

## **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/guardians as to the serious nature of such conduct, to encourage students and parents/guardians 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**

"Communicate" means to convey in person or by written or electronic means, including, but not limited to telephone, text messages, electronic mail, internet, social media, facsimile, telex and similar transmissions.

"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 otherwise 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 constitute 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 students and staff from communicating terroristic threats, committing terroristic acts and/or engaging in conduct constituting violent, aggressive or abusive behavior, directed at any student, employee, Board member, community member or property owned, leased or being used by the District. 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, students and staff are required to immediately inform the building principal, or other member of the District's threat assessment team, 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 building principal, Superintendent, or other member of the District's threat assessment team, 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 threat assessment team member, including 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 Superintendent or designee shall react promptly to information and knowledge concerning a possible or actual terroristic threat or terroristic act. Such action shall be in compliance with state law and regulations and with the procedures set forth in the memorandum of understanding with local law enforcement officials and the district's emergency preparedness plan.

### Guidelines

When an administrator has evidence that a student has made a terroristic threat or committed a terroristic act, the following guidelines shall be applied:

1. Where a student's behavior indicates a threat to the safety of the student, other students, school employees, school facilities, the community or others, district staff shall report the student to the building principal, in accordance with applicable law and Board policy.
2. The building principal shall immediately inform the Superintendent after receiving a report of such a threat.
3. The building principal may, where appropriate, immediately 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 activity.
4. The Superintendent or designee may report incidents involving terroristic threats on school property, at any school-sponsored activity or on a conveyance providing transportation to or from a school or school-sponsored activity to the local police department that has jurisdiction over the school's property, in accordance with state law and regulations, the procedures set forth in the memorandum of understanding with local law enforcement and Board policies.
5. The Superintendent or designee shall notify the parent/guardian of any student directly involved in an incident involving a terroristic threat as a victim or suspect immediately, as soon as practicable. The Superintendent or designee shall inform the parent/guardian

whether or not the local police department that has jurisdiction over the school property has been or may be notified of the incident. The Superintendent or designee shall document attempts made to reach the parent/guardian.

The building principal, the Superintendent or their 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 District may require, prior to readmission, that the student provide competent and credible evidence that the student does not pose a risk of harm to themselves and/or others. Specifically, the District may require 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 and/or others. If it is determined that counseling, training or substance abuse treatment is needed, the student and their parent(s)/guardian(s) must agree to the counseling, training and/or treatment at the parent(s)/guardian(s) expense before the student 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, the student and/or their parent/guardian on behalf of the student shall consent to being subject to random searches for a period of time deemed appropriate by the District.

In the case of students with disabilities, including a student for whom an evaluation is pending, the District will take all steps necessary to comply with state and federal laws and regulations, the procedures set forth in the memorandum of understanding with local law enforcement and Board policies.

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. Staff members and 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. Specifically, staff members and students shall be made aware of their responsibility for informing the building principal regarding any information or knowledge relevant to a possible or actual terroristic threat or terroristic act.
2. In accordance with state law, the Superintendent shall annually, by July 31, report all required criminal offenses, including terroristic threats, to the Office for Safe Schools on the required form.
  3. 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.
  4. 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.
  5. 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.
  6. The administration shall prepare administrative guidelines to implement this Policy.
  7. 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.

Adopted April 19, 1999  
Revised October 16, 2000  
Revised March 19, 2012  
Revised October 17, 2022

### References:

School Code – 24 P.S. Sec. 1302.1-A, 1303-A

State Board of Education Regulations – 22 PA Code Sec. 10.2, 10.22, 10.23, 10.25, 12.2

Crime Code (Terroristic Threats) – 18 Pa. C.S.A. Sec. 2706