



Board of Education

67 Washington Avenue ~ Woodbury, CT 06798

www.ctreg14.org

Mission: The Region 14 community ensures an engaging and positive learning environment where every student is valued as a respected contributing member of society, who graduates prepared to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

July 6, 2018

Dear Parents and Community Members;

In a continued effort toward improving transparency regarding school climate and bullying issues in Region 14, we would like to share the attached letter from the Connecticut State Department of Education.

We are committed to providing safe schools for all students. We will continue to educate ourselves and the larger Region 14 Community on best practice to improve school climate in all of our buildings.

Respectfully,

Region 14 Board of Education

[Board of Education Members](#)

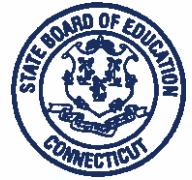
Janet Morgan, Chairperson ~ Maryanne Van Aken, Vice Chairperson ~ Carol Ann Brown, Assistant Secretary/Treasurer
~ George Bauer, Treasurer ~ John Chapman ~ Michael Devine ~ David Lampart ~ Pamela Zmek, Secretary



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

June 28, 2018



Dr. Anna Cutaia-Leonard
Superintendent of Schools
Regional School District 14
5 Minortown Road
Woodbury, CT 06798

Dear Dr. Cutaia-Leonard:

This is to inform you of the outcome of the fact-finding conducted in response to allegations made during the public comment segment of the April 4, 2018, regular meeting of the Connecticut State Board of Education (CSBE), and additional allegations brought to the attention of the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) Turnaround Office. Specifically, parents from the Regional School District (RSD) 14 expressed concerns that the district leadership does not promptly or equitably address allegations of bullying, discrimination, and/or harassment complaints. Therefore, in addition to previous technical assistance work with the district on April 26, 2018, staff from CSDE convened a lengthy meeting with district and school leadership to discuss the allegations made; examine evidence of RSD 14's handling of complaints and reports of bullying, and sexual harassment; and to assess the sufficiency of the district's investigative process and response.

As a result of the fact-finding conducted by the CSDE, it has been determined that the district and the school leadership have a reliable and impartial investigatory process that is widely published. This process is triggered when an allegation of bullying, discrimination and/or harassment is received. Upon receipt of a complaint, the records examined show that the district and/or school leadership's response has been prompt and appropriate in the investigation that was conducted. Determinations were based on facts discovered during the investigation and the outcome was communicated to all parties, and subject to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations and restrictions. Additionally, there is evidence that even when verified acts of bullying are not found by the district and/or school investigation where appropriate, consequences have been issued for inappropriate behavior and a safety plan was developed by the district.

It has also been determined, based on the discussion and review of RSD 14 Board of Education. Furthermore, to the extent permitted by FERPA, the outcomes of the district/school inquiries conducted were communicated to the families of students involved. However, as part of its fact-finding and technical assistance, the CSDE staff reminds RSD 14 district leadership that in accordance with the mandates of Connecticut General Statutes §10-222k(c)(1): "the principal of each school shall establish a committee or designate at least one existing committee in the school to be responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate and addressing issues relating to bullying in the school. Such committee shall include at least one parent or guardian of a student enrolled in the school appointed by the school principal."

As we discussed during our February 21, 2018, technical assistance visit with the RSD 14's Central Office to discuss ongoing parent concerns, it is important to continue the district's work to promote positive culture and climate across the district. The March 2018 Advanced School Climate trainings at Woodbury Middle School shows evidence of that effort.

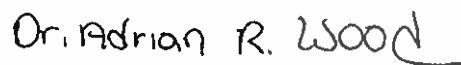
Dr. Anna Cutaia-Leonard
June 28, 2018
Page 2

Furthermore, the district and the school leadership should continue to notify families and community members of district-initiated and other available learning opportunities on topics like bullying, discrimination, and unlawful harassment. Similarly, republishing board policies concerning bullying, discrimination, and other forms of unlawful harassment, as well as the district's procedures for investigating complaints of such prohibited behavior ensures that students and families have access to helpful information about what constitutes bullying, discrimination and harassment, and the district's responsive process. The CSDE staff remain available and willing to provide technical assistance where it is appropriate.

As part of RSD 14's ongoing efforts, broader communication with parents/guardians about the district's strategies for maintaining a positive school climate is critical. We emphasize here, the importance of communication regarding the broader issue of school climate because it appears likely that misunderstanding, uncertainty and/or confusion concerning what legally constitutes "bullying" under Connecticut law may have contributed to the belief of some parents that RSD 14 was not appropriately addressing climate issues. It is important to be clear with all relevant parties that just because a particular incident, or group of incidents, was not found to meet the legal definition of bullying under Connecticut law does not mean that RSD 14 failed to take appropriate action in response to the behavior to ensure that damage to student relationships and the school climate has been repaired. Under the Freedom of Information Act, it may be necessary to release this document, and related records upon request to the extent required by applicable law.

Thank you for your cooperation with this process. If you or your staff have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Adrian R. Wood at 860-713-6795 or via e-mail at adrian.wood@ct.gov.

Sincerely,



Dr. Adrian R. Wood
Education Consultant for the Turnaround Office

AW:bt