



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

December 13, 2013

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: *Model Policy to Address Bullying in Virginia's Schools*

On October 24, 2013, the Virginia Board of Education adopted the [Model Policy to Address Bullying in Virginia's Schools](#). The 2013 Virginia General Assembly enacted HB 1871, which amended the *Code of Virginia* at [§ 22.1-276.01](#), to provide a definition of "bullying" as follows:

"...any aggressive and unwanted behavior that is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim; involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor or aggressors and victim; and is repeated over time or causes severe emotional trauma. 'Bullying' includes cyber bullying. 'Bullying' does not include ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument or peer conflict."

The bill also added a new *Code* [§ 22.1-291.4](#) to require that "Each school board shall implement, by July 1, 2014, policies and procedures to educate school board employees about bullying, as defined in [§ 22.1-276.01](#), and the need to create a bully-free environment."

HB 1871, legislation passed by the 2013 General Assembly, also requires:

"That the Board of Education develop, by January 1, 2014, model policies and procedures for use by each school board to educate school board employees about bullying, as defined in [§ 22.1-276.01](#), and the need to create a bully-free environment."

The Board's policy presents effective strategies and practices to prevent and to address bullying, to intervene with those who bully, and to respond to the victims of bullying behavior. It is intended to promote the practice of: (1) educating students about preventing and reporting bullying behavior; and (2) training staff in proactive ways to prevent and intervene in bullying situations. Furthermore, it promotes and provides procedures for investigating incidents and maintaining accurate data on the findings. Analysis of data should be used to bolster and improve bullying reduction and prevention efforts as discussed in the model policy. Additional resources may be found on the Virginia Department of Education's Web site by clicking on this link to the [Bullying Prevention](#) Web page.

For additional information, please contact Dr. Cynthia Cave, director of student services, at 804-225-2818, or via e-mail at Cynthia.Cave@doe.virginia.gov or Jo Ann Burkholder, coordinator, student assistance systems, at 804-371-7586, or via e-mail at Joann.Burkholder@doe.virginia.gov.

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