



Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Academy is required by law to provide annual written notice of our Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan to all members of our community, including our students (relevant student portions). We take student safety very seriously at The Academy: one cannot learn and grow if one does not feel physically and emotionally safe. So it stands to reason that we all must strive to make each child feel safe to live, learn, take risks, and be themselves as vibrant members of this community. We ask that families review this policy together, and that parents support the school's efforts in supporting the skills we teach to prevent and respond to bullying.

I. PURPOSE

A safe and civil environment is needed for students to learn and attain high academic standards and to promote healthy human relationships. Bullying, like other violent or disruptive behaviors, is a form of conduct that interferes with students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to educate students in a safe environment. While The Academy cannot monitor the activities of all students at all times (particularly when students are not under the direct supervision of school personnel), it is The Academy's intent to take all measures reasonably within its powers to prevent bullying in any form within our community, and to take action to investigate, respond, remediate, and if necessary discipline any acts of bullying we become aware of. The purpose of this policy is to assist The Academy in its goal of preventing and effectively responding to acts of bullying in all forms.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. Bullying (as defined below) is expressly prohibited on The Academy's property or at school-related functions. This policy applies not only to students and school personnel who directly engage in an act of bullying but also to students and school personnel who, by their indirect behavior, condone or support an act of bullying. This policy also applies to any student or school personnel whose conduct at any time or in any place constitutes bullying that interferes with or obstructs the mission or operations of The Academy or the safety or welfare of the student, other students, or employees.

B. No teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of The Academy shall permit, condone, or tolerate bullying in any form.

C. Apparent permission or consent by a student or school personnel being bullied does not lessen the prohibitions contained in this policy.

D. Retaliation against a victim, a good faith reporter, or a witness of bullying is prohibited.

E. False accusations or reports of bullying are prohibited.

F. Any person who engages in an act of bullying, retaliation, or false reporting of bullying, or who permits, condones, or tolerates bullying shall be subject to discipline for that act in accordance with The Academy's policies and procedures. The Academy may take into account the following factors:

1. The developmental and maturity levels of the parties involved;
2. The level of harm, surrounding circumstances, and nature of the behavior;
3. Past incidences or past or continuing patterns of behavior;
4. The relationship between the parties involved; and
5. The context in which the alleged incidents occurred.

Consequences for students or school personnel who are determined to have engaged in bullying or retaliation may include a range of disciplinary actions up to and including expulsion from The Academy (students) and termination of employment (personnel). Any action taken against a student shall balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior. School personnel who permit, condone, or tolerate bullying may likewise be subject to disciplinary action.

G. The Academy recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Annually, the school will seek to support vulnerable students and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge and strategies needed to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment. This will be executed through our advisory program in small, grade-specific groups through relevant activities and discussions, to be followed by individual meetings with advisors. Like all community members, students will be reminded of their access to the anonymous incident report form available on our website.

H. The Academy will act to investigate all complaints of bullying and will discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of The Academy who is found to have violated this policy.

III. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, the definitions included in this section apply.

A. “Bullying” is defined as the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim’s property; (ii) places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself or of damage to his property; (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the victim; (iv) infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For the purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

B. “Cyber-bullying”, bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, 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, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. Cyber-bullying shall also include (i) the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or (ii) the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying. Cyber-bullying shall also include 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 conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

C. “Immediately” means as soon as possible but in no event longer than 24 hours.

D. “On Academy property or at school-related functions” means all Academy buildings, school grounds, and school property or property immediately adjacent to school grounds, school bus stops, school buses, school vehicles, school contracted vehicles, or any other vehicles approved for school purposes, the area of entrance or departure from school grounds, premises, or events, and all school-related functions, school-sponsored activities, events, or trips. Academy property also may mean a student’s walking route to or from school for purposes of attending school or school-related functions, activities, or events, as well as any collaborative school for a school- sponsored activity, function, program, instruction or training. The inclusion of any particular location on the foregoing list does not constitute a representation that The Academy is able to provide supervision at the location in question.

IV. REPORTING PROCEDURE

A. Any person who believes they have been the victim of bullying, or any other person with knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying, shall immediately report the alleged acts to the Associate Head of School for Community. Reports may be made orally or in writing. A person may report bullying anonymously. However, The Academy’s ability to take action against an alleged perpetrator based solely on an anonymous report may be limited. No disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

B. The person designated above (IV.A) (the “report taker”) is the person responsible for receiving reports

of bullying. If the complaint involves the report taker, the report may be filed directly with the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees.

C. Teachers, school administrators, volunteers, contractors, and other school employee shall be particularly alert to possible situations, circumstances, or events that might include bullying. Any such person who receives a report of, observes, or has other knowledge or belief of conduct that may constitute bullying shall inform a report taker immediately. Academy personnel who fail to inform the report taker of conduct that may constitute bullying in a timely manner may be subject to disciplinary action.

D. Reports of bullying (including in most cases any reports generated as a result of an investigation into alleged bullying) are classified as private educational and/or personnel data and/or confidential investigative data, and will not be disclosed to any person except as required by law.

E. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of bullying will not affect the complainant's or reporter's future employment, grades, or work assignments, or educational or work environment.

F. The Academy will make all reasonable efforts to maintain the confidentiality of any bullying investigation and the privacy of reporters, alleged victims and perpetrators, and any witnesses, to the extent consistent with law and The Academy's obligation to promptly and fully investigate and take appropriate action.

V. SCHOOL ACTION

A. Upon receipt of a report of bullying, The Academy shall undertake or authorize an investigation by an Academy official or (in The Academy's sole discretion) by a third party designated by The Academy.

B. The Academy may take immediate steps, at its discretion, to protect an alleged victim, reporter, or any other person pending completion of an investigation of bullying consistent with applicable law.

C. Upon completion of an investigation, The Academy will take any appropriate action. Such action may include, but is not limited to, warning, suspension, exclusion, expulsion, remediation, training, termination, or discharge. With respect to any student found to have engaged in bullying, any action taken for violation of this policy will balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior.

D. The Academy is not authorized to disclose to a victim private educational or personnel data regarding an alleged perpetrator who is a student or employee of The Academy. To the extent permitted by law, school officials will notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) of students involved in a bullying incident of the result of the investigation, of the remedial action taken, and of any actions taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation.

E. The Academy will work with our psychological consultant to provide counsel or referral to appropriate services for perpetrators and victims, and appropriate family members.

VI. RETALIATION

The Academy will discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, volunteer, contractor, or other employee of The Academy who retaliates against any person who makes a good faith report of alleged bullying or against any person who testifies, assists, or participates in an investigation, or against any person who testifies, assists, or participates in a proceeding or hearing relating to such bullying. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, reprisal, harassment, or intentional disparate treatment.

VII. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

A. The Academy will regularly provide information and any applicable training to personnel regarding this policy.

B. The Academy will annually provide education and information to students regarding bullying, including information regarding this policy, the harmful effects thereof, and other applicable initiatives to prevent bullying.

C. The administration of The Academy is dedicated to implementing programs and other initiatives to prevent bullying, to responding to bullying in a manner that does not stigmatize any victim, and to making resources or referrals to resources available to victims of bullying and any other person in our community upon request.

VIII. NOTICE

The Academy will give annual notice of this plan to parents, guardians, students (relevant student portions) and staff; and this plan will be available on The Academy's website.

Legal references: Massachusetts General Laws, Chap. 71, Sec. 37O.