



WALDORF SCHOOL
of Lexington

BULLYING PREVENTION &
INTERVENTION PLAN

I. Introduction

At the Waldorf School of Lexington, we expect that all members of our school community will treat each other with civility and respect and support an inclusive, welcoming, and safe environment for all members of the community.

It is the school's policy to provide and maintain a learning environment that is free of bullying and any other verbal or physical misconduct that disrupts the learning environment or makes it unsafe.

The Waldorf School of Lexington Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, set forth below, is published in response to the Massachusetts law against bullying and is an integral part of our efforts to promote learning, to provide a safe and healthy school environment, and to prevent behavior that can impede the learning process. Our plan spells out the Waldorf School's comprehensive approach to addressing bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation.

This plan is consistent with broader protections at WSL against discrimination, harassment, bullying, and retaliation that appear in our Parent Handbook and our Employee Handbook.

It is important that this plan be well understood by all members of our community. There will be an opportunity for teachers, staff, parents, and guardians to offer comment and feedback on the plan each year. The School Director is responsible for the implementation and administration of the plan. Questions and concerns related to this plan may be referred to the School Director or to the Social Inclusion Coordinator.

II. Policy Against Bullying, Cyber-Bullying, and Retaliation

The Waldorf School of Lexington considers all forms of bullying and cyber-bullying to be unacceptable, and we will not 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, property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at school-sponsored or school-related events, activities, functions, and programs whether on or off school grounds. Bullying and cyber-bullying also are prohibited at bus stops, on school buses and other vehicles used for school-sponsored trips, and through use of technology or electronic devices owned, leased, or used by the school.

In addition, bullying and cyber-bullying are prohibited at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school related or through the use of technology or electronic devices that are not owned, leased, or used by the school, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for a targeted student; infringes on the rights of a targeted student at school; or materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the school. Nothing contained in this legislation requires schools to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

Definitions Under the Law

The following definitions are drawn from the Massachusetts law against bullying:

Bullying: Bullying is defined as the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at and meant to harm a target. Bullying can involve overt physical behavior or verbal, emotional, or social behavior that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the targeted student or damage to the targeted student's property;
- places the targeted student 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 and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the school.

For the purpose of this plan, bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

Cyber-bullying: Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices including, but not limited to, telephones, cell phones, computers, fax machines, and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, social networking, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings, whether on a webpage, in a blog, or otherwise. It includes creating a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of someone else, writing messages pretending to be someone else, and posting material on an electronic medium such as Facebook.

By definition, bullying is an act of aggression in which the perpetrator repeatedly targets an individual with the intention of causing harm to that individual. There is an imbalance of power in the relationship with the aggressor having more real or perceived power than the target.

Perpetrator: A perpetrator or aggressor is a student or a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to extracurricular activity or paraprofessional who engages in bullying or retaliation.

The law expanded the scope of the plan to afford protection to school personnel, in addition to students, who may be the target of bullying.

Target: A target or victim is the person against whom bullying or retaliation has been perpetrated.

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.

Legal Definitions and School Policy

It is important to bear in mind that stricter standards of behavior may apply under WSL's policies in order that we may prevent inappropriate verbal and physical conduct before a student has been subject to bullying as it is defined under the 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 the law.

III. Prevention of Bullying and Cyber-Bullying

From the earliest classes at the Waldorf School of Lexington, 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. When necessary, parents are notified and asked to reinforce these standards and shared values that are expected in the WSL community.

In grades 6–8, a "Middle School Code of Conduct" is reviewed with students and shared with parents each fall. All parties sign the document as a gesture of commitment and good will.

The Social Inclusion program in the 8th grade focuses on understanding the Bullying Intervention and Prevention Plan, peer relationships, and personal responsibility, and empowers students to take action if they feel targeted or if they witness other students engaging in bullying or other unacceptable behavior. One of our educational goals is to strengthen each student's capacity for empathy and respect, while recognizing and working against racism, sexism, homophobia, and other prejudices and biases.

The administration and faculty recognize that it is essential that expectations for student conduct extend to hallways, lunch, recess, carpool, buses and the like. The school strives to ensure that ample adult supervision is provided on school premises, including in the hallways, at lunch and at recess, and on school-provided transportation throughout the school day as well as at school-sponsored events.

Diversity

It has been determined that certain students or personnel may be more vulnerable and therefore may become targets of bullying, harassment, or teasing based on actual or perceived differences including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, physical appearance, or 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.

At WSL, we value and welcome diversity, and our curriculum offers many opportunities for our students to learn about and come to understand and respect the many cultural and social differences and abilities existing in the world today. One of our educational goals is to strengthen each

student's capacity for empathy and respect, while recognizing and working against racism, sexism, homophobia, and other prejudices and biases.

Educational Support Department (ESD)

Students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) are sometimes disproportionately affected by bullying and therefore must be protected and supported. This can be accomplished by working, to the best of the school's ability, to implement the accommodations and recommendations included in the students' official IEP. This awareness and understanding will help faculty and staff work to ensure that no child on an IEP is subject to bullying or seen as a bully due to their educational profile. Through our curriculum and educational programs, we will work to provide all students with the skills they need to prevent, identify, or respond to bullying or harassment.

Professional Services

The Waldorf School of Lexington has a limited consulting relationship with an outside psychologist, who teaches a block to our middle school students each year.

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 the Social Inclusion Coordinator, School Director, or to any other faculty or staff member with whom the student is comfortable speaking. 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. This reporting may be done anonymously, though no disciplinary action can be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

A parent or guardian 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 is strongly urged to promptly notify the Social Inclusion Coordinator or School Director. Furthermore, any parent or guardian who has witnessed bullying or cyber-bullying or has relevant information concerning such an incident is strongly urged to come forward. A parent or guardian should also report any incident of retaliation in violation of this policy to the Social Inclusion Coordinator or School Director. This reporting may be done anonymously, though no disciplinary action can be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Students and parents or guardians are encouraged to bear in mind that the school takes its policy against retaliation 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.

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 by law to report it immediately to the Social Inclusion Coordinator. There are to be no exceptions. A member of the faculty or staff may not make promises of confidentiality to a student or parent who informs him or her of an allegation of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation. Faculty and staff may not make reports under this policy anonymously.

Written reports of bullying or retaliation can be made using the “Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Reporting Form, which can be obtained in the main office. Questions or concerns can be directed to the Social Inclusion Coordinator or the School Director by email, phone, or in person by making an appointment in the main office.

False Accusations

Students who knowingly make a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action.

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 Social Inclusion Coordinator, 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 parent or guardian of a student who is an alleged target of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation and the parent or guardian of a 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 School Director or Social Inclusion Coordinator:

An impartial investigation of the complaint is conducted by the School Director and/or the Social Inclusion Coordinator. That investigation may include (but will not necessarily be limited to) interviews with the person who made the complaint, interviews with and/or observations of 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 School Director or Social Inclusion Coordinator conducting the investigation also may choose to consult with other teachers.

D. Resolution, Notification, and Follow-up

Following the investigation, the School Director and Social Inclusion Coordinator 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 School Director or Social Inclusion Coordinator will determine what disciplinary action and/or other remedial action is appropriate and how it will be implemented. Disciplinary measures may include detention, suspension, or expulsion, and these will be balanced by the need for accountability, behavior changes, and restitution, as needed.

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.

Upon completion of the investigation, the School Director or Social Inclusion Coordinator who conducted the investigation 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. Depending on the age(s) of the student(s) involved, the meeting may be with or include parents, if necessary. The purpose of this meeting is 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. Confidentiality laws protecting student records may limit the amount of information provided in these meetings.

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.

Reporting to Legal Authorities

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

VI. Conclusion

This document is intended (1) to inform our school community about the school's plan, and to prevent bullying and cyber-bullying among our students and/or school personnel, (2) to encourage students, parents and guardians, and school personnel to have confidence in the school's procedures and to come forward promptly whenever an individual is subject to conduct that is prohibited by this or any other school policy; and (3) to implement appropriate discipline and other corrective measures when they are found to be warranted.