

EUT POLICY ON BULLYING

The EUT 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,” harassment and sexual harassment are not acceptable conduct in our schools and are prohibited.

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

In adopting this policy, it is not the EUT’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 EUT does not condone and will act 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.

Definitions

“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:
 - a. 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
 - b. 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.

Under Maine law:

“Sexual orientation” means a person’s actual or perceived heterosexuality, bisexuality, homosexuality, or gender identity or expression.

“Gender identity” means gender-related identity, appearance, mannerisms, or other gender-related characteristics of an individual, regardless of the individual’s assigned sex at birth.

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.

Retaliation

Retaliation means an act or gesture against a student for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. Retaliation also includes reporting that is not made in good faith on an act of bullying.

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 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 EUT 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 state policy or applicable collective bargaining agreements.

Volunteers, contractors, and visitors who violate this policy will be barred from school property until the Director 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 EUT approval/sanctioning and/or suspension or revocation of its permission to operate on school grounds.

Staff Training

The EUT will provide professional development and staff training in bullying prevention and response.

Delegation of Responsibility

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

The school principal will be responsible for implementation/enforcement of this policy and associated procedures on the school level.

A student or his/her parent/guardian who is dissatisfied with a decision of the Principal related to the taking or not taking of disciplinary action in the course of implementing this policy may appeal, in writing, to the Director within 14 calendar days of notice of the decision.

The Director's decision shall be final.

Dissemination of Policy

The Principal will be responsible for providing this policy, any associated administrative procedures in writing to students, parents, school employees and volunteers in handbooks, on the school unit's website and by such other means (if any) as may be determined by the Director.

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

Adopted: June 2022