

## BULLYING POLICY: PEER ABUSE IN THE SCHOOLS

The Board of Education is committed to providing a safe and productive learning environment within its schools. Bullying of a student by another student 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 Board of Education shall require the prohibition of bullying along with the range of possible intervention activities and/or sanctions for such misconduct to be included in the *District Code of Conduct* for all grade levels.

For purposes of this policy, the term "bullying" among children is defined, in general, as: "a variety of negative acts carried out repeatedly over time. It involves a real or perceived imbalance of power, with a more powerful child or group attacking those who are less powerful." Bullying can take three forms:

- a) Physical (including, but not limited to, hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, taking personal belongings);
- b) Verbal (including, but not limited to, taunting, malicious teasing, name calling, making threats); and
- c) Psychological (including, but not limited to, spreading rumors; manipulating social relationships; or engaging in social exclusion, extortion, or intimidation).

Bullying may also occur as various forms of harassment and/or hazing of students by other students (including "pledging" and/or a student's initiation into or affiliation with a school or student related organization or team).

The District also prohibits "Internet bullying" (also referred to as "cyber-bullying" and "cyber threat") including the use of instant messaging, e-mail, web sites, chat rooms, and text messaging when such use interferes with the operation of the school; or infringes upon the general health, safety and welfare of District students or employees.

Cyberbullying means being cruel to others by sending or posting harmful materials using the Internet or a cellular phone.

Cyber threat means online material that threatens or raises concerns about violence to others, or to one's self. There are two (2) kinds of cyber threats: direct threats or distressing material. Direct threats are actual threats to hurt another person. Distressing material is online material that provides clues indicating that the person is emotionally upset, and that the person is contemplating hurting another person, one's self or committing suicide.

Cyberbullying or cyber threatening material, either in the form of text or images, posted on personal web sites, blogs or transmitted via email, discussion groups, message boards, chat rooms, instant messages, or via cellular phones is prohibited. The use of the District's internet system, cellular devices on school district property, cellular devices not on district property or the use of an

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internet system not owned or operated by the District to bully or harass other students, faculty and staff is prohibited.

Off-campus cyberbullying or cyber threats -regardless of the form in which the message is transmitted -endangering the health, welfare or safety of students, faculty or staff within the District or adversely affecting the educational process is prohibited. However, it is important to note that a single negative act as enumerated above may also constitute "bullying" (if not more serious misconduct) based upon the particular circumstances such as the seriousness of the act and/or the intent of the actor.

Any student who believes that he she is being subjected to bullying 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 investigated and will be treated as confidential and private to the extent possible within legal constraints.

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.

Personnel at all levels are responsible for taking corrective action to prevent bullying behavior of which they have been made aware at School District sites or activities and/or reporting such behavior to their immediate supervisor. Further, staff training shall be provided to raise awareness of the problem of bullying within the schools and to facilitate staff identification of and response to such bullying behavior among students.

Prevention and intervention techniques within the District to prevent against bullying behavior and to support and protect victims shall include building-level and classroom-level strategies and activities as determined by administration. Individual intervention will be provided by appropriate staff members to bullies, victims and their parents to help ensure that the bullying stops.

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.