

Martha's Vineyard Public Schools Anti-Bias Policy

POLICY STATEMENT:

The Martha's Vineyard Public Schools system supports all individuals regardless of *race, color, sex, gender identity, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or homelessness*. The members of the Martha's Vineyard Public Schools system believe that for a school community to be truly healthy, it must be guided by the values of multicultural inclusion, respect, and equality. Intolerance has no place at an institution of learning.

The members of the Martha's Vineyard Public Schools system believe in the importance of a safe climate where communication between adults and students is encouraged and supported, and where conflict is managed and mediated constructively. In a climate of safety, students are willing to break the unwritten, but powerful "code of silence". When students know that harassment, intimidation, and bullying will not be tolerated, they are more likely to turn to trusted adults for help in resolving problems without the feeling that they are "ratting", "tattling", or "telling" on a peer. By encouraging responsible bystander behavior in students, serious problems will come to adult attention earlier, and can be addressed and mediated more effectively.

Martha's Vineyard Public Schools employees, students, and volunteers who witness or have reliable information about a student being subjected to harassment, intimidation, or bullying, whether verbal or physical, are encouraged to report these incidents. We encourage all Martha's Vineyard Public Schools professionals to be actively engaged in the struggle to end oppression, to prevent bias related violence in our school communities, and to take action to eradicate injustice.

PURPOSE:

Harassment, intimidation, and bullying of students by other students will not be tolerated in the Martha's Vineyard Public Schools system.

SCOPE:

This policy is in effect while students are on school grounds, school district property, or property within the jurisdiction of the school district, school uses, or while students are engaging in school sponsored activities.

DEFINITIONS:

Harassment prohibited by the district includes, but is not limited to, harassment on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, age, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, or disability. Harassment means conduct of a verbal or physical nature that is designed to embarrass, distress, agitate, disturb, or trouble students, and that has the effect of insulting or demeaning a student or group of students in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school's educational mission or the education of any student. Included in this definition are any words, acts, or gestures reasonably perceived as being motivated by a student's height, weight,

socio-economic status, or any other distinguishing characteristic. This category is geared to other things that make students stand out in a way that might target them as likely victims of bullies.

Harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- **PHYSICAL AGGRESSION:** physical harm or destroying property;
- **SOCIAL AGGRESSION:** rumors, racial slurs, or exclusion from a group
- **VERBAL AGGRESSION:** name calling, teasing, or threatening, implied or explicit threats concerning one's grades, achievements, or other school matter;
- **INTIMIDATION:** phone calls, mean tricks, or taking possessions;
- **WRITTEN AGGRESSION:** threatening notes or graffiti;
- **SEXUAL HARASSMENT:** comments or actions of a sexual nature that make the victim uncomfortable;
- **RACIAL AND CULTURAL (ETHNIC) HARASSMENT:** comments or actions containing racial or ethnic overtones (*direct or indirect*) that make the recipient uncomfortable.

CONSEQUENCES AND REMEDIAL ACTION:

- 1) The student who is the victim will be offered additional support through the school counseling office.
- 2) Any student(s) involved in provoking an incident shall receive one or more of the following consequences.
 - a) Immediate suspension for up to five school days.
 - b) Parent meeting.
 - c) Verbal and/or written apology to the victim.
 - d) Follow-up educational assignment facilitated by principal/school counselor from a list compiled and reviewed by school administration each year e.g., to conduct research on certain aspects of history involving coercion and mistreatment.

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING ACTS OF HARASSMENT/BULLYING

When a harassment, intimidation or bullying incident occurs, staff members are required to immediately report the incident to administration.

Administration will contact school counselors who will provide emotional support to victimized student.

Administration will conduct a thorough investigation which upon substantiation, shall result in the above noted consequences and remedial action.

Parents of both victim and aggressor will be notified immediately.

