

# BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

**TO:** Dr. Donald Evans, Superintendent  
**FROM:** Dr. Susan Craig, Director, Student Services  
**DATE:** December 11, 2013  
**SUBJECT:** Annual Bullying Report

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

California Assembly Bill 9, also known as Seth's Law (named after a 13 year old California student who committed suicide after being bullied at school), became effective July 1, 2012. Prior to the passage of AB9, existing law required school districts to adopt policies to protect students who are targets of discrimination and harassment. Seth's Law expanded to scope to include complaints alleging harassment and/or bullying due to actual or perceived characteristics, such as ethnicity, disability or gender expression.

In accordance with Seth's Law, the Berkeley Unified School District's Governing Board approved the District's Anti-Bullying Policy (5131.2) in January 2012. The Policy states that the Director of Student Services will report to the Board at a fall Board meeting on bullying within the District and make recommendations as to how this policy can be more effectively implemented.

## DEFINITION OF BULLYING

BUSD'S policy defines bullying as follows:

Bullying means *systematically and chronically* inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or employees. It is further defined as: unwanted purposeful written, verbal, nonverbal, or physical behavior, including but not limited to any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by an adult or student, that has the potential to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment or cause long term damage; cause discomfort or humiliation; or unreasonably interfere with the victim's school performance or participation. *Bullying is carried out repeatedly;* and is often characterized by an imbalance of power. (italics added)

The Education Code (48900(r)) definition of bullying was updated and significantly expanded on January 1, 2013 to include "any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act". According to the new definition, bullying does not need to be carried out repeatedly if it is sufficiently severe to place a reasonable pupil in fear of harm or has a detrimental effect on a pupil's physical or mental health or academic performance.

District staff recommends that the Board consider updating the Policy's definition to align with the definition in California Education Code at a future Board meeting.

## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY OBJECTIVES

BUSD'S Anti-Bullying Policy has three objectives:

1. Cultivation of a culture of empathy, kindness, respect, and mutual trust among students and between students and staff
2. Creation of a school climate which encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying, both in their roles as victims, perpetrators and bystanders
3. Demonstration of a commitment to address incidents of bullying by outlining the school response to any such behaviors

In accordance with the policy's objectives, during the 2012-2013 school year, BUSD strengthened efforts to cultivate caring school communities as follows:

- BUSD provided professional development in culturally responsive Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) for teams at all K-8 schools and pre-schools.
- BHS Intervention Counselor, Jasdeep Malhi was certified as an Olweus bullying prevention trainer; her training was funded through a grant from the Berkeley Development Group. Ms. Malhi provided bullying prevention training to staff at BHS, and provided the training to middle school vice-principals and counselors in August 2013. A bullying survey was administered to all students at BHS in spring 2013.
- A Positive School Climate Grant provided case management support for identified at-risk students at BHS, a Restorative Justice Professional Learning Community for BHS teachers, and funded the Olweus bullying survey at BHS.
- Restorative Justice support was provided at Rosa Parks Elementary School (RJ has now been expanded to all three BUSD middle schools and will soon be offered at Malcolm X).
- The LifeLines Academy, a weekly violence prevention group for middle and high school students facilitated by the Omega Boys Club, was offered for the second year in a row, and the LifeLines Prep Academy, for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, was added.
- The Omega Boys Club's Alive and Free violence prevention program was implemented school-wide at Berkeley Technology Academy.

## 2012-2013 SCHOOL YEAR BULLYING REPORT

Elementary Schools: At the eleven BUSD elementary schools, a total of 40 students were reported to have been targets of bullying and reports of bullying by 18 elementary school students were substantiated. Multiple bullying complaints were filed against two elementary school students; additional resources were provided for the students.

The bullying behaviors that occurred at elementary schools included teasing, threats, intimidation, social exclusion, physical aggression, and sexual harassment.

Action taken to address bullying in elementary schools included counseling the students individually, parent contact and/or meetings, loss of privileges (i.e. recess, field trips, etc.), in-school suspension, a referral to the LifeLines Prep Academy, suspension, District-level behavior contract meeting, referral to SST/RtI, class change (one instance), change of school per parent's request (two instances), and a recommendation for a psycho-educational assessment. In almost all instances, no further bullying was reported after the site interventions.

Middle Schools: At the three BUSD middle schools, a total of 15 students were reported to have been targets of bullying and reports of bullying by 21 middle school students were substantiated.

The bullying behaviors that occurred at middle schools included teasing, social exclusion, threats, name calling, mean looks, physical aggression, sexual harassment, and cyber-bullying.

Action taken to address bullying in middle schools included counseling the students individually, parent contacts and/or meetings, formal meetings with student, parent, teachers, counselors, and administrators, referral to SST/RtI, and a change of school per parent's request (two instances).

High Schools: At the two BUSD high schools (Berkeley High School and Berkeley Technology Academy), a total of 5 students were reported to have been targets of bullying and reports of bullying by 2 high school students were substantiated. In addition, a report of bullying by a staff member (coach) was received.

The bullying behaviors that occurred at high schools included teasing, threats, name calling, physical aggression, sexual harassment, and cyber-bullying.

Action taken to address bullying that occurred at high schools included counseling the students individually, parent contacts/meetings, suspension, referral to LifeLines Academy, and a police report.

## NEXT STEPS

Recommended next steps to strengthen bullying prevention efforts in BUSD include:

- Additional staff training in Olweus bullying prevention,
- continued staff training in culturally responsive PBIS,
- implementation of the Toolbox Social-Emotional Program at identified elementary schools,
- continued Restorative Justice support at all three middle schools and Rosa Parks Elementary School, and expansion to Malcolm X Elementary School,
- analyze results of BHS Olweus bullying survey and determine next steps for support at BHS,
- administer Olweus bullying survey at all three middle schools, and

- increase efforts to encourage students who are targets or witnesses to bullying to report incidents to school staff.

**DISTRICT GOAL**

None

**POLICY/CODE**

BP 5131.2

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

None

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Receive the information regarding the bullying report, and provide feedback and direction to District staff regarding the annual bullying report.