

BULLYING PREVENTION

The Bullying Prevention Policy of the Elkhart Community Schools establishes its efforts to create a safe environment in the School District.

The Board of School Trustees has determined a safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. Bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, disrupts both a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its students in a safe and disciplined environment. Since students learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff and volunteers should be expected to and commended for demonstrating appropriate behavior; treating others with civility and respect; and refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation, or similar bullying behaviors.

Definition

A. Bullying

1. As defined by the Board, bullying means intentional behaviors involving unwanted and unwelcomed actions which are severe, persistent, or pervasive.
2. Bullying includes unwanted, often repeated, acts or gestures, including verbal or written communications or images transmitted in any manner (including digitally or electronically), physical acts committed, aggression, or any other behaviors which are committed by a student or group of students against another student which have an effect of harassing, ridiculing, humiliating, intimidating or harming the targeted student and creating for the targeted student, an objectively hostile school environment which:
 - a. places the targeted student in reasonable fear of harm to the targeted student's person or property;
 - b. has a substantially detrimental effect on the targeted student's physical or mental health;
 - c. has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student's academic performance; or

- d. has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, and privileges provided by the school.
3. The term bullying may not be interpreted to impose any burden or sanction on, or include in the definition of the term, the following:
 - a. participating in a religious event;
 - b. acting in an emergency involving the protection of a person or property from an imminent threat of serious bodily injury or substantial danger;
 - c. participating in an activity consisting of the exercise of a student's rights protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or Article I, Section 31 of the Constitution of the State of Indiana, or both;
 - d. participating in an activity conducted by a nonprofit or governmental entity that provides recreation, education, training, or other care under the supervision of one or more adults;
 - e. participating in an activity undertaken at the prior written direction of the student's parent; or
 - f. engaging in interstate or international travel from a location outside Indiana to another location outside Indiana.

Procedures

- A. Elkhart Community Schools has adopted rules which address bullying behavior and includes provisions concerning education, parental involvement, and intervention. These discipline rules shall apply regardless of the location in which the bullying occurred (i.e., the bully and the targeted student are students at a school within the school corporation); the bullying has created, for the targeted student, an objectively hostile school environment; and disciplinary action is reasonably necessary to avoid substantial interferences with school discipline or prevent an unreasonable threat to the rights of others to a safe and peaceful learning environment.
- B. The principal at each school shall implement procedures which are consistent with the Guidelines for Good School Order and Rules for Student Conduct and ensure both appropriate consequences and remedial measures be provided for students who commit one (1) or more acts of bullying. Appropriate consequences and remedial measures are those which vary according to the severity of the offenses, and consider both the developmental ages of the student offenders as well as the students' histories of inappropriate behaviors, per the code of student conduct.
- C. The principal at each school shall be responsible for designating a member of his/her staff to receive all complaints alleging violations of this policy.
- D. All school employees who have contact with students are required to verbally report alleged violations of this policy to the principal or the principal's designee in an expedited manner after an incident was witnessed or reliable information regarding the occurrence of an incident was received. A written report (e.g., anonymous report, email, memo, etc.) of the incident shall also be prepared by the school within one (1) school day of receiving the verbal report.
- E. Students, parents, and visitors of a school are encouraged to report alleged policy violations to the principal (or principal's designee) in an expedited manner. A written report shall be prepared by the school following receipt of this information. Such a report may be made using Sprigeo.

Students, parents, and visitors may also make anonymous reports through an anonymous reporting system. Formal action for violations of the code of student conduct may not be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

- F. The principal or designee shall conduct a thorough and complete investigation for each report of an alleged incident of bullying behavior received using the Bullying Investigation guidelines. The investigation shall be initiated by the principal or the principal's designee within one (1) school day of the submission of the written incident report. The principal may appoint additional personnel to assist in the investigation. The investigation shall be completed and the written findings submitted to the principal as soon as possible, but not later than five (5) school days from the date of the written report of the alleged incident of harassment, intimidation, or bullying behavior. The principal shall submit a report of confirmed incidents of bullying behavior to the Superintendent or designee within ten (10) school days of the completion of the investigation. This time line may be extended for reasonable cause as determined by the school district. The Superintendent or his/her designee shall report the results of each investigation confirming incidents of bullying behavior to the Board on a quarterly basis during regularly scheduled board meetings.
- G. Each school shall record the frequency of confirmed incidents of bullying behavior in the following categories: verbal bullying, physical bullying, social/relational bullying, and electronic or written communication bullying. Each school shall report this information to the Superintendent, who will report it to the Board and Indiana Department of Education. Information shall be submitted to the Indiana Department of Education by July 1 of each year.
- H. The principal shall provide information about the investigation, in accordance with Federal and State law and regulation, to the parents of the student(s) who was bullied as well as the parents of the student(s) with the bullying behavior. The information provided to parents includes the nature of the investigation, whether the corporation found evidence of bullying behavior, and whether consequences were imposed or services provided to address the bullying incident if the evidence of bullying behavior was substantiated. This information is to be provided in an expedited manner following completion of the investigation.
- I. Any school employee who observes bullying behavior or receives a report of behavior which violates the terms of this policy and fails to report this information may be subjected to disciplinary action.

Any school employee responsible for conducting an investigation under this policy and fails to investigate the reported behavior which violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

- J. Elkhart Community Schools has defined a range of ways in which school staff and the principal or the principal's designee shall respond once an incident of bullying behavior is confirmed. Some acts, which violate the terms of this policy, may be isolated incidents requiring the school officials to respond appropriately to the individuals committing the acts. Other acts may be so serious they require a response either at the school corporation level or by local law enforcement officials.
- K. The principal shall proceed in accordance with the Guidelines for Good School Order and Rules for Student Conduct, as appropriate, based on the investigation findings. As appropriate to the investigation findings, the principal shall ensure the Guidelines for Good School Order and Rules for Student Conduct have been implemented, and provide intervention and/or relevant support services (i.e., refer to counseling, establish training programs to reduce bullying behavior and enhance school climate, enlist parent cooperation, and involvement or take other appropriate action). Intervention and support implemented by the principal or his/her designee should include follow up services to both the targeted student and the student with bullying behavior.
- L. Elkhart Community Schools may take disciplinary action for the false reporting of alleged bullying incidents.
- M. The Superintendent shall annually disseminate this policy to all parents who have children enrolled in a school within the School Corporation. The Superintendent shall post a link to the policy which is prominently displayed on the home page of the School Corporation's website. The Superintendent shall ensure notice of the corporation's policy appears in the student handbooks and all other publications of the School Corporation which set forth the comprehensive rules, procedures, and standards for schools within the School Corporation.
- N. Each school shall provide researched based bullying prevention instruction to all students in grades 1-12 within the school no later than October 15th of each school year. It is expected this instruction will be part of a more comprehensive bully prevention effort communicated to the students throughout the school year, and the age appropriate, research based instruction for all students in grades 1-12.
- O. Each school shall provide annual training on this policy and bullying prevention and intervention instruction to corporation and school employees, volunteers, and contracted service providers who have direct and on-going contact with students.

- P. The Board understands the characteristics and resultant needs of each school will continue to evolve, and the existing base of knowledge regarding bullying prevention and intervention will continue to grow. Research on bullying prevention practices will continue to emerge, and the data on the nature of bullying behaviors will continuously change. It is essential for school administrators and officials to regularly review available bullying prevention and intervention data. Additionally, school administrators are expected to collect and analyze in-house data regarding bullying incident investigations, incident frequency, and the effects of the corporation's efforts to address bullying behaviors. Through data-driven practice, administrators will be best qualified to determine the need for changes to policies and procedures and to institute improvements to prevention and intervention programs and approaches.