

# NC government tightens regulation on bullying

by Rachel Southmayd, April 6, 2010

The North Carolina General Assembly passed the School Violence Prevention Act in June 2009. Since then, programs have been popping up across the state intended to protect students from harassment in the school environment.

The conditions of the bill went into full effect March 1. This was the deadline for school administrators across the state to provide training on the new policies. By Dec. 31, 2009, schools were expected to have adopted these policies and made them known to students and parents.

In the Alamance-Burlington School System, the student code of conduct prohibits "the repeated intimidation of others" by various means. Students who do participate in bullying may be punished with up to 10 days out-of-school suspension, and the police may be contacted.

Staff Sgt. Bill Currie of the Burlington Police Department said local schools have Student Resource Officers that assist administration when bullying issues arise.

"(The SROs) pretty much take care of any problems they have at school," he said.

Since the School Violence Prevention Act has gone into effect, Currie said he hasn't noticed an increase in the amount of interventions that have been requested.

"We haven't really seen an increase in that at this time, but we've always been involved in dealing with it," he said.

Elon University senior Sara Riek is currently student teaching at Graham Middle School in a sixth grade classroom and said she hasn't witnessed a lot of bullying.

"Most of it happens outside of a teacher's view and we hear about it secondhand," she said.

At Graham Middle School, teachers first address an issue and, if it's deemed serious enough, the offender is sent to the principal.

"Serious matters would be violence, pushing, hitting, etc., and nonserious would be something like one kid calling another a rude name," Riek said.

Some colleges are also making changes in the way they operate, tightening regulations on bullying.

The University of North Carolina system recently made changes to its honor code to include prohibiting of harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identification to better comply with the act.

On Elon's campus, instances of harassment, a form of bullying, carry a punishment of disciplinary probation,