

MOBILE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM
BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY
(Revised April 2017)

The Mobile County Public School system believes that all students have a right to a safe and healthy environment. The district, schools, and community have an obligation to promote mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance.

The Mobile County Public School System prohibits any discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying of any student based on the student's race, color, ancestry, national origin, ethnic group identification, age, religion, marital or parental status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or gender expression; the perception of one or more of such characteristics; or association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics.

The Mobile County School System will not tolerate behavior that infringes upon the safety of any student. A student shall not intimidate, harass, or bully another student through words or actions. Such behavior includes, but may not be limited to: direct physical contact, such as hitting or shoving; verbal assaults such as teasing or name-calling; social isolation or manipulation; and cyber-bullying, using social media to threaten, manipulate, or verbally assault another individual. No behavior that creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive environment shall be tolerated.

The Mobile County Public School System expects students and/or staff to immediately report incidents of bullying to the principal or designee. Staff who witness such acts should take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so. Each complaint of bullying should be promptly investigated. This policy applies to students on school grounds, while traveling to and from school, or a school-sponsored activity, during the lunch period, whether on or off campus, and during a school-sponsored activity.

To help reduce the occurrences of bullying on campuses, the Mobile County School System will provide staff development training in bullying prevention and cultivate a culture of acceptance and understanding in all students and staff to build each school's capacity to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment.

Teachers and Counselors should discuss this policy with the students in age-appropriate ways and should assure them that they need not endure any form of bullying. Students who bully are in violation of this policy and are subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

Bullying should be included in the Student Code of Conduct:

- Any student who engages in bullying may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

- Students are expected to immediately report incidents of bullying to the principal or designee.
- Students can rely on staff to promptly investigate each complaint of bullying in a thorough and confidential manner.
- If the complainant student or the parent of the student believes that appropriate resolution of the investigation or complaint has not been reached, the student or the parent should contact the principal or the Office of Students Services. The school system prohibits retaliatory behavior against any complainant or any participant in the complaint process.

The procedures for intervening in bullying behavior include, but may not be limited to the following:

- All staff, students, and their parents will receive a summary of this policy prohibiting intimidation and bullying at the beginning of the school year as part of the student handbook and/or information packet, as part of new student orientation, and as part of the school system's notification to parents.
- The school will make reasonable efforts to keep a report of bullying and the results of the investigation confidential.
- Staff who witness acts of bullying shall take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so. Any person witnessing or experiencing bullying are strongly encouraged to report the incident; such reporting will not reflect on the target or witnesses in any way.

Reporting, Investigation, and Complaint Resolution Procedures
for Bullying and Harassment

- a) Complaints alleging violations of this policy must be made on Board approved complaint forms available at the principals and/or counselor's office in each schools. The complaint must be signed by the student alleging the violation or by the student's parent or legal guardian and delivered to the principal or the principal's designee either by mail or personal delivery. At the request of the complaining student or the student's parent or legal guardian, incidental or minor violations of the policy may be presented and resolved informally.
- b) Upon receipt of the complaint, the principal or the principal's designee will have authority to determine if the complaint alleges a serious violation of this policy. If the principal or the principal's designee determines that the complaint alleges a serious violation, the principal's designee will undertake an investigation of the complaint. The investigation will involve gathering facts and evidence, and will be conducted in a reasonably prompt time period and as confidentially as possible. If the principal or the principal's designee determines that a violation was committed, the school will impose appropriate disciplinary sanctions on the offending student(s). The principal or school system may also impose other measures that are reasonably calculated to prevent a recurrence of the violation(s).
- c) Retaliation against any student who reports a violation of this policy or seeks relief under this policy is prohibited and is itself a violation of this policy. Any confirmed retaliation will be subject to disciplinary sanctions that may include any sanction, penalty, or consequence that is available to school officials under the *Student Code of Conduct*. A student who deliberately, recklessly, and falsely accuses another student of a violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary sanctions as outlined in the *Student Code of Conduct*.
- d) The complaint form developed to report violations of this policy will include a provision for reporting a threat of suicide by a student. If the school receive a suicide threat, the principals or the principal's designee will inform the student's parent or guardian of the report in compliance with the Mobile County Public School System's Suicide/Homicide Safety Protocol.