

Bullying Prevention Policy for Lawrence Hall School



Purpose

The Illinois General Assembly has found that a safe and civil school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve and that bullying causes physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students and interferes with their ability to learn and participate in school activities. Bullying has been linked to other forms of antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, shoplifting, skipping and dropping out of school, fighting, using drugs and alcohol, sexual harassment, and violence. It is the goal of the school to create a learning environment where students feel safe and supported, are protected from bullying and are able to succeed academically and develop socially and emotionally into responsible, caring individuals.

Scope

Bullying is contrary to Illinois law and this Policy is consistent with the Illinois School code. This Policy protects students against bullying and harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race or ethnicity, color, religion, sex, national origin or immigration status, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender or sex (includes gender identity and gender expression), political belief or affiliation, or on the basis of a person's association with a person or group with one of more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics. We recognize the vulnerability of students with actual or perceived disabilities and those that identify as or are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Nothing in this policy is intended to infringe upon any expression protected by the First Amendments to the United States Constitution or the Illinois Constitution.

Policy Evaluation

This Policy is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents/guardians. The Behavior Management Committee will reevaluate this Policy every two years based on an assessment of its outcomes and effectiveness, including, but not limited to, factors such as the frequency of victimization; student, staff family observations of safety at school; student survey results, identification of areas in the school where bullying occurs; the types of bullying that are common or occurring; and bystander intervention or participation. This information will be provided to school personnel, parents, guardians, and students following the meeting of this committee.

Bullying and harassment are prohibited:

- During any school sponsored or school sanctioned program or event.
- In school, on school property, on school buses or other school provided transportation.
- Through the transmission of information from a school computer or computer network or other electronic school equipment.

- When communicated through any electronic technology or personal electronic device while on school property, on school buses or other school-sponsored or school-sanctioned event or activity.
- When it is conveyed that a threat will be carried out in a school setting, including threats made outside school hours with intent to carry them out during any school-related or sponsored program or activity or on school-provided transportation.

Definition

“Bullying” means any physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students, and meets all the following criteria:

1. An observed or perceived imbalance of power exists between the person(s) engaged in the bullying behavior(s) and the targeted student(s); and /or student(s) were targeted based on prejudice or bias as defined below.
2. The behaviors are severe or pervasive (repeated over time), or there is a high likelihood that behaviors will be repeated. While bullying is often characterized by repeated acts, sometimes a single incident constitutes bullying depending on the severity and if other elements of bullying are present.
3. The intent of the person(s) engaging in the behavior is to cause physical or emotional harm to the targeted student(s).
4. The behavior has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the following effects:
 - a. Placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student’s person or property;
 - b. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student’s physical or mental health;
 - c. Substantially interfering with the student’s academic performance; or
 - d. Substantially interfering with the student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, privileges provided by a school.

Preventing Bullying

All staff shall work to develop a safe, supportive school environment that prevents bullying through:

- Developing supportive school climate strategies, including clear expectations and share agreements to guide interactions between students, and between staff and students. This includes the inclusion of the policy in the student/parent handbook. This handbook is distributed annually to students and parents at the start of each school year. It is also shared at the initial intake meeting for all new students and during the on-boarding meeting with new staff.
- Teach all students social and emotional skills and establish classroom and school-wide practices that promote relationship-building, including teaching all school stakeholders to speak out when they see or hear bullying, degrading language, and bias or prejudice.

- Establish predictable responses and effective disciplinary practices that address root cause, teach skills, build empathy, and repair harm. Ensure all students, staff and stakeholders know our school plan to respond to bullying and harassment.

Intervening to Address Bullying

A. Responsibilities of School Staff

All school staff who witness incidents of bullying or school violence or who possess reliable information to suspect that a person is a target of bullying must:

1. Intervene immediately in a manner that is appropriate and ensures that safety of all people involved.
2. Report the incident of bullying or retaliation to the Principal or Director of Education as soon as practicable, but by the end of the school day.
3. Cooperate fully in any investigation of the incident and in implementing any safety plan established by the principal or director of education.

B. Responsibilities of Students, Parents and Guardians

No student who witnesses bullying may stand by or participate in the bullying but must notify a school staff or an adult at home as quickly as possible. Any parent or guardian who witnesses or is notified of bullying has an obligation to advise the Principal or the Director of Education as quickly as possible. Reports can be made by contacting the principal at 773-727-6200 or at vhicks@lawrencehall.org Anonymous reports will be accepted by the Principal. No disciplinary action will be taken on the sole basis of an anonymous report.

Reprisal/retaliation or the submission of knowingly false bullying allegations is prohibited and will result in the imposition of appropriate intervention/consequences including but not limited to parent conferences, community service IEP review/revisions and suspension.

C. Process for Investigating Reports of Bullying

1. **Ensure Safety.** The Principal will determine if a reported act of bullying is within the permissible scope of the school's jurisdiction. If there are overt or implied risks of safety, the Chicago Police Department may be contacted. The principal will provide immediate support to any targeted students to ensure safety.
2. **Notify parents/guardians of all involved students.** Within one school day of receipt of a bullying report, the Principal will report to the parent/legal guardian of all involved students, via telephone, personal conference and or in writing, the occurrence of any alleged incident or bullying, and shall document these notifications in the student's file.
3. **Document all allegations of bullying.** Within two school days of receiving a report of bullying, the Principal will document the allegation and notifications to guardians in the school's data base system.

4. **Conduct an investigation.** The Principal or Designee will conduct the investigation. Investigation of reported bullying will be initiated within 5 school days of receipt of a report and completed within 10 school days. The investigation will include:
 - a. Identifying all involved parties, including the student(s) alleged to have engaged in the bullying behaviors, alleged target(s) and bystanders(s), as well as any adult who witnessed the incident or may have reliable information about it.
 - b. Conducting an individual interview in a private setting with all involved parties. The alleged target should never be interviewed in public or with the student(s) alleged to have engaged in the bullying.
 - c. Determining how often the conduct occurred, any past incidents or continuing pattern of behavior indicated on written reports.
 - d. Assessing the individual and school-wide effects of the incident relating to safety.
5. **Make a determination whether allegations of bullying are substantiated or not and document determination.** The Principal/Designee shall consider whether the four elements of the bullying definition are met, or if all four elements of bullying are not present, whether the behavior qualifies as another inappropriate behavior. When the investigation is complete, the Principal/Designee will ensure that the investigation and findings are documented in the school's data base system. If the investigation determines that a student(s) engaged in bullying behaviors and or other inappropriate behaviors, the Principal/Designee will complete an incident report.
6. **Notify all involved parties of the outcome of the investigation.** Within one day of making a determination, the Principal/designee will notify, in writing, the parents/legal guardians of all students involved of the outcome of the investigation. Parents/legal guardians of the student who are parties to the investigation may request a personal conference with the Principal/Designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying, and any resources available in or outside the school to help the students address the underlying reasons for the bullying.

D. Determining an Appropriate Response

The goal of the response is to ensure the targeted student feels safe and welcome, and the student engaged in bullying behaviors understands the harm s/he caused and changes his/her behavior.

1. Identify school risk factors and ensure a universal strategy for school climate improvement and social and emotional development.
2. Provide the targeted student with information on available services including counseling and support services.
3. Determine interventions and or consequences that address the root cause of the student's bullying behavior.

4. For incidents that impact the larger school community, provide opportunities in safe, structured environments for affected students, staff, and/or parents to speak about the incident, its impact, and what is needed to repair the harm.
- E. Practices to avoid or consider
1. Do not solicit an apology from the student who engaged in bullying behavior.
 2. Do not require a targeted student to participate in mediation until they are comfortable doing so.
 3. Dismiss bullying as typical student behavior or assume that it is not serious.

Appeal

Any party that is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal to the Chief Program Officer at Lawrence Hall (telephone 773-769-3500) within 15 calendar days of notification of the Principal's decision