Anti-Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Work Group Report 2011

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Anti-Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Work Group Report 2011

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Executive Summary

Legislation

Recognizing harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB) to be problems in schools, the 2010 Legislature passed Substitute House Bill 2801 (SHB 2801) which was intended to expand the tools, information, and strategies available to districts to combat HIB. This legislation mandated that school districts update policies and procedures. The 2011 Legislature found that while updated school district HIB policies and procedures was a step in the right direction for preventing negative behaviors in schools, more needed to be done. Second Substitute House Bill 1163 (2SHB 1163) charged the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) with creating a work group focused on preventing HIB and increasing student knowledge on issues relating to student mental health and youth suicide.

Meetings

In the spring and summer of 2011, OSPI began the process of organizing the Anti-Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Work Group. Designated stakeholder groups and individuals were contacted and invited to participate.

The first meeting of the work group was held September 14, 2011, at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. At that meeting, the mandated work of the group was explained and summarized into the following nine main areas:

1. Considering whether disaggregated data should be collected regarding incidents of HIB.
2. Examining possible procedures for anonymous reporting of HIB.
3. Identifying curriculum and best practices to improve school climate, create respectful learning environments, and train staff.
4. Incorporating instruction about mental health, youth suicide, and bullying and harassment prevention.
5. Recommending best practices for informing parents about HIB.
6. Training primary district contact personnel.
7. Recommending educator preparation and certification requirements.
8. Examining discipline policies.
9. Collaborating with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to examine and recommend policies to protect K–12 students attending community and technical colleges.

A second meeting was held October 12, 2011. That meeting focused more in the formal organization of the work group and began to respond to questions from the first meeting. The third meeting of the full work group is scheduled for December 7, 2011, at the Criminal Justice Training Commission in Burien, WA.

There were also two additional, small meetings held between the second and third meetings. One of these was a focus group discussion as a part of the 2011 Washington State School Directors’ Association (WSSDA) conference. The other was an online meeting held to review the contents of this report.
**Current Status**

As of this time, all mandated stakeholder groups have participated in the work group. The nine identified issues of the group have gone through a preliminary prioritization. The work group is establishing its internal processes and methods of operation, and efforts continue to facilitate and maximize participation for the very diverse work group membership.

This report will expand on each of these items. Agendas, minutes, and related documents can be found in the work group link on the bullying and harassment page of the School Safety Center Web site.

In addition, in a letter dated November 21, 2011, from the United States Department of Education, Washington was notified that it is one of four states selected to participate in an implementation study of youth bullying policies in schools, based on the comprehensiveness of our state bullying legislation.
Introduction

Recognizing harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB) to be problems in schools, the Legislature passed Substitute House Bill 2801 in 2010. This legislation was intended to expand the tools, information, and strategies available to districts to combat HIB. This legislation mandated that school districts update their policy and procedures. All districts were to adopt the new policy and procedures by August 2011. The 2011 Legislature found that having updated school district HIB policies and procedures was a step in the right direction for preventing negative behaviors in schools, but they also recognized that more steps were needed. Therefore, Second Substitute House Bill 1163 (2SHB 1163) charged the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) with creating a work group on preventing bullying, intimidation, and harassment and increasing student knowledge on issues relating to student mental health and youth suicide. This is the first report of the newly created Anti-Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Work Group, herein referred to as the work group.

The function of the work group is to help maintain focus and attention on anti-bullying and anti-harassment. To accomplish this, the work group was charged with investigating specific areas of consideration around harassment, intimidation, and bullying. These areas cover such issues as curriculum, best practices, and data collection.

More specifically, the work group was charged with investigating nine areas of consideration around harassment, intimidation, and bullying:

1. Considering whether additional disaggregated data should be collected regarding incidents of bullying and harassment or disciplinary actions, and making recommendations to OSPI for collection of such data.
2. Examining possible procedures for anonymous reporting of incidents of bullying and harassment.
3. Identifying curriculum and best practices for school districts to improve school climate, create respectful learning environments, and train staff and students in de-escalation and intervention techniques.
6. Recommending training for district personnel who are designated as the primary contact regarding the policy and procedure and for school resource officers and other school security personnel.
7. Recommending educator preparation and certification requirements in harassment, intimidation, and bullying prevention and de-escalation and intervention techniques for teachers, educational staff associates, and school administrators.
8. Examining and recommending policies for discipline of students and staff who harass, intimidate, or bully.
9. In collaboration with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, examining and recommending policies to protect K–12 students attending community and technical colleges from harassment, intimidation, and bullying.

The work group is required to submit a biennial progress and status report to the Governor and the Education Committees of the Legislature beginning December 1, 2011, with additional reports by December 1, 2013, and December 1, 2015. The work group will terminate effective January 1, 2016. A draft of this report was made available to work group members, and on November 22, 2011, members were invited to participate in an online meeting to review the document and provide input into its final contents.

The Anti-Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Work Group

Establishing the Work Group

Prior to convening the work group, OSPI held several pre-planning meetings in the spring and summer of 2011. To ensure representation from across stakeholder groups, the legislation mandated that the work group must include representatives from the State Board of Education, Washington State Parent Teacher Association, Washington State Association of School Psychologists, school directors, school administrators, principals, teachers, school counselors, classified school staff, youth, community organizations, and parents. OSPI contacted agencies, organizations, and individuals representing these stakeholder groups and invited them to participate in the work group. As of this report, all mandated stakeholder groups are represented, and all groups have been involved in the early planning and organizational activities of the work group. As noted below, the work group is still in the process of formalizing that representation through a process of submitting commitment letters to OSPI.

The First Meeting of the Work Group

The first official gathering of the Anti-Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Work Group took place September 14, 2011, at OSPI. Martin Mueller, Assistant Superintendent of Student Support, has been designated as State Superintendent Randy Dorn’s appointed Chair of the work group.

At the first meeting in September, Chairman Mueller provided an overview of 2SHB 1163, the role of OSPI, and the work group’s mandate. Representative Marko Liias, primary sponsor of 2SHB 1163, shared the history of events leading to the legislation creating the work group. He underscored the commitment of the Legislature to school safety and the day-to-day safety of school children in the state of Washington. Within that context, harassment, intimidation, and bullying were recognized as important issues to be addressed, not only in policy, but in action as well.

By way of history, School Safety Center Program Supervisor, Jeff Soder, shared background information on Washington State’s bullying milestones from the initial 2002 legislation to the present day. In 2002, the first legislation was passed which required districts to have a policy
addressing harassment, intimidation, and bullying. A sample policy was created by the Washington State School Directors’ Association (WSSDA) and training funds were made available. In 2007, the initial legislation was updated to include a prohibition of electronic forms of bullying, commonly referred to as cyberbullying. This was followed by 2008 legislation requesting an in-depth bullying study in Washington. The product of that study was *Bullying in Washington Schools: Update 2008.* Substitute House Bill 2801 (RCW 28A.300.285) was passed in 2010, which required OSPI to create, and local districts to adopt, model state policy and procedure by August 1, 2011. To strengthen anti-bullying efforts and ensure compliance with policy, districts were also required to identify a district HIB compliance officer. Finally, the 2011 Legislature passed 2SHB 1163, which required creation of the Anti-Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Work Group.

The OSPI School Safety Center Web site was introduced to the group, with a focused look at the bullying and harassment pages. The state model policy and procedure, guidance and training materials, and several other documents and resources are available to districts, schools, and others through the site. A specific work group page has also been created to keep participants updated on meetings, to share documents, and to keep members apprised of the ongoing work of the group.

With this historical background, the nine areas of consideration from 2SHB 1163, and the work with which the work group has been charged were explained and discussed. As a way of engaging participants, an introductory brainstorming and fact finding activity asked for ideas on what people collectively know and what they need to know with respect to the nine elements of the legislation in order to effectively address bullying. The results of this early engagement activity can be found on the Anti-Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Work Group Web site at [http://www.k12.wa.us/safetycenter/BullyingHarassment/WorkGroup.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/safetycenter/BullyingHarassment/WorkGroup.aspx).

Insofar as there are many stakeholder groups, organizations, and individuals who responded to the call for participation, the number of participants and the size of the group is large and potentially unwieldy. In order to ensure full representation and consistent participation over time, and to begin to create group norms and processes, the formalities of organizing the work group were also begun. Chairman Mueller asked the group to consider:

1. Identifying official representatives for all stakeholder groups.
2. Identifying a meeting structure so as to facilitate the work of the work group.
3. Prioritizing areas of effort.
4. Establishing frequency of meetings.
5. Determining viable alternatives to face-to-face meetings.
6. Determining viable alternative meeting locations.
7. Suggesting other general recommendations to ensure ongoing participation.
8. Defining reporting processes.

**The Second Meeting of the Work Group**

The second meeting of the work group was held October 14, 2011. With the information gathered at the September meeting, the focus of the second meeting was fourfold:

1. To address some of the “need to know” items identified during the first meeting.
2. To identify a process for formalizing group membership and organizational commitment.
3. To establish a group decision making process and group norms.
4. To begin to prioritize the work of the group.

In response to specific requests for information around the prevalence of harassment, intimidation, and bullying, and the availability of Washington State data, two data-oriented presentations were arranged.

Deb Came, OSPI Director of Student Information, presented an overview of the state’s Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS). CEDARS collects data from school districts statewide. CEDARS will begin collecting student-level data on bullying, suspensions, and expulsions in the 2012–13 school year.

Dixie Grunenfelder, OSPI Prevention/Intervention Program Supervisor, followed with a presentation on the state’s Healthy Youth Survey (HYS). Administered in Grades 6, 8, 10, and 12, the HYS has been developed and vetted by several agencies and is based on national and local surveys. The HYS gathers student self-reported information on a wide variety of health and safety issues for schools. The data provide very beneficial information to schools and districts which participate, and help those districts and schools in school safety planning. Longitudinal data on the number of times students have been bullied in the last month is available to the public at the district and county level.

The presentations were well received and provided background information for the data collection component in 2SHB 1163.

With respect to agenda item No. 2, by this second meeting there were over 65 individual participants representing the constituencies required by the legislation. The number of participants underscored both the interest in the issues surrounding HIB, as well as the more urgent and practical need to formally identify designated members of the work group who would have decision making authority.

Participants discussed the issue of group size and agreed that a letter of support from organizations, agencies, or represented groups was in order. The letter would identify organizations’ official representatives, limit the size of the work group, and define “official” work group membership. However, it was reiterated that the actual work of the work group was not limited to the “official” members of the group. Rather, it was expected and encouraged that others would be invited to participate in whole group and subgroup activities over time as the need arose or as a specific area of endeavor was undertaken.

To facilitate the process of establishing official representation, OSPI was tasked with generating a support letter template to be shared with the work group and sent to all current stakeholder organizations, agencies, and representative groups. The letter would be adapted by the organization, the official representative designated, the letter signed, and returned to Chairman Mueller’s office prior to the next work group meeting.

On agenda item No. 3, the participants also agreed to a consensus process for decision making. For such occasions where consensus is not reached, a majority vote of “official” representative
work group members would be used. As of the second meeting, all group decisions were reached by consensus.

In addition to discussions around official representation and decision making, the work group also considered the challenges of limited travel budget and time. Participants represent constituencies from across Washington. They also represent organizations and agencies which operate on various work schedules. In an attempt to ensure as broad and complete participation opportunities as possible, the work group has also planned its meeting times and locations to meet the needs of as many members as possible and to take advantage of various video-teleconferencing solutions. Meeting information is also shared electronically through the OSPI School Safety Center Web site where a work group page has been developed.

Finally, approaching the core of their work in agenda item No. 4, the participants began the process of prioritizing the work group’s tasks. The nine charges to the work group were reviewed. Participants were asked to identify those which they considered most urgent, and the ones which the group should approach first. The group indicated a strong desire for training and curriculum. The initial priority order which the work group identified is as follows:

1. Curriculum and Best Practice
   - Identify curriculum and best practices for school districts to improve school climate, create respectful learning environments, and train staff and students in de-escalation and intervention techniques.
   - Identify curriculum and best practices for incorporating instruction about mental health, youth suicide prevention, and prevention of bullying and harassment.

2. Discipline—Policy and Procedure
   - Examine and recommend policies for discipline of students and staff who harass, intimidate, or bully.

3. Compliance Officer Training
   - Recommend training for district personnel who are designated as the primary contact regarding the policy and procedure and for school resource officers and other school security personnel.

4. Informing Parents About HIB Policy and Procedure
   - Recommend best practices for informing parents about the harassment, intimidation, and bullying prevention policy and procedure under RCW 28A.300.285 and involving parents in improving school climate.

5. Data Collection
   - Consider whether additional disaggregated data should be collected regarding incidents of bullying and harassment or disciplinary actions and make recommendations to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction for collection of such data.

6. Anonymous Reporting
   - Examine possible procedures for anonymous reporting of incidents of bullying and harassment.

7. Safety of K–12 Students on College Campuses
   - In collaboration with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, examine and recommend policies to protect K–12 students attending community and technical colleges from harassment, intimidation, and bullying.
8. Instruction about Suicide Prevention and HIB  
   - Identify curriculum and best practices for incorporating instruction about mental health, youth suicide prevention, and prevention of bullying and harassment.

9. Pre-service Teacher Training  
   - Recommend educator preparation and certification requirements in harassment, intimidation, and bullying prevention and de-escalation and intervention techniques for teachers, educational staff associates, and school administrators.

There has been strong agreement among the group for the need for classroom curriculum and professional development around harassment, intimidation, and bullying and best practices to address them in school. Throughout this initial process and subsequent conversation, it was also noted that if the work group were to address the top three priority items, much of what is included in the remaining items would already have been addressed. Anonymous reporting, for example, would be infused into staff, student, and parent trainings. Within that context, the work group will revisit this initial prioritized list. If there is consensus among the work group, they will begin to address the elements in that order.

**The Washington State School Directors’ Association (WSSDA) Focus Group**

On Saturday, November 19, 2011, a WSSDA Focus Group meeting was held as a part of the 2011 WSSDA annual conference. Approximately 25 WSSDA members from across Washington participated. The focus group was appraised of the initial work of the work group, its initial prioritizations, and was asked for additional input. The focus group did not disagree with the priority sequence from the larger work group; however, there were two overriding suggestions which the group put forward to be addressed. First, the focus group suggested that the concepts of emotional and psychological harm be considered in the definition of harassment, intimidation, and bullying with the understanding that some mechanism for measuring these effects would be necessary. Second, the focus group commented on the need for clarification regarding the definition of hazing and its relationship to the proscribed activities. The focus group also raised concerns regarding the budgetary and staffing impacts of the new requirements on the schools. Additional input underscored the need for process around parental notification and training of the designated district contact people. This input will be shared at the upcoming work group meeting in December 2011.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the work group has begun its work to help maintain focus and attention on anti-bullying and anti-harassment and to monitor districts’ progress toward the reduction of bullying behavior. As mandated by the Legislature, the work group currently includes representatives from the State Board of Education, Washington State Parent Teacher Association, Washington State Association of School Psychologists, school directors, school administrators, principals, teachers, school counselors, classified school staff, youth, community organizations, and parents. Finally, the work group is establishing its processes for addressing the nine areas of consideration around harassment, intimidation, and bullying which it was charged with investigating.
The next scheduled meeting of the Anti-Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Work Group will be held at the Criminal Justice Training Commission in Burien, WA, on December 7, 2011. At that time, stakeholder groups will formally commit to the work ahead. The work group will establish its ongoing meeting schedule. It will also revisit its initial prioritization of the nine mandated areas of work and begin the process of creating subgroups to address them. In addition, the work group will be advised of the November 21, 2011, letter from the United States Department of Education, in which Washington was notified that it is one of four states selected based on the comprehensiveness of the state bullying legislation to participate in an implementation study of youth bullying policies in schools.

The next report to the Legislature is due December 2013. In the meantime, documentation on the progress of the work group will be available through its page on the OSPI School Safety Center Web site.

Members are fully invested in this work and are eager to proceed. The members of the Anti-Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Work Group would like to thank the Legislature for the opportunity to work on these issues which are so critical to the safety and success of students and the establishment of positive school climate.

References

Anti-Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Work Group:

Bullying in Washington Schools: Update 2008:

Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS):

Healthy Youth Survey:

School Safety Center:

School Safety Center Bullying and Harassment:
  http://www.k12.wa.us/SafetyCenter/BullyingHarassment/default.aspx.

Substitute House Bill 2801: An Act Relating to Anti-Harassment Strategies in Schools:

Second Substitute House Bill 1163: An Act Relating to Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Prevention: