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## Draft anti-bullying policy released in Phoebe Prince's school district

The Massachusetts school district where a bullied 15-year-old, Phoebe Prince, attended school before she committed suicide has unveiled a draft anti-bullying policy that details measures that should be taken to prevent, or intervene in, a bad situation.

The most important part requires the school district to teach students how to deal with the issue in the classroom, and includes provisions to educate parents and guardians about addressing it at home.

In the wake of the teenager's death, the subject of bullying is getting new academic attention. It was announced today that the University of Buffalo Graduate School of Education will become the site of a national center for the prevention of bullying, abuse and school violence.

"We need to change the way people look at this problem to reflect the message that bullying is child abuse by children," said Jean M. Alberti, who donated money for the center. "No one I've ever heard or read about talks about bullying in that language. Until we change the language, we can't change people's understanding of the problem."

The new draft anti-bullying policy for the South Hadley school district was drawn up by a task force appointed in February after the teenager hanged herself. Prosecutors said she took her life after being bullied by other students, nine of whom have been criminally charged in her death.

According to the Springfield Republican, the draft policy:

- Defines bullying as severe or repeated use by one or more students of written, verbal or electronic communication, or a physical act or gesture or exclusion directed at another student.
- Has at least one of the following effects: Causes physical or emotional harm, creates a hostile environment, infringes on the person's rights or disrupts the school.
- Details measures to intervene or prevent bullying, including the establishment of a process for students and staff to report bullying, anonymously, if necessary.
- Recommends a range of disciplinary actions
- Explains strategies for protecting students and notifying parents or guardians of bullying.
- Requires that law enforcement be notified in cases where criminal charges may be pursued.

The draft is likely to change somewhat before it becomes permanent. Some task force members criticized it, mostly on the grounds that the disciplinary measures may not be tough enough.

But disciplinary measures are not really at the heart of any anti-bullying policy.

In fact, more than 40 states already have some sort of law that makes bullying illegal. Yet the harassment of kids by their classmates remains common. According to the latest U.S. government statistics, about one-third of students aged 12-18 say they are bullied in some fashion.

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Some states are now moving to strengthen their anti-bullying laws, but the fact is that unless everybody in every school in the country learns how to recognize and deal with these situations, bullying won't stop.

Most schools don't have anti-bullying programs. Some that have them don't have the ones known to be most effective.

South Hadley has budgeted \$20,000 to bring anti-bullying instruction into its schools, though it isn't yet known what the program will be.

Researchers say that the only kind of anti-bullying program with any hope of reducing such behavior involves the entire school community, such as [The Olweus Program](#) (pronounced OI-VEY-us) for elementary, junior high and middle schools. (You can find reports that analyze different bullying programs [here](#).)

That means that every adult in the school, from the principal to the janitor, must be trained in how to recognize bullying and what actions to take to stop it. Kids need to learn that being a bystander is not acceptable, and then how to safely intervene, even if it means getting help from an adult in a bad situation. One school-wide assembly to discuss bullying doesn't work. Schools that are serious about this kind of program often make time once a week for the topic to be discussed in every classroom.

Education and training are the keys. It's both sad and infuriating that it takes a tragedy to force adults to pay attention to what is harming so many kids.

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By Valerie Strauss | April 27, 2010; 3:30 PM ET  
 Categories: [Bullying](#) | Tags: [Phoebe P.](#), [Phoebe Prince](#), [South Hadley schools](#), [bullying](#)

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The anti-harassment policy must include measures to protect vs.:

COVER-UPS BY SUPT., PRINCIPALS, STAFF who are concerned with image, blame, etc. (as was once the case in South Hadley)

INFLUENTIAL / HOSTILE PARENTS (OF ACCUSED) who try to change outcomes.

ATHLETES GIVEN "ENTITLEMENT" TO HARASS Have a strict code of conduct & ENFORCED penalties for even the star athletes.

S.Hadley HS football capt. Sean Mulveyhill dated the late Phoebe Prince, then taunted her with hockey player + gf Kayla Narey. --> per indictment of friend Ashley Longe <--

ENFORCE, ENFORCE, ENFORCE If educators mean business, impose & enforce penalties. Why enable a future adult coworker bully? Or another Colombine?

\*\*HALL CAMERAS & HALL MONITORS\*\* deter bullies

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PARENTS: Support schools! Even responsible parents can hv kids who harass.

Posted by: CitizenOfWorld | April 27, 2010 8:13 PM | [Report abuse](#)

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Bullying is hard to stop in part because teachers are afraid to intervene, especially when it gets physical. Teachers get sued and districts get sued when parents feel Precious was stopped from being a bully too harshly.

An example:

I was put on administrative leave for a week because I decided to stop a little 5th grader from getting in any more punches on another student. The hitter called me names, stomped on my foot, resisted going to the office (so I physically brought him there with assistance from other teachers) and was simply being a thug. A violent, habitual bully, as I came to find out (it was my first year at the school, not my first teaching).

His mother called me and the school racist (kid is black, I am white), called the cops and tried to sue.

Obviously I was within my rights; indeed, it is my responsibility to make school a safe environment for everyone, and stopping an assault seemed to be the right thing to do.

But they still sent me home for a week while they figured out how to handle this angry, misguided mother and violent child.

Obviously, I came back, no charges were filed, no disciplinary action was taken against me. But the kid was there the whole week I was gone. I got suspended instead of him.

This is how public schools work; they fear the parents and law suits. They tend to treat parents like customers. They aren't customers. And the parent of this kid is just trouble.

You need to look into why bullying continues. It's always been around, and back in the day, the bully would get his ass kicked, or the school would demand the parents do something, and if they can't, the school will remove the kid.

We don't do that now. We have become milquetoast. And when we assert ourselves in attempt to do the right thing, we get suspended, put on administrative leave, and the offender gets rewarded.

Anti-bullying programs are fine, but meaningless for the bullies--they will bully until they get theirs.

What we need are teachers unafraid to confront anti-social behavior. When a kid hits another, they have lost their autonomy. I should be able to take that kid to the office and call his mother to come pick him up. But, unless administration backs me up, I got nothing.

This is a "classroom management" issue, and one that can't be fixed by "talking" about it. Bullies need to watch other bullies get busted. Unless we deal with actual bullies at the moment they are doing their bullying, all the programs in the world will be useless.

That's all I got.

Posted by: tfteacher | April 27, 2010 8:18 PM | [Report abuse](#)

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"We need to change the way people look at this problem to reflect the message that that bullying is child abuse by children," said Jean M. Alberti, who donated money for the center. "No one I've ever heard or read about talks about bullying in that language. Until we change the language, we can't change people's understanding of the problem."

THANK YOU! I do not even call this the B word but full on abuse; Peer Abuse! Its about time people started calling a spade a spade!

Elizabeth Bennett  
Peer Abuse Know More!

Posted by: elizabethbennett1 | April 28, 2010 10:01 AM | [Report abuse](#)

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I have worked in many schools and I would say that some schools and some districts have a culture of bullying and some don't. When you get a lot of people who think the victims are wimps or overly sensitive or caused it, you get a lot of bullying, because it is seen as a normal part of growing up. I have also heard discussions among teachers about getting help to the bullies and talking to them, as if they are the ones who are suffering.

I agree with tfteacher. Anti-bullying programs help in that at least they say "No" to bullying in a public way and they give kids and teachers a common language to talk about or report bullying. But bullies are slick and keep on until someone stops them. The situation he describes is obvious bullying, because it is physical. In many schools it is more psychological, cyber bullying, cruel notes and posters on lockers, gum on your books, that kind of stuff. If it is relentless and against one kid, it is pretty bad.

Posted by: celestun100 | April 28, 2010 10:28 AM | [Report abuse](#)

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