



**EXETER-WEST GREENWICH REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**REPORT FORM**

**(Bullying and/or Cyberbullying)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions about this reporting incident:

List the name of the alleged bully, and/or cyberbully. If name is not known, provide any other identifiable information:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Relationship between you and the alleged bully, and/or cyberbully:

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe the incident:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

When and where did it happen?

\_\_\_\_\_

Were there any witnesses? [ ] yes [ ] no If yes, who?

\_\_\_\_\_

Other information, including previous incidents or threats:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Student or parent declines to complete this form: Initial: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that all statements made in the complaint are true and complete. Any intentional false statement of fact will subject me to appropriate discipline. I authorize school officials to disclose the information I provide only as necessary in pursuing the investigation.

Signatures:

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

School official receiving complaint: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

School official conducting follow-up: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*This document shall remain confidential*

## **8518: Bullying—Prohibited**

The Exeter-West Greenwich School Committee recognizes bullying creates a school climate of fear and disrespect which seriously undermines the safe learning environment that students need to achieve their full potential.

### **I. Policy Proclamation**

The school committee does not tolerate bullying in the district schools. To manage the prevention of bullying the school committee herein directs the superintendent to implement and enforce all elements of this policy.

### **II. Scope of Policy**

This policy codifies the school committee's prohibitions against bullying. Bullying is defined and the processes for preventing, reporting, investigating, mediating any occurrence of bullying in E-WG schools are set forth. Guidelines for appropriate disciplining of student offenders are included. The policy fully incorporates the requirements of the model bullying policy, promulgated by the Rhode Island Department of Education, and applicable to all public school districts not later than June 30, 2012.

### **III. Definitions**

In the context of this policy, terms used have the following meaning:

**Bullying**— the use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof directed at a student that:

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the student or damage to the student's property;
- Places the student in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
- Creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or abusive educational environment for the student;
- Infringes on the rights of the student to participate in school activities, or
- Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

The expression, physical act or gesture may include, but is not limited to, an incident or incidents that may be reasonably perceived as being motivated by characteristics such as: race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or mental, physical, or sensory disability, intellectual ability or by any other distinguishing characteristic.

Bullying most often occurs as repeated behavior and often is not a single incident but is repeated behavior and between the bullying/cyber-bullying offender(s) and the bullying victim(s). Bullying also occurs when a student or a cliquish group of students organize a shunning campaign against another student or maliciously spread rumors about another student.

(Other acts of bullying that may occur at school are addressed in school committee policy **8513: Dating Violence, Sexual Violence and Hazing.**)

**Cyber- bullying**— the use of technology or any electronic communication, which may include, but not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, texting or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system including electronic mail,

internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications; with the intent to embarrass, humiliate, threaten or intimidate the victim. The cyber bully may remain anonymous or may self-inflate while cavorting with a circle of attending minions using electronic means to maliciously bullying the victim. Forms of cyber-bullying may include but are not limited to:

- The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person;
- The knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages; or
- The distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of materials on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the creation, impersonation, or distribution results in any of the conditions enumerated in the above definition of bullying.

Social networking—the use of electronic media in any form to communicate with another person(s), website, online service, online community net, business enterprise or any other online contact.

At school—the presence on school premises, at any school sponsored activity or event whether or not it is held on school premises, on a school transportation vehicle, at an official school bus stop, using property or equipment provided by the school, or acts which create a material and substantial disruption of the education process or the orderly operation of school.

Parent —the parent(s) of a student and includes natural parent, a guardian or other person acting as a parent in the absence of the natural parent or guardian. Also included is a student’s step parent who resides with the student.

Staff—consist of school administrators, teaching faculty, guidance and social counselors, certified and non-certified support personnel and school volunteers.

#### **IV. Prohibited Bullying Cyber-Bullying and Social Networking**

Bullying, cyber-bullying and social networking, as defined above are prohibited. Students who violate any of these prohibitions, while at school, shall be subject to one or more of the disciplinary sanctions listed below. An exception to social networking may be permitted for educational or instructional purposes with prior approval from the teacher or school administration; however; with the exception noted, the restrictions on student’s personal electronic devices imposed by school committee policy **8517: Cell Phone and other Personal Electronic Devices—Permitted and Prohibited Possession and Use** shall remain in affect.

#### **V. Disciplinary Sanctions**

The disciplinary actions for violations of this bullying policy shall be determined by the school principal, or designee, with the cognizance of the superintendent. Disciplinary actions for violations shall balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. The severity of the disciplinary action shall be aligned to the severity of the bullying behavior. Students, while at school, who engage in any form of bullying or acts of retaliation, shall be subject to disciplinary sanctions which may include, but not limited to one or more of the following:

- Admonitions and warnings,

- Parental/ Guardian notification and meetings,
- Detention,
- In school suspension,
- Loss of school provided transportation or loss of student parking pass,
- Loss of the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities including athletics,
- Loss of the opportunity to participate in school social activities,
- Loss of the opportunity to participate in graduation exercises or middle school promotional activities,
- Police referral, if federal or state criminal statutes have been violated, or
- School suspension: No student shall be suspended from school unless it is deemed to be a necessary consequence of the violation of this policy. (Any such suspension shall be conducted in accordance with school committee policy **8506: Suspension and Expulsion.**)

#### **VI. Condoning**

If during an investigation into an allegation of bullying it is found that any student (s) condoned the prohibited offence by cheering-on or in any other way encouraged the offender(s), the student (s) shall, depending on the degree of their participation, be subject to one or more of the disciplinary sanctions listed above.

#### **VII. Retaliation**

Retaliation or threats of retaliation in any form designed to intimidate victims, witnesses, or investigators of bullying shall not be tolerated. Any student(s) found to be in violation of the retaliation prohibition shall be subject to one or more of the disciplinary sanctions listed above; and, if applicable, referral to police in accordance with the state's criminal statutes prohibiting blackmail, extortion and/or stalking.

#### **VIII. Reporting Responsibilities**

The school principal of each of school shall prominently publicize to students, staff, and parents guidelines on how a report bullying. Such instructive guidance shall encourage reporting, and shall emphasize, especially to student, the confidential manner that reports will be received and acted upon and that reports may be verbal or in written form. (Report forms, developed in the superintendent's office—common to all schools, shall be available in school offices and posted on the district website.)

Persons responsible for reporting bullying are:

- The victim of bullying, anyone who witnesses an incidence of bullying, and anyone who has credible information that an act of bullying has taken place may report the bullying.
- Any student or staff member who believes he/she is being bullied is strongly encouraged to immediately report such to the school principal or any other appropriate staff member.
- Staff members, including volunteers, who observe an act of bullying or who have reasonable grounds to believe that bullying is taking place whether at school or away from school shall report the bullying to the principal, or designee. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

- The principal, or designee, shall notify the parents\* of the victim of bullying and the parents of the alleged perpetrator(s). Such notification shall be immediate, and in no case later than 24 hours, upon affirmation or even a reasonable suspicion that a student is being victimized.

(\* The principal shall respect the right of eighteen year old students to have or not have their parents involved in any issue addressed in this policy.)

- Students who observe an act of bullying or who have reasonable grounds to believe that bullying is taking place shall report the bullying to school authorities. Students, who fail to report bullying, may be subject to one or more of the disciplinary sanctions listed above. **The victim of bullying, however, shall not be subject to discipline for failing to report the bullying.** To overcome their natural fear of reporting bullying occurring to self or another student, students shall be encouraged to talk to their parents, or to any teacher or school staff member that they feel comfortable with.
- Student reports of bullying or retaliation may be made anonymously; provided however, no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
- Any school employee, school volunteer or student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to discipline in accordance with the applicable school behavior code.
- Any school employee, school volunteer, student, parent, or caregiver who in good faith promptly reports an act of bullying to the appropriate school official **shall be immune from a cause of civil action for damages arising from reporting the bullying (Rhode Island General Law 16-21-34 (a), (13)).**

#### **IX. Investigation Process**

The principal, or designee, shall promptly investigate all allegations of bullying in a fair manner which preserves the due process rights of the accused. The investigation process will follow the guidelines listed below:

- If the initial investigation of an allegation finds credibility, the principal, or designee, shall immediately notify the superintendent and the parents of all involved students, and began a full investigation.
- If the investigation confirms the allegation, appropriate disciplinary sanctions shall be imposed.
- The investigation will include an assessment by the school psychologist and/or social worker on how the victim has been affected by the unwanted intimidation. Any student who engages in continuous and/or serious acts of bullying will be referred to the school psychologist and/or social worker.
- To the extent practical all phases of the investigation shall be conducted in a confidential manner. The investigating official shall prepare a report which shall include: the findings of the investigation; disciplinary sanction imposed, if any; and an assessment of the effect the prohibited conduct has had on the victim.
- Whenever an investigation finds a bullying situation has occurred that violates criminal law, the principal shall immediately notify the superintendent and police

officials. If such notification leads to a police investigation, the principal shall ensure that any police interrogation of a student (s) on school premises is conducted only in accordance with school committee policy **8516: Police Investigations on School Premises**.

- At any time during an investigation that the superintendent deems appropriate, but in no event later than when police officials become involved in the investigation of a bullying situation, the superintendent shall notify school committee members.

#### **XI. Prevention—School Climate/ Environment**

School staff shall take all reasonable measures to prevent bullying at school. Such measures may include professional development and prevention activities, parental workshops, and student assemblies among other strategies.

School staff, at all times, shall model courteous behavior to each other, to students, parents and to school visitors. Abusive or humiliating language or churlish demeanor will not be accepted among school employees. Additionally, students and their families are expected to exhibit courteous behavior to all members of the learning community in school and at school sponsored events.

To the extent possible, the influence of cliques and other exclusive student grouping shall be diminished by the creation of inclusive school activities in which all students are encouraged to participate.

The junior high and senior high school principals, or their designees, shall ensure that students and staff are instructed in how to recognize and report bullying. If bullying becomes a serious issue within a school, the principal may refer remediation to the school **Safe and Drug-free Schools Team**. The team will develop recommended policies and protocols designed to prevent and diminish the bullying. The team's recommendations shall be reviewed by the superintendent and, if approved, submitted to the school committee for final review and approval before being implemented.

#### **XII. Compliance with Protective Orders**

School principals shall comply with all restraining and no-contact orders issued by a court to protect one student from another. The principal shall meet separately with the student under protection and the student to whom the protective order is directed and their respective parents. At such meetings, the principal shall review the ramifications of the protective order and explain the school's rules that will be strictly enforced to avoid any at school face-to-face contact between the students named in the protective order.

#### **XIII. Confidentiality**

School principals shall ensure that all reports, investigations and actions taken regarding bullying are filed with the involved students' confidential educational records in accordance with the 1974 Federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act and school committee policy **8901: Maintaining Confidentiality of Student Records**.

#### **XIV. Appeal Process**

Parents of students under age 18 and students age 18 or older may appeal disciplinary actions taken by school principals regarding bullying to the superintendent, and if not satisfied with the superintendent's decision, to the school committee. A school committee's decision to expel a student for bullying offences may be appealed to the Rhode Island Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education RI Department of Education.

**XV. Other Redress**

Neither this policy nor the RIDE mandated policy nor Rhode Island General Laws 16-21-33 and 16-21- 34, which directed the implementation of the statewide policy, create or alter any tort liability or prevent a victim or parent of a victim of bullying, cyber bullying or retaliation from seeking redress under any other available law, either civil or criminal.

**XVI. Policy Enforceability**

This policy is enforceable to the extent it is consistent with federal and state laws and regulations.

**XVII. Applicable State Laws, As Amended**

The Rhode Island General Laws applicable to the prevention and control of bullying in public and private schools include:

- 11-42-2 Extortion and Blackmail,
- 11-59-2 Stalking Prohibited,
- 16-7.1-2 (e) Accountability for student performance,
- 16-21-7 School Health Program,
- 16-21.5 Student Interrogations,
- 16-21-21 School Discipline,
- 16-21-23 School Safety plans,
- 16-21-24 Requirements of school safety plans, school emergency response plans and school crisis response plans,
- 16-21-33 Safe school act,
- 16-21-34 Statewide bullying policy implemented, and
- 16-38-4 Exclusive Clubs.

**XVIII. Information and Policy Dissemination**

The principal in each school shall ensure that students, staff, volunteers, and parents are provided information regarding this policy. This information shall include methods of discouraging and preventing bullying, the duty to report bullying, the procedure for filing reports, and the disciplinary action that may be taken against those who commit acts in violation of this policy.

The prevention of bullying shall also be part of the school district strategic plan and school safety plan.

This policy upon adoption shall be disseminated to all policy book holders, and shall be distributed annually to students, staff, parents and school volunteers. Appropriate excerpts shall be included in the annual student hand books.

**XIX. Effective Date**

This policy shall become effective upon approval by the school committee.

**First Reading:            May 22, 2012**  
**Second Reading:        June 13, 2012**  
**Adopted:                    July 17, 2012**