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Addendum to Student Conduct and Discipline Policy

Sherburne Elementary School Bullying Prevention Plan

1. Introduction

Bullying is a form of dangerous and disrespectful behavior that will not be permitted or tolerated. Bullying may involve a range of misconduct that, based on the severity, will warrant a measured response of corrective action and/or discipline. Behaviors that do not rise to the level of bullying, as defined below, still may be subject to intervention and/or discipline under another section of the discipline plan or a discipline policy.

2. Definition

Bullying means any overt act or combination of such acts directed against a student by another student or group of students and which:

- (a) occurs during the school day on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored activity;
- (b) is intended to ridicule, humiliate, or intimidate the student; and
- (c) is repeated over time.¹

3. Notice of Prohibition Against Bullying and Anti-Bullying Interventions

The Sherburne Elementary School recognizes that students should have a safe, orderly, civil and positive learning environment and that bullying has no place and will not be tolerated in its schools. The Sherburne Elementary School shall:

- (a) Include the prohibition against bullying in student or school handbooks and in other ways make students aware of the prohibition against bullying, the penalties for engaging in bullying, and the procedures for reporting bullying.
- (b) Develop strategies for school staff to prevent and intervene in bullying. See Appendix A for prevention and intervention strategies.

4. Reporting, Investigating, and Notifying Parents of Bullying Reports

To address bullying, the Sherburne Elementary School:

- (a) Encourages students to report personally or anonymously to teachers and school administrators acts of bullying.² The Sherburne Elementary School has established the following methods for such reporting:

Reporting: School Principal or Guidance Counselor

¹ Conduct that might otherwise be considered bullying but *does not* occur during the school day, on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored event still may be subject to disciplinary action pursuant to 16 V.S.A. §§1161(a) and 1162; however, such misconduct would not meet the definition of bullying.

² Any student, who knowingly makes false accusations regarding bullying, may be subject to disciplinary action.

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- (b) Encourages parents or guardians of students to file written reports of suspected bullying. See (a) above.
- (c) Requires teachers and other school staff who witness acts of bullying or receive student reports of bullying to promptly notify the Principal.
- (d) Requires the Principal to accept and review all reports of bullying, including anonymous reports. If after initial inquiry, an anonymous or oral report appears to warrant further investigation, school districts shall promptly continue with an investigation. School administrators shall investigate any written reports.
- (e) As with any other disciplinary action, requires school staff to notify the parent or guardian of a student who commits a verified act of bullying of the response of the school staff and consequences that may result from further acts of bullying.
- (f) To the extent permitted under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, (FERPA), requires school staff to notify the parent or guardian of a student who is a target of bullying of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying.³

5. Data Gathering

The Sherburne Elementary School delegates the responsibility of data collection to the Act 51 Coordinator. He/she shall collect data on the number of reported incidents of bullying and the number of incidents that have been verified and to make such data available to the Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Education and to the public. See the Department's Safe Schools Web page for further information on data gathering. (www.state.vt.us/educ/new/html/pgm_safeschools.html#data)

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³ FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the confidentiality of student records and the school district must comply with this law, as well as a similar state law. When the school administrator contacts a parent about the school district's response to a bullying incident, he/she may discuss information about an investigation and corrective action taken, but only to the extent that it may be done without disclosing information about any students other than the student subjected to the bullying.

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Appendix A: Quick Reference on Bullying Prevention & Intervention**Possible Strategies for Prevention**

- Assess the school environment.
- Adopt a comprehensive approach that considers the bully, the target and bystanders.
- Provide bullying prevention and intervention training to all faculty and staff.
- Closely supervise all areas of the school.
- Update discipline plan and procedures; adopt all legally required related policies.
- Utilize multiple means for publicizing clear behavioral standards/rules.
- Consistently and fairly enforce standards/rules.
- Establish an anonymous reporting system.
- Encourage parent and community involvement in bullying prevention.
- Use classroom management techniques for response to classroom behavior and when needed, use appropriate discipline.
- As warranted, refer victims and bullies to school counselors or mental health professionals.

Possible Steps for Intervening in Bullying Situations

- Intervene immediately to stop the bullying.
- Talk to the bully and the victim separately. If more than one student is involved in bullying behavior, talk to each separately, in quick succession. (Expect bullies to minimize [or] deny their actions.)
- Remind the bully about school and classroom rules, reiterate what behavior is expected, and discuss sanctions that will be imposed for future bullying behavior.
- Reassure the victim that everything possible will be done to prevent a recurrence.
- Make other students aware of the consequences of the bullying behavior. Reiterate the school's policy of zero tolerance toward bullying.
- Phone the parents of both the bully and the victim as soon as possible. If possible, involve the parents in designing a plan of action.
- Continue to monitor the behavior of the bully and the safety of the victim.
- Consult administrators, teachers, and staff members to alert them to the problem and to get a better understanding of it.
- If the situation doesn't change, remove the bully - not the victim - from the classroom.

Education World citing The Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System of the London Family Court Clinic. www.education-world.com/a_issues/issues103.shtml

For bullying prevention and intervention, see also:

1. BEST: Building Effective Supports for Teaching Students with Behavioral Challenges. Call Anne Dubie, (802) 656-5775 or visit <http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/best/>.
2. Bullying Strategies That Work, Education World.
www.education-world.com/a_issues/issues103.shtml
3. Blueprints for Violence Prevention. www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/
4. Think You Know What A Bully Looks Like? Think Again... National PTA.
www.pta.org/bullying/
5. Project on Teasing and Bullying, Wellesley Centers for Women,
www.wcwoonline.org/bullying/
6. A World of Difference Institute.
www.adl.org/education/edu_awod/awod_classroom.asp