

Abraxas Naperville Bridge

Preventing Bullying, Intimidation and Harassment of Students

Bullying, intimidation, and harassment diminish a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate. Preventing students from engaging in these disruptive behaviors and providing all students equal access to a safe, non-hostile learning environment are important school goals.

Bullying on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, military status, unfavorable discharge status from military service, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender-related identity or expression, ancestry, age, religion, physical or mental disability, order of protection status, status of being homeless, or actual or potential marital or parental status, including pregnancy, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic is prohibited in each of the following situations:

1. During any school sponsored education program or activity.
2. While in school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, or at school sponsored or school sanctioned events or activities.
3. Through the transmission of information from a school computer, a school computer network, or other similar electronic school equipment.
4. Through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed at a non-school-related location, activity, function, or program or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the school if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of a school.

Definitions from Section 27-23.7 of the School Code (105 ILCS 5/27-23.7)

Bullying includes *cyber-bullying* and means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act of conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

1. Placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property.
2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health.
3. Substantially interfering with the student's academic performance or.
4. Substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

Cyber-bullying means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photo-electronic system, or photo-optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. *Cyber-bullying* includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying. *Cyber-bullying* also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of *bullying*.

Restorative measures mean a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, that: (i) are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community,

(ii) contribute to maintaining school safety, (iii) protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, (iv) teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, (v) serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, (vi) reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school.

School personnel means persons employed by, on contract with, or who volunteer in a school, including without limitation school administrators, teachers, school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, administrative assistants, custodians, and bus drivers.

The Principal shall develop and maintain a bullying prevention and response plan that advances the schools goal of providing all students with a safe learning environment free of bullying and harassment. This plan must be consistent with the requirements listed below; each numbered requirement, 1-12, corresponds with the same number in the list of required policy components in 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7 (b) 1-12.

1. The school uses the definition of *bullying* as provided in this policy.
2. Bullying is contrary to State law and the policy of this school. However, nothing in the school's bullying prevention and response plan is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution or under Section 3 or Article I of the Illinois Constitution.
3. Students are encouraged to immediately report bullying. A report may be made orally or in writing to the School Complaint Manager or any staff member with whom the students is comfortable speaking. Anyone, including staff members and parents/guardians, who has information about actual or threatened bullying is encouraged to report it to the School Complaint Manager or any staff member. Anonymous reports are also accepted.

Complaint Manager:

Dr. James Shellard

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4. Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, the Principal or designee shall promptly inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) of every student involved in an alleged incident of bullying and discuss, as appropriate, the availability of counseling services, other interventions, and restorative measures.
5. The Principal or designee shall promptly investigate and address reports of bullying, by, among other things:
 - a. Making all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 school days after the date the report of a bullying incident was received and taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported bullying incident.
 - b. Involving appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.
 - c. Notifying the Building Principal or school administrator or designee of the reported incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report if received.

- d. Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, providing parents/guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and as opportunity to meet with the Building Principal or school administrator of his or her designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.

The Principal or designee shall investigate whether a reported incident of bullying is within the permissible scope of the School's jurisdiction and shall require that the School provide the victim with information regarding services that are available within the School and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs.

6. The Principal or designee shall use interventions to address bullying, that may include, but are not limited to, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, and community-based services.
7. A reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying **is prohibited**. A student's act of reprisal or retaliation will be treated as *bullying* for purposes of determining any consequence or other appropriate remedial actions.
8. A student will not be punished for reporting bullying or supplying information, even if the School's investigation concludes that no bullying occurred. However, knowingly making a false accusation or providing knowingly false information will be treated as bullying for purposes of determining any consequences or other appropriate remedial actions.
9. The School's bullying prevention and response plan must be based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents/guardians.
10. The Principal or designee shall assist the School with its evaluation and assessment of this policy's outcomes and effectiveness. This process shall include, without limitation:
 - a. The frequency of victimization;
 - b. Student, staff, and family observations or safety at a school;
 - c. Identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs;
 - d. The types of bullying utilized; and
 - e. Bystander intervention or participation.
 - f. The cognitive and social emotional abilities of the parties involved.

The evaluation process may use relevant data and information that the School already collects for other purposes. The Principal or designee must post the information developed as a result of the policy evaluation on the School's website, or if a website is not available, the information must be provided to school administrators, School members, school personnel, parents/guardians, and students.

12. The Principal or designee shall fully implement the School policies, including without limitation, the following:
 - a. *Uniform Grievance Procedure*. A student may use this policy to complain about bullying.
 - b. *Curriculum Content*. Bullying prevention and character instruction is provided in all grades in accordance with State law.

- c. *Student Social and Emotional Development.* Student social and emotional development is incorporated into the School's educational program as required by State law.
- d. *Access to Electronic Networks.* This policy states that the use of the School's electronic networks is limited to: (1) support of education and/or research, or (2) a legitimate business use.
- e. *Harassment of Students Prohibited.* This policy prohibits *any* person from harassing, intimidating, or bullying a student based on an identified actual or perceived characteristic
- f. *Restrictions on Publications.* This policy prohibits students from and provides consequences for: (1) accessing and/or distributing at school any written, printed, or electronic material, including material from the Internet, that will cause substantial disruption of the proper and orderly operation and discipline of the school or school activities, and (2) creating and/or distributing written, printed, or electronic material, including photographic material and blogs, that causes substantial disruption to school operations or interferes with the rights of other students or staff members.
- g. *Distribution* Meridian North will communicate this policy on bullying to its students and their parent or guardian on an annual basis.

Full implementation of the above policies includes each school's adoption of formal Bullying/Harassment Investigation Procedures requiring: (a) a prompt and thorough investigation of alleged incidents of bullying, intimidation, harassing behavior, or similar conduct, (b) a determination by a preponderance of the evidence that bullying or harassment has occurred; (c) the provision of appropriate consequences and remedial action to students who violate on or more of these policies,(d) protection of students against retaliation for reporting such conduct, and (e) notification of all involved parties the outcome of the School's investigation. Such notification must be consistent with the requirements of the Illinois School Student Records Act.

- 13. Encourages all members of the school community, including students, parents/guardians, volunteers and visitors, to report alleged acts of bullying, intimidation, harassment, and other acts of actual or threatened violence.

LEGAL REF.: 405 ILCS 49/, Children's Mental Health Act.
 105 ILCS 5/10-20.14, 5/24-24, and 5/27-23.7.
 23 Ill.Admin.Code §§1.240 and §1.280.