

BULLYING

Bullying and harassment are major distractions from learning. The grades of victims can suffer. Fear can lead to chronic absenteeism, truancy, or even dropping out of school. Bystanders feel both guilty and helpless for not confronting the bully.

As a rule, bullying behavior starts in elementary school and peaks in the middle school years. However, it attracts more attention from adults when it appears in high school. Because the students are older and physically larger, the behavior is recognized as being less tolerable and more inappropriate. Also, sexual harassment is, in fact, a form of bullying.

Bullying of any type has no place in a school setting. The Agawam Public Schools district will endeavor to maintain a learning and working environment free of bullying.

Bullying is defined as the act of one or more individuals intimidating one or more persons through verbal, physical, mental, or written interactions *including via any electronic media*. Bullying can take many forms and occur in virtually any setting. It can create unnecessary and unwarranted anxiety that will affect attending school, walking in corridors, eating in the cafeteria, playing in the school yard or recreation areas, participating in or attending special and extra-curricular activities, or riding on the bus to and from school each day.

Examples of bullying include but are not exclusive to:

1. Intimidation either physical or psychological
2. Threats of any kind stated or implied
3. Assaults on students including those that are verbal, physical, psychological, and emotional
4. Attacks on student property

The School Committee expects administrators and supervisors to make clear to students and staff that bullying in the school building, on school grounds, on the bus or school-sanctioned transportation, or at school-sponsored functions will not be tolerated and will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including suspension and expulsion for students, and termination for employees.

The district will promptly and reasonably investigate allegations of harassment including bullying. The principal of each building will be responsible for handling all complaints by students alleging harassment including bullying.

The Superintendent will develop administrative guidelines and procedures for the implementation of this policy.