

Harassment & Bullying Policy

The Monroe County Board of Education believes that all students have a right to a safe and healthy school environment. All schools within the district have an obligation to promote mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance among students, staff, volunteers and visitors. Behavior that negatively impacts the safety of any student will not be tolerated. Per the Monroe County Board of Education Board Policy JCDAG, a student shall not bully, harass, or intimidate another student through words or actions. Bullying is defined as an act which occurs on school property, on school vehicles, at designated school bus stops, or at school related functions or activities, or by use of data or software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, computer network, or other electronic technology of the Monroe County school system, that is:

- (1) Any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person, when accompanied by an apparent present ability to do so;
- (2) Any intentional display of force such as would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm; or
- (3) Any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, which a reasonable person would perceive as being intended to threaten, harass, or intimidate, that:
 - (A) Causes another person substantial physical harm within the meaning of Code Section 16-5-23.1 or visible bodily harm as such term is defined in Code Section 16-5-23.1; 61
 - (B) Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education;
 - (C) Is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or
 - (D) Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

Such behavior includes but is not limited to: Direct physical contact such as hitting or shoving; verbal assaults such as teasing or name-calling; the use of electronic methods to harass, threaten or humiliate; and social isolation and/or manipulation. This prohibition of bullying shall be included in the student handbooks of all Monroe County schools.

All students and/or staff shall immediately report incidents of bullying, harassment and intimidation to the school principal or designee. School staff members are expected to immediately intervene when they see a bullying incident occur. Each complaint of bullying shall be promptly and thoroughly investigated. This policy shall apply to students on school grounds, while traveling on a school bus to or from school, at a school bus stop, at a school-sponsored

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event and during any school-sponsored activity. Any form of electronic bullying (cyberbullying) using school equipment, school networks, e-mail systems or that are committed at school are strictly prohibited. The Board prohibits retaliatory behavior against any complainant or any participant in the complaint process.

Bullying, harassment or intimidation will not be tolerated. Disciplinary action as established in the Student Code of Conduct shall be taken after each incident of bullying upon a finding of guilt.

School system staff shall also involve other school system professionals such as social workers and counselors and shall use other interventions if needed to address the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic needs of students who are the victims of bullying and students who commit the offense of bullying.

Students, parents/guardians and any other person may directly report incidents of bullying to an administrator, teacher, counselor or other staff member. If a staff member receives the report, the report shall be immediately forwarded to the school principal or designee. Reports of bullying can also be made by calling the Georgia Department of Education's 1-877-SAY-STOP (1-877-729-7867) School Safety Hotline.

School staff shall take the following actions when an incident of bullying is reported:

1. Investigate

Upon receipt of any report of bullying, the staff member shall immediately notify the principal. The principal or his or her designee shall direct an immediate investigation involving appropriate personnel. The investigation should begin no later than the next school day following the report of bullying. The investigation should include, among other actions as needed, interviewing the alleged perpetrator(s) and victims(s), witnesses, teachers and staff members and reviewing video surveillance if available. School counselors, school social workers and/or other support staff should be utilized for their expertise as determined by the circumstances of the matter and the person directing the investigation. Law Enforcement officials shall be contacted as required by the circumstances of the matter.

2. Notify

At an appropriate time during or after the investigation, parents/guardians of the accused and the victim must be notified of the reported incident. If the incident involves an injury or similar situation, appropriate medical attention should be arranged and the parent/guardian should be notified immediately.

3. Discipline

Upon confirming that bullying has occurred, the principal or his or her designee shall charge the accused student with bullying and shall be given an age-appropriate consequence which shall include, at minimum and without limitation, disciplinary action or counseling as appropriate and as otherwise consistent with this policy and the student Code of Conduct. Students in grades six

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through twelve who have been found to have committed the offense of bullying for the third time in a school year shall be assigned to an alternative school through appropriate due process by disciplinary hearing officer, panel or tribunal.

4. Follow Up

Follow up is important to the accused and the victim. Staff should implement a method to provide follow up consultation to the victim and the accused.