

**Policy 5131.2: Bullying**

**Status:** ADOPTED

**Original Adopted Date:** 06/12/2019 | **Last Revised Date:** 01/16/2020 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 01/16/2020

The Board of Trustees recognizes the harmful effects of bullying on student well-being, student learning, and school attendance and desires to provide a safe school environment that protects students from physical and emotional harm. No individual or group shall, through physical, written, verbal, visual, or other means, harass, sexually harass, threaten, intimidate, cyberbully, cause bodily injury to, or commit hate violence against any student or school personnel, or retaliate against them for filing a complaint or participating in the complaint resolution process.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop strategies for addressing bullying in district schools with the involvement of students, parents/guardians, and staff. As appropriate, the Superintendent or designee may also collaborate with social services, mental health services, law enforcement, courts, and other agencies and community organizations in the development and implementation of effective strategies to promote safety in schools and the community.

Such strategies shall be incorporated into the comprehensive safety plan and, to the extent possible, into the local control and accountability plan and other applicable district and school plans.

Any complaint of bullying shall be investigated and, if determined to be discriminatory, resolved in accordance with law and the district's uniform complaint procedures specified in AR 1312.3. If, during the investigation, it is determined that a complaint is about nondiscriminatory bullying, the principal or designee shall inform the complainant and shall take all necessary actions to resolve the complaint.

If the Superintendent or designee believes it is in the best interest of a student who has been the victim of an act of bullying, as defined in Education Code 48900, the Superintendent or designee shall advise the student's parents/guardians that the student may transfer to another school. If the parents/guardians of a student who has been the victim of an act of bullying requests a transfer for the student pursuant to Education Code 46600, the Superintendent or designee shall allow the transfer in accordance with law and district policy on intradistrict or interdistrict transfer, as applicable.

Any employee who permits or engages in bullying or retaliation related to bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

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**Examples of Prohibited Conduct**

Bullying is an aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived imbalance of power between individuals with the intent to cause emotional or physical harm. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or social/relational and may involve a single severe act or repetition or potential repetition of a deliberate act. Bullying includes, but is not limited to, any act described in Education Code 48900(r).

Cyberbullying includes the electronic creation or transmission of harassing communications, direct threats, or other harmful texts, sounds, or images. Cyberbullying also includes breaking into another person's electronic account or assuming that person's online identity in order to damage that person's reputation.

Examples of the types of conduct that may constitute bullying and are prohibited by the district include, but are not limited to:

1. **Physical bullying:** An act that inflicts harm upon a person's body or possessions, such as hitting, kicking, pinching, spitting, tripping, pushing, taking or breaking someone's possessions, or making cruel or rude hand gestures
2. **Verbal bullying:** An act that includes saying or writing hurtful things, such as teasing, name-calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting, or threats to cause harm
3. **Social/relational bullying:** An act that harms a person's reputation or relationships, such as leaving a person out of an activity on purpose, influencing others not to be friends with someone, spreading rumors, or embarrassing someone in public
4. **Cyberbullying:** An act such as sending demeaning or hateful text messages or emails, spreading rumors by email or by posting on social networking sites, or posting or sharing embarrassing photos, videos, web site, or fake profiles

**Measures to Prevent Bullying**

The Superintendent or designee shall implement measures to prevent bullying in district schools, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Ensuring that each school establishes clear rules for student conduct and implements strategies to promote a positive, collaborative school climate
2. Providing information to students, through student handbooks, district and school web sites and social media, and other age-appropriate means, about district and school rules related to bullying, mechanisms available for reporting incidents or threats, and the consequences for engaging in bullying
3. Encouraging students to notify school staff when they are being bullied or when they suspect that another student is being bullied, and providing means by which students may report threats or incidents confidentially and anonymously
4. Conducting an assessment of bullying incidents at each school and, if necessary, increasing supervision and security in areas where bullying most often occurs, such as playgrounds, hallways, restrooms, and cafeterias
5. Annually notifying district employees that, pursuant to Education Code 234.1, any school staff who witnesses an act of bullying against a student has a responsibility to immediately intervene to stop the incident when it is safe to do so

**Staff Development**

The Superintendent or designee shall annually make available to all certificated staff and to other employees who have regular interaction with students the California Department of Education (CDE) online training module on the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the identification of bullying and cyberbullying and the

implementation of strategies to address bullying. (Education Code 32283.5)

The Superintendent or designee shall provide training to teachers and other school staff to raise their awareness about the legal obligation of the district and its employees to prevent discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying of district students. Such training shall be designed to provide staff with the skills to:

1. Discuss the diversity of the student body and school community, including their varying immigration experiences
2. Discuss bullying prevention strategies with students, and teach students to recognize the behavior and characteristics of bullying perpetrators and victims
3. Identify the signs of bullying or harassing behavior
4. Take immediate corrective action when bullying is observed
5. Report incidents to the appropriate authorities, including law enforcement in instances of criminal behavior

### **Information and Resources**

The Superintendent or designee shall post on the district's web site, in a prominent location and in a manner that is easily accessible to students and parents/guardians, information on bullying and harassment prevention which includes the following: (Education Code 234.6)

1. The district's policy on student suicide prevention, including a reference to the policy's age appropriateness for students in grades K-6
2. The definition of sex discrimination and harassment as described in Education Code 230, including the rights set forth in Education Code 221.8
3. Title IX information included on the district's web site pursuant to Education Code 221.61, and a link to the Title IX information included on CDE's web site pursuant to Education Code 221.6
4. District policies on student sexual harassment, prevention and response to hate violence, discrimination, harassment, intimidation, bullying, and cyberbullying
5. A section on social media bullying that includes all of the references described in Education Code 234.6 as possible forums for social media
6. A link to statewide resources, including community-based organizations, compiled by CDE pursuant to Education Code 234.5.
7. Any additional information the Superintendent or designee deems important for preventing bullying and harassment

### **Student Instruction**

As appropriate, the district shall provide students with instruction, in the classroom or other educational settings, that promotes social-emotional learning, effective communication and conflict resolution skills, character development, respect for cultural and individual differences, self-esteem development, assertiveness skills, and appropriate online behavior.

The district shall also educate students about the negative impact of bullying, discrimination, intimidation, and harassment based on actual or perceived immigration status, religious beliefs and customs, or any other individual bias or prejudice.

Students should be taught the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, how to advocate for themselves, how to help another student who is being bullied, and when to seek assistance from a trusted adult. As role models for students, staff shall be expected to demonstrate effective problem-solving and anger management skills.

To discourage cyberbullying, teachers may advise students to be cautious about sharing passwords, personal data, or

private photos online and to consider the consequences of making negative comments about others online.

### **Reporting and Filing of Complaints**

Any student, parent/guardian, or other individual who believes that a student has been subjected to bullying or who has witnessed bullying may report the incident to a teacher, the principal, a compliance officer, or any other available school employee.

When a report of bullying is submitted, the principal or a district compliance officer shall inform the student or parent/guardian of the right to file a formal written complaint in accordance with AR 1312.3 - Uniform Complaint Procedures. The student who is the alleged victim of the bullying shall be given an opportunity to describe the incident, identify witnesses who may have relevant information, and provide other evidence of bullying.

Within one business day of receiving such a report, a staff member shall notify the principal of the report, whether or not a uniform complaint is filed. In addition, any school employee who observes an incident of bullying involving a student shall, within one business day, report such observation to the principal or a district compliance officer, whether or not the alleged victim files a complaint.

Within two business days of receiving a report of bullying, the principal shall notify the district compliance officer identified in AR 1312.3.

When the circumstances involve cyberbullying, individuals with information about the activity shall be encouraged to save and print any electronic or digital messages that they feel constitute cyberbullying and to notify a teacher, the principal, or other employee so that the matter may be investigated. When a student uses a social networking site or service to bully or harass another student, the Superintendent or designee may file a request with the networking site or service to suspend the privileges of the student and to have the material removed.

### **Discipline/Corrective Actions**

Corrective actions for a student who commits an act of bullying of any type may include counseling, behavioral intervention and education, and, if the behavior is severe or pervasive as defined in Education Code 48900, may include suspension or expulsion in accordance with district policies and regulations.

When appropriate based on the severity or pervasiveness of the bullying, the Superintendent or designee shall notify the parents/guardians of victims and perpetrators and may contact law enforcement.

### **Support Services**

The Superintendent, principal, or principal's designee may refer a victim, witness, perpetrator, or other student affected by an act of bullying to a school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, child welfare attendance personnel, school nurse, or other school support service personnel for case management, counseling, and/or participation in a restorative justice program as appropriate. (Education Code 48900.9)

If any student involved in bullying exhibits warning signs of suicidal thought or intention or of intent to harm another person, the Superintendent or designee shall, as appropriate, implement district intervention protocols which may include, but are not limited to, referral to district or community mental health services, other health professionals, and/or law enforcement.

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