

ANTI-BULLYING/HARASSMENT POLICY

Harassment and bullying of students and employees/volunteers are against federal, state and local policy, and are not tolerated by the board. The board is committed to providing all students, employees and volunteers with a safe and civil school environment in which all members of the school community are treated with dignity and respect. To that end, the board has in place policies, procedures, and practices that are designed to reduce and eliminate bullying and harassment as well as processes and procedures to deal with incidents of bullying and harassment. Bullying and harassment of students by other students, by school employees, and by volunteers who have direct contact with students will not be tolerated in the school or school district.

The board prohibits harassment, bullying, hazing, or any other victimization, of students, based on any of the following actual or perceived traits or characteristics, including but not limited to, age, color, creed, national origin, race, religion, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, political party preference, political belief, socioeconomic status, or familial status. Harassment against employees/volunteers based upon the employee's/volunteer's race, color, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, age or disability is also prohibited.

This policy is in effect while students or employees/volunteers are on property within the jurisdiction of the board: while on school-owned or school-operated vehicles; while attending or engaged in school-sponsored activities; and while away from school grounds if the misconduct directly affects the good order, efficient management and welfare of the school or school district.

If, after an investigation, a student is found to be in violation of this policy, the student shall be disciplined by appropriate measures which may include suspension or expulsion. If after an investigation a school employee is found to be in violation of this policy, the employee shall be disciplined by appropriate measures which may include termination. If after an investigation a school volunteer is found to be in violation of this policy, the volunteer shall be subject to appropriate measures which may include exclusion from school grounds. "Volunteer" means an individual who has regular, significant contact with students.

When looking at the totality of the circumstances harassment and bullying mean any electronic, written, verbal, or physical act or conduct toward a student, employee or volunteer which is based on any actual or perceived trait or characteristic of the student, employee or volunteer and which creates an objectively hostile school environment that meets one or more of the following conditions:

- Places the student, employee or volunteer in reasonable fear of harm to the student's, employee's or volunteer's person or property;
- Has a substantially detrimental effect on the student's, employee's or volunteer's physical or mental health;
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's academic performance; or employee's or volunteer's job.
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's, employee's or volunteer's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

"Electronic" means any communication involving the transmission of information by wire, radio, optical cable, electromagnetic, or other similar means. "Electronic" includes but is not limited to communication via electronic mail, internet-based communications, pager service, cell phones, electronic text messaging or similar technologies.

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Harassment and bullying may include, but are not limited to, the following behaviors and circumstances:

- Repeated remarks of a demeaning nature
- Implied or explicit threats concerning one's grades, achievements, property, etc.
- Demeaning jokes, stories, or activities directed at the student or employee/volunteer and/or
- Unreasonable interference with a student's, employee's or volunteer's performance

Sexual harassment means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to the conduct is made either implicitly or explicitly a term or condition of the student's education or benefits; or the employee/volunteer's job.
- Submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as the basis for academic decisions affecting that student; or job decisions of the employee/volunteer;
- The conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with the student's academic performance or the employee's/volunteer's job performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive education environment.

In situations between students, or employees/volunteers and school officials, faculty, staff, or volunteers who have direct contact with students, or employees/volunteers bullying and harassment may also include the following behaviors:

- Requiring that a student submit to bullying or harassment by another student, or employees/volunteers either explicitly or implicitly, as a term or condition of the targeted student's education or participation in school programs or activities; and/or the employee's/volunteer's job
- Requiring submission to or rejection of such conduct as a basis for decisions affecting the student or employee/volunteer.

Any person who promptly, reasonably, and in good faith reports an incident of bullying or harassment under this policy to a school official, shall be immune from civil or criminal liability relating to such report and to the person's participation in any administrative, judicial, or other proceeding relating to the report. Individuals who knowingly file a false complaint may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

Retaliation against any person, because the person has filed a bullying or harassment complaint or assisted or participated in a harassment investigation or proceeding, is also prohibited. Individuals who knowingly file false harassment complaints and any person who gives false statements in an investigation shall be subject to discipline by appropriate measures, as shall any person who is found to have retaliated against another in violation of this policy. Any student found to have retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, suspension and expulsion. Any school employee found to have retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, termination of employment. Any school volunteer found to have retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, exclusion from school grounds.

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The school or school district will promptly and reasonably investigate allegations of bullying or harassment. The **Equity/affirmative action coordinator** or designee will be responsible for handling all unresolved complaints by students and employees/volunteers alleging bullying or harassment.

It also is the responsibility of the superintendent, in conjunction with the investigator and principals, to develop procedures regarding this policy. The superintendent also is responsible for organizing training programs for students, school officials, faculty, staff, and volunteers who have direct contact with students. The training will include how to recognize harassment and what to do in case a student is harassed. It will also include proven effective harassment prevention strategies. The superintendent will also develop a process for evaluating the effectiveness of the policy in reducing bullying and harassment.

The board will annually publish this policy. The policy may be publicized by the following means:

- Inclusion in the student handbook,
- Inclusion in the employee handbook
- Inclusion on the school or school district's web site.

and a copy shall be made to any person at the Building Principal offices.

Date of Adoption: August 14, 2007

Date of Revision: November 27, 2007

ANTI-BULLYING/HARASSMENT INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES

Individuals who feel that they have been harassed should:

- Communicate to the harasser that the individual expects the behavior to stop, if the individual is comfortable doing so. If the individual wants assistance communicating with the harasser, the individual should ask a teacher, counselor or principal to help.
- If the harassment does not stop, or the individual does not feel comfortable confronting the harasser, the individual should:
 - tell a teacher, counselor or principal; and
 - write down exactly what happened, keep a copy and give another copy to the teacher, counselor or principal including;
 - what, when and where it happened;
 - who was involved;
 - exactly what was said or what the harasser did;
 - witnesses to the harassment;
 - what the student said or did, either at the time or later;
 - how the student felt; and
 - how the harasser responded.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

An individual who believes that the individual has an unresolved harassment or bullying situation will notify Mary Jo Den Hartog, the designated investigator. The investigator may request that the individual complete the Harassment/Bullying Complaint form and turn over evidence of the harassment, including, but not limited to, letters, tapes, or pictures. The complainant shall be given a copy of the completed complaint form. Information received during the investigation is kept confidential to the extent possible.

The investigator, with the approval of the superintendent, or the superintendent has the authority to initiate an investigation in the absence of a written complaint.

INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE

The investigator will reasonably and promptly commence the investigation upon receipt of the complaint. The investigator will interview the complainant and the alleged harasser. The alleged harasser may file a written statement in response to the complaint. The investigator may also interview witnesses as deemed appropriate.

Upon completion of the investigation, the investigator will make written findings and conclusions as to each allegation of harassment and report the findings and conclusions to the superintendent. The investigator will provide a copy of the findings of the investigation to the superintendent.

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RESOLUTION OF THE COMPLAINT

Following receipt of the investigator's report, the superintendent may investigate further, if deemed necessary, and make a determination of any appropriate additional steps which may include discipline.

Prior to the determination of the appropriate remedial action, the superintendent may, at his/her discretion, interview the complainant and the alleged harasser. The supervisor will file a written report closing the case and documenting any disciplinary action taken or any other action taken in response to the complaint. The complainant, the alleged harasser and the investigator will receive notice as to the conclusion of the investigation. The superintendent will maintain a log of information necessary to comply with Iowa Department of Education reporting procedures.

POINTS TO REMEMBER IN THE INVESTIGATION

- Evidence uncovered in the investigation is confidential.
- Complaints must be taken seriously and investigated.
- No retaliation will be taken against individuals involved in the investigation process.
- Retaliators will be disciplined up to and including suspension and expulsion.

CONFLICTS

If the investigator is a witness to the incident, the alternate investigator shall be appointed by the superintendent.