**Cyberbullying**

**Definitions:**

“**Bullying”** means the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral or electronic communication directed at or referring to another student attending school in the Woodstock Public Schools, or a physical act or gesture by one or more students repeatedly directed at another student attending school in the Woodstock Public Schools, that:

(1) causes physical or emotional harm to such student or damage to such student’s property;

(2) places such student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself, or of damage to his or her property;

 (3) creates a hostile environment at school for such student;

 (4) infringes on the rights of such student at school; or

 (5) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Bullying includes, but not be limited to, a written, verbal or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

**“Cyberbullying”** means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications. Cyberbullying includes, but is not limited to the following: harassing, teasing, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another person by sending or posting inappropriate or hurtful e-mail messages, instant messages, text messages, sexting, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including, but not limited to, blogs or social networking sites); when such messages, pictures or postings meet the definition of bullying behavior set forth above.

**"Electronic communication"** means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic or photo-optical system.

**"Mobile electronic device"** means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted.

**"Outside of the school setting"** means at a location, activity or program that is not school related, or through the use of an electronic device or a mobile electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the Woodstock Board of Education.

**"School employee"** means

(1) a teacher, substitute teacher, school administrator, school superintendent, guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker, nurse, physician, school paraprofessional or coach employed by the Woodstock Board of Education or working in the Woodstock Public Schools; or

(2) any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students enrolled in the Woodstock Public Schools, pursuant to a contract with the Woodstock Board of Education.

**Prohibition of Cyberbullying:**

The Board expressly prohibits any form of cyberbullying on school grounds; at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds; at a school bus stop; on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by a local or regional board of education; or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by Woodstock Board of Education.

All forms of cyberbullying or harassment using technological means are unacceptable and considered to be a violation of this policy, the Board’s “Bullying Behavior in the Schools Policy” (JICD) and the Board’s “Computer Technology & Internet Access and Use” policy (EDC). Further, the district computer network and the Internet, whether accessed on campus or off campus, during or after school hours, may not be used for the purpose of cyberbullying, harassment or other inappropriate behavior.

Malicious use of the district computer system to develop programs or to institute practices that bully or harass other users or gain unauthorized access to any entity on the system and/or damage the components of an entity on the network is prohibited. Users are responsible for the appropriateness of the material they transmit over the system. Hate mail, harassment, discriminatory remarks, bullying, cyberbullying, or other inappropriate behaviors are expressly prohibited.

**Prohibition of Off-Campus Cyberbullying:**

The Board also prohibits any form of cyberbullying behavior outside of the school setting if such cyberbullying (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such cyberbullying was directed, (ii) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such cyberbullying was directed at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

**Reports of Cyberbullying:**

Students who believe they have been subjected to cyberbullying should report the act(s) of cyberbullying to the school administration, by making a report pertaining to bullying behavior pursuant to the Board’s “Bullying Behavior in the Schools Policy” (JICD) and its applicable administrative regulations. Students who believe they have been the victims of misuses of technology, as described in this policy, should not erase the offending material, but should share the materials with their building principal. Students who believe they have been the victims of misuses of technology, as described in this policy, should not erase the offending material, but should share the materials with their building principal.

Parents (or guardians of students) may file a written complaint of cyberbullying pertaining to any student by making a report pertaining to bullying behavior pursuant to the Board’s “Bullying Behavior in the Schools Policy” (JICD) and its applicable administrative regulations.

Community members who witness acts of cyberbullying or receive information pertaining to cyberbullying of an elementary school student are encouraged to report any such information to the Woodstock Elementary School Principal. Community members who witness acts of cyberbullying or receive information pertaining to cyberbullying of a middle school student are encouraged to report any such information to the Woodstock Middle School Principal.

School employees who witness acts of cyberbullying or receive information pertaining to cyberbullying of an elementary school student shall report any such information to the Woodstock Elementary School Principal, not later than one school day after such school employee witnesses or receives a report of bullying, and to file a written report not later than two school days after making such oral report. School employees who witness acts of cyberbullying or receive information pertaining to cyberbullying of a middle school student shall report any such information to the Woodstock Middle School Principal, not later than one school day after such school employee witnesses or receives a report of bullying, and to file a written report not later than two school days after making such oral report.

**Investigation of Cyberbullying:**

The administration shall investigate reports of cyberbullying incidents in accordance with the Board’s “Bullying Behavior in the Schools Policy” (JICD) and its applicable administrative regulations.

**Remediation of Cyberbullying Incidents:**

Cyberbullying can take many forms and can vary dramatically in the nature of the offense and the impact the behavior may have on the victim and other students. Accordingly, there is no one prescribed response to verified acts of cyberbullying. While conduct that rises to the level of “cyberbullying,” as defined above, will generally warrant traditional disciplinary action against the perpetrator of such cyberbullying, whether and to what extent to impose disciplinary action (e.g., detention, in-school suspension, suspension or expulsion) is a matter for the professional discretion of the building principal. No disciplinary action may be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous complaint of cyberbullying. The school district may consider appropriate alternatives to traditional disciplinary sanctions, including age-appropriate consequences and other restorative or remedial interventions. Actions takes in response to verified instances of cyberbullying shall be consistent with the Board’s “Bullying Behavior in the Schools Policy” (JICD) and its applicable administrative regulations.

Legal References:

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-145a

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-145o

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-220a

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222d

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222g

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222h

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222j

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222k

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-222l

Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 10-233a through 10-233f

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