

# WILKES-BARRE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

## BULLYING/CYBER BULLYING

The Wilkes-Barre Area School District Board of Education strives to provide a safe, positive learning climate for students in the schools. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the District to maintain an educational environment in which bullying and cyber bullying in any form are not tolerated.

### **Authority**

The School Board prohibits all forms of bullying and cyber bullying behavior on school property, in school vehicles, at school-sponsored events, or during travel to and from school. Any violation of this policy shall be considered an infraction of the Student Code of Conduct, with discipline implemented accordingly. All bullying behavior that is a violation of the PA Crimes Code will be reported to law enforcement.

Students who have been bullied or cyber bullied shall promptly report such incidents to any staff member.

Complaints of bullying or cyber bullying shall be investigated promptly, and corrective action shall be taken when a complaint is verified. Neither reprisals nor retaliation shall occur as a result of the submission of a complaint.

The School District shall annually inform students that bullying or cyber bullying of students will not be tolerated.

### **Definitions**

**Bullying** shall mean unwelcome verbal, written or physical conduct directed at a student by another student that has the effect of:

1. Physically, emotionally or mentally harming a student;
2. Damaging, extorting or taking a student's personal property;
3. Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical, emotional or mental harm;
4. Placing a student in reasonable fear of damage to or loss of personal property; or
5. Creating an intimidating or hostile environment that substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities.

**Cyber bullying** includes, but is not limited to, the following misuses of technology: harassing, teasing, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another student or staff member by way of any technological tool, such as sending or posting inappropriate or

derogatory email messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs) which has the effect of:

1. Physically, emotionally or mentally harming a student;
2. Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical, emotional or mental harm;
3. Placing a student in reasonable fear of damage to or loss of personal property; or
4. Creating an intimidating or hostile environment that substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities.

All forms of bullying are unacceptable and, to the extent that such actions are disruptive of the educational process of the Wilkes-Barre Area School District, offenders shall be subject to appropriate staff intervention, which may result in administrative discipline.

The term "bullying" and "cyber bullying" shall not be interpreted to infringe upon a student's right to engage in legally protected speech or conduct.

#### **Delegation of Responsibility**

Each staff member shall be responsible to maintain an educational environment free of bullying and cyber bullying.

Each student shall be responsible to respect the rights of his/her fellow students and to ensure an atmosphere free from all forms of bullying and cyber bullying.

Students shall be encouraged to report bullying or cyber bullying complaints to any staff member.

Any staff member who receives a bullying or cyber bullying complaint shall gather information or seek administrative assistance to determine if bullying or cyber bullying has occurred. If the behavior is found to meet the definition of bullying or cyber bullying, the building principal must complete the appropriate written documentation.

The building principal or his/her designee will inform the parents or guardians of the victim and also the parents or guardians of the accused.

#### **Complaint Procedure**

A student shall report a complaint of bullying or cyber bullying, orally or in writing, to a staff member. If a parent initiates the complaint, the appropriate staff member will follow-up with the student.

The staff member will either gather the information or seek administrative assistance to determine if the alleged bullying or cyber bullying conduct occurred.

After the information has been gathered, the building principal shall be notified of the complaint. The building principal will determine the need for further investigation or the appropriate intervention, which may result in administrative discipline to ensure that the conduct ceases. If the behavior is found to meet the definition of bullying or cyber bullying, the building principal must complete the appropriate written documentation.

A violation of this Policy shall subject the offending student to appropriate disciplinary action, consistent with the student discipline code, which may include suspension, expulsion or notification to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

### **Retaliation**

The District prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports a relevant act of bullying. The principal will determine the consequences and remedial actions. Any violation of the PA Crimes Code will be reported to law enforcement.

### **False Reports**

The principal will determine the consequences and remedial actions for a pupil found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation or bullying. Any violation of the PA Crimes Code will be reported to law enforcement.

### **The following are specific things that teachers can do to help prevent bullying:**

1. Make it clear to students that bullying will not be tolerated in the classroom, in the hallways, on the playground, or anywhere at school.
2. Ensure students that if anyone has a problem with bullying, that s/he can talk to you about it in person or by writing you a note about what happened.
3. Immediately take action when you see bullying, name calling, or harassment happen in your presence.
4. Help students identify themselves as allies for victimized students.
5. If students report bullying, make sure that the bullies are confronted and that the victims, bystanders, and allies are protected.
6. Have students write what they think a bully is and discuss it out loud.
7. Work with other teachers to share ideas on what you are doing in your classroom to teach about and prevent bullying.
8. Compile with your students a list of strategies for dealing with bullies and post them in your classroom.

**The following is a list of strategies to help students deal with bullies:**

1. Walk away from a bully.
2. Ignore the bully.
3. Tell someone like a teacher, parent/guardian, or friend that can help.
4. Try to be nice to the bully.
5. Try to be tricky.
6. Go to class to talk about problems with bullies.
7. Stand behind the person being bullied.
8. Go out of your way to make new friends to make yourself feel better.
9. Use humor.
10. Stay with other people so that you are not alone.
11. Do not give the bully the power to change your life.
12. Do not fight back.

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