Omaha Public Schools
Aim 2: Safe and Secure Learning Environment
Bullying Prevention and Intervention Efforts
Nebraska Revised Statute 79-267 (79-2,137)

Rationale
The Nebraska State Legislature finds and declares that:
(a) Bullying disrupts a school's ability to educate students; and
(b) Bullying threatens public safety by creating an atmosphere in which such
behavior can escalate into violence.

On or before July 1, 2009, each school district shall develop and adopt a policy concerning
bullying prevention and education for all students. The school district shall review this
policy annually.

Section 6:33 Policy on Bullying
Bullying is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct and the Elementary Student
Behavior Guidelines. The Board of Education seeks to prevent bullying and to further these
efforts, annual education shall be provided for all students on what constitutes bullying and
bullying prevention. The education on bullying may include, but is not limited to:
• The definition of bullying;
• The discipline consequences for students who engage in bullying;
• The expectations of the school district for students who witness bullying; and
• The procedures for reporting incidents of bullying.

Defining Bullying
Bullying includes any written or verbal expression, electronic abuse, physical act, or gesture or a pattern
thereof that is intended to cause distress upon one or more students (OPS Code of Conduct).

Students may bully on the basis of appearance, national origin, interests, academic
achievements, economic status, or any number of other factors. Bullying involves an
imbalance of power or strength and can seriously affect the emotional, physical, and
academic well-being of children. If behavior is willful, repeated and harmful, it is likely
considered bullying.

The behavior of bullying occurs in many different forms, for example: physical, verbal,
sexual, emotional or exclusion, and cyber-bullying.

- **Physical Bullying**: Hitting, kicking, hair pulling, pushing, or any physical
  aggression.
- **Verbal Bullying**: Teasing, name calling, put-downs, or other behavior that
  would deliberately hurt others' feelings.
- **Sexual Bullying**: Any bullying behavior, whether physical or non-physical,
  that is based on a person's sexuality or gender.
Emotional or Exclusion Bullying - Starting rumors, telling others not to be friends with someone, eye rolling, or other actions that would cause someone to be without friends or intentionally left out.

Cyber-bullying - Using electronic devices such as computers, cell phones, and pagers to bully others through methods such as posting comments, statements, or pictures on blogs or websites, text messaging, instant messaging, and email.

The Omaha Public School District recognizes bullying as a real issue that challenges the emotional, physical, and academic well-being of children. Bullying disrupts the district’s ability to educate students, thus jeopardizing educational opportunities designed to help students achieve their highest potential. Research suggests that educators have the greatest impact on bullying if it is addressed through a comprehensive approach, as outlined by the SSDS Process.

All schools receive ongoing support from Student and Community Services to ensure implementation of a comprehensive bullying prevention effort. The Omaha Public School District is committed to providing a safe, secure and positive learning environment for all students.

**Best Practices for Bullying Prevention***

1. Improve social environment of school.
2. Assess bullying behaviors.
3. Develop comprehensive bullying prevention efforts.
4. Coordinate bullying prevention efforts as a group (SSDS Leadership Team).
5. Train all staff on bullying prevention.
6. Establish and enforce school expectations/policies.
7. Increase supervision.
8. Intervene consistently and appropriately in bullying situations. Hold separate meetings with students being bullied and bullying.
9. Focus class time on bullying prevention.
10. Continue these efforts over time.

Suggested Reporting Procedures

Bullying is unacceptable and a culture of openness can counter such behavior. It is the responsibility of each member of the school community (administrators, staff members, students and parents/family members) to submit verbal, written, and/or electronic reports of bullying behavior or suspicions of bullying behavior, with the understanding that all such reports will be taken seriously.

School community members should report all incidents of bullying (verbally, in writing and/or electronically), whether they personally observe incidents or are made aware of them by some other means. Reporting by school community members should occur even if the victim does not file a formal complaint, and even if the victim does not express any overt disapproval of the bullying behavior.

Each site should consider having, verbal, written and electronic reporting systems available for staff, students, and parents/family members. Reporting systems should gather the following information:

1) Name of reporter (student, staff, parent/family member) and date of report
2) Names of all persons involved (including perpetrators, targets, and bystanders)
3) The date, location, and time of the incident
4) Summary of alleged bullying behavior (to include any website, forum, blog, e-mail, instant message or text message)
5) Names of all staff members who may have knowledge of the concern

All reports (verbal, written, or electronic) should be submitted to a designated school official who should help identify a course of action.

Annual lessons for all students should be taught on when to report bullying behavior, which staff members should receive verbal, written, and/or electronic reports, where to acquire reporting forms, and how to appropriately complete the forms.

Parents/family members should receive annual information on when to report bullying behavior, which staff members should receive verbal, written, or electronic reports, and where to acquire reporting forms. Information should also be provided on when parents/family members should follow-up with submitted reports, who they should follow-up with, and what the chain of command is for the school building.

Annual staff briefings should be conducted on when to report bullying behavior, the designated school official to receive verbal, written, or electronic reports, where to acquire reporting forms, and how to assist students and parents/family members with reporting.
Reporting Procedures for Students

1) Verbally and privately express your concerns to a parent/family member or building staff member (administrator, teacher, counselor, dean, etc.)
2) Fill out reporting forms and submit to a staff member.
3) If you feel that your report has not been taken seriously, verbally and privately, express your concerns to a parent/family member or other building staff members.
4) Continue to talk with staff members or family members until the issue is resolved.

Reporting Procedures for Parents/Family Members

1) Verbally and privately express concerns to a building staff member (administrator, teacher, counselor, dean, etc.)
2) If necessary, fill out a reporting form and submit to a building staff member.
3) Encourage your child to express concerns (verbally and privately) to a building staff member and to fill out a reporting form, if necessary.
4) Continue to observe and talk with your child about the concerns.
5) Follow-up with the building staff member who received the report.
6) Express an attitude that supports meeting the needs of all students involved.
7) If you feel that your report has not been taken seriously, express your concerns to the next building staff member in the chain of command.

Reporting Procedures for Staff Members (assisting students and parents/family members)

1) Provide students and parents/family members with a practical, safe, and private way of expressing their concern.
2) If necessary, help students and parents/family members fill out reports and submit to the designated school official.
3) Follow-up in a timely fashion with the designated school official who received the report.
4) Ensure the student and parents/family members have been updated on the concern.
5) If you feel the report has not been taken seriously, express your concerns to the next building staff member in the chain of command.

Suggested skills for assisting students and parents/family members:

a. Be a good listener by demonstrating active listening
b. Restate what the student or parent/family member is saying (So, you’re saying that . . .)
c. Ask how the student or parent/family member is feeling (How do you feel about the behavior?)
d. Ask specifics about the type of bullying behavior, location, and time
e. Ask how long it has been a pattern of behavior
f. Ask who had been involved in the behavior and identify any bystanders
g. Ask if any other reports have been made
h. Keep the report confidential
i. Log any future bullying behavior
Do not dismiss a report as tattling if the student reporting is trying to keep another student safe. Also, do not tell the person being bullied to stand up to the person bullying. Research states that the person being bullied is chosen because of perceived weakness so standing up may cause the condition to worsen.

Reporting Procedures for Staff

1) After receiving or identifying bullying behavioral concerns, make a verbal, written, or electronic report to the designated school official.
2) Follow-up with the designated school official in a timely fashion.
3) If you feel your report has not been taken seriously, express your concerns to the next building staff member in the chain of command.

Suggested Responding Procedures (Administrators and Staff)

If a building staff member knows or has reason to believe that a student is being bullied repeatedly and over time by one or more students, that staff member has the responsibility to take action as a reasonable person in a loco parentis situation.

Building staff members should respond in a timely fashion to address the behavior. The intervention should consist of identifying the inappropriate behavior, debriefing students about their role, increasing communication with students and parents/family members, applying logical consequences, and may include a report or administrative referral. Repeated or severe incidents of bullying require a mandatory office referral. Information concerning any complaints of bullying should be treated confidentially.

Responding Procedures for Staff Members:

Stop the bullying behavior immediately
Compare the bullying behavior and the relevant school expectations against the behavior (Guidelines for Success/Social Skills)
Hold private conferences with the perpetrators, targets, and bystanders engaging in bully behavior
Review and apply logical consequences for students who demonstrate bullying behavior
Increase supervision and inform students they will be watched in order to help them meet behavioral expectations (Guidelines for Success)
Contact a parent/family member
Increase the frequency of social skills/bullying prevention lessons (classroom or small group)
Initiate a separate counselor referral for the person being bullied and perpetrator
Consult other staff members about the bullying behavior
For a period of time, check in daily with the person being bullied and perpetrator
If a student demonstrates any suicidal/homicidal behavior, refer to the counselor immediately
Follow-up with administrators and counselors
Involve the person being bullied in a peer support group, orienting new students, or cooperative learning groups
Initiate a bullying report or administrative, if necessary
Responding Procedures for Administrators/Designated School Officials
(After a bullying report or an administrative referral):

- **Take care of the person being bullied**
  - Engage the person being bullied first and reassure him/her that bullying behavior will not be tolerated.
  - Direct the person being bullied to share what's happening and how he/she feels about it.
  - Ask him/her to log any future situations for the purpose of providing documentation.
  - Reassure the person being bullied that all possible steps will be taken to prevent a reoccurrence.
  - Never label the person being bullied as a “victim.”

- **Consult**
  - When a student is reported for bullying, the administrator should consult with the designated school official, as well as staff, to get a wider reading on the problem.
  - Alert other supervising adults to the alleged bullying concern.
  - Increase supervision, if necessary.

- **Investigate and Reinforce**
  - If more than one perpetrator is involved in the bullying incident, talk with each of the perpetrators separately beginning with the lead perpetrator.
  - Explain that a report has been submitted and, if appropriate, read it aloud.
  - Reinforce a commitment to a safe and secure learning environment for all students.
  - Explain there will be additional consequences if bullying continues.
  - Remember to state the future behavior that you expect the perpetrator(s) to model and express confidence in his/her ability.

In many instances, the student responding defensively to bullying is perceived as the student who initiated the conflict. Expect the perpetrator to minimize and deny his/her actions. Do not bring the parties together to apologize nor offer mediation. A power imbalance may result in an intimidating situation that may cause additional fear for the person being bullied.

- **Correct and Prevent**
  - Give immediate and logical consequences to the perpetrator for his/her behavior (i.e. utilizing the Positive Action Center/SSC, loss of recess, private dining, removing the student from the classroom).
  - Increase instruction on expectations and social skills for the perpetrator (train for correction).
- Assess the health the person being bullied and take action accordingly (i.e. refer to counselor, increase social skills instruction, identify school engagement opportunities).
- If necessary, develop a personalized success plan/SAT for both the person being bullied and perpetrator.

**Consequences for a student who commits an act of bullying should be unique to the individual incident and will vary in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student’s history of problem behaviors and performance. Consequences should be consistent with instructional discipline practices as identified in the Foundation & Leadership Booklet of the SSDS Process.**

☐ **Communicate and Collaborate**

- Inform the parents/family members of each student involved as quickly as possible.
- Include the parents/family members of each student involved and staff members in developing a personalized success plan/SAT.
- Follow-up with parents/family members.

*A call home the same day is preferable, followed by an appointment at school for the parents, if deemed necessary. Better results are obtained when parents are involved early in a bully/victim situation, before patterns are entrenched. It is recommended, however, not to bring the conflicting parties together.*

*Adapted from [http://www.wagepeacetoday.com](http://www.wagepeacetoday.com) by Dr. Michael Carpenter, 2006*