

LA GRANGE ISD

PLAN FOR THE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION OF BULLYING

A REQUIREMENT OF HB 1942

Bullying is a growing issue across Texas and the United States. The La Grange Independent School District is not immune to this trend. Campus and district administrators encourage parents to work together with the district to help provide a safe and orderly learning environment that encourages student success in the pursuit of their education. The district also seeks community involvement and engagement.

What is Bullying?

Bullying occurs when a student or group of students repeatedly engages in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic methods, or physical conduct against another student on school property, at a school-related or sponsored activity, or in a district operated vehicle and the behavior:

- *Results in harm to the student or the student's property
- *Places a student in reasonable fear of physical harm or of damage to the student's property
- *Is so severe, persistent, and pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment

Bullying is Bullying if:

- *it exploits an imbalance of power between the student perpetrator and the student victim through written or verbal expression or physical conduct and;
- *interferes with a student's education or substantially disrupts the operation of a school

Bullying is prohibited by the La Grange Independent School District (Policies FFH and FFI LEGAL) and could include:

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| *Hazing | *Teasing |
| *Threats | *Confinement |
| *Taunting | *Demands for money |
| *Assault | *Theft of valued possessions |
| *Name-calling | *Rumor-spreading |
| *Ostracism | |

The bottom line is that bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose. The person being bullied has a hard time defending himself or herself. Bullying happens over and over. Sometimes bullying is easy to notice, such as hitting or name-calling and at other times it is hard to see, such as with leaving a person out or saying mean things behind someone's back. Both boys and girls bully and both boys and girls get bullied. Bullying is not fair and it hurts.

What are Other Areas of Bullying?

The La Grange Independent School District is committed to working together with parents to help promote the health and well-being of our students. Bullying often occurs outside of school and some forms of bullying may be exclusively off-campus. Other areas of bullying can include:

Cyber-bullying—is defined as willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices. Most cyber-bullying is created on computers, cell phones and other devices that are not owned by the district or not located on school property, cyber-bullying can still affect the school environment and the welfare of students.

Teen Dating Violence—is defined as the intentional use of physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse by a person to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control another person in a dating relationship. Teen dating violence is a pattern of coercive behavior that one partner exerts over the other for the purpose of establishing and maintaining power and control.

Hostile Environment—is defined as a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

Retaliation—is defined as any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying

What are Warning Signs of Bullying?

Possible warning signs that a child is being bullied:

- *Returns home with torn, damaged, or missing pieces of clothing, books, or other belongings
- *Has unexplained cuts, bruises, and scratches
- *Seems afraid of going to school, walking to or from school, riding the school bus
- *Does not want to take part in school activities, clubs, etc.
- *Takes a long or illogical route when walking to school
- *Has lost interest in school work or grades suddenly fall
- *Appears sad, moody, teary, or depressed when returning from school
- *Complains repeatedly of headaches, stomachaches, or other physical ailments
- *Has trouble sleeping or has frequent bad dreams
- *Experiences a loss of appetite
- *Appears anxious and suffers from low self-esteem

What Bullying Is Not:

Bullying does not include normal childhood behavior such as sibling rivalry or one-on-one fighting of siblings or peers with competing claims. Nor does it include acts of impulsive aggression, such as aggression that is a spontaneous, indiscriminate striking out with no intended target. Bullying does not include criminal activities that may have begun as a conflict and escalated.

Roles and Responsibilities to Prevent and Intervene in Bullying

Administrators—Inform staff and students as where to obtain information regarding all levels of students safety, provide training on all forms of harassment including bullying and cyber-bullying; conduct formal investigations regarding claims of harassment including sexual harassment, bullying, and cyber-bullying; and coordinate efforts with district level team members regarding campus specific needs.

Counselors—provide individual or group counseling opportunities to distribute information regarding student safety on all levels; advise campus administration of any acts of harassment, bullying, cyber-bullying, etc. and provide information to parents regarding student safety issues. Set up counseling opportunities for the victim, witnesses or perpetrator of the bullying incidents and also inform them and their parents of counseling locations outside the school and in the local communities if those services are needed to gain coping skills to address the issues that arose because of the bullying.

Teachers—Through classroom instruction, take opportunities to discuss, disseminate, and distribute information regarding student safety on all levels.

Parents—Cooperate with campus personnel to address student safety issues. Provide regular communication with their children to determine student’s well-being, as well as addressing their responsibility. Participate in proactive discussions and activities working on anti-bullying and character development with their children.

How Will LGISD Staff Become Knowledgeable and Gain an Understanding of Bullying?

La Grange ISD staff will receive Bullying training so that our educators will be able to better address the critical issues in all types of bullying. Emphasis on training will include information which allows educators to better teach students how recognize, address, and prevent the different types of bullying from taking place. Staff will gain an understanding of the personal, social, and legal ramifications associated with bullying and cyber-bullying and learn prevention strategies. This training may be provided through campus staff, district staff, or outside agencies as appropriate at the discretion of the campus administration.

Who Do You Go to When You See Bullying Taking Place?

Many students who are bullied usually need help from an adult. The student who is doing the bullying probably does, too. Often the bullying does not get reported. Individuals that bullying can be reported to include:

- *Teachers
- *School Nurse
- *School Counselor
- *Cafeteria Worker
- *Principal
- *Bus Driver
- *Other adult you feel comfortable telling. If you need help, take a friend along.

All LGISD employees are required to report student complaints of bullying to the campus principal or designee.

What Can a Student do When They See Bullying Taking Place at School?

As a student, think about how you might feel if the bullying was happening to you. Students can lend a hand to someone being bullied even if they are not close friends with the student being bullied. School will be a better place when you help stop the bullying. Actions a student can take include:

- *Say something, just do not stand there
- *Kids who bully may think they are being funny or “cool;” if you feel safe to do so, tell the person to STOP the bullying behavior, tell them that you do not like it and it is not funny
- *Do not bully back; it will not help the situation to use mean names or actions and it could make the situation worse; do not put yourself in an unsafe situation
- *Take the time to say something kind to the person that was the recipient of the bullying such as “I’m sorry about what happened and I do not like it.”
- *Try to help the person understand that it was not their fault
- *Be a friend by taking the time to get to know the person—invite them to sit with you at lunch or offer to help them with their school work
- *Tell the student who is being bullied to talk to someone about what happened; offer to go along as support for the victim
- *Tell an adult.

Telling is very IMPORTANT! Reporting that someone is getting bullied or hurt in some other way is NOT “tattling.” Adults at school can help. Explain to your friends that bullying is not fair and encourage them to help in stopping the bullying.

What if the Bullying Does Not Happen at School?

*If there is an adult around, report the bullying to an adult such as your youth group leader, minister, or sports coach.

*No matter where the bullying happens, you should talk to your parents about bullying that you see or know about. Seek ideas about how to help. Everyone must do their part. Kids who are bullied deserve to feel safe and welcome at school, in their neighborhoods, and their communities.

What are the Procedures When Bullying is Reported?

If a student believes that he or she has experienced bullying or has witnessed bullying of another student, it is very important for a student or parent to notify school personnel. The student or parent making the report will be asked to fill out an "Incident Report Form" provided by the district as soon as possible so that assistance and intervention can be obtained. The LGISD campus administration will investigate any allegations of bullying or other related misconduct. The La Grange Independent School District investigators (campus principal or designee) will use the flow chart produced by the Texas School Safety Center at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas, to determine if a reported conduct rises to the level of a bullying incident according to HB 1942. An "Investigation Report" will be completed by the investigator of the alleged bullying incident. The parent of any student who was a witness to bullying incidents will be notified in writing by receiving a "Notice to Parent of Bullying Incident Form" from the campus principal or the designee.

What are the Consequences When Bullying is Found to Have Taken Place?

If the results of an investigation indicate that bullying has occurred, the campus administration will take appropriate disciplinary action. Disciplinary or other action may be taken even if the conduct did not rise to the level of bullying. Consequences of bullying behavior may include removal from the classroom to a disciplinary placement, a change in classroom, or even a change in campus. Severe behavior may result in expulsion. Law enforcement will be contacted if it is believed a student is thought to have engaged in illegal conduct. If a student is to be transferred to another campus, it will be done in consultation with the parent. The parent of a student who has been determined by the district to be a victim of bullying may request that his or her child be transferred to another classroom or campus within the district.

Also, if a situation of bullying involves physical contact by the perpetrator and the victim of the bullying uses **reasonable self-defense**, the actions will be taken into consideration during the investigation phase of the incident by administrators to determine appropriate discipline consequences. Likewise, a student with disabilities will be given the same consideration during an investigation phase and when discipline consequences of the bullying are administered.

When a case of bullying has been verified by the campus principal or designee, a written "Notice of Bullying Incident Form" will be sent to the victim's parents and likewise, a written "Notice to Parent of Bullying Incident" form will be sent to the parents of the student(s) who engaged in the bullying.

Note: For the transfer of a student who is the victim of bullying or who engaged in bullying, including a student who receives special education services, see Policy FDB. For school safety transfers, see FDE. For bullying rising to the level of prohibited harassment, see FFH.

A student or parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of an investigation may appeal through policy FNG(LOCAL). Policy online may be found at www.lgisd.net. Follow the "Inside LGISD" tab to Policies.

Additional Resource

For up to date information on the prevention of bullying please visit the website: www.stopbullying.gov.

Attachments

1. Texas State University – Texas School Safety Center Flow Chart
2. Incident Report Form – Student
3. Incident Report Form – Adult
4. Investigation Report
5. Notice to Parent of Bullying Incident (Victim)
6. Notice to Parent of Bullying Incident (Student Who Engaged in Bullying)
7. Notice to Parent of Bullying Incident (Witness)
8. Pledge to End Bullying and Harassment
9. LGISD Policy FFI (Legal)
10. LGISD Policy FFI (Local)