ANTI-BULLYING POLICY - adoption: 8/1/2023; revised 9/1/2026

## I. Introduction

The Montessori School of Long Grove (MSLG) is a community of adults and children working together with the principal aim of helping children develop their own personal potential: academically, socially, physically and emotionally. We believe strongly that our students' daily school experience should be a happy and rewarding one, and that all children have the right to learn in an environment that respects their needs and is both safe and nurturing. School is a place where students learn the norms and mores of social interactions. As part of this process, all students experiment with a range of behaviors as they begin to gauge their own social power. As a result, it is possible that students may sometimes push the limits of this range and engage in behaviors considered bullying, as defined in accordance with Illinois State Law below.

Bullying and other forms of peer mistreatment are detrimental to the school environment, as well as student learning, achievement, and well-being. Bullying and other forms of peer mistreatment affect not only students who are targets, but also those who participate in and witness such behavior. These instances must be addressed to ensure student safety and an inclusive learning environment.

It is not our intent to prohibit students from expressing their ideas or from engaging in civil debate. However, MSLG does not condone and will take action in response to conduct that substantially interferes with students' opportunities to learn, our educational mission, and the operations of the school. Bullying and Cyberbullying are contrary to MSLG's Mission Statement and core values and to Illinois state law. The following policy is in alignment with the other policies of MSLG and its Board of Directors, and, consistent with 105 ILCS 5/22-110(a-5), 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 United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article 1 of the Illinois Constitution.

## II. Definitions

A. "Bullying", including "Cyberbullying", is defined by 105 ILCS 5/22-110(b) as 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 the school.

Bullying, as defined, may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, posting or distributing sexually explicit images, 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.

B. "Cyberbullying" is defined by 105 ILCS 5/22-110(b) as 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 policy and as provided by 105 ILCS 5/22-110(b) . "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 and as provided by 105 ILCS 5/22-110(b). Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, "cyber-bullying" also includes the posting or distribution of an unauthorized digital replica by electronic means if the posting or distribution creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of "bullying" in this policy and as provided by 105 ILCS 5/22-110(b).

1. Additionally, bullying is prohibited 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 a school district or school if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of a school. This applies only in cases in which a school administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred and does not require the school or staff to monitor any non-school related activity, function or program.

C. "Retaliation" means an act or gesture against a student for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. "Retaliation" also includes knowingly falsely reporting an act of bullying.

D. "Alternative discipline" means disciplinary action other than suspension or expulsion from school that is designed to correct and address the root cause(s) of a student's specific misbehavior while retaining the student in class/school, or restorative school practices to repair the harm done to relationship and persons from the student's misbehavior.

E. "Digital replica" has the meaning given to that term in the Digital Voice and Likeness Protection Act.

## III. Prohibited Behavior

The following behaviors are prohibited:

1. Bullying;
2. Cyberbullying;
3. Harassment;
4. Retaliation against those reporting such defined behaviors; and
5. Making knowingly false accusations of bullying and/or cyberbullying behavior.

Any person who engages in any of these prohibited behaviors that constitute bullying shall be subject to appropriate disciplinary actions.

## IV. Examples of Bullying and Cyberbullying

Bullying may take various forms, including, but not limited to, one or more of the following (note that this list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive):

1. Repeated or pervasive taunting, name-calling, belittling, mocking, insults, or demeaning humor;

2. Behavior that is likely to harm someone by damaging or manipulating his/her relationships with others, including, but not limited to: gossip, spreading rumors, and social exclusion;

3. Non-verbal threats and/or intimidation;

4. Hate speech, such as the use of words or images to harass individuals or groups based on gender, gender expression, race, religion, sexual orientation, or any other aspect of identity; or

5. Harassment, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying.

Cyberbullying may take various forms, including, but not limited to, the following actions on any electronic medium:

1. Posting slurs or rumors or displaying any defamatory, inaccurate, disparaging, violent, abusive, profane, or sexually oriented material about a student on a website, an app, in social media, or any other electronic platform;

2. Posting misleading or fake photographs or digital video footage of a student on websites or creating fake websites or social networking profiles in the guise of posing as the targeted student;

3. Impersonating or representing another student through the use of that other student's electronic device or account to send e-mail, text messages, instant messages (IM), phone calls, or other messages on a social media website;

4. Sending e-mail, text messages, IM, or leaving voice mail messages that are hostile or threatening, or so numerous as to bombard the target's e-mail account, IM account, or cell phone; or

5. Using a camera phone or digital video camera to take and/or send embarrassing or humiliating photos or "sexting" photographs of other students.

MSLG cannot control the bullying behavior of students 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 out-of-school bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of the school, parents/guardians of all parties will be contacted, and the school will determine the appropriate course of action and natural consequences. This applies if a school administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred.

## V. Reporting

Bullying or suspected bullying should be reported in person or in writing (including anonymously) to MSLG's Head of School: Beth Norman, beth@montessorilonggrove.org. Voicemail messages may be left anonymously on the school voicemail at (847) 634-0430, or anonymous written communications may be left in the school's "community mailbox" which is located within the circular drive at the front of the school.

A. School faculty and staff, as well as teachers of extra-curricular activities are required to report alleged incidents of bullying to the Head of School. Any other adult working or volunteering in the school will be encouraged to promptly report observed or suspected alleged incidents of bullying to the Head of School.

B. Students who are believed to have been bullied or are aware of incidents of bullying are strongly encouraged to report this behavior to a staff member or the Head of School.

C. Parents and other adults who believe that an incident of bullying has occurred are encouraged to report this behavior to a staff member or the Head of School.

D. Acts of reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an alleged incident of bullying are prohibited. Consequences and remedial actions for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation will be determined and carried out by school administration in a timely manner up to, and potentially including, dismissal from the school. Consequences are remedial actions for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation my includes, but are not limited to, imposing a series of graduated consequences that follow MSLG's philosophy of natural consequences and/or include

alternative discipline. In determining the appropriate response to students who engage in reprisal or retaliation, the Head of School will consider the type of behavior, the frequency and/or patten of behavior, and other circumstances deemed to be relevant. Alternative discipline interventions include, but are not limited to:

a. Meeting with the student and the student's parents/guardians;

b. Reflective activities, such as requiring the student to write an essay about his/her misbehavior;

c. Mediation, but only when there is mutual conflict between peers, rather than one-way negative behavior, and both parties voluntarily choose this option;

d. Family or individual counseling;

e. Anger management;

f. Health counseling or intervention;

g. Mental health counseling;

h. Participating in skills building and resolution activities, such as social-emotional cognitive skills building, resolution circles and restorative conferencing;

i. Community service;

j. Restorative measures;

k. Social-emotional skill building;

l. In-school detention or suspension, which may take place during lunch/recess or after school; or

m. Community-based services.

E. Any student who is determined to have knowingly falsely accused another of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary consequences. Consequences and remedial actions for a person who knowingly falsely accuses another of bullying will be determined and carried out by school administration in a timely manner up to, and potentially including, dismissal from the school. Consequences and remedial actions for a person who knowingly falsely accuses another of bullying may include, but are not limited to, imposing a series of graduated consequences that follow MSLG's philosophy of natural consequences and/or include alternative disciple. In determining the appropriate response to students who knowingly falsely accuse another of bullying, the Head of School will consider the type of behavior, the frequency and/or pattern of behavior, and other

circumstances deemed to be relevant. Alternative discipline interventions include, but are not limited to:

a. Meeting with the student and the student's parents/guardians;

b. Reflective activities, such as requiring the student to write an essay about his/her misbehavior;

c. Mediation, but only when there is mutual conflict between peers, rather than one-way negative behavior, and both parties voluntarily choose this option;

d. Family of individual counseling;

e. Anger management;

f. Health counseling or intervention;

g. Mental health counseling;

h. Participating in skills building and resolution activities, such as social-emotional cognitive skills building, resolution circles and restorative conferencing;

i. Community service; and

j. In-school detention or suspension, which may take place during lunch/recess or after school.

## VI. Responding

The Head of School (or designee) will:

A. As appropriate, engage in a process to investigate and determine whether a reported act of bullying is within the permissible scope of the school's jurisdiction. Part of this process will include providing the victim/family with information regarding services that are available within the community such as counseling, support services, and other applicable programs.

B. Promptly (within 24 hours after MSLG's administration is notified of allegations of bullying behavior) make all reasonable efforts to inform parents or guardians of all students involved in the alleged incident;

C. Promptly investigate allegations of bullying behavior (note that the Head of School, or designee, will make all reasonable efforts to complete an investigation within 10 school days after the date the report of the incident of bullying was received; however, this time may be reasonably extended to accommodate further investigation into additional relevant information received);

D. Respond to allegations of bullying behavior within a reasonable time (note that the Head of School, or designee, will make all reasonable efforts to respond to allegations of bullying behavior within 10 school days after the date the report of the incident of bullying was received; however, this time may be reasonably extended to accommodate further investigation into additional relevant information received and supplemental reporting regarding the same);

E. Keep written documentation of all allegations of bullying behavior and outcomes of investigations;

F. Inform parents/guardians of the student who was alleged to have engaged in bullying AND of the student who was believed and/or reported to have been bullied that a report of an alleged incident of bullying has been made;

G. Communicate to the parents/guardians of the student who was believed to have been bullied the measures being taken to ensure the safety of said student and to prevent further acts of bullying;

H. Inform parents/guardians of the students involved of the findings of the investigation and actions to be taken;

I. Report any and all threats, suggestions, or instances of self-harm determined to be the result of bullying to the parents or legal guardians of involved parties;

J. Communicate with local or state law enforcement agencies if, in the judgment of the school, it is believed that the pursuit of criminal charges or a civil action under Illinois law may be warranted;

K. Provide opportunity for discussion, as appropriate, the availability interventions that can be taken to address bullying, which may include, but is not limited to, social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services (to the extent available), community-based services, and other interventions or restorative measures;

L. Involve appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.

## VII. Remediation

The Head of School, upon completing the investigation process, and with input from appropriate stakeholders, will:

A. Identify the specific nature of the incident.

B. Provide 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 designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying. (Providing of this information must be consistent with Federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights.)

C. Apply disciplinary actions, which may include, but are not limited to, imposing a series of graduated consequences that follow MSLG's philosophy of natural consequences and/or include alternative discipline. In determining the appropriate response to students who engage in bullying behavior, the Head of School will consider the type of behavior, the frequency and/or pattern of behavior, and other circumstances deemed to be relevant. Alternative discipline includes, but is not limited to:

1. Meeting with the student and the student's parents/guardians;
2. Reflective activities, such as requiring the student to write an essay about his/her misbehavior;
3. Mediation, but only when there is mutual conflict between peers, rather than one-way negative behavior, and both parties voluntarily choose this option;
4. Family or individual counseling;
5. Anger management;
6. Health counseling or intervention;
7. Mental health counseling;
8. Participation in skills building and resolution activities, such as social-emotional cognitive skills building, resolution circles, and restorative conferencing;
9. Community service; and
10. In-school detention or suspension, which may take place during lunch/recess or after school.
11. Remediate a substantiated incident of bullying to counter the negative impact of the bullying and reduce the risk of future bullying incidents, which may include referring the victim, perpetrator, or other involved persons to counseling or other appropriate services.

## VIII. Assignment of Responsibility

A. The Head of School, with the support of the Board of Directors, is responsible for evaluating this anti-bullying policy to assess its outcomes and effectiveness. This evaluation shall include, but is not limited to, factors such as:

1. The frequency of victimization;
2. Student, staff, and family observations of safety at MSLG;

3. Identification of areas of MSLG where bullying occurs;

4. The types of bullying that are common or occurring; and

5. Bystander intervention or participation.

The information developed as part of the evaluation process will be posted on our school website. If the website is not available, the information will be provided to school administrators, school board members, school personnel, parents, guardians, and students.

B. The Head of School, with the support of the Board of Directors, is also responsible for:

1. Ensuring that this policy is based on engagement with a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents/guardians;

2. Annually providing written versions of this policy and related procedures to students, parents/guardians, volunteers, extra-curricular activity guides, and school faculty and staff;

3. Posting this policy and related procedures on the school website;

4. Including in the Parent Handbook a section that addresses in detail this policy and related procedures;

5. Oversight, implementation, and enforcement of this policy and its procedures;

6. Designating school faculty and/or staff to administer the policy as warranted;

7. Ensuring that the prohibition on bullying and retaliation and the attendant consequences apply to any student, school employee, contractor, visitor, or volunteer who engages in conduct that constitutes bullying or retaliation;

8. Providing professional development and staff training in the best practices in bullying prevention as well as implementation of this policy;

9. Filing this policy that addresses bullying and cyberbullying with the Illinois State Board of Education, as required; and

10. Beginning with the 2024-25 school year, pursuant to the Racism-Free Schools Law (Public Act 103-0472) and Bullying Prevention (105 ILCS 5/27-23.7 and/or 105 ILCS 5/22-110), as modified for data collection per PA 103-0047), collecting, maintaining, and submitting to the Illinois State Board of Education any and all non-identifiable data pertaining to incidents of bullying, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

References:

*ISBE Bullying Policy Requirements*
https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Bullying-Prev-Policy-Req.pdf
https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Memo-Field-Bullying-RSFA.pdf
https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/fulltext.asp?DocName=010500050K27-23.7

*Model Policy for Bullying and Cyberbullying*
https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Model-Bullying-Prevention-Policy.pdf