

Information from RASD 2022-2023 School Year



RASD BULLYING & UNLAWFUL HARASSMENT INFORMATION

February 3, 2023

Dear RASD Families and Community,

Together we can make our community and schools kinder and safer places. This information includes District policies and procedures related to bullying and unlawful harassment. Being vigilant is an on-going endeavor. Together we can prevent and reduce experiences of bullying and harassment which occur in our schools, neighborhoods, parks, homes, social media, entertainment media and community locations.

Definitions

Bullying is repeated written, verbal, or physical behavior directed toward another, with the intent to be mean or cause harm. A perceived or real imbalance of power must exist between the individuals which the behavior/interaction is occurring. There are occasions when bullying becomes discriminatory harassment. **Harassment** consists of verbal, written, graphic, or physical conduct/behavior that focuses on a person's race, national origin, color, sex, orientation, age, disability, and/or religion. Discriminatory harassment not only falls under school discipline, but it may also warrant a criminal investigation. The effects of bullying or harassment can be severe, persistent and pervasive to the point that the experience negatively impacts one's ability to learn (students) or work (employees); creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive work/school environment; and/or interferes with an individual's performance. Bullying or harassment can cause substantial interference with daily life to the extent that it limits one's ability to participate.

Prevention

Modeling respectful and kind behavior through our own interactions with one another is important. Youth watch how adults manage stress and conflict, as well as how they treat their friends, colleagues, and families. Parents/guardians are encouraged to monitor their child(ren) social media use regarding output (what they post) and input (what they receive). School staff and community members also monitor social media and alert school staff to concerns. In school, staff are strategically located in common areas during periods of transition, to observe for and prevent acts of bullying and/or harassment. As we analyze where and when bullying and harassment are occurring, the adult presence at locations of concern can be increased. The District appreciates parent/guardian and community efforts to reduce bullying and harassment in our schools and community. **Communicating** early helps to keep the lines of communication open and provides opportunities to address concerns at the onset. Kids who are bullied need to know who their trusted adults are. Children look to parents, caregivers and educators for advice on tough decisions. There are times when children will talk to trusted adults about a bullying situation that they observed. It is important to use these discussions as teachable moments and to report concerning information to the school administration.

Intervention

Bullying or harassment can be reported by anyone. Cyberbullying is a bit more challenging for school administrators to deal with because the bullying through electronics must have a direct link to the school environment. To better understanding the scope of cyberbullying parents and students are encouraged to review SB policy 237 – Electronic Devices. A Bullying Report and Incident Form (related to SB Policy 249 and 237) and a Harassment Report Form are attached. All School Board Policies related to Unlawful Harassment; Bullying/Cyberbullying; and Electronic Devices can be found at <https://www.boarddocs.com/pa/rasd/Board.nsf/Public>. Click on the upper left corner "Policy" tab, then click on active, then type keywords into search box to search for specific policies. If you are uncertain about whether a situation is bullying/harassment, please contact your child's school administrator and discuss the details with them. Bullying/harassment concerns should be reported to the building administration in person, via fax, email, scanned or mailed documents:

Ridgway Middle/High School:	Mrs. Noel Petrosky, Principal	Phone: (814)773-3164 Fax: (814)776-4247 Email: pettroskynoe1@rasd.us
	Mr. Shawn Hofmann, Asst. Principal and Athletic Dir.	Phone: (814)773-3164 Fax: (814)776-4247 Email: hofmannshawn@rasd.us
FSG Elementary School:	Mrs. Pam Yeager, Principal	Phone: (814)776-2176 Fax: (814)776-4297 Email: yeagerpam@rasd.us
The District Compliance Officer:	Mrs. Heather A. McMahon-Vargas, Superintendent	Phone: (814)773-3146 Fax: (814)776-4299 Email: mcmahonheather@rasd.us

When a school receives a complaint, steps are taken to investigate and resolve the situation:

- Documenting the reported behavior.
- Investigating in a prompt, thorough and impartial manner to determine what happened.
- Interviewing targeted students, offending students, and witnesses, and maintain written documentation of investigation **(BULLYING REPORT AND INCIDENT FORM. This form must be turned in to the superintendent within 24 hours of the investigation being concluded.)**
- For an incident to be founded as bullying, all four of the following components must be met:
 - Interactions/behavior between two or more individuals in which there is an actual or perceived imbalance of power
 - Interactions/behavior that is repeated (or as the potential to be repetitive) and includes written, verbal, electronic, or physical interactions for the specific intent to cause harm or be mean.
 - Interactions/behavior is severe, persistent, and pervasive.
 - Interactions/behavior causes substantial interference with another's daily life to the extent that it limits one's participation and/or creates a threatening environment.
- Communicate with targeted student and their parents regarding steps taken.
- Check in with targeted students to ensure feelings of safety and wellbeing.

If the four components are present through an investigation, a determination of bullying shall be made and the following steps shall be taken:

- End the bullying
- Eliminate any hostile environment
- Prevent reoccurrence
- Prevent retaliation against the targeted student(s) or complainant(s).
- Enact services and student discipline in accordance with Board Policy 249, 218 and the student handbooks
- Limit interactions between offender and victim
- Provide victim an additional opportunity to obtain a benefit that was denied (e.g., retaking a test/class).
- Provide services to a student who was denied a benefit (e.g., academic support services).
- Establish a safety plan if warranted.

Resources:

- School Board Policy 218 (Student Discipline); Policy 237 (Electronic Devices); Policy 249 (Bullying/Cyberbullying) are available at www.rasd.us
- 22-23 Student Handbooks
- www.stopbullying.gov

Together, we can make our schools and community a kinder and safer place to work, learn, and live. If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at 814-773-3146 or mcmahonheather@rasd.us.

Sincerely,

Heather A. McMahon-Vargas, RASD Superintendent