Merchantville Board of Education 130 South Centre Street Merchantville, NJ 08109	File Code : 5131.5 Adopted : 09/27/1988 Revised : 05/15/2023 Reviewed : 06/03/2024

Vandalism/Violence

Vandalism

The board of education views vandalism against school property by pupils as reprehensible. The causes of such misbehavior often are complex, calling for careful study by parents/guardians, school staff and appropriate community officials.

The board believes that pupils should respect property and take pride in the schools of this district. Whenever a pupil has been found to have done willful and malicious damage to property of the board the chief school administrator shall be notified. The board will hold the pupil or his/her parents/guardians liable for the damage caused by him/her.

When vandalism is discovered, the administration is directed to take such steps as are necessary to identify the vandals. If pupils have taken part in the vandalism, the appropriate administrator shall:

A. Identify the pupils involved;

B. Call together persons, including the parents/guardians, needed to study the causes;

C. Decide upon disciplinary and/or legal action possibly including suspension. Should parents/guardians fail to cooperate in the discussions, the administration may charge the pupil with being delinquent by a petition stating the offense and requesting appearance in juvenile court;

D. Take any constructive actions needed to try to guard against further such pupil misbehavior;

E. Seek appropriate restitution.

Violence

Physical violence including assault with or without a weapon, against another pupil, a staff member or board member is prohibited and will result in the disciplinary sanctions included in policies on suspension and expulsion and conduct/discipline. Disruptive behavior that is characterized by violence, even though not directed toward another person, should be reported by the classroom teacher to the school principal, unless instructed otherwise, so that possible program adjustments may be identified.

Any pupil who is convicted or adjudicated delinquent for possession of a firearm or a crime while armed with a firearm or found knowingly in possession of a firearm or any school property or on a school bus or at a school-sponsored function shall be immediately removed from the

school's regular education program for a period of not less than one calendar year. The chief school administrator may modify this suspension on a case-by-case basis. Each pupil so removed shall be placed in an alternative educational program or on home instruction and shall be entitled to a hearing before the board.

Any school employee observing or having direct knowledge from a participant or victim of an act of violence in the district public school(s) should complete the standard report form and submit it to the school guidance counselor who is responsible for preparing the official report to the chief school administrator. Staff will report accurately and not falsify information.

Two times each school year between September 1 and January 1 and between January 1 and June 30, the school board shall hold a public hearing at which the chief school administrator reports to the board of education all acts of violence, vandalism, and harassment, intimidation, or bullying (HIB) which occurred during the previous reporting period. The report shall include the number of HIB reports in the schools, the status of all investigations, the nature of the HIB, and other data required by law.

Threats of Violence

The board is committed to promoting healthy relationships and a safe learning environment. Therefore, it shall not tolerate pupil threats of harm to self or others or other threatening behaviors, including threats to damage school property. Threatening behaviors shall not be tolerated on school property or at activities under the jurisdiction of the board of education.

Pupils shall inform a teacher, guidance counselor or chief school administrator when he/she is in possession of knowledge of such threats. Staff shall immediately notify the chief school administrator of any threat or threatening behavior that he/she has knowledge of, has witnessed or received. All such threats shall be promptly reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Pupils who perpetrate threatening behaviors shall be disciplined in accordance with policy and regulations on suspension and expulsion and conduct/discipline.

Threat Assessment Team

The board shall direct the establishment of a threat assessment team(s) in each school. The purpose of the team shall be to provide school teachers, administrators, and other staff with assistance in identifying students of concern, assessing those students' risk of engaging in violence or other harmful activities. The team shall also be responsible for delivering intervention strategies to manage the risk of harm for students who pose a potential safety risk, to prevent targeted violence in the school, and ensure a safe and secure school environment that enhances the learning experience for all members of the school community.

The threat assessment team at each school shall be multidisciplinary in membership and, to the extent possible, shall include the following individuals:

A. A school psychologist, school counselor, school social worker, or other school employee with expertise in student counseling;

B. A teaching staff member;

C. A school principal or other senior school administrator;

D. A safe schools resource officer or school employee who serves as a school liaison to law enforcement; and

E. The school safety specialist designated pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:17-43.3, in the event that the school safety specialist is not already a school administrator or school employee required to be a part of the threat assessment team in accordance with this policy.

Additional school employees may serve as regular members of the threat assessment team or may be consulted during the threat assessment process, as appropriate be the team.

This policy shall be consistent with guidelines adopted by the New Jersey Department of Education and include, but not be limited to:

A. Guidance for students, teachers and all staff regarding the recognition of threating or aberrant behavior in a student that may represent a threat to the school community;

B. The designation of members of the school community to whom threatening behavior shall be reported; and

C. Appropriate actions to be taken, including available social, developmental, and law enforcement resources, for students whose behavior is identified as posing a threat to the safety of the school community.

The threat assessment team shall not disclose or disseminate any information obtained during their assessment beyond the purpose for which the information was provided to the threat assessment team, except that the team is authorized to disclose the information to applicable agencies to pursue appropriate action under paragraph C., above, for any student whose behavior is identified as posing a threat to the safety of the school community.

Classified Students

Where a student whose behavior is being assessed has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan, the threat assessment team shall consult with the IEP team or 504 team to determine whether the aberrant behavior is a threat to school safety and is being properly addressed in a manner that is required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14 and all federal and State special education laws.

Training

Each member of the threat assessment team shall participate in training provided by the school safety specialist designated pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:17-43.3, that is consistent with the guidelines developed by the New Jersey Department of Education, to ensure that the threat assessment team is able to accurately assess student behavior and to ensure that threat assessment teams do not have a disparate impact on students based on their race, ethnicity, homelessness status, religious belief, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. The training shall, at a minimum, include training on adverse childhood experiences, childhood trauma, cultural competency, and implicit bias.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed as affecting the provisions of any collective bargaining agreement or individual contract of employment in effect on the date of the policy's adoption.

Unsafe School Choice Option

The chief school administrator shall comply with all requirements of the Unsafe School Choice Option policy adopted by the state board of education for schools in districts that receive funds under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) He/she shall keep the board informed of all state requirements and actions taken to implement the policy.

Particularly, if a school in the district is designated as "persistently dangerous" as defined in the policy, corrective action plans shall be prepared and presented to the board for review. The corrective action plans shall be in the format provided by the department of education and shall describe how the schools will reduce the number of incidents of violence as determined by the School Safety Data System (SSDS).
Likewise, if a student while at school or on school grounds becomes a victim of a violent criminal offense as defined by state statute, he/she shall be offered the option of transferring to another safe school within the district.

Parents/guardians shall be informed according to law and policy.

The board shall be provided with access to a copy of the current statewide Unsafe School Choice Option Policy.

School Violence Awareness Week

This school district shall observe School Violence Awareness Week, the week beginning on the third Monday in October of each year. Organized activities focused on the prevention of school violence will be offered to students, employees and board members. Local law enforcement personnel will be invited to participate.

Violence and Vandalism Reporting

The chief school administrator will biannually submit a report utilizing the **School Safety Data System (SSDS)** accurately reporting on each incident of violence, vandalism and alcohol and other drug abuse within the school district. Any allegations of falsification of data will be reviewed by the board of education using the requirements and procedures set forth in N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.3(g). Board action shall be based on a consideration of the nature of the conduct, the circumstances under which it occurred, and the employee's prior employment record.

Implementation

The chief school administrator shall oversee the development of implementing regulations on all aspects of this policy, including the establishment of procedures for cooperation between school staff and law enforcement officials for all situations involving firearms or other deadly weapons.

Key Words

Conduct, Discipline, Pupil Conduct, Student Conduct, Vandalism, Violence

Legal References: N.J.S.A.	2A:4A-60 et al.	Disclosure of juvenile information; penalties for disclosure
N.J.S.A.	2A:53A-15	Liability of parent or guardian for willful destruction of property by infant under 18
N.J.S.A.	2C:39-5	Unlawful possession of weapons

N.J.S.A. 18A:17-46	Act of violence; report by school employee; notice of action taken; annual report,
N.J.S.A. 18A:25-2	Authority over pupils
N.J.S.A. 18A:36-5.1	School violence awareness week
N.J.S.A. 18A:37-1 et seq.	Discipline of Pupils
See particularly:	
N.J.S.A. 18A:37-2, -2.1 through -2.5, -3, -7 through -12	
N.J.S.A. 18A:37-13 et seq.	Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act
N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.8	Discipline/suspension/expulsion
N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.1 et seq.	Programs to Support Student Development
See particularly:	
N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1, -5.2, -5.3, -5.5, -5.6, -5.7, -6.1	

"H.A." v. Warren Hills Regional School District, 1976 S.L.D. 336

See also Commissioners' Decisions indexed under "Pupils – Punishment of" in Index to N.J. School Law Decisions

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Pub. L. 114-95. 20 U.S.C.A. 6301 et seq.

A Uniform State Memorandum of Agreement Between Education and Law Enforcement Officials

Unsafe School Choice Option Policy, New Jersey Department of Education, June 30, 2003

Possible Cross References:

*1120	Board of education meetings
*3250	Income from fees, fines, charges
3517	Security
4131	Staff Development, Inservice Education, Visitations, Conferences
4148	Employee protection
4248	Employee protection
*5114	Suspension and expulsion
*5119	Transfers
*5124	Reporting to parents/guardians
*5131	Conduct/discipline
5131.4	Campus disturbances
*5131.6	Drugs, alcohol, tobacco (substance abuse)
*5131.7	Weapons and dangerous instruments
*6114	Emergencies and disaster preparedness
*6172	Alternative educational programs

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.