

NONDISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

General Prohibitions

The Turtle Lake-Mercer School District is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment free from discrimination and harassment in all employment and educational programs, activities, and facilities. The District prohibits discrimination and harassment based on a student's, parent's, guardian's, or employee's race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, national origin, ancestry, disability, age, or other status protected by law. The District also provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups, as required by federal law.

It is a violation of this policy for any district student, parent, guardian, employee, or third party to discriminate or harass against another district student or employee, based on any status protected by law, if the conduct occurred within the context of an education program or activity, or if the conduct had a continuing effect in the educational setting of a program or activity occurring on or off school district property. The District will not tolerate discrimination or harassment of a district student or employee by a third party. The District also prohibits aiding, abetting, inciting, compelling, or coercing discrimination or harassment; discriminating against or harassing any individual affiliated with another who is protected by this policy and/or law; knowingly making a false discrimination and/or harassment report; and retaliation against individuals who report and/or participate in a discrimination and/or harassment investigation, including instances when a complaint is not substantiated.

The District shall promptly investigate any discrimination, harassment, or retaliation complaint and act on findings as appropriate, which may include disciplinary measures such as termination of employment or expulsion in accordance with board policy, law, and, when applicable, the negotiated agreement. Students and employees are expected to fully cooperate in the investigation process. The District will take steps to prevent recurrence of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation and remedy discriminatory effects on the complainant and others, if appropriate.

Definitions

- *Complainant* is the individual filing the complaint. If the complainant is not the victim of the alleged discrimination and/or harassment, the victim must be afforded the same rights as the complainant under this policy and regulation AAC-BR.
- *Disability* is defined in accordance with NDCC 14-02.4-02(5).
- *Discrimination* means failure to treat an individual, equally due to a protected status.
- *Protected status* is defined in applicable state (NDCC 14-02.4-02(6)) and federal laws.
- *Employee* is defined in accordance with NDCC 14-02.4-02(7).
- *Harassment* is a specific type of discrimination based on a protected status. It occurs under the following conditions:

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- a. For employees: When enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment, or the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable individual would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive.
 - b. For students: When the conduct is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive so as to limit the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the education program or to create a hostile or abusive education environment.
- *Section 504 (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, 29 U.S.C. § 794)* is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education.
- *Sexual harassment* is a form of harassment based on sex or gender identity. It is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal, written, or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature when:
 - a. It is *quid pro quo*, meaning submission to such conduct or communication is made a term or condition, either explicitly or implicitly, of the basis for employment decisions or educational decisions or benefits for students (e.g., receiving a grade).
 - b. It creates a hostile environment, meaning unwelcome sexual conduct or communication that is sufficiently serious to deny or limit a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the school's program(s). For employees, a hostile environment is created when submission to unwelcome sexual conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of an individual's employment.
- *Sexual harassment* examples include:
 - a. Sexual or "dirty" jokes;
 - b. Sexual advances;
 - c. Pressure for sexual favors;
 - d. Unwelcome touching, such as patting, pinching, or constant brushing against another's body;
 - e. Displaying or distributing of sexually explicit drawings, pictures, and written materials;
 - f. Graffiti of a sexual nature;
 - g. Sexual gestures;
 - h. Touching oneself sexually or talking about one's sexual activity in front of others;
 - i. Spreading rumors about or rating other's sexual activity or performance;
 - j. Remarks about an individual's sexual orientation; and
 - k. Sexual violence, including rape, sexual battery, sexual abuse, and sexual coercion.
- *Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act* extends the prohibition on discrimination established by Section 504 to all services, programs, and activities of State and local government entities.

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- *Title IX* is a federal law that protects people from discrimination, based on sex, in education programs or activities that receive federal financial assistance.

Complaint Filing Procedure

The Board shall create an informal and formal discrimination and harassment complaint filing procedure in board regulations coded AAC-BR. The procedure provides for an impartial investigation free of conflicts of interest. Nothing in this policy or in the discrimination and harassment grievance procedure prevents an individual from pursuing redress through state and/or federal law.

Confidentiality

An individual wishing to file an anonymous discrimination and/or harassment complaint must be advised that confidentiality may limit the district's ability to fully respond to the complaint and that retaliation is prohibited. The appropriate grievance coordinator (Title IX, 504/Title II, or Nondiscrimination) shall perform a confidentiality analysis to determine when a request for confidentiality cannot be honored due to safety reasons or the district's obligation to maintain a nondiscriminatory educational environment. The complainant must be notified in writing of the confidentiality analysis outcome. A discrimination or harassment investigation report is subject to the open records law after 60 days or when the investigation is complete (whichever comes first), with limited exceptions such as when the record is protected by FERPA.

Complaint Recipients

If any district employee receives a discrimination or harassment complaint, the employee shall forward it to the appropriate grievance coordinator. All district employees must receive training on their reporting duties.

Policy Training and Dissemination

The Board authorizes the Superintendent to develop discrimination and harassment awareness training for students and employees. In addition, the Superintendent shall display this policy and complementary grievance procedures in a prominent place in each district building and publish it in student and employee handbooks.

Grievance Coordinators

The Title IX Coordinator's responsibilities include overseeing the district's response to Title IX reports and complaints and identifying and addressing any patterns or systemic problems revealed by such reports and complaints. The Title IX Coordinator must have knowledge of the requirements of Title IX, of the district's policies and procedures on sex discrimination, and of all complaints raising Title IX issues throughout the District. To accomplish this, the Title IX Coordinator must be informed of any report or complaint raising Title IX issues, even if the report or complaint was initially filed with another individual or office or if the investigation will be conducted by another individual or office. The Board designates the Superintendent, as the Title IX Coordinator. They may be contacted at: 250 3rd Ave. West or 701-448-2365.

The 504/Title II Coordinator's responsibilities include overseeing the district's response to disability discrimination reports and complaints. The 504/Title II Coordinator must have knowledge of the requirements of Section 504 and Title II, of the district's policies and

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procedures on disability discrimination, and of all complaints raising Section 504/Title II issues throughout the District. To accomplish this, the 504/Title II Coordinator must be informed of any report or complaint raising Section 504/Title II issues, even if the report or complaint was initially filed with another individual or office or if the investigation will be conducted by another individual or office. The Board designates the Superintendent as the 504/Title II Coordinator. They may be contacted at: 250 3rd Ave. West or 701-448-2365.

The Nondiscrimination Coordinator's core responsibilities include overseeing the district's response to discrimination and harassment reports and complaints that do not include sex or disability, but instead the other protected statuses. The Board designates the Superintendent as the Nondiscrimination Coordinator. They may be contacted at: 250 3rd Ave. West or 701-448-2365.

The Title IX, 504/Title II, and nondiscrimination coordinators, and any other school official responsible for the investigation of discrimination complaints, shall receive training. This training must include:

1. The definition of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation;
2. The handling of complaints under the Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Procedure (AAC-BR); and
3. The applicability of confidentiality requirements.

Complementary Documents

- AAC-BR1, Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Procedure
- AAC-E1, Filing a State or Federal Discrimination and/or Harassment Complaint
- AAC-E2, Discrimination and/or Harassment Complaint Confidentiality Assessment
- AAC-E3, Discrimination and/or Harassment Training Requirements for Students and Employees
- AAC-E4, Reasonable Accommodation Request Physician Form
- FGDB, Student Handbooks

End of Turtle Lake-Mercer School District #72 Policy AAC Amended: 11/24/20