

6.18 *Bullying, Intimidation, Violence, and Threats of Violence*

6.18.1 Prohibition - No student shall engage in nor should any be subjected to bullying, violence, threats of violence or intimidation by any other student that is based on any of the specific characteristics set forth in this policy. Students who violate this policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary sanctions as specified in the Student Code of Conduct, subject to the investigating school administrator's authority and decision.

6.18.2 Definitions –

- a. The term “bullying” means a continuous pattern of intentional behavior that takes place on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored function including, but not limited to, cyberbullying or written, electronic, verbal, or physical actions that are reasonably perceived as being motivated by any characteristic of a student, or by the association of a student with an individual who has a particular characteristic, if the characteristic falls into one, but not limited to, the categories of personal characteristics set forth below. To constitute bullying, a pattern of behavior may do any of the following:
 1. Place a student in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property.
 2. Have the effect of substantially interfering with the educational performance, opportunities, or benefits of a student.
 3. Have the effect of substantially disrupting or interfering with the orderly operation of the school.
 4. Have the effect of creating a hostile environment in the school, on school property, on a school bus, or at a school-sponsored function.
 5. Have the effect of being sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student.
- b. The term “hostile environment” as used in this policy means the perception by an affected student that the conduct of another student constitutes a threat of violence or bullying and that the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable person, under the circumstances, would agree that the conduct constitutes bullying, threat of assault, or assault.
- c. The term “violence” as used in this policy means the infliction of physical force by a student with the intent to cause injury to another student or damage to the property of another student.

- d. The term “threat” as used in this policy means a statement of an intention to inflict pain, injury, damage, or other hostile action to cause fear of harm. The intention may be communicated through an electronic, written, verbal, or physical act to cause fear, mental distress, or interference in the school environment. The intention may be expressly stated or implied and the person communicating the threat has the ability to carry out the threat.
- e. The term “threat of violence” as used in this policy means an expression of intention to inflict injury or damage that is made by a student and directed to another student.
- f. The term “intimidation” as used in this policy means a threat or other action that is intended to cause fear or apprehension in a student, especially for the purpose of coercing or deterring the student from participating in or taking advantage of any school program, benefit, activity or opportunity for which the student is or would be eligible.
- g. The term “student” as used in this policy means a person who is enrolled in the Russell County school system.

6.18.3 Description of Behavior Expected of Students –

- a. Students are expected to treat other students with courtesy, respect, and dignity and comply with the Code of Student Conduct. Students are expected and required (1) to comply with the requirements of law, policy, regulation, and rules prohibiting harassment, violence, or intimidation; (2) to refrain from inflicting or threatening to inflict violence, injury, or damage to the person or property of another student; and (3) to refrain from placing another student in fear of being subjected to violence, injury, or damage when such actions or threats are reasonably perceived as being motivated by any personal characteristic of the student that is identified in this policy.
- b. Violence, threats of violence, bullying, and intimidation are prohibited and will be subject to disciplinary consequences and sanctions if the perpetrator of such action is found to have based the prohibited action on one or more of the following personal characteristics of the victim of such conduct:
 - 1. The student’s race/color/ethnicity;
 - 2. The student’s gender/gender identity;
 - 3. The student’s sexual preference;
 - 4. The student’s religion;

5. The student's socioeconomic status;
6. The student's national origin; or
7. The student's disability.

6.18.4 Consequences for Violations – A series of graduated consequences for any violation of this policy will be those outlined in the Code of Student Conduct or any rule or standard adopted under authority of this policy.

6.18.5 Reporting, Investigation, and Complaint Resolution Procedures – Complaints alleging violations of this policy may be made on a form readily available in the student handbook, on the website, or at the school's office. The complaint must be signed by the student alleging the violation or by the student's parent or legal guardian and delivered to the principal or the principal's designee either by mail or personal delivery. Incidental or minor violations of the policy may be presented and resolved informally.

The complaint form developed to report violations of this policy will include a provision for reporting a threat of suicide by a student. If a threat of suicide is reported, the principal or the principal's designee is authorized to inform the student's parent or guardian of the report unless at the discretion of the school principal or the principal's designee the apparent cause of the threat of suicide is child abuse or other significant harm from a parent or guardian.

Upon receipt of the complaint, the principal or the principal's designee will, in their sole discretion, determine if the complaint alleges a serious violation of this policy. If the principal or the principal's designee determines that the complaint alleges a serious violation, the principal or the principal's designee will undertake an investigation of the complaint. The investigation will entail the gathering of relevant facts and evidence and will be conducted in a reasonably prompt time period taking into account the circumstances of the complaint. If the investigation establishes a violation, appropriate disciplinary sanctions may be imposed on the offending student(s). Other measures that are reasonably calculated to prevent a recurrence of the violation(s) may also be imposed by the principal or the school system.

Acts of reprisal or retaliation against any student who has reported a violation of this policy or sought relief provided by this policy are prohibited, and are themselves a violation of this policy. Any confirmed acts of reprisal or retaliation may be subject to disciplinary sanctions that may include any sanction, penalty, or consequence that is available to school officials under the Code of Student Conduct. A student who deliberately, recklessly, and falsely accuses another student of a violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary sanctions as outlined in the Code of Student Conduct.

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6.18.6 Suicide Prevention – To the extent that the legislature appropriates funds or the Board provides funds from other sources, the Superintendent is authorized to develop a program to implement the following statutory requirements of the Jason Flatt Act in an effort to prevent student suicide:

- a. Foster individual, family, and group counseling services related to suicide prevention.
- b. Make referral, crisis intervention, and other related information available for students, parents, and school personnel.
- c. Foster training for school personnel who are responsible for counseling and supervising students.
- d. Increase student awareness of the relationship between drug and alcohol use and suicide.
- e. Educate students in recognizing signs of suicidal tendencies and other facts and warning signs of suicide.
- f. Inform students of available community suicide prevention services.
- g. Promote cooperative efforts between school personnel and community suicide prevention program personnel.
- h. Foster school-based or community-based, or both, alternative programs outside of the classroom.
- i. Develop a strategy to assist survivors of attempted suicide, students, and school personnel in coping with the issues relating to attempted suicide, suicide, the death of a student, and healing.
- j. Engage in any other program or activity which the Board determines is appropriate and prudent in the efforts of the school system to prevent student suicide.
- k. Provide training for school employees and volunteers who have significant contact with students on the Board policies to prevent harassment, intimidation, and threats of violence.
- l. Develop a process for discussing with students local board policies relating to the prevention of student suicide and to the prevention of harassment, intimidation, violence, and threats of violence.

- m. Provide annual training for all certificated school employees in suicide awareness and prevention. This training may be provided within the framework of existing in-service training programs or as a part of required professional development offered by the school system.

Students may be required to participate in curricular activities developed to implement the statutory requirements of the Jason Flatt Act and are encouraged to participate in any other activities or strategies developed by the Board for that purpose.

- 6.18.7 Promulgation of Policy and Related Procedures, Rules, and Forms – This policy and any procedures, rules, and forms developed and approved to implement the policy will be published on the website of each local board of education and school, shall be available at each school office, and shall be included in the handbook that is distributed to each student at the beginning of each school year.