

Students

SUBJECT: BULLYING: PEER ABUSE IN THE SCHOOLS

The Board of Education is committed to providing a safe and productive learning environment for the entire school community. Bullying of a student by another student or by group of students is strictly prohibited on school property, in school buildings, on school buses, and at school sponsored events and/or activities whether occurring on or off campus. The District *Code of Conduct* shall include a prohibition of bullying along with sanctions for such misconduct.

For purposes of this policy, the term "bullying" is defined as a conscious, willful, deliberate activity intended to harm where the perpetrators get pleasure from the targeted person's pain and/or misery. Those who play an active supporting role in the bullying are considered to have participated in the bullying. It can be verbal, physical, psychological and/or relational; have as its overlay race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability or mental ability; and includes all forms of hazing and cyberbullying. It can be, and often is, continuous and repeated over time, but does not have to be. Once is enough to constitute bullying. It involves a real or perceived imbalance of power, with a more powerful child or group attacking those who are less powerful.

Although this Policy focuses on the bullying of a student by another student, it should be noted that bullying against any individual is strictly prohibited. This includes bullying of staff members against students, students against staff members, staff members against other staff members, and bullying by or against any parents, persons in parental relation, volunteers, visitors or vendors who may be on school property or at school sponsored events as defined above.

Cyberbullying Behavior

As with other forms of bullying, cyberbullying is an attempt to display power and control over someone perceived as weaker. Cyberbullying involving District students may occur both on campus and off school grounds and may involve student use of the District Internet system or student use of personal digital devices while at school, such as cell phones, digital cameras, and personal computers to engage in bullying.

Cyberbullying includes, but is not limited to, the following misuses of technology: harassing, teasing, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another student or staff member by way of any technological tool, such as sending or posting inappropriate or derogatory e-mail messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs).

Also, cyberbullying that occurs off-campus, that causes or threatens to cause a material or substantial disruption in the school, could allow school officials to apply the "*Tinker* standard" where a student's off-campus "speech" may be subject to formal discipline by school officials when it is determined that the off-campus speech did cause a substantial disruption or threat thereof within the school setting [*Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Sch. Dist.* 393 U.S. 503 (1969)]. Such conduct could also be subject to appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the District *Code of Conduct* and possible referral to local law enforcement authorities.

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SUBJECT: BULLYING: PEER ABUSE IN THE SCHOOLS (Cont'd.)**Reports of Allegations of Bullying/Cyberbullying Behavior**

Any student who believes that he/she is being subjected to bullying/cyberbullying behavior, as well as any other person who has knowledge of or witnesses any possible occurrence of bullying, shall report the bullying to any staff member or the Building Principal. The staff member/Building Principal to whom the report is made (or the staff member/Building Principal who witnesses bullying behavior) shall investigate the complaint and take appropriate action to include, as necessary, referral to the next level of supervisory authority and/or other official designated by the District to investigate allegations of bullying. Investigation of allegations of bullying shall follow the procedures utilized for complaints of harassment within the school District. Allegations of bullying shall be promptly and equitably investigated and will be treated as confidential and private to the extent possible within legal constraints. Personnel at all levels are responsible for taking corrective action to stop the bullying behavior and to report such action to their immediate supervisor.

Prevention and Intervention Training

Training shall be provided to all District employees in order to raise awareness of the problem of bullying and to facilitate identification of and response to bullying behavior among students. Such training will include ways to differentiate between bullying and conflict along with the appropriate responses in each case. Classroom teachers, along with the administration will develop curriculum that emphasizes the responsibility of "bystanders" to intervene in bullying situations, to help targeted students escape, or to tell an adult. Additionally, the administration will develop measures to ensure that students who have been the victims of bullying are safe at school and receive the necessary supports when applicable.

Rules against bullying shall be publicized District-wide and shall be disseminated as appropriate to staff, students and parents. Disciplinary sanctions for violation of this policy shall be outlined in the District *Code of Conduct* as enumerated above and may also be incorporated in staff and student handbooks.

Prohibition of Retaliatory Behavior (Commonly Known as "Whistle-Blower" Protection)

The Board prohibits any retaliatory behavior directed against complainants, victims, witnesses, and/or any other individuals who participate in the investigation of allegations of bullying. Follow-up inquiries and/or appropriate monitoring of the alleged bully and victim shall be made to ensure that bullying behavior has not resumed and that all those involved in the investigation of allegations of bullying have not suffered retaliation.

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NOTE: Refer also to Policies #3410 -- Code of Conduct on School Property
#3420 -- Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment in the School District
#7551 -- Sexual Harassment of Students
#7553 -- Hazing of Students
District *Code of Conduct*

Adopted: 9/9/09
Revised: 3/14/12