

Welcome!

Welcome to the first issue of our newsletter, The Safety Net. We value the important work that you do to provide a safe and welcoming environment to all – students, staff, and parents alike. Maximizing achievement is a difficult task and is integral to the work that you do every day in your district and that we do at the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE). We hope that the information contained in this newsletter will aid with your work.

We appreciated your feedback on our survey and have used it as a guide to plan the first issues of this newsletter. We plan to provide information and tools that will help in meeting your goals and to address the topics that you indicated you are most interested in, ranging from bullying, to bus safety to school culture.

We are very excited to launch this inaugural edition and welcome suggestions and ideas for topics for future issues of The Safety Net. We hope that this newsletter will

grow into a robust resource that will benefit you. Please feel free to forward this newsletter onto interested parties in your district.

The Safe Schools Team:

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Bullying: Know It When You See It

Did you know that Kentucky has a new definition for bullying? A statewide definition for bullying in the K-12 school system was passed into law last April. This new definition should help staff and students clearly label incidences of bullying – a task that can often prove difficult. Pursuant to [KRS 158.148](#) (1), bullying is defined as:

Any unwanted verbal, physical, or social behavior among students that involves a real or perceived power imbalance and is repeated or has the potential to be repeated:

1. that occurs on school premises, on school-sponsored transportation, or at a school-sponsored event; or
2. that disrupts the education process.

Additionally, **“this definition shall not be interpreted to prohibit civil exchange of opinions or debate or cultural practices protected under the state or federal Constitution where the opinion expressed does not otherwise materially or substantially disrupt the education process.”**

For more information about this new legislation, this [FAQ](#) from KDE clarifies the specifics of this statute.

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New Bullying Law (see Page 1)
Cyberbullying (see Page 2)

Free District EOP Training Opportunity Available (see Page 3)
Suicide Prevention (see Page 2)



What resources does KDE provide with regard to bullying?

[The Kentucky Department of Education](#) provides trainers certified by the [Olweus Bullying Prevention Program](#) to support schools and districts as they implement Olweus and other bullying prevention programs. In addition to this, KDE supports the [Kentucky Center for Instructional Discipline](#) (KYCID) at Eastern Kentucky University as well as the [Academic and Behavioral Response to Intervention](#) (ABRI) Program at the University of Louisville. Both centers provide support to local school districts around the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) for all students. [The Kentucky Center for School Safety](#) (KCSS) also provides support and training for schools in the area of bullying.

High Tech Bullying

Cyberbullying is any bullying that occurs through the use of electronic technology. As technology usage continues to increase, cyberbullying has become a modern day problem for teens that many adults can't relate to. The chances of a young person running into a bully, hater, or troll in the online world is sadly quite high. Victims of cyberbullying often can't escape their bullies and bullying attacks that can occur at any time – 24 hours a day, seven days a week. According to [The Cyberbullying Research Center](#), cyberbullying places victims at a high risk for depression, anxiety, and stress-related disorders. In some instances, victims of cyberbullying suffer from suicidal thoughts, attempts and even completed suicides.



[The Kentucky Center for School Safety](#) (KCSS) provides guidelines for schools/districts to address cyberbullying in its comprehensive plan. They recommend that schools/districts:

1. Update their policies,
2. Form a technology abuse committee,
3. Provide professional development about cyberbullying,
4. Teach students how to deal with cyberbullying,
5. Inform parents of any cyberbullying incidents,
6. Monitor computer usage at school, and
7. Periodically survey students about cyberbullying and evaluate this data to improve plan.

For a more comprehensive discussion of these recommendations, you can view KCSS's [Steps for Schools Comprehensive Plan](#) fact sheet. They also provide a [Suggestions for Educators](#) guide that offers advice to teachers on how to deal with cyberbullying. Both of these fact sheets are short documents that provide good information and can be easily distributed to interested parties. Common Sense is an organization that offers a free grade-based [Digital Citizenship Curriculum](#) that teaches students to be critical thinkers and safe participants in our digital world.

A Great Resource to Share with Parents:



[Absences Add Up](#) is a great website for parents to learn more about bullying through featured helpful links. One of the links allows parents to download an app called [KnowBullying](#) which provides tools to help them start talking to their children about bullying. This app received a Bronze Award in the Mobile category from Web Health Awards. You can watch a video about this app [here](#).

Students in Crisis

Suicide prevention is of critical importance to all educators with suicide now being the second leading cause of death for youth in Kentucky. The numbers of young people reporting suicidal thoughts are staggering and the need for effective suicide prevention training is undeniable.

What laws are currently on the books relating to suicide prevention training and awareness? Let's review:

[KRS 158.070](#) requires all high school and middle school

principals, guidance counselors, and teachers to complete a minimum of two hours of self-study review of suicide prevention materials each school year.

[KRS 161.011](#) permits suicide prevention training for classified employees.

[KRS 156.095](#) requires the Cabinet for Health and Family Services to post suicide prevention awareness and training information on its web page by August 1, and requires every

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public middle and high school administrator to disseminate suicide prevention awareness information to all middle and high school students by September 1.

How Educators Can Help? Educators can take three actions to help prevent suicide:

1. Learn about the size of the problem to help others understand that students may contemplate and attempt suicide. [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) provides statistics and graphics on suicide.

2. Teach students and staff members how to recognize when a colleague or friend needs help, and how to appropriately encourage them to seek help. [The National Institute](#)

[of Mental Health](#) provides information related to someone showing signs of suicidal thoughts as well as steps to follow for helping.

3. Reinforce factors that strengthen resiliency and support youth such as enhancing the sense of “connectedness” students feel with their school and the community. The [Department for Behavioral Health, Development, and Intellectual Disabilities \(BHDID\)](#) can offer information about programs that teach resiliency.

All Kentucky educators can and should be gatekeepers who can recognize when a young person is in crisis and provide direction to help.

SAFE SCHOOLS DATA COLLECTION: What should I be doing now?

In order to meet deadlines and be in compliance, you should be checking your data throughout the school year. To do this, run your Safe Schools Report in Infinite Campus on a regular basis – quarterly at a minimum, but monthly is preferred. Then clean up the data during this data check. See our [Safe Schools Data Collection and Reporting](#) page for more information. If you clean your data as the school year progresses, meeting the state deadlines will be much easier.

Training Opportunity: Emergency Operations Plans for Kentucky School Districts

[Kentucky SB 8](#) mandates that all schools have Emergency Operations Plans (EOP) in place and on file. These plans outline specific duties and communications along with specific student safety procedures should an emergency occur. These plans must be approved by SBDM councils and reviewed with staff annually. Additionally, a drill schedule must be developed with drills being conducted during the first thirty days of school and again in January.

Per [SB 39](#), school principals are required to consult with safety officials (local Emergency Management Office, fire marshal, National Weather Service personnel, building architects/structural engineers) regarding identification of the designated safe weather zones (effective June 25, 2015).

Currently, a federal grant is in place to provide the necessary training to Kentucky school districts for the development and implementation of a District Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). Approximately eighty school districts have been trained in the district-level EOP process.

Training goals are to encourage participants to reflect upon and review current district EOPs while providing

guidance in developing high-quality district EOPs based upon best practices. A federal grant was received by KDE for the purpose of developing quality district-level EOPs. KDE partnered with the [Kentucky Center for School Safety \(KCSS\)](#) and the [Kentucky School Boards Association \(KSBA\)](#) to develop and offer this training to all interested Kentucky school districts and non-public schools. EOP coaches were chosen for their expertise to present this information to school districts state-wide. The EOP coaches are: Lucy Riffle, Denny Vincent, Mike Blevins, Greg Smith and Cyril Wantland. Don Martin (KSBA) along with Jon Akers (KCSS) are working closely with the EOP coaches in their development and delivery of the EOP training.

Interested districts should contact Don Martin at KSBA to be put in touch with the appropriate training coach. He can be contacted by email at don.martin@ksba.org. KDE encourages all districts that have not participated in this training to do so before the federal grant ends.

To see a map of all districts who have already participated in this training, please click [here](#).

Do you have a story that you would like to see featured in *The Safety Net*? Perhaps a school in your district has successfully implemented an effective program dealing with Safe Schools issues. Maybe you know someone in your district who is doing something exemplary to make sure all students are safe. If you have information you'd like to see featured in an upcoming issue or would be interested in being a guest author, please contact Rae Burgess at rae.burgess@education.ky.gov.