

## **ANTI-BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY**

The Board of Education of the Syosset Central School District is committed to providing an educational environment that promotes respect, dignity and equality. The Board recognizes that students' ability to learn and to meet high academic standards and a school's ability to educate its students are compromised by incidents of bullying or harassment. Such behavior affects not only the individuals who are its targets, but also those who participate in or witness such acts.

Therefore, it is the policy of the District to prohibit bullying and harassment on district property, district transportation, and at school-sponsored events and functions. Acts of bullying and harassment are prohibited, whether they are committed directly or indirectly, in person (face-to-face), through postal mail, or remotely by use of electronic technology, either on school property, at a school function, on a school or coach bus, or off school property where there is a sufficient nexus to the school environment.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

#### **“Bullying” and “Harassment”:**

1. “Bullying” and “harassment” mean the creation of a hostile educational environment:
  - a. by written, verbal, or physical conduct, intimidation or abuse, including such behavior conducted via electronic communication, and/or postal mail,
  - b. that has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education or reasonably causes, or would be expected to cause, a person to fear for his or her physical safety.
2. “Bullying” and “harassment” can take many forms including, but not limited to: slurs, rumors, jokes, innuendo, demeaning comments, drawing cartoons, pranks, gestures, physical attacks, threats, or other written, verbal, physical, or electronic actions.
3. The basis for such conduct may include, but is not limited to, a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, physical or mental ability or disability, sexual orientation, gender, sex, marital status, gender identity, socio-economic status, and familial status.
4. “Bullying” and “harassment” do not have to include the intent to harm, be directed at a specific target, or involve repeated incidents.

**“Electronic communication”** means a communication transmitted by means of an electronic device, including but not limited to, a telephone, cellular phone, computer, laptop, pager, or other hand-held device, communications transmitted through email, text message, instant message, voicemail, social networking sites, webpage, video, blogs and twitter.

## **REPORTING:**

In order for the Board to effectively enforce this policy and to take prompt corrective measures when the policy is violated, it is essential that all victims and persons with knowledge of bullying, harassment, or similar behavior report it immediately to District administrative staff.

The District will promptly investigate all complaints, whether informal or formal, verbal or written. Complaints will be treated confidentially to the extent possible but limited disclosure may be required to complete a thorough investigation. If, after investigation, the District finds that there has been a violation of this policy, prompt corrective action will be taken.

Any person having reasonable cause to suspect that a student has been subjected to bullying or harassment who, acting in good faith, either reports such information to school officials, to the commissioner, or to law enforcement authorities, or otherwise participates in proceedings related to such bullying or harassment, shall have immunity from any civil liability arising from making such report or participating in the related investigation.

Retaliation for reporting incidents of bullying or harassment, or for participation in a related investigation constitutes a violation of this policy. False reports or retaliation against the alleged bully or harasser also constitutes a violation of this policy. Acts of retaliation should be reported to the Administration. The District will investigate such reports and if, after investigation, the District finds that there has been a violation of this policy, prompt corrective action will be taken.

## **POLICY IMPLEMENTATION:**

The Superintendent of Schools or designee shall implement guidelines for reporting, investigating, and addressing allegations of harassment and discrimination.

The Board recognizes that the effective implementation of this policy requires that it be part of a District-wide educational program which shall include elements of prevention, intervention and consequences:

### ***Prevention will include:***

- (1) training for administrators and staff to increase awareness of the prevalence, causes, and consequences of bullying and harassment, and sharing strategies for preventing such behavior;
- (2) promoting student involvement in anti-bullying and anti-harassment efforts, peer support, mutual respect, and creating a culture which encourages students to report incidents of bullying and harassment, or similar behavior to an adult;
- (3) collaborating with families and the community to inform parents about the prevalence, causes, and consequences of bullying and harassment;

### ***Intervention will include:***

- (1) training for school staff on how to respond appropriately to students who engage in bullying or harassing behavior, are victims of such behavior, and are bystanders who report such behavior;
- (2) remedial measures designed to correct the bullying or harassing behavior, prevent another occurrence, and protect the victim;
- (3) development of nondiscriminatory instructional and counseling methods; and

- (4) thorough training of at least one Peer Mediation Advisor at every school to handle human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, physical or mental ability or disability, sexual orientation, gender, sex, marital status, gender identity, socio-economic status, and familial status. Contact information will be included in the District Calendar, District Website and other appropriate school publications, and will be distributed to students and staff annually at the beginning of the school year.

***Consequences may include:***

- (1) discipline, including suspensions and expulsions consistent with the Student Code of Conduct and all rights under law and other applicable agreement; and
- (2) recognition for positive behavior exhibited by students who take an active role in addressing prohibited behaviors.

This policy shall be posted in a prominent place in each District facility, shall also be included in the Code of Conduct in plain language and distributed to students and staff annually at the beginning of the school year through the District Calendar, District Website and other appropriate school publications. A summary of this policy shall be included as a part of the District's summary of the Code of Conduct.

*Adopted 3/19/2012*