

PROHIBITING HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING

The Township of Franklin Board of Education prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying on school property, at school sponsored functions and on school busses.

A safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards; harassment, intimidation or bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its students in a safe environment; and since students learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff and volunteers are expected to demonstrate appropriate behavior, treat others with civility and respect, and refuse to tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying.

"Harassment, intimidation or bullying" means any gesture or written, verbal or physical act that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function or on a school bus and that:

- a. is motivated by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability; or,
- b. by any other distinguishing characteristic; and
- c. a reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, that the act(s) will have the effect of harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to his person or damage to his property; or
- d. has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students in such a way as to cause substantial disruption in, or substantial interference with, the orderly operation of the school.

The board of education expects students to conduct themselves in keeping with their levels of development, maturity and demonstrated capabilities with a proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students and school staff, the educational purpose underlying all school activities, and the care of school facilities and equipment.

The board of education believes that standards for student behavior must be set cooperatively through interaction among the students, parents/guardians, staff and community members, producing an atmosphere that encourages students to grow in self-discipline. The development of this atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for district and community property on the part of students, staff and community members.

The board of education believes that the best discipline is self-imposed, and that it is the responsibility of staff to use disciplinary situations as opportunities to help students learn to assume and accept responsibility for their behavior and the consequences of their behavior. Staff members who interact with students shall apply best practices designed to prevent discipline problems and encourage students' abilities to grow in self-discipline.

POLICY

File Code: 5131.9

## PROHIBITING HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING

Based on community involvement, the board of education shall develop general guidelines for student conduct and shall direct development of detailed regulations suited to the age levels of the students. Board policy requires all students in the district to adhere to the rules and regulations established by the school district and to submit to such disciplinary measures as are appropriately assigned for infraction of these rules.

The chief school administrator shall provide annually to students and their parents/guardians the rules of the district regarding student conduct, and the policy shall appear in the Student/Parent Handbook as well as posted on the district web site. Provisions shall be made for informing parents/guardians whose primary language is other than English.

Bystander support of harassment, intimidation or bullying can support these behaviors, accordingly, active or passive support for harassment, intimidation or bullying is prohibited. Students are encouraged to support students who walk away from these acts when they see them, constructively attempt to stop them or report them to the designated authority.

In determining the appropriate response to students who commit one or more acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying, school administrators should consider the following factors: the developmental and maturity levels of the parties involved, the levels of harm, the surrounding circumstances, the nature of the behaviors, past incidences or past or continuing patterns of behavior, the relationships between the parties involved and the context in which the alleged incidents occurred. Concluding whether a particular action or incident constitutes a violation of this policy requires a determination based on all of the facts and surrounding circumstances. It is only after meaningful consideration of these factors that an appropriate consequence should be determined, consistent with the case law, Federal and State statutes, regulations and policies, and district policies and procedures. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for students who commit acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion.

At each school, the principal is responsible for receiving complaints alleging violations of this policy. All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the principal. All other members of the school community, including students, parents, volunteers and visitors, are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy. The reporting party is encouraged to use the report form available from the principal of each building. Oral reports to the Principal also shall be considered official reports. The Principal shall complete the report form. Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

The principal is responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes a violation of this policy. In so doing, the principal shall conduct a prompt, thorough and complete investigation of the alleged incident.

Some acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying may be isolated incidents requiring that the school respond appropriately to the individuals committing the acts. Other acts may be so serious or parts of a larger pattern of harassment, intimidation or bullying that they require a response either at the classroom, school building or school district levels or by law enforcement officials.

## PROHIBITING HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING

Every incident of harassment, intimidation or bullying requires that the district respond appropriately to the individual who committed the act. The district will set the range of responses, including individual, classroom, school or district level responses, as appropriate. Individual responses can include positive behavioral interventions (e.g., peer mentoring, short-term counseling, life skills groups) and punitive actions (e.g., in-school suspension, expulsion). Classroom responses can include class discussions about an incident of harassment, intimidation or bullying, role plays, research projects, observing and discussing audio-visual materials on these subjects and skill-building lessons in courtesy, tolerance, assertiveness and conflict management. School responses can include theme days, learning station programs, parent programs and information disseminated to students and parents. District-wide responses can include community involvement in policy review and development, professional development programs, adoption of curricula and coordination with community-based organizations.

The school district prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying. The consequence and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation shall be determined by the principal after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act.

Consequences and appropriate remedial action shall be taken for a student found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation or bullying. Consequences and appropriate remedial action shall be taken for a school employee found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation or bullying. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a visitor or volunteer, found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation or bullying shall be determined by the principal after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act, including reports to appropriate law enforcement officials.

The goal of this policy is to foster a safe and disciplined environment that is conducive to learning, where individuals treat one another with civility and respect. To accomplish this goal, the policy will be disseminated to inform everyone in the school and community of its provisions. A range of options which the school district may use for publicizing this policy, includes posting the policy in public buildings or in publications (e.g., newsletters, newspapers, web-sites), utilization of the audio-visual media (e.g., public cable access, radio, public television), mailing copies, requiring all employees, students and parents to sign a written statement indicating that they have received and read the policy and agree to abide by the provisions of the policy and reviewing the policy at public meetings.

Staff members are encouraged to become trained in skills and strategies for developing student self-discipline and to apply best practices for positive behavioral interventions. This policy should be used as an opportunity to prepare staff to prevent and effectively intervene with instances of harassment, intimidation and bullying, as well as use the policy as a prevention tool by explaining to students the district's expectations for their behavior, consistent with the provisions of the district's policy. It is for students to have a clear understanding of the district's expectations under the policy, the reasons for and benefits of the policy, as well as the consequences for violations of the policy.

POLICY

File Code: 5131.9

PROHIBITING HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING

The district encourages use of experiential learning techniques, such as role play situations and other demonstration and modeling strategies in its information activities for students and staff.

Date: April 23, 2003

Legal References: N.J.S.A. 18A:37-13 et seq.