

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA

SECTION: 200 PUPILS
TITLE: Bullying/Cyberbullying
ADOPTED: September 22, 2010
REVISED: December 15, 2016

249. BULLYING/CYBERBULLYING

Purpose

The School Reform Commission is committed to providing a safe, positive learning environment for district students. The SRC recognizes the negative impact that bullying has on student health, welfare, and safety and on the learning environment at school. The SRC recognizes that bullying creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, detracts from the safe environment necessary for student learning, and may lead to more serious violence. Therefore, the SRC prohibits bullying by district students.

Definitions

Bullying means an intentional electronic, written, verbal, nonverbal, psychological or physical act or series of acts directed at another student or students, which occurs in and/or outside a school setting, that is severe, persistent or pervasive and has the effect of doing any of the following:[\[1\]](#)

1. Substantial interference with a student's education.
2. Creation of a threatening environment.
3. Substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school.

Bullying is characterized by the following three (3) criteria:

1. It is aggressive behavior or intentional harm doing.
2. It is carried out repeatedly over time.
3. It occurs within an interpersonal relationship where there is an imbalance of power (e.g. one (1) person is physically larger, stronger, mentally quicker or socially more powerful).

Bullying can take many forms and can include a variety of behavior. As defined in this policy, bullying refers to direct or indirect action, which may include but is not limited to:

1. Physical – hitting, kicking, pushing, shoving, getting another person to hurt someone.

2. Verbal – racial slurs, name-calling, teasing, taunting, harassment, gossiping, spreading rumors.
3. Nonverbal – threatening, obscene gestures, isolation, exclusion, stalking, cyberbullying (bullying that occurs by use of electronic communication devices through means of social networking, e-mail, instant messaging, text messages, tweets, blogs, photo and video sharing, chat rooms, dash boards, or web sites).

It is the intent of this policy that the term bullying include, but not be limited to, incidents that are reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as gender, age, race, color, sexual orientation (known or perceived), gender identity expression (known or perceived), national origin, religion, disability, socioeconomic status and/or political beliefs.

School setting means in the school, on school grounds, in school vehicles, at a designated bus stop or at any activity sponsored, supervised or sanctioned by the school. [\[1\]](#)

Student shall mean an individual enrolled in a district school.

Authority

The SRC prohibits all forms of bullying by district students. The SRC encourages students or parents/guardians of students who have been bullied or witness bullying to immediately report such incidents to the building principal or designee, or to any other member of the school staff, including teachers, guidance counselors, coaches and administrators. Any staff member who receives such a report shall immediately notify the principal or designee of same. If the behavior continues or if the school does not take action, students or parents/guardians should report the incident to the district's hotline at 215-400-SAFE. [\[1\]](#)

The SRC directs that complaints of bullying shall be investigated promptly and thoroughly, and corrective action shall be taken when allegations are substantiated. Confidentiality of all parties shall be maintained, consistent with the district's legal and investigative obligations. All parties will be treated with dignity and due process.

No reprisals or retaliation shall occur as a result of good faith reports of bullying.

Delegation of Responsibility

In order to maintain an educational environment that discourages and prohibits bullying, the SRC shall designate a district Compliance Officer to coordinate the district's efforts to comply with this policy and applicable laws and regulations.

The Compliance Officer shall publish and disseminate this policy and the complaint procedure at least annually to students, parents/guardians, employees, independent contractors, vendors, and

the public. The publication shall include the position, office address and telephone number of the Compliance Officer.

Each student shall be responsible to respect the rights of others and to ensure an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and free from bullying.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop administrative procedures to implement this policy.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that this policy and administrative procedures are reviewed annually with staff, students, and parents/guardians.[\[1\]](#)

The Superintendent or designee, in cooperation with other appropriate administrators, shall review this policy every three (3) years and recommend necessary revisions to the SRC.[\[1\]](#)

District administration shall annually provide the following information with the Safe School Report:[\[1\]](#)

1. SRC's Bullying Policy.
2. Report of bullying incidents.
3. Information on the development and implementation of any and all research-based bullying prevention and intervention programs.

Guidelines

The Code of Student Conduct, which shall incorporate this policy, shall be disseminated annually to students.[\[1\]\[2\]\[3\]](#)

This policy shall be accessible in every classroom, posted in a prominent location within each school building and posted on the district website. The policy shall be made available in English and all other languages necessary to facilitate understanding by district residents.

Education

The district shall implement research-based bullying prevention and intervention programs. Such programs shall provide training for district staff for effectively responding to, intervening in and reporting incidents of bullying.[\[1\]\[4\]](#)

Complaint Procedure

Step 1 – Reporting

A student or his/her parent/guardian who believes s/he has been subject to conduct that constitutes a violation of this policy is encouraged to immediately report the incident to the building principal or designee, or to any other member of the school staff, including teachers, guidance counselors, coaches and administrators.

A school employee who witnesses, suspects or is notified that a student has been subject to conduct that constitutes a violation of this policy shall immediately report the incident to the building principal or designee.

The complainant or reporting employee is encouraged to use the report form available from the building principal, but oral complaints shall be acceptable.

Step 2 – Investigation

Upon receiving a complaint of bullying, the building principal or designee shall investigate the complaint, unless the building principal or designee is unable to conduct the investigation.

The investigation may consist of individual interviews with the complainant, the accused, and others with knowledge relative to the incident. The investigator may also evaluate any other information and materials relevant to the investigation.

The investigator shall attempt to secure statements from all participants in, and witnesses to the complaint. The complainant shall not be required to meet face-to-face with the accused.

The obligation to conduct this investigation shall not be negated by the fact that a criminal or other investigation of the incident is pending or has been concluded.

Consequences for Violations

If the allegations are confirmed, the building principal or designee shall:

1. Inform the student(s) found to have violated this policy and his/her parents/guardians of the results of the investigation, including the actions of the student and the consequences for his/her actions.
2. Review the definition of bullying and the district's policy on bullying with the student(s) and his/her parents/guardians.
3. Administer the consequences for the behavior relative to the number of offenses and the severity of the behavior.

A student who violates this policy shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action consistent with the Code of Student Conduct, which shall include:[\[1\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[5\]](#)

1. First Offense - documented warning and parent/guardian notification.
2. Second Offense -parent/guardian conference, loss of school privileges, exclusion from school-sponsored activities, detention, and/or counseling within the school.

3. Third Offense - suspension or transfer to another classroom, school building or school bus.

If the first offense is notably severe, a student may immediately be disciplined in accordance with the Code of Student Conduct. This could result in a long-term suspension (4-10 days); a referral for placement in an alternative education program; or expulsion.[5]

Legal References:

1. 24 P.S. 1303.1-A

2. 22 PA Code 12.3

3. Pol. 218

4. 24 P.S. 1302-A

5. Pol. 233

Pol. 236

Pol. 237

Pol. 248

Pol. 815