



BULLYING

The Regional School Unit-24 (RSU) Board (RSUB) seeks to provide all students with an equitable opportunity to learn. The RSUB therefore expects, and requires, all RSU personnel to ensure that we are providing a safe, orderly and respectful school environment that is conducive to both teaching and learning.

“Bullying” type behavior is detrimental to student learning and achievement. It interferes with the mission of the RSU to educate our students and disrupts the good order and discipline of RSU schools. Bullying affects not only RSU students who are targets, but also those who participate and witness such behavior.

The RSUB believes that promoting ethical and responsible behavior is an essential part of the RSU’s educational purpose. Ethics, responsible behavior and good moral character are required if a student is to leave the RSU as a “responsible and involved citizen” as described in the Guiding Principles of Maine’s System of Learning Results. Bullying interferes with the accomplishment of this goal.

Incidents of violence and/or threatened violence have occurred in schools across the nation in the past several years. Whereas research strongly suggests a link between bullying and school violence, the RSUB seeks to avoid such incidents and therefore takes a systematic approach to bullying prevention and intervention within the RSU.

It is not the RSUB’s intent to prohibit students from expressing their ideas, realizing that sometimes these ideas might tend to offend the sensibilities of others, or from engaging in civil debate. However, the RSUB does not condone, and will take action in response to, conduct that interferes with any RSU students’ opportunity to learn, and/or interferes with the educational mission of the RSU, and/or the operation of our schools.

Bullying Prohibited

Bullying, as defined in this policy, is not acceptable conduct and is strictly prohibited. Any RSU student who engages in conduct that constitutes bullying shall be subject to disciplinary consequences up to and including suspension and/or expulsion. A student’s bullying behavior may also be addressed through other behavioral interventions.

Bullying Defined

For the purpose of this policy, “bullying” means any physical act or gesture or any verbally, written, or electronically communicated expression that:

- A. A reasonable person should expect will have the effect of:
 1. Physically harming a student or damaging a student’s property;

2. Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical harm or damage to his/her person or property;
or
 3. Substantially disrupting the instructional program or the orderly operations of the RSU; or
- B. Is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, hostile educational environment for the student who is bullied.

Application of Policy

This policy applies to bullying that takes place at RSU schools or on RSU grounds, at any RSU-sponsored activity or event, or while students are being transported to or from RSU schools or any RSU-sponsored activities or events. It also applies to bullying that occurs at any other time or place if such bullying substantially disrupts RSU instructional programs, operations of schools, or the welfare of RSU students.

Examples of conduct that may constitute bullying include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Physical contact or injury to another person or his/her property;
- B. Threats of harm to a student, to his/her possessions, or to other individuals, whether transmitted verbally, in writing, or through cyberspace;
- C. Blackmail, extortion, demands for protection money, or involuntary loans or donations;
- D. Non-verbal threats and/or intimidations such as use of aggressive or menacing gestures;
- E. Stalking;
- F. Blocking access to RSU property or facilities;
- G. Stealing or hiding books, backpacks, or other possessions;
- H. Repeated or pervasive taunting, name-calling, belittling, mocking, put-downs, or demeaning humor relating to a student's race, color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ancestry, religion, disability, or other personal characteristics, whether or not the student actually possesses them, that could reasonably be expected to result in disruption of any RSU instructional program and/or the operation of RSU schools, or that results, or that could reasonably be expected to result, in a hostile educational environment for any RSU student.

For the purpose of this policy, bullying does not mean mere teasing, put-downs, "talking trash," trading of insults, or similar interactions among friends, nor does it include expression of ideas or beliefs so long as such expression is not lewd, profane, or does not interfere with a students' opportunity to learn, the instructional program, or the operations of the RSU. This does not preclude teachers or building administrators (BA) from setting and enforcing rules for civility, courtesy, and/or responsible behavior in the classroom and the school environment, and in fact the RSUB strongly encourages such rules.

Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent will be responsible for developing and implementing procedures for:

- A. Student and parent reporting of bullying to staff and BA's;

- B. Staff reporting of bullying to BA's;
- C. Review of reports and investigation of bullying incidents;
- D. Intervention with and/or discipline of RSU students who engage in bullying;
- E. Support for RSU students who are victims of bullying;
- F. Training staff and students in bullying prevention; and
- G. Periodic evaluation of bullying prevention, intervention, and training efforts within the RSU, and reporting results to the RSUB upon request.

Reporting

RSU students who have been bullied or who observe incidents of bullying are encouraged to report this behavior to a teacher, who should report incidents to their BA.

Acts of reprisal or retaliation against any person reporting an incident of bullying are prohibited. Any RSU student who is determined to have falsely accused another of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Responding to Bullying

RSU consequences may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension, expulsion, and/or reports to law enforcement officials.

Dissemination of Policy

This Policy shall be communicated to all RSU students and parents through the Student Code of Conduct Policy, and will be published in all RSU Student Handbooks.

Legal Reference: 20-A M.R.S.A. § 1001(15)(H)
P.L. 2005, ch. 307 § 4-5

Cross Reference: AC - Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity
ACAA - Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students
ACAD - Hazing
ADF - School District Commitment to Learning Results
JI - Student Rights and Responsibilities
JIC – Code of Conduct
JICC - Student Conduct on Buses
JICIA - Weapons, Violence and School Safety
JK - Student Discipline
JKD - Suspension of Students
JKE - Expulsion of Students

First Read: July 13, 2010

Adopted: _____