

## 411.5 BULLYING

The School District of Wisconsin Rapids strives to provide a safe, secure and respectful learning environment for all students in school buildings, on school grounds, and school buses and at school-sponsored activities. Bullying has a harmful social, physical, psychological and academic impact on bullies, victims and bystanders. The District consistently and vigorously addresses bullying so that there is no disruption to the learning environment and learning process.

While it is the intent of the District to prevent bullying, take actions to stop bullying, and protect reporters of bullying, the District cannot monitor the activities of students at all times and eliminate all incidents of bullying between students, particularly when students are not under the direct supervision of school personnel.

Bullying is deliberate or intentional behavior using words or actions, intended to cause fear, intimidation or harm. Bullying is typically repeated behavior and may involve an imbalance of power. The behavior may or may not be motivated by an actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic, such as, but not limited to: age; national origin; race; ethnicity; religion; gender; gender identity; sexual orientation; transgender status; physical attributes; physical or mental ability or disability; and social, economic or family status.

Bullying behavior can be:

1. Physical (e.g. assault, hitting or punching, kicking, theft, threatening behavior)
2. Verbal (e.g. threatening or intimidating language, teasing or name-calling, racist remarks)
3. Indirect (e.g. spreading cruel rumors, intimidation through gestures, social exclusion and sending insulting messages or pictures by mobile phone or using the internet)
  - a. Cyber bullying is the use of any electronic communication device to convey a message in any form (text, image, audio or video) that defames, intimidates, harasses or is otherwise intended to harm, insult or humiliate in a deliberate, repeated or hostile and unwanted manner under a person's true or false identity. Any communication of this form which disrupts or prevents a safe and positive educational environment may be considered cyber bullying. Cyber bullying is unacceptable and a violation of the District's technology acceptable use policy and procedures.
4. Between students and students, students and adults, or adults and adults.

Individual schools will address the problem of bullying through a variety of methods including:

1. Character education programs that emphasize and reward positive behaviors and relationships;
2. Implementing programs which promote community building and positive school climate and culture;
3. Educating students and staff to recognize and respond appropriately to bullying behavior;
4. Developing a plan to increase supervision in areas within the school setting where bullying could potentially occur more frequently.

Bullying behavior is prohibited in all schools, buildings, property and educational environments, including any property or vehicle owned, leased or used by the District. This includes public transportation regularly

used by students to go to and from school. Educational environments include every activity under school supervision.

All school staff members and school officials who observe or become aware of acts of bullying are required to report these acts to the administration as soon as practical.

Any other person, including a student who is either a victim of the bullying or is aware of the bullying or any other concerned individual is encouraged to report the conduct to school personnel as soon as practical.

Reports of bullying may be made verbally or in writing and may be made confidentially. All such reports, whether verbal or in writing, will be taken seriously and a clear account of the incident is to be documented. A written record of the report, including all pertinent details, will be made by the recipient of the report.

The school official receiving a report of bullying shall immediately notify the building principal. If the building principal is unavailable, or if there is a perceived conflict of interest involving the building principal, or if reporting to the building principal would not be appropriate under the circumstances, the school official should contact the Superintendent or his/her designee.

There shall be no retaliation against individuals making such reports. Individuals engaging in retaliatory behavior will be subject to disciplinary action.

The person assigned by the District to conduct an investigation of the bullying report shall, without undue delay, interview the person(s) who are the victim(s) of the bullying and collect whatever other information is necessary to determine the facts and the seriousness of the report. Parents and/or guardians of each pupil involved in the bullying will be notified prior to the conclusion of the investigation. The District shall maintain the confidentiality of the report and any related pupil records to the extent required by law.

If the investigation reveals that the reported conduct may have created an intimidating, hostile or offensive school environment, and was based on a characteristic protected by State or Federal civil rights law, the report will be forwarded for investigation under the District's student non-discrimination and anti-harassment policy.

If it is determined that students participated in bullying behavior or retaliated against anyone due to the reporting of bullying behavior, District administration and/or the school board may take immediate disciplinary action, including: suspension, expulsion and/or referral to law enforcement officials for possible legal action as appropriate. Pupil services staff will provide support for the identified victim(s).

If administration has identified that bullying did in fact occur based upon the outcome of their investigation and the behavior does not cease, administration may refer the matter to law enforcement to determine if any local ordinances are being (or have been) violated which may result in monetary consequences. Such law enforcement action would be independent of school procedures, with a determination as to any violation and related consequences as deemed appropriate by the governing agency involved.

This policy will be distributed annually to all students enrolled in the District, and their parents and/or guardians. The District will also provide a copy of the policy to any person who requests it.

LEGAL REF.: Wis. Stat. § 118.46  
Wisconsin Rapids City Ordinance No. 25.37 Anti-Bullying  
Grand Rapids Ordinance No. 71 Prohibiting Bullying and Harassment

CROSS REF.: 411 – Student Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy  
411 Exhibit 1 – Complaint Form

APPROVED: February 11, 2008  
August 9, 2010  
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