
Note: This policy addresses bullying of District students. For provisions regarding discrimination, harassment, and retaliation involving District students, see FFH. For reporting requirements related to child abuse and neglect, see FFG.

PURPOSE

A safe and civil environment is needed for students to learn and attain high academic standards and to promote healthy human relationships. The purpose of this policy is to assist the District in its goal of preventing and responding to acts of bullying, intimidation, violence, and other similar disruptive behavior. An act of bullying, by either an individual student or a group of students, is expressly prohibited on District property or at school-related functions. This policy applies not only to students who directly engage in an act of bullying, but also to students who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support another student's act of bullying.

BOARD
EXPECTATIONS,
BELIEFS, AND
STANDARDS

The Board expects students to conduct themselves in a manner in keeping with their levels of development, maturity, and demonstrated capabilities with a proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students, school staff, volunteers, and contractors.

The Board believes that standards for student behavior must be set cooperatively through interaction among the students, parents and guardians, staff, and community members of the District, producing an atmosphere that encourages students to grow in self-discipline. The development of this atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for District and community property on the part of students, staff, and community members.

The Board believes that the best discipline is self-imposed, and that it is the responsibility of staff to use disciplinary situations as opportunities for helping students learn to assume responsibility and the consequences of their behavior. Staff members who interact with students shall apply best practices designed to prevent discipline problems and encourage students' abilities to develop self-discipline.

Since bystander support of harassment or bullying can support these behaviors, the District prohibits both active and passive support for acts of harassment or bullying. The staff should encourage students to support students who walk away from these acts when they see them, constructively attempt to stop them, or report them to the designated authority.

The District shall incorporate information regarding the policy against harassment or bullying into the Student Code of Conduct, the student handbook, and appropriate training programs.

BULLYING
PROHIBITED

The standards of this policy constitute a specific, focused, coordinated, integrated, and culturally sensitive system of supports for all students, staff, families, and community agencies that will improve relations within each school. It is designed to ensure that every school has staff members who have been trained and are supported in their school's efforts to provide awareness, intervention training, and instructional strategies on prevention, including violence prevention, to each student, staff, and parent in the District and to direct follow up when incidents are reported and/or occur.

The District prohibits bullying as defined by this policy. Policy prohibits retaliation against any person who in good faith provided information concerning an incident of bullying, including a victim or a witness.

The District prohibits the bullying of any student:

1. During any educational program or activity conducted by the District;
2. During any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity or on a school bus;
3. Through the use of any electronic device or data while on school grounds or on a school bus or through the use of computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, or computer network of the District. The physical location or time of access of a computer-related incident cannot be raised as a defense in any disciplinary action initiated under this section; or
4. Through threats, using any of the above methods, to be carried out on school grounds, which includes threats made outside of school hours that are intended to be carried out during any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity, or on a school bus.

Though an incident of alleged bullying may occur off campus and may not entail threats of acts to occur during school hours, if a student's ability to receive an education or a school's ability to provide an education is significantly impaired, as determined by the District administration, disciplinary sanctions may be imposed.

Such behavior is considered harassment or bullying whether it takes place on or off school property, at any school-sponsored function, or in a school vehicle.

A student or witness may file a complaint following the same procedures for bullying against a student that occurs at a bus stop or en route to and from school, and the school shall investigate and/or provide assistance and intervention as the principal or designee

deems appropriate, which may include the use of the District police department.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions shall apply for purposes of this policy:

- **Bullying** means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students. Bullying of a student may include hazing, threats, taunting, teasing, confinement, assault, demands for money, extortion, destruction of property, theft of valued possessions, ridicule, name-calling, rumor spreading, slurs, jokes, innuendos, demeaning comments, and ostracism of the person or another.

It is further defined as any unwanted purposeful gesture or written, verbal, graphic, or physical act (including electronically transmitted acts—i.e., Internet, cell phone, personal digital assistant (PDA), or wireless hand-held device) that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, ethnicity, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital status, socioeconomic background, social/family background, linguistic preference, political beliefs, or a mental, physical, or sensory disability, difference, or impairment; or by any other distinguishing characteristic or because of one's association with a particular person or group of persons.

Bullying also includes, but is not limited to, any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by a student, that has the potential to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment or cause long-term damage, cause discomfort or humiliation, or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school performance or participation, or is carried out repeatedly and is often characterized by an imbalance of power.

Bullying may involve, but is not limited to:

- Verbal: Hurtful name-calling, teasing, gossiping, making threats, making rude noises, or spreading hurtful rumors.
- Nonverbal: Posturing, making gang signs, leering, staring, stalking, destroying property, using graffiti or graphic images, or exhibiting inappropriate and/or threatening gestures or actions.
- Physical: Hitting, punching, pushing, shoving, poking, kicking, tripping, strangling, hair pulling, fighting, beating, biting, spitting, or destroying property.

- Emotional (Psychological): Rejecting, terrorizing, extorting, defaming, intimidating, humiliating, blackmailing, manipulating friendships, isolating, ostracizing, using peer pressure, or rating or ranking personal characteristics.

Bullying occurs when a student or a group of students engages in written or verbal expression or physical conduct that:

- Will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or of damage to the student's property;
 - Is so sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student; or
 - Has the effect of substantially negatively impacting a student's emotional or mental well-being.
- **Cyberbullying** is defined as willful harassment and intimidation of a person through the use of digital technologies, including, but not limited to, e-mail, blogs, texting on cell phones, social websites (e.g., MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, and the like), chat rooms, "sexting," instant messaging, or video voyeurism by accessing or knowingly and willingly causing or providing access to data or computer software through a computer, computer system, or computer network within the scope of the District network system.
 - **Cyberstalking** means to engage in a course of conduct to communicate, or to cause to be communicated, words, images, or language by or through the use of electronic mail or electronic communication, directed at or about a specific person, causing substantial emotional distress to that person and serving no legitimate purpose.
 - **Prohibited harassment** includes, but is not limited to, oral, written, psychological, physical (both climate and contact), and other demonstrative actions with regard to race, creed, ethnic origin, religious preference, gender, disability, or sexual orientation that is harassing. [See FFH(LOCAL)]
 - **Accused** is defined as any District student in the school or outside the school at school-sponsored events, on school buses, or at training facilities or training programs sponsored by the District who is reported to have committed an act of bullying, whether formally or informally, verbally, or in writing.
 - **Complainant** is defined as any individual who has a complaint or concern.

- **Victim** is defined as any District student who is reported to have been the target of an act of bullying during any educational program or activity.

TRAINING

The District shall implement research-based bullying prevention and intervention programs. Such programs shall provide training for District students and staff for effectively responding to, intervening in, and reporting incidents of bullying.

The District designates the following department to coordinate training and counseling services related to this policy:

Department: Counseling Services

Address: 3700 Ross Avenue, Room 208, Dallas, TX 75204

Telephone: (972) 925-3505

At the beginning of each school year, the school principal or principal's designee and/or appropriate executive director shall provide awareness of this policy, as well as of the process for reporting incidents, investigations, and appeals to students, school staff, parents, or other persons responsible for the welfare of students through appropriate references in the Student Code of Conduct, the student handbook, the school website, and/or other reasonable means.

Students' rights shall be explained as outlined in this policy, the student handbook, and in the Student Code of Conduct.

At student orientation sessions and on other appropriate occasions, which may include parents, students shall be provided with age-appropriate information on the recognition and prevention of harassment, intimidation or bullying, and their rights and responsibilities under this and other District policies and rules. Parents shall be provided with copies of this policy and appropriate materials on the recognition and prevention of harassment, intimidation, and bullying.

The Site-Based Decision-Making (SBDM) Committee shall assist the principal in designating campus goals that incorporate systemic methods for student and staff recognition through positive reinforcement for good conduct, self-discipline, good citizenship, and academic success. [See BQB(LOCAL)]

REPORTING
PROCEDURES

Reports of bullying shall be made as soon as possible after the alleged act or knowledge of the alleged act. A failure to promptly report may impair the District's ability to investigate and address the prohibited conduct.

STUDENT WELFARE
FREEDOM FROM BULLYING

FFI
(LOCAL)

Any student who believes that he or she has experienced bullying or believes that another student has experienced bullying should immediately report the alleged acts to a teacher, counselor, principal, or other District employee. A report may be made orally or in writing.

To report after hours, parents and students can contact the District's hotline at (800) 530-1608, which is staffed 24 hours a day.

Reports of bullying may also be directed to the District's Anti-Bullying Department:

Counseling Services Department

3700 Ross Avenue, Room 208, Dallas, TX 75204

(972) 925-3505 (phone); (972) 925-3507 (fax)

NOTICE OF REPORT

Any District employee who receives notice that a student has or may have experienced bullying shall immediately complete a report online.

Failure of a District employee to report a suspected instance of bullying may result in disciplinary action.

INVESTIGATION OF
REPORT

The District prohibits retaliation by a student or District employee against any person who reports bullying, serves as a witness, or otherwise participates in an investigation.

If a report is made orally, the District employee shall complete an online bullying report.

The campus principal or designee shall determine whether the allegations in the report, if proven, would constitute prohibited conduct as defined by policy FFH, and if so proceed under that policy instead.

The campus principal or designee shall conduct an appropriate investigation based on the allegations in the report. The campus principal or designee shall promptly take interim action calculated to prevent bullying during the course of an investigation, if appropriate.

Proper prevention and intervention steps shall be taken based on the level of severity of infraction as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

CONCLUDING THE
INVESTIGATION

Absent extenuating circumstances, the investigation should be completed within ten school days from the date of the report; however, the campus principal or designee shall take additional time if necessary to complete a thorough investigation.

STUDENT WELFARE
FREEDOM FROM BULLYING

FFI
(LOCAL)

The campus principal or designee shall complete an electronic report of the investigation, including a determination of whether bullying occurred. An electronic copy of the report is received automatically by counseling services for data collection and reporting purposes.

DISTRICT ACTION

If the results of an investigation indicate that bullying occurred, the campus principal shall promptly notify the parents of the victim and of the student who engaged in bullying upon completion of the investigation. The campus behavior coordinator shall respond by taking appropriate disciplinary or corrective action reasonably calculated to address the conduct in accordance with the District's Student Code of Conduct. [For information on student transfers due to bullying, see FDB.]

The principal may convene the Student Support Team (SST) for the purpose of developing a plan of action/interventions for the victim and/or perpetrator, even if the District concludes that the conduct did not rise to the level of bullying under this policy.

Victims of bullying and the accused shall be offered counseling services ranging from those provided by school counselors to a referral to one of the District's youth and family centers.

Consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a student who commits one or more acts of harassment or bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion.

Consequences for a student who commits an act of harassment or bullying shall be unique to the individual incident and shall vary in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance. The consequences must also be consistent with the District's Student Code of Conduct.

The District may take action based on the results of an investigation, even if the District concludes that the conduct did not rise to the level of bullying under this policy.

The District prohibits the discipline of a student who used reasonable self-defense in a bullying incident and is found to have been the victim in the incident.

The District requires that any discipline of a student with disabilities found to have engaged in bullying must comply with applicable requirements of federal law, including IDEA.

CONFIDENTIALITY

To the greatest extent possible, the District shall respect the privacy of the complainant, persons against whom a report is filed, and

STUDENT WELFARE
FREEDOM FROM BULLYING

FFI
(LOCAL)

witnesses. Limited disclosures may be necessary in order to conduct a thorough investigation.

APPEAL

A parent, legal guardian, or adult student who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation or plan of action may appeal through FNG(LOCAL) beginning at the appropriate level.

RECORDS RETENTION

Retention of records shall be in accordance with CPC(LOCAL).

ACCESS TO POLICY

Information regarding this policy shall be distributed annually to District students through the Student Handbook and the Student Code of Conduct. Copies of the policy shall be readily available at each campus and the District's administrative offices.

ADOPTION OR LAST
AMENDED DATE

This policy was last adopted or amended on December 17, 2015.