

BULLYING AND OTHER AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR TOWARD STUDENTS

The Hillsdale Preparatory School Board of Directors recognizes that a school that is physically and emotionally safe and secure for all students and staff, promotes good citizenship, increases attendance and engagement and supports academic achievement. The Board of Directors expects students and staff to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes positive relationships and school climate.

To protect the rights of all students and staff for a safe and secure school environment, the Board of Directors prohibits acts of bullying, including cyberbullying, harassment, and other forms of aggression and violence. Bullying or harassment, like other forms of aggressive or violent behaviors, interferes with both a school's ability to educate its students and a student's ability to learn. All administrators, faculty, staff, parents, volunteers and students are expected to refuse to tolerate bullying and harassment and will demonstrate behavior that is respectful and civil. It is especially important for adults to model these behaviors (even when disciplining) in order to provide positive examples for student behaviors.

"Bullying" or "harassment" is any gestures or written, verbal, graphic, or physical act (including electronically transmitted acts- i.e., cyberbullying, through the use of internet, cell phone, computer or wireless handheld device, currently in use or alter developed and used by students) that is perceived as being dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress and may be motivated either by bias or prejudice based upon any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression; or a mental, physical or sensory disability or impairment; or by any other distinguishing characteristic, or is based upon association with another person who has or is perceived to have any distinguishing characteristics. Bullying or harassment also include forms of retaliation against individuals who report or cooperate in an investigation under this policy. Such behaviors are considered to be bullying or harassment whether they take place on or off school property, at any school-sponsored function, or at any time or place where a child's imminent safety or overall wellbeing may be at issue.

"Bullying" is conduct that meets all of the following criteria:

- Is perceived as being dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress;
- Is directed at one or more students;
- Is conveyed through physical, verbal, technological or emotional means;
- Substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more students;
- Adversely affects the ability of a student to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs or activities by placing the student in fear of physical harm or by causing emotional distress; and
- Is based on a student's actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic or is based on an association with another person who has or is perceived to have any of these characteristics.

"Harassment" is conduct that meets all of the following criteria:

- Repeated or continuing unwanted contact perceived as being dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress;
- Is directed at one or more students or staff;
- Is conveyed through physical, verbal, technological, or emotional means;
- Substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more students or staff;
- Adversely affects the ability of a student to participate in or benefit from the school's educational programs or activities because the conduct, as perceived by the student, is so severe, pervasive and objectively offensive as to have this effect: and
- Is based on a student's or staff's actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic or is based on an association with another person who has or is perceived to have any of these characteristics.

The scope of this policy includes the prohibition of every form of bullying, harassment, and cyberbullying/harassment, whether in the classroom, on school premises, immediately adjacent to school premises, when a student is traveling to or from school, or at a school-sponsored event, whether or not held on the premises. Bullying or harassment, including cyberbullying/harassment, that is not initiated at a location defined above is covered by this policy if the incident results in a potentially material or substantial disruption of the school learning environment for one or more students or staff and/or the orderly day-to-day operations of any school or school program.

The Hillsdale Preparatory School Board of Directors believes that a comprehensive health education curriculum, within the whole school, whole community, whole child framework, helps students attain skills and knowledge vital to school success, a productive and healthy workforce and good citizenship. Critical skills include anticipating consequences of choices, making informed decisions, communicating effectively, resolving conflicts and developing cultural competency.

The Hillsdale Preparatory School Board of Directors recognizes that in order to have the maximum impact, it is critical to provide a minimum of annual training for school employees and volunteers who have significant contact with students on school policies and procedures regarding bullying and harassment to help promote a positive school climate. Training will provide school employees with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the necessary schools to fulfill them. (Examples of appropriate trainings include, but are not limited to, age-appropriate strategies for immediate and effective interventions to stop incidents; Restorative Justice Practices; internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying; and fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and differences.)

The Hillsdale Preparatory School Board of Directors believes that standards for student behavior must be set through interaction among the students, parents and guardians, staff and community members of the school, producing an atmosphere that encourages students to grow in self-discipline and their ability to respect the rights of others. The development of this atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for school and community property on the part of students, staff, parents and community members.

The Hillsdale Preparatory School Board of Directors believes that the best discipline for aggressive behavior is designed to (1) support students in taking responsibility for their actions, (2) develop empathy, and (3) teach alternative ways to achieve the goals and to solve problems that motivated the aggressive behavior. Staff members and volunteers who interact with students shall role model respectful behavior and apply best practices designed to *prevent* discipline problems and encourage students' abilities to develop self-discipline and make better choices in the future. School staff who exhibit bullying or harassing behavior that is directed toward school employees, volunteers, parents, or students will also be held accountable. If the Head of School is the alleged aggressor, the Board of Directors or its designee shall be responsible for investigating the report and taking any necessary steps.

Since bystander support in bullying and harassment can encourage these behaviors, the school prohibits both active and passive support for acts of harassment or bullying. The staff should encourage students *not* to be part of the problem; *not* to pass on the rumor or derogatory message; to constructively attempt to stop them; to report them to the designated authority; and to reach out in friendship to the student who is being bullied or harassed. Regular classrooms meetings should be conducted to help promote a positive and connected classroom. Informal classroom discussions and activities designed to provide awareness and increase student connectedness promote a positive shift in peer norms that will support empowered bystanders. This meeting time can be used to teach students how and when to respond to incidents of bullying and harassment. When bystanders do report or cooperate in an investigation, they

must be protected from retaliation with the same type of procedures used to respond to bullying and harassment.

While investigating reports of bullying and harassment, the following questions will be considered:

- What is the history between the students involved? Have there been past conflicts?
- Is there a power imbalance?
- Has this happened before? Is the student worried it will happen again?

The Hillsdale Preparatory School Board of Directors requires its Head of School to develop and implement procedures that ensure both the appropriate consequences and remedial responses to a student or staff member who commits one or more acts of bullying and harassment. The following factors, at a minimum, shall be given full consideration by the Head of School in the development of the procedures for determining appropriate consequences and remedial measures to each act of harassment or bullying.

Factors for Determining Consequences:

- Age, development and maturity levels of the parties involved
- Degree of harm (physical and/or emotional distress)
- Surrounding circumstances
- Nature and severity of the behavior(s)
- Incidences of past or continuing patterns of behavior
- Relationship between the parties involved
- Context in which the alleged incidents occurred
- *Prior to suspending or expelling a student, consideration of the 7 factors outlined in MCL 380.1310D is required. These factors include:*
 - *The student's age*
 - *The student's disciplinary history*
 - *Whether the student has a disability*
 - *The seriousness of the violation or behavior committed by the student*
 - *Whether the violation or behavior threatened the safety of any student or staff member*
 - *Whether Restorative Practices will be used to address the violation or behavior committed.*
 - *Whether a lesser intervention would properly address the violation or behavior committed by the student.*

In order to ensure the students' perception of fair and impartial treatment, a student's academic or athletic status is *not* a legitimate factor for determining consequences. Consequences must be perceived as fair and impartial.

Factors for Determining Remedial Measures:

- Personal
- Environmental

Consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a student or staff member who engages in one or more acts of bullying or harassment may range from positive behavior interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, in the case of a student, or suspension or recommendation for termination in the case of an employee, as set forth in the Board of Directors' approved code of student conduct. Staff will be held accountable for bullying or harassing behavior directed toward school employees, volunteers, parents or students in conjunction with Henway Consulting's staff handbook.

Consequences for a student who commits an act of bullying and harassment shall vary in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance. Remedial measures shall be designed to: *correct the problem behavior; prevent another occurrence of the behavior; and protect the victim of the act.*

Examples of Consequences:

- Participation in guided reflection process designed to teach alternative behavior
- Temporary removal from the classroom
- Loss of privileges
- In-school suspension during the school week
- Out-of-school suspension
- Legal action
- Expulsion

Examples of Remedial Measures:

- Restitution or Restoration
- Restorative Justice Practices
- Corrective instruction
- Supportive interventions
- Behavioral assessment or evaluation, including, but not limited to, a referral to a Child Study Team, as appropriate
- Referral to School Mental Health
- Parent conferences

The Hillsdale Preparatory School Board of Directors requires the Head of School to be responsible for receiving complaints alleging the violation of this policy. All school staff and volunteers are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the Head of School. All other members of the school community, including students, parents and visitors are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy. Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the bases of an anonymous report.

The Hillsdale Preparatory School Board of Directors requires the Head of School to be responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes a violation of this policy. In so doing, the Head of School shall conduct a prompt, thorough and complete investigation of each alleged incident. The investigation is to be completed within three school days after a report or complaint is made. The parents of the students involved shall receive written notice from the school on the outcome of the investigation (incompliance with current privacy laws and regulations). All reports on instances of bullying and or/ harassment must be recorded by the school for annual data review.

The Hillsdale Preparatory School Board of Directors prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying or harassment. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person found to have falsely accused another as a means of bullying or harassment may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a school employee found to have falsely accused another as a means of bullying or harassment shall be in accordance with Henway Consulting policies, procedures and agreements.

The Hillsdale Preparatory School Board of Directors requires school officials to annually disseminate the policy to all school staff, students and parents, along with a statement explaining that it applies to all applicable acts of harassment and bullying that occur on school property, or at school-sponsored functions. The Head of School shall develop an annual process for discussing the school district policy on harassment and bullying with students and staff. The school shall incorporate information regarding the policy against harassment or bullying into each school employee training program and handbook.