



November 29, 2010

RE: A Call to Action: Safe Schools Task Force

Dear Educators, Policy Makers, and Stakeholders:

Recent incidents of teen suicide have called national attention to the harmful and potentially tragic effects of bullying and harassment. While these incidents took place elsewhere, harassment and bullying is a pervasive problem across our country including in Colorado.

Despite local and statewide policies, far too many young people are still being targeted for bullying and harassment. Every day students walk into our schools in fear and isolation; they are harassed and bullied because of their gender expression, sexual orientation, weight, ability, clothing, and religion. They suffer at the hands of their peers and experience an array of harmful effects that have been tied to bullying—from poor attendance to failing grades.

To address this serious problem, Colorado Education Association, Colorado Association of School Executives, American Federation of Teachers – Colorado, Colorado Association of School Boards, and One Colorado are calling on the 2011–12 General Assembly and Governor-elect Hickenlooper to immediately establish a statewide Safe Schools Task Force. Appointed by the Governor and state legislature and representing education policy organizations and various constituencies, this Task Force should assess the effectiveness of current bullying and harassment policies, procedures and trainings and develop recommendations to reduce bullying and harassment in Colorado schools.

We recognize that all of us want to ensure that kids feel safe and valued at school. Many schools and districts are actively engaged in work to address bullying and harassment. The goal of the Task Force is to support educators in these efforts and help build upon them.

The Task Force will partner with schools, districts, and other stakeholders to learn what strategies are working and what opportunities exist for improvement. Specifically, the Task Force should:

- Assess the effectiveness and investigate the implementation of current statewide policies, procedures, trainings, and curriculum to address bullying or harassment in Colorado schools

- Investigate reporting procedures and accountability of school districts to the Department of Education and public to address bullying and harassment
- Solicit the input and experience of students, parents, and school personnel through local forums and roundtable discussions in every district of the state
- Identify opportunities to include research-based, anti-bullying training for school personnel and students in existing programs, including peer-to-peer bullying prevention
- Develop a report on the state of bullying and harassment in Colorado schools, including recommendations to the Governor and state legislature

In the months and year ahead, the Colorado Education Association, Colorado Association of School Executives, American Federation of Teachers – Colorado, and One Colorado will work with education policy makers to address bullying and harassment in our schools. While schools and districts try to create safe environments for students, there is more work to be done. It is our moral duty to protect our kids—every student who walks through the doors of our schools regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender identity, or ability. And we must start immediately.

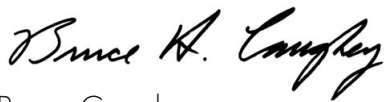
Sincerely,



Brad Clark
Executive Director
One Colorado



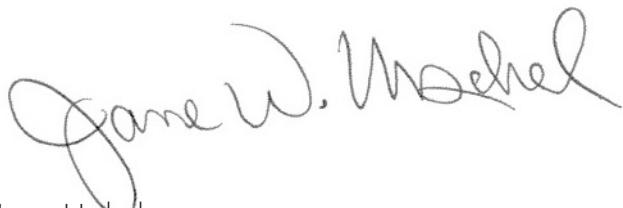
Beverly Ingle
President
Colorado Education Association



Bruce Caughey
Deputy Executive Director
Colorado Association of School Executives



Brenda Smith
President
AFT - Colorado



Jane Urshel
Associate Executive Director
Colorado Association of School Boards