Clarksen Central School District is committed to providing a safe school environment where all students and employees are treated with respect and dignity, and are safe from bullying, discrimination, intimidation and harassment (see Harassment Policy #4171 and Dignity For All Students Act). A safe school environment is fundamental to our K-12 education program and is extended to everyone without exception.

Bullying is a violation of our District’s core values and will not be tolerated. The Board of Education condemns all forms of bullying. No person, student, or employee should be fearful of being bullied or harassed. The action of any one person or group of individuals which threatens the health, mental health, or safety of students and/or staff must be addressed promptly. Early intervention, reinforcement of a consistent message and follow through from students, parents, staff and administration will ensure that everyone’s right to learn and work in a safe environment is respected. Bullying that occurs off-campus, which endangers the health, mental health, or safety of students or staff within the school or substantially disrupts the educational process, will be addressed. A community approach is needed in these situations with cooperation between parents, school faculty, and students, and if needed, the School Resource Officer.

To help provide a safe and civil educational environment and in compliance with the Dignity for All Students Act, the District will:

- Adopt guidelines to be used in school training programs to raise awareness and sensitivity of school employees to these issues and to enable them to respond appropriately;
- Designate at least one staff member in each school to be trained in non-discriminatory instructional and counseling methods and handling human relations; and
- Adopt a statement to be read at the beginning of all District- and School-level meetings related to the behavioral expectations associated with respect and dignity.

For the purposes of this Policy, bullying is defined as a hostile activity which harms or induces humiliation, exclusionary acts, or fear through the threat of further aggression (and/or creates terrorizing). Bullying may be premeditated or a sudden activity. It may be subtle or easy to identify, done by one person or a group. Bullying includes but is not necessarily limited to:

- **Power imbalance** - occurs when an individual uses his/her physical or social power over another individual.
- **Intent to harm** - an individual seeks to inflict physical or emotional harm and/or takes pleasure in this activity.
- **Threat of further aggression** – the individual who bullies or the individual who is bullied believes the bullying will continue.
- **Terrorizing** - when any bullying increases, it becomes a “systematic violence or harassment used to intimidate and maintain dominance.” (Coloroso, *The Bully, The Bullied & The Bystander*, 2003)
While the focus of this Policy is on prevention, bullying acts may still occur. Where bullying has occurred, offenders will be given the clear message that their actions are wrong and that the behavior must stop immediately. Offenders will receive in-school guidance in making positive choices in their relationships with others. If appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken by the administration.

Students or employees of the Clarkstown Central School District who have been bullied, parents whose children have been bullied, or other students who observe bullying behavior are expected to make a verbal and/or written complaint to a teacher, coach, bus driver, social worker, counselor, supervisor, administrator, or any other school employee (nurse, secretary, etc.). To the greatest extent possible, the identity of those who report bullying will be kept confidential. Reports may be made anonymously to a staff member designated in each building, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. However, staff members are expected to refer anonymous reports of bullying to a school administrator.

Intervention by adults and bystanders is an important step to prevent escalation and to resolve issues in the earliest stages. All such complaints will be documented, tracked and handled according to the regulations and procedures accompanying this Policy and the District’s Code of Conduct.
DIGNITY FOR ALL REGULATION

This regulation sets forth detailed guidelines for reporting, investigating and remedying allegations of bullying.

“Bullying” is a form of harassment that generally consists of inappropriate persistent behavior including threats or intimidation of others, treating others cruelly, exclusionary acts, terrorizing, coercing, or repeated put-downs and/or badgering others.

Unacceptable Conduct

School-related conduct, which the district considers unacceptable and which may constitute bullying includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- **Verbal bullying** including name calling, insulting remarks, verbal teasing, frightening phone calls, violent threats, extortion, taunting, gossip, spreading rumors, racist slurs, threatening electronic communications (including, but not limited to, cyberbullying [See Policy #6526, Internet Safety]), anonymous notes, etc.
- **Physical bullying** including poking, slapping, hitting, tripping or causing a fall, choking, kicking, punching, biting, pinching, scratching, spitting, twisting arms or legs, damaging clothes and personal property, threatening gestures, setting fires, assault with a weapon, stealing, use of prior knowledge of individual’s health to cause injury (e.g., exposing person to things that cause an allergic reaction), etc.
- **Social or relational bullying** including isolating, excluding someone from a group, shunning, spreading rumors or gossiping, cyberbullying, arranging public humiliation, undermining relationships, teasing about clothing or appearance, giving dirty looks, aggressive stares, etc.
- **Identity-based bullying** including any derogatory expression referring to one’s race, color, ethnicity, disability, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression (see Harassment Policy #4171).
- **Cyberbullying** is inflicting willful and repeated harm through the use of electronic means. Cyberbullying occurs through electronic means including, but not limited to, email, instant messaging (IMing), chat room exchanges, Web site posts, or digital messages or images sent to a cellular phone. Cyberbullying, like traditional bullying, involves an imbalance of power, aggression, and a negative action that is often repeated (See Policy #6526).

Professional Development

All staff members shall participate in professional development programs to provide strategies for staff on helping students in making better behavioral choices. The District recognizes the value of providing a context for this learning for students and will ensure that instruction is embedded into the learning experiences of students at appropriate times.
Reporting Complaints

Any individual who has been bullied or person with knowledge of bullying by a student or employee is expected to report the complaint to the school administrator or designee as soon as possible after the incident so that it may be effectively investigated and resolved. To the extent possible, the identity of those who report bullying will be kept confidential. Reports may be made anonymously to a staff member designated in each building, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. However, staff members are expected to refer anonymous reports of bullying to a school administrator.

In order to assist investigators, individuals must document the bullying as soon as it occurs and with as much detail as possible including: the nature of the incident(s); dates, times, places it has occurred; name of perpetrator(s); witnesses to the incident(s); and the victim's response to the incident. Students will be provided with practical, safe, private, and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with a staff member, or with the principal or designee.

Confidentiality

It is district policy to respect the privacy of all parties and witnesses to complaints of bullying. To the extent possible, the district will not release the details of a complaint or the identity of the complainant or the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed to any third parties who do not need to know such information. However, because an individual's need for confidentiality must be balanced with the district's legal obligation to provide due process to the accused, to conduct a thorough investigation, or to take necessary action to resolve the complaint, the district retains the right to disclose the identity of parties and witnesses to complaints in appropriate circumstances to individuals with a need to know; e.g., parents or law enforcement representatives. The staff member responsible for investigating complaints will discuss confidentiality standards and concerns with all complainants.

Investigation and Resolution Procedure

Whenever a complaint of bullying is received whether verbal or written, it will be subject to a preliminary review and investigation. Except in the case of severe or criminal conduct, the school administrator or designee should make all reasonable efforts to resolve complaints informally at the school level. The goal of informal and formal procedures (including school bullying rubric, documentation, etc.) is to end the bullying and obtain a prompt and equitable resolution to a complaint.

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the principal or designee will take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the individual who was allegedly bullied, and/or to protect the individual who was bullied from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but are not limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the individual who was bullied and/or the individual who allegedly bullied in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a “safe person” for the individual who was bullied; and altering the schedule of the individual who bullied and access to the individual who was bullied if possible. The principal or
designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course or and after the investigation, as necessary.

As soon as possible following receipt of a complaint, the school administrator or designee will begin an investigation of the complaint by:

- Reviewing any written documentation provided by the individual(s) who was/were bullied.
- Conducting separate interviews of the individual(s) who was/were bullied, alleged perpetrator(s), and witnesses, if any, and documenting the conversations.
- Providing the alleged perpetrator(s) a chance to respond and notify him/her that if objectionable behavior has occurred, it must cease immediately and that the individual may be subject to discipline.
- Conduct follow-up interviews with the individual(s) who was/were bullied and the individual(s) who bullied to determine the need for further intervention or support.

Parents of a student who was bullied and accused students will be notified as soon as possible of any and all allegations of bullying. Every effort will be made to notify the parents by the end of the following school day of such allegations.

Where appropriate, and at the discretion of the school administrator or his/her designee, informal methods may be used to resolve the complaint, including but not limited to:

- Discussion with the accused, informing him or her of the district's policies and indicating that the behavior must stop;
- Suggesting counseling and/or sensitivity training;
- Conducting professional development with staff members as appropriate where such behavior occurred to provide strategies for assisting students in making better-informed behavioral choices;
- Threat assessment;
- Requesting a letter of apology to the individual who was bullied; however, only if the apology is perceived by the individual who was bullied as being sincere;
- Separating the parties; and
- Involvement of law enforcement personnel as appropriate.

After investigation, if it was determined an act of bullying took place, appropriate level of disciplinary action shall be recommended and imposed in accordance with district policy and state law as appropriate. After investigation, final decisions relating to whether the behavior rises to a level that requires disciplinary action, or whether informal methods may be used to resolve the compliant, lie with the principal in these situations.

The school administrator or designee shall report back to both the individual who was bullied and the accused regarding the outcome of the investigation and that appropriate action will be taken to resolve the complaint in keeping with the legal requirements of confidentiality. The individual who was bullied shall report immediately if the objectionable behavior occurs again or if the alleged perpetrator retaliates against him/her.
If a complaint contains evidence or allegations of serious or repeated bullying, the complaint shall be referred promptly to the appropriate Assistant Superintendent. In addition, where the school administrator or designee has a reasonable suspicion that the alleged bullying incident involves criminal activity, he/she shall immediately notify the Assistant Superintendent, prior to informing appropriate child protection and law enforcement authorities.

Any party who is not satisfied with the outcome of the initial investigation by the school administrator or designee may request a district-level investigation by submitting a written notice to the Superintendent or his/her designee within 30 days of the incident.