

WESTERN SIERRA CHARTER SCHOOLS
SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

Sexual harassment of or by any student or member of the **Western Sierra Charter Schools** (the “School” Mountain Home School and Glacier High School inclusive) staff shall not be tolerated. The Governing Board considers sexual harassment to be a major offense, which may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal or expulsion, of the offending student or staff member, or other appropriate sanction.

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when it interferes with an individual’s performance at school and/or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational environment. The conduct described above is also sexual harassment when submission to it is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s access to education.

Sexual harassment regulated by this policy pertains to behavior of a sexual nature while staff and students are under the jurisdiction of the School.

Staff and students may receive age-appropriate training and/or instruction on the prohibition of sexual harassment at the School. Copies of this policy, implementing administrative regulations containing rules and procedures for reporting charges of sexual harassment and for pursuing available remedies shall be available at the School’s Administrative Office.

Any staff or student who believes that he or she has been harassed or has witnessed sexual harassment is encouraged to immediately report such incident to his or her teacher or to the School’s Sexual Harassment Investigator. The Investigator will promptly investigate all such incidents in a confidential manner. The Sexual Harassment Investigator will be each School’s Administrator or his/her appointee.

Adopted: 1/20/10

Amended:

WESTERN SIERRA CHARTER SCHOOLS

SEXUAL HARASSMENT PROCEDURES

Statement against Sexual Harassment

- **No toleration policy** - Sexual harassment of or by any faculty, staff or student is illegal and will not be tolerated. The Governing Board prohibits sexual harassment, and harassment based on pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, race, religious creed, color, national origin or ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition, marital status, age, or any other basis protected by federal, state or local law or ordinance or regulation.
- **To whom the policy applies** - This policy applies to all persons involved in the operation of the School and prohibits unlawful harassment by faculty, staff, and students.
- **Discipline** - The Governing Board considers sexual harassment to be a major offense and any individuals who violate this policy are subject to discipline up to and including dismissal, expulsion or other appropriate sanction.
- **Prompt and Thorough Investigation** - All claims of harassment will be taken seriously and will be investigated promptly and thoroughly.
- **Confidentiality** - Sexual harassment advisers and others responsible to implement this policy will respect the confidentiality and privacy of individuals reporting or accused of sexual harassment to the extent appropriate .
- **No Retaliation** - Retaliation against any employee or student who in good faith reports or provides information related to harassment in violation of this policy is against the law and will not be tolerated. Intentionally providing false information, however, is grounds for discipline.

Sexual Harassment Defined

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other visual, verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made implicitly or explicitly a term or condition of employment or educational development;
- Submission or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for employment or education decisions affecting individuals; or
- Such conduct has a purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or educational performance, or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or educational environment.
- Sexual harassment in California also includes:
 - Verbal harassment, such as epithets, derogatory comments or slurs;
 - Physical harassment such as assault or physical interference with movement or

work; and

- Visual harassment, such as derogatory cartoons, drawings or posters.
 - Unwelcome sexual advances of an employer towards an employee or student of the same sex and harassment on the basis of pregnancy disability are unlawful sexual harassment.
- Specifically, sexual harassment may occur as a pattern of degrading sexual speech or actions and may include, but is not limited to the following examples:
 - Vulgar remarks;
 - Sexually derogatory comments regarding a person's appearance;
 - Physical touching, pinching, patting, or blocking free movement;
 - Sexual propositions or advances (with or without threats to a person's job or promotion if that person does not submit);
 - Sexually suggestive or degrading posters, cartoons, pictures or drawings;
 - Offensive sexual jokes, slurs, insults, innuendos or comments; or
 - Physical assault.

Notification

- A copy of the Policy shall be provided to all employees at the beginning of the school year, noting whether any amendments have been made.
- New employees to the School will receive a copy of the Information Sheet and Board Sexual Harassment Policy # upon acceptance of employment.
- The Board Sexual Harassment Policy will be displayed in a prominent location at the School.

Employees or students who have questions concerning this board policy are encouraged to contact the Executive Director or designee

Complaint Filing Procedure

- Informal Resolution - The Board encourages communication among its employees and students. If you feel that you are being harassed by another student, if reasonably possible, we suggest informing the party directly that his or her conduct is unwelcome or offensive and it must stop. If this is not possible, or if the alleged harasser is an employee of the School, or if the behavior continues, follow the complaint filing procedure.
- Written Complaint – Complaints should be submitted within one (1) year of the alleged incident to ensure a prompt, thorough investigation.
- Any student who believes he or she has been harassed, or believes he or she has witnessed harassment by a peer, or agent of the School should promptly report in writing, using the attached form, incident(s) to the his or her supervisor and / or the Executive

Director.

- A complaint form is attached to this Policy. It is important to fill in as much information as accurately as possible. A copy of this form can be obtained from the Executive Director.
- The School's Administrator, or designee, will investigate all reported incidents within 10 days of receiving a written complaint form, unless the Administrator, or designee, is the subject of the investigation, in which case the Executive Director shall appoint an investigator. The individual responsible for the investigation will hereinafter be referred to as the "Investigator." If the Investigator deems it necessary, he or she will convene a team of trained investigators to proceed in the investigation.

Investigation

- Complaints will be treated seriously and investigated immediately.
- Complaints will be handled confidentially.
- Complainants will be promptly and fully informed of their rights pursuant to this policy.
- All witnesses and the accused will be properly and fully informed of their rights and remedies pursuant to this policy.
- All interviews of the accused, witnesses and the complainant shall be conducted in a private area.
- The Investigator will be properly trained to listen to the allegations, make complete notes, attempt to identify all persons involved, as well as all possible witnesses, and interview the accused.
- No complainant, witness, or party who assists in the investigation will be retaliated against.
- The School will take steps to prevent the recurrence of any harassment and will correct any discriminatory effects on the complainant and others.

The Investigator will initiate an investigation to determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that a violation of the Board's sexual harassment policy has occurred. "Reasonable cause" is shown if a person of ordinary caution or prudence would be led to believe and conscientiously entertain a strong suspicion of a violation of the sexual harassment policy.

- All individuals involved in the investigation including the complainant, witnesses and the accused shall be fully informed of their rights under this policy.
- The accused shall be provided with a copy of the complaint form and an opportunity to respond to the allegations within seven (7) days of receipt of the request for a formal inquiry. The investigation will include interviews with the complainant and other witnesses as determined by the circumstances.
- The Investigator shall fully and effectively conduct an investigation that includes interviewing:

- 1) The complainant;
 - 2) The accused;
 - 3) Any witnesses to the conduct; and
 - 4) Any other person who may be mentioned during the course of the investigation as possibly having relevant information.
- When appropriate, interim protections or remedies for the complainant, such as limitations on contact, may be recommended to the appropriate Executive Director at any time during the process. The complainant will be kept informed of the status of the complaint, consistent with the Board's policy and regulation and applicable law.
 - The formal investigation shall typically be completed within sixty (60) days of the date of the filing of the request.
 - The final determination of the Investigator's investigation shall result in a report which shall contain, at the minimum:
 - 1) a statement of the allegations and issues;
 - 2) the positions of the parties;
 - 3) a summary of the evidence received from the parties and the witnesses;
 - 4) any response the accused wishes to add to the report; and
 - 5) all findings of fact.
 - The final determination report shall state a conclusion that the Investigation Team:
 - 1) Found reasonable cause that the accused violated the sexual harassment policy; or
 - 2) Did not find sufficient evidence to find reasonable cause that the accused violated the sexual harassment policy. Where the Investigator did not find reasonable cause but believes the behavior complained of may constitute misconduct, the Investigator may state such a conclusion and refer the matter to the appropriate Executive Director.
 - The report shall be submitted to the Executive Director for action, within thirty (30) days of the completion of the investigation or as soon thereafter as is feasible. The Investigator will inform the complainant and the accused that the report has been forwarded and to whom. The appropriate administrator(s) will ensure that the complainant and the accused are timely notified in writing of the disciplinary action taken.
 - Within fifteen (15) days of disciplinary action being taken against the accused, or as required by applicable Board procedures, the appropriate administrator(s) shall provide written notification to the complainant indicating:
 - 1) individual remedies available to the complainant; and
 - 2) all sanctions against the accused of which the complainant needs to be aware in order for the sanctions to be fully effective
 - Within fifteen (15) days of taking disciplinary action against the accused, the appropriate administrator(s) shall provide written notification to the Investigator indicating

- 1) the results of any disciplinary actions and the initiation of any appeals; and
 - 2) all further individual remedies available to the complainant.
- If the final determination is that sexual harassment has occurred, a prompt, relevant and effective remedy shall be provided to the complainant and appropriate disciplinary action taken against the harasser.

Appeal

Appeal of Sexual Harassment Investigation Finding of No Reasonable Cause - There are different ways to appeal a finding of no reasonable cause depending on whether the complainant is a student, faculty, or staff. In most cases, existing School complaint procedures provide a mechanism for such an appeal, and where available, such procedures must be utilized.

Notice to the Complainant

Where the Investigator concludes that there is no reasonable cause to believe that a violation of the Board's sexual harassment policy has occurred and the complaint is to be dismissed, a copy of the report will be sent to the complainant and the accused in accordance with the Board policies/regulations applying to the disclosure of information from School records.

Written Appeal

A written appeal must be directed to the appropriate administrator, as designated by the Executive Director, within thirty (30) days of notification to the complainant of the dismissal of the complaint.

Basis for Appeal - The appeal may be based only on one of the following grounds:

- 1) There is newly discovered important evidence not known at the time of the report;
- 2) Bias on the part of an Investigator member; or
- 3) The Investigator failed to follow appropriate procedures.

Decision

The Executive Director or his or her designee will consider the appeal and will provide a written decision to the complainant and the Investigator within thirty (30) days of receipt of the appeal.

Extensions of Deadlines

Extensions of all deadlines contained in these procedures may be granted at the discretion of the Investigator for good cause. The Executive Director shall be consulted before a decision is made on requests for extensions involving faculty and staff.

Adopted: 1/20/10

Amended: