



WONDER MONTESSORI SCHOOL POLICY ON BULLYING

Approval Date: (01/05/2024)

Wonder Montessori School believes that all students have a right to a safe and healthy school environment. The school has an obligation to promote mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance.

Wonder Montessori School will not tolerate behavior that infringes on the safety of any student. A student shall not intimidate, harass, or bully another student through words or actions. Such behavior includes: direct physical contact, such as hitting or shoving; verbal assaults, such as teasing or name-calling; and social isolation or manipulation.

Definition:

Bullying is contrary to Illinois State law and the policy of our private school.

As per 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7 and 23 IAC 1.295:

Bullying on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, physical appearance, socioeconomic status, academic status, pregnancy, parenting status, homelessness, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, unfavorable discharge from military service, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic is prohibited in all school districts, charter schools, and non-public, non-sectarian elementary and secondary schools. No student shall be subjected to bullying:

- (1) during any school-sponsored education program or activity;
- (2) while in school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, at designated school bus stops waiting for the school bus, or at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities;
- (3) through the transmission of information from a school computer, a school computer network, or other similar electronic school equipment; or
- (4) through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed at a non-school-related location, activity, function, or program or from the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of a school. This item (4) applies only in cases in which a school administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred and does not require a district or school to staff or monitor any non-school-related activity, function, or program.

“Bullying,” including “cyberbullying,” is 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:

- 1) Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property;
- 2) Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
- 3) Substantially interfering with the student's or students' academic performance; or
- 4) 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.

"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, photoelectronic 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 policy. "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 policy.

Statement of Intent:

Wonder Montessori School is committed to providing a supportive, caring and safe environment in which all children are free from the fear of being bullied. As a school we take bullying and its impact seriously. Bullying of any form is not tolerated in our school, whether carried out by a child or an adult.

Staff, children and parents or carers will be made aware of the school's position on bullying. Bullying behavior is unacceptable in any form. The school has high expectations of outstanding behavior, and we consistently challenge any behavior that falls below this. Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a member of staff.

Any child who is a victim of bullying will be dealt with in a sympathetic manner. If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff informed, and then discussed with the head teacher and methods listed below implemented and followed through.

School Expectations:

Wonder Montessori School expects students and/or staff to immediately report incidents of bullying to the Head of School or designee. Staff who witness such acts take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so. Each complaint of bullying should be promptly investigated. This policy applies to students on school grounds, while traveling to and from school or a school-sponsored activity, whether on or off campus, and during a school-sponsored activity.

Students, who believe that they are a target of bullying, observe an act of bullying, or who have reasonable grounds to believe that these behaviors are taking place, are obligated to report incidents to a member of the school staff. The target shall, however, not be subject to discipline for failing to report bullying.

Wonder Montessori School will also allow staff or anyone reporting a bullying incident to directly email the school at info@wondermontessori.org or to call the school office at (773) 509-1296, extension 3.

If any person would like to anonymously report a bullying incident, they may do so by dropping a typed note in the school mailbox in front of the Preschool or Elementary program offices or leaving a voicemail on the school's main office line. No formal disciplinary action will be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying, shall be prohibited.

Any student, staff, or person who engages in an act of reprisal or retaliation due to the bullying report will be required to have a meeting with the head of school and any other persons involved. The retaliatory matters will be discussed in the private meeting. Consequences of any retaliatory behavior will be a reconciliation between the involved parties, a letter of apology with the intent to stop stated behavior, and if unable to come to a resolution, then alternative schooling routes or temporary suspension from the school will be addressed.

This policy aligns with other school policies approved by our school board.

Prevention:

To prevent conflict, Wonder Montessori School will incorporate conflict resolution education and problem solving techniques into the curriculum and campus programs. This is an important step in promoting respect and acceptance, developing new ways of communicating, understanding, and accepting differing values and cultures within the school community and helps ensure a safe and healthy learning environment

Furthermore, Wonder Montessori School will provide staff development training in bullying prevention and cultivate acceptance and understanding in all students and staff to build each school's capacity to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment

Teachers should discuss this policy with their students in age-appropriate ways and should assure them that they need not endure any form of bullying. Students who bully are in violation of this policy and are subject to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

Procedures:

Consistent with Federal and Illinois State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, Wonder Montessori School will make all reasonable efforts within the permissible scope of the school's jurisdiction to complete the investigation within ten (10) school days after the date of incident of

bullying was received. The school will take into consideration additional relevant information received during the investigation about the reported incident of bullying.

Wonder Montessori School will notify the Head of School or designee of the report of the incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received. Students who are parties to the investigation will have an opportunity to meet with the Head of School or designee to discuss the investigation, the findings, and the actions taken to address the reported incident.

Wonder Montessori School will involve appropriate school personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.

Wonder Montessori School will provide the victim with information regarding services that are available within the public school district and community, such as counseling, support services, and other social work programs and restorative measures.

School Code of Conduct:

Our school will furthermore adopt a Student Code of Conduct to be followed by every student while on school grounds, or when traveling to and from school or a school-sponsored activity, whether on or off campus.

The Student Code of Conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Any student who engages in bullying may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including suspension or expulsion.
- Students are expected to immediately report incidents of bullying to the Head or School or designee.
- Students can rely on staff to promptly investigate each complaint of bullying in a thorough and confidential manner.
- If the complainant student or the parent of the student feels that appropriate resolution of the investigation or complaint has not been reached, the student or the parent of the student should contact the Head of School. The school system prohibits retaliatory behavior against any complainant or any participant in the complaint process.

The procedures for intervening in bullying behavior include, but are not limited, to the following:

- All staff, students and their parents will receive a summary of the bullying policy prohibiting intimidation and bullying: at the beginning of the school year, as part of the student handbook and/or information packet..
- The school will make reasonable efforts to keep a report of bullying and the results of investigation confidential.
- Staff who witness acts of bullying shall take immediate steps to intervene when safe to do so. People witnessing or experiencing bullying are strongly encouraged to report the incident; such reporting will not reflect on the target or witnesses in any way.

False Accusations:

After a thorough investigation, if the evidence-based conclusion is the person was found to have falsely accused another of bullying as a means of retaliation, appropriate consequences will take place. The person believed to have made the false accusation of bullying will be placed on temporary probation and have to write a letter of apology to the victim and family. Once the student has returned to the school, a meeting will take place with the student and parents to discuss prevention and amelioration measures to help the student transition back to the school environment and prevent any further accusations or incidents.

Evaluation:

Wonder Montessori School will implement an evaluation process every two (2) years of the School Code of Conduct and effectiveness of school bullying procedures. Factors that will contribute to the evaluation include, but is not limited to:

- Frequency of victimization.
- Student, staff, and family observations of safety at the school.
- Identification of areas where bullying occurs.
- Types of bullying that are common or occurring.
- Bystander intervention or participation.
- Information developed as part of the evaluation process must be posted on the School Handbook and given to school staff personnel, parents, guardians, and students.