

Students cannot be expected to reach their full academic potential in an environment of fear and intimidation. All schools in the DeKalb County School District have an obligation to provide a safe, healthy, and positive learning environment for their students and to promote mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance among students, staff, and volunteers.

**A. Prohibited Behaviors**

The District expressly prohibits the bullying, harassing, or intimidating of any student, by any means or method, at school, on school property, or at school-related functions; while traveling to or from school on a school bus; off-campus when the behavior results in a disruption to the school environment; or by use of data or software that is accessed through a District computer, computer system, computer network, or other electronic technology of the District.

Examples of prohibited behaviors include but are not limited to:

- ❖ Verbal assaults such as unwanted teasing or name-calling;
- ❖ Threats, taunts and intimidation through words and/or gestures;
- ❖ Direct physical contact such as hitting or shoving;
- ❖ Physical violence and/or attacks;
- ❖ Destruction of school or personal property;
- ❖ Any form of electronic bullying or cyberbullying using school equipment, school networks, or e-mail systems or committed at school;
- ❖ Theft of money and/or personal possessions for the purpose of bullying, harassing, or intimidating;
- ❖ Harassment or intimidation motivated by any actual or perceived characteristic including race, color, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ancestry, national origin, physical attributes, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability or disability, or by any other distinguishing characteristic;
- ❖ Public humiliation;
- ❖ Social isolation;
- ❖ Extortion or manipulation, including incitement and/or coercion;
- ❖ Rumors or spreading of falsehoods;
- ❖ Stalking;
- ❖ Cyberstalking or engaging in conduct to communicate, or to cause to be communicated, words, images, or language by or through the use of electronic mail or electronic communication, directed at or about a specific person, causing substantial emotional distress to the victim;
- ❖ Cyberbullying or the willful, hostile and repeated harassment and intimidation of a person through the use of digital technologies, including, but not limited to, email, blogs, social networking websites (*e.g.*, MySpace, Facebook, etc.), chat rooms, texts, and instant messaging;

- ❖ The use of cameras or camera phones to take embarrassing photographs of students or school employees and distributing them to others or posting them online;
- ❖ Sending abusive or threatening text messages or instant messages; and
- ❖ Using websites to circulate gossip and rumors to other students.

All staff, students, and parents or guardians will receive a summary of this policy prohibiting bullying at the beginning of the school year as part of the Student Code of Conduct.

## **B. Reporting Incidents of Bullying**

Bullying may be reported by a student, parent, guardian, or other stakeholder to an administrator, teacher, counselor, or other staff member at the student's school. At the option of the person reporting the incident, the report may be made either by name or anonymously and either verbally or in writing. Reports of bullying also may be made by using the District's complaint procedures or by calling the Georgia Department of Education's School Safety Hotline at 1-877 SAY-STOP (1-877-729-7867).

Any employee to whom bullying is reported must promptly document the report and forward it to the principal or designee. Any employee who witnesses an incident of bullying or who otherwise learns that a student is being bullied must promptly submit a written report to the principal or designee. The principal or designee shall ensure that proper documentation is maintained throughout the investigation and resolution of the matter.

If the reporting student or the parent or guardian of the student feels that the school is not taking appropriate steps to investigate or address the problem even after consulting the school principal, the student or the parent or guardian should contact the Superintendent or his or her designee.

Students who believe that another student at their school is being bullied are urged to inform a teacher, counselor, administrator or other staff member.

The District prohibits retaliation against any person who reports bullying or participates in an investigation of bullying. Schools shall keep reports of bullying confidential to the extent consistent with a thorough investigation.

An employee who fails to comply with the requirements of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to including termination of employment.

## **C. Responding to Incidents of Bullying**

School staff are expected to intervene immediately when they see a bullying incident occur or upon receipt of any report of bullying. The following actions will be taken when bullying is reported:

### **1. Investigation**

Upon receipt of any report of bullying, the principal or designee will direct an immediate investigation involving appropriate personnel. The investigation should begin no later than the

following school day. The investigation shall include interviewing the alleged perpetrator(s), victim(s), identified witnesses, teacher(s), and staff members and reviewing video surveillance, if available. School police, school counselors, school social workers, and other support staff should be utilized for their expertise as determined by the circumstances of the matter. The school shall keep confidential the results of the investigation.

## **2. Notification**

At an appropriate time during or after the investigation, the parent or guardian of both the accused and the victim must be notified. If the incident involves an injury or similar situation, appropriate medical attention should be provided, and the parent or guardian should be notified immediately.

## **3. Disciplinary Action**

Upon a finding of guilt, a student who has committed the offense of bullying should be given an age-appropriate consequence which shall include, at minimum and without limitation, disciplinary action or counseling as appropriate under the circumstances.

Disciplinary action after the first incident of bullying may include but is not limited to the following:

- Loss of a privilege
- Reassignment of seats in the classroom, cafeteria, or school bus
- Reassignment of classes
- Detention
- In-school suspension
- Out-of-school suspension (through appropriate due process hearing)
- Expulsion (through appropriate due process hearing)
- Assignment to an alternative school (through appropriate due process hearing)

Students in grades six through twelve found to have committed the offense of bullying for the third time in a school year shall at a minimum be assigned to an alternative school through appropriate due process by disciplinary hearing officers, panels, or tribunals.

Schools should clearly communicate to all parties that retaliation following a report of bullying is strictly prohibited and may result in strong disciplinary action.

## **4. Follow Up**

Follow up is important to the accused and the victim. Each school must implement a planned method to provide after-care and follow up and to reiterate to the school community the previously stated prohibition on retaliation. If necessary, counseling and other interventions should also be provided to address the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic needs of students who are victims of bullying and students who commit an offense of bullying.