Suicide Prevention and Response

Subject: Suicide Prevention and Response

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Introduction:

Suicide is a leading cause of death among youth. An even higher percentage of high school students contemplate and/or attempt suicide. In line with our mission to partner with parents to protect the health, safety, and welfare of our students, this policy aims to safeguard and support students and their families.

Purpose:

In an attempt to reduce suicidal behavior and its impact on students, families, and staff, Element Education (Element) has adopted strategies and created a plan for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, and the identification of the mental health challenges frequently associated with suicidal thinking and behavior. Element will incorporate best practices and guidance as identified by the California Department of Education's model policy into its' strategies and plan for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention.

Scope:

All students and their families, with an emphasis of those in grades seven and up**.**

Policy:

Element will utilize staff and public mental health professionals in the development and monitoring of the suicide prevention and intervention plan. The plan will be reviewed, and updated as needed, at least once annually. The K–12 Toolkit for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention is one of several resources that will be used for plan development

and monitoring. Element will continue to review all materials and resources used to ensure they align with best practices for safe messaging about suicide.

The Behavior Counselor, or designee, will serve as the suicide prevention point of contact for Element. In addition, each School Director will serve as the liaison and coordinate and implement suicide prevention activities within their schools.

1. **Prevention**

Professional development will be required for school personnel who regularly interact with students or are in a position to recognize the risk factors and warning signs of suicide. Training will promote the mental health model of suicide prevention rather than encourage the use of the stress model to explain suicide. Additional professional development in suicide risk assessment and crisis intervention shall be provided to mental health professionals on staff to ensure proper development and monitoring of the plan and practices.

- At least annually, staff shall receive training on the risk factors and warning signs of suicide, suicide prevention, intervention, referral, and postvention.

- Suicide prevention trainings shall be offered under the direction of school-employed mental health professionals, such as school counselors, psychologists, or social workers, who have received advanced training specific to suicide and may benefit from collaboration with one or more county and/or community mental health agencies. Staff training can be adjusted year-to-year based on previous professional development activities and emerging best practices.

- At a minimum, staff shall participate in training on the core components of suicide prevention (identification of suicide risk factors and warning signs, prevention, intervention, referral, and postvention) at the beginning of their employment.

- The professional development shall include additional information regarding groups of students judged by the school, and available research, to be at elevated risk for suicide.

- Training and other resources will be made available to parents with regard to recognizing and responding to the signs of suicide, as well as support for situations of attempts.

- Developmentally appropriate educations will be made available to students with regard to coping strategies, resources, and other support.

2. **Intervention**

Employees of Element, and their partners, must act only within the authorization and scope of their credential or license. While it is expected that school professionals are able to identify suicide risk factors and warning signs and to prevent the immediate risk of a suicidal behavior, treatment of suicidal ideation is typically beyond what schools are able to provide.