

## **Personnel-Certified/Non-Certified**

### **Rights, Responsibilities and Duties**

#### **Workplace Bullying (Congenial and Healthy Workplace)**

The purpose of this policy is to promote a healthy, positive workplace climate so that every individual is able to contribute fully to our educational community. Every person has the right to dignity at work. The rights and responsibilities described in this policy apply to all employees, parents, and all who utilize or visit District facilities.

The Board requires all of its employees to treat all other employees, as well as students, with dignity and respect. Building principals and supervisory staff need to be sensitive to signs of stress among staff. During periods of high stress, staff may be observed acting in an unprofessional manner with each other. Unprofessional behavior must be dealt with, and not ignored. Further, rudeness will not be tolerated among the staff.

#### **Consequences of Bullying in the Workplace**

The Board of Education (Board) does not condone bullying in the workplace. Workplace bullying is antithetical to maintaining a congenial and healthy workplace. The Board desires to provide a workplace that is free from violence, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior. The Board is concerned that bullying in the workplace can affect people in a number of serious ways, which include:

- High stress; post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD);
- Loss of self-confidence;
- Deterioration in the quality of work;
- Increased absenteeism;
- Financial problems due to absence;
- Lack of communication and teamwork;
- Lack of confidence in the District leading to lack of commitment to the position;
- Reduced self-esteem;
- Musculoskeletal problems;
- Phobias;
- Sleep disturbances;
- Increased depression/self-blame; and/or
- Digestive problems

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##### **Definitions**

“**Workplace bullying**” is defined as conduct that a reasonable person would find hostile, intimidating, offensive, humiliating or an abuse of authority. It may be verbal, nonverbal, public or private. It is typically behavior repeated across multiple incidents; a single incident is rarely a violation. It may originate from any employee or from any individual to another. It is also bullying to continue policy-violating conduct when the targeted individual requests that it cease.

“**Mobbing**” is a particular type of bullying behavior carried out by a group rather than by an individual. Mobbing is the bullying or social isolation of a person through collective unjustified accusations, humiliation, general harassment or emotional abuse. Although it is group behavior, specific incidents such as an insult or a practical joke may be carried out by an individual as part of mobbing behavior.

##### **Examples of Bullying in the Workplace**

Inappropriate behavior includes actions that intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a worker, which at times can occur in the presence of co-workers, students, parents, contractors or visitors to the school or school activities. The Board believes that:

- Bullies can be supervisors, subordinates, co-workers, and colleagues;
- Bullies often operate within the established rules and policies of their organization; and
- The damage that such actions cause, both to the targeted employee and to workplace morale, is significant.

The Board believes it is necessary to maintain a congenial, healthy and supportive workplace in order to avoid institutional bullying. Institutional bullying is when bullying becomes entrenched in an organization and becomes accepted as part of the workplace culture.

In order to develop and maintain a congenial, healthy and supportive workplace that contributes in a positive manner to the educational services provided to the students of the District, the Board considers the following examples of bullying as a detriment in the educational workplace.

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##### **Examples of Bullying in the Workplace (continued)**

The illustrative examples of bullying include, but are not limited to:

- Provocative or dehumanizing name calling;
- Belittling the person;
- Discounting or humiliating people at meetings;
- Deliberate exclusion from job-critical decision-making opportunities;
- Preventing an employee from meeting students' academic potential;
- Unwarranted or invalid criticism;
- Blame without factual justification;
- Being treated differently than the rest of a person's work group;
- Being sworn at;
- Exclusion or social or physical isolation;
- Rumors (or failing to stop them) and gossip about a person or school's reputation;
- Being shouted at or being humiliated;
- Being the target of practical jokes;
- Subjected to excessive monitoring; and
- Other inappropriate behavior includes actions that intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a co-worker, including occurrences in front of other co-workers, students, parents, contractors or visitors.

##### **Reporting of Workplace Bullying/Procedures**

Employees who believe they have been subjected to workplace bullying should report to the Building Principal/Superintendent of Schools in writing. The report should include details of the date, time, place and the specific conduct which occurred. The Building Principal/Superintendent or his/her designee will seek to maintain confidentiality while investigating the incident(s) but may discuss the situation with other supervisors/administrators or, if deemed necessary, with the Chairperson of the Board, via the Superintendent of Schools. The District will implement appropriate remedial measures. Disciplinary action may be taken if the severity of the workplace bullying makes that intervention appropriate. While investigating and responding to the prohibited misconduct, the Principal/Superintendent, or his/her designee, will give priority to avoiding possible retaliation or reprisals, while restoring and maintaining a congenial and healthy workplace.

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**Reporting of Workplace Bullying/Procedures (continued)**

At times, incidents of workplace bullying can be handled effectively in an informal manner. If an incident occurs that is offensive, it may be sufficient to explain clearly to the offender that the behavior is unacceptable. If the circumstances are too difficult or embarrassing for an individual, support may be sought from another colleague, a contact person, staff representative or an administrator. A complainant may decide, for whatever reason, to bypass the informal procedure and proceed to the filing of a written complaint.

For an individual to allege a policy violation, to call it bullying according to this policy's standard, the targeted individual must be able to demonstrate that due to the alleged bullying activity that he/she has experienced negative consequences which are affecting their ability to perform his/her job. It is the intent of this policy that such issues are identified early by the targeted individual, a co-worker or colleague, and the issue is resolved at the earliest possible stage.

**Related Considerations**

Bullying must not be confused with the non-abusive exercise of management rights to assign tasks, coach, and reprimand or take disciplinary actions against employees. Any administrator, supervisor or individual in a position of leadership to whom a complaint is reported (verbally or in writing) must take appropriate action according to internal procedures. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action.

Freedom from retaliation is protected under this policy. Retaliation is a separate offense from the original claim of bullying. Protected individuals include complainants, or anyone who testifies, assists, or participates in any manner in an investigation or proceeding, internal or external, pertaining to the allegation of bullying.

Misuse of the policy is a violation of the policy itself.

This policy supplements but does not replace the District's policies pertaining to discrimination and harassment.

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- (cf. 0521 – Nondiscrimination)
- (cf. 1316 – Conduct on School Property)
- (cf. 4118.11/4218.11 – Nondiscrimination)
- (cf. 4118.112/4218.112 – Sexual Harassment)
- (cf. 4118.13/4218.13 – Conflict of Interest)
- (cf. 4118.211 – Retaliation and Whistle-Blowing)
- (cf. 4118.24/4218.24 – Staff/Student Relations)
- (cf. 5131.911 – Bullying)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-221 Boards of education to prescribe rule(s), policies, and procedures.

10-238 Petition for hearing by board of education.

Policy adopted: December 19, 2016

STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Stonington, Connecticut