

BULLYING PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

Loudoun County Public Schools is committed to a school environment that is free from bullying and cyberbullying.

A. Definitions.

1. Bullying is the systematic and chronic inflicting of physical hurt or psychological distress on another person. The Code of Virginia § [22.1-276.01](#) defines bullying as “any aggressive and unwanted behavior that is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim; involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor or aggressors and victim; and is repeated over time or causes severe emotional trauma. “Bullying” includes cyberbullying. “Bullying” does not include ordinary teasing, horseplay, arguments or peer conflict.”

2. Cyberbullying refers to bullying by a student(s) towards another through electronic communication. Cyberbullying includes such things as sending mean, vulgar or threatening messages or images; posting sensitive private information about another person; pretending to be someone else in order to humiliate another person; and defamatory online social media websites.

3. The Code of Virginia requires that policies and procedures regarding bullying and cyberbullying do not prohibit expression of religious, philosophical, or political views, unless that expression creates an actual disruption of the work of the school.

B. Bullying Characteristics.

1. Bullying involves physical and emotional behaviors that are intentional, controlling, and hurtful and create a harassing, intimidating, hostile or otherwise offensive educational environment.

2. Bullying is any unwanted and repeated written, verbal, cyber, or physical behavior, including any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by a student or adult, that is severe or pervasive enough to create feelings of intimidation, alienation, or humiliation and which unreasonably interferes with the school performance or participation of others.

3. Bullying behavior may be communicated openly and directly, or subtly and indirectly, in person or by other methods of communication, to include technology.

4. Bullying behavior is a subtype of the broader concept of peer aggression and victimization; therefore, bullying prevention approaches must focus broadly on reducing all forms of aggressions and victimization, regardless of the intent, frequency, and power differential.

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5. Bullying behavior may include, but is not limited to, targeting a student's actual or perceived personal characteristics including race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental ability or disability, age, genetic information, socioeconomic status, political affiliation, or on a student's association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics.

C. Reporting Bullying Behavior. Any student who believes they have been the target of bullying/cyberbullying, or any other person in the school community who observes or receives notice that a student has or may have been the target of bullying/cyberbullying, should immediately report incidents to a school administrator or faculty/staff member. Staff members shall take steps to prevent bullying and attempt to take developmentally appropriate steps to intervene with bullying. When allegations of bullying are reported to the principal, or designee, he/she shall investigate such allegations and/or incidents promptly.

D. Parent Notification. The principal, or administrative designee, shall attempt to promptly report any allegation of bullying, by or against a child, to the parent/guardian via telephone, personal conference, and/or in writing. The status of any investigation of an allegation or incident of bullying, as defined by this policy, shall be reported to the parent/guardian within 24 hours notice. Notification must be consistent with the student privacy rights under the applicable provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). At any time during the investigation it has been determined that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator, all appropriate local law enforcement agencies should be notified.

E. Positive Behavior/Education.

1. Bullying prevention and intervention programming should include evidenced-based curricula, practices, and strategies. Incidents of bullying are to be reported and investigated as soon as possible. Developmentally appropriate interventions with students accused of bullying, as well as those identified as the victims, and resolutions of all complaints are essential to maintaining a safe learning environment. Records are to be kept and collected, and the data analyzed semiannually.

2. A school administrator should be designated as the bullying prevention coordinator at each school to oversee the implementation of the division-wide program that includes the following:

- a. annual training for faculty, staff and students on how to prevent and identify bullying, how to report suspected bullying, and how to take developmentally appropriate steps to intervene with bullying;

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- b. steps for receiving, reporting and investigating complaints;
- c. parent/guardian education;
- d. privacy and confidentiality for all involved individuals;
- e. notification of law enforcement when it is suspected a criminal offense may have occurred; and

3. This policy should be prominently displayed on the division's and individual school's websites.

F. Staff and Administrative Response. Bullying violations under this policy are prohibited and constitute grounds for interventions to include but not limited to Restorative Practices and/or student discipline ranging from in-school disciplinary measures to involuntary transfer, short or long-term suspensions and/or expulsion under school board policies. When investigating the allegation and/or incident, all of the surrounding facts, circumstances, severity, and age/developmental factors should be considered.

G. Monitoring. The principal and designated assistant principal(s) are responsible for implementing, enforcing, and monitoring this policy.

[Former Policy 8-41]
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Current Revision: 11/14/23

Leg Refs.: Code of Virginia §§ [22.1-208.01](#), [22.1-276.01](#), [22.1-279.6](#), [22.1-291.4](#)
Cross Ref.: Policy [8650](#), Student Technology Acceptable/Responsible Use Policy