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SAN DIEGO ? The San Diego school board adopted an anti-bullying policy on Tuesday during a meeting that turned emotional when students, teachers and district officials shared personal stories of harassment brought on by their sexual orientation.

Approved unanimously, the Bullying, Harassment and Intimidation Prohibition Policy was developed with help from community groups and the Safe Schools Task Force. Next, the district will create procedures to carry out the policy, which calls for school officials report incidents of bullying or harassment, prevention programs and disciplinary actions for those who violate the policy.

?The taunting, getting beat up in the locker room ? those episodes are so powerful at destroying children?s lives,? said trustee Kevin Beiser, the board?s first openly gay member. ?We have to stand up for those children?s lives. You cannot turn a blind eye when you observe bullying of your students at your school.?

Trustees also passed a resolution in support of AB 9, ?Seth?s Law,? that would require all California school districts to adopt anti-bullying policies similar to the one approved for the San Diego Unified School District. Authored by Tom Ammiano, D-San Francisco, the legislation is named for Seth Walsh, a 13-year-old Tehachapi boy who killed himself last year after enduring years of bullying that targeted him because he was gay.

Members of the Hoover High School Gay Straight Alliance cheered the board?s actions. Several students expressed hope that the new policy would improve the climate at their campus and others.

?Every day I hear comments and I get looks,? said Alfredo Urquieta, a junior at Hoover and a member of the alliance. ?I don?t think it will ever completely end, but I hope it gets better. I?ve been strong, but we have all heard about suicides in other places.?

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News Article

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San Diego Union-Tribune

Maureen Magee

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