Milbank School District	Code: JFCE

BULLYING

SECTION 1 – Policy Statement

The District is committed to maintaining a constructive, safe, and bullying-free school climate that is conducive to all students' educational opportunities and which fosters an environment in which all students are treated with respect and dignity. Bullying can inhibit a student's educational opportunities and may also have long-term negative effects on a student. Bullying of students shall not be tolerated and is strictly prohibited. Bullying of students from other schools who are at a District activity, parents, school employees, guests, visitors, volunteers and vendors of the District shall also not be tolerated and is strictly prohibited.

This policy shall not be interpreted or applied to prohibit civil exchange of opinions or debate protected under the state or federal constitutions if the opinion expressed does not otherwise materially or substantially disrupt the education process or intrude upon the rights of others. However, conduct which substantially interferes with the work of the school, causes material and substantial interference with school work and discipline, and might reasonably have led school authorities to forecast substantial disruption of or material interference with school activities is not constitutionally protected speech and is therefore prohibited under this policy.

All students, parents, employees, guests, visitors, volunteers and vendors shall conduct themselves in a civil and responsible manner and in a manner consistent with school policies related to student, parent, employee and visitor conduct. This policy prohibiting bullying shall apply to all students, parents, employees, guests, visitors, volunteers and vendors while on school property, while attending or participating in school activities, on school-owned property or on non-school property, while in any school-owned or leased vehicle, while at a school bus stop, or when in a private vehicle located on school property during school or during school activities.

The District shall investigate all reported instances involving bullying. Unless a different person is designated by the Superintendent to conduct the investigation, the Principal of the school attendance center where the bullying is alleged to have occurred is responsible for investigating the alleged bullying. Allegations of bullying may also be reported by the administration to other authorities, including but not limited to law enforcement.

Students who violate this policy shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion. Employees who violate this policy shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Parents, guests, visitors, volunteers, and vendors who violate this policy may be prohibited from being on school property.

Pursuant to state law:

A. any school district employee, school volunteer, student, or parent who promptly reports in good faith an act of bullying to the appropriate school district official as designated in the school district's policy, and who makes the report in compliance with the provisions of the school district's policy, is immune from any cause of action for damages arising from failure to remedy the reported incident, and

B. no cause of action is created against the school district, school district employee, school volunteer, student, or parent unless there has been substantial noncompliance with the school district's policy which results in injury to a person.

The District will maintain confidentiality to the maximum extent possible under the circumstances. However, a person reporting bullying conduct must understand that should the administrator who is investigating the report determine there is reasonable cause to suspect that bullying did occur which could result in administrative discipline or a referral to the School Board, the person alleged to have abused the other person may have the right to know the identity of the person(s) making the report in order that he/ she may have an opportunity to defend himself/herself.

The District strictly prohibits retaliation against any person because he or she has made a report, testified, assisted, or participated in the investigation of a report of alleged bullying. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of verbal or physical reprisal or adverse pressure. The person(s) alleged to have bullied another person shall not directly or indirectly (such as through another person) harass, pressure, or retaliate against any other person because of the complaint being reported. A violation of this provision may lead to separate disciplinary action based on the retaliation. Any person who believes he or she is being subjected to retaliation because of his or her involvement with a bullying report should immediately contact a school administrator.

SECTION 2 – Bullying Defined

A. Bullying is an intentional isolated act or pattern of repeated conduct toward another person that is sufficiently severe and offensive to a reasonable person, and

1. has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive school environment for one or more students, parents, employees, guests, visitors, volunteers or vendors, and/or

2. has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with a student's educational opportunities (i.e., academic, co-curricular activities, extra-curricular activities, and social opportunities, etc. within the school environment), employee's and volunteer's work environment or performance, or access by parents, guests, visitors or vendors, and/or
3. places a person in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property, and/or

4. causes physical hurt or psychological distress to a person, and/or

5. constitutes retaliation against any person for asserting or alleging an act of bullying, and/or

6. disrupts the orderly operation of a school.

B. Bullying conduct includes threats, intimidation, physical violence, theft, destruction of property, hazing, stalking (SDCL 22-19A-1), harassment (SDCL 22-19A-4), and threatening or harassing contact by telephone or other communication devices, commonly referred to as cyberbullying (SDCL 49-31-31). Neither the physical location nor the time of day of any incident involving the use of computers or other electronic devices is a defense to any disciplinary action taken by the School District for conduct determined to meet the definition of bullying in SDCL 13-32-15.

1. Hazing defined: any verbal or physical act or acts done on school property or at a school activity which directed toward another person and done for the purpose of initiation into any group, regardless of whether the group is a school sanctioned organization, when the act or acts causes or may create a reasonable risk of causing mental, emotional or physical harm to the person who is the recipient of the act or acts.

2. Stalking defined: willfully, maliciously, and repeatedly following or harassing another person; making a credible threat to another person with the intent to place that person in reasonable fear of death or great bodily injury; or willfully, maliciously, and repeatedly harassing another person by means of any verbal, electronic, digital media, mechanical, telegraphic, or written communication.

3. Harass defined: a knowing and willful course of conduct directed at a specific person which seriously alarms, annoys, or harasses the person, and which serves no legitimate purpose.

4. Threatening or harassing contacts by telephone or other electronic communication device defined: using or knowingly permitting a telephone or other electronic communication device under his or her control for any of the following purposes:

(1) to contact another person with intent to terrorize, intimidate, threaten, harass or annoy such person by using obscene or lewd language or by suggesting a lewd or lascivious act,

(2) to contact another person with intent to threaten to inflict physical harm or injury to any person or property,
(3) to contact another person with intent to extort money or other things of value,

(4) to contact another person with intent to disturb that person by repeated anonymous telephone calls or intentionally failing to replace the receiver or disengage the telephone connection.

SECTION 3 – Reporting Procedure

Any individual who believes that he or she has been or is being subjected to bullying or has reason to suspect another person has been or is being subjected to bullying should immediately report it to a teacher or school administrator. The report may be made verbally or in writing. A report may be made anonymously, although disciplinary action may not be based solely on an anonymous report. If disciplinary action is being requested, the individual reporting the bullying will be asked to either submit a signed written complaint or sign a completed Bullying Report Form, Exhibit JFCD-E(1), verifying the accuracy of its content. The written complaint or Bullying Report Form must include the following:

- the date the written complaint was filed or the Bullying Report Form was completed,
- the school employee receiving the complaint (if applicable),
- the name of the person reporting the bullying,
- the address/phone # of the person reporting the bullying,
- the specific conduct or nature of the bullying complaint including the person(s) alleged to have bullied the complaining party or another person, the date(s) and location where the conduct occurred, witnesses, etc.,
- the date the school employee completed the form (if applicable),
- the date and signature of the person reporting the bullying.

If the signed written complaint was given to a teacher, or if the Bullying Report Form was completed by a teacher, the teacher shall forward the complaint or Bullying Report Form to the teacher's building principal.

SECTION 4 – Procedure for Addressing Bullying Complaints

STEP 1: Principal.

Should there be a report which alleges a District student, parent, employee, guest, visitor, volunteer or vendor has been subjected to bullying, an investigation into the alleged bullying will be initiated. The District's investigation may include, but is not limited to, such things as interviewing individuals with actual or possible knowledge regarding the conduct in question, identifying facts related to the conduct in question, identifying when and over what period of time the conduct is to have occurred, determining whether the conduct negatively affects the educational opportunities or employment condition of the victim, identifying prior history of a similar nature by any of

the individuals involved, and attempting to obtain possible verification from other persons. The investigation shall be conducted promptly and completed in a reasonable time frame given the nature of the complaint.

The person alleged to have bullied another person will be notified that a complaint has been filed pursuant to this policy and that the complaint is being investigated. The name of the person making the complaint will not be disclosed to the person alleged to have violated this policy unless and until the investigation results in a determination that there is reasonable cause to suspect that bullying did occur.

Upon reasonable suspicion by the school administrator responsible for the investigation that the allegation of bullying may be true, the employee, student or other person accused of bullying conduct shall be notified in writing that reasonable suspicion exists that the complaint may be valid, including a statement of the facts supporting the determination that reasonable suspicion exists, and the name of the alleged victim.

The person alleged to have bullied another person in violation of this policy shall be afforded an opportunity to respond to the allegation of bullying but is not required to submit a response.

Pending the outcome of the investigation the school administrator responsible for conducting the investigation may take such action consistent with school policy and state law as deemed appropriate in order to facilitate the investigation and protect the rights of all persons involved. If there is reasonable suspicion to believe that a person bullied another person while at school or at a school activity on non-school property in violation of this policy, the administration may prohibit that person from being on school property or at school activities.

Upon reasonable suspicion by the school administrator responsible for the investigation that the allegation of bullying may be true, the employee, student or other person accused of bullying conduct shall be notified in writing that reasonable suspicion exists that the complaint may be valid, a statement of the facts supporting the determination that reasonable suspicion exists, and the name of the alleged victim and complaining individual(s).

The person alleged to have bullied another person in violation of this policy shall be afforded an opportunity to respond in writing to the notification of alleged bullying but is not required to submit a written response.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Principal shall make a determination as to whether bullying did occur or whether the facts are insufficient to determine that a determination that bullying occurred. The complainant and the person alleged to have bullied another person will receive written notice of the Principal's determination. Should the Principal conclude that bullying did occur, the Principal shall take such action as deemed appropriate, which may include imposing disciplinary consequences on the person found to have violated this policy prohibiting bullying.

STEP 2: Appeal to the Superintendent

The following procedure shall be used to address an appeal of the Principal's decision in Step 1 to the Superintendent :

1. If either party is not satisfied with the Principal's decision, or if the Principal does not render a written decision within fourteen (14) calendar days of the request for a decision on the merits of the complaint, that party may appeal to the Superintendent by filing form JFCD-E(2). The appeal must be filed within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of the Principal's written decision, or ten (10) days of the deadline for the Principal's written decision, whichever comes first. The appealing party must attach the Principal's written decision.

2. Within fourteen (14) calendar days from the date the appeal was filed, the Superintendent shall render a decision in writing. All parties shall receive copies of the decision. The Superintendent shall uphold, reverse, modify the principal's decision, or the Superintendent may refer the matter back to the Principal for further investigation and supplemental decision which decision may restate, modify or reverse the Principal's initial decision. A supplemental decision by the Principal after a referral back to the Principal is subject to appeal to the Superintendent. The time frame for rendering a decision by the Superintendent may be extended by the Superintendent for good cause and upon written notification to all parties, which notification shall identify the reason for the extension and the date on or before which the decision shall be rendered.

STEP 3: Appeal to the Board

If either party is not satisfied with the Superintendent's decision, or if the Superintendent does not render a written decision within fourteen (14) calendar days of the receipt of the appeal, that party may appeal to the School Board by filing with the Business Manager using Form JFCD-E(3) within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of the Superintendent's written decision, or ten (10) days of the deadline for the Superintendent's written decision, whichever comes first. The appeal shall be in writing and the appealing party must attach to the appeal the Principal's written decision, the appeal to the Superintendent, and the Superintendent's written decision or notice of the Superintendent's failure to render a written decision.

The following procedure shall be used by the Board to address an appeal of the Superintendent's decision on the merits related to a bullying complaint:

1. Upon receipt by the Board President/Chairperson of an appeal by the Complainant, a copy of the appeal shall be given to the person alleged to have violated the bullying policy.

2. Upon receipt of an appeal, the Board shall at its next meeting schedule a date, time and location for the appeal hearing.

3. The following procedure shall be applicable at the appeal hearing before the Board:

A. The Board shall appoint a board member or a person who is not an employee of the school district as the hearing officer;

B. Within thirty (30) calendar days of an appeal being filed with the Board, the Board shall conduct a hearing in executive session;

C. The Complainant, person alleged to have violated the bullying policy, and Superintendent each have the right to be represented at the hearing;

D. The Board shall make a verbatim record of the hearing by means of an electronic or mechanical device or by court reporter. This record and any exhibits must be sealed and must remain with the hearing officer until the appeal process has been completed;

E. The issue on appeal is whether the Superintendent's decision should be upheld, reversed or modified;

F. All parties shall be given the opportunity to make an opening statement, with the appealing party being given the first opportunity, followed by the other party, and then the Superintendent;

G. The appealing party shall present his or her case first, and the other party shall then present his or her case. Both parties shall have the opportunity to ask questions of the other's witnesses. The hearing officer and board members may ask questions of any witness;

H. The Superintendent shall present the basis of his/her decision which led to the appeal. Both parties shall have the opportunity to ask the Superintendent questions. The hearing officer and board members may also ask questions of the Superintendent;

I. Unless a witness is a party to the appeal, witnesses may be present only when testifying unless the hearing officer rules otherwise. All witnesses must take an oath or affirmation administered by the School Board president, hearing officer or other person authorized by law to take oaths and affirmations;

J. The hearing officer shall admit all relevant evidence. The hearing officer may limit unproductive or repetitious evidence. The strict rules of evidence do not apply. Moran v. Rapid City Area School Dist., 281 N.W.2d 595. 602 (S.D. 1979).

K. All parties shall be given the opportunity to make a closing statement, with the appealing party having the first opportunity, followed by the other party, and then the Superintendent. The appealing party shall be given the opportunity for a brief rebuttal;

L. After the evidentiary hearing, the Board shall continue to meet in executive session for deliberations. No one other than the hearing officer may meet with the Board during deliberations. The Board may seek advice during deliberation from an attorney who has not represented any of the parties to the hearing. Consultation with any other person during deliberation may occur only if a representative of both parties and Superintendent are present. The Board may, in its sole discretion, continue the proceedings and make a final decision on the appeal at a later date; Within twenty (20) calendar days of the hearing, the Board shall render its decision and issue its written Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Decision. The time frame for rendering a decision may be extended by the Board President for good cause and upon written notification to both parties and the Superintendent, and the notification shall identify the reason for the extension and the date on or before which the decision shall be rendered;

M. The decision of the School Board must be based solely on the evidence presented at the hearing and must be formalized by a motion made in open meeting. The Board will convene in open session and a motion to uphold, reverse, or modify the Superintendent's decision shall be made and voted upon. Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Decision, consistent with the Board motion shall be in writing and approved by the Board. Both parties, the Principal and the Superintendent will receive copies after the Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Decision are approved by the Board.

N. Following the Board hearing, should the Board determine there has been a violation of this policy prohibiting bullying, Board action may include but is not limited to the following: (1) suspend or expel a student from any or all school programs, including but not limited to classes, extracurricular activities, or attendance at school activities; (2) pursuant to statute, reprimand, suspend without pay, or terminate the contract of an employee, or (3) prohibit a person from being on school property or at school activities for such time as may be determined by the Board.

O. If either party is dissatisfied with the Board's decision, that party may appeal the decision by filing an appeal to circuit court pursuant to SDCL 13-46-1.

Complaints against school employees and complaints related to Sexual Harassment are addressed through other school district policies and not through this policy.

Legal References:

Cross References: ACAA (Sexual Harassment)
JF (Student Rights and Responsibilities)
JFA (Student Due Process Rights)
JFC (Student Conduct)
JFCC (EEACC) (Student Conduct on School Buses)

JFCD (Cyber Bullying)
JFCF (Hazing)
JFCE-R (Student Bullying – Regulation)
JG (Student Discipline)
JGD (Student Suspension and Expulsion)

Adopted: November 2009

Reviewed:

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