

BENSON STUDENT BULLYING PROHIBITION POLICY

The Benson School District strives to provide safe, secure and respectful learning environments for all students in school buildings, on school grounds, school buses and at school-sponsored activities. Bullying is a detriment to both student academic and social/emotional growth. Benson Public Schools has implemented the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program which provides education to students on preventing bullying behaviors, how to intervene when bullying is witnessed, and how to respond to bullying. Olweus also trains staff on how to stop and correct prohibited conduct, prevent prohibited conduct from occurring, and protect, support, and intervene on behalf of students. In addition, Olweus provides lessons for teaching bullying prevention skills.

DEFINITION

Bullying is recognized as intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct that is objectively offensive and when someone repeatedly and purposefully says or does mean or hurtful things to another person or group of people, and there is an actual or perceived imbalance of power between the student engaging in prohibited conduct and the target of the behavior, or materially and substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or performance or ability to participate in school functions or activities or receive school benefits, services, or privileges. These actions can be verbal, physical or relational and done either in a direct or indirect manner.

PROHIBITION

Benson Public Schools prohibits bullying on school property and at all school-related events. Cyber bullying using technology or other electronic communication, including, but not limited to, a transfer of a sign, signal, writing, image, sound, or data, including a post on a social network Internet Web site or forum, transmitted through a computer, cell phone, or other electronic device) that is connected to school is also prohibited. This policy applies not only to students who directly engage in an act of bullying but also to students who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support another student's act of bullying. Furthermore, "Prohibited Conduct" means bullying or cyberbullying as defined or retaliation for asserting, alleging, reporting, or providing information about such conduct or knowingly making a false report about bullying. Anyone who is the victim of bullying, or has knowledge about such an incident, should immediately report it to a school staff member or other trusted adult. A suspected bullying situation may also be reported on the Benson Public School website under "Parents and Community" tab. It is the school district's intent to prevent bullying and to take action to investigate, respond, remediate, and possibly discipline those acts of bullying which have not been successfully prevented. The purpose of this policy is to assist the school district in its goal of preventing and responding to acts of bullying, intimidation, violence, and other similar behavior that is disruptive to the learning environment. Parents are encouraged to closely monitor their children's social networking (Facebook, Twitter, texts, etc.) and immediately report any suspected bullying behaviors.

REMEDIAL RESPONSE

The principal at Northside Elementary School will receive bullying reports in grades PK-4 and the Benson High School Counselor will receive reports of bullying in grades 5-12. They will ensure this policy and its procedures are fairly and fully implemented and serve as the primary contact on policy and procedural matters implicating both the district or school and department.

If the complaint involves the principal/designee, the complaint shall be made or filed directly with the superintendent.

When investigating a complaint, principal/designee may take into account the following factors:

- The developmental ages and maturity levels of the parties involved.
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- The levels of harm, surrounding circumstances, and nature of the behavior.
- Past incidences or past or continuing patterns of behavior.
- The relationship between the parties involved.
- The context in which the alleged incidents occurred.

Investigation of a bullying incident shall be initiated within three school days of receipt of a report and be completed within 10 school days.

Consequences - Many student conflicts can be resolved immediately and do not require reporting or creation of an incident report. Benson Schools will respond to bullying in a manner tailored to the individual incident, considering the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance.

Appeal - Any party who is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal to the district's human rights officer within 10 school days of notification of the principal/designee's decision. The human rights officer will conduct a review of the appeal and, within 10 school days of receipt of the appeal, will affirm, reverse or modify the findings of the report. The human rights officer shall notify the party requesting the appeal and the principal that its decision is final and shall document that notification in the incident report.

District Employees - When it is determined that a district employee was aware prohibited conduct was taking place but failed to report it, the employee will be considered to have violated this policy. The principal shall consider employee discipline for such violations, making reference to any applicable collective bargaining agreement.

NOTICE AND DISSEMINATION OF REQUIREMENTS

The school district will give annual notice of this policy to students, parents or guardians, and district employees, and this policy shall appear in the student handbook and be posted in electronic format on the district website.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

Staff - Professional development will be offered annually to build the skills of all district employees to implement this policy and to refresh the Olweus curriculum and procedures for dealing with bullying district-wide with all staff and students.

Student Education – Students will receive instruction time during the school year using the Olweus Anti-Bullying curriculum to help students identify, prevent and reduce bullying and create a safe learning environment.

SCHOOL DISTRICT ACTION

The principal/designee shall perform the investigation.

1. Investigation of a bullying incident shall be initiated within three school days of receipt of a report and be completed within 10 school days, unless the principal/designee grants in writing an additional five-day extension due to extenuating circumstances. The principal/ designee shall document the extension in the investigation report and shall notify the parties involved. The principal/designee will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of those who report bullying incidents and is responsible for keeping and protecting access to any written records of the investigation.

2. Prior to the investigation of an incident, the principal/designee will take immediate steps, at their discretion, to protect the alleged actor(s), target(s), bystander(s) or reporter pending completion of an investigation. Once an investigation is concluded, further steps will be taken as needed to assure the continued safety of the complainant from additional incidents of bullying or retaliation.

3. The purpose of the investigation is to make a determination as to whether a reported incident constitutes a case of bullying. These determinations will be made in consideration of the totality of the facts and the circumstances surrounding the incident, such as the nature of the behavior, past incidents or continuing patterns of behavior, the relationship between the parties involved and the context in which the alleged incident occurred.

- Identifying the alleged actor(s), target(s) and bystander(s), as well as any adult who witnessed the incident or may have reliable information about it.
- Conducting an individual interview in a private setting with the alleged actor and target. The alleged actor and target should never be interviewed together or in public. Individual interviews shall also be conducted in private with student and adult bystanders. The investigation may also consist of any other methods and documents deemed pertinent by the principal/designee.
- Determining how often the conduct occurred, any past incident or continuing pattern of behavior, and whether the target's education, including but not limited to, a negative impact on academic performance, educational opportunities and participation in school activities was affected.
- If the principal/designee determines the reported incident may involve criminal activity or the basis for criminal charges, information about the incident must be conveyed to the appropriate law enforcement authorities. As part of making this determination, the principal/designee may wish to consult with either a law enforcement officer or legal counsel.
- When appropriate, preparing a report identifying his/her recommendation for individual consequences.
- Comprehensively documenting the details of the investigation.

Additional information on disciplinary actions

Remedial actions may include:

For the student harmed: protect, support and intervene on behalf of the student who is the target of the prohibited conduct.

Support may include: referral to student support staff for one-to-one support or social skills training; daily check-in and check-out with a trusted adult in the school.

For the student who violated the prohibited conduct policy: schools may use consequences that are individualized, consistent, reasonable, fair, age-appropriate and should match the severity of the student's behavior and their developmental age.

Consequences may include:

A referral to appropriate staff for teaching and reinforcing appropriate school behavior; a meeting between the administrator and the family of the student who did the harm; a coordinated behavior plan that may include behavior contracts with a plan to prevent the prohibited conduct from recurring.

Consequences may also include warning, detention, suspension, exclusion, expulsion or transfer.

When an investigation determines that bullying occurred, the principal/designee shall explain the consequences in a non-hostile manner, and shall impose any consequence in a timely manner. The student will also be placed on the bullying tracking list. The principal/designee shall keep communicating and working with all parties involved until the situation is resolved.