

# Pioneer Springs Community School

## Bullying Policy

Approved 4/8/19

Pioneer Springs Community School believes respect is the cornerstone of all of our interactions and behaviors. The Board acknowledges the dignity and worth of all students and staff and believes that all students have the right to attend a school that is safe, secure, and supportive of individual dignity. To that end, the school and community have an obligation to promote mutual respect and safe and harmonious relations that support human dignity and equality.

Pioneer Springs Community School will not tolerate any form of bullying, or other acts of harassment by students or school personnel, including, but not limited to, actions based on gender, race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, physical characteristics, and physical or mental disabilities. This policy is part of the Student Code of Conduct and will be disseminated at orientation prior to the beginning of each school year and will be posted on the school's website with the Code of Conduct.

### Definitions

*NC General Statute 115C-407.5. Bullying and harassing behavior:* Bullying or harassing behavior includes, but is not limited to, acts reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, socioeconomic status, academic status, gender identity, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics.

**Teasing:** Critical statements about a person's actions, appearance, family circumstances, or other characteristics made by someone (the "teaser") to produce a strong reaction from the person being teased and/or other observers. Examples of teasing include name-calling, put-downs, and laughing at or commenting on mistakes or accidents. Hurtful teasing is fully intended to hurt the feelings of the person being teased, exclude them from the group, and diminish the dignity and worth of the individual or group being teased.

**Bullying:** refers to the exercise of power by one individual (or group) over another weaker individual (or group). This type of bullying usually involves threats of injury or other negative consequences for non-compliance. An example of this bullying behavior may be an older individual threatening a younger individual with some type of physical harm if he doesn't give him some money. Another type of bullying is unfair emotional persuasion and can come from a friend. This type of bullying is called "peer pressure." Examples of peer pressure may include phrases such as "I'll be your best friend if" or "What are you, a chicken?". This type of peer pressure relies heavily upon exclusion from the group in order to force compliance. A third type of bullying is called "dangerous bullying" and can include the presence of a weapon (knife, gun) or objects that can be used as weapons (chains, bats).

**Harassment:** The most common form of harassment is the creation of a *pervasive hostile environment* which means that language, behavior, pictures, symbols, and artifacts cause a student or a group of students dread, fear, anxiety, concern, sadness, shame, or embarrassment.

The hostile environment affects the ability of the student to be in school and to be successful in school. Examples of hostile environment might include displays of swastikas, burning crosses, nooses, and the use of derogatory terms to address or define persons (a one-time mistake - slip of the tongue- does not qualify as harassment unless a pattern of such behavior can be established). Other actions which may create a *pervasive hostile environment* include, slurs, innuendos, derogatory remarks, jokes, gestures, demeaning comments, mimicking, name calling, graffiti, physical contact, stalking, displaying or circulating written materials and pictures (including clothing) threats, hostile treatment, violence or other verbal or physical conduct, which cause, or threaten to cause, or are likely to cause, bodily harm and/or personal degradation. *Quid pro quo harassment* generally approximates the characteristics of some bullying behaviors and involves intimidation to bring about compliance or a desired outcome.

In the event of teasing, bullying, and/or harassment, the incident shall be reported to a member of the administration. Anonymous reporting is acceptable; however, any person who abuses the anonymous reporting provisions of this policy will be subject to the consequences as outlined under the Willful Disobedience section in the Code of Conduct. Anonymous reporting may include the verbal, confidential, one-on-one communication to a staff member or written communication sealed in an envelope and placed in the reporting box. Reprisal or retaliation against any person reporting an act of bullying is prohibited.

The Administrative Team shall investigate the incident and, if confirmed, parents/ guardians of both the aggressor and victim will be notified and provided a copy of the investigation notes. Parents must be informed of due process rights and the possible consequences.

A written summary and the conclusion of the findings of fact will be kept on file in the school office.

In the instances of confirmed bullying or harassment, an intervention plan will be developed with the parents (aggressor and victim), students, and appropriate staff.

**Consequences:**

Consequences for teasing, bullying, or harassment are at the discretion of the administrator and may include, but are not limited to, a 1 to 10 day suspension, referral for counseling, referral to other community agencies, restorative action, or recommendation for long-term suspension.

**Students with special needs:**

Students with special needs are not exempted from the consequences, only the context in which the consequences are determined. Federal and state laws shall be followed when assigning a consequence for an exceptional child.