



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Shepard Building
255 Westminster Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-3400

Peter McWalters
Commissioner

December 1, 2003

Dear Superintendent:

The purpose of this correspondence is to notify you of the **Rhode Island Model Policy and Guidance Document for Bullying Teasing and Harassment**. As you may know, the General Assembly has passed legislation requiring school committees to adopt rules and regulations meant to prevent bullying in the public schools under their respective jurisdictions. [R.I.G.L. 16-21-26, copy attached] These policies must be in effect by September 1, 2004.

Additionally, the Rhode Island Department of Education was required by this legislation to prepare for dissemination to school committees a model policy for the prevention of bullying. This model policy was required to be made available by December 1, 2003. A copy of a model policy along with a guidance document containing pertinent related statutes and a bibliography of programs books and reference documents are also attached.

You should know that this policy was developed in cooperation with a statewide advisory committee representing superintendents, principals, the NEA and AFT, parents, the Office of the Attorney General and Department of Education. This committee met throughout the past few months to draft this document. They referred to numerous pertinent documents as well as policies being adopted in other states before they recommended this model policy to assist you in developing your local policy in order to comply with this legislative requirement. I commend them for the fine work they accomplished.

The issue of bullying teasing and harassment is a pervasive and growing issue that this model policy will assist you in addressing. While this is a behavior that should neither be tolerated nor condoned, it should not be addressed by merely removing or excluding students from school. The development of your local policy should be seen as an opportunity to develop a comprehensive and preventive approach that addresses the underlying reasons for this behavior and helps to create a better school community which supports learning and teaching for students and adults.

I request that you familiarize yourself with this model policy and the guidance, and be sure to make this known well within your community. You should discuss this with your central office and building level administrators well as with teachers, parents, school improvement teams, school committees, law enforcement or other appropriate individuals and groups.

Telephone (401)222-4600 Fax (401)222-6178 TTY 800-745-5555 Voice 800-745-6575

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Page 2

December 1, 2003

If you have any questions regarding this policy, you may contact George McDonough at 222-4600, ext. 2372 or Forrest Avila. They were the Department of Education staff that coordinated the work of the advisory committee and developed the final model policy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter McWalters". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Peter McWalters

