

SCHOOL VIOLENCE, TERRORISTIC THREATS AND TERRORISTIC ACTS

Background

The Mt. Lebanon School District recognizes that the physical safety of students, employees and visitors is essential to the proper operation of the schools within the District and for the establishment of a positive learning environment that develops the qualities of self-esteem and respect for self and others. The Mt. Lebanon School District is committed to providing education in a safe, secure and caring environment and therefore strictly prohibits terroristic threats and terroristic acts, as well as violent, aggressive or abusive conduct because such conduct is known to lead to and/or is likely to cause physical attacks resulting in serious physical injury and even death.

Objective

It is the objective of this policy to communicate the District's commitment to providing education in a safe environment. School violence, terroristic threats or acts as well as other violent, aggressive or abusive conduct and behavior are incompatible with the District's educational mission. Accordingly, terroristic threats, terroristic acts and all violent, aggressive or abusive conduct, as well as aiding, abetting or encouraging others to engage in such improper conduct, are strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

It is the further objective of this Policy to create an awareness among students, staff and parents as to the serious nature of such conduct, to encourage students and parents to report such actual or potential incidents and to establish principles as well as procedures and administrative guidelines to assist staff in responding to these situations.

Definitions

"Terroristic threat" means a threat to commit violence communicated with the intent to terrorize another person, to cause evacuation of a building, place of assembly or facility of transportation, or cause serious public inconvenience or in reckless disregard of the risk of causing such terror or inconvenience.

"Terroristic act" means an offense against another person or property, or involving danger to another person.

Examples of "terroristic threats" or "terroristic acts", or conduct which may lead to or result in a "terroristic threat" or "terroristic act" include, but are not limited to:

1. Possession of, threat with or use of a weapon as defined in Policy GBGB/JICI.
2. Physical assault. Physical assault is the act of striking or touching a person or that person's property with the intent of causing physical injury or harm or reasonably causing a person to fear such injury or harm.
3. Verbal Abuse and Harassment. Verbal abuse and harassment shall include but is not limited to swearing, screaming or making either obscene gestures or racial, ethnic or

religious slurs or threats when directed in a threatening or intimidating way and intended to frighten the recipient. Such threatening or intimidating communication may be either verbal (including by telephone) or written (including emails, text messages and other forms of electronic communications) and includes communications directed at an individual, his/her family or a group.

4. Intimidation. Intimidation is an act intended to frighten or coerce someone into submission or obedience.
5. Extortion. Extortion is the use of verbal or physical coercion in order to obtain financial or material gain from others.
6. Bullying. Bullying is the use of physical or verbal coercion to obtain control over others or to be habitually cruel to others who are weaker.
7. Gang Activity. Gang activity is behavior exhibited by groups of youths who share common beliefs, attitudes and/or attire and who associate with each other for unlawful purposes.
8. Any act similar to any of the foregoing categories of prohibited conduct which violates any applicable law, ordinance, regulation, policy or rule concerning actual or threatened harm to persons or property.

Policy

The District strictly prohibits all employees and students from communicating terroristic threats or committing terroristic acts or engaging in conduct constituting violent, aggressive or abusive behavior, whether such conduct occurs in an individual or group setting. The District further strictly prohibits students and staff from aiding, abetting or encouraging others to engage in such prohibited conduct. This policy applies to all prohibited conduct which takes place relative to school or school sponsored activities, regardless of whether the prohibited conduct occurs on school property or during school hours.

Frequently, terroristic threats or terroristic acts (or acts of violent, aggressive or abusive behavior) are preceded by warning signs or rumors which, if promptly reported, investigated and addressed, may result in avoidance of such acts (and potential tragedy). Accordingly, staff members and students are required to immediately inform the building principal regarding any knowledge relevant to an actual, potential or rumored terroristic threat or terroristic act, or any prohibited act of violence or violent, aggressive or abusive behavior.

Parents are strongly encouraged to promptly report to the building principal or Superintendent any information they receive regarding any actual, potential or rumored terroristic threat or terroristic act or prohibited violent, aggressive or abusive behavior. Tragedies may be avoided if even seemingly minor or rumored incidents are reported, investigated and addressed before they can escalate into more serious or violent incidents.

Because such incidents and/or reports of actual or potential terroristic threats, terroristic acts, or violent aggressive behavior frequently arise under emergency situations, the building principal shall have discretion to make an initial assessment of the situation and act immediately to diffuse/de-escalate the situation, preserve or restore peace and in so doing to preserve the safety of students and

staff. The building principal shall use his/her discretion in determining when to contact the Superintendent in such a situation. As a general rule, the building principal should notify the Superintendent when the incident involves a weapon, injury to a person, a genuine or imminent threat to the safety of persons or property or where the police have been contacted.

Where appropriate, the building principal may act immediately to exclude the involved or suspected student(s) from school either for their own safety or the safety of others. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student(s) will be contacted and advised to pick up the student. Such exclusion for purposes of safety shall not be deemed as a suspension and will not be so reflected on the student's record unless investigation later reveals that the excluded student engaged in prohibited activities.

In addition:

1. The building principal may, where appropriate, immediately suspend the student.
2. Based on further investigation, as may be necessary and appropriate, the building principal and/or the Superintendent may report the student to law enforcement officials, as may be appropriate. If the incident involves a weapon or other offense enumerated in the District's Memorandum of Understanding with the Mt. Lebanon Police Department, law enforcement officials will be contacted immediately.
3. The building principal, the Superintendent or his/her designee, shall undertake an investigation of the incident as may be necessary and impose appropriate disciplinary measures which may include notification of parents/guardians, counseling, detention, suspension or recommendation for expulsion.

If a student is suspended or expelled for making terroristic threats or committing terroristic acts, the School Board may require, prior to readmission, that the student be evaluated by one or more of a school counselor, the building principal, a Mt. Lebanon police officer, school psychologist or other designated administrator or consultant to determine whether the student is experiencing psychological, emotional or substance abuse problems and whether the student poses a risk of harm to himself/herself and/or others. If it is determined that counseling, training or substance abuse treatment is needed, the student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s) must agree to the counseling, training and/or treatment at the parent(s)/guardian(s) expense before he/she is permitted to return to school.

If a student is suspended or expelled for making terroristic threats or committing terroristic acts and the student is permitted to return to school, he/she shall be subject to random searches for a period of time deemed appropriate by the District.

In the case of students with disabilities, the District will take all steps necessary to comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which does permit disciplinary procedures, but with certain limitations.

This policy is in addition to and not in lieu of any other applicable District Policy, principles and procedures as well as the Code of Student Conduct. It should be noted that all of the types of violent, aggressive or abusive conduct enumerated herein are strictly prohibited even if such conduct is not within the definitions of "terroristic threat" or "terroristic act" as set forth above. Any

occurrence of the enumerated prohibited violent, aggressive or abusive conduct may be subject to disciplinary action pursuant to the Code of Student Conduct or other applicable policy, principles and procedures, notwithstanding whether or not the occurrence of such prohibited conduct constitutes a violation of this policy.

Administrative Responsibilities

1. Members of administration and faculty shall receive appropriate training to recognize early warning signs of future behavior that may result in terroristic threats or terroristic acts as well as intervention techniques to help prevent such future conduct and/or to prevent seemingly minor infractions from escalating into more serious or tragic incidents. Faculty and staff shall receive specific training for incidents involving special education students.
2. Students shall receive instruction regarding this policy and shall be strongly encouraged to report any and all incidents of actual, potential or rumored incidents of terroristic threats, terroristic acts or violent, aggressive and/or abusive behavior.
3. Parents will receive information regarding this policy and shall be strongly encouraged to report to the appropriate building principal any information they receive pertaining to incidents of actual, potential or rumored incidents of terroristic threats, terroristic acts or violent, aggressive or abusive behavior.
4. The administration shall prepare administrative guidelines to implement this Policy.
5. The administration shall assist in communicating this policy and in developing appropriate training for staff and students consistent with the policy.

Communication

This policy shall be communicated to:

1. All administrators, teachers and staff
2. Parents, students, PTAs
3. Other parties as may be deemed necessary.

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