

## WAUSAU SCHOOL DISTRICT

STUDENTS

5706

WELFARE/DISCIPLINE

Prohibition Against Bullying, Hazing, Discrimination and Harassment

### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Wausau School District prohibits bullying, hazing, discrimination and harassment or the threat of such activities by a student or group of students against other students or personnel in any form it may take. The Board of Education considers these actions to be a violation of its obligation and Shared Key Interest to provide safe, secure, flexible, inviting, and well-maintained environments that nurture student well-being and enhance teaching and learning, and determines them to be disruptive to the academic atmosphere. All reports of bullying will be taken seriously.

### DEFINITIONS:

- Aggressive behavior: physical or verbal behavior described as leading to self-assertion; it is often angry and destructive and intended to be injurious, physically or emotionally, and aimed at domination of one person by another.
- Cyberbullying: Sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false or mean content about someone else through use of digital devices, occurring through text message, apps, social media, online forums, blogs, gaming or e-mail.
- Discrimination: the prejudicial treatment of people based on protected categories.
- Harassment. persistent and unwelcome conduct, advances, gestures, or words that are based on any legally protected categories.
- Power: the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behavior of others or the course of events., including, but not limited to, through use of physical strength, access to embarrassing information, popularity.

### BULLYING

Bullying is defined as the unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-age children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is reasonably perceived as being dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time and can be physical, verbal, or indirect. Both students who are bullied and students who bully others may have serious, lasting problems. Bullying may consist of the real or threatened infliction of physical, verbal, non-verbal, written, electronically transmitted, or emotional abuse, or through attacks on the property

of another. Such conduct based on race, ethnicity, disability, gender, or sexual orientation, physical ability or disability; and social, economic, or family status.” may contribute to harassment and discrimination in the school environment.

Bullying may include, but is not limited to:

1. Verbal taunts;
2. Spreading rumors, name-calling, and put-downs;
3. Extortion of money or possessions;
4. Exclusion from peer groups within the school;
5. Threatening another person;
6. Manipulating friendships;
7. Posting or sending negative, harmful, false or mean-spirited messages about someone using cell phones, electronic mail, internet-based communications, texting, websites, blogs, social media etc. (also known as cyberbullying);
8. Organizing others to threaten, tease, or exclude a targeted individual, or any of the above;
9. Retaliation against individuals who report or cooperate in an investigation conducted pursuant to this policy.

In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

1. **An imbalance of power:** Students who bully use their power, such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity, to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people; and
2. **Repetition:** Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Students who engage in any act of bullying at school, at a school function, or in connection to any activity sponsored by the District (whether it is held on school premises or not), or while enroute to or from school (whether it is by District sponsored transportation or walking) are subject to disciplinary action in accordance with Board Policy 5705, Board Policy 5708 and Board Policy 5750, up to and including suspension or expulsion. In addition, cyberbullying can result in discipline whether it occurs on or off school property, irrespective of whether it involves an electronic device at school, at home, or at a third-party location, if it results in a substantial disruption of the school learning environment.

### TRAINING/EDUCATION

Students, parents, and employees shall be informed annually, and additionally as the need arises, of this prohibition via the parent/student handbook, employee handbook, other such publications, and through age-appropriate training at the building level. Parent education is seen as a critical

component and addressed on an ongoing basis through when opportunities arise at events such as PTO meetings, open houses, scheduling meetings, orientations, and other venues as appropriate. Additionally, this policy shall not be interpreted to prohibit a reasonable and civil exchange of opinions or debate, which is protected by state or federal law.

### HAZING

Hazing is defined as:

1. any intentional, knowing, or reckless act meant to
  - a. induce physical pain, embarrassment, humiliation, deprivation of rights; or
  - b. create physical or mental discomfort; or
  - c. result in property damage or theft; and
2. is directed against a student for the purpose of being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in (collectively called "initiation activities"), or maintaining membership in an organization, club, or athletic team sponsored or supported by the District and whose membership is totally or predominately other students from the District

Hazing is prohibited and applies to any and all student-sponsored and adult-sponsored activities that have not been approved by the District. An example of an approved school-sponsored initiation activity is the ceremony for the induction of students into the National Honor Society. Examples of prohibited hazing include, but are not limited to:

- Requiring a behavior for people to "earn" their way onto a team or activity;
- Physically or verbally abusing someone as a way of "initiation."

Students engaging in any hazing or hazing-type behavior that is in any way connected to any activity sponsored or supported by the District will be subject to disciplinary actions in accordance with Board Policy 5705, up to and including suspension or expulsion. Students and employees shall be informed annually of this prohibition via the parent/student handbook, employee handbook, or other such publications.

### REPORTING

The School Board shall comply with Wisconsin statutes that require school boards to provide an instructional program designed to give students knowledge of effective means by which they may recognize, avoid, prevent, and halt physically or psychologically intrusive or abusive situations that may be harmful to them. Any student who feels targeted by acts of bullying or hazing should contact the building principal designee, or follow the complaint procedure provided in Board Policy 5405. Students who file false reports of bullying or hazing will be subject to discipline, up to and including expulsion.

RETALIATION

Students and others are prohibited from retaliating against those who report incidents of bullying or hazing or who assist in an investigation. Students and others who retaliate shall be subject to discipline consistent with District policies and procedures, up to and including suspension or expulsion, and may be referred to law enforcement.

Employees who participate in, allow, or knowingly fail to enforce this policy will be subject to disciplinary action as per the Employee Handbook.

Furthermore, students may be referred to law enforcement for bullying, cyberbullying, or hazing incidents, and shall be referred to law enforcement where required by law.

SUPPORT

Students who Administration has identified as bullied, cyberbullied, or hazed will be supported by:

1. Being offered an opportunity to discuss the incident with a Pupil Services' staff member or other staff of their choice;
2. Being offered on-going support with the goal of restoring self-esteem, confidence, and a feeling of safety in the school environment;
3. Being offered encouragement to report further incidents.

Students who Administration has identified as bullying, cyberbullying, or hazing others by will be supported by:

1. Being offered an opportunity to discuss the incident with an administrator, Pupil Services' staff member, or other staff member;
2. Identifying the bullying behavior, the need to change, and support to change;
3. Working to discover why the student became involved in the act of bullying;
4. Enlisting the assistance of the parents/guardians or other supportive adult to assist in changing the behavior/attitude of the student.

Cross Ref.: Board Policy 4300, Sexual Harassment  
 Board Policy 4205, Complaint Procedures  
 Board Policy 5400, Compliance Statement  
 Board Policy 5405, Complaint Procedures  
 Board Policy 5705, Student Discipline  
 Board Policy 5708, Code of Student Conduct  
 WSD Parent/Student Handbook

WSD Employee Handbook  
Stopbullying.gov  
Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing,  
and Allied Health

Legal Ref.: Wisconsin Statutes 118.01(2)(d), 118.13, 118.46(2), 120.13(1),  
948.51(2)

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964  
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972  
Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973  
Americans With Disabilities Act  
US Constitution, Equal Protection Clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment

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