching the students. Civility is part of that education; it should be practiced by and expected from school employees and members of the community.

Policy Implications

Policy #1316, “Conduct on School Property,” pertains to this topic of civility on school property. This policy has been one of CAFE’s sample policies since the time former Commissioner of Education Theodore Sergi requested school districts to work harder on improving the social climate within our schools, over a decade ago. The updated policy follows for consideration. In addition, some new models have also been prepared and follow.

A sample policy to consider.

Community Relations

Relations between Public and School Personnel

Conduct on School Property (Civility)

The Board of Education (Board) expects mutual respect, civility and orderly conduct among all individuals on school property or at school events. District staff will treat parents and other members of the public with respect and expect the same in return. The Board is committed to maintaining orderly educational and administrative processes in keeping schools and administrative offices free from disruptions and preventing unauthorized persons from entering school/district grounds.

This policy promotes mutual respect, civility and orderly conduct among Board members, District employees, parents and the public. It is not intended to deprive any individual of his/her right to freedom of expression, but only to maintain to the extent possible and reasonable, a safe, harassment-free environment for students and staff. Volatile, hostile or aggressive actions and words cannot be tolerated, and individuals who engage in these activities may face legal penalties.

In the interest of presenting Board members and District employees as positive role models to the students as well as to the community, the Board encourages positive communication and discourages volatile, hostile or aggressive actions. The Board seeks public cooperation with this endeavor.

Based upon the above, the Board expects that no person on school property or at a school event shall:

1. Injure, threaten, harass or intimidate a staff member, Board member or any other person;
2. Curse and use obscenities;
3. Disrupt or threaten to disrupt school or office operations;
4. Damage or threaten to damage another's property;
5. Damage or deface District property;
6. Violate any Connecticut law or town/city ordinance;
7. Smoke or otherwise use tobacco products;
8. Consume, possess, distribute, or be under the influence of alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs, or possess dangerous instruments or weapons;
9. Impede, delay, or otherwise interfere with the orderly conduct of the District's educational program or any other activity occurring on school property;

Community Relations

Relations Between Public and School Personnel

Conduct on School Property (Civility) (continued)

10. Enter upon any portion of the school premises at any time for purposes other than those which are lawful and authorized by the Board;
11. Operate a motor vehicle in a risky manner or in violation of an authorized District employee's directive; or
12. Violate other District policies or regulations or an authorized District employee's directive.

Alternate language to consider:

Standards

- A. Expected behaviors include but are not limited to:
 1. Respect and courtesy in language, demeanor, and actions
 2. Moderate tone and volume of voice
 3. Active and respectful listening
 4. Respectful acknowledgement of cultural differences
 5. Respect for the personal, civil, and property rights of others
 6. Appropriate and courteous use of telephone, public address systems, electronic devices and any other verbal communication device
 7. Appropriate and courteous written communication, including notes, letters, email and text messages
- B. Unacceptable behaviors include but are not limited to:
 1. Rude, insulting or demeaning language and/or actions
 2. Persistently unreasonable demands
 3. Intrusive and/or interruptive behavior
 4. Displays of temper
 5. Harassment and intimidation
 6. Threatening and/or abusive gestures and behavior
- C. Incidents of uncivil behavior should be resolved cooperatively with the individual(s) most directly involved.

Community Relations

Relations Between Public and School Personnel

Conduct on School Property (Civility) (continued)

Optional Language:

Any individual who disrupts or threatens to disrupt normal school or office operations; threatens the health and safety of students or staff; willfully causes property damage; uses loud or offensive language which could provoke a violent reaction; or who has otherwise established a continued pattern of unauthorized entry on District property, will be directed to leave the premises by a member of the administrative staff or his/her designee.

If any member of the public uses obscenities or speaks in a demanding, loud, insulting and/or demeaning manner, the staff member to whom the remarks are directed will calmly and politely admonish the speaker to communicate civilly. If the abusing party does not take corrective action, the District employee will terminate the meeting or conversation.

(cf. 1110.1 - Parent Involvement)

(cf. 1120 - Public Participation at Board of Education Meetings)

(cf. 1250 - Visits to Schools)

(cf. 1251 - Loitering or Causing Disturbances)

(cf. 1310 - Relations Between the Public and School Personnel)

(cf. 1312 - Public Complaints)

(cf. 1330 - Use of School Facilities)

(cf. 5131.911 - Bullying)

(cf. 4118.15/4218.15 - Workplace Bullying)

(cf. 1700 - Otherwise Lawful Possession of Firearms on School Property)

(cf. 6145.71 - Use of Alcohol by Adults)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

1-225 Meetings of the government agents to be public.

1-232 Conduct of the meeting.

10-221 Boards of education to prescribe rule(s), policies, and procedures.

10-238 Petition for hearing by board of education.

10-239 Use of school facilities for other purposes.

53a-185 Loitering in or about school grounds: Class C misdemeanor.

Policy adopted:

cps 1/01

rev 1/12

Another version of this policy to consider.

Community Relations

Relations Between Public and School Personnel

Conduct on School Property (Civility)

Members of _____ School District staff will treat parents and other members of the public with respect and expect the same in return. The District is committed to maintaining orderly educational and administrative processes in keeping schools and administrative offices free from disruptions and preventing unauthorized persons from entering school/district grounds.

This policy promotes mutual respect, civility and orderly conduct among District employees, parents and the public. This policy is not intended to deprive any person of his/her right to freedom of expression, but only to maintain, to the extent possible and reasonable, a safe, harassment-free workplace for our students and staff. In the interest of presenting District employees as positive role models to the children of this District, as well as the community, the _____ School District encourages positive communication and discourages volatile, hostile or aggressive actions. The District seeks public cooperation with this endeavor.

Disruptions

1. Any individual who disrupts or threatens to disrupt school/office operations, threatens the health and safety of students or staff, willfully causes property damage; uses loud and/or offensive language which could provoke a violent reaction; or who has otherwise established a continued pattern of unauthorized entry on District property, will be directed to leave the school or District property promptly by the Superintendent, Principal or designee.
2. If any member of the public uses obscenities or communicates in verbal or written language in a demanding, loud, insulting and/or demeaning manner, the administrator or employee to whom the remarks are directed will calmly and politely admonish the speaker to communicate civilly. If corrective action is not taken by the abusing party, the District employee will verbally notify the abusing party that his/her participation in the meeting, conference or telephone conversation is terminated and, if the meeting or conference is on District premises, the offending person will be directed to leave promptly.
3. Disruptions on the part of a staff member or behavior that would be considered insulting or demeaning toward others by a staff member would be treated as described above. Appropriate disciplinary action is to be taken in accordance with applicable Board of Education policies and the current collective bargaining unit agreement.
4. When an individual is directed to leave under circumstances outlined in paragraphs 1 or 2, the Superintendent, Principal or designee shall inform the person that he/she may be guilty of a misdemeanor in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes.

Community Relations

Relations Between Public and School Personnel

Conduct on School Property (Civility)

Safety and Security

The Superintendent or designee will ensure that a safety and/or crisis intervention techniques program is provided in order to raise awareness on how to deal with these situations if and when they occur.

When violence is directed against an employee, or theft against property, employees shall promptly report the occurrence to their Principal or supervisor and file a written report.

An employee whose person or property is injured or damaged by willful misconduct of a student may ask the District to pursue legal action against the student or the student's parent/guardian.

Documentation

When it is determined by staff that a member of the public is in the process of violating the provisions of this policy, an effort should be made by staff to provide a written copy of this policy at the time of occurrence.

Following any violation of the provisions of this policy, the employee will immediately notify his/her supervisor and provide a written report of the incident.

(cf. 1110.1 - Parent Involvement)

(cf. 1120 - Public Participation at Board of Education Meetings)

(cf. 1250 - Visits to Schools)

(cf. 1251 - Loitering or Causing Disturbances)

(cf. 1310 - Relations Between the Public and School Personnel)

(cf. 1312 - Public Complaints)

(cf. 1330 - Use of School Facilities)

(cf. 1700 - Otherwise Lawful Possession of Firearms on School Property)

(cf. 4118.15/4218.15 - Workplace Bullying)

(cf. 5131.911 - Bullying)

(cf. 6145.71 - Use of Alcohol by Adults)

Community Relations

Relations Between Public and School Personnel

Conduct on School Property (Civility)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

1-225 Meetings of the government agents to be public.

1-232 Conduct of the meeting.

10-221 Boards of education to prescribe rule(s), policies, and procedures.

10-238 Petition for hearing by board of education.

10-239 Use of school facilities for other purposes.

53a-185 Loitering in or about school grounds: Class C misdemeanor.

Policy adopted:

cps 1/12

Another version of this policy to consider.

Community Relations

Relations between Public and School Personnel

Conduct on School Property (Civility)

I. Policy Statement

The _____ Board of Education (Board) values diversity and commonality and is committed to a culture that fosters free and open communication. The Board believes that an environment of mutual respect and civil conduct between and among students, school system employees, parents, volunteers, and the general public is critical to the achievement of students and staff. The Board is committed to maintaining a culture that recognizes the worth and dignity of the individual in support of academic achievement and social development.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set clear expectations for civil behavior that support a safe, welcoming, and nurturing environment on school property and at school-related activities.

III. Definitions

- A. **Civility:** Mutual respect and consideration reflected in language, attitudes, and behaviors.
- B. **Harassment and Intimidation:** Conduct, including verbal conduct, that creates a hostile environment by substantially interfering with an individual's educational benefits, opportunities, or performance, or with an individual's physical or psychological well-being, and is motivated by an actual or a perceived personal characteristic such as race, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion or disability, or is threatening or seriously intimidating.
- C. **School Property:** Any property owned or leased by the _____ Public School System. The concept of property shall extend to school activities such as field trips, use of parks and recreation facilities, proms at hotels, etc. This means that when a facility is scheduled for student use, it will be considered an extension of school property.
- D. **School-related Activity:** On or off premises activity in which a student directly participates (e.g. field trip, school system-sponsored athletic event, or class/graduation activity), or in which the student does not directly participate, but represents the school or student body simply by being there (e.g. spectator at a school system-sponsored event).

Community Relations

Relations between Public and School Personnel

Conduct on School Property (Civility) (continued)

IV. Standards

- A. Expected behaviors include but are not limited to:
 - 1. Respect and courtesy in language, demeanor, and actions
 - 2. Moderate tone and volume of voice
 - 3. Active and respectful listening
 - 4. Respectful acknowledgment of cultural differences
 - 5. Respect for the personal, civil, and property rights of others
 - 6. Appropriate and courteous use of telephone, public address systems, two-way radios, and any other verbal communication device
 - 7. Appropriate and courteous written communication, including notes, letters, email, and text messages

- B. Unacceptable behaviors include but are not limited to:
 - 1. Rude, insulting, or demeaning language and/or actions
 - 2. Persistently unreasonable demands
 - 3. Intrusive and/or interruptive behavior
 - 4. Displays of temper
 - 5. Harassment and intimidation
 - 6. Threatening and/or abusive gestures and behavior.

- C. Incidents of uncivil behavior should be resolved cooperatively with the individual most directly involved.

V. Compliance

- A. Each individual is responsible for behaving in a civil manner and for cooperating in resolving incidents of uncivil behavior.

- B. The Superintendent/designee is responsible for determining whether an incident occurring on school property violates an existing board policy and for responding appropriately.

- C. The Superintendent/designee will provide for annual notification of this policy to students, staff, parents, and community members.

Community Relations

Relations between Public and School Personnel

Conduct on School Property (Civility) (continued)

VI. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop appropriate procedures for the implementation of this policy.

(cf. 1110.1 - Parent Involvement)

(cf. 1120 - Public Participation at Board of Education Meetings)

(cf. 1250 - Visits to Schools)

(cf. 1251 - Loitering or Causing Disturbances)

(cf. 1310 - Relations between the Public and School Personnel)

(cf. 1312 - Public Complaints)

(cf. 1330 - Use of School Facilities)

(cf. 1700 - Otherwise Lawful Possession of Firearms on School Property)

(cf. 4118.15/4218.15 - Workplace Bullying)

(cf. 5131.911 - Bullying)

(cf. 6145.71 - Use of Alcohol by Adults)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

1-225 Meetings of the government agents to be public.

1-232 Conduct of the meeting.

10-221 Boards of education to prescribe rule(s), policies, and procedures.

10-238 Petition for hearing by board of education.

10-239 Use of school facilities for other purposes.

53a-185 Loitering in or about school grounds: Class C misdemeanor.

Policy adopted:

cps 1/12

A sample administrative regulation to consider.

Community Relations

Relations between Public and School Personnel

Conduct on School Property (Civility)

I. Training and Resources

- A. The Superintendent/designee will communicate expectations for civil behavior outlined in the policy to all school administrators and central office personnel.
- B. The Principal/supervisor or designee will communicate expectations of civil behavior annually to their staff, students, parents, and community groups as appropriate.
- C. The Principal/supervisor or designee will provide appropriate resources, guidance, and professional development with the goal of promoting civil behavior and addressing related concerns within the school system.

II. Process for Addressing Concerns and Issues

A. Resolution through Cooperative Agreement

Individuals who feel they have been subjected to uncivil conduct are encouraged to resolve the concern/issue with the person or persons directly involved when appropriate. Through a process of cooperative agreement, the affected individuals may be able to reach a mutually effective resolution.

B. General Steps when Resolution is not Reached through Cooperative Agreement

1. Either party may cite this policy and notify the other person that they are ending the conversation or the interaction and removing themselves from the situation (for instance, ending a phone call, walking out of the room, or requesting the other individual leave the room).
2. There are many existing policies and procedures that cover specific circumstances or general behaviors. In these cases, the appropriate policy or procedure should be followed.
3. If the issue/situation is not addressed in another policy or procedure, either party may notify the appropriate Principal/supervisor or designee. The Principal/supervisor or designee will assist the individuals in reaching a resolution.

Community Relations

Relations between Public and School Personnel

Conduct on School Property (Civility) (continued)

III. Enforcement

The Principal or his/her designee shall be responsible for enforcing the conduct required by this civility policy. When the Principal or his/her designee sees or is advised by others of an individual engaged in the prohibited conduct, which in his or her judgment and discretion does not pose any immediate threat of injury to persons or property, the Principal or designee shall tell the individual that the conduct is prohibited and attempt to persuade the individual to stop. The Principal or designee shall also warn the individual of the consequences for failing to stop. If the person refuses to stop engaging in the prohibited conduct, or if the person's conduct, in the judgment and discretion of the Principal or designee poses an immediate threat of injury to persons or property, or to public order, the Principal or designee shall have the individual removed immediately from the school property or the school function. If necessary, local law enforcement authorities will be contacted to assist in removing the person.

The District may initiate disciplinary action against any student or staff member, as appropriate, in compliance with applicable Board of Education policies and bargaining unit agreements. In addition, the District reserves the right to pursue a civil or criminal legal action against any person violating this policy and its corresponding administrative regulation.

Regulation approved:

cps 1/12