

## **514 BULLYING PROHIBITION POLICY**

### **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to prohibit bullying behavior and assist the Duluth School District in its goal of preventing and responding to acts of bullying, intimidation, violence, and other similar disruptive behavior.

The Duluth School District strives to provide safe, secure and respectful learning environments for all students in school buildings, on school grounds, school buses and at school-sponsored activities. A safe and civil environment is needed for students to learn and attain high academic standards and to promote healthy human relationships.

This policy protects all students against bullying behavior including bullying behavior on the basis of actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, creed, national origin, immigration status, sex, marital status, familial status, socioeconomic status, physical appearance, sexual orientation, including gender identity and expression, academic status related to student performance, disability, status with regard to public assistance, age, military status, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic defined in Minnesota Human Rights Act (Chapter 363A).

### **II. DEFINITIONS**

"Bullying" means intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct that is objectively offensive and:

- A. there is an actual or perceived imbalance of power between the student engaging in prohibited conduct and the target of the conduct and the conduct is repeated or forms a pattern; or
- B. materially and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges.

"Cyberbullying" means bullying using technology or other electronic communication, including, but not limited to, a transfer of a sign, signal, writing, image, sound, or data, including a post on a social network Internet website or forum, transmitted through a computer, cell phone, or other electronic device. The term applies to prohibited conduct which occurs on school premises, on school district property, at school functions or activities, on school transportation, or on school computers, networks, forums, and mailing lists, or off school premises to the extent that it substantially and materially disrupts student learning or the school environment.

"Intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct" means; but is not limited to, conduct that does the following:

- A. Causes physical harm to a student or a student's property or causes a student to be in reasonable fear of harm to person or property;
- B. Under Minnesota common law, violates a student's reasonable expectation of privacy, defames a student, or constitutes intentional infliction of emotional distress against a student; or

- C. Is directed at any student or students, including those based on a person's actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, creed, religion, national origin, immigration status, sex, marital status, familial status, socioeconomic status, physical appearance, sexual orientation, including gender identity and expression, academic status related to student performance, disability, or status with regard to public assistance, age, or any additional characteristic as defined in the MHRA. However, prohibited conduct need not be based on any particular characteristic defined in this paragraph or the MHRA.

"Remedial response" means a measure to stop and correct prohibited conduct, prevent prohibited conduct from recurring, and protect, support, and intervene on behalf of the student who is the target of the prohibited conduct. Remedial response also means a measure to stop and correct retaliation for asserting, alleging, reporting or providing information about prohibited conduct (retaliation) or knowingly making a false report about prohibited conduct (false report), prevent retaliation or false reports from recurring and protect, support and intervene on behalf of the student who is the target of the prohibited conduct.

"Prohibited conduct" means bullying or cyberbullying as defined in this policy or retaliation for asserting, alleging, reporting, or providing information about such conduct or knowingly making a false report about bullying.

"Immediately" means as soon as possible but in no event longer than one school day.

"District employee" includes school board members, administrators, educators, aides, school counselors, social workers, psychologists, other school mental health professionals, nurses and other school-based/linked medical providers/health professionals, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, extracurricular activities advisors, paraprofessionals, school employees, agents or persons subject to the supervision and control of the district and its students.

"On Duluth School District property or at school-related functions" means all Duluth School District buildings, school grounds, and school property or property immediately adjacent to school grounds, school bus stops, school buses, school vehicles, school contracted vehicles, or any other vehicles approved for Duluth School District purposes, the area of entrance or departure from school grounds, premises, or events, and all school-related functions, school-sponsored activities, events, or trips. Duluth School District property also may mean a student's walking route to or from school for purposes of attending school or school-related functions, activities, or events. While prohibiting bullying at these locations and events, the Duluth School District does not represent that it will provide supervision or assume liability at these locations and events.

"Building Report Taker" is language from the Safe and Supportive Schools legislation and in the Duluth School District means the Building Principal or Designee. This policy will refer to the "Building Report Taker" as "Principal or Designee" throughout the document.

### **III. STATEMENT OF PROHIBITION**

An act of bullying, by either an individual student or a group of students, is expressly prohibited on Duluth School District property or at school-related functions. This policy also applies to any student whose conduct at any time or in any place constitutes

bullying or other prohibited conduct that interferes with or obstructs the mission or operations of the school district or the safety or welfare of the student or other students, or materially and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges. This policy also applies to an act of cyberbullying regardless of whether such act is committed on or off school district property and/or with or without the use of school district resources.

Apparent permission or consent by a student being bullied does not lessen the prohibitions contained in this policy.

Retaliation against a victim, good faith reporter, or a witness of bullying is prohibited.

False accusations or reports of bullying against another student are also prohibited.

No District employee, volunteer, or contractor shall permit, condone, or tolerate bullying.

#### **IV. REPORTING PROCEDURE**

It is everyone's responsibility to report bullying behavior, not just the person targeted. Any student who believes he or she has been the victim of bullying or any person with knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying or prohibited conduct shall report the alleged acts immediately to the Building Principal or designee, either verbally or in writing.

A person may make an initial report to any District Employee and may report bullying anonymously. However, the Duluth School District's ability to take action against an alleged perpetrator based solely on an anonymous report may be limited.

The Duluth School District has made available to the reporting party or complainant the use of a report form. See the Parent & Student Handbook, contact the Principal, District Climate Coordinator, or visit [www.isd709.org](http://www.isd709.org) to access a "Bullying Report Form".

The building principal or designee is the person responsible for receiving reports of bullying at the building level. If the complaint involves the principal or designee, the complaint shall be made directly with the Assistant Superintendent or Superintendent of the Duluth School District. Please see our Parent & Student Handbook or Duluth School District Website at [www.isd709.org](http://www.isd709.org) for Principal and Duluth School District contact information.

The principal or designee shall ensure that this policy and its procedures, practices, consequences, and sanctions are fairly and fully implemented and shall serve as the primary contact on policy and procedural matters. The principal or designee or a third party designated by the school district shall be responsible for the investigation. The principal or designee shall provide information about available community resources to the target or victim of the bullying or other prohibited conduct, the perpetrator, and other affected individuals as appropriate.

A District employee, volunteer, or contractor shall be particularly alert to possible situations, circumstances, or events that might include bullying. Any such person who receives a report of, observes, or has other knowledge or belief of conduct that may

constitute bullying shall make reasonable efforts to address and resolve the prohibited conduct and inform principal or designee immediately. District employees who fail to inform the building report taker of conduct that may constitute bullying in a timely manner may be subject to disciplinary action.

Reports of bullying are classified as private educational and/or personnel data and/or confidential investigative data and will not be disclosed except as permitted by law.

The Duluth School District will respect the privacy of the complainant(s), the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and the witnesses as much as possible, consistent with the Duluth School District's obligation to investigate, take appropriate action, and comply with any legal disclosure obligations.

Submission of a good faith complaint or report of bullying will not affect the complainant's or reporter's future employment, grades, or work assignments, or educational or work environment.

## **V. PREVENTION, INVESTIGATION, AND RESPONSE**

Many student conflicts can be resolved immediately and do not require reporting or creation of an incident report or office discipline referral. Schools must respond to bullying in a manner tailored to the individual incident, considering the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance.

It is the Duluth School District's responsibility to prevent bullying and to take action to investigate, respond, remediate, and discipline those involved in acts of bullying which have not been successfully prevented - to the extent possible given that such conduct affects the educational environment of Duluth Schools and the rights and welfare of its students, and is within the control of Duluth School District in its normal operations.

Prevention - Each school will utilize research-based developmentally appropriate best practice prevention strategies. These prevention strategies may include but are not limited to: teaching respect and acceptance of difference between people, positive behavior interventions and supports, social emotional learning, intentionally creating positive student and staff relationships, and preparing students for when bullying behavior does occur.

Investigation - Investigation of a bullying incident shall be initiated as soon as possible but no later than three school days of receipt of a report. The Duluth School District may take immediate steps, at its discretion, to protect the target or victim of bullying or other prohibited conduct, the complainant, reporter, students, or others pending completion of an investigation of bullying, consistent with applicable law. When investigating a complaint, the principal/designee may take into account following factors:

- The developmental ages and maturity levels of the parties involved.
- The potential for culturally misinterpreting behavior.
- The levels of harm, surrounding circumstances, and nature of the behavior.
- Past incidences or past or continuing patterns of behavior.
- The relationship between the parties involved.
- The context in which the alleged incidents occurred.

The alleged perpetrator of the bullying or other prohibited conduct shall be allowed the opportunity to present a defense during the investigation or prior to the imposition of discipline or other remedial responses.

Remedial Response - Upon completion of the investigation, the Duluth School District will take appropriate action with the student harmed and with the student who violated the prohibited conduct policy.

- For the student harmed: Protect, support, and intervene on behalf of the student who is the target of the prohibited conduct. Support may include: safety planning, student conference(s), referral to student support staff for one-to-one support or social skills training; check-in and/or check-out with a trusted adult in the school; and choice to participate in a restorative process - facilitated by a trained facilitator. When an incident includes documentation through an office discipline referral, information regarding the student harmed will be included on the referral.
- For the student who violated the prohibited conduct policy: Schools may use multi-tiered levels of response that are individualized, consistent, reasonable, fair, and age-appropriate and should match the severity of the student's behavior and their developmental age. The response must be a natural and logical match to the prohibited behavior; consequences must be paired with meaningful instruction and guidance; and must be carefully planned with well-defined outcomes. Responses may include but are not limited to:
  - Safety planning
  - Student conference(s)
  - Working with parents of involved students
  - Teaching/reteaching of desired skills or behavior
  - Reinforcing desired skills or behaviors
  - School disciplinary action (detention, suspension, etc.)
  - Connecting students/families to school, district, community resources
  - Consideration of a restorative process if all parties are prepared and willing

Duluth School District action taken for violation of this policy will be consistent with the requirements of applicable collective bargaining agreements; applicable statutory authority, including the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act; Duluth School District policies; and regulations.

School officials will notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of students involved in a bullying incident and the remedial action taken, to the extent permitted by law, based on a confirmed report. The Duluth School District is not authorized to disclose to a victim private educational or personnel data regarding an alleged perpetrator who is a student or employee of the Duluth School District.

*In order to prevent or respond to bullying or other prohibited conduct committed by or directed against a child with a disability, the District shall, when determined appropriate by the child's individualized education program ("IEP") team or Section 504 team, allow the child's IEP or Section 504 plan to be drafted to address the skills and proficiencies the child needs as a result of the child's disability to allow the child to respond to or not to engage in bullying or other prohibited conduct.*

Appeal - Any party who is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal to the district's Office of the Assistant Superintendent within 10 school days of notification of the principal/designee's decision. The Assistant Superintendent or

designee will conduct a review of the appeal and, within 10 school days of receipt of the appeal, will affirm, reverse or modify the findings of the report. The Assistant Superintendent or designee shall notify the party requesting the appeal and the principal that its decision is final and shall document that notification with the appeal.

District Employees - When it is determined that a district employee was aware prohibited conduct was taking place but failed to report it, the employee will be considered to have violated this policy. The employee's supervisor shall consider employee discipline for such violations, making reference to any applicable collective bargaining agreement. Remedies for offending contractors should be imposed according to their Duluth School District contracts.

## **VI. REPRISAL**

The Duluth School District will take appropriate action against any student or District employee who retaliates against any person who testifies or participates in an investigation, or against any person who testifies, assists, or participates in a proceeding or hearing relating to such bullying. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, reprisal, harassment, or intentional disparate treatment.

## **VII. RECORDS**

Information gained when investigating and remediating reports of bullying will be recorded and kept by the Building Principal or designee. Information regarding the number of reports of bullying and the action taken to resolve the reports will be provided to Duluth School District Climate Coordinator by the Building Principal or designee annually.

Affected students and their parents may have rights under state and federal data practices laws to obtain access to data related to an incident and to contest the accuracy or completeness of the data.

## **VIII. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION**

The District shall discuss this Policy with District employees, volunteers, and contractors, and provide appropriate training and professional development to district employees regarding this Policy.

Staff - Professional development will:

- A. Be required on a three year cycle for all school personnel to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying behavior. Newly employed district employees must receive the training within the first year of their employment with the district or school. A district or school administrator may accelerate the training cycle or provide additional training based on particular needs or circumstances.
- B. Require ongoing professional development, consistent with Minnesota Statutes Section 122A.60, to build the skills of all school personnel who regularly interact with students to identify, prevent, and appropriately address bullying and other prohibited conduct. The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to:
  1. Developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent incidents of bullying and to

- intervene immediately and effectively to stop them in a manner that does not stigmatize the victim.
2. Information about the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an actor, target and witness to the bullying.
  3. Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk and any specific interventions that may be particularly effective for addressing bullying behavior related to bias.
  4. Recognizing, responding to and reporting bullying.
  5. Information about the incidence and nature of cyber bullying.
  6. Information about Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber bullying.
  7. Student staff relationships and initial responses to students making a report.
  8. A review of the district's reporting requirements related to bullying and cyber bullying.

Student Education - Each school shall incorporate into the school curriculum developmentally appropriate programmatic instruction to help students identify, prevent and reduce bullying and create a safe learning environment.

The Duluth School District will work with the Minnesota Department of Education Technical Assistance Center and provide resources for instruction and topics including but not limited to: evidence-based social-emotional learning to prevent and reduce discrimination and other improper conduct to engage all students in creating a safe and supportive school environment.

## **IX. NOTICE**

The Duluth School District will give annual notice of this policy to students, parents or guardians, and staff through the following practices:

- A. A script, orally or in writing, using age appropriate language, will be shared with all students during the fall of each school year.
- B. This policy shall fully appear in the Parent/Student Handbook with notice of the policy in the Employee Handbook.
- C. This policy shall be given to each school district employee and independent contractor at the time of entering into the person's employment contract.
- D. Information regarding this policy will be included in information communicated to volunteers at time of entering into volunteer agreement.
- E. A report will be provided annually to the School Board at the July Education Committee Meeting, including a summary of the number of bullying reports submitted and the action taken to resolve reports. This will be done without releasing any case specific information or personnel data.
- F. This policy must be available to all parents and other school community members in an electronic format in the languages appearing on the district or school Web site, consistent with the district policies and practices.

**Legal References:** Minn. Stat. § 120B.232 (Character Development Education)  
Minn. Stat. § 121A.03 (Sexual, Religious and Racial Harassment and Violence)  
Minn. Stat. § 121A.0695 (School Board Policy; Prohibiting Intimidation and Bullying)  
Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40-121A.56 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)  
Minn. Stat. § 121A.69 (Hazing Policy)  
Minn. Stat. § 121A.031 (Student Bullying Policy)

**Cross References:** MDE Model Policy, November 2014 (Model Student Bullying Prohibition Policy)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 514 (Bullying Prohibition Policy)

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