

SUBJECT: BULLYING: PEER ABUSE IN THE BOCES

The Board of Education is committed to providing a safe and productive learning environment within the BOCES. Bullying of a student by another student is strictly prohibited on BOCES property, in BOCES buildings, on BOCES buses, and at BOCES sponsored events and/or activities whether occurring on or off campus. The Board of Education shall require the prohibition of bullying - along with the range of possible intervention activities and/or sanctions for such misconduct - to be included in the *BOCES Code of Conduct*.

For purposes of this policy, the term "bullying" among students is defined, in general, as: "a variety of negative acts carried out repeatedly over time. It involves a real or perceived imbalance of power, with a more powerful child or group attacking those who are less powerful." Bullying can take three forms:

- a) Physical (including, but not limited to, hitting, kicking, spitting, pushing, taking personal belongings);
- b) Verbal (including, but not limited to, taunting, malicious teasing, name calling, making threats); and
- c) Psychological (including, but not limited to, spreading rumors; manipulating social relationships; or engaging in social exclusion, extortion, or intimidation).

Bullying may also occur as various forms of harassment and/or hazing of students by other students (including "pledging" and/or a student's initiation into or affiliation with a BOCES or student related organization or team).

The BOCES also prohibits "Internet bullying" (also referred to as "cyber-bullying") including the use of instant messaging, e-mail, web sites, chat rooms, and text messaging when such use interferes with the operation of the BOCES; or infringes upon the general health, safety and welfare of BOCES students or employees.

However, it is important to note that a single negative act as enumerated above may also constitute "bullying" (if not more serious misconduct) based upon the particular circumstances such as the seriousness of the act and/or the intent of the actor.

Any student who believes that he/she is being subjected to bullying behavior, as well as any other person who has knowledge of or witnesses any possible occurrence of bullying, shall report the bullying to any staff member or the building administrator. The staff member/building administrator to whom the report is made (or the staff member/building administrator who witnesses bullying behavior) shall investigate the complaint and take appropriate action to include, as necessary, referral to the next level of supervisory authority and/or other official designated by the BOCES to investigate allegations of bullying. Investigation of allegations of bullying shall follow the procedures utilized for complaints of

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harassment within the BOCES. Allegations of bullying shall be promptly investigated and will be treated as confidential and private to the extent possible within legal constraints.

The Board prohibits any retaliatory behavior directed against complainants, victims, witnesses, and/or any other individuals who participate in the investigation of allegations of bullying. Follow-up inquiries and/or appropriate monitoring of the alleged bully and victim shall be made to ensure that bullying behavior has not resumed and that all those involved in the investigation of allegations of bullying have not suffered retaliation.

Personnel at all levels are responsible for taking corrective action to prevent bullying behavior of which they have been made aware at BOCES sites or activities and/or reporting such behavior to their immediate supervisor. Further, staff training shall be provided to raise awareness of the problem of bullying within the BOCES and to facilitate staff identification of and response to such bullying behavior among students.

Prevention and intervention techniques within the BOCES to prevent against bullying behavior and to support and protect victims shall include building-level and classroom-level strategies and activities as determined by administration. Individual intervention will be provided by appropriate staff members to bullies, victims and their parents to help ensure that the bullying stops.

Rules against bullying shall be publicized BOCES-wide and shall be disseminated as appropriate to staff, students and parents. Disciplinary sanctions for violation of this policy shall be outlined in the *BOCES Code of Conduct* as enumerated above and may also be incorporated in staff and student handbooks.

Adopted: 12/14/2006