

# District Policy & Regulations

## BOARD OF EDUCATION COLUMBUS SCHOOL DISTRICT

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### BULLYING

The Columbus School District strives to provide a safe, secure and respectful learning environment for all students in school buildings, on school grounds, in school buses and at school-sponsored activities. Bullying has a harmful social, physical, psychological and academic impact on victims and bystanders as well as the person who is bullying. The school district consistently and vigorously addresses bullying so that there is no disruption to the learning environment and learning process.

#### Definition

1. Bullying is deliberate or intentional behavior using words or actions.
2. Bullying is intended to cause fear, intimidation, or some type of negative outcome or harm to the victim.
3. Bullying usually is repeated behavior that occurs over a span of time, though in some cases, one serious incident may be considered bullying.
4. Bullying involves an imbalance of power that may be physical or social.
5. Bullying behavior may be motivated by an actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic, such as, but not limited to: age; national origin; race; ethnicity; religion; gender; gender identity; sexual orientation; physical attributes; physical or mental ability or disability; and social, economic or family status.

#### Bullying behavior can be:

- Physical (e.g. assault, hitting or punching, kicking, theft, threatening behavior)
- Verbal (e.g. threatening or intimidating language, teasing or name-calling, racist remarks)
- Indirect (e.g. spreading cruel rumors, intimidation through gestures, social exclusion and sending insulting messages or pictures by mobile phone or using the internet . also known as cyber bullying)

Bullying behavior will be addressed by the school district if one or more of the following conditions exist:

- Bullying occurs at a school-sponsored activity or function.
- Bullying occurs with the aid of school-owned equipment or materials, e.g., computers.
- Bullying occurs outside of a school-sponsored activity or function but has a disruptive effect on the learning environment.

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### **Prohibition**

Bullying behavior is prohibited in all schools, buildings, property and educational environments, including any property or vehicle owned, leased or used by the school district. This includes public transportation regularly used by students to go to and from school. Educational environments include, but are not limited to, every activity under school supervision.

### **Prevention of Bullying Behavior**

Each building will have in place a universal program of bullying prevention. At a minimum, this will include curriculum and/or school-wide programs designed to improve school climate. The designated curriculum and/or program will be one that is listed on the National Registry of Evidence Based Programs and Practices. ([www.nrepp.samhsa.gov](http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov))

### **Procedure for Reporting/Retaliation**

Students and staff shall be informed of the reporting process at the beginning of each school year during building or homeroom meetings.

All school staff members and school officials who observe or become aware of possible acts of bullying are required to report these acts electronically. Referrals are made to the Building Principal who assigns a person to investigate the complaint. The following people may investigate a report of bullying: Building Principals, Director of Student Services, School Counselors, School Psychologists, School Social Workers, School Nurse or Dean of Students. Generally, school staff who have been involved in interventions with either the victim or the perpetrator of bullying behavior will not be assigned to investigate a reported incident.

Any other person, including a student, parent or community member who is either a victim of bullying or is aware of bullying is encouraged to report the conduct to any school staff member. School staff will, in turn, report the conduct via the District's electronic report system.

Student, parent or community reports of bullying may be made verbally or in writing and may be made confidentially. All such reports, whether verbal or in writing, will be taken seriously and a clear account of the incident is to be documented.

There shall be no retaliation against individuals making such reports. Individuals engaging in retaliatory behavior will be subject to disciplinary action.

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### **Procedure for investigating reports of bullying**

The person assigned by the District to conduct an investigation of the bullying report shall, within one school day, interview the person(s) who are the victim(s) of the bullying and collect whatever other information is necessary to determine the facts and the seriousness of the report.

Parents and/or guardians of each pupil involved in the bullying will be notified prior to the conclusion of the investigation. The district shall maintain the confidentiality of the report and any related pupil records to the extent required by law.

The investigator of the report will make a written record of the report that will be forwarded to the District's Discrimination and Harassment Officer

### **Sanctions and supports**

If it is determined that students participated in bullying behavior or retaliated against anyone due to the reporting of bullying behavior, the school district administration and school board may take disciplinary action, including but not limited to: suspension, expulsion and/or referral to law enforcement officials for possible legal action as appropriate.

In addition to sanctions for bullying behavior, behavioral and/or emotional interventions for the perpetrator of the behavior will be developed. This will occur within two weeks of the completion of the Investigative report. Interventions will be developed by a team of people, including at least one Pupil Service staff and the student's parent or guardian. This may include school based interventions and/or referrals to outside agencies.

Care will be taken to alleviate the effects of bullying behavior for the victim. This may include, but is not limited to, school-base counseling, school-based interventions, social supports, environmental alterations either for the victim or the perpetrator, and/or referrals to outside agencies.

If both the victim and perpetrator agree, Restorative Practices will be used to establish a relationship that is conducive to learning in the school environment.

### **Disclosure and Public Reporting**

The policy will be distributed annually to all students enrolled in the school district, their parents and/or guardians and employees. It will also be distributed to organizations in the community having cooperative agreements with the schools. The school district will also provide a copy of the policy to any person who requests it.

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Records will be maintained on the number and types of reports made, and sanctions imposed for incidents found to be in violation of the bullying policy.

An annual summary report shall be prepared and presented to the school board in Executive Limitation-14: Student Discipline report. The annual report will be available to the public.

Adopted: 08/10/10