SUBJECT: BULLYING: PEER ABUSE IN THE SCHOOLS

The Board of Education is committed to providing a safe and productive learning environment within its schools. Bullying of a student by another student is strictly prohibited on school property, in school buildings, on school buses, and at school sponsored events and/or activities whether occurring on or off campus. The Board of Education shall require the prohibition of bullying – discrimination, bullying and/or harassment against any student by employees or students on school property, at a school function, or off school property when the actions create or would foreseeably create a risk of substantial disruption within the school environment or where it is foreseeable that the conduct might reach school property, that creates a hostile environment by conduct, with or without physical contact, threats, intimidation or abuse (verbal or non-verbal), of such a severe nature that:

1. Has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional and/or physical well-being; or
2. Reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his/her physical safety.

For purposes of this policy, the term "harassment" is defined as the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being; or conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety.

For purposes of this policy, the term "bullying" among children is defined, in general, as: "a variety of negative acts carried out repeatedly over time. It involves a real or perceived imbalance of power, with a more powerful child or group attacking those who are less powerful." Bullying can take three (3) forms:

a) Physical (including, but not limited to, hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, taking personal belongings);

b) Verbal (including, but not limited to, taunting, malicious teasing, name calling, making threats); and

c) Psychological (including, but not limited to, spreading rumors; manipulating social relationships; or engaging in social exclusion, extortion, or intimidation).

"Hazing" is a form of harassment which involves committing an act against a student or coercing a student into committing an act that creates a risk of emotional, physical or psychological harm to a person, in order for the student to be initiated into or affiliated with a student or other organization, or for any other purpose. The fact that a victim may consent to the act does not excuse the behavior or lessen the offense.

(Continued)

SUBJECT: BULLYING: PEER ABUSE IN THE SCHOOLS (Cont'd.)

The District also prohibits "Internet bullying" (also referred to as "cyber-bullying") including, but not limited to the use of instant messaging, e-mail, Web sites, chat rooms, and text messaging when such use interferes with the operation of the school causing a material or substantial disruption to the educational process or can be reasonably forecast to do so; or infringes upon the general health, safety and welfare of District students or employees.

However, it is important to note that a single negative act as enumerated above may also constitute "bullying" (if not more serious misconduct) based upon the particular circumstances such as the seriousness of the act and/or the intent of the actor.

Any student who believes that he/she is being subjected to bullying behavior, as well as any other person who has knowledge of or witnesses any possible occurrence of bullying, shall report the bullying to a school employee. School employees who witness or receive a report (oral or written) of harassment, bullying and/or discrimination must orally notify the building principal, or their designee no later than one (1) school day after witnessing or receiving a report of such incident. The employee must then file a written report within two (2) school days after making the oral report. Investigation of allegations of bullying shall follow the procedures utilized for complaints of harassment within the School District. Allegations of bullying shall be promptly investigated and will be treated as confidential and private to the extent possible within legal constraints.

The Board prohibits any retaliatory behavior directed against complainants, victims, witnesses, and/or any other individuals who participate in the investigation of allegations of bullying. Follow-up inquiries and/or appropriate monitoring of the alleged bully and victim shall be made to ensure that bullying behavior has not resumed and that all those involved in the investigation of allegations of bullying have not suffered retaliation.

Personnel at all levels are responsible for taking corrective action to prevent bullying behavior of which they have been made aware at School District sites or activities and/or reporting such behavior to their immediate supervisor. Further, staff training shall be provided to raise awareness of the problem of bullying within the schools and to facilitate staff identification of and response to such bullying behavior among students.

Prevention and intervention techniques within the District to prevent against bullying behavior and to support and protect victims shall include building-level and classroom-level strategies and activities as determined by administration. Individual intervention will be provided by appropriate staff members to bullies, victims and their parents to help ensure that the bullying stops.

At least one employee in every school shall be designated as a Dignity Act Coordinator and instructed in the provisions of the proposed rule and thoroughly trained in methods to respond to human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender and sex. The designation of each Dignity Act Coordinator shall be approved by the board of education annually.

(Continued)

SUBJECT: BULLYING: PEER ABUSE IN THE SCHOOLS (Cont'd.)

The name(s) and contact information for the Dignity Act Coordinator(s) shall be shared with all school personnel, students, and persons in parental relations. This shall be done by:

- including in District Code of Conduct
- posting on District website
- included in at least one district or school mailing per school year
- posted in highly-visible areas of school buildings
- made available at the district and school level administrative offices

In the event a Dignity Act Coordinator vacates his or her position, another school employee shall be immediately designated for an interim appointment as Coordinator, pending approval of a successor Coordinator by the Board of Education within 30 days of the date the position was vacated. In the event a Dignity Act Coordinator is unable to perform the duties of his or her position for an extended period of time, another school employee shall be immediately designated for an interim appointment as the Dignity Act Coordinator, pending return of the previous Dignity Act Coordinator to his or her duties as Dignity Act Coordinator.

Rules against bullying shall be publicized District-wide and shall be disseminated as appropriate to staff, students and parents. Disciplinary sanctions for violation of this policy shall be outlined in the *District Code of Conduct* as enumerated above and may also be incorporated in staff and student handbooks.

NOTE: Refer also to Policies
#3410 -- Code of Conduct on School Property
#3420 – Non-Discrimination Anti-Harassment in the School District
#7310 – School Conduct & Discipline
#7551 -- Sexual Harassment of Students
District Code of Conduct

Adopted: 6/15/11
Revised & Adopted: 8/14/13