

November 14, 2019

Dear District Administrators:

I hope your year is going well. I have had the privilege of visiting many schools this year and continue to be impressed with the work being done and the education students are receiving from dedicated educators. I am writing today, however, to draw your attention to an issue we must work together on as a community to address. As you have seen in the media recently, incidents, including racial slurs, mocking other cultures, and violent outbursts have been occurring in our classrooms and on our playing fields. This unacceptable behavior is becoming more prevalent in our schools, and we need to address this head on.

As we all know, students deserve to be educated in an environment free from bullying and intolerance and in which all students are accepted for who they are. We play a critical role in making sure students are prepared to engage in civil discourse, respect and appreciate differences, and collaborate effectively with others. Part of our vision for all students to become college and career ready includes the skills and habits necessary to apply this knowledge in a successful manner. Everything that happens within a school setting, from the classroom to involvement in extracurricular activities, prepares students with these skills and habits to become productive citizens in our society.

As part of your continuing review of school policies, and as you connect with your students, teachers, administrators, staff, coaches, and parents, I am asking you to identify ways in which you can further build inclusive and accepting learning environments. In particular, I would draw your attention to some policies you are required to have in place under state law:

- Wis. Stats. 120.13 (1)(a) requires codes of conduct. The code is developed in consultation with a committee of school district residents that consists of parents, pupils, members of the school board, school administrators, teachers, pupil services professionals, and other residents of the school district who are appointed to the committee by the school board.
- Wis. Stats. 118.46 requires a school board to adopt a policy on bullying.
- Administrative rule PI 9.03 requires each school board to develop policies prohibiting discrimination against pupils. Those policies are required to address, among other items, standards and rules of behavior, including pupil harassment.

Additionally, under federal law, there are requirements associated with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

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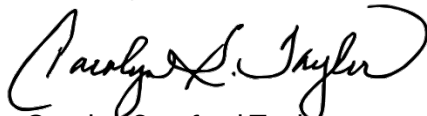
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As educators, we work together with our entire school community to build a positive school culture. Please know the Department of Public Instruction has multiple resources to help you with safe and supportive school environments, which can be found at <https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/safe-schools/safe-and-supportive>. These resources include model policies on school nondiscrimination, anti-bullying, guidance on how to reduce and respond to sexual harassment and violence, and recommendations for developing school-based support groups.

Our staff are also available to support you in your work. The Student Services/Prevention and Wellness Team can be reached at (608) 266-8960.

Thank you for all you do to improve the lives of students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carolyn S. Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Carolyn Stanford Taylor  
State Superintendent

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