

520 BULLY PROHIBITION

I. PURPOSE

A safe and civil environment is needed for students to learn and attain high academic standards and to promote healthy human relationships. Bullying, like other violent or disruptive behavior, is conduct that interferes with a student's ability to learn and/or a teacher's ability to educate students in a safe environment. The District cannot monitor the activities of students at all times and eliminate all incidents of bullying between students, particularly when students are not under the direct supervision of school personnel. However, to the extent such conduct affects the educational environment of the District and the rights and welfare of its students and is within the control of the District in its normal operations, the District intends to prevent bullying and to take action to investigate, respond, remediate, and discipline those acts of bullying which have not been successfully prevented. The purpose of this policy is to assist the District in its goal of preventing and responding to acts of bullying, intimidation, violence, reprisal, retaliation, and other similar disruptive and detrimental behavior.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

- A. An act of bullying, by either an individual student or a group of students, is expressly prohibited on school premises, on District property or at school-related functions or activities, or on school transportation. This policy applies not only to students who directly engage in an act of bullying but also to students who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support another student's act of bullying. This policy also applies to any student whose conduct at any time or in any place constitutes bullying or other prohibited conduct that interferes with or obstructs the mission or operations of the District or the safety or welfare of the student or other students, or materially and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges. This policy also applies to an act of cyber-bullying regardless of whether such act is committed on or off District property and/or with or without the use of District resources.
- B. No teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of the District shall permit, condone, or tolerate bullying.
- C. Apparent permission or consent by a student being bullied does not lessen or negate the prohibitions contained in this policy.
- D. Retaliation against a victim, good faith reporter, or a witness of bullying is prohibited.
- E. False accusations or reports of bullying against another student are prohibited.

F. A person who engages in an act of bullying, reprisal, retaliation, or false reporting of bullying or permits, condones, or tolerates bullying shall be subject to discipline or other remedial responses for that act in accordance with the District's policies and procedures, including the District's discipline policy. The District may take into account the following factors:

1. The developmental ages and maturity levels of the parties involved;
2. The levels of harm, surrounding circumstances, and nature of the behavior;
3. Past incidences or past or continuing patterns of behavior;
4. The relationship between the parties involved; and
5. The context in which the alleged incidents occurred.

Consequences for students who commit prohibited acts of bullying may range from remedial responses or positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension and/or expulsion. The District shall employ research-based developmentally appropriate best practices that include preventative and remedial measures and effective discipline for deterring violations of this policy, apply throughout the District, and foster student, parent, and community participation. Consequences for employees who permit, condone, or tolerate bullying or engage in an act of reprisal or intentional false reporting of bullying may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination or discharge. Consequences for other individuals engaging in prohibited acts of bullying may include, but not be limited to, exclusion from District property and events and/or termination of services and/or contracts.

G. The District will act to investigate all complaints of bullying reported to the District and will discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of the District who is found to have violated this policy.

III. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, the definitions included in this section apply.

A. "Bullying" means intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct that is objectively offensive and:

1. An actual or perceived imbalance of power exists between the student engaging in the prohibited conduct and the target of the prohibited conduct, and the conduct is repeated or forms a pattern; or

2. Materially and substantially interferes with a student’s educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges.

The term, “bullying,” specifically includes cyber-bullying as defined in this policy.

B. “Cyber-bullying” means bullying using technology or other electronic communication, including, but not limited to, a transfer of a sign, signal, writing, image, sound, or data, including a post on a social network Internet website or forum, transmitted through a computer, cell phone, or other electronic device. The term applies to prohibited conduct which occurs on school premises, on District property, at school functions or activities, on school transportation, or on school computers, networks, forums, and mailing lists, or off school premises to the extent that it substantially and materially disrupts student learning or the school environment.

C. “Immediately” means as soon as possible but in no event longer than 72 hours.

D. “On school premises, on District property or at school-related functions or activities, or on school transportation” means all District buildings, school grounds, and school property or property immediately adjacent to school grounds, school bus stops, school buses, school vehicles, school contracted vehicles, or any other vehicles approved for District purposes, the area of entrance or departure from school grounds, premises, or events, and all school-related functions, school-sponsored activities, events, or trips. School district property also may mean a student’s walking route to or from school for purposes of attending school or school-related functions, activities, or events. While prohibiting bullying at these locations and events, the District does not represent that it will provide supervision or assume liability at these locations and events.

IV. REPORTING PROCEDURE

A. Any person who believes he or she has been the target or victim of bullying or any person with knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying or prohibited conduct under this policy shall report the alleged acts immediately to an appropriate District official designated by this policy. A person may report bullying anonymously. However, the District may not rely solely on an anonymous report to determine discipline or other remedial responses.

B. The District encourages the reporting party or complainant to use the report form available from the Executive Director or Executive Director’s designee of each building or available in the District office, but oral reports shall be considered complaints as well.

C. The Executive Director, or the Executive Director’s designee, (hereinafter the “building report taker”) is the person responsible for receiving reports of bullying or

other prohibited conduct at the building level. If the complaint involves the building report taker, the complaint shall be made or filed directly with the Board of Directors Chair by the reporting party or complainant

D. A teacher, school administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other school employee shall be particularly alert to possible situations, circumstances, or events that might include bullying. Any such person who witnesses, receives a report of, observes, or has other knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying or other prohibited conduct shall make reasonable efforts to address and resolve the bullying or prohibited conduct and shall inform the building report taker immediately. School district personnel who fail to inform the building report taker of conducts that may constitute bullying or other prohibited conduct or who fail to make reasonable efforts to address and resolve the bullying in a timely manner may be subject to disciplinary action.

E. Reports of bullying are classified as private educational and/or personnel data and/or confidential investigative data and will not be disclosed except as permitted by law.

F. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of bullying or other prohibited conduct will not affect the complainant's or reporter's future employment, grades, work assignments, or educational or work environment.

G. The District will respect the privacy of the complainant(s), the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and the witnesses as much as possible, consistent with the District's obligation to investigate, take appropriate action, and comply with any legal disclosure obligations.

V. SCHOOL DISTRICT ACTION

A. Within three days of the receipt of a complaint or report of bullying or other prohibited conduct, the District shall undertake or authorize an investigation by the building report taker or a third party designated by the District.

B. District officials may take immediate steps, at their discretion, to protect the victim of the bullying or other prohibited conduct, the complainant, the reporter, and students, or others, pending completion of an investigation of bullying consistent with applicable law.

C. The alleged perpetrator of the bullying or other prohibited conduct shall be allowed the opportunity to present a defense during the investigation or prior to the imposition of discipline or other remedial responses.

D. Upon completion of the investigation that determines that bullying or other prohibited conduct has occurred, the District will take appropriate action. Such action may include, but is not limited to, warning, suspension, exclusion, expulsion, transfer, remediation, termination, or discharge. Disciplinary consequences will be sufficiently severe to try to deter violations and to appropriately discipline prohibited conduct. District action taken for violation of this policy will be consistent with the requirements of applicable collective bargaining agreements; applicable statutory authority, including the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act; the student discipline policy and other applicable District policies; and applicable regulations.

E. The District is not authorized to disclose to a victim private educational or personnel data regarding an alleged perpetrator who is a student or employee of the District. School officials will notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of students involved of bullying or other prohibited conduct and the parent(s) or guardian(s) of alleged perpetrators of bullying or other prohibited conduct who have been involved in a reported and confirmed bullying incident of the remedial or disciplinary action taken, to the extent permitted by law.

F. In order to prevent or respond to bullying or other prohibited conduct committed by or directed against a child with a disability, the District shall, when determined appropriate by the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team or Section 504 team, allow the child's IEP or Section 504 plan to be drafted to address the skills and proficiencies the child needs as a result of the child's disability to allow the child to respond to or not to engage in bullying or other prohibited conduct.

VI. REPRISAL

The District will discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of the District who commits an act of reprisal or who retaliates against any person who asserts, alleges, or makes a good faith report of alleged bullying or prohibited conduct, who provides information about bullying or prohibited conduct, who testifies, assists, or participates in an investigation of alleged bullying or prohibited conduct, or who testifies, assists, or participates in a proceeding or hearing relating to such bullying or prohibited conduct. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, harassment, or intentional disparate treatment.

VII. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

A. The school district will annually provide information and any applicable training to school district staff regarding this policy.

B. The school district will annually provide education and information to students regarding bullying, including information regarding this school district policy prohibiting bullying, the harmful effects of bullying, and other applicable initiatives to prevent bullying.

C. The Administration of the District is directed to implement programs and other initiatives to prevent bullying, to respond to bullying in a manner that does not stigmatize the target or victim, and to make resources or referrals to resources available to victims of bullying.

D. The District may implement violence prevention and character development education programs to prevent or reduce policy violations. Such programs may offer instruction on character education including, but not limited to, character qualities such as attentiveness, truthfulness, respect for authority, diligence, gratefulness, self-discipline, patience, forgiveness, respect for others, peacemaking, and resourcefulness.

VIII. NOTICE

The school District will give annual notice of this policy to students, parents or guardians, and staff, and this policy shall appear in the student handbook, employee handbooks, and on the school's website.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 120B.232 (Character Development Education)

Minn. Stat. § 121A.03 (Sexual, Religious and Racial Harassment and Violence)

Minn. Stat. § 121A.031 (School Student Bullying Policy)

Minn. Stat. § 121A.0311 (Notice of Rights and Responsibilities of Students and Parents under the Safe and Supportive Minnesota Schools Act)

Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40-121A.56 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)

Minn. Stat. § 121A.69 (Hazing Policy)

Cross References: Policy 414: Mandated Reporting of Child Neglect or Physical or Sexual Abuse

Approved: 2/16/16

Revised: