

USD# 354 Claflin Bullying Plan

January 10, 2008

The Claflin USD #354 Board of Education prohibits acts of harassment or bullying on school property, at school-sponsored events, or in a school vehicle. The Board of Education has determined that a safe environment in school is essential for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. Harassment or bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a student's ability to learn and school's ability to educate its students in a safe environment. Demonstration of appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment and bullying is expected of administrators, faculty, staff, students, and volunteers to provide positive examples for student behavior.

"Harassment or bullying" is any gesture or written, verbal, graphic, or physical act (including electronically transmitted acts- i.e. internet, cell phone, personal digital assistant (pda), or wireless hand held device) that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual act 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 impairment; or by any other distinguishing characteristic. Such behavior is considered harassment or bullying whether it takes place on or off school property, at any school-sponsored function, or in a school vehicle.

"Harassment or bullying" is conduct that meets all of the following criteria:

- is directed at one or more pupils;
- substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more pupils;
- adversely affects the ability of a pupil to participate in or benefit from the school district's educational programs or activities because the conduct, as reasonably perceived by the pupil, is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive as to have this effect; and,
- is based on a pupil's actual or distinguishing characteristic (see above), or is based on an association with another person who has or is perceived to have any of these characteristics.

The Board of Education believes that standards for student behavior must be set cooperatively through interaction among the students, parents and guardians, staff, and community members of the school district, 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 for helping students learn to assume responsibility 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 develop self-discipline.

Since bystander support of harassment or bullying can support these behaviors, the district prohibits both active and passive support for acts of harassment or bullying. The staff should encourage students 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.

The Board of Education encourages its school administrators to use procedures that ensure both the appropriate consequences and remedial responses to a student or staff member who commits one or more acts of harassment or bullying. The following factors should be given consideration by school administrators in determining appropriate consequences for each act of harassment or bullying.

Factors for Determining Consequences

- Age, development, and maturity levels of the parties involved
- Degree of harm
- Surrounding circumstances
- Nature and severity of the behavior(s)
- Incidences of past or continuing pattern(s) of behavior
- Relationship between the parties involved
- Context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred

Consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a student or staff member who commits one or more acts of harassment or bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, in the case of a student, or suspension or termination in the case of an employee.

Consequences for a student who commits an act of harassment or bullying shall be unique to the individual incident and will vary in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance. Remedial measures shall be designed to: correct the problem behavior; prevent another occurrence of the behavior; and protect the target (victim) of the act.

The consequences and remedial measures may include, but are not limited to, the examples below:

Examples of Consequences

- Verbal Counseling
- Temporary removal from the classroom
- Loss of privileges
- Classroom or administrative detention
- Referral to disciplinarian
- In-school suspension during the school week or the weekend, for students
- Out-of-school suspension
- Legal action
- Expulsion or termination

Examples of Remedial Measures

Personal

- Identifying the aggressive behavior as a failed attempt to solve a real problem or reach a goal. The adult assists the misbehaving student to find a better way to solve the problem or meet the goal.
- Restitution and restoration
- Peer support group
- Corrective instruction or other relevant learning or service experience
- Supportive discipline to increase accountability for the bullying offense
- Supportive interventions, including participation of an intervention and referral services team, peer mediation, etc.
- Behavioral assessment or evaluation
- Student counseling
- Parent conferences

Environmental (Classroom, School Building, or School District)

- Set a time, place and person to help the bully reflect on the offending behavior
- School culture change
- Modifications of schedules
- Adjustments in hallway traffic
- Modifications in student routes or patterns traveling to and from school
- Targeted use of monitors (e.g., hallway, cafeteria, bus)
- Disciplinary action for school staff who contributed to the problem
- Parent conferences
- Peer support groups

The principal and/or the principal's designee will be responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes a violation of this policy. In doing so, the principal and/or the principal's designee shall conduct a prompt, thorough, and complete investigation of each alleged incident. The investigation is to be completed within three school days after the report or complaint is made.

The Claflin USD#354 Board of Education prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of harassment or bullying. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation shall be determined by the administrator after consideration of the nature, severity, and circumstances of the act.

The Board of Education prohibits any person from falsely accusing another as a means of harassment or bullying. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment or bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a school employee found to have falsely accused another as a means of harassment or bullying shall be disciplined in accordance with district policies, procedures, and agreements.

This plan of action to deter bullying and/or harassment will be disseminated annually to all school staff, students, and parents. Community members are encouraged to provide input and support in providing a safe and orderly environment for USD 354 students and staff.

TRAINING

Staff Training

School staff will receive initial training as to what bullying is, types of bullying, and strategies to deal with bullying. Following initial training school staff will receive annual training concerning: 1) types of bullying, 2) strategies to deal with bullying, 3) supervision of students, and 4) procedures to report bullying.

Student Training

Students will be surveyed on a yearly basis.

Elementary Students – Teachers and counselor will work together to plan lessons about bullying and procedures to report bullying. The counselor will present lessons to the students on a monthly basis with follow-up occurring with the classroom teacher.

Middle School and High School Students – Teachers will be given materials to discuss with their seminar students. One QPA period per month will be devoted to discussion about bullying: 1) types of bullying, 2) how to recognize bullying, 3) how to deal with bullying behavior, 3) procedures for reporting.

Information will be provided to students when it comes to technology dealing with inappropriate text messaging and cyber bullying.

Parent/Community Awareness

The plan will be posted on the district website. The plan will be presented to Site Councils on a yearly basis.

Parents and community members are encouraged to provide input on dealing with bullying.

BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

What is Bullying?

Bullying occurs when a person willfully and repeatedly exercises power over another with hostile or malicious intent. There are a wide range of physical or verbal behaviors of an aggressive or antisocial nature associated with bullying. These behaviors may include insulting, teasing, abusing, threatening, humiliating, harassing, and mobbing. Less direct forms of bullying may include gossiping, spreading rumors, or shunning.

Bullies can be classified according to two broad categories, *aggressive bullies* and *passive bullies*. An aggressive bully is considered a person who is belligerent, fearless, coercive, confident, tough, and impulsive. This type of bully is someone who typically has a low tolerance for frustration, coupled with a stronger than usual tendency toward violence as a means of resolving a challenge. A passive bully tends to be associated with aggressive bullies, but often takes the less aggressive role. In groups, the aggressive bully will instigate the bullying situation while the passive bully supports the bully and begins to actively participate once the bullying begins.

The purpose or function of bullying appears to be primarily for the following reasons:

1. To obtain attention, recognition, prestige or acceptance in a peer group, while maintaining psychological control through fear and intimidation over a victim.
2. To obtain access to an activity (e.g. ball at a game or an item (e.g. money)
3. A lack of understanding of social/cultural, psychological, or physical differences.

Impact of Bullying

Bullying can have both traumatic and lasting effects on the victim. Bullied students often report difficulty concentrating on schoolwork, where academic performance tends to be between marginal and poor. Being a victim of a bully can lead to feelings of anxiousness, which in turn may result in a variety of physical and emotional challenges. Bullied students may have higher rates of absenteeism and dropout as compared to their non-bullied peers. Students who are bullied tend to have higher levels of:

- * Insecurity.
- * Anxiety
- * Depression
- * Loneliness
- * Unhappiness
- * Low self-esteem

When faced with continual bullying, victimized students may become depressed and despondent, even suicidal or homicidal. In fact, bullied students who have had a long-standing history of being a victim of severe bullying may sometimes retaliate with extreme violence such as the case with several recent school shootings. Overall, bullying is a serious problem that can dramatically affect a student's well-being.

Characteristics of Bullies

Bullying may or may not take on different forms among boys as compared to girls. The most frequent characteristics of bullying for boys include:

- * Intimidation
- * Control
- * Humiliation
- * Power domination
- * Threats to ones safety

Common tactics for boys to bully others are:

- * Name-calling
- * Shoving
- * Fist fights
- * Defacing victim's property
- * Inappropriate sexual behavior

The most frequent characteristics of bullying reported for girls are:

- * Social cruelty
- * Manipulation
- * Deliberately hurting the feelings of others
- * Character assassination
- * Rejection

Common tactics for girls to bully others are:

- * Name-calling
- * Spreading false rumors
- * Isolating the victim from others

Students who engage in bullying behavior appear to have a need to feel powerful and in control. They derive satisfaction from personally inflicting injury, suffering, or humiliating others, showing little empathy for their victims, and defending their actions by saying their victims provoked them in some way.

Characteristics of Victims

Although anyone can be a victim of bullying, it occurs more frequently when the victim does not act or appear "normal," according to prevailing mainstream norms. They may lack social skills and friends and are often times socially isolated. They tend to be physically small or weaker than their peers. Other characteristics associated with who gets bullied have included the victim being of a different race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Victims may also be closer to their parents, and may have parents who are described as overprotective.

Children who are bullied often fear school and consider it to be an unsafe and unhappy place. Victims of bullying therefore tend to have a higher risk of truancy and dropping out of school. Other characteristics are:

- * Frequent anxiousness
- * Insecurity
- * Cautiousness
- * Suffer from low self-esteem
- * Rarely defend them or retaliate

There are several warning signs that may indicate a student is being bullied. The most common and consistent warning signs include:

- * Having few or no friends with whom to play
- * Appears depressed, anxious, or moody

- * Has visible and frequent injuries such as bruises, cuts, or scratches
- * Frequently complains of physical ailments such as headaches and stomachaches in attempt to avoid school
- * Often seems afraid to go to school
- * Comes from school with dirty or torn clothing, damaged or missing possessions
- * Is typically seen standing or waiting by him/her while others play

Unfortunately, many victims of bullying believe that adults will not intervene even when they report bullying and therefore learn to be a continual victim. In many cases, this belief has been supported by their experiences.

Why is Bullying Underreported?

Despite the severe consequences that victims of bullying suffer, many victims do not report bullying incidents. They do not report it because:

- * They believe the bullying will become worse if they tell
- * They are embarrassed or ashamed
- * They feel nothing will be done

In most cases, bystanders who witness acts of bullying do not report these incidents to school personnel. Some of the more common reasons cited are because they fear that association with a victim may cause them to be bullied as well. Bystanders learn that bullying is a way of gaining prestige and attention within a peer group. Bystanders also fear reporting bullying incidents because they may be labeled as a “snitch.” Often times, bystanders experience guilt or helplessness for not assisting the victim. Unfortunately, most victims of bullies, including bystanders are not old enough or competent enough to defend themselves.