

SABINAL ISD ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Purpose

Sabinal ISD recognizes that a safe school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve and that bullying causes physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students and interferes with their ability to learn and participate in school activities. Bullying has been linked to other forms of antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, shoplifting, skipping and dropping out of school, fighting, using drugs and alcohol, sexual harassment, and violence. It is the goal of Sabinal ISD to create a learning environment in all its school communities where all students feel safe and supported, are protected from bullying, and are able to succeed academically and develop socially and emotionally into responsible, caring individuals.

Sabinal ISD asks that every student, with the support of his/her parent(s), or guardian(s) and the employees at our schools, commit to the following principles, which will apply to everyone on school property and at school-related activities:

- I will not bully others.
- I will try to help anyone I suspect is being bullied.
- I will work to include students who are left out.
- If someone is being bullied, I will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

This Policy is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents/guardians. Sabinal ISD will reevaluate this policy every two (2) years based on an assessment of its outcomes and effectiveness, including, but not limited to, factors such as the frequency of victimization; student, staff and family observations of safety at school; identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs; the types of bullying utilized; and bystander intervention or participation. The information developed will be made available on the District's website.

Bullying and harassment are prohibited: (1) during any school-sponsored or school-sanctioned program or activity; (2) in school, on school property, on school buses or other provided transportation; (3) through the transmission of information from a computer or computer network, or other electronic school equipment;(4) when communicated through any electronic technology or personal electronic device while on school property, on school buses or other school transportation, and at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities; (5) when it is conveyed that a threat will be carried out in a school setting, including threats made outside school hours with intent to carry them out during any school-related or sponsored program or activity;.

“Bullying”:

1. Means a single significant act or a pattern of acts by one or more students directed at another student that exploits an imbalance of power and involves engaging in written or verbal expression, expression through electronic means, or physical conduct that satisfies the applicability requirements below and that:

- a. Has the effect or will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or of damage to the student's property;
- b. Is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive enough that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student;
- c. Materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of a classroom or school; or
- d. Infringes on the rights of the victim at school; and Includes cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying:

"Cyberbullying" means bullying that is done through the use of any electronic communication device, including through the use of a cellular or other type of telephone, a computer, a camera, electronic mail, instant messaging, text messaging, a social media application, an Internet website, or any other Internet-based communication tool.

Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation, one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

"Cyberbullying" means using information and communication technologies to bully. This definition includes cyberbullying by means of technology that is not owned, leased, or used by the school district. When an administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred, they are to let their supervisor know. This Policy does not require a district or school staff to monitor any nonschool-related activity, function, or program.

"Retaliation" means any form of intimidation, reprisal including but not limited to the submission of knowingly false bullying allegations, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying. Retaliation is prohibited and will result in the imposition of appropriate interventions/consequences according to this Policy and the SCC.

"Peer Conflict" means disagreements and oppositional interactions that are situational, immediate and developmentally appropriate. Conflicts arise when two or more students with relatively similar observed or perceived power have differences in opinion or perspectives. When school employees are aware of peer conflict, they are expected to guide students in developing new skills in social competency, learning personal boundaries and peaceably resolving conflict, and to model appropriate social interactions.

"Prejudice or bias" means motivation for bullying or harassment based in part or in whole by actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin or immigration status, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, unfavorable discharge from military service, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic.

“Restorative Practices” means a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline that are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community, contribute to maintaining school safety, protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, and reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students’ behavioral health needs. Restorative practices are ways of pro-actively developing relationships and community, as well as repairing community when harm is done. After conflict or harm, Restorative Practices provide a way of thinking about, talking about, and responding to issues and problems by involving all participants to discuss their feelings and opinions, identify what happened, describe how it affected everyone, and find solutions to make things better.

Preventing Bullying:

All campus principals and staff shall work to develop safe supportive school environments that prevent bullying through:

- Developing supportive school climate strategies, including clear expectations and share agreements to guide interactions between students, and between staff and students.
- Teaching all students social and emotional skills and establish classroom and school-wide practices that promote relationship-building, including teaching all school stakeholders to speak out when they see or hear bullying, degrading language, and bias or prejudice.
- Establish predictable responses and effective disciplinary practices that address root cause, teach skills, build empathy, and repair harm

Intervening to Address Bullying:

A. Responsibilities of Sabinal ISD Employees , lunchroom staff and bus drivers, who witness incidents of bullying or school violence or who possess reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a person is a target of bullying, must: (1) intervene immediately in a manner that is appropriate to the context and ensures the safety of all people involved; (2) report the incident of bullying or retaliation to the Principal/Designee as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours on the SISD Bullying Complaint Form (Attachment A); and (3) cooperate fully in any investigation of the incident and in implementing any safety plan established by the Principal/Designee.

B. Responsibilities of Students, Parents and Guardians: No student who witnesses bullying may stand by or participate in the bullying, but must notify an adult at school and an adult at home as quickly as practicable. Any parent or guardian who witnesses or is notified of bullying has an obligation to advise the Principal/Designee as quickly as practicable. Reports can be made to any Sabinal ISD employee in person, through the “Bully Drop Box” located in the foyer of the schools, or by completing Attachment A and submitting it to the Principal/Designee. Anonymous reports will be accepted by the Principal/Designee. No disciplinary action will be taken on the sole basis of an anonymous report.

C. Steps for Investigating Bullying Reports

(1) Ensure safety. The Principal or his/her designee will provide immediate support to any targeted student(s) to ensure safety. Alleged behaviors targeted at sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression should be reported immediately. (2) Notify parents/guardians of all involved students. Within one school day of receipt of a bullying report, the Principal/Designee shall report to the parent/legal guardian of all involved students, via telephone, personal conference and/or in writing, the occurrence of any alleged incident of bullying, and shall document these notifications in the District student information system. a. Notifications should be made privately to students directly involved and their parent/legal guardians. b. Additionally, when incidents have a larger impact on the school community, the Principal/Designee shall provide clear communication to students, staff and parents to re-enforce school-wide expectations and a climate of respect and inclusion. (3) Document all allegations of bullying. Within two school days of receiving a report of bullying, the Principal/Designee will document the allegation in the District student information system as a general incident report and document all notifications made. (4) Conduct an investigation. The Principal and/or a designee, who is knowledgeable about bullying prevention and intervention, shall perform the investigation. Investigation of reported bullying shall be initiated within 5 school days of receipt of a report, documented within the incident report in the District student information system, and completed within 10 school days, unless the Principal grants in writing an additional 5-day extension due to extenuating circumstances. The Principal/Designee shall document the extension in the investigation report and shall notify the parties involved.

The investigation shall include: a. Identifying all involved parties, including the student(s) alleged to have engaged in the bullying behaviors, alleged target(s) and bystander(s), as well as any adult who witnessed the incident or may have reliable information about it. b. Conducting an individual interview in a private setting with all involved parties. The alleged target should never be interviewed in public or with the student(s) alleged to have engaged in bullying. c. Determining how often the conduct occurred, any past incident or continuing pattern of behavior, and the District student information system of the behaviors on the targeted student's education. d. Assessing the individual and school-wide effects of the incident relating to safety.

(5) Make a determination whether allegations of bullying are substantiated or not and document determination. The Principal/Designee shall consider whether the four elements of the bullying definition are met, or if all four elements of bullying are not present, whether the behavior qualifies as another inappropriate behavior listed in the SCC. When the investigation is complete, the Principal/Designee shall ensure the investigation and findings (whether the report of bullying is substantiated or not substantiated) are documented in the District student information system. If the investigation determines a student engaged in bullying behaviors and/or other inappropriate behaviors listed in the SCC, the Principal/Designee shall prepare a Misconduct Report.

(6) Notify all involved parties of the outcome of the investigation that pertains to their individual child. Within one day of making a determination, the Principal/Designee shall notify, in writing, the parents/legal guardians of all students involved of the outcome of the investigation. Parents/legal guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation may request a personal conference with the Principal/Designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying, and any resources available in or outside the school to help the students address the underlying reasons for the bullying.

When communicating incidents of bullying to the targeted student's parent/guardian, the Principal/Designee should consider whether the student may want to keep certain information confidential. For example, if a student is bullied after coming out as gay, the Principal/Designee shall not disclose the student's sexual orientation to the parent/guardian without the student's permission, unless there is a legitimate, school-related reason for doing so.

If the investigation determines a student engaged in bullying behaviors, the Principal/Designee shall provide the Misconduct Report to the parent/legal guardians of the student who engaged in the behaviors. The Principal/Designee may advise the parent/legal guardian of other involved students that the Student Code of Conduct was followed. S/he may not advise them of specific consequences imposed, as that would violate the confidentiality of school-record information required by law.

D. Determining an Appropriate Response:

The goal of the response is to ensure the targeted student feels safe and welcome, and the student engaging in bullying behaviors understands the harm s/he caused and changes his/her behavior.

(1) Identify school risk factors and ensure a universal strategy for school climate improvement and social and emotional development. Assess and address any issues in supervision, expectations, relationship-building, and emotional learning.

(2) Support the targeted student. Assign school staff to create and implement a plan that will restore a sense of safety for the targeted student and other students who have been impacted. Determine any other interventions that may be appropriate.

If the targeted student has a disability, the school shall convene the ARD Committee to determine whether additional or different special education or related services are needed to address the student's individual needs and revise the IEP accordingly. For example, if the student's disability affects social skill development or makes the student vulnerable to bullying, the Principal/Designee shall ask the committee to consider whether the IEP should include provisions to reduce vulnerability to bullying.

(3) Determine interventions and/or consequences that address the root cause of the students' bullying behaviors. Consider the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance. Follow the Student Code of Conduct and the Guidelines for Effective Discipline, and identify opportunities to teach, build empathy, and repair harm. While suspensions may be necessary in some cases to ensure the safety of the targeted student, keep in mind that suspending or expelling students who bully does not reduce bullying behavior.

If the student who engaged in bullying behavior is a student with a disability, the school shall convene through a Manifestation Determination to determine if additional supports and services are needed to address the inappropriate behavior and develop the student's social and emotional skills. The team may also consider examining the environment in which the bullying occurred to determine if changes to the environment are warranted. For example, the ARD committee should consider a behavior intervention plan for the student or review a current behavior intervention plan and revise if necessary. The Principal/Designee shall comply with the Procedural Safeguards for Discipline of Students with

Disabilities/Impairments when considering interventions and consequences for students with disabilities.

(4) For incidents that impact the larger school community, provide opportunities in safe, structured environments for affected students, staff, and/or parents to speak about the incident, its impact, and what is needed to repair the harm.

Training and Professional Development

Staff Professional development will be offered to build the skills of all Sabinal ISD employees to implement this Policy. The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to: (1) Developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent incidents of bullying and to intervene immediately and effectively to stop them; (2) Information about the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among a perpetrator, target, and witness to the bullying; (3) Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk, and any specific interventions that may be particularly effective for addressing bias-based bullying; and (4) Information about Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

Sabinal ISD Form for Reporting Bullying and Retaliation

NOTE: The reporter may remain anonymous, but no discipline will be imposed based solely upon an anonymous report.

Please submit this report to the principal or any school staff member.

Victim or Target Information

School: _____

Name(s) and grade(s) of Victim/Target:

Reporting Information (*Optional for students/parents/guardians)

Name & Title of Person Reporting: _____

Relationship to Victim/Target: _____

Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

Incident Information

Name(s) of student(s) accused of engaging in bullying behaviors OR description (if name(s) unknown):

Location of incident: _____

Date and time of incident: _____

Approximate dates, times, and frequency of prior incident(s): _____

Describe what happened and who was present in as much detail as possible (*Required Information):

Date of submission: _____