2024-2025
Student Discipline,
Bullying & Cyber-Bullying

Local Board Policy Requirements

⭐ House Bill 250 states that each local board of education shall adopt a policy that prohibits bullying of a student and shall require such prohibition to be included in the student Code of Conduct for schools in that system.

What is bullying....
(in Georgia)

⭐ Any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person, when accompanied by an apparent present ability to do so.

⭐ Any intentional display of force that would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm.

⭐ Any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, which a reasonable person would perceive as being intended to threaten, harass, or intimidate.

What is bullying?

Bullying:

- Causes another person substantial physical harm or visible bodily harm.
- Affects the student's education.
- Is so severe, **persistent**, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment.
- Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

What is bullying?

Bullying also involves acts which occur through the use of electronic communication, whether or not such an electronic act originated on school property or with school equipment. The electronic communication can be bullying if it:
- is directed specifically at students or school personnel,
- is maliciously intended for the purpose of threatening the safety of those specified or substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school, and
- it creates a reasonable fear of harm to the student's or school personnel's person or property, or has a high likelihood of succeeding in that purpose.

What is bullying?

Electronic communication includes, but is not limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writings, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic, or photo optical system.

Where can bullying occur?

Bullying may occur:
- On school property, school vehicles, at designated school bus stops, or at school related functions/activities.
- By the use of data or software that is accessed through a computer, a computer system, a computer network, or any other electronic technology.

Cyber-Bullying & Bullying Off-Campus

Each student Code of Conduct shall also contain provisions that address any off-campus behavior that may result in disciplinary action such as:

- Inappropriate use of cell phones
- Inappropriate usage of BOE sites and computer communication

Mandatory Consequences

Acts of bullying shall be punished by a range of consequences through the progressive discipline process. Such consequences shall include, <u>at a minimum,</u> counseling and disciplinary action as appropriate under the circumstances. However, Georgia law mandates that upon a finding by the disciplinary hearing officer, panel, or tribunal, a student in <u>grades 6-12</u> who has committed the offense of bullying for the third time in a school year, shall be assigned to an alternative school/program.

Notice Obligation

Each local BOE shall establish and publish in its local board policy a method to notify the parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of a student upon a finding by a school administrator that such student has committed an offense of bullying, or is a victim of bullying.

Responsibility of the Administration

- Administrators will investigate any report of bullying promptly.
- Administrators will develop a yearly plan for educating staff, students, and parents.
- Each school will develop a plan for initial and ongoing bullying education that will take place throughout the school year. This plan will be shared with School Operations. All students and staff members must be educated on bullying, and the consequences of bullying, within the first month of school.

Responsibility of the Administration

- Administrators will use the district-wide Houston County form to document bullying.
- Administrators will notify the parents of both the perpetrator and the victim.
- Administrators will implement necessary interventions and will assign consequences.

Posting & Handbook Requirements

- Each local BOE shall ensure that students and parents are notified of the prohibition against bullying and the penalties for violating this prohibition. The information shall be posted at each school and will be included in student and parent handbooks.
- Each school has a standard posting to place in the school in a visible location near the front office.

Mandated Reporting

- Any teacher or other school employee who has reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that someone is a target of bullying shall immediately report it to the principal, or an assistant principal.
- Once trained, teachers and staff members will sign-off that they have received training.

Keys to Remember

- Investigate each reported incident promptly and thoroughly.
- Set the tone for your building that bullying will not be tolerated.
- Be sure to complete a thorough investigation with both the perpetrator and the victim to determine the facts of the case.
- Be consistent with consequences.
- Empower the victim.
- Be the expert. Do not let a parent tell you that something is bullying if it is not bullying after your thorough investigation.
- Put a plan in place to protect the victim and prevent further incidents from occurring.

Discussing the Issue with Parents

- Do not label the student.
- Focus on how their child made the other child feel.
- Explain to the parent that on the third infraction of Bullying, the student (grades 6-12) will be referred to the alternative program. There should be <u>no surprises</u> for parents or students about the consequences.
  - Elementary students <u>may</u> be assigned to the alternative program for 30-45 days.
  - Middle/High students may be assigned one semester to one full year at the alternative program.

Other Notes

- If you suspect an incident of bullying, do not talk to the students together.
- Explain to your students that "We were just joking/playing!" or "We are friends!" is not a valid excuse and will not be accepted.
- Utilize bus videos for any bus issues – videos are always helpful.
- We are not capable of knowing everything that goes on in our schools. Build relationships with your students so that they will report any incidents of bullying.

School Level Responsibilities

Educate Your Faculty
- During pre-planning (July 24 – July 30)
- Review Policy JCDAG with the faculty (Bullying).
- Ensure that all staff members understand their responsibility as a mandated reporter.

Educate Your Students
- By August 30, 2024, all schools are to conduct an initial bullying education program with all students.
- Define bullying, define the consequences for bullying, and educate students about what to do if they are aware of any bullying behavior.
- Provide ongoing counseling as needed for bullying behavior throughout the school year.

School Level Responsibilities

Educate Your Parents
- Include information pertaining to bullying in your parent orientation programs no later than <mark>**August 30, 2024**</mark>.
  - Define bullying, define the consequences for bullying, educate parents on what to do if they are aware of any bullying behavior.

By <mark>September 6, 2024</mark>, all schools must:
- Submit your Bullying Education Assurances form through Office 365 Forms. A link will be e-mailed to you from School Operations. Please add the following:
  - Information on **how** and **when** you will educate your staff, students, and parents about bullying behavior and the related local BOE policy, JCDAG.

Important Deadlines to Remember

July 30, 2024:
Educate your school's faculty and staff about bullying.

August 30, 2024:
Educate your school's students about bullying.
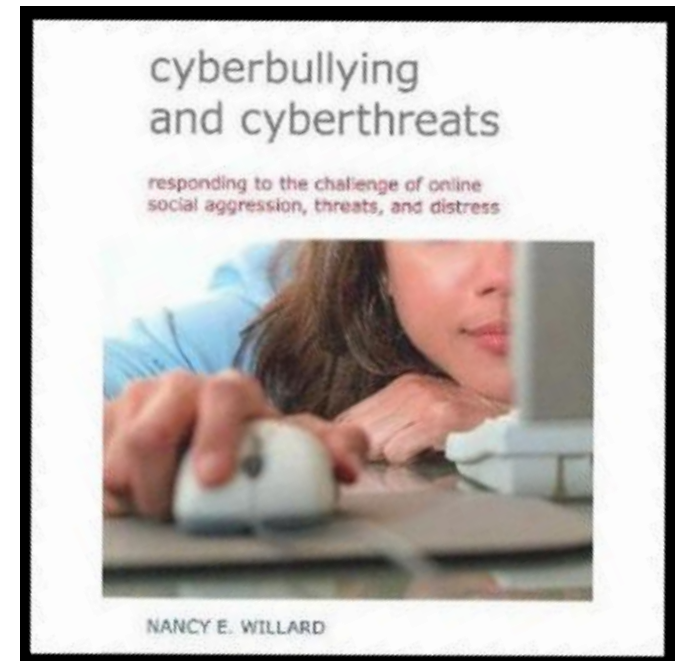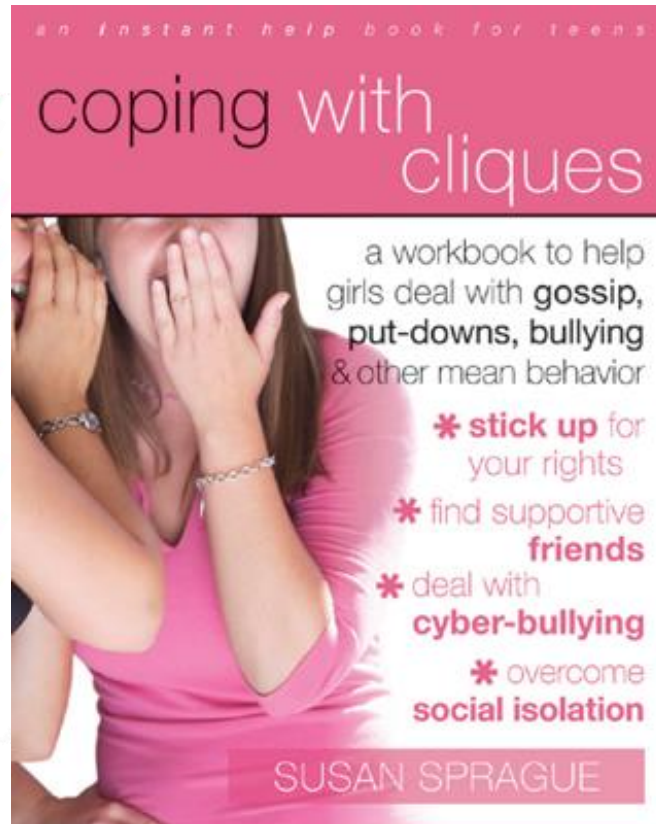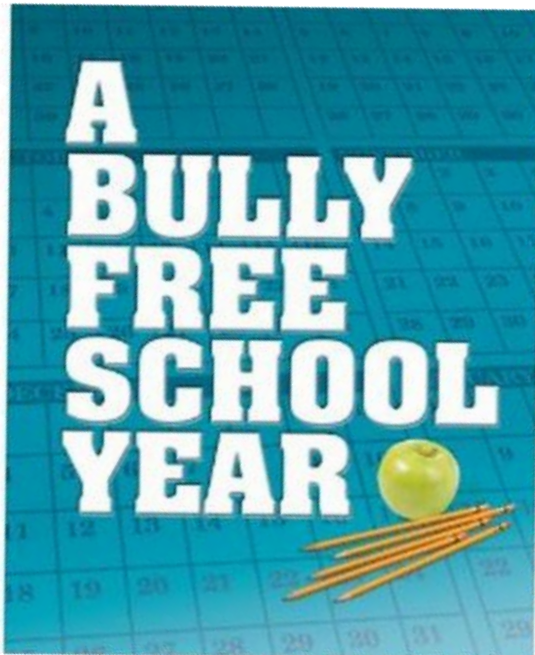
August 30, 2024:
Educate your school's parents about bullying.

September 6, 2024:
Submit your Bullying Education Assurances of Training form to Office 365 Forms.
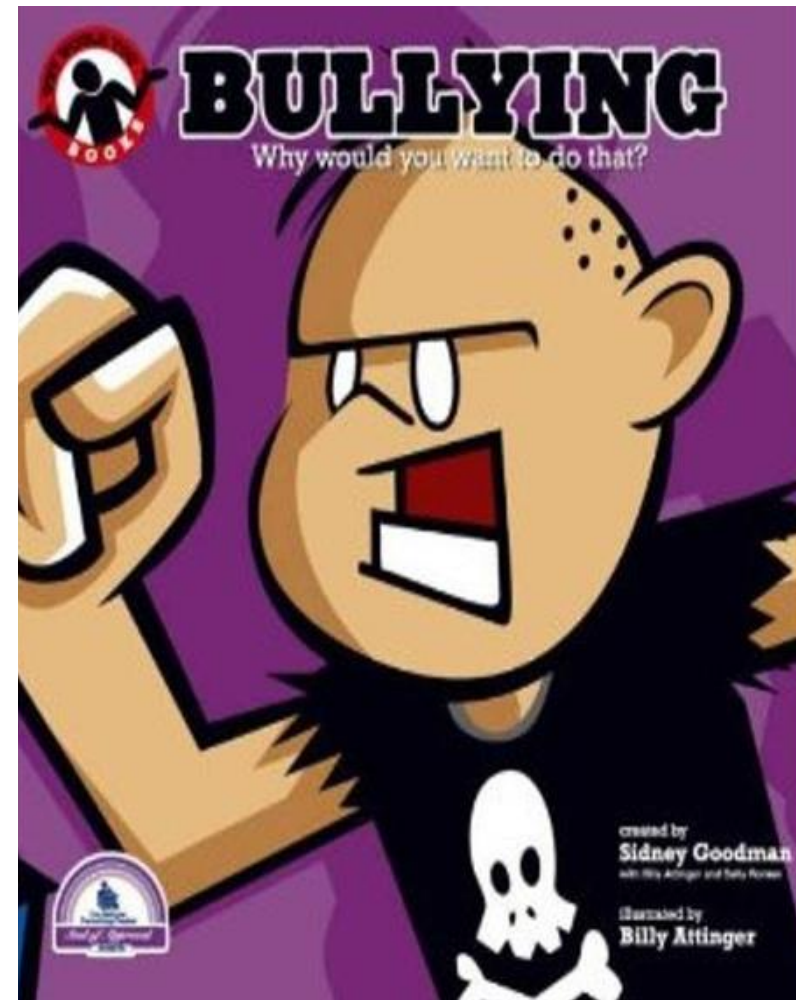
Print Resources

Print Resources

Every elementary school should have copies of this book.

Online Resources

Bullying Toolkit form GaDOE
https://www.gadoe.org/wholechild/Pages/Bullying-Prevention-Toolkit.aspx

National Association of School Psychologists
https://www.nasponline.org/

Sources of Strength
http://www.sourcesofstrength.org