Steward's Bullying Prevention Policy

Steward ESD #220 finds that a safe, civil, and healthy school environment is necessary for all students to learn and achieve. Bullying causes physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students, which interferes with this safe, civil, and healthy learning environment. Additionally, bullying has been linked to other forms of antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, shoplifting, skipping or dropping out of school, fighting, using drugs and alcohol, sexual harassment, and sexual violence (105 ILCS 5/22-110).

Bullying on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, physical appearance, socioeconomic status, academic status, pregnancy, parenting status, homelessness, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, unfavorable discharge from military service, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic is prohibited. Bullying is contrary to state law and the policies of **Steward ESD #220**. No student shall be subjected to bullying:

1. During any school-sponsored education program or activity

2. While in school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, at designated school bus stops waiting for the bus, or at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities

3. Through the transmission of information from a school computer, a school computer network, or other similar electronic school equipment

4. Through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed at a non-school-related location, activity, function, or program or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of a school. This item (4) applies only in cases in which a school administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred and does not require a district or school to staff or monitor any non-school-related activity, function, or program.

Nothing in this policy is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously-based views protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution.

A. Definitions: (105 ILCS 5/22-110).

Bullying- Includes "cyber-bullying" and means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the Following:

1. Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property.

2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health.

3. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance.

4. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school

Bullying may take various forms, including, without limitation, one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

Cyber-Bullying- Bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including, without limitation, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photoelectronic system, or photo optical system, including, without limitation, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. "Cyber-bullying" includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying. "Cyber-bullying" also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of "bullying." "Cyber-bullying" also includes the posting or distribution of an unauthorized digital replica by electronic means if the posting or distribution creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of "bullying."

Digital Replica- A newly created, electronic representation of the identity of an actual individual created using a computer, algorithm, software, tool, artificial intelligence, or other technology that is fixed in a sound recording or audiovisual work in which that individual did not actually perform or appear and that is so realistic that a reasonable observer would believe it is a performance by the individual being portrayed and no other individual.

Restorative Measures- A continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, that: (i) are adapted to the particular needs of the school

and community, (ii) contribute to maintaining school safety, (iii) protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, (iv) teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, (v) serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, (vi) reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school, and (vii) increase student accountability if the incident of bullying is based on religion, race, ethnicity, or any other category that is identified in the Illinois Human Rights Act.

School Personnel- Persons employed by, on contract with, or who volunteer in a school district, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school, including without limitation school and school district administrators, teachers, school social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, school resource officers, and security guards.

B. Bullying Report Process

Students, parents, and school personnel are encouraged to immediately report bullying to any administrator within **Steward ESD #220**. Alternatively, reports may be made orally or in writing to the bullying report manager:

Name:
Title:
Phone Number:
Email Address:
Address:

Anonymous reports are accepted by calling the contact listed above and specifically indicating that you would like to remain anonymous. However, formal disciplinary action cannot be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

C. Response to Bullying Reports

Upon receipt of a report of bullying, **Steward ESD #220** will investigate whether such reported acts of bullying are within the permissible scope of its jurisdiction.

Consistent with federal and state laws and rules governing student privacy rights, the parents or guardians of all students involved in an alleged incident of bullying will be notified of such, along with threats, suggestions, or instances of self-harm determined to be the result of bullying, within 24 hours after the school's administration is made aware of the student's involvement in the incident. As appropriate, the school's administration shall also discuss the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures. The school shall make diligent efforts to notify a parent or legal guardian, utilizing all contact information the school has available or that can be reasonably obtained by the school

within the 24-hour period.

Further, the administrator or report manager will promptly investigate and address the report of bullying by doing the following:

1. Making all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 school days after the date the report of the incident of bullying was received, taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported incident of bullying.

2. Involving appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.

3. Notifying the principal, school administrator, or his/her designee of the report of the incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received (if the principal or administrator is not the person who received the report).

4. Consistent with federal and state laws and rules governing student privacy rights, providing the parents and guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the principal, school administrator, or his/her designee to discuss the investigation, its findings, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.

The principal, administrator, or his/her designee may implement interventions to address reports of bullying. This includes, but is not limited to, school social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services. Additionally, **Steward ESD #220** shall provide the victim with information regarding services that are available within the district and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs.

Reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying is prohibited. Such reprisal or retaliation will be treated as bullying for the purpose of determining appropriate consequences. No person will be subject to consequences for making a good-faith report of bullying. However, making a false accusation of bullying as a means of retaliation or as a means of bullying is prohibited and will be treated as bullying for the purpose of determining appropriate consequences.

D. Policy Evaluation

This policy is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents or guardians. Furthermore, the policy is consistent with the other policies of **Steward ESD #220**.

This policy will be posted on **Steward ESD #220** existing, publicly accessible website. Additionally, it will be included in the student handbook and, where applicable, posted where other policies, rules, and standards of conduct are currently posted in the school. The policy will be provided periodically throughout the school year to students and faculty and will be distributed annually to parents, guardians, students, and school personnel, including new employees when hired.

Steward ESD #220 shall conduct a review and re-evaluation of this policy every two years to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of this policy and shall make any necessary and appropriate revisions. As part of this process, **Steward ESD #220** shall review various factors including, but not limited to:

1. The frequency of victimization
2. Student, staff, and family observations of safety at school
3. Identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs
4. The types of bullying utilized
5. Bystander intervention or participation

Steward ESD #220 may use relevant data and information it already collects for other purposes in the policy evaluation. The information developed as a result of the policy evaluation must be made available on the website of **Steward ESD #220**. If a website is not available, the information must be provided to school administrators, school board members, school personnel, parents, guardians, and students.

No later than September 30 of the subject year, the policy must be filed with the Illinois State Board of Education after being updated.

Date of Adoption: 09/23/2026

Date of Most Recent Review/Re-evaluation: 09/23/2026

Steward Board Signature: _____ **Date:** 9/23/2026

Steward Principal Signature: _____ **Date:** 9/23/2026

E. References
105 ILCS 5/22-110 – Bullying Prevention
23 Illinois Administrative Code § 1.295