

## 518 STUDENT BULLYING

### INTRODUCTION

The Portage Community School District shall strive to provide a safe, secure, and respectful learning environment for all students in school buildings, on school buses, and at school sponsored activities. Bullying has a harmful social, physical, psychological, and academic impact on the bullies, the victims, and the bystanders. The district will consistently and vigorously address bullying so that there is no disruption to the learning environment and learning process.

### PROHIBITION

Bullying behavior is prohibited in all schools, buildings, busses, property and educational environments including any vehicle owned, leased, or used by the school district. Educational environments include, but are not limited to, every activity under school supervision. Virtual, online environments are also included.

### DEFINITION

Bullying is deliberate or intentional behavior, using words or actions, intended to cause fear, intimidation, or harm. Bullying may be, but is not always, repeated behavior and typically involves an imbalance of power of some kind (e.g. physical, social, etc.) between the bully and their victim. The behavior may be motivated by an actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic such as, but not limited to: age, color, national origin, race, religion, gender, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, social or family status.

Bullying behavior can be:

1. Physical (e.g. assault, hitting, kicking, theft)
2. Verbal (e.g. threatening or intimidating language, name calling, racist remarks)
3. Indirect (e.g. spreading cruel rumors, social exclusion and isolation, using technology in a hurtful manner – electronic aggression commonly referred to as cyber bullying). Cyber bullying includes, but is not limited to, the use of e-mail, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, cell phones, social networking, or website postings to threaten, harass, or intimidate the victim.
4. Although bullying behavior can involve actions by adults as well as youth, this particular policy only addresses behavior by students or other youth on school property or at school.

### PROCEDURES for REPORTING/RETALIATION

It is the responsibility of all school staff members, students, and concerned individuals who observe or become aware of acts of bullying to report these acts confidentially to a school staff member or administrator designated by the Board of Education to be a recipient of such reports. All such reports, either verbal or in writing, are to be taken seriously and a clear account of the incident is to be documented. There shall be no retaliation against individuals making such reports. Individuals engaging in retaliatory behavior will be subject to disciplinary action.

**518 STUDENT BULLYING (cont'd)****PROCEDURES for INVESTIGATING REPORTS of BULLYING**

An investigation by the building principal or designee to determine the facts will take place in a timely manner to verify the validity of the report and the severity of the reported behavior. Parents and/or guardians of the students involved will be notified that a report has been made and the findings of the investigation. The district shall keep the complaint confidential to the extent permitted by law for both the accused and the accuser, until such time as the misconduct is confirmed and sanctions are imposed.

**SANCTIONS and SUPPORTS**

If it is determined that a student participated in bullying behavior in violation of the policy, the principal or assistant principal or dean of students may take disciplinary action including suspension, and/or referral to law enforcement officials for possible legal action as appropriate. District employees are expected to report incidents that may fall under the provisions of this policy to administrative staff for investigation.

**DISCLOSURE and PUBLIC REPORTING**

The policy will be annually distributed to all students enrolled in the school district, their parents and/or guardians, and employees. It will also be distributed to organizations in the community that use property belonging to the district for activities that involve students. The school district will also provide a copy of the policy to any person who requests it. Records will be maintained on the number and types of reports made and sanctions imposed for incidents found to be in violation of the bullying policy.

An annual summary report shall be prepared and presented to the School Board that includes trends in bullying behavior and recommendations on how to further reduce bullying behavior. The annual report will be available to the public.

1<sup>st</sup> Reading – July 12, 2010

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading – August 9, 2010

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