

Dearborn Public Schools- Bylaws & Policies

5517.01 - BULLYING AND OTHER AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR TOWARD STUDENTS

It is the policy of the District to provide a safe and nurturing educational environment for all of its students. This policy applies to all activities on school property and to all school sponsored activities whether on or off school property.

Bullying or other aggressive behavior toward a student, whether by other students, staff, or third parties, including but not limited to Board members, parents, guests, contractors, vendors, and volunteers, is strictly prohibited. This prohibition includes, but is not limited to written, electronic, 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.

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.

Bullying is defined as any written, verbal or physical act or electronic 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:

- A. substantially interfering with educational opportunities;
- B. affecting participation in programs or activities by placing the student in reasonable fear of physical harm or emotional distress;
- C. having an actual or substantial detrimental effect on a student's physical or mental health; or
- D. causing substantial disruption with the orderly operation of the school.

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 but is not limited to: for example, bullying, hazing, stalking, intimidating, menacing, coercion, name-calling, taunting, and making threats.

Any student who believes s/he has been or is the victim of bullying, hazing, or other aggressive behavior should immediately report the situation to the building principal or assistant principal who are responsible for the investigation of such incidents. 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 appropriate Executive Director of Student Achievement. Complaints against the Executive Director of Student Achievement should be filed with the Superintendent. Complaints against the Superintendent or board member should be filed with the Board President. Complaints against the board president should be filed with another member of the Board.

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 any student. All students are protected under this policy and bullying is equally prohibited without regard to its subject matter or motivating animus. 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 any anonymous report confidentially and the reporter's confidentiality will be safeguarded by the administrator receiving the report unless disclosure is required by law.

All complaints alleging bullying or aggressive behavior that may violate this policy shall be promptly investigated and documented by the building principal or designee.

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 but is not limited up to: expulsion for students, up to discharge for employees, exclusion for parents, guests, volunteers, and contractors, and removal from any officer position and/or a request to resign for Board members. Individuals may also be referred to law enforcement officials.

The parent(s) of the student responsible for the bullying behavior as well as the parent(s) of the victim of the bullying behavior shall be notified of the findings of the investigation, and as appropriate, that remedial action has been taken.

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 bullying or 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 bullying or 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.

The following definitions are provided for guidance only. If a student or other individual believes there has been bullying or 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, cyberbullying, or a combination of all three four. 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.
- D. Cyberbullying – bullying through the use of electronic technology. Examples include: text messaging, emails, postings to social media, posting of embarrassing pictures, videos or websites, or fake profiles.

"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, sexual orientation, physical characteristics, cultural background, socioeconomic status, or geographic location.

"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.

"Harassment, intimidation, menacing, or bullying" means any act that substantially interferes with a student's educational benefits, opportunities, or performance, that takes place on or immediately 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.

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.

School Responsibilities

Each building principal is responsible to ensure that his/her school:

- A. holds three (3) anti-bullying events including a fall kick-off each year;
- B. forms adult and student anti-bullying committees;
- C. teaches the district Response to Bullying Behavior curriculum;
- D. holds annual parent anti-bullying training;
- E. tracks incidents of bullying behavior.

Notification

Notice of this policy will be posted on the District website, as well as posted in conspicuous locations in all school buildings and discussed with students as part of the adopted Dearborn Response to Bullying Behavior curriculum. State and Federal rights posters on discrimination and harassment shall also be posted in each building. All Dearborn staff having any contact with students will be required to participate in annual anti-bullying professional development on how to prevent, identify, respond to and report bullying behavior. All new hires will be required to receive training and to review and sign off on this policy. Each school will hold annual anti-bullying training for parents.

Each school principal shall be responsible for tracking incidents of bullying. Summary data regarding incidents of bullying shall be reported annually to the Board of Education.

The elementary and secondary associate superintendents as well as the building principals are responsible for this policy's implementation.

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.

Policies on Bullying, Michigan State Board of Education

Model Anti-Bullying Policy, Michigan State Board of Education

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