



Reed-Custer School District **Bullying Policy**

Purpose

The Illinois General Assembly has found that a safe and civil school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve, and that bullying causes physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students and interferes with their ability to learn and participate in school activities. Bullying has been linked to other forms of antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, shoplifting, skipping and dropping out of school, fighting, using drugs and alcohol, and sexual harassment and violence. The Reed-Custer Board of Education is committed to creating and maintaining a physically, emotionally, and intellectually safe educational environment free from bullying, harassment and discrimination. The purpose of this policy is to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that no one within our school community will be subject to any bullying, and to secure a safe, orderly, respectful, and nurturing environment that promotes teaching and learning.

Definitions

“Bullying” The School Code of Illinois 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7(b) defines bullying as:

“Any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or may be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

1. Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student’s or students’ person or property;
2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student’s or students’ physical or mental health;
3. Substantially interfering with the student’s or students’ academic performance; or
4. Substantially interfering with the student’s or students’ ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the school.”

“Cyber-bullying” means bullying that takes place through the use of electronic devices, including but not limited to telephones, cellular phones, computers, pagers, electronic mail, instant messaging, text messaging, websites, and/or other social media.

“Teen Dating Violence” occurs whenever a student who is 13 to 19 years of age uses or threatens to use physical, mental, or emotional abuse to control an individual in the dating relationship; or uses or threatens to use sexual violence in the dating relationship.

“School-Sponsored Activity” means any activity conducted on or off school property (including school buses and other school-related vehicles) that is sponsored, recognized, or authorized by the Board of Education.

Prohibited Behavior

Bullying is not acceptable and is strictly prohibited. Bullying is conduct that is covered by this policy, is conduct that occurs on school property or at school-sponsored activities or events, while students are being transported or walking to or from school or school-sponsored activities or events, while students are waiting at school bus stops, or when the conduct otherwise would substantially impede the educational environment, regardless of where the conduct occurs. Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual

violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying.

Reporting and Investigation

Anyone who witnesses any conduct that could constitute bullying shall report it to a school staff member as soon as possible. Such a report shall then be forwarded to the Principal or his/her designee as soon as possible, who then shall conduct or cause to be conducted a thorough investigation of the alleged incident. Discipline and/or other intervention appropriate to the outcome of the investigation shall be imposed consistent with the Reed-Custer School District discipline procedures.

When appropriate, the local police and State's Attorney shall be notified immediately of incidents involving bodily harm, property damage or any other conduct which is reasonably believed by the school administration to be a violation of criminal laws. Additionally, as mandated reporters of child abuse by the state of Illinois, Reed-Custer School District administration may report incidences to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to investigate claims of abuse. The investigation of any such bullying shall proceed in cooperation with the police and other applicable law enforcement authorities. Reed-Custer School District 255-U retains its right to investigate and impose any discipline for violation of this policy, whether or not criminal charges are pursued.

Disciplinary Consequences

Administrators have the discretion to determine appropriate disciplinary consequences and/or interventions for violations of this policy based upon the relevant facts and circumstances in a particular case, including but not limited to:

1. The developmental and maturity levels of the parties involved
2. The level(s) of harm
3. The surrounding circumstances
4. The nature of the behavior(s)
5. Past incidences or continuing patterns of behavior
6. The relationships between the parties involved
7. The context in which the alleged incidents occurred

Disciplinary consequences may include detention, suspension or expulsion from school. In addition, students may be required to participate in education programs, mediation, counseling and/or other programs and/or activities to address and prevent reoccurrence of bullying and cyber-bullying behavior.

Expected Behavior

Expected behaviors demonstrate the values, commitments and ethics that influence one's behaviors toward others and affect learning, motivation and development. These expected behaviors support values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility and social justice. Ideally, the teaching and learning of these behaviors should be the shared responsibility of every school employee, student, parent, and community member. These expected behaviors include, but are not limited to:

1. The ability to recognize emotions, control impulses and manage stress accordingly
2. The ability to overcome obstacles as well as to set and monitor progress toward the achievement of personal and academic goals
3. The ability to empathize with others

4. The ability to seek out and appropriately use family, school, and community resources in age appropriate ways
5. The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding age appropriate relationships based on cooperation
6. The ability to resist inappropriate social pressure
7. The ability to constructively prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflict
8. The ability to seek and provide help when needed
9. The ability to consider ethical and safety concerns, social norms, and respect for other when making decisions
10. The ability to contribute positively to the school culture and climate

Prevention Strategies

In addition to the prompt investigation of complaints of bullying and direct intervention when acts of bullying are verified, other district actions may prevent potential problems with bullying in school or at school-sponsored activities. The following list of potential prevention and intervention strategies shall serve as a resource for administrators, teachers and other professional employees in each school. Such prevention and intervention strategies may include, but are not limited to:

1. School rules prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation in all settings and establishing appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts
2. Adequate adult supervision of outdoor areas, hallways, the lunchroom and other specific areas where bullying is likely to occur
3. A clear and well-communicated reporting procedure
4. Student peer training, education and support
5. Respectful responses to bullying concerns raised by students, parents or staff
6. Planned professional development programs addressing prevention and intervention strategies, which training may include school violence prevention, conflict resolution and prevention of bullying
7. Use of peers to help assist the plight of victims and include them in group activities
8. Continuing awareness and involvement on the part of school employees and parents with regards to prevention and intervention strategies
9. Modeling, by teachers, of positive, respectful, and supportive behavior toward students
10. Creating a school atmosphere of team spirit and collaboration that promotes appropriate social behavior by students in support of others
11. Employing classroom strategies that instruct students how to work together in a collaborative and supportive atmosphere

Password Request

Reed-Custer Administrators may request or require a student to provide a password or other related account information in order to gain access to the student's account or profile on a social networking website if a reasonable cause exists to believe that the student's account on a social networking website contains evidence that the student has violated a school disciplinary rule or policy.

Evaluation

In compliance with Illinois law, this policy will be evaluated every two (2) years and updated to reflect any necessary and appropriate revisions. This policy will be posted on the school's website, will be included in the District Handbook, and will be available for parents, guardians, students, and school personnel upon request.