

VCS Bullying Policy and Procedures

The School Board is committed to providing a safe, positive, productive, and nurturing educational environment for all of its students. The Board encourages the promotion of positive interpersonal relations between members of the school community. Bullying behavior toward a student, whether by other students, staff, or third parties is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated. This prohibition includes physical, verbal, and psychological abuse as provided herein. The Board will not tolerate any gestures, comments, threats, or actions which cause or threaten to cause bodily harm or personal degradation.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying as defined in State law means overt, repeated acts or gestures, including verbal or written communications transmitted, physical acts committed, or any other behaviors committed by a student or group of students against another student with the intent to harass, ridicule, humiliate, intimidate, or harm the other student. This type of behavior is a form of harassment, although it need not be based on any of the legally protected characteristics, such as sex, race, color, national origin, marital status, or disability. It would include, but not be limited to, such behaviors as stalking, intimidating, menacing, coercion, name-calling, taunting, making threats, and hazing.

Location and Times of Bullying in Jurisdiction of VCS

This policy applies when a student is on school grounds immediately before or during school hours, immediately after school hours, or at any other time when the school is being used by a school group; off school grounds at a school activity, function, or event; traveling to or from school or a school activity, function, or event; or, using property or equipment provided by the school.

Reporting

Any student who believes s/he has been or is currently the victim of bullying should immediately report the situation to the building principal or assistant principal, or the Superintendent. The student may also report concerns to a teacher or counselor, or social worker who will be responsible for notifying the appropriate administrator or Board official. Complaints against the building principal should be filed with the Superintendent. Complaints against the Superintendent should be filed with the Board President. **Every student is encouraged, and every staff member is required, to report any situation that they believe to be bullying behavior directed toward a student.** Reports may be made to those identified above.

Investigation

All complaints about bullying behavior that may violate this policy shall be promptly investigated. If the investigation finds an instance of bullying behavior has occurred, it will result in prompt and appropriate disciplinary action. This may include up to expulsion for students, up to discharge for employees, exclusion for parents, guests, volunteers, and contractors, and removal from any officer position and/or a request to resign for Board members. Individuals may also be referred to law enforcement officials. The complainant shall be notified of the findings of the investigation, and as appropriate, that remedial action has been taken.

Complaint Procedures

Building principals and assistant principals and the Superintendent have responsibility for conducting investigations concerning claims of bullying. The investigator(s) shall be a neutral party having had no involvement in the complaint presented. Any student, employee or third party who has knowledge of conduct in violation of Policy 5517.01 or feels s/he has been a victim of bullying in violation of Policy 5517.01 shall immediately report his/her concerns. All complaints will be promptly investigated in accordance with the following procedures:

- Step I Any complaints, allegations or rumors of bullying shall be presented to the building principal or assistant principal or the Superintendent. Students may also report their concerns to teachers or counselors who will be responsible for notifying the appropriate administrator or Board official. Complaints against the building principal shall be filed with the Superintendent. Complaints against the Superintendent shall be filed with the Board President. Information may be initially presented anonymously. All such information will be reduced to writing and will include the specific nature of the offense and corresponding dates. If the person filing the complaint is an adult, s/he must sign the charge affirming its veracity. If the person filing the complaint is a minor, s/he may either sign the charge or affirm its veracity before two (2) administrators.
- Step II The administrator/Board official receiving the complaint shall promptly investigate. Parents will be notified of the nature of any complaint involving their student. The administrator/Board official will arrange such meetings as may be necessary with all concerned parties within five (5) work days after receipt of the information or complaint. The parties will have an opportunity to submit evidence and a list of witnesses. All findings related to the complaint will be reduced to writing. The administrator/Board official conducting the investigation shall notify the complainant and parents as appropriate, (in writing,) when the investigation is concluded and a decision regarding disciplinary action, as warranted, is determined.
 - A copy of the notification letter or the date and details of notification to the complainant, together with any other documentation related to the incident, including disciplinary action taken or recommended, shall be forwarded to the Superintendent.
- Step III If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision at Step II, s/he may submit a written appeal to the Superintendent or designee. Such appeal must be filed within ten (10) work days after receipt of the Step II decision. The Superintendent or designee will arrange such meetings with the complainant and other affected parties as deemed necessary to review and discuss the appeal. The Superintendent or designee shall provide a written decision to the complainant's appeal within ten (10) work days of the appeal being filed.
- Step IV If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision at Step III, a written appeal may be filed with the Board. Such appeal must be filed within ten (10) work days after receipt of the Step III decision. The Board shall, within twenty (20) work days, conduct a hearing at which time the complainant shall be given an opportunity to present the complaint. The Board shall provide a written decision to the complainant within ten (10) work days following completion of the hearing.

Documentation related to the incident, other than any discipline imposed or remedial action taken, will be maintained in a file separate from the student's education records or the employee's personnel file.

Retaliation

Retaliation against any person who reports, is thought to have reported, files a complaint, or otherwise participates in an investigation or inquiry concerning allegations of bullying is prohibited and will not be tolerated. Such retaliation shall be considered a serious violation of Board policy and independent of whether a complaint is substantiated. Suspected retaliation should be reported in the same manner as bullying. Retaliation may result in disciplinary action.

False Reporting

Making intentionally false reports about bullying for the purpose of getting someone in trouble is similarly prohibited and will not be tolerated. False reports may result in disciplinary action.

Confidentiality

To the extent appropriate and/or legally permitted, confidentiality will be maintained during the investigation process. However, a proper investigation will, in some circumstances, require the disclosure of names and allegations.