



UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT 490

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The Honorable Chairwoman Jean Schodorf and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

Thank you for allowing me an opportunity to share my thoughts with you regarding Senate Bill 278.

I will first defer to Donna Whiteman, staff attorney with KASB, who is an excellent resource for input regarding this bill for both legislators and administrators. She spoke on administrative response to bullying reports at the KASB Convention and did an excellent job of stressing current law, most of which already addresses the intent of this bill. She makes clear the responsibilities for investigation and prevention, under no uncertain terms.

I will make my personal concerns regarding this bill brief. It is easy to see the same kind of legislation in this bill that led to *No Child Left Behind*. A good intention but absorbed with being punitive instead of preventative, for who can argue that we shouldn't be doing everything we can to prevent bullying in our schools? Let me assert that I take exception instead, to creating complex protocols and threats of licensure sanctions for administrators in an area where most are already overburdened by the responsibility of finding adequate evidence to take action.

Schools do punish for acts of bullying when there is sufficient evidence. As a building principal this was one of the biggest challenges I faced. We cannot punish based upon allegations alone. Like anyone else who has the responsibility of invoking punishment, we must have evidence. When that evidence is not one-sided or cannot be proven, parents sometimes disagree with the action we do or do not take. We are bound by privacy laws so when the media is engaged, the impression is given that nothing has been done. Our silence becomes a sentence.

A written report to the superintendent for every report of bullying is an unreasonable redundancy for a building principal, and will not ensure that investigations are completed with fidelity. In my district, our discipline is recorded in our student database and specialized discipline logs, and I would venture to say that most school districts do the same as it is inherent in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and Positive Behavior Supports (PBS).

Increasing the paperwork for principals will result in less positive school climates, as they will be prevented from doing the most important actions toward improving school climate and safety, and that is being involved in positive nurturing relationships with students and staff, and monitoring student behavior by being physically present. Tie them down to their desks to complete more paperwork and you will see school climate and culture take an immediate downturn.

We do need to insure safe schools and we need to discipline when evidence exists that any school policy is violated. That is a professional responsibility already dictated in current law. I encourage you to not advance Senate Bill 278.

Respectfully,

Sue Givens
Superintendent of Schools – El Dorado USD 490

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