

## **Sparta Area School District**

### Article 533 – Bullying

The Sparta Area School District strives to provide a safe, secure and respectful learning environment for all students in school buildings, on school grounds, and school buses and at school-sponsored activities. Bullying has a harmful social, physical, psychological and academic impact on bullies, victims and bystanders. The school district consistently and vigorously addresses bullying so that there is no disruption to the learning environment and learning process.

#### **Definition**

Bullying is deliberate or intentional behavior using words or actions, intended to cause fear, intimidation or harm. Bullying may be repeated behavior and involves an imbalance of power. The behavior may be motivated by an actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic, such as, but not limited to: age; national origin; race; ethnicity; religion; gender; gender identity; sexual orientation; physical attributes; physical or mental ability or disability; and social, economic or family status.

Bullying behavior can be:

1. Physical (e.g. assault, hitting or punching, kicking, theft, threatening behavior)
2. Verbal (e.g. threatening or intimidating language, teasing or name-calling, racist remarks)
3. Indirect (e.g. spreading cruel rumors, intimidation through gestures, social exclusion and sending insulting messages or pictures by mobile phone or using the internet – also known as cyber bullying)

#### **Prohibition**

Bullying behavior is prohibited in all schools, buildings, property and educational environments, including any property or vehicle owned, leased or used by the school district. This includes public transportation regularly used by students to go to and from school. Educational environments include, but are not limited to, every activity under school supervision. While it is the intent of the District to prevent bullying, take actions to stop bullying, and protect reporters of bullying, the District cannot monitor the activities of students at all times and eliminate all incidents of bullying between students, particularly when students are not under the direct supervision of school personnel.

#### **Procedure for Reporting/Retaliation**

It is considered a responsibility of all students and staff members to watch for and report acts of bullying in any of the above-described situations to a school staff member, building administrator, or the Director of Pupil Services. Students are requested and encouraged to report acts of bullying to a school staff member, building administrator, or at a minimum a parent or other adult.

Reports of bullying may be made verbally or in writing and may be made confidentially. All such reports, whether verbal or in writing, will be taken seriously and a clear account of the incident is to be documented. A written record of the report, including all pertinent details, will be made by the recipient of the report.

The school employee receiving a report of bullying shall immediately notify the school district official assigned to investigate the report. The following school district officials have been identified as investigators:

PreKindergarten Charter School Principal  
Cataract Elementary School Principal  
Lakeview Montessori Charter School Principal  
Maplewood Elementary School Principal  
Southside Elementary School Principal  
Lawrence Lawson Elementary School Principal  
Meadowview Intermediate School Principal  
Meadowview Middle School Dean of Students  
Meadowview Middle School Principal  
High Point Charter School Principal  
SAILS Charter School Principal  
Sparta High School Assistant Principals  
Sparta High School Activities Director  
Sparta High School Principal  
Director of Pupil Services

There shall be no retaliation against individuals making such reports. Individuals engaging in retaliatory behavior will be subject to disciplinary action.

#### **Procedure for investigating reports of bullying**

The person assigned by the district to conduct an investigation of the bullying report shall, within one school day, interview the person(s) who are the victim(s) of the bullying and collect whatever other information is necessary to determine the facts and the seriousness of the report. Parents and/or guardians of each pupil involved in the bullying will be notified prior to the conclusion of the investigation. The district shall maintain the confidentiality of the report and any related pupil records to the extent required by law.

#### **Sanctions and supports**

If it is determined that a student participated in bullying behavior or retaliated against anyone due to the reporting of bullying behavior, the school district administration and school board may take disciplinary action which may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension, expulsion, and/or referral to law enforcement officials for possible legal action as appropriate. The District may take into account, but not be limited to the following factors: the developmental and maturity levels of the students involved; the circumstances; the severity of the behavior; and past incidences or continuing patterns of behavior. Consequences for employees who permit, condone, tolerate, or engage in bullying may result in disciplinary action consistent with the collective bargaining agreement or policy manual. Pupil services staff will provide support for the identified victim(s).

#### **Disclosure and Public Reporting**

The policy will be distributed annually to all students enrolled in the school district, their parents and/or guardians and employees. It will also be distributed to organizations in the community having cooperative agreements with the schools. The school district will also provide a copy of the policy to any person who requests it.

