



KIPP AUSTIN Anti-Bullying Policy

Purpose

A safe and civil environment is needed for students to learn and attain high academic standards and to promote healthy human relationships. The purpose of this policy is to assist KIPP Austin Public Schools (“KIPP Austin”) in its goal of preventing and responding to acts of bullying, intimidation, violence, and other similar disruptive behavior.

An act of bullying, by either an individual or group of people in the KIPP AUSTIN community, is expressly prohibited on KIPP Austin property or school-related functions. This policy applies not only to individuals who directly engage in an act of bullying but also to individuals who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support another individual’s act of bullying.

State Policy on Bullying

Please see the Texas Education Code, Chapter 37 Section 37.001 (a); **Student Code of Conduct**

Board and Region Expectations, Beliefs, and Standards

KIPP AUSTIN is committed to protecting its students, employees, and applicants for admission from bullying, harassment, or discrimination for any reason and of any type. KIPP Austin and its Board believe that all students and employees are entitled to a safe, equitable, and harassment-free school experience. Bullying, harassment, or discrimination will not be tolerated and shall be just cause for disciplinary action.

KIPP AUSTIN and the Board believe that standards for student behavior must be set cooperatively through interaction among the students, parents, guardians, staff, and community partners of KIPP Austin, producing an atmosphere that encourages students to grow in self-control. The development of this atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for the community property on the part of students, staff, and community members.

The standards of this policy constitute a specific, focused, coordinated, integrated, culturally sensitive system of supports for all students, staff, families and community agencies that will improve relations within each school. It is designed to ensure that every school has staff that have been trained and are supported in their school’s efforts to provide awareness, intervention training, and instructional strategies on prevention, including violence prevention, to each staff, parent, and student to direct follow-up when incidents are reported and/or occur.

I. Definitions

- A. **“Bullying”** means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students or employees. It is further defined as unwanted purposeful written, verbal, nonverbal, or physical behavior, including but not limited to any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by an adult or student, that has the potential to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment or cause long term damage; cause discomfort or humiliation; or unreasonably interfere with the individual’s school performance or participation, is carried out repeatedly and is often characterized by an imbalance of power.

Bullying may involve, but is not limited to:

- Verbal: Hurtful name-calling, teasing, gossiping, making threats, making rude noises, or spreading hurtful rumors.
- Nonverbal: Posturing, making gang signs, leering, staring, stalking, destroying property, using graffiti or graphic images, or exhibiting inappropriate and/or threatening gestures or actions.
- Physical: Hitting, punching, pushing, shoving, poking, kicking, tripping, strangling, hair pulling, fighting, beating, biting, spitting or destroying property.
- Emotional or Psychological: Rejecting, terrorizing, extorting, defaming, intimidating, humiliating, blackmailing, manipulating friendships, isolating, ostracizing, using peer pressure, or rating or ranking personal characteristics.

Bullying occurs when a student or group of students engages in written or verbal expression or physical conduct that is either repeated/persistent over time or is an extreme incident (at school's discretion):

- Will have the effect of physically harming a student, damaging a student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or of damage to the student's property;
- Is so sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that the action or threat creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for a student; or
- Has the effect of substantially negatively impacting a student's emotional or mental well-being.
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities or benefits.
- Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school environment.

B. Cyberbullying is defined as willful harassment and intimidation of a person through the use of digital technologies, including, but not limited to e-mail, blogs, texting on a cell phone, social web site (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), chat rooms, texting sexually explicit messages, instant messaging, or video voyeurism.

C. Cyberstalking means to engage in a course of conduct to communicate, or to cause to be communicated, words, images, or language by or through the use of electronic mail or electronic communication, directed at or about a specific person, causing substantial emotional distress to that person and serving no legitimate purpose.

D. Harassment includes, but is not limited to oral, written, psychological, physical (both climate and contact), and other demonstrative actions with regard to race, creed, ethnic origin, religious preference, gender, disability, or sexual orientation that is harassing.

E. Bullying, Cyberbullying and/or Harassment also encompass:

- Retaliation:
 - Against a student by another student for asserting or alleging an act of bullying, harassment, or discrimination.
 - Also includes reporting a baseless act of bullying, harassment, or discrimination that is not made in good faith.

- Perpetuation of conduct listed in the definition of bullying, harassment, and/or discrimination by an individual or group with intent to demean, dehumanize, embarrass, or cause emotional or physical harm to a student by:
 - Incitement or coercion;
 - Accessing or knowingly and willingly causing or providing access to data or computer software through a computer, computer system, or computer network within the scope of KIPP Austin Public Schools; or
 - Acting in a manner that has an effect substantially similar to the effect of bullying, harassment, or discrimination.

- F. Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment and Discrimination (hereinafter referred to as bullying as defined in Section A, for the purpose of this policy) also encompass, but are not limited to, **unwanted harm** towards a student in regard to their real or perceived gender or gender identity or expression, race, color, religion, political beliefs, linguistic preference, natural origin, age, disability (physical, mental, or educational), socio-economic background, or ancestry.

- G. **“Accused”** is defined as any KIPP AUSTIN employee, volunteer, contractor, student, or other person in the school or outside the school at school-sponsored events, on school buses, and at training facilities or training programs sponsored by KIPP AUSTIN who is reported to have committed an act of bullying, whether formally or informally, verbally or in writing.

- H. **“Complainant”** is defined as any KIPP AUSTIN employee, volunteer, contractor, student or other person who formally or informally makes a report of bullying, verbally or in writing.

- I. **“Victim”** is defined as any KIPP AUSTIN employee, volunteer, contractor, student or other person inside the school or outside the school at a school-sponsored event, on school buses, who is reported to have been the target of an act of bullying during the school day or during any educational program or activity.

II. KIPP AUSTIN Campus Bullying Policy Requirements

- A. The principal of each school shall establish and prominently publicize to students, parents, staff and volunteers how a report of bullying may be filed and what actions may be taken.
- B. Each school will have a location for *Bullying Incident Reports* to be accessed and submitted.
- C. Each school will have an option for reporting anonymously. Example: having the option to anonymously submit a form to a specific staff member’s box or office.
- D. Administrators/principals/designee(s) shall document in writing on a *Bullying Tracking and Investigation Chart* all complaints regarding bullying, to ensure that problems are appropriately addressed in a timely manner. Each school will maintain their own *Bullying Tracking and Investigation Chart*. See screenshot of the chart below:

"Insert SCHOOL NAME" Bullying Tracking and Investigation Chart

Date	Student Reporting Bullying (FULL NAME, GRADE)	Student Reported as Bully (FULL NAME, GRADE)	Description of Incident	Action Taken	Notes

III. Reporting an Act of Bullying

- A. At each school, the principal/designee is responsible for receiving oral or written complaints alleging violations of this policy, and documenting on appropriate forms for compliance, and informing parents and guardians of parties involved
- B. Any member of the school community who has credible information that an act of bullying has taken place may file a *Bullying Incident Report*, whether a victim or a witness.
- C. Any student (and/or the parent on the complainant’s behalf if the complainant is a minor) who believes he/she is a victim of bullying is strongly encouraged to fill out a *Bullying Incident Report* in the front office of his/her school.
- D. Complaints should be filed as soon as possible after the alleged incident and noted on the incident report. Complaints must be filed within ninety (90) school days after the alleged incident. Failure on the part of the victim to initiate and/or follow up on the complaint within this period may result in the complaint being deemed abandoned.
- E. A KIPP AUSTIN employee, student, parent, or volunteer who promptly reports in good faith an act of bullying to the appropriate school official, and who makes this report in compliance with the procedures set for in this policy, is immune from a cause of action for damages arising out of the reporting itself or any failure to remedy the reported incident. However, this does not prohibit investigation into that reporter’s actions previous to the submission. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of bullying will not affect the complainant or reporter’s future employment, grades, learning or working environment, or work assignments at KIPP AUSTIN.

IV. Investigating Bullying Complaints

- A. The principal or Investigative Designee shall document all complaints in writing on the *Bullying Tracking and Investigation Chart* to ensure that problems are addressed in a timely manner. This process is to be followed with all anonymous complaints as well. Although this Policy encourages students to use the formal, written *Bullying Incident Report*, school officials “should investigate all complaints and reports of harassment, whether or not the complaint is in writing,” as stated by the Office for Civil Rights in *Protecting Students from Harassment and Hate Crime: A Guide for Schools, Part II (1999)*.
- B. If the complaint is about the principal, the KIPP Austin Human Resources Department shall be asked to address the complaint.
- C. The trained principal/Investigative Designee will make the determination if a reported act of bullying or harassment falls within the scope of KIPP Austin.

- If it is within the scope of KIPP AUSTIN, move to Procedures for Investigating Bullying and/or Harassment as outlined below.
- If it is outside the scope of KIPP AUSTIN, and determined an alleged criminal act, refer to appropriate law enforcement, provide any applicable interventions, and document according to this Policy.
- If it is outside the scope of KIPP AUSTIN, and determined not a criminal act, inform parents/guardians of all students involved, provide appropriate interventions and document according to Policy.

D. Investigation Procedures for Reported Acts of Bullying Under this Policy

1. The procedures for investigating school-based bullying must include the principal/designee and or Investigative Designee, in the case of student-to-student bullying.
2. The investigator may not be accused or the alleged victim.
3. The principal/designee or appropriate KIPP Austin administrator shall begin a thorough investigation with the alleged victim and accused within two (2) school days of receiving notification of complaint. The principal/designee/administrator must immediately notify parents of both the victim and the alleged perpetrator of an act of bullying or harassment within 2 school days of a filed complaint.
4. During the investigation, the principal/designee or appropriate administrator may take any action necessary to protect the complainant, alleged victim, other students or employees consistent with the requirements of applicable regulations and statutes.
5. Documented interviews of the alleged victim, alleged perpetrator, and witnesses are conducted privately, separately, and are confidential. Each individual will initially be interviewed separately and only with permission of victim and family will the alleged perpetrator and victim to be interviewed together.
6. At no time during the investigation will the name of the complainant be revealed by the investigator without permission of victim or family or if safety is jeopardized.
7. In general, student complainants and/or alleged victims will continue attendance at the same school and pursue their studies as directed while the investigation is conducted and the complaint is pending resolutions. Any legal order of the court will prevail.
8. During the investigation where a KIPP AUSTIN employee is accused, the principal/designee/administrator may recommend to the Director of Human Resources any action necessary to protect the complainant, the alleged victim, or other students or employees. Examples of this could include: removal of student from classroom, leave of absence while under investigation, etc.
9. Within ten (10) school days of the notification as to the filing of the complaint, there shall be a written decision on the *Bullying Tracking and Investigation Chart* by the Principal/Designee/Administrator.

V. Resolving an Act of Bullying

- A. **Informal Resolution:** Where the administrator, along with the alleged victim and the accused/student, may agree to informally investigate an alleged bullying incident among parties. A

Bullying Incident Report form may have already been filed, or will be completed during the investigation by the parties involved.

- Interviews of the victim, alleged perpetrator, and witnesses are conducted privately separately, and are confidential.
- Each individual (victim, alleged perpetrator, witnesses) will be initially interviewed separately.
- A joint voluntary mediation meeting between the two parties shall be held, and each party's agreement to Informal Resolution must be in writing on the *Bullying Tracking and Investigation Chart*.
- If a mutual resolution is accepted the incident and the resolution must be documented on the complaint form and the appropriate data system. No further action needed.
- If a mutual resolution has not been achieved, a formal written appeal for a formal resolution must be filed within five (5) work days after the informal meeting and submitted to the principal or appropriate KIPP Austin supervisor.

B. Formal Resolution: the alleged victim/complainant/student/or parent on behalf of the student may file a written complaint with the principal/designee or appropriate KIPP Austin administrator by utilizing the KIPP Austin Public Schools *Bullying Incident Report and Bullying Tracking and Investigation Chart* Forms.

- According to the level of infraction, parents will be promptly notified within 2 school days of a submission of any actions being taken to protect the victim via written notice, telephone or personal conference; the frequency of notification will depend on the seriousness of the bullying incident.
- Documented interviews of the victim, alleged perpetrator, and witnesses are conducted privately separately, and are confidential and are recorded on the Bullying Incident Report Form.
- Each individual (victim, alleged perpetrator, witnesses) will be initially interviewed separately.
- A joint voluntary mediation meeting between the two parties can be held if parties agree.
- If bullying is found: all evidence is collected, all documentation is recorded and filed in the school and district specified data system. Disciplinary actions are decided by the administrator or designee with appropriate supervisor input based on circumstance.
- If no bullying is found: all documentation is kept and filed. Monitoring of victims and complainants and any additional supports needed is implemented. Whether bullying is found or not, all parties will be notified in writing of the final decision and their right to appeal. This is filed with the other incident documents.
- All documents shall be filed in the school's Bullying Incident Folder, and student files.

VI. Additional Strategies for Bullying Prevention

In addition to the above mentioned school leaders may implement the following preventative strategies at their discretion:

- Implementing Social and Emotional Learning programs focusing on bullying



- Conducting school wide meetings or assemblies regarding bullying at the beginning of the year and throughout the year as necessary
- Conducting staff professional development to help identify bullying