

STUDENT BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

In furtherance of the Board's policy regarding student bullying prevention and intervention, the District shall require prevention and intervention strategies, as described below, based on building data, for school staff to address bullying behaviors. These interventions will be on a continuum, ranging from those aimed at prevention to those interventions that address more serious bullying behavior on a case-by-case basis.

The District's "prevention and intervention strategies" referenced above include, but are not limited to:

1. Including prohibitions and guidance concerning bullying in the District's Behavior Response Plan;
2. Implementation of a positive behavioral intervention and support process or another evidence-based model approach for safe school climate or for the prevention of bullying, including any such programs identified by the State Department of Education;
3. A school survey to determine the prevalence of bullying, which will take place during the second or third quarter of each school year and a summary of which will be made available to a District office designee; and
4. Establishment of a Safe & Healthy Schools Committee for each school site (K-12) as mandated by the School Safety and Bullying Prevention Act. The Safe & Healthy Schools Committee will consist of at least ten (10) members and shall be composed of teachers, parents of enrolled students, students, and a school official who participates in the investigation of reports of bullying. Each Safe & Healthy Schools Committee has the responsibility of studying and making recommendations regarding unsafe conditions, strategies for students to avoid harm at school, student victimization, crime prevention, school violence, and other issues which interfere with and adversely affect school safety. With respect to student bullying, each Committee shall assist the Board in promoting a positive school climate. The Committee will study the District's policy and currently accepted bullying prevention programs (available on the State Department of Education website) to make recommendations regarding bullying. These recommendations must be submitted to the principal and cover: (i) needed staff development, including how to recognize and avoid bullying; (ii) increasing student and community involvement in addressing bullying, (iii) improving individual student-staff communication, (iv) implementing problem solving teams which include counselors and/or school psychologists, and (v) utilizing behavioral health resources.
5. The development, posting, and enforcement of rules at each school site that prohibit bullying and establish appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts, as defined by District policy;

6. The consistent provision of adult supervision at each school site of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur;
7. Inclusion of grade-appropriate, research-based bullying prevention curricula in pre-kindergarten through high school grades, as compiled by the State Department of Education and which is reported annually using a fidelity checklist to submit to Safe & Healthy Schools Committee members;
8. Training school personnel to be sensitive to the interpersonal dynamics of bullying behavior so that they recognize the need to protect all students from reprisal, retaliation and false accusations.
9. The participation of all employees directly involved with student services in annual bullying awareness/intervention training and suicide prevention training;
10. The participation of all new employees directly involved with student services in bullying awareness/intervention training and suicide prevention training before reporting to their new positions;
11. Individual interventions for students who engaged in confirmed bullying behavior and against whom bullying behavior has been confirmed, the parents or guardians of those students, and involved school staff members;
12. School-wide training related to the provision of a safe school climate;
13. The promotion of parent involvement in bullying prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings and individual interventions, which may include discussion panels, Safe & Healthy Schools Committee, PTSA, parent involvement facilitators and the like.

As the terms are used in the District's policy and this regulation, the following definitions apply.

DEFINITIONS:

- A. "Bullying" means any pattern of harassment, intimidation, threatening behavior, physical acts, verbal or electronic communication directed toward a student or group of students that results in or is reasonable perceived as being done with intent to cause negative educational or physical results for the targeted individual or group and is communicated in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school's education mission or the education of any student.

According to experts in the field, bullying in general is the exploitation of a less powerful person by an individual taking unfair advantage of that person, which is repeated over time, and which inflicts a negative effect on the victim. The seriousness of a bullying act depends on the harm inflicted upon the victim and the frequency of the offensive acts. Power may be but is not limited to physical strength, social skill, verbal ability, or other characteristics. Bullying acts by students have been described in several different categories:

“Physical bullying” may include harm or threatened harm to another’s body or property, including but not limited to, what would reasonably be foreseen as a serious expression of intent to inflict physical harm or property damage through verbal or written speech or gestures directed at the student-victim, when considering the factual circumstances in which the threat was made and the reaction of the intended victim. Common acts include tripping, hitting, pushing, pinching, pulling hair, kicking, biting, starting fights, daring others to fight, stealing or destroying property, extortion, assaults with a weapon, other violent acts, and homicide.

“Emotional bullying” may include the intentional infliction of harm to another’s self-esteem, including but not limited to insulting or profane remarks, insulting or profane gestures, or harassing and frightening statements, when such events are considered in light of the surrounding facts, the history of the students involved, and age, maturity, and special characteristics of the students.

“Social bullying” may include harm to another’s group acceptance, including but not limited to, harm resulting from intentionally gossiping about another student or intentionally spreading negative rumors about another student that result in the victim being excluded from a school activity or student group; the intentional planning and/or implementation of acts or statements that inflict public humiliation upon a student; the intentional undermining of current relationships of the victim-student through the spreading of untrue gossip or rumors designed to humiliate or embarrass the student; the use of gossip, rumors or humiliating acts designed to deprive the student of awards, recognition or involvement in school activities; the false or malicious spreading of an untrue statement or statements about another student that exposes the victim to contempt or ridicule or deprives the victim of the confidence and respect of student peers; or the making of false statements to others that the student has committed a crime, or has an infectious, contagious, or loathsome disease, or similar egregious representations.

“Sexual bullying” may include harm to another resulting from, but not limited to, making unwelcome sexual comments, about the student, making vulgar, profane, or lewd comments or drawings or graffiti about the victim; directing vulgar, profane, or lewd gestures toward the victim; committing physical acts of a sexual nature at school, including the fondling or touching of private parts of the victim’s body; participation in the gossiping or spreading of false rumors about the student’s sexual life; written or verbal statements directed at the victim that would reasonably be interpreted as a serious threat to force the victim to commit sexual acts or to sexually assault the victim when considering the factual circumstances in which the threat was made and the reaction of the intended victim; off-campus dating violence by a student that adversely affects the victim’s school performance or behavior, attendance, participation in school functions or extracurricular activities, or makes the victim fearful at school of the assaulting bully; or the commission of sexual assault, rape, or homicide. Such conduct may also constitute sexual harassment — also prohibited by the district.

- B. “Threatening behavior” means any pattern of behavior or isolated action, whether or not it is directed at another person, that a reasonable person would believe indicates potential for future harm to students, school personnel or school property.

- C. "Electronic communication" means the communication of any written, verbal, pictorial information or video content by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, a mobile or cellular telephone or other wireless telecommunication device or a computer. Electronic communications include, but are not limited to, communications made through weblogs and social media forums. Bullying by electronic communication is prohibited whether or not such communication originated at school, or with school equipment, if the communication is specifically directed at students or school personnel and concerns bullying at school.
- D. The term "at school" means on school grounds, in school vehicles, at school-sponsored activities or at school-sanctioned events.
- E. In determining what a "reasonable person" should recognize as bullying, staff will consider the point of view of the intended target, including any characteristics unique to the intended target. Staff may also consider the disciplinary history and physical characteristics of the alleged bully.
- F. "Good faith" is a state of mind consisting in honesty in belief or purpose or faithfulness to one's duty or obligation.
- G. The term "discriminatory harassment, intimidation and retaliation" is defined by the District pursuant to TPS Board Policy 4901 as harassment, intimidation, and retaliation targeted toward an individual because of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identification, age, national origin, marital status, veteran status, disability or genetic information.