

Bullying is contrary to Illinois law and Ronald Knox Montessori School policy. Bullying and other aggressive behaviors diminish a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate. Deterring students from engaging in these disruptive behaviors and providing all students access to a safe, non-hostile learning environment are important Ronald Knox goals.

Ronald Knox prohibits and will not tolerate aggressive student behavior, including bullying conduct of any type or on any basis, as defined below. Students are expected to act respectfully towards their peers and to avoid bullying and aggressive behaviors in their interactions with other students. Bullying or other aggressive behaviors will result in restorative actions, up to and including suspension or expulsion.

In addition, bullying that is based on actual or perceived race, color, nationality, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender-related identity or expression, ancestry, age, religion, physical or mental disability, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic is prohibited and may amount to a violation of a student's civil rights.

For purposes of this policy, the term *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, or intended to specifically target a student 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.
4. Substantially interfering with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the 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.

Aggressive conduct towards other students that is not severe or pervasive shall not be deemed as bullying but may constitute gross disobedience or misconduct leading to disciplinary action.

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, photo-electronic 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*. *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*.

Restorative measures means a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsions, that: (i) are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community, (ii) contribute to maintaining school safety, (iii) protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, (iv) teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society, (v) serve to build and/or restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, and (vi) reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students' behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school.

School personnel means persons employed by, on contract with, or who volunteer in the school, including without limitation school administrators, teachers, teaching assistants, school guidance counselors, school social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, school resource officers, and security guards.

Bullying is prohibited in each of the following situations:

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.
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 the school if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of a school. This paragraph (item #4) applies only when a school administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred; it does not require school personnel members to monitor any non-school related activity, function, or program.

The Head of School or designee shall develop and maintain a bullying prevention and response program that:

1. Advances the school's goal of providing all students with a safe learning environment free of bullying.
2. Is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including teachers, board members, and parents/guardians.
3. Defines bullying as provided in this policy.
4. Fully implements and enforces all applicable school policies by including provisions that address the following:
 - a. conducting a prompt and thorough investigation of alleged incidents of bullying, intimidation, harassing behavior, or similar conduct,

- b. making reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within ten (10) school days after the report of the alleged incident was received, taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation of the reported bullying incident,
 - c. involving appropriate school support personnel and other school personnel with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process,
 - d. providing each student who is determined as a result of investigation to have violated this or other school policies with disciplinary consequences and appropriate remedial actions consistent with this and other Board policies,
 - e. protecting students against retaliation for reporting such bullying conduct,
 - f. ensuring consistency with federal and state laws and rules governing student privacy rights, providing parents/guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the Head of School or school administrator or his or her designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.
 - g. The Head of School or school administrator or designee should be notified of the reported incident of bullying as soon as possible. The Head of School or designee shall investigate whether a reported incident of bullying is within the permissible scope of the school's jurisdiction. The school shall provide both the victim and the aggressor with information regarding services that are available within the school community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs.
5. Examines the appropriate steps to understand and rectify conditions that foster bullying, intimidation, and harassment; this contemplates taking action to eliminate or prevent these disruptive behaviors beyond traditional punitive disciplinary actions. In addition, interventions shall be utilized to address bullying, which may include, but are not limited to school social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services.
 6. Includes bullying prevention and character instruction through the Montessori peace curriculum.
 7. Fully informs school personnel of the school's goal to prevent students from engaging in bullying and the measures being used to accomplish it. This includes: (a) communicating the school's expectation – and the state law requirement – that teachers and other certificated employees maintain discipline, and (b) establishing a clear process for school personnel to fulfill their obligation to report alleged acts of bullying, intimidation, harassment, and other acts of actual or threatened violence, and (c) requiring school personnel to notify the Head of School or designee of the reported incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received.
 8. Encourages all members of the school community, including students, parents/guardians, school personnel, volunteers, and visitors, to report alleged acts of bullying, intimidation, harassment, and other acts of actual or threatened violence to the Head of School or any school employee. A report may be made orally or in writing. Anonymous reports are accepted. No disciplinary action will be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

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9. Actively involves students' parents/guardians in the remediation of the behavior(s) of concern. This includes ensuring that all parents/guardians are notified, as required by State law, whenever their child engages in aggressive behavior. The Head of School or designee shall, consistent with federal and state laws and rules governing student privacy rights, promptly inform parents/guardians of all students involved in the alleged incident of bullying and discuss, as appropriate, the availability of services within the school and community, such as social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures.
10. Communicates the school's expectation that all students conduct themselves with a proper regard for the rights and welfare of other students. This includes a process for commending or acknowledging students for demonstrating appropriate behavior.
11. Prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying. A student's act of reprisal or retaliation will be met with disciplinary consequences and appropriate remedial actions consistent with this and other school policies.
12. Does not punish a student for reporting bullying or supplying information, even if the school's investigation concludes that no bullying occurred. However, knowingly making a false accusation or providing knowingly false information will be met with disciplinary consequences and appropriate remedial actions consistent with this and other school policies.
13. Posts this policy on the school's website, includes it in the parent handbook, and, where applicable, posts it where other policies, rules, and standards of conduct are currently posted. Annually communicates this policy to students and their parents/guardians, and school personnel, including new employees when hired, and provides this policy periodically throughout the school year to students and faculty. This includes annually disseminating information to all students, parents, and guardians explaining the serious impact caused by bullying, intimidation, or harassment and that these behaviors will be taken seriously and are not acceptable in any form.
14. The Head of School or designee shall assist the Board with its evaluation and assessment of this policy's outcomes and effectiveness. This process shall include, without limitation:
 - a. The frequency of victimization;
 - b. Student, school personnel, and family observations of safety at a school;
 - c. Identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs;
 - d. The types of bullying reported; and
 - e. Bystander intervention participation.

15. Complies with State and federal law and is consistent with all other School Board policies. This includes prompting the Board to conduct a review and reevaluation of the policy to make any necessary and appropriate revisions every 2 years, and file the policy with the Illinois State Board of Education after the Board adopts or updates it.

This policy is not 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 U.S. Constitution or under Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution.