

Students

SUBJECT: CYBERBULLYING BEHAVIOR IN THE SCHOOLS

The Board of Education is committed to providing a safe and productive learning environment within its schools. All forms of bullying, including cyberbullying, are unacceptable and, to the extent such actions are disruptive of the educational process of the School District, offenders shall be subject to appropriate staff intervention, which may result in administrative discipline.

Cyberbullying includes, but is not limited to, the following misuses of technology: harassing, teasing, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another student or staff member by way of any technological tool, such as sending or posting inappropriate or derogatory e-mail messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs).

The Board of Education shall require the prohibition of cyberbullying - along with the range of possible intervention activities and/or sanctions for such misconduct - to be included in the *District Code of Conduct* for all grade levels.

Engages in Cyberbullying Behavior

As with other forms of bullying, cyberbullying is an attempt to display power and control over someone perceived as weaker. Cyberbullying involving District students may occur both on campus and off school grounds and may involve student use of the District Internet system or student use of personal digital devices while at school, such as cell phones, digital cameras, and personal computers to engage in bullying.

Cyberbullying has the effect of:

- 1) Physically, emotionally or mentally harming a student;
- 2) Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical, emotional or mental harm;
- 3) Placing a student in reasonable fear of damage to or loss of personal property; and
- 4) Creating an intimidating or hostile environment that substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities.

Also, cyberbullying that occurs off-campus, that causes or threatens to cause a material or substantial disruption in the school, could allow school officials to apply the "***Tinker*** standard" where a student's off-campus "speech" may be subject to formal discipline by school officials when it is determined that the off-campus speech did cause a substantial disruption or threat thereof within the school setting [*Tinker v. Des Moines Indep. Sch. Dist.* 393 U.S. 503 (1969)]. Such conduct could also be subject to appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the *District Code of Conduct* and possible referral to local law enforcement authorities.

(Continued)

Students

SUBJECT: CYBERBULLYING BEHAVIOR IN THE SCHOOLS (Cont'd.)**Reports of Allegations of Cyberbullying Behavior**

Any student who believes that he/she is being subjected to cyberbullying behavior, as well as any other person who has knowledge of or witnesses any possible occurrence of cyberbullying, shall report the behavior to any staff member or the Building Principal. The staff member/Building Principal to whom the report is made (or the staff member/Building Principal who witnesses cyberbullying behavior) shall investigate the complaint and take appropriate action to include, as necessary, referral to the next level of supervisory authority and/or other official designated by the District to investigate allegations of cyberbullying. Investigation of allegations of cyberbullying shall follow the procedures utilized for complaints of harassment within the School District. Allegations of cyberbullying shall be promptly investigated and will be treated as confidential and private to the extent possible within legal constraints.

However, it is important to note that a single negative act as enumerated above may also constitute "cyberbullying" (if not more serious misconduct) based upon the particular circumstances such as the seriousness of the act and/or the intent of the actor.

Prevention/Intervention Techniques

Personnel at all levels are responsible for taking corrective action to prevent cyberbullying behavior of which they have been made aware at School District sites or activities and/or reporting such behavior to their immediate supervisor. Further, staff training shall be provided to raise awareness of the problem of cyberbullying within the schools and to facilitate staff identification of and response to such cyberbullying behavior among students.

Prevention and intervention techniques within the District to prevent against cyberbullying behavior and to support and protect victims shall include building-level and classroom-level strategies and activities as determined by administration. Individual intervention will be provided by appropriate staff members to bullies, victims and their parents to help ensure the cyberbullying stops.

Prohibition of Retaliatory Behavior (Commonly Known as "Whistle-Blower" Protection)

The Board prohibits any retaliatory behavior directed against complainants, victims, witnesses, and/or any other individuals who participate in the investigation of allegations of cyberbullying. Follow-up inquiries and/or appropriate monitoring of the alleged cyberbully and victim shall be made to ensure that cyberbullying behavior has not resumed and that all those involved in the investigation have not suffered retaliation.

(Continued)

7552R.1

2012

of 3

3

Students

SUBJECT: CYBERBULLYING BEHAVIOR IN THE SCHOOLS (Cont'd.)

Dissemination of Information

Rules against cyberbullying shall be publicized District-wide and shall be disseminated as appropriate to staff, students and parents. Disciplinary sanctions for violation of Board policy and administration regulation shall be outlined in the *District Code of Conduct* as enumerated above and may also be incorporated in staff and student handbooks.

NOTE: Refer also to Regulations #3420R -- Anti-Harassment in the School District
#7551R-- Sexual Harassment of Students
#7553R -- Hazing of Students
District Code of Conduct