

## Oologah-Talala Public Schools Bullying, Harassment, Hazing

It is the policy of the school district that threatening behavior, harassment, intimidation and bullying of students by other students, personnel or the public will not be tolerated. Students are expected to be civil, polite and fully engaged in the learning process. Students who act inappropriately are not fully engaged in the learning process. This policy is in effect while the students are on school grounds, in school vehicles, at designated bus stops, at school-sponsored activities, at school-sanctioned events and while away from school grounds if the misconduct directly affects the good order, efficient management and welfare of the school district.

Threatening behavior, harassment, intimidation, and bullying of students by electronic communication is prohibited whether or not such communication originated at school or with school equipment; if the communication is specifically directed at students or school personnel and concerns harassment, intimidation or bullying at school.

Harassment is intimidation by threats of or actual physical violence; the creation by whatever means of a climate of hostility or intimidation; or the use of language, conduct, or symbols in such a manner as to be commonly understood to convey hatred, contempt, or prejudice or to have the effect of insulting or stigmatizing an individual. Harassment includes but is not limited to harassment based on race, sex, creed, color, national origin, religion, marital status, or disability.

As used in the School Bullying Prevention Act, "harassment, intimidation, and bullying" means any gesture, written or verbal expression, electronic communication or physical act that a reasonable person should know will harm another student, damage another student's property, place another student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or damage to the student's property, or insult or demean any student or group of students in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school's educational mission or the education of any student. Harassment, intimidation and bullying include, but are not limited to, gestures or written, verbal or physical act. Such behavior is specifically prohibited.

No student in this school district will be subject to hazing, harassment, bullying or any other form of persecution by any student or employee whether connected to any fraternity or organization or not. For the purpose of this policy, hazing is defined as the deliberate harassment of a student by means of rough practical jokes or causing the student to perform meaningless, difficult or humiliating tasks.

In all disciplinary action, teachers, and administrators will be mindful of the fact that they are dealing with individual personalities. The faculty may consider consultation with parents to determine the most effective disciplinary measure.

In considering alternatives of corrective actions, the faculty/administration of the school district will consider those listed below. However, the school is not limited to these alternative methods, nor does this list reflect an order or sequence of events to follow in disciplinary actions. The board of education will rely upon the judgment and discretion of the administrator to determine the appropriate remedial or corrective action in each instance.

- Conference with student
- Conference with parents
- In-school suspension
- Detention
- Referral to counselor
- Behavioral contract

- Changing student's seat assignment or class assignment
- Requiring a student to make financial restitution for damaged property
- Requiring a student to clean or straighten items or facilities damaged by the student's behavior
- Restriction of privileges
- Involvement of local authorities
- Referring student to appropriate social agency
- Suspension
- Other appropriate disciplinary action as required and as indicated by the circumstances which may include, but is not limited to, removal from eligibility to participate or attend extracurricular activities as well as removal from the privilege of attending or participating in the graduation ceremony, school dances, prom, prom activities, and/or class trips.

This policy is not intended to deny school district authorities from taking necessary and appropriate disciplinary action toward any student or employee. Students or employees who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action which may include expulsion for students and employment termination for employees.

*Harassment set forth above may include, but is not limited to, the following:*

- Verbal, physical, or written harassment or abuse
- Repeated remarks of a demeaning nature
- Implied or explicit threats concerning one's grades, achievements, etc.
- Demeaning jokes, stories, or activities directed at the student
- Unwelcome physical contact

*The Superintendent shall develop procedures providing for:*

- Prompt investigation of allegations of harassment
- The expeditious correction of the conditions causing such harassment
- Establishment of adequate measures to provide confidentiality in the complaint process
- Initiation of appropriate corrective actions
- Identification and enactment of methods to prevent reoccurrence of the harassment
- A process where the provisions of this policy are disseminated in writing annually to all staff and students

## **PROHIBITING HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING (REGULATION)**

Statement of Legislative Mandate and Purpose

This regulation is a result of the legislative mandate and public policy embodied in the School Bullying Protection Act, 70 O.S. §24-100.2. The Oklahoma Legislature requires school districts to adopt a policy to prevent harassment, intimidation and bullying in an effort to "create an environment free of unnecessary disruption" and also requires school districts to actively pursue programs for education regarding bullying behaviors.

The Oologah-Talala Public Schools' student code prohibits harassment, intimidation and bullying. This regulation further explains the negative effects of that behavior and seeks to promote strategies for prevention.

The board of education recognizes that intimidation, harassment and bullying of students cause serious educational and personal problems, for both the student-victim, and the initiator of the intimidation, harassment, and bullying. The board observes that this conduct:

1. Has been shown, by national and state studies, to have a substantial adverse effect upon school district operations, the safety of students and faculty and the educational system at large.

2. Substantially disrupts school operations by interfering with the district's mission to instruct students in an atmosphere free from fear, is disruptive of school efforts to encourage students to remain in school until graduation and is just as disruptive of the district's efforts to prepare students for productive lives in the community as they become adults.
3. Substantially disrupts healthy student behavior and thereby academic achievement. Research indicates that healthy student behavior results in increased student academic achievement. Improvement in student behavior through the prevention or minimization of intimidation, harassment and bullying towards student-victims simultaneously supports the district's primary and substantial interest in operating schools that foster and promote academic achievement.
4. Substantially interferes with school compliance with federal law that seeks to maximize the mainstreaming of students with disabilities and hinders compliance with Individual Educational Programs containing objectives to increase the socialization of students with disabilities. Targets of bullying are often students with known physical or mental disabilities who, as a result, are perceived by bullies as easy targets for bullying actions.
5. Substantially interferes with the district's mission to advance the social skills and social and emotional well-being of students. Targets of intimidation, harassment and bullying are often "passive-target" students who already are lacking in social skills because they tend to be extremely sensitive, shy, display insecurity, anxiety and/or distress; may have experienced a traumatic event; may try to use gifts, toys, money, or class assignments or performance bribes to protect themselves from intimidation, harassment, or bullying; are often small for their age and feel vulnerable to bullying acts; and/or may resort to carrying weapons to school for self-protection. Passive-target victims who have been harassed and demeaned by the behavior of bullies often respond by striving to obtain power over others by becoming bullies themselves, and are specifically prone to develop into students who eventually inflict serious physical harm on other students, or, in an effort to gain power over their life or situation, commit suicide.
6. Substantially disrupts school operations by increasing violent acts committed against fellow students. Violence, in this context, is frequently accompanied by criminal acts.
7. Substantially disrupts school operations by interfering with the reasonable expectations of other students that they can feel secure at school and not be subjected to frightening acts or be the victim of mistreatment resulting from bullying behavior.

Bullying, harassing and intimidating behavior often involves expressive gestures, speech, physical acts that are sexually suggestive, lewd, vulgar, profane or offensive to the education or social mission of this school district and at times involves the commission of criminal acts. This behavior interferes with the curriculum by disrupting the presentation of instruction and also disrupts and interferes with the student-victim or bystander's ability to concentrate, retain instruction and study or to operate free from the effect of intimidation, harassment and bullying. This results in a reluctance or resistance to attend school.

Definition of Terms:

1. **Statutory definition of harassment, intimidation, and bullying:**

70 O.S. §24-100.3(c) of the School Bullying Protection Act defines the terms "harass, intimidate, or bully," as including, but not limited to, any gesture, written or verbal expression, or physical act that a reasonable person should recognize will:

- A. Harm another student;
- B. Damage another student's property;

- C. Place another student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or damage to the student's property; or
- D. Insult or demean any student or group of students in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school's educational mission or the education of any student.

## 2. **The "Reasonable Person" Standard**

In determining what a "reasonable person" should recognize as an act placing a student in "reasonable" fear of harm, staff will determine "reasonableness" not only from the point of view of a mature adult, but also from the point of view of an immature child of the age of the intended victim along with, but not limited to, consideration of special emotional, physical, or mental needs of the particular child; personality or physical characteristics, or history that might cause the child to be particularly sensitive to efforts by a bully to humiliate, embarrass, or lower the self-esteem of the victim; and the discipline history, personality of, and physical characteristics of the individual alleged to have engaged in the prohibited behavior.

## 3. **General Display of Bullying Acts**

Bullying, for purposes of this section of the regulation, includes harassment and intimidation, and vice versa. According to experts in the field, bullying in general is the exploitation of a less powerful person by an individual taking unfair advantage of that person, which is repeated over time, and which inflicts a negative effect on the victim. The seriousness of a bullying act depends on the harm inflicted upon the victim and the frequency of the offensive acts. Power may be, but is not limited to, physical strength, social skill, verbal ability, or other characteristics. Bullying acts by students have been described in several different categories.

- A. **Physical Bullying** includes harm or threatened harm to another's body or property, including, but not limited to, what would reasonably be foreseen as a serious expression of intent to inflict physical harm or property damage through verbal or written speech or gestures directed at the student-victim, when considering the factual circumstances in which the threat was made and the reaction of the intended victim. Common acts include tripping, hitting, pushing, pinching, pulling hair, kicking, biting, starting fights, daring others to fight, stealing or destroying property, extortion, assaults with a weapon, other violent acts, and homicide.
- B. **Emotional Bullying** includes the intentional infliction of harm to another's self-esteem, including, but not limited to, insulting or profane remarks, insulting or profane gestures, or harassing and frightening statement, when such events are considered in light of the surrounding facts, the history of the students involved, and age, maturity, and special characteristics of the students.
- C. **Social Bullying** includes harm to another's group acceptance including, but not limited to, harm resulting from intentionally gossiping about another student or intentionally spreading negative rumors about another student that results in the victim being excluded from a school activity or student group; the intentional planning and/or implementation of acts or statements that inflict public humiliation upon a student; the intentional undermining of current relationships of the victim-student through the spreading of untrue gossip or rumors designed to humiliate or embarrass the student; the use of gossip, rumors or humiliating acts designed to deprive the student of awards, recognition or involvement in school activities, the false or malicious spreading of an untrue statement or statements about another student that exposes the victim to contempt or ridicule or deprives the victim of the confidence and respect of student peers; or the making of false statements to others that the

student has committed a crime, or has an infectious, contagious, or loathsome disease, or similar egregious representations.

- D. Bullying of a sexual nature includes harm to another resulting from, but not limited to, making unwelcome sexual comments about the student; making vulgar, profane, or lewd comments or drawings or graffiti about the victim; directing vulgar, profane, or lewd gestures toward the victim; committing physical acts of a sexual nature at school, including the fondling or touching of private parts of the victim's body; participation in the gossiping or spreading of false rumors about the student's sexual life; written or verbal statements directed at the victim that would reasonably be interpreted as a serious threat to force the victim to commit sexual acts or to sexually assault the victim when considering the factual circumstances in which the threat was made and the reaction of the intended victim; off-campus dating violence by a student that adversely affects the victim's school performance or behavior, attendance, participation in school functions or extracurricular activities, or makes the victim fearful at school of the assaulting bully; or the commission of sexual assault, rape, or homicide. Such conduct may also constitute sexual harassment – also prohibited by Oologah-Talala Public Schools.

### **Procedures Applicable to the Understanding of and Prevention of Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying of Students**

1. **Student and Staff Education and Training**

All staff will be provided with a copy of the district's policy on prevention of harassment, intimidation, and bullying of students. All students will be provided a summary of the policy and notice that a copy of the entire policy is available on request. Oologah-Talala Public Schools is committed to providing appropriate and relevant training to staff regarding identification of behavior constituting harassment, intimidation, and bullying of students and the prevention and management of such conduct.

Students, like staff members, shall participate in an annual education program that sets out expectations for student behavior and emphasizes an understanding of harassment, intimidation, and bullying of students, the district's prohibition of such conduct, and the reasons why the conduct is destructive, unacceptable, and will lead to discipline. Students shall also be informed of the consequences of bullying conduct toward their peers.

2. **Oologah-Talala Public Schools' Safe School Committee**

The safe school committee has the responsibility of studying and making recommendations regarding unsafe conditions, strategies for students to avoid harm at school, student victimization, crime prevention, school violence, and other issues that interfere with an adversely affect the maintenance of safe schools.

With respect to student harassment, intimidation and bullying, the safe school committee shall consider and make recommendations regarding professional staff development needs of faculty and other staff related to methods to decrease student harassment, intimidation, bullying and understanding and identifying bullying behaviors.

In addition, the committee shall make recommendations regarding: identification of methods to encourage the involvement of the community and students in addressing conduct involving bullying; methods to enhance relationships between students and school staff in order to strengthen communication; and fashioning of problem-solving teams that include counselors and/or school

psychologists. In accomplishing its objectives, the committee shall review traditional and accepted harassment, intimidation, and bullying prevention programs utilized by other states, state agencies, or school districts. (See also policy BDFC.)

### **Student Reporting**

Students are encouraged to inform school personnel if they are the victim of or a witness to acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

### **Staff Reporting**

An important duty of the staff is to report acts or behavior that the employee witnesses that appears to constitute harassing, intimidating, or bullying. Employees, whether certified or noncertified, shall encourage students who tell them about acts that may constitute intimidation, harassment, or bullying to complete a report form. For young students, staff members given that information will need to provide direct assistance to the student.

Staff members who witness such events are to complete reports and to submit them to the employee designated by the assistant superintendent to receive them. Staff members who hear of incidents that may, in the staff member's judgment, constitute harassment, intimidation, or bullying, are to report all relevant information to the assistant superintendent or his/her designee.

### **Parental Responsibilities**

Parents/guardians should become familiar with the district's program to stop intimidation, harassment, and bullying. An administrative response to a reported act of intimidation, harassment, or bullying may involve certain actions to be taken by parents. Parents will be informed of the program and the means for students to report bullying acts toward them or other students. Parents will also be told that to help prevent bullying at school they should encourage their children to:

- Report bullying when it occurs
- Take advantage of opportunities to talk to their children about bullying
- Inform the school immediately if they think their child is being bullied or is bullying other students
- Watch for symptoms that their child may be a victim of bullying and report those symptoms
- Cooperate fully with school personnel in identifying and resolving incidents

\*The OTPS Policy is available on the OTPS website or the school office can make a hardy copy upon request.