

JFCZ. BULLYING PREVENTION AND AWARENESS POLICY [Norfolk]

I. PURPOSE AND SUPERINTENDENT AUTHORITY

A. Purpose

Bullying creates an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, is unproductive and unacceptable, and harms school culture and climate. It further harms the individual lives of the students who are bullied, the bystander and the bully. Bullying should be prevented and intervention should be taken in cases where bullying has been reported or is suspected. The School Board of the City of Norfolk, recognizing the negative impact of bullying on student health, safety, and on the learning environment, is committed to the provision of school settings that are safe, secure and free from bullying of any kind.

B. Superintendent Authority

The superintendent is hereby authorized to promulgate comprehensive regulations consistent with this policy concerning bullying, cyberbullying and intimidation, including but not limited to, regulations concerning bullying and intimidation, and training of students and staff.

II. BULLYING

“Bullying” means any aggressive and unwanted behavior that is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim; involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor or aggressors and student who is bullied; and is repeated over time or causes severe emotional trauma. “Bullying” includes cyberbullying. Bullying does not include ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument or peer conflict.

A student, either individually or as a part of a group, shall not bully other either in person or by the use of any communication technology including computer systems, telephones, or instant messaging systems. Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to physical, verbal, or written intimidation, taunting, name-calling, and insults and any combination of prohibited activities.

III. DISSEMINATION

To promote school settings that discourage and prohibit bullying, it shall be included in codes of student conduct, policies and procedures that include a prohibition against bullying. Policy should be prominently displayed on the divisions’ and individual schools’ websites and in every school building.

IV. BULLYING PREVENTION COORDINATION

The Department of Student Support Services should be designated to oversee program planning and implementation that includes: (1) annual training for faculty, staff and students on how to prevent and identify bullying, how to report suspected bullying, and how to take developmentally appropriate steps to intervene with bullying (2) procedures for receiving, reporting and investigating complaints; (3) parental involvement; (4) privacy and confidentiality for all involved individuals; and (5) notification of law enforcement when it is suspected a criminal offense may have occurred.

V. BULLYING EDUCATION

Students shall receive annual age-appropriate character education programs. The purpose of the character education program is to “instill in students civic virtues and personal character traits so as to improve the learning environment, promote student achievement, reduce disciplinary problems, and develop civic minded students with high character.” The program shall also address the inappropriateness of bullying.

Information about the Anti-Bullying and Safe Schools Hotline, established for students to report incidents and concerns anonymously of bullying, should be included in these character education programs. Also, district provided posters displaying Bullying Awareness information and the Anti-Bullying and Safe Schools Hotline should be prominently displayed in high traffic areas of all schools.

The district shall implement research based bullying prevention and intervention programs and provide annual training of school personnel in examples of appropriate management of student conduct on how to identify, respond to, and report incidents of bullying.

A bullying awareness and prevention campaign will coincide with National Bullying Prevention Month each year. The campaign will involve all schools and departments.

VI. REPORTING BULLYING

Reports of bullying may be made by target students, the parent/guardian of a target student, or a close relative of a target student, and staff members either orally, written or electronically, with the understanding that all reports will be taken seriously and handled with confidentiality. Anyone who believes to be subject of an incident of bullying is encouraged to report the incident immediately.

Reports may be made anonymously. No disciplinary action will be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students intentionally making false accusations of bullying may be subject to disciplinary action. Steps should be taken at the time of reporting to assure the protection of the person reporting bullying or witness(es) from retaliation. The confidentiality of the person reporting bullying or witness(es) should be maintained.

Reports of alleged bullying should be responded to or investigated by the building principal/designee as promptly and thoroughly as possible, within five (5) business days after receiving the report. All reports investigated shall be documented using a form made available for documentation by the district.

The building principal/designee shall, within five (5) business days, notify the parent of any student involved in an alleged incident of bullying of the status of the investigation.

VII. INVESTIGATION

The investigation of a reported incident of bullying is initiated when deemed to be a school related activity and shall begin upon receiving a complaint of such an act. The building principal or designee are to be responsible for conducting the investigation.

The investigator, in a reasonable amount of time, shall conduct and document interviews with the alleged aggressor, target student, and witnesses to the complaint. The investigation will at no time allow the alleged aggressor and target student to be interviewed at the same time. Interviews with the alleged aggressor, target student, and witnesses should be conducted privately and separately.

Interviews should be documented and kept confidential. The investigator may evaluate other sources of information and materials that may be considered relevant to the investigation.

The investigator shall attempt to secure the statements from all witnesses to the alleged incident, and document the statements on the appropriate Witness Statement Form.

The investigator shall assess the needs of the alleged target student, and create and implement a plan to secure the student's sense of safety.

The investigator shall collect and evaluate the facts of the complaint, and apply the appropriate disciplinary action in a manner that is consistent with the Standards of Student Conduct.

A written record of the reported incident of bullying, and disciplinary action shall be maintained.

VIII. RECORDKEEPING

All reported incidents of bullying and information related to the investigation of bullying complaints shall be documented in a file maintained by the school.

IX. ADDITIONAL CONCERNS

After identifying those who have been determined as having committed an act of bullying, the administrator will apply disciplinary action consistent with the Standards of Student Conduct. A student identified as an aggressor will further receive supports that include a school-based component to address intervention and assistance as determined appropriate that would include research-based counseling/interventions to address the behavior of the student who bullies and harasses others (e.g., empathy training, anger management).

Please refer to the associated regulation supporting this policy in furtherance of the procedures to prevent and mitigate acts of bullying, intimidation, and harassment.

Cross Ref.

JFHA/GBA. Sexual Harassment/Harassment Based on Race, National Origin, Disability and Religion
JFC-R. Student Conduct

Legal Ref.:

Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 22.1-276.01, 22.1-279.6, 22.1-208.01.

Model Policy to Address Bullying in Virginia's Public Schools (Virginia Department of Education October 2013)

VA Compilation of School Discipline Laws and Regulations. (Department of Education January 2018)