

Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination

Grace Montessori strives to provide all students with a safe school environment that facilitates learning. Academy High's desire is for all students to thrive in an atmosphere of mutual respect, and an atmosphere of respect for individual differences. The school is committed to maintaining an educational environment that is safe, inclusive, and free of bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment), discrimination, and retaliation. This may include behavior that occurs off school property, uses technology that is not owned by Academy High (e.g., social media, other digital communications), or that negatively impacts or affects Grace Montessori community.

Using any form or type of aggressive behavior that does physical or psychological harm to someone else and/or disrupts the learning environment, and/or urges students to engage in such conduct is prohibited. Bullying, harassment, discrimination, and retaliation are not acceptable in any form and will not be tolerated at school or any school-related activity, on school property, or through a school computer, network, or other school electronic equipment. The school will protect students against retaliation for reporting incidents of bullying, intimidation, or harassment, including sexual harassment, and will take disciplinary action against any student who participates in such conduct.

Violations of bullying and harassment policies may be subject to discipline under applicable school policies. The jurisdiction of Academy High in bullying and harassment is the same as for other discipline incidents (see the Discipline section). Typically, Grace Montessori becomes involved in external behavior of bullying and harassment only when it interferes with, disrupts, or adversely affects Academy High environment, school operations, or an educational function at the sole discretion of the Head of School.

Caveats

Bullying is contrary to State law- the policy of Grace Montessori, which is a non-sectarian nonpublic school, is consistent with the free exercise of religion. Nothing in this document is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously based views protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article 1 of the Illinois Constitution.

It is important for students and parents to realize that all social conflict is not bullying or harassment per se, although it might be inappropriate behavior that would be addressed by Grace Montessori with education and consequences. In addition, bullying and harassment can be difficult to detect by staff, and all bullying and harassment can never be stopped in any school environment, no matter how diligent the school is. It is essential that victims, bystanders, parents, and faculty report bullying directly and clearly and in a timely fashion using proper procedures below to give AH an opportunity to address problems. All faculty are expected to intervene in any conduct they witness that approaches bullying and harassment and report significant instances of misbehavior to the Head of School as appropriate.

Definitions and Examples of Bullying

"Bullying" includes "cyber-bullying" and means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

- Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property;
- Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
- Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or
- Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

"Cyber-bullying" means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation 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 system, photoelectric system, or photo-optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. "Cyber-bullying" includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section. "Cyber-bullying" also includes 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 effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section.

With bullying, there is a relationship between bully and victim and typically a real or perceived difference in power between bullying and victim. Bullying typically involves a pattern of negative behavior over time and is typically intentional harm-doing.

Bullying and similar prohibited conduct may include, without limitation, threats, intimidation, sexual harassment, stalking, physical violence, theft, public humiliation, teasing, social exclusion or social aggression/control, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. Below are examples of acts that may be considered as bullying:

- Name-calling, racist remarks, put-downs, hazing, and extortion.
- Spreading rumors, wearing or possessing items depicting or implying hatred or prejudice, taking, hiding, and destroying others' possessions.
- E-mail, blogs, other computer transmission from school computers, signs, and graffiti.
- Cyberbullying may include, without limitation, some of the above behaviors by electronic means (such as rumor spreading) but might also include photo altering, flaming, trolling, impersonation, sexting, and other conduct. More information on how to react to cyberbullying is available from the SSO.
- Extreme or subtle relationship manipulation, reputation attacking, and using demeaning gestures.

Definition and Examples of Harassment

Grace Montessori considers harassment to be, without limitation, intimidating, bullying, physical, or verbal conduct that is based upon perceived race, color, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, ancestry, age, religion, creed, physical or mental disability, gender identity, status as homeless or other socioeconomic difference, or pregnancy, or association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics or any other distinguished characteristics. Harassment can take many forms:

Verbal, Written, And Visual Harassment includes, but is not limited to, making disparaging statements, telling jokes, using epithets, slurs, stereotypes, insults, or labels based on an individual's Protected Classification(s), threats of physical harm or statements designed to intimidate, abuse or humiliate another, whether communicated verbally, in writing, electronically, or in posters, cartoons, drawings, or gestures. This may include comments on appearance including dress or physical features, or dress consistent with gender identification, or stories and jokes, focusing on race, national origin, religion, or other Protected Classifications

Physical Harassment includes, but is not limited to intimidating conduct, such as touching of a person or a person's property, hazing, assault, grabbing, stalking, or blocking or impeding a person's movement.

Sexual Harassment is defined as any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, written, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to, demands for sexual activity; sexual flirtations, advances, or propositions; sexual innuendoes or suggestive jokes; comments of a sexual nature to describe an individual or an individual's body; unwelcome physical contact such as touching, pinching, or brushing the body; any type of coerced sexual activity including sexual abuse; displays of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; obscene gestures or materials; spreading rumors of a sexual

nature; leering; making sexual gestures; or sexual contact. Sexual harassment can occur between individuals of different genders or individuals of the same gender.

Racial, Ethnic or Religious and Sexual Orientation Harassment are specifically prohibited and will not be tolerated. Language, gestures, apparel, or any action that show disrespect, intimidate, threaten, or cause injury on the basis of racial, ethnic, or religious origin or background or sexual orientation will constitute harassment.

Discrimination

Grace Montessori values the contributions to learning that results from maintaining a diverse student body, faculty, and staff. AH does not tolerate discrimination based on race, color, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, ancestry, age, religion, creed, physical or mental disability, gender identity, status as homeless or other socioeconomic difference, or pregnancy, or association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics or any other distinguished characteristics.

Retaliation

Grace Montessori prohibits retaliatory behavior against anyone who complains in good faith or participates in a complaint and/or investigation process. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, taking sides against an individual, spreading rumors about or shunning or avoiding an individual, or making real or implied threats of intimidation towards an individual, because that individual reported bullying, harassment, or discrimination or participated in an investigation related to a report of bullying, harassment, or discrimination.

Witnessing Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination, or Retaliation

Student bystanders in any situation involve bullying, harassment, discrimination, or retaliation are asked to refrain from joining in, to tell the agitator to stop his or her behavior and report the incident to a trusted adult.

Reporting

Students who believe they are victims of bullying, intimidation, harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, retaliation, or have witnessed such activities, are encouraged to promptly discuss the matter with any Academy High employee or trusted adult. Students may choose to report to a person of the student's same sex, and students may be accompanied by a parent/guardian, friend, or advisor in making such a report. The Head of School should be informed in person or via **phone (708-344-7257)** or email the Head of School of the report of the incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received.

Should concerns about discrimination or harassment directly involve the Head of School, the Chair of the Board of Grace Montessori should be promptly notified in writing. The Chair will review the complaint with the Executive Committee and will respond to the person submitting the complaint within ten business days.

Grace Montessori appreciates that there are rare occasions when a student believes they can only report their concern anonymously. If this is the case, an anonymous report may be submitted on the school's website. While Academy High will do its best to address the concern, please note that no follow-up with you is possible unless you reconsider identifying yourself, and that formal disciplinary action cannot be taken solely based on an anonymous report.

Consequences

Grace Montessori will make all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 school days after the date the report of the incident of bullying was received and take into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported incident of bullying. The school will involve appropriate paid staff with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process. The Head of School should be immediately notified of the report of the incident of bullying.

Consequences for engaging in bullying, harassment (including sexual harassment), discrimination, and retaliation, are severe. Depending upon the behavior, circumstances, history, and other contextual factors, consequences including, but not limited to, verbal or written reprimand, detentions, denial of privileges, and other penalties may be assigned; often suspension or expulsion from school are warranted. As stated above, illegal behavior may be reported to the police. Students found to have falsely accused another of bullying, harassment, discrimination, or retaliation as a means of bullying or as a means of retaliation will be subject to similar consequences and appropriate remedial actions as those listed above.

Consistent with federal and state laws and rules governing student privacy rights, Grace Montessori will promptly inform the parents and guardians of all students involved in the alleged incident of bullying. They will have the opportunity to meet with the Head of School to discuss the investigation, its findings, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying. Other interventions will be discussed, as appropriate, including, but not limited to, social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services.

"Restorative measures" means a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, that

- Are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community,
- Contribute to maintaining school safety,
- Protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate,
- Teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society,
- Serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, and
- Reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school.
- Increase student accountability if the incident of bullying is based on religion, race, ethnicity, or any other category that is identified in the Illinois Human Rights Act.

Additional community-based counseling may be recommended or required based on the outcome of the investigation.

Evaluation of Effectiveness of Anti-Bullying Policy

Grace Montessori will review the incidences of bullying and harassment annually and evaluate the anti-bullying policy's effectiveness. This process will include, but not be limited to factors such as the frequency of victimization; student, staff, and family observations of safety at a school; identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs; the types of bullying utilized; and bystander intervention or participation. Grace Montessori will use relevant data and information it already collects for other purposes in the policy evaluation. The information developed as a result of the policy evaluation will be made available on the Internet website of the school. The information will also be provided to school administrators, school board members, school personnel, parents, guardians, and students.

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