



VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association

Leadership · Advocacy · Support

2024 Bullying Prevention Month Toolkit



Participation in VSBA initiatives and observances is optional. School boards in Virginia have the discretion on whether to participate locally. All related materials from the Association are shared as suggested ideas for implementation for any board that may choose to do so.

October 2024 – VSBA Bullying Prevention Month

Dear School Board Member/Superintendent,

In an effort to promote awareness of school bullying, the VSBA Board of Directors has designated the month of October as VSBA Bullying Prevention Month. This initiative is crucial in raising awareness and combating bullying in our schools.

Childhood bullying is a significant problem nationwide. It can cause school absenteeism, mental and physical stress, poor school performance, low self-esteem, and in some cases, school violence. Statistics show bullying increases the risk of depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, lower academic achievement, and dropping out of school (Centers for Disease Control 2024)

School board members, superintendents, teachers, administrators, and parents play a critical role in creating a climate where bullying is not tolerated. Bullying is a pervasive issue that can significantly impact a student's academic performance and emotional well-being. It is imperative that we, as educational leaders, take a proactive stance in addressing and preventing bullying within our schools.

VSBA will publicize Bullying Prevention Month in our newsletter, on the VSBA website, through social media, and will send out a statewide news release urging news organizations to provide coverage of local activities. School divisions are encouraged to issue their own news releases, and it would be helpful if divisions would apprise the VSBA of any related activities taking place in their division. Potential activities could include:

- **Adopt a proclamation:** Similar to the one adopted by the VSBA Board of Directors (see enclosed).
- **Utilize Social Media:** Use your school's social media platforms to share information and resources related to bullying prevention.
- **Implement School-Wide Activities:** Plan activities such as assemblies, poster contests, and themed days that promote kindness, inclusion, and respect.
- **Host Educational Workshops:** Conduct parent/caregiver workshops on bullying, which could include the opportunity for parents/caregivers to spend time with their child's guidance counselor.

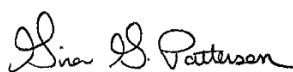
This guide includes several resources to assist you in these efforts, including references to VSBA sample policies on bullying, a sample news release, and a proclamation adopted by the VSBA Board of Directors.

We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to help spread awareness of the serious nature of bullying in our schools.

Sincerely,



Dr. Cardell Patillo, Jr.
VSBA President



Gina G. Patterson
Executive Director

VSBA Anti-Bullying Policies (SAMPLE)

The VSBA Policy Manual includes several policies that address bullying. For example, Sample Policy JFC Student Conduct states:

Bullying is prohibited. "Bullying" means 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 principal or principal's designee notifies the parent of any student involved in an alleged incident of bullying within 24 hours of learning of the allegation of bullying.

Sample Policy IGAI Character Education states that the division's character education program will include instruction on the inappropriateness of bullying.

Sample Policy GCL Professional Staff Development provides that the division's professional development program educates school board employees about bullying and the need to create a bully-free environment.

Sample Policy GAB/IIBEA Acceptable Computer System Use provides that the division's technology guidelines include provisions designed to educate students and employees on appropriate online behavior, including cyberbullying awareness and response.

In addition to policies that address bullying by name, it is important to remember that bullying is a term which incorporates many types of conduct. Some of that conduct, such as hitting, may amount to criminal misconduct. When that is the case, the conduct must be reported to law enforcement officials pursuant to VSBA Sample Policy CLA Reporting Acts of Violence and Substance Abuse. The conduct may also be addressed by VSBA Sample Policy JFHA/GBA Prohibition Against Harassment and Retaliation. Whenever a division is confronted with conduct that may be bullying, it should carefully consider whether the conduct is also prohibited harassment. When a division discovers harassment, it should consider not only appropriate discipline for the harasser(s), but should also consider whether broader remedies, such as school-wide or division wide training, are necessary.

VSBA Board of Directors Proclamation

WHEREAS, school bullying has become an increasingly significant problem in the United States and Virginia; and

WHEREAS, over twenty percent of the youth in the United States are estimated to be involved in bullying each year, either as a bully or as a victim; and

WHEREAS, an estimated fourteen percent of public schools report that bullying is a discipline problem occurring daily or at least once a week;

WHEREAS, bullying can take many forms, including verbal, physical, and in cyberspace, and can happen in many places on and off school grounds;

WHEREAS, it is important to Virginia parents, students, teachers, and school administrators to be aware of bullying, and to encourage discussion of the problem as a school community; and

WHEREAS, the VSBA has developed sample policies to encourage positive behaviors and to eliminate bullying behaviors;

Now, **THEREFORE**, the Virginia School Boards Association recognizes the month of October 2024 as VSBA Bullying Prevention Month, with the intention that the issue of bullying and its prevention be discussed in Virginia schools and classrooms during that time.

Sample News Release

For Immediate Release

[DATE]

Contact

[NAME]

[PHONE]

October is VSBA Bullying Prevention Month

[CITY/COUNTY], VA -- School board members, superintendents, teachers, and parents can play a critical role in creating a climate where bullying is not tolerated. It has been proven that when adults and children stand together, bullying ends. This is why the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) has declared October as VSBA Bullying Prevention Month.

Childhood bullying is a significant problem nationwide. It can cause school absenteeism, mental and physical stress, poor school performance, low self-esteem, and, in some cases, school violence. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) released that middle schools have the highest reports of bullying at 28% followed by high schools at 16%, combined schools at 12% and primary schools at 9% ([About Bullying, 2024](#)). Bullying is common and can include cyber, physical, and verbal.

[INSERT QUOTE FROM BOARD MEMBER AND/OR SUPERINTENDENT]

Local activities include [INSERT LIST OF ACTIVITIES]

About the Virginia School Boards Association

Virginia School Boards Association, a voluntary, nonpartisan organization of Virginia school boards, promotes excellence in public education through advocacy, training, and services. The Association offers conference, information, training, and counseling designed to meet the needs of the Commonwealth's educational leaders.

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