

REGION TWO SCHOOL OF APPLIED TECHNOLOGY

File: JICK

BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING PREVENTION

A. INTRODUCTION

It is the goal of Region Two for our school to be a safe and secure learning environment for all students. It is the intent of the Cooperative Board to provide all students with an equitable opportunity to learn. To that end, the Cooperative Board has a significant interest in providing a safe, orderly, and respectful school environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.

Bullying and other forms of peer mistreatment are detrimental to the Region Two environment as well as student learning, achievement and well-being. Peer mistreatment interferes with the mission of Region Two to educate their students and disrupts the operations of the school. Bullying and other forms of peer mistreatment affect not only the students who are targets, but also those who participate in and witness such behavior. These behaviors must be addressed to ensure student safety and an inclusive learning environment.

It is not the Cooperative Board's intent to prohibit students from expressing their ideas, including ideas that may offend the sensibilities of others, or from engaging in civil debate. However, the Cooperative Board does not condone and will take action in response to conduct that interferes with students' opportunity to learn, the educational mission of Region Two, and the operation of the school.

B. PROHIBITED BEHAVIOR

The following behaviors are prohibited:

1. Bullying;
2. Cyberbullying;
3. Harassment and Sexual Harassment (as defined in policy ACAA);
4. Retaliation against those reporting such defined behaviors; and
5. Making knowingly false accusation of bullying behavior.

Any person who engages in any of these prohibited behaviors that constitutes bullying shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary actions.

C. BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING DEFINED

"Bullying" and "Cyberbullying" have the same meaning in this policy as in Maine law:

- A. "Bullying" includes, but is not limited to, a written, oral or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof directed at a student or students that:
1. Has, or a reasonable person would expect it to have, the effect of:
 - a. Physically harming a student or damaging a student's property; or
 - b. Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical harm or damage to the student's property;

OR

2. Interferes with the rights of a student by:
 - c. Creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment for the student; or
 - d. Interfering with the student's academic performance or ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities or privileges provided by Region Two;

OR

3. Is based on a student's actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, physical or mental disability, gender, sexual orientation, or any other distinguishing characteristic, or is based on a student's association with a person with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics, and that has the effect described in subparagraph (1) or (2) above. (These behaviors might also meet the criteria for harassment as defined in policy ACAA: Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students).

Examples of conduct that may constitute bullying include, but are not limited to:

1. Repeated or pervasive taunting, name-calling, belittling, mocking, put-downs, or demeaning humor;
2. Behavior that is likely to harm someone by damaging or manipulating his or her relationships with others, including but not limited to gossip, spreading rumors, or social exclusion;

3. Non-verbal threats and/or intimidations such as use of aggressive, menacing, or disrespectful gestures;
4. Threats of harm to a student, to his/her possessions, or to individuals, whether transmitted verbally or in writing;
5. Blackmail, extortion, demands for protection money, or involuntary loans or donations;
6. Blocking access to Region Two property or facilities;
7. Stealing or hiding books, backpacks, or other possessions;
8. Stalking; or
9. Physical contact or injury to another person or his/her property.

B. "Cyberbullying" means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including, but not limited to, a transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted by the use of any electronic device, including but not limited to, a computer, telephone, cellular telephone, text messaging device or personal digital assistant.

Examples of conduct that may constitute cyberbullying include, but are not limited to, the following actions on any electronic medium:

1. Posting slurs or rumors or displaying any defamatory, inaccurate, disparaging, violent, abusive, profane, or sexually oriented material about a student on a website, an app, in social media, or any other electronic platform;
2. Posting misleading or fake photographs or digital video footage of a student on websites or creating fake websites or social networking profiles in the guise of posing as the targeted student;
3. Impersonating or representing another student through the use of that other student's electronic device or account to send e-mail, text messages, instant messages (IM), phone calls or other messages on a social media website;
4. Sending e-mail, text messages, IM, or leaving voice mail messages that are mean or threatening, or so numerous as to bombard the target's e-mail account, IM account, or cell phone; or
5. Using a camera phone or digital video camera to take and/or send embarrassing or "sexting" photographs of other students.

C. "Retaliation" means an act or gesture against a student for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. "Retaliation" also includes knowingly falsely reporting an act of bullying.

- D. "Substantiated" means that the outcomes of the investigation on the Responding form (JICK-E2) provide clear evidence to prove that bullying or cyberbullying, as defined in the policy, did occur.

- E. "Alternative discipline" means disciplinary action other than suspension or expulsion from Region Two that is designed to correct and address the root causes of a student's specific misbehavior while retaining the student in class or school, or restorative school practices to repair the harm done to relationships and persons from the student's behavior.

D. APPLICATION OF POLICY

- A. This policy applies to any student, employee, contractor, visitor or volunteer who engages in conduct that constitutes bullying or retaliation, all of whom have the responsibility to comply with this policy

- B. This policy applies to bullying that:
 - 1. Takes place at Region Two or on school grounds, meaning: a Region Two building; property on which the building or facility is located; or property that is owned, leased or used by Region Two for a school-sponsored activity, function, program, instruction or training. "School grounds" also includes school-related transportation vehicles;
 - 2. Takes place while students are being transported to or from Region Two or school-sponsored events;
 - 3. Takes place at any school-sponsored event, activity, function, program, instruction or training; or
 - 4. Takes place elsewhere or through the use of technology, but only if the bullying also infringes on the rights of the student at Region Two as set forth in this policy's definition of bullying.

E. REPORTING

Bullying or suspected bullying is reportable in person or in writing (including anonymously) to Region Two personnel.

- A. All Region Two staff are required to report alleged incidents of bullying to the Director. Any other adult working or volunteering will be encouraged to promptly report observed or suspected alleged incidents of bullying to the Director.**
- B. Students who are believed to have been bullied or are aware of incidents of bullying are strongly encouraged to report this behavior to a staff member or the Director.**
- C. Parents and other adults who believe that an incident of bullying has occurred are encouraged to report this behavior to a staff member or the Director.**
- D. Acts of reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an alleged incident of bullying are prohibited. Any student who is determined to have knowingly falsely accused another of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary consequences.**

F. RESPONDING

The Director will:

- A. Promptly investigate and respond to allegations of bullying behavior;**
- B. Keep written documentation of all allegations of bullying behavior and outcomes of the investigations;**
- C. Inform parent(s) or guardian(s) of a student(s) who was alleged to have bullied AND of the student(s) who was believed to have been bullied, that a report of alleged bullying has been made;**
- D. Communicate to the parent(s) or guardian(s) of a student(s) who was believed to have been bullied, the measures being taken to ensure the safety of the student(s) who was believed to have been bullied and to prevent further acts of bullying;**
- E. Inform parent(s) or guardian(s) of the student(s) involved in the findings of the investigation and actions to be taken;**
- F. Communicate with local or state law enforcement agencies if it is believed that the pursuit of criminal charges or a civil action under the Maine Civil Rights Act may be appropriate.**

G. REMEDIATION

The Director will:

- A. Identify the specific nature of the incident.**
- B. Apply disciplinary actions, which may include but are not limited to, imposing a series of graduated consequences that include alternative discipline. In determining the appropriate response to students who engage in bullying behavior, the Director should consider the type of behaviors, the frequency and/or pattern of behaviors, and other relevant circumstances. Alternative discipline includes, but is not limited to:**
 - 1. Meeting with the student and the student's parents/guardian;**
 - 2. Reflective activities, such as requiring the student to write an essay about the student's misbehavior;**
 - 3. Mediation, but only when there is mutual conflict between peers, rather than one-way negative behavior, and both parties voluntarily choose this option;**
 - 4. Counseling;**
 - 5. Anger management;**
 - 6. Health counseling or intervention;**
 - 7. Mental health counseling;**
 - 8. Participation in skills building and resolution activities, such as social-emotional cognitive skills building, resolution circles and restorative conferencing;**
 - 9. Community service; or**
 - 10. Recommend expulsion.**
- C. Remediate any substantiated incident of bullying to counter the negative impact of the bullying and reduce the risk of future bullying incidents, which may include referring to the victim, perpetrator or other involved persons to counseling or other appropriate services.**

H. APPEAL

Notification shall be provided to parent(s), guardian(s) and students of the right to appeal a decision of the Director related to taking or not taking remedial action in accordance with this policy. Appeals must be made in writing to the Director within fourteen (14) days of notification. The appeals procedure must be consistent with other appeals procedures established by the Cooperative Board and may include an appeal to the Director.

I. ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

A. The Cooperative Board is responsible for:

- 1. Annually providing written versions of this policy and related procedures to students, parent(s) and guardians(s), volunteers, administrators, instructors and other staff;**
- 2. Posting this policy and related procedures on Region Two's publicly accessible website; and**
- 3. Including in student handbooks, a section that addresses in detail this policy and related procedures.**

B. The Director is responsible for:

- 1. Oversight, implementation and enforcement of this policy and its procedures;**
- 2. Ensuring that the prohibition on bullying and retaliation and the attendant consequences apply to any student, employee, contractor, visitor or volunteer who engages in conduct that constitutes bullying or retaliation;**
- 3. Ensuring that any contractor, visitor, or volunteer who engages in bullying is barred from Region Two grounds until the Director is assured that the person will comply with the policies of the Cooperative Board;**
- 4. Ensuring that any organization affiliated with Region Two that authorizes or engages in bullying or retaliation forfeits permission for that organization to operate on Region Two grounds or receive any benefit of affiliation with Region Two;**
- 5. Providing professional development and training in the best practices in the prevention of bullying and harassment;**
- 6. Filing the policy that addresses bullying and cyberbullying with the Maine Department of Education.**
- 7. Ensuring that substantiated incidents of bullying and cyberbullying are reported to the Maine Department of Education on at least an annual basis.**

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA § 254 (11-A)
20-A MRSA § 1001(15), 6554
Maine Public Law, Chapter 659

Cross References: AC - Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity
ACAA - Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students
ACAA-R - Student Discrimination and Harassment Complaint
Procedure
ACAD - Hazing
AD - Educational Philosophy/Mission
ADAA - School System Commitment to Standards for Ethical and
Responsible Behavior
GCI - Professional Staff Development
IJNDB - Student Computer and Internet Use and Internet Safety
JICIA - Weapons, Violence and School Safety
JK - Student Discipline

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