

Your school administration has a policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation and bullying, required by law. In May, the State Board of Education adopted a model policy to guide districts whose policy may not be as comprehensive as it needs to be. There are minimum requirements, including that the policy be published in all student handbooks.

Also in May, the State Board began the two step voting process to adopt a Parent and Family Involvement Policy in response to state law and the Title 1 section of Federal law. These laws are in place because research over thirty years has shown that parental involvement is a key factor in student academic achievement.

A second vote of Intention to Adopt passing in May covers a Comprehensive System of Learning Support Guidelines. Through appropriate implementation of the Guidelines districts will meet and exceed state law that requires schools to diagnose, intervene, collect and use data to address the needs of ALL students, not just those who have failed or who are at risk of failing the state tests.

Always, the goal and purpose of the Ohio public education system is higher academic achievement for all students. These three policies represent all the concerns and efforts that must be taken into account if a student is going to be academically successful.

Students must feel safe from harassment and bullying. You cannot concentrate if you don't feel safe. All students need family support. Parents and families need to be welcomed by the school, invited to be involved as a partner in their child's education and as a school partner if the best of public education is to be available to all of our children. At the same time, school personnel can be helpful to families by offering or finding needed resources. The work required to write and implement the anti-bullying and family involvement policies supports the implementation of the Comprehensive System of Student Supports because the system must include highly qualified teachers, excellent administrative leadership, support for families and their involvement in schools, a safe, supportive school environment and all possible community resources. All social service, safety and medical agencies must be linked to the school. The business community and civic and religious organizations can supplement all school efforts with mentoring, tutoring, recreation and incentives to achieve.

The policies are being adopted at an important moment. I was pleased to be a part of the first Regional Safe Schools Summit for southern Ohio. The five regional summits being held this month follow a statewide Safe Schools Summit hosted by Ohio first Lady Frances Strickland and Ohio Superintendent of Public Instruction Susan Tave Zelman in May. The First Lady's strong support and interest in the concerns for student support will help propel all these issues to prominence. We heard from officials representing local police departments that provide School Resource Officers, mental health agencies that provide psychological support services in inner city schools and Family and Children First Councils working closely with schools to meet student special needs.

What I love to think about is sharing all these ideas and efforts as the policies are implemented statewide and as leadership at the state level is recognizing that the life of the whole child affects the academic success of that child. At this moment we all need to think about what part we can play in helping all students achieve at their highest ability. It is not only important for each child, it is important for Ohio because high achieving students will lead to a higher achieving economy.

You may read all these policies, once adopted at [www.ode.state.us.oh](http://www.ode.state.us.oh).