

<b>Students</b>	<b>Knox County Board of Education Policy</b>		
	<b>Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying or Cyber-Bullying</b>	Descriptor Code:	Issued:
		<b>J-211</b>	<b>6/05</b>
	Descriptor Term:	Reviewed:	Revised:
	<b>3/26</b>	<b>5/26</b>	

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**GENERAL**

Knox County Schools prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation, bullying and cyber-bullying.<sup>1, 3</sup> A safe and courteous environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve. Harassment, intimidation or bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a student’s ability to learn and a school’s ability to educate students in a safe and orderly environment; and since students learn by example, administrators, faculty, staff and volunteers should be positive role models in demonstrating appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying. All Knox County Schools teachers and administrative personnel are responsible for ensuring this policy is faithfully implemented in all areas under their purview or direct supervision.

“Cyber-bullying” means bullying undertaken through the use of electronic devices;

“Electronic devices” include, but are not limited to, telephones, cellular phones or other wireless telecommunication devices, personal digital assistants (PDAs), computers, electronic mail, instant messaging, text messaging, and web sites;

“Harassment, intimidation or bullying” means any act that substantially interferes with a student’s educational benefits, opportunities or performance. Conduct must be sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to create a hostile educational environment or substantially disrupt the learning process.

(A) If the act takes place on school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity, on school-provided equipment or transportation or at any official school bus stop, the act has the effect of:

- (i) Physically harming a student or damaging a student’s property;
- (ii) Knowingly placing a student or students in reasonable fear of physical harm to the student or damage to the student’s property;
- (iii) Causing emotional distress to a student or students; or
- (iv) Creating a hostile educational environment; or

(B) If the act takes place off school property or outside of a school-sponsored activity, it is directed specifically at a student or students and has the effect of creating a hostile educational environment or otherwise creating a substantial disruption to the education environment or learning process.

Other acts of violent behavior may include:

1 “Hazing,” which involves any intentional or reckless act, on or off LEA property, by one student acting  
 2 alone or with others that is directed against any other student, that endanger the mental or physical health  
 3 or safety of that student or that induces or coerces a student to endanger that student’s mental or physical  
 4 health or safety. See T.C.A. § 49-2-120.<sup>2</sup>

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 6 “Hazing” does not include customary athletic events or similar contests or competitions and is limited to  
 7 those actions taken and situations created in connection with the initiation into or affiliation with any  
 8 organization. When looking at the totality of the circumstances, harassment, bullying, cyber-bullying, or  
 9 any other disruptive or violent behavior includes conduct such as gestures, verbal, written, graphic, or  
 10 electronically transmitted acts toward a student which is based on any actual or perceived trait or  
 11 characteristic of the student and creates an educational environment that meets one or more of the  
 12 following conditions:

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- 14 • Places the student in reasonable fear or harm to the student’s person or property;
- 15 • Has substantially detrimental effect on the student’s physical or mental health;
- 16 • Has the effect of substantially interfering with the students’ academic performance; or
- 17 • Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student’s ability to participate in or benefit from
- 18 the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.
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20 All students are expected to refrain from acts of harassment, intimidation and bullying or cyber-bullying  
 21 in any form and to be aware that such disciplinary measures as are appropriately assigned in Board policy  
 22 J-191 will be utilized for the unacceptable behavior described above.

## 23 24 **PREVENTION AND TRAINING**

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 26 At the beginning of each school year, principals will provide this policy to parents and ensure that students  
 27 are aware of the expectations for their behavior under this policy. This policy shall also be posted in the  
 28 Board of Education policy page of the Knox County Schools website.

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 30 To promote and foster intergroup awareness, appreciation and understanding by students and staff of the  
 31 diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural groups represented in the school district, United States, and the world,  
 32 the Knox County Schools shall:

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- 34 1. Provide on-going professional development for staff to prevent harassment, intimidation and
- 35 bullying.
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- 37 2. Implement practices to achieve safer and less violent schools for students, teachers and
- 38 administrators through Restorative Practices, Positive Behavior Intervention Support.
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- 40 3. Endeavor to ensure that the curriculum does not promote stereotypical views of any group and
- 41 recognizes the accomplishments and contributions of all peoples.
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- 43 4. Provide a comprehensive digital citizenship training program at all levels.
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## 45 **REPORTING AND RESPONSE**

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 47 Students who feel they are being harassed, bullied or intimidated may report this concern to any teacher  
 48 or school administrator or the office of the Superintendent using any means of communication with which  
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1 they feel comfortable. Students may report anonymously, and anonymous reports will be treated with  
2 the same level of urgency as all other reports.  
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4 All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the principal or the  
5 principal's designee for investigation and appropriate action. Submission of a written incident report to  
6 the principal is required by all district employees. Oral reports will also be considered official reports.  
7 Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis  
8 of an anonymous report. Once a report is received, the principal or his or her designee must initiate an  
9 investigation within forty-eight (48) hours for student well-being unless the need for additional time is  
10 appropriately documented. An appropriate intervention must be initiated within twenty (20) calendar  
11 days from the receipt of the report unless the need for more time is appropriately documented.<sup>2</sup> Parents  
12 of all students must be immediately informed if their student is involved in an act of harassment,  
13 intimidation, bullying or cyber-bullying.  
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15 A school employee, student or volunteer who possesses reliable information that a student has  
16 electronically transmitted a credible threat to cause bodily injury or death to another student or school  
17 employee shall report such information to the Principal or other school administrator. The Principal shall,  
18 in consultation with the appropriate district administrative personnel, make a determination regarding the  
19 disposition of the report with respect to appropriate investigations and disciplinary actions.<sup>4</sup>  
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21 Bullying or cyber-bullying, which meets the definitions in (A)(i), (A)(ii), or (B) cited above, after  
22 investigation, must be reported to law enforcement for the purposes of a report and notice to the parent  
23 or legal guardian.<sup>7</sup>  
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25 Failure to report reliable information about an electronically transmitted credible threat to a student or  
26 employee may result in disciplinary action for the student or employee withholding the information. If a  
27 volunteer fails to report such information, the volunteer may be restricted from volunteering at any further  
28 school-related activities.  
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30 A school employee, student or volunteer may not engage in reprisal or retaliation against a victim of,  
31 witness to, or person with reliable information about an act of harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyber-  
32 bullying.<sup>5</sup>  
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34 No student shall be the subject of reprisal for any report of bullying, harassment and intimidation.  
35 Students found to have perpetrated acts of reprisal shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action as  
36 described in Board Policy J-190.<sup>5,6</sup>  
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38 Consequences for a student found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation  
39 or bullying range from behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, as permitted  
40 under Board Policy J-190.  
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42 The following factors will be considered in determining the appropriate response to students who commit  
43 one or more acts of harassment, intimidation, bullying or cyber-bullying:  
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- 45 1. The developmental level and maturity levels of the parties involved;
- 46 2. The levels of harm as determined by the student's ability to be educated in a safe and orderly  
47 environment;
- 48 3. The surrounding circumstances;
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- 4. The nature of the behavior(s);
- 5. Past incidences or continuing patterns of behavior;
- 6. The relationships between the parties involved; and
- 7. The context in which the alleged incidents occurred.

Consequences and appropriate remedial action for students who commit acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying may range from behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion. The appropriate action will be consistent with established Board policy, case law, and federal and state statutes.

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Legal References:

- 1. If this concerns possible or alleged civil rights violations, please refer to Board Policy J-210. T.C.A. § 49-6-4501.
- 2. T.C.A. § 49-2-120.
- 3. T.C.A. § 49-6-4503.
- 4. T.C.A. § 49-6-4504.
- 5. T.C.A. § 49-6-4505(a).
- 6. T.C.A. § 49-6-4216(a)(2)(C) and § 49-6-4505(d).
- 7. T.C.A. § 39-17-308.