

Bullying of Students

Section A - Introduction

It is the policy of the Board of Education to foster an environment that maximizes student learning and a climate of civility among students and employees of the district. The Board recognizes that there are certain behaviors and types of conduct that, if tolerated, would have a significant negative impact upon the learning environment. These behaviors, characterized as bullying, will not be tolerated. Bullying of students is contrary to state law and the policy of this district.

Section B - Scope

Bullying on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, military status, unfavorable discharge status from the military service, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender-related identity or expression, ancestry, age, religion, opinion or viewpoint, physical or mental disability, order of protection status, status of being homeless, or actual or potential marital or parental status, including pregnancy, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic is prohibited. Bullying as described herein shall be prohibited in the following situations:

1. In any physical area used for District-sponsored or related activities, whether or not such area is on school or District property (including but not limited to, school buildings and lands, and District offices), or at any school-sponsored or related activities, performances, extracurricular and athletic events, and school-sponsored travel at other venues;
2. On school-supplied or -sanctioned transportation to or from any of the above subsection 1;
3. At activities or events at other locations, if the administration determines that the incident bears a nexus to the school or school safety, or the educational environment; and
4. Through the transmission of information from any electronic device regardless of ownership or where it is accessed if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or the orderly operation of a school. This subsection does not require school administrators or staff members to monitor any nonschool-related activity, function, or program.

In addition to the above jurisdiction, the administration is authorized to establish a Code of Conduct that imposes progressive loss of privileges by reason of any conduct by a student in violation of this policy wherever the conduct occurs. Students who participate in extracurricular activities such as interscholastic athletics, drama, fine arts and other competitions or who participate in clubs and activities are representatives of our schools, and as such are expected to conform their behavior to this policy as a condition to continued enjoyment of these privileges.

This policy is consistent with subsection (a-5) of 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7 of the School Code. Bullying is contrary to State law and the policy of the school district and is consistent with subsection (a-5). Nothing in this Section B is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression, or the free exercise of religion, or religiously-based views protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution.

Section C - Definitions

1. **Bullying:** Any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:
 - a. Placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student or student's property;
 - b. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health;
 - c. Substantially interfering with the student's academic performance; or
 - d. Substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation, one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

2. **Cyberbullying:** Bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photoelectric system, or photo-optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications.

Cyberbullying includes, among other things, the assumption of the identity of another person as the author of posted content or messages if such assumptions create any of the effects described in the definition of bullying in Section C. Cyberbullying also includes the distribution or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be received/ accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects described in the definition of bullying.

Section D – Violations

Any single act of bullying will be considered a Category II infraction in accordance with Board Policy 7:191. Violations will be subject to the procedures of Policy 7:191 and may include suspension, expulsion, and/or referral to law enforcement authorities. Staff member violations will be subject to the procedures of Board Policy 5:20 and may include appropriate personnel action, and/or referral to law enforcement authorities.

Section E - Prevention and Response Plan

1. **Reporting**

Students, parents and staff are encouraged to immediately report incidents of alleged bullying. A report may be made orally or in writing. Reports can be made to the Complaint Manager (as available on the district website) or any staff member. Anonymous reports are also accepted. Both schools utilize anonymous reporting systems.

- a. Reports will be kept confidential to the extent possible given the need to investigate. Students or staff who make good faith reports will not be disciplined.
 - b. All reports of violations of this policy will be processed in accordance with 2:260 Policy - Uniform Grievance.
2. Response
- a. Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, parents or guardians of all students involved in an alleged incident of bullying shall be promptly informed of the incident and the alleged involvement of their student. As appropriate, the potential availability of social work services, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures shall be shared with the parent/guardian.
 - b. "Restorative measures" means a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, that:
 - i. Are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community;
 - ii. Contribute to maintaining school safety;
 - iii. Protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate;
 - iv. Teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society;
 - v. Serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities;
 - vi. Reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school; and
 - vii. Increase student accountability if the incident of bullying is based on religion, race, ethnicity, or any other category that is identified in the Illinois Human Rights Act.

Procedures for promptly investigating and addressing reports of alleged bullying, include the following:

1. Make all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within ten (10) school days after the date the report of the incident of alleged bullying was received and take into consideration additional relevant information received during the investigation about the alleged incident of bullying;
2. Involve appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process;
3. Notify the principal or his/her designee of the report of the incident of alleged bullying as soon as possible after the report is received; and
4. Remain consistent with Federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights and providing parents/guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the principal or his/her designee to discuss the investigation and findings.

5. Interventions and restorative measures that can be taken to address bullying, may include, but are not limited to, school social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services.
6. Reprisal or retaliation (which does not include denial or disagreement, civilly stated) against any person who reports an act of alleged bullying is prohibited. An act of reprisal or retaliation will be treated as: (1) bullying for purposes of determining any consequences or other appropriate remedial actions; or (2) misconduct that can result in suspension or expulsion for a student.
7. A student/staff member will not be punished for reporting alleged bullying or supplying information in good faith, even if the District's investigation concludes that no bullying occurred. However, knowingly or recklessly making a false accusation or knowingly or recklessly providing false information will be treated as: (1) bullying for purposes of determining any consequences or other appropriate remedial actions; or (2) misconduct that can result in suspension or expulsion for a student.

Section F - Evaluation

No less often than every two years, the Superintendent (or designee) shall implement a policy evaluation process to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of this policy that includes, but is not limited to, factors such as:

1. The frequency of victimization;
2. Student, staff, and family observations of bullying at a school;
3. Identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs;
4. The types of bullying that are common or occurring; and
5. Bystander intervention or participation.

As appropriate, the evaluation process may use relevant information that the District already collects for other purposes. Acceptable documentation to satisfy the re-evaluated policy submission includes one of the following:

1. An updated version of the policy with the amendment/modification date included in the reference portion of the policy;
2. If no revisions are deemed necessary, either a copy of board minutes or a signed statement from the board indicating that the policy was re-evaluated and no changes were deemed to be necessary; or
3. A signed statement from the Board President indicating that the Board re-evaluated the policy and no changes to it were necessary.

The Superintendent or designee must post the information developed as a result of the policy re-evaluation on the District's website. Reviews and re-evaluations in years they are due must be submitted to the Illinois State Board of Education by September 30.

This policy shall be provided on the school district's website and included in the student handbook. It shall be distributed annually to parents, guardians, students, and school personnel, including new employees when hired.

Adopted: April 11, 2005
Revised: December 9, 2019
Revised: January 23, 2023
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