



District Safe School Climate Plan

The Sherman Board of Education is committed to creating and maintaining a physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe educational environment free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination. To further foster safe, engaging learning environment at The Sherman School, a Safe School Team has been established and the committee is comprised of the following people:

Safe School Team

Mr. Brian Kalkreuth, Assistant Principal
Mrs. Keri Snowden, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Innovation
Mr. David Dudics, Special Education Director
Dr. Belinda Badger, School Psychologist
Ms. MariJo Ficca, School Counselor
Ms. Suzy Reynolds, Special Education Teacher
Mrs. Shaela Hillmann, Special Education Teacher
Mrs. Christine Schipul, Special Education Teacher
Mrs. Jill Vermilyea, Speech Pathologist
Mrs. Kathryn Calsetta, Occupational Therapist
Ms. Sheila Reidy, Physical Education Teacher
Mr. Steven Trinchillo, Music Teacher
Mrs. Marie Hatcher, Parent Liaison

The following School/District Safe School Climate Plan as mandated by Public Act 11-232 An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws, has been reviewed by the members of the Committee.

The Safe School Climate Plan which follows represents a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyberbullying, as well as “mean behavior,” and sets forth the Board’s expectations for creating a positive school climate and thus preventing, intervening, and responding to incidents of bullying and mean behavior.

The Sherman School’s Board of Education policy strictly prohibits all bullying behavior, and students who are determined to have engaged in such behavior are subject to disciplinary action, which may include suspension or expulsion from school. The district’s commitment to addressing bullying behavior, however, involves a multifaceted approach, which includes student, parent, and staff education and the promotion of Safe School Climates in which bullying and mean behavior will never be tolerated by students, teachers, administrators, parents, or school staff. Sherman’s multifaceted approach includes the following:

- Specific policies and regulations delineating the Board of Education's expectations for student and staff behavior regarding bullying and cyberbullying, and clear consequences for violations;
- *Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS)*
- Developmental Guidance program in prekindergarten through grade 8;
- Implementation of a social emotional curriculum
- Special behavior intervention programs, such as school counseling groups for students who engage in bullying behavior, or who are at risk for engaging in bullying behavior, or who exhibit “mean behavior” frequently;
- Annual Safe School Climate training programs for all certified and noncertified staff members,

including district bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodians, and paraprofessionals as of 8/12;

- Safe School Team comprised of teachers and administrators, as well as parents;
- Safe School Climate Specialist (the assistant principal or his/her designee) charged with investigating all bullying complaints and responding to all reports of bullying in the school;
- Safe School Climate Coordinator responsible for implementing the Safe School Climate Plan; collaborating with Safe School Climate Specialists, the Board, and the Superintendent to prevent bullying; providing data and information to the State Department of Education regarding bullying; meeting with the school based Safe School Climate Specialists to make recommendations for any amendments to the district's plan;
- Safe School Team (see above) comprised of parents, teachers, and leaders within the district to continuously provide students, parents, and staff with informational workshops and presentations on bullying, physically and psychologically safe schools, cyberbullying, positive behaviors, and other relevant bullying topics.

I. Prohibition against Bullying and Retaliation

- A. The Sherman Board of Education expressly prohibits any form of bullying behavior on school grounds; at a school sponsored or school related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds; at a school bus stop; on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the Board of Education; or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased, or used by Board of Education.
- B. The Board also prohibits any form of bullying behavior outside of the school setting if such bullying (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying was directed, (ii) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was directed at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.
- C. In addition to prohibiting student acts which constitute bullying, the Board also prohibits discrimination and/or retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying.
- D. Students who engage in bullying behavior in violation of Board Policy and the Safe School Climate Plan shall be subject to school discipline, up to and including expulsion, in accordance with the Board's policies on student discipline, suspension and expulsion, and shall be consistent with state and federal law.

II. Definition of Bullying

- A. "Bullying" means the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic communication, such as cyberbullying, or a physical act or gesture repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the same district that:
 1. causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student's property;
 2. places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property;
 3. creates a hostile environment at school for such student;
 4. infringes on the rights of such student at school; or
 5. substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school.
- B. Bullying shall include, but not be limited to, written, verbal, or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have

one or more of such characteristics.

III. Other Important Definitions

- A. "Cyberbullying" means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone, or other mobile electronic devices, or any electronic communications.
- B. "Electronic communication" means any transfer of signs, signals, writings, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic, or photo optical system;
- C. "Hostile environment" means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate;
- D. "Mobile electronic device" means any handheld or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a videogame or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted;
- E. "Outside of the school setting" means at a location, activity, or program that is not school related, or through the use of an electronic device or a mobile electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the Sherman Board of Education;
- F. The following "prevention and intervention strategies" have been implemented at The Sherman School as noted below:
 - 1. implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
 - 2. publication of school rules and all Board of Education policies prohibiting bullying, harassment, and intimidation and establishing appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts at all schools in student/parent handbooks and on school and district websites;
 - 3. adequate adult supervision, primarily by teachers and administrators, within all schools' outdoor areas, hallways, school cafeterias, and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur;
 - 4. continued implementation of a social emotional skills development and problem solving;
 - 5. special social skills instruction for special education students who may be at risk as bullying targets, as determined appropriate through the planning and placement team process;
 - 6. individualized, developmentally appropriate Student Safety Support Plan and interventions for the bullied child as well as interventions for the perpetrators of recurrent bullying at each school;
 - 7. regularly scheduled, school wide training programs directly related to Safe School Climate and bullying identification, intervention, and prevention to include all certified and noncertified staff;
 - 8. continued promotion of parent involvement and deeper understanding of bullying prevention through parent participation in district and school based meetings for this purpose; district and school based workshops offered at least two times a year; and special developmentally appropriate school based workshops and presentations on bullying issues;
 - 9. data collection and analysis of the types and frequency of bullying behaviors;

Additional prevention and intervention strategies in Sherman include:

- 1. the implementation of the Developmental Guidance program PK-8 and special school counseling intervention programs;
- 2. regularly scheduled training by administrators for all school bus drivers on bullying identification and prevention on the school bus and at the bus stop;
- 3. professional development for school counselors, school psychologists, and

administrators regarding bullying and mean behavior prevention and intervention.

- G. "School climate" means the quality and character of school life with a particular focus on the quality of the relationships within the school community between and among students and school employees. Building the quality of student staff relationships during school and at school events is a priority for Sherman's administrators.

In addition, Sherman will survey the school climate from the point of view of parents, staff members, and students. The Safe School Climate Coordinator will analyze and address the findings from the surveys.

- H. "School employee" means

1. a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, school counselor, school psychologist, school nurse, physician, school paraprofessional, school bus driver, school cafeteria workers, and all coaches employed by the Sherman Board of Education; or
2. any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students, and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled at The Sherman School pursuant to a contract with the Sherman Board of Education, including volunteers and substitute teachers.

- I. "School Sponsored Activity" shall mean any activity conducted on or off school property (including school buses and other school related vehicles) that is sponsored, recognized, or authorized by The Sherman School of Education. This includes all school sponsored field trips.

IV. Leadership and Administrative Responsibilities

A. Safe School Climate Coordinator

The Superintendent has appointed the Assistant Principal as the Safe School Climate Coordinator ("Coordinator"). The Coordinator shall:

1. be responsible for implementing the School/District Safe School Climate Plan ("Plan");
2. collaborate with the School Principal, the Board, and the Superintendent to identify, prevent, and respond to bullying in district schools;
3. provide data and information, in collaboration with the Superintendent, to the State Department of Education regarding bullying;
4. meet with the School Principal at least twice during the school year to discuss issues relating to bullying the school district and to make recommendations concerning amendments to the district's plan.

B. Safe School Climate Specialists

Sherman's Safe School Climate Specialist is: Mr. Brian Kalkreuth, Assistant Principal. The Safe School Climate Specialist shall investigate or supervise the investigation of reported acts of bullying and act as the primary school official responsible for preventing bullying and responding to reports of suspected bullying in the school.

V. Development and Review of Safe School Climate Plan

- A. For the school year commencing July 1, 2011 and each school year thereafter, the principal shall establish a Safe School Climate Committee or designate the PBIS existing committee in the school to be responsible for developing and fostering a Safe School Climate and addressing issues relating to bullying in the school. Such Committee shall include at least one parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the school, as appointed by the school principal. The Sherman School, the Safe School Climate Committee members are:

Mr. Brian Kalkreuth, Assistant Principal
Ms. Tracy Edwards, Special Education Director
Dr. Belinda Badger, School Psychologist
Ms. MariJo Ficca, School Counselor
Ms. Suzy Hatch, Special Education Teacher
Mrs. Shaela Hillmann, Special Education Teacher
Mrs. Christine Schipul, Special Education Teacher
Mrs. Jill Vermilyea, Speech Pathologist
Mrs. Kathryn Calsetta, Occupational Therapist
Ms. Sheila Reidy, Physical Education Teacher
Mr. Steven Trinchillo, Music Teacher
Mrs. Marie Hatcher, Parent Liaison

- B. The Safe School Team shall:
 - 1. receive copies of completed reports following bullying investigations;
 - 2. identify and address patterns of bullying among students in the school;
 - 3. review and amend school regulations and procedures relating to bullying;
 - 4. review and make recommendations to the Safe School/District Climate Coordinator regarding the Safe School Climate Plan based on data, issues, and experiences specific to the school;
 - 5. continuously educate students, school employees, and parents/guardians on issues relating to bullying;
 - 6. perform any other duties as determined by the principal that are related to the prevention, identification, and response to school bullying.
- C. Any parent/guardian serving as a member of the Committee shall not participate in any activities which may compromise the confidentiality of any student, including, but not limited to receiving copies of investigation reports, or identifying or addressing parents of bullying among students in the school. When making a final determination on a bullying incident the anti harassment team (a subcommittee of the Safe School team) will meet to review the situation.
- D. The Board of Education shall approve the School/District Safe School Climate Plan developed pursuant to Board policy and submit such plan to the State Department of Education. Not later than thirty (30) calendar days after approval by the Board, the Board shall make such plan available on the District's website, and ensure that the Safe School Climate Plan is included in the school district's publication of the rules, procedures and standards of conduct for schools and in all student handbooks.

VI. Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Complaints of Bullying

- A. Students and parents (or guardians of students) may file written reports of bullying using the form provided by the schools and found in the main office and the guidance office in the school. Written reports of bullying must be reasonably specific as to the basis for the report, including the name and place of the alleged conduct, the number of incidents, the target of the suspected bullying, and the names of potential witnesses. Such reports may be filed with any building administrator and/or the Safe School/District Climate Specialist in the building, and all reports shall be forwarded to the Safe School/District Climate Specialist for review and actions consistent with this plan.
- B. Students may make anonymous reports of bullying to any school employee, but we strongly encourage students to go directly to their school counselor or a building administrator. All school employees will be trained in how to make a report of suspected bullying, and they will immediately take the report to an administrator or to the School/District Climate Specialist in the building. A student may also request

anonymity when making a report, even if the student's identity is known to the school employee. In cases where the student requests anonymity, the Safe School/District Climate Specialist shall meet with the student to review the request for anonymity and discuss the impact that maintaining the anonymity of the complainant may have on the investigation and on any possible remedial action. All anonymous complaints shall be reviewed and reasonable action will be taken to address the situation, to the extent such action may be taken that does not disclose the source of the complaint, and is consistent with the due process rights of the student(s) alleged to have committed acts of bullying. No disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous complaint.

- C. School employees who witness acts of suspected bullying or receive reports of suspected bullying shall orally notify the Safe School/District Climate Specialist or another school administrator, not later than one (1) school day after such school employee witnesses or receives a report of suspected bullying. The school employee shall then file a written report no later than two (2) school days after making such oral report using the school's bullying report form (see attached).
- D. The Safe School/District Specialist shall be responsible for reviewing any anonymous reports of suspected bullying and shall investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of suspected bullying and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written reports. In order to allow the district to adequately investigate complaints filed by a student or parent/guardian, the parents of the student suspected of being bullied must provide consent to permit the release of that student's name in connection with the investigation process, unless the student and/or parent has requested anonymity. The Safe School/District Specialist or other school administrator will follow up on all relevant information while conducting an investigation. Parents and students should be advised that all reports of bullying will be investigated.
- E. In investigating reports of suspected bullying, the Safe School/District Climate Specialist or designee will consider all available information known, including the nature of the allegations and the ages of the students involved. The Safe School/ District Climate Specialist will interview witnesses, as necessary, reminding the alleged perpetrator and other parties that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

VII. Responding to Verified Acts of Bullying

- A. Following investigation, if acts of bullying are verified, the Safe School/District Climate Specialist or designee shall notify the parents or guardians of the students against whom such acts were directed as well as the parents or guardians of the students who commit such acts of bullying of the finding no later than forty-eight hours after the investigation is completed. This notification shall include a description of the school's response to the verified acts of bullying. In providing such notification, however, care must be taken to respect the statutory privacy rights of other students, including the perpetrator of such bullying. The specific disciplinary consequences imposed on the perpetrator, or personally identifiable information about a student other than the parent/guardian's own child, will not be disclosed except as provided by law.
- B. The Safe School Climate Specialist or designee shall develop a Student Safety Support Plan for any student against whom repeated acts of bullying were directed. Such a support and intervention plan will include safety measures designed to protect against further acts of bullying. The Student Safety Support Plan is a specific and individualized intervention plan. A specific and individualized intervention plan will also be developed to address recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual. The plan may include counseling, discipline, and other appropriate remedial actions as determined by the Safe School/District Climate Specialist or designee.
- C. Notice to Law Enforcement

If the principal of a school (or his/her designee) reasonably believes that any verified

act of bullying constitutes a criminal offense, he/she shall notify appropriate law enforcement. Notice shall be consistent with the Board's obligations under state and federal law and Board policy and procedures regarding the disclosure of personally identifiable student information.

- D. If a bullying complaint raises concern about discrimination or harassment on the basis of legally protected classifications (such as race, color, religion, ancestry, nationality origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics), the Safe School/District Climate Specialist shall coordinate any investigation with other appropriate personnel within the district. Mr. Brian Kalkreuth is the Title IX Coordinator, in addition to his role as the Assistant Principal.

VIII. Documentation and Maintenance of Log

- A. The school shall maintain written complaints of bullying, along with supporting documentation received and/or created as a result of bullying investigations, consistent with the Board's obligations under state and federal law. Any educational record containing personally identifiable student information pertaining to an individual student shall be maintained in a confidential manner, and shall not be disclosed to third parties without the prior written consent of a parent, guardian, or eligible student, except as permitted under Board policy and state and federal law.
- B. The Safe School/District Climate Specialist shall maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying in the school and this list shall be available for public inspection upon request. Consistent with district obligations under state and federal law regarding student privacy, the log shall not contain any personally identifiable student information, or any information that alone or in combination would allow a reasonable person in the school community to identify the students involved. Accordingly, the log should be limited to basic information such as the number of verified acts, name of school, grade level, and date. For any determination of bullying that involves repeated verbal, written or electronic communications or physical acts or gestures, each investigation that results in a verified act of bullying for that school year shall be tallied as one verified act of bullying unless the specific actions that are the subject of each report involve separate and distinct acts of bullying. The list shall be limited to the number of verified acts of bullying and shall not set out the particulars of each verified act, including, but not limited to any personally identifiable student information, which is confidential information by law.
- C. The Safe School/District Climate Specialist at The Sherman School shall report the number of verified acts of bullying in the school annually to the Sherman Board of Education and to the State Department of Education in such manner as prescribed by the Commissioner of Education.

IX. Other Prevention and Intervention Strategies

- A. Bullying behavior can take many forms and can vary dramatically in the nature of the offense and the impact the behavior may have on the victim and other students. Accordingly, there is no one prescribed response to verified acts of bullying, and for that reason, The Sherman School developed a comprehensive response to bullying and "mean behavior." While conduct that rises to the level of "bullying," as defined above, will generally warrant traditional disciplinary action against the perpetrator of such bullying, whether and to what extent to impose disciplinary action (e.g., detention, in school suspension, suspension, or expulsion) is a matter for the professional discretion of the building administration. No disciplinary action may be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous complaint.

- B. A Student Safety Support Plan shall be developed to address repeated incidents of bullying against a single individual. Such Student Safety Support Plan will include safety measures designed to protect against further acts of bullying. A specific and individualized intervention plan will also be developed to address recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual. This plan may include interventions such as counseling, discipline, and other appropriate remedial or restorative actions as determined by the building administrator.
- C. The following sets forth possible interventions which may also be utilized to enforce the Board's prohibition against bullying:

1. Non disciplinary interventions

When verified acts of bullying are identified early and/or when such verified acts of bullying do not reasonably require a disciplinary response, students may be counseled as to the definition of bullying, its prohibition, and their duty to avoid any conduct that could be considered bullying. Students may also be subject to other forms of restorative discipline or remedial actions, appropriate to the age of the students and nature of the behavior. Suspension from extracurricular and/or athletic activities may also be considered, as appropriate, as either a safety or a remedial measure.

2. Disciplinary interventions

When acts of bullying are verified and a disciplinary response is warranted, students are subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences. Anonymous complaints, however, shall not be the sole basis for disciplinary action.

In school suspension and suspension may be imposed only after informing the accused perpetrator of the reasons for the proposed suspension and giving him/her an opportunity to explain the situation, in accordance with the Board's Student Discipline policies.

Expulsion may be imposed only after a hearing before an impartial hearing officer designated by the Board of Education in accordance with the Board's Student Discipline policies. This consequence shall normally be reserved for serious incidents of bullying and/ or when past interventions have not been successful in eliminating bullying behavior.

3. Interventions for bullied students

The building administration shall intervene in order to address incidents of bullying against a single individual. Intervention strategies for a bullied student may include the following:

- a) Counseling;
- b) Increased supervision and monitoring of student to observe and intervene in bullying situations;
- c) Encouragement of student to seek help when victimized or witnessing victimization;
- d) An individualized Student Safety Support Plan, and
- e) Restitution for property loss or damage incurred at the perpetrator's expense.

4. General Prevention and Intervention Strategies

In addition to the prompt investigation of complaints of bullying and direct intervention when acts of bullying are verified, other district actions may ameliorate potential problems with bullying in school or at school sponsored activities. Within Sherman, comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies include:

- a) Implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS);
 - b) publication of school rules and all Board of Education policies prohibiting bullying, harassment, and intimidation and establishing appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts at all schools in student/parent handbooks and on school/district websites;
 - c) adequate adult supervision, primarily by teachers and administrators, within all schools' outdoor areas, hallways, school cafeterias, and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur;
 - d) implementation of a social emotional skills development curriculum;
 - e) special social skills instruction for special education students who may be at risk as bullying targets, as determined appropriate through the planning and placement team process;
 - f) individualized, developmentally appropriate Student Safety Support Plans and interventions for the bullied child as well as interventions for the perpetrators of recurrent bullying;
 - g) yearly school wide training programs directly related to Safe School Climate and bullying identification, intervention, and prevention to include all certified and noncertified staff;
 - h) continued promotion of parent involvement and deeper understanding of bullying prevention through parent participation in school based meetings for this purpose and special developmentally appropriate school based workshops and presentations on bullying issues;
 - i) school/district wide data collection and analysis at the school site for the study of the types and frequency of bullying behaviors;
 - j) the implementation of the Developmental Guidance program PK-8 and special school counseling intervention programs;
 - k) regularly scheduled training by administrators for all school bus drivers on bullying identification and prevention on the school bus and at the bus stop;
 - l) professional development for school counselors, school psychologists, and administrators regarding bullying and mean behavior prevention and intervention, targeting especially the development of individualized Student Safety Support Plans;
 - m) modeling by administrators and teachers of positive, respectful, and supportive behavior toward students and colleagues;
 - n) creating and maintaining school atmospheres of team spirit and collaboration that promote appropriate, positive social behavior by students;
 - o) yearly district wide training related to safe schools, violence prevention, Title IX/Sexual Harassment training, Section 504/ADA training, cultural diversity training, and other federal and state civil rights legislation, including the avoidance of sex role stereotyping;
 - p) implementation of classroom strategies that instruct students on how to work together in a collaborative and supportive atmosphere.
- D. In addition to prevention and intervention strategies, administrators, teachers and other employees may find opportunities to educate students about bullying and help eliminate bullying behavior through class discussions, counseling, special assemblies, and by the continuous reinforcement of socially appropriate behavior. Administrators, teachers and other professional employees should intervene promptly whenever they observe mean spirited student conduct, even if such conduct does not meet the formal definition of "bullying".

X. Improving School Climate

Annual Notice and Training

- A. Students and parents or guardians of students shall be notified annually at the start of the school year via the student handbooks and by school and district website postings of the process by which students may make reports of bullying.
- B. At the beginning of each school year, each school shall provide all school employees with a written or electronic copy of the School/District Safe School Climate Plan and require that all school employees annually complete training on the identification, prevention, and response to bullying as required by law.

XI. School Climate Assessments

The Board shall require a biennial assessment by May of the school year using the school climate assessment instruments, including surveys, approved and disseminated by the State Department of Education. The Board shall collect the school climate assessments for each school in the district and submit such assessments to the Department.

Legal References:

Public Act 11-232, An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10E222d

Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 10E233a through 10E233f

Connecticut State Department of Education Circular Letter C-8, Series 2008-2009 (March 16, 2009)