The Board of Education recognizes that harassment of students staff, and certain “non-employees” (which includes contractors, subcontractors, vendors, consultant and other persons providing services pursuant to a contract, or their employees) on the basis of sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression and/or sexual orientation is abusive and illegal behavior that harms victims and negatively impacts the school culture by creating an environment of fear, distrust, intimidation and intolerance. The Board of Education further recognizes that preventing and remedying such harassment in schools is essential to ensure a healthy, nondiscriminatory environment in which students can learn and employees and “non-employees” can work productively.

The Board is committed to providing an educational and working environment that promotes respect, dignity and equality and that is free from all forms of sexual harassment, including sexual violence. To this end, the Board condemns and strictly prohibits all forms of sexual harassment on school grounds, school buses and at all school-sponsored activities, programs and events including those that take place at locations outside the District. Since sexual violence is a form of sexual harassment, the term “sexual harassment” in this policy will implicitly include sexual violence, even if not explicitly stated, or outside the school setting if the harassment impacts the individual’s education or employment in a way that violates their legal rights.

"Sexual harassment" means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually motivated physical conduct or other verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature.

“Gender-based harassment” means verbal, non-verbal or physical aggression, intimidation or hostility that is based on actual or perceived gender identity or expression.

Sexual or gender-based harassment occurs when:

1. Submission to that conduct or communication is made a term or condition, either explicitly or implicitly, of an employee's or “non-employee’s” employment or a student's education (including any aspect of the student's participation in school-sponsored activities, or any other aspect of the student's education); or
2. submission to or rejection of that conduct or communication by an individual is used as a factor in decisions affecting an employee's or “non-employees” employment or a student's education; or
3. the conduct or communication has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with an employee's or “non-employee’s” work performance or a student's academic performance or participation in school-sponsored activities, or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or educational environment.

“Sexual violence” means physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person’s will or where a person is incapable of giving consent. A person may be incapable of giving consent due to age, drug or alcohol use, or an intellectual or other disability. Sexual violence includes, but is not limited to, acts such as rape, sexual assault, sexual battery and sexual coercion. All such acts of sexual violence are forms of sexual harassment.

Because sexual harassment can occur staff to student, staff to staff, student to student, male to female, female to male, male to male or female to female, it shall be a violation of this policy for any student, employee or third party (school visitor, vendor, etc.) to sexually harass any student, employee, or “non-employee”.

Under various state and federal laws, students, employees and “non-employees” have legal protections against sexual harassment in the school environment as described above. The district’s Code of Conduct also addresses appropriate behavior in the school environment. Sexual harassment can occur between persons of all ages and genders.

**Prohibited Conduct**

School-related conduct that the District considers unacceptable and which may constitute sexual harassment includes, but is not limit to, the following:

1. rape, attempted raped, sexual assault, attempted sexual assault, forcible sexual abuse, hazing, and other sexual and gender-based activity of a criminal nature as defined under the State Penal Law;
2. unwelcome sexual invitations or advances, or requests for sexual activity in exchange for grades, promotions, preferences, favors, selection for extracurricular activities or job assignments, homework, etc.
3. unwelcome and offensive public sexual display of affection, including kissing, making out, groping, fondling, petting, inappropriate touching of one’s self or others, sexually suggestive dancing, and massages;
4. any unwelcome communication that is sexually suggestive, sexually degrading or implies sexual motives or intentions, such as sexual remarks or innuendoes about an individual’s clothing, appearance or activities; sexual jokes; sexual gestures; public conversations about sexual activities or exploits; sexual rumors and “rating lists;” howling, catcalls, and whistles; sexually graphic computer files, messages or games, etc.;
5. unwelcome and offensive name calling or profanity that is sexually suggestive, sexually degrading, implies sexual intentions, or that is based on sexual stereotypes or sexual preferences;
6. unwelcome physical contact or closeness that is sexually suggestive, sexually degrading, or sexually intimidating such as the unwelcome touching of another’s body parts, cornering or blocking an individual, standing too close, spanking, pinching, following, stalking, frontal body hugs etc.;
7. unwelcome and sexually offensive physical pranks or touching of an individual’s clothing, such as hazing and initiation, “streaking,” “mooning,” “snuggies,” or “wedgies” (pulling underwear up at the waist so it goes in between the buttocks), bra-snapping, skirt “flip-ups,” “spiking” (pulling down someone’s pants or swimming suit), pinching, placing hands inside an individuals’ pants, shirt, blouse, or dress, etc.;
8. unwelcome leers, stares, gestures, or slang that are sexually suggestive, sexually degrading or imply sexual motives or intentions;
9. clothing with sexually obscene or sexually explicit slogans or messages;
10. unwelcome and offensive skits, assemblies, and productions that are sexually suggestive, sexually degrading, or that imply sexual motives or intentions, or that are based on sexual stereotypes;
11. unwelcome written or pictorial display or distribution of pornographic or other sexually explicit materials such as magazines, videos, films, Internet material etc.;
12. any other unwelcome gender-based behavior that is offensive, degrading, intimidating, demeaning, or that is based on sexual stereotypes and attitudes.

For the purposes of this policy, action or conduct shall be considered “unwelcome” if the employee, student, or “non-employee” did not request or invite it and regarded the conduct as undesirable or offensive.

**Determining if Prohibited Conduct is Sexual Harassment**

All complaints of sexual harassment will be taken seriously and will be thoroughly investigated to determine whether the totality of the behavior and circumstances meet any of the elements of the above definition of sexual harassment and should therefore be treated as sexual harassment. Not all unacceptable conduct with sexual connotations may constitute sexual harassment. In many cases (other than quid pro quo situations where the alleged harasser offers academic or employment rewards or threatens punishment as an inducement for sexual favors), unacceptable behavior must be sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive to be considered sexual harassment.

In evaluating the totality of the circumstances and making a determination of whether conduct constitutes sexual harassment, the individual investigating the complaint should consider:

1. the degree to which the conduct affected the ability of the student to participate in or benefit from his or her education or altered the conditions of the student's learning environment or altered the conditions of the employee's working environment;
2. the type, frequency and duration of the conduct;
3. the identity of and relationship between the alleged harasser and the subject of the harassment (e.g., sexually based conduct by an authority figure is more likely to create a hostile environment than similar conduct by another student or a co- worker);
4. the number of individuals involved;
5. the age and sex of the alleged harasser and the subject of the harassment
6. the location of the incidents and context in which they occurred;
7. other incidents at the school;
8. incidents of gender-based, but non-sexual harassment; and
9. any other matters considered relevant to the circumstance.

**Reporting Complaints and Confidentiality**

In order for the Board to effectively enforce this policy and to take prompt corrective measures, it is essential that all victims of sexual harassment and persons with knowledge of sexual harassment report the harassment immediately. The District will promptly investigate all complaints of sexual harassment, formal or informal, verbal or written. To the extent possible, all complaints will be treated in a confidential manner. Limited disclosure may be necessary to complete a thorough investigation. Such disclosure shall be made to individuals on a “need-to-know” basis.

The District will designate, at a minimum, two (2) Compliance Officers, one (1) of each gender. In addition, the Board will designate a second individual for compliance with Title IX in regard to sexual harassment so that students who believe that they have been subjected to sexual harassment will have a second avenue of complaint, if the alleged harassers is the Compliance Officer.

The victims of sexual harassment are urged to come forward and to make reports of such sexual harassment to the Compliance Officer and/or Title IX coordinator without fear of retaliation or intimidation. Due to the sensitive and serious nature of these complaints, investigations or allegations of sexual harassment will be conducted with due regard for confidentiality. It is District policy to respect the privacy of all parties and witnesses to complaints of sexual harassment. 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. The staff member responsible for investigating complaints will discuss confidentiality standards and concerns with all complainants.

The Superintendent of Schools is directed to develop and implement regulations for reporting, investigating and remedying allegations of sexual harassment. These regulations are to be attached to this policy.

**Corrective Action**

If, after appropriate investigation, the District finds that a student, an employee, “non-employee” or a third party has violated this policy, prompt corrective action will be taken in accordance with the applicable collective bargaining agreement, contract, District policy and State law or Federal law. Individual nondisclosure agreements may only be used as permitted by law, described in the accompanying regulation. Mandatory arbitration clauses for complaints of sexual harassment are prohibited in all district contracts and agreements.

**Prohibition on Retaliatory Behavior**

All complainants and those who participate in the investigation of a complaint of sexual harassment have the right to be free from retaliation of any kind. Any act of retaliation against any person who complains of sexual harassment, is prohibited an illegal, and therefore subject to disciplinary action. Likewise, retaliation against any person who has testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing concerning a sexual harassment complaint is prohibited.

Complaints of retaliation may be directed to the Civil Rights Compliance Officer. In the event the Civil Rights Compliance Officer is the alleged offender, the report will be directed to another Civil Rights Compliance Officer, if the District has designated another individual to serve in such a capacity, or to the Superintendent of Schools.

Where appropriate, follow-up inquiries will be made to ensure that sexual harassment has not resumed and that none of the individuals involved in the investigation of sexual harassment have suffered any retaliation.

**Training**

In addition, training programs shall be established for students and employees to raise awareness of the issues surrounding sexual harassment and to implement preventative measures to help reduce incidents of sexual harassment including but not limited to the following:

1. All students and employee shall be informed of this policy in student and employee handbooks and student registration materials. The policy shall be posted on the District’s website and in prominent locations at each school.
2. All new employees shall receive information about the policy and procedures concerning the prohibition against sexual harassment at new employee orientation. All other employees shall be provided information at least once a year regarding this policy and District’s commitment to a harassment-free learning and working environment. Principals, Title IX Officer/Coordinators, and other administrative employees who have specific responsibilities for investigating and resolving complaints of sexual harassment shall receive a yearly training on this policy, procedures and related legal developments.
3. Program directors and principals in each school shall be responsible for informing students and staff on a yearly basis of the terms of this policy, including procedures established for investigation and resolution of complaints, general issues surrounding sexual harassment, the rights and responsibilities of students and employees, and the impact of sexual harassment on the victim.

Annual employee training programs shall include: (i) an explanation of sexual harassment consistent with guidance issued by the NYS Department of Labor and the NYS Division of Human Rights; (ii) examples of conduct that is unlawful sexual harassment; (iii) information on federal and state laws about sexual harassment and remedies available to victims of sexual harassment; and (iv) information concerning employees' right to make complaints and all available forums for investigating complaints.

**Legal Protections and External Remedies**

As stated above, sexual harassment is not only prohibited by the School District but is also prohibited by state, federal, and, where applicable, local law.

***State Human Rights Law (HRL)***

The Human Rights Law (HRL), codified as N.Y. Executive Law, art. 15, § 290 et seq., applies to all employers in New York State with regard to sexual harassment, and protects employees, paid or unpaid interns and non-employees, regardless of immigration status. A complaint alleging violation of the Human Rights Law may be filed either with the Division of Human Rights (DHR) or in New York State Supreme Court.

Complaints with DHR may be filed any time **within one year** of the harassment. If an individual did not file at DHR, they can sue directly in state court under the HRL, **within three years** of the alleged sexual harassment. An individual may not file with DHR if they have already filed a HRL complaint in state court. Complaining internally to the School District does not extend your time to file with DHR or in court. The one year or three years is counted from date of the most recent incident of harassment.

You do not need an attorney to file a complaint with DHR, and there is no cost to file with DHR. DHR will investigate your complaint and determine whether there is probable cause to believe that sexual harassment has occurred. Probable cause cases are forwarded to a public hearing before an administrative law judge. If sexual harassment is found after a hearing, DHR has the power to award relief, which varies but may include requiring your employer to take action to stop the harassment, or redress the damage caused, including paying of monetary damages, attorney’s fees and civil fines.

DHR’s main office contact information is: NYS Division of Human Rights, One Fordham Plaza, Fourth Floor, Bronx, New York 10458. You may call (718) 741-8400 or visit: [www.dhr.ny.gov](http://www.dhr.ny.gov). Contact DHR at (888) 392-3644 or visit [dhr.ny.gov/complaint](https://dhr.ny.gov/complaint) for more information about filing a complaint. The website has a complaint form that can be downloaded, filled out, notarized and mailed to DHR. The website also contains contact information for DHR’s regional offices across New York State.

***Civil Rights Act of 1964***

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) enforces federal anti-discrimination laws, including Title VII of the 1964 federal Civil Rights Act (codified as 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq.). An individual can file a complaint with the EEOC anytime within 300 days from the harassment. There is no cost to file a complaint with the EEOC. The EEOC will investigate the complaint, and determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that discrimination has occurred, at which point the EEOC will issue a Right to Sue letter permitting the individual to file a complaint in federal court.

The EEOC does not hold hearings or award relief, but may take other action including pursuing cases in federal court on behalf of complaining parties. Federal courts may award remedies if discrimination is found to have occurred. In general, private employers must have at least 15 employees to come within the jurisdiction of the EEOC.

An employee alleging discrimination at work can file a “Charge of Discrimination.” The EEOC has district, area, and field offices where complaints can be filed. Contact the EEOC by calling 1-800-669-4000 (TTY: 1-800-669-6820), visiting their website at [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov) or via email at [info@eeoc.gov](mailto:info@eeoc.gov). If an individual filed an administrative complaint with DHR, DHR will file the complaint with the EEOC to preserve the right to proceed in federal court.

***Title IX***

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX protects people from discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities that receive Federal financial assistance. Title IX states that “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

The U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is responsible for the enforcement of Title IX. OCR evaluates, investigates, and resolves complaints alleging sex discrimination. OCR also conducts proactive investigations, called compliance reviews, to examine potential systemic violations based on sources of information other than complaints.

For assistance related to Title IX or other civil rights laws, please contact [OCR](https://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OCR/contactus.cfm) at [OCR@ed.gov](mailto:ocr@ed.gov) or 800-421-3481, TDD 800-877-8339.

***Dignity for All Students Act***

The Dignity for All Students Act (DASA), codified as N.Y. Education Law, art. 2, § 10 et seq., protects all students from harassment, bullying and discrimination while on school grounds and during school activities based on numerous protected classes, including, but not limited to sexual orientation, gender (including gender identity and expression), and sex. A complaint alleging a violation of DASA may be made to one of the School District’s Dignity Act Coordinators and/or any staff member in accordance with the School District’s policy.

***Local Protections***

Many localities enforce laws protecting individuals from sexual harassment and discrimination. An individual should contact the county, city or town in which they live to find out if such a law exists. If the harassment involves unwanted physical touching, coerced physical confinement or coerced sex acts, the conduct may constitute a crime. Contact the local police department.

This policy shall be posted in a prominent place in each District facility and shall also be published in student registration materials, student, parent and employee handbooks, and other appropriate school publications. A committee of administrators, teachers, parents, and students shall be convened annually to review this policy’s effectiveness and compliance with applicable state and federal law, and to recommend revisions to the Board of Education.

Cross Ref: Dignity for All Students

Code of Conduct

Ref: Education Amendments of 1972, Title IX, 20 U.S.C. §1681 *et seq.*

Title VII of Civil Rights Act (1964), 42 U.S.C. §2000-e; 34 CFR §100 *et seq.*

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