

**STUDENT HARASSMENT & BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION**  
**(DASA)**

The Board of Education of the Patchogue-Medford School district is committed to providing an educational environment that promotes respect, dignity and equality. The Board recognizes that students' ability to learn and to meet high academic standards and a school's ability to educate its students are compromised by incidents of bullying or harassment. Such behavior affects not only the individuals who are its targets, but also those who participate in or witness such acts.

Therefore, it is the policy of the District to prohibit bullying and harassment on district property, district transportation, and at school-sponsored (on or off campus) events and functions. Acts of bullying and harassment are prohibited, whether they are committed directly or indirectly, in person (face-to-face), or remotely by use of electronic technology, and whether on school property, at a school function, on a school or coach bus, or off school property where there is a sufficient nexus to the school environment. The District prohibits acts of bullying and harassment that create a hostile environment at school for the victim, infringe on the rights of the victim at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the educational process or the orderly operation of a school.

The Board recognizes that, in some instances, acts of bullying and harassment may constitute discrimination in violation of state and federal law and regulation and/or District policy. The District strictly prohibits all forms of discrimination, including bullying and harassment. No student shall be subjected to discrimination based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender, or sex by school employees or students on District property or at a school function.

**DEFINITIONS**

**“Bullying” and “Harassment”:**

1. “Harassment,” as defined by the Dignity for All Students Act, means the creation of a hostile educational environment by written, verbal, or physical conduct, threats, intimidation or abuse, including such behavior conducted via electronic communication:
  - a. That has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being; **or**
  - b. That reasonably causes, or would reasonably be expected to cause, a student to fear for his or her physical safety.
2. “Bullying” means “a variety of negative acts carried out repeatedly over time involving a real or perceived imbalance of power, with a more powerful person or group attacking those who are less powerful.” Bullying can take three (3) forms:

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Definitions (Continued)

- a. Physical (including, but not limited to, hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, and taking physical belongings).
  - b. Verbal (including, but not limited to, taunting, malicious teasing, name calling, and making threats).
  - c. Psychological (including, but not limited to, spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, and engaging in social exclusion, extortion, and intimidation).
3. “Bullying” includes “cyber bullying,” which is an attempt to exercise power and commit negative acts over time involving a real or perceived imbalance of power. Opportunities for cyber bullying exist both on and off of the premises of Patchogue-Medford Schools and may involve the use of, but not limited to, the Patchogue-Medford computer system, electronic mail system, or personal computers, cell phones, digital cameras. Cyber bullying using any of these methods shall be covered by this policy. Cyber bullying included, but is not limited to, the following misuses of technology: harassing, teasing, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another student or employee by way of any technological device or tool, such as sending or posting inappropriate or derogatory electronic mail messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blog entries).
4. “Bullying” and “harassment” can take many forms including, but not limited to: slurs, rumors, jokes, innuendo, demeaning comments, drawing cartoons, pranks, gestures, physical attacks, threats, name-calling, insulting remarks, frightening phone calls, extortion, taunting, gossip, damaging or taking a student’s clothes or personal property, exclusion from a group, teasing, humiliating a student or other written, verbal, physical, or electronic actions.
5. The basis for such conduct may include, but is not limited to, a person’s actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, physical or mental ability or disability, sexual orientation, gender, sex, marital status, gender identity, socio-economic status, and familial status.
6. “Bullying” and “harassment” do not have to include the intent to harm, be directed at a specific target, or involve repeated incidents.

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Definitions (Continued)

**“Electronic communication”** means a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device, including but not limited to, a telephone, cellular phone, computer, laptop, pager, or other hand-held device, communications transmitted through email, text message, instant message, voicemail, social networking sites, webpage, video, blogs, twitter, etc.

**REPORTING**

In order for the Board to effectively enforce this policy and to take prompt corrective measures when the policy is violated, it is essential that all victims and persons with knowledge of bullying, harassment, or similar behavior report it immediately to District administrative staff.

The District will promptly investigate all complaints, whether informal or formal, verbal or written. School staff will utilize the flow charts and forms provided in the Anti-Bullying Implementation Plan and attached to this policy. All members of the school community will have access to the Bullying Complaint Forms and complaints will be treated confidentially to the extent possible but limited disclosure may be required to complete a thorough investigation. If, after investigation, the District finds that there has been a violation of this policy, prompt corrective action will be taken. Upon completion of the investigation, all responding parties will complete the Bullying Determination Forms and subsequent Conduct/Action Plan forms if deemed necessary. Where required, incidents of bullying and harassment will be reported to the State Education Department through the Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting (VADIR) system.

Any person having reasonable cause to suspect that a student has been subjected to bullying or harassment who, acting in good faith, either reports such information to school officials, to the commissioner, or to law enforcement authorities, or otherwise participates in proceedings related to such bullying or harassment, shall have immunity from any civil liability arising from making such report or participating in the related investigation.

Retaliation for reporting incidents of bullying or harassment, or for participation in a related investigation constitutes a violation of this policy. False reports or retaliation against the alleged bully or harasser also constitutes a violation of this policy. Acts of retaliation should be reported to the Administration. The District will investigate such reports and if, after investigation, the District finds that there has been a violation of this policy, prompt corrective action will be taken. Student violators of the policy may be subjected to disciplinary action in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

## **Student Harassment & Bullying Prevention and Intervention (DASA) (Continued)**

### **POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

The Superintendent of Schools shall implement regulations for reporting, investigating, and addressing allegations of harassment and discrimination.

The Board recognizes that the effective implementation of this policy requires that it be part of a District-wide educational program that shall include elements of prevention, intervention and consequences:

#### ***Prevention will include:***

- (1) training for administrators and staff to increase awareness of and sensitivity to the prevalence, causes, and consequences of bullying and harassment, and sharing strategies for preventing such behavior;
- (2) promoting student involvement in anti-bullying and anti-harassment efforts, peer support, mutual respect, and creating a culture which encourages students to report incidents of bullying and harassment, or similar behavior to an adult;
- (3) collaborating with families and the community to inform parents about the prevalence, causes, and consequences of bullying and harassment;
- (4) instruction for all students in civility, citizenship and character education, including, but not limited to, principles of honesty, tolerance, personal responsibility, respect for others, observance of laws and rules, courtesy, dignity, and awareness and sensitivity to discrimination or harassment and civility in the relations of people of different races, weights, national origins, ethnic groups, religions, religious practices, mental or physical abilities, sexual orientations, genders, and sexes.

#### ***Intervention will include:***

- (1) Training for school staff on how to respond appropriately to students who engage in bullying or harassing behavior, are victims of such behavior, and are bystanders who report such behavior;
- (2) Remedial measures designed to correct the bullying or harassing behavior, prevent another occurrence, and protect the victim;
- (3) Development of nondiscriminatory instructional and counseling methods; and
- (4) thorough training of at least one staff member at every school to handle human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, physical or mental ability or disability, sexual orientation, gender, sex, marital status, gender identity, socio-economic status, and familial status. This staff member's contact information will be included in student registration materials, student, parent, and employee handbooks, and other appropriate school publications, and will be distributed to students and staff annually at the beginning of the school year.

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Policy Implementation (Continued)

***Consequences may include:***

- (1) Discipline, including suspensions and expulsions consistent with the Student Code of Conduct and all rights under law and other applicable agreements; and
- (2) Recognition for positive behavior exhibited by students who take an active role in addressing prohibited behaviors.

Disciplinary sanctions and corrective actions will take into account the severity of incidents, frequency and duration. Furthermore, possible consequences include, but are not limited to:

- Parent notification
- Written warning
- Parent conference
- Detention
- In School Suspension (ISS)
- Exclusion from school program or activities
- Out of School Suspension (OSS)
- Expulsion
- Consequences as permitted by Board of Education policy and the Code of Conduct.
- Restoration or repayment

This policy shall be included in the code of conduct in plain language, student registration materials, student, parent and employee handbooks, and other appropriate school publications, and distributed to students and staff annually at the beginning of the school year. A summary of this policy shall be included as a part of the District's summary of the code of conduct.

Adopted:  
July 3, 2012