

NO PLACE

FOR BULLYING,
INTIMIDATION
OR HARASSMENT

All students and staff deserve a safe and supportive environment in which to learn and teach.

Federal Way Public Schools, like districts around the state, has refocused on the issue of bullying, intimidation and harassment in our schools.

We need everyone's help to effectively deal with bullying.

- ◆ We need students, staff, parents and the community to know the rules and "speak the same language" around bullying prevention. The district's full policy can be found in the student policies and procedures section located here: www.fwps.org/Page/502. Under that policy, for an action to be considered bullying, it needs to meet the following definition:
- ◆ Harassment, intimidation, or bullying means any intentional electronic, written, verbal, or physical act, including but not limited to acts that are shown to be motivated by the perception of the victim's race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, or sensory handicap or other distinguishing characteristics, when the intentional electronic, written, verbal, or physical act:

- ◆ Physically harms a student or damages the student's property; or
- ◆ Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education; or
- ◆ Is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or
- ◆ Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

How do I report bullying?

If you believe your child is being bullied:

- ◆ Contact the principal of your child's school and file a formal complaint. The Office of Equity will be notified and a formal investigation will take place.

Complaint forms can be found on the district's webpage along with our harassment, intimidation, and bullying policy (www.fwps.org/Page/502). You can also contact the Washington State OSPI Safety Center for additional information.

- ◆ Contact the police if you believe your child is the victim of malicious harassment and is in immediate danger.

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Here are a few reasons for schools to have strong and effective bullying policies:

- ◆ By preventing and addressing bullying, this can reduce potential long-term negative effects on those involved and supports our students in being thriving, confident and responsible individuals.
- ◆ It helps cultivate and maintain a healthy and positive school climate.
- ◆ It increases the amount of scholars who feel their school is safe and welcoming so they can achieve academically.
- ◆ And, it's the law.





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More resources

The Washington State Education Ombudsman's Office has an excellent brochure with many good tips for families of victims and those of instigators. It can be found at www.governor.wa.gov/oeo/publications/006_english.pdf.

The Office of the State Public Instruction Superintendent (OSPI) provides a School Safety webpage for parents and school staff, with additional information and resources. Go to www.k12.wa.us/SafetyCenter/default.aspx.

Why should I get involved? This is just kids being kids— isn't it?

To the contrary, bullying is serious and should never be tolerated. Adults need to intervene every time they witness bullying. Tolerating bullying sends the wrong message and creates a toxic environment that can spread beyond the school's walls.

Students who are bullied are more likely to miss school and have a loss of self-esteem. They may have physical symptoms like headaches, depression and anxiety. They are less likely to take risks academically and may have suicidal or homicidal thoughts or attempts.

Those who do the bullying are in need of help, too. If the behavior isn't addressed, they often continue to be abusive later in life and fail to develop healthy relationships. They are less likely to complete their education and more likely to be involved in criminal activities.

Even bystanders are impacted by bullying. They may feel helpless, vulnerable and afraid. They may feel guilty for not helping or have decreased empathy for people being bullied. In general, if bullying isn't addressed, the school can develop a climate of fear and resulting in reduced academic achievement.

What does the state law on bullying say?

Each school district is required by RCW 28A.300.285 to have a policy that prohibits the harassment, intimidation, or bullying of any student. It is the responsibility of each school district to share this policy with parents or guardians, students, volunteers, and school employees.

Federal Way Public Schools Policy 3207(P)

It is a violation of State Law and District policy for a student to be harassed, intimidated, or bullied by others in the school community, at school sponsored events, or when such actions create a substantial disruption to the educational process. It is our goal for all students in FWPS to feel safe and focus on academic achievement. Student(s) will not be harassed because of their individual differences. We require that any school staff who observes, overhears, or otherwise witnesses bullying or to whom such actions have been reported must take prompt and appropriate action to stop the harassment and to prevent its recurrence.