

## Freedom from Bullying Policy

Tenaha Independent School District promotes a safe environment for students and staff. The purpose of the Tenaha Independent School District's policy on bullying is to assist the district in its goal of preventing and responding to acts of bullying. The act of bullying, by either an individual student or a group of students, is expressly prohibited on district property or at school related events. This policy applies not only to students who directly engage in an act of bullying but also to students who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support another student's act of bullying. The Tenaha Independent School District prohibits bullying. Retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process is a violation of district policy. The district prohibits the bullying of any student:

- During any educational program or activity conducted by the district;
- During any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity or on a school bus;
- Through the use of any electronic device or data while on school grounds or on a school bus or through the use of computer software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, or computer network of the school district. The physical location or time of access of a computer-related incident cannot be raised as a defense in any disciplinary action initiated under this section; or
- Through threats, using any of the above methods, to be carried out on school grounds, which includes threats made outside of school hours that are intended to be carried out during any school-related or school-sponsored program or activity, or on a school bus.

Though an incident of alleged bullying may occur off campus and may not entail threats of acts to occur during school hours, if a student's ability to receive an education or a school's ability to provide an education is significantly impaired, as determined by the district administration, disciplinary sanctions may be imposed.

Such behavior is considered harassment or bullying whether it takes place on or off school property, at any school-sponsored function, or in a school vehicle.

A student or witness may file a complaint following the same procedures for bullying against a student that occurs at a bus stop or enroute to and from school, and the school shall investigate and/or provide assistance and intervention as the principal or designee deems appropriate, which may include the use of the Tenaha ISD police department.

The following definitions shall apply:

**Bullying** means persistent inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students. Bullying exploits an imbalance of power between the student perpetrator and the student victim through written or verbal expression or physical conduct and interferes with a student's education or substantially disrupts the operating of a school.

Reports of bullying should be made as soon as possible after the alleged act or knowledge of the alleged act. A failure to promptly report may impair the District's ability to investigate and address the prohibited conduct.

Any student who believes that he or she has experienced bullying or believes that another student has experienced bullying should immediately report the alleged acts to a teacher, counselor, principal or other district employee. A report may be made orally or in writing.

Students or parents in the school community can anonymously submit any suspicious activity, bullying or other student related issues to a school administrator(s). (False reporting will be taken seriously to the full extent of the law.)

Any district employee who receives notice that a student has or may have experienced bullying shall immediately make a report on the district's Student Discipline System.

Failure of a district employee to report a suspected instance of bullying may result in disciplinary action.

The campus principal will be notified when a report has been made and will investigate. The campus principal or designee shall determine whether the allegations in the report, if proven, would constitute prohibited conduct as defined by Board Policy FFH(LOCAL), and if so proceed under that policy instead.

The campus principal or designee shall conduct an appropriate investigation based on the allegations in the report.

The campus principal or designee shall promptly take interim action calculated to prevent bullying during the course of an investigation, if appropriate.

Appropriate prevention and intervention steps shall be taken based on the level of severity of infraction as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

The campus principal or designee will complete the investigation on the Student Discipline System, including a determination of whether bullying occurred.

If the results of an investigation indicate that bullying occurred, the campus principal shall promptly respond by taking appropriate disciplinary or corrective action reasonably calculated to address the conduct in accordance with the district's Student Code of Conduct. [For information on student transfers due to bullying, see Board Policy FDB.]

Victims of bullying shall be offered counseling services by the school.

Consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a student who commits one or more acts of bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion.

Consequences for a student who commits an act of bullying shall be unique to the individual incident and shall vary in method and severity according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance. The consequences must also be consistent with the district's Student Code of Conduct.

The district may take action based on the results of an investigation, even if the district concludes that the conduct did not rise to the level of bullying under this policy.

To the greatest extent possible, the district shall respect the privacy of the complainant, persons against whom a report is filed, and witnesses. Limited disclosures may be necessary in order to conduct a thorough investigation.

A parent, legal guardian, or adult student who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation or plan of action may appeal through Board Policy FNG(LOCAL) beginning at the appropriate level.

Information regarding this policy shall be distributed annually to district students through the student handbook and the Student Code of Conduct. Copies of the policy shall be readily available at each campus and the district's administrative offices.

The district shall implement research-based bullying prevention and intervention programs. Such programs shall provide training for District students and staff for effectively responding to, intervening in, and reporting incidents of bullying.

At the beginning of each school year, the school principal or principal's designee and/or appropriate Executive Director shall provide awareness of this policy, as well as about the process for reporting incidents, investigations, and appeals to students, school staff, parents, or other persons responsible for the welfare of students through appropriate references in the Student Code of Conduct, the Student Handbook, the school Web site, and/or other reasonable means.

Students shall be provided with age-appropriate information on the recognition and prevention of harassment, intimidation or bullying, and their rights and responsibilities under this and other District policies and rules. Parents shall be provided with copies of this policy and appropriate materials on the recognition and prevention of harassment, intimidation, and bullying.

Note that school board policies may be revised at any time. For legal context and the most current copy of the local policy, visit [www.tenahaisd.com](http://www.tenahaisd.com). Above is the text of Tenaha Independent School District's policy FFI(LOCAL) as of the date that this handbook was finalized for this school year.

**STUDENT WELFARE: FREEDOM FROM BULLYING  
FFI(LOCAL)**