Desert Trails Preparatory Academy Board of Directors Policy
Cyberbullying Prevention Policy

<u>**Statement of Policy**</u>

Desert Trails Preparatory Academy (DTPA) is committed to providing a safe, positive, productive, and nurturing educational environment for all scholars and members of the DTPA community. This policy provides DTPA families with background information on cyberbullying, disciplinary rules, prevention strategies, and links to helpful resources.

1. <u>**What is Cyberbullying?**</u>

   Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic communication technology such as cell phones, computers and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, e-mail, web applications and text messages. In some cases, cyberbullying is a single child sending a hurtful text to another child. But it can also be a group of students posting hurtful things about another student on a social media website.

2. <u>**Cyberbullying is Prohibited at DTPA**</u>

   DTPA will not tolerate behavior that infringes on the safety of any scholar, including the bullying, harassment, intimidation, and cyberbullying of any scholar. Scholars who engage in cyberbullying may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including suspension and expulsion.

   DTPA has policies and programs in place that help create an environment that is proactive in preventing and addressing cyberbullying. These include the implementation of DTPA's Behavior Policy, Student Suspension and Expulsion Policy, Anti-Discrimination Policies, on campus programs with teacher and staff in-service training to raise the awareness of children and school staff regarding harassment, intimidation and bullying.

   "Bullying" is prohibited and is grounds for suspension or expulsion. "Bullying" is defined to include severe or pervasive conduct, **including cyberbullying that** can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

   - Placing a reasonable scholar in fear of harm to the scholar's person or property.
   - Causing a reasonable scholar to experience substantial interference with his or her academic performance.
   - Causing a substantial detrimental effect on a reasonable scholar's physical or mental health.

   DTPA can discipline scholars for ant acts that occur **on-campus,** (e.g., scholar sends bullying texts to another scholar during school hours). A scholar may also be disciplined for **off-campus** cyberbullying if it meets the definition of bullying above and substantially disrupts another scholar's instructional environment.

For example, a scholar who uses a home computer to post insulting statements about another scholar on a social media website is engaging in cyberbullying. As a result, the target scholar may be subject to additional harassment at school, making it more difficult for him/her to participate in educational activities. Any scholar who makes that kind of posts will be subject to disciplinary action, as well as any other scholars who are responsible for harassing the target scholar.

DTPA staff recognizes scholars' First Amendment rights and will consult with legal counsel if they have questions about the school's ability to discipline a scholar for actions conducted off-campus.

3. **Reporting Cyberbullying**

Scholars are expected to immediately report incidents of intimidation, harassment and/or bullying-including cyberbullying-to their teacher, proctors, additional school staff or Principal.

DTPA staff should immediately report any instances of cyberbullying to the Principal. The Principal is responsible for investigating incidents of cyberbullying, notifying parents/legal guardians, and issuing discipline consistent with DTPA's policies. Parents and scholars can rely on DTPA staff to promptly investigate each complaint in a thorough and confidential manner. DTPA shall discipline scholars who commit a prohibited act of cyberbullying following the procedures laid out in the charter, which are summarized in the Student Suspension/Expulsion section.

If any scholar who believes he/she was cyberbullied by another scholar, or the parent of the complainant scholar feels that appropriate resolution of the investigation or complaint has not been reached, the scholar or the parent should contact the Chief Executive Officer, (CEO). DTPA prohibits retaliatory behavior against any complainant or any participant in the complaint process.

If cyberbullying is of a very serious nature, such as threats of physical violence or sharing explicit photographs of another scholar, DTPA staff must immediately inform the CEO and Principal. The CEO and Principal are responsible for notifying law enforcement in response to these serious incidents.

4. **Prevention Strategies and Resources**

Each teacher at DTPA implements a classroom management plan that addresses inappropriate behavior including bullying. Teachers discuss/review this plan and conduct ongoing discussions and activities in the classroom related to bullying prevention throughout the school year.

Since cyberbullying can take place at home, parents/guardians play an important role in preventing cyberbullying. The following are some strategies aimed at cyberbullying prevention:

a. Provide guidance to children on appropriate behavior using technology, which may include:
   1. Never give out personal information online, whether in instant message profiles, chat rooms, blogs, social media sites, or personal websites.
   2. Never tell anyone but your parents/guardians your password, even friends.
   3. If someone sends a mean or threatening message, don't respond. Save it or print it out and show it to an adult.
   4. Don't put anything online that you wouldn't want your classmates to see, even in email.
   5. Don't send messages or make posts when you're angry. Before clicking "send," ask yourself how you would feel if you received the message.
   6. Help other scholars who are bullied online by not joining in a showing bullying messages to an adult.
   7. Always be as polite online as you are in person.
b. Know the sites your children visit and their online activities. Ask where they're going, what they're doing, and who they're doing it with.
c. Learn about the sites and applications your children use, so you can better monitor their use.
d. Discuss cyberbullying with your children and ask if they have ever experienced it or seen it happen to someone.
e. Ask for their passwords, and if necessary tell them you'll only use them in case of an emergency.
f. Ask to "friend" or "follow" your kids on social media sites or ask another trusted adult to do so.
g. Tell your children that you won't blame them if they are cyberbullied. Emphasize that you won't take away their computer privileges-this is one of the main reasons children don't tell adults when they are cyberbullied.

The following are links to websites that feature additional information and resources, which may be helpful to our families:

National Crime Prevention Council: http://www.ncpc.org/topics/cyberbullying/stop-cyberbullying
StopBullying.Gov: https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/index.html
Cyberbullying Research Center: http://cyberbullying.org/resources
Cyberbullying Help: http://cyberbullyinghelp.com
Safe Kids: http://www.safekids.com/

Board Approved: July 6, 2017