

BAY COVE ACADEMY BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Bay Cove Academy (BCA) is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyber-bullying. This commitment is an integral part of our comprehensive efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

Bullying, harassment, and intimidation have a negative impact on the school climate and can be major distractions from learning. Bullying can create unnecessary anxiety that affects the ability or desire of a student to attend school, learn in school, travel on the school bus, and, generally, feel safe in all areas of school. The failure to address bullying behavior also gives other students the message that it is permissible to engage in negative conduct. Bay Cove Academy takes a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying and cyber-bullying, and is committed to working with students, staff, families, law enforcement agencies, and the community to prevent issues of violence.

Bullying behavior by a student is prohibited and will be considered unacceptable behavior. BCA will not tolerate any unlawful or disruptive behavior, including any form of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation, in our school building, on school grounds, or in school related activities. We will investigate promptly all reports and complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation, and take immediate action to end that behavior and restore a sense of safety. We will support this commitment in all aspects of our school community, including curricula, clinical work, staff development, and parent/guardian involvement. The school expects that all members of the school community, students and adults, will treat each other in a civil manner and with respect for differences.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING, CYBER-BULLYING, AND RETALIATION

Bullying is defined as 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 another student that:

- a. causes physical or emotional harm to the student or damage to the student's property;
- b. places the student in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself or of damage to his/her property;
- c. creates a hostile environment at school for the student;
- d. infringes on the rights of the student at school; or
- e. materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

For the purposes of this policy, bullying will include cyber-bullying.

Cyber-bullying is defined as bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.

Cyber-bullying will also include:

- a. The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person, or
- b. The knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.
- c. 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 conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Retaliation against or intimidation of a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying also is prohibited and will be considered unacceptable behavior. Such retaliation or intimidation may result in disciplinary action.

Bullying and cyber-bullying may occur in and out of school, during and after school hours, at home and in locations outside of the home. When bullying and cyber-bullying are alleged, the full cooperation and assistance of parents and families are expected.

Bullying shall be prohibited:

- on school grounds;
- on property immediately adjacent to school grounds;
- at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds;
- at a school bus stop;
- on any form of transportation to and from school (i.e. school bus, van, taxi)
- through the use of technology or an electronic device owned by BCA.

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 an electronic device that is not owned by BCA if the bullying:

- creates a hostile environment at school for the victim;
- infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Principal in collaboration with the administrative team shall oversee the development, monitoring and updating of a prevention and intervention plan, in consultation with all stakeholders, which may include teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, students, parents and guardians, consistent with the requirements of this policy, as well as state and federal laws. The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be reviewed and updated, if needed, once a year.

The Principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the bullying prevention and implementation plan.

REPORTING

Students

BCA expects students, who believe they have been subjected to bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation, or who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving another student or bullying behavior by a staff member towards a student, to report it to the principal, a teacher, therapist or any adult staff member. Students will be provided practical, safe, private and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying with school personnel. This report is best if done in direct conversation with the staff member, but may also be done by other means or through the student's parent/guardian. The report may also be submitted anonymously.

Any **staff member** will report immediately to the principal or designee when he/she witnesses or becomes aware of conduct that may be bullying or retaliation.

Parents/guardians

BCA expects parents/guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of bullying or retaliation involving a student to report it to the principal or designee. Reports may be made anonymously, but no disciplinary action will be taken against an alleged aggressor solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Parents/guardians, and others may request assistance from a staff member to complete a written report. This report to the principal is best if done in direct conversation but may also be done by email, phone message, or other written communication.

Anonymous reports of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation, or reports by students or parent/guardians who wish to remain anonymous may be submitted to teachers and school administrators and will be investigated. No disciplinary action will be taken based solely on an anonymous report.

A **Reporting Form** will be made available for use by any party. This form may be submitted directly to the principal or sent anonymously to the principal of the school.

False Reports submitted knowingly alleging bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action.

INVESTIGATING AND RESPONDING TO REPORTS

Upon receipt of a report of possible bullying, cyber-bullying, retaliation, or intimidation, the school principal or a designee will, before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, take steps to assess the need to restore a sense of safety to the alleged student and/or to protect the alleged student from possible further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but not be limited to, creating a personal safety plan; pre-determining seating arrangements for the student and/or the aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; identifying a staff member who will act as a "safe person" for the student; and altering the aggressor's schedule and access to the student. The principal or designee will take additional steps to promote safety during the course of and after the investigation, as necessary.

In conducting an investigation, the principal or designee, will consider how the bullying behavior might impact the general learning environment of the school or the impact it may have on bystanders or other students in the school. Consequences may be necessary even if the student indicates the aggressor(s) behavior is permissible.

The principal or designee will promptly conduct an investigation. During the investigation the principal or designee will, among other things, interview students, staff, witnesses, parents/guardians, and others as necessary. The principal or designee (or whoever is conducting the investigation) will remind the alleged aggressor, student, and witnesses that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action. The principal or designee is required to investigate all reports of potential acts of bullying or cyber-bullying. This obligation exists regardless of requests from reporters to not investigate or talk with certain students or individuals. We encourage reporting, but reporting on the condition that no action will be taken or limits placed on the investigation cannot be accepted.

As much as possible, confidentiality shall be used to protect a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or is witness to or has reliable information about an act of bullying.

Steps of the Investigation:

- a. Report is received;
- b. Interview the student and assess the level of threat present;
- c. Interview reporter, if other than student, and note and interview other witnesses (especially adults) or any online involvement;
- d. Interview the alleged aggressor(s);
- e. Determine the merit and plausibility of the report; and
- f. Determine the circumstances and establish disciplinary or other consequences, if necessary.
- g. Write an incident report detailing results of the investigation.

CONSEQUENCES AND RESPONSES TO BULLYING

If the school principal or designee determines that bullying, retaliation, or intimidation has occurred and consequences are merited, the school principal or designee will:

- a. promptly notify the parents/guardians of the student and the aggressor about the results of the investigation and, what action is being taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation.

NOTE: All notice to parents must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws and regulations. Because of the legal requirements regarding the

- confidentiality of student records, the principal or designee cannot report specific information to the student's parent or guardian about the disciplinary action taken unless it involves a "stay away" order or other directive that the student must be aware of in order to report violations.
- b. notify the LEA team chair;
 - c. take appropriate disciplinary action;
 - d. notify the local law enforcement agency if she/he has a reasonable basis to believe that the incident may result in criminal charges against the alleged aggressor. If the local law enforcement is notified, the principal shall document the reasons for the decision. If the local law enforcement agency is not notified or if it determines that its involvement is not necessary, the principal shall respond to the behavior as is appropriate within BCA's disciplinary policies.
 - e. If an incident of bullying, retaliation or intimidation involves students from other schools, the Principal or designee will promptly notify the appropriate administrator of the other school so that appropriate action may be taken.
 - f. parents/guardians will be informed about the DESE problem resolution system and, if needed, be given assistance in navigating the process.

CONSEQUENCES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Bullying behavior can take many forms and can vary dramatically in its seriousness and its impact on the student and other students. Accordingly, there is no one prescribed response to verified acts of bullying and retaliation. Consequences and disciplinary action will be applied in accordance with BCA's disciplinary policies. The responses will range from redirection of future behavior to suspension from school. These actions will escalate in severity for repeated offenses or with the severity of the implication of the negative conduct. The specific action will be age appropriate, concrete, and immediate. The nature and extent of disciplinary action imposed or consequences applied is a matter within the sound discretion of the principal or designee. The principal will balance the need for accountability and safety with the need to teach appropriate behavior.

Actions may be accompanied by a referral to counseling or other therapeutic supports in the community. However, since all students at Bay Cove Academy have an on-site individual therapist, counseling will be provided to targets and aggressors as standard

BCA protocol. In addition BCA is able to provide family counseling to appropriate family members of the involved students.

Consequences and discipline for acts of retaliation will be imposed at the same, or more severe, level as the underlying bullying, cyber-bullying or inappropriate behavior.

Students who are not primary participants in the reported act of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation but join in, may be subject to disciplinary action or consequences as if they were primarily involved. "Joining-in" is a form of endorsing the behavior. Consequences or disciplinary actions taken in an instance of bullying will be shared with the appropriate school staff members to ensure awareness and follow through.

When it is determined that a student is in fear or is being threatened, the principal will develop a safety plan to immediately take steps to limit and control the behavior of the aggressor(s) who is causing the threat. The safety plan will be developed in collaboration with the appropriate staff and shared with staff to ensure enforcement and follow-up. The same procedure will be followed to protect a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, and/or witnesses or provides reliable information regarding an act of bullying.

The principal or designee will periodically follow-up with the student(s), and his/her parents, involved in an incident to ensure the student believes the situation has improved and that any threat or fear has been significantly reduced or eliminated.

Protection for All

All segments of the Bay Cove Academy community must work together to address the problem of bullying. This means that teachers, administrators, clinicians, milieu staff, career development, parents/guardians, and students need to cooperate as they assess the scope of the bullying problem in the school and devise strategies to respond to it effectively in order to keep all students from becoming victims. BCA affords all students the same protection regardless of their status under the law.

Bay Cove Academy is continuously assessing the extent that bullying is a problem at the school. Bay Cove Academy staff meet regularly in multiple forums to discuss students and to be vigilant about preventing any bullying behavior from occurring in the school community. When bullying is detected staff intervene immediately and follow BCA policies and procedures.

We recognize that all students who attend BCA may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics such as physical appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or mental or physical disability. BCA will administer a student survey developed by the DESE every four years to assess school climate and the prevalence, nature and severity of bullying in schools.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF

Annual staff training

Annual training for all school staff on the Bullying Intervention and Prevention Plan will include staff duties under the Plan, an overview of the steps that the principal or designee will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention curricula to be offered. Staff members hired after the start of the school year are required to receive the training during the school year in which they are hired.

Ongoing professional development

The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes safety, civil communication, and respect for differences. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying and cyber bullying. Training will also provide staff information about students who are at risk for bullying and cyber bullying, information regarding cyber bullying, social media and internet safety issues and risks.

Additional areas included in staff training include:

- a. promoting and modeling the use of respectful language;
- b. fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference;
- c. building relationships and communicating with families;
- d. constructively managing classroom behaviors;
- e. using positive behavioral intervention strategies;
- f. applying constructive disciplinary practices;
- g. teaching students skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others;
- h. engaging students in school or classroom planning and decision-making;
- i. maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students;
- j. self awareness of power differential between staff vs. students as well as between students and students;
- k. understanding and recognition that all students in the school have characteristics that place them at risk for being bullied or being a bully.

Publication and Notice

Annual written notice of the relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan are mailed to students and parents/guardians. Included in this information is student curriculum and instruction regarding bullying, cyber bullying and internet safety. This information is also included in the student handbook.

Annual written notice of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to all school staff. The staff will be trained annually on BCA's bullying prevention and intervention plan.

Relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan relating to the duties of staff shall be included in the school employee handbook.

The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be posted on the BCA website.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Bullying prevention is incorporated into all aspects of Bay Cove Academy's school culture. It is deeply embedded into our curriculum, our therapeutic work and our career counseling. Our bullying instruction takes place in the classroom through formal instruction as well as adherence to clear classroom rules and expectations; during individual therapy, therapeutic group work, process meetings, general milieu counseling; and career counseling regarding work place expectation and job coaching.

Bullying prevention instruction emphasizes, among other things, the following:

- a. using scripts and role plays to develop skills;
- b. empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance;
- c. helping students understand the dynamics of bullying and cyber-bullying, including the underlying power imbalance;
- d. emphasizing cyber safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies;
- e. enhancing students' skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications; and
- f. engaging students in a safe, supportive school environment that is respectful of diversity and difference.

Initiatives will also teach students about the student-related sections of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan.

The following approaches are integral to establishing a safe and supportive school environment. These underscore the importance of our bullying intervention and prevention initiatives:

- a. setting clear expectations for students and establishing school and classroom routines;
- b. creating safe school and classroom environments for all students;
- c. using appropriate and positive responses and reinforcement, even when students require discipline;
- d. using positive behavioral supports;
- e. encouraging adults to develop positive relationships with students;

- f. modeling, teaching, and rewarding pro-social, healthy, and respectful behaviors;
- g. using positive approaches to behavioral health, including collaborative problem-solving, conflict resolution training, teamwork, and positive behavioral supports that aid in social and emotional development;
- h. using the Internet safely; and
- i. supporting students' interest and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, particularly in their areas of strength.

APPLICATION TO STUDENTS ON INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

When the IEP Team determines the student has a disability that affects social skills development or that the student may participate in, or is vulnerable to, bullying, harassment, or teasing because of his/her disability, the Team will consider what should be included in the IEP to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. This will include a particular focus on the needs of students whose disability affects social skills development.