



SECTION IV: STUDENTS

POLICY 14

BULLYING PREVENTION

Statement of Legislative Mandate and Purpose

This policy is a result of the legislative mandate and public policy embodied in the *School Safety and Bullying Prevention Act*, 70 Okla. Stat. § 24-100.2. The Oklahoma Legislature requires school districts to adopt a policy to address prevention of bullying behavior, in an effort to create an educational environment free of fear and unnecessary disruption, and also requires districts to actively pursue programs for communication, training and education, reporting, investigation, discipline, and remedial action to deter bullying behaviors.

The District's student conduct code prohibits bullying behavior. This Policy further explains the negative effects of that behavior, seeks to promote strategies for prevention and education, establishes procedures for District communication of bullying policy to students and parents; reporting alleged incidents; investigating alleged incidents of prohibited behavior; and establishes a post-investigation procedure that may include recommendations for community mental health care options and requests for disclosure of student mental health care information.

The District will implement this policy in an ongoing manner throughout the year and will integrate it with other violence prevention efforts.

Statement of Board Purpose in Adopting Policy

The Board of Education recognizes that bullying causes serious educational and personal problems, both for the student-victim and the initiator. The Board observes that bullying conduct often involves expressive gestures, written or verbal expression, electronic communication or physical acts that are sexually suggestive, lewd, vulgar, profane or offensive to the education or social mission of the District, and at times involves the commission of criminal acts. This behavior interferes with the curriculum by disrupting the presentation of instruction and also disrupts and interferes with the student-victim's or bystander's ability to concentrate, retain instruction and study or to operate free from the effects of harassment, intimidation, bullying and threatening behavior. This results in a reluctance or resistance to attend school.

Definition of Terms

1. Bullying

- "Bullying" means any pattern of harassment, intimidation, threatening behavior, physical acts, verbal or electronic communication directed toward a student or group of students that results in or is reasonably perceived as being done with the intent to cause negative educational or physical results for the targeted individual or group and is communicated in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school's educational mission or the education of any student.

2. Electronic Communication

- "Electronic communication" means the communication of any written, verbal, pictorial information or video content by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, a mobile or cellular telephone or other wireless telecommunication device, or a computer.



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- The District prohibits bullying by electronic communication, whether such communication originated at school or with school equipment, if the communication is specifically directed at students or school personnel and concerns bullying at school.
3. At School
 - “At school” means on school grounds, in school vehicles, at school-sponsored activities, or at school-sanctioned events.
 4. Threatening Behavior
 - “Threatening behavior” means any pattern of behavior or isolated action, whether or not it is directed at another person, that a reasonable person would believe indicates potential for future harm to students, school personnel or school property.
 5. The “Reasonable Person” Standard
 - In determining what a “reasonable person” should recognize as an act placing a student in “reasonable” fear of harm, staff will determine “reasonableness” not only from the point of view of a mature adult but also from the point of view of an immature child of the age of the intended victim along with, but not limited to, consideration of special emotional, physical, or mental needs of the particular child; personality or physical characteristics, or history that might cause the child to be particularly sensitive to efforts by a bully to humiliate, embarrass, or lower the self-esteem of the victim; and the discipline history, personality of and physical characteristics of the individual alleged to have engaged in the prohibited behavior.
 6. General Display of Bullying Acts
 - According to experts in the field, bullying in general is the exploitation of a less powerful person by an individual taking unfair advantage of that person, which is repeated over time, and which inflicts a negative effect on the victim. The seriousness of a bullying act depends on the harm inflicted upon the victim and the frequency of the offensive acts. Power may be, but is not limited to, physical strength, social skill, verbal ability, or other characteristics. Bullying acts by students have been described in several different categories:
 - **Physical Bullying** includes harm or threatened harm to another’s body or property, including but not limited to, what would reasonably be foreseen as a serious expression of intent to inflict physical harm or property damage through verbal or written speech or gestures directed at the student-victim, when considering the factual circumstances in which the threat was made and the reaction of the intended victim. Common acts include tripping, hitting, pushing, pinching, pulling hair, kicking, biting, starting fights, daring others to fight, stealing or destroying property, extortion, assaults with a weapon, other violent acts, and homicide.



- **Emotional Bullying** includes the intentional infliction of harm to another's self-esteem, including but not limited to insulting or profane remarks, insulting or profane gestures, or harassing and frightening statements, when such events are considered in light of the surrounding facts, the history of the students involved, and age, maturity, and special characteristics of the students.
- **Social Bullying** includes harm to another's group acceptance, including but not limited to harm resulting from intentionally gossiping about another student or intentionally spreading negative rumors about another student that result in the victim being excluded from a school activity or student group; the intentional planning and/or implementation of acts or statements that inflict public humiliation upon a student; the intentional undermining of current relationships of the victim-student through the spreading of untrue gossip or rumors designed to humiliate or embarrass the student; the use of gossip, rumors or humiliating acts designed to deprive the student of awards, recognition, or involvement in school activities; the false or malicious spreading of an untrue statement or statements about another student that exposes the victim to contempt or ridicule or deprives the victim of the confidence and respect of student peers; or the making of false statements to others that the student has committed a crime, or has an infectious, contagious or loathsome disease, or similar egregious representations.
- **Sexual Bullying** includes harm to another resulting from, but not limited to, making unwelcome sexual comments about the student; making vulgar, profane, or lewd comments or drawings or graffiti about the victim; directing vulgar, profane, or lewd gestures toward the victim; committing physical acts of a sexual nature at school, including the fondling or touching or private parts of the victim's body; participation in the gossiping or spreading of false rumors about the student's sexual life; written or verbal statements directed at the victim that would reasonably be interpreted as a serious threat to force the victim to commit sexual acts or to sexually assault the victim when considering the factual circumstances in which the threat was made and the reaction of the intended victim; off-campus dating violence by a student that adversely affects the victim's school performance or behavior, attendance, participation in school functions or extracurricular activities, or makes the victim fearful at school of the assaulting bully; or the commission of sexual assault, rape, or homicide. Such conduct may also constitute sexual harassment, which is also prohibited by the District.



Understanding and Preventing Student Bullying

1. Student, Parent and Staff Communication, Education and Training

- All staff and volunteers will be provided with a copy of this Policy. All students will be provided an age appropriate summary of the Policy and notice that a copy of the entire policy is available on request. The District is committed to providing appropriate and relevant training to staff regarding identification of behavior constituting student bullying and the prevention and management of such conduct. Administrators and school employees are required to take or attend annual training as developed and provided by the State Department of Education in preventing, identifying, responding to and reporting incidents of bullying.
- Students and parents, like staff members, shall participate in an annual education program(s), designed and developed by the State Department of Education and/or the District, which sets out expectations for student behavior and emphasizes an understanding of student bullying; its prevention, identification; and the District's response to and prohibition of such conduct, and the reasons why the conduct is destructive, unacceptable and will lead to discipline. Students shall also be informed of the possible consequences of bullying conduct toward their peers.
- Notice of the Bullying Prevention policy shall be posted at various locations within each school site, including but not limited to cafeterias, school bulletin boards, and administration offices.
- The Bullying Prevention policy shall be posted on the District's Internet website. Each school site's Internet website/page will have a link to the District policy.
- The Bullying Prevention policy shall be included in all student and employee handbooks.

2. The District's Safe School Committees

The District's Safe School Committees have the responsibility of studying and making recommendations to the Principal regarding unsafe conditions, strategies for students, faculty and staff to avoid physical and emotional harm at school, student victimization, crime prevention, school violence and other issues which interfere with and adversely affect the maintenance of safe schools.

With respect to student bullying, each Safe School Committee shall consider and make recommendations regarding professional staff development needs of faculty and other staff related to methods to decrease student bullying, and understanding and identifying bullying behaviors. In addition, each Committee shall make recommendations regarding: (1) identification of methods to encourage the involvement of the community and students in addressing conduct involving bullying; (2) methods to enhance relationships between students and school staff in order to strengthen communication; and (3) using problem-



solving teams and resources that include counselors and other behavioral health resources within or outside the school system.

In accomplishing its objectives each Committee shall review the District policy for the prevention of bullying and the list of research-based programs appropriate for the prevention of bullying of students at school compiled by the State Department of Education. In addition, the Committee may review traditional and accepted bullying prevention programs utilized by other states, state agencies or school districts.

Reporting Acts or Suspected Acts of Bullying

Acts or suspected acts of bullying should be immediately reported to a school official such as the school Principal or Assistant Principal. Such reports may be made and submitted through the District’s website or the school’s website. A printed copy of the form may be requested and submitted in person or through the mail. If desired, reports may be submitted anonymously. Please note that anonymous reports, according to state law, cannot be the sole basis for disciplinary action for a student.

1. Student Reporting of Bullying

Students are encouraged to tell school personnel if they are the victim of or witness acts of bullying.

2. Staff Reporting of Bullying

An important duty of any District employee is to report acts or behavior that the employee witnesses that appears to constitute bullying, or the employee has reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a student or person is a target of bullying shall immediately report it to the Building Principal or designee of the Principal, or other school administrator. All employees shall encourage students who tell them about such acts to complete a report form. For young students, staff members given that information will need to provide direct assistance to the student to report the incident.

Staff members who witness such events must complete reports and submit them to the employee designated by the Principal to receive them.

Investigating and Responding to Alleged Incidents of Student Bullying

1. Responsibility for Policy Enforcement

The District’s bullying coordinator is the Executive Director for Secondary Education. Building Principals are responsible for enforcing this policy at their designated school sites.

2. Investigation, Determination, and Preventive Action

The Building Principal shall investigate all reported incidents of bullying or suspected bullying and make a determination regarding whether the conduct actually occurred or is occurring, and take prompt and effective action to address confirmed incidents and prevent their recurrence. This action may impose consequences which include discipline, referral to the school counselor, referral to community mental health care providers, student social



skills training and other actions. Such consequences and remedial action may also be imposed for a student found to have falsely accused another as a means of retaliation, reprisal or as a means of bullying. In addition, principals will also determine the severity of confirmed incidents and assess their potential to result in future violence. Principals shall promptly report their findings to the district’s bullying coordinator.

3. Parent Notification

The Building Principal or the Principal’s designee shall make timely notification to the parents or guardians of a victim of documented and verified bullying, and to the parents or guardians of the perpetrator of the documented and verified bullying.

4. Law Enforcement Notification

Building Principals shall report to law enforcement officials all documented and verified acts of bullying that they reasonably believe may constitute criminal activity or reasonably have the potential to endanger school safety. All such incidents must also be reported to the Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services.

5. Reporting Documented and Verified Incidents of Bullying

Building Principals are responsible for tracking and reporting documented and verified incidents of bullying per established procedures.

Post-Investigation Recommendations

1. Community Mental Health Care Options

When designated school personnel confirm an incident of student bullying, they may also determine that it is appropriate to recommend counseling or referral to appropriate services, including guidance, academic intervention, and other protection for all students and family members affected by bullying, and that the students and parents take advantage of available community mental health care, substance abuse or other counseling options in an effort to provide additional student assistance and prevent the recurrence of further incidents. If so, designated school personnel will advise the parent in writing of such options available in the community and surrounding area.

2. Disclosure of Student Community Mental Health Care Information

Pursuant to the requirements of state law, the District may request the disclosure of any information concerning students who have received mental health, substance abuse, or other care for an incident that indicates an explicit threat to the safety of students or school personnel. The District will make any request for disclosure in compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

Parental Responsibilities

Parents/guardians will receive an annual written notice of the District’s policy and program(s) to address and prevent bullying. Parents will be informed of the program(s) and the means for students to report bullying acts toward them or other students. An administrative response to a reported and/or confirmed act of bullying may involve certain actions to be taken by parents. Parents will be advised that to help prevent bullying at school, they should:



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1. Encourage their children to report bullying to them, their school Principal or other responsible adult when it occurs;
2. Take advantage of opportunities to talk to their children about bullying;
3. Inform the school Principal or Assistant Principal immediately if they think their child is being bullied or is bullying other students;
4. Watch for symptoms that their child may be a victim of bullying and report those symptoms;
5. Cooperate fully with school personnel in identifying and resolving bullying incidents; and
6. Participate in all activities designed to eliminate bullying behavior, including activities designed to address confirmed incidents.

Source: *Broken Arrow Board of Education policy adoption, July 13, 2009.*
Broken Arrow Board of Education policy revision, December 9, 2013.