

**HOPEDALE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
POLICIES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

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BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

- A. It is the policy of the Hopedale School District to take proactive, reasonable measures designed to provide a learning and working atmosphere for students, employees and other members of the school community free from sexual harassment, bullying, hazing, and intimidation. These terms are referenced herein as “harassment,” which is more particularly defined below. The District in the strongest possible terms condemns harassment, whether based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, or any other reason.
- B. It is a violation of policy for any administrator, teacher or other employee, or any student or other member of the school community, to engage in or condone harassment in school, on school grounds or at or in a school-related function, activity, communication or contact, or to fail to report or otherwise take reasonable corrective measures when they become aware of an incident of harassment.
- C. This policy is not designed or intended to, nor shall it limit, the school’s authority to take disciplinary action or to take remedial action when such harassment occurs out of school, but has a sufficient nexus to school under applicable law, or is disruptive to an employee’s or student’s work or participation in school-related activities.

Reports of harassment, including but not limited to cyber-bullying by electronic or other means, occurring in or out of school will be reviewed, and, when a sufficient nexus to school or school-related work exists, will result in discipline.

- D. It is the responsibility of every employee, student and parent to recognize acts of harassment and take reasonable action to see that the applicable policies and procedures of this school district are implemented. All members of the school community are and must act as partners in such efforts if we are to have any reasonable chance of success in preventing or minimizing activity of this type, which is harmful to both the victim and the perpetrator. The children attending our schools are in critical, formative stages of their lives. To the extent that we, working together, are able to show them a better way, they will reap immeasurable, lifelong benefits.
- E. Any employee or student who believes that he or she has been subjected to harassment has the right to file a complaint and to receive reasonably prompt and appropriate handling of the complaint. While proper enforcement of this policy foreseeably may

require disclosure of any or all information received, all reasonable efforts will be made to maintain confidentiality to the extent consistent with such enforcement.

- F. The Building Principal/Director of Pupil Personnel Services/SPED shall be responsible for assisting employees and students seeking guidance or support in addressing matters relating to any form of harassment. Specific staff training will be conducted annually, and the administration will target all grade levels and specific courses for inclusion of student safety training.

II. Prohibition and Definitions

Harassment, including bullying, may take a variety of forms. It is utterly unacceptable in a school or work environment. As a result, neither any student, nor employee nor other member of the school community shall be subjected to harassment, intimidation, bullying, taunting, or cyber-bullying in any public educational institute.

- A. “Harassment”, including “Bullying”, the latter including but not limited to “cyber-bullying”, as used in this policy means an unwelcome written, electronic, verbal or physical communication, act or gesture which: (1) reasonably causes a student or employee to feel coerced, intimidated, harassed or threatened and (2) under the circumstances foreseeably may cause: (a) a reasonable person to suffer physical or emotional harm, or (b) damage to a student’s or employee’s property, or (c) a disruptive or hostile school environment. The behavior must interfere with an employee’s ability to perform his or her duties or with a student’s academic performance or ability to learn, or interfere with a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from services, activities, or privileges:
 - 1. that are being offered by or through the school district; or
 - 2. during any district-related educational program or activity; or
 - 3. while in school, on or using school district property or equipment, in a school vehicle, on a school bus, at school-designated bus stops, at school-sponsored activities, at school-sanctioned events; or
 - 4. through the use of data, telephone or computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, or computer network or any public education institute related to or provided or facilitated by the district that will disrupt the school/learning environment; or
 - 5. in circumstances otherwise having a sufficient nexus with the school district.
- B. “Electronic communication” as used in this policy means any communication through an electronic device, including but not limited to a telephone, cellular phone, computer or pager.

III. Retaliation:

In the event of retaliation in any form against any person who has made or filed, or provided any information as to, a complaint relating to harassment, any employee or student found to have engaged in same shall be subject to discipline in accordance with applicable law. In the case of an employee, up to and including dismissal from employment, and in the case of a student up to and including expulsion. If warranted a referral to law enforcement shall also be made.

IV. Confidentiality:

Reports of harassment should be kept completely confidential to the extent consistent with necessary investigation procedures, with the goal of protecting the victim and stopping the behavior.

The Superintendent will develop administrative guidelines and procedures for the implementation of this policy, including annual staff training.

Source: MASC
Date Adopted: June 1, 2010; revised August 21, 2012
Legal Reference: BESE Regulations 603 CMR 26:00
Forms: Guidelines
Posted: Website; Principals' Office, P.P.S. Office, School Libraries

PROTOCOL FOR INVESTIGATION OF STAFF HARASSMENT OR NEGLIGENCE COMPLAINT

Such complaints will be directed in writing to the Director of Special Education/Pupil Personnel Services Director, who is the district's Title VI and Title IX Coordinator. It is this Director's responsibility to conduct an investigation. Such investigation will follow the steps outlines below:

1. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the Director may advise the Superintendent to put the employee(s) named in the complaint on paid administrative leave, without prejudice.
2. The Director will interview all affected parties within (10) business days, upon receipt of the complaint, for fact finding.
3. In scheduling these interviews, the Director will inform the staff member(s) named in the complaint of his/her right to invite a union representative to participate, and the right to counsel if the discussion could conceivably lead to a suspension, and will ask the staff member(s) to indicate the decision to include or not to include this representative in writing.
4. With the documented "YES" response regarding union representation, the Director will continue to keep the union representative in the loop unless directed by the union that their involvement and representation has ceased.
5. Upon the completion of interviews, the Director will summarize findings and present a proposed resolution to the Superintendent for his/her endorsement, within five (5) business days.
6. The Director will present this resolution separately to both person(s) who have filed the complaint and the person(s) under investigation. These meetings will be completed within ten (10) business days following the meeting with the Superintendent, unless there are mitigating circumstances that require a delay. Such a delay must be approved in writing by the Superintendent, and communicated in writing to the affected parties.
7. A copy of the resolution will be filed in the personnel folder of the employee(s) named in the complaint.
8. The resolution will be implemented immediately upon completion of the process.
9. In the case of a dismissal, the Director will notify DESE Certification Office with information that an employee has been dismissed.