



Preventing and Responding to Bullying Among Higher Education and K-12 Students

United Educators Roundtable

Wednesday, April 6

1:00–2:15 p.m. ET

Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| Speaker Biographies | 3 |
| Roundtable Agenda | 4 |
| Resources | 5 |
| Elements of a Good Anti-Bullying Policy | 5 |
| UE Resources | 7 |
| Alfred University Online Resources | 8 |
| Higher Education Policies Against Bullying | 8 |
| K-12 Policies Against Bullying | 9 |
| Other Resources | 11 |

Speaker Biographies

Charles Leitch, a founding principal of Patterson Buchanan Fobes Leitch & Kalzer Inc., P.S. in Seattle, has served as a city and county prosecutor. In his civil practice he represents both public school districts and independent schools. In addition to his active litigation practice, Leitch advises his school clients on best practices in the prevention of and response to harassment, intimidation, and bullying in personal and electronic form. He also regularly conducts training for students and parents as well as administrators, faculty, and staff. Leitch received his undergraduate degree from Whitman College and his law degree from Willamette University School of Law.

Norm Pollard has been dean of students at Alfred University in Alfred, N.Y., since 2006 and has worked on college campuses since 1984. He is a licensed counselor and was director of Alfred's Counseling and Student Development Center before becoming dean. An adjunct associate professor, Pollard has taught graduate courses for the college student development, counseling, and school psychology programs. He received his undergraduate degree from Lycoming College, his master's degree in counseling from Western State College, and his doctorate in counseling from Drake University.

Hillary Pettegrew (moderator) is a risk management counsel for United Educators and previously served as a UE claims counsel, handling employee and student claims against UE members. Before joining UE, she was a writer/editor at Research Institute of America Group and practiced law at a Washington, D.C., law firm, where she focused on employment litigation. Pettegrew received her undergraduate degree from Colgate University and her law degree from Northwestern University School of Law.

Roundtable Agenda

Part 1 – The Bullying Problem: Overview and Trends

Part 2 – Practical Prevention Approaches: Policies and Training

Part 3 – Responses to Bullying: What Is Effective, What Is Not



UE recommends that schools and colleges consider the following when drafting their anti-bullying policies:

Briefly explain the policy's purpose

- For example, if your institution promotes a culture of respect and inclusion, your policy might include a reference to that mission or philosophy

Include a clear statement that bullying is unacceptable and will not be tolerated

Explain important terms used in the policy

- Whether your institution's policy uses the word "bullying" or alternative words, it should explain and define the important terms. (For ease of reference, this document will refer to "bullying.")
- Provide a nonexhaustive list of improper behavior examples. The policy might contain language such as: "Bullying includes, but is not limited to..."
- Specifically include cyberbullying as one form of bullying.

Outline the potential penalties for bullying

- The policy should clearly indicate possible consequences for violations, but it's usually best to state that sanctions "may include, but are not limited to..." This approach gives the institution maximum flexibility to act as it deems appropriate and necessary.
- If the penalties may include suspension or expulsion from the institution, the policy should make that clear.

Every educational institution should tailor an anti-bullying policy to fit its needs and culture. However, keep in mind that simply having a written policy is not enough. You must also publicize the policy to your campus community and provide training on its application.

Establish mechanisms for reporting bullying

- The policy should describe several alternative ways for students and others in the campus community (including parents) to report bullying. The policy should identify specific individuals who can receive these reports, such as officials in student affairs, counselors, principals, or headmasters, and give their contact information. Identify alternative individuals in case the primary contact is not available.
- Because many people are hesitant to report bullying in person, the policy should identify at least one alternative mechanism, such as a hotline or website.
- The policy should clarify whether the institution accepts anonymous reports and, if so, how to make them.

Describe how the institution investigates and responds to reports of bullying

- The policy should explain what will happen after someone reports a bullying incident. For example, will the school keep the student “victim” informed of any investigation’s progress? Will the institution keep reports confidential to the extent possible? How will the school notify the person making the report of any resolution?

Cross-reference related policies

- The policy should refer to any other institutional policies and procedures that might be relevant, such as a general student conduct code, a policy prohibiting discrimination and harassment, procedures governing the student judicial process, and any internal grievance procedures for disciplined students.

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Resources

UE Resources

- **“You Asked UE: Student Bullying in Higher Education” (November 2010)**
www.ue.org/Libraries/Shared_RML/You_Asked_UE_Bullying_in_Higher_Education_--_11-10.sflb.ashx
This brief UE publication on bullying in higher education recognizes that it is more typically considered a K-12 problem and suggests convening a steering committee or similar group to conduct research on campus into the nature and extent of bullying at a particular institution.
- **UE Roundtable: “Monitoring Student Electronic Communications: Can You Do It? Should You Do It?” (February 2010)**
www.ue.org/Libraries/Shared_RML/Roundtable_Monitoring_Student_Electronic_Communications_--_Resources_02-10.sflb.ashx
The reference materials for this earlier UE roundtable include links to sample acceptable computer use policies for both K-12 and higher education institutions; some of them specifically prohibit cyberbullying.
- **United Educators, *Public School News*, “Bullying: Lessons to Combat Cruelty” (May 2008)**
www.ue.org/Libraries/Shared_RML/Public_School_News_Bullying_Lessons_to_Combat_Cruelty_--_05-08.sflb.ashx
This issue of UE's *Public School News* addresses bullying in the K-12 context and discusses results of a study of UE claims from 2003 to 2007 that involved bullying of children under age 18.
- **United Educators, *Public School News*, “Cyberbullying: Protecting Children in the School Domain” (Issue 1, 2004)**
www.ue.org/Libraries/Shared_RML/Public_School_News_Cyberbullying_Protecting_Children_in_the_School_Domain_--_01-04.sflb.ashx
This issue of *Public School News* focuses specifically on bullying through electronic media and provides an overview of several federal laws intended to protect children when they are online. The publication discusses policy recommendations, including an acceptable computer use policy and a policy limiting or prohibiting the use of handheld electronic devices at school, and also suggests steps schools, parents, and students could take to help prevent cyberbullying.

Alfred University Online Resources

- my.alfred.edu/index.cfm/fuseaction/student_policies.index.cfm
This page on Alfred’s website contains links to a variety of policies, including the student Code of Conduct. The page also links to a series of FAQs for parents that describes Alfred’s “Parents as Partners” philosophy and, among other things, outlines limitations that FERPA places on the university’s ability to share information with parents.
- our.alfred.edu/index.cfm/fuseaction/brt.home.cfm?CFID=2856357&CFTOKEN=81570941
The web page for Alfred’s Bias Response Team (BRT), chaired by roundtable speaker Norm Pollard, describes its purpose and membership, including contact information for all team members, and provides a link for submitting incident reports. The page notes that in addition to incidents of bias or discrimination, the BRT will review “issues with campus climate.”

Higher Education Policies Against Bullying

Although many higher education institutions, like Alfred University, do not use “bullying” language in their policies, below are examples of three institutions that do. These policies cover bullying by any member of the campus community, not just students.

- **Bossier Parrish Community College (Bossier City, La.)**
www.bpcc.edu/studenthandbook/generalpolicies.html
This community college’s Anti-Bullying Policy defines prohibited bullying as “severe or repeated use by one or more individuals of written, verbal, or electronic communication, or a physical act or gesture or exclusion directed at another individual.” Students and employees who bully others are subject to discipline under the appropriate policies.
- **University of New Mexico (UNM)**
www.unm.edu/~ubppm/d2240.htm
The university’s Respectful Campus Policy, which was adopted in draft form in November 2010, provides detailed examples of various forms of prohibited bullying, including physical, verbal, nonverbal, and anonymous conduct. The policy instructs anyone who believes a student has engaged in bullying to use the complaint procedure outlined in the university’s student code of conduct. While the policy does not specifically prohibit cyberbullying, the description of “anonymous” bullying can encompass some cyberbullying. In addition, UNM has separate computer use guidelines that would apply to certain instances of online bullying (www.unm.edu/~ubppm/ubppmanual/2510.htm).

- **Westfield State University (Westfield, Mass.)**

www.wsc.ma.edu/prospective-students/campus-life/student-handbook/student-life-policies/anti-bullying-mobbing-and-harassment-policy/

Westfield has an Anti-Bullying, Mobbing, and Harassment Policy that broadly defines bullying as “abusive conduct relative to acts, omissions, or both, that a reasonable person would find hostile, based on the severity, nature, and frequency of the conduct and without regard to the method of delivery, such as verbal, written, or electronic.” The policy applies to the entire college community, covering employees as well as students.

K-12 Policies Against Bullying

Massachusetts Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

www.doe.mass.edu/bullying/ModelPlan.doc

Following several high-profile student suicides that seemed to be connected to bullying, in May 2010 Massachusetts passed legislation mandating bullying prevention efforts. Schools were required to submit plans for implementation by the end of the year. In August 2010, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education issued a Model Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, which the state attorney general said schools should use as guidance for developing their own plans.

The model plan document contains broad language that prohibits bullying, including cyberbullying. The ban on bullying extends beyond school grounds and related places, such as bus stops, to encompass bullying behavior at locations that are not owned or even used by a school if the behavior “creates a hostile environment” at school, infringes on a person’s rights at school, or causes a substantial and material disruption to the education process. Similarly, the model plan extends the prohibition on cyberbullying to use of electronic systems or devices that are not owned or used by a school if the conduct would have a negative impact on the school environment, an individual’s rights, or the education process.

Public School Districts

- **Fairfax County Public Schools (Falls Church, Va.)**

www.fcps.edu/dss/ips/ssaw/SRNR/2010-11-SRR.pdf

Consistent with Virginia law, the Fairfax County Public Schools requires both parents and students in grades K-12 to sign an annual acknowledgment that they have received the “Student Responsibilities and Rights” handbook. Individual school principals are “requested,” but not required, to review the book with their teachers. Page 16 defines prohibited “disruptive or inappropriate behavior” for which school principals have the discretion to discipline to include “[c]onduct, including fighting, making threats, stalking, or intimidating, including bullying, that endangers the well-being of other students or school staff members.” The glossary defines bullying as “physical or psychological harassment on the part of one or more students toward another.”

- **Richland School District (Richland, Wash.)**

www.rsd.edu/resources/bullying-harassment-policy.html

Richland prohibits harassment, intimidation, bullying, or cyberbullying. Those terms are generally defined to include any “written or other visual communication, verbal communication, or physical act, gesture or omission, engaged in with the intent to, creating a substantial and unjustifiable risk of, creating the threat of, or with the natural end result of” (among other things) causing physical, emotional or mental harm to students or others, damaging property, or substantially interfering with the educational experience. Cyberbullying is broadly defined to mean such actions taken while using electronic media that includes but is not limited to “email messages, text messages, instant messages, social networking sites, Internet based video sites, and posting of blogs.”

Independent Schools

- **Chicago Waldorf School (Chicago, Ill.)**

www.chicagowaldorf.org/school-life/hs-student-handbook-11

The “General Conduct Guidelines” for Chicago Waldorf School state that the school “seeks to build a climate of mutual respect, trust, courtesy, and fairness.” The school defines unacceptable behavior under this standard to include harassment, bullying, and even teasing, which “becomes bullying when it is carried too far.” Consequences for violations can include a verbal warning, counseling, detention, suspension, probation, or dismissal.

- **Milton Academy (Milton, Mass.)**

www.milton.edu/parents/anti-bullying.cfm

Milton Academy’s Anti-Bullying Policy is a good example of how an independent school has incorporated the 2010 Massachusetts Anti-Bullying Law and its model plan document. Milton “prohibits bullying, physical or verbal assault, hazing, abuse, cruelty, or any sort of harassment (on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, class, or disability), and regards such acts as serious discipline offenses.” The ban applies regardless of whether the interaction occurs face to face or by electronic means. Milton encourages students and parents to report any bullying, and requires faculty and staff to do so. In addition, the policy describes how Milton will investigate and respond to reports of bullying and commits to training faculty and staff on the policy, and in particular their reporting obligations, at least annually.

- **Pinecrest Schools (Canyon County, Calif.)**

pinecrestschools.com/Canyon/information/handbook/part1.htm#conduct

Pinecrest’s rules on student conduct state that the school “expects proper behavior from its students,” and specifically that “[s]tudents are not to harass, abuse, bully, tease, threaten, torment, humiliate, or intimidate other students either physically, mentally, or emotionally. Actions such as name calling, unwelcome physical contact, and insults are detrimental to a positive school environment, and will not be tolerated.” Both students and parents are required each year to read and return to the school signed acknowledgment of a document setting forth the Golden Rules of behavior.

Other Resources

- **Billitteri, Thomas J., “Preventing Bullying: Do anti-harassment laws violate students’ rights?”**
CQ Researcher, Dec. 10, 2010

law.pace.edu/files/pressreleases/Bullying.pdf

This article contains information and resources on bullying that both K-12 and higher education institutions should find useful. For example, it summarizes recent research into bullying in general and cyberbullying in particular. It discusses research on the frequency of bullying among students and the attitudes of adults toward the severity of the bullying problem, as well as where they believe primary prevention responsibility lies. The article also gives an overview of state laws governing bullying, with special attention to legislation recently passed in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New Jersey.

- www.stopbullying.gov/

This website collects and consolidates helpful information and resources on bullying from government agencies such as the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services. The site provides links to numerous research papers on bullying and its prevention and to other online resources. These resources include material specific to certain forms of bullying, such as cyberbullying and bullying on the basis of sexual orientation.

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