

5000.

NON-DISCRIMINATION (STUDENTS)

Protected Class Discrimination Prohibited:

The Meriden Board of Education (the “Board”) complies with all laws prohibiting the exclusion of any person from any of its educational programs or activities, or the denial to any person of the benefits of any of its educational programs or activities, including all academic, extra-curricular, and school-sponsored activities, on the basis of any protected characteristic (or protected class) including race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, alienage, ancestry, disability, pregnancy, gender identity or expression, veteran status, status as a victim of domestic violence or any other basis prohibited by state or federal law (“Protected Class”), subject to the conditions and limitations established by law. When the Board has created a limited public forum, the Board shall provide equal access to the Boy Scouts and other groups as required by law.

It is the policy of the Board that any form of discrimination or harassment on the basis of an individual’s actual or perceived membership in a Protected Class, whether by students, Board employees, Board members, or third parties subject to the control of the Board, is prohibited in the Meriden Public Schools (the “District”). The Board’s prohibition of discrimination or harassment in its educational programs or activities expressly extends to academic, nonacademic, and extracurricular activities, including athletics.

Retaliation Prohibited:

The Board further prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any individual who reports incidents in good faith that may be a violation of this policy, or who participates in the investigation of such reports.

Discrimination on the Basis of Protected Class Association Prohibited:

Discrimination and/or harassment against any individual on the basis of that individual’s association with someone in a Protected Class may also be considered a form of Protected Class discrimination and/or harassment and is therefore prohibited by this policy.

Scope and Applicability:

Students, Board employees, Board members, and community members (e.g., other individuals affiliated with the District, accessing or seeking access to District facilities) are expected to adhere to a standard of conduct that is respectful of the rights of all members of the school community.

Definitions:

The following definitions apply for purposes of this policy:

A. Discrimination:

With respect to students, unlawful discrimination occurs when a student is denied participation in, or the benefits of, a program or activity of the Board because of such student's actual or perceived membership in a Protected Class.

B. Harassment:

Harassment is a form of Protected Class discrimination that is prohibited by law and by this policy. Harassment constitutes unlawful discrimination when it creates a hostile environment, which occurs when the harassment is sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent so as to interfere with or limit a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or opportunities offered by the District.

The following non-exhaustive list provides examples of the types of prohibited conduct that may be considered Protected Class harassment that can lead to a hostile environment, and are therefore prohibited by this policy:

- objectively offensive racial, ethnic, or religious epithets (or epithets commonly associated with any Protected Class membership);
- other words or phrases commonly considered demeaning or degrading on the basis of Protected Class membership;
- display of images or symbols commonly associated with discrimination against individuals on the basis of their membership in a Protected Class;
- graphic, written or electronic communications that are harmful, or humiliating based on Protected Class membership;
- bigoted conduct or communications; or
- physical, written, electronic or verbal threats based on Protected Class membership.

Harassment does not have to include intent to harm, be directed at a specific target, or involve repeated incidents.

Sexual harassment is a form of harassment that is prohibited by law and Board Policy 5020, Policy Regarding Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 – Prohibition of Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (Students). For more information regarding harassment based on sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or gender identity or expression, contact the District's Title IX Coordinator at:

Office of the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, Meriden Public Schools, 22 Liberty Street, Meriden, CT 06450

C. Veteran:

A veteran is any person honorably discharged from, released under honorable conditions from or

released with an other than honorable discharge based on a qualifying condition from, active service in, the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Air Force and any reserve component thereof, including the Connecticut National Guard. “Qualifying condition” means (i) a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury made by an individual licensed to provide health care services at a United States Department of Veterans Affairs facility, (ii) an experience of military sexual trauma disclosed to an individual licensed to provide health care services at a United States Department of Veterans Affairs facility, or (iii) a determination that sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression was more likely than not the primary reason for an other than honorable discharge, as determined in accordance with Conn. Gen. Stat. §§ 27-103(c), (d).

D. Gender identity or expression:

Gender identity or expression refers to a person’s gender-related identity, appearance or behavior, whether or not that gender-related identity, appearance or behavior is different from that traditionally associated with the person’s physiology or assigned sex at birth, which gender-related identity can be shown by providing evidence including, but not limited to, medical history, care or treatment of the gender-related identity, consistent and uniform assertion of the gender-related identity or any other evidence that the gender-related identity is sincerely held, part of a person's core identity or not being asserted for an improper purpose.

E. Sexual Orientation:

Sexual orientation refers to a person’s identity in relation to the gender or genders to which they are romantically, emotionally or sexually attracted, inclusive of any identity that a person (i) may have previously expressed, or (ii) is perceived by another person to hold.

F. Race:

The term race is inclusive of ethnic traits historically associated with race, including but not limited to, hair texture and protective hairstyles. “Protective hairstyles” includes, but is not limited to, wigs, headwraps, and hairstyles such as individual braids, cornrows, locs, twists, Bantu knots, afros, and afro puffs.

G. Domestic Violence:

The term domestic violence means (1) a continuous threat of present physical pain or physical injury against a family or household member, as defined in Conn. Gen. Stat. § 46b-38a; (2) stalking, including but not limited to, stalking as described in Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53a-181d, of such family or household member; (3) a pattern of threatening, including but not limited to, a pattern of threatening as described in Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53a-62, of such family or household member or a third party that intimidates such family or household member; or (4) coercive control of such family or household member, which is a pattern of behavior that in purpose or effect unreasonably interferes with a person's free will and personal liberty. “Coercive control” includes, but is not

limited to, unreasonably engaging in any of the following: (a) isolating the family or household member from friends, relatives or other sources of support; (b) depriving the family or household member of basic necessities; (c) controlling, regulating or monitoring the family or household member's movements, communications, daily behavior, finances, economic resources or access to services; (d) compelling the family or household member by force, threat or intimidation, including, but not limited to, threats based on actual or suspected immigration status, to (i) engage in conduct from which such family or household member has a right to abstain, or (ii) abstain from conduct that such family or household member has a right to pursue; (e) committing or threatening to commit cruelty to animals that intimidates the family or household member; or (f) forced sex acts, or threats of a sexual nature, including, but not limited to, threatened acts of sexual conduct, threats based on a person's sexuality or threats to release sexual images.

Biased Conduct:

The Board recognizes that certain student conduct or communications may be indicative of bias towards individuals who are members of a Protected Class, even when such conduct or communications do not rise to the level of discrimination and/or harassment. The Board directs the District administration to address any such biased conduct or communications in a manner consistent with the Board's legal obligations under state and federal law and Board policy, including free speech considerations, in order to promote a school environment that is welcoming and safe for all individuals.

Reporting to District Officials:

It is the policy of the Board to provide for the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging Protected Class discrimination or harassment.

Any student, staff member and/or parent/guardian who believes a student has experienced Protected Class discrimination or harassment or an act of retaliation or reprisal in violation of this policy should report such concern in writing to the Office of the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, Meriden Public Schools, 22 Liberty Street, Meriden, CT 06450 in accordance with the Board's complaint procedures included in the Board's Administrative Regulations Regarding Non-Discrimination/Students, which accompany this policy and are available online at www.meridenk12.org or upon request from the main office of any District school. Students are encouraged to immediately report concerns about Protected Class discrimination, harassment, or retaliation.

Students may make verbal or written reports about Protected Class discrimination, harassment, or retaliation to any school employee.

If a complaint involves allegations of discrimination or harassment of a student based on sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or gender identity or expression, such complaints will be handled in accordance with the procedures set forth in Board Policy # 5020, Policy Regarding Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 – Prohibition of Sex Discrimination and Sexual

Harassment (Students). Complaints involving allegations of discrimination or harassment of a student based on disability will be addressed in accordance with the procedures set forth in Board Policy #5010, Section 504/ADA (Students). In the event reported conduct allegedly violates more than one policy, the Board will coordinate any investigation in compliance with the applicable policies.

Mandatory Staff Reporting for Student Incidents:

District employees are required to report incidents of alleged student-to-student and employee-to-student discrimination, harassment, or retaliation that may be based on a Protected Class when District employees witness such incidents or when District employees receive reports or information about such incidents, whether such incidents are verbal or physical or amount to discrimination, harassment or retaliation in other forms. **Reports should be made to any District administrator or to:**

Office of the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, Meriden Public Schools, 22 Liberty Street, Meriden, CT 06450

Remedial Action:

If the District makes a finding of discrimination, harassment or retaliation of a student, the District will take remedial action designed to:

1. eliminate the discriminatory/harassing/retaliatory conduct,
2. prevent its recurrence, and
3. address its effects on the complainant and any other affected individuals.

Examples of appropriate action may include, but are not limited to:

1. In the case of a student respondent, interventions for the individual who engaged in the discrimination/harassment may include, but are not limited to, discipline (including but not limited to suspension and/or expulsion), educational interventions, exclusion from extra-curricular activities and/or sports programs, and/or referral to appropriate state or local agencies;
2. In the case of an employee respondent, interventions for the individual who engaged in the discrimination/harassment may include, but are not limited to, supervisor notification, discipline (including possible termination of employment), training, and/or referral to appropriate state or local agencies;
3. In the case of the respondent who is otherwise associated with the school community, interventions for the individual who engaged in the discrimination/harassment may include, but are not limited to, exclusion from school property and/or activities and/or referral to appropriate state or local agencies;
4. Follow-up inquiries with the complainant and witnesses to ensure that the discriminatory/harassing conduct has stopped and that they have not experienced any retaliation;

5. Supports for the complainant; and
6. Training or other interventions for the larger school community designed to ensure that students, staff, parents, Board members and other individuals within the school community understand the types of behavior that constitute discrimination/harassment, that the District does not tolerate it, and how to report it.

District staff members and administrators will work with students and parents/guardians to take steps designed to prevent acts of discrimination, harassment and retaliation.

Reporting to State and Federal Agencies:

In addition to reporting to the Board, any student and/or parent/guardian also may file a complaint with the following agencies:

Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education (“OCR”):

Office for Civil Rights, Boston Office

U.S. Department of Education

8th Floor

5 Post Office Square

Boston, MA 02109- 3921

(617-289-0111)

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/howto.html>

Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities:

Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities

450 Columbus Blvd.

Hartford, CT 06103-1835

(860-541-3400 or Connecticut Toll Free Number 1-800-477-5737)

Questions/Requests for Accommodation:

Any parent, student, staff member, Board member or community member who:

1. has questions or concerns about this policy or its accompanying regulations;
2. wishes to request or discuss accommodations for a student based on religion;

may contact:

Office of the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, Meriden Public Schools, 22 Liberty Street, Meriden, CT 06450

Any parent, student, staff member, Board member or community member who has questions or concerns about the Board's policies regarding discrimination or harassment of students on the basis of gender/sex, gender identity, pregnancy or sexual orientation may contact the District's Title IX Coordinator:

Office of the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, Meriden Public Schools, 22 Liberty Street, Meriden, CT 06450

Any parent, student, staff member, Board member, or community member who:

1. has specific questions or concerns about the Board's policies regarding discrimination on the basis of disability applicable to students; OR
2. wishes to request an accommodation for a student on the basis of disability may contact the District's Section 504/ADA Coordinator:

Office of the Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Operations, Meriden Public Schools, 22 Liberty Street, Meriden, CT 06450

Legal References:

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. § 1681, et seq.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d, et seq.

Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act, 20 U.S.C. § 7905

Americans with Disabilities Act, 42 U.S.C. § 12101, et seq.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794, et seq.

Connecticut General Statutes § 1-1n, "Gender Identity or Expression" defined

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-15c

Connecticut General Statutes § 27-103

Connecticut General Statutes § 46a-51, Definitions

Connecticut General Statutes § 46a-58, Deprivation of rights

Connecticut General Statutes § 46b-1, Family relations matters and domestic violence defined

Public Act No. 23-145, "An Act Revising the State's Antidiscrimination Statutes"

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Previous Policy Number AD-R (3)

Cross-referenced: Policy 5020, Students/Sex Discrimination and Harassment

Policy 5010, Section 504/ADA