

## 411.1 HARASSMENT AND/OR BULLYING OF STUDENTS

Harassment and/or bullying of students will not be tolerated in the Williams Bay Public Schools, which includes any property or vehicles owned, leased, or used by the schools. The School Board considers these actions to be detrimental to the health and safety of students, and disruptive to the educational environment. Policy 411.2 relates to Title IX sexual harassment, and any report or formal complaint related to Title IX sexual harassment will be processed under that policy.

The educational environment is defined as consisting of every activity under the supervision of each school. For purposes of this policy, "**Harassment, intimidation, or bullying**" means any act that substantially interferes with a student's educational benefits, opportunities, or performance, that takes place on or immediately adjacent to school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity, on school-provided transportation or at any official school bus stop, and that has the effect of:

- physically harming a student or damaging a student's property
- knowingly placing a student in reasonable fear of physical harm to the student or damage to the student's property; or
- creating a hostile educational environment.

The following definitions are provided for guidance only. If a student or other individual believes there has been bullying, regardless of whether it fits a particular definition, s/he should report it and allow the administration to determine the appropriate course of action.

"**Bullying**" is defined above. Some examples of bullying are:

- Physical – hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, pulling, taking and/or damaging personal belongings or extorting money, blocking, or impeding student movement, unwelcome physical contact.
- Verbal – taunting, malicious teasing, insulting, name calling, making threats.
- Psychological – spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, coercion, or engaging in social exclusion/shunning, extortion, or intimidation.

**"Cyberbullying"** – the use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messaging (IM), defamatory personal web sites, and defamatory online personal polling web sites, to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others."

The Board recognizes that cyberbullying can be particularly devastating to young people because:

- Cyberbullies more easily hide behind the anonymity that the Internet provides.
- Cyberbullies spread their hurtful messages to a very wide audience with remarkable speed.
- Cyberbullies do not have to own their own actions, as it is usually very difficult to identify cyberbullies because of screen names, so they do not fear being punished for their actions.
- The reflection time that once existed between the planning of a prank – or a serious stunt – and its commission has all but been erased when it comes to cyberbullying activity.
- Hacking into or otherwise gaining access to another's electronic accounts (e-mail, social media, etc.) and posing as that individual with the intent to embarrass or harm the individual.

Cyberbullying includes, but is not limited to the following:

- posting slurs or rumors or other disparaging remarks about a student on a web site or on weblog;
- sending e-mail or instant messages that are mean or threatening, or so numerous as to drive-up the victim's cell phone bill;
- using a camera phone to take and send embarrassing photographs of students;
- posting misleading or fake photographs of students on web sites.

**"Harassment"** includes, but is not limited to, any act which subjects an individual or group to unwanted, abusive behavior of a nonverbal, verbal, written or physical nature on the basis of sex, (including transgender status, change of sex, or gender identity), race, color, national origin, religion, creed, ancestry, marital or parental status, sexual orientation or physical, mental, emotional or learning disability, or any other characteristic protected by Federal or State civil rights laws.

**"Intimidation"** includes, but is not limited to, any threat or act intended to tamper, substantially damage or interfere with another's property, cause substantial inconvenience, subject another to offensive physical contact or inflict serious physical injury on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.

**"Menacing"** includes, but is not limited to, any act intended to place a school employee, student, or third party in fear of imminent serious physical injury.

The administration and staff will inform students that the Williams Bay School District does not tolerate harassment, bullying, or hazing in any form and will take all necessary and appropriate action to eliminate it, up to and including discipline of offenders. Students will be informed of this policy annually and the complaint procedure will be made available to any students or parent/guardian wishing to file a complaint.

It is the responsibility of administrators, staff members, and all students to ensure that these prohibited activities do not occur.

Any student who believes he/she has been subject to harassment and/or bullying may file a complaint in accordance with established complaint procedures or may complain directly to the building principal or designee. The student may also report concerns to a teacher or counselor who will be responsible for notifying the appropriate administrator or Board official.

Any student or parent/guardian who becomes aware of or witnesses harassment and/or bullying has an obligation to report and will be supported by involved staff members in reporting the bullying/harassment to the proper authorities. Any District employee who becomes aware of or witnesses harassment and/or bullying has an obligation to intervene and report.

Filing a complaint or otherwise reporting harassment and/or bullying in good faith will not reflect upon the individual's status nor will it affect his/her grades or benefits provided by the District. The District shall respect the confidentiality of both the complainant and the accused consistent with the District's legal obligations and with the necessity to investigate allegations of misconduct and to take corrective and/or disciplinary action when this conduct has occurred.

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.

All complaints about behavior that may violate this policy shall be investigated promptly by the building principal. The staff member who is investigating the report of bullying shall interview the victim(s) of the alleged bullying and collect whatever other information is necessary to determine the facts and the seriousness of the report.

Parents and/or guardians of each student involved in the bullying report will be notified prior to the conclusion of the investigation. The District shall maintain the confidentiality of the report and any related student records to the extent required by law.

If the investigation finds that bullying has occurred, it will result in prompt and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action. This may include student discipline, including, but not limited to reprimand, suspension, or possible expulsion. Further, the result of an investigation that finds that bullying has occurred may result in discharge for employees, exclusion for parents, guests, volunteers, and contractors, and removal from any official position and/or a request to resign for Board members. Individuals may also be referred to law enforcement officials.

The complainant shall be notified of the findings of the investigation, and as appropriate, that remedial action has been taken. This policy shall not be interpreted to infringe upon the First Amendment rights of students (i.e., to prohibit a reasoned and civil exchange of opinions, or debate, that is conducted at appropriate times and places during the school day and is protected by State or Federal law).

Students who engage in harassment and/or bullying in violation of this policy and/or retaliating against an individual for reporting harassment and/or bullying shall be subject to school disciplinary measures consistent with District policies and procedures up to and including suspension and/or expulsion.

APPROVED: August 8, 1994  
REVISED: February 10, 2003  
August 9, 2010  
September 11, 2017  
August 5, 2020  
May 24, 2021