

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 2050
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Education
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Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Bullying in public schools has become a serious problem among teenagers. In fact, according to the National Bullying Prevention Center, one out of every five (20.2 percent) students reported they had experienced some bullying. Additionally, 49.8 percent of teenagers between the ages of nine and 12 said they experienced bullying at school, and 14.5 percent of teenagers shared they experienced bullying online. Furthermore, teenagers who were cyberbullied shared that it negatively impacted their feelings about themselves (69.1 percent), their friendship (31.9 percent), their physical health (13.1 percent), and their schoolwork (6.5 percent). The National Bullying Prevention Center also reported that students who experience bullying are at increased risk of depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, lower academic achievement, and dropping out of school. Unfortunately, teenagers who are bullied are also at a higher risk of committing suicide. According to the National Bullying Prevention Center, students facing peer victimization are 2.2 times more likely to have suicide ideation and 2.6 times more likely to attempt suicide than students not facing victimization. According to the Megan Meier Foundation, one in 20 adolescents experience suicide in a single year. Children should not be committing suicide; it is unfortunate to see these statistics among our youth. Therefore, we must ensure we do everything we can to prevent teenagers from attempting or committing suicide. Lastly, we must ensure that we take all the steps necessary to prevent any bullying types in public schools.

School should not be a place where students feel trapped and miserable, but instead, students should be excited to go to school to learn and hang out with their friends. Therefore, we must ensure that we do everything we can to prevent bullying in public schools. S.B. 2050 ensures that any student who bullies another student is removed from class and placed in a disciplinary alternative education program or expelled from school if the student's actions are found to encourage suicide or harm the student. Additionally, the principal of a public primary or secondary school shall make a report to any school district police department if, after an investigation is completed, the principal has reasonable grounds to believe that a student engaged in conduct that constitutes an offense. Lastly, each school district shall establish district-wide police to prevent and mediate bullying incidents between students.

There will be a committee substitute that will remove Section 1 and 2 and create a model cyber-bullying policy as a default for Section 3 of the bill.

(Original Author's/Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

S.B. 2050 amends current law related to bullying and cyberbullying in public schools.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 2 (Section 48.009, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 37.0832, Education Code, by amending Subsection (c) and adding Subsection (c-1), as follows:

(c) Requires the board of trustees of each school district to adopt a policy, including any necessary procedures, concerning bullying that prevents and mediates bullying incidents between students that interfere with a student's educational opportunities, or substantially disrupt the orderly operation of a classroom, school, or school-sponsored or school-related activity, and that complies with the minimum standards adopted by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) under Subsection (c-1). Makes conforming and nonsubstantive changes.

(c-1) Requires TEA to adopt minimum standards for a school district's policy under Subsection (c). Requires that the standards:

(1) include an emphasis on bullying prevention by focusing on school climate and building healthy relationships between students and staff;

(2) require each district campus to establish a committee to address bullying by focusing on prevention efforts and health and wellness initiatives;

(3) require students at each grade level to meet periodically for instruction on building relationships and preventing bullying, including cyberbullying;

(4) include an emphasis on increasing student reporting of bullying incidents to school employees by increasing awareness about district reporting procedures, and by providing for anonymous reporting of bullying incidents;

(5) require districts to collect information annually through student surveys on bullying, including cyberbullying, and to use those survey results to develop action plans to address student concerns regarding bullying, including cyberbullying; and

(6) require districts to develop a rubric or checklist to assess an incident of bullying and to determine the district's response to the incident.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 48.009, Education Code, by adding Subsection (b-4), as follows:

(b-4) Requires the commissioner of education (commissioner) by rule to require each school district and open-enrollment charter school to annually report through the Public Education Information Management System the number of reported incidents of bullying that have occurred at each campus. Requires that the commissioner's rules require a district or school to specify the number of incidents of bullying that included cyberbullying.

SECTION 3. Repealer: Section 37.0832(f) (relating to authorizing each school district to establish a district-wide policy to assist in the prevention and mediation of bullying incidents between students), Education Code.

SECTION 4. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.

SECTION 5. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2021.