

Public School Principals' Experiences with Interpreting and Implementing
Connecticut's Anti-bullying Law (CGS § 10-222d): A Statewide Survey

Report to the Connecticut State Department of Education

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This report was prepared for the Connecticut State Department of Education.

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Importantly, we appreciate the time that each participant took, from what we know are very busy schedules, to respond to the survey. This effort is indicative of their dedication to providing a safe and healthy learning environment for all students and adults.

Executive Summary

This report presents the results of a statewide survey, *Public School Principals' Experiences with Interpreting and Implementing Connecticut's Anti-bullying Law (CGS § 10-222d)*, which was conducted in the late spring and early summer of 2007. Our aim is to begin a conversation. What we present here is a relatively full data set with minimal analysis. We intentionally set out to merely describe and explore the data. Further analysis certainly can and should be conducted. We, the authors, purposely choose not to draw general conclusions or make recommendations for practice and policy. It is our belief that a representative stakeholder group should come together to review these data and collectively make practice and policy recommendations.

The report begins with a brief overview of the prevalence of bullying and the affects, information about states that have passed bullying legislation, and a brief summary of Connecticut's anti-bullying law (Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d). The study methodology is explained. Then results of the survey are presented in rather full detail. Finally, some key findings and recommendations for future research are presented.

The study was a collaborative effort between the Connecticut State Department of Education (CT-SDE) and the University of Hartford's Department of Educational Leadership. The purpose of the investigation was to explore and describe public school principals' reports of: (a) their experiences with implementing the state's anti-bullying law (Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d), (b) related aspects of their school climate, (c) the anti-bullying curricula and programs in use in their schools, and (d) school personnel's need for related training and technical assistance. The law, as amended, provided the framework for the investigation.

The CT-SDE mailed an invitation to participate in the study and a copy of a researcher-developed survey to each public school principal in the state ($N = 1069$; includes elementary, middle, high, charter, and magnet schools). Respondents were given the option of completing the online version of the survey or completing and returning the paper-pencil version. In total, 31 surveys were returned by mail and 161 were completed online, yielding a response rate of 18% ($n = 192$).

Several key findings emerged from the analysis of the data. Concerning principals' reports of interpreting and implementing Connecticut's anti-bullying law (CGS § 10-222d), slightly more than half of respondents indicated that their districts had put into place all of the various policy elements as prescribed in the law, with nearly all of the respondents reporting that several elements were in place. Notably, there was unevenness related to participants' reports of full implementation of all of the provisions. In other words, no single element was reported by all participants (i.e., 100%) as being included in their district policies.

Survey respondents' reports of the anti-bullying curricula and programs being used suggest that, for the most part, schools are not using the research-based programs identified by the federal Department of Education as "Exemplary" or "Promising". Rather, they are using other combinations of materials, programs, and strategies, some of which are locally developed, as they focus on preventing and reducing bullying to support safe learning in schools.

An overwhelming majority of survey respondents' rated their school as either "excellent" or "very good" in terms of being safe and providing a healthy learning environment for all students and adults. About half of the participants reported that surveys had been conducted to assess their school climate.

Principals' reports of training or technical assistance needed with regard to preventing and reducing bullying and supporting safe learning in schools revealed that nearly two-thirds wanted professional development and slightly more than half wanted curricular materials. In particular, they were interested in "grade-level" materials.

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The Prevalence of Bullying and the Affects

Research on the nature and affects of bullying began initially outside of the United States. Despite the fact that the phenomenon of “schoolyard bullying” seems to have been a common and reported occurrence from the earliest days of American schooling, it has only been since the 1970’s that bullying has been systematically studied. Dan Olweus, a Norwegian researcher, published a book in 1978, *Aggression in the Schools – Bullies and Whipping Boys*, that presented his research into the phenomena in Scandinavian schools. His work proved to be all too urgent and relevant after a 1982 report that three young adolescent students committed suicide as a direct result of having been bullied. From that time forward, large-scale research into the prevalence of bullying has taken place throughout the world (Minogue, 2002).

Serious and substantial research into bullying in the United States began in earnest after the Littleton, Colorado school shooting at Columbine High School in 1999. In 2001, the *Journal of the American Medical Association* published the first major scientific study of school bullying in the United States, “Bullying Behaviors among US Youth” (Nansel et al., 2001). The authors surveyed 15,686 students in grades 6 – 10 in both public and parochial schools. Participants completed the World Health Organization’s Health Behavior in School-aged Children survey. This was a collaborative effort, among 30 different countries, that followed pockets of research taking place primarily in Europe and Australia. The conclusions from this study confirmed that bullying is a serious and pervasive problem, not just in a single country or region, but also throughout the world. Nearly 30% of the students reported experiencing moderate or frequent involvement in bullying (13% as bullies, 10.6% as targets, and 6.3% as both). Of even greater concern was the fact that 30% of the students who had experienced some degree of bullying were

twice as likely to be at risk for other psychological and social problems, including smoking, drinking, social isolation, negative feelings about school, and poor academic performance.

While Nansel et al. (2001) is perhaps the most widely referenced investigation of bullying other large studies have since been carried out in the United States. Finkelhor, Ormond, Turner, and Hamby (2005) conducted research designed to gain a better understanding of victimization. Data were gathered from a nationally representative sample of 2,030 children and youth age 2-17 years, living in the contiguous United States. Telephone interviews with youth and parents were conducted using the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire. The authors found that approximately one fifth of the children and youth ($n = 425$) experienced bullying (e.g., peer picked on, chased, or grabbed) and about one fourth ($n = 493$) experienced teasing or emotional bullying (e.g., child is made to feel bad or harassed by peer).

Harris Interactive and GLSEN (2005) used an online survey strategy to gather data from a nationally representative sample of 3,450 students aged 13-18 and 1,011 secondary school teachers. The focus of this investigation was to: “understand how students and teachers in junior high and high schools across the country perceive and experience the problem of bullying and harassment of all kinds in their schools” (p. i). An analysis of the data showed that 65% of the students surveyed reported having “been verbally or physically harassed or assaulted at school during the past year because of their appearance or their actual or perceived race/ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, or religion” (p. iii). Although respondents reported that most schools had some type of anti-harassment policy, only about half of these policies specified sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. Students from schools with a policy that included sexual orientation or gender reported fewer problems with school safety in general.

Collectively, statistics from the growing body of research (e.g., Dinkes, Cataldi, Kena, & Baum, 2006; Finkelhor et al., 2005; Nansel et al., 2001) on bullying in the United States can be summarized as follows. Over 160,000 students miss school every day due to fear of victimization. Seven percent of 8th graders stay home at least once a month because of being victimized. About 14% of 8th - 12th graders and 22% of 4th - 8th graders report that those who use bullying behaviors “diminished their ability to learn”. Of the youth who drop out of school, 10% do so because of having been targets of aggressive behavior. Most notable is the fact that 60% of those labeled bullies in grades 6 - 9 had at least one criminal conviction by age 24.

Importantly, findings from research (e.g., Blum, n.d.; Blum, McNeely, & Rinehart, 2002) focused on the social and emotional health of adolescents revealed that school climate contributes to the social and emotional success of students. When students feel they are part of their school, treated fairly by teachers, and physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe, they are significantly more likely to be emotionally healthy and more likely to experience school success.

State-level Anti-bullying Policies

At this writing, 30 of the 50 states have enacted some form of an anti-bullying law. All of them are post-Columbine laws. Georgia was the first to so legislate in 1999. Table 1 displays the states and years in which legislation was passed.

Table 1

States with Anti-bullying Law

Year of Passage	State
1999	Georgia
2001	Colorado, Louisiana, Oregon, West Virginia
2002	Connecticut, Mississippi, New Jersey, Oklahoma
2003	Arkansas, California, Rhode Island
2004	New Hampshire
2005	Arizona, Indiana, Maryland, Nevada, Texas, Virginia
2006	Idaho, Maine, South Carolina, Washington
2007	Alaska, Delaware, Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Vermont

Connecticut's Anti-bullying Law

In June 2002, the State of Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) passed Public Act 02-119, An Act Concerning Bullying Behavior in Schools and Concerning the Pledge of Allegiance. Section 1 mandated that each local and regional board of education (school district) develop a policy to address bullying in its schools. In addition to a definition of “bullying”, the legislation required that each school district policy include certain provisions. Among them were mandates requiring that districts make it possible for students to anonymously report acts of bullying to teachers or administrators, requiring school administrators to investigate written and review anonymous reports of bullying, and stipulating that each school maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying and make lists available for public inspection.

During February 2006, the CGA passed Public Act 06-115, amending Connecticut’s anti-bullying law (Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d). Section 1 redefined bullying and several optional and mandated provisions related to school district policies were added. These included requirements that students be notified annually of the process by which they may report bullying and the development of case-by-case interventions for addressing repeated incidents of bullying. Appendix A contains a copy of Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d.

Connecticut's school districts have responded to the law (Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d) and developed bullying policies. School administrators (e.g., principals and assistant principals) are expected to implement these policies at the building level. Although it has been over four years since the passage of Public Act 02-119, a state-level analysis of school district bullying policies has not taken place. We know little about the ways in which schools implement their policies (e.g., make provisions for anonymous reporting, investigate acts of bullying, intervene). Additionally, we neither know which curricula and programs are being used to address this issue nor do we know what information, training, or technical assistance principals need to reduce bullying and support safe learning in their schools.

Therefore, survey research was conducted to explore and describe public school principals' reports of: (a) their experiences with implementing the state's anti-bullying law (Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d), (b) related aspects of their school climate, (c) the anti-bullying curricula and programs in use in their schools, and (d) school personnel's need for related training and technical assistance. The law, as amended, provided the framework for the investigation. As such, the research questions were:

1. What are principals' reports of interpreting and implementing Connecticut's anti-bullying law (CGS § 10-222d)?
2. What are principals' reports of associated aspects of their school climate?
3. What are principals' reports of the anti-bullying curricula and programs that are used in their schools?
4. What are principals' reports of training or technical assistance needed with regard to preventing and reducing bullying and supporting safe learning in schools?

Methodology

Given the purpose of the investigation, a survey research design was selected. Creswell (2005) stated that a survey research design is appropriate when a researcher is asking questions that simply seek to primarily describe what is going on, as was the case in this study. Specifically, a large-scale cross-sectional design was used to collect data from the population of public school principals, statewide, at one point in time. The researchers developed a new instrument, the Bullying and School Climate Survey (survey), for the study, quantified the data, and then analyzed the data to describe trends about responses and to answer the research questions. The University's Human Subjects Committee approved the conduct of the study. Participation was voluntary.

Survey Development and Description

The survey development and design followed recommendations outlined by Creswell (2005) and Dillman (2000). First, the purpose of the survey research was specified, as described above. Second, different types of questions (i.e., close-ended and open-ended) were developed to align with the survey's purpose, using the anti-bullying law (Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d) as a framework. Third, attention was given to constructing the survey in a respondent-friendly manner. This included the formatting of paper pencil and online versions, the order of questions, and the appearance of the individual pages. The online version was created using the software Professional Quest©. Fourth, a small-scale pilot was conducted with five public school administrators who possessed expertise and knowledge about the law and related issues. All of the pilot participants choose to respond online. The instrument was also reviewed and approved

by CT-SDE's legal department. Accordingly and based on all of the feedback, minor modifications were made to the survey.

The final instrument was organized into seven main sections that contained 50 questions. Of those, 10 provided for a "yes" or "no" response format; 17 had a list of items with a "check one" response format, 5 of which had a place to add information; 20 had a list of items with a "check all that apply" response format and a place to add information; and 3 had an open-ended response format. An optional eighth section contained 2 questions.

Section I contained a series of 6 questions requesting information about survey respondents and their schools. Section II had 9 items that were designed to gather participants' reports of how they interpreted and implemented Connecticut's anti-bullying law (CGS § 10-222d). Specifically, the questions focused on district bullying policies and the regulations that supported implementation of those policies. Section III contained 12 items inquiring about procedures for reporting allegations of bullying and responding to, investigating, and verifying those reports. Section IV had 8 items that were designed to gather respondents' reports of how they were collecting and analyzing data on verified acts of bullying. Section V contained 9 items about their school climate. They included questions aimed at assessing respondents' overall ratings of their school climate and those designed to gather data on whether school climate was a part of their school mission and improvement plans. Section VI had 4 items designed to gather data on participants' use of various programs and efforts focused on preventing and reducing bullying to support safe learning in schools and the intended audiences for those programs. Section VII contained 2 questions related to respondents' reports of their need for information related to sample bullying policies, professional development, curricular materials, or technical assistance. The final optional section had 2 items asking participants to indicate whether they

were interested in (a) receiving technical assistance concerning preventing and reducing bullying and (b) working with a select group of schools and districts to review and create model policies. A copy of the survey is in Appendix B.

Data Collection

The CT-SDE mailed an invitation to participate in the study and a copy of the survey to each public school principal in the state ($N = 1069$; includes elementary, middle, high, charter, and magnet schools). Respondents were given the option of completing the online version of the survey or completing and returning the paper-pencil version.

Within four weeks of the first mailing, 56 responses had been completed. At that time, a follow-up email, thanking those that participated for responding and asking those that had not yet responded to do so, was sent to principals through an electronic mailing list. Another 56 surveys were returned. After two more weeks, a final reminder, thank you letter was mailed to all principals, leading to 80 additional responses. In total, 31 surveys were returned by mail and 161 were completed online, yielding a response rate of 18% ($N = 192$).

Data Analysis

As stated above, the purpose of this study was to simply to gather data to be able to explore and describe public school principals' reports of how schools were implementing Connecticut's anti-bullying law (CGS § 10-222d). This survey yielded nominal and qualitative data. The data from the close-ended items were examined using descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies and percentages) generated through SPSS 11.0 for Mac OS X. Procedures associated with qualitative research (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) were used to analyze the qualitative

responses. Responses were read several times to generate categories, themes, and patterns; findings were modified, and refined with each reading. Finally, data displays were created and occurrences of major themes were counted (quantizing; Miles & Huberman, 1994; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Survey Results

The results are organized and presented in the order of the survey sections and questions. A relatively full data set with minimal analysis is offered. The intent is to merely describe and explore the data.

Section I: Participants and their Schools

Section I of the survey contained a series of 6 questions requesting information about respondents and their schools. The participant included 146 principals, 37 assistant principals, 4 deans of students, and 5 individuals who held other positions in their school or district (e.g., social work, director of special education). Slightly more than 40% of the respondents indicated that they had been in their current administrative position for between 4 and 10 years. Another 35.4% reported that they had held their positions for between 1 and 3 years. Table 2 contains frequencies and percentages for study participants.

Table 2

Study Participants (n = 192)

	n	%
Position Held		
Principal	146	76.0
Assistant Principal	37	19.3
Dean of Students	4	2.1
Other	5	2.6
Years in Current Position		
Less than 1 year	14	7.3
1 - 3 years	68	35.4
4 - 10 years	77	40.1
11 - 15 years	17	8.9
16+	16	8.3

Nearly 88% of participants categorized their school as a traditional school (versus vocational, magnet, or charter). Table 3 displays frequencies and percentages for respondents' characterization of their schools.

Table 3

Participants' Reports of Type of School (n = 192)

What type of school is your school? (Check ONE response.)	n	%
Traditional/regular education school	168	87.5
Interdistrict magnet school	10	5.2
Intradistrict magnet school	2	1.0
Charter school	1	0.5
Alternative school	0	0
Vocational/technical school	6	3.1
Special education school	0	0
Other	5	2.7

There was considerable variability in the grade span configurations of respondents' schools with 28 different types of school configurations reported. Nearly 22% ($n = 42$) of participants indicated that their school included grades 9 - 12, followed by 13.5% ($n = 26$), grades 6 - 8; and 12% ($n = 20$), kindergarten through fifth grade. Table 4 depicts this variability.

Table 4

Participant's Reports of School Grade Span Configuration (n = 192)

	n	%
What grade level(s) does your school include? (Check ONE response.)		
Pre K - K	2	1.0
Pre K - 2	3	1.6
Pre K - 3	1	0.5
Pre K and 3 - 4	1	0.5
Pre K - 4	6	3.1
Pre K - 5	17	8.9
Pre K - 6	8	4.2
Pre K - 7	1	0.5
Pre K - 8	12	6.3
K - 2	1	0.5
K - 4	8	4.2
K - 5	23	12.0
K - 6	7	3.6
K - 8	1	0.5
1 - 6	2	1.0
2 - 4	1	0.5
3 - 5	3	1.6
4 - 5	1	0.5
4 - 6	1	0.5
4 - 8	1	0.5
5 - 6	3	1.6
5 - 8	6	3.1
6 - 12	2	1.0
6 - 8	26	13.5
7 - 8	10	5.2
7 - 12	3	1.6
9 - 12	42	21.9

Participants' schools encompassed a range of student enrollments, with the vast majority ($n = 145$) clustering between 301 - 1,000 students. Table 5 displays student enrollments for participants' schools.

Table 5

Participants' Reports Student Enrollment (n =192)

	n	%
How many students are currently enrolled in your school? (Check ONE response.)		
1 – 300	25	13.0
301 – 500	68	35.4
501 – 700	46	24.0
701 – 1000	31	16.1
1001 – 1300	11	5.7
1301 – 1500	2	1.0
1501 – 1999	6	3.1
2000+	3	1.6

The CT-SDE has divided the state's 166 local school districts and three academies into nine groups based on socioeconomic status and indicators of need. These groups, known as district reference groups (DRGs), enable educators to fairly compare groups of districts with similar characteristics. Survey respondents were from a cross section of the state's DRGs. The number of respondents for each DRG ranged from 8 for DRG A to 42 for DRG B. What is not known is whether these respondents are from the same or different school districts. These data were intentionally not collected to protect participant confidentiality. Table 6 depicts frequencies and percentages for this distribution for the subsample of participants that responded to this item ($n = 190$).

Table 6

Participants' Reports of School District Reference Group (DRG) Classification (n = 190)

In what District Reference Group (DRG) is your school classified? (Check ONE response.)	Districts per DRG	Principals per District	n	%	%
				Principals	Sample
A	9	43	8	18.6	4.2
B	21	135	42	31.1	22.1
C	30	83	18	21.7	9.5
D	24	152	30	19.7	15.8
E	34	68	24	35.3	12.6
F	17	69	21	30.4	11.1
G	15	141	15	10.6	7.9
H	9	118	14	11.9	7.4
I	7	191	18	9.4	9.5

Section II: Implementing and Interpreting the Law

Section II of the survey contained 9 items that were designed to gather respondents' reports of how they interpreted and implemented Connecticut's anti-bullying law (CGS § 10-222d). Specifically, the questions focused on district bullying policies and the regulations that supported implementation of those policies.

In the first question, respondents were asked to check, from a list that was provided, all elements that were included in their written bullying policy and any accompanying regulations. Table 7 depicts frequencies and percentages of responses, in descending order. The top five selected elements included "definition of bullying" (95.3%); "disciplinary and remedial consequences" (85.4%); "policy and procedure notification to students and parents or guardians" (84.4%); "reporting, including anonymous reporting" (80.2%); and "investigation and review" (77.6%).

Table 7

Participants' Reports of Elements Included in LEA Bullying Policy and Regulations (n = 192)

	n	%
What is explicitly included in your written bullying policy and any accompanying regulations? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Definition of bullying*	183	95.3
Disciplinary and remedial consequences*	164	85.4
Policy and procedure notification to students and parents or guardians*	162	84.4
Reporting, including anonymous reporting*	154	80.2
Investigation and review*	149	77.6
Due process	133	69.3
Intervention strategies*	106	55.2
Public list of verified bullying acts*	105	54.7
Positive standards for behavior	103	53.6
Definition of safe schools	94	49.0
Prevention strategies	84	43.8
Appeals	76	39.6
Education, training, or professional development for faculty, staff, and students	73	38.0
Adult bullying behaviors	61	31.8
Retaliation	43	22.4
Other	8	4.2

Note: * Items are considered to be elements of Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d

The second item in Section II of the survey called upon participants to indicate whether their district provided training for implementing its bullying policy and regulations. Nearly 54% ($n = 103$) indicated that “yes” their district provided training. Those that responded yes were then asked to check, from a list that was provided, all the recipients of this training. Table 8 depicts frequencies and percentages of responses, in rank order, for the subsample of participants responding to this item. Participants most often selected “school administrators” (83.5%), “classroom teachers” (78.6%), and “related services personnel” (77.7%) as recipients of the training.

Table 8

Participants' Reports of Recipients of Training about Bullying Policy (n = 103)

	n	%
Who are the primary recipients of the training? (Check ALL that apply.)		
School administrators	86	83.5
Classroom teachers	81	78.6
Related services professionals (e.g., psychologist, guidance counselors, social workers)	80	77.7
Central office personnel	39	38.6
Non-professional support staff (e.g., cafeteria staff, custodians, student resource officers)	24	23.3
Other	9	8.7

The fourth item in Section II asked respondents to indicate where copies of their districts' bullying policies were located. The three most commonly selected locations included "school board policies and regulations manuals" (94.8%), "student handbook" (83.9%), and "staff or faculty handbook" (79.7%). Table 9 shows frequencies and percentages, in descending order, for participant responses.

Table 9

Participants' Reports of Location of Copies of Bullying Policy (n = 192)

	n	%
Where are copies of your district's bullying policy located? (Check ALL that apply.)		
School board policies and regulations manuals	182	94.8
Student handbook	161	83.9
Staff/faculty handbook	153	79.7
Parent handbook	123	64.1
School districts' website	107	55.7
School's website	49	25.5
Posted in classrooms, hallways, or other visible places around the school	39	20.3
Other	6	3.1

Item five, Section II, requested information about the methods used to disseminate district or school bullying policies. The top three methods chosen, from those provided, were “student handbook” (83.3%), “staff/faculty handbook” (79.7%), and “parent handbook” (63.0%). Table 10 displays frequency and percentages for participant responses in rank order.

Table 10

Participants’ Reports of Methods used to Disseminate the Bullying Policy (n = 192)

	n	%
What methods are used to disseminate your district or school bullying policy? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Student handbook	160	83.3
Staff/faculty handbook	153	79.7
Parent handbook	121	63.0
District Website	101	52.6
PTO/PTA meetings	81	42.2
Newsletters	80	41.7
Student handouts	68	35.4
Parent handouts	59	30.7
School Website	48	25.0
Other	18	9.4

The sixth item in Section II called for participants to select, from the list provided, all means through which students were told they could make anonymous reports of acts of bullying. Nearly 67% of respondents reported using “student handbooks” and nearly 55% indicated that they used “classroom presentations”. Frequencies and percentages for responses to this item are displayed in Table 11.

Table 11

Participants' Reports of How They Inform Students about Anonymous Reporting (n = 192)

	n	%
How are students notified about the process by which they may make anonymous reports of acts of bullying? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Student handbook	128	66.7
Classroom presentation	105	54.7
Assembly	87	45.3
During homeroom	40	20.8
Student handouts	37	19.3
Other	28	14.6

In the seventh item, Section II, respondents were asked to indicate how often students were notified about the process for making anonymous reports of acts of bullying. Of the subsample of participants responding to this item ($n = 187$), 91.9% ($n = 172$) reported that they notified students annually or more often. Those participants that reported “other” did not specify the precise frequency with which they notified students. Table 12 shows percentages and frequencies in descending order for participants' responses to this item.

Table 12

Participants' Reports of Frequency of Notifying Students about Anonymous Reporting (n = 187)

	n	%
How often are your students notified about the process by which they may make anonymous reports of acts of bullying? (Check ONE response.)		
Annually*	122	65.2
Upon arrival to the school (during student orientation)	25	13.4
Each semester	19	10.2
Other	15	8.0
Each quarter	6	3.2

Note: * Minimum requirement under Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d

The eighth item called for respondents to select, from the list provided, all the locations, outside of the school setting, that were addressed under the district’s bullying policy. Slightly more than 94% of participants selected “school-sponsored activities”, nearly 92% selected “school grounds”, and nearly 83% selected “school bus”. Percentages and frequencies for participants’ responses to this item are depicted in Table 13, in rank order.

Table 13

Participants’ Reports of Locations Addressed in Policy (n = 192)

	n	%
What locations are explicitly addressed under your district’s bullying policy? (Check ALL that apply.)		
School-sponsored activity*	181	94.3
School grounds*	176	91.7
School bus*	159	82.8
Off-campus – Internet (cyber-bullying)	72	37.5
Off-campus – Community (e.g., neighborhood, recreational facilities)	53	27.6
Other	12	6.3

Note: * Included in the Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d definition of bullying

The final item in Section II asked participants to report the challenges they faced in implementing the provisions of the law. Almost 47% of participants selected “getting parents or guardians of students to file written reports of suspected bullying” and nearly 46% also chose “time to conduct investigations” as challenges to implementing the law. Table 14 shows percentages and frequencies, in descending order, for participants’ responses to this item.

Table 14

Participants' Reports of Challenges with Implementing the Law (n = 192)

	n	%
What challenges do you face implementing the provisions of Connecticut's anti-bullying legislation, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222d, as amended? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Getting parents or guardians of students to file written reports of suspected bullying	90	46.9
Time to conduct investigations	87	45.3
Lack of support from the verified bullies parent or guardian	84	43.8
Investigating anonymous reports	79	41.1
Inadequate training of teachers and school staff in this area	74	38.5
Getting teachers and school staff to notify administration in a timely manner of bullying reports	62	32.3
A thorough understanding of the legislation	62	32.3
Limited intervention strategies	55	28.6
Lack of support from the target's parent or guardian	40	20.8
Other	12	6.3

Section III: Reporting, Investigating, and Verifying Allegations of Bullying

Section III contained 12 items designed to gather data about procedures for reporting allegations of bullying and responding to, investigating, and verifying those reports.

In response to the first item, which asked participants to indicate whether their school had a formally articulated process for responding to “informal or anonymous *student* reports of allegations of bullying”, 83.2% ($n = 159$) of the subsample of individuals responding to the item ($n = 191$) reported that they did. Almost 11% ($n = 20$) indicated that they did not have a process and slightly more than 6% ($n = 12$) reported they were not aware of one.

The second item asked whether participants' schools had a formally articulated process for responding to “informal or anonymous *family* members reports of allegations of bullying”. Of the individuals responding to this item ($n = 191$), 77% ($n = 147$) reported that they did have such a process. Slightly more than 15% ($n = 29$) indicated that they did not and nearly 8% ($n = 15$) indicated they were not aware of one.

The third item in Section III requested that respondents indicate who was *officially* responsible for receiving and investigating written reports of suspected bullying in their school. Slightly more than 56% reported that the principal was responsible and slightly more than 29% indicated that the assistant principal was responsible. Table 15 shows frequencies and percentages for responses to this item, in descending order.

Table 15

Participants' Reports of Person Officially Responsible for Receiving Written Reports (n = 192)

	n	%
Who is officially responsible for receiving and investigating written reports of suspected bullying in your school? (Check ONE response.)		
Principal	108	56.3
Assistant principal	56	29.2
Other	9	4.7
School psychologist	7	3.6
School social worker	5	2.6
Guidance counselor	3	1.6
Title IX coordinator	3	1.6
School nurse	1	0.5
Teacher	0	0.0

In response to the fourth item, which asked respondents to indicate whether their school had a *formally* articulated process for investigating allegations of bullying, 85.3% ($n = 163$) of the subsample of individuals responding to this item ($n = 191$) reported that they did have such a process. Eleven percent ($n = 21$) indicated that they did not and 3.7% ($n = 7$) indicated they were not aware of one.

The fifth item in Section III asked respondents to check, from a list that was provided, all the procedures that were used to “investigate and determine outcomes of *formal* allegations of bullying in their school”. Nearly all of the respondents (99.5%) reported that the “person

reporting the incident” was interviewed. Similarly, almost all participants indicated that interviews were also conducted with “witnesses” (98.4%), the “alleged target” (97.9%), and the “alleged bully” (97.9%). Table 16 contains frequencies and percentages for all responses to this item, in descending order.

Table 16

Participants’ Reports of Investigation Procedures for Formal Allegations of Bullying (n = 192)

	n	%
What procedures are used to investigate and determine outcome of formal allegations of bullying in your school? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Interview person reporting the incident	191	99.5
Interview witnesses (e.g., teachers, students, bus driver)	189	98.4
Interview alleged target	188	97.9
Interview alleged bully	188	97.9
Speak with alleged target’s parent or guardian	185	96.4
Speak with alleged bully’s parent or guardian	184	95.8
Review written report	167	87.0
Observe alleged bully	112	58.3
Observe alleged target	107	55.7
Other	15	7.8

In response to the sixth item, which asked respondents to check from the list provided all the procedures that were used to “investigate and determine outcomes of anonymous and *informal* allegations” of bullying in their school, 94.3% indicated that they interviewed the “alleged target”. As with formal allegations, participants reported that interviews were also conducted with “witnesses” (92.2%) and the “alleged bully” (91.1%). Frequencies and percentages for all responses to this item are displayed, in rank order, in Table 17.

Table 17

Participants' Reports of Investigation Procedures for Informal Allegations of Bullying (n = 192)

	n	%
What procedures are used to investigate and determine outcome of anonymous and informal allegations of bullying in your school? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Interview alleged target	181	94.3
Interview witnesses (e.g., teachers, students, bus driver)	177	92.2
Interview alleged bully	175	91.1
Speak with alleged bully's parent or guardian	162	84.4
Interview person reporting the incident	159	82.8
Speak with alleged target's parent or guardian	159	82.8
Review written report	152	79.2
Observe alleged bully	108	56.3
Observe alleged target	104	54.2
Other	15	7.8

The next two items in Section III were designed to assess how respondents' schools were dealing with the fact that, under the state law, the definition of bullying behavior included the phrase that the act must be "repeated against the same student over time". The seventh question asked participants to indicate whether the district definition of "repeated" included the "number of incidents", "duration", or both. Nearly 69% ($n = 132$) of respondents reported that their definition encompassed both the number and duration of incidents. Another 30.7% ($n = 59$) reported that the definition of repeated included only the number of incidents.

The responses to the eighth item, which asked participants to write out their definition of "over time", were quite variable. Notably, few significant themes emerged from the 174 responses that were provided. Although 81 responses contained a phrase or words that suggested respondents defined over time as acts of bullying that "occur over some timeframe" (day, week, month, year, calendar year, semester), no single timeframe emerged as significant. In fact, respondents often included more than one timeframe within their definition. Forty-six responses contained words suggesting that respondents defined over time as acts of bullying that "occur

more than one time, irrespective of the timeframe”. Twenty-nine of the responses included phrases that suggested participants defined over time as acts of bullying that “establish a pattern”. Table 18 contains verbatim examples of participants’ responses (in their entirety) for these themes.

Table 18

<i>Major Themes Generated from Participants’ Reports of Definition of “Over Time” (n = 174)</i>	
Theme	Verbatim Example Responses
Acts of bullying “occur over some timeframe” (n = 81)	“Anything over a three day time period” “Over a period of days, weeks, months” “Over the course of at least a school year”
Acts of bullying “occur more than one time, irrespective of the timeframe” (n = 46)	“Incidents that happen more than one time during a marking period” “2 or more incidents in a school year” “More than 2-3 times within a short period of time”
Acts of bullying “establish a pattern” (n = 29)	“Any repetition that constitutes a pattern” “Any repetition that indicate separate events” “Bully shows a distinct pattern or trend of behavior”

The ninth item requested that participants’ check, in the list provided, all the types of conduct that they considered to be bullying behavior. Each item was selected by at least 71% of respondents. The three most often selected were “intimidation” (96.4%), followed by “verbal taunts” (94.8%) and “verbal threats” (94.8%). Table 19 contains frequencies and percentages for participants’ reports of conduct considered to be bullying behavior.

Table 19

Participants' Reports of Conduct Considered Bullying Behavior (n = 192)

	n	%
What types of conduct do you consider to be bullying behavior? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Intimidation	185	96.4
Verbal taunts (e.g., name calling, put-downs)	182	94.8
Verbal threats	182	94.8
Racial or ethnic harassment	180	93.8
Physical aggression	179	93.2
Threatening gestures	174	90.6
Extortion	169	88.0
Sexual harassment	167	87.0
Teasing	162	84.4
Social alienation (e.g., exclusion, shunning, snubbing)	148	77.1
Relational aggression	144	75.0
Intellectual intimidation	138	71.9
Other	14	7.3

In the tenth question, participants were asked to select, from a list provided, all the interventions that were used to address verified acts of bullying behavior. “Counseling” (96.9%) and having a “conference” with the bully (96.9%) were the top two selections. Frequencies and percentages for responses to this item are displayed in Table 20, in descending order.

Table 20

Participants' Reports of the Interventions used to Address Verified Acts of Bullying (n = 192)

	n	%
What interventions are used in your school to address verified acts of bullying behavior? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Counseling	186	96.9
Conference with bully	186	96.9
Increased supervision and monitoring of the student(s)	171	89.1
In-school suspension	159	82.8
Detention	156	81.3
Out-of-school suspension	153	79.7
Warning	150	78.1
Restorative justice (providing a remedy for the wrong done)	102	53.1
Peer mediation	85	44.3
Community service	57	29.7
Expulsion	55	28.6
Other	21	10.9

The eleventh question in Section III asked participants to select all the interventions that were used in working with targeted students, from the list provided. Respondents' top three selections comprised "counseling" the targeted student (95.8%), encouraging the student to "seek help when targeted" (95.3%), and increasing "supervision and monitoring" of the targeted student (94.1%). Table 21 contains frequencies and percentages, in rank order, for all responses to this item.

Table 21

Participants' Reports of the Interventions used with Targeted Students (n = 192)

	n	%
What interventions are used in your school for working with targeted students? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Counseling	184	95.8
Encouragement of student to seek help when targeted	183	95.3
Increased supervision and monitoring of the student	177	94.1
Mediation/conflict resolution with an adult mediator	150	78.1
Peer mediation	69	35.9
Other	13	6.8

The final question in this section of the survey requested that participants select, from the list provided, all persons notified once acts of bullying had been verified. Nearly 98% of respondents indicated they notified the parents or guardians of the bully and slightly more than 97% reported notifying the parents or guardians of the target. Table 22 shows frequencies and percentages for all responses, in rank order.

Table 22

Participants' Reports of Persons Notified about Verified Acts of Bullying (n = 192)

	n	%
Who is notified when acts of bullying have been verified in your school? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Parents or guardians of bully*	188	97.9
Parents or guardians of target*	187	97.4
Teachers	165	85.9
Guidance staff	150	78.1
Superintendent or designee	114	59.4
Other	34	17.7

Note: *Required under Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d

Section IV: Collecting and Analyzing Data on Verified Acts of Bullying

Section IV of the survey had 8 items that were designed to gather respondents' reports of how they were collecting and analyzing data on verified acts of bullying.

In response to the first item, which asked participants to indicate whether a list of the number of verified acts of bullying was maintained in their school, 85.9% ($n = 165$) reported that "yes" they did maintain a list and 14.1% ($n = 27$) indicated that they did not. Individuals responding "yes" were then asked to indicate whether the list of verified acts was immediately available for public inspection at the time when a parent verbally requested it. Of the subsample

of participants responding to this item ($n = 160$), 76.3% ($n = 122$) reported that “yes” the list of verified acts was immediately available and 23.8% ($n = 38$) indicated that it was not.

The third item in Section IV asked for information about the number of *verified* acts of bullying for the 2005 - 2006 academic year. Nearly 40% ($n = 73$) of respondents to this item ($n = 183$) indicated that there were no verified acts of bullying in their school. In response to the fourth item, which requested that participants provide data about the number of verified acts of bullying, recorded to date, for the 2006 - 2007 academic year 37.3% ($n = 69$) of the respondents to this item ($n = 185$) indicated that there were no verified acts of bullying in their school that year. Table 23 shows the frequencies and percentages for responses to both of these items.

Table 23

Participants' Reports of Verified Acts of Bullying for 2005-2006 and 2006 - 2007 School Years

Academic Year	2005 - 2006 ($n = 183$)		2006 - 2007 ($n = 185$)	
	n	%	n	%
Verified Acts of Bullying				
None	73	39.9	69	37.3
1 – 2	49	26.8	47	25.4
3 – 5	31	16.9	36	19.5
6 – 8	19	10.4	19	10.3
9 – 11	7	3.8	9	4.9
12 or more	4	2.2	5	2.7

In response to the fifth item in this section, which asked participants to indicate whether they reviewed data on verified acts of bullying for trends, 58.2% ($n = 110$) of the subsample of participants responding to this item ($n = 189$) reported they reviewed data for trends and 41.8% ($n = 79$) indicated they did not. Individuals responding “yes” to this item were then asked to select, from a list provided, all the ways in which data were analyzed. Respondents to this item most often indicated data were analyzed by “type” of bullying act (81.8%, $n = 90$), followed by

the “nature” (78.2%, $n = 86$) and “location” of the act (75.5%, $n = 83$). Table 24 shows the frequencies and percentages, in descending order, for responses to this item.

Table 24

Participants’ Reports of How Data are Analyzed ($n = 110$)

	n	%
How do you analyze the data? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Type (e.g., physical, verbal, non-verbal, social)	90	81.8
Nature (e.g., impulsive, threat, victimization, racial)	86	78.2
Location (e.g., playground, classrooms, hallways, rest rooms)	83	75.5
Time (e.g., before or after school, during classes, between classes)	74	67.3
Individual vs. group bullies	64	58.2
Individual vs. group targets	61	55.5
Other	9	8.2

The final item in Section IV asked participants to indicate whether they administered student, parent, staff, or community surveys “to assess the awareness and scope of bullying” at their school. Seventy-six percent ($n = 143$) of respondents indicated that they did not conduct surveys, 24% ($n = 46$) indicated that they did so. The subsample of participants that responded “yes” to this item were then asked to select, from a list provided, the individuals from whom data were gathered. Of those respondents, 93.5% ($n = 43$) indicated that they gathered data from “students” and 52.2% ($n = 24$) reported gathering data from classroom teachers. Table 25 contains frequencies and percentages for responses to this item.

Table 25

Participants' Reports of Persons Surveyed about Awareness and Scope of Bullying (n = 46)

	n	%
From whom did you gather data? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Students	43	93.5
Classroom teachers	24	52.2
Parents	17	37.0
Related services professionals (e.g., psychologist, social workers)	13	28.3
School administrators	9	19.6
Community members	5	10.9
Non-professional support staff (e.g., bus drivers, cafeteria staff)	2	4.4
Other	1	2.2

Section V: School Climate

Section V contained 9 items related to school climate, including those aimed at assessing respondents' overall ratings of their school climate and those designed to gather data on whether school climate was a part of their school mission and improvement plans.

In response to the first item, which asked participants to indicate whether they had administered student, parent, staff, or community surveys to assess the climate at their school, 55.2% ($n = 106$) reported that "yes" they had and 44.8% ($n = 86$) indicated that they had not. Individuals responding "yes" to this item were then asked to indicate all the persons from whom they gathered data. Respondents most frequently reported that they collected data about school climate from "classroom teachers" (84.0%, $n = 89$) and "students" (73.6%, $n = 28$). Table 26 depicts frequencies and percentages, in rank order, for responses to this item.

Table 26

Participants' Reports of Persons Surveyed about School Climate (n = 106)

	n	%
From whom did you gather data? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Classroom teachers	89	84.0
Students	78	73.6
Related services professionals (e.g., psychologist, social workers)	74	69.8
Parents	74	69.8
School administrators	49	46.2
Non-professional support staff (e.g., bus drivers, cafeteria staff)	38	35.8
Community members	21	19.8
Other	2	1.9

The third item in Section V requested that participants indicate whether their school had “a school climate improvement plan”; 62.5% ($n = 120$) indicated “yes” they did. Those responding yes were then asked to specify whether the school climate plan was part of the “overall school improvement plan”; 92.5% ($n = 111$) reported “yes” it was. The fifth item asked participants if school climate was explicitly part of their school’s mission; 76.0% ($n = 146$) indicated “yes” it was. Additionally and in response to the sixth item, 64.6% ($n = 124$) of participants reported that school climate was part of the “district or school’s bullying policy”.

The last three items in Section V called upon participants to rate their school, from “excellent” to “very poor”, in terms of being physically, emotionally/socially, and intellectually “safe and providing a healthy learning environment for all students and adults”. Of the subsample of participants responding to the item on physical safety ($n = 191$), 91.6% ($n = 175$) rated their school as either “excellent” (49.7%) or “very good” (41.9%) in terms of being physically safe. Concerning emotional and social safety, 84.8% ($n = 163$) of the respondents to this item ($n = 192$) indicated that their school was “excellent” (43.8%) or “very good” (41.1%). Finally, 92.1% ($n = 175$) of the subsample of participants responding to the item on intellectual

safety ($n = 190$) indicated that their school was either “excellent” (46.3%) or “very good” (45.3%) in that regard. Table 27 depicts the frequencies and percentages for each of these items.

Table 27

Participants’ Ratings of Safe and Healthy Learning Environment for All Students and Adults

	Physically Safe ($n = 191$)		Emotionally Safe ($n = 192$)		Intellectually Safe ($n = 190$)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Excellent	95	49.7	84	43.8	88	46.3
Very good	80	41.9	79	41.1	87	45.8
Good	13	6.8	27	14.1	13	6.8
Poor	3	1.6	2	1.1	2	1.1
Very poor	0	0	0	0	0	0

Section VI: Efforts Focused on Preventing and Reducing Bullying to Support Safe Learning

Section VI contained 4 items designed to gather data on respondents’ use of various programs and efforts focused on preventing and reducing bullying to support safe learning in schools and the intended audiences for those programs.

The first question requested that participants select from a list of research-based programs identified by the federal Department of Education as “Exemplary” or “Promising”, which, if any, were being used in their schools. Slightly more than 35% ($n = 68$) of respondents reported that they did not use any of the 33 programs listed. Only three of the listed programs were selected by 10 or more respondents, “Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum” ($n = 29$), “Life Skills Training” ($n = 16$), and “Social Decision Making and Problem Solving” ($n = 10$). Twenty-one programs were selected by from 1 to 4 respondents and nine programs were not selected at all. Finally, 75 survey respondents offered examples of “other” programs that were in use in their schools. Of those, the two most commonly listed were “Responsive Classroom®” ($n = 14$) and “Don’t Laugh at Me” ($n = 12$).

The second item in this section called upon participants to briefly describe other school efforts focused on preventing and reducing bullying to support safe learning in schools. Of the 182 participants that responded to this item, 85 described efforts that could be characterized as “school based thematic programs”. In these responses, participants referenced several programs (e.g., Responsive Classroom®, Don’t Laugh at Me) noted under the previous item, described above. Thirty-six responses could be categorized as “classroom based activities and discussions”. Thirty-two participants described activities that involved “assemblies or guest speakers”. Thirty respondents described efforts that were aimed at developing a positive “school climate and expectations”. Table 28 contains a list of themes were generated from this item and verbatim examples of responses.

Table 28

Themes Generated from Participants' Reports of Efforts Focused on Preventing and Reducing Bullying to Support Safe Learning in Schools (n = 182)

Themes	Verbatim Example Responses
School based thematic programs (n = 85)	“In addition to our use of Second Step, we are a Responsive Classroom school.” “K-8 Operation Respect”
Classroom based activities and discussions (n = 36)	“. . . class meetings, discussions on bullying . . .” “Morning circles to reinforce appropriate interpersonal behavior.”
Assemblies or guest speakers (n = 32)	“Speakers brought in . . .” “. . . Assemblies sponsored by PTA . . .”
Climate and expectations (n = 30)	“School climate efforts part of strategic plan” “Maintaining a positive environment for students, staff and community is one of our school goals.”
Counseling (n = 18)	“. . . individual counseling . . .” “Social worker (Group Counseling)”
Curriculum (n = 16)	“Anti-bullying education is embedded in the curriculum for all grade levels.” “Counselor teaches positive counseling curriculum.”
Professional development (n = 14)	“A two hour bullying professional development session was given by our social worker and health teacher. . .” “School psychologist and pupil personnel staff training.”
Parent programs or involvement (n = 11)	“PTA sponsored two anti bullying programs this year . . . father son dinner . . . mother daughter dinner . . .” “Efforts to increase parent involvement”

In the third item, participants were asked to check, in a list provided, all recipients of their anti-bullying programs. Selected most frequently were “whole school” (71.9%), “groups of students” (62.5%), and “individual students” (58.3%). Table 29 contains frequencies and percentages for all responses to this item, in descending order.

Table 29

Participants' Reports of Primary Recipients of Anti-Bullying Programs (n = 192)

	n	%
Who are the primary recipients of your anti-bullying program(s)? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Whole school	138	71.9
Groups of students	120	62.5
Individual students	112	58.3
Classroom teachers	94	49.0
Individual classes	82	42.7
Related services professionals (e.g., psychologist, guidance counselors, social workers)	75	39.1
Individual grade levels	67	34.9
School administrators	66	34.4
Parents or guardians	45	23.9
Non-professional support staff (e.g., bus drivers, cafeteria staff)	37	19.3
Families	26	13.5
Other	2	1.0
Members of surrounding community	1	0.5

The last item in Section VI requested that respondents indicate “who is involved in delivering” anti-bullying programs. “Related services professionals” (85.4%), “school administrators” (77.6%), and “classroom teachers” (69.8%) were most often selected.

Frequencies and percentages for this item are depicted, in rank order, in Table 30.

Table 30

Participants' Reports of Persons Involved in Delivering Anti-Bullying Programs (n = 192)

	n	%
Who is involved in delivering the program(s) in your school? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Related services professionals (e.g., psychologist, guidance counselors, social workers)	164	85.4
School administrators	149	77.6
Classroom teachers	134	69.8
Personnel from community service agencies (including police)	59	30.7
Students	58	30.2
Professional consultants	32	16.7
Non-professional support staff (e.g., bus drivers, cafeteria staff)	27	14.1
Non-profit organizations (e.g., anti-deformation league)	23	12.0
Parents	22	11.5
Community volunteers	15	7.8
Other	11	5.7
CT SDE personnel	8	4.2
Proprietary curriculum consultants	2	1.0

Section VII: Information, Training, and Technical Assistance Needs

Section VII contained two questions designed to elicit respondents' reports of their need for information about sample bullying policies, professional development, curricular materials, or technical assistance.

In the first item, respondents were asked to indicate, from the list provided, "what would be most helpful with regard to preventing and reducing bullying and supporting safe learning". They were also given space to write in specific examples of these needs. Participants most often indicated that "professional development" (62.5%) and "curricular materials" (52.1%) were needed. Table 31 contains the frequencies and percentages for all responses. Concerning professional development, respondents to this item most often requested training related to the "identification of bullying and prevention and intervention strategies" ($n = 29$) and "the law" (n

= 21). “Grade level” curricular materials for discussions or activities ($n = 41$) were the most frequently cited needs of participants that had selected this area.

Table 31

Participants’ Reports of Needs Related Preventing and Reducing Bullying and Supporting Safe Learning ($n = 192$)

	n	%
In the future, what would be most helpful with regard to preventing and reducing bullying and supporting safe learning in your school? (Check ALL that apply.)		
Professional development	120	62.5
Curricular materials	100	52.1
Copies of sample policies	48	25.0
Technical assistance	38	19.8
Other	14	7.3

The final item in this section asked respondents to describe how the CT-SDE could support them in terms of managing school climate and anti-bullying efforts at their school. Responses mirrored those from the first item, with 28 participants indicating that they wanted training and workshops and 28 reporting that they would like information, materials, and updates concerning “any changes to state law and their implications for schools”.

Optional Section

The “optional” section of the survey contained two items. The first item requested that respondents indicate whether they “would be interested in receiving technical assistance concerning preventing and reducing bullying and supporting safe learning in my school, if it were made available” to them. Of the subsample of participants that responded to this item ($n = 118$), 62.7% ($n = 74$) indicated “yes”. The second item asked respondents to indicate whether they “would be interested in working with a select group of schools and districts to review and

create model bullying policies and procedures”. Fifty percent ($n = 62$) of the respondents to this item ($n = 124$) indicated “yes”.

Key Findings and Recommendations for Future Research

The section presents some key findings and suggestions for future research. This presentation is by no means exhaustive; the intent is merely to begin a conversation. We, the authors, purposely choose not to draw general conclusions or make recommendations for practice and policy. It is our belief that a representative stakeholder group should come together to review these data and collectively make practice and policy recommendations.

Findings Related to Disseminating District Bullying Policies and Student Notification

Respondents reported using multiple methods for disseminating district bullying policies, with student, faculty, or parent handbooks, and the district website being the most frequently selected. The law (Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d) mandates that district policies shall: “require students to be notified annually of the process by which they may make such reports”. Nearly all of the study participants (90%) indicated students are notified at least annually or more often about the process for making anonymous reports of acts of bullying. They reported using various means to tell students how they could make such reports, with student handbooks (68%) and classroom presentations (55%) being the most commonly identified.

Future research should be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the methods for disseminating district policies. In particular, it seems important to know if various constituencies, particularly all students and their parents, have full access to current dissemination methods and the content of the materials provided (e.g., Are alternative formats needed? What is the

readability of the materials?). Additionally, investigations should be conducted to determine if students and other constituents understand the policies.

Findings Related to Reporting, Investigating, and Verifying Allegations of Bullying

Reporting acts of bullying. The law (Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d) requires that district policies “enable students to anonymously report acts of bullying to teachers and school administrators”, “enable the parents or guardians of students to file written reports of suspected bullying”, and “require teachers and other school staff who witness acts of bullying or receive student reports of bullying to notify school administrators”. Slightly more than three-fourths of survey respondents indicated that their district policy contained a provision for reporting, including anonymous reporting. Future research is needed to understand how well these provisions are working. It would seem particularly important to know if other processes that provide greater access to families and students may need to be put in place (e.g., access to interpreters, alternatives formats for written reports, verbal or internet based report systems).

Responding to and investigating reports of allegations of bullying. Concerning having a *formal* process in place to respond to *informal or anonymous* reports of allegations of bullying, over three-fourths of respondents indicated that such a process was in place for students. Three-fourths also indicated that a process was in place for family members. Well over three-fourths of the study participants indicated that either the principal or the assistant principal had the official responsibility for receiving written reports of allegations of bullying.

Well over three-fourths of the study participants reported that their school had a formally articulated process for investigating and determining the outcome of *formal* allegations of bullying in their school. Participants indicated that they used a variety of methods to investigate the formal allegations, with nearly all of the participants reporting that interviews were conducted with the person reporting the incidents, witnesses, alleged targets, and alleged bullies. Additionally, almost all of the respondents indicated that they spoke with parents or guardians of alleged bullies. Well over three-fourths reported speaking with parents or guardians of alleged targets and reviewing written reports. Respondents' reports of the methods used to investigate and determine the outcome of *informal* allegations of bullying were quite similar.

Among other possibilities, future research should be conducted to understand how well the various processes for investigating and determining the outcome of informal and formal allegations of bullying are working.

The definition of bullying. Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d contains a definition of bullying. It is as follows.

“Bullying” means any overt acts by a student or a group of students directed against another student with the intent to ridicule, harass, humiliate or intimidate the other student while on school grounds, at a school-sponsored activity or on a school bus, which acts are repeated against the same student over time. Such policies may include provisions addressing bullying outside of the school setting if it has a direct and negative impact on a student's academic performance or safety in school.

Although implicit, the law is silent on mandating that districts include a definition of bullying in their policy.

Notably, nearly all of (95%) of survey respondents indicated that their district policy did contain a definition of bullying. Participants' reports of the types of conduct considered to be bullying behavior were quite inclusive and consistent, with each of the 12 types of conduct listed in one survey item being selected by almost three-fourths of survey respondents. While most all participants reported that locations addressed in their districts' policies were inclusive of school-sponsored activities (94%) and school grounds (92%), only about 83% reported school bus as a location that was addressed. Concerning the notion of "over time" contained within the definition in the law, participants' provided definitions of over time that were quite variable, with no specific definitions emerging. Over two-thirds of participants reported that their definition of bullying encompassed both the number and duration of incidents.

Definitions serve to provide parameters for and guide the implementation of a law, and in turn, practice. It seems logical to assume, therefore, that an operational definition would be needed to adequately investigate and verifying acts of bullying. Not having a clear and standard definition for the phrase over time would certainly seem to have an affect on districts' ability to verify, count, and report acts of bullying, requirements under the law. Future research is needed to better understand how schools are defining bullying, what affects that might have on meeting the provisions of the mandate, and what definition would best help districts to meet legislative intent, supporting safe learning in schools.

Nearly two-thirds of participants indicated that they had one or more verified acts of bullying in their school during both the 2005-2206 and 2006-2007 school years. We do not know, however, how many reports were filed and how many investigations were actually conducted during either year. Future research in this area may prove helpful in understanding acts that are perceived to be bullying and the scope of the issue.

Parent notification. Finally, once acts of bully are verified the law (Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d) requires that “the parents or guardians of students who commit any verified acts of bullying and the parents or guardians of students against whom such acts were directed to be notified”. Nearly all of the survey respondents indicated that they did so. Future research should be conducted to identify how well these notification systems are working.

Findings Related to Intervening

The law (Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d) stipulates that district policies “include an intervention strategy for school staff to deal with bullying” and “direct the development of case-by-case interventions for addressing repeated incidents of bullying against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual that may include both counseling and discipline”. Participants’ in this study reported using several interventions to address verified acts of bully, with nearly all of them indicating they counsel and conference with the bully. Additionally, over three-fourths reported the use of increased supervision, in school suspension, detention, out-of-school suspension, and a warning. Regarding interventions used with targeted students, almost all of the survey respondents indicated that they counseled students, encouraged students to seek help when targeted, and increased supervision of students.

Future research is needed to identify which of these intervention strategies work best with regard to reducing future incidents of bullying and for which students and types of incidents they are most effective.

Findings Related to Tracking and Monitoring Verified Acts of Bullying

District policies, under this law (Conn. Gen. Statute § 10-222d), must “require each school to maintain a list of the number of verified acts of bullying in such school and make such list available for public inspection”. Well over three-fourths of the study participants reported that their districts maintained such a list and three-fourths of those respondents indicated that the list was available for public inspection. A little more than half of the respondents indicated they analyzed their verified acts of bullying data to identify the trends that exist. Future research about how these data are being used would seem important.

Findings Related to Prevention and Professional Development

School climate. An overwhelming majority of survey respondents’ rated their school as either “excellent” or “very good” in terms of being physically, emotionally/socially, and intellectually safe and providing a healthy learning environment for all students and adults. Systematically assessing school-climate is an important step in the process of learning whether a school actually has a safe and healthy environment that supports the learning experiences of all students. To get the fullest picture, it seems important to collect these data from all stakeholders, administrators, teachers and staff, parents, and, in particular, students, who are most directly affected by the climate.

Slightly over half of the survey respondents reported that they assessed their school climate. Well over three-fourths of those participants reported collecting school climate data from teachers and nearly three-fourths of them indicated that they also collected data from students. Additionally, nearly two thirds of the respondent indicated that they had school climate improvement plans. Future research should be conducted with regard to how school climate data

are being used to inform the creation of safe and healthy learning environments and how these inform school climate improvement plans.

Programs and efforts focused on preventing and reducing bullying. The use of evidence-based practices and programs has become recommended practice. Educators are routinely urged to strongly consider research results (evidence) regarding program effectiveness when selecting any program for implementation.

Survey respondents' reports of the anti-bullying curricula and programs being used suggest that, for the most part, schools are not using the research-based programs identified by the federal Department of Education as "Exemplary" or "Promising". Rather, nearly all of the participants indicated that they are using other combinations of materials, programs, and strategies, some of which are locally developed, as they focus on preventing and reducing bullying to support safe learning in schools. Related is the fact that slightly more than half of the participants reported that they wanted curricular materials, in particular, "grade-level" materials. Future research should examine the efficacy of the locally developed material. Regular research and evaluation projects should be conducted in a systematic way with the goals of identifying exemplary local practices, improving on those practices, and sharing innovations statewide.

Professional development. Slightly more than half of survey respondents indicated that their district provided training for implementing its bullying policy, with school administrators, classroom teachers, and related services personnel most often reported as the primary recipients of this training. Nearly two-thirds of respondents reported that it would be helpful if they had professional development focused on preventing and reducing bullying. Future research should

examine the efficacy of current professional development efforts at the local and state levels. Here again, regular research and evaluation projects should be conducted in a systematic way with the goals of identifying exemplary local practices, improving on those practices, and sharing innovations statewide.

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