

UNDERSTANDING DISCRIMINATION & HARASSMENT/ BULLYING

A Guide for Parents



INTRODUCTION

Pitt County Schools acknowledges the dignity and worth of all students. We strive to create a safe, orderly, caring, and welcoming school environment to facilitate student learning and achievement.

We do not tolerate any form of unlawful discrimination and harassment/ bullying in any of our educational activities or programs.

This guidebook is intended to help parents

- Distinguish harassment/ bullying from other conduct;
- Understand how to report harassment/ bullying;
- Recognize warning signs;
- Understand how Pitt County Schools responds to harassment/ bullying; and
- Access additional resources on this topic.

This guidebook provides basic information about this topic and does not replace Pitt County Board of Education Policies 1710/4021/7230 and 1720/4015/7225. For additional information about unlawful discrimination and harassment/ bullying and how PCS responds, please consult these policies.

WHAT IS HARASSMENT/ BULLYING?

Not all interactions at school rise to the level of harassment/ bullying. The chart below is intended to help distinguish harassment/ bullying from other types of behavior.

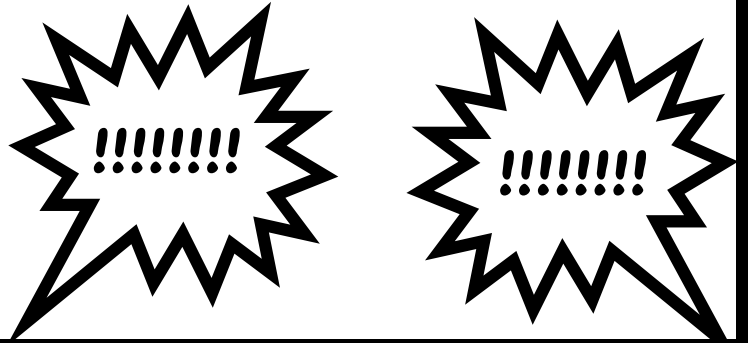
Teasing

- Everyone is involved equally
- No one is getting hurt
- Back and forth provokes participants in a playful manner



Conflict

- There is an equal balance of power
- No one is having fun
- There is a disagreement or argument that can be resolved with interventions and supports



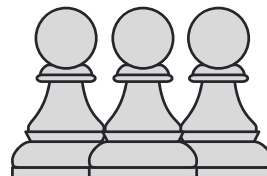
Mean Moment

- Something is said to a student that is intended to be hurtful
- The hurtful statement was an isolated event



Discrimination

- Conduct that unreasonably and unfavorably differentiates treatment of others based solely on their membership in a socially distinct group or category, such as race, ethnicity, sex, religion, or disability status



WHAT IS HARASSMENT/ BULLYING?

Harassment/ Bullying

- Intentional conduct that is motivated by a difference or perceived difference AND EITHER
- Places a student in reasonable fear of harm to his/her person or property OR
- Is objectively severe or occurs with such frequency that it substantially interferes with a student's educational performance or engagement at school.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying that occurs through electronic means, including the Internet, e-mail, text messaging, a personal website, or social media.

Pitt County Schools does not digitally monitor students' online activity. However, Pitt County Schools administrators will investigate reports of cyberbullying if all of the individuals involved are PCS students or staff.

WARNING SIGNS

Signs a Child May Be Bullied

- Unexplained injuries
- Lost or destroyed personal belongings
- Frequently complaints of illness
- Change in appetite
- Difficulty sleeping / frequent nightmares
- Change in grades / interest in school work / desire to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends / avoidance of social situations
- Feelings of hopelessness/ decreased self esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors (e.g. running away from home, self harm, or talking about suicide)

Signs a Child May Be Bullying

- Gets into physical or verbal fights
- Has friends who bully others
- Is increasingly aggressive
- Frequently referred to the principal's office
- Has unexplained new belongings or extra money
- Blames others for their problems
- Doesn't accept responsibility for their actions
- Is competitive and worries about reputation or popularity

Source: stopbullying.gov

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Talk to your child about bullying, encourage your child to confide in you, & keep an open line of communication.
- Discuss appropriate social media and internet usage with your children.
- Understand what harassment/ bullying and discrimination is and is not. Visit the Bullying Prevention section on the PCS website for a discussion guide with examples of different types of conduct.
- Recognize warning signs of harassment/ bullying.
- Report suspected harassment/ bullying and discrimination to the principal or assistant principal. When making a report, details are helpful (e.g. who was involved, who may have witnessed the incident, where the incident occurred within the school, when it happened).

HOW TO REPORT DISCRIMINATION OR HARASSMENT / BULLYING

Parents and students are strongly encouraged to report any act that may constitute an incident of discrimination or harassment/ bullying to the principal.

Reports may be made orally, by the tip line, or in writing.

It is recommended that a report be made within 30 days of an alleged incident to ensure that the principal can undertake a thorough investigation.

HOW PCS RESPONDS

PCS treats all reports of discrimination or harassment/ bullying seriously.

A report is treated as an allegation of discrimination or harassment/ bullying. The report will be investigated thoroughly by a principal, assistant principal, or school counselor.

If the investigator concludes that of discrimination or harassment/ bullying has occurred, the principal or assistant principal will impose disciplinary consequences. Even if conduct does not rise to the level of discrimination or harassment/ bullying, the school may take additional corrective action (e.g. conflict mediation and/ or imposition of disciplinary consequences for the violation of a different code of conduct violation).

Although disciplinary consequences may be imposed, PCS is not able to share specific information with anyone other than the student being disciplined and his/her parents. Additionally, the imposition of a disciplinary consequence may not prevent future incidents.

RESOURCES

PCS Bullying Prevention

Pitt County Schools has set up a Bullying Prevention section on its website. This section provides access to additional resources regarding bullying. Please visit <https://www.pitt.k12.nc.us/Page/1519> to access this section of our website.

PCS Tip Line

To report a complaint of bullying/ harassment via our tip line, please visit <https://www.pitt.k12.nc.us/domain/176>. Please make sure to specify the school in the drop down under "Organization."

Board of Education Policies

For further information about unlawful discrimination and harassment / bullying and how PCS responds, please consult Pitt County Board of Education Policies 1710/4021/7230 and 1720/4015/7225. Please visit <https://www.pitt.k12.nc.us/domain/198> to access Board of Education Policies online.

