

POLICY on BULLYING

The Schenectady City School District (SCSD) recognizes that a safe and civil environment is essential for students to learn and achieve. Providing a safe classroom and school environment, conducive to learning is a top priority. Bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a student's ability to learn, an educator's ability to teach and threatens classroom and school safety. The importance of education cannot be overstated as it is the cornerstone of development, life long success and becoming successful contributing members of the community.

The SCSD is committed to providing a school environment that values and teaches respect for all. The district will not tolerate bullying of any kind on school grounds (including school transportation) or at school-sponsored events or functions, including those that take place outside of the district. The district will not tolerate retaliation in any form when bullying has been reported. District policy requires that all school staff, students and visitors are respectful, tolerant and accepting.

The SCSD realizes that cyberbullying is an important topic that must be addressed. Cyberbullying is a complex issue that does not have time or geographic boundaries. It is important that all members of the staff and all SCSD students know where to turn for guidance and clear direction if faced with a cyberbullying or bullying threat.

DEFINITIONS

“Bullying” is defined as threatening, stalking or seeking to coerce or compel a person to do something; intentionally placing or attempting to place another person in fear of imminent physical injury; or engaging in verbal or physical conduct that threatens another with harm, including intimidation through the use of epithets or slurs involving race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, religious practices, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability that substantially disrupts the educational process.

“Bullying” is a form of harassment and may include threats or intimidation of others, cruel treatment, terrorizing, coercion, habitual put-downs, badgering and/or social exclusion. There are four types of bullying:

- **Verbal bullying** includes name calling, insulting remarks, verbal teasing, making frightening phone calls, violent threats, extortion, taunting, gossiping, spreading rumors, making racial slurs, making threats using electronic communication, anonymous notes etc.
- **Physical bullying** includes poking, slapping, hitting, tripping or causing a fall, choking, kicking, punching, biting, pinching, scratching, spitting, twisting arms or legs, damaging clothes and personal property or threatening gestures.
- **Social or Relational bullying** includes excluding someone from a group, isolating, shunning, spreading rumors or gossiping, arranging public humiliation, undermining relationships, teasing about clothing and/or looks, giving dirty looks or aggressive stares, etc.
- **Emotional bullying** includes rejecting, terrorizing, blackmailing, manipulating friendships, isolating, ostracizing, peer pressure, rating or ranking personal characteristics.

“Cyberbullying” is “the repeated use of information technology, including e-mail, instant message, blogs, chat rooms, pagers, cell phones and gaming systems to deliberately harass, threaten or intimidate others.”

Cyberbullying, unlike physical bullying, does not provide an option for its victims to walk away. Cyberbullying will not be tolerated on school grounds (including school transportation) or at school-sponsored events or functions, using either school or personal information technology equipment.

EXPECTATIONS

Promoting an anti-bullying culture

All policies and procedures designed to prevent bullying and discrimination must be clearly defined and expressed to all members of the school community. This can be done by:

- displaying materials around the school by a variety of means (posters, flyers, etc.)
- providing information on policy and practice to parents/guardians, staff and visitors both in literature and on the website
- teaching pupils how to raise their concerns and how to help each other respond assertively to bullying
- using curriculum opportunities to address the issue
- offering district wide positive behavior and social skills training to all staff
- educating students about bullying by encouraging students to be part of peer support systems, buddies, peer mediation or peer mentoring and to become active in the anti-bullying ethos of the school and district
- making available support service such as school counselors, social workers, psychologists and community agencies
- developing and providing training for parents and community members to be active stakeholders in the prevention of and intervention of bullying with special attention to cyberbullying.
- Keeping all complainants and those who participate in the investigation of a complaint who have acted in good faith free from retaliation of any kind.

Curriculum opportunities

The SCSD will ensure that a range of opportunities are offered through the curriculum and instruction that will help students develop knowledge and skills relating to:

- understanding the nature of bullying and its links to discrimination and prejudice
- strategies for responding to bullying directed at themselves and others

- choosing not to be involved in bullying behaviors
- promoting emotional health and well-being, resilience and self-esteem
- developing empathy and relationship skills.

INTERVENTIONS

It is essential that the parents and guardians of students who have experienced bullying are made aware of how the incidents have been addressed in accordance of school policies and procedures, with the school making efforts to ensure continued confidence in the system.

Parents and guardians will be informed of the policies and procedures established by the district.

Parents and guardians of victims will be informed of any investigation status as permitted by law without divulging student identities.

While schools cannot provide guarantees that bullying will not recur, the safety of students who have been subjects of bullying will be a priority.

When deemed necessary, SCSD staff may make adjustments to school arrangements to ensure the safety of individuals.

INVESTIGATIONS

SCSD will promptly investigate all complaints of bullying. The formal investigation procedures used for negative behavior that is in violation of the code of conduct, will be implemented. To the extent possible, all complaints will be treated in a confidential manner, although disclosure may be necessary to complete a thorough investigation. Special concern will be given to:

- the social, emotional and psychologically well-being of the victim. Appropriate referral to and intervention of Pupil Personnel Services should be considered
- VADIR reporting
- Consulting with and referral to the Equal Employment Opportunity officer with respect to possible civil rights and sexual harassment violations.

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CONSEQUENCES

Please refer to the SCSD Code of Conduct

NON-RETALIATION

All complainants and those who participate in the investigation of a complaint, who have acted in good faith, have the right to be free from retaliation of any kind.