

Introduction

As part of the Division's ongoing efforts to foster a safe, healthy, and supportive learning environment and an inclusive community, ACPS is considering developing and implementing a civility policy. To inform ACPS' upcoming consultations with the School Board, Hanover Research (Hanover) has conducted a preliminary scan of similar policies, codes, and regulations adopted by districts nationwide.¹ In this brief, Hanover shares initial observations regarding the motivations for and the contents of such policies. Hanover also outlines questions ACPS may use to guide discussions with the School Board regarding the nature of a civility initiative within the Division.

Initial Observations²

Districts typically adopt civility policies following increases in aggressive language and behavior among one or more stakeholder groups. Such disputes and disagreements may involve: only students; only staff members; students and staff members; students and parents; and/or staff members and parents. Community members also may cause disturbances (e.g., at district meetings and events open to the general public). Districts appear to implement two types of policies in response to this trend: 1) bullying, intimidation, and harassment policies and/or 2) civility policies. Hanover's preliminary scan finds the former policy response more common than the latter. When compared with bullying, intimidation, and harassment policies, civility policies generally convey a more positive tone, emphasizing how civil discourse and behavior contribute to wider efforts to promote a safe, supportive district culture and climate.

District civility policies vary in terms of format, structure, content, and degree of specificity. While a more thorough review likely would yield additional insight into the characteristics of such measures, Hanover's preliminary research indicates that the most comprehensive district civility policies commonly:

- Define civility;
- Discuss why civility matters;
- Note that civility represents a realistic, attainable goal (e.g., stakeholders *can* acknowledge differences respectfully, disagree courteously, solve problems constructively);
- Specify acceptable and unacceptable forms of language and behavior;
- Set expectations (in general and for different stakeholder groups);
- Outline mechanisms for reporting violations; and
- Indicate how the district will respond to confirmed violations.

When developing civility policies, districts should consider involving diverse representatives from each stakeholder group to capture a range of perspectives and experiences. Following civility policy adoption, districts should plan to issue notices and post the document(s) prominently. Districts also should schedule training sessions for staff members and information sessions or workshops for other stakeholder groups, including community members.

Discussion Questions

ACPS may use the following questions to guide discussions with the Board regarding the development of a civility policy for the Division.

?	How would you define civility? What does civility mean to you?
?	How would you describe the current state of civility in ACPS?
?	How do you think our community has become <i>less</i> civil?
?	Have you been the target of aggressive, threatening, or violent language or behavior?
?	Have you witnessed someone else in our community being targeted by aggressive, threatening, or violent language or behavior?
?	Which groups in our community are most often the target of aggressive, threatening, or violent language or behavior?
?	What are the underlying causes of this hostility in our community?
?	Why do the perpetrators think this language and behavior is acceptable?
?	How do you think this hostility contributes to other negative outcomes in ACPS?
?	What do you think needs to change to increase understanding in our community?
?	How might a civility policy support these changes?
?	What should ACPS' immediate next steps be to make our discourse more civil?

District Civility Policy Examples

To identify examples of civility policies, Hanover first researched the 10 largest districts nationwide as identified by the U.S. Census Bureau based on enrollment and per pupil expenditures (Figure 1).³ Then, we examined select ACPS peer districts at the national, regional, and state levels, as identified by Hanover's Data Lab (Figures 2, 3, and 4 respectively). Hanover's Data Lab generated lists of peer districts based on degree of similarity across multiple variables, including total enrollment, student demographics, and community socioeconomic characteristics. The top five national peers include one Virginia division—Manassas City Public Schools. Thus, Hanover incorporated the sixth most similar district in the regional peer group to ensure we considered a total of five districts. Lastly, Hanover researched district civility policies more generally, without taking into consideration the extent to which such districts resemble ACPS (Figure 5). All 22 districts in Figure 5 maintain some form of civility policy, code, or regulation, as indicated by the green shading of the rows. In Figures 1-4, gray shading reflects cases in which districts or divisions do not appear to mention civility at all or only refer to civility in passing (i.e., simply noting the importance of civility in communications and interactions among stakeholder groups). For such districts or divisions, where possible, Hanover links to related policies and practices instead (e.g., bullying, harassment, intimidation).

Figure 1: Civility and Related Policies and Resources—10 Largest Districts Nationwide

DISTRICT	POLICIES/RESOURCES
New York City Department of Education (NY)	Respect for All: Fostering Anti-Bullying Practices
Los Angeles Unified School District (CA)	Bullying and Hazing BUL-5212.2: Bullying and Hazing Policy (Student-to-Student and Student-to-Adult)
Chicago Public Schools (IL)	Student Code of Conduct (SCC) SCC Section 4: Anti-Bullying Policy Reporting Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Retaliation
Miami-Dade County Public Schools (FL)	Bullying and Harassment Policy Against Bullying and Harassment Bullying and Harassment Policy Manual and Curriculum
Clark County School District (NV)	Say No to Bullying P-5137: Safe and Respectful Learning Environment—Bullying and Cyberbullying SafeVoice Nevada
Broward County Public Schools (FL)	Notes from a 2011 Diversity Committee Meeting reference a “Resolution in Support of Civility” adopted annually since 2003. However, Hanover could neither locate a copy of the Resolution nor confirm its current status. Bullying Prevention 5.9: Anti-Bullying Policy
Houston Independent School District (TX)	Volunteer in Public Schools(VIPS) Code of Civility Policy on Bullying Anti-Bullying Resources
Hillsborough County Public Schools (FL)	Civility Statement Policy 3380 - Threatening Behavior Toward Staff Members Policy 5517.01 – Bullying and Harassment School Board Meeting Guidelines
Orange County Public Schools (FL)	Code of Civility Professional Standards - Frequently Asked Questions
Palm Beach County Public Schools (FL)	Student & Family Handbook 2020-21 Policy 5.001: Protecting Students from Harassment and Discrimination Policy 5.002: Bullying and Harassment Bullying Awareness, Prevention and Resources

Figure 2: Civility and Related Policies and Resources—Top 5 Nationwide Peer Districts

DISTRICT	POLICIES/RESOURCES
Manassas City Public Schools (VA)	Section K: School Community Relations—School Visitors
	Section G: Personnel—Anti-Bullying
	Report of Bullying Form (Personnel)
	Section J: Students—Bullying of Students
	Reporting Bullying Behavior Form (Students)
	Section J: Students—Bullying, Hazing, Assault and Battery and Threats Against Students and Employees
Tracy Unified School District (CA)	Student Code of Conduct 2020-2021
	Bullying Prevention Policy
Brentwood Union Free School District (NY)	Bullying Investigation Procedures
	Mission Statement
	Code of Conduct
	Board Policy 0115: Student Harassment and Bullying Prevention and Intervention
Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (CA)	Current Brentwood Anti Bullying Programs
	BP 2111 Administration: Superintendent Governance Standards
	BB 9005 Board Bylaws: Governance Standards
	BP 5131.2 Students: Bullying
	AR 5131.2 Students: Bullying
	E 5131.2 Students: Bullying
	BP 5145.3 Students: Nondiscrimination/Harassment
	AR 5145.3 Students: Nondiscrimination/Harassment
	BP 5145.9 Students: Hate-Motivated Behavior
Danbury Public Schools (CT)	Parent/Guardian and Student Rights and Information Notifications for the 2020-21 School Year
	Board of Education Policy Committee Meeting Minutes from October 2, 2019 reference changes to 9273 Civility Code. However, Hanover could neither locate a copy of the Resolution nor confirm its current status.
	Policy No. 7-797: Bullying Behavior in the Schools
	Regulation: Bullying Behavior in the Schools—Safe School Climate Plan

Figure 3: Civility and Related Policies and Resources—Top 5 Regional Peer Districts⁴

DISTRICT	POLICIES/RESOURCES
Manor Independent School District (TX)	Student Code of Conduct 2020-2021
	Anti-Bullying Resources
	Bullying Definition
	Bullying Report Process
	Incident Report Form
Manassas Park City Public Schools (VA)	School Visitors
	Student Code of Conduct
	Student Conduct
	Student Health and Wellness
	Prohibition Against Harassment and Retaliation
	Report of Harassment
	Prohibition Against Harassment and Retaliation
New Caney Independent School District (TX)	Report of Harassment
	Student Welfare: Freedom from Bullying
	Student Welfare: Student Safety
	Student Welfare: Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation
	Student Rights and Responsibilities: Student and Parent Complaints/Grievances
	Employee Welfare: Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation
	Employee Standards of Conduct
Carrollton-Farmers Branch Independent School District (TX)	No Bully Zone
	Code of Conduct 2020-2021
	Student Welfare: Freedom from Bullying
	Student Welfare: Student Safety
	Student Welfare: Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation
	Student Rights and Responsibilities: Student Conduct
	Employee Welfare: Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation
	Employee Standards of Conduct
	Notice of Parent and Student Rights – Bullying, Sexual Harassment, and Dating Violence
	Student/Parent Handbook 2020-2021
Spring Branch Independent School District (TX)	Counseling Topics & Resources: Bullying Prevention
	Anonymous Alerts
	Student/Parent Handbook 2020-2021
	Student Code of Conduct 2020-2021
	Student Welfare: Freedom from Bullying
	Student Welfare: Freedom from Bullying
	Student Welfare: Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation
	Student Welfare: Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation
	Student Welfare: Student Safety
	Student Rights and Responsibilities: Student Expression
	Employee Welfare: Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation
	Bullying Prevention

Figure 4: Civility and Related Policies and Resources—Select Virginia Divisions

DIVISION	POLICIES/RESOURCES
Prince William County Public Schools (VA)	Policy 134: Citizen Participation
	Addressing Civility in the Workplace
	Regulation 733.01-1: Bullying of Students
	Bullying Prevention
	Prevention and Family Assistance
Fairfax County Public Schools (VA)	Fairfax County School Board Strategic Governance Manual
	Student Rights and Responsibilities
	Bullying Prevention and Intervention

Figure 5: Civility and Related Policies and Resources—Various Districts Nationwide

DISTRICT	POLICIES/RESOURCES
Federal Way Public Schools (WA)	Policy 3203: Civility
Gloucester County Public Schools (VA)	Civility Policy
Hernando County School District (FL)	Code of Civility
Howard County Public School System (MD)	Policy 1000 – Civility
Irvine Unified School District (CA)	Board Policy 1313: Civility
Issaquah School District (WA)	Regulation 4011: Civility
	Procedure 5282P: Civility
Knox County Schools (TN)	Civility Code
Lake Washington School District (WA)	Policy 4011: Civility
Lower Merion School District (PA)	Policy 006: Civility
Menifee Union School District (CA)	Board Policy 1313: Civility
Oak Park Unified School District (CA)	Civility Policy
Olympia School District (WA)	Policy 5161: Civility in the Workplace
Parkway Schools (MO)	Civility Policy
Pasco County Public Schools (FL)	Respect and Civility Statement
Princeton Public Schools (NJ)	Policy 1252: Civility
	Policy 5131.1: Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying
Pueblo County School District 70 (CO)	Civility Policy
Sacramento City Unified School District (CA)	Civility Policy
Santa Barbara Unified School District (CA)	Board Policy 1313: Civility
School District of Osceola County (FL)	2020-21 School Board Rules: Civility and Orderly Conduct among School District Employees, Parents, and the Public
Sumner-Bonney Lake School District (WA)	Policies 3209 and 5012: Civility
Torrance Unified School District (CA)	Civility Procedures
Weston Public Schools (CT)	Policy 1255: Civility

Endnotes

¹ A more comprehensive research study likely would yield additional and/or more robust findings regarding the objectives, components, and effects of civility policies.

² In addition to the district-specific policies, codes, and regulations included in the figures, please see: [1] "Civility Policies Surfacing in Schools." Education World, February 6, 2017. https://www.educationworld.com/a_issues/issues223.shtml [2] "Sports, Parents, and Violence: What Can Schools Do?" National School Boards Association, *American School Board Journal*, June 2005. Accessed via EBSCOHost.

[3] Willard, N. "Learning From Politics: 5 Actions to Help Students Embrace Civility." *Education Week Blog*, March 30, 2018.

³ "Top 10 Largest School Districts by Enrollment and Per Pupil Current Spending." U.S. Census Bureau, May 21, 2019. <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2019/comm/largest-school-districts.html>

⁴ As noted in the text, Manassas City Public Schools also constitutes ACPS's top regional peer. Thus, Hanover incorporated the sixth most similar district in the regional peer group to ensure we considered a total of five.