

### **Bullying Prevention and Intervention (See Policy Code: JICK)**

It is the intent of the Hope Elementary School Committee to provide all students with an equitable opportunity to learn. To that end, the Committee has a significant interest in providing a safe, orderly and respectful school environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.

Bullying is detrimental to student learning and achievement. It interferes with the mission of the schools to educate its students and disrupts the operations of the schools. Bullying affects not only students who are targets, but also those who participate and witness such behavior.

The Committee also believes that promoting ethical and responsible behavior is an essential part of the school unit's educational purpose. Ethics, responsible behavior and "character" are important if a student is to leave school as a "responsible and involved citizen" as described in the Guiding Principles of Maine's system of Learning Results. Bullying interferes with the accomplishment of this goal.

Finally, the Committee recognizes the well-publicized incidents of violence and threatened violence that have occurred nationally in the past several years. As research suggests a link between bullying and school violence, the Committee seeks to avoid such incidents and instead take a systematic approach to bullying prevention and intervention.

It is not the Committee's intent to prohibit students from expressing their ideas, including ideas that may offend the sensibilities of others, or from engaging in civil debate. However, the Committee does not condone, and will take action in response to, conduct that interferes with students' opportunity to learn, the educational mission of the Hope Elementary School and the operation of the schools.

Bullying, as defined in this policy, is not acceptable conduct in Hope Elementary School and is prohibited. Any student who engages in conduct that constitutes bullying shall be subject to disciplinary consequences up to and including suspension and expulsion. A student's bullying behavior may also be addressed through other behavioral interventions.

For the purpose of this policy "**bullying**" means any physical act or gesture, or any verbally, written or electronically communicated expression that:

- A. A reasonable person would have the effect of:
  - 1. Physically harming a student or damaging a student's property;
  - 2. Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical harm or damage to his/her property; or
  - 3. Substantially disrupting the instructional program or the orderly operations of the school; or
  
- B. Is so severe, persistent or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, hostile educational environment for the student who is bullied.

This policy applies to bullying that takes place at school or on school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity or event, or while students are being transported to or from school or school-sponsored

activities or events. It also applies to bullying that occurs at any other time or place that substantially disrupts the instructional program, operations of the school or welfare of students.

Examples of conduct that may constitute bullying include, but are not limited to:

1. Physical contact or injury to another person or his/her property;
2. Threats of harm to a student, to his/her possessions or to other individuals, whether transmitted verbally, in writing or through cyberspace;
3. Blackmail, extortion, demands for protection money, or involuntary loans or donations;
4. Non-verbal threats and/or intimidations such as use of aggressive or menacing gestures;
5. Stalking;
6. Blocking access to school property or facilities;
7. Stealing or hiding books, backpacks or other possessions;
8. Repeated or pervasive taunting, name-calling, belittling, mocking, put-downs or demeaning humor relating to a student's race, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ancestry, religion, disability, or other personal characteristics, whether or not the student actually possesses them, that could reasonably be expected to result in disruption of the instructional program or operations of the schools, or that results in a hostile educational environment for the student.

For the purpose of this policy, bullying does not mean mere teasing, put-downs, "talking trash," trading of insults or similar interactions among friends, nor does it include expression of ideas or beliefs so long as such expression is not lewd, profane or does not interfere with students' opportunity to learn, the instructional program or the operations of the schools. This does not preclude teachers or school administrators from setting and enforcing rules for civility, courtesy, and/or responsible behavior in the classroom and the school environment.

The determination whether particular conduct constitutes bullying requires reasonable consideration of the circumstances, which include the frequency of the behavior at issue, the location in which the behavior occurs, the ages and maturity of the students involved, the activity or context in which the conduct occurs, and the nature and severity of the conduct.

#### Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent/designee will be responsible for developing and implementing procedures for:

1. Student and parent reporting of bullying to staff and school administrators;
2. Staff reporting of bullying to school administrators;
3. Review of reports and investigation of bullying incidents;
4. Intervention with and/or discipline of students who engage in bullying;
5. Support for students who are victims of bullying;
6. Training staff and students in bullying prevention; and
7. Periodic evaluation of bullying prevention, intervention and training efforts in Hope Elementary School and reporting to the Committee upon request.

#### Reporting

Students who have been bullied or who observe incidents of bullying are encouraged to report this behavior to a staff member or school administrator. Staff should report bullying to the building principal.

Acts of reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an incident of bullying are prohibited. Any student who is determined to have falsely accused another of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary consequences.

#### Responding to Bullying

In determining the appropriate response to students who engage in bullying behavior, school administrators should consider the ages and maturity of the students involved, the type of behaviors, the frequency and/or pattern of behaviors, the context in which the incident occurred, and other relevant circumstances. Consequences may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension, expulsion and/or reports to law enforcement officials.