

11. Diocese of Allentown Policy on Prohibiting Bullying, Harassment, Intimidation or Hazing

A. Purpose

The Secretariat for Catholic Education (Office of Education) for the Diocese of Allentown is committed to providing a caring, friendly, safe and respectful environment for all students, employees, volunteers, and visitors of our schools. Each Catholic school, in fulfilling its role within the educational mission of the Church, must share and live out, through Catholic Christian tradition, the message of Jesus Christ and be committed to providing an integrated Catholic educational environment that permeates all aspects of its daily life and operations. Therefore, acts of harassment, hazing, intimidation, and bullying (including cyber-bullying) are unacceptable behaviors and are prohibited in our schools.

Bullying, Cyber-bullying, harassment, intimidation or hazing constitute conduct that disrupts both the student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its students in a safe and embracing Catholic environment. This behavior is against the fundamental tenet of "love your neighbor as yourself," and destroys respect for the dignity of the student, undermines the Christian identity of the school, and deprives the student of a safe and caring learning environment.

The purpose of this policy is to guide the schools of the Diocese of Allentown in our goal of preventing and responding to acts of bullying, intimidation, violence and other similar disruptive behavior with "Zero Indifference." Administration, faculty, staff, and volunteers are to demonstrate appropriate behavior by treating others with civility and respect, and being aware of and not tolerating harassment, intimidation, hazing, and bullying.

B. Definitions

For purposes of this Policy, the following definitions shall apply:

Bullying- repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or physical gesture, or any combination thereof, that:

- Creates a hostile educational environment
- Substantially interferes with a student's education benefits, opportunities, or performance
- Causes physical or emotional harm to the individual or damage to their property
- Places an individual in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself, or damage to his/her property
- Including but not limited to physical intimidation, assault, extortion, oral or written threats, slurs, innuendo, teasing and putdowns, demeaning comments, cartoon drawing, graffiti, pranks, name calling, threatening looks, gestures or actions, cruel rumors, false accusation, social isolation, flashing a weapon, taunting/ridiculing, stalking and relationship undermining.

For purposes of this Policy, whenever the term “Bullying” is used it is to denote either Bullying or Cyber-Bullying.

Cyber-Bullying - Bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by:

- Wire
- Radio
- Photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messaging or facsimile communications

Cyber-Bullying shall also include the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates another person as author posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of Bullying.

Cyber-Bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of Bullying.

Harassment, hazing, intimidation – acts, word or other behavior, by an individual or group against another individual or group characterized by:

- Intent to harm.
- Intensity and duration over a period of time.
- An interpersonal relationship where there is an imbalance of power, not mutual or intentional provocation by the victim.
- Inflicting physical or emotional harm or discomfort or damage to the person’s reputation and/or relationships.
- A level so severe, persistent, or pervasive that an intimidation or threatening education environment is created or the orderly operation of the school is substantially disrupted.

Name-calling – the use of language to defame, demean, or degrade individuals or groups.

C. **Prohibitions**

Bullying, harassment, hazing, intimidation and name-calling are prohibited:

- On school grounds owned, leased or used by a school;
- On property immediately adjacent to school ground;
- At any school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds;
- At a school bus stop;
- On a school bus or any other vehicle owned, leased, or used by the school;
- Through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by a school or any personal device.

Bullying, harassment, hazing, intimidation and name-calling are also prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school if the acts in question:

- Create a hostile environment at school for the individual.
- Infringe on the rights of the individual at school.
- Materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.