

23. Bullying Prohibition Policy (MSMA 514)

Adopted by Mastery School Board of Education: September 22, 2011

I. PURPOSE

A safe and civil environment is needed for students to learn and attain high academic standards and to promote healthy human relationships. Bullying, like other violent or disruptive behavior, is conduct that interferes with students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to educate students in a safe environment. Mastery School 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. However, to the extent such conduct affects the educational environment of Mastery School and the rights and welfare of its students and is within the control of the school in its normal operations, it is the school's intent to prevent bullying and to take action to investigate, respond, remediate, and purpose of this policy is to assist the school in its goal of preventing and responding to acts of bullying, intimidation, violence, and other similar disruptive behavior.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. An act of bullying, by either an individual student or a group of students, is expressly prohibited on Mastery School property or at school-related functions. This policy applies not only to students who directly engage in an act of bullying but also to students who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support another student's act of bullying. This policy also applies to any student whose conduct at any time or in any place constitutes bullying that interferes with or obstructs the mission or operations of the school district or the safety or welfare of the student, other students, or employees.

B. No teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of Mastery School shall permit, condone, or tolerate bullying.

C. Apparent permission or consent by a student being bullied does not lessen the prohibitions contained in this policy.

D. Retaliation against a victim, good faith reporter, or a witness of bullying is prohibited.

E. False accusations or reports of bullying against another student are prohibited.

F. A person who engages in an act of bullying, reprisal, or false reporting of bullying or permits, condones, or tolerates bullying shall be subject to discipline for that act in accordance with Mastery School's policies and procedures. The school may take into account the following factors:

1. The developmental and maturity levels of the parties involved;
 2. The levels of harm, surrounding circumstances, and nature of the behavior;
 3. Past incidences or past or continuing patterns of behavior;
 4. The relationship between the parties involved; and
 5. The context in which the alleged incidents occurred.
- Mastery School Board of Education Policy

Consequences for students who commit prohibited acts of bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension and/or expulsion. Consequences for employees who permit, condone, or tolerate bullying or engage in an act of reprisal or intentional false reporting of bullying may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination or discharge. Consequences for other individuals engaging in prohibited acts of bullying may include, but not be limited to, exclusion from school property and events and/or termination of services and/or contracts.

G. The school will act to investigate all complaints of bullying and will discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of the school district who is found to have violated this policy.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the definitions included in this section apply.

A. "Bullying" means any written or verbal expression, physical act or gesture, or pattern thereof, by a student that is intended to cause or is perceived as causing distress to one or more students and which substantially interferes with another student's or students' educational benefits, opportunities, or performance. Bullying includes, but is not limited to, conduct by a student against another student that a reasonable person under the circumstances knows or should know has the effect of:

1. harming a student;
2. damaging a student's property;
3. placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or property; or
4. creating a hostile educational environment for a student.

B. "Immediately" means as soon as possible but in no event longer than 24 hours.

C. "On school property or at school-related functions" means all school buildings, school grounds, and school property or property immediately adjacent to school grounds, school bus stops, school buses, school vehicles, school contracted vehicles, or any other vehicles approved for school purposes, the area of entrance or departure from school grounds, premises, or events, and all school-related functions, school-sponsored activities, events, or trips. School property also may mean a student's walking route to or from school for purposes of attending school or school-related functions, activities, or events. While prohibiting bullying at these locations and events, the school does not represent that it will provide supervision or assume liability at these locations and events.

Reporting Procedure

A. Any person who believes he or she has been the victim of bullying or any person with knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying shall report the alleged acts immediately to the school director. A student may report bullying anonymously, but action may not be taken against an alleged perpetrator based solely on an anonymous report.

B. Mastery School encourages the reporting party or complainant to use the report form available from the director or available from the school office, but oral reports shall be considered complaints as well.

C. The director is the person responsible for receiving reports of bullying at the building level. Any person may report bullying directly to a school human rights officer.

D. A teacher, school administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other school employee shall be particularly alert to possible situations, circumstances, or events that might include bullying. Any such person who receives a report of, observes, or has other knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying shall inform the director/principal immediately.

E. Reports of bullying are classified as private educational and/or personnel data and/or confidential investigative data and will not be disclosed except as permitted by law.

F. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of bullying will not affect the complainant's or reporter's future employment, grades, or work assignments, or educational or work environment.

G. The school will respect the privacy of the complainant(s), the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and the witnesses as much as possible, consistent with the school district's obligation to investigate, take appropriate action, and comply with any legal disclosure obligations.

School District Action

A. Upon receipt of a complaint or report of bullying, Mastery School shall undertake or authorize an investigation by school officials or a third party designated by the school.

B. Mastery School may take immediate steps, at its discretion, to protect the complainant, reporter, students, or others pending completion of an investigation of bullying, consistent with applicable law.

C. Upon completion of the investigation, Mastery School will take appropriate action. Such action may include, but is not limited to, warning, suspension, exclusion, expulsion, transfer, remediation, termination, or discharge. Disciplinary consequences will be sufficiently severe to try to deter violations and to appropriately discipline prohibited behavior. School action taken for violation of this policy will be consistent with the requirements of applicable statutory authority, including the Minnesota Pupil Fair Dismissal Act; school district policies; and regulations.

D. Mastery School is not authorized to disclose to a victim private educational or personnel data regarding an alleged perpetrator who is a student or employee of the school. School officials will notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of students involved in a bullying incident and the remedial action taken, to the extent permitted by law, based on a confirmed report.

Reprisal

Mastery School will discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of the school who retaliates against any person who makes a good faith report of alleged bullying or against any person who testifies, assists, or participates in an investigation, or against any person who testifies, assists, or participates in a proceeding or hearing relating to such bullying. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, harassment, or intentional disparate treatment.

Training and Education

A. Mastery School annually will provide information and any applicable training to school staff regarding this policy.

B. Mastery School annually will provide education and information to students regarding bullying, including information regarding this school policy prohibiting bullying, the harmful effects of bullying, and other applicable initiatives to prevent bullying.

C. The administration of the school will implement programs and other initiatives to prevent bullying, to respond to bullying in a manner that does not stigmatize the victim, and to make resources or referrals to resources available to victims of bullying.