

Acacia Academy Bullying Policy

The Illinois General Assembly finds 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 students' ability to learn and participate in school activities.

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. It shall be a violation of this policy and State law for any school community member (students, school employees, volunteers, parents, guardians, community members) to bully another school community member through conduct or communications.

No school community member shall be subjected to bullying:

1. During a school-sponsored activity or event;
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; or
3. Through the transmission or posting of information or content from use of school technology, devices, or networks, or use of non-school owned technology, devices, or networks if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the education process or orderly operation of a school.

The Illinois laws and definitions regarding bullying are listed below:

Bullying Definition:

For purposes of this policy, "bullying" means any severe or persuasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that results in an imbalance of power and has or can be reasonable predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

1. Placing the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to a student's or students' person or property;
2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student(s)' physical or mental health;
3. Substantially interfering with the student(s)' academic performance; or
4. Substantially interfering with the student(s)' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

Bullying shall include cyber-bullying. For purposes of this policy, "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, photoelectric system, or photo optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications involving the transmission 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 District of school within the

District, if the bullying causes any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying above, any substantial disruption to the education process or orderly operation of the school. 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 the posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Policy. 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 policy.

Bullying may take various forms, including, without limitations, any retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying.

Bullying/Harassment:

[105 ILCS 5/27-23.7](#) (2010) defines bullying and prohibits it in the school environment 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, 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. No student shall be subject to bullying during any school-sponsored education program or activity, while in school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, at designated school bus stops waiting for the bus, at schools-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities, or through the transmission of information from a school computer, school computer network or other similar electronic school equipment. 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.

Cyber Bullying:

[105 ILCS 5/27-23.7](#) (2010) prohibits bullying (as defined in the statute) in the school environment and includes in its definition of bullying electronic communications. Bullying is specifically prohibited through the transmission of information from a school computer, a school computer network, or other similar electronic school equipment.

[105 ILCS 135/1-2](#) (2008) defines harassment through electronic communications. The definition includes “making any obscene comment, request, suggestion or proposal with an intent to offend,” and “threatening injury to the person or to the property of the person to whom the electronic communication is directed or to any of his family or household members.” Violation of the provisions of the statute will result in a class B misdemeanor.

Reporting Procedures:

Students are encouraged to report any act of bullying to any staff member at Acacia (teacher, paraprofessional, administration, related service staff). Any report will be reported immediately to the administration.

- Anonymous reporting: info@acaciaacademy.com
- Email Options: info@acaciaacademy.com, Kbourdage@acaciaacademy.com, melissaburns@acaciaacademy.com, cowens@acaciaacademy.com, lmccconnell@acaciaacademy.com
- Written form: Bully Box located in Ms. Kacey’s office
- Report by phone: Main building phone number: 708-579-9040
 - Kacey Bourdage ext. 24, Christina Owens ext. 21, Melissa Burns and Lana McConnell ext. 37

Acacia shall maintain procedures for reporting bullying, including (without limitation):

- Identifying and providing the school email addresses (if applicable) and school telephone number for the staff person(s) responsible for receiving such reports

- Procedures for anonymous reporting; however, this shall not be construed to permit formal disciplinary action solely on the basis of any anonymous report
- Procedures to promptly, and in accordance with applicable laws and rules governing student privacy rights, inform parents and guardians of all students involved in the alleged incident or bullying and discussion, as appropriate, the availability of social work services, counseling, other interventions, and restorative measures.

Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, the administration shall promptly inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) of every student involved in an alleged incident of bullying and discuss, as appropriate, the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures. This includes individual instances of bullying, as well as all threats, suggestions, or instances of self-harm determined to be the result of bullying, to be reported to the parents or legal guardians of those involved.

Investigation of Reports of Bullying:

Full implementation of this policy includes conduct of a prompt and thorough investigation of all reported incidents of bullying. Acacia shall maintain procedures for promptly investigating reports of bullying, including (without limitations):

1. Making all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 school days after the date the alleged bullying incident was received and taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported incident of bullying
2. Involving appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process
3. Notifying the principal or school administrator or his or her designee, as applicable of the report of the incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received
4. Consistent with Federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights and providing parents/guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the school administrator or designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.

Nothing in this policy is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religious based views protected under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution.

Acacia's Strategies for Bully Prevention/Intervention:

Acacia promotes a welcoming, caring, safe environment for all students to learn. Acacia staff stresses to our students the importance of respect and empathy – feeling what another is feeling. The following practices are in place for the promotion of acceptance, tolerance and respect:

- Acacia's yearly Student and Parent Handbook will include a copy of our "Bullying Policy" along with an anti-bullying pledge that will be signed by each student.
- The Bullying Policy will also be made available to all families and staff members on Acacia's website
- The Bullying Policy is available to all staff on Office 365
- Once in school administration will assess the level of respect in our building by having students fill out bully/victim rating scales. Information will be compiled and data reported to students and staff.
- Administration, staff, and students will determine building "hot spots" and increase student monitoring in those areas.
- Each grade level will implement class level discussions and activities about bullying.
- Students will be acknowledged for respectful behavior.

Acacia's Response to Bullying:

Acacia's response model will clearly label "bullying" as unacceptable, build awareness, and help students develop the skills, empathy, and insights they need to interact respectfully with others. Staff will work with the "bullied," "bully" and "the bystanders" by intervening, investigating, reporting, and remediating.

When bullying is **suspected**, staff will intervene immediately, document the information, talk to the students involved separately and help others understand how to prevent future incidents.

When bullying is **confirmed**, staff will intervene immediately, investigate, document the information, and make plans for remediating.

If bullying continues, parent phone calls/conferences will be made or scheduled. Based on the severity/repeat offenses consequences and remediation will be issued.

The matrix below should be considered a guideline for Acacia practices (Interventions, Consequences):

<p style="text-align: center;">Low severity/Repeat Offenses</p> <p>Written warning, detention, parent notification, in-school Suspension, out of school suspension</p> <p>Apology, behavioral contract, assignment on bullying, parent meeting, student to meet with school social worker/psychologist</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">High Severity/Repeat Offenses</p> <p>In school suspension, parent notification, out of school suspension, legal action, report to law enforcement, expulsion</p> <p>Apology, behavioral contract, additional pro-social skills Training, restitution, restorative practices</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Low Severity/First Offense</p> <p>Conference with student, temporary removal from Classroom, loss of privileges, parent notification</p> <p>Reflective essay, apology, social skills training</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">High Severity/Low Offenses</p> <p>Detention, report to law enforcement, parent notification, in school suspension, out of school suspension</p> <p>Apology, behavioral contract, assignment on bullying, parent meeting, meet with school social worker/psychologist</p>

www.stopbullying.gov

Matrix from DuPage County Anti-Bullying Task Force Bullying Protocol

Ramifications:

If it has been determined, following investigation, that an incident of bullying as occurred, then the Acacia Administration may take actions it deems appropriate to address the situation, including, without limitation, social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, and community-based services. Local law enforcement may be contacted if violence or threat of violence is involved and as otherwise deemed appropriate by the Acacia Administration. “restorative measure” refers to a continuum of school-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, such as suspensions and expulsion, that 1. are adapted to the particular needs of the school and community, 2. contribute to maintaining school safety, 3. protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning climate, 4. teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society 5. serve to build and restore relationships among students, families, schools, and communities, and 6. reduce the likelihood of future disruption by balancing accountability with an understanding of students’ behavioral health needs in order to keep students in school.

All Acacia employees, agents and students are prohibited from reprisal or retaliating 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.

Any person who is found to have falsely accused another of bullying as a means of retaliation or as a means of bullying shall be subject to remedial action as deemed appropriate by the Acacia Administration.

Acacia will evaluate the effectiveness of the Policy that includes, but is not limited to, 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 that are common or occurring
- Bystander intervention or participation
- The information developed as part of the evaluation process must be posted on the school website (Acacia Student and Parent Handbook).

The Bullying Policy aligns with the other policies of Acacia Academy.

Process to Investigate:

The Policy or implementing procedure shall include a process to investigate whether a reported act of bullying is within the permissible scope of Acacia's jurisdiction. Acacia shall provide the victim with information regarding services that are available within Acacia and the community, such as counseling, support services and other programs.

Acacia shall develop and maintain a program that educates students, parents, teachers, and other school community members about conditions that foster bullying and means to help prevent or stop bullying, including setting expectations that preventing and stopping bullying is a duty shared by all school community members.

This policy is based on engagement with a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents/guardians. This policy is posted where other policies are posted in the school. This policy shall be posted on Acacia's school website, included in the Parent and Student Handbook, on Office 365 for all staff and new employees, and made available on TeacherEase during the registration process. This policy is distributed annually to parents/guardians, students, and school personnel.

Date of Policy Revision: 9/5, 9/7 & 9/9/2021

Revision: 12/3/21, 12/6/2021, 8/30/2023

Policy Reviewed: August 30, 2023

This policy will be reviewed and revised yearly if necessary and submitted to bullyingpolicy@isbe.net.

Acacia Academy's Anti-Bullying Pledge

We believe that everybody should enjoy our school equally. We should all feel safe, secure and accepted regardless of color, race, gender, popularity, athletic ability, intelligence, religion, nationality, and economic background.

Bullying is cruel intentional physical, verbal, and/or relational (social/emotional) behavior that occurs **over time**. Bullying is actions that are used to intentionally control, ostracize, intimidate, hurt, frighten and/or torment others. These actions could be repeated and/or random.

- Physical – pushing, physical contact, bumping, blocking hallways
- Verbal – name calling, gossiping, spreading rumors, taunting
- Relational (social/emotional) – excluding or rejecting students from their peer group
- Cyber Bullying – using technology to intimidate or threaten others such as chat rooms, text messaging, on-line posting, personal pages, e-mail, social networking sites such as Facebook, etc.

Students agree to:

1. Value student differences and treat others with respect.
2. Not become involved in bullying incidents or be a bully.
3. Be aware of the school's policies and support system with regard to bullying.
4. Report honestly and immediately all incidents of bullying to a faculty member.
5. Be alert in places around the school where there is less adult supervision such as bathrooms, corridors, and stairwells.
6. Support students who have been or are subjected to bullying.
7. Talk to teachers and parents about concerns and issues regarding bullying.
8. Work with other students and faculty to help the school deal with bullying effectively.
9. Provide a good role model for younger students and support them if bullying occurs.
10. Acknowledge that whether I am being a bully or see someone being bullied, if I do not report or stop it, I am not helping others feel safe at school.

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____