

10.07 HARASSMENT INTIMIDATION, AND BULLYING

Introduction

The Board shall develop this policy in consultation with parents, school employees, school volunteers, students and community members.

Prohibitions

Harassment, intimidation, and bullying of students in the school environment can substantially interfere with their ability to learn, perform, and feel safe. Therefore, any conduct, communication, activity, or practice that occurs at any time, on school property, on a school bus, or during any school sponsored event and at the times and/or places set forth in the Code of Student Conduct, that constitutes harassment, intimidation, or bullying involving students shall be strictly prohibited. Students who are determined to have engaged in such behavior (including any student found responsible for harassment, intimidation, or bullying by an electronic act) are subject to disciplinary action, which may include suspension or expulsion from school. Further, any such conduct, communication, activity, or practice should be immediately reported to the building principal or other responsible school employee.

Procedures, Investigation and Documentation

To implement this policy and to address the existence of harassment, intimidation, or bullying in the schools, the following procedures shall be followed:

- A. Students must report acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying to teachers, district employees, and/or school administrators;
- B. The parents or guardians of students should file written reports of suspected harassment, intimidation, or bullying with the building principal or other appropriate administrator;
- C. Teachers and other school staff who witness acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying or receive student reports of harassment, intimidation, or bullying shall notify school administrators;
- D. School administrators shall and document any written or oral reports;
- E. School administrators shall notify both the custodial parent or guardian of a student who commits acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying and the custodial parent or guardian of students against whom such acts were committed, and allow access to any written reports pertaining to the incident, to the extent permitted by O.R.C. §3319.321 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.
- F. The District shall respond to complaints of sexual harassment and discrimination by following the procedures in Board Policy 10.06.

Victims or other persons may report suspected acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying anonymously by addressing a letter to the head administrator of the school building where the student or the alleged perpetrator attends school or works.

Students are prohibited from filing false reports of harassment, intimidation or bullying. Individuals who are found to have knowingly filed a false bullying report will be disciplined in accordance with the District's disciplinary code and may be subject to suspension or other disciplinary action.

Definition of Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying

In accordance with this policy, "harassment, intimidation, or bullying" means any intentional written, verbal, electronic, or physical act that a student has exhibited toward another particular student more than once and the behavior both:

- A. Causes mental or physical harm to the other student; and

- B. Is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates and intimidates, threatening, or abusive educational environment.

For the purposes of this policy, an "electronic act" means an act committed through the use of a cellular telephone, computer, pager, personal communication device, or other electronic communication device.

"Harassment, intimidation, or bullying" also includes violence within a dating relationship.

The behavior prohibited by this policy is marked by the intent to ridicule, humiliate or intimidate the victim. In evaluating whether conduct constitutes harassment, intimidation, or bullying, special attention should be paid to the words chosen or actions taken, whether such conduct occurred in front of others or was communicated to others, how the perpetrator interacted with the victim, and the motivation, either admitted or appropriately inferred, of the perpetrator.

Conduct Constituting Harassment, Intimidation, or Bullying

Such conduct can take any forms and can include many different behaviors having overt intent to ridicule, humiliate or intimidate another student. Examples of such conduct include, but are not limited to:

- A. Physical violence and/or attacks.
- B. Verbal taunts, name-calling, and put-downs.
- C. Threats and intimidation (through words and/or gestures).
- D. Extortion or stealing of money and/or possessions.
- E. Exclusion from the peer group or spreading rumors.
- F. Repetitive and hostile behavior with the intent to harm others through the use of information and communication technologies and other Web-based/online sites (also known as "cyber bullying"), such as the following:
 - G. Posting slurs on Web sites where students congregate or on Web logs (personal online journals or diaries);
 - H. Sending abusive or threatening instant messages;
 - I. Using camera phones to take embarrassing photographs of students and posting them online; and
 - J. Using Web sites to circulate gossip and rumors to other students;
 - K. Excluding others from an online group by falsely reporting them for inappropriate language to Internet service providers.

Retaliation is Prohibited

Retaliation against those who file a complaint or participate in the investigation of the complaint is prohibited. Therefore, filing a complaint or otherwise reporting harassment, intimidation, or bullying will not reflect upon the student's status, nor will it affect future employment, grades, or work assignments. Further, the administrator is directed to implement strategies for protecting a victim from retaliation following a report.

Disciplinary Interventions

When acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying are verified and a disciplinary response is warranted, students are subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences. However, such discipline shall not infringe on any student's rights under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

Publication, Training, Immunity and Board Summary

This policy shall appear in any student handbooks, and in any publications that set forth the comprehensive rules, procedures, and standards of conduct for schools and students in the district. Information regarding the policy shall be incorporated into employees training materials.

A school district employee, student, or volunteer shall be individually immune from liability in a civil action for damages arising from reporting an incident in accordance with the policy if that person reports an incident of harassment, intimidation, or bullying promptly in good faith and in compliance with the procedures as specified in the policy.

The district administration will semi-annually provide the president of the Board a written summary of all reported incidents and post the summary on the district website to the extent permitted by state and federal student privacy laws.

Board Approved August 16, 2011