

CUMBERLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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**Policy** The Cumberland School Department is committed to ensuring that each student enrolled in its school system be free from bullying, teasing, and harassment.

**Definition of Bullying** Bullying occurs when a student, while at school, intentionally assaults, batters, threatens, harasses, stalks, menaces, intimidates, extorts, humiliates, or taunts another student. Bullying also occurs when a student or a group of students organize a campaign of shunning against another student or when a student or a group of students maliciously spread rumors about another student. In most circumstances, bullying shows evidence of a pattern of abuse over time in either singular or multiple incidences. Bullying usually does not include a mutual fight between two students of roughly equal strength who are angry with each other. Such fights are subject to discipline as a violation of school rules prohibiting fighting.

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

- In a classroom
- Elsewhere in the school
- On school property
- Immediately adjacent to school property
- On a school bus or other school vehicle
- At school bus stops
- While students are walking to or from school
- At any school-sponsored activity or event, whether or not held on school premises.

**Electronic Media:** Anyone who uses the electronic media (cell phones, Internet, etc.) in the school setting to bully, tease, or harass will be subject to the sanctions outlined in this policy.

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**Disciplinary Sanctions:**

Disciplinary sanctions for bullying may include:

- Loss of the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities
- Loss of the opportunity to participate in school social activities
- Loss of the opportunity to participate in graduation exercises
- Loss of school bus transportation
- Assignment of community service
- Short term school suspension (10 or fewer days of suspension) or long term school suspension (suspension for more than 10 days)
- Admonitions, warnings, and counseling.

**Reporting Bullying:**

The Principal of each school site in the Cumberland School Department shall establish, and prominently publicize to students, staff, volunteers, and parents, how a report of bullying may be filed and how this report will be acted upon. 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.

**Responsibility of Staff:**

School staff shall take all reasonable measures to prevent bullying and shall report all acts of bullying that come to their attention. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action. In this context, the staff includes volunteers working in the school.

**Instruction in the Prevention of Bullying:**

Students and staff shall be given instruction in the Cumberland School Department's Policy and Regulations against bullying. This instruction shall include methods of discouraging and preventing bullying, along with instruction on how to file a complaint against bullying, and the disciplinary action that may be taken against those who commit acts of bullying.

**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. 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.

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an assessment of what effect the bullying has had on the victim completed by the appropriate school personnel, i.e., school psychologist, social worker, etc.)

**Help for the Victim of Bullying:**

If the victim’s mental health has been placed at risk, appropriate referrals will be made.

**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. (R.I.G.L. 11-42-2. Extortion and blackmail) R.I.G.L. - 59-2. Stalking prohibited.)

**Prohibition Against False Reports of Bullying:**

False reports concerning bullying will be subject to appropriate school discipline, including short or long term sanction.

**Individualized School Safety Plan:**

If a student is the victim of serious or persistent bullying and upon completion of the assessment conducted by the appropriate personnel, the Principal of the school site will prepare a written school safety plan outlining what steps will be taken to provide the student with a safe educational environment. This plan will be developed, if possible, with input from the parents of the student. Staff members who are to assist in the implementation of the plan will help formulate such.

**Police Notification:**

When the bullying involves conduct that violates the criminal law, the police shall be notified immediately.

**Mediation Board:**

The Principal of any school site in 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 when appropriate, students.

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### **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.

### **Bullying Prevention Task Force:**

The Principal of each school site in the Cumberland School Department will establish a Bullying Prevention Task Force. This Task Force may include at a minimum parents, school staff, and law enforcement officers, as well as community members and, if age allows, students. Meetings will be held at principal's discretion.

### **Bullying Prevention Task Force:**

The purpose of this Task Force will be to develop policies and programs to educate students and staff 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.

### **School Atmosphere:**

School staff at all times will model correct and courteous behavior to each other, to students, and to visitors to the school. Abusive or humiliating language or demeanor will not be accepted. An effort will be made to ensure that each student is well known by at least one certified teacher so that the student will have someone to turn to at school if a bullying situation develops. To the extent possible, the influence of cliques and other exclusive student groupings will be diminished. (R.I.G.L. 16-38-4. Exclusive clubs.)

### **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.

### **Reports to Administration:**

School site Principals will provide the Superintendent with a semi-annual report on incidents of bullying which have taken place in the schools under their respective supervision. This report will include a statement describing what remedial action has been taken to address bullying.

*First Reading: March 15, 2005*

*Adopted & Approved by Cumberland School Committee April 14, 2005*