

Local Impact Note for Safe & Supportive Minnesota Schools Act

The Safe & Supportive Minnesota Schools Act, SF 783, and HF 826 will implement the recommendations from Governor Dayton’s 2012 Task Force on the Prevention of School Bullying. This legislation will move Minnesota from having the least effective anti-bullying policy in the country to a policy that will implement strategies to eliminate incidences of bullying, harassment and intimidation in schools throughout the state.

The Local Impact Note prepared by Minnesota Management & Budget lays out many of its own shortcomings. From the Local Impact Note:

The nature of the response data necessitated that MMB take a general approach to estimating impact to local districts, rather than estimating per pupil cost based on size or category of district. Rural districts were overrepresented in the survey (42 out of the total 57). Since different categories of districts were not equally represented, the variation among categories with fewer responses (such as the 3 metro districts that provided cost estimates) would have resulted in less precise cost estimates for that particular category. ... The actual cost that a school district would incur for each of the provisions listed below may vary significantly.

To estimate the statewide local government impact, Minnesota Management & Budget collaborated with the Minnesota Associations of School Business Officials and Minnesota Rural Education Association to survey their members. Here are the questions in that survey:

Survey Question	Fiscal Impact
Estimated annual cost to post policy within school, online, with state in accessible formats, and include policy in employee/volunteer manuals	<i>The survey did not give districts the “no additional cost” option. Current law requires having and disseminating a bullying prevention policy so this should not be a driver of cost.</i>
Estimated annual cost to discuss policy with students, parents, staff, volunteers. Provide training on policy to staff and volunteers.	<i>The survey did not give districts the “no additional cost” option. The question is worded in such a way that there is no data on how much districts are spending now and what costs would be new under the Safe Schools law.</i>
Estimated annual cost to designate staff in each building to have primary responsibility over bullying, receive formal complaints, and oversee responses and consequences.	<i>The survey did not give districts the “no additional cost” option. Schools have staff in place whose job it is to deal with discipline. Designating and training that staff person to have primary responsibility over bullying should not be a driver of cost.</i>
Estimated cost (per incident) to require intervention by adults when bullying is seen. Investigate complaints. Respond to complaints and notify parents. Report incidents (number, type, etc.) to the state.	<i>The requirement to report aggregate bullying data to the state is a new cost (though for districts that already track discipline issues it may be as easy as hitting send on an email). The survey does not provide us with data that distinguishes current costs from new costs associated with the bill.</i>
Estimated annual cost to provide professional development to staff on how to best deal with bullying.	<i>The survey did not give districts the “no additional cost” option. The cost of training for bullying prevention and intervention could be covered by the budgets school districts already have in place for professional development for teachers.</i>

Estimated annual cost to make modifications to Individualized Education Program. Adopt Internet policies to prevent bullying.

The survey did not give districts the “no additional cost” option. Individualized Education Programs are rewritten annually and frequently include a behavior plan so modifications to the IEP are unlikely to be a driver of cost.

The per pupil costs for each school district will fall within a wide range; from \$30.80 per pupil in districts that currently have no bullying prevention efforts, to zero in districts that currently exceed the requirements laid out in the Safe Schools bill. For those districts that require financial support in order to comply with the mandatory provisions in the Safe Schools bill the House Education Omnibus bill increases the Safe Schools Levy from \$25 to \$30 per pupil and HF 826 gives Local School Districts the authority to use Safe Schools Levy funds for physical security or school climate based on the needs of their district.

All students deserve the right to an educational environment that is free from bullying and harassment. Passage of the Safe & Supportive Minnesota Schools Act will lead to better academic performance. By providing a climate that is safe and conducive for learning, attendance and graduation rates will improve for students who are currently being bullied. When students feel protected at school, they are less inclined to miss classes or drop out. For the welfare of all students, we must support this bill, which will demonstrate to young people that we care about them and their safety at school.