

ANTI-BULLYING

Background

The Mt. Lebanon School District's goal is to establish a secure school climate, conducive to teaching and student learning that is free from threat, harassment, and any type of bullying behavior for any reason including membership in any protected class including, but not limited to, race, color, age, creed, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ancestry, national origin, familial status, language, genetic information, pregnancy, or handicap or disability. One of the District's core values calls for each member of our learning community to demonstrate respect toward others.

Objective

The objective of this policy is to:

1. Provide a safe, positive environment for learning through prompt resolution of bullying incidents;
2. Educate students, employees and parents about bullying, its adverse impact on students and the District generally, and how to prevent and resolve bullying incidents, so as to minimize the potential for bullying;
3. Communicate to District students, employees and parents the District's commitment to countering and preventing bullying and to inform the District community of the specific measures the District will undertake to resolve problems in this area;
4. Delineate disciplinary consequences for bullying and authorize the development of prevention, intervention and education programs; and
5. Identify the appropriate school staff person to receive reports of incidents of alleged bullying.

Definitions

“Bullying,” for purposes of this policy, shall mean an intentional electronic, written, verbal or physical act, or a series of acts, whether in the school setting or outside the school setting, that: (1) are directed at another student or students; (2) are severe, persistent or pervasive; and (3) have the effect of doing any one or more of the following:

- (a) substantially interfering with a student's education;
- (b) creating a threatening environment; and/or
- (c) substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school. Bullying, as defined in this Policy, also includes Cyber-Bullying.

Bullying consists of a pattern of repeated, harmful behavior seeking either physical or social power over another. It can occur in person, via electronic communications (e.g., text messages or emails) or via social media. This may include a wide variety of behaviors, with deliberate intent to hurt, embarrass, or humiliate the other person. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose. Bullying can be verbal and may include teasing, name-calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting and threatening to cause harm. Bullying can be social or relational and involve harming someone's reputation or relationships and can include leaving someone out on purpose, telling others not to be friendly with someone, spreading rumors about or embarrassing someone. Bullying can be physical and involve hurting a person's body or possessions and includes hitting, kicking, pinching, spitting, tripping, pushing, taking or breaking someone's belongings and making mean or rude hand gestures.

“Cyber-Bullying” includes any form of verbal or psychological bullying that may occur on the Internet through social media. Cyber-bullying includes, but is not limited to, the following misuses of technology: harassing, teasing, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another student, teacher, or employee of the District by sending or posting inappropriate or derogatory email messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings including any social networking accounts, for example, blogs. All forms of cyber-bullying are unacceptable and, to the extent that such actions relate to the school setting and are disruptive of the education process of the District, offenders shall be the subject of appropriate discipline, which may include legal and/or police proceedings.

“School setting,” for purposes of this policy, shall mean in the school (including all school buildings), on school grounds, in school vehicles, traveling to and from school, at a designated bus stop, or any activity or event sponsored, supervised or sanctioned by the school, whether or not on school grounds or during school hours.

Policy

- A. General. The District shall not tolerate any bullying. The District requires all employees to observe and be aware of bullying and to take immediate, appropriate steps to intervene. The employee shall report the bullying to the school principal or appropriate supervisor. In addition, the District expects students and parents who become aware of bullying to report it to any principal, assistant principal, other administrator, guidance counselor, psychologist, teacher or school nurse for further investigation. Individuals are encouraged to use the District's report form, available from the building principal, or to put the complaint in writing; however, oral complaints shall be accepted and documented.

Verbal and written complaints of bullying shall be investigated promptly, and appropriate corrective, restorative, supportive and/or preventative action be taken when appropriate.

Where made to the teacher or guidance counselor, they will forward the report to the principal. All reports of bullying shall be documented by the building principal or appropriate supervisor and investigated as necessary. Where the District deems it appropriate, law enforcement authorities may be notified.

- B. Prevention. The Administration is authorized to develop prevention, intervention, and education programs to reduce and prevent bullying using evidence-based practices and resources.
- C. Investigation Procedures - Student. Upon learning about a bullying incident, the building principal or his/her designee shall conduct an investigation which may include interviewing the students or others involved in the matter, contacting the parents of the students, and undertaking a more thorough investigation. This investigation may include interviews with students, parents and school employees, and a review of school records.
- D. Response - Student. Any students who bully others shall be subject to discipline designed to stop the behavior, including, but not limited to specific disciplinary consequences as will be developed by the District, as well as counseling and parental conferences. Bullying is also a violation of the District policy on Student Conduct (Policy JIC); as a result, consequences for students who bully others may include not only counseling or a parent conference, but also discipline such as detention, suspension and/or expulsion.

In addition and when appropriate, restorative practices will be employed by the District. This includes supportive measures for the victim. Any complaint of bullying brought pursuant to this policy shall also be reviewed for conduct which may not be proven to be bullying under this policy but merits review and possible action under other Board policies.

- E. Investigation Procedures/Response - Employee. Where a District employee has been accused of bullying, the Human Resource Director, or his/her designee, shall undertake an investigation. Any investigation and discipline will be consistent with federal and state law,

including the Pennsylvania Public School Code of 1949, as amended, and with any applicable collective bargaining agreement.

- F. Discrimination/Unlawful Harassment/Title IX Sexual Harassment. Every report of alleged bullying that can be interpreted at the outset to fall within the provisions of policies addressing potential violations of laws and policies against discrimination, including harassment and Title IX sexual harassment, shall be handled as a joint, concurrent investigation into all allegations and coordinated with the full participation of the Title IX Coordinator/Compliance Officer. If, in the course of a bullying investigation, potential issues of discrimination are identified, the Title IX Coordinator/Compliance Officer shall be promptly notified, and the investigation shall be conducted jointly and concurrently to address the issues of alleged discrimination, including harassment and Title IX sexual harassment, as well as the incidents of alleged bullying.

Administrative Responsibility

1. Employees shall receive support to recognize and help prevent bullying behavior, and shall promptly report any incidents of bullying to the principal.
2. Students shall receive support to recognize and help prevent bullying behavior. Students shall receive information regarding this Policy in the District's Code of Student Conduct and shall be expected to report any and all incidents of bullying to a teacher, guidance counselor or the principal.
3. Parents shall receive information regarding this Policy and shall be expected to report to their building principal any suspected incidents of bullying involving their own children or other District students.
4. The Administration shall develop lists of disciplinary consequences for acts of bullying prohibited by this Policy, and shall communicate these to students and parents to promote awareness and in an effort to prevent acts of bullying.
5. This Policy shall be posted on the District's Web site and at a prominent location within each school building where notices are usually posted, and shall be available in every classroom. This Policy shall be reviewed with students at least once every school year. Material changes to this Policy or to the procedures for reporting bullying shall be reviewed with students within 90 days of the adoption of the changes.
6. This Policy shall be reviewed by the District every three years. The Administration shall annually provide PDE with a copy of this bullying policy and information related to the development and implementation of any bullying prevention, intervention and education programs. This information shall be attached to the Annual School Safety Report. In addition, acts of bullying shall be

reported to the Office of Safe Schools as required by law, and a copy of all such reports shall be provided to the Board of School Directors.

7. The Administration shall develop any administrative procedures deemed necessary or advisable to implement this Policy.

Communication

This Policy shall be communicated to all employees, students, and parents, including but not limited to the forms of communication described above.

Adopted August 18, 2003
Revised December 15, 2008
Revised February 21, 2011
Reviewed September 8, 2014
Revised May 22, 2017
Revised June 15, 2020
Revised September 21, 2020
Revised May 22, 2023