LAMB Bullying Prevention Policy

Objectives and Purpose

A key responsibility of the Latin American Montessori Bilingual Public Charter School (LAMB) is to provide services in a respectful and positive environment. Acts of bullying, harassment and intimidation are an attack on core LAMB values. Thus, to facilitate our mission and in accordance with District of Columbia law, LAMB has established this bullying prevention policy. This policy protects the dignity and safety of LAMB students and describes LAMB’s strategies to identify and prevent incidents by connecting our students to necessary services. LAMB will investigate reported incidents which may violate this policy and provide appropriate remedies for victims of verified incidents of bullying.

Contact Information

LAMB’s Prevention Specialist is responsible for coordinating LAMB’s bullying prevention efforts. Bullying incident reports, as well as questions, comments, and concerns about this bullying policy and LAMB’s prevention efforts should be directed to the Prevention Specialist, whose contact information is below.

Director of Family Engagement
1375 Missouri Avenue NW Washington DC 20011
frontdesk@lambpcs.org
(202) 726-6200

Definition of Bullying

LAMB defines bullying as any severe, pervasive, or persistent act or conduct, whether physical, electronic, or verbal that:

1. May be based on a youth’s actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, intellectual ability, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, disability, source of income, status as a victim of an intrafamily offense, place of residence or business, or any other distinguishing
characteristic, or on a youth’s association with a person, or group with any person, with one or more of the actual or perceived foregoing characteristics; and

2. Shall be reasonably predicted to:
   ● Place the youth in reasonable fear of physical harm to his or her or their (hereinafter all references to gender are intended to be neutral and “s/he, they” may be used interchangeably) person or property;
   ● Cause a substantial detrimental effect on the youth’s physical or mental health;
   ● Substantially interfere with the youth’s academic performance or attendance; or
   ● Substantially interfere with the youth’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by LAMB.

Prohibition against Bullying and Retaliation

Acts of bullying against a LAMB student, including cyberbullying whether by students, volunteers or staff, are prohibited:

1. On LAMB grounds and immediately adjacent property, at LAMB sponsored or related events on and off LAMB grounds, on any vehicle used for LAMB business, at locations where LAMB may gather students for transportation, education, and/or LAMB-sponsored event purposes, or through the use of any electronic devices owned by LAMB, leased by LAMB, or used for LAMB business; or

2. At a location or function unrelated to LAMB, through the use of any electronic devices, including those not owned or leased by LAMB, if the acts of bullying or cyberbullying create a hostile environment at the school for the victim or witnesses, infringe on their rights at LAMB, or materially and substantially disrupt the orderly operation of LAMB.

Retaliation against students, volunteers, or employees who report bullying, provide information about an act of bullying, or witness an act of bullying is also prohibited. Consequences for retaliatory behavior by an employee, volunteer, or student at LAMB in response to a bullying investigation or finding may include, but are not limited to education, reprimand, deprivation of privileges, ban on participating in LAMB activities, ban from LAMB facilities, suspension or expulsion (if a student), or termination (if an employee or volunteer).

Code of Conduct

LAMB expects students to behave in a way that supports LAMB’s objective to provide a safe and welcoming environment for other students, LAMB staff, and community members. Students who are part of the LAMB community are expected to:

1. Treat all members of the LAMB community with respect;
2. Respect the property of LAMB, its staff, and other students connected to LAMB;
3. Respond appropriately to instructions from LAMB staff;
4. Follow LAMB’s Positive Behavior Matrix (PAZ)

**Reporting Incidents of Bullying or Retaliation**

LAMB expects all employees and volunteers to report incidents of bullying or retaliation they witness or are made aware of to the Principal, an Assistant Principal, or the Prevention Specialist.

Youth, parents, guardians, and community members are encouraged by LAMB to report any incidents of bullying they witness or become aware of. Reports of bullying may be made to LAMB’s Prevention Specialist (whose name and contact information is listed above), to any Assistant Principal, the Principal or to the Executive Director for guidance regarding next steps. To submit a formal complaint, individuals have to fill out and submit the bullying incident form available online at lambpcs.org/forms. The form should be sent to the Prevention Specialist (frontdesk@lambpcs.org).

Reports of bullying by youth, parents, guardians, and community members may be made anonymously by placing the complaint in the drop box located in their building. Please note that LAMB cannot take disciplinary action solely on the basis of an anonymous report (absent sufficient information to corroborate or investigate). LAMB’s ability to investigate or respond to an anonymous report may be limited if the report does not contain sufficient information about the parties involved or the facts and circumstances of the conduct. In response to an anonymous report, LAMB will conduct an inquiry to the best of its ability and remedy the situation, if appropriate. LAMB will only investigate reports regarding students who are currently enrolled.

**Investigating Incidents of Bullying**

Prior to the investigation of an incident, the Prevention Specialist will take steps to ensure the safety of the alleged victim referenced in a reported bullying incident. These steps will be designed to restore a sense of safety to the victim and to protect them from further incidents if necessary. Examples of such steps taken include designating a staff member to serve as that alleged victim’s “safe” person, altering the alleged bully/bullies’ seating or schedule to reduce access to the alleged victim, or creating a safety plan in consultation with the alleged victim. Once an investigation is concluded, further steps will be taken as needed to assure the continued safety of the victim from additional incidents of bullying or retaliation. These steps may vary from case to case and will be determined and implemented in LAMB’s sole discretion.

Once LAMB receives an allegation of bullying, the Prevention Specialist will assess the allegation/complaint. If there is enough information to determine that bullying, as defined above,
has or is occurring, then the Prevention Specialist will take steps to notify the following groups as necessary and as is determined to be appropriate by LAMB:

**Parents and guardians:** LAMB will notify the parents or guardians of reported victims, bullies, and if appropriate, witnesses to incidents of bullying behavior about the nature of the incident and the procedures and steps in place for responding to it. The Prevention Specialist will determine if parents or guardians should be informed prior to or after the investigation of an incident. In certain circumstances, the Prevention Specialist may determine that it would not be appropriate to notify parent(s)/guardian(s). Should this occur, the Prevention Specialist will document the decision not to inform parent(s)/guardian(s) and the reason for making that decision.

**Schools:** LAMB will notify the schools of all reported victims and bullies in an incident of bullying to ensure that youth are not victimized across schools and that comprehensive service and protection can be provided to bullies and victims.

**Law enforcement agencies:** If LAMB determines that the reported incident may involve criminal activity or the basis for criminal charges, information about the incident must be conveyed to the appropriate law enforcement authorities. As part of making this determination, the Prevention Specialist may wish to consult with either a law enforcement officer or legal counsel. LAMB is required to report suspected ongoing abuse of a minor to child protective services and/or local law enforcement. See LAMB’s Family Handbook for more information about Mandated Reporting of Abuse.

LAMB will notify these groups of incidents of bullying only to the extent allowed by law. Notification will be undertaken solely to ensure that services are provided to victims and bullies, to protect victims from further or sustained victimization, and/or to meet LAMB’s obligations under the law. LAMB will make every effort to protect the confidentiality of those who report bullying incidents.

The Prevention Specialist, whose contact information is listed above, is responsible for investigating reports of bullying. An investigation of an incident will be initiated no more than two (2) days after the Prevention Specialist receives a completed bullying incident form, and will conclude no later than thirty (30) days after the receipt of such a report. The course of an investigation will vary case by case and will be carried out as determined by LAMB. As part of the investigation, the Prevention Specialist may interview appropriate individuals, including alleged victims, students allegedly engaging in bullying behavior, witnesses, staff, parents, or guardians. The Prevention Specialist may also collect written or other evidence.
The Prevention Specialist will provide confidentiality as far as possible to relevant parties as part of the investigation, and inform all relevant parties that retaliation for reporting acts of bullying is prohibited.

In investigating an incident of bullying, the Prevention Specialist will seek to ensure that the reported incident is one of victimization, a sign of bullying, rather than of conflict. When investigating a reported incident the Prevention Specialist will attempt to determine what mechanisms the victim had and has access to for halting the incident that occurred, and preventing future such instances. If the victim has few or no mechanisms for ending the incident or constructively dealing with future instances, that information will serve as compelling, though not conclusive evidence that the reported incident was an incident of bullying.

The Prevention Specialist is charged with making determinations as to whether a reported incident constitutes a case of bullying. These determinations will be made in consideration of the totality of the facts and the circumstances surrounding the incident. If the Prevention Specialist determines that an incident of bullying has occurred, they should take the response steps enumerated in LAMB’s Behavior and Discipline Protocol to prevent the recurrence of an incident and restore the safety of a victim. In addition to this protocol, the consequences of bullying are further outlined in this policy, below.

Students and their parents (if appropriate) will be notified when the investigation has concluded and, to the extent practicable, the outcome of the process. Please note, however, that LAMB may be limited in how much information it can disclose, including information about any discipline that was imposed.

**Consequences of Bullying**

The goal of discipline or sanctions is always to appropriately correct the bullying behavior, prevent another occurrence of bullying or retaliation, and protect the target of bullying. Further, LAMB recognizes that for sanctions to be an effective component of a bullying prevention plan, they must be applied consistently, fairly, and equitably. To this end, LAMB shall ensure that staff follow these guidelines as closely as possible, while allowing for flexibility to adapt sanctions to individual contexts, as referenced above. To ensure equitability in applying sanctions, measures may be applied on a graduated basis determined by the nature of the offense, the disciplinary history of the person bullying, and the age and developmental status of the youth involved.

Responses to incidents of bullying may include, but are not limited to:

- Education (recognizing our students are of a young age and may be in need of a teachable moment)
- Any appropriate response steps from LAMB’s Behavior and Discipline Protocol
- Reprimand
- Deprivation of LAMB privileges
- Bans on participating in optional LAMB activities
- Ban or Suspension from LAMB facilities
- If the bully is a student, suspension or expulsion imposed consistent with LAMB’s policies set forth in its Family Handbook
- If the bully is an employee, termination of employment

The imposition of sanctions may be delayed during an appeal, as described in the Appeals section of this policy. To ensure that single incidents of bullying do not become recurring problems, LAMB will make its best efforts to refer victims and bullies involved in an incident to services in addition to imposing sanctions on bullies.

LAMB views discipline of students as a learning opportunity and does not endorse the use of punitive strategies associated with “zero-tolerance” policies when applying sanctions to an incident of bullying.

Students with disabilities may be disciplined, suspended, or expelled on the same basis as those without disabilities. LAMB provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities; providing accommodations do not prevent LAMB from disciplining those students if necessary. Students with disabilities are, however, entitled to certain additional procedural protections during the discipline process. These protections include the requirement for a meeting to determine if behaviors resulting in expulsion or suspension for more than ten (10) days over the course of the year are a manifestation of a student’s disability. Parents can request more information about this process and a copy of the procedural safeguards by contacting the Special Education Coordinator or Section 504 Coordinator.

**Appeals**

Parties dissatisfied by the outcome of a bullying investigation may appeal the determination of the Prevention Specialist to LAMB’s Executive Director. This appeal should be submitted no later than thirty (30) days after the initial determination. Upon receipt of an appeal, the Executive Director must conduct a secondary investigation within 30 days of the receipt of an appeal. This 30 days may be extended by up to an additional fifteen (15) days if the Executive Director sets forth in writing the reasons why more time is needed to conduct an investigation. In responding to an appeal, the Executive Director will inform the party making the submission of their ability to seek additional redress under the DC Human Rights Act.

**Publication**

This policy will be included in the Family and Staff handbooks and will be made available at

1375 Missouri Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20011 • 1800 Perry Street, N.E. Washington, D.C. 20018
1399 Aspen Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20012 • V (202) 726 - 6200 F (202) 722 - 4125
LAMB’s website. The policy, and age appropriate versions thereof, will be distributed and/or communicated to LAMB students and parent(s)/guardian(s).