

## **Policy Code: 1710/4021/7230 Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying**

The Wake County Board of Education acknowledges the dignity and worth of all students and employees and strives to create a safe, orderly, caring, and inviting school environment to facilitate student learning and achievement. The Board prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, [transgender status](#), disability, or age and will provide equal access to designated youth groups as required by law. Any form of unlawful discrimination, harassment, or bullying in any educational or employment activities or programs is against Board policy.

### **A. Prohibited Behaviors**

#### 1. Discrimination

The Board prohibits all forms of unlawful discrimination. For purposes of this policy, discrimination means any act or failure to act that unreasonably and unfavorably differentiates treatment of others based solely on their membership in a socially distinct group or category, such as race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, religion, age, or disability.

#### 2. Harassment and Bullying

The Board prohibits all forms of unlawful harassment and bullying. For purposes of this policy, harassment or bullying behavior is any pattern of gestures or written, electronic, or verbal communications, or any physical act or any threatening communication that:

- a) places a student or school employee in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property; or
- b) creates or is certain to create a hostile environment by substantially interfering with or impairing a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits or by adversely altering the conditions of an employee's employment.

"Hostile environment" means that the victim subjectively views the conduct as harassment or bullying and that the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable person would agree that it is harassment or bullying. A hostile environment may be created through pervasive or persistent misbehavior or a single incident, if sufficiently severe.

Harassment and bullying include, but are not limited to, behavior described

above that is reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic or motivated by an individual's association with a person who has or is perceived to have a differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, socioeconomic status, academic status, [transgender status](#), gender identity, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability. Examples of behavior that may constitute bullying or harassment include, but are not limited to, verbal taunts, name-calling and put-downs, epithets, derogatory comments or slurs, lewd propositions, extortion of money or possessions, implied or stated threats, assault, impeding or blocking movement, offensive touching, and visual insults such as derogatory posters or cartoons. Legitimate age-appropriate pedagogical techniques are not considered harassment or bullying.

Harassment, including sexual or gender-based harassment, is not limited to specific situations or relationships. It may occur between fellow students or co-workers, between supervisors and subordinates, between employees and students, or between non-employees, including visitors, and employees or students. Harassment may occur between members of the opposite sex or the same sex.

### 3. Cyber-Bullying and Cyber-Harassment

The Board prohibits cyber-bullying and cyber-harassment. Cyber-bullying and cyber-harassment are any words, actions, or conduct that meet the definitions of bullying or harassing behavior described in this policy, and are conveyed via e-mail, text message, Internet message boards, interactions on social media, or other electronic media.

### 4. Sexual Harassment

The Board prohibits unlawful sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is one type of harassment.

Sexual harassment prohibited under Title IX and by this policy is conduct on the basis of sex occurring in a school system education program or activity that satisfies one or more of the following:

1. an employee of the school system conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the school system on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;
2. unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a

person equal access to the school system's education program or activities. This determination requires consideration of all the facts and circumstances, including, but not limited to, the ages and disability statuses of the harasser and the victim and the number of individuals involved and their authority;

3. sexual assault including rape, statutory rape, fondling, and

incest 4. dating violence;

5. domestic violence; or

6. stalking.

Sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking will be defined in accordance with applicable law and the definitions will be incorporated into an administrative regulation developed by the superintendent.

Conduct that satisfies this standard but that occurred outside the United States is not sexual harassment for purposes of this policy.

Sexual harassment in the employment context is prohibited. In addition to the definition above, prohibited employment sexual harassment includes unwelcome conduct which is either of a sexual nature, or is directed at a person because of the person's sex, when:

1. submission to the conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a person's employment;

2. submission to or rejection of such conduct is made the basis for decisions affecting a person's employment; or

3. the conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment may be committed by members of the same sex or by members of the opposite sex. Romantic or sexual advances toward students by employees or romantic or sexual relationships between school system employees and students are never appropriate, whether they are consensual or otherwise outside the definition of sexual harassment. Such relationships are prohibited. Employees engaging in inappropriate relationships with students will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

## 5. Gender-Based Harassment.

The Board prohibits unlawful gender-based harassment. Gender-based harassment is also a type of harassment. Gender-based harassment may include acts of verbal, nonverbal, or physical aggression, intimidation, or hostility based on sex or sex-stereotyping but not involving conduct of a sexual nature.

## 6. Retaliation

The Board prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person for reporting or intending to report violations of this policy, supporting someone for reporting or intending to report a violation of this policy, or participating in the investigation of reported violations of this policy.

### **B. Application of Policy**

This policy applies to students, employees, volunteers, and visitors. "Visitors" includes persons, agencies, vendors, contractors, and organizations doing business with or performing services for the school system.

This policy applies to behavior that takes place:

1. in any school building or on any school premises before, during or after school hours;
2. on any bus or other vehicle as part of any school activity;
3. at any bus stop;
4. during any school-sponsored activity or extracurricular activity;
5. at any time or place when the individual is subject to the authority of school personnel; and
6. at any time or place when the behavior has a direct and immediate effect on maintaining order and discipline in the schools.

This policy shall not be construed to allow school officials to punish student expression or speech based on an undifferentiated fear or apprehension of a disturbance or out of a desire to avoid the discomfort and unpleasantness that may accompany an unpopular viewpoint.

### **C. Reporting and Investigating Complaints of Discrimination, Harassment, or Bullying**

Employees are required to report any actual or suspected violations of this policy. Students, parents, volunteers, visitors, or others are also strongly encouraged to report any actual or suspected incidents of discrimination, harassment, or bullying. All reports should be made in accordance with policy 1720/4015/7225, Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying Complaint Procedure, and reported to one of the school officials identified in that policy. Reports may be made anonymously, and all reports shall be investigated in accordance with that policy.

### **D. Consequences**

Any violation of this policy is serious and shall result in prompt and appropriate action. Students who violate this policy will be disciplined in accordance with applicable policies and procedures governing student conduct and discipline. Based on the nature and severity of the offense and the circumstances surrounding the incident, the student will be subject to appropriate consequences and/or remedial actions ranging from positive behavioral interventions up to, and including, expulsion.

Employees who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to, and including, dismissal.

Volunteers and visitors who violate this policy will be directed to leave school property and/or reported to law enforcement, as appropriate, in accordance with Visitors to the Schools policy.

The actions taken in response to harassment or bullying behavior shall be reasonably calculated to end any harassment or bullying, eliminate a hostile environment if one has been created, and prevent harassment from occurring again. When considering if a response beyond the individual level is appropriate, school administrators should consider the nature and severity of the misconduct to determine whether a classroom, school-wide, or school system-wide response is necessary. Such classroom, school-wide, or school system-wide responses may include staff training, harassment and bullying prevention programs, and/or other measures deemed appropriate by the Superintendent or designee.

Nothing in this policy precludes the school system from taking disciplinary action against a student or employee where the evidence does not establish discrimination, harassment, or bullying but the conduct otherwise violates the Code of Conduct.

## **E. Training and Programs**

The Board directs the Superintendent to establish training and other programs that are designed to help eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and bullying and to foster an environment of understanding and respect for all members of the school community. The training or programs should (1) provide examples of behavior that constitutes discrimination, harassment, or bullying; (2) teach employees to identify groups that may be the target of discrimination, harassment, or bullying; and (3) train school employees to be alert to locations where such behavior may occur, including locations within school buildings, at school bus stops, on cell phones, and on the Internet. Information about this policy and the related complaint procedure must be included in the training plan.

As funds are available, the Superintendent is also authorized to provide additional training for students, employees, and volunteers who have significant contact with students regarding the Board's efforts to address discrimination, harassment, and bullying, and to create programs to address these issues.

## **F. Notice**

The Superintendent is responsible for providing effective notice to students, parents, and employees of this policy and of the procedures for reporting and investigating complaints of discrimination, harassment, and bullying established in policy 1720/4015/7225, Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying Complaint Procedure. The Superintendent or designee must ensure that students, employees, and parents or other responsible care givers are provided effective notice of this policy at the beginning of each school year. In addition, both policies must be posted on the school system website, and copies of the policies must be readily available in the principal's office, the media center at each school, and the Superintendent's office. Notice of the policies must appear in all student and employee handbooks and in any school or school system publication that sets forth the comprehensive rules, procedures, and standards of conduct for students and employees.

## **G. Coordinators**

The Superintendent shall appoint one or more individuals to coordinate the school system's efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities under federal non discrimination laws. These responsibilities include investigating complaints communicated to school officials alleging noncompliance with Title VI or Title IX of the Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Age Discrimination Act, and/or the Boy Scouts Act, or alleging actions which would be prohibited by those laws. The names, titles, and

contact information for these individuals will be posted on the district's website and otherwise made publicly available.

## **H. Records and Reporting**

The Superintendent or designee shall maintain confidential records of complaints or reports of discrimination, harassment, or bullying. The records must identify the names of all individuals accused of such offenses and the resolution of such complaints or reports. The Superintendent or designee also shall maintain records of training conducted and corrective action(s) or other steps taken by the school system to provide an environment free of discrimination, harassment, and bullying. The Superintendent or designee shall report to the State Board of Education all verified cases of discrimination, harassment, or bullying. The report must be made through the Discipline Data Collection Report or through other means required by the State Board.

## **I. Evaluation**

The Superintendent or designee shall evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to correct or prevent discrimination, harassment, and bullying and shall share these evaluations periodically with the Board.

Adopted: July 21, 2015

Revised: August 4, 2020

**Wake County Board of Education**