

American School Anti-Bullying Policy Effective September 1, 2023

American School (the School) recognizes a school that is physically and emotionally safe and secure for all students promotes good citizenship, increases student engagement, and supports academic achievement. **Bullying is contrary to Illinois law and the policies of American School.** To protect the rights of all students and groups with the intention of providing a safe and secure learning environment, American School prohibits acts of bullying, harassment, and other forms of aggression and violence. Bullying or harassment, like other forms of aggressive and violent behaviors, interferes with both a school's ability to educate its students and a student's ability to learn. All administrators, faculty, staff, parents, volunteers, and students are expected to refuse to tolerate bullying and harassment and to demonstrate behavior that is respectful and civil. It is especially important for adults to model these behaviors (even when disciplining) in order to provide positive examples for student behavior.

Nothing in this policy 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.

Purpose

This policy is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents/guardians. The School or its designee will re-evaluate this policy every two (2) years based on 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 with schooling involving other students; the types of bullying utilized. The information will be made available on the School's website.

Definitions

Bullying, including cyber-bullying, 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 on one or more of the following:

1. Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' persons or property;
2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or student's 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, which includes harassment based on physical appearance, socioeconomic status, academic status, pregnancy, homelessness and other factors, can take various forms and can include 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.

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 the School when an administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred.

Retaliation means any form of intimidation, reprisal including but not limited to the submissions 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.

Procedure

In the decision whether or not inappropriate behavior constitutes bullying, administrators will consider the student's intent, the frequency or reoccurrence of the inappropriate behavior, and whether there are power imbalances between the students involved. Although bullying is often characterized by repeated acts, in some cases, a single incident may constitute bullying depending on the student's intent and power imbalances.

Responsibilities of American School Staff

All American School staff who witness incidents of bullying or school violence or who possess reliable information that would lead to a reasonable person to suspect that a person is a target of bullying must:

1. Intervene immediately in a manner that is appropriate to the context and ensures the safety of all persons involved;
2. Report the incident of bullying or retaliation to the Principal/Designee as soon practicable, but within 24 hours, using the American School Bullying Complaint Form; and
3. Cooperate fully in the investigation of the incident and in implementing any safety plan established by the Principal/Designee.

Responsibilities of Students and Parents/Guardians

Any student that witnesses bullying may not stand by or participate in the bullying, but must notify an adult at the School and an adult at home as quickly as practicable. Any parent/guardian who witnesses or is notified of bullying has an obligation to advise the Principal/Designee as quickly as practicable, but within 24 hours. Reports can be made to any American School employee or contractor in person, by completion of an American School Bullying Complaint Form, by calling the Instruction Department at 708-418-2860, or by emailing instructiondept@americanschool.org. Anonymous reports will be accepted by the Principal/Designee. No disciplinary action will be taken on the sole basis of an anonymous report.

Investigation

1. American School and/or its Principal/Designee shall select a designee to perform the investigation who is knowledgeable about bullying prevention and intervention.
2. Investigation of bullying incidents will be initiated within five business days of receipt of a report and completed within 10 business days, unless the Principal/Designee 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.
3. The investigation shall include:
 - a. Identify the perpetrator(s), target(s), and bystander(s), as well as any adult who witnessed the incident or may have reliable information about it.

- b. Individual interviews, allowing the alleged perpetrator and target to provide their complete history of the report incident.
 - c. A determination of how often the conduct occurred, any past incident or continuing pattern of behavior or whether the target's education was affected.
 - d. 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.
 - e. When appropriate, preparing a Misconduct Report identifying his/her recommendation for individual consequences.
 - f. Documenting full details of the investigation.
4. When the investigation is complete, the Principal/Designee shall ensure the investigation report is placed in the permanent record of the both the perpetrator and target.

Notification

The Principal/Designee shall report to the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of all students involved within 24 hours of the investigation being initiated via telephone and/or in writing, the occurrence of any alleged incident of bullying as well as all threats, suggestions or instances of self-harm determined to be the result of bullying, and shall document these notifications in the permanent record of the both the perpetrator and target. The Principal/Designee also shall collect, maintain, and submit non-identifiable data regarding verified allegations of bullying to the Illinois State Board of Education.

When the investigation is complete, the Principal/Designee shall notify the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of all students involved the outcome of the investigation via telephone and/or writing.

Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of the students who are parties to the investigation may request a personal conference with the Principal/Designee to discuss the investigation, findings of the investigation, the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying, and of possible resources outside the School to help the students address the underlying reasons for the bullying.

If the investigation results in the imposition of consequences, the Principal/Designee may advise the parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of students other than the perpetrator that the Student Code of Conduct was followed. Parent(s)/legal guardian(s) of students other than the perpetrator will not be advised of specific consequences imposed, as that would be a violation of confidentiality of school-record information required by law.

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

When communicating incidents of bullying to the target's parent(s)/guardian(s), the Principal/Designee will consider whether the student may want to keep certain information confidential.

Assigning Interventions and/or Consequences

American School will respond to bullying in a manner tailored to the individual incident, considering the nature of the behavior, 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 and can include suspension and or dismissal from American School.

Referrals

Consistent with Federal and State laws, the Principal/Designee may refer students who bully to the School Counselor. The counselor, as appropriate, will inform and discuss with the parent(s)/guardian(s) the availability of social work, counseling, and psychological services, and other intervention and restorative measures in the student's local area.

Appeal

Any party who is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal to the American School Executive Committee within 15 calendar days of notification of the Principal/Designee's decision. The Executive Committee will render a final determination within 10 days of receipt of the appeal. The Executive Committee may return the incident to the Principal/Designee for further investigation or reconsideration of the consequence(s), direct the imposition of other consequence(s), or deny the appeal. The Executive Committee shall notify the party requesting the appeal and the Principal/Designee that its decision is final and shall document that notification in permanent record of the both the perpetrator and target.

Consequences for 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 will be considered to have violated this policy. The Principal/Designee will report the incident the Human Resources Supervisor for employee discipline as outlined in the *American School Employee Handbook*.

Notice and Dissemination of Requirements

This policy shall be posted on American School's website, included in American School's Student Handbook and Employee Handbook, and will be distributed on a yearly basis to parents, guardians, students, and school personnel (including new hires).



Bullying and Retaliation Reporting Form

Date of Submission: _____

Victim or Target Information

Name(s) of Victim/Target:

Reporting Information*

Name and Title of Person Reporting: _____

Relationship to Victim/Target: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Incident Information

Name(s) of student(s) accused of engaging in bullying behaviors:

Course in which bullying/retaliation took place: _____

Date and time of incident: _____

Dates, times and frequency of prior incident(s): _____

Describe what happened and who was present in as much detail as possible (Required). _____
