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WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP
SCHOOL DISTRICT

**Harassment,
Intimidation
and Bullying**

On School Property
At School-Sponsored Activities
On School Buses



Parent Information
September 2011

Introduction This pamphlet has been prepared for students and parents to help them develop a common understanding about bullying, and advise students and parents about our school district's policies and regulations.

Repeatedly, as parents, we often hear concerns expressed that children experience bullying at school. Unfortunately, in the United States, bullying among children and teenagers has often been dismissed as a normal part of growing up. As a result, too little attention has been paid to the devastating effects of bullying, or to the connection between bullying and other forms of violent behavior.

In recent years, however, students and adults around the country have begun to make a commitment to stop bullying, in their schools and communities, an effort that our school district would like to jointly support.

What is bullying? Bullying includes a wide variety of behaviors, but all the behaviors involve a person or a group repeatedly trying to harm someone who they perceive as being weaker or more vulnerable. Bullying can involve direct attacks such as hitting, threatening or intimidating, maliciously teasing and taunting, name-calling, making sexual remarks, and stealing or damaging belongings; or more subtle indirect attacks such as spreading rumors or encouraging others to reject or exclude someone.

What is cyber-bullying? Cyber-bullying is the use of electronic information and communication devices such as the use of e-mail messages, instant messaging, text messaging, cellular telephones, internet blogs, internet chat rooms, internet postings, defamatory websites and/or social networks that: deliberately threatens, harasses, intimidates an individual; places an individual in reasonable fear of harm or damage to the individual's property; or, has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

How common is bullying?

Available data suggests that bullying is much more common among younger teens than older teens. As teens grow older, experience suggests that they are less likely to bully others and to be the target of a bully.

What can our schools do to stop bullying? Effective programs have been developed to reduce bullying in schools. Research has found that bullying is most likely to occur in schools where there is a lack of adult supervision during breaks, where students and staff are indifferent to or accepting of bullying behavior and/or where rules against bullying are not consistently enforced. Approaches to reduce bullying that simply crack down on individual bullies have not proven to be effective in reducing bullying behaviors. However, when there is a school-wide commitment against bullying, the bullying behavior can be

reduced by fifty-percent. One effective approach focuses on changing school and classroom climates by: raising awareness about bullying, increasing teacher and parent involvement and supervision, forming clear rules and strong social norms against bullying and providing support and protection for students.

What can you do? Talk to your child about bullying. Contact your child's principal, if you believe that your child has experienced bullying.

We ask that our parents be aware of the Board of Education #5512 Hazing; #5512.01 *Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying*; #5512.02 *Cyber-Bullying* and also the regulations that appear in the Student Handbook. The student handbooks explain, in detail, the consequences and penalties that students will receive if they are found to have exhibited bullying, harassing or intimidating behaviors.

Message from the Superintendent . . .

I invite you to get involved in our efforts to eliminate bullying. Together we can largely reduce the presence of bullying in our schools.

Dr. Brenda Harring-Marro
Superintendent