

TO: CCSD STAFF

FROM: Dr. Nancy J. McGinley, Superintendent

RE: Cyberbullying/Electronic Aggression
Recognizing, and Reporting for CCSD Staff, Students and
Parents

DATE: August 15, 2013 (Revised 8/20/13)

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State law includes in the definition of bullying conduct through electronic communication, commonly referred to as "cyberbullying." SC Code Ann. § 59-63-120(1).

Cyberbullying is defined in the CCSD Student Code of Conduct as: willful harassment and intimidation of a person through the use of digital technologies, including, but not limited to, email, blogs, texting, social media, chat rooms, sexting, instant messaging, or video voyeurism. Code of Conduct, p. 21.

Cyberbullying is of particular concern because technology makes it easier to target students for bullying and, in many cases, easier for the bully to hide their identity. Cyberbullying may also increase the amount of emotional damage that can take place unrecognized. This makes it more difficult for us, as educators, to detect and address. In order to maintain a safe school environment, Charleston County School District condemns and prohibits bullying, harassment, threats, or intimidation of any nature.

Even though cyberbullying does not always take place on the school campus, there is an expectation from our educational system, students, as well as parents, that if the situation negatively influences the school's climate, the administration will become appropriately involved. In any case, CCSD offers to our students a "safe place" where they can come and discuss or report incidents, even those off campus, without retaliation.

Cyber Bullying may include:

- sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages;
- distributing information about another that is derogatory;
- breaking into an email or social networking account and using that person's online identity to send or post vicious or embarrassing material to/about others;
- sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information, and/or tricking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information and forwarding it to others;

- engaging in online activities which threatens another or cause him or her to be afraid for his or her safety;
- Dissing, flaming, denigrating, impersonating, outing, tricking, excluding, and cyberstalking are also examples of cyberbullying.

Filing a Complaint

At each school, the principal or designee is responsible for receiving complaints alleging violations of this regulation. All school employees are required to report alleged violations of this regulation to the principal or designee. All other members of the school community, including students, parents, volunteers, and visitors are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this regulation. Reports by students may be made anonymously, but disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report and will conform to the law and District policies regarding due process. Each school will provide students with a safe means of reporting incidents of bullying, harassment, potential cyberbullying and intimidation.

The principal and/or designee is responsible for determining whether an alleged act constitutes a violation of this regulation. In doing so, the principal/or designee shall conduct a prompt, thorough, and complete investigation of the alleged incident.

If students or parents know of someone who is being bullied, cyberbullied or know of a person or group that is bullying others, they can call the CCSD Bully Hotline at 1-877-250-2790, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Reprisal or Retaliation

The School District prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying, harassment, threats, or intimidation. The consequence and remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation shall be determined by the principal or designee after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act, in accordance with the law and district policies and procedures. Should reprisal or retaliation take place outside the jurisdiction of the School District, the District will cooperate to the fullest with law enforcement authorities.

Parental Guidance For Recognizing Cyberbullying/Electronic Aggression

Monitor your child's computer use:

- **Put the computer in a common area.** In your house the computer should be in areas such as the living room or kitchen
- **Talk to your child regularly.** Ask about what he or she does online and with whom he or she communicates. Ask if your child has seen anything that made him or her feel worried, scared or confused.

- **Go online with your child.** Have your child show you the sites he or she visits and the services he or she uses. If you see anything inappropriate, point it out and explain why it is not appropriate.
- **Consider using parental controls.** Some Internet browsers have this software built in. Or you can install it separately. It may help you:
 - Block inappropriate material and Web sites.
 - Track what your child does and limit the time spent online.Just keep in mind that parental controls may not block everything inappropriate and that some children may know how to get around them.
- **Check your child's accounts.** Ask your child to show you his or her accounts regularly or make it a rule that your child has to give you his or her usernames and passwords so you can look at them yourself.
- Check:
 - What information is included in your child's online profile(s).
 - What your child is posting.
 - Who your child is connecting with.
 - What the privacy settings are on your child's account(s). (It's best to use the most private one.)

If you see anything inappropriate, have your child change or remove it. Remind your child of your rules and enforce the consequences you set.

- **Check cell phones and other digital devices.** Be sure you know what features your child's cell phone or other digital devices have. Find out about any parental control options for these devices. Check to make sure your child's use follows the rules you have set.