

HARRISON TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT
MULLICA HILL, NEW JERSEY

FILE CODE 5131a

Monitored

Mandated

Other Reasons

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

The Harrison Township Board of Education believes that an integral part of each student's academic personal and social growth is the acquisition of life skills that will assure success over the entire course of his/her life's journey. It is the policy of the Board of Education and the school district that acts of harassment, intimidation or bullying are inconsistent with the educational process and will be prohibited at all times.

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 Harrison Township Board of Education believes 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 should be commended for demonstrating appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying.

"Harassment, intimidation or bullying" means any gesture or written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either 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 by any other distinguishing characteristic, that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, or on a school bus and that:

- A. 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

- B. 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.

“Electronic communication” means a communication that is transmitted by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to a telephone, cellular phone, computer or pager, that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function or on a school bus.

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 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.

No administrator, faculty member, or other employee of the school district will encourage, permit, condone or tolerate acts of harassment, intimidation and/or bullying. Administrators, faculty members, and all other employees of the school district will be particularly alert to possible situations, circumstances or events, which might include harassment, intimidation and/or bullying. If such is discovered, involved students will be informed by the discovering school employee of the prohibition contained in the policy and will be required to end all such behavior immediately. All such incidents will be reported to the building principal. While submission of the report form is not required, the reporting party is encouraged to use the report form available from the Principal of each building or available at the school district office. Oral reports also shall be considered official reports. Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Based on broad community involvement, the Board of Education shall develop general guidelines for student conduct suited to the age levels of the students and the mission and physical facilities of the individual schools. Board policy requires all students in the district to submit to such disciplinary measures as are appropriately assigned for infraction of these rules.

The code of conduct shall:

- A. Describe student responsibilities, including the requirements for students to conform to reasonable standards of socially acceptable behavior; respect the person, property and rights of others; obey constituted authority; and respond to those who hold that authority;
- B. Address appropriate recognition for positive reinforcement for good conduct, self-discipline; good citizenship and academic success.
- C. Explain student rights; and
- D. Identify disciplinary sanctions and due process.

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

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 development 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 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, provision for school counseling up to and including suspension or expulsion as permitted under N.J.S.A. 18A:37-1, Discipline of Pupils.

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.

In considering whether a response beyond the individual level is appropriate, the administration should consider the nature and circumstances of the act, the level of harm, the nature of the behavior, past incidences or past or continuing patterns of behavior, and the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred.

Institutional (i.e., classroom, school building, school district) responses can range from school and community surveys, to mailings, to focus groups, to adoption of research-based bullying prevention program models, to training for certificated and non-certificated staff, to participation of parents and other community members and organizations, to small or large group presentations for fully addressing the actions and the school's response to the actions, in the context of acceptable student behavior and the consequences of such actions and to involvement of law enforcement officers.

The school district prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal retaliation shall be determined by the administrator after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act, in accordance with case law, Federal and State statutes and regulations and district policies and procedures.

Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a student found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation or bullying range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, as permitted under N.J.S.A. 18A:37-1, Discipline of Pupils.

Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a school employee found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment, intimidation or bullying shall be disciplined in accordance with district policies, procedures and agreements. 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 school administrator after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act, including reports to appropriate law enforcement officials.

The policy shall be posted on the district web site and disseminated annually to all school staff, students and parents, along with a statement explaining that it applies to all acts of harassment, intimidation and bullying that occur on school property, at school-sponsored functions, or on a school bus. The Superintendent shall develop an annual process for discussing the school district policy on harassment, intimidation or bullying with students.

Board Approval: September 29, 2008

Legal References:

N.J.S.A. 18A-37-15

N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.9