

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Purpose

Bullying is contrary to Illinois law and the policies of Matteson School District. The Illinois General Assembly has found that a safe and civil school environment is necessary for students to learn and to achieve, and that bullying causes physical, psychological and emotional harm to students, as well as interfering with students' ability to learn and to participate in school activities. 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7. It is the goal of the Board of Education (the "Board") of Matteson School District No. 162 ("District 162") to create a learning environment in all its school communities which protects students from bullying so that students feel safe and supported in their efforts to succeed academically and to reach their full potentials. This policy and District 162's bullying prevention and response procedures are based upon the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents/guardians. This policy provides District 162's anti-bullying policy and is consistent with all other policies of this Board and District 162. Nothing in this Policy is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article 1 of the Illinois Constitution.

Scope

Illinois law prohibits bullying of students on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, gender, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic. Bullying is prohibited:

1. in school, on school property, on school buses or other Board-approved transportation, and at designated locations where students wait for buses and other Board provided transportation ("bus stops");
2. during any school-sponsored or school-sanctioned activity;
3. through the transmission of information from a District 162 computer or computer network, or other District 162 equipment;
4. through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed at a non-school related location, activity, function, or program, or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the orderly operation of a school, provided that District personnel receive a report of such bullying;
5. when communicated through any electronic technology or personal electronic device while on school property, on school buses or other Board-provided transportation, at bus stops, and at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities;

6. when it is conveyed that a threat will be carried out in a school setting, including threats made outside school hours with the indicated intent to carry out such threats during any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity or on Board provided transportation; and
7. when such misconduct occurs off campus but seriously disrupts a school's operation.

Definitions

“**Bullying**” includes “cyber-bullying” and means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students, which has or can reasonably be predicted to have one or more of the following effects:

1. placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property;
2. causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health;
3. substantially interfering with the student's academic performance; and/or
4. substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in and/or benefit from the services, activities or privileges provided by a District 162 school.

Bullying may take various forms, including, without limitation, one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

“**Cyber-bullying**” means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including, without limitation, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photoelectronic system, or photo-optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. “Cyber-bullying” includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Policy. “Cyber-bullying” also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Policy.

“**Retaliation**” means any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of alleged bullying, or based upon an individual's witnessing or having information relating to bullying.

“**Restorative Measures**” that shall be considered pursuant to this policy means a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline such as suspensions and expulsion, which:

1. are adapted to the particular needs of the school community;
2. contribute to maintaining school safety;
3. protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate;
4. teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and in society;
5. serve to build and to restore relationships among students, families, schools and communities; and
6. reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep student in school as appropriate.

Intervening to Address Bullying

Responsibilities of District 162 Employees and Contractors

All District 162 employees and contractors who witness incidents of bullying or school violence or who possess reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a person is a target of bullying must:

1. intervene immediately in a manner that is appropriate to the context and protects to the greatest possible extent the safety of all people involved;
2. report the incident of bullying to the school's Principal/Designee as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours, and the Principal shall immediately advise District 162's Superintendent of the reported incident and the proposed course of action to resolve the incident; and
3. cooperate fully in any investigation of the incident.

Responsibilities of Students and Parents/Guardians

No student who witnesses bullying may stand by or participate in the bullying, but must notify an adult of the incident as soon as practicable. Any parent/guardian who witnesses or is notified of bullying has an obligation to notify the Principal of the school where the bullying occurred, as soon as possible.

Reporting

Individuals should initially report incidents of bullying to the principal of the school where the bullying was observed or to District 162's Superintendent. Specifically, in order to satisfy their responsibility to report bullying, District 162 employees, contractors, parents and students may make such reports in person or via telephone or email communications to the following District 162 personnel with contact information as stated below, which list shall be updated as necessary by the Superintendent or designee:

1. **Arcadia School Principal Dr. Stephanie Healy**: 708-747-3535, extension 5999 or shealy@sd162.org
2. **Huth School Principal Ms. Brenda Calvin**: 708-748-0470, extension 2799 or bcalvin@sd162.org

3. **Illinois School Principal Dr. Shernita Mays**: 708-747-0301, extension 2699 or smays@sd162.org
4. **Indiana School Principal Ms. Tracye Hutsona**: 708-747-5300, extension 3799 or thutsona@sd162.org
5. **Matteson School Principal Ms. Kisha Houston**: 708-748-0480, extension 4299 or khouston@sd162.org
6. **Richton Square Principal Ms. Kim McGuire**: 708-748-0480, extension 4299 or kmcguire@sd162.org
7. **Sauk School Principal Dr. Richard Morgan**: 708-747-2660, extension 7199 or rmorgan@sd162.org
8. **District 162 Superintendent Dr. Blondean Y. Davis**: 708-748-0100, extension 4124 or bdavis@sd162.org

If the initial report of bullying is to District 162's Superintendent, the School Principal shall be notified of the report as soon as possible. District 162's Superintendent shall ensure that this policy is updated as necessary so that the above-listed personnel and their contact information are correctly stated at all times while this policy remains in effect.

As required by applicable Illinois law, it is the express policy of District 162 that anonymous reports of bullying may be submitted, in writing or via telephone to the above-listed personnel, who shall investigate such anonymous reports in an effort to determine the underlying facts; however, discipline of individuals allegedly responsible for incidents of bullying shall not occur solely on the basis of such anonymous reports.

Investigation

Upon being notified of an incident of alleged bullying, District 162's Superintendent or her designee shall conduct an investigation as deemed necessary for the appropriate resolution of the incident, which investigation shall be initiated and completed as soon as practicable, making all reasonable efforts to complete such investigation within ten (10) school days after the date the report of the incident alleged bullying was received, taking into consideration all relevant information received during the course of the investigation. The investigation shall consider whether a reported act of bullying is within the permissible scope of District 162's jurisdiction. Consistent with federal and state laws and rules governing student privacy rights, the Superintendent shall ensure that parents/guardians of students who are the subjects of such investigation have the opportunity to meet with District 162 personnel as appropriate so that the parents/guardians are informed of the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying. As deemed appropriate, the Superintendent shall ensure that school personnel and other District 162 staff members with knowledge, training experience and training regarding bullying prevention are involved in the investigation process.

Imposing Consequences

District 162's Superintendent shall ensure that District 162 responds to incidents of potential bullying in a manner tailored to the individual incident, which includes consideration of the nature of the behavior at issue, the developmental age of the student(s) involved, and involved students' history of inappropriate behaviors. The Superintendent shall ensure that all potentially appropriate interventions to address incidents of bullying are considered, including, but not limited to, appropriate discipline, social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services. As appropriate and consistent with federal and state laws and requirements governing student privacy rights, the Superintendent shall ensure that the parents/guardians of all students involved in an alleged incident of bullying are informed of the matter, as well as the availability of appropriate interventions, including, but not limited to, social work services, counseling, school psychological services, and restorative measures.

Potential disciplinary consequences for students are outlined in District 162's Uniform Discipline Policy. Acts of reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying are strictly prohibited and an individual who engages in such acts will be disciplined pursuant to the Uniform Discipline Code for students or other disciplinary policies, procedures and rules applicable to other individuals. Likewise, any person found to have made a false accusation of bullying as a means of retaliation or as a means of bullying shall be subject to discipline pursuant to the Uniform Discipline Code for students or such other policies, procedures and rules applicable to other individuals.

Consequences for District 162 Employees and Contractors

When it is determined that a District 162 employee or contractor was aware that bullying had occurred but failed to report it to the school's Principal and/or District 162's Superintendent, the employee/contractor has violated this policy and therefore has violated his/her obligations to District 162 and District 162's students. District 162's Superintendent shall impose and/or recommend imposition by this Board of appropriate discipline/sanctions for such misconduct, up to and including the termination of employment and/or termination of third party contractual relationships.

Notice and Dissemination Requirements

District 162's Superintendent shall ensure that this Anti-Bullying Policy is appropriately communicated to: (1) District 162 students and their parents/guardians each year via appropriate methods, including, without limitation, publication on District 162's website and in District 162's Student and Parent Handbook; (2) District 162 administrators, faculty and staff as part of District 162's annual professional development programs; and (3) District 162 contractors who will have contact with District 162 students in performing their contractual obligations to District 162. In addition, this Anti-Bullying Policy must be filed with the Illinois State Board of Education upon its approval by the Board, must be updated every two (2) years, and must be re-filed with the Illinois State Board of Education after being updated.

Submission and Review of Policy

Pursuant to applicable Illinois law, this policy shall be filed with the Illinois State Board of Education. Every two (2) years, the Superintendent shall ensure that a review and re-evaluation of this policy is

conducted and any necessary and appropriate revisions are made and submitted to the Board for approval. The process of reviewing and re-evaluating this policy shall include an assessment of the outcomes and effectiveness of the policy which shall include, but is not limited to, factors such as: (1) the frequency of victimization via incidents of bullying; (2) student, staff, and family observations regarding safety at school; (3) identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs; (4) the types of bullying which have occurred; and (5) bystander intervention or participation. In the evaluation of this policy, District 162 may use relevant data which it already collects for other purposes. The information developed as a result of the evaluation of this policy shall be made available on District 162's website.

Adopted: 2/19/08

Revised: 8/20/13

8/19/14

12/21/21

3/21/23