

## HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING

### Definition

“Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying” means any gesture or written, verbal, or physical act that can harm and/or intimidate. Any verbal or physical act that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic such as race, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical, or sensory handicap, or by any other distinguishing characteristic that takes place on school property, at any school sponsored function, or on a school bus and that:

- a. a reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of harming a student or damaging the student’s property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of harm from this person or damage to his property; or
- b. has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students, in such a way as to cause substantial disruption in, or substantial interference with, the orderly operation of the school. N.J.S.A. 18A: 37-14; 15.

Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying is prohibited for students, employees, and visitors at Westbridge Academy.

Westbridge Academy expects students to conduct themselves in keeping with their levels of development, maturity and demonstrated capabilities with a proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students and school staff as well as proper care of school facilities and equipment. The Administration of this school believes that standards for student behavior must be established cooperatively by students, parents/guardians and staff to produce an atmosphere that encourages students to grow in self-discipline. The development of this atmosphere requires respect for self and others, as well as for school property, on the part of students and staff members. It is the obligation of staff and parents to use disciplinary situations as opportunities to help students learn to accept responsibility for the consequences of their behavior.

The Executive Director shall provide annually to all students, and their parents /guardians, Westbridge Academy rules regarding student conduct. Special provisions shall be made for informing those parents/guardians whose primary language is other than English.

A positive and supportive climate is a necessary foundation for effective promotion of positive behavior. The climate of a school is affected by many things, including academic instruction, classroom and school-wide behavior management, and parental involvement, as well as by relationships among teachers, school administrators, nonteaching staff, students and parents/guardians. In the classrooms, teachers can utilize cooperative games, class meetings and lessons focused on respect and cooperation. It should be expected that everyone at school, adults and students alike, treat each other with respect. Verbal reminders and review of behavioral expectations are proactive and effective interventions.

In determining the appropriate response to students who commit one or more acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying, school administrators should consider the following factors: the development and maturity levels of the parties involved, the levels of harm, the surrounding circumstances, the nature of the behaviors, past incidents or past or continuing patterns of behavior and the context in which the alleged incidents occurred.

After careful consideration of these factors, an appropriate consequence will be determined, consistent with case law, federal and state statutes, regulations and policies, and Westbridge Academy policies and procedures. Consequences and appropriate remedial action for students who commit acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying may range from positive behavioral interventions up to and including suspension and/or termination. It can also include reporting to law enforcement officers. In addition, Westbridge Academy should make resources (e.g., counseling) available to individual victims of harassment, intimidation, and bullying and respond in a manner that does not stigmatize the victim(s).

The Principal is responsible for receiving complaints alleging violations of this policy (N.J.S.A. 18A: 37-15 b(6)). All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this policy to the Principal. All other members of the school community (including students, parents, and visitors) are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy.

Reprisal or retaliation is prohibited against any person who reports an act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying (N.J.S.A. 18A: 37-15 b(8)). The consequence and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in these behaviors shall be determined by the administrator after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act, in accordance with case law, federal and state statutes and regulations and, Westbridge Academy's policies and procedures.

District case managers and parents will be immediately contacted to participate in the final decision and/or be notified in writing with a meeting to follow. The policy shall be disseminated to all school staff, students and parents, along with a statement explaining that it applies to all acts of harassment, intimidation, and bullying that occur on school property, at school sponsored functions, or on a school bus. This policy will be discussed by the Executive Director with our school staff at our annual meeting and at staff development meetings. Discussions with parents will be done at Westbridge Academy's "Back to School Night", during IEP meetings, and during Westbridge Academy's intake procedure. As part of this process, school staff and parents/guardians should discuss their roles and responsibilities in the student's educational process. Parental participation is of utmost importance.

The goal of this policy is to foster a safe and disciplined environment that is conducive to learning, where individuals treat one another with civility and respect. This policy is also included in the Employee Policies Manual and shall be incorporated into Westbridge Academy's Staff Development Program.