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Joint Initiative Launched to Help School Districts Implement Anti-Bullying Efforts

Schools in Ottawa, Jackson and Wayne Counties First to Participate

Lansing— Following the passage of the Matt's Safe Schools Law in late 2011, officials from the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) came together to develop a joint initiative designed to ensure school districts have the support they need to implement effective anti-bullying programs. The initiative is aimed at reducing destructive peer interactions, thus improving behavior and attitudes in schools and communities.

In December, Michigan's public school districts were invited to apply for consultative support in developing and implementing anti-bullying programming. Nine districts expressed interest in being part of the pilot program. Of the applicants, three districts were selected to participate: **Detroit Public Schools, Vandercook Lake, and Allendale Public Schools.**

The participating school districts came together last week for an orientation session. They will receive a variety of supports, including help with interpreting and using data, needs assessment and selecting interventions. The consultants will also help the participants to engage local partners such as community mental health, local public health, social service, government, law enforcement, and the private sector in a comprehensive plan to reduce bullying behaviors.

"The orientation meeting was a great opportunity to hear from both the Michigan Department of Civil Rights and the Michigan Department of Education about their hopes for this initiative. It was also helpful to hear about what the other two districts are doing in bullying prevention. We hope that the resources and best practices garnered through this initiative can help our parents and children in schools across the state," said Superintendent Dan Jonker, Allendale Public Schools.

To learn more about the Department of Civil Rights, visit www.michigan.gov/mdcr and to learn more about the Department of Education, visit www.michigan.gov/mde.

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