



PREVENTING AND TACKLING BULLYING POLICY

School Name:	Politz Day School of Cherry Hill
Date Policy Adopted:	May 21, 2014
Adopted by:	Politz Board of Trustees

Beliefs:

The school has chosen to adopt the following beliefs, which were culled from a variety of professional sources. The school's main beliefs are:

- 1) We all have the right to learn in a safe and supportive school environment that values diversity—an environment free from bullying, harassment, discrimination, and violence.
- 2) We all have the right to be treated with fairness and dignity.
- 3) We all have a responsibility to keep others safe and to treat them in the same way—with fairness, dignity and respect.

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages or the internet), and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers and schools have to make their own judgement about each specific case.

Examples:

Bullying is defined as repeated incidents involving:

- A bigger, stronger, or more powerful (verbally or physically) child harassing a smaller or weaker child, or
- A group of children harassing a single child.

Bullying may comprise harassment that is:

- Verbal: the child is called names, put down or threatened.
- Physical: the child is hit, tripped, poked, kicked, or belongings are stolen or damaged.
- Social: the child is left out, ignored, or rumors are spread.

- Psychological: the child is stalked or given dirty looks.
- Cyber: the child is harassed through text messaging or via the internet.

Bullying is different from ordinary teasing, rough-and-tumble, or schoolyard fights. The difference is that the incidents are ongoing (or have the potential to be ongoing), and there is usually an imbalance of size, strength, and power between the children involved. The bully might have power not only because he is bigger and stronger, but because other children often side with the bully to protect themselves.

What Are the Signs of Bullying?

- Bullying may be very hard to see. Victims may already be having trouble relating to other children or with teachers. They are often picked on by bullies for this reason.
- Bullying usually happens out of sight, away from teachers or other adults. The people who are most likely to know what is going on are other children.
- Children who are being bullied often don't like to tell anyone because they feel weak or ashamed, or are frightened that it will only make things worse. They also feel it is wrong to tell tales on other children.
- If bullied children tell anyone, it is most likely they will tell their parents – usually their mother – or their friends before they will tell a teacher.

Head of School Expectations:

It is expected that the Head of School will:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Support all staff in implementing the Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Inform staff about the response or action plan to serious incidents;
- Discuss bullying behavior regularly with the whole school and more frequently at targeted audiences if required.

Staff Expectations:

All Politz staff are expected to:

- Take complaints of bullying seriously;
- Follow the school's Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Manage classes in a way that enhances peer relationships;
- Demonstrate respect and valuing of all students;
- Encourage students to develop values and ethics in their relationships with others;
- Include students in decision making;
- Know how to respond effectively to bullying behaviors;
- Work proactively in a team to assist students at risk;
- Maintain a duty of care at all times i.e. in class, in the playground and between classes;
- Create opportunities for students to share concerns (e.g. formal and informal class meetings);
- Empower students to participate in solving their bullying issues;
- Explicitly teach bystander skills to students.

Student Expectations:

We expect Politz students to:

- Follow the school's rules;
- Seek immediate help when bullying is experienced or witnessed;

- Respect and value themselves and others;
- Learn and use effective bystander responses;
- Share issues of concern and help make suggestions to contribute to a cycle of continuous improvement.

Parent Involvement:

We ensure that parents clearly understand that the school does not tolerate bullying and are aware of the procedures to follow if they believe that their child is being bullied. Parents should feel confident that the school will take any complaint about bullying seriously and resolve the issue in a way that protects the child, and they should reinforce the value of good behavior at home.

PREVENTION

Our school's response to bullying does not start at the point when a child has been bullied. A more sophisticated approach is used, through which school staff members proactively gather intelligence about issues between students that might provoke conflict and develop strategies to prevent bullying occurring in the first place. This might involve talking to students about issues of difference in lessons, through dedicated events or projects, or through assemblies. Staff will be empowered to determine what will work best for their students, depending on the particular issues they need to address.

Tackling bullying creates an ethos of good behavior where students treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave. Values of respect for staff and other students, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school environment and are reinforced by staff and older students, who set a good example to the rest.

INTERVENTION

Our school applies disciplinary measures to students who bully in order to clearly show that their behavior is wrong. Disciplinary measures are applied fairly, consistently, and reasonably taking into account any special education needs or disabilities that the students may have and taking into account the needs of vulnerable students. We also consider the motivations behind bullying behavior and whether it reveals any concerns for the safety of the perpetrator; children engaging in bullying may need support themselves.

Strategies for Building a Safe and Supportive School and Preventing Bullying:

- The Head of School will discuss bullying behavior with the whole school, as required. Discussions will include the types of behaviors that constitute bullying and will reaffirm the school's stand that bullying is not acceptable.
- Staff are encouraged to use cooperative learning experiences that build bridges between interests, experiences, abilities, and aspirations of students from diverse backgrounds.
- Staff demonstrates—and encourage students to demonstrate, understanding—respect and valuing of themselves and others.
- Staff treats time on the playground as an important part of the curriculum and also understand that it is a time when students can be more vulnerable to bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence.

Staff Demonstrates this By:

- Reinforcing good playground behavior and positive social relationships with their students.
- Providing classroom opportunities for social interactions (through play, games and other social activities), which contribute to positive peer relationships and networks.

- Reviewing bullying and safety issues.
- Providing safe places for students.

Strategies for Knowing When or If Bullying is Happening:

Involving a wide range of students to help identify where bullying occurs:

- **Bullying Audits:**
 - These are anonymous ways that students can inform the school where bullying occurs—using a map of the school, the students highlight where bullying is most likely to, or frequently does occur. The students also mark places they consider safe.
- **Bullying Advocates:**
 - Staff members with whom students feel comfortable talking to about any bullying that occurs, work with students to promote empathy, problem-solving skills, and self-awareness.
 - Older students designated as “Peace Squad” members work with younger students to resolve their differences in an amicable manner.

Managing Incidents of Bullying that Have Serious Impact on Individuals and/or the School:

On hearing a complaint of bullying from a student, teachers will:

- Treat the complaint of bullying seriously;
- Investigate the complaint to determine the nature of the incident, including talking to the student about whom the complaint has been made. The teacher will gather as much information as possible including when and where the alleged bullying occurred and whether or not there were any witnesses;
- When sufficient information allows, the observing teacher will inform the child’s teacher of the incident/s;
- Depending on the seriousness of the behavior, the child’s teacher will discuss the matter with the student about whom the complaint has been made, going through the seriousness of the behavior, assisting with self-awareness and opportunities for change, and referring the student to the school’s rules and the school’s Anti-Bullying Policy;
- If sufficiently concerned about the incident, report the matter to the Head of School, who may contact the parent of the student about whom the complaint has been made and the parent of the student who has been harassed;
- Follow evidence-based responses in line with empathy, responsibility, and restorative justice principles. This includes attempting to repair trust and relationships between students;
- Depending on the nature of the bullying, other agencies (e.g. police) may be contacted if appropriate;
- In serious cases, the student about whom the complaint has been made will be suspended from school.