

BULLYING

The Board believes that bullying, including cyberbullying, is detrimental to student well-being and to student learning and achievement. It interferes with the mission of the schools to educate their students and disrupts the operations of the schools. Bullying affects not only students who are targets but also those who participate in and witness such behavior.

Bullying Prohibited

Bullying, including “cyberbullying,” is not acceptable conduct in Beals School Department and is prohibited.

Retaliation for the reporting of incidents of such behavior is also prohibited.

In adopting this policy, it is not the Board’s intent to prohibit students from expressing their ideas, including religious, political and philosophical views that may offend the sensibilities of others, or from engaging in civil debate. However, the Board does not condone and will take action in response to conduct that directly interferes with students’ rights at school under applicable laws or with the educational mission, operations, discipline or general welfare of the schools.

Definition of Bullying

“Bullying” and “cyberbullying” have the same meaning in this policy as in Maine law:

Bullying

“Bullying” includes, but is not limited to a written, oral or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof directed at a student or students that:

- A. Has, or a reasonable person would expect it to have, the effect of:
 1. Physically harming a student or damaging a student’s property; or
 2. Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical harm or damage to his/her property;
- B. Interferes with the rights of a student by:
 1. Creating an intimidating or hostile educational environment for the student; or
 2. Interfering with the student’s academic performance or ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities or privileges provided by the school; or
- C. Is based on:
 1. A student’s actual or perceived characteristics identified in 5 MRSA § 4602 or 4684-A (including race; color; ancestry; national origin; sex; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; religion; physical or mental disability) or other distinguishing personal characteristics (such as socioeconomic status; age; physical appearance; weight; or family status); or

2. A student's association with a person with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics or any other distinguishing characteristics; and that has the effect described in subparagraph A or B above.

Cyberbullying

“Cyberbullying” means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including but not limited to, a transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted by the use of any electronic device including, but not limited to, a computer, telephone, cellular telephone, text messaging device or personal digital assistant.

Application of Policy

This policy applies to bullying that:

- A. Takes place at school or on school grounds, at any school-sponsored or school-related activity or event or while students are being transported to or from school or school-sponsored activities or events; or
- B. Takes place elsewhere or through the use of technology, but only if the bullying also infringes on the rights, safety or well being of the student at school as set forth in the definition of “bullying.”

Consequences for Policy Violations

Students

Students who violate this policy may be subject to disciplinary action which may include suspension, expulsion or a series of graduated consequences including alternative discipline or other behavioral interventions.

The Board retains the right to impose disciplinary consequences for bullying and other conduct that occurs at any time or place that substantially disrupts the instructional program, operations of the schools or welfare of students.

Any student violating this policy may also be subject to civil or criminal penalties.

School Employees and Others

Administrators, professional staff and all other employees who violate this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, and in accordance with any applicable collective bargaining agreements.

Volunteers, contractors and visitors who violate this policy will be barred from school property until the Superintendent is satisfied that the person will comply with Maine's bullying law and this policy.

Any person violating this policy may also be subject to civil or criminal penalties.

Any school-affiliated organization that authorizes or engages in bullying or retaliation is subject to forfeiture of Board approval/sanctioning and/or suspension or revocation of its permission to operate on school grounds.

Staff Training

Beals School Department will provide professional development and staff training in bullying prevention and response. The Superintendent will select an evidence-based program that is a best practice training for all staff. Training will occur annually and be documented at the central office.

Delegation of Responsibility

The Superintendent will designate the school principal and/or other school personnel to be responsible for implementation/enforcement of this policy and associated procedures on the school level.

The Superintendent/designee will be responsible for developing and implementing procedures in accordance with applicable law to implement this policy.

Reporting

Students who have been bullied or who observe incidents of bullying are encouraged to report this behavior to a staff member or school administrator. Staff should report bullying to the building principal.

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

Responding to Bullying

In determining the appropriate response to students who engage in bullying behavior, school administrators should consider the ages and maturity of the students involved, the type of behaviors, the frequency and/or pattern of behaviors, the context in which the incident occurred, and other relevant circumstances. Consequences may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension, expulsion, and/or reports to law enforcement officials.

Unusual Circumstances

Under unusual and grave conditions, the superintendent can suspend a student from school if the student is summons to court for a crime in the community that would constitute a felony indictment and/or detention if perpetrated as an adult.

In such dire circumstances, the superintendent is exercising due diligence to balance the rights of that child that is summons with the responsibility to retain good order and discipline within the school.

Dissemination of Policy

This policy, any associated administrative procedures and the names of the person(s) responsible for implementing the policy/procedure at the school level will be provided, in writing to students, parents, school employees and volunteers in handbooks, and on the school unit's website and by such other means (if any) as may be determined by the Superintendent.

[NOTE: The law refers to "the school administrative unit's publicly accessible website." In practice, there will be some sections of the website (directly or through links) that are not accessible to the public at large e.g., parent portals and employee "portals."]

Legal Reference: 20-A M.R.S.A. § 1001(15), 6554

Cross Reference: AC - Nondiscrimination, Equal Opportunity
ACAA-R - Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students
ACAD - Hazing

ADF - School District Commitment to Learning Results
CHCAA - Student Handbooks
JI - Student Rights and Responsibilities
JIC - Student Code of Conduct
JICC - Student Conduct on Buses
JICIA - Weapons, Violence and School Safety

Cross Reference – Continued:

JK - Student Discipline
JKD - Suspension of Students
JKE - Expulsion of Students
KLG - Relations with Law Enforcement Authorities

Adopted: September 6, 2006

Revised: March 6, 2014