

Bullying Awareness

In the Colquitt County School System, we take bullying behaviors very seriously. Parents, did you know that **bullying is against Georgia State Law**? Take a closer look at the bullying law – Code of Conduct Rule 5A - of this agenda book. Isolated or repeated mutual conflict between students is not generally considered as bullying. Bullying happens when one child exhibits power (i.e. social status, physical strength, popularity) over another child and does so with intent to harm repeatedly either physically or emotionally. Bullying can be a physical act such as hitting or kicking, or it can be emotionally hurtful behavior such as excluding a child on purpose or starting rumors. To classify any behavior as bullying, all three conditions must be in place—power over another student, purposeful intent to harm, and repeated behavior. At the discretion of the principal, consequences for a student who is bullying may range from a verbal reprimand to out of school suspension or even referral to a Board of Education disciplinary hearing.

In an effort to address bullying, the Colquitt County School System staff members would like to work together with all students and parents. We strive to provide a well-supervised and safe learning environment for all of our students, including preventing bullying and enforcing the rules if it does occur. By teaming together, we can create more effective communication between home and school to increase the well-being of our students. No one deserves to be bullied, and we will work together to prevent or stop bullying behavior.

What Can Parents Do?

There are several things parents can do to help their children deal with being bullied. To help your child:

- Listen respectfully.
- Help your child understand the difference between reporting and tattling. Reporting is when a student informs an adult to get help for someone who is being hurt or who is sick or when property is being damaged. Tattling is when a student tells an adult in order to get another student in trouble.
- Avoid using statements such as, “You just need to toughen up!” or “That’s part of growing up. Learn to deal with it.”
- Notice if your child is telling you about problems with the same student or similar incidences over and over again.
- If you think your child is being bullied, contact your child’s teacher.

A Pledge for Parents

I pledge to work together with my child’s school to address bullying. By signing below, I agree to take the following steps:

- Model respectful behaviors for my child
- Avoid using words or actions that hurt others
- Talk with my child regularly about how students treat others at school
- Set an example by valuing differences and promoting sensitivity to others
- Discuss with school staff members any concerns about bullying behavior

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

A Pledge for Students

I pledge to work with others at my school to put an end to bullying. By signing below, I agree to take the following steps:

- Treat others respectfully
- Try to include others who are left out
- Refuse to bully others
- Refuse to watch, laugh or join in if someone is being bullied
- Tell an adult

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

BULLYING IS NOT ALLOWED!

Board Policy JC DAG Summary:

The Colquitt County Board of Education believes that all students can learn better in a safe school environment. Behavior that infringes on the safety of students will not be tolerated. Bullying, as the term is defined in Georgia law, of a student by another student is strictly prohibited. Such prohibition shall be included in the Student Code of Conduct for all schools within the school system.

Bullying is defined as follows: An act that is:

1. Any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person, when accompanied by an apparent present ability to do so;
2. Any intentional display of force such as would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm; or
3. Any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, which a reasonable person would perceive as being intended to threaten, harass, or intimidate, that:
 - a. Causes another person substantial physical harm within the meaning of Code Section 16-5-23.1 or visible bodily harm as such term is defined in Code Section 16-5-23.1;
 - b. Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education;
 - c. Is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or
 - d. Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

The term applies to acts which occur on school property, on school vehicles, at designated school bus stops, or at school related functions or activities or by use of data or software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, computer network, or other electronic technology of a local school system. The term also applies to acts of cyberbullying which occur through the use of electronic communication, whether or not electronic act originated on school property or with school equipment, if the electronic communication (1) is directed specifically at students or school personnel, (2) is maliciously intended for the purpose of threatening the safety of those specified or substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school, and (3) creates a reasonable fear of harm to the students' or school personnel's person or property or has a high likelihood of succeeding in that purpose. Electronic communication includes, but is not limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writings, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system.

Examples of prohibited behaviors include but are not limited to:

- Verbal assaults such as unwanted teasing or name-calling;
- Threats, taunts and intimidation through words and/or gestures;
- Direct physical contact such as hitting or shoving;
- Physical violence and/or attacks;
- Destruction of school or personal property;
- Any form of electronic bullying or cyber-bullying using school equipment, school networks, or e-mail systems or committed at school;
- Theft of money and/or personal possessions for the purpose of bullying, harassing, or intimidating;
- Harassment or intimidation motivated by any actual or perceived characteristic including race, color, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ancestry, national origin, physical attributes, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability or disability, or by any other distinguishing characteristic;
- Public humiliation;
- Social isolation;
- Extortion or manipulation, including incitement and/or coercion;
- Rumors or spreading of falsehoods;
- Stalking;

- Cyber-stalking or engaging in conduct to communicate, or to cause to be communicated, words, images, or language by or through the use of electronic mail or electronic communication, directed at or about a specific person, causing substantial emotional distress to the victim;
- Cyber-bullying or the willful, hostile and repeated harassment and intimidation of a person through the use of digital technologies, including, but not limited to, email, blogs, social networking websites (*e.g.*, Facebook, etc.), chat rooms, texts, and instant messaging;
- The use of cameras or camera phones to take embarrassing photographs of students or school employees and distributing them to others or posting them online;
- Sending abusive or threatening text messages or instant messages; and
- Using websites to circulate gossip and rumors to other students.

Physical Violence --In accordance with Georgia Law, physical violence is defined as:

1. Intentionally making physical contact of an insulting or provoking nature with the person of another; or
2. Intentionally making physical contact which causes physical harm to another unless such physical contacts or physical harms were in defense of him or her, as provided in. Code Section 16-3-21.

Students who witness bullying or who are victims of bullying behaviors should make a report to a teacher or school administrator so that an appropriate investigation can take place. At the option of the person reporting the incident, the report may be made either by name or anonymously and either verbally or in writing. Reports of bullying also may be made by using the District's complaint procedures or by calling the Georgia Department of Education's School Safety Hotline at 1-877 SAY-STOP (1-877-729-7867). Any employee to whom bullying is reported must promptly document the report and forward it to the principal or designee. Any employee who witnesses an incident of bullying or who otherwise learns that a student is being bullied must promptly submit a written report to the principal or designee. The principal or designee shall ensure that proper documentation is maintained throughout the investigation and resolution of the matter. If the reporting student or the parent or guardian of the student feels that the school is not taking appropriate steps to investigate or address the problem even after consulting the school principal, the student or the parent or guardian should contact the Superintendent or his or her designee. At an appropriate time during or after an investigation of the bullying report, the parent or guardian of both the accused and the victim must be notified. If, after an investigation, a student is found to be in violation of the Code of Conduct bullying policy, the student shall be disciplined by appropriate measures up to, and including, suspension and expulsion. Students in grades six through twelve found to have committed the offense of bullying for the third time in a school year shall at a minimum be assigned to an alternative school through appropriate due process by the disciplinary hearing officer. Retaliation following a report of bullying is strictly prohibited and may result in strong disciplinary action.