

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Section J: Students	File: JICD
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It is the goal of the Newburyport School Committee to promote a learning atmosphere for students free from all forms of bullying. Because bullying affects not only students who are targets but also those who participate and witness such behavior, it is detrimental to student learning and achievement and will not be tolerated by Newburyport Public Schools.

Newburyport Public Schools prohibits all forms of harassment, discrimination and hate crimes based on race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age or disability. Newburyport Public Schools recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to become a target of bullying and harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including “race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have 1 or more of these characteristics.” The civil rights of all school community members are guaranteed by law. The protection of those rights is of utmost importance and priority to our school district. Newburyport Public Schools also prohibits bullying of school community members for reasons unrelated to their race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or disability. Further, Newburyport Public Schools will also not tolerate retaliation against persons who report an incident(s) of bullying and/or harassment.

Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students or school staff members of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- (a) causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target’s property;
- (b) places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property;
- (c) creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- (d) infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- (e) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

For the purposes of this policy and related procedures, bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings.

As is required by Massachusetts General Law, curriculum concerning the prevention of bullying and the fostering of a safe and nurturing school climate at each school shall be implemented in the Newburyport Public Schools.

All reports of bullying will be promptly investigated and will subject the perpetrator(s) to disciplinary action in accordance with the student handbooks/policies and/or the collective bargaining agreement. Bullying actions will include, when appropriate, referral to law enforcement agencies or other state agencies. Newburyport Public Schools will support this policy in all aspects of its activities, including its curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities and parental involvement.

This policy applies to all sites and activities under the supervision and control of the district, or where it has jurisdiction under the law, including school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school.

Bullying is also prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the district, if the act or acts in question create a hostile environment at school for the target, infringe on the rights of the target at school or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

The School Committee expects the Superintendent or his/her designees, to make clear to students and staff members that bullying will not be tolerated and will be grounds for disciplinary action.

All staff members are required to report any bullying or harassment they see or learn about. The district will promptly and reasonably investigate allegations of harassment, including bullying. The Principal or his/her designee will be responsible for handling all complaints by students alleging harassment or bullying. Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, who provides information during an investigation of bullying, or who is a witness to or has reliable information about bullying, is prohibited.

Nothing in this policy is designed or intended to limit the District’s authority to discipline or take remedial action under General Laws Chapter 71, §37H or other statutes or regulations, or in response to violent, harmful, or disruptive behavior, regardless of whether this policy covers the conduct. Reports of cyberbullying by electronic or other means, occurring in or out of school will be reviewed and, when a connection to school exists, will prompt investigation and disciplinary action.

The Superintendent will develop administrative guidelines and procedures for implementation of this policy, consistent with the requirements of M.G.L. Chapter 71 §37O and related guidelines issued by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The Superintendent in conjunction with principals will publish disciplinary policies in Student Handbooks, which shall prohibit bullying and shall include the bullying prevention and intervention plan required by Chapter 71, §37O of the Laws of the Commonwealth. Student handbooks shall include age-appropriate summaries of the student-related sections of the district’s bullying prevention and intervention plan.

The Superintendent and/or his/her designee shall develop, adhere to, and update a plan to address bullying prevention and intervention, in consultation with district stakeholders. The plan shall be reviewed and updated at least biennially. The bullying intervention plan will recognize that certain students may be more vulnerable to become a target of bullying and harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including “race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have 1 or more of these characteristics.” The District’s bullying intervention plan will include the specific steps that each school will take to support these vulnerable students and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge and strategies needed to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment.

References:

LEGAL REFERENCE: MGL Chapter 71, §37 O Massachusetts Equal Educational Opportunities Regulations, 603 CMR 26.00.

CROSS REFERENCE: Student Handbooks

Version Control

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