

SSSA 2014 FALL SEMINAR

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO THE NEW ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

New Anti-Bullying Initiative

The Safe and Supportive Schools Act ("Act"), widely known as the anti-bullying law, recently was passed by the Minnesota legislature. The Act requires public schools to begin implementing new policies and procedures beginning with the 2014-2015 school year. As a result, we are implementing a revised bullying policy and updating many of our present policies such as our student discipline and internet acceptable use policy. Students will receive information in school as to their obligations under these new policies and procedures. As a parent or guardian, you can help your child understand these expectations and the reporting procedures.

What Are the Behavioral Expectations For My Child?

Under the policy, students are prohibited from engaging in any act of bullying on school premises, school district property, at school functions or activities, or on school transportation. School policy also applies to an act of cyberbullying that occurs on school premises or through the use of school resources as well as cyberbullying that occurs off school premises to the extent such acts substantially and materially disrupt student learning or the school environment. Retaliation for asserting, alleging reporting or providing information about an act of bullying or cyberbullying, as well as knowingly making a false report of bullying are also prohibited.

What is Bullying?

Per Minnesota law, bullying is defined as: intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct that is objectively offensive and:

1. there is an actual or perceived imbalance of power between the student engaging in the prohibited conduct and the target of the prohibited conduct, and the conduct is repeated or forms a pattern; or
2. materially and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges.

What Conduct is Considered to be Intimidating, Threatening, Abusive, or Otherwise Harming?

"Intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct" that constitutes bullying means, but is not limited to, conduct that does the following:

1. causes physical harm to a student or a student's property or causes a student to be in reasonable fear of harm to person or property;

5. If your child is determined to have engaged in an act of bullying, he or she may be disciplined as set forth in the student code of conduct. A copy of the Student Discipline Policy may be found at _____.

What Happens if my Child is the Victim of Bullying?

If you, your child or anyone else reports that your child may be the victim of bullying under the above definitions, we will take the following actions:

1. We will investigate the report.
2. While the investigation is pending, intermediate steps may be taken to protect your child and any other students who may have witnessed or reported the incident such as separating the parties involved and increasing supervision when the parties may be together (lunch, recess).
3. We will ask to speak with your child to determine what conduct did or did not occur.
4. Parents/guardians will be given notice of the alleged bullying conduct to the extent permitted by data privacy laws.
5. We will take action to address a confirmed report of bullying including any actions listed in the Bullying Prohibition Policy and/or the Student Discipline Policy. A copy of the Student Discipline Policy may be found at _____. To the extent permitted by state and federal privacy laws, we will inform you of the remedial action taken in response to the report.

What Can I do as a Parent to Help my Child with Bullying?

Parents can help their children by being informed as to the behavioral expectations their child must meet at school and assisting their children in understanding the need to treat others with respect. Parents can also be alert to warning signs of bullying and talk to their children if they suspect bullying may be occurring. The Olweaus Bullying Prevention Program publishes common warning signs of bullying which may be found at http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/bullying_warning_signs.page. Finally, we can all address and prevent bullying by communicating with each other. If you know or suspect bullying is occurring in school, whether it involves your child or another student, it is important that school officials receive that information as soon as possible. Valuable information can be lost when investigations are delayed and action cannot be taken to address the situation if we do not know that an incident occurred.