



Christie Administration Announces School Anti-Bullying Grades

For Immediate Release

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Trenton, NJ – In coming weeks, parents throughout New Jersey will begin seeing an anti-bullying grade on their school district's website, under a new system required by state statute and implemented by the state Department of Education.

A provision in the state's Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act (NJSA 18A:17-46) requires the Commissioner of Education to develop a program to grade the efforts of each public school and school district to address bullying in the school environment.

In fulfilling its statutory obligation, the Department of Education (DOE) created a 20-page self-assessment form that each school completed to measure how well it met the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act. Each school's grade is a raw score from 0 to 75 (e.g., 65 of 75).

Each school's self-assessment grade must be posted on the school's website by March 18. The grade for the school district is calculated by averaging the grades of each school in the district and will be posted on the district website.

The self-assessment measured adherence to the anti-bullying law from Jan. 5, 2011 to June 30, 2013. Schools were provided a rubric to rate their performance in eight categories, including programs to prevent harassment, intimidation and bullying; staff training; student curriculum and instruction; proper staffing; and reporting and investigation procedures.

"We know that safe school environments are a crucial component of high-performing schools," said Education Commissioner Chris Cerf. "We have worked closely with districts on reducing bullying incidents and creating safer schools, and we are looking forward to continuing that process."

Throughout the process, local school officials have had the opportunity to provide input into the process, receive technical assistance from the DOE, and review their grades. The process included:

- The self-assessment was developed in consultation with school district representatives from all 21 counties. Also included in the consultation process were experts in school climate and anti-bullying strategies from higher education, child advocacy and human service organizations, professional associations and state agencies.
- Chief school administrators were to certify the self-assessments completed by the School Safety Teams in each school.
- Boards of education were required approve the completed self-assessment at a public meeting.
- The DOE reached out to ensure all school districts provided the necessary information so no district would otherwise receive a grade of zero for non-submission. Local school districts were required to complete the self-assessment forms several months ago, but the DOE twice extended the deadline to ensure 100-percent compliance among all traditional public schools and charter schools.
- The DOE provided school and district grades to local school officials earlier this month to allow for a final review prior to the official release.

Local school boards are encouraged to use the results of the self-assessment to improve anti-bullying efforts. The DOE will use the data to guide the design of professional development and technical assistance for local school staff.

Now that all districts have completed and submitted their data, the Department is prepared to work with districts to promote accurate assessments as the program continues in the coming years.