



**VSBA**

**Virginia School Boards Association**

Leadership · Advocacy · Support

# 2023 Bullying Prevention Month Toolkit



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

# October 2023 – VSBA Bullying Prevention Month

Dear School Board Member/Superintendent,

In an effort to promote awareness of school bullying, the VSBA Board of Directors has designated the month of October as VSBA Bullying Prevention Month.

Childhood bullying is a significant problem nationwide. It can cause school absenteeism, mental and physical stress, poor school performance, low self-esteem, and in some cases, school violence. Statistics show students who experience bullying are at an increased risk for depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, lower academic achievement, and dropping out of school (Centers for Disease Control, 2021).

School board members, superintendents, teachers, administrators, and parents play a critical role in creating a climate where bullying is not tolerated. It has been proven that when adults and children stand together, bullying ends.

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

- Adopt a proclamation similar to the one adopted by the VSBA Board of Directors (see enclosed).
- Write a letter to the editor or contact a local reporter to see if they will do a story about bullying prevention initiatives taking place in the division.
- Hold school or division student contests (poster, video, writing, etc.) around the theme of “VSBA Bullying Prevention Month.”
- Conduct parent/caregiver workshops on bullying, which could include the opportunity for parents/caregivers to spend time with their child’s guidance counselor.

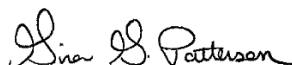
This guide includes several resources to assist you in these efforts, including references to VSBA policies on bullying, a sample news release, and a proclamation adopted by the VSBA Board of Directors.

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

Sincerely,



David Woodard  
VSBA President



Gina G. Patterson  
Executive Director

# VSBA Anti-Bullying Policies

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

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

The principal or principal's designee notifies the parent of any student involved in an alleged incident of bullying within 24 hours of learning of the allegation of bullying.

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

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

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

# VSBA Board of Directors Proclamation

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

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

**WHEREAS**, an estimated one hundred sixty thousand students in kindergarten through twelfth grade miss school every day due to a fear of being bullied;

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

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

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

Now, **THEREFORE**, the Virginia School Boards Association recognizes the month of October 2023 as VSBA Bullying Prevention Month, with the intention that the issue of bullying and its prevention be discussed in Virginia schools and classrooms during that time.

# Sample News Release

For Immediate Release

[DATE]

## Contact

[NAME]

[PHONE]

## October is VSBA Bullying Prevention Month

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

Childhood bullying is a significant problem nationwide. It can cause school absenteeism, mental and physical stress, poor school performance, low self-esteem, and, in some cases, school violence. One out of every five (20%) students report being bullied on school property and more than one in six (16.67%) students reported being bullied electronically in the last year, according to the Centers for Disease Control in 2021. This means that upwards of thirteen million school-aged children are bullied each year.

[INSERT QUOTE FROM BOARD MEMBER AND/OR SUPERINTENDENT]

Local activities include [INSERT LIST OF ACTIVITIES]

## About the Virginia School Boards Association

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

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