

Preston Public School

PROHIBITING HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING (INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES)

The following procedures will be used by any person for the filing, processing and resolution of a reported incident of harassment, intimidation, bullying, or threatening behavior. The procedures are to be followed by the administration of the school district in an effort to determine the severity of the incident and the potential to result in future violence.

Definitions

1. "Bully" is any pattern of harassment, intimidation, threatening behavior, physical acts, verbal or electronic communication.
 - a. Directed toward a student or group of students
 - b. That results in or is reasonably perceived as being done with the intent to cause negative educational or physical results for the targeted individual or group and
 - c. Is communicated in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school's educational mission or the education of any student.
2. "Harassment, intimidation and bullying" means any gesture, written or verbal expression, electronic communication, or physical act that a reasonable person should know will harm another student, damage to the student's property, place another student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or damage to the student's property, or insult or demean any student or group of students in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school's education of any student. Harassment, intimidation, and bullying include, but are not limited to, gestures, written, verbal, or physical acts, or electronic communications.
3. "Electronic communication" means the communication of any written, verbal, or pictorial information or video content by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, a mobile or cell phone or other wireless communication device, or a computer.
4. "Threatening behavior" means any pattern of behavior or isolated action, whether or not it is directed at another person, that a reasonable person would believe indicates potential for future harm to students, school personnel, or school property.
5. "At school" is on school grounds, in school vehicles, at school-sponsored activities, or at school-sanctioned events.

Procedures

The procedure for investigating reported incidents of harassment, intimidation, and bullying or threatening behavior, is as follows:

1. The matter should immediately be reported to the building principal. If the bullying involved an electronic communication, a printed copy of the communication as well as any identifying information such as email address or web address shall be provided to the building principal. As much detailed information as possible should be provided to the building principal in written form to allow for a thorough investigation of the matter.
2. Upon receipt of a written report, the building principal shall contact the superintendent and begin an investigation to determine the severity of the incident and the potential for future violence.
3. If, during the course of the investigation, it appears that a crime may have been committed the building principal and/or superintendent shall notify law enforcement and request that the alleged victim also contact law enforcement to report the matter for potential criminal investigation.

4. If it is determined that the school districts discipline code has been violated, the building principal shall follow district policies regarding the discipline of the student.
5. Upon completion of the investigation, the principal or superintendent may recommend that available community mental health care options be provided to the student, if appropriate. If such a recommendation is made, the administration shall request disclosure of any information that indicates an explicit threat to the safety of the students or school personnel.

PROHIBITING HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING (REGULATION)

Statement of legislative Mandate and Purpose

This regulation is a result of the legislative mandate and public policy embodied in the School Bullying Protection Act, 70 O.S. §24- 100.2. The Oklahoma Legislature require school district to adopt a policy to prevent harassment, intimidation, and bullying in an effort to “create an environment free of unnecessary disruption” and also requires school districts to actively pursue programs for education regarding bullying behaviors.

The Preston Public Schools’ student conduct code prohibits harassment, intimidation, and bullying. This regulation further explains the negative effects of that behavior and seeks to promote strategies for prevention.

Statement of Board Purpose in Adopting Policy

The board of education recognizes that intimidation, harassment, and bullying of students causes serious educational and personal problems, both for the student-victim and the initiator of the intimidation, harassment, and bullying. The board observes that this conduct:

1. Has been shown by national and state studies to have substantial adverse effect upon school district operations, the safety of students and faculty, and the educational system at large.
2. Substantially disrupts school operations by interfering with the districts mission to instruct students in an atmosphere free from fear, is disruptive of school efforts to encourage students to remain in school until graduation, and just as disruptive of the district’s efforts to prepare students for productive lives in the community as they become adults.
3. Substantially disrupts healthy student behavior and thereby academic achievement. Research indicates that healthy student behavior results in increased student academic achievement. Improvement in student behavior through the prevention or minimization of intimidation, harassment and bullying towards student-victims simultaneously supports the district’s primary and substantial interest in operating schools that foster and promote academic achievement.
4. Substantially interfere with school compliance with federal law that seeks to maximize the mainstreaming of students with disabilities and hinders compliance with Individual Educational Programs containing objectives to increase the socialization of students with disabilities. Targets of bullying are often students with known physical or mental disabilities who, as a result, are perceived by bullies as easy targets for bullying actions.
5. Substantially interferes with the district’s mission to advance the social skills and social and emotional wellbeing of students. Targets of intimidation, harassment, and bullying often “passive-target” students who already are lacking in social skills because they tend to be extremely sensitive, shy, display insecurity, anxiety and/or distress; may have experienced a traumatic event; may try to use gifts, toys, money, or class assignments or performance bribes to protect themselves from intimidation, harassment, or bullying; are often small for their age and feel vulnerable to bullying acts; and/or may resort to carrying weapons to school for self-protection. Passive-target victims who have been harassed and demeaned by the behavior of bullies often respond by striving to obtain

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6. Power over others by becoming bullies themselves, and are specifically prone to develop into students who eventually inflict serious physical harm on other students, or, in an effort to gain power over their life or situation, commit suicide.
7. Substantially disrupts school operations by increasing violent act committed against fellow students. Violence, in this context, is frequently accompanied by criminal acts.
8. Substantially disrupts school operations by interfering with reasonable expectations of other students that they can feel secure at school and not be subject to frightening acts or be the victim of mistreatment resulting from bullying behavior.

Bullying, harassing, and intimidating behavior often involves expressive gestures, speech, physical acts that are sexually suggestive, lewd, vulgar, profane, or offensive to the education or social mission of this school district, and at times involves the commission of criminal acts. This behavior interferes with the curriculum by disrupting the presentation of instruction and also disrupts and interferes with the student-victim's or bystander's ability to concentrate, retain instruction, and study or to operate free from the effects of intimidation, harassment, and bullying. This results in a reluctance to attend school.

Definition of Terms

1. Statutory definition of harassment, intimidation and bullying:

70 O.S. §24- 100.3 (c) of the school Bullying Protection Act defines the terms "harass, intimidate, or bully," as including, but not limited to, any gesture, written or verbal expression, or physical act that a reasonable person should recognize will:

- A. Harm another student;
- B. Damage another student's property;
- C. Place another student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or damage to the student's property; or
- D. Insult or demean any student or group of students in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school's educational mission or the education of any student.

2. The "Reasonable Person" Standard

In determining what a "reasonable person" should recognize as an act placing a student in "reasonable" fear of harm, staff will determine "reasonableness" not only from the point of view of a mature adult, but also from the point of view of an immature child of the age of the intended victim along with, but not limited to, consideration of special emotional, physical, or mental needs of the particular child; personality or physical characteristics, or history that might cause the child to be particularly sensitive to efforts by a bully to humiliate, embarrass, or lower the self esteem of the victim; and the discipline history, personality of, and physical characteristics of the individual alleged to have engaged in the prohibited behavior.

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3. General Display of Bullying Acts

Bullying, for purpose of this section of the regulation, includes harassment and intimidation, and vice versa. According to experts in the field, bullying in general is the exploitation of a less powerful person by an individual taking unfair advantage of that person, which is repeated over time, and which inflicts a negative effect on the victim. The seriousness of a bullying act depends on the harm inflicted upon the victim and the frequency of the inflicted acts. Power may be, but is not limited to, physical strength, social skill, verbal ability, or other characteristics. Bullying acts by students have been described in several different categories.

- A. Physical Bullying includes harm or threatened harm to another's body or property, including, but not limited to, what would reasonably be foreseen as a serious expression of intent to inflict physical harm or property damage through verbal or written speech or gestures directed at the student-victim, when considering the factual circumstances in which the threat was made and the reaction of the intended victim. Common act include tripping, hitting, pushing, pinching, pulling hair, kicking biting, starting fights, daring others to fight, stealing or destroying property, extortion, assaults with a weapon, other violent acts, and homicide.
- B. Emotional Bullying includes the intentional infliction of harm to another's self-esteem, including, but not limited to, insulting or profane remarks, insulting or profane gestures, or harassing and frightening statement, when such events are considered in light of the surrounding facts, the history of the students involved, and age, and special characteristics of the students.
- C. Social Bullying includes harm to another's group acceptance, including, but not limited to, harm resulting from intentionally gossiping about another student or intentionally spreading negative rumors about another student that results in the victim being excluded from school activity or student group; the intentional planning and/or implementation of acts or statements that inflict public humiliation upon a student; the intentional undermining of current relationships of the victim-student through the spreading of untrue gossip or rumors design to humiliate or embarrass the student; the use of gossip, rumors, or humiliating acts designed to deprive the students of awards, recognition, or involvement in school activities; the false or malicious spreading of an untrue statement or statements about another student that exposes the victim to contempt or ridicule or deprives the victim of the confidence and respect of student peers; or the making of false statements to others that the student has committed a crime, or has and infectious, contagious, or loathsome disease, or similar egregious representations.
- D. Sexual Bullying includes harm to another resulting from, but not limited to, making unwelcome sexual comments about the student, making vulgar, profane, lewd comments or drawings or graffiti about the sexual nature at school, including the fondling or touching of private parts of the victim's body; participation in the gossip or spreading of false rumors about the student's sexual life; written or verbal statement directed at the victim that would reasonably be interpreted as a serious threat to force the victim to commit sexual acts or to sexually assault the victim when considering the factual circumstances in which the threat was made and the reaction of the intended victim; off-campus dating violence by a student that adversely affects the victim's school performance or behavior, attendance, participation in school functions or extracurricular activities, or make the victim fearful at school of the assaulting bully; or the commission of sexual assault, rape, or homicide. Such conduct may also constitute sexual harassment also prohibited by Preston Public Schools.

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Procedures Applicable to the Understanding of and Prevention of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying of Students

1. Student and Staff Education and Training

All staff will be provided with a copy of the district's policy on prevention of harassment, intimidation, and bullying of students. All students will be provided a summary of the policy and notice that a copy of the entire policy is available on request. Preston Public Schools is committed to providing appropriate and relevant training to staff regarding identification of behavior constituting harassment, intimidation, and bullying of students and the prevention and management of such conduct.

Students, like staff members, shall participate in an annual education program that sets out expectations for student behavior and emphasizes an understanding of harassment, intimidation, and bullying of students, the district's prohibition of such conduct, and the reasons why the conduct is destructive, unacceptable, and will lead to discipline. Students shall also be informed of the consequences of bullying conduct toward their peers.

2. Preston Public Schools' Safe School Committee

The safe school committee has the responsibility of studying and making recommendations regarding unsafe conditions, strategies for students to avoid harm at school, student victimization, crime prevention, school violence, and other issues that interfere with and adversely affect the maintenance of safe schools.

With respect to student harassment, intimidation, and bullying and understanding and identifying bullying behaviors. In addition, the committee shall make recommendations regarding: identification of methods to encourage the involvement of the community and the students in addressing conduct involving bullying; methods to enhance relationships between students and school staff in order to strengthen communication; and fashioning of problem-solving teams that include counselors and/or school psychologists.

In accomplishing its objectives, the committee shall review traditional and accepted harassment, intimidation, and bullying prevention programs utilized by other states, state agencies, or school districts. (See also policy BDFC.)

Student Reporting

Students are encouraged to inform school personnel if they are the victim of or a witness to acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

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Staff Reporting

Any school employee who has reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a person is a target of bullying shall immediately report it to the principal or principal's designee.

Staff members who witness such events are to complete reports and to submit them to the employee designated by the assistant superintendent to receive them. Staff members who hear incidents that may, in the staff member's judgment, constitute harassment, intimidation, or bullying, are to report all relevant information to the assistant superintendent or his/her designee.

Parental Responsibilities

Parents/guardians will be informed in writing of the district's program to stop intimidation, harassment, and bullying. An administrative response to a reported act of intimidation, harassment, or bullying may involve certain actions to be taken by parents. Parents will be informed of the program and the means for students to report bullying acts toward them or other students. They will also be told that to help prevent bullying at school they should encourage their children to:

1. Report bullying when it occurs;
2. Take advantage of opportunities to talk to their children about bullying;
3. Inform the school immediately if they think their child is being bullied or is bullying other students;
4. Watch for symptoms that their child may be a victim of bullying and report those symptoms; and
5. Cooperate fully with school personnel in identifying and resolving incidents.

Discipline of Students

In administering discipline, consideration will be given to alternative methods of punishment to insure that the most effective discipline is administered in each case. In all disciplinary action, teachers and administrators will be mindful of the fact that they are dealing with individual personalities. The faculty may consider consultations with parents to determine the most effective disciplinary measure.

In considering alternatives of corrective actions, the faculty/administration of the school district will consider those listed below. However, the school is not limited to these alternative methods, nor does this list reflect an order or sequence of events to following disciplinary actions. The board of education will rely upon the judgment and discretion of the administrator to determine the appropriate remedial or corrective action in each instance.

1. Conference with student
2. Conference with parent
3. In-school suspension
4. Detention
5. Referral to counselor
6. Behavioral contract
7. Changing student's seat assignment or class assignment
8. Requiring a student to make financial restitution for damaged property.
9. Requiring a student to clean or straighten items or facilities damaged by the student's behavior.
10. Restriction of privileges
11. Involvement of local authorities
12. Referring student to appropriate social agency

13. Suspension

14. Other appropriate disciplinary action as required and as indicated by the circumstances which may include, but is not limited to, removal from eligibility to participate or attend extracurricular activities as well as removal from the privilege of attending or participating in the graduation ceremony, school dances, prom, prom activities, and/or class trips.

CROSS-REFERENCE: Policy BDFC, Safe School Committee