



## Livingston County Schools

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March 27, 2012

Dear Livingston County Parents, Staff, and Students

This letter is being sent in response to the events of the recent week in Livingston County. The issue of bullying has been raised in the community. Bullying is a state and national problem and unfortunately, Livingston County is no different than other school districts in that we are not immune from this problem. In 2008, an anti-bullying bill supported by our State Representative Mike Cherry became law in KY. This law required immediate revision of all Board of Education policies as well as revision to all district and school discipline codes. Our own policies and codes of conduct were revised as required and our staff received mandatory training which is updated annually. We have policies and rules which provide definite guidelines, procedures, and requirements for the school staff to deal with this issue. Despite recently enacted policies that were put in place in KY and other laws being enacted across the nation, bullying remains a problem.

Yesterday, March 26, I had the opportunity to discuss the bullying issue with a concerned parent, and representatives of the KY State Police and Livingston County Sheriff's Department. Our meeting was a very productive one in which we not only listened to parental concerns but also brainstormed ideas with law enforcement officials who brought a great deal of insight and expertise on this topic to the table.

Here are some of the key points that came out of our meeting:

- All parties involved want the same thing—that is, to do all we can to effectively address and stop bullying.
- The need to notify and involve parents of bullying issues involving their child.
- The need to follow up and monitor cases that have been reported.
- The need to convey our procedures for reporting allegations of bullying and to carefully and precisely document and track cases of bullying.
- Communication is a key part of the solution. Students and parents must report allegations of bullying as called for in the policies. Teachers and other staff who have knowledge of bullying must report it to the Principal. In more serious and repetitive cases, the Principal must report it to the Superintendent or their designee and in serious cases as called for in our policy, the Principal must report it to law enforcement.

- If in doubt about whether a situation is serious enough to be reported to law enforcement, we should err on the side of caution and report it. Our law enforcement officials stand ready to assist us in such matters. Harassment or bullying of a physical or sexual nature needs law enforcement involvement.
- Students need to feel comfortable in reporting allegations of bullying against themselves or their peers to school employees.

As a result of these key points as discussed above, the next steps that will be taken in Livingston County Schools will be to continue to implement and seek to improve the policies, procedures, and programs already in place and also to continue to add new strategies. A summary of these are as follows:

- To emphasize to students and parents how allegations of bullying should be reported. These reports can be made verbally or in writing to any staff member who will then report them to the principal. If the bullying is based on any federally protected areas such as race, color, national origin, age, religion, sex, or disability a designated form is attached for reporting this to the school principal. Reports can also be made verbally or directly to the school principal.
- To consider the implementation of a 24 hour hotline to report acts of bullying or possible violence for the 2012-2013 school year. We had already received correspondence from Dr. Roland Haun, a retired KY School Superintendent and education consultant about a month ago in regard to a Safe School Hotline that not only allows for reporting of allegations, but also offers access to 24/7 counseling services.
- To publish and promote the following phone numbers which provide services 24/7: Local Crisis Line- 1-800-592-3980. National Suicide Prevention Hotline- 1-800-273-TALK. Their website contains many resources and can be found at <http://dbhdid.ky.gov/dbh/sped.asp>.
- To review and improve our procedures and process for documenting instances of bullying.
- To improve parental communication on all school issues, including that of bullying. The use of technology such as Twitter and Facebook can be used to communicate general issues and information that parents need to know. Staff members can be reached for private matters through their school e-mail and possibly a private message to the District Facebook site.
- To use technology to better communicate to parents and educate them on what the law as well as board policies and school discipline codes say regarding bullying.
- To continue to train and update our staff to better detect and respond to bullying issues as well as reporting requirements. This is an ongoing process as laws and regulations change and as policies are revised. This training is currently an annual event. A mid-year refresher training at staff faculty meetings will be put in place, and possibly more often as deemed necessary by principals.
- The Superintendent and DPP will review school and district data on bullying incidents every month to look for trends.
- To use the surveillance camera system already in place in all schools to assist in investigating reports of bullying.
- To take advantage of collaboration with law enforcement in programs such as DARE. Deputy Robert Johnson is working with our elementary schools in the DARE program which focuses not only on drug education but also on issues such as bullying.
- To seek input from all available community partners in bringing programs and assemblies into our schools that address issues such as bullying and other relevant topics.

- To continue to participate in statewide initiatives such as the on-line anti bullying pledges promoted by the KY Center for School Safety.
- To form a district committee to stay abreast of issues regarding bullying and to meet to coordinate anti-bully programs and initiatives.

Again, I want to stress that our staff in Livingston County Schools is committed to not only providing a quality education to our students but to provide a safe and respectful learning environment in which students feel safe. While bullying is a complex and troublesome issue, we are confident we can work with parents, law enforcement, and community partners to better serve our students. You will be hearing much more on this in the days, weeks, and months ahead. If any of our staff can assist you at any time, we urge you to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darryl Chittenden". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Darryl Chittenden  
Superintendent  
Livingston County Schools