



**Title: BULLYING, CYBERBULLYING, HARASSMENT, HAZING
AND RETALIATION POLICY**

REVISION DATE: August 28, 2023

Yearly Notice: 53G-8-802

The Ranches Academy is committed to providing an educational environment that is free from illegal harassment and other forms of discrimination based upon sex, race, color, ethnic background, national origin, religion, gender, creed, age, citizenship, or disability.

I. PURPOSE

Bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, hazing, and abusive conduct of students and employees are against federal, state and local policy, and are not tolerated by The Ranches Academy. The Ranches Academy is committed to providing all students with a safe and civil school environment in which all members of the school community are treated with dignity and respect. To that end, The Ranches Academy has in place policies, procedures, and practices that are designed to reduce and eliminate bullying, cyberbullying, harassment and hazing—including but not limited to civil rights violations—as well as processes and procedures to deal with such incidents. Bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and hazing of students and/or employees by students and/or employees will not be tolerated in The Ranches Academy.

School officials have the authority to discipline students for off-campus speech that causes or threatens a substantial disruption on campus or school activities, including violent altercations, or a significant interference with a student's educational performance and involvement in school activities. If after an investigation, a student is found to be in violation of this policy, the student shall be disciplined by appropriate measures up to, and including, suspension and expulsion, pursuant to Utah Code Ann. 53A-11-904 and in accordance with the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, loss of participation in extracurricular activities, and/or probation. If after an investigation, a school employee is found to have violated this policy, the employee shall be disciplined by appropriate measures up to, and including, termination.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. "Bullying" means intentionally or knowingly committing an act that:

1. endangers the physical health or safety of a school employee or student;
 - a. involves any brutality of a physical nature such as whipping, beating, branding, calisthenics, bruising, electric shocking, placing of a harmful substance on the body, or exposure to the elements;
 - b. involves consumption of any food, liquor, drug, or other substance;
 - c. involves other physical activity that endangers the physical health and safety of a school employee or student; or
 - d. involves physically obstructing a school employee's or student's freedom to move; and
2. is done for the purpose of placing a school employee or student in fear of:
 - a. physical harm to the school employee or student; or
 - b. harm to property of the school employee or student.
3. The conduct described above constitutes bullying, regardless of whether the person against whom the

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conduct is committed directed, consented to, or acquiesced in, the conduct.

4. In addition to the above, The Ranches Academy considers bullying to be aggressive behavior that:
- a. is intended to cause distress and harm;
 - b. exists in a relationship in which there is an imbalance of power and strength; c. is repeated over time.

B. "Civil rights violation" means bullying (including cyberbullying), harassing, or hazing that is targeted at a federally protected class.

C. "Cyberbullying" means:

- 1. using the Internet, a cell phone, or another device to
- 2. send or post text, video, or an image with the intent or knowledge, or with reckless disregard, that the text, video, or image will hurt, embarrass, or threaten an individual,
- 3. regardless of whether the individual directed, consented to, or acquiesced in the conduct, or voluntarily accessed the electronic communication.

D. "Federally protected class" means any group protected from discrimination under federal law.

- 1. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.
- 2. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.
- 3. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.
- 4. Other areas included under these acts include religion, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

E. "Harassment" means repeatedly communicating to another individual, in an objectively demeaning or disparaging manner, statements that contribute to a hostile learning or work environment for the individual. This includes rumor spreading and social aggression intended to demean and disparage another individual and that contributes to a hostile environment for that individual.

F. "Hazing" means intentionally or knowingly committing an act that:

- 1. endangers the physical health or safety of a school employee or student;
 - a. involves any brutality of a physical nature such as whipping, beating, branding, calisthenics, bruising, electric shocking, placing of a harmful substance on the body, or exposure to the elements;
 - b. involves consumption of any food, liquor, drug, or other substance;
 - c. involves other physical activity that endangers the physical health and safety of a school employee

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or student; or

d.involves physically obstructing a school employee's or student's freedom to move; and

2. is done for the purpose of initiation or admission into, affiliation with, holding office in, or as a condition for, membership or acceptance, or continued membership or acceptance, in any school or school sponsored team, organization, program, or event; or

3. if the person committing the act against a school employee or student knew that the school employee or student is a member of, or candidate for, membership with a school, or school sponsored team, organization, program, or event to which the person committing the act belongs to or participates in.

4. The conduct described in Subsection "F" constitutes hazing, regardless of whether the person against whom the conduct is committed directed, consented to, or acquiesced in, the conduct.

G. "Abusive conduct" means verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a parent or a student directed toward a school employee that, based on the severity, nature, and frequency of occurrence, a reasonable person would determine:

1. It is intended to cause intimidation, humiliation, or unwarranted distress
2. It results in substantial physical or psychological harm as a result of intimidation, humiliation, or unwarranted distress
3. Exploits an employee's known physical or psychological disability.

A single act does not constitute abusive conduct, unless it is especially severe or egregious act. G. "Parent" means a student's guardian.

H. "Retaliation" means an act of communication intended:

1. as retribution against a person for reporting bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or hazing; or
2. to improperly influence the investigation of, or the response to, a report of bullying or hazing.

I. "School" means any public elementary or secondary school or charter school J. "School board means:

1. a local school board; or
2. a local charter board.

K. "School employee" means:

1. school teachers;
2. school staff;
3. school administrators; and
4. all others employed, directly or indirectly, by the school, school board, or school district.

L. "Volunteer" means a person working under direct supervision of a licensed educator. III. PROHIBITIONS

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A. No school employee or student may engage in bullying or harassing a school employee or student:

1. on school property;
2. at a school related or sponsored event;
3. on a school bus;
4. at a school bus stop; or
5. while the school employee or student is traveling to or from a location or event described above in Subsection A(1) – (4)

B. No school employee or student may engage in hazing or cyberbullying a school employee or student at any time or in any location.

C. No school employee or student may engage in retaliation against:

1. a school employee;
2. a student; or
3. an investigator for, or witness of, an alleged incident of bullying, harassing, cyberbullying, hazing, or retaliation

D. No school employee or student may make a false allegation of bullying, harassing, cyberbullying, hazing, or retaliation against a school employee or student.

E. Any bullying, harassing, or hazing that is found to be targeted at a federally protected class is further prohibited under federal anti-discrimination laws and is subject to compliance regulations from the Office for Civil Rights.

IV. ACTIONS REQUIRED IF PROHIBITED ACTS ARE REPORTED

A. Each reported complaint will include:

1. name of complaining party;
2. name of offender (if known);
3. date and location of incident(s);
4. a statement describing the incident(s), including names of witnesses (if known).

B. Each reported violation of the prohibitions noted previously will be promptly investigated by a school administrator or an individual designated by a school administrator. Formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on an anonymous report of bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, hazing, or retaliation. Disciplinary due process procedures shall be followed. To the extent permitted by federal and state law, school policies, and confidentiality and privacy rights; the parents or legal guardians of a student who is a target of bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, hazing, or retaliation may be generally informed that disciplinary action has been taken against the perpetrator (s), but specific details concerning a student's disciplinary action are protected from disclosure as per the Federal Educational Rights and privacy Act (FERPA).

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C. Any student or employee who engages in bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, hazing, or retaliation, as described herein, is in violation of this policy and shall be subject to disciplinary action. Consequences should be firm and fair and correspond to the severity of the infraction. A continuum of consequences should be utilized along with implementing positive behavioral interventions and support strategies. Verified violations of the prohibitions noted previously shall result in consequences or penalties. Consequences or penalties may include but are not limited to:

1. student suspension or removal from a school-sponsored team or activity including school sponsored transportation;
2. student suspension or expulsion from school or lesser disciplinary action;
3. employee suspension or termination for cause or lesser disciplinary action;
4. employee reassignment; or
5. other action against student or employee as appropriate.
6. Probation
7. Referral to law enforcement for criminal acts

If a report of bullying, harassment, hazing, or retaliation is discovered to be false, the student making the false claims will be appropriately disciplined as per The Ranches Academy policy. Any accusations confirmed to be false will be immediately removed the falsely-accused student's file.

D. Parent Notification

1. Pursuant to Utah Code Ann., Section 53A-11a-203, when the director/designee discovers an incident of bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, hazing, or retaliation has occurred shall notify the parent/guardian of each student involved. Likewise, the director/designee shall notify immediately the parent/guardian of any student who threatens to commit suicide.

2. The director/designee who notifies a parent/guardian under this section shall keep a record verifying that the parent/guardian was notified using the Parent/Guardian Notification Record of Student Bullying Incident or Suicide Threat form. This form shall contain the date, time manner of notification, and indicate the type of threat or incident. This form, along with any related written communication, must be kept separate from the student's educational records. The form may be disclosed to the parent/guardian and/or student, but it may not be disclosed to any other person or entity except when required by a valid court order as provided in Utah Code Ann., Section 63G-2-202(7). The form prepared pursuant to this section is categorized as a "private record" as per Utah Code Ann., Section 63G-2-3-2 under the Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA) (Utah Code Ann., Section 63G-2-101, et seq.). In addition, the form and any accompanying written communication may not be used for the school's own purposes, such as for a report or study, statistical analysis, or to conduct research.

3. The Ranches Academy will retain the records of notifications for seven years as required by law. At that time, the records will be destroyed in an appropriate manner, maintaining confidentiality at all times.

E. Compliance with the Office for Civil Rights when Civil Rights Violations Occur:

1. Once The Ranches Academy knows or reasonably should know of possible student-on-student bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment or hazing, the school must take immediate and appropriate action to investigate or otherwise determine what occurred.
2. If it is determined that the bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment or hazing occurred as a result of the student-victim's membership in a protected class, The Ranches Academy shall take prompt and effective steps reasonably calculated to:
 - a. end the bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, or hazing
 - b. eliminate any hostile environment, and
 - c. prevent its recurrence.
3. These duties are The Ranches Academy's responsibilities even if the misconduct also is covered by a separate anti-bullying policy and regardless of whether the student makes a complaint, asks the school to take action, or identifies the bullying, cyberbullying, harassment or hazing as a form of discrimination.

F. Actions must also include, as appropriate:

1. procedures for protecting the victim and other involved individuals from being subjected to:
 - a. further bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or hazing, and
 - b. retaliation for reporting the bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or hazing.
2. prompt reporting to law enforcement of all acts of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, hazing, or retaliation that constitute suspected criminal activity.
3. prompt reporting to the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of all acts of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, hazing, retaliation that may be violations of student(s)' or employee(s)' civil rights.
4. procedures for a fair and timely opportunity for the accused to explain the accusations and defend his actions prior to student or employee discipline.
5. Procedures for providing due process rights under Section 53A-8-102 (licensed staff) and local employee discipline policies prior to employee discipline or Section 53A-11- 903 and local policies (students) prior to long term (more than 10 day) student discipline.

V. INVESTIGATIONS

The Ranches Academy will promptly and reasonably investigate allegations of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment and/or hazing. The Director and the Lead Teacher will be responsible for handling all complaints by students and employees alleging bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, or hazing as outlined in the

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procedures below: Allegations need to be submitted in writing to administration upon receipt of written allegation, victim will be interviewed to start the investigation.

The Ranches Academy's policy, in compliance with state and federal law, that students have a limited expectation of privacy on the school's Internet system, and routine monitoring or maintenance may lead to discovery that a user has violated district policy or law. Also, individual targeted searches will be conducted if there is reasonable suspicion that a user has violated policy or law. Personal electronic devices of any student suspected of violation of the above policy will be confiscated for investigation and may be turned over to law enforcement.

VI. TRAINING

A. All students, staff, and volunteers at The Ranches Academy will receive annual training from a qualified professional regarding bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, hazing. This training will address:

1. overt aggression that may include physical fighting such as punching, shoving, kicking, and verbal threatening behavior, such as name calling, or both physical and verbal aggression or threatening behavior
2. relational aggression or indirect, covert, or social aggression, including rumor spreading, intimidation, enlisting a friend to assault a child, and social isolation;
3. bullying, cyberbullying, harassment or hazing of a sexual nature or with sexual overtones;
4. cyberbullying, including use of email, web pages, text messaging, instant messaging, three-way calling or messaging or any other electronic means for aggression inside or outside of school
5. civil-rights violations including training and education specific to bullying based upon students' actual or perceived identities, and conformance or failure to conform to stereotypes. Training on civil rights violations will include compliance when civil rights violations are reported.
6. awareness and intervention skills such as social skills training.

B. Volunteers are under direct supervision of a licensed educator who is responsible for ensuring the volunteer is trained in the above areas. Volunteers are required to report to their supervising licensed educator if they are notified of a bullying, cyberbullying, hazing, harassment, or retaliation incident among students or if they reason to suspect such an incident. Volunteers are prohibited from engaging in bullying activities themselves and will be asked to leave The Ranches Academy if in violation of this policy.

C. Pursuant to 53A-15-1301, The Ranches Academy will implement a youth suicide prevention program for students.

D. Pursuant to 53A-1-603, all licensed educators must complete 2 hours of professional development of youth suicide prevention training once every license renewal cycle. To the extent possible, other programs or initiatives designed to provide training and education regarding the prevention of bullying, cyber-bullying,

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harassment, hazing, and retaliation will be implemented.

E. In addition to training for all school employees, students, employees, and volunteer coaches involved in any extra-curricular activity shall:

1. participate in bullying and hazing prevention training prior to participation in the extra-curricular activity;
2. repeat bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, and hazing prevention training at least every three years;
3. be informed annually of the prohibited activities list provided previously in this Policy and the potential consequences for violation of this Policy.

VII. ADDITIONAL NOTES

A. 53A-11a-301 requires that this policy be developed with input from (1) students, (2) parents, (3) teachers, (4) school administrators, (5) school staff, or (6) law enforcement agencies.

B. All information received in a complaint, names of complainants shall be treated with the utmost confidence to the extent possible. Administrators shall notify complainant before revealing his name.

C. A student assessment of the prevalence of bullying in The Ranches Academy, specifically locations where students are unsafe and additional adult supervision may be required, such as playgrounds, hallways, and lunch areas, will be provided on a bi-annual basis.

D. This policy does not prohibit expressive activity protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. However, if off-campus speech that may constitute a bullying, cyber-bullying, hazing, or harassment incident creates a substantial disruption to the school environment, under *Tinker v. Des Moines*, The Ranches Academy may take disciplinary action against the student who initiated the speech. Factors that The Ranches Academy may consider in determining whether a substantial disruption has occurred are:

1. whether there is a verbal or physical confrontation over the incident at school;
2. whether there is likely to be a verbal or physical confrontation based on evidence of a prior relationship between the victim and the student who initiated the speech;
3. whether any part of the speech that gave rise to the incident was repeated at school;
4. whether students are discussing the incident during class or if it otherwise is disrupting school work;
5. whether there is a widespread whispering campaign sparked by the off campus incident that disrupts the school environment and students' abilities to focus on school;

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6. whether administrators who dealt with the incident were pulled from their ordinary tasks to address the incident and how much time it took out of an administrators' day to do so;
7. whether speech similar to the off-campus speech in this incident has occurred in the past and has resulted in violence or near violence at school;
8. whether there is a negative effect on classroom activities as a result of the off-campus incident;
9. whether the speech was violent or whether there is a history of violence from the student/s who initiated the speech; (Note: true threats are not protected by the First Amendment if it advocates "imminent" violence or unlawful conduct. Thus, a message that threatens physical harm, even if it isn't mean to be serious, may not be protected by the First Amendment and the person who utters such a message may be disciplined by The Ranches Academy)