

# Kansas Blue Ribbon Task Force on Bullying Final Report



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December 10, 2019



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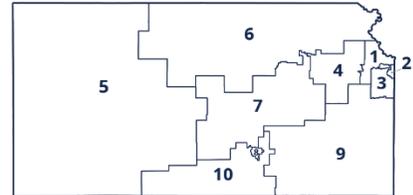


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SEPT. 2019

# Kansas Blue Ribbon Task Force on Bullying Final Report

## Table of Contents

- Executive Summary**..... 1
  
- Introduction** ..... 5
  
- The Kansas Legal and Policy Environment**.....8
  
- The Situation in Kansas**.....10
  
- The Kansas Advantage**.....12
  
- Barriers and Challenges in Addressing School Bullying**.....13
  - Definitional Concerns.....14
  - Cultural Awareness.....14
  - Evidence-Based Practices.....15
  - Issues of Implementation.....16
  - Cyberbullying.....16
  - School Climate and Culture.....17
  - Measurement and Accountability.....18
  - Time and Costs.....18
  
- Research and Best Practice**.....19
  
- Recommendations**.....21
  
- References**.....27
  
- Appendices**.....31
  - A - Task Force Membership.....31
  - B - State Statute KSA 72-6147.....34
  - C - SECD Graphic.....36

# Kansas Blue Ribbon Task Force on Bullying

## Executive Summary

Bullying in schools has been a persistent problem for generations. Peer bullying and victimization are concerns for students of all ages due to the negative outcomes that result for all those involved, including the targets of peer aggression, the perpetrators, and the witnesses or bystanders. With the Columbine High School shooting in 1999, and more recent shootings such as happened at a Parkland High School in Florida in 2018, the connection to bullying behavior towards the shooters heightened concern and interest in addressing bullying behavior. Bullied students have multiple school-related problems, including skipping school, feeling unsafe, being distracted, and having difficulty concentrating on lessons affecting school performance. Research has documented that bullied students report higher levels of loneliness and poorer health as well as greater levels of anxiety and depression, with both short-term and long-lasting effects. Bullied students are at high risk for depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, academic difficulties, substance abuse, delinquency and other negative behaviors.

In Kansas schools, survey data provided by the Kansas Communities That Cares Survey (KCTC, 2018), suggests that 55.7% of 6th graders, 63.3% of 8th graders, 60.4% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and 59.7% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders self-reported having seen someone being bullied. Overall, 27.3% of Kansas students completing the survey in 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades reported being bullied at school, with 17.9% indicating it was in the form of cyberbullying.

In April, 2019, Kansas Commissioner of Education, Dr. Randy Watson, appointed a Blue-Ribbon Task Force to examine issues of bullying in the state's schools and report recommendations to the State Board of Education by December 2019. The Task Force included 35 members (see attached list of Task Force members, Appendix A), and first met on April, 25<sup>th</sup> 2019 in Topeka. At that first meeting, the Task Force agreed upon the following objectives and goals:

1. Research and identify current bullying definitions, trends, incidents, and prevention measures occurring across the state.
2. Coordinate with stakeholders to address relevant issues effectively, to best meet the needs of students.
3. Review work in the areas of social-emotional learning as set forth by the State Board goals, identifying possible avenues that could reduce and prevent bullying and cyberbullying.
4. Review current statutes, regulations and policy to determine need for change.

5. Present recommendations to the Kansas Board of Education by presenting recommendations to address bullying, cyberbullying, prevention and training measures.

This report offers a set of recommendations for the State Board of Education to help school boards, administrators, teachers, students, families and communities in addressing this persistent problem. The report begins with an examination of the legal and policy environment regarding bullying in Kansas, then provides current information available on the scope of the problem. The advantages Kansas has to leverage current practices are discussed, along with the barriers and challenges faced in addressing bullying in schools. Then the report addresses the state of the research on bullying and bullying prevention and a discussion of best practices. The report ends with a set of recommendations for the State Board of Education to consider in addressing bullying in Kansas schools.

The Task Force offers seven main recommendations with numerous sub-recommendations, fully set out in this report. The Task Force recognizes that many supports for bullying prevention already exist and is not attaching a fiscal note to these recommendations, leaving that to the elected officials and policy makers to consider.

The recommendations are not suggested in order of priority, but rather as the collective efforts needed to address the bullying problem in Kansas schools. The following is a short summary of the Task Force recommendations:

- 1. Better support and direction for school districts**

Kansas law requires school districts to adopt bullying policies and plans and make provisions for training. More direction and support are needed for these efforts. Clear guidelines for strong policies and effective plans need be shared. A statewide unit should be established or appointed to offer guidance and support school districts as they implement policies, plans and training. A bank of promising practices needs to be collected and available for school districts.

- 2. Continue and develop the state's focus on social-emotional and character development education to address school bullying**

The research is clear about those youth behaviors that lead to school bullying. Preparation in social-emotional and character development skills are directly related to these bullying and victimization behaviors. Social-emotional growth is one of five measured outcomes in the Kansas Can initiative. Resources and supports available related to these initiatives in Kansas need to be shared through better communication efforts.

- 3. Examine the current state law and determine if it requires reconsideration**

The Kansas law on bullying is broad and is somewhat inconsistent with research identifying bullying as repetitive over time and involving a power imbalance. The same inconsistency is evident in the state definition of cyberbullying. It is recommended that the State Board of Education examine the current state law and provide appropriate

guidance.

**4. Local policies and plans must focus on relationships, school climate and culture, and the mental health impact of bullying in schools**

Bullying is a complex and multidimensional social issue. Bullying can occur in physical locations such as at the school, on a school bus, but can also take place virtually through online platforms such as social media and gaming. Different strategies are needed to address bullying based on the level of schooling, age of children and different school contexts. Changing school climate and culture takes time and persistence. Changing culture is especially difficult. To positively impact bullying behavior, schools need to focus on peer and adult-student relationships. A caring and safe environment is necessary. Any bullying plan must address the differing needs of students and staff identified by research regarding but not limited to biological sex, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religious faith, and socio-economic status. The whole school community needs to be involved in policies and plans addressing bullying, including students, staff, teachers, leaders, families and those in the larger community context. A trusted means for reporting bullying behavior needs to be developed and shared. Mental health and counseling support for schools need to be strengthened and new funding sources considered.

**5. The state needs better data on school bullying and measures for assessing program effectiveness.**

The KCTC survey is an ambitious effort to gather information from students across multiple dimensions. The survey currently contains seven questions regarding bullying. At the same time, no collectively accepted measures for assessing bullying exist in Kansas. Given there are disparities in bullying experiences for identifiable characteristics measures that enumerate those experiences by demographics should be available. It is recommended that the KCTC survey continue to be administered but improved in ways outlined in the report. In addition, the need for school climate and other teacher surveys should be considered. Districts need guidance in determining which bullying programs are truly evidenced-based. In addition, agreed upon variables and measures for assessing the effectiveness of bullying programs need to be identified. Any surveys conducted should include a common definition of bullying.

**6. Addressing Cyberbullying**

As technology and social media continue to proliferate across our society, it is expected that the incidences of cyberbullying will increase. Cyberbullying can be exceedingly pernicious as it can increase the number of witnesses and audience, while also being anonymous. Districts need to consider specific plans regarding cyberbullying, and work with teachers, students, families, caregivers and technology/social media experts in finding effective means for addressing this behavior. Information campaigns by districts with input from students are recommended.

**7. Training, professional development and teacher preparation**

Educators have a wide array of responsibilities. Teaching and learning are complex

matters that require a lot of skills. Academic achievement is important, as is the training of the other skills identified in the Kansans Can agenda. This includes growth on socio-emotional learning. But in order for schools to implement any program effectively, time, resources, and effective training are key. Training for in-service teachers and pre-service teachers on issues related to bullying and youth suicide prevention is recommended. The most promising practices to impact bullying behavior are those that are school-wide, universal and involve parents and families. This is the goal of social-emotional learning programs, and effective approaches should be shared and considered.

# Kansas Blue Ribbon Task Force on Bullying Final Report

## Introduction

Bullying has been a persistent problem in schools for generations. Research examining bullying actively started nearly fifty years ago (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Olweus, 1973, 1978). Peer bullying and victimization is a concern for students of all ages due to the negative outcomes that result for all those involved, including the targets, the perpetrators, and the witnesses or bystanders. With the Columbine High School shooting in 1999, and more recent shootings such as what happened at Parkland High School in Florida in 2018, the connection to bullying behavior towards the shooters heightened concern and interest in addressing bullying behavior. Bullying impacts student mental health. Indeed, data from the Kansas Communities That Care survey (KCTC, 2018) suggests that 17.92% of Kansas students thought about dying by suicide, with 11.59% having made plans and 5.08% having made an actual attempt. While not all student suicidal behavior directly relates to bullying, it is among the more significant factors prompting such behavior (Winsper et al., 2012; Arseneault et al., 2010).

Due to the proliferation of technology and social media across our culture, addressing bullying is especially difficult given the advent of cyberbullying. Lack of civility in personal interactions is a troubling phenomenon affecting all of American society today. Bullying incidents in our schools can take place both on and off school property and can occur virtually through online platforms and social media at any point during the day.

Finding means to deal with bullying is important as there is ample evidence that bullied students have multiple school-related and other problems. These typically include skipping school, feeling unsafe, being distracted and having difficulty concentrating on lessons affecting school performance. Bullied students report higher levels of loneliness and poorer health, and greater levels of anxiety and depression (Rahal, 2010; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). Arseneault et al. (2010) found that bullying can impact victims with short-term severe consequences and long-lasting effects. Thus, students who are bullied and the bullies themselves are at greater risk for feeling depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, academic difficulties, substance abuse, delinquency and other behaviors.

Specific data on bullying behavior in schools is hard to obtain given data collection challenges, and the numbers of those actually experiencing bullying differ from study to study. Data suggest the highest level of bullying is among middle school students, with it declining as students get older in high school. But students at all grade levels are affected. The recently released U.S. Department of Education School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCES, 2019) indicated that 20.2% of students ages 12-18 reported being bullied in school. Of the four regions of the country identified, the Midwest had the highest

percentage of students reporting bullying behavior at 23.5%. Over 15% of those reporting being bullied indicated it came online or through texts. Other studies suggest that the percentages of individuals who have experienced cyberbullying at some point in their lifetime have doubled from 18% to 35% between 2007 and 2016 (Patchin & Hinduja, 2016; Cyberbullying Research Center, 2019), suggesting that this is a growing concern that schools will face.

For Kansas schools, in response to the question about having seen someone bullied during the current year from the most recent KCTC survey (2018), 55.7% of 6th graders, 63.3% of 8th graders, 60.4% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders, and 59.7% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported having seen someone bullied. Overall, 27.3% of Kansas students reported being bullied at school, with 17.9% indicating it was in the form of cyberbullying. Indeed, at a Task Force meeting with a panel of students from two local high schools in Lawrence, KS, when asked how often they witnessed bullying in their school, all seven indicated every day.

As part of our deliberations, the Task Force heard about a number of programs in place across the state to address bullying, and reviewed resources available to support prevention in schools. While there are promising approaches available, the research is clear about the complexity of the problem. There are no simple fixes or silver bullets for bullying prevention. However, there is an emerging consensus regarding the kinds of practices and approaches that should lead to success. Kansas is well-situated to implement such reforms given the state board's initiatives related to social-emotional learning and character development.

In April 2019, Kansas Commissioner of Education, Dr. Randy Watson, appointed a Blue-Ribbon Task Force to examine issues of bullying in the state's schools and report recommendations to the State Board of Education by December 2019. The Task Force included 35 members (see Appendix A for list of Task Force members), and first met on April 25, 2019 in Topeka. At that first meeting, the Task Force agreed upon the following objectives and goals:

1. Research and identify current bullying definitions, trends, incidents, and prevention measures occurring across the state.
2. Coordinate with stakeholders to address relevant issues effectively, to best meet the needs of students.
3. Review work in the areas of social-emotional learning as set forth by the State Board goals, identifying possible avenues that could reduce and prevent bullying and cyberbullying.
4. Review current statutes, regulations and policy to determine need for change.
5. Present recommendations to the Kansas Board of Education by presenting recommendations to address bullying, cyberbullying, prevention and training measures.

The Task Force held six open Town Hall meetings and one online webinar co-sponsored by the Kansas National Education Association (KNEA), to gather community input and learn about

local efforts at addressing bullying. The Town Hall meetings were held in Clearwater (May 28<sup>th</sup>), Garden City (June 18<sup>th</sup>), Salina (August 5<sup>th</sup>), Girard (September 25<sup>th</sup>), Wichita (October 30<sup>th</sup>), and Lawrence (November 6<sup>th</sup>). Each meeting held open time for public comment, and commission members heard from local schools and experts regarding bullying-related programs and practices to address the problem. The online webinar (November 19<sup>th</sup>) provided an opportunity for educators, families and others to offer comments and provide input to the Task Force. Throughout the Task Force data collecting period, educators and interested parties were invited to provide written feedback, and a webpage was created on the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) website for documenting all materials received, all presentations made and resources to address bullying behavior. (See, <https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Special-Education-and-Title-Services/Early-Childhood/Blue-Ribbon-Taskforce-on-Bullying.>)

The Task Force created six working committees to address the goals and objectives. These committees included:

- Data and Research
- Evidenced-Based and Current Practices
- Cultural Awareness
- Policy Regulations/Accountability
- Barriers and Solutions
- Writing

To conduct the work of the committees, time was set aside at each Town Hall session for the work groups to meet, and each prepared a report on their identified topic. The entire Task Force met a final time on December 2<sup>nd</sup> to review and finalize the draft of this report prepared by the Task Force chairs and KSDE support staff.

This report offers a set of recommendations for the State Board of Education to help school boards, administrators, teachers, students, families and communities in addressing this persistent problem. The report begins with an examination of the legal and policy environment regarding bullying in Kansas, then provides current information available on the scope of the problem in Kansas. The advantages Kansas has to leverage current practices are discussed, along with the barriers and challenges faced in addressing bullying in schools. Then the report addresses the state of the research on bullying and bullying prevention and a discussion of best practices. The report ends with a set of recommendations for the State Board of Education to consider in addressing school bullying and cyberbullying in Kansas.

## The Kansas Legal and Policy Environment

The U.S. Department of Education set out the key components of model state bullying legislation in its comprehensive 2011 report, “Analysis of State Bullying Laws and Policies.” (Stuart-Cassel, Bell & Springer, 2011). These components included: Prohibition and Purpose Statement, Statement of Scope, Prohibited Behavior, Enumeration of Groups, Development and Implementation of Local Policies, Review of Local Policies, Components of Local Policies, Communications, Training and Prevention, Transparency and Monitoring, Right to Pursue Other Legal Remedies. Currently, every state in the U.S. has passed legislation regarding bullying.

Kansas Statute 72-6147 is the governing law for our state (Appendix B). The statute defines bullying as – *any intentional gesture or any intentional written, verbal, electronic or physical act or threat either by any student, staff member or parent towards a student or by any student, staff member or parent towards a staff member that is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive that such gesture, act or threat creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment that a reasonable person, under the circumstances, knows or should know will have the effect of:*

- *Harming a student or staff member whether physically or mentally*
- *Damaging a student or staff member’s property*
- *Placing a student or staff member in reasonable fear of harm to the student or staff member*
- *Placing a student or staff member in reasonable fear of damage to the student’s or staff member’s property*

Bullying is further defined as including cyberbullying and any other form of intimidation or harassment prohibited by the board of education of the school district in policies concerning bullying.

In addition, the board of education in each district is directed to adopt a policy to prohibit bullying as well as a plan to address bullying. The plans must include provisions for the training and education of staff members and students.

The Kansas law is broad, addressing behavior by students, staff and families. However, the definition doesn’t enumerate specific groups to address or how local policies will be reviewed. Ostensibly, these details are left to individual school districts to enumerate and determine. Moreover, given that the Kansas definition of bullying describes it as “sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive,” it contrasts with research which defines bullying as something that is repetitious (Olweus, 1978, 1993, 2001; Williford et al., 2018). Testimony shared with the Task Force argued that bullying should be distinguished from one-time acts of harassment, suggesting that a key element of the bullying definition is the behavior being repeated over time.

Litigation suggests that school officials hold some liability for addressing bullying-type of acts

when the behavior is based on race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, etc. The *Theno v. USD 464* decision (394 F.Supp. 2<sup>nd</sup> 1299, 2005), dealt with a Title IX sexual harassment situation involving a 7<sup>th</sup> grade student who argued he had been harassed over several years, claiming negligent failure to supervise. The court balanced the recognition that districts can't expel every student accused of misconduct, with the understanding that measures need be taken that might work, or be changed if they do not. The court argued that when a district has "actual knowledge" of such behavior, and its efforts continue to fail, the district has, "failed to act reasonably in light of the known circumstances." School officials, therefore, have an obligation to act when informed and an obligation to try to use effective measures to address the behavior.

Regarding school district policies, the U.S. Department of Education report identified six key policy components to consider. These include:

- Bullying definitions
- Reporting procedures
- Investigations and response
- Use of written records
- Consequences or sanctions for prohibited behaviors
- Procedures for counseling or referral for mental health services and supports

The Kansas Association for School Boards offers districts Model Bullying Policies and Plans for their consideration <https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Career-Standards-and-Assessment-Services/Content-Area-M-Z/School-Counseling/School-Counseling-Resources/Anti-Bullying-Awareness> .

The Task Force Policy/Practice/Accountability committee was clear in its expectation that a well-defined reporting process is necessary to accurately record the impact of any change. They further called for training for staff about bullying, local policy and enforcement of rules. They highlighted the importance of support staff - counselors, social workers, etc. – having appropriate-sized caseloads so individual behavioral concerns can be adequately addressed.

## The Situation in Kansas

The most comprehensive picture of the state of bullying behavior in Kansas schools is derived from the KCTC survey administered each year sponsored by the Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services Behavioral Health Services Division. It is a lengthy self-report survey of over 140 questions containing seven questions for public school students specifically focusing on bullying behavior in schools. The survey is implemented in a window between November through January each year. Participation by schools and districts is voluntary. In the 2018-2019 school year, 232 school districts (81.2%) and nine private schools participated in the survey with a sample of approximately 70,000 students. Students are surveyed in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12.

The seven questions the KCTC survey focuses on bullying include the following – with results from the 2018 administration:

1. During the school year, how often have you seen someone being bullied?
  - 6<sup>th</sup> graders – 53.2%
  - 8<sup>th</sup> graders – 62.4%
  - 10<sup>th</sup> graders – 58.8%
  - 12 graders – 57.9%
  
2. During the school year, how often have you been bullied?
  - 6<sup>th</sup> graders – 28.6%
  - 8<sup>th</sup> graders – 27.4%
  - 10<sup>th</sup> graders – 23.1%
  - 12 graders – 19.6%
  
3. During the past 12 months, how often have you been electronically bullied?
  - All grades – between ~82%-84%
  
4. During the past year, how often did you miss school because you felt unsafe, uncomfortable or nervous at school or on your way to or from school?
  - I did not feel safe at school – 16.7%
  - Missed school because felt unsafe – 14.8%
  
5. During the past school year, how often have you had your property stolen or deliberately damaged?
  - Had property stolen or damaged – 20.0%
  
6. If you saw bullying at school, what would you do?

- Intervene to stop the bullying – 35%
- Report it to a teacher or other adult – 32%
- I haven't seen any bullying – 17%
- Ignore it as it is none of my business – 13%
- Nothing, just watch – 2%

7. What do adults do when they see bullying?

- Stop it and solve the problem – 38.5%
- I'm not certain – 35.5%
- Stop it and tell everyone to leave – 14.6%
- Nothing, they ignore it – 11.4%

In summary, the Kansas data largely reflect the national trends, though the number of students reporting being electronically bullied is exceedingly high. As in any self-report survey, these data measures lack any external validity checks regarding the accuracy of the reports. Thus, some of the data we heard from students and teachers conflicts with the overall self-reported numbers identified in the KCTC survey. One of the problems may be that there was no definition of bullying provided in the survey.

Several of the Task Force committees raised concerns and offered recommendations on ways to improve the KCTC survey. The first concern was on the length of the survey. It is quite long, with the concomitant concern that the validity of responses is compromised given the time needed for students to respond to over 140 questions. Second, the window for administering the survey is wide (November through January), and time of the year in administering a survey can impact student responses. Indeed, it isn't clear if participating districts even administer the survey at the same time each year, making yearly comparisons problematic. Third, the reliability psychometric analyses are quite old and not particularly strong. These should be redone periodically to assure that the instrument carries sufficient levels of reliability. Fourth, certain demographic information isn't collected – for example, regarding gender identity and sexuality required to understand state and local disparities in LGBTQ+ youth experiences with bullying. And as KCTC itself reports, data about race is often collected in inconsistent ways with other state data collection efforts, making determinations of the representativeness of the data difficult. Finally, the KCTC survey was moved from an opt-out to an opt-in procedure in 2015 by legislative action, likely impacting response rate. Returning to an opt-out process would assure greater participation and representativeness of data across the state and districts. We also recommend that they include a definition of bullying in the survey.

The Task Force committee on Evidence-Based and Current Practices conducted a short, unscientific survey in summer of 2019 to gather information from educators regarding their feelings about current practices and bullying efforts in their schools. A call went out to educators across the state to provide feedback on 10 questions related to local bullying efforts and 794 district administrators, building administrators, counselors, teachers and others responded. Though voluntary in their responses, these data do provide an interesting picture

of teacher attitudes about bullying policies and plans.

The key findings included:

- 88% indicated they knew what their school or district’s policies are
- 84% indicated they know what their school district does to prevent bullying
- Satisfaction with school or district’s bullying efforts – 3.52 out of 5.0 (not satisfied to very satisfied)
- Top responses regarding what my school or district does to prevent bullying:
  - Counselor lessons/education (N=125)
  - Punishment/reporting (N=75)
- Top issues your school encounters with regard to bullying:
  - Social/cyberbullying (N=185)
  - Not understanding the definition (N=165)
  - Verbal (N=90)
  - Emotional exhaustion/relational aggression (N=55)
  - Bullying behaviors & students afraid to report (N=50)
- Top responses for “What I wish my school or district did to prevent bullying”:
  - Educate families and/or students on bullying (N=55)
  - “Right Track” (N=27)
  - Harsher penalties for students or families (N=18)
  - Not sure (N=16)

While not a representative or scientifically verified survey, the data suggested that educators are aware of what is happening in their schools and districts and are somewhat satisfied with current practices. The results indicate that cyberbullying is prevalent, definitional concerns regarding bullying exist, and education is the best tactic for addressing the problem. Such data collection efforts should be routinized and strengthened to provide a periodic snapshot of ongoing efforts across schools and districts in Kansas.

## The Kansas Advantage

The Kansans Can Vision for Education provides public schools of Kansas with relevant goals for improving: 1) Social-emotional growth; 2) Kindergarten Readiness; 3) Individual Plans of Study; 4) High school graduation rates; and 5) Post-secondary readiness. Related to bullying prevention, Social-emotional Growth (SEG) is one of the five measured outcomes established by the State Board of Education. Skills encompassed related to SEG include interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities (e.g. self-awareness, social awareness, problem solving and decision-making). To promote the teaching of these skills, the state adopted Social-Emotional and Character Development (SECD) standards in 2012 and revised them in 2018. These standards are divided in three areas for all grade levels – character development, personal development, and social development and are designed for implementation by classroom teachers in content areas. These social, emotional and character development skills relate strongly to the

research evidence on the kinds of behavior development that will positively impact bullying behavior.

At the same time, multiple districts across the state are involved in what is referred to as “Redesign,” focused on developing local responses for ways to meet the needs of all students. Currently 150 schools across the state, involving 66 school districts are engaged in redesign efforts in partnership with KSDE.

It is also important to note that the Kansas Curricular Standards for School Counseling include developmentally appropriate social-emotional standards and benchmarks with knowledge and skill indicators for PreK-12 students (KSDE, 2015). The counseling standards align with the American School Counselor Association Mindsets and Behaviors Student Standards and the Kansas SECD Standards.

The Kansas Technical Assistance System Network (TASN) provides a wealth of resources regarding the implementation of the SECD standards. The state also has a strong alliance with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), which provides multiple free resources for states, districts and schools in implementing social-emotional learning. They work with a collaboration of states inspired by the notion of a community of practice. Their model, which inspired the Kansas SECD standards, is built around five competencies – self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Other state supports, such as the Research Collaboration at The University of Kansas, offer surveys and training for districts to develop and teach the Kansas Can competencies. The Task Force heard a presentation on their assertiveness training for students, which their data suggests has positive effects on bullying behaviors.

The Task Force Research committee identified some support for school-wide, universal interventions such as social-emotional learning as one of the more promising practices for impacting bullying behavior. Kansas has a strong focus in its standards and practices in this area and therefore brings certain advantages that can be leveraged in dealing with the bullying behavior in schools.

## **Barriers and Challenges in Addressing School Bullying**

Multiple challenges impact efforts to address bullying and bullying prevention. These include:

1. Definitional concerns
2. Multiple cultural issues that create differing challenges for various sub-groups within the school population
3. Problems related to understanding what are truly evidence-based remedies

4. Issues related to properly implementing programs in schools (including issues of training and of fidelity of implementation of any program)
5. The challenges of cyberbullying
6. The need to generally address school climate and culture engaging students, teachers, administrators, staff, families and school communities in developing plans for addressing the problem
7. Identifying appropriate measures of bullying behavior
8. Time and costs

## Definitional Concerns

Multiple terms are often used in describing bullying behavior in schools, including bullying, peer conflict, peer aggression, peer victimization, etc. Research is consistent in suggesting three parts to the definition of bullying: the behavior is aggressive, negative and intentional; the behavior is carried out repeatedly over an extended period of time; and, the behavior occurs in a relationship where there is an imbalance of power between the parties involved (Rahal, 2010 – ERS). Bullying behavior encompasses perpetrators, victims and witnesses or bystanders. The definition of bullying in Kansas law was drafted in 2007. It is quite broad, and allows for behavior to be labeled as bullying if it is persistent or pervasive. The generally accepted definition in the research focuses on the behavior being repetitive and therefore is inconsistent with Kansas law. The Task Force Committee on Barriers and Challenges questioned if the definition should be reconsidered to accommodate the reality that peer conflict between youth is common, but may not rise to the level of what is generally understood as bullying. While “bullying” is often overused as a way to describe many incidents of peer conflict, the committee recognized that it may be challenging to change the perception even with a new definition. Information provided to the Task Force from multiple school administrators and teachers highlighted that not all incidents of peer conflict rise to the level of bullying (e.g., includes a power differential). The Task Force committee highlighted the need for school communities to fully understand what is meant by bullying in the state, district and school. This understanding should involve clear communication and information sharing consistent with Kansas law. The key is ensuring that students, families, faculty and staff understand the definition and the differences between peer conflict and bullying.

## Cultural Awareness

The Task Force committee on Cultural Awareness highlighted five identified student demographic disparities in bullying and/or victimization – biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, race/ethnicity (including migrant populations), disability, and socio-economic status (SES). Other characteristics like religious beliefs may also be involved.

Females experience bullying at higher levels than males, both in school and through cyberbullying (NCES, 2019). Females have greater negative effects regarding relationships and physical health. Males do report higher levels of physical victimization than females.

Research is consistent that bullying of students from various minority racial backgrounds is higher than for Caucasian students (Raines, 2017). Students with sexual orientation, gender identity and expression differences experience bullying at much higher rates than their classmates (GLSEN 2017a, 2017b). Multiple studies show that students with disabilities are repeatedly victimized at a rate two to three times that for students without disabilities (Blake et al. 2012, Banks et al. 2009). Recent data released by the U.S. Department of Education suggests that children in poverty are bullied twice as much as higher socioeconomic youth (NCES, 2019).

These findings have legal implications for school districts (e.g. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments). Awareness and training are needed that includes specific information regarding the risk of varying demographic factors.

## Evidence-Based Practices

Given the decades-long focus on bullying in schools, schools and school districts are inundated with possible remedies, what studies have referred to as literally hundreds of bullying and aggression-prevention programs (Swearer et al., 2017; Leff et al. 2004). While states have passed bullying laws, the research reports that, at best, these programs have had mixed results (Divecha & Brackett, 2019). Deciphering what will work best in a specific school situation and culture presents tremendous challenges to schools, teachers and administrators. Most every prevention program makes claims of being evidence-based, though the actual data substantiating such claims about the effects of specific programs on bullying behavior is typically lacking beyond hyperbolic testimonials. And what may have worked in one situation may not translate elsewhere. Part of the problem is that there aren't commonly accepted measures of how to assess the incidence of bullying behavior. This leaves school officials with the dual dilemma of not knowing how well any specific program truly works, and how they might assess any program's effectiveness once implemented.

There are resources available to school personnel to assist with these issues. For example, regarding evidenced-based social-emotional programs, CASEL created a guide for schools called, "Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs" (2013). The report offers guidance in selecting programs that are well-designed, deliver high quality training and other implementation supports, and are evidence-based. Note, however, this guidance is directed at assisting with selection of programs training in social and emotional learning broadly, not specifically on bullying prevention programs. Other assistance can be gleaned from the Research Collaboration at The University of Kansas which provides surveys and data collection instruments along with training on select components of social-emotional learning. Despite such useful resources, school leaders, teachers, families and students looking for effective programs to address bullying face significant challenges in identifying evidence-based bullying prevention programs that best fit their circumstances.

## Issues of Implementation

Schools are renowned for trying multiple new initiatives to address the various learning and social challenges inherent in modern education (Tyack & Cuban, 1998). Technological advances have, for example, dramatically impacted how schools operate. Most every student has access to a computer, phone or iPad. In recent years, states have recognized the importance of revising the sole focus on academic performance on standardized tests as the basis for assessing performance, and broadened that to include social and emotional learning. The prevalence of violence in schools have led to new programs around school safety. Schools are focusing on career readiness, redesigning classroom spaces with new furniture styles, dealing with growing trauma and mental health issues. Concerns about poor performance in subjects like reading launch new initiatives. These and other changes create an onslaught of new approaches, many focusing on Multiple Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) as the mechanism for driving and promoting change in schools.

But implementing change in any organization is difficult, and the ongoing nature of change in schools often leads to cynicism by educators. As Seymour Sarason (1990) warned in his book years ago, aptly titled, “The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform,” change is hard. Factors such as participant buy-in, training, support, dealing with staff turnover, addressing collectively agreed upon issues, burnout, etc. can all impact proper implementation of even the best intentioned and well-designed reforms (Cohen and Mehta, 2017). Any new programs are naturally being implemented while schools are carrying out all their other duties, basically changing the plane while it is in flight. Notably, even when a new program is implemented, assuring that the program is implemented and carried out as intended, what is referred to as “fidelity of implementation,” is a significant concern. This involves time, strong training and support, resources, and significant commitment to be successful. Collecting appropriate data along the way, which is fed back into the system to make appropriate adjustments, is also vital. Families and caregivers should have opportunities for training and support to help shape attitudes and reinforce commitment regarding the anti-bullying messages that schools teach.

## Cyberbullying

Participation with social media is prevalent across the world. According to the Pew Research Center (Linehart, 2015), for example, 92% of students indicate being online daily, with 71% using more than one type of media. New social media forms emerge continually. Kansas has defined cyberbullying as “bullying by use of any electronic communication device through means including, but not limited to, e-mail, instant messaging, text messages, blogs, mobile phones, papers, online games and web-sites.” (72-6147) Researchers define it as, “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, or other electronic

devices.” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009). Here again, the nature of it being repeated behavior is emphasized.

The recent U.S. Department of Education survey (NCES, 2019) indicated about 15% of those being bullied were bullied online. Other studies put the incidence of cyberbullying much higher (Espelage et al., 2017). Targets of cyberbullying report the same symptoms as those bullied through “traditional” ways. No doubt, with the ongoing proliferation of technology and social media in people’s lives, this is an area that will continue to grow.

What makes cyberbullying so challenging is that the behavior may take place off school grounds, then follow students through the schoolhouse gate and becomes a school-related problem. Research is clear that cyberbullying needs to be addressed, though there is no consensus as to how to prevent or deal with this growing problem (Aboujaode et al., 2015). For now, sharing information with students, families and school personnel about cyberbullying, and how to avoid becoming victimized, are the most commonly identified prevention approaches (Espelage and Hong, 2017).

## School Climate and Culture

Schools are complex organizations and each has its own climate and culture. Schools differ in size and student make-up. Elementary, middle and high schools serve different aged populations. Schools are imbedded in communities that can differ from location to location. Staff sizes and experiences can differ dramatically, as does parent and community involvement and support. Any bullying prevention plan that works in one setting may not fare well in another.

Just as bullying activity can influence a school climate, for example, making students feel unsafe, a positive school climate can influence the likelihood of the effectiveness of prevention activities. A school’s culture is derived from its underlying norms, values and beliefs. Climate represents the actions of a school that drive the culture – it’s practices, policies and procedures (See, Willford, et al., 2018). Some have referred to a school’s climate as its, “heart and soul.” (Freiberg & Stein, 1999, p.11). According to research, schools that have a positive climate support healthy development among all students, whereas negative school climate is associated with a variety of behaviors like bullying, aggression, feeling unsafe and victimization (Cohen et al., 2015).

Overly punitive or harsh policies don’t work to prevent bullying or reduce aggressive behavior, and may, in fact, have negative consequences like student disengagement (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008; Swearer et al., 2017). Instead, focusing on school climate and culture, adding rehabilitation support from mental health and school support staff, can aid in strengthening a school’s climate. The Task Force heard from several mental health professionals who described situations where schools with leadership and staff buy-in for mental health support had positive behavioral outcomes for students.

Similarly, the Task Force heard from Beloit High School counselors who described a multi-year process implementing two complimentary programs aimed at character development and positive behavior support. Students, teachers, staff, families and the surrounding community members worked in harmony to create a culture supportive of students. Evidence suggests that negative behaviors like bullying are minimized in this caring culture and positive school climate. But it takes time, careful training, resources, leadership and buy-in from school personnel and all constituents to be successful.

## Measurement and Accountability

Good teaching requires corrective feedback from teachers to students for learning to be optimized. In the same way, school leaders and staff need information on how a program is working to truly know if it is effective. Accountability is important, and in order for that to happen, measures must be identified regarding elements of program success. Too often no data are collected, or simple self-report data are used as the sole means for assessing a program's worth. That isn't good enough. School leaders and school teams need to identify the goals of programs they implement, and identify measures they can operationalize and collect data on to determine if bullying programs are actually working. If they aren't, adjustments need be made or programs should be discarded and replaced.

Sadly, there aren't common measures that schools or districts employ to determine if their bullying prevention efforts work. Behavioral referrals, levels of absenteeism, reports of bullying, student levels of involvement and other similar measures need to be identified and periodically collected so informed program adjustments are possible.

Data on the prevalence of bullying in a school, district and the state should be strong. The KCTC survey is helpful in this regard, but weaknesses in that data approach should be addressed.

## Time and Costs

Identifying, implementing, and assessing bullying prevention programs takes time and money. Many programs carry significant fiscal costs. They take time to put in place. Changing climate and culture are difficult processes. Given the added costs of ongoing training, parental and community support, mental health and counseling needs, leadership and personnel direction, and evaluation expertise, the costs attached to addressing bullying behavior are not insignificant. Districts intent on implementing an effective bullying prevention program need to set aside ample resources or find grants or other sources to support the work.

## Research and Best Practice

Research is consistent that peer bullying and victimization is a major concern among youth of all ages due to the negative outcomes that often result for all individuals involved, including the aggressors, the victims, and the bystanders (Evans, Smokowski, Rose, Mercado, & Marshall, 2018; Vernberg & Biggs, 2010). Specifically, youth involved in bullying and victimization are at increased risk for experiencing depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, academic difficulties, substance use, delinquency, and other behavior problems (e.g., Card & Hodges, 2008; Evans, et al., 2018; Reijntjes et al., 2011; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Rivers & Noret, 2013; Vernberg & Biggs, 2010).

The two most common forms of victimization youth experience are relational and physical in nature. Relational aggression refers to acts that target social relationships (e.g., Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Ostrov et al., 2018), such as ignoring and withdrawing friendship and spreading rumors and/or lies. Physical aggression involves real or threatened physical injury to others (e.g., Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Ostrov et al., 2018), including hitting, kicking, and pushing. In recent years, there has been increasing concerns regarding cyber aggression, or the use of technology (e.g., instant message, text messaging, and social media) to threaten or harm others (e.g., Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Ostrov et al., 2018).

Alarmingly, between 60-73% of children report being victimized by their peers at least once during the elementary school years (Cooley, Fite, & Pederson, 2018; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001). It appears, however, that rates of victimization tend to decline as children progress through school (Ladd, Ettekal, & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2017). Yet, up to 1 in 4 high school students report experiencing peer victimization (Centers for Disease Control, 2016). Moreover, many youth experience long-term and chronic victimization, and recent research indicates that approximately 1 in 4 youth were chronically victimized from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade (Ladd, Ettekal, & Kochenderfer-Ladd, 2017). With regard to bullying behavior, between 4-9% of youth engage in frequent acts of bullying behavior toward their peers (Juvonen & Graham, 2014; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). Further, it is important to remember that virtually all children will be a witness or bystander to aggressive behavior during their school-age years.

Peer victimization most often occurs in locations where there is less adult monitoring, there is less structure, and the student-to-adult ratio is high (Fite et al., 2013; Williford, Fite, DePaolis, & Cooley, 2018). Within the school setting, the playground and bus are often identified as two of the most common locations (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007; Fite et al., 2013; Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001; Nansel et al., 2001; Williford et al., 2018). However, it is important to note that bullying and victimization can occur anywhere, with youth indicating that home, the neighborhood, and a friend's house are also common locations in which

victimization takes place (Fite et al., 2013; Williford et al., 2018).

With regard to how to prevent bullying and victimization, existing research provides some support for the use of school-wide, universal interventions, such as social-emotional learning programs (for a meta-analysis, see Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). However, more research evaluating the effective components of these programs and the fidelity with which programs need to be implemented for successful outcomes is needed. There is substantial evidence suggesting that individual and group interventions, such as cognitive-behavioral approaches and parent management training, can be successful at reducing aggression (Flanagan & Battaglia, 2010; *Kaminski & Claussen, 2017; McCart, & Sheidow, 2016*). However, the effectiveness of these programs to reduce bullying behavior specifically is still in need of investigation. Research examining the effectiveness of individual and group interventions for peer-victimized youth is currently limited (Fite et al., 2018). See the references or the KSDE website for more information on social-emotional character development standards (SECD).

According to Kansas law, all school districts must have a plan to address bullying and cyberbullying, adopt policies prohibiting bullying and implement a plan to address bullying which includes provisions for training staff and students. The challenge faced is that evidence on specific approaches that work is limited, though the research considers school-wide, universal interventions the most promising. Social-emotional learning (SEL) is identified as a favorable approach of this type, with cautions about more research being needed to identify the key components and best implementation practices.

With these limitations in mind, the Kansas emphasis on SEL and considerable work underway due to the SECD standards focusing on SEL competencies supporting intrapersonal, interpersonal and cognitive competencies, is an advantage to leverage. Continued work in these areas with a focus on bullying behavior is consistent with best practice. Best practice will require agreed upon measures for determining program success. The Task Force found that better clarifying and communicating the definition of bullying is important to reinforce anti-bullying messages for students, teachers, families and communities. Best practice will also necessarily include improving means for reporting bullying behavior, especially for students. The state offers multiple resources to assist schools in these and related mental health and trauma efforts, and these need to be shared and better communicated.

# Recommendations

The Task Force offers the following recommendations, understanding that many require additional funding and support. The Task Force recognizes that many supports already exist. However, the Task Force is not attaching a fiscal note to these recommendations, and leaves that to the elected officials and policy makers to consider.

The recommendations are not suggested in priority order, but rather as a collective of efforts needed to address the bullying problem in Kansas schools.

## 1. Better support and direction for school districts

Kansas law requires districts to adopt bullying policies and plans and make provisions for training. More direction and support are needed for these efforts. Clear guidelines for strong policies and effective plans need to be shared. To these ends, the Task Force specifically recommends:

- I. Establish or appoint a standing statewide unit to offer guidance and support to school districts as they implement policies, plans, and training.
- II. This unit should compile a bank of promising practices for schools and districts to share. These practices should be evidenced-based, providing solid data regarding how and why they work.
- III. Continue state efforts like Bullying Awareness Week, understanding that such substantive and symbolic activity is important only if the successful efforts to address bullying in schools are widely shared and known.

## 2. Continue and develop the state's focus on social-emotional and character development education to address school bullying

The research is clear about those youth behaviors that lead to school bullying. Preparation in social-emotional and character development skills are directly related to these bullying and victimization behaviors. Social-emotional growth is one of five measured outcomes in the Kansans Can initiative. The following recommendations are suggested:

- I. Better communicate and share the SEL-related supports available to school districts in Kansas. CASEL provides multiple resources for school districts. The Research Collaboration at The University of Kansas provides training on student assertiveness including survey instruments and support in other specific SEL competencies. These and other available resources need to be better

communicated, known and shared with schools, districts, teachers, students and families.

- II. Though the state is dedicated to strengthening social-emotional learning and has developed state-of-the-art SECD standards, districts are still left with the quandary of identifying appropriate curriculum strategies within their SECD efforts to address bullying. We recommend that the oversight unit identified in recommendation 1.I be charged with providing information and direction for school districts in devising curricula to address the bullying problems in schools and classrooms.
- III. Kansas has included addressing bullying in the SECD and School Counselor standards. School boards should consider these standards in the development of their bullying plans (KSDE 2015, 2018).

### **3. Examine the current state law and consider appropriate guidance**

- I. The Kansas law on bullying is broad and is somewhat inconsistent with research identifying bullying as repetitive over time and involving a power imbalance. The same inconsistency is evident in the state definition of cyberbullying. It is recommended that the State Board of Education examine the current state law and provide appropriate guidance.

### **4. Local policies and plans must focus on relationships, school climate and culture, and the mental health impact of bullying in schools**

Bullying is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon. Bullying takes place in school and online through social media and gaming. Different strategies are needed by level of schooling, age of children and different school contexts. Changing school climate and culture takes time and persistence. Changing culture is especially difficult. But to positively impact bullying behavior, schools need to focus on peer and adult-student relationships. A caring and safe environment is necessary. Strengthening school climate is key, driven by a school culture responsive to student and staff needs. To these ends, the following recommendations are made:

- I. Any bullying plan must address the differing needs of students and staff identified by research including but not limited to biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, race/ethnicity (including migrant populations), disability, religious faith and socio-economic status (SES). These groups are differentially affected by bullying and must be considered in deriving local policies.
- II. The whole school community needs to be involved in policies and plans addressing bullying, including students, staff, teachers, leaders, families and those in the larger community context.

- III. Students need simple, effective and trusted means for reporting bullying behavior. This is necessary for both victims and bystanders, as well as educators and families. Several apps and telephone hotlines (e.g. the Kansas Bullying Prevention Hotline, SpeakUp being used in Wichita) were offered as examples of possible means for reporting and dealing with bullying behavior. These apps and hotlines need to be developed and/or identified. Trained support staff or facilitators need to be available to examine and respond to these data inputs. The effectiveness of these reporting mechanisms should be continually monitored.
  - IV. Strong school cultures and climates have trusting relationships among those in the environment. Means for listening to students and families, addressing their concerns are a beginning point. Programs that offer training in character development, relevant social-emotional skills, assertiveness, positive behavior supports, and other behavioral interventions need to be implemented with proper training and fidelity. Ample time needs to be permitted for these to work, and their effectiveness must be monitored.
  - V. Training in resiliency should be part of any professional development offered by school districts.
  - VI. Districts should consider the use of restorative approaches that avoid re-victimization and build social skills rather than zero-tolerance policies.
  - VII. Students impacted by bullying have negative behavioral impacts and can be affected for life. Mental health support in communities and schools needs to be identified and available for potential users.
  - VIII. Bullying has consequences for the perpetrators, the victims and the bystanders. Any program addressing bullying should consider all those involved.
  - IX. Large caseloads in any counseling or mental health capacity weaken the ability to address problems. At a minimum, schools should strive to have a school counselor for all student's Pre-K-12. Schools should also try to meet the recommended ratio of 1 to 250 school counselors and social workers to students, and a ratio of 1 to 500-700 school psychologists to students. The school mental health team would also be strengthened by the addition of school nurses. The state should consider potential sources of funding such as at-risk funding.
  - X. Teachers have a lot of demands on their time, and are busy teaching. Tying bullying prevention efforts in with other reforms and mandates can minimize the workload and potential burnout teachers report.
5. **The state needs better data on school bullying and measures for assessing program effectiveness.**

The KCTC survey is an ambitious effort to gather information from students across multiple dimensions. It currently contains seven questions regarding bullying and should be continued with several alterations. At the same time, no collectively accepted

measures for assessing bullying or school climate exist in Kansas. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- I. All districts in Kansas should be encouraged to participate in the KCTC survey. The board may want to consider the student privacy act to potentially increase participation rates.
- II. The KCTC survey contains 142 questions, likely impacting its validity for students who respond given the amount of time it requires. The Task Force recommends the KCTC survey be administered several times a year with no more than 40-50 of the questions in each administration.
- III. Consideration should be given to administering the KCTC survey at about the same time each year to strengthen longitudinal comparisons.
- IV. The KCTC survey should have its psychometric reliability checks done every few years. These measures need to be checked to ensure they are internally consistent, meaning we would get the same responses over time. The current available reliability measures are somewhat low and quite old.
- V. The KCTC survey should collect information on all the sub-groups identified by the Task Force as being differentially adversely impacted by bullying – biological sex, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religious faith, and socio-economic status. Currently, the demographic break-downs collected in the KCTC survey are too limited and leave out certain groups, severely impacting the ability to address group specific problems.
- VI. The KCTC survey should include the current definition of bullying in Kansas.
- VII. The state should determine a mechanism for collecting data regarding bullying and school climate from educators. The Task Force committee was able to collect information about bullying from teachers relatively quickly. Collecting such data each year can assist in identifying common problems and areas for further development in addressing bullying behavior. We recommend that the oversight unit identified in Recommendation 1.I consider identifying or creating surveys regarding teacher perceptions of bullying and information regarding school climate.
- VIII. Most anti-bullying programs contend they are evidence-based. They are not. The evidence rarely shows if any set of program practices actually affects the incidence of bullying. Just showing that training increased knowledge about a topic (bullying, SEL behaviors, etc.) is important but doesn't offer evidence that the programs affect bullying behavior in a school. Schools and districts should be certain to consider the evidence when adopting any program, understanding that what works in one context may not translate to another. CASEL provides thoughtful guidance on this for SEL programs. In addition, KSDE provides a statement on evidence-based practices for at-risk programs in meeting the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and K.S.A 72-5153. These may prove helpful in discerning evidence-based approaches:

<https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Special-Education-and-Title-Services/Announcements-Special-Education-and-Title-Services/Best-Practices>

- IX. The unit identified in recommendation 1.I should be responsible for recommending measures that districts use to assess the effectiveness of their bullying efforts. These may include indirect measures such as attendance rates, office referrals, in and out of school suspensions, academic achievement, etc., or self-reported incidents of bullying (e.g. from school, district or KCTC survey data)

## 6. Addressing Cyberbullying

As technology and social media continue to proliferate across our society, it is expected that the incidences of cyberbullying will increase. Cyberbullying can be exceedingly pernicious as it can increase the number of witnesses and audience, while also being anonymous. Districts need to consider specific policies regarding cyberbullying, and work with teachers, students, families and technology/social media experts in finding effective means for addressing cyberbullying at school and at home. The following are suggested as recommendations for school districts for sharing with students, families and school personnel:

- I. Provide information regarding cyberbullying definition, how to avoid becoming victimized. Websites and tip sheets have been shown to be useful.
- II. Share information about district cyberbullying policies, plans and expected consequences for engaging in this behavior.
- III. Hold cyberbullying awareness activities and events (e.g. school assemblies, software programs, etc.)
- IV. Train educators and families involved with students on the problems associated with cyberbullying.
- V. Find social media apps or other means for students and others to report both bullying and cyberbullying behavior.
- VI. Involve students in planning ways to best mobilize social media to address cyberbullying behavior.
- VII. School Boards should monitor any changes in federal law regarding cyberbullying.

## 7. Training, professional development and teacher preparation

Educators have a wide array of responsibilities. Teaching and learning are complex matters that require a lot of skills. Academic achievement is important, as is the training of the other skills identified in the Kansans Can agenda. This includes growth on social-emotional learning. But in order to implement any program effectively, time, resources, and effective training are key. Recommendations include:

- I. Schools and districts must set aside ample time and resources to support training and professional development for any anti-bullying program to be effective. One-time professional development opportunities don't work. Training must be imbedded in classroom practice, with ample coaching or support, and be driven by the people in the school - what the leading expert on change, Michael Fullan (2016), refers to as "let the group change the group". Schools need to invest in both social capital (the quality of interactions and relationships among people) and human capital (the quality and ability of the individuals in the school).
- II. Programs impacting bullying behavior require specific skills. Outside support from the community, professional programs, etc. should be expected to be needed.
- III. As the research clearly identified, the most promising practices to impact bullying behavior are those that are school-wide, universal, and include a parental component. This is the goal of social-emotional learning efforts, and effective approaches should be considered.
- IV. In-service training for teachers should be coupled with preparation for staff, students, families and others in the school community.
- V. Pre-service teacher preparation must also address the issues of bullying in schools and various anti-bullying approaches. Institutions of higher education preparing teachers in Kansas should include training on bullying and youth suicide prevention (Jason Flatt Act) in their classroom management and other components of their programs. The State Department of Education should ask institutions of higher education to report the bullying-related portions of the preparation curriculum, and share best practices among institutions.
- VI. School districts should also include families in their anti-bullying training efforts.

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# Appendix A

## Task Force Members

Bullying Task Force Members List			
First Name	Last Name	Job Title	Area of interest
Angie	Salava	College and Career Readiness and Counseling Services Coordinator	USD Administrator
Brenda	Dietrich	Vice Chair, House Education Committee	Kansas House of Representatives
Camille	Straub	Counselor St. Mary's Grade Salina - At large Member of KAIRS Ex. Board	KAIRS
Dr. David	Benson	Member, House Education Committee	Kansas House of Representatives
Debbie	Deere	Owner / Operator A Deere Place Early Learning Center	State Board Nominee
Dinah	Sykes	Ranking Minority Member, Senate Education Committee	Kansas Senate
Donna	Whiteman	Assistant Executive Director Legal Services KASB	KASB
Dotty	Schuckman	USD 320 Social Worker	Kansas School Social Worker
Dr. Jane	Groff	Executive Director, KS Parent Information Resource Center	Kansas Parent Information Resource Center

Dr. Jim	Persinger	Director, School Psychology Program ESU (GLSEN)	Targeted Groups Transgender/Gay/ Lesbian
Dr. Judy	Hughey	Associate Professor Coordinator of Counselor Education	Higher Education
Dr. Karen	Kroh	Assistant Superintendent Archdiocese of KCK	Private Schools
Dr. Paula	Fite	PhD. Professor in the Clinical Child Psychology Program at KU,	Faculty Member in Clinical Child Psychology
<b>Dr. Rick</b>	<b>Ginsberg</b>	KU Dean of Education	<b>CO-CHAIR</b>
Gin	Meier-Hummel	Executive Director Office of Kansas Attorney General	AG's Office
Irvin	Parga	Early Career Classroom Teacher	State Board Nominee
<b>James</b>	<b>Regier</b>	Superintendent Remington-Whitewater	<b>CO-CHAIR</b>
Jean	Clifford	State Board Member	Kansas State Board of Education Member
Joe	Coles	Educational Consultant	Expert Vendor
Jose	Cornejo	Mental Health Facilitator Lawrence Schools	Mental Health Facilitator
Jose	Martinez	Special Education Teacher/Testing Room Facilitator	State Board Nominee
Kim	Keiser	School Psychologist / KASP Representative	KASP Referral
Kyle	Griffitts	Principal Cottonwood Elementary, USD 305	State Board Nominee
Lindsay	Buck	Special Ed Teacher from Lawrence	KNEA Representative
Lori	Blake	Executive Director of Child Advocacy and parenting Services KASB President Elect	KASB School Board Member Representative
Molly	Baumgardner	Chair, Senate Education Committee	Kansas Senate

Pat	Happer	Superintendent USD 340	State Board Nominee
Rebecca	Lewis-Pankratz	Parent & Director of Learning Centers, ESSDACK	State Board Nominee
Rhonda	White	Principal Lakeside Elem. USD 250 Pittsburg	State Board Nominee
Sara	Hortenstine	Executive Director, Kansas Child Death Review Board	Office of Kansas Attorney General
Stephanie	Anderson	Counselor Coordinator for Wichita Public Schools USD 259	State Board Nominee
Stephanie	Litton	Beloit Jr High Counselor USD 273	K-12 Practicing School Counselor
Susan	McMahan	KSDE School Safety Specialist	KSDE School Safety Unit
Thomas	Witt	Executive Director, Equality KS	Equality Kansas
Whitney	Morgan	Wyandotte High School ESL Teacher	KTOY

## Appendix B

Kansas Statute 72-6147

**72-6147. Bullying, school district policies.** (a) As used in this section:

- (1) "Bullying" means: (A) Any intentional gesture or any intentional written, verbal, electronic or physical act or threat either by any student, staff member or parent towards a student or by any student, staff member or parent towards a staff member that is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive that such gesture, act or threat creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment that a reasonable person, under the circumstances, knows or should know will have the effect of:
  - (i) Harming a student or staff member, whether physically or mentally;
  - (ii) damaging a student's or staff member's property;
  - (iii) placing a student or staff member in reasonable fear of harm to the student or staff member; or
  - (iv) placing a student or staff member in reasonable fear of damage to the student's or staff member's property;(B) cyberbullying; or  
(C) any other form of intimidation or harassment prohibited by the board of education of the school district in policies concerning bullying adopted pursuant to this section or subsection (e) of K.S.A. 72-1138, and amendments thereto.
- (2) "Cyberbullying" means bullying by use of any electronic communication device through means including, but not limited to, e-mail, instant messaging, text messages, blogs, mobile phones, pagers, online games and websites.
- (3) "Parent" includes a guardian, custodian or other person with authority to act on behalf of the child.
- (4) "School district" or "district" means any unified school district organized and operating under the laws of this state.
- (5) "School vehicle" means any school bus, school van, other school vehicle

and private vehicle used to transport students or staff members to and from school or any school-sponsored activity or event.

(6) "Staff member" means any person employed by a school district.

(b) The board of education of each school district shall adopt a policy to prohibit bullying either by any student, staff member or parent towards a student or by a student, staff member or parent towards a staff member on or while utilizing school property, in a school vehicle or at a school-sponsored activity or event.

(c) The board of education of each school district shall adopt and implement a plan to address bullying either by any student, staff member or parent towards a student or by a student, staff member or parent towards a staff member on school property, in a school vehicle or at a school-sponsored activity or event. Such plan shall include provisions for the training and education for staff members and students.

(d) The board of education of each school district may adopt additional policies relating to bullying pursuant to subsection (e) of K.S.A. 72-1138, and amendments thereto.

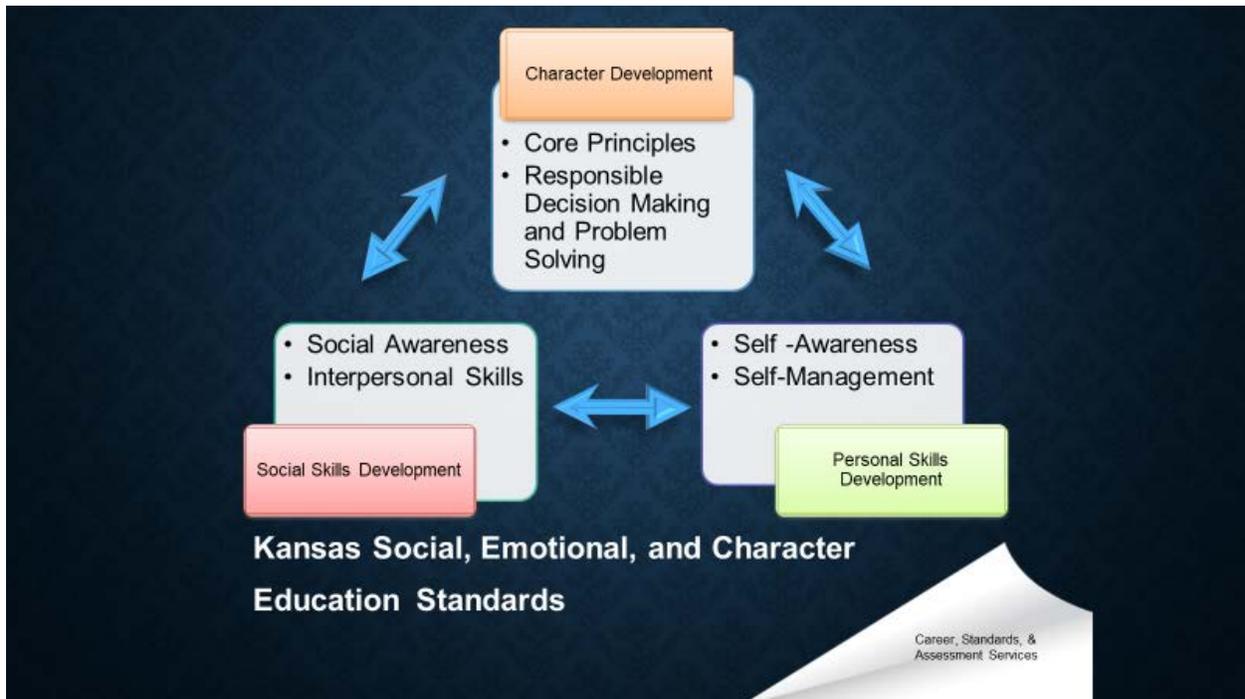
(e) Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit or supersede or in any manner affect or diminish the requirements of compliance by a staff member with the provisions of K.S.A. 2018 Supp. 38-2223 or 38-2226, and amendments thereto.

**History:** L. 2007, ch. 185, § 4; L. 2008, ch. 77, § 1; L. 2013, ch. 121, § 15; July 1.

**Source or Prior Law:**

72-8256.

# Appendix C



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