

Office of the Superintendent of Schools  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Rockville, Maryland

August 15, 2018

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Policy JHF, Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation, and Possible Retaliation  
(06-25-18-11)

**Question**

During the discussion regarding the technical amendments for Policy JHF, *Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation*, Dr. Docca requested information regarding how the system deals with reprisals or intimidation that may occur against individuals who file such a complaint.

**Response**

Board [Policy JHF](#), *Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation*, sets forth the Board's commitment to prohibiting reprisal or retaliation against individuals who report acts of bullying, harassment, or intimidation, or who are targets, witnesses, bystanders, or others with reliable information about an act of bullying, harassment, or intimidation. Policy JHF further states that the prohibition of reprisal and retaliation against individuals who report acts of bullying, harassment, or intimidation must be included as a part of a systemwide prevention and intervention program and that consequences should be consistently and fairly applied.

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) [Regulation JHF-RA](#), *Student Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation*, provides procedures that guard against reprisal or retaliation directed at individuals who report acts of bullying through prevention, early intervention, remedial activities, and specific consequences as needed. Schoolwide bullying, harassment, or intimidation prevention programs, implemented as part of a system of positive behavioral supports, character education, violence prevention, and school improvement at all grade levels, include a focus on the prohibition of reprisals or intimidation that may occur against individuals who file a complaint of bullying. Extensive notice of resources available to students and families is updated and provided annually through the distribution of *A Student's Guide to Rights and Responsibilities in MCPS*; quarterly distribution to students and families of reporting form MCPS Form 230-35, *Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation Reporting Form*; and the *Student Code of Conduct in MCPS*. A list of community resources also is provided on the "[Preventing Student Bullying](#)" website.

MCPS offers many supports and services to help prevent bullying, including staff members in the Office of Student and Family Support and Engagement (school counselors, school psychologists, parent community coordinators, and pupil personnel workers) who assist in the development of individual, group, or schoolwide approaches to bullying prevention. Restorative practices and remedial approaches planned through collaboration with families and other community stakeholders are designed to prevent future occurrences, and protect alleged victims from retaliation and/or further episodes of bullying by providing an opportunity to those involved in the bullying incident to share how the incident affected others in a safe environment and for the alleged student who bullied to repair the harm that was caused through words and actions that are memorialized in a contract signed by all participants.

Among the most effective tools against retaliation are the conferences that are required to be conducted after the investigation of a bullying complaint. Regulation JHF-RA requires that, within two weeks of the investigation, designated school staff members conduct separate conferences with the alleged student who was bullied and the alleged student who bullied to verify the bullying, harassment, or intimidation has ceased. These conferences may occur as part of counseling interventions. Another follow-up conference or conversation must be held with the alleged student who was bullied and the alleged student who bullied four weeks after the investigation to verify that the bullying, harassment, or intimidation has ceased.

According to the *Student Code of Conduct in MCPS*, any disciplinary response to bullying or harassment should emphasize intervention strategies. Consequences for bullying or harassment range from Level 2 (e.g., community service, peer mediation, temporary removal from class) to Level 5 (e.g., long-term suspension, expulsion, or referral to alternative education programs). Repetition of behavior always is a factor when considering appropriate disciplinary consequences; therefore, if a student's inappropriate behavior also is an act of retaliation, it may be considered for a heightened level of consequence.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Jonathan T. Brice, associate superintendent, Office of Student and Family Support and Engagement, at 240-453-2426 or Mr. Joshua I. Civin, general counsel, at 240-314-4840.

JRS:JIC:spw

Copy to:

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