

## **Green Friends Montessori School**

### **Bullying Policy - Updated 11/2/22**

"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 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. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

"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 Section.

"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 Section.

Bullying is contrary to State law and the policy of our non-sectarian nonpublic school and is consistent with subsection (a-5) of this Section [free exercise of religion].

Nothing in this Section is 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 United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article 1 of the Illinois Constitution.

The school procedures for promptly reporting bullying, including, but not limited to, identifying and providing the school e-mail address (if applicable) and school telephone number for the staff person or persons responsible for receiving such reports and a procedure for anonymous reporting; however, this shall not be construed to permit formal disciplinary action solely on the basis of an anonymous report. The complaint manager is Vandana Caruso (630) 457 – 9178 [info@greenfriendsmontessori.org](mailto:info@greenfriendsmontessori.org)

- 1) As defined by the Illinois Code of Schools [105 ILCS 5/27-23.7], bullying may take on different forms, including but not limited to, “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.” Bullying also includes “cyber-bullying,” which refers to “any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically” which places the student in fear of harm to self or property, causes substantially negative effects on the student’s health or academic performance, or substantially interferes with the student’s ability to participate in school activities [105 ILCS 5/27-23.7].
- 2) Bullying is contrary to state law and the policies of Green Friends Montessori School. No student shall be subject to bullying while in school, on the school property, at any school-sponsored program, or through any electronic means. This policy statement is not intended to infringe upon any right to free expression or free exercise of religion as protected under the First Amendment of the US Constitution.
  - a. Incidents of bullying shall be promptly reported to the school administrator. The school administrator shall record the name, school telephone number, and school email address (if applicable) of the individual reporting the incident of bullying along with a detailed account of the reported incident. Anonymous reports of bullying shall be accepted by the administrator; however, formal disciplinary action should not be implemented solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Reports may be given verbally to the administrator, but the reporter must also provide the administrator with a dated, written account of the incident.
- 3) The administrator shall make an investigation of a reported bullying incident in a timely manner, making all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 school days of the date of the report being received. **The investigation of reported bullying incidents shall include the following procedures:**
  - a. The school administrator receives the written bullying report and gathers contact information for the incident reporter, as outlined above.
  - b. The administrator promptly meets individually with all students or persons involved in the alleged bullying incident; this meeting is for the sole purpose of gathering information and is not to include any sort of disciplinary action. The

administrator makes a written account of information shared during these meetings.

- c. The administrator promptly informs parents/guardians of any student involved in an alleged bullying incident, while taking care to maintain confidentiality of other students involved in the alleged incident in order to protect student privacy rights.
- d. During an investigation of an alleged event of “cyberbullying” (bullying through electronic means), the school acknowledges that it may not request or require a student to provide a password or other related account information in order to gain access to the student’s account or profile on a social networking website. However, the school may conduct an investigation or require a student to cooperate in an investigation if there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the student’s social network account violates the school’s bullying or discipline policy. In addition, the school may require students to share content from the account in the course of such an investigation.
- e. In completing the investigation, the administrator shall include other school staff personnel with experience or training in bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, and shall engage all related stakeholders, such as students involved in the incident and their parents/guardians.
- f. When it is determined that the bullying act is within the scope of the school’s jurisdiction (based on information provided in this policy and information gathered in the investigation), the administrator will develop and implement a plan to address the incident that is based on the reports or evidence gathered regarding the incident. The plan shall be consistent with the school’s discipline policy and include interventions and/or restorative measures, as deemed appropriate.
- g. As appropriate, the administrator shall discuss with the parents/guardians of the involved students the availability of social services, counseling, other interventions, and restorative measures. The administrator shall provide information on the investigation, its findings, and actions taken to address it, to the parents/guardians of the involved students and shall provide them with an opportunity to meet individually with the administrator to discuss, all while maintaining confidentiality of other students involved to protect student privacy rights.
- h. When interventions are deemed necessary, they may include but are not limited to: social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, psychological services, and community-based services. Restorative measures refer to alternatives to exclusionary discipline, and take into account: the particular needs of the school community; the integrity of the persons involved in the incident; school safety needs, focus on developing interpersonal

and pro-social skills; and work towards developing a peaceful, respectful learning environment based on positive relationships.

- i. During the investigation, efforts shall be made to protect the confidentiality of the reporter of the incident as much as is reasonably possible. Retaliation against any reporter of bullying is prohibited, and any individual engaging in such retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary actions consistent with the school's discipline policy. The individual shall also be provided with appropriate interventions and participate in restorative measures as outlined in this bullying procedure.
- j. Persons found to have knowingly and falsely accused another of bullying (as a means of bullying or retaliation) shall be subject to disciplinary actions consistent with the school's discipline policy. The individual shall also be provided with appropriate interventions and participate in restorative measures as outlined in this bullying procedure. Retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying and the consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation is strictly prohibited. Retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying and the consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation is strictly prohibited.
- k. Consequences and appropriate remedial actions for a person found to have falsely accused another of bullying as a means of retaliation or as a means of bullying will be taken seriously by the school administration in ways that are appropriate to each situation. The following (but not limited to) will be considered when administrating follow-up actions.
  - 1) The frequency of victimization.
  - 2) Student, staff, and family observations of safety at a school.
  - 3) Identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs.
  - 4) The types of bullying that are common or occurring.
  - 5) Bystander intervention or participation.
- l. The school will investigate whether a reported act of bullying is within the permissible scope of the district's or school's jurisdiction and require that the district or school provide the victim with information regarding services that are available within the district and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs
- m. The school administration will make all reasonable efforts to complete the in within ten (10) school days after the date the report of the incident of bullying was received and taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the investigation about the reported incident of bullying.

This policy shall be posted on the school's website and included in the student handbook and staff handbook so that it is readily available to parents, staff, and students. In addition, the policy shall be distributed to parents, staff, and students annually, and shall be distributed to new employees upon hire.

The school shall review and update this bullying policy biennially to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of the policy, taking into account the frequency of bullying incidents, perceived safety at school, the types of bullying and locations it occurs at school, and participation or intervention by bystanders. The information developed from the biennial policy evaluation shall be displayed on the school website.

A wide range of people may be called upon as needed for policy implementation, school stockholders, students, parents and guardians.

Staff shall consider students' needs for support services such as counseling and social work when staff note changes in the student group or stresses in the school or surrounding community. Support services include social emotional health, mental health, and supports for learning. Possible support may include school social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services

Measures may be taken to support the child(ren) involved and prevent future instances. The restorative measures may include, but are not limited to:

- 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 in order to keep students in school.
- increase student accountability if the incident of bullying is based on religion, race, ethnicity, or any other category that is identified in the Illinois Human Rights Act.

A policy evaluation process may be used to assess the effectiveness of the policy. Factors such as the frequency of victimization; student, staff, and family observations of safety at a school; identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs; the types of bullying utilized; and bystander intervention or participation may be evaluated. Green Friends Montessori School may use relevant data and information it already collects for other purposes in the policy evaluation. Data collected during the policy evaluation will be made available on the Internet website of the school and/or be provided to school administrators, school board members, school personnel, parents, guardians, and students.

This is in agreement with Green Friends Montessori (a non-public preschool and elementary school) policies and the school board.