

## STUDENTS

## STUDENT CONDUCT

§8-41 Bullying Prevention and Education

Bullying and cyber bullying are prohibited at all times and it is the policy of the Loudoun County School Board to create bully-free learning environments. Such incidents should be investigated and handled by school staff as quickly and expediently as possible.

A. Statutory Authority and Mission. Virginia school boards have been required to include bullying prevention as a part of character education since 2005 (§ 22.1-208.01 of the *Code of Virginia*). In addition, school boards are expected to include bullying as a prohibited behavior in the student code of conduct (§ 22.1-279.6.D of the *Code of Virginia*) and to implement policies and procedures to educate school board employees about bullying and the need to create a bully-free environment (§ 22.1-291.4 of the *Code of Virginia*). This policy furthers these ends.

B. Definition. Bullying is the systematic and chronic inflicting of physical hurt or psychological distress on another person. The Code of Virginia at § 22.1-276.01 defines bullying as:

any aggressive and unwanted behavior that is intended to harm, intimidate, or humiliate the victim; involves a real or perceived power imbalance between the aggressor or aggressors and victim; and is repeated over time or causes severe emotional trauma. “Bullying” includes cyber bullying. “Bullying” does not include ordinary teasing, horseplay, argument, or peer conflict.

C. Bullying Characteristics

The Loudoun County School Board adopts the definition of bullying as stated in the Code of Virginia and expounds upon it for further clarification to ensure an anti-bullying learning environment is maintained in all schools.

1. Bullying involves physical and emotional behaviors that are intentional, controlling, and hurtful that create harassing, intimidating, hostile or otherwise offensive educational environments.

2. Bullying is unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behavior, including any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by a student or adult, that is severe or pervasive enough to create feelings of intimidation, alienation, or humiliation which unreasonably interfere with the school performance or participation of others.

3. Bullying behavior is a subtype of the broader concept of peer aggression and victimization; bullying prevention approaches must focus more broadly on reducing all forms of aggressions and victimization, regardless of the intent, frequency, and power differential.

4. The Virginia General Assembly requires policies and procedures regarding bullying and cyberbullying may not prohibit expression of religious, philosophical, or political views, unless that expression creates an actual, material disruption of the work of the school.

D. Notification. The principal, or designee, shall attempt to promptly report via telephone, personal conference, and/or in writing, the occurrence of any incident of bullying as defined by this policy to the parent or legal guardian of all students involved. Notification must be consistent with the student privacy rights under the applicable provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). Once the investigation has been completed and it has been determined that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator, all appropriate local law enforcement agencies should be notified.

E. Positive Behavior/Education

1. Bullying prevention and intervention programming should include evidenced-based curricula and practices and strategies. Incidents of bullying are to be reported and investigated as soon as possible. Developmentally appropriate intervention with students accused of bullying, as well as those identified as the victims, and resolution of all complaints are essential to maintaining a safe learning environment. Records are to be kept and collected, and the data analyzed annually.

2. A school administrator should be designated as the bullying prevention coordinator at each school to oversee the implementation of the division-wide program that includes the following:

- (a) annual training for faculty, staff and students on how to prevent and identify bullying, how to report suspected bullying, and how to take developmentally appropriate steps to intervene with bullying;
- (b) steps for receiving, reporting and investigating complaints;
- (c) parent education;
- (d) privacy and confidentiality for all involved individuals;
- (e) notification of law enforcement when it is suspected a criminal offense may have occurred; and

- (f) This policy should be prominently displayed on the division's and individual school's websites.

Legal Ref.: Sections [22.1-276.01](#), [22.1-279.6](#) and [22.1-291.4](#)

Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_