

Clarifying the Bullying Policy Revision Process



Recently, there have been questions and criticism over the length of time it has taken our District to complete the revision of our bullying policy. The process has taken too long, but the process requires collaboration and coordination with both federal and state agencies, and the District does not control the timeline. Differences in federal and state law have made the process all the more challenging. The District is working with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), the California Department of Education (CDE), and the California School Boards Association (CSBA) to navigate differences and to achieve agreement. Although it's been reported CDE and CSBA have already provided their approval, the District has not received written notifications to this effect.

The District's goal is to investigate and resolve any allegations of discrimination, harassment, or bullying as quickly as possible. There have been expressed concerns that the District is separating students in categories for which discrimination, harassment, or bullying is alleged based on whether they are in a legally-protected class, such as race, disability, or gender. The complaint procedure which considers these legally-protected classes has been in place statewide for many years. It is a lengthy and prescribed process that allows 60 days to find resolution. The District is considering an additional complaint process with a much quicker timeline for students who are not in legally-protected categories as a proactive step to resolve any issues as quickly as possible. Our goal with these revisions is to help protect all students from bullying or harassment in a clear, consistent manner across all schools. We know bullying can be hurtful and distracting for students no matter who is involved.

We have received helpful and positive input from many sources in the development of our proposed Board Policies at Board Policy Review Committee (BPRC) meetings and via emails and parent groups. Our next BPRC meeting is scheduled for December 3 from noon to two in the Staff Development Center at the district office. We will review these policies at this time, unless we are still waiting for feedback from CSBA/CDE.

Finally, let me reassure you this delay in Board policy and regulation revision has in no way affected our compliance with laws intended to keep students safe. In recent months, we've conducted staff trainings, enhanced our educational efforts with students, and reached out to the community to continue to improve our work on prevention of bullying and harassment. We are committed to these efforts and thankful for your support.

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