BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

The DeSoto Parish School Board shall be committed to maintaining a safe, orderly, civil, and positive learning environment so that no student feels threatened while in school or participating in school-related activities. Students and their parents/guardians shall be notified that the school, school bus, and all other school environments are to be safe and secure for all. Therefore, the School Board prohibits and shall not tolerate bullying or harassment on school property, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity or function, on any school bus or van, at any designated school bus stop, in any other school or private vehicle used to transport students to and from school or any school-sponsored activity or event, or otherwise in a manner or by a method which operates to disrupt the educational process.

The DeSoto Parish School Board shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities, including all academic, extracurricular and school-sponsored activities. Equal educational opportunity shall be a priority for all students and harassment of any kind shall be strictly prohibited.

Any student who believes he or she has been subjected to harassment or a hostile environment based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age has the right to report any such incident(s) and to have the alleged harassment or hostile environment investigated. The School Board shall conduct a prompt investigation of formal and informal complaints of harassment. Any student found to have engaged in acts of harassment or other acts that create a hostile environment based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age shall be appropriately disciplined, which may include suspension or expulsion. The DeSoto Parish School Board shall encourage students, parents, and district staff to work together to prevent acts of harassment of any kind.

The DeSoto Parish School Board shall adhere to the equal opportunity provisions of federal civil rights laws and regulations applicable to this agency. The School Board shall not tolerate acts of harassment, including but not limited to acts of harassment based on race, color, or national origin pursuant to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies:

Director of Student Services
DeSoto Parish School Board Office
(318) 872-1198
523 Oxford Road
Mansfield, LA 71052
All students, teachers, and other school employees shall take responsible measures to report and/or prevent violations of this policy as provided below. All alleged violations of this policy shall be handled judiciously and in a timely manner.

PROHIBITIONS AND DEFINITIONS

The following conduct is specifically prohibited and shall be subject to the reporting, investigation, disciplinary, and appeal procedures set forth under procedures below.

1. Bullying and Harassment

   Intentional gestures or written, verbal, or physical acts that a reasonable person under the circumstances should know will have the effect of harming a student and/or damaging his/her property or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to his/her life or person or damage to his/her property and is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student.

   **Bullying** shall mean:

   A pattern of any one or more of the following:

   A. Gestures, including but not limited to obscene gestures and making faces.

   B. Written, electronic, or verbal communication, including but not limited to calling names, threatening harm, taunting, malicious teasing, or spreading untrue rumors. Electronic communication includes, but is not limited to, a communication or image transmitted by e-mail, instant message, text message, blog, or social networking website through the use of a telephone, mobile phone, pager, computer, or other electronic device.

   C. Physical acts, including but not limited to hitting, kicking, pushing, tripping, choking, damaging personal property, or unauthorized use of personal property.

   D. Repeatedly and purposefully shunning or excluding from activities.

   And, where the pattern of behavior as provided above is exhibited toward a student, more than once, by another student or group of students and occurs, or is received by, a student while on school property, at a school-sponsored or school-related function or activity, in any school bus or van, at any designated bus stop, in any other school or private vehicle used to transport students to and from schools, or any school-sponsored activity or event.
And, the pattern of behavior as provided above must have the effect of physically harming a student, placing the student in reasonable fear of physical harm, damaging a student’s property, or must be sufficiently severe, persistent, and pervasive enough to either create an intimidating or threatening educational environment, have the effect of substantially interfering with a student’s performance in school, or have the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

2. Harassment

While bullying, intimidation, harassment, and hazing for any purpose or reason is prohibited, the School Board particularly prohibits such on the basis of a person’s race, color, or national origin. Harassment in this context shall mean engaging in bullying or harassment of a person because of his/her race or skin color by the use of derogatory language, intimidating language and/or actions, threats, unwanted physical contact and/or violence, and/or the use of derogatory images related to race, skin color, or national origin.

3. Hostile Environment

Whether conduct constitutes a hostile environment must be determined from the totality of the circumstances. Factors to consider may include frequency and severity of discriminatory conduct, whether it is physically threatening or humiliating or merely offensive, and whether it interferes with work performance; psychological harm is not required but may be taken into account like any other relevant factor. Other relevant factors may include the nature, frequency, and content of racial harassment, as well as identities of perpetrators and victims.

COMPLAINT REPORTING/INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES

STEP ONE: Complaint Reporting

A complaint of an alleged violation of this policy must be sufficiently clear and explicit so that it can be investigated as a report of bullying and harassment. This means that a complaint report shall, at a minimum, include: (1) a description of the alleged act, including the date, time, and place it allegedly occurred; (2) identity of the alleged victim; (3) identity of the alleged perpetrator; and (4) identity of the reporting person. The written complaint report must include an affirmation of truth statement. A complaint report form shall be provided.

Any report of bullying and/or harassment shall remain confidential.

1. Students and Parents
Any student who believes that he/she or another student has been, or is currently, the victim of bullying and/or harassment, or any student, or any parent or guardian, who witnesses bullying and/or harassment or has good reason to believe bullying and/or harassment is taking place should immediately report the situation to a school official.

A student, parent or guardian may also report concerns regarding bullying and/or harassment to a teacher, counselor, or other school employee, or to any parent chaperoning or supervising a school function or activity.

2. School Personnel

School personnel for purposes of reporting bullying and/or harassment means any teacher, counselor, bus driver, or other school employee, whether full or part time, and any parent chaperoning or supervising a school function or activity.

Any school personnel, as defined above, who witnesses bullying and/or harassment, or who learns of bullying and/or harassment from a student pursuant to the above, shall report the incident to a school official. A verbal report shall be submitted by the school employee or the parent on the same day the employee or parent witnessed or otherwise learned of the bullying incident, and a written report shall be filed no later than two days thereafter.

Any school personnel, as defined above, who observe acts of bullying and/or harassment on any basis, including but not limited to bullying and/or harassment based on race, color, or national origin, should intervene to stop the harassment, unless circumstances would make such intervention dangerous.

3. Anti-Retaliation

Retaliation against any person who reports bullying and/or harassment in good faith, who is thought to have reported bullying and/or harassment, who files a complaint, or who otherwise participates in an investigation inquiry concerning allegations of bullying and/or harassment is prohibited conduct and subject to discipline. School and district resources shall not be used to prohibit or dissuade any person who meets specifications of this item.

4. False Reports

Intentionally making false reports about bullying to school officials is
prohibited conduct and will result in appropriate disciplinary measures.

STEP TWO: Investigation

An investigation will be performed for the purpose of determining the facts relative to the alleged violation and the appropriate administrative response.

Investigations will be conducted in a fair, impartial, thorough, thoughtful manner and in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws. Utmost consideration will be given to preserving the privacy and other legal rights of students, parents/legal guardians, and school staff members involved during the investigation process.

1. Timelines

Within one (1) school day of receiving a verbal or written complaint report from a student, parent/guardian, or by school personnel, the building principal/designee shall institute an investigation to determine the validity of the allegations contained in the report, which investigation shall be concluded as soon as possible but at least within ten (10) school days. If additional information is received after the end of the ten-day period, the school principal or his designee shall amend all documents and reports to reflect such information.

If an employee receives an anonymous complaint or media report about an alleged incident, the employee will report the alleged incident to the building principal, who shall consider the specificity and reliability of the information, the seriousness of the alleged incident, and whether any individuals can be identified who were subjected to the alleged conduct in determining whether it is reasonable to pursue an investigation.

2. Scope of Investigation

The investigation must include:

A. obtaining a written report from the reporting student, parent, and/or reporting school personnel, which written report shall be made on a form provided by the school district;

B. interviewing the reporter, the victim, the alleged bully/harasser, and any witnesses;

C. obtaining copies or photographs of any audio-visual evidence; and

E. making reasonable efforts to determine whether prior reports or
complaints of similar conduct have been made against the alleged perpetrator for the sole purpose of determining whether a pattern of similar conduct may exist.

STEP 3: Report, Decision and Notice

1. As soon as possible but no later than ten (10) school days after the written complaint report is submitted to the principal/designee, the school official shall compose a written document containing the findings of the investigation, including input from the students’ parents or legal guardian, and the decision by the school or school system official, and provide notice of the results to all parties, including the parent/guardian of the alleged victim, the parent/guardian of the alleged perpetrator, and the principal/designee (if not the investigator), appropriately redacted to comply with applicable law and regulations.

DISCIPLINARY AND OTHER CORRECTIVE ACTION

Where a violation of this policy is found to have occurred, the District will take prompt, appropriate corrective action to end the conduct, prevent its recurrence, and address its effect on the targeted student.

The building principal/designee shall determine the appropriate disciplinary action and other corrective action to be taken against any student who is determined to have engaged in conduct in violation of this policy in accordance with relevant disciplinary policies and law, including, but not limited to, possible suspension or expulsion, the possibility of suspension of a student’s driver’s license for one year, and the possible criminal consequences of violent acts committed on school property, at a school-sponsored function, or in a firearm-free zone.

Other appropriate corrective action may include: counseling; separating the students, provided that such steps minimize to the extent possible any disadvantage to the targeted student; informing the targeted student and his/her family of how to report any subsequent problems; and conducting follow-up to determine whether there have been any new incidents or any instances of retaliation against the targeted student or any witnesses, and responding promptly and appropriately to address continuing or new instances.

Counseling services will be offered to any student found to have been subjected to bullying and/or harassment on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS

1. Responsibility and Maintenance Period
The principal/designee shall be responsible for ensuring that all documents related to a report or investigation under this policy, regardless of outcome, are maintained at the building level in a clearly identified file for at least three (3) calendar years or as otherwise provided by law.

2. Confidentiality

Such file(s) shall be maintained in a confidential manner and in accordance with state and federal privacy laws, and shall be kept confidential except where disclosure is required by applicable federal laws, rules, or regulations or by state law or regulations.

TRAINING

The School Board shall provide a minimum of four (4) hours of training for all new employees who have contact with students and two (2) hours of training each subsequent year for all school employees who have contact with students, including bus drivers, with respect to bullying, in accordance with state statutory provisions.

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