



The SEED School of Washington, D.C.

## BULLYING/HARASSMENT POLICY

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SEED DC is committed to creating a safe, caring, respectful learning environment for all students. We will treat all members of our community with civility and respect. Our school strictly enforces a prohibition against bullying or harassment of any students or staff. In collaboration with teachers and administrators the school has developed and will implement a plan for education and discipline, including curriculum, to prevent bullying and harassment and to help adults and students to respond effectively to reports and observations of bullying or harassment.

This policy is intended to (1) prevent bullying/harassment and cyber-bullying among our students, (2) to encourage students and their parents to have confidence in the school's policies and procedures and to come forward promptly whenever a student is subject to conduct that is prohibited by this or any other school policy, and (3) to implement appropriate discipline and other corrective measures when they are found to be warranted.

### Definitions

**Bullying:** Has been defined by the Youth Bullying Prevention Act of 2012 (YBPA) as any severe, pervasive, or persistent act or conduct, whether physical, electronic, or verbal that:

- A. May be based on a youth's actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, intellectual ability, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, disability, source of income, status as a victim of an intra-family offense, place of residence or business, or any other distinguishing characteristic, or on a youth's association with a person, or group with any person, with one or more of the actual or perceived foregoing characteristics; and
- B. Shall be reasonably predicted to:
  - 1. Place the youth in reasonable fear of physical harm to his or her person or property;
  - 2. Cause a substantial detrimental effect on the youth's physical or mental health;



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3. Substantially interfere with the youth's academic performance or attendance; or
4. Substantially interfere with the youth's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by an agency, educational institution, or grantee.

**Harassment:** Behavior that creates a hostile environment for the victim at school.

**Sexual Harassment:** Defined as unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment can include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment includes sexual violence, which the Inspired Teaching School defines as physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person's will or where a person is incapable of giving consent. Sexual harassment can be carried out by school employees, other students, or third parties. This policy applies to sexual harassment by other students. Complaints about sexual harassment by school employees or third parties should be made pursuant to the SEED DC's Grievance Procedures.

**Cyber Bullying:** Bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as a telephone, cell phone, computer, or the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant message, text message, or Internet posting, whether on a webpage, social media application in a blog or elsewhere.

**Hostile Environment:** Bullying/harassment creates a hostile environment when the conduct is sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent so as to interfere with or limit a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or opportunities offered by a school.

**Retaliation:** Any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

### **Bullying/Harassment Prohibited**

Bullying/harassment is prohibited on school grounds, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at school sponsored or school related activities, functions



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or programs whether on or off school grounds, on or off school bus or other vehicles owned, leased or used by the school, or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school.

Bullying/harassment is also prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is not school related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the school, if the act or acts in question create a hostile environment at school for the victim, infringe on the rights of the victim at school or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Retaliation against a youth, volunteer or staff member who reports bullying/harassment, provides information about an act of bullying/harassment, or witnesses an act of bullying/harassment is also prohibited.

Administrators will make expectations clear to students and staff that bullying/harassment will not be tolerated and will be the grounds for disciplinary action up to and including suspension and dismissal for students.

The school will promptly and reasonably investigate all allegations of bullying/harassment.

Ms. Rashida Holman-Jones, Director of Family and Community Engagement will be responsible for handling all complaints and investigations of bullying/harassment.

### **Reporting Bullying**



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All staff members are required to report any bullying or harassment they witness or are made aware of on a Staff Incident Report and/or Referral. Staff members should immediately record all such incidents in accordance with school procedures for reporting behavior incidents and notify the Dean of Students or other administrator on duty.

Any student who believes that they have been the target of bullying/harassment or who is aware of bullying/harassment is strongly encouraged to promptly report the matter orally or in writing to a Dean of Students, or to any other faculty or staff member or member of SEED DC with whom the student is comfortable speaking. Also, any student who is subject to retaliation in violation of this policy or who knows of another student who has been subject to retaliation is urged to report it as soon as possible.

A parent who witnesses or becomes aware of bullying/harassment is strongly urged to promptly notify one of the school deans. A parent should also report any incident of retaliation in violation of this policy to a school dean.

### **Anonymous Reporting**

Reports may be made anonymously, although no formal response will be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report. However, such a report may trigger an investigation.

### **Investigation of Incidents of Bullying/Harassment or Retaliation**

If an incident of bullying, harassment or retaliation is reported, the Director of Family and Community Engagement will respond quickly and appropriately to investigate and intervene. Verbal or written complaints or reports of bullying/sexual harassment/retaliation will be investigated in an adequate, reliable and impartial manner. Each investigation will include, as necessary, interviewing individuals



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involved and reviewing all relevant information including but not limited to social media posts, written messages or notes, video footage, and written student statements. All documentation related to the investigation will remain confidential. SEED DC will take steps to ensure the safety of all parties involved and determine whether the incident was one of bullying/sexual harassment/retaliation. SEED DC will also take steps to provide the complainant with periodic updates on the status of the investigation. Once bullying/sexual harassment/retaliation behavior has been determined, the following groups will be notified as needed by SEED DC, making every effort to protect confidentiality of those who report bullying/sexual harassment/retaliation:

- **Parents and Guardians:** SEED DC will notify the parents or guardians of victims, instigators, and witnesses as appropriate, about the nature of the incident and the steps in place to respond to it. The Director of Climate and Culture will determine if parents or guardians should be informed prior to or after the investigation of the incident.
- **Law Enforcement Agencies:** If SEED DC determines that the reported incident may involve criminal activity or the basis for criminal charges, information about the incident must be conveyed to the appropriate law enforcement agencies.

Within ten (10) school days of receiving a report of bullying, the Director of Family and Community Engagement will conduct the investigation and respond to the parents of the students involved in writing, summarizing the course and outcome of the investigation and identifying an appropriate resolution. If it is determined that bullying/sexual harassment has occurred, appropriate corrective and remedial action will be taken. SEED DC will make determinations as to whether a reported incident constitutes bullying/harassment based on all of the facts and circumstances surrounding the incident. SEED DC will use a preponderance of the evidence standard (i.e., more likely than not that bullying/sexual harassment occurred) when resolving complaints.



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Steps will be taken as necessary to protect suspected victims of bullying/sexual harassment during the course of the investigation process. SEED DC will make every effort to protect confidentiality during the course of the investigation. The individual responsible for conducting the investigation will be responsible for making determinations about confidentiality.

### **Appeals**

Any party who not satisfied with the outcome of the initial investigation and response from SEED DC may appeal in writing to the Head of School. Appeals must be made within 30 days of the conclusion of the initial investigation. The secondary investigation shall be completed within 30 days of receipt of an appeal, unless: (1) circumstances require additional time to complete a thorough investigation; (2) the higher-level authority sets forth those circumstances in writing; (3) the additional time is not to exceed 15 days. The party not satisfied with the outcome shall be informed of his/her right to seek further redress under the Human Rights Act.

### **Sanctions and Remedies for Bullying/Harassment**

SEED DC takes a tiered approach to responding to inappropriate behavior. The same approach will be taken when responding to bullying/harassment. SEED DC's levels of discipline are designed to (a) appropriately correct the bullying/harassment behavior; (b) prevent another occurrence of bullying/harassment or retaliation; (c) protect the target of bullying/harassment; and are flexible and can be varied in method and severity based on: (i) nature of the incident; (ii) developmental age of the person committing the act at issue, and; (iii) any history of problem behavior from the person committing the act at issue. The School Dean may apply more than one consequence, or skip a step, depending on the severity and nature of the violation.

Students engaged in bullying /harassment will be suspended 1 day for the first referral, and two (2) days for the second referral. A Step I Reflection Meeting will be scheduled to reflect on behavior with parents and students to determine what



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remedial action is appropriate and how it will be implemented. The goal is to correct the situation to the extent it is reasonably possible, to take such steps as can be taken to prevent there being a repetition of the incident, and to prevent the student or students targeted and others who participated in the investigation from being subject to retaliation. If this same student receives a third referral for bullying/harassment, he/she will be automatically suspended for three (3) days and a Step 2 Discipline Review Meeting with SEED DC Administrators will be scheduled. The purpose of this meeting is to determine whether a student is dismissed from SEED DC or if the student may return to SEED DC programming.

### **Bystander Policy**

Students are expected to report rumors of bullying/harassment, planned bullying/harassment, as well as bullying/harassment actually observed. Students who watch and laugh, but do not report what they have witnessed, are considered bystanders and will be treated as participants.

SEED DC defines bystanders as those who observe or have knowledge of, a level 3 or 4 without alerting or seeking support from a school staff member. This may include instances of bullying/harassment, fighting, theft, or arson.