

VISTA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Students

BOARD POLICY No. 5131.2: BULLYING

The Board of Trustees recognizes the harmful effects of bullying on student learning and school attendance and desires to provide a safe school environment that protects students from physical and emotional harm. District employees shall establish student safety as a high priority and shall not tolerate bullying of any student.

No individual or group shall, through physical, written, verbal, or other means, harass, sexually harass, threaten, intimidate, retaliate, cyberbully, cause bodily injury to, or commit hate violence against any student or school personnel.

Cyberbullying includes the electronic creation or transmission of harassing communications, direct threats, or other harmful texts, sounds, or images as defined in Education Code 48900. Cyberbullying also includes breaking into another person's electronic account and assuming that person's identity in order to damage that person's reputation.

Strategies for addressing bullying in district schools shall be developed with involvement of key stakeholders, including students, parents/guardians, and staff, and may be incorporated into the comprehensive safety plan, the local control and accountability plan, and other applicable district and school plans.

As appropriate, the Superintendent or designee may collaborate with law enforcement, courts, social services, mental health services, other agencies, and community organizations in the development and implementation of joint strategies to promote safety in schools and the community and to provide services for alleged victims and perpetrators of bullying.

Bullying Prevention

To the extent possible, district schools shall focus on the prevention of bullying by establishing clear rules for student conduct and implementing strategies to promote a positive, collaborative school climate. Students shall be informed, through student handbooks and other appropriate means, of district and school rules related to bullying, mechanisms available for reporting incidents or threats, and the consequences for engaging in bullying.

As appropriate, the district shall provide students with instruction, in the classroom or other educational settings, that promotes social-emotional learning, effective communication and conflict resolution skills, character/values education, respect for cultural and individual differences, self-esteem development, assertiveness skills, and appropriate online behavior.

Such instruction shall also educate students about the negative impact of bullying, discrimination, intimidation, and harassment based on actual or perceived immigration status, religious beliefs and customs, or any other individual bias or prejudice.

The Superintendent or designee shall provide training to teachers and other school staff to raise their awareness about the legal obligation of the district and its employees to prevent discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying of district students. Such training shall be designed to provide staff with the skills to:

1. Discuss the diversity of the student body and school community, including their varying immigration experiences
2. Discuss bullying prevention strategies with students, and teach students to recognize the behavior and characteristics of bullying perpetrators and victims
3. Identify the signs of bullying or harassing behavior
4. Take immediate corrective action when bullying is observed
5. Report incidents to the appropriate authorities, including law enforcement in instances of criminal behavior

Based on an assessment of bullying incidents at school, the Superintendent or designee may increase supervision and security in areas where bullying most often occurs, such as classrooms, playgrounds, hallways, restrooms, and cafeterias.

Intervention

Students are encouraged to notify school staff when they are being bullied or suspect that another student is being victimized. In addition, the Superintendent or designee shall develop means for students to report threats or incidents confidentially and anonymously.

School staff who witness an act of bullying shall immediately intervene to stop the incident when it is safe to do so. (Education Code 234.1)

When appropriate based on the severity or pervasiveness of the bullying, the Superintendent or designee shall notify the parents/guardians of victims and perpetrators and may contact law enforcement.

The Superintendent, principal, or principal's designee may refer a victim, witness, perpetrator, or other student affected by an act of bullying to a school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, child welfare attendance personnel, school nurse, or other school support service personnel for case management, counseling, and/or participation in a restorative justice program as appropriate. (Education Code 48900.9)

Reporting and Filing of Complaints

Any student, parent/guardian, or other individual who believes that a student has been subjected to bullying or who has witnessed bullying may report the incident to a teacher, the principal, a compliance officer, or any other available school employee. Within one business day of receiving such a report, a staff member shall notify the principal of the report, whether or not a uniform complaint is filed. In addition, any school employee who observes an incident of bullying involving a student shall, within one business day, report his/her observation to the principal or a district compliance officer, whether or not the alleged victim files a complaint.

Within two business days of receiving a report of bullying, the principal shall notify the district compliance officer identified in AR 1312.3 - Uniform Complaint Procedures.

When the circumstances involve cyberbullying, individuals with information about the activity shall be encouraged to save and print any electronic or digital messages that they feel constitute cyberbullying and to notify a teacher, the principal, or other employee so that the matter may be investigated. When a student uses a social networking site or service to bully or harass another student, the Superintendent or designee may file a request with the networking site or service to suspend the privileges of the student and to have the material removed.

When a report of bullying is submitted, the principal or a district compliance officer shall inform the student or parent/guardian of the right to file a formal written complaint in accordance with AR 1312.3. The student who is the alleged victim of the bullying shall be given an opportunity to describe the incident, identify witnesses who may have relevant information, and provide other evidence of bullying.

Investigation and Resolution of Complaints

Any complaint of bullying shall be investigated and, if determined to be discriminatory, resolved in accordance with law and the district's uniform complaint procedures specified in AR 1312.3.

If, during the investigation, it is determined that a complaint is about nondiscriminatory bullying, the principal or designee shall inform the complainant and shall take all necessary actions to resolve the complaint.

Discipline

Corrective actions for a student who commits an act of bullying of any type may include counseling, behavioral intervention and education, and, if the behavior is severe or pervasive as defined in Education Code 48900, may include suspension or expulsion in accordance with district policies and regulations.

Any employee who permits or engages in bullying or retaliation related to bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE

200-262.4 Prohibition of discrimination

32282 Comprehensive safety plan

32283.5 Bullying; online training

35181 Governing board policy on responsibilities of students

35291-35291.5 Rules

48900-48925 Suspension or expulsion

48985 Translation of notices

52060-52077 Local control and accountability plan

PENAL CODE

422.55 Definition of hate crime

647 Use of camera or other instrument to invade person's privacy; misdemeanor

647.7 Use of camera or other instrument to invade person's privacy; punishment

653.2 Electronic communication devices, threats to safety

CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 5

4600-4687 Uniform complaint procedures

UNITED STATES CODE, TITLE 47

254 Universal service discounts (e-rate)

CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS, TITLE 28

35.107 Nondiscrimination on basis of disability; complaints

CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS, TITLE 34

104.7 Designation of responsible employee for Section 504

106.8 Designation of responsible employee for Title IX

110.25 Notification of nondiscrimination on the basis of age

COURT DECISIONS

Wynar v. Douglas County School District, (2013) 728 F.3d 1062

J.C. v. Beverly Hills Unified School District, (2010) 711 F.Supp.2d 1094

Lavine v. Blaine School District, (2002) 279 F.3d 719

Management Resources:

CSBA PUBLICATIONS

Final Guidance: AB 1266, Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students, Privacy, Programs, Activities & Facilities, Legal Guidance, March 2014

Providing a Safe, Nondiscriminatory School Environment for Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Students, Policy Brief, February 2014

Addressing the Conditions of Children: Focus on Bullying, Governance Brief, December 2012

Safe Schools: Strategies for Governing Boards to Ensure Student Success, 2011

Building Healthy Communities: A School Leaders Guide to Collaboration and Community Engagement, 2009

Cyberbullying: Policy Considerations for Boards, Policy Brief, July 2007

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS

California's Social and Emotional Learning: Guiding Principles, 2018

Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2008

Bullying at School, 2003

CALIFORNIA OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL PUBLICATIONS

Promoting a Safe and Secure Learning Environment for All: Guidance and Model Policies to Assist

California K-12 Schools in Responding to Immigration Issues, April 2018

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS PUBLICATIONS

Guidance to Schools: Bullying of Students with Disabilities, October 2014

Dear Colleague Letter: Bullying of Students with Disabilities, August 2013

Dear Colleague Letter: Guidance on Schools' Obligations to Protect Students from Student-on-Student Harassment on the Basis of Sex; Race, Color and National Origin; and Disability, October 26, 2010

Dear Colleague Letter: Harassment and Bullying, October 2010

WEB SITES

CSBA: <http://www.csba.org>

California Department of Education, Safe Schools Office: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/l/s/ss>

California Office of the Attorney General: <http://oag.ca.gov>

Center on Great Teachers and Leaders: <http://gtlcenter.org>

Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning: <http://casel.org>

Common Sense Media: <http://www.commonsensemedia.org>

National School Safety Center: <http://www.schoolsafety.us>

Partnership for Children and Youth: <http://www.partnerforchildren.org>

U.S. Department of Education: <http://www.ed.gov>

Policy Reviewed:

1st Reading & Adoption:

August 16, 2012

Revised, 1st Reading:

December 13, 2018

Revised, 2nd Reading & Adoption:

January 17, 2019