

**School Board of School Trustees
Metropolitan School District of Decatur Township**

Students
5517.01-BULLYING

PURPOSE

It is the School Board's commitment to provide a safe, positive, productive and nurturing educational environment for all of its students. Bullying, like other violent or disruptive behavior, is conduct that interferes with students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to educate students in a safe environment. To the extent such conduct affects the educational environment of School District schools and the rights and welfare of its students, it is the School District's intent to prevent bullying and to take action to investigate, respond, remediate, and discipline those acts of bullying which have not been successfully prevented. Appropriate administrative and staff follow-up will be provided for targets and offenders of bullying. The purpose of this policy is to assist the School District in its goal of preventing and responding to acts of bullying, intimidation, violence, and other similar disruptive behavior. Bullying that also constitutes harassment is prohibited under Policy 5517.

The School Board continually encourages the promotion of positive interpersonal relations between members of the School District community.

GENERAL POLICY STATEMENT

An act of bullying, by, either an individual student or a group of students, is expressly prohibited on School District property, at school related functions, or in electronic form otherwise known as cyber bullying. This policy applies to all of the academic and nonacademic (for example, athletic and extracurricular) programs of the School District and will be enforced before, during, or after school hours on all school property, including the school bus, school functions, or events held at other locations. The policy also applies to any off-campus conduct that causes or threatens to cause a substantial and material disruption at school, or interferes with the rights of students or employees to be free from a hostile school environment taking into consideration the totality of the circumstances on and off campus. This policy applies not only to students who directly engage in an act of bullying but also to students who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support another student's act of bullying.

DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, the definitions included in this section apply.

1. **Bullying:** Unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:
 - a. *An Imbalance of Power:* Students who bully use their power-such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity-to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people
 - b. *Repetition:* Bullying behaviors happen more than once, or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose. There are four types of bullying:

1. Verbal bullying is saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying includes:
 - Teasing
 - Name-Calling
 - Taunting
 - Threatening to cause harm
2. Social Bullying, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:
 - Leaving someone out on purpose
 - Telling other children not to be friends with someone
 - Spreading rumors about someone
 - Embarrassing someone in public
3. Physical bullying involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes:
 - Hitting/kicking/pinching
 - Spitting
 - Tripping/pushing
 - Taking or breaking someone's things

- Making mean or rude hand gestures
4. Electronic/written communication involves cyber-bullying, collective or group note writing, any bullying undertaken through the use of electronic devices (e.g., computer, cell phones.)

Bullying can take a variety of forms. As noted above, it can be a written, verbal or electronic expression, a physical act or gesture, graphic representation (e.g. graffiti). Bullying may include the misuse of technology in any form, including sending or posting email messages, instant messages, text messages, blog or social media postings, digital pictures or images, or other electronic postings, regardless of whether such acts are committed on or off School District property and/or with or without the use of School District resources.

Bullying based on one or more of the Protected Classes as set forth in the Board’s Policy on Nondiscrimination and Access to Equal Educational Opportunity actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ancestry, ethnic group identification, sex (including gender, gender identity, gender expression, and nonconformity with gender stereotypes), religion, marital or parental status, disability, sexual orientation, age, or military status or association with someone who is or is perceived to be a member of one or more of these Protected Classes), may also constitute a violation of the School District’s Anti-Harassment Policy.

2. **School District Employee:** For purposes of this policy includes School Board members, School District employees, agents, volunteers, contractors/vendors, or persons subject to the supervision and control of the School District.
3. **Immediately or Immediate:** Within two (2) school days.
4. **On School District Property, at school-related functions, or in electronic form:** All 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 School District purposes, the area of entrance or departure from school grounds, premises, or events, all school-related functions, school-sponsored activities, events, or trips, the use of any School District technology equipment or system on or off-campus, the use of a personal digital device on campus, or off-campus electronic communication that causes or threatens to cause a substantial and material disruption at school or interference with the rights of students or employees to be secure. 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 or events or through use of School District technology resources, the School District does not

represent that it will provide supervision or assume liability at these location or events or through use of School District technology resources.

REPRISAL

The School Board will also take immediate steps to impose appropriate disciplinary action on or use other non-disciplinary interventions or supports for individuals engaging in any of the following prohibited acts

- a. Retaliating against a person who has made a report or filed a complaint alleging bullying, or who has participated as a witness in a bullying investigation.
- b. Disregarding, failing to investigate adequately, or delaying investigation of allegations of harassment, when responsibility for reporting and /or investigating harassment charges comprises part of one's supervisory duties.

COMPLAINT, INVESTIGATION, AND APPEAL PROCEDURES

The District will investigate and respond to all incidents or complaints of discrimination, harassment, bullying, hazing, and similar conduct under common complaint, investigation, and appeal procedures, as set forth in **Administrative Guidelines 5517.01-Bullying.**

REVIEW OF THE POLICY

This policy and its accompanying administrative guidelines will be reviewed by the School Board or its designee on an annual basis and, if necessary, will be revised to conform to applicable state and Federal law.

NOTICE

The School District will give annual notice of this policy and its accompanying administrative guidelines to students, parents or guardians, and staff, and give notice of this policy in the student handbook. The entire policy can be accessed at <http://www.neola.com/msddecatur-in/>, by clicking on **5000-Students** for a list of the policies.