

# OKEENE SCHOOLS

## BULLYING AND/OR HARASSMENT POLICY

2016-17

The Board is committed to providing a safe, secure, positive, productive, and nurturing educational environment that is free from bullying and/or harassment of any kind for all of its students, employees, and volunteers. The Board encourages the promotion of positive interpersonal relations between members of the school community. All school members are expected to conform to reasonable standards of socially acceptable behavior, respect the person, property, and rights of others, obey constituted authority and respond to those who hold that authority. Bullying and/or harassment toward a student, employee, volunteer, or visitor whether by other students, employees, or third parties is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated. This prohibition includes physical, verbal, and psychological abuse. The Board will not tolerate any gestures, comments, threats, or actions, which cause or threaten to cause bodily harm or personal degradation.

This policy applies to all activities in the District, including activities on school property or while en route to or from school-sponsored activities and those occurring off school property if the student or employee or volunteer is at any school-sponsored, school-approved or school-related activity or function, such as field trips or athletic events where students are under the school's control, or where an employee or volunteer is engaged in school business. Bullying and/or harassment will not be tolerated and disciplinary action will be taken. In addition to school consequences, criminal charges may also be filed. This policy shall be interpreted and applied consistently with all applicable state and federal laws. Conduct that constitutes bullying and/or harassment, as defined herein, are prohibited in all educational environments.

**Bullying** means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or school employees. It is further defined as unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behavior, including any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by an adult or student, that is severe or pervasive enough to create and intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment; cause discomfort or humiliation; or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school performance or participation; and may involve but is not limited to:

- A. Unwanted Teasing
- B. Social exclusion
- C. Threat
- D. Intimidation

Bullying can be further defined as unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behavior, including any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by an adult or student, that is severe or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment; cause discomfort or humiliation; or unreasonably interferes with the individual's school performance or participation; is often characterized by an imbalance of power.

**Harassment** means any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, use of data or computer software, or written, verbal or physical conduct directed against a student or school employee that:

- A. Places a student or school employee in reasonable fear of harm to his/her person or damage to his/her property.
- B. Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits.
- C. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of a school.

**Bullying and/or harassment** also encompass:

- A. Retaliation against a student or school employee by another student or school employee for asserting or alleging an act of bullying and/or harassment. Reporting an act of bullying and/or harassment that is not made in good faith is considered retaliation.
- B. Perpetuation of conduct listed in the definition of bullying and/or harassment by an individual or group with intent to demean, dehumanize, embarrass, or cause emotional or physical harm to a student or school employee by:
  1. Incitement or coercion
  2. Assessing or knowingly and willingly causing or providing access to data or computer software through a computer, computer system, or computer network within the scope of the school district
  3. Acting in a manner that has an effect substantially similar to the effect of bullying and/or harassment

**Cyberstalking** means to engage in a course of conduct to communicate, or to cause to be communicated, words, images, or language by or through the use of electronic mail or electronic communication, directed at a specific person, causing substantial emotional distress to that person and serving no legitimate purpose.

**Cyberbullying** is defined as a situation when a student or school employee is repeatedly harassed, humiliated, threatened, and intimidated, or otherwise targeted by another student or school employee the use of digital technologies, including but not limited to, instant and text messaging, email, blogs, social websites (e.g. MySpace, Facebook), and chat rooms.

### **Expected Behavior from Students and School Employees**

The Okeene Public School District expects students to conduct themselves in keeping with their levels of development, maturity, and demonstrate capabilities with a proper regard for authority, the rights and welfare of other students, and school staff, respecting the educational purposes underlying all school activities while providing proper care of school facilities, school buses, and equipment.

The School District believes that standards for student behavior must be set cooperatively through interaction among the students, parents/legal guardians, staff, and community members producing an atmosphere that encourages students to grow in self-discipline. The development of this atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for District and community property on the part of students, staff and community members. Since students learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers will demonstrate appropriate behavior; treat others with civility and respect, and refuse to tolerate bullying and/or harassment.

The School District upholds that bullying and/or harassment of any student or school employee is prohibited:

- A. During any education program or activity conducted by the school district, including in route to or from such program or activity
- B. Through the use of data or computer software that is accessed through computer, computer system, or computer network at Okeene Public School
- C. Through off-campus events that can significantly affect the learning environment at school.

All administrators, faculty, and staff, in collaboration with parents, students, and community members, will incorporate systemic methods for student and staff recognition through positive reinforcement for good conduct, self-discipline, good citizenship, and academic success, as seen in the required school plan to address positive school culture and behavior.

### **Incident Reporting and Immunity**

At each school, the principal or principal's designee is responsible for receiving complaints alleging violations of this policy. All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the principal or the principal's designee. All members of the school community, including students, parents/legal guardians, volunteers and visitors are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy anonymously or in-person to the principal or the principal's designee.

The principal of each school shall establish and prominently publicize to students, staff, volunteers, and parent/legal guardians, how a report of bullying and/or harassment may be filed either in-person or anonymously and how this report will be acted upon. The victim of bullying and/or harassment, anyone who witnessed the bullying and/or harassment, and anyone who has credible information that an act of bullying and/or harassment has taken place are encouraged to file a report of bullying and/or harassment.

A school employee, school volunteer or visitor, student, parent/legal guardian or other person who promptly reports in good faith an act of bullying and/or harassment to the appropriate school official, and who makes this report in compliance with the procedure set forth in this district policy is immune from a cause of action for damages arising out of the reporting itself of bullying and/or harassment will not affect the complainant or reporter's future employment, grades, learning or working environment, or work assignments within Okeene Public School.

Any written or oral reporting of an act of bullying and/or harassment shall be considered an official means of reporting such act(s). Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

### **Determination of Scope of Investigation**

When a report of bullying and/or harassment has taken place, the principal or the principal's designee will promptly initiate a preliminary investigation to determine whether there is probable cause to believe an act of bullying and/or harassment has occurred. If it is determined that it is in the scope of the district appropriate actions will be taken. If it is outside the scope of the district, and determined a criminal act, refer to appropriate law enforcement immediately, notify parent or legal guardian, and document the referral. If it is outside scope of district, and determined not a criminal act, inform parents/legal guardians of all students involved.

### **Procedures for Prompt Investigation**

The investigation of a reported act of bullying and/or harassment of a student, school-based employee, or other persons providing service to the school is deemed to be a school-related activity and begins with a report of such an act. Incidents that require a reasonable investigation when reported to appropriate school authorities shall include alleged incidents of bullying and/or harassment allegedly committed against a child while the child is en route to school aboard a school bus or at a school bus stop.

The principal or the principal's designee shall document all complaints in writing to ensure that problems are addressed in a timely manner. If the complaint is about the principal, then the Superintendent or designee shall be asked to address the complaint.

The Procedures for Investigating Bullying and/or Harassment include:

- A. Documented interviews of the victim, alleged perpetrator(s), and witnesses are conducted privately, separately, and are confidential. At no time will the alleged perpetrator and victim be interviewed together. It is recommended that the victim be interviewed first.
- B. The investigator shall collect and evaluate the facts including, but not limited to:
  1. Description of incident(s) including nature of the behavior (physical hurt or psychological distress), context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred, etc.
  2. How often the conduct occurred

3. Whether there were past incidents or past continuing patterns of behavior
  4. The relationship between the parties involved
  5. The characteristics of parties involved (i.e., grade, age, etc.);
  6. The identity and number of individuals who participated in bullying and/or harassing behavior;
  7. Where the alleged incident(s) occurred
  8. Whether the conduct adversely affected the student's education or educational environment
  9. Whether the alleged victim felt or perceived an imbalance of power as a result of the reported incident; and the date, time, and method in which the parents/legal guardians of all parties involved were contacted.
- C. Whether a particular action or incident constitutes a violation of this policy requires a determination based on all the facts and surrounding circumstances and includes:
1. Recommended remedial steps necessary to stop the bullying and/or harassing behavior; and A written final report to the principal and Superintendent

The maximum of fifteen (15) school days shall be the limit for the initial filing of incidents and completion of the investigative procedural steps. The highest level of confidentiality possible will be upheld regarding the submission of a complaint or a report of bullying and/or harassment, and the investigative procedures that follow

### **Notice to Parents/Guardians**

The principal, or the principal's designee, shall notify via telephone, personal conference, and/or in writing, the occurrence of any incident of bullying and/or harassment as defined by this policy to the parent or legal guardian of all students involved as soon as possible on the same day the investigation of the incident has been initiated. Notification must be consistent with the student privacy rights under the applicable provision of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

Once the investigation has been completed and it has been determined that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator(s), all appropriate local law enforcement agencies will be notified by telephone and/or in writing.

### **Consequences**

Concluding whether a particular action or incident constitutes a violation of this policy requires a determination based on all the facts and surrounding circumstances. Consequences and appropriate remedial actions will apply to persons, whether it is student, school employees, or visitors/volunteers, who are found to have wrongfully and intentionally accused another of an act of bullying and/or harassment. The physical location or time of access of a computer-related incident cannot be raised as a defense in any disciplinary action initiated.

**Student** consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a committed act of bullying and/or harassment are outlined in the discipline policy.

**School employee** consequences and appropriate remedial action for a committed act of bullying and/or harassment will be instituted in accordance with District policies, procedures, and agreements. Additionally, egregious acts of harassment by certified educators may result in the reporting to the State Board of Education.

Visitor or volunteer consequences and appropriate remedial action for a committed act of bullying and/or harassment shall be determined by the school administrator after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act including, if applicable, reports to appropriate law enforcement officials.

### **Referral for Counseling**

School personnel or parent may request informal consultation with the school counselor to determine the severity of concern and appropriate steps to address the concern. These include but are not limited to:

- A. Counseling and support to address the needs of the victims of bullying or harassment
- B. Counseling/interventions to address behavior of the students who bully and/or harass others
- C. Counseling/interventions which include assistance and support provided to parents/legal guardians, if deemed necessary or appropriate.

### **Actions to Protect Victim**

According to the level of infraction, parents/legal guardians will be notified by telephone and/or writing of actions being taken to protect the child; the frequency of notifications will depend on the seriousness of the bullying and/or harassment incident. Notifications must be consistent with the student privacy rights under the applicable provisions of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

Limited disclosure may be necessary to complete a thorough investigation as described above. The District's obligation to investigate and take corrective action may supersede an individual's right to privacy.

The complainant's identity shall be protected, but absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. The identity of the victim of the reported act shall be protected to the reasonable extent possible.

Retaliation is prohibited and includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment in response to filing a complaint or assisting with an investigation under this policy. Retaliatory or intimidating conduct against any individual who has made a bullying complaint or any individual who has testified, assisted, or participated, in any manner, in an investigation is specifically prohibited and as detailed in this policy, shall be treated as another incidence of bullying.

### **Providing Instruction/Training**

The District ensures that schools sustain healthy, positive, and safe learning environments for all students. It is important to change the social climate of the school and the social norms with regards to bullying and/or harassment. This requires the efforts of everyone in the school environment – teachers, administrators, counselors, school nurses, all non-teaching staff, parents/legal guardians, and students.

Students, parents/legal guardians, teachers, school administrators, counseling staff, bus drivers, non-teaching staff and school volunteers shall be given annual instruction at a minimum on the district's Policy and Regulations prohibiting bullying and/or harassment. The instruction shall include methods of preventing bullying and/or harassment, as well as how to effectively identify, prevent, and respond to bullying and/or harassment in schools.

## **OKEENE ELEMENTARY BULLYING AND/OR HARASSMENT (From their handbook)**

“Harassment, intimidation, and bullying” means any gesture, written or verbal expression, or physical act that a reasonable person should know will harm another student, damage another 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 students 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. “Harassment, intimidation, and bullying” include but are not limited to a gesture, written or verbal expression, or physical act.

Policy by the Okeene Board of Education and administration prohibits all harassment from occurring among its employees, and/or students or to its employees and/or students and will make efforts to prevent it from happening by advising its employees and/or students of its prohibition in handbooks, conversation and any other way possible.

In determining whether conduct constitutes a violation of harassment, the following shall be considered: the surrounding circumstances, the nature of the behavior, the relationships between those involved, and the context in which the incident(s) occurred.

Any conduct that is considered harassment, whether it happens to you directly, or you witness such conduct should be reported to the teacher in charge or the building principal.

The Okeene School District will discipline or take appropriate action against any pupil, teacher, administrator, or other school personnel who retaliates or attempts to retaliate against any person who reports incidents of harassment or violence, files a complaint of harassment, who testifies, assists or participates in any investigation, hearing or proceeding related to such harassment or violence. Retaliation includes but is not limited to any form of threat, intimidation, reprisal or discrimination.

### **Kinds of bullying include but are not limited to:**

***Physical Bullying:*** Harm to another’s body or property (threatening physical harm or gestures, tripping, hitting, starting fights destroying property, extortion, assaulting with a weapon (object).

***Emotional Bullying:*** Harm to another’s self-worth (insulting remarks, insulting gestures, harassing and frightening phone calls, challenging in public).

***Social Bullying:*** Harm to another’s group acceptance (gossiping,

sassing/talking back to school employees, playing mean tricks, spreading rumors, insulting race, excluding from the group arranging public humiliation, undermining other relationships, ruining reputation).

**Sexual Bullying:** Sexual harm to another (unwanted sexual comments and behaviors).

**Cyber Bullying:** Defined as a situation when a student or school employee is repeatedly harassed, humiliated, threatened, and intimidated, or otherwise targeted by another student or school employee by the use of digital technologies including but not limited to, instant and text messaging, e-mail, blogs, social websites, and chat rooms.

### **Okeene Elementary School Bullying Consequence Plan:**

Okeene Elementary School students are expected to exhibit civility at all times. Bullying behaviors will not be tolerated without consequences at Okeene Elementary School. The following outlines those consequences but does not limit other options that may be necessary depending on frequency and/or severity of the nature of the incidents.

- Step 1:** Behavior addressed with promise not to repeat and/or apology. (Minimum punishment) Report is filed.
- Step 2:** Behavior addressed with one day ISD (in-school detention). (Minimum punishment) Report is filed.
- Step 3:** Behavior addressed with three days ISD (in-school detention) and referral for counseling option. (Minimum punishment) Report is filed.
- Step 4:** Behavior is addressed with 3 days OSS (out of school suspension). Report is filed.