

Bullying Prevention/Anti-Bullying Policy¹

Purpose

The Illinois General Assembly has found that a safe and civil school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve and that bullying causes physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students and interferes with their ability to learn and participate in school activities. Bullying has been linked to other forms of antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, shoplifting, skipping, and dropping out of school, fighting, using drugs and alcohol, sexual harassment, and violence. It is the goal of Great Lakes Academy to create a learning environment in all its school communities where students are protected from bullying, so they feel safe and supported in their efforts to succeed academically and develop emotionally into responsible, caring individuals. The Great Lakes Academy bullying policy is aligned with other school policies, including but not limited to, the school's Student Code of Conduct and Family Handbook.

The school asks every Great Lakes Academy student, with the support of his/her parent(s), guardian(s), and the adults at school, to commit to the following principles, which will apply to everyone on school property and at school-related activities:

- I will not bully others.
- I will try to help anyone I suspect is being bullied.
- I will work to include students who are left out.
- If someone is being bullied, I will tell an adult at school and an adult at home.

Scope

Bullying is contrary to Illinois law and this Policy is consistent with the Illinois School Code. This Policy protects Great Lakes Academy students against bullying and harassment on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, physical appearance, socioeconomic status, academic status, pregnancy, parenting status, homelessness, 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. Great Lakes Academy recognizes the vulnerability of students with actual or perceived disabilities and those who identify as or are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Nothing in this Policy is intended to infringe upon any expression protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution.

This Policy is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents/guardians. Great Lakes Academy or its designee will re-evaluate this Policy every two (2) years based on an assessment of its outcomes and effectiveness, including, but not limited to, factors such as the frequency of victimization; student, staff, and family observations of safety at school; identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs; the types of bullying utilized; and bystander intervention or participation. The policy is included in the school's Family Handbook which is distributed annually to families, and is posted in areas of the school where other policies are posted.

Bullying is prohibited:

- during any school-sponsored or school-sanctioned program or activity.
- in school, on school property, on school buses or other provided transportation; (3) through the transmission of information from a Great Lakes Academy computer or computer network, or other electronic school equipment.

¹ This policy was revised on 8/26/24 to fully align with changes in the Illinois School Code to take effect in the 2024-25 school year.

- when communicated through any electronic technology or personal electronic device while on school property, on school buses or other provided transportation, and at school-sponsored or school sanctioned events or activities.
- when it is conveyed that a threat will be carried out in a school setting, including threats made outside school hours with intent to carry them out during any school-related or sponsored program or activity or on other provided transportation.
- when it is a Student Code of Conduct (“SCC”) Level 4 or 5 behavior that occurs off campus but seriously disrupts any student’s education.

Definitions

“Bullying” means any severe or pervasive (repeated over time) 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 one or more of the following effects:

- placing the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property;
- causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health;
- substantially interfering with the student's academic performance; or
- substantially interfering with the student's 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. All of these forms of bullying, including any form of retaliation as defined below, are strictly prohibited. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

Bullying behaviors may also qualify as other inappropriate behaviors listed in the SCC. When deciding whether inappropriate behavior constitutes bullying, administrators should consider the student’s intent, the frequency or recurrence of the inappropriate behavior, and whether there are power imbalances between the students involved. While bullying is often characterized by repeated acts, sometimes a single incident constitutes bullying depending on the student’s intent and power imbalances.

“Cyberbullying” means using information and communication technologies to bully. This definition includes cyberbullying by means of technology that is not owned, leased, or used by Great Lakes Academy when an administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred. This Policy does not require a district or school to staff or monitor any non-school-related activity, function, or program.

“Retaliation” means any form of intimidation, reprisal including but not limited to the submission of knowingly false bullying allegations, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying. Retaliation is prohibited and will result in the imposition of appropriate interventions/consequences according to this Policy and the SCC.

“Peer Conflict” means disagreements and oppositional interactions that are situational, immediate, and developmentally appropriate. When school employees are aware of peer conflict, they are expected to guide students in developing new skills in social competency, learning personal boundaries, and peaceably resolving conflict, and to model appropriate social interactions. These interventions are designed to prevent Peer Conflict from escalating to Bullying.

“Restorative Measures” means a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline 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.

Bullying Prevention

Great Lakes Academy takes several measures to promote the prevention of bullying. This includes:

- Social Emotional Learning lessons for students about bullying that include:
 - Definitions of bullying
 - Appropriate language and physical touch
 - Prohibited behaviors
 - How to respond to and report bullying
- Dissemination of bullying policies and procedures to parents through the Student Code of Conduct, Summer Orientation meetings, and other school communications
- Training for staff that includes:
 - Definitions of bullying
 - School policies and procedures and their role in responding

Intervening to Address Bullying

Responsibilities of Great Lakes Academy Employees and Contractors

All Great Lakes Academy employees and contractors, including security officers, lunchroom staff and bus drivers, who witness incidents of bullying or school violence or who possess reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a person is a target of bullying, must:

- intervene immediately in a manner that is appropriate to the context and ensures the safety of all people involved.
- report the incident of bullying or retaliation to the Principal/Designee as soon as practicable, but within 24 hours; and
- cooperate fully in any investigation of the incident and in implementing any safety plan established by the Principal/Designee.

Responsibilities of Students, Parents and Guardians

No student who witnesses bullying may stand by or participate in the bullying but must notify an adult at school and an adult at home as quickly as practicable. Any parent or guardian who witnesses or is notified of bullying has an obligation to advise the Principal/Designee as quickly as practicable. Reports can be made to any Great Lakes Academy administrator in person, [via this form](#), by phone (773.530.3040), by direct email or to the school’s general email account which will be forwarded to the Principal/Designee (info@glachicago.org). Reports via phone or email will be forwarded to the Principal or Designee for follow up. Students may report bullying through the same channels.

Parents or guardians and students may make anonymous reports to the Principal/Designee by [completing this form](#) and leaving off their name and email address. No disciplinary action will be taken on the sole basis of an anonymous report.

Investigation

- The Principal shall select a designee, knowledgeable about bullying prevention and intervention, to perform the investigation.

- Investigation of a bullying incident shall be initiated within five school days of receipt of a report and completed within 10 school days, unless the Principal grants in writing an additional 5-day extension due to extenuating circumstances. The Principal/ Designee shall document the extension in the investigation report and shall notify the parties involved.
- The investigation shall include:
 - Identifying the perpetrator(s), target(s), and bystander(s), as well as any adult who witnessed the incident or may have reliable information about it.
 - Conducting an individual interview in a private setting with the alleged perpetrator and target. The alleged perpetrator and target should never be interviewed together or in public. Individual interviews shall also be conducted in private with student and adult bystanders.
 - Determining how often the conduct occurred, any past incident or continuing pattern of behavior, and whether the target's education was affected.
 - Assessing the individual and school-wide effects of the incident relating to safety and assigning school staff to create and implement a safety plan that will restore a sense of safety for the target and other students who have been impacted.
 - Providing and/or informing the victim(s) of additional supports in the school or available in the community.
 - When appropriate, prepare a Misconduct Report identifying his/her recommendation for individual consequences.
 - Comprehensively documenting the details of the investigation.
- When the investigation is complete, the Principal/Designee shall ensure the investigation report is attached to the Incident Report.

Notification

School officials will make every reasonable effort to notify parents within 24 hours of being made aware of a student's involvement in an incident. The Principal/Designee shall report to the parent/legal guardian of all involved students, via telephone, personal conference and/or in writing, the occurrence of any alleged incident of bullying, and shall document these notifications in the Incident Management portal in the school's online data system. School officials will also report all instances of threats, suggestions, or threats of self-harm believed to be the result of bullying to the legal guardian(s) of a student.

When the investigation is complete, the Principal/Designee shall notify the parents/legal guardians of all students involved of the outcome of the investigation. Parents/legal guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation may request a personal conference with the Principal/Designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying, and any resources available in or outside the school to help the students address the underlying reasons for the bullying (see "Referrals" section below).

If the investigation results in the imposition of consequences, the Principal/Designee may advise the parent/legal guardian of students other than the perpetrator that the Student Code of Conduct was followed. S/he may not advise them of the specific consequence imposed, as that would violate the confidentiality of school-record information required by law.

When communicating incidents of bullying to the target's parent/guardian, the Principal/Designee should consider whether the student may want to keep certain information confidential. For example, if a student is bullied after coming out as gay, the Principal/Designee shall not disclose the student's sexual orientation to the parent/guardian without the student's permission, unless there is a legitimate, school-related reason for doing so.

If the target is a student with a disability, the school shall convene the IEP Team to determine whether additional or different special education or related services are needed to address the student's individual

needs to revise the IEP accordingly. For example, if the student's disability affects social skill development or makes the student vulnerable to bullying, the Principal/Designee shall ask the student's IEP Team to consider whether the IEP should include provisions to develop the student's skills and proficiencies to avoid and respond to bullying.

If the student who engaged in bullying behavior is a student with a disability, the school shall convene the IEP Team to determine if additional support and services are needed to address the inappropriate behavior and consider examining the environment in which the bullying occurred to determine if changes to the environment are warranted. For example, the IEP Team should consider a behavior intervention plan for the student or review a current behavior intervention plan and revise if necessary. The Principal/Designee shall comply with the Procedural Safeguards for Discipline of Students with Disabilities/Impairments when considering interventions and consequences for students with disabilities.

Assigning Interventions and/or Consequences

Many Peer Conflicts can be resolved immediately and do not require reporting or creation of a Misconduct or Incident Report. If, however, a conflict is ongoing and meets the definition of bullying, the investigation procedures in this Policy must be followed.

GLA will respond to bullying in a manner tailored to the individual incident, considering the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student, and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance. Appropriate responses and consequences are outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

When an investigation determines that bullying occurred, the Principal/Designee will explain the consequences in a non-hostile manner and shall impose any consequence immediately and consistently. The Principal/Designee will keep communicating and working with all parties involved until the situation is resolved. Some key indicators of resolution include:

1. The perpetrator is no longer bullying and is interacting civilly with the target.
2. The target reports feeling safe and is interacting civilly with the perpetrator.
3. School staff notice an increase in positive behavior and social-emotional competency in the perpetrator and/or the target.
4. School staff notice a more positive climate in the areas where bullying incidents were high.

Great Lakes Academy has a range of intervention and consequences for bullying (which includes retaliation against a student for reporting bullying or making false accusations of bullying) outlined in the Student Code of Conduct. Assigned consequences will consider many factors including the severity of the incident and whether the behavior has been repeated.

The range of interventions and consequences include:

- Parent/Guardian Conference with Principal, Assistant Principal, or designee and at least one additional disciplinary action from the range of disciplinary actions.
- Safety and/or Intervention Plan (chronic level 2 and 3 behaviors only)
- Loss of attendance at school wide events
- Recommended instructive, corrective, or restorative response.
- Conflict resolution/Restorative Circle
- Documented teacher, student, parent/guardian, and/or Administrator conference focused on expectation violation, cause of behavior, and a strategy to prevent recurrence.
- Behavior Courses w/Behavior Interventionist
- Parent supervision in school (shadowing)⁽¹⁷⁾
- Behavior Interventionist pushes into classroom/scholar space.
- Detention - lunch, before school, after school, or Saturday

- Skill building in-school suspension, out of school suspension, or a combination in-school and out-of-school suspension.
- **Recommendation for expulsion for repeated behaviors**

Referrals

Interventions with students who are bullying others will not focus on feelings, but on changing thinking. The Principal/Designee may refer students who bully to positive-behavior small-group interventions (for anger management, trauma, or social skills), social work, counseling, or school psychological services within the school, if necessary, to reinforce the behavioral expectation they violated and increase their social-emotional competency.

The targets of bullying need protection from bullies but may also need support and help in changing their own behavior. The Principal/Designee shall ask a school mental health professional to refer these students to individual or group therapy where they can openly express their feelings about their bullying experience, social-skills training and/or groups where they can practice assertiveness and coping mechanisms, or social work, counseling, or school psychological services available within the school.

Appeal

Any party who is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal to the Executive Director, within 15 calendar days of notification of the ED / Principal's decision. The ED shall render a final determination in accordance with the timeline and procedures set out in the anti-bullying appeal guidelines. The ED may return the incident for further investigation or reconsideration of the consequence(s), direct the imposition of other consequence(s), or deny the appeal. The ED shall notify the party requesting the appeal that its decision is final and shall document that notification in the Incident Report.

Consequences for Great Lakes Academy Employees and Contractors

When it is determined that an employee or contractor was aware that bullying was taking place but failed to report it, the employee/contractor will be considered to have violated this Policy. The Principal shall consider employee discipline for such violations, referring to any applicable collective bargaining agreement. Remedies for offending contractors should be imposed according to their contracts.

Notice and Dissemination of Requirements

GLA will post its SCC Anti-Bullying Policy on the school's website, as well as disseminating and presenting this Policy to school staff as part of pre-school-year professional development.

Training and Professional Development

Professional development will be offered to build the skills of all Great Lakes Academy employee's contractors and volunteers to implement this Policy. The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to:

- Developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent incidents of bullying and to intervene immediately and effectively to stop them.
- Information about the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among a perpetrator, target, and witness to the bullying.
- Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk, and any specific interventions that may be particularly effective for addressing bias-based bullying; and
- Information about Internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.
- Information about techniques to prevent bullying in the classroom

Great Lakes Academy is required to submit data on reports of bullying to the Illinois State Board of Education after the conclusion of the school year.