

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES OF THE MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE 8.52 **STUDENT BULLYING**

Bullying prevention requires a sustained effort to both prevent bullying from occurring and to respond effectively when bullying situations do occur. The following procedures shall be followed when a student is a victim and/or offender in a bullying situation. For reports of bullying involving staff, see Administrative Policy 6.03 or 6.07 depending on the circumstances. Allegations of bullying involving private citizens on district property, as defined in Administrative Policy 8.52, shall be reported to the appropriate authorities as necessary.

(1) DEFINITION

(a) Bullying is defined as deliberate or intentional, often repeated, behavior using words or actions intended to cause fear, humiliation, intimidation, harm, or social exclusion. Bullying occurs when a student uses an imbalance of power such as physical strength, group size, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others.

(b) Conflict is defined as a relational dispute between two or more parties in which all sides express their views, there is equal power between those involved, and the behavior generally stops or changes when the parties realize harm is occurring.

(2) RECEIVING STUDENT REPORTS OF BULLYING

(a) When receiving a report of bullying, staff should utilize the 4-A Response: Affirm the reporter's feelings; Ask relevant questions to determine the situation; Assess the safety of all students involved; and Act according to sections (3) through (6) below.

(b) Determine if the incident is bullying or conflict. Ask questions to determine the students involved and the frequency and intentionality of the behaviors. Conflict situations should be handled pursuant to school/classroom disciplinary procedures.

(c) The safety needs of the student who is being bullied, those who have witnessed the bullying, and the student making the report must be addressed.

(3) DOCUMENTING SUSPECTED BULLYING

(a) If staff have information to suggest that an incident of bullying has occurred, staff must document the behavior as bullying on an Infinite Campus behavior referral within 24 hours.

(b) For all incidents of suspected bullying, the report must include a reason and at least two participants - an offender (the student engaging in bullying behavior) and a victim (the student being bullied).

(4) RESPONDING TO A REPORT

(a) The administrator shall contact the parent/guardian of the victim at the end of the first day of receiving a report of bullying, to inform them of what is being alleged and the current state of the investigation.

(b) The administrator shall take steps to promote safety for the victim(s), reporters, witnesses, and offenders after a report is made and for the duration of the investigation. Strategies that may be used to create a safer environment include, but are not limited to:

- Increasing adult supervision at times or in locations where incidents have occurred.
- Temporarily changing the offender's class assignment, schedule and/or seating arrangements.
- Establishing a safe zone or safe person for the victim to go to when they feel vulnerable.
- Creating a personal safety plan for anyone at risk of retaliation.

(c) Within 24 hours of a report being made, the administrator shall notify parents/guardians of the affected students, including the victims, offenders, and, as appropriate, the reporters and/or witnesses, that a report of bullying has been made and of any safety measures put in place. Documentation of the contact to the victim's parent should be included on the victim's Personal Learning Plan (PLP) contact log, but not on the offender's PLP contact log.

(5) INVESTIGATION OF REPORTED BULLYING

(a) The administrator shall initiate an investigation within two school days of receiving a report of bullying. The administrator shall complete the investigation within ten school days of receiving the report unless sufficient reason exists (e.g. police are still investigating or student witnesses were unavailable for an extended period of time) to extend the investigation.

(b) As part of the investigation, the administrator shall gather all available information, including but not limited to date, time, and location of the incident; individuals involved and their ages; details of the incident; and any knowledge of prior incidents. The administrator shall consider all the information provided in the report, as well as gather additional information from interviews of students, staff, witnesses, parents/guardians, or others as necessary. Interviews of each party shall be conducted separately to avoid revictimization and contamination of information.

(c) The administrator shall maintain a written record of the investigation in a locked file cabinet, safe, or secure digital repository accessible for future use by any administrator associated with that school.

(d) Throughout the investigation process, the administrator must remind all parties that retaliation is strictly prohibited and shall result in disciplinary action. To the extent practicable, the administrator shall maintain confidentiality during the investigative process.

(e) Upon completion of the investigation, the administrator shall determine, based upon all of the facts and circumstances, whether or not bullying occurred.

(f) Within one business day of making a determination, the administrator must notify the parents/guardians of the victim and offender, as well as other affected parties as necessary about the results of the investigation.

(g) If bullying is substantiated, the administrator shall communicate to parents/guardians what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying and/or retaliation. All notice to parents/guardians must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. The administrator shall also complete Infinite Campus documentation regarding the outcome of the investigation and resolution.

(h) If the allegations of bullying cannot be substantiated, the administrator must notify the parents/guardians of the alleged victim(s), through a formal letter, detailing the investigation and the inability to substantiate the allegation of bullying. The incident referral shall be recoded in or deleted from Infinite Campus as appropriate, and a PLP-Behavior Allegation for Victim note should be created, documenting that an investigation could not substantiate the allegation of bullying.

(6) TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION

(a) The administrator must consider what adjustments, if any, are needed in the school environment to enhance the victim's sense of safety and the sense of safety for others as well. As appropriate, support may include continuation of strategies implemented during the investigation.

(b) Peer mediation, repairing harm and/or restorative conferencing, and group interventions composed of students who bully are **NOT** recommended strategies. Removal of the victim from their classes should be used only with parental consultation and only as a last resort, when other options are not sufficient.

(c) When students are found to have engaged in bullying behavior, the school shall use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability (discipline) with the need to teach appropriate behavior (supports).

(1) Discipline should be utilized in accordance with the Code of Classroom Conduct. Additional disciplinary alternatives may include awareness-raising consequences, school service activities, restricted access and/or increased supervision for specific areas of the school, and/or behavior change reflection sheet and plan.

(2) Supports should be designed to build student skills in the areas of social communication, problem solving, relationships, social awareness, empathy, emotion management, and other skills deemed necessary. Suggested activities include re-teaching of behaviors, behavior reflection sheets, scenarios/role plays, reviewing or previewing universal social and emotional learning curriculum lessons, one-on-one participation in bullying prevention lessons, inclusion in a Social Academic Instructional Group (SAIG), and/or the development of a behavior intervention plan.

(d) Within five school days following the implementation of supports, safety measures, and/or disciplinary action, the administrator must contact the victim(s) to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the bullying behavior and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If so, the administrator shall work with appropriate school staff to implement them. Follow-up should continue to occur at regular intervals.

(e) Retaliatory behavior or action against persons who complain, testify, assist, or otherwise participate in the complaint process established pursuant to this procedure will not be tolerated. Any retaliatory behavior will be subject to appropriate discipline.

(f) If the offender is identified as a student with disabilities, the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), behavioral intervention plan, and the due-process procedures regarding discipline for students with disabilities shall be followed. If the cause of the incident is related to the student's disability, the provision of skill-building training shall be integrated into that student's IEP.

History:

Cross Ref.: Admin. Policy 8.52 Bullying