



Procedure for Investigating, Reporting and Preventing Bullying

This Procedure implements Board Policy 5601, Bullying, and the requirements of state and federal law. FWCS prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation and bullying of or by students. The School Board has determined that students require a safe and civil school environment to learn and bullying disrupts the District's ability to educate all students to high standards. Students and staff shall treat others with civility and respect.

Definition of Bullying

Indiana law defines bullying as overt, unwanted, **repeated** acts or gestures, including verbal or written communications or images transmitted in any manner (including digitally or electronically), physical acts committed, aggression, or any other behaviors, that are committed by a student or group of students against another student with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate, or harm the targeted student and create for the targeted student an objectively hostile school environment that:

- (1) places the targeted student in reasonable fear of harm to the targeted student's person or property;
 - (2) has a substantially detrimental effect on the targeted student's physical or mental health;
 - (3) has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student's academic performance; or
 - (4) has the effect of substantially interfering with the targeted student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, and privileges provided by the school.
- If the incident is brought to a principal's attention as an allegation of bullying, or if the principal thinks the incident might be bullying, he/she should follow this procedure and investigate the incident

Categories of bullying:

1. Physical bullying – hurting a person's body or possessions, including hitting, kicking, punching, spitting, tripping, pushing, taking or breaking someone's things and making mean or rude hand gestures
2. Verbal bullying – saying mean things, including teasing, name-calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting or threatening to cause harm
3. Social/relational bullying – hurting someone's reputation or relationships, such as telling other children not to be friends with someone, leaving someone out on purpose, spreading rumors about someone or embarrassing someone in public
4. Electronic/written communication – cyber-bullying, collective or group note writing, any bullying undertaken through the use of electronic devices (computer, cell phones, etc.)

FWCS Procedure:

1. Reporting. All FWCS personnel who observe or become aware of an alleged incident of bullying must report the incident to their building principal or his/her designee. FWCS employees must report the incident the same school day that the report was received.
 - a. Bullying may be reported online via Let's Talk. Reports made online will be forwarded directly to building principals based on the school the students attend and/or the school where the bullying occurred.
 - b. Bullying may be reported anonymously. Care should be taken to keep the identity of the child who was bullied confidential if that is his/her request, where possible. Sometimes FWCS may not be able to guarantee anonymity.
2. Considerations in determining if the behavior meets the definition of bullying.
 - a. The history between the individuals – e.g. past conflicts, dating relationships
 - b. Power differential – imbalance of power, not limited to physical strength
 - c. Repetition
 - d. Gang membership – see also the FWCS Criminal Organizations Policy and Procedure
3. Investigation.
 - a. All reports of bullying must be investigated by the principal and/or his/her designee within three (3) school days of receipt of the initial report.
 - b. The principal and/or his/her designee shall document all of the actions taken to investigate the referral or report of possible bullying.
 - c. The principal and his/her designee must collect statements from the child who was bullied, the child who bullied, and any student or adult witnesses. Principals or their designees should obtain written statements from witnesses where possible. If students are unable to write statements, principals/designees should document the statements without editing or drawing conclusions.

**FWCS Procedure for Investigating,
Reporting and Preventing Bullying
*Continued***

- d. Reports of bullying shall be investigated whether the alleged incident occurs on campus or not. Discipline may only be appropriate if there is a substantial disruption at school. Contact General Counsel with any questions.
- 4. Communication.
 - a. Students' parents/legal guardians should be kept informed at every step of the process. This includes the parents of both the alleged child who bullied and was bullied.
 - i. Principals or their designees shall contact parents/legal guardians of the child who was bullied the same day that they receive a report of bullying, to inform them of the investigation that they intend to make.
 - ii. Whether or not the report of bullying is substantiated, the investigation should be discussed with parents/legal guardians of both the child who was bullied and the child who bullied within three (3) days of completion of the investigation.
 - b. Never discuss education records containing personally identifiable information of students with parents other than their own. This includes disciplinary consequences imposed following your investigation.
 - i. These responses should be carefully crafted to avoid revealing protected private information – communicate that we follow all state and federal privacy law.
 - ii. FWCS does not allow parents to view surveillance video.
 - c. The emphasis of all conversations with parents/legal guardians should be that the safety of their child is of utmost concern.
 - d. Counselors, administrators, teachers, SROs and other FWCS personnel shall be made aware of the incident as appropriate.
 - e. The reporting staff member should be notified of the result of the investigation once it is closed if appropriate.
 - f. For issues of systemic bullying, notify FACE.
- 5. Substantiated claims.
 - a. If the investigation is substantiated, appropriate discipline shall be administered, per the FWCS Code of Conduct.
 - b. Whether or not the investigation is substantiated, the principal/designee shall consider strategies to help alleviate the potential for possible future bullying.
 - c. Resources shall be provided to support children who were bullied and to provide effective rehabilitative education for children who bullied.
 - d. Where bullying is alleged to have occurred outside of school property, proper authorities may be contacted as necessary. Before contacting law enforcement, please discuss the incident with the Director of Security.
- 6. Strategies.
 - a. Counseling/Restorative Practices – any available FWCS counseling services should be made available to alleged children who bullied and were bullied, with the consent of their parent(s)/legal guardian(s)
 - b. Mediation – this option is never appropriate for sexual assault or harassment cases
 - c. Monitoring – employees should monitor hallways, cafeterias, playgrounds and other school facilities to deter future incidents of bullying
 - d. Scheduling changes – keeping the child who was bullied and the child who bullied separate may help, but do not change the schedule of the child who was bullied unless requested by the child's/parent
 - e. Think outside the box – listen to your students and create solutions that work for them and your building
- 7. Documentation.
 - a. Document everything – all calls to parents, investigation process, strategies employed, and timing of all actions taken
 - b. At the conclusion of the investigation, the principal or his/her designee shall complete the Bullying Report and Determination form, which must be sent to FACE and maintained for two years after the child who was bullied has graduated from FWCS.
 - c. This form shall be kept separate from the students' files.