

## BULLYING AND HARASSING BEHAVIOR

The School District of Brodhead is committed to providing a safe, secure, and respectful learning environment for all of its students. We encourage positive interpersonal relations between all members of the school community.

Bullying has harmful social, physical, psychological, and academic impacts on the victim, the bully, and the bystanders, and creates a disruption to the learning environment. Bullying is anti-social behavior, and will not be tolerated in any school building, property, or vehicle, or at any school activity whether on District grounds or elsewhere while under the school's supervision. School busses are considered an extension of the school environment.

Bullying is intentional, unprovoked, deliberate, and hostile behavior without legitimate purpose that is intended to inflict physical, emotional, or mental distress or suffering on another individual or group of individuals. Bullying takes many forms, but may be represented by (but not limited to) the following examples:

- physical acts like hitting, kicking, punching, taking, or damaging another's property, hazing
- verbal attacks like threatening or intimidating language, teasing or name calling, insults or put-downs, racist remarks, taunting
- indirect actions like spreading rumors, intimidation through gestures, glaring or threatening facial expressions, extortion, or coercion
- social exclusion or isolation
- use of computer, cell phones, websites, or other telecommunications to send embarrassing, slanderous, threatening, or intimidating messages or images

It must be recognized that cyberbullying is a particularly insidious and harmful form of harassment or bullying. Cyberbullies can more easily hide behind a cloak of Internet anonymity, and have the ability to spread their harmful message instantly to a wide audience. All forms of bullying and harassment in cyberspace are considered a violation of this policy. When the cyberbullying takes place at school, it will be handled strictly within the parameters of this policy and the student conduct code. Cyberbullying that originates outside the school environment will be handled in relation to the disruption it causes in the school environment, consistent with individuals' First Amendment rights; incidents may be referred to law enforcement.

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All acts of bullying or harassment are expressly prohibited in the school environment, whether directed at or originating from students, staff, or visitors to our schools. This policy also applies to students who, by their indirect behavior, support or condone another student's acts of bullying. Consent by the individual being bullied does not lessen the prohibitions in this policy. Referrals to law enforcement may be made in any case, at the discretion of the Principal.

Students who engage in acts of bullying will be given consequences aligned with the District's Code of Conduct, up to and including suspension or expulsion. Staff members who engage in acts of bullying will receive appropriate consequences under District policies for staff conduct and consistent with the Employee Handbook, up to and including suspension or termination. Parents, community members, or other visitors to the school who engage in bullying will be warned and/or removed from the school premises, and may be excluded from future appearances. If the behavior occurs at a meeting, the meeting may be stopped and re-scheduled to a later date, and attendance by the offender will be at the discretion of the Building Principal.

Any individual that believes s/he has been or is the victim of bullying should immediately report the situation to the Building Principal. Concerns may also be reported to a teacher, counselor, or other staff member, who will be responsible for notifying the Building Principal. Complaints against the Building Principal should be filed with the District Administrator. Complaints against the District Administrator should be filed with the Board President. Complaints may be filed verbally or in writing, and may be delivered in person or mailed. Mailed complaints must be signed, and should include a phone number for follow-up contacts.

Every student is encouraged, and every staff member is required, to report any situation that they believe to involve bullying. Staff members are also expected to intervene immediately in any bullying situation that they perceive constitutes an immediate threat or danger to any individual.

All complaints about bullying that may violate this policy shall be promptly investigated. If the investigation finds an instance of bullying has occurred, prompt and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action will be taken. In addition to disciplinary consequences, consideration should be given to any counseling services that may be appropriate for the victim, the bully, or witnesses to the event(s). The complainant shall be notified of the findings of the investigation, and as appropriate, that remedial action has been taken.

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Retaliation against any person who reports, is thought to have reported, files a complaint, or otherwise participates in an investigation or inquiry concerning allegations of bullying is prohibited and will not be tolerated. Such retaliation shall be considered a serious violation and will result in additional disciplinary action. Making intentionally false reports about bullying for the purpose of getting someone in trouble is similarly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

The School District will respect the privacy of the complainant, the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and the witnesses as much as possible, consistent with the Board's legal obligations to investigate, to take appropriate action, and to conform to any discovery or disclosure obligations. All records generated under this policy and its related administrative guidelines shall be maintained as confidential to the extent permitted by law. To the extent appropriate and/or legally permitted, confidentiality will be maintained during the investigation process. However, a proper investigation will, in some circumstances, require the disclosure of names and allegations.

This policy will be distributed to and discussed with students annually, and the information referenced and/or incorporated into the teacher, student, and parent/guardian handbooks. The policy shall also be made available to any interested party upon request. Summary reports of bullying and/or harassment complaints shall be provided as required by law.

While it is the firm intent of the District to prevent bullying, take actions to stop bullying, and protect all members of the school community from bullying and harassment, it must be recognized that the District cannot monitor the activities of all individuals at all times nor prevent all incidences of inappropriate behavior, especially at those times when students are on school grounds but not under the direct supervision of school personnel.

LEGAL REF: WI. ST. 118.46

Adopted: August 11, 2010  
Last Revision: October 12, 2016  
Last Review: October 12, 2016

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