

ACADEMY HILL SCHOOL BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

I INTRODUCTION

At Academy Hill, we strive to create the conditions wherein our children can be successful. It is the school's policy to provide a learning environment that is free of all physical or verbal misconduct.

The Academy Hill School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan has been developed and is being published in response to the Massachusetts law prohibiting bullying signed into law on May 3, 2010. Our plan spells out Academy Hill's comprehensive approach to addressing bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation.

It is important that this Plan be understood by all members of the AHS community. The Head of School is responsible for the implementation and administration of the Plan and any questions or concerns related to the Plan may be referred to him/her.

II POLICY AGAINST BULLYING, CYBER-BULLYING AND RETALIATION

Academy Hill School will not tolerate any form of bullying or cyber-bullying, nor will we tolerate retaliation against any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses, or has reliable information about bullying.

Bullying and Cyber-bullying are prohibited:

On school grounds and at school sponsored events, activities, functions and programs, whether they take place on or off school grounds

On a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the school

Through the use of technology or an electronic device that is owned, leased or used by the school

At any program or location that is not school related, or through the use of personal technology or devices

If the bullying creates a hostile environment at the school for a targeted student or materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the school.

DEFINITIONS UNDER THE LAW

The following definitions are drawn from the Massachusetts law against bullying (M.G.L. c.71 p.370).

Bullying: the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;

Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;

Creates a hostile environment at school for the targeted student;

Infringes on the rights of the targeted student at school; or

Materially or substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the school.

Cyber-bullying: Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, fax machines, and the internet. It includes but is not limited to: e-mail, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings whether on a webpage, in a blog, or otherwise.

Hostile Environment A hostile environment is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

Retaliation: Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses, or has reliable information about bullying.

Target: The individual against whom bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation has been perpetrated.

LEGAL DEFINITIONS AND SCHOOL POLICY

It is important to bear in mind that stricter standards of behavior may apply under Academy Hill's policies in order that we may prevent inappropriate verbal and physical conduct before a student has been subject to bullying as defined under law. For example, although the law defines bullying as "repeated use" of certain expressions, acts, and/or gestures, the School reserves the right to apply disciplinary measures and other corrective action in a case of a single expression, act, or gesture, if the School determines that it is of sufficient severity to warrant disciplinary measures or other remedial action or that the repetition of that expression, act, or gesture might reasonably result in bullying as defined under law

III PREVENTION OF BULLYING AND CYBER-BULLYING

Academy Hill's Code of Conduct focuses on positive behaviors and values. From the earliest grades, students learn that as members of our community they have a right to be treated with civility and respect. Our curriculum emphasizes respect for differences, and teachers are clear in their expectations for student behavior. The School partners with parents in enforcing standards for membership in the Academy Hill community.

At the start of each year, Morning Meetings are utilized by the Head of School and faculty to make sure that students are well informed about what is expected of them and to reinforce positive, respectful conduct. Throughout the year, faculty and particularly in the lower grades, use "teachable moments" to again reinforce the School's standards of behavior.

Throughout the year, the staff discusses potential problems at staff meetings and individually with the Head of School. When deemed appropriate, consulting psychologists or behavioral specialists are invited to conduct professional development sessions in order to respond to a determined need.

A school-wide positive behavior curriculum, "Don't Laugh at Me", is used and additional curricula are continually researched.

The School recognizes that it is essential that expectations for student conduct extend to corridors, the lunch room, recess and the like. The School strives to ensure that ample adult supervision is provided on School premises as well as at School-sponsored events.

IV REPORTS OF BULLYING CYBER-BULLYING OR RETALIATION

Any student who is the target of bullying or cyber-bullying or has witnessed an incident of bullying or cyber-bullying or otherwise has relevant information about bullying or cyber-bullying prohibited by this policy is strongly encouraged to promptly report the matter orally or in writing to a teacher or the Head of School. Also, any student who is subject to retaliation in violation of this policy or who knows of another student who has been subject to retaliation is urged to report it as soon as possible.

A parent of a student who is the target of bullying or cyber-bullying or of a student who has witnessed or otherwise has relevant information about bullying or cyber-bullying or has information concerning such an incident is strongly urged to come forward to the Head of School. A parent should also report any incident of retaliation in violation of this policy to the Head of School.

Any member of the faculty or staff of the School who witnesses or otherwise becomes aware of bullying or cyber-bullying in violation of this policy or who becomes aware of retaliation against a student who reported information concerning a violation of this policy is required to report it immediately to the Head of School. There are to be no exceptions. A member of faculty or staff may not make promises of confidentiality to a student or parent who informs him/her of an allegation of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation.

Faculty and staff may not make reports under this policy anonymously. The School also urges students and their parents not to make reports anonymously. Although there are circumstances in which an anonymous report can be better than none at all, it is far more difficult to determine the facts of what occurred if complaints are made anonymously. Students and parents are encouraged to keep in mind that the School takes its policy against retaliation very seriously. Also, while the School cannot promise strict confidentiality, because information must be shared in order to conduct an effective investigation, the school releases information concerning complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation only on a legitimate need-to-know basis.

V RESPONDING TO A REPORT OF BULLYING, CYBER-BULLYING OR RETALIATION

A Preliminary Considerations When a complaint of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation is brought to the attention of the Head of School, an assessment is made as to whether any initial steps need to be taken to protect the well-being of students and to prevent disruption of their learning environment while the investigation is being conducted. As appropriate, strategies such as increased supervision may be implemented to prevent further bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation during an investigation.

B Obligation to Notify Parents It is the policy of the School to notify the parents of any student who is the alleged target of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation and the parents of any student who may have been accused of engaging in such behavior promptly after a complaint has been made.

C Investigation The following is an outline of the procedure that is pursued once a complaint has been brought to the attention of the Head of School.

An impartial investigation of the complaint is conducted by the Head of School. That investigation may include, but will not be limited to, interviews with the person who made the complaint, with the student who was the target of the alleged bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation, with the person or persons against whom the complaint was made, and with any students, faculty, staff or other persons who witnessed or who may otherwise have relevant information about the alleged incident.

Depending on the circumstances, the Head of School also may choose to consult with other teachers or relevant professionals in the field of Mental Health.

D Resolution, Notification, and Follow-up

Following interviews and any other investigation undertaken, as the School deems appropriate, the Head of School will determine whether and to what extent the allegation of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation has been substantiated. If it is determined that the policy set forth in this Plan has been violated, the Head of School will determine what disciplinary action and/or other remedial action is appropriate and how it will be implemented.

The goal of an investigation and any disciplinary or other remedial process that is imposed following that investigation is to correct the situation to the extent it is reasonably possible and to take such steps as can be taken to prevent there being a repetition of the incident and to prevent the student or students targeted and others who participated in the investigation, from being subject to retaliation.

In appropriate circumstances, such as when a crime may have been committed or a child may have been subject to abuse or neglect that is reportable under Section 51A of the Massachusetts laws, law enforcement or another appropriate government agency may be notified.

Upon completion of the investigation, the Head of School will meet individually with the student or students who were the target of the alleged incident and the student or students against whom the complaint was made and their parents to report the results of the investigation and, where disciplinary or other corrective action is determined to be appropriate, to inform the parties of the steps that will be taken to correct the situation. The amount of information provided in these meetings may be limited by confidentiality laws protecting student records.

Follow-up contacts will be made with any student found to have been targeted in violation of this policy and his/her parents to inquire as to whether there have been any further incidents.

VI Conclusion

This Plan is intended:

- To prevent bullying and cyber-bullying among our students.
- To encourage students and their parents to have confidence in the School's procedures and to come forward promptly whenever a student is subject to conduct that is prohibited by this or any other School policy; and
- To implement appropriate discipline and other corrective measures when they are found to be warranted.