



CARDINAL McCLOSKEY COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL

Dignity for All Students Policy

Cardinal McCloskey Community Charter School and the New York City Board of Education are each committed to providing an educational and working environment that promotes respect, dignity and equality. They recognize that discrimination, such as harassment, hazing and bullying, are detrimental to student learning and achievement. These behaviors interfere with the mission of the school and the district to educate their students and disrupt the operation of the schools. Such behavior affects not only the students who are its targets but also those individuals who participate and witness such acts.

To this end, the Charter School and the Board of Education condemn and strictly prohibit all forms of discrimination, such as harassment, hazing and bullying on school grounds, school buses and at all school-sponsored activities, programs and events, whether on or off of school property.

Reported material incidents of discrimination, harassment, hazing or bullying that take place at locations outside of school grounds, such as cyberbullying, which create or could foreseeably create a risk of substantial disruption within the school environment are similarly prohibited and actionable under the Dignity Act.

Definitions

Bullying: Bullying is a form of harassment (see “Harassment” below). The accompanying regulation provides more guidance regarding the definition and characteristics of bullying.

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying is harassment or bullying through any form of electronic communication. In order to be actionable under this Policy, cyberbullying that occurs off campus must create or would foreseeably create a risk of substantial disruption within the school environment, where it is foreseeable that the conduct, threats, intimidation or abuse might reach school property.

Discrimination: Discrimination is the act of denying rights, benefits, justice, equitable treatment or access to facilities available to all others, to an individual or group of people because of the group, class or category to which that person belongs (as enumerated in the Definitions section, under Harassment, below).

Hazing: Hazing is an induction, initiation or membership process involving harassment which produces public humiliation, physical or emotional discomfort, bodily injury or public ridicule or creates a situation where public humiliation, physical or emotional discomfort, bodily injury or public ridicule is likely to occur.

Harassment: Harassment has been defined in various ways in federal and state law and regulation. The Dignity for All Students Act defines harassment as the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by threats, intimidation or abuse, whether verbal or non-verbal, including cyberbullying, that (a) has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being; (b) reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety; (c) reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause physical injury or emotional harm to a student; or (d) occurs off school property and creates or would foreseeably create a risk of substantial disruption within the school environment, where it is foreseeable that the conduct, threats, intimidation or abuse might reach school property. The harassing or discriminating behavior may be based on any characteristic, including but not limited to a person's actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender (including gender identity and expression).

For purposes of this Policy and its implementing Regulation, the term "bullying" will encompass harassment, intimidation, cyberbullying and hazing behaviors.

Prevention

The school setting provides an opportunity to teach children, and emphasize among staff, that cooperation with and respect for others is a key district value. A program geared to prevention is designed to not only decrease incidents of bullying but to help students build more supportive relationships with one another by integrating the bullying prevention program into classroom instruction. Staff members and students will be sensitized, through district-wide professional development and instruction, to the warning signs of bullying, as well as to their responsibility to become actively involved in the prevention of bullying before overt acts occur.

Curricular material that raises awareness and sensitivity to discrimination or harassment and civility in the relationships of people of different races, weights, national origins, ethnic groups, religions, religious practices, mental or physical abilities, sexual orientations, sexes or gender expression or identities will be included in the instructional program K-12.

In order to implement this program the Board of Education will designate at its annual organizational meeting a Dignity Act Coordinator (DAC) for each building to coordinate and enforce this policy in the school to which assigned. In addition, the Board will annually designate a district wide DAC to oversee and enforce this policy throughout the District.

Intervention

Intervention by adults and bystanders is an important step in preventing escalation and resolving issues at the earliest stages. Intervention will emphasize education and skill-building, and may involve remediation. Remedial responses to bullying and harassment include measures designed to correct the problem behavior, prevent another occurrence of the behavior and protect the target. Remediation may be targeted to the individual(s) involved in the bullying behavior or systemic approaches which are targeted to the school or district as a whole.

In addition, intervention will focus upon the safety of the target. Staff is expected, when aware of bullying, to either refer the student to designated resources for assistance, or to intervene in accordance with this policy and regulation.

Provisions for Students Who Do Not Feel Safe at School

The Board of Education acknowledges that, notwithstanding actions taken by district staff, intervention may require a specific coordinated approach if the child does not feel safe at school. Students who do not feel safe at school are limited in their ability to learn and reach their academic potential. Staff, when aware of bullying, should determine if accommodations are needed in order to help ensure the safety of the student and bring this to the attention of the building principal. The building principal, other appropriate staff, the student and the student's parent will work together to define and implement any needed accommodations.

The district recognizes that there is a need to balance accommodations which enhance student safety against the potential to further stigmatize the targeted student. Therefore, each case will be handled individually. The student, parent/guardian, and school administration will collaborate to establish safety provisions that best meet the needs of the targeted student. Follow-up discussion and/or meetings will be scheduled, as needed, to ensure that safety concerns have been adequately addressed and to determine when and if accommodations need to be changed or discontinued.

Training

The Board of Education recognizes that in order to implement an effective bullying prevention and intervention program, professional development is needed. The Superintendent, the DAC professional development team will incorporate training to support this program in new teacher orientation and the annual professional development plan, as needed. Training opportunities will be provided for all staff, including but not limited to bus drivers, cafeteria and hall monitors and all staff who have contact with students. The DAC will be trained in accordance with state requirements and will continue their professional development so as to successfully support this policy and program.

Incident Reporting and Investigation

The district cannot effectively address bullying if incidents are not reported. Students who have been bullied, parents whose children have been bullied or other students who observe bullying behavior are encouraged and expected to make a verbal and/or written complaint to any school personnel in accordance with the training and guidelines provided.

There shall be a duty for all school personnel to report any incidents of bullying that they observe or of which they become aware to their building principal, the DAC or other administrator who supervises their employment. An oral report shall be made within one school day and the district reporting form must be completed within two school days. The individual to whom the report is made will refer the information to appropriate district staff for investigation in accordance with the regulation. If a staff person is unsure of the reporting procedure, he/she is expected to inquire about how to proceed by speaking with their supervisor. A district employee may be deemed to have permitted unlawful

discrimination or harassment if he/she fails to report an observed incident, whether or not the target complains.

At all times, complaints will be documented, tracked and handled in accordance with the regulations or, if applicable, the District's Code of Conduct. The Building Principal shall maintain a log of bullying incidents as a record for the purpose of tracking repeat offenders, as well as identifying trends. Written records should also capture what action, if any, was taken, or why no action was taken. Material incidents that result in corrective and/or disciplinary action will follow the district and state guidelines for records retention and included in the Violent and Disruptive Incident Reporting (VADIR) system when applicable.

An equitable and thorough investigation will be carried out by the appropriate personnel in accordance with the regulation. The results of the investigation shall be reported back to both the target and the accused in accordance with the accompanying regulation. If either of the parties disagrees with the results of the investigation, they can appeal the findings in accordance with the regulations that accompany this policy.

Disciplinary Consequences/Remediation

While the focus of this policy is on prevention, bullying acts may still occur. In these cases, offenders will be given the clear message that their actions are wrong and the behavior must improve. Student offenders will receive in-school guidance in making positive choices in their relationships with others. If appropriate, corrective and/or disciplinary action will be taken by the administration in accordance with the district's Code of Conduct, as applicable. If the behavior rises to the level of criminal activity, law enforcement will be contacted.

Consequences for a student who commits an act of bullying shall be unique to the individual incident and will vary in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors, and must be consistent with the district's Code of Conduct. The District shall ensure the safety of the student or students against whom such bullying was directed and take reasonable measures to prevent recurrence of the offending behavior.

Non-Retaliation

All complainants and those who participate in the investigation of a complaint in conformity with state law and district policies, who have acted reasonably and in good faith, have the right to be free from retaliation of any kind.

Dissemination, Monitoring, Review, and Reporting

This policy, or a plain language summary, shall be published in student registration materials, student, parent and employee handbooks, and posted on the district's website. A bullying complaint form will be available on the district's website. The district will ensure that the process of reporting bullying is clearly explained to students, staff and parents on an annual basis.

Each year, as part of the annual review of the Code of Conduct, this policy will be reviewed to assess its effectiveness and compliance with state and federal law. If changes are needed, revisions will be recommended to the Board of Education for its consideration.

The Board of Education will receive the annual VADIR report, for each building and for the district as whole, with particular attention to the trends in the incidence of bullying. In addition, the Board will receive on an annual basis a more detailed report of the number of bullying incidents that occur, disaggregated by school, student demographic information and type of incident. Based on the review of the data, the Board of Education may consider further action, including but not limited to modification of this policy.

ADOPTED: 4/15/19