

SUBJECT: BULLYING AND HAZING

Bullying and hazing are abusive and illegal behaviors that harm victims and negatively impact the school environment by creating an atmosphere of fear, distrust, and mean-spiritedness. The Board of Education is committed to providing an educational and working environment that promotes respect, dignity and equality.

Therefore, bullying and hazing activities of any type committed by students, staff, volunteer, or contracted employee on school grounds, school buses, and/or at all school sponsored activities, programs, and events, including those that take place at locations outside the district, are strictly prohibited and shall not be tolerated.

Definitions

Bullying: For purposes of this policy, the term “bullying” is defined as “a variety of negative acts carried out repeatedly over time. It involves a real or perceived imbalance of power, with a more powerful child or group attacking those who are less powerful.” Bullying generally manifests in three forms:

- a) Physical (including, but not limited to, hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, taking personal belongings or money);
- b) Verbal or Written (including, but not limited to, taunting, malicious teasing, name calling, making threats); and
- c) Psychological (including, but not limited to, spreading rumors; manipulating social relationships; or engaging in social exclusion, extortion, or intimidation).

Bullying may also occur as various forms of harassment and/or hazing of students by other students (including “pledging” and/or a student's initiation into or affiliation with a school or student related organization or team). See definition of Hazing below.

The district also prohibits “Internet bullying” (a.k.a. “cyber-bullying”) including the use of instant messaging, e-mail, web sites, chat rooms, and text messaging when such use interferes with the operation of the school; or infringes upon the general health, safety and welfare of district students or employees.

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However, it is important to note that a single negative act as enumerated above may also constitute "bullying" (if not more serious misconduct) based upon the particular circumstances such as the seriousness of the act and/or the intent of the actor.

Hazing: For purposes of this policy and its implementation, "hazing" means intentionally or recklessly committing an act against a student, or coercing a student into committing an act, that creates a substantial risk of harm (physical, emotional, sexual or otherwise) to a person, in order for the student to be initiated into or affiliated with a student organization, whether school sponsored or not, or for any other purpose. Hazing occurs whether or not any harm actually occurs. Hazing also occurs whether the participants are willing or coerced

Hazing may include, but is not limited to, physical acts such as whipping or beating; sexual violation, simulation or assault; sleep deprivation, exposure to extreme weather conditions or other acts which adversely affect the mental or physical health or safety of the student; activities such as the consumption of alcohol, drugs, or food or other substances which subject the student to an unreasonable risk of harm; assignment or pranks or other destructive or criminal acts; or any activity that intimidates or threatens the student with ostracism, embarrassment, shame or humiliation.

Reporting and Investigation

In order for the Board to effectively enforce this policy and to take prompt corrective measures, it is essential that all victims of bullying/hazing and persons with knowledge or belief of conduct which may constitute bullying/hazing report the alleged acts immediately to a staff member. Staff members receiving a report of bullying/hazing shall report the incident to the Building Principal. Employees, including coaches, volunteers and contract employees, must report any incidents they observe, and where appropriate, intervene to stop such activities.

The district will promptly investigate all complaints of bullying/hazing in accordance with regulation 0110-R, Harassment Regulation. To the extent possible, all complaints will be treated in a confidential manner. Limited disclosure may be necessary to complete a thorough investigation. Written reports shall be prepared for the Superintendent of Schools.

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If, after appropriate investigation, the district finds that a student, an employee or a third party has violated this policy, prompt corrective action will be taken in accordance with the applicable collective bargaining agreement, district policy and state law. Disciplinary consequences will be sufficiently severe to deter violations and to appropriately discipline prohibited behavior. If the alleged behavior constitutes or may constitute a crime, the police authorities or any other appropriate agency shall be immediately notified.

Prohibition of Retaliation

The Board prohibits any retaliatory behavior directed towards any person who reports an act of bullying/hazing as well as against anyone who participates in the investigation of a complaint of bullying/hazing.

False Accusations

Students who knowingly make false accusations against another individual as to allegations of hazing may also face appropriate disciplinary actions.

Publication, Prevention and Training

This policy shall be published in student, parent, and employee handbooks, the district Code of Conduct and other appropriate school publications as directed by the Superintendent of Schools.

Prevention and intervention techniques within the District to prevent against bullying behavior and to support and protect victims shall include building-level and classroom-level strategies and activities as determined by administration. Individual intervention will be provided by appropriate staff members to bullies, victims, and their parents to help ensure that the bullying stops.

In addition, each Principal, athletic coach, and other extracurricular activity advisors shall inform his or her students about this policy at the beginning of each school year and/or start of the group/team, and prior to each subsequent team or group's activities for the year.

Cross-ref: 6121, Harassment
6121-R, Harassment Regulation

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Students

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3410, Code of Conduct
7315, Bullying, Peer Abuse in Schools
3413, Hazing

Ref: Penal Law §§120.16; 120.17

Adopted: 7/26/06