

**BULLYING AND OTHER AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR
TOWARD STUDENTS**

A safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. It is the policy of the District to prohibit bullying in any form against students, and to provide a safe and nurturing educational environment.

A. Bullying Any Student Is Strictly Prohibited, Without Regard to the Bases for the Bullying Conduct.

Bullying or other aggressive behavior toward a student, whether by other students, staff, or third parties, including Board members, parents, guests, contractors, vendors, and volunteers, is strictly prohibited. This prohibition includes physical, verbal, and psychological abuse, including hazing, gestures, comments, threats, or actions to a student, which cause or threaten to cause bodily harm, reasonable fear for personal safety or personal degradation. Demonstration of appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment or bullying is expected of administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers to provide positive examples for student behavior. Bullying is equally prohibited without regard to its subject matter or motivating animus.

B. Bullying and Aggressive Behavior is Prohibited at Any School Related Activities.

This policy applies to all activities in the District, including activities on school property, in a school vehicle, and those occurring off school property if the student or employee is at any school-sponsored, school-approved or school-related activity or function, such as field trips or athletic events where students are under the school's control, or where an employee is engaged in school business. Misconduct occurring outside of school may also be disciplined if it interferes with the school environment.

C. Aggressive Behavior and Bullying Defined.

“Aggressive behavior” is defined as inappropriate conduct that is repeated enough, or serious enough, to negatively impact a student’s educational, physical, or emotional well-being. Such behavior includes, for example, bullying, hazing, stalking, intimidating, menacing, coercion, name-calling, taunting, and making threats.

“Bullying” is conduct that meets all of the following criteria:

1. is directed at one (1) or more students;
2. substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one (1) or more students; and adversely affects the ability of a student to participate in or benefit from the school district’s educational programs or activities by placing the student in reasonable fear of physical harm or by causing emotional distress.

D. Reporting Procedures.

Any student who believes s/he has been or is the victim of bullying, or other aggressive behavior should immediately report the situation to the building principal or assistant principal, or the Superintendent. The student may also report concerns to a teacher or counselor who will be responsible for notifying the appropriate administrator or Board official. Complaints against the building principal should be filed with the Superintendent. Complaints against the Superintendent should be filed with the Board President.

E. Duty to Report.

Every student is encouraged, and every staff member is required, to report any situation that they believe to be bullying or aggressive behavior directed toward a student. Reports shall be made to those identified above. Reports may be made anonymously.

F. Complaints Shall be Promptly and Thoroughly Investigated.

All complaints about bullying or aggressive behavior that may violate this policy shall be promptly and thoroughly investigated, and

documented. The investigation should be completed within three (3) school days after a report or complaint is made.

G. Consequences for Engaging in Bullying or Aggressive Behavior.

If the investigation finds an instance of bullying or aggressive behavior has occurred, it will result in prompt and appropriate remedial action. This may include up to expulsion for students, up to discharge for employees, exclusion for parents, guests, volunteers, and contractors, and removal from any official position and/or a request to resign for Board members. Individuals may also be referred to law enforcement officials.

H. Notification of Complaint.

The building principal shall ensure that the parent or legal guardian of a victim of bullying, and the parent or legal guardian of a perpetrator of the bullying, are notified of any complaint within 24 hours of the reporting. The complainant shall be notified of the findings of the investigation, and as appropriate, that remedial action has been taken.

I. Retaliation and False Reports Prohibited.

Retaliation against any person who reports, is thought to have reported, files a complaint, or otherwise participates in an investigation or inquiry concerning allegations of aggressive behavior is prohibited and will not be tolerated. Such retaliation shall be considered a serious violation of Board policy and independent of whether a complaint is substantiated. Suspected retaliation should be reported in the same manner as aggressive behavior. Making intentionally false reports about bullying or aggressive behavior for the purpose of getting someone in trouble is similarly prohibited and will not be tolerated. Retaliation and intentionally false reports may result in disciplinary action as indicated above.

J. Definitions.

The following definitions are provided for guidance only. If a student or other individual believes there has been aggressive behavior, regardless

of whether it fits a particular definition, s/he should report it and allow the administration to determine the appropriate course of action.

"Bullying" is defined as a person willfully and repeatedly exercising power or control over another with hostile or malicious intent (i.e., repeated oppression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful individual by a more powerful individual or group). Bullying can be physical, verbal, psychological, or a combination of all three. Some examples of bullying are:

- A. Physical – hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, pulling; taking and/or damaging personal belongings or extorting money, blocking or impeding student movement, unwelcome physical contact.
- B. Verbal – taunting, malicious teasing, insulting, name calling, making threats.
- C. Psychological – spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, coercion, or engaging in social exclusion/shunning, extortion, or intimidation.

"Intimidation" includes, but is not limited to, any threat or act intended to tamper, substantially damage or interfere with another's property, cause substantial inconvenience, subject another to offensive physical contact or inflict serious physical injury on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.

"Menacing" includes, but is not limited to, any act intended to place a school employee, student, or third party in fear of imminent serious physical injury.

adjacent to school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity, on school-provided transportation or at any official school bus stop.

"Staff" includes all school employees and Board members.

"Third parties" include, but are not limited to, coaches, school volunteers, parents, school visitors, service contractors, vendors, or others engaged in District business, and others not directly subject to school control at inter-district or intra-district athletic competitions or other school events.

For a definition and instances that could possibly be construed as hazing, see Policy 5516.

K. Confidentiality.

To the extent appropriate and/or legally permitted, confidentiality will be maintained during the investigation process. However, a proper investigation will, in some circumstances, require the disclosure of names and allegations.

L. Posting of this Policy.

Notice of this policy will be **annually** circulated to all students and staff and posted in conspicuous locations in all school buildings and departments within the District and discussed with students, as well as incorporated into the teacher, student, and parent/guardian handbooks. All new hires will be required to review and sign off on this policy and the related complaint procedure. The Superintendent is directed to develop administrative guidelines to implement this policy. Guidelines shall include reporting and investigative procedures, as needed. The complaint procedure established by the Superintendent shall be followed.

M. Free Speech and Complaints that this Policy is Not Being Followed.

This policy is not intended to and should not be interpreted to interfere with legitimate free speech rights of any individual. However, the District reserves the right and responsibility to maintain a safe environment for students, conducive to learning and other legitimate objectives of the school program. All complaints alleging that this policy has not been followed shall be made to the Building Principal, who shall immediately so inform the Superintendent and Board President. The Building Principal or his/her designee shall be responsible for promptly

and thoroughly investigating the complaint of policy non-compliance, unless otherwise directed by the Superintendent.

N. Reporting of Verified Incidents.

Any prohibited incident, and all verified incidents of bullying and the resulting consequences (including disciplinary referrals) shall be reported on an annual basis to the Board of Education at its June meeting.

Policies on Bullying, Michigan State Board of Education, 7-19-01
Model Anti-Bullying Policy, Michigan State Board of Education, 9-12-06

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