



Laurel Highlands Middle School Bullying Policy

For the purposes of this policy, bullying is defined as a hostile activity which harms or induces fear through the threat of further aggression and/or creates terror. Bullying may be premeditated or a sudden activity. It may be subtle or easy to identify, done by one person or a group. Bullying includes but is not necessarily limited to:

1. **Power imbalance** – occurs when a bully uses his/her physical or social power over a victim.
2. **Intent to harm** – the bully seeks to inflict physical or emotional harm and/or takes pleasure in this activity.
3. **Threat of further aggression** – the bully and the victim believe the bullying will continue.
4. **Terror** – when any bullying increases, it becomes a “systematic violence or harassment used to intimidate and maintain dominance.”

There are at least three kinds of bullying: verbal, physical and social/relational.

- Verbal bullying includes name calling, insulting remarks, verbal teasing, frightening phone calls, violent threats, extortion, taunting, gossip, spreading rumors, racist slurs, threatening electronic communications, anonymous notes, etc.
- Physical bullying includes poking, slapping, hitting, tripping or causing a fall, choking, kicking, punching, biting, pinching, scratching, spitting, twisting arms or legs, damaging clothes and personal property, threatening gestures, setting fires, assault with weapon, stealing, etc.
- Social or relational bullying includes excluding someone from a group, isolating, shunning, spreading rumors or gossiping, arranging public humiliation, undermining relationships, teasing about clothing, looks, giving dirty looks, aggressive stares, etc.

While the focus of this policy is on prevention, bullying acts may still occur. In these cases, offenders will be given the clear message that their actions are wrong and the behavior must improve. Offenders will receive in-school guidance in making positive choices in their relationships with others. If appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken by the administration.

Students or employees of the Laurel Highlands Middle School who have been bullied, parents whose children have been bullied, or other students who observe bullying behavior are encouraged to make verbal and/or written complaint to a teacher, coach, bus driver, social worker, counselor, supervisor, or administrator. Intervention by adults and bystanders is an important step to prevent escalation and to resolve issues in the earlier stages. At all times, complaints will be documented, tracked and handled according to the regulations and procedures accompanying this policy and the district’s Code of Conduct.

As a school community, we strive to create schools and classrooms where a climate of safety and respect will enable all children to thrive and succeed. The process of helping youth can be greatly enhanced when adults are good listeners, supportive, and proactive in helping students deal with concerns and problems. As a staff, we should never limit ourselves to intervene on behalf of students.