

# HARASSMENT, INTIMIDATION OR BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICY

## Introduction

Amani Public Charter School is committed to providing an educational and working environment that promotes respect, dignity and equality. Amani recognizes that discrimination, such as harassment, hazing and bullying, are detrimental to scholar learning and achievement. These behaviors interfere with the mission of the school to educate its scholars and disrupt the operation of the school. Such behavior affects not only the scholars who are its targets but also those individuals who participate and witness such acts.

To this end, Amani condemns and strictly prohibits all forms of discrimination, such as harassment, hazing and bullying on school grounds, school buses and at all school-sponsored activities, programs and events.

Discrimination, harassment, hazing or bullying that takes place at locations outside of school grounds which can be reasonably expected to materially and substantially interfere with the requirements of appropriate discipline in the operation of the school or impinge on the rights of other scholars are prohibited, and may be subject to disciplinary consequences.

## Definitions

### Harassment

Harassment has been defined in various ways in federal and state law and regulation. Amani recognizes that these definitions are important standards, but the school's goal is to prevent misbehavior from escalating in order to promote a positive school environment and to limit liability. The **Dignity for All Scholars Act** (§§10-18 of Education Law) defines harassment as the creation of a hostile environment by conduct or by verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that has or would have the effect of unreasonably and substantially interfering with a scholar's educational performance, opportunities or benefits, or mental, emotional or physical well-being; or conduct, verbal threats, intimidation or abuse that reasonably causes or would reasonably be expected to cause a scholar to fear for his or her physical safety. The harassing behavior may be based on any characteristic, including but not limited to a person's actual or perceived:

- race;
- color;
- weight;
- national origin;
- ethnic group;
- religion;
- religious practice;
- disability;
- sex;
- sexual orientation; or
- gender (including gender identity and expression).

### Intimidation

Intimidation is intentional behavior that would cause a person of ordinary sensibilities fear of harm or injury. It is not necessary to prove that the behavior caused the victim to actually be frightened.

### Bullying

Bullying is a form of harassment that consists of inappropriate persistent behavior including threats of intimidation of others, treating others cruelly, terrorizing, coercing, stalking, or habitual put-downs and/or badgering of others, whether done directly, indirectly, face to face or remotely through electronic communication.

Types of bullying include:

- **Verbal**- involves taunting, teasing, name calling, and threats;
- **Physical**- the most common form; including hitting, kicking, pushing and taking personal belongings;
- **Emotional**- includes spreading rumors, manipulating social relationships, and engaging in social exclusion, extortion, or intimidation;
- **Cyber**- including the use of cell phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to harass, threaten or intimidate someone.

### Cyberbullying

The law defines “cyber bullying” as the above conduct through any form of electronic communication, where it be through electronic text, photos, or videos. Examples of this behavior include, but are not limited to:

- *Sending false, cruel, or vicious messages.*
- *Creating websites that have stories, cartoons, pictures, or jokes ridiculing others.*
- *Breaking into an email account and sending vicious or embarrassing materials to others.*
- *Engaging someone in electronic communication, tricking that person into revealing sensitive personal information, and forwarding that information to others.*
- *Posting of a student picture without his/her permission.*

The online activities and technologies often used by students engaged in cyberbullying include, but are not limited to: social networking sites, chat rooms and discussion groups, instant messaging, text messaging, computers, cell phones and personal digital devices, digital cameras, cell phone cameras, and webcams. As new technologies emerge, they too may be included with the above forms of electronic communication.

### Reporting and Prevention of Bullying and Cyberbullying

The school is committed to promptly addressing and preventing incidents of bullying to the maximum extent possible.

### Reporting Bullying and Cyberbullying (together, “Bullying”)

1. If a student feels that he/she is a victim of bullying, or witnesses a student being bullied, the student should report the incident to a trusted adult in the building. Students may report bullying situations anonymously via written note or email so long as the information is securely and privately delivered to the Social Emotional Learning (“SEL”) team.
2. If a parent or guardian suspects bullying, they may report it via written note or e-mail to the SEL.
3. Any staff member who witnesses or receives any report of bullying must notify a member of the SEL department as soon as possible, and in any event within one school day after the staff member witnesses or receives a report of bullying.
4. All reports will be documented and maintained for the duration of the student’s tenure at the school.
5. The school will maintain a list of the number of confirmed acts of bullying, without specific names. The school will make the list available upon request and will provide the number of confirmed acts of cyberbullying as required to the State Department of Education.

### Investigation

1. As with any situation involving a serious breach of school culture and the Code of Conduct, the SEL department will take action to investigate the report of bullying. As bullying is prohibited by the Code of Conduct, it is important to note that this applies to activity on school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the school, or through the use of an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school, or outside of the school setting if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the scholar against whom the bullying was directed, infringes on the rights of that scholar, or substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school.
2. The SEL department will investigate, in a timely fashion, parents’ reports and will review students reports, anonymous or otherwise, to determine the proper action.
3. The SEL department will question the reporting student or parent about specific details, which may include date of incident, time, location, and what was said or done to the student being bullied. If the reporter is anonymous, the dean of students will question those who are listed in the report. No disciplinary action will be taken solely based on an anonymous report.
4. A member of the SEL department will then meet with and question the student(s) accused of bullying, as well as the student(s) being bullied.
5. A member of SEL department or his/her designee will call the parents or guardians of the students involved in verified incidents of bullying and inform them of the incident(s), the school’s response, and any consequences that may result from further acts of bullying within 48 hours after the completion of the investigation. Parents or guardians of scholars against whom the bullying was directed will be invited to a meeting to discuss the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of their scholar and policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying. Parents or guardians of scholars who committed the bullying will be invited to a separate meeting to discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying.
6. At the discretion of the SEL Department or his/her designee, the parents of both parties may be requested to come in and meet with the dean of students and Social Worker for mediation.

## Intervention and Prevention

### A. Intervention

1. The school will promote the use of interventions that are least intrusive and most effective and will develop case-by-case interventions for addressing repeated acts of bullying against a single individual or recurring bullying incidents perpetrated by the same individual. Intervention may include, but not limited to the following:
  - As the situation may warrant, the school may provide counseling or refer students to outside counseling to address the needs of the victim(s) of the bullying.
  - As the situation may warrant, the school may provide or refer out for counseling and support to address the behavior of the students who bully (e.g., empathy training, anger management, and social skills), and will take other disciplinary measures as appropriate.
  - The school will monitor each individual situation to ensure that the bullying ceases for individual victims and on a school-wide basis.
  - Disciplinary sanctions and consequences will be commensurate with the situation.
  - The school will notify the appropriate law enforcement agency if principal or designee believes the acts of bullying constitute criminal conduct.

### B. Prevention

The school will send consistent messages to students throughout the school year that bullying is not part of our school's culture and will not be tolerated. Prevention may include, but it not limited to, the following:

1. The school will maintain rules prohibiting bullying, harassment and intimidation and will establish appropriate consequences for those who bully other students.
2. The school prohibits discrimination and retaliation against any individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying.
3. As part of our regular character education program - ACHIEVE, the school will provide advisory time and age-appropriate curricula for all classes to discuss bullying in school and the effects of it.
4. The school will implement an ongoing cyber safety curriculum to ensure that students are knowledgeable about how to safely interact online.
5. The school will work to protect the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications.
6. The school will discuss values with parents during orientations.
7. The school's PD program will contain a time to discuss promoting positive school culture including character development and bullying prevention training.
8. The school will use common time with students to discuss cyber safety and cyber bullying issues with students.
9. The school will host tech sessions to teach parents how to monitor their children's behavior on the Internet and their phones.