

**I. PURPOSE**

A safe and civil environment is needed for students to learn and attain high academic standards and to promote healthy human relationships. Bullying, like other violent or disruptive behavior, is conduct that interferes with students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to educate students in a safe environment. NWSISD cannot monitor the activities of students at all times and eliminate all incidents of bullying between students, particularly when students are not under the direct supervision of school personnel. However, to the extent such conduct affects the educational environment of NWSISD and the rights and welfare of its students and is within the control of NWSISD in its normal operations, it is NWSISD's intent to prevent bullying and to take action to investigate, respond, remediate, and discipline those acts of bullying which have not been successfully prevented. The purpose of this policy is to assist NWSISD in its goal of preventing and responding to acts of bullying, intimidation, violence, and other similar disruptive behavior.

**II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

- A. An act of bullying, by either an individual student or a group of students, is expressly prohibited on school district property or at school-related functions. This policy applies not only to students who directly engage in an act of bullying but also to students who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support another student's act of bullying. This policy also applies to any student whose conduct at any time or in any place constitutes bullying that interferes with or obstructs the mission or operations of NWSISD or the safety or welfare of the student, other students, or employees. The misuse of technology including, but not limited to, teasing, intimidating, defaming, threatening, or terrorizing another student, teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of NWSISD by sending or posting e-mail messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings, including blogs, also may constitute an act of bullying regardless of whether such acts are committed on or off school district property and/or with or without the use of school district resources.
- B. No teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of NWSISD shall permit, condone, or tolerate bullying.
- C. Apparent permission or consent by a student being bullied does not lessen the prohibitions contained in this policy.
- D. Retaliation against a victim, good faith reporter, or a witness of bullying is prohibited.
- E. False accusations or reports of bullying against another student are prohibited.
- F. A person who engages in an act of bullying, reprisal, or false reporting of bullying or permits, condones, or tolerates bullying shall be subject to discipline for that act in accordance with school district's policies and procedures. NWSISD may take into account the following factors:
  - 1. The developmental and maturity levels of the parties involved;
  - 2. The levels of harm, surrounding circumstances, and nature of the behavior;
  - 3. Past incidences or past or continuing patterns of behavior;
  - 4. The relationship between the parties involved; and
  - 5. The context in which the alleged incidents occurred.

Consequences for students who commit prohibited acts of bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension and/or expulsion. Consequences for employees who permit, condone, or tolerate bullying or engage in an act of reprisal or intentional false reporting of bullying may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination or discharge. Consequences for other individuals engaging in prohibited acts of bullying may include, but not be limited to, exclusion from school district property and events and/or termination of services and/or contracts.

- G. NWSISD will act to investigate all complaints of bullying and will discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of NWSISD who is found to have violated this policy.

### III. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, the definitions included in this section apply.

- A. “Bullying” means intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct that is objectively offensive and :
  - 1. an actual or perceived imbalance of power exists between the student engaging in the prohibited conduct and the target of the prohibited conduct, and the conduct is repeated or forms a pattern; or
  - 2. materially and substantially interferes with a student’s educational opportunities, performance, or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges.The term, “bullying,” specifically includes cyberbullying as defined in this policy.
- B. “Cyberbullying” means bullying using technology or other electronic communication, including, but not limited to, a transfer of a sign, signal, writing, image, sound, or data, including a post on a social network Internet website or forum, transmitted through a computer, cell phone, or other electronic device. The term applies to prohibited conduct which occurs on school premises, on NWSISD property, at school functions or activities, on school transportation, or on school computers, networks, forums, and mailing lists, or off school premises to the extent that it substantially and materially disrupts student learning or the school environment.
- C. “Immediately” means as soon as possible but in no event longer than 24 hours.
- D. “Intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct” means, but is not limited to, conduct that does the following:
  - 1. Causes physical harm to a student or a student’s property or causes a student to be in reasonable fear of harm to person or property;
  - 2. Under Minnesota common law, violates a student’s reasonable expectation of privacy, defames a student, or constitutes intentional infliction of emotional distress against a student; or
  - 3. Is directed at any student or students, including those based on a person’s actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, creed, religion, national origin, immigration status, sex, marital status, familial status, socioeconomic status, physical appearance, sexual orientation including gender identity and expression, academic status related to student performance, disability, or status with regard to public assistance, age, or any additional characteristic defined in the Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA). However, prohibited conduct need and not be based on any particular characteristics defined in this paragraph or the MHRA.
- E. “On school district property, at school-related functions or on school transportation” means all school district buildings, school grounds, and school property or property immediately adjacent to school grounds, school bus stops, school buses, school vehicles, school contracted vehicles, or any other vehicles approved for school district purposes, the area of entrance or departure from school grounds, premises, or events, and all school-related functions, school-sponsored activities, events, or trips. School district property also may mean a student’s walking route to or from school for purposes of attending school or school-related functions, activities, or events. While prohibiting bullying at these locations and events, NWSISD does not represent that it will provide supervision or assume liability at these locations and events.
- F. “Prohibited conduct” means bullying or cyberbullying as defined in this policy or retaliation or reprisal for asserting, alleging, reporting, or providing information about such conduct or knowingly making a false report about bullying.

- G. “Remedial response” means a measure to stop and correct prohibited conduct, prevent prohibited conduct from recurring, and protect, support, and intervene on behalf of a student who is the target or victim of prohibited conduct.
- H. “Student” means a student enrolled in a public school or a charter school.

#### **IV. REPORTING PROCEDURE**

- A. Any person who believes they have been the victim of bullying or any person with knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying under this policy shall report the alleged acts immediately to an appropriate school district official designated by this policy. A person may report bullying anonymously. However, NWSISD may not rely solely on an anonymous report to determine discipline or other remedial responses.
- B. NWSISD encourages the reporting party or complainant to use the report form available from the principal of each building or available from the NWSISD office, but oral reports shall be considered complaints as well.
- C. The building principal, the principal’s designee, or the building supervisor (hereinafter “building report taker”) is the person responsible for receiving reports of bullying at the building level. Any person may report bullying directly to a school district human rights officer or the Executive Director. If the complaint involves the building report taker, the complaint shall be made or filed directly with the Executive Director or NWSISD human rights officer by the reporting party or complainant.
- D. A teacher, school administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other school employee shall be particularly alert to possible situations, circumstances, or events that might include bullying. Any such person who receives a report of, observes, or has other knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying shall inform the building report taker immediately. School district personnel who fail to inform the building report taker of conduct that may constitute bullying in a timely manner may be subject to disciplinary action.
- E. Reports of bullying are classified as private educational and/or personnel data and/or confidential investigative data and will not be disclosed except as permitted by law.
- F. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of bullying will not affect the complainant’s or reporter’s future employment, grades, or work assignments, or educational or work environment.
- G. NWSISD will respect the privacy of the complainant(s), the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and the witnesses as much as possible, consistent with NWSISD’s obligation to investigate, take appropriate action, and comply with any legal disclosure obligations.

#### **V. SCHOOL DISTRICT ACTION**

- A. Within three days of receipt of a complaint or report of bullying or other prohibited conduct, NWSISD shall undertake or authorize an investigation by school district officials or a third party designated by NWSISD.
- B. NWSISD may take immediate steps, at its discretion, to protect the target or victim of the bullying or other prohibited conduct, the complainant, reporter, students, or others, pending completion of an investigation of bullying, consistent with applicable law.
- C. The alleged perpetrator of the bullying or other prohibited conduct shall be allowed the opportunity to present a defense during the investigation or prior to the imposition of discipline or other remedial responses.
- D. Upon completion of the investigation that determines that bullying or other prohibited conduct has occurred, the district will take appropriate action. Such action may include, but is not limited to, warning, suspension, exclusion, expulsion, transfer, remediation, termination, or discharge. Disciplinary consequences will be sufficiently severe to try to deter violations and to appropriately discipline prohibited conduct. Remedial responses to the bullying or other prohibited conduct shall be tailored to the particular incident and nature of the conduct and

shall take into account the factors specified in Section II.F. of this policy. School district action taken for violation of this policy will be consistent with the requirements of applicable collective bargaining agreements; applicable statutory authority, including the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act; the student discipline policy (See NWSISD Policy 506) and other applicable school district policies; and regulations.

- E. NWSISD is not authorized to disclose private, educational, or personal data regarding an alleged perpetrator who is a student or employee of NWSISD to a victim. School officials will notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of students who are targets of bullying or other prohibited conduct who have been involved in a reported and confirmed bullying incident of the remedial action taken, to the extent permitted by law
- F. In order to prevent or respond to bullying or other prohibited conduct committed by or directed against a child with a disability, the member school district shall, when determined appropriate by the child's individualized education program (IEP) team or Section 504 team, allow the child's IEP or Section 504 plan to be drafted to address the skills and proficiencies the child needs as a result of the child's disability to allow the child to respond to or not to engage in bullying or other prohibited conduct.

#### **VI. RETALIATION AND REPRISAL**

The district will discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of NWSISD who commits an act of reprisal or who retaliates against any person who asserts, alleges, or makes a good faith report of alleged bullying or prohibited conduct, who testifies, assists, or participates in an investigation of alleged bullying or prohibited conduct, or who testifies, assists, or participates in a proceeding or hearing relating to such bullying or prohibited conduct. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, reprisal, harassment, or intentional disparate treatment. Disciplinary consequences will be sufficiently severe to deter violations and to appropriately discipline the individual(s) who engaged in the prohibited conduct. Remedial responses to the prohibited conduct shall be tailored to the particular incident and nature of the conduct and shall take into account the factors specified in Section II.F. of this policy.

#### **VII. TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

- A. NWSISD annually will provide information and any applicable training to school district employees regarding this policy.
- B. NWSISD annually will provide education and information to students regarding bullying, including information regarding this school district policy prohibiting bullying, the harmful effects of bullying, and other applicable initiatives to prevent bullying.
- C. The administration of NWSISD is directed to implement programs and other initiatives to prevent bullying, to respond to bullying in a manner that does not stigmatize the victim, and to make resources or referrals to resources available to victims of bullying.
- D. NWSISD may implement violence prevention and character development education programs to prevent and reduce policy violations. Such programs may offer instruction on character education including, but not limited to, character qualities such as attentiveness, truthfulness, respect for authority, diligence, gratefulness, self-discipline, patience, forgiveness, respect for others, peacemaking, and resourcefulness.

#### **VIII. NOTICE**

NWSISD aligns the Bullying Prohibition Policy with MSBA Policy #514, and this will serve as notice to students, parents or guardians. NWSISD employees will be given annual notice by this policy appearing in the employee handbook.

**Legal References:**

Minn. Stat. Ch. 13 (Minnesota Government Data Practices Act)  
Minn. Stat. § 120A.05, Subds. 9, 11, 13, and 17 (Definition of Public School)  
Minn. Stat. § 120B.232 (Character Development Education)  
Minn. Stat. § 121A.03 (Sexual, Religious and Racial Harassment and Violence)  
Minn. Stat. § 121A.031 (School Student Bullying Policy)  
Minn. Stat. § 121A.0311 (Notice of Rights and Responsibilities of Students and Parents under the Safe and Supportive Minnesota Schools Act)  
Minn. Stat. §§ 121A.40-121A.56 (Pupil Fair Dismissal Act)  
Minn. Stat. § 121A.69 (Hazing Policy)  
Minn. Stat. Ch. 124E (Charter School)  
Minn. Stat. Ch. 363A (Minnesota Human Rights Act)  
20 U.S.C. § 1232g *et seq.* (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act)  
34 C.F.R. §§ 99.1 - 99.67 (Family Educational Rights and Privacy)

**Cross References:**

MSBA/MASA Model Policy 403 (Discipline, Suspension, and Dismissal of School District Employees)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 413 (Harassment and Violence)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 414 (Mandated Reporting of Child Neglect or Physical or Sexual Abuse)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 415 (Mandated Reporting of Maltreatment of Vulnerable Adults)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 423 (Employee-Student Relationships)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 501 (School Weapons Policy)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 506 (Student Discipline)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 507 (Corporal Punishment)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 515 (Protection and Privacy of Pupil Records)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 521 (Student Disability Nondiscrimination)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 522 (Student Sex Nondiscrimination)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 524 (Internet Acceptable Use and Safety Policy)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 525 (Violence Prevention)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 526 (Hazing Prohibition)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 529 (Employee Notification of Violent Behavior by Students)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 709 (Student Transportation Safety Policy)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 711 (Video Recording on School Buses)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 712 (Video Surveillance Other Than on Buses)

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