



Northstar Middle School

Bullying and Harassment Protocol

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BACKGROUND

Northstar Middle School is committed to providing a safe, caring, and positive environment to maximize learning opportunities and experiences for all students. Every member of this school community must take personal responsibility for the emotional and physical safety of one another and the learning or school environment. It is a violation of school policy for any student to bully, harass, or intimidate another student, and it will not be tolerated.

This protocol establishes practices and procedures for handling observed and reported incidents of bullying and/or harassment. Questions about any aspect of the protocol should be addressed to the Coordinator of Bullying Prevention and Intervention (Northstar Administration)

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT DEFINITIONS

ECASD definition of **Bullying** is found in district policy [5517.01-Bullying](#). Important elements of this definition include:

- **Power:** Involves an imbalance of power (i.e. social status, popularity, influence, size, age, etc.);
- **Pain:** Unwelcome behavior that may impact a student's educational, physical, or emotional well-being, and intentional behavior using words or actions intended to cause fear, intimidation, or harm;
- **Pattern:** may be a repeated behavior or has the likelihood to be repeated.

ECASD definition of **Harassment** is found in district policy [5517-Student Anti-Harassment](#).

Harassment means any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, use of data or computer software, or written, verbal, or physical conduct directed against a student or group of students based on one or more of the student's or group of students' Protected Class that:

- places a student or group of students in reasonable fear of harm to their person or damage to their property;
- has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's or group of students' educational performance, opportunities, or benefits; or
- has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of a school.

“Harassment” also includes “hate speech” directed against a student or group of students—the use of language, behavior, or images/symbols that express prejudice against a particular group or groups on the basis of any protected characteristic(s).

SCHOOL POLICY AND PREVENTION PRACTICES

Critical to the establishment of this protocol is the development of a comprehensive bullying and harassment policy and school-wide strategies for effective prevention and intervention. Northstar Middle School practices in prevention include:

- School enforces an effective policy that:
 - Clearly defines bullying behavior, harassment and provides examples
 - Clearly establishes school rules and expectations for all members of the school community
 - Communicates rules and expectations to all students, staff and parents
 - Staff consistently enforce school rules and encourages students to take personal responsibility for creating a physically and emotionally safe learning environment
 - Provides additional instructional opportunities to address pro-social skills to prevent bullying
 - Makes age appropriate, non-punitive remediation a priority
 - Recognizes the importance of increased adult supervision in known “hotspots”
- School identifies a “Coordinator” responsible for:
 - Knowing federal and state definitions, requirements and ramifications for bullying, harassment and intimidation
 - Tracking all reported bullying incidents
 - Ensuring bullying awareness training is available to all students, staff and parents
 - Securing data about the frequencies, types and locations of bullying and harassment in the school
- School promotes a welcoming, caring, safe, and equitable culture and climate
 - School actively seeks input regarding school climate
 - School regularly surveys stakeholders about climate
 - All staff and students take personal responsibility for establishing a caring environment
 - School encourages and positively reinforces students’ reporting of bullying incidents

SCHOOL RESPONSE AND PRACTICES

School personnel must interrupt, report, and/or investigate all incidents of bullying/harassment and take appropriate action whether they personally observe incidents or learn of them by some other means. Reporting, investigation, and action must occur even if the victim does not file a formal complaint or does not express overt disapproval of the incident. Adult non-intervention establishes a climate of fear, reinforces students’ beliefs that bullying is “normal” and must be tolerated, and enables the behavior. Furthermore, non-intervention may expose the school district to potential liability.

STAFF RESPONSE PROTOCOL

- 1) INTERVENE - Staff members must intervene immediately or as quickly as reasonably possible to address the behavior.
 - a. Identify behaviors. Focus on the behavior not the person. Refer to the classroom or school rules and other PBIS behavior expectations.
 - b. Stop the behavior. Get in between target(s) and perpetrator(s) if safe to do so. Resist the temptation to dismiss the behavior as normal (“boys will be boys” and “girls will be girls”) behavior for that age.
 - c. Conference with the student(s) SEPARATELY.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Peer mediation and conflict resolution work best when both parties involved want to resolve a problem. *They are NOT recommended as bullying intervention strategies because bullying involves an abuse of power and control and these techniques may revictimize the bullying target.*

- 2) INVESTIGATE – All reports of bullying incidents should be recorded and investigated in a timely fashion – within 24 hours (when possible) of receiving the initial report.
 - a. All reports of bullying should be addressed by any District employee to whom bullying is reported or who observes actions that appear to constitute bullying. All staff should receive training to recognize what constitutes bullying and harassment under the statutory definition. If there is any doubt on the part of the employee about whether a reported or observed action constitutes “bullying” under the statutory definition, the incident should be reported to a Northstar Administration. . In that way, reports of bullying will receive the appropriate and proper attention.
 - b. The staff person responsible for investigating or who receives the report about bullying or harassing behavior should:
 - i. Use the [ECASD bullying/harassment form](#) to record details about the incident.
 - ii. Interview student(s) exhibiting bullying behavior and the target/victim(s) *separately* to avoid further victimization of the target.
 1. Engage the target/victim first:
 - a. Focus on the student’s safety.

- b. Reassure the student that the behavior will not be tolerated and that all possible steps will be taken to prevent a reoccurrence.
 - c. Ask what happened and how they feel about it. Be sure to ask questions to assess if the behavior meets the definition of bullying or harassment.
 - d. It is generally best to advise the student to walk away/ignore the behavior, use humor to dismiss it, tell the bully to stop and/or seek help from an adult. It is not advisable to suggest the victim stand up to the bully or fight back.
 - e. Involve the victim in a peer support group, or cooperative learning group or offer counseling, if needed and if appropriate.
 - f. Ask student to document any future bully/victim situations.
- 2. For the perpetrator:
 - a. Have the student identify the problem using an I statement. If they are unable to admit to a problem, say “I’ve been hearing that…” or “I have observed you…”
 - b. Ask questions and gather information. Praise honesty.
 - c. Ask “What was wrong with what you did?”
 - d. Ask “What problem were you trying to solve?” (not “Why did you do it?”)
 - e. Ask “Next time you have that problem, how will you solve it?”
 - f. Remind the student of the school rules and policies, expectations for behavior and their personal responsibility for the learning environment.
 - g. Utilize remediation measures and consequences according to the Bullying Matrix.
- iii. Submit [ECASD bullying/harassment form](#) and any interview notes to administration. The administrator will determine whether bullying may also rise to the level of harassment based on protected categories under federal and state law, such as race, color, sex, national origin, disability, religion and sexual orientation, and take appropriate action as warranted.
- iv. Take interim action to prevent bullying or retaliation during the course of the investigation.
- v. Work in collaboration with school administrators to determine remediation and consequences in cases of severe or repeated incidents. It may also be necessary to alert other teachers to the bullying behavior to ensure the safety of, and support for, the students involved.

- c. If a student reports bullying behavior to a staff member, do not dismiss it as tattling, particularly if the student reporting is trying to keep another student safe. Thank the student who made the report!
- 3) REPORT - All bullying incidents should be reported to the coordinator using the [ECASD bullying and harassment reporting form](#).
 - a. Repeated or severe incidents should be promptly referred to the school administration.
 - b. All information concerning complaints or incidents of bullying should be treated confidentially at all times. When talking with parents, teachers and administrators cannot name the other students involved and cannot indicate disciplinary measures utilized.
 - c. Inform the parents of the bully and the victim of the behavior as quickly as possible. A call home the same day is preferable, followed by an appointment at school with the parents if necessary. Early intervention is most effective before patterns of behavior are established. Invite the parents to collaborate on a solution. Do not bring the parents of the victim and the bully together.
- 4) REMEDIATION AND CONSEQUENCES - It is the responsibility of the adult staff to use violations of the school rules as opportunities to help students improve their social and emotional skills, accept personal responsibility for their learning environment, and understand consequences for poor choices and behaviors. A clear distinction exists between remediation and consequences.
 - a. Remediation, intended to counter or “remedy” a behavioral mistake, can be an effective prevention practice. Remediation measures are intended to correct the problem behavior, prevent a reoccurrence, protect and provide support for the victim and take corrective action for documented systemic problems related to bullying and harassment. Remediation measures allow the student an opportunity to reflect on behaviors, learn pro-social skills and make amends to those affected.
 - b. Consequences, tend to be punitive in nature and should be used only when appropriate and almost always in conjunction with remediation measures.

Consequences and remediation should be applied based on the Bullying and Harassment Behavior Matrix (attached) and considering a number of factors including:

Student Considerations:

- Age and developmental maturity of the students involved;
- Nature, frequency and severity of the behaviors;
- Relationships of the parties involved;
- Context in which the alleged incidents occurred;
- Patterns of past or continuing behaviors;
- Other circumstances that may play a role.

School Considerations:

- School culture, climate and general staff management of the learning environment;
- Social emotional and behavioral supports;
- Student-staff relationships and staff behavior toward the student;
- Family, community and neighborhood situation;
- Alignment with policies and procedures;

Examples of remedial measures and consequences may include, but are not limited to, the examples listed below:

Examples of Remedial Measures

Personal - Student Exhibiting Bullying Behavior

- Develop a behavioral contract with the student. Ensure the student has a voice in the outcome and can identify ways he/she can solve the problem and change behaviors.
- Meet with parents/family to develop a family agreement to:
 - Ensure parent/family/student all understand school rules and expectations
 - Explain the long-term negative consequences of bullying on all involved
 - Understand consequences if bullying behavior continues
- Meet with school counselor, social worker or psychologist to:
 - Address mental health issues – what is happening and why?
 - Develop a learning plan with consequences and skill building
 - Consider wrap-around support services
- Additional social skill training such as impulse control, anger management, developing empathy and problem solving.
- Arrange for apology – written is recommended
- Reflective essay to ensure student understands the impact of their actions on others
- Research and teach a lesson to class about bullying, empathy or similar topic (related to incident)
- Restitution – particularly if any personal items were damaged or stolen
- Restorative Practices (age appropriate)
- Follow-up conference with student

Personal – Target/Victim

- Meet with trusted staff member to:
 - Explore feelings about incident
 - Develop a plan to ensure student's emotional and physical safety at school
- Meet with guidance counselor or social worker to:
 - Ensure student does not feel responsible for behavior

- Ask student to log behaviors in the future
 - Develop skills, tools, strategies to resist bullying
- Follow-up conference with student

Parents, Family and Community

- Development of a family agreement
- Referral for family counseling
- Parent education workshops related to bullying and social emotional learning;

Environmental (Classroom, School Building)

- School and community surveys or other strategies for determining the conditions contributing the behavior
- School policy and procedures revisions
- Adoption of research based Social and Emotional Learning curriculum or more focused effort on embedding SEL in existing school curricula
- Communicate behavioral expectations with students, parents, and staff
- Modifications of student schedules, or routes traveling to/from school
- Increased supervision in known areas for behavior such as the locker room, hallways, cafeteria, school perimeter and bus
- Increased supervision of student(s) before and after school, including school transportation
- Professional Development for staff to learn effective intervention and prevention strategies
- Involvement of parent-teacher organization.

Examples of Consequences

- Conference with student
- Major ODR
- Temporary removal from the classroom
- Lunch Detention
- Parental Notification - Letter sent home to Parent(s)
- Parental Notification - Phone call to parent
- In school suspension
- Out of school suspension
- Referral to law enforcement

Possible Consequences and *Remediation* for Bullying Behavior Matrix

<u>Low Severity/Repeat Offense(s)</u> Major ODR Parental Notification In school suspension Out of school suspension <i>Apology</i> <i>Behavioral contract</i> <i>Additional pro-social skills training</i> <i>Research and instruct a lesson on bullying</i> <i>Hold meeting with parents</i> <i>Student to meet with school counselor</i>	<u>High Severity/Repeat Offenses</u> In school suspension Parental Notification Out of school suspension Legal action Report to law enforcement <i>Apology</i> <i>Behavioral contract</i> <i>Additional pro-social skills training</i> <i>Decipher mental health issues</i> <i>Restorative Practices</i> <i>Hold meeting with parents</i> <i>Student to meet with school counselor</i>
<u>Low Severity/First Offense</u> Major ODR Conference with student Parental Notification Lunch detention <i>Reflective essay</i> <i>Apology</i> <i>Additional pro-social skills training</i>	<u>High Severity/Low Offenses</u> Major ODR Parental Notification In school suspension Out of school suspension <i>Apology</i> <i>Behavioral contract</i> <i>Additional pro-social skills training</i> <i>Research and instruct a lesson on bullying</i> <i>Hold meeting with parents</i> <i>Student to meet with school counselor</i>