

5517.01 - BULLYING and OTHER AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR TOWARD STUDENTS
MCL § 380.1310b (*Matt's Safe School Law, H.B. 4163, Public Act 241 of 2011*)

It is the policy of the District to provide a safe and nurturing educational environment for all of its students.

This policy is intended to protect all students from bullying/aggressive behavior, including cyberbullying, regardless of the subject matter or motivation for such impermissible behavior.

Bullying or other aggressive behavior toward a student, whether by other students, staff, or third parties within the school community, including Board members, parents, guests, contractors, vendors, and volunteers, is strictly prohibited. This prohibition includes written, 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 bullying is expected of administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers to provide positive examples for student behavior.

This policy applies to all "at school" activities in the District, including activities on school property, in a school vehicle, and those occurring off school property if the student is attending 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.

Bullying or other aggressive behavior toward a student, including cyberbullying, that is not initiated at a location described above, or using a device or service owned by or under the control of the District, is, nevertheless, covered by this policy if the incident could likely lead to a material or substantial disruption of the school learning environment for one or more students and/or the orderly day-to-day operations of any school or school program.

NOTIFICATION

Notice of this policy will be **annually** circulated to and posted in conspicuous locations in all school buildings and departments within the District and discussed with students, as well as incorporated into the staff, and student/parent/guardian handbooks. This policy will also be posted on the District's website.

Parents or legal guardians of the alleged victim(s), as well as of the alleged aggressor(s), shall be promptly notified of any complaint or investigation as well as the results of the investigation to the extent consistent with student confidentiality requirements. A record of the time and form of notice or attempts at notice shall be kept in the investigation file.

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. Further, the appropriate authorities may be notified, depending on the nature of the complaint and/or the results of the investigation.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Superintendent is responsible to implement this policy, and may develop further guidelines, not inconsistent with this policy.

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.

PROCEDURE

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 Principal or assistant principal. 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.

Every student is encouraged, and every staff member is required, to report any situation that they believe to be bullying or other aggressive behavior directed toward a student. Reports shall be made to those identified above. Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

The Principal (or other administrator as designated) shall promptly investigate and document all complaints about bullying, aggressive or other behavior that may violate this policy. The investigation must be completed as promptly as the circumstances permit.

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 or other appropriate officials.

The individual responsible for conducting the investigation shall document all reported incidents and report all verified incidents of bullying, aggressive or other prohibited behavior, as well as any remedial action taken, including disciplinary actions and referrals, to the Superintendent. The Superintendent shall submit a compiled report to the Board on an annual basis.

In instances where bullying or other aggressive behavior is believed to be based on race, color, national origin, sex or disability, a complaint should also be filed with the School District's designated Compliance Officer. The School District will, then, in addition to the above, follow its policies and practices for investigating claims of discrimination.

NON-RETALIATION/FALSE REPORTS

Retaliation or false allegations against any person who reports, is thought to have reported, files a complaint, participates in an investigation or inquiry concerning allegations of bullying or aggressive behavior (as a witness or otherwise), or is the target of the bullying or aggressive behavior being investigated, is prohibited and will not be tolerated. Such retaliation shall be considered a serious violation of Board policy, independent of whether a complaint of bullying is substantiated. Suspected retaliation should be reported in the same manner as bullying/aggressive behavior.

Making intentionally false reports about bullying/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.

PREVENTION/TRAINING

The District shall support programs involving school staff, students, clubs or other student groups, administrators, volunteers, parents, law enforcement, community members, and other stakeholders, aimed at the prevention of bullying or other aggressive behavior.

The District shall provide administrators, school employees, contracted employees and volunteers who have significant contact with students training on preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying and other aggressive behavior.

The District shall provide all students annual training on preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying, cyber bullying and other aggressive behavior.

The District shall provide all parents/legal guardians annual training on preventing, identifying, responding to and reporting incidents of bullying, cyber bullying and other aggressive behavior.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are provided for guidance only. If a student or other individual believes there has been bullying or other aggressive behavior, regardless of whether it fits a particular definition, s/he should report it immediately and allow the administration to determine the appropriate course of action.

“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, intimidation, menacing, coercion, name-calling, taunting, making threats and hitting / pushing / shoving.

“At School” is defined as in a classroom, elsewhere on school premises, on a school bus or other school related vehicle, or at a school-sponsored activity or event whether or not it is held on school premises, or an other activity with a connection to the school day. It also includes conduct using a telecommunications access device or telecommunications service provider that occurs off school premises if either owned by or under the control of the District.

“Bullying/Cyberbullying” is defined as any gesture or written, verbal, graphic, or physical act (including electronically transmitted acts – i.e. computer, Internet, telephone or cell phone, personal digital assistant (PDA), or wireless hand-held device, currently in use or later developed and used by students)

communication, that is intended or that a reasonable person would know is likely to harm one (1) or more students either directly or indirectly by doing any of the following:

- A. substantially interfering with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one (1) or more students;
- B. adversely affecting 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 substantial emotional distress;
- C. having an actual and substantial detrimental effect on a student's physical or mental health; and/or
- D. causing substantial disruption in, or substantial interference with, the orderly operation of the school.

Bullying/Cyberbullying 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. This may occur in a number of different ways, including but not limited to notes, emails, social media postings and graffiti.

“**District**” is the Center for Literacy & Creativity PSA.

“**Harassment**” includes, but is not limited to, any act which subjects an individual or group to unwanted, abusive behavior of a nonverbal, verbal, written or physical nature, often on the basis of age, race, religion, color, national origin, marital status or disability, but may also include sexual orientation, physical characteristics (e.g., height, weight, complexion), cultural background, socioeconomic status, or geographic location (e.g., from rival school, different state, rural area, city, etc.).

“**Intimidation/Menacing**” includes, but is not limited to, any threat or act intended to: place a person in fear of physical injury or offensive physical contact; to substantially damage or interfere with a person's property; or to intentionally interfere with or block a person's movement without good reason.

“**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 other engaged in District business, and others not directly subject to school control at inter-district or intra-district athletic competitions or other school events.

References:

MCL § 380.1310b (*Matt's Safe School Law, H.B. 4163, Public Act 241 of 2011*)
Policies on Bullying, Michigan State Board of Education
Model Anti-Bullying Policy, Michigan State Board of Education

