

AAA ACADEMY ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Policy No. 201009

Revised: November 08, 2023

The Alternative Academic Achievement Academy believes that providing an educational environment for all students, employees, and volunteers, free from harassment, intimidation, or bullying supports a total learning experience. This environment promotes personal growth, healthy interpersonal relationships, wellness, and freedom from discrimination and abuse. Harassment, intimidation, and bullying are in violation of AAA Academy school policy and Illinois state law. These acts are dangerous and disrespectful behaviors that will not be tolerated. This anti-bullying policy is set forth as part of the AAA Academy student code of conduct which is detailed on the student handbook published annually. The student code of conduct is intended to ensure that AAA Academy provides a safe and effective learning environment for our students and staff and is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents or guardians and is consistent with the policies of the Board of Directors of AAA Academy; non-public, non-sectarian elementary school.

Definitions:

Definitions from Section 27-23.7 of the Illinois School Code:

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. 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 7:180 Page 2 of 5 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.

"Bullying" is any repeated and pervasive written, verbal or, physical acts or gestures, or a pattern of behavior that is intended to cause distress upon one or more students in the school and school vehicles. Bullying includes, but is not limited to, harassment, intimidation of a student which may, but need not be based on the student's sex, race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, age, disability or sexual orientation.

“Harassment” means knowingly pursuing a pattern of conduct that is intended to threaten alarm or terrorize another person.

“Racial Harassment” consists of physical or verbal conduct relating to an individual’s race when the conduct:

- **Has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive academic environment;**
- **Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with an individual’s academic performance; or**
- **Otherwise adversely affects an individual’s academic opportunities.**

“Sexual Harassment” means any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other inappropriate verbal, written, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Sexual harassment may take place under any of the following circumstances:

- When giving in to such conduct is made, plainly or outright, an expression or condition of obtaining an education; or
- Submission to or rejection of that conduct or communication by an individual is used to factor in decisions affecting that individual’s education.

Notice of: Prohibition against Bullying and Anti-Bullying Interventions.

Bullying behavior by any student that attends the **Alternative Academic Achievement Academy** is strictly prohibited and such conduct may result in disciplinary actions that have been determined by the principal, and directors. **“Bullying”** means any repeated and pervasive written, verbal or physical act, election harassments, or gesture, pattern thereof that is intended to cause distress upon one or more students in the school, on school grounds, in school vehicles, or sanctioned events that occurs at school and includes “cyber-bullying” through the use of technology and digital platforms.

Bullying includes, but is not limited to harassment, intimidation or threatening acts of a student which may, be based on the student’s race, color, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation that a reasonable person under the circumstances should know will have the effect of:

- **Placing a student in reasonable fear of physical harm or damage to the student’s property; or**
- **Physically harming a student or damaging a student’s property; or**
- **Insulting or demeaning any student or group of students in such a way as to disrupt or interfere with the school’s educational mission or the education of any student. This behavior may possibly cause long- term psychological/emotional harm to the target.**

While bullying is contrary to State law and the policy of the 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.

Students and parents may file verbal or written complaints concerning suspected bullying behavior to school personnel and administrators. Any report of suspected bullying

behavior will be promptly reviewed. If acts of bullying are verified, prompt disciplinary action will be taken against the alleged aggressor.

- *Staff will be reminded at the beginning of each school year about the Anti-Bullying Policy, as well as their responsibilities regarding bullying behavior. A copy of the policy will be distributed to all staff and will be included in the Staff Resource Manual.*
- *The Anti-Bullying Policy will be available for the Board of Directors.*

Reporting Intimidation, Harassment, or Bullying Behavior

- Any student who believes he/she has been the victim of harassment, intimidation, or bullying by another student or school personnel, or any person with knowledge, or belief of such conduct that may constitute harassment, intimidation or bullying, toward a student should notify the principal or school administrator or his or her designee of the report of the incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received. The report may be made to any staff member. The staff member will assist the student in reporting to the principal or designee. In addition, anonymous reports of bullying can be made to the director, sheltonflowers@aaaacademy.org or calling 708-206-0000 and request to speak to Director Flowers. Once received, an investigation of the report will be conducted by an administrator in compliance with the timeline set below.
- Teachers and other school staff who witness acts of bullying or receive student reports of bullying are **REQUIRED** to promptly notify designated staff.
- Staff reports should be done in writing using an Incident Report form. A copy of this form will be submitted to the Principal or designee.
- AAA Academy will make all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 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 course of the investigation about the reported incident of bullying. The investigation will include appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.
- The principal or designee is **REQUIRED** to make a reasonable effort to notify the parent or guardian of a student who commits a verified act of intimidation, harassment, or bullying of the response of the school staff, and consequences that may result from further acts of bullying.
- **Reprisal or 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 prohibited.
- The right to confidentiality for both the complainant and the accused shall be preserved whenever possible. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed at the onset of an investigation as it cannot be predicted what will be discovered or what kind of hearing will result.
- If harassment or bullying continues, the (alleged) aggressor will be immediately disciplined. In regards to Special Education students, Special Education procedure and/or protocol will be followed. IEP and/or behavior management plans will also be consulted as a determinant for consequences, and for interventions to address the issue.

- To the extent permitted under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), school staff is **REQUIRED** to make a reasonable effort to notify the parent or guardian of a student who is a target of bullying of the action taken to prevent any further acts of bullying.
- Any investigation will be consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, providing parents and guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the principal 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.
- Reports of bullying (as well as other disciplinary incidents) are tracked electronically. This tracking includes a record of the frequency and types of bullying behaviors, location of incidents, as well as any precipitating factors and the response of staff members in charge. Disciplinary reports that include incidents of bullying are made available to administrators, the Board of Directors, and staff, on a quarterly basis to facilitate a review of our disciplinary process and bullying policies. A parent copy is available upon request.

Investigating Intimidation, Harassment, or Bullying Behavior

The principal or his/her designee will appropriately and promptly investigate all reports of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. Depending on whether the alleged conduct constitutes bullying, of the entire circumstances, the nature of the conduct, the student's history, and the context in which the alleged conduct occurred will be investigated. The following are key points to consider during the investigation process:

- The administrator/designee(s) will make a reasonable effort to inform the parents/guardians of the victim, and the accused, of any formal report of harassment, intimidation, bullying or hazing. The administrator/designee(s) will inform them at that time whether or not an investigation will take place.
- The investigation shall consist of personal interviews with the complainant, the individual(s) against whom the complaint was filed, and others who may have knowledge of the alleged incident(s) or circumstances giving rise to the complaint.
- The Academy may take immediate steps to protect the complainant, students, teachers, administrators, or other school personnel pending the completion of an investigation.
- Administrative staff shall make all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation **within ten (10) school days**. The investigation will include appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process. Each school site will be responsible for processing and maintaining a file of all formal incidents. Said reports may be reviewed by administration and may also be used to compile data regarding the extent of bullying within the school.
- A school-wide student computer reporting system will be utilized to track formal incidents to include bullying harassment, intimidation and hazing. This tracking will include:
 - 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 will be provided to school administrators, school board members, school personnel, parents, guardians, and students.

Responses to Bullying

Verified acts of bullying shall result in intervention by the Principal or his/her designee that is intended to ensure that the prohibition against bullying behavior is enforced.

Bullying behavior can take many forms and may vary dramatically in how serious it is, and what impact it has on the targeted individual and other students. Accordingly, there is not a single disciplinary response to bullying. Conduct that rises to the level of “bullying” as defined above will warrant disciplinary action against the (alleged) aggressor of such bullying. The extent to which to impose disciplinary action is a matter of professional discretion of the building Principal designee(s).

Consequences may include in or out-of-school detention. Other interventions may include restorative justice, mediation, or the involvement of other programs adopted by the Academy to address bullying behaviors. Special education students will be subject to disciplinary action specified within their IEP or Behavior Management Plan.

Victims and perpetrators of bullying are eligible for school counseling services. In addition, the school counselor may provide the victim’s family with information regarding services that are available within the school and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs.

The Academy’s responses are consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, includes procedures for promptly informing parents or guardians of all students involved in the alleged incident of bullying and discussing, as appropriate, the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures.

“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 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.
- (vii) 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.

Consequences for Knowingly Making False Reports

False reports of bullying behaviors will be regarded as serious offenses and will result in disciplinary action or other appropriate sanctions.

Threats of Violence

- Threats of violence toward other students, school staff, or facilities are prohibited and will result in some form of disciplinary procedure, regardless of whether the student has previously engaged in such conduct.
- All employees and students are required to report evidence of threats of violence to their Principal or designee. Such reports shall be investigated by Principal/designee(s). Reporting procedures shall follow the standards outlined above.
- In cases of threats that may constitute a serious violation of criminal law, the Principal/designee(s) shall notify law enforcement authorities.
- In cases of threats that constitute a minor violation of criminal law, the principal/designee(s) has the right to notify law enforcement authorities if appropriate.

Pending Board of Directors approval;

- **Distribute copies of Policies and Procedures for Anti-Bullying to our staff.**
- **Anti-bullying will be included in the Health Curriculum school-wide.**
- **Implement school-wide training possibilities for all staff concerning anti-bullying, using outside participants.**
- **Counselors should conduct a needs assessment with students and staff to determine areas of concern and scope of problem in regards to bullying.**