

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Magnolia Public Schools (MPS) is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils so they can feel safe, confident and find success in personal and academic development. Therefore, it is important for MPS to have an explicit policy on bullying and cyber-bullying as part of a general policy on discipline and behavior. It is the Board's policy to maintain an educational environment in which bullying and cyber bullying in any form are not tolerated.

MPS shall comply with all applicable requirements of the Safe Place to Learn Act, Education Code section 234 *et seq.* MPS' policy on bullying prohibits discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying based on actual or perceived characteristics, as specified in the definition of hate crimes. MPS' process for receiving and investigating complaints includes complaints of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying based on actual or perceived characteristics, as specified, and a requirement that Charter School personnel who witness such acts take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so, a timeline to investigate and resolve complaints, and an appeal process.

What Is Bullying / Cyber Bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. It is the unwelcome verbal, written, or physical conduct that has the effect of pain and distress on the victim. Bullying occurs in school playgrounds every 7 minutes and once every 25 minutes in class. Boys report more physical forms of bullying; girls tend to bully in indirect ways, such as gossiping and excluding. Research shows that 85% of bullying episodes occur in the context of a peer group (Pepler et al., 1997).

Bullying can be:

- **Emotional:** Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- **Physical:** Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- **Religious/Racist:** Taunts, graffiti, gestures
- **Sexual:** Unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- **Homophobic:** Because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- **Verbal:** Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumors, teasing
- **Cyber:** All areas of internet, such as email & internet chat room misuse; mobile threats by text messaging & calls; misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera & video facilities

Cyber Bullying:

Cyber bullying includes, but is not limited to, the following misuses of technology: harassing, teasing, intimidating, threatening, or terrorizing another student or staff member by way of any technological tool, such as sending or posting inappropriate or derogatory email messages, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs) which has the effect of:

- Physically, emotionally or mentally harming a student;
- Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical, emotional or mental harm;
- Placing a student in reasonable fear of damage to or loss of personal property; or

- Creating an intimidating or hostile environment that substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities.

Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Students who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving. Schools have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying. Per Education Code Section 234.1(b)(1), it is a requirement that if school personnel witness an act of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying, they shall take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so.

Objectives of this Policy:

- All teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All teaching and non-teaching staff should know what the school policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All pupils and parents should know what the school policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.
- As a school we take bullying seriously. Pupils and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.
- Bullying will not be tolerated.

Signs and Symptoms:

A child may indicate by signs or behavior that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- is frightened of walking to or from school
- doesn't want to go on the school / public bus
- begs to be driven to school
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- begins to be truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has lunch or other monies continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises

- comes home starving (money / lunch has been stolen)
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous & jumpy when a cyber message is received

These signs and behaviors could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Students who report cyberbullying are requested to preserve evidence of cyberbullying. For example, a student may save or bring a copy of an email, text message, picture or other electronic transmission that the student believes was intended to harm, insult, or humiliate.

Procedures:

- 1. Reporting:** Students are encouraged to inform school personnel if they are the target of or a witness to bullying. If school personnel witness an act of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying, they shall take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so. School personnel are required to report bullying incidents to the appropriate school administrator, i.e., Assistant Principal (or Dean of Students).
- 2. Informal Resolution:** The Assistant Principal, along with the complainant and the accused/student, may agree to informally resolve the complaint within two (2) work days. The incident and the resolution will be documented by the Assistant Principal. If the Assistant Principal is not available to address the issue, the Principal/designee will work to resolve the complaint.

If a mutual resolution has not been achieved, a formal written appeal must be filed by the complainant/student/employee or parent(s), on behalf of the students, within five (5) work days after the informal meeting and submitted to the principal.

- 3. Formal Resolution:** Upon receipt of the complaint, the principal or the principal's designee will, in their sole discretion, determine if the complaint alleges a serious violation of this policy. If the principal or the principal's designee determines that the complaint alleges a serious violation, the principal or the principal's designee will undertake a thorough investigation of the complaint. The investigation will entail the gathering of relevant facts and evidence and will be conducted in a reasonable prompt time period, e.g. ten (10) work days, taking into account the circumstances of the complaint. If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted in extreme cases. If the investigation establishes a violation, appropriate disciplinary sanctions will be imposed on the offending student(s). Other measures that are reasonably calculated to prevent a recurrence of the violation(s) may also be imposed by the principal/designee or the school system.
- 4. Further steps:**

- a. If the complainant is not happy with the formal resolution, he/she may write a formal written appeal to the School Site Council (SSC). The SSC may call a meeting with the complainant, principal and other interested parties if necessary. The SSC will collaborate with the principal to resolve the issue within time frame that is suggested by the SSC and agreed by the parent.
 - b. If the complainant is not happy with the SSC's resolution, he/she may take his/her written appeal to the CEO (or designee) of MPS. The CEO (or designee) will collaborate with the SSC or the principal (or designee) to resolve the issue within time frame that is suggested by the CEO (or designee) and agreed by the parent.
 - c. If the complainant is not happy with the CEO (or designee)'s resolution, he/she may take his/her written appeal to the MPS Board of Directors. In all cases, the Board of Directors will not get involved in the issue until the above steps have been attempted. The Board chairperson will determine the next course of action; a subcommittee of the Board of Directors may be formed to review the complaint and issue a finding within 30 calendar days. The Board's decision is final.
5. After this point if the complainant is still not satisfied with the resolution, he/she can write a letter to the charter authorizer, but their involvement is beyond the scope of this policy.

Outcomes (with reconciliation of pupils being the goal)

1. Parent conference
2. The bully (bullies) may be asked to genuinely apologize.
3. Repeated offenders may have consequences such as meeting with the assistant principal, participating in peer mediation, or participating in small group or individual counseling. Student may also be placed on a behavior contract.
4. In serious cases, ISS, OSS, or expulsion will be considered.
5. After the incident / incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

The school may revoke the privilege of a student or third party, who uses school equipment or electronic communication system to engage in cyberbullying, to use any school electronic equipment. The school may revoke the privilege of a student or third party, who uses a personal communication device to engage in cyberbullying, to bring any personal communication device on school property or school-sponsored activities.

Prevention

We will use various methods for helping students to prevent bullying. As and when appropriate, these may include:

- having assemblies on bullying awareness/prevention
- empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance

- writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying
- reading stories about bullying or having them read to a class
- making up and participating in role-plays
- having discussions (class meetings) about bullying and why it matters
- emphasizing cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies
- using the internet safely
- enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications
- using positive behavioral supports and appropriate reinforcement, even when students require discipline
- encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students
- school/community training
- displaying anti-bullying posters throughout the campus
- providing the students with an "anonymous incident reporting box" to avoid being labeled a "tattle tale" or "snitch"
- implementing a poster board on the campus where students can sign a "pledge to take a stand against bullying"
- support from our school counselors working with victims of bullying and students who bully others
- frequent reminders from the administration and staff regarding consequences for those who bully or fight on campus
- collaborating with the parent group to bring resources to the students and the parents

The phenomenon that is bullying / cyber bullying in schools is very much a reality, and it takes a collective effort from the staff, students, parents and community members to help reduce the amount of incidents that occur on a particular campus. Therefore, we ask the entire MPS family to continue to emphasize the importance of taking a stand against bullying and not participating in inappropriate behavior on campus.

Thank you for doing your part in helping to make MPS a safe and enjoyable place to be.