BULLYING POLICY

The School Safely and Bullying Prevention Act of 70 0.S. 24-100.4(A) requires each public school district board of education to adopt policies to address investigation of reported incidents of bullying.

I. Prohibition of Incidents of Bullying

It is the policy of Pleasant Grove Public Schools to prohibit all bullying of any person at school. Prohibited conduct includes incidents of bullying instigated by use of electronic communication specifically directed at students or school personnel.

II. Definitions

The following words and terms used in this policy shall have the following meaning:

"At school" means on school grounds, in school vehicles, at school-sponsored activities, or at school-sanctioned events.

"Bullying" means any pattern of harassment, intimidation, threatening behavior, physical acts, verbal communication, 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.

"Electronic communication" means the communication of any written, verbal, or 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.

"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 future harm to students, school personnel, or school property.

III. School Bullying Prevention and Intervention

Pleasant Grove shall ensure compliance with the following strategies for bullying prevention and appropriate intervention when incidents of bullying occur at school:

A. Bullying Prevention Officers. The principal shall designate at least one Bullying Prevention Officer ("BPO") who shall be the primary point of contact to receive reports of incidents of bullying. The duties of the BPO shall be as follows:

1. To receive, promptly review, and track reports of incidents of bullying;
2. To establish and maintain the confidentiality of reports of incidents of bullying as appropriate;
3. To establish a method of receiving anonymous reports of incidents of bullying;
4. To publicize the procedures for reporting set forth in this policy to all students, parents/legal guardians of students, and school employees;
5. To educate the school and community about bullying prevention measures; and
6. To review, monitor, and suggest strategies for improvement of the school climate in order to facilitate prevention and intervention of bullying incidents in the school site and promote a school culture of intolerance of bullying behaviors;
7. To report the number of documented and verified incidents of bullying to the district and/or the State Department of Education in accordance with the requirements of 70 0.S. 24-100.4(F) and accompanying regulations at 210:101-20;
8. To serve on the Safe School Committee and make recommendations for bullying prevention, professional development, and/or policies and procedures pertaining to bullying prevention; and
9. Any other duties deemed necessary by school administrators and/or the Safe School Committee to facilitate bullying prevention at the school site.

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B. Training and education in school bullying prevention and intervention. All school administrators and school employees at each school site shall be required to complete annual professional development training in school bullying prevention, identification, response, and reporting that meets the requirements of 70 0.S. 24-100.4(A) and 210:10-1-20. Selection of the required training at each school site shall be based upon the recommendation of the Safe School Committee established at each site.

C. Safe School Committee. Every school site in this district shall establish a Safe School Committee that meets the requirements of 70 0.S. 24-100.4(A). At least one of the members of the Committee shall be a BPO designated at the school site. The duties of the Committee shall be the duties set forth in 70 0.S. 24-100.4(B).

D. Bullying Prevention Programs. Every school site in this district shall implement a research based educational program as designed and developed by the State Department of Education for students and parents in preventing, identifying, responding to and reporting incidents of bullying.

IV. Reporting Incidents of Bullying

The system of incident reporting at every school site in this district shall ensure that students are encouraged to report incidents of known bullying and shall remove unnecessary obstacles that would serve as a deterrent to reporting (e.g. ensuring availability of reporting procedures during the school day, ensuring a student is not penalized for tardiness or absence from a class incurred as a result of reporting an incident). To facilitate prompt reporting and tracking of all incidents, school sites shall, at a minimum follow the following procedures: Such procedures shall, at a minimum, address all of the following requirements:

A. District Bullying Report Form. Students shall be informed of the process for reporting incidents of bullying and encouraged to report all incidents of bullying. Incidents of bullying shall be reported on the "District Bullying Report Form" which shall be made available to students at all times during regular school hours, including in the main/front office of the school site, the office of the school counselor, the website of the school site, and any other locations recommended by the Safe School

Committee at each school site Students shall be advised that they may obtain assistance from a school official if they have questions about completing the District Bullying Report Form or if they are unable to complete the form without assistance e.g., students unable to write legibly due to age, disability, etc.). The District Bullying Report Form shall be designed to facilitate reporting of incidents by all ages, and shall, at a minimum include all of the following item:

1. Date and approximate time of incident;
2. Location of incident;
3. Name(s) of all individuals at whom the incident was directed or who were affected by the bullying behavior;
4. Name(s) of all individuals who initiated or encouraged the bullying behavior;
5. Name(s) of all individuals who witnessed the incident or may have information pertaining to the incident;
6. Description of the incident, including:
    i. Identification of all inappropriate behaviors;
    ii. Identification of any types of alleged harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or disability;
7. A description of the types of behaviors used to harass, intimidate, or threaten a student. Examples include, but are not limited to the following:
    i. Gesture, written, or verbal expressions (e.g., written or verbal threats, obscene gestures directed toward a student);

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ii. Physical acts (e.g., physical fights, assault, or attack);
iii. Electronic communication (e.g. cellphone, instant messaging, email, social networking, audio or visual images);
iv. Damage of a student's property (e.g., stealing, hiding, or damaging property);
v. Threatening another student (i.e., communication leading to a reasonable fear of harm to the person or property of another individual or individual's friends or family);

8. Description of interference with the school's educational mission or the education of the student, including, but not limited to:
   i. Detrimental changes in school attendance (e.g., absences or tardies; missing all or part of a class or a school day);
   ii. Detrimental changes in student performance (e.g., student grades, assessments);
   iii. Detrimental changes in participation in school activities (e.g., student demonstrates fear or avoidance of interaction with other students during activities, lunch, bus, recess);
9. Identification of any physical evidence of the conduct (e.g., written notes, emails, property destruction, voicemail messages, audio or video recordings);
10. Any other information which could potentially assist school officials in investigation of the incident;
11. Name of individual reporting the incident and contact information at which the individual reporting the incident may be reached to seek additional information (unless the form is for the purpose of anonymous reporting);
12. Relationship of the individual reporting the incident to the individuals involved in the incident.

B. Individuals who may report incident of bullying. Incidents of bullying at each school site in this district may be reported by any student, parent, school employee, or member of the public. Any school employee who has reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that an individual at the school is currently or has been the target of one or more incidents of bullying shall be required to report the information to the school's BPO. Failure by school employees to report incidents of bullying in accordance with the requirements of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

C. Privacy and confidentiality. Reports of bullying shall be kept confidential to the extent necessary to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Family Education and Privacy Rights Act (FERPA) and to protect students who report incidents of bullying from retaliation.

D. Anonymous reporting. In order to ensure individuals may report incidents without fear of retribution or retaliation, every school site in this district shall provide at least one method of anonymous reporting of incidents of school bullying that protects the identity of the individual reporting the incident. However, an anonymous report shall not be the sole basis for formal disciplinary action in response to an incident of bullying.

E. Tracking reports of incidents of bullying. All reports of bullying shall be tracked using methods that will enable the BPO and administrators of each school site to identify emerging patterns of bullying over extended periods of time.

V. Response to Reported Incidents of Bullying

Every school site shall follow the following procedure in response to reported incidents of bullying. Upon receipt of a report of a bullying incident, the BPO shall take immediate steps to:

A. Separately interview with the individuals involved in the incident and witnesses to the incident to assess and ensure the safety of all individuals involved in the incident pending investigation of the incident;
B. Locate and secure any records or physical evidence relating to the incident;

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C. Promptly notify the guardian(s) of all individual students involved in the incident and the steps taken by the school administration to ensure the safety of the students pending investigation of the incident; and
D. Contact law if an incident reported involves an immediate threat to school safety or immediate harm to the safety of an individual student.

VI. Investigation, Determination, and Documentation of Reported Incidents of Bullying

The principal of each site shall be the individual responsible for investigating incidents of bullying unless the principal designates another school official at the site as the individual responsible for investigation of the incident. The procedure for investigation of a reported bullying incident shall, at a minimum, meet all of the following requirements:

A. Initiation of investigation. Within three (3) school days of receipt of a report of an incident of bullying, the school principal or designee shall initiate an investigation of the reported incident. All interviews with individuals involved in the incidents, their parent(s)/legal guardian(s), and/or witnesses shall be documented. A student's parent/legal guardian or attorney shall be permitted to be present at the interview of a student upon request of the student or the student's parent/legal guardian.

B. Documentation of investigation. All investigations shall be documented on a form that includes, at a minimum, all of the following information:

1. The date that the report of the incident was received by the BPO;
2. The date investigation of the report was initiated;
3. The name and title of the individual(s) assigned to conduct the investigation;
4. Identification of all individuals involved in the incident;
5. Identification of all individuals who witnessed the incident;
6. A summary of the details of the alleged incident;
7. A list of documentation available to investigate the incident; (e.g., written statement of student victim, written statement of student witnesses, medical information, incident forms, police reports);
8. A summary of action taken to investigate the incident (e.g., interviews with alleged victim, offender, perpetrator, and/or witnesses; review of incident reports; review of history of prior student behaviors; review of evidence);
9. A determination of whether sufficient evidence exists to occurrence of the alleged conduct;
10. Identification of follow up actions taken with the victim(s) and offender(s);
11. Identification of consequences implemented for the offender(s);
12. Identification of remediation implemented to address harm to the victim(s);
13. Date and method of notification of parents/legal guardians of victim(s) and offender(s) of completion and findings of investigation.

C. Findings and determination of alleged incident. Upon completion of review of all facts alleged and available evidence, the school administrator shall:

1. Document all findings of facts;
2. Issue a determination as to whether the occurrence of the incident could be verified based upon the available evidence as follows:
    i. Occurrence of the incident was verified;
    ii. Occurrence of the incident was unverified due to lack of proof (e.g., inability or unwillingness of victim to assist investigation or provide evidence in support of the allegations); or

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iii. Evidence exists beyond reasonable doubt to support a conclusion that incident was falsely reported by an individual as a means of bullying or retaliation or reprisal against a student for reporting an act of bullying.

D. Notification of results of investigation. Upon completion of an investigation, the school administrator shall promptly notify the district, and the parents/legal guardians of the students involved:

1. The findings of the investigation; and
2. Any proposed consequences and remedial measures provided to the individual(s) affected by the incident.

E. Follow up referrals for the purpose of student support services. Upon completion of an investigation, a school may recommend that available community mental health care, substance abuse, or other counseling options be provided to students involved in bullying incidents. A school may request the disclosure of any information concerning students who have received mental health, substance abuse, or other care pursuant to paragraph 13 of this subsection that indicates an explicit threat to the safety of students or school personnel, provided the disclosure of the information does not violate the requirements and provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, Section 2503 of Title 12 of the Oklahoma Statutes, Section 1376 of Title 59 of the Oklahoma Statutes, or any other state or federal laws regarding the disclosure of confidential information.

VII. Remediation and Consequences for Incidents of Bullying

A. Consequences for Individuals Who Commit Incidents of Bullying. Appropriate consequences shall be imposed for every individual who commits an act of bullying or an individual found to have falsely accused another student of bullying as a means of bullying or retaliation or reprisal for reporting an act of bullying. Consequences shall be determined, implemented and enforced in a manner that is consistent with the due process requirements set forth in the districts policies pertaining to student and employee discipline. Examples of appropriate consequences may include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Verbal or written warnings;
2. Conferences with the guardian(s) of the students involved in an incident of bullying;
3. Detention;
4. Loss of school privileges;
5. Course and/or teacher reassignment;
6. Prohibition or suspension of participation in school activities;
7. In-school or out-of-school suspension in accordance with the provisions of 70 0.S. 24101 .3 and district policies and procedures pertaining to student discipline;
8. Restitution of a victim's property that has been damaged as a result of the bullying incident;
9. Reassignment, suspension, and/or termination of school employment,
10. Referral to law enforcement.

B. Factors for Determination of Consequences for Incidents of Bullying Behavior. Every school administrator shall determine consequences for incidents of bullying behavior on a case-by-case basis in a manner that is proportionate to the severity of the conduct. Consequences for verified acts of bullying behavior shall be applied in such a manner as to ensure fair and impartial application of consequences (e.g., student's academic or athletic status shall not be considered as a factor for determination of appropriate consequences). In determining what consequences are appropriate for an individual determined to have perpetrated an incident of bullying, every school administrator shall include the following factors in the consideration:

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1. If the individual who perpetrated the incident was a student:
    i. The age of the student;
    ii. The life skills of the student;
    iii. The grade level of the student;
    iv. The mental, physical and emotional development level of the student; and
    v. Personal obstacles such as a history of abuse suffered by the student or negative family situation.
2. The existence of any previous bullying behavior or continuing or ongoing pattern(s) of behavior by the perpetrator;
3. The circumstances in which the incident occurred;
4. The nature and severity of the bullying behavior involved in the incident;
5. The nature and severity of harm to the victim of the incident, including:
    i. Consideration of documented physical, mental and emotional distress resulting from the incident; and
    ii. The existence of any mental, physical, or health conditions of the victim exacerbated by the incident;
6. The relationship between the individuals involved; and
7. The potential for future violent conduct.

C. Factors for Determination of Consequences for False Accusations. Every school administrator shall determine consequences for incidents in which an individual intentionally and knowingly reports a falsified accusation of a bullying incident as a means of bullying or as a means of retaliation or reprisal against another student in response to a previous reported incident of bullying. Consequences shall be sufficient to deter false reports of conduct, but not so severe as to deter credible reports of bullying incidents. All of the following factors shall be considered in determining appropriate consequences for a falsified accusation:

1. The status of the individual (i.e., student, employee, volunteer, etc.);
2. If the individual who made the false accusation was a student:
    i. The age of the student;
    ii. The life skills of the student;
    iii. The grade level of the student;
    iv. The mental, physical and emotional development level of the student; and
    v. Personal obstacles such as a history of abuse suffered by the student or negative family situation.
3. Whether the individual who falsely accused another student of bullying has been the perpetrator of previous bullying incidents;
4. The nature and severity of the bullying behavior involved in the incident; and
5. The circumstances in which the incident occurred.

D. Determination of Remediation Measures in Response to Incidents of Bullying Behavior. Every school site shall implement appropriate remediation measures in response to incidents of bullying. Remediation measures shall include strategies for the protection of all persons involved in incidents of bullying, including targets and perpetrators of the bullying incident, and family members affected by the bullying incident. Such remediation measures shall be designed to prevent further incidents of bullying and to increase safety for the individuals involved in incidents of bullying as well as all individuals at each school site. Examples of appropriate remedial measures in response to incidents of bullying may include, but shall not be limited to, one or more the following:

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1. Referral of students involved in incidents of bullying to appropriate support services, including school or community counseling services, mental health treatment, or therapy services;
2. Academic intervention;
3. Programs of age-appropriate instruction for students to support a student's life skills (e.g., conflict resolution, problem solving skills, life skills, social skills, anger management).
4. Parental education programs;
5. Peer support groups;
6. Modifications of student schedules;
7. Modification of hallway traffic at the school site;
8. Increased supervision;
9. Increased use of monitors or monitoring equipment in school facilities, hallways, cafeterias, playgrounds, and/or buses.

VIII. Annual Notice of School Bullying Prevention Policy

Every school site shall implement a strategy for publicizing and distribution of this policy and all accompanying forms and procedures for reporting and investigation of incidents of school bullying. Publication and distribution shall comply with the provisions of 70 0.S. 24100.4 and 210: 10-1-20, and shall at a minimum meet all of the following requirements:

A. An annual written notice of the bullying policy shall be provided to parents, guardians, staff, volunteers, and students at each school. Notice of the policy shall be posted at various locations within each school site, including, but not limited to school cafeterias, bulletin boards, and administration offices. The written notice provided to students shall be written in age appropriate language to ensure comprehension by younger students and provided with accommodations as necessary to ensure accessibility to students with disabilities.

B. A copy of this policy shall be posted on the Pleasant Grove Public School website. In addition, each school site that has its own separate website shall post a copy of this policy and all accompanying forms and procedures on its website.

C. Each school site shall include a copy of this policy in its student and employee handbooks.