

**BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY**

It is the policy of Maine School Administrative District #15 to provide all students with an equitable opportunity to learn. To that end, the Board has a significant interest in providing a safe, orderly and respectful school environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.

Bullying is detrimental to student learning and achievement. It interferes with the mission of the schools to educate their students and disrupts the operations of the schools. Bullying affects not only students who are targets but also those who participate and witness such behavior.

The Board also believes that promoting ethical and responsible behavior is an essential part of the District’s educational purpose. Ethics, responsible behavior and character are important if a student is to leave school as a “responsible and involved citizen” as described in the Guiding Principles of Maine’s system of Learning Results. Bullying interferes with the accomplishment of this goal.

Finally, the Board recognizes the well-publicized incidents of violence and threatened violence that have occurred nationally and the research that suggests a link between bullying and school violence. The Board seeks to avoid such incidents and instead take a systematic approach to bullying prevention and intervention.

It is not the Board’s intent to prohibit students from expressing their ideas, including ideas that may offend the sensibilities of others, or from engaging in civil debate. However, the Board does not condone and will take action in response to conduct that interferes with students’ opportunity to learn, the educational mission of the District’s schools, and the operation of the schools.

**Bullying Prohibited**

Bullying, as defined in this policy, is not acceptable conduct in MSAD #15 and is prohibited. Any student who engages in conduct that constitutes bullying shall be subject to disciplinary consequences up to and including suspension and expulsion. A student’s bullying behavior may also be addressed through other behavioral interventions.

**Bullying Defined**

For the purpose of this policy, “bullying” means any physical act or gesture or any verbally, written, or electronically communicated expression that:

- A. A reasonable person should expect will have the effect of:
  - 1. Physically harming a student or damaging a student’s property; or
  - 2. Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical harm or damage to his/her property; or
  - 3. Substantially disrupting the instructional program or the orderly operations of the school.

- 52 B. Is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, hostile  
53 educational environment for the student who is bullied.  
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### 55 **Application of Policy**

56 This policy applies to bullying that takes place at school or on school grounds, at any  
57 school-sponsored activity or event, or while students are being transported to or from  
58 school or school-sponsored activities or events. It also applies to bullying that occurs at  
59 any other time or place that substantially disrupts the instructional program, operations of  
60 the school, or welfare of students.  
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62 Examples of conduct that may constitute bullying include, but are not limited to:

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- 64 A. Physical contact or injury to another person or his/her property;
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  - 66 B. Threats of harm to a student, to his/her possessions, or to other individuals,  
67 whether transmitted verbally, in writing, or through cyberspace;
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  - 69 C. Blackmail, extortion, demands for protection money, or involuntary loans or  
70 donations;
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  - 72 D. Non-verbal threats and/or intimidations such as use of aggressive or menacing  
73 gestures;
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  - 75 E. Stalking;
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  - 77 F. Blocking access to school property or facilities;
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  - 79 G. Stealing or hiding books, backpacks, or other possessions;
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  - 81 H. Repeated or pervasive taunting, name-calling, belittling, mocking, put-downs, or  
82 demeaning humor relating to a student's race, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual  
83 orientation, ancestry, religion, disability, or other personal characteristics, whether  
84 or not the student actually possesses them, that could reasonably be expected to  
85 result in disruption of the instructional program or operations of the schools, or  
86 that results in a hostile educational environment for the student.  
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88 For the purpose of this policy, bullying does not mean mere teasing, put-downs, "talking  
89 trash," trading of insults, or similar interactions among friends, nor does it include  
90 expression of ideas or beliefs so long as such expression is not lewd, profane, or does not  
91 interfere with students' opportunity to learn, the instructional program, or the operations  
92 of the schools. This does not preclude teachers or school administrators from setting and  
93 enforcing rules for civility, courtesy, and/or responsible behavior in the classroom and the  
94 school environment.  
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96 The determination whether particular conduct constitutes bullying requires reasonable  
97 consideration of the circumstances, which include the frequency of the behavior at issue,  
98 the location in which the behavior occurs, the ages and maturity of the students involved,  
99 the activity or context in which the conduct occurs, and the nature and severity of the  
100 conduct.  
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103 **Delegation of Responsibility**

104 The Superintendent/designee will be responsible for developing and implementing  
105 procedures for:

- 106 A. Student and parent reporting of bullying to staff and school administrators;
- 107 B. Staff reporting of bullying to school administrators;
- 108 C. Review of reports and investigation of bullying incidents;
- 109 D. Intervention with and/or discipline of students who engage in bullying;
- 110 E. Support for students who are victims of bullying;
- 111 F. Training staff and students in bullying prevention; and
- 112 G. Periodic evaluation of bullying prevention, intervention, and training efforts in the  
113 District’s schools and reporting to the Board upon request.

122 **Reporting**

123 Students who have been bullied or who observe incidents of bullying are encouraged to  
124 report this behavior to a staff member or school administrator. Staff should report  
125 bullying to the building principal.

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127 Acts of reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an incident of bullying are  
128 prohibited. Any student who is determined to have falsely accused another of bullying  
129 shall be subject to disciplinary consequences.

131 **Responding to Bullying**

132 In determining the appropriate response to students who engage in bullying behavior,  
133 school administrators should consider the ages and maturity of the students involved, the  
134 type of behaviors, the frequency and/or pattern of behaviors, the context in which the  
135 incident occurred, and other relevant circumstances. Consequences may range from  
136 positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension, expulsion, and/or  
137 reports to law enforcement officials.

139 **Dissemination of Policy**

140 Notice of what constitutes bullying, the Board’s prohibition against bullying, and the  
141 consequences for students who bully shall be communicated to students and parents  
142 through JIC Student Code of Conduct and Student Handbook.

144 Legal Reference: 20-A M.R.S.A. § 1001(15)(H)  
145 P.L. 2005, ch. 307 § 4-5

147 **Cross References:**

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|-----------|--|-----|-------------------------|
| 148 AC    | Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity           | JK  | Student Discipline      |
| 149 ACAA  | Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students   | JKD | Suspension of Students  |
| 150 ACAD  | Hazing   | JKE | Expulsion of Students   |
| 151 ADF   | School District Commitment to Learning Results | JIC | Student Code of Conduct |
| 152 JICC  | Student Conduct on Buses                       |     |                         |
| 153 JICIA | Weapons, Violence and School Safety            |     |                         |

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