

## **Students**

### **Bullying**

Board of Education policy prohibits bullying as defined in the policy on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities. Board policy #5131.911 defines bullying as “any overt acts by a student or a group of students directed against another student with the intent to ridicule, humiliate or intimidate the other student while on school grounds or at a school-sponsored activity, which acts are repeated over time.”

#### **I. Definition of Bullying**

In assessing whether “bullying” in violation of Board Policy #5131.911 occurred, administrators should consider the following:

- A. Whether the misconduct occurred on school property or at a school-sponsored activity. “School-sponsored activity” is defined in Board Policy #5131.911 and state statutes as “any activity sponsored, recognized or authorized by [the Board of Education] and includes activities conducted on or off school property.”
- B. Whether the misconduct was repeated against the same student over time. A single incident, though it may warrant discipline, is not a violation of Board Policy (number).
- C. Whether the misconduct constitutes a single act of misconduct against a student or a series of distinct acts of misconduct each against a different student and therefore does not meet the definition of bullying because the behavior has not been repeated against the same student over time.
- D. Whether the misconduct was directed at a student with the intent to ridicule, humiliate or intimidate that student. Only misconduct from which such intent reasonably can be inferred violates the policy against bullying. The extent to which misconduct took place in the presence of third parties will be relevant to determining the required intent, though an intent to ridicule, humiliate or intimidate also can be found when conduct is not witnessed by others.

#### **II. Publication to Students and Parents**

To ensure notification to students and parents of Board Policy #5131.911 prohibiting bullying, student handbooks will contain a statement incorporating the definition of bullying set forth in Board Policy #5131.911 and a statement of how and where parents and students can access a copy of the policy. Handbooks will also state that any student found to have engaged in bullying as defined in Board policy #5131.911 will be subject to disciplinary action, including suspension and expulsion in accordance with Board Policy #5131.911. In addition, each student handbook will contain the following language:

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#### **II. Publication to Students and Parents (continued)**

Board Policy #5131.911 regarding bullying on school property or at school-sponsored activities, provides that a student who believes he or she has been the victim of bullying (or any other person, including parents or guardians) may report the matter, orally or in writing, to any teacher or member of the school administration. The policy also provides that students may anonymously report acts of bullying to teachers and administrators and that parents or guardians may file reports of suspected bullying.

#### **III. Informing Staff**

Building principals shall be responsible for informing teachers and other school staff of their responsibility to report to administrators any acts of bullying witnessed by them or any reports of bullying received by them. Information provided to teachers and staff shall include a requirement that acts and reports of bullying be reported to administrators as soon as possible but in no event later than twenty-four hours after the teacher or other staff member witnessed any act of bullying or received any report of bullying. Teachers and other staff will be advised that they are required to be familiar with Board Policy #5131.911 regarding bullying and this administrative regulation and be provided a copy of the policy and this regulation upon request.

#### **IV. Investigation of Complaints or Reports of Bullying**

Upon notification by a building administrator or other person of a report or complaint of bullying the Building Principal, or other appropriate administrator, will promptly investigate the complaint or report or cause such an investigation to be conducted. The investigation will include interviews with the complainant or reporter, the alleged victim, the alleged perpetrator or perpetrators, and any witnesses. The statements of the alleged victim, the alleged perpetrator, and witnesses, if any, will be recorded and the person interviewed will be asked to read and sign the statement unless the person's age makes such a request for a signature inappropriate. Where anonymity is requested, the statements of persons interviewed will be recorded without reference to the person's name. Where the alleged victim of bullying requests anonymity he or she, and his or her parent or guardian, will be advised that such a request may hinder the ability of the administration to take appropriate disciplinary action if bullying is substantiated.

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#### **V. Reporting and Notification Obligations**

- A. Parents or guardians of students who have engaged in acts of bullying and the parents or guardians of students against whom such acts have been directed must be notified of the results of the investigation. The notification shall include a description of the response of school staff to such acts and any consequences that may result from the commission of further acts of bullying.
- B. The notification will be made by the Superintendent or a member of the school administration designated by the Superintendent to provide such notification in a manner that is consistent with the confidentiality of personally identifiable information contained in student records and student due process rights. This means that the notice shall not disclose to the parent or guardian of the victim either the name of the perpetrator or the specific disciplinary consequences imposed upon the perpetrator. The notification also shall not include any reference to the specific consequences that a student may face for further acts of bullying since as a matter of due process such consequences cannot be determined in advance. Rather, such notification will advise the parents that further acts of bullying may lead to additional discipline, such as suspension or expulsion, in accordance with Board Policy #5131.911 and other relevant policies that govern student conduct.
- C. The notification may include a description of measures undertaken to prevent further acts of bullying by the student or students involved.

#### **VI. Post Investigation Intervention and Actions**

##### **Student discipline**

Bullying behavior can take many forms and therefore will vary in severity. As a result, the extent of discipline, if any, to be imposed where bullying is substantiated cannot be prescribed in advance. Nevertheless, in all cases where bullying is substantiated the Superintendent will be informed so that a determination can be made as to whether expulsion should be recommended under Board Policy #5131.911. In cases where the Superintendent decides that expulsion is not warranted what disciplinary action may be appropriate will be determined by the building administration in accordance with Board Policy #5131.911.

Where the victim of bullying and/or witnesses to bullying request anonymity but bullying has been substantiated, discipline up to and including suspension may be imposed consistent with any applicable due process requirements of Board Policy #5131.911.

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#### VI. Post Investigation Intervention and Actions (continued)

##### Intervention with or without disciplinary action and classroom activities

Normally, substantiated acts of bullying will be met with the imposition of some form of student discipline. Whether or not discipline is imposed the school administration will take reasonable measures to prevent further acts of bullying by the student or students involved. Such measures may include counseling afforded both the victim and perpetrator(s) of bullying. Other preventive measures may be employed on a school wide basis such as the use of curriculum that fosters, among other positive character traits, respect for the personal integrity of others both physical and mental, and other instructional strategies intended to foster student mutual respect, and modeling by teachers of appropriate behavior on the part of students.

#### VII. List of Number of Verified Acts of Bullying

As required by state law and Board Policy a list of the number of verified acts of bullying shall be maintained and be available for public inspection in each of the district's schools. This list shall reflect only the number of verified acts of bullying and shall not contain any student personally identifiable information. The building Principal will be responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the number on the list maintained in his/her school and that members of the public upon request have prompt access to the list or are provided a copy thereof if one is requested in writing.

Legal References: Connecticut General Statutes

PA 02-119, An Act Concerning Bullying Behavior in Schools and Concerning the Pledge of Allegiance

10-233a Definitions

10-233b Removal of pupils from class

10-233c Suspension of pupils

10-233d Expulsion of pupils

10-233e Notice as to disciplinary policies and action

10-233f In-school suspension of pupils. Reassignment

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WATERFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Waterford, Connecticut