



WILBRAHAM & MONSON ACADEMY
BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN
UPDATED JUNE 2017

I. Introduction

At Wilbraham & Monson Academy (School or Academy), we expect that all members of our school community will treat each other with civility and respect.

It is the policy of the School 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 Wilbraham & Monson Academy Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, set forth below, is published in response to the recently enacted Massachusetts law against bullying and is an integral part of our efforts to promote learning and to prevent behavior that can impede the learning process. Our Plan spells out Wilbraham & Monson Academy's comprehensive approach to addressing bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation.

This plan is consistent with broader protections at WMA against harassment that appear in our Student/Parent Handbook and our Faculty and Staff Handbook.

It is important that this plan be well understood by all members of the WMA community. The Head of School is responsible for the implementation and administration of the Plan. Questions and concerns related to this Plan may be referred to the Head, the Dean of Students, or the Director of the Middle School.

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

- A.** The School will not tolerate any form of bullying or cyber-bullying, nor will we 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 and at school-sponsored events, athletic or other activities,

functions, and programs. Bullying and cyber-bullying also are prohibited on school buses and other vehicles owned, leased, or used by the school, and through use of technology or an electronic device 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 an electronic device that is 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.

B. Definitions under the Law

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

- a. **Bullying:** 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 a target 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.
- b. **Cyber-bullying:** Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, fax machines and the internet. It includes, but is not limited to, e-mail, instant

messages, text messages, and internet postings, whether on a webpage, in a blog, or otherwise.

- c. 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.

- d. 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.

C. Legal Definitions and School Policy

It is important to bear in mind that stricter standards of behavior may apply under Wilbraham & Monson Academy'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

- A. From the earliest grades at WMA, 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 standards for membership in the WMA community. In Grades six through twelve, the Student/Parent Handbook is distributed each year and students and families acknowledge their acceptance of its policies with the signing of their contracts. This handbook includes explicit policies around the acceptable use of technology at WMA. In addition, weekly School Meetings are utilized by administrators (Head of School, Dean of Students, Athletic Director,

Director of the Middle School) to make sure that students are well informed about what is expected of them and to reinforce positive conduct.

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

B. In addition, there are several specific programs that address the issues of bullying and related topics throughout the academic year.

1. Orientation

During the opening of school each year, the middle and upper schools engage in healthy group activities that highlight and reinforce positive community involvement. Having students initially learn about one another and interact with one another in a controlled environment with the support of faculty members sets the right tone for the year. Orientation also typically includes guest speakers on topics pertinent to building a healthy and comfortable environment and policy sessions for all new students. These are important educational opportunities to help students understand what is expected of them and what their limits are.

2. Peer Mediators/Mentors

The student peer mediators/mentors, a developing group on campus, are trained student leaders who assist the Deans Office and Health Services in handling difficult interpersonal situations. Of course, the students typically deal with low level or mild cases, and with plenty of support from the Deans Office, but simply having this system in place further establishes our expectations for the fair and healthy treatment of differences among community members.

3. Counselors Group

Every week, key members of the school community meet to talk about the students and what is happening on campus, from a health

and welfare perspective. The group is chaired by the School Counselor, and includes the Dean of Students, Dean of Studies, Dean of Residential Life, Director of Health Services, the five Head Dorm Parents, Director of Academic Services, Director of International Students, and the School's consulting psychologist. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss proactive approaches to situations which could impact students' health and welfare at the school. Members of the group present information either from first-hand observation or as received from another source, and it is discussed at length. With the assistance of the group's collective experience, and the professional input of the consulting psychologist, plans are made to mediate existing or potential escalation.

IV. Reports of Bullying, Cyber-Bullying, or Retaliation

The School has developed a bullying incident report form, which can be accessed on the School's web site or picked up in one of the administrative offices.

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 expected to promptly report the matter orally or in writing to the Head of School, Dean of Students, Director of the Middle School, 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 expected to report it as soon as possible.

A parent 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 Head of School, the Dean of Students, or the Director of the Middle School. Furthermore, any parent who has him or herself witnessed bullying or cyber-bullying or has relevant information concerning such an incident is strongly urged to come forward to the Head of School, the Dean of Students, or the Director of the Middle School. A parent should also report any incident of retaliation in violation of this policy

to the Head of School, the Dean of Students, or the Director of the Middle School.

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 to report it immediately to the Head of School, the Dean of Students, or the Director of the Middle School. 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/her of an allegation of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation.

Faculty and staff may not make reports under this policy anonymously. The school also urges students and their parents not to make reports anonymously. Although there are circumstances in which an anonymous report can be better than none at all, it is far more difficult to determine the facts of what occurred if complaints are made anonymously. Students and parents 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.

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 Head of School, the Dean of Students, or the Director of the Middle School, 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 may be implemented to prevent further bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation during an investigation. Within appropriate circumstances, some of these strategies may include separating students, class schedule changes, locker or parking assignment changes, and assigning ‘safe people’ and ‘safe places’ as resources for the student making the complaint.

B. Obligation to Notify Parents: It is the policy of the School to notify the parents of any student who is an alleged target of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation and the parents of any 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 Head of School, the Dean of Students, or the Director of the Middle School:

1. Since bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation are covered within the broader protections at WMA against abusive behavior and harassment (see policies in the Student/Parent Handbook), the investigation procedures are also the same. Once assessment has been done and a determination that further investigation is warranted, the WMA Harassment Review Board conducts an impartial investigation of the complaint.
2. The Harassment Review Board consists of the Dean of Students, the Director of the Middle School, the Dean of Residential Life, the Director of Health Services, the School Counselor, and the Business Manager (HR).
3. The investigation may include (but will not necessarily be limited to) interviews with the person who made the complaint, with 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. All students and staff will be asked to document the incident in question for further comparison.
4. Depending on the circumstances, the Review Board members conducting the investigation also may choose to consult with other teachers and/or the School Psychologist.
5. Upon completion of the investigation, the person(s) who has investigated the complaint bring(s) it to the full Review Board. A recommendation is then made to the Head of School by the Review Board, which may include anything from no action, a warning, probation, or dismissal.

D. Resolution, Notification, and Follow-up: Following interviews and any other investigation undertaken, and a recommendation from the Review Board, the Head of School 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 Head of School, in consultation with the Harassment Review Board, will determine what disciplinary action and/or other remedial action is appropriate and how it will be implemented. Action could include mandatory counseling and discipline up to and including dismissal.

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. Additionally, the goal is also 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.

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, law enforcement or another appropriate government agency may be notified. (For example, if the alleged conduct involves criminal activity, threats, violence, or electronic or physical stalking.)

Upon completion of the investigation, the Head of School and members of the Harassment Review Board 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 and their parents 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.

VI. Conclusion

This plan is intended to:

1. prevent bullying and cyber-bullying among our students
2. encourage students and their parents to have confidence in the school's procedures and to come forward promptly whenever a student is subject to conduct that is prohibited by this or any other school policy
3. implement appropriate discipline and other corrective measures when they are found to be warranted