

Policy Statement on Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation

The Worcester County Board of Education is committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and respectful educational environment where the worth and dignity of individuals are valued and their safety and rights are protected. Behaviors that compromise this environment, interfere with school operations, or are otherwise contrary to the basic mission of public schools will not be tolerated. This policy is intended to apply to the bullying, harassment, or intimidation of students by other students or by school employees.

Definition of Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation

Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation exists when there is a sufficiently severe action or persistent, pervasive pattern of actions or statements, directed at an identifiable individual or group. Bullying, harassment, or intimidation is defined as intentional conduct that creates a hostile educational environment by substantially interfering with a student's educational benefits, opportunities, or performance, or with a student's physical or psychological well-being and is:

- 1.** motivated by actual or perceived personal characteristics including race, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, religion, ancestry, physical attributes, socioeconomic status, family status or disability; or threatening or seriously intimidating; and
- 2.** occurring on school property, at a school activity or event, or on a school bus; or substantially disrupts the orderly operation of a school.

Forms of Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation

Forms of bullying, harassment, or intimidation may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Verbal harassment, such as derogatory or offensive comments, jokes, slurs, intimidations, or gossip; and
- Physical harassment, such as inappropriate or offensive touching, impeding or blocking movement; and
- Visual harassment, such as derogatory or offensive writing, posters, pictures, objects, cards, cartoons, graffiti, drawings, gestures, or prolonged staring/leering; and
- Other forms of harassment which may include hazing, bullying, teasing, or

cyber bullying by electronic communication. Electronic communication means a device, such as but not limited to, a telephone, cellular phone, computer, PDA, or pager.

Complaint/Reporting Procedures

Students who believe that they have been subject to bullying, harassment, or intimidation or who have knowledge of employees or students who may be engaging in bullying, harassment, or intimidation will immediately report the problem to a teacher, counselor, or school administrator. Students employed by the Board of Education will report bullying, harassment, or intimidation in writing to their immediate supervisor or to the office of the Superintendent. Retaliation against a student making a complaint in good faith is prohibited. Any complaint that cannot be resolved at the building level should be forwarded in writing to the Superintendent or designee.



Investigation

The principal or designee, upon receipt of a written report or complaint alleging bullying, harassment, or intimidation will immediately conduct an investigation. In determining whether the alleged conduct constitutes a violation of this policy, the principal or designee should consider the surrounding circumstances, the nature of the behavior, past incidents or past continuing patterns of behavior, the relationships between the parties involved, and the context in which the alleged incidents occurred. Whether a particular action or incident constitutes a violation of this policy requires a determination based on all the facts surrounding the circumstances. The principal or designee will determine whether the allegations have been substantiated and the complainant informed of the findings.

Disciplinary Action

The principal or designee will investigate all allegations. Any student who is found to have violated this policy (IV-C-11) will be subject to disciplinary action.



Disposition

Upon determination of incidents of student bullying, harassment, or intimidation, appropriate action will be taken. The action may include, but is not limited to, counseling, parent conferences, awareness training, referral to mental health services, alternative education placement, suspension, or recommendation for expulsion.

Notification

Students will be informed of the policy prohibiting bullying, harassment, or intimidation. Notice of this policy will be included in the Student Handbook and the Code of Student Conduct publications.

Student Awareness

All schools will provide age-appropriate bullying, harassment, or intimidation awareness at the beginning of each school year. Student orientation will also include this awareness.

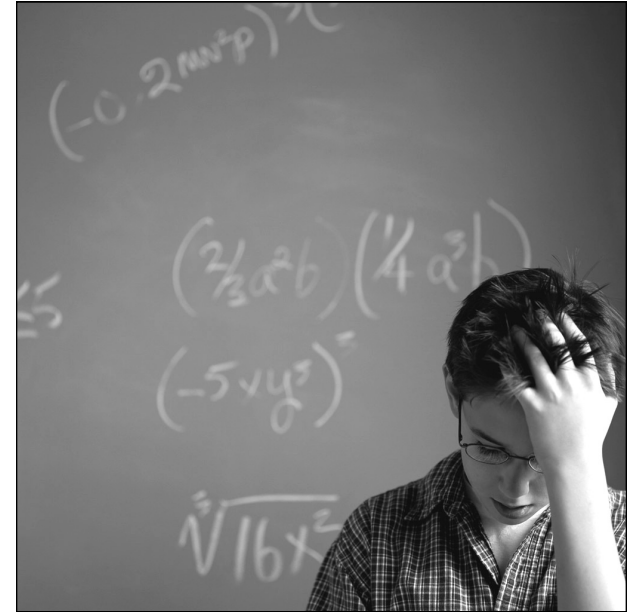
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Dr. Jerry Wilson, Superintendent

The Worcester County Board of Education does not discriminate in admissions, access, treatment, or employment in its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, sex, age, national origin, religion, or disability.

Worcester County Public Schools



A Policy Guide
for Students and Parents:

Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation