

SCHOOL COMMITTEE POLICY

Policy #84

Anti-Bullying Policy

Commitment

The Medway Public School district is committed to providing our students a safe learning environment that is free from bullying. This will be possible when all members of the Medway school community treat each other with respect. This policy is an integral part of the Medway Public Schools' comprehensive effort to promote learning and eliminate all forms of violent, harmful, and disruptive behavior. All students require this support to achieve their personal and academic potential.

Medway Public Schools will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including bullying, in our schools or during school-related activities. All reports of bullying will be promptly investigated by Medway Public Schools. Medway Public Schools' response to bullying actions will include, when appropriate, referral to a law enforcement agency. Medway Public Schools will support this policy in all aspects of its activities, including its curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities and parental involvement.

Definition of Bullying

The definition of "perpetrator", as defined by M.G.L. c. 71, 37O, Sections 72 – 74 of Chapter 38 of the Acts of 2013, includes a student or a member of a school staff, including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional.

Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students of written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture, or other direct or indirect behavior that is repetitive, or any combination thereof, directed at a target that has the effect of:

- causing physical or emotional harm, or of damage to his/her property;
- placing a target in reasonable fear of harm or of damage to his/her property;
- creating an unwelcoming or hostile environment at school for another person;
- infringing on the rights of another person at school; or

- materially and substantially disrupting the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Cyberbullying is the repeated use by one or more students of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, 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
- photoelectronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.

Cyberbullying shall also include the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates another person as author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Cyberbullying shall also include 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 conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Bullying and cyberbullying may occur in and out of school, during and after school hours, at home and in locations outside of the home. When bullying and cyberbullying are alleged, the full cooperation and assistance of parents and families are expected.

For the purpose of this policy, whenever the term bullying is used it is to denote either bullying or cyberbullying.

Bullying Prohibited

Bullying is prohibited on school grounds, athletic/playing fields, at school-sponsored or school-related activities, functions or programs whether on or off school grounds, at school bus stops, on school buses or other vehicles owned, leased or used by the district, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school district.

Bullying and cyberbullying are also prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the district, if the act or acts in question create a hostile environment at school for the victim, infringe upon the rights of the victim at school, and/or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

The Medway School Committee expects administrators to make clear to students and staff members that bullying will not be tolerated and will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including suspension and expulsion for students, and termination for employees. All staff members are required to report any bullying they see or learn about. The district will promptly and reasonably investigate all allegations of bullying. Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, who provides information during an investigation of bullying, or who is a witness to or has reliable information about bullying, is prohibited.

Guidelines and Implementation

The superintendent will develop administrative guidelines and procedures for implementation of this policy, including:

- a student complaint process;
- a reporting process for staff;
- an investigation process;
- an anonymous reporting process;
- a process for communication with parents/guardians; and
- record-keeping and reporting.

The superintendent will publish disciplinary protocols in student handbooks and on the district website, which shall prohibit bullying and shall include the bullying prevention and intervention plan required by Chapter 71 Section 37 of the Laws of the Commonwealth. Student handbooks shall include age-appropriate summaries of the student-related sections of the district's bullying prevention and intervention plan.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

The school district shall develop and update, at least biennially, a bullying prevention and intervention plan, in consultation with school staff members,

students, parents and community members. The bullying prevention plan shall:

- include descriptions of and statements prohibiting bullying, cyberbullying and retaliation;
- establish clear procedures for students and staff members to report bullying and/or retaliation;
- include a provision that reports of bullying and/or retaliation may be made anonymously provided that no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report;
- establish clear procedures for promptly responding to and investigating reports of bullying or retaliation;
- identify the range of disciplinary actions that may be taken against a perpetrator for bullying or retaliation;
- establish clear procedures for restoring a sense of safety for a victim and assessing that student's needs for protection;
- establish strategies for protecting from bullying or retaliation a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation or is witness to or has reliable information about an act of bullying;
- establish procedures for promptly notifying the parents or guardians of a victim and a perpetrator, for notifying the parents or guardians of a victim of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying, and for notifying local law enforcement officials where criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator;
- include a provision that a student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action;
- include a strategy for providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for perpetrators and victims and for appropriate family members of the students; and
- comports with the requirements of this policy, as well as state and federal laws.

Programs

The school district will implement an anti-bullying program as a required part of the curriculum at each grade level. It will be based in age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention using evidence-based curricula.

Furthermore, the district will provide instruction on civil and ethical behavior at each grade level and hold students and adults responsible for behaving with respect toward one and other at all times.

Professional Development

The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall include annual professional development of all members of the school staff to build the skills to prevent, identify and respond to bullying and to implement the bullying prevention and intervention plan. The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to:

- developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents;
- developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
- information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among the perpetrator, the victim and any witnesses to the bullying;
- research findings on bullying;
- information on the incidence and nature of cyberbullying;
- Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying; and
- legal issues and responsibilities related to bullying.

Parent/Guardian Education

The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall include provisions for educating parents and guardians about the bullying prevention curriculum at each school, how they can reinforce the curriculum at home, how they can support the district's prevention and intervention plan, the dynamics of bullying and online safety and cyberbullying.

The district shall provide to students and their parents or guardians in age-appropriate terms and in the most prevalent languages of families, annual written notice of relevant sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan in the student handbooks and on the district website.

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