

HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

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The Board of Education is committed to providing a safe and positive teaching and learning environment. The Board recognizes that students' ability to learn and to meet high academic standards, and a school's ability to educate its students, are compromised by incidents of harassment or discrimination. The Board, therefore, condemns and strictly prohibits all forms of harassment and discrimination on school grounds, school buses and at all school-sponsored activities, programs and events, whether on or off school grounds. Behaviors that take place at locations outside the district that materially and substantially disrupt the educational process of the school environment or impinge on the rights of other students are prohibited, and may be subject to disciplinary consequences.

Definition of Harassment and Discrimination

For purposes of this policy, the term harassment shall mean the creation of a hostile environment by conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being; or conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety, or to cause or reasonably be expected to cause damage or loss to a student's property. Such conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse shall include bullying behavior in the form of taunting or intimidation that is intentional and repeated in nature and has or would have the effect of interfering with a student's ability to attend school and/or to be educated in a safe, non-hostile environment.

The creation of such hostile environment includes, but is not limited to, all above-described conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that occurs through the use of technology, such as email messages, instant messages, text messages, blogs, chat rooms, social networking, pagers, cell phones, and gaming systems, including the posting or forwarding of sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude photos through such technology, and has or would have the effect of interfering with a student's ability to attend school and/or to be educated in a safe, non-hostile environment.

For purposes of this policy, the term discrimination shall mean harassment based on a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender (identity and expression) and sex.

Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Coordinator

The Board shall designate at its annual organizational meeting, a Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Coordinator who shall be trained in accordance with state requirements to successfully implement this policy. Such training shall include human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender (identity and expression) and sex.

The Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Coordinator shall be responsible for coordinating and enforcing this policy and regulations in each school building, including but not limited to coordinating:

- The work of the building-level committees;
- Professional development for staff members;
- The complaint process; and
- Management of the Dignity for All Students Act's civility curriculum components.

Training

In order to implement an effective harassment and discrimination prevention and intervention program, the Superintendent, the Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Coordinator and the district Professional Development Team shall incorporate appropriate and required training in the annual professional development plan. Training opportunities will be provided for all staff, including but not limited to bus drivers, cafeteria and hall monitors and all staff who have contact with students. The Superintendent shall ensure that at least one staff member is thoroughly trained in human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender and sex.

Through district-wide professional development and instruction, staff and students will be educated as to the warning signs of harassment and discrimination, as well as to their responsibility to become actively involved in the prevention of harassment and discrimination. The components of a prevention program include:

- Learning about and identifying the early warning signs and precursor behaviors that may lead to harassment and discrimination.
- Establishing clear school wide and classroom rules about harassment and discrimination.
- Training adults in the school to prevent and respond sensitively and consistently to harassment and discrimination.
- Raising parental awareness and involvement in addressing problems.
- Providing instruction in civility, citizenship and character education that emphasizes tolerance and respect for others.

Reporting and Investigation

In order for the district to appropriately address harassment and discrimination in the schools, it is of utmost importance that staff and students report incidents of harassment and discrimination. Students who have been subjected to harassment, bullying behavior or discrimination, parents of those students, or other students who observe such behavior are encouraged and expected to make a verbal and/or written complaint to any school personnel in accordance with the training and guidelines provided. All complaints will be documented, tracked and handled in accordance with the regulations and procedures accompanying this policy and other applicable district policy (Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination or Sexual Harassment or Code of Conduct) and laws.

There shall be a duty for all school personnel to report any incidents of student-to-student and staff-to-student harassment and discrimination that they observe, or of which they are made aware, to their building principal or other administrator who supervises their employment. Supervisors will refer the information to appropriate district staff for investigation, as designated in regulations.

The results of an investigation will be reported both to the target and the accused in accordance with the regulations. If either of the parties disagrees with the results of the investigation, they can appeal the findings in accordance with regulations.

- **Disciplinary Consequences/Remediation**

While the focus of this policy is on prevention, harassment and discrimination acts may still occur. In these cases, offenders will be given the clear message that their actions are wrong and the behavior must improve. Offenders will receive in-school guidance in making positive choices in their relationships with others. If appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken by the administration in accordance with the district's Code of Conduct, as applicable. If the behavior rises to the level of criminal activity, law enforcement will be contacted. Consequences for committing an act or acts of harassment and discrimination shall be determined on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the district Code of Conduct. The consequences will vary in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors.

- **Non-Retaliation**

All complainants and those who participate in the initiation or investigation of a complaint in conformity with state law and district policies, who have acted reasonably and in good faith, have the right to be free from retaliation of any kind.

Dissemination, Monitoring, Review and Reporting

This policy, or a plain language summary, shall be published in student registration materials, student, parent and employee handbooks, and posted on the district's website. A harassment and discrimination complaint form will be developed and will be available on the district's website.

Each year, as part of the annual review of the Code of Conduct, this policy will be reviewed to assess its effectiveness and compliance with state and federal law. If changes are needed, revisions will be recommended to the Board for its consideration.

The Superintendent of Schools shall establish regulations to facilitate implementation of this policy.