

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

This STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE is adopted by the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), the Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA), the Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA), the Nebraska Association of School Boards (NASB), the Nebraska State Education Association (NSEA), the Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association (NRCSA), the Nebraska Coaches Association (NCA), and the Nebraska State Athletic Administrators Association (NSAAA) collectively as part of the Nebraska school system to affirm our commitment to the basic tenets and values upon which the United States and the State of Nebraska were founded.

Beginning with the Declaration of Independence, which states:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Followed by the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States, which states:

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Prosperity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Followed by Article I, Section 5, of the Nebraska Constitution, which states:

"Every person may freely speak, write and publish on all subjects, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty; and in all trials for libel, both civil and criminal, the truth when published with good motives, and for justifiable ends, shall be a sufficient defense."

And concluding, pursuant to the authority granted by the people of the State of Nebraska under Article VII, Section 1, of the Nebraska Constitution, to provide for the free instruction in the common schools of this state for all persons between the ages of five and twenty-one years, the Nebraska Legislature, enacted in 1927 Section 79-725, which states:

"Each teacher employed to give instruction in any public, private, parochial, or denominational school in the State of Nebraska shall arrange and present his or her instruction to give special emphasis to common honesty, morality, courtesy, obedience to law, respect for the national flag, the United States Constitution, and the Constitution of Nebraska, respect for parents and the home, the dignity and necessity of honest labor, and other lessons of a steadying influence which tend to promote and develop an upright and desirable citizenry."

Students in our schools have been experiencing negative, harassing, and bullying conduct during the school day, and at school activities by the spectators attending those events or, and at times by opponents in an activity, that is directed at the other school's participants and spectators, often

with a racial component. Such conduct is unacceptable and does not reflect the foregoing basic tenets of our society.

It is the responsibility of our organizations to promote and respect the liberty interests of all persons who may participate in or attend any educational endeavor sponsored by our organizations which includes ensuring that common courtesy is shown for all persons, insuring tranquility for all, and being responsible that no one person abuses his or her liberties to the detriment of other persons.

As the educational leaders of Nebraska's school system, we firmly support Nebraska schools and communities in proactively involving teachers, boards, administrators, students, parents, and community members in developing and maintaining a positive school and community culture that supports learning opportunities for all persons, and ensures that respect and courtesy are shown to all persons.

Conduct by any person that does not show respect for and courtesy to other persons in Nebraska schools and any school activity is prohibited and shall not be tolerated – period.

In carrying out these core values and responsibilities, federal and state law has provided that schools have the responsibility and authority to provide all persons with a safe learning environment in school, on school ground or vehicles, and at school activities. In addition, schools are mandated by law to provide every person with a climate free of discrimination. The Nebraska unicameral has acted to prohibit “bullying” in our schools. It has been determined that discriminatory conduct, harassment and intimidation constitute bullying.

Courts have uniformly held that school officials have the authority to maintain the discipline and learning environment necessary to accomplish the school's educational missions and statutory duties. School officials are empowered to control student speech where school authorities have reason to anticipate that such speech would “substantially interfere with the work of the school or impinge upon the rights of other students.”

This is not just a legal issue; but rather it is a matter of basic human dignity. These are basic human rights that men and women have fought and died for under our flag, and this basic tenet must also be communicated to the community as a whole.

Each school can and should take reasonable steps to provide for the safety of everyone in their school and those who visit or are participating in or attending a school activity from another school, including keeping them safe from discriminatory, harassing and bullying conduct by others at school activities. In addition, school board members and community members should take reasonable steps to provide time, resources, and support for learning opportunities for their school leaders, students and staff to ensure that all have a clear understanding of the expectations of a positive school and community culture.

The School Community listed above is available to provide support, resources and ideas on addressing this important moral issue. We urge each school to become strongly involved within its own programs and the programs of all other schools in fostering procedures that provide a wholesome atmosphere, an attitude of sportsmanship at activities, and a safe experience for all students, athletes, and spectators at its activity events free of negative, harassing, and bullying conduct.

Dated: 8/22/2018


Nebraska Department of Education


Nebraska Council of School Administrators


Nebraska School Activities Association


Nebraska Association of School Boards


Nebraska Coaches Association


Nebraska State Education Association


Nebraska State Athletic Administrators Association

 Exec Director (Exec Comm approved 7/25/18)
Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association