



Student Bullying and Harassment Policy

KEY POLICY STATEMENTS:

The Diocese of Rochester and the Department of Catholic Schools support The Dignity for All Student Act which ensures the belief that all administrators, teachers, staff, and students are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect, and to learn and work in a safe environment free from harassment. It is the responsibility of the principal, teachers and staff, and students to create an environment free from harassment, bullying and discrimination.

The Department of Catholic Schools strictly prohibits any conduct which constitutes harassment and will discipline any person guilty of such conduct. Such discipline may include but is not limited to suspension, expulsion or other disciplinary procedures at the discretion of the principal with approval of the Superintendent. *False accusations of harassment and or bullying will result in disciplinary action.*

APPLIES TO: All Diocesan Schools

Bullying

Bullying has been described by the USDE as unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying can occur before and after school hours, in a school building or places like a playground or bus, while a child who is travelling to an from school or on the Internet. Children who are bullied and those who bully others could have serious, lasting problems. Additionally, according to the USDE, bullying generally involved the following characteristics:

- *An Imbalance of Power:* Children 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.
- *Intent to Cause Harm:* The person bullying has a goal of causing harm
- *Repetition:* Bullying behaviors generally happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once

Examples of bullying include but are not limited to:

- *Verbal:* Name-calling, teasing, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting and threatening to cause harm.
- *Social:* Spreading rumors about someone, excluding others on purpose, telling other children not to be friends with someone, and embarrassing someone in public
- *Physical:* Hitting, punching, shoving, kicking, pinching, spitting, tripping, pushing, taking or breaking someone's things, and making mean or rude hand gestures

Go to: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/definition/index.html>

Harassment

The Dignity Act (Education Law S11(7)) Defines harassment as the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being; or conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that reasonably causes or would reasonably be



expected to cause a student to fear for his or her physical safety. Such conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse, includes but is not limited to conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse based on a person's actual or perceived: Race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender (which includes a person's actual or perceived sex, as well as gender identity and expression).

Identifiers

Harassment, Bullying and or Discrimination can be defined as any behavior, ordinarily repetitive in nature, which disturbs, torments, troubles, persecutes or pesters someone. Harassment is a form of discrimination when someone is treated differently because of perceived differences. In a school setting harassment presents as any unwanted words or actions that hurt, humiliate, embarrass or persistently disturb people. *The speaker or actor's intentions do not mitigate the seriousness of the behavior.*

1. Behavior or words that: are uninvited, unwanted, and unwelcome; cause a person to feel uncomfortable, hurt or offended; create an atmosphere that makes work or learning difficult; may be repeated or may occur on a one-time basis.
2. May include, but is not limited to:
 - Unwelcome verbal conduct such as verbal abuse or "kidding," derogatory comments or jokes, spreading of rumors, unwanted advances, intimations or comments.
 - Unwelcome visual contact such as derogatory gestures, looks, pictures, photographs, illustrations, graffiti, messages, or notes.
 - Unwelcome physical contact such as demands for favors, accompanied by promises or threats; pulling at clothes, blocking or cornering a person; touching, grabbing, or pinching; intentionally brushing against a person; forcing a person to do anything.
 - Any of the conduct mentioned herein when such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or learning environment, and, such conduct refers to behavior that is not welcome, that is personally offensive, that lowers morale and that interferes with the school's effort and obligation to educate its students.
 - Retaliation for having reported or threatened to report harassment

Responsibilities of the principal:

1. It is the responsibility of the principal that members of the faculty and staff are knowledgeable of Article VI, Title 6 of the New York State Social Services Law.
2. The principal is responsible for establishing local school procedures that ensure proper reporting of suspected cases of child abuse and maltreatment in cooperation with Article VI, Title 6 of the New York State Social Service Law.

These procedures should include but are not limited to:

A. Arranging annual in-service for school staff to address: the responsibilities of mandated reporters of child abuse; understanding indicators of child abuse and neglect.

B. Establishing administrative procedures that: assure that required reporting and record keeping are carried out; assure that proper records are kept for verbal and written communication; assure reporters that the responsibility to investigate a report of suspected child abuse is the principal's (cf. Section 413).

3. Whenever there is a question about a particular situation, principals are encouraged to contact their local Department of Social Services, Child Protective Unit, to receive consultation and assistance on how and what to report.