



Anti-Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying Policy

Bullying

PLA has determined that a safe and civil environment in school is necessary for scholars to learn and to achieve high academic standards. To protect the rights of all scholars and groups, PLA prohibits acts of bullying, harassment, and other forms of aggression and violence. Bullying or harassment, like other forms of aggressive and violent behaviors, interferes with both a school's ability to educate its scholars and a scholar's ability to learn.

School administrators, faculty, staff and volunteers shouldn't tolerate bullying and harassment and must demonstrate behavior that is respectful and civil, even when disciplining, in order to provide positive examples for scholar behavior.

PLA defines bullying as aggressive behaviors that involve unwanted negative actions that are repeated over time and involve an imbalance of power. Specifically, it is any gesture or written, verbal, graphic, or physical act (including electronically transmitted acts – i.e., cyberbullying, through the use of internet, cell phone, computer, or wireless handheld device, currently in use or later developed) and used by scholars that is reasonably perceived as being dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress and may be motivated either by bias or prejudice based upon any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression; or a mental, physical, or sensory disability or impairment; or by any other distinguishing characteristic, or is based upon association with another person who has or is perceived to have any distinguishing characteristic.

Bullying and harassment also include forms of retaliation against individuals who report or cooperate in an investigation under this policy. Such behaviors are considered to be bullying or harassment whether they take place on or off school property, at any school-sponsored function, or in a school vehicle or at any time or place where a child's imminent safety or overall well-being may be at issue.

Bullying or harassment, whether on-campus or off-campus, that results in a potentially material or substantial disruption of the school learning environment for one or more scholars and/or the day-to-day operations of any school or school program are covered by the Bullying policy.

Discipline for Bullying

The PLA School Leader shall utilize disciplinary procedures that ensure both the appropriate consequences and remedial responses for scholars or staff who commit one or more acts of bullying, and are consistent with Scholar and staff disciplinary policies. Appropriate scholar consequences and remedial actions are those that are graded according to the severity of the offenses and consider the developmental ages of the scholars, offenders and scholars' histories of inappropriate behaviors, per the scholar discipline policy, relationship between the parties involved, and context in which the alleged incident occurred.



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- **Consequences** and appropriate remedial actions for a scholar or staff member who engages in one or more acts of bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, in the case of a scholar, or suspension or termination in the case of an employee, as set forth in the code of scholar conduct or employee handbook. School employees will also be held accountable for bullying or harassing behavior directed toward school employees, volunteers, parents, or scholars.
- **Remedial measures** shall be designed to correct the problem behavior, prevent another occurrence of the behavior, and protect the victim of the act. Effective discipline should employ a school-wide approach to address bullying offenses and the associated consequences.

Investigations

- **Investigator** - The School Leader shall be responsible for investigating or designating a member of his/her staff to receive all bullying complaints.
- **Complaints** - All PLA employees, volunteers and contracted service providers who have contact with scholars are required to verbally report alleged violations to the school's Principal (or Principal's designee) on the same day that an incident was witnessed or reliable information regarding the occurrence of an incident was received. A written report of the incident shall also be submitted within one (1) school day of submitting the verbal report. Scholars and Parents/Guardians are also encouraged to submit a written report of alleged violations to the Principal (or Principal's designee) on the same day that an incident was witnessed or reliable information regarding the occurrence of an incident was received. Such a report may be made anonymously. Please note that formal action for violations may not be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.
- **Time Frame** - The Principal (or Principal's designee) shall conduct a prompt, thorough, and complete investigation of each alleged incident. The investigation is to be completed within five (5) school days after a report or complaint is made. The Principal shall submit a written report to the President of the PLA Network Board within ten (10) school days of the completion of the investigation.
- **Findings** - The Parents/Guardians of the scholar involved shall receive written notice from the school on the outcome of the investigation. The Principal shall provide the Parents/Guardians of the scholar who are parties to the investigation with information about the investigation, in accordance with Federal and State law and regulation. The information to be provided to Parents/Guardians includes the nature of the investigation, whether the corporation found evidence of bullying, and whether consequences were imposed or services provided to address the bullying incident if the evidence of bullying was substantiated. This information is to be provided in compliance with current privacy laws and regulations.



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Bullying Data

All reports or instances of bullying and/or harassment must be recorded by the school for annual data review. The data collected should include the frequency of verbal bullying, physical bullying, social/relational bullying and electronic or written communication bullying.

Retaliation

PLA prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying or harassment or cooperates in an investigation. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation shall be determined by the administrator after consideration of the nature, severity, and circumstances of the act.

False Reporting

PLA prohibits any person from falsely accusing another as a means of bullying or harassment. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person found to have falsely accused another as a means of bullying or harassment may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a school employee found to have falsely accused another as a means of bullying or harassment shall be in accordance with Network policies.

Training

PLA shall provide annual training on this policy and bullying prevention and intervention instruction to all school employees, volunteers and contracted service providers who have direct and on-going contact with scholars.

PLA shall disseminate the anti-bullying policy and bullying prevention instruction to all scholars in grades K-12 each school year. It is expected that anti-bullying information will be part of a more comprehensive bully prevention effort communicated to the scholars throughout the school year, and that the age appropriate, research-based instruction for all scholars in grades K-12 be delivered by a school safety specialist, school counselor or other person with training and expertise in the area of bullying prevention and intervention. **A copy of the School Safety Policy can be found in the Scholar/Parent Handbook.**