

# Sebastopol Independent Charter School

## Administrative Regulation

### Bullying

AR 5131.2

#### Students

Education Code 234.4 mandates charter schools to adopt procedures for preventing acts of bullying, including cyberbullying.

Education Code 48900 defines "bullying," including bullying via an electronic act, for purposes of establishing grounds for suspension or expulsion. See Suspension and Expulsion Policy. In addition, Penal Code 653.2 makes it a crime to distribute another person's personally identifiable information electronically with the intent to place that person in reasonable fear of the person's own or a family member's safety and for the purpose of imminently causing harassment or injury by a third party.

Bullying is an aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived imbalance of power between individuals with the intent to cause emotional or physical harm. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or social/relational and may involve a single severe act or repetition or potential repetition of a deliberate act. Bullying includes, but is not limited to, any act described in Education Code 48900(r).

Cyberbullying includes the electronic creation or transmission of harassing communications, direct threats, or other harmful texts, sounds, or images. Cyberbullying also includes breaking into another person's electronic account or assuming that person's online identity in order to damage that person's reputation.

Examples of the types of conduct that may constitute bullying and are prohibited by the charter school include, but are not limited to:

1. **Physical bullying:** An act that inflicts harm upon a person's body or possessions, such as hitting, kicking, pinching, spitting, tripping, pushing, taking or breaking someone's possessions, or making cruel or rude hand gestures
2. **Verbal bullying:** An act that includes saying or writing hurtful things, such as teasing, name-calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting, or threats to cause harm
3. **Social/relational bullying:** An act that harms a person's reputation or relationships, such as leaving a person out of an activity on purpose, influencing others not to be friends with someone, spreading rumors, or embarrassing someone in public
4. **Cyberbullying:** An act such as sending demeaning or hateful text messages or emails, spreading rumors by email or by posting on social networking sites, or posting or sharing

embarrassing photos, videos, web site, or fake profiles.

### Measures to Prevent Bullying

The Executive director or designee shall implement measures to prevent bullying in charter school schools, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Ensuring that each school establishes clear rules for student conduct and implements strategies to promote a positive, collaborative school climate
2. Providing information to students, through student handbooks, charter school web site and social media, and other age-appropriate means, about charter school rules related to bullying, mechanisms available for reporting incidents or threats, and the consequences for engaging in bullying
3. Encouraging students to notify school staff when they are being bullied or when they suspect that another student is being bullied, and providing means by which students may report threats or incidents confidentially and anonymously
4. Conducting an assessment of bullying incidents at each school and, if necessary, increasing supervision and security in areas where bullying most often occurs, such as playgrounds, hallways, restrooms, and cafeterias
5. Annually notifying charter school employees that, pursuant to Education Code 234.1, any school staff who witnesses an act of bullying against a student has a responsibility to immediately intervene to stop the incident when it is safe to do so

### Staff Development

The Executive director or designee shall annually make available to all certificated staff and to other employees who have regular interaction with students the California Department of Education (CDE) online training module on the dynamics of bullying and cyberbullying, including the identification of bullying and cyberbullying and the implementation of strategies to address bullying. (Education Code 32283.5)

The Executive director or designee shall provide training to teachers and other school staff to raise their awareness about the legal obligation of the charter school and its employees to prevent discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying of charter school students. Such training shall be designed to provide staff with the skills to:

1. Discuss the diversity of the student body and school community, including their varying immigration experiences
2. Discuss bullying prevention strategies with students, and teach students to recognize the behavior and characteristics of bullying perpetrators and victims

3. Identify the signs of bullying or harassing behavior
4. Take immediate corrective action when bullying is observed
5. Report incidents to the appropriate authorities, including law enforcement in instances of criminal behavior

#### Information and Resources

The Executive director or designee shall post on the charter school's web site, in a prominent location and in a manner that is easily accessible to students and parents/guardians, information on bullying and harassment prevention which includes the following: (Education Code 234.6)

1. The charter school's policy on student suicide prevention, including a reference to the policy's age appropriateness for students in grades K-6
2. The definition of sex discrimination and harassment as described in Education Code 230, including the rights set forth in Education Code 221.8
3. Title IX information included on the charter school's web site pursuant to Education Code 221.61, and a link to the Title IX information included on CDE's web site pursuant to Education Code 221.6
4. Charter school policies on student sexual harassment, prevention and response to hate violence, discrimination, harassment, intimidation, bullying, and cyberbullying
5. A section on social media bullying that includes all of the references described in Education Code 234.6 as possible forums for social media
6. A link to statewide resources, including community-based organizations, compiled by CDE pursuant to Education Code 234.5.
7. Any additional information the Executive director or designee deems important for preventing bullying and harassment

#### Student Instruction

As appropriate, the charter school shall provide students with instruction, in the classroom or other educational settings, that promotes social-emotional learning, effective communication and conflict resolution skills, character development, respect for cultural and individual differences, self-esteem development, assertiveness skills, and appropriate online behavior.

The charter school shall also educate students about the negative impact of bullying, discrimination, intimidation, and harassment based on actual or perceived immigration status, religious beliefs and customs, or any other individual bias or prejudice.

Students should be taught the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, how to advocate for themselves, how to help another student who is being bullied, and when to seek assistance from a trusted adult. As role models for students, staff shall be expected to demonstrate effective problem-solving and anger management skills.

To discourage cyberbullying, teachers may advise students to be cautious about sharing passwords, personal data, or private photos online and to consider the consequences of making negative comments about others online.

### Reporting and Filing of Complaints

Any student, parent/guardian, or other individual who believes that a student has been subjected to bullying or who has witnessed bullying may report the incident to a teacher, the principal, a compliance officer, or any other available school employee.

When a report of bullying is submitted, the principal or a charter school compliance officer shall inform the student or parent/guardian of the right to file a formal written complaint in accordance with AR 1312.3 - Uniform Complaint Procedures. The student who is the alleged victim of the bullying shall be given an opportunity to describe the incident, identify witnesses who may have relevant information, and provide other evidence of bullying.

Within one business day of receiving such a report, a staff member shall notify the principal of the report, whether or not a uniform complaint is filed. In addition, any school employee who observes an incident of bullying involving a student shall, within one business day, report such observation to the principal or a charter school compliance officer, whether or not the alleged victim files a complaint.

Within two business days of receiving a report of bullying, the principal shall notify the charter school compliance officer identified in AR 1312.3.

When the circumstances involve cyberbullying, individuals with information about the activity shall be encouraged to save and print any electronic or digital messages that they feel constitute cyberbullying and to notify a teacher, the principal, or other employee so that the matter may be investigated. When a student uses a social networking site or service to bully or harass another student, the Executive director or designee may file a request with the networking site or service to suspend the privileges of the student and to have the material removed.

### Discipline/Corrective Actions

Pursuant to Education Code 48900-48900.4, "bullying" is a ground for suspension or expulsion.

The courts have generally upheld discipline for off-campus student conduct that poses an identifiable threat to the safety of other students, staff, or school property or presents a risk of substantial disruption of school activities, provided that the charter school is able to document the impact or disruption that the conduct has, or could be expected to have, on school activities (e.g., *Wynar v. Douglas County School District*, *Lavine v. Blaine School District*). The court in

J.C. v. Beverly Hills Unified School District found that the district would be able to discipline a student for a video recorded off campus and posted on YouTube, but that the discipline imposed on this particular student was not justified since the district did not present evidence of specific facts that led school officials to predict that the video would cause substantial disruption (e.g., the video was not violent or threatening nor did it lead to any confrontations between the students).

Consistent with these interpretations, Education Code 48900 defines bullying by means of an electronic act to include creation or transmission originating on or off the school site. Thus, for purposes of determining whether the conduct may be subject to suspension or expulsion, the act does not necessarily need to have been committed while at school, while coming to or from school, or during a school-sponsored activity. Nevertheless, the act needs to satisfy the criteria specified in the definition of "bullying" in Education Code 48900 (i.e., a severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of placing a reasonable student in fear of harm to the student's person or property, causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health, causing substantial interference with the student's academic performance, or causing substantial interference with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from school services, activities, or privileges).

When the conduct does not rise to the level specified in Education Code 48900, the district may implement interventions other than suspension or expulsion to address the bullying.

Corrective actions for a student who commits an act of bullying of any type may include counseling, behavioral intervention and education, and, if the behavior is severe or pervasive as defined in Education Code 48900, may include suspension or expulsion in accordance with charter school policies and regulations.

When appropriate based on the severity or pervasiveness of the bullying, the Executive director or designee shall notify the parents/guardians of victims and perpetrators and may contact law enforcement.

### Support Services

The Executive director or designee may refer a victim, witness, perpetrator, or other student affected by an act of bullying to a school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, child welfare attendance personnel, school nurse, or other school support service personnel for case management, counseling, and/or participation in a restorative justice program as appropriate. (Education Code 48900.9)

If any student involved in bullying exhibits warning signs of suicidal thought or intention or of intent to harm another person, the Executive director or designee shall, as appropriate, implement charter school intervention protocols which may include, but are not limited to, referral to charter school or community mental health services, other health professionals, and/or law enforcement.

Adopted: November 2, 2020

Revised: