



## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

Propel prohibits acts of harassment or bullying. In order for the students of Propel to achieve high academic standards, it is necessary that the buildings be a safe and civil environment. Harassment or bullying, like any other disruptive or violent behavior, is conduct that disrupts a student's ability to learn as well as the learning of others. Demonstration of appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment or bullying of any kind is expected of administrators, faculty, and staff as they provide positive examples for student behavior.

*Harassment or bullying* is any intentional gesture or written, oral, graphic, or physical act (including electronically transmitted act) that takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored activity, or in a school vehicle and is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression; a mental, physical, or sensory disability or impairment; or by any other distinguishing characteristic. *Harassment or bullying* includes any intentional gesture or written, oral, graphic, or physical act (including electronically transmitted act) that takes place off school property if such intentional act causes a hostile environment on school grounds.

Propel encourages students who have been subject to bullying or harassment to promptly report such incidents to designated employees as listed in this policy.

All complaints of harassment or bullying shall be investigated promptly, and corrective action shall be taken when allegations are substantiated. Confidentiality of all parties shall be maintained to the extent possible, consistent with Propel's legal and investigative obligations.

This policy also prohibits (a) retaliation against anyone who in good faith reports behavior prohibited by this policy; and (b) intimidation of any witness or party who participates in an investigation.

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This policy applies to students, employees and third-parties (such as vendors, independent contractors and members of the general public) and covers incidents that result in the bullying or harassment of Propel students regardless of whether the incidents themselves occur on school property.

Propel's Superintendent or his/her designee is Propel's Compliance Officer for purposes of this anti-bullying policy.

The Compliance Officer shall publish and disseminate this policy and complaint procedure at least annually to students, parents/guardians, employees and the public. Such communications to students, parents/guardians and the public shall include the position, office address and telephone number of the Compliance Officer. This policy, its complaint procedures and the Compliance Officer's contact information shall be available on the Propel Schools website.

Propel officials must explain that this policy applies to all applicable acts of harassment and bullying that occur on school property, at school sponsored events, on a school bus or as a result of a student's association with the school. The Superintendent shall develop an annual process for discussing the policy on harassment and bullying with students and staff.

Contact information for the Compliance Officer and for the building principals appears in Attachment A of this policy.

## **DEFINITIONS**

*Harassment* is conduct that meets all of the following criteria:

- Is directed at one or more students;
- Substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more students;
- Adversely affects the ability of a pupil to participate in or benefit from Propel's educational programs or activities because the conduct, as reasonably perceived by the student, is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive as to have this effect; and,
- Is based on a student's actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic, or is based on an association with another person who has or is perceived to have a distinguishing characteristic, such as race, color, age, creed, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ancestry, national origin, marital status, pregnancy, genetic history, or disability.

*Bullying* is conduct that meets the following criteria:

- Is directed at one or more students;
- Is severe, persistent or pervasive; and

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- Has the effect of doing any of the following:
  - Creating a threatening environment;
  - Substantially interfering with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more students; or
  - Substantially interfering with the orderly operation of the school.

## **PROCEDURE**

Propel expects students to conduct themselves in a manner keeping with their levels of development, maturity, and demonstrated capabilities with a proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students and school personnel. To prevent harassment and bullying, Propel staff shall use disciplinary situations as opportunities for helping students to learn to assume responsibility and consequences for their behavior. Staff members who interact with students shall apply best practices designed to prevent discipline problems and encourage students' abilities to develop self-discipline.

Propel prohibits both active and passive support for acts of harassment or bullying. The staff should encourage students to support students who walk away from these acts. Propel staff shall attempt to stop bystander support or encouragement of harassment or bullying. In serious cases of bystander support or encouragement of harassment or bullying staff shall report such actions to the building principal. Bystander support or encouragement of harassment or bullying shall be punishable as harassment or bullying.

Administrators shall develop and implement procedures that ensure both the appropriate consequences and remedial responses to student harassment or bullying. The following factors, at a minimum, shall be given full consideration by school administrators in the development of the procedures for determining appropriate consequences and remedial measures harassment or bullying.

- Parties' ages, development, and maturity
- Harm, if any
- Surrounding circumstances
- Severity
- Prior incidents
- Parties' relationship
- Context
- Life skill competencies
- Experiential deficiencies
- Social relationships
- School culture
- School climate

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- Social-emotional and behavioral supports
- Neighborhood culture
- Family situation

Consequences and appropriate remedial actions may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion. Consequences shall be unique to the individual incident and will vary in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance, but consequences must be consistent with Propel's Code of Student Conduct. Remedial measures shall be designed to correct the problem behavior; prevent another occurrence of the behavior; and protect the victim of the act. The consequences may include, but are not limited to, the examples listed below

- Admonishment
- Temporary removal from the classroom
- Loss of privileges
- Classroom or administrative detention
- Referral to disciplinarian
- In-school suspension
- Out of school suspension
- Legal action
- Expulsion

Remedial measures may include:

*Personal*

- Problem solving advice
- Restitution and restoration
- Peer support group
- Corrective instruction or other relevant learning or service experience
- Supportive discipline to increase accountability for the bullying offense
- Supportive interventions, including participation in the Care Team, peer mediation, or similar services
- Behavioral assessment or evaluation, including, but not limited to, a referral to the Behavior Support Coach
- Positive Behavioral Support Management Plan
- Involvement of school disciplinarian
- Student counseling
- Parent conferences
- Student treatment
- Student therapy

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*Environmental (Classroom, School building)*

- Modifications of schedules
- Adjustment in hallway traffic
- Modifications student routes or patterns traveling to and from school
- Targeted use of monitors
- Parent conferences
- Law enforcement involvement
- Peer support groups
- School and community surveys or other strategies for determining the conditions contributing to harassment, intimidation, or bullying
- School culture change
- School climate improvement
- Adoption of research-based, systemic bullying prevention programs
- General professional development programs for certificated and non-certificated staff
- Involvement of parent-teacher organizations, such as Parent Council

The principal and/or associate principal at each school are/is responsible for receiving complaints alleging violations to this policy. All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the building principal or principal's designee. The complaining party or reporting employee is encouraged to use the report form available from the building principal, but oral complaints shall be acceptable.

A school employee who suspects or is notified that a student has been subject to conduct that constitutes a violation of this policy shall immediately report the incident to the building principal. Within two (2) school days, the building principal (or Compliance Officer, as the case may be) will follow up with the student reported to be the subject of such conduct. All other members of the school community, including students, parents, volunteers, and visitors are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy. Reports may be made anonymously, but formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

**Step 1 - Reporting**

The principal and/or the principal's designee also are/is responsible for conducting a prompt, thorough, and complete investigation of each alleged incident. The building principal or his/her designee shall

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1. Inform the complaining party of the right to file a complaint and the complaint procedure.
2. Inform the complaining party if s/he is a student that s/he may be accompanied by a parent/guardian during all steps of the complaint procedure.
3. Notify the complaining party and the accused of the progress at appropriate stages of the procedure.
4. Refer the complaining party to the Compliance Officer if the building principal is the subject of the complaint.

A list of building principals is available in Attachment A of this policy and on the Propel Schools website. Students and parents will be provided with the names of their building principals before or at the beginning of the school year.

If the building principal is the subject of a complaint, the complaining party or the reporting employee shall report the incident directly to the Compliance Officer.

In cases in which the alleged victim may be in danger or his/her ability to participate fully in the educational process may be seriously impaired, the Compliance Officer or his/her designee may take interim action (consistent with state and federal law) to keep the alleged victim from his/her alleged harasser. Such action may include parent contact, removal from class, loss of privileges, detention, or suspension of the alleged harasser.

## **Step 2 - Investigation**

The investigation may consist of individual interviews with the complaining party, the accused, and others with knowledge relative to the incident. The investigator may also evaluate any other information and materials relevant to the investigation. Both the alleged victim and the alleged bully/harasser will be given the opportunity to present witnesses and other evidence. The investigator will use the preponderance of evidence standard to determine whether this policy has been violated. That is, a violation will be found if the complainant or victim presents evidence establishing it is more likely than not that the prohibited conduct occurred.

The obligation to conduct this investigation shall not be negated by the fact that a criminal investigation of the incident is pending or has been concluded.

The investigation is to be completed within three (3) school days after a report or complaint is made. Any reasonable delays (e.g., the unavailability of witnesses or parties

due to illness) will be noted in the investigative file, and the investigation will be completed as soon as possible following the delay.

### **Step 3 - Investigative Report**

The building principal (or other person conducting the investigation) shall prepare a written report within fifteen (15) days, unless additional time to complete the investigation is required. Any reason for additional time in which to complete the report will be noted in the investigative file. The report shall include a summary of the investigation, a determination of whether the complaint has been substantiated as factual, whether it is a violation of this policy, and a recommended disposition of the complaint.

Findings of the investigation shall be provided in writing within five (5) school days to the complaining party, the accused and the Compliance Officer.

### **Step 4 - Action**

If the investigation results in a finding that the complaint is factual and constitutes a violation of this policy, Propel shall take prompt, corrective action to ensure that such conduct ceases and will not recur. Victims of substantiated bullying or harassment claims will be offered counseling and other resources consistent with the circumstances of their charges.

Disciplinary action shall be consistent with the employee handbook, Student Code of Conduct, Board policies, Propel procedures, applicable employment agreements, and applicable law. Employees will be disciplined consistent with the findings and such discipline may include termination. Independent contractors found to be in violation of this policy may have their agreements terminated or may be debarred from transacting business with Propel. Other third-party actors may be prohibited from participating in Propel activities.

Students will be subject to the consequences listed (above) in this Procedure section. The lists of prohibited behavior and possible discipline are illustrative only. Consistent with state and federal law, Propel will take appropriate action to address bullying and harassment.

Reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of harassment or bullying is prohibited. 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 reprisal or retaliation.

False accusations of harassment or bullying are prohibited. The consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person found to have falsely accused another of harassment or bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion.

### **Appeal Procedure**

1. If the complainant is not satisfied with a finding of no violation of the policy or with the corrective action recommended in the investigative report, s/he may submit a written appeal to the Compliance Officer within fifteen (15) days.
2. The Compliance Officer shall review the investigation and the investigative report and may also conduct an additional reasonable investigation.
3. The Compliance Officer shall prepare a written response to the appeal within fifteen (15) days of receipt. Copies of the response shall be provided to the complainant, the accused and the building principal (or other person) who conducted the initial investigation.



ATTACHMENT A – CONTACT INFORMATION

**Compliance Officer**

Dr. Tina Chekan, Superintendent

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