



Cumberland School Department Policy Manual

STUDENTS

J

ANTI-BULLYING/TEASING/HARASSMENT

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PURPOSE

The Cumberland School Department is committed to creating and sustaining a safe, caring, respectful learning environment for all students. We will treat all members of our community with civility and respect in an inclusive environment. Key words that represent our actions and our words are our three traits we value as a school department: respectful, responsible and ready to learn. Our schools strictly enforce a prohibition against bullying of any students or staff. The School Committee expects that in collaboration with teachers, families and community members, each school will implement the anti-bullying policy and procedures as adopted by the school committee.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is defined as the engagement of a behavior, intentional or not, in a manner that deliberately intends to infringe on the rights of the student to participate in school activities, materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school, exert power or control over another person resulting in physical harm or emotional distress of the victim, social embarrassment, discrimination or humiliation, the damage of their property or the placement of the victim in reasonable fear of such harm, distress, embarrassment, discrimination, humiliation or damage. Discrimination of the victim may be in reference to race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender (identity and expression), sexual orientation, disability (mental, physical, or sensory), appearance, height, weight, or clothing, intellectual ability or by any other distinguishing characteristic. Cyber-bullying may also include, but is not limited to any transfer of signs, signals, writings, images, sounds, data, texting or intelligence.

This behavior may be exerted directly through written or verbal communication, indirectly or through electronic expression. Direct behaviors may include the use of speech and expressive conduct to harass, threaten, physically attack (e.g. punch, kick, push down, assault, batter, stalk, menace, intimidate, extort) or socially embarrass (humiliate or taunt) an individual. Indirect behaviors may include spreading malicious gossip and rumors, writing insulting graffiti or messages about another person, or perpetuating behaviors that ostracize, shun or exclude another individual. A student can be considered bullied if they also feel reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property.

Cyber-bullying is, but not limited to, the use of modern communication technologies and online forums (instant messaging, text messaging, blogs, email, chat rooms and social networks, transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data) to embarrass, discriminate, humiliate, knowing impersonation of another person as the author or posted content, threaten or intimidate an individual in the attempt to gain power and control over them. Cyber-bullying may also include intelligence of any nature transmitted by wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, but not limited to electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.



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Forms of cyber-bullying may include but are not limited to:

1. The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person;
2. The knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages; or
3. The distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of materials on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the creation, impersonation, or distribution results in any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

At School: In the context of these regulations, the phrase “at school” includes the following places and situations:

1. In a classroom
2. Elsewhere in the school
3. On school property
4. Immediately adjacent to school property
5. On a school bus or other school vehicle
6. At official school bus stops
7. While students are walking to or from school
8. At any school-sponsored activity or event, whether or not held on school premises
9. Using property or equipment provided by the school
10. Acts which create a material and substantial disruption of the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

Electronic media: Anyone who uses electronic media (cell phones, Internet, etc.) in the school setting to bully, tease, or harass another student will be subject to the sanctions outlined in this policy. This may also include using electronic media outside of school hours or outside of the school setting in the event that the bullying impacts or disrupts the school learning environment thereafter (the next school day, at a school sponsored event, etc.).

DISTRICT RESPONSE TO STUDENTS WHO BULLY

School Interventions

1. Mandatory social skills training through the school counselors
2. Exit interview with the school administration to review school wide expectations and address any questions the student may have



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Disciplinary Sanctions

Disciplinary sanctions for bullying/harassment may include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Admonishments and warnings
- 2) Parental/guardian notification and meetings
- 3) Police contact
- 4) Loss of opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities
- 5) Loss of opportunity to participate in school social activities
- 6) Loss of opportunity to participate in graduation exercises or middle school promotional exercises
- 7) Loss of school bus transportation or student parking pass
- 8) Assignment of community service
- 9) Lunch or office detention

In and out of school suspension: No student shall be suspended from school unless it is deemed a necessary consequence of the violation of this Policy.

SCHOOL CLIMATE

Bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation against any person associated with a report of bullying or the investigation thereof is prohibited in all schools that are approved for the purpose of the compulsory attendance statute (§§16-19-1 and 16-19-2). School staff shall take all reasonable measures to prevent bullying at school. Such measures may include professional development and prevention activities, parental workshops, and student assemblies among other strategies. School faculty, administration and staff, at all times, will model courteous behavior to each other, to students, and to school visitors. Abusive or humiliating language or demeanor will not be accepted. Additionally, students and their families are expected to exhibit courteous behavior to all members of the learning community in school and at school sponsored events.

REPORT BULLYING

Cumberland School Department have established necessary means for reporting bullying issues to the school department. Parents, students and school district personnel will be trained in how to report a bullying situation. These methods will be prominently displayed on all school department affiliated websites as well as in schools. The victim of bullying, anyone who witnessed the bullying, and anyone who has credible information that an act of bullying has taken place may file a report of bullying. The procedures for reporting a bullying situation are as follows:

1. Electronic form that will be available on the district website linked to a school official's email.
2. Tell a trusted adult at school (who will then report it to the school administration)
3. In writing to a school official
4. Tell a bystander who will then help report the issue to a trusted school official



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Procedures for Bullying Incidents

Once a bullying issue has been reported, the school administration will conduct a thorough investigation utilizing the attached forms. These forms will document the investigation from the beginning of the investigation to the conclusion. The form titles attached are:

1. The Cumberland School Department Bullying/Harassment/Intimidation Flowchart
2. The Cumberland School Department Bullying/Harassment/Intimidation Incident Reporting Form
3. The Cumberland School Department Bullying/Harassment/Intimidation Investigation and Determination Form
4. The Cumberland School Department Safety/Conduct Plan

TRAINING IN THE PREVENTION OF BULLYING

Bullying prevention will be provided for all stakeholders during the school year. The training will be provided by a team consisting of one school appointed designee and the School Resource Officer (or police department designee). The training will include a review of the school department policy, what to do when they see bullying taking place, how to report it and who to report it to. In subsequent school years, there will be links and presentations on the Cumberland School Department website concerning any changes each year to the policy. Parents and school building personnel will receive one workshop each year provided by the Anti-Bully Task Force at each building. A multimedia presentation will be developed and posted on the school department website based on the training that the students will receive during the school day.

RESPONSIBILITY OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL

School personnel shall take all reasonable measures to prevent bullying as stated within this policy. All personnel will report all acts of bullying that come to their attention. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action. In this context, school personnel include volunteers that work within each school building.

RESPONSIBILITY OF STUDENTS

Students who observe an act of bullying or who have reasonable grounds to believe that bullying is taking place are obligated to report the bullying to school authorities. This can be done using any one of the reporting methods listed previously in this policy. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action. The victim of bullying shall, however, not be subject to discipline for failing to report the bullying.

HELP FOR THE VICTIM OF BULLYING

A full assessment of what effect the bullying/harassment has had on the victim will be conducted by the mental health professionals (i.e., school psychologist, social worker, etc.). Referrals for mental health support will be made available to families to support them throughout the process to heal.



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INDIVIDUALIZED SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN

If a student is the victim of serious or persistent bullying and upon completion of the assessment conducted by the mental health professionals, the school administration will complete the Safety Conduct Plan form to memorialize the safety plan. This plan will be developed, whenever possible, with input from the parents of the student. School personnel as part of the follow through with the plan will also be a part of the Conduct Plan development.

PROHIBITION AGAINST RETALIATION

Retaliation or threats of retaliation in any form designed to intimidate the victim of bullying, those who are witnesses to bullying, or those investigating an incident of bullying shall not be tolerated. In most cases, retaliation or a threat of retaliation will result in the imposition of a short or long term sanction and, in appropriate cases, referral to the police (RIGL 16-21-33 Safe Schools Act).

PROHIBITION AGAINST FALSE REPORTS OF BULLYING

False reports concerning bullying will be subject to appropriate school discipline, including short or long term consequences as previously outlined within this policy.

POLICE NOTIFICATION

When bullying behavior involves conduct that violated the criminal law, the police department shall be notified immediately by the victim's family or school administration.

MEDIATION BOARD

The school administration within the Cumberland School Department may establish a Mediation Board to resolve complaints of bullying in circumstances where mediation may provide an appropriate remedy. The Mediation Board could include administrators, teachers, school social workers, and where appropriate, students.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN MEDIATION

No student who is the victim of bullying shall be required to participate in mediation or to accept any apology tendered by the bullying student. The decision of a victim of bullying not to participate in a mediation program shall not diminish the obligation of the school to impose discipline against the student who has committed an act of bullying.



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BULLYING PREVENTION TASK FORCE

The purpose of the Task Force will be to develop programs and review policies for revision. They will educate students and school personnel about the harm caused by bullying. The Task Force will also create and present to students programs to prevent or diminish bullying. The program recommendations of the Task Force shall be subject to review by the Superintendent before the programs are implemented.

The school administration of each school within the Cumberland School Department will establish an Anti-Bullying Task force. This Task Force may include at a minimum parents, school personnel and law enforcement officers and as well as community members and students at the middle and high school level. Meetings will be held at the school administrations discretion.

SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING

The school programs and school services will include appropriate social skills training to help students avoid isolation and to help them interact in a healthy manner. These trainings should be conducted with K-12 evidence based programs that contain a curriculum specifically targeting the behavior that the student who is bullying is demonstrating. A bank of programs will be made available and evaluated on a yearly basis within the school counselors department.

REPORTS FROM SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION TO DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

The school administration will provide the Superintendent with a semi-annual report on incidents of bullying which have taken place in the school under their respective supervision by January 1st and May 1st. The Superintendent will then present this data to the school committee on or about January 15th and May 15th. This report will include a statement describing what remedial action has been taken to address bullying at the school level.

For public schools, the prevention of bullying shall be part of the school district strategic plan (§ 16-7.1-2(e)) and school safety plan (§16-21-24).

OTHER REDRESS

This section does not prevent a victim of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation from seeking redress under any other available law, either civil or criminal. This section does not create or alter any tort liability.

This policy replaces the previously adopted policy dated: 4/14/2005

Reviewed by Cumberland School Committee Policy Sub-Committee: 9/22/2011

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