

Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter School

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

August 2023

**Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter School
201 Forest Street
Marlborough, Massachusetts 01752**

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy

The Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter School (AMSA) is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment that is free from bullying and cyber bullying. This commitment is an integral part of our combined efforts to promote learning, and to prevent and eliminate all forms of bullying and other harmful and disruptive behavior that can impede the learning process.

Application and Implementation of the AMSA Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

The AMSA Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan ("Plan") is a comprehensive approach to addressing bullying. As required by M.G.L., c. 71 § 37O, the plan was developed in consultation with teachers, school staff, students, parents and guardians, the Marlborough Police Department, professional support personnel, volunteers, community representatives, and the Board of Trustees.

The Plan applies to all District students and members of the District's staff, including, but not limited to: educators, administrators, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extracurricular activity and paraprofessionals.

The Principal or designee is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the Plan. The Principal will designate a team of administrators each school year, consisting of the Deans, counselors, and selected staff and/or faculty, to assist in determining appropriate responses to bullying. Designated administrators and professional support staff will work with the Principal to assess the adequacy of programs and curricula, current policies and procedures, training programs, and behavioral health services. Data on behavior that exemplifies good character will be reviewed periodically, and policies and procedures will be updated as needed. The Principal or designee is responsible for the following tasks under the Plan:

- Soliciting reports for where and how the school should identify opportunities for character growth and development.
- Collecting and analyzing school-wide data on respect and responsibility in action among students, staff, teachers both in and around the school community.
- Recording and tracking incident reports of behavior that is counter-productive to our character-driven mission.
- Planning professional development that enhances the two-prong approach to our vision of academic rigor and character education.
- Overseeing supports that respond to the needs of targets and aggressors that would threaten our approach to education.

Definitions

The following definitions are provided by M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O and its implementing regulation at 603 C.M.R. 49.02:

"Bullying" is the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a victim that:

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damage to the victim's property;
- Places the victim in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property;
- Creates a hostile environment at school for the victim;
- Infringes on the rights of the victim at school; or
- Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school. For purposes of this section, bullying shall include cyber-bullying.

"Charter school" includes commonwealth charter schools and Horace Mann charter schools established pursuant to section 89 of chapter 71.

"Cyber-bullying" is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail (e-mail), internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications. Cyber-bullying shall also include:

- The creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person; or the
- The knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation created any of the conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

Cyber-bullying shall also include 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 conditions enumerated in clauses (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

"Hostile environment" is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

"Plan" is a bullying prevention and intervention plan established pursuant to subsection (d).

"Perpetrator" or "Aggressor" is a student or a member of a school staff including, but not limited

to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, cafeteria worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor to an extracurricular activity or paraprofessional who engages in bullying or retaliation.

"Retaliation" is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

"School grounds" is property on which a school building or facility is located or property that is owned, leased or used by a school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private day or residential school, or collaborative school for a school-sponsored activity, function, program, instruction or training.

"Victim" or "Target", is a student against whom bullying or retaliation has been perpetrated.

Prohibition Against Bullying and Retaliation

For the purposes of this Plan, references to bullying shall include cyber-bullying. As stated in M.G.M.c. 71, § 37O (b), bullying is prohibited:

- On school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds;
- At a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds;
- At a school bus stop or on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the school; or
- Through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the school.

Bullying is also prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the school, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for the target, infringes on the rights of the target at school or materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school. Nothing contained herein shall require schools to staff any non-school related activities, functions, or programs.

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

Prevention and Intervention

The school is committed to working with the AMSA community to prevent issues of aggression.

Policies and Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Bullying and Retaliation

Reports of suspected bullying or retaliation may be made by staff, students, parents or guardians, or others, to the principal or designee, and may be oral or written. If the allegation involves the principal or designee as the alleged aggressor, staff, students, parents or guardians, or others shall report it immediately to the Executive Director. If the allegation involves the Executive Director as the alleged aggressor, reports shall immediately be made to the Board of Trustees. The AMSA Bullying Prevention and Intervention Incident Report Forms may be used to report suspected bullying or retaliation.

AMSA staff members are required to report immediately to the Principal or designee any instance of suspected bullying or retaliation the staff member becomes aware of or witnesses, including reports by students, parents or guardians, or other staff to them. Any oral report made by, or to, a staff member must be recorded in writing and given to the principal or designee. The requirement to report to the Principal or designee does not limit the authority of the staff member to respond to behavioral or disciplinary incidents consistent with school policies and procedures for behavior management and discipline. Reports made by students, parents or guardians, or other individuals who are not school staff members may be made anonymously, and will be thoroughly investigated. However, a student will not be disciplined on the basis of an anonymous report.

The AMSA Administrative Team and HR Manager may be a resource for students, parents or guardians, staff, and others regarding this Plan.

At the beginning of each school year, the school will provide the AMSA community, including administrators, staff, students, and parents or guardians, with written notice of its policies for reporting acts of bullying and retaliation. A description of the reporting procedures and resources will be included on the school website.

REPORTING BY STUDENTS, PARENTS OR GUARDIANS, AND OTHERS

AMSA expects students, parents or guardians, and others who witness or become aware of an instance of suspected bullying or retaliation involving a student as the target to report it to the Principal or designee.

Students, parents or guardians, and others may request assistance from the appropriate Dean of Students in the lower or upper school to complete a written report. Students will be provided private, safe, and age-appropriate ways to report and discuss an incident of bullying or retaliation with a staff member, principal, or designee.

RESPONDING TO A REPORT OF BULLYING OR RETALIATION

After receiving a report of bullying, AMSA may dismiss the allegation of bullying if, after considering all of the allegations as if they were true, they would not constitute bullying under Massachusetts law.

Student safety is the school's primary concern when responding to allegations of bullying or retaliation. Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the Principal or designee will take steps to provide a sense of safety to the alleged target and to protect the alleged target from the possibility of further incidents. Responses to promote safety may include, but are not limited to, the following student safety planning strategies:

- Changing seating arrangements for the alleged target and/or the alleged aggressor in the classroom, at lunch, or on the bus; and identifying a staff member who will act as a "safe person" for the alleged target.

The Principal or designee will also take appropriate steps, which may include the safety strategies listed above, to protect from bullying or retaliation any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about an act of bullying.

AMSA recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Accordingly, in an effort to support vulnerable student and provide all students with the skills, knowledge and strategies needed to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment, the Principal or designee will consider whether the following actions are required: (1) If the alleged target or the alleged aggressor is on an IPE or 504 Plan, the Principal or designee will notify the Team leader; (2) If the alleged conduct is on the basis of a protected class (i.e. race, gender, disability, etc), the Principal or designee will need to follow the District's Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Procedures, as well.

INVESTIGATION

After making a preliminary determination that the facts as alleged, if true, would meet the statutory definition of bullying or retaliation, the Principal or designee will promptly investigate. The Principal or designee will gather evidence, including, if necessary, interviewing students, staff, witnesses, parents or guardians, and/or others. Everyone involved in the investigation, including the alleged aggressor, alleged target, and witnesses, will be reminded that retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action. Interviews may be conducted by the principal or designee. The Principal or designee will maintain confidentiality during the investigation to the extent practicable, and in accordance with state and federal law regarding the privacy of student records and mandated reporting. If necessary, the Principal will consult with legal counsel. The Principal or designee will maintain a written record of the investigation.

DETERMINATIONS

The Principal or designee will make a determination as to whether the preponderance of the evidence supports a finding that bullying occurred, and if so, what remedial action is required, including any necessary responsive and/or disciplinary action. If bullying or retaliation is substantiated, the Principal or designee will take reasonable steps to prevent recurrence and

to ensure that the target is not restricted in participating in school or in school activities.

If appropriate to the circumstances, the principal or designee may consult with the students' teachers and/or school counselors, and the target's or student aggressor's parents or guardians, to identify any underlying social or emotional issues that may have contributed to the bullying behavior, and to assess the level of need for additional social skills development.

The Principal's or designee's determination is the final decision to be made by the District, and there is no opportunity to appeal the determination within the District.

Report of Bullying Substantiated

Upon the determination that bullying or retaliation occurred, the principal shall promptly notify the parents or guardians of the victim and the perpetrator. The principal may, but is not required to, contact parents or guardians prior to a determination. Notice shall be in the primary language of the home. Notice shall include the following information: determination and actions taken to prevent further acts of bullying or retaliation.

Notice for the victim's parents/guardians shall include the following information about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program's (DESE's) Problem Resolution System and the process for seeking assistance or filing a PRS claim.

Any parent/guardian wishing to file a claim/concern or seeking assistance outside of the district may do so with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Program Resolution System (PRS). That information can be found at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/prs>, emails can be sent to compliance@doe.mass.edu or individuals can call 781-338-3700.

Notices to parents/guardians will comply with federal and state law regarding the confidentiality of student records, and other privacy laws and regulations. To this end, the Principal or designee cannot inform the target's parents/guardians about any disciplinary action taken against the aggressor, unless the information is directly related to the allegations victim (e.g., stay away or no contact order)

Upon the principal or designee determining that bullying or retaliation has occurred, the school will use a range of responses that balance the need for accountability with the need to teach appropriate behavior.

AMSA has developed strategies for teaching appropriate behavior through skills building, and other individualized interventions that the school may take to remediate or prevent further bullying and retaliation.

- Providing educational activities for individual students or groups of students, in consultation with the Principal, Deans, counselors, and appropriate support staff.
- Implementing academic and nonacademic positive behavioral supports to help students

understand pro-social ways to achieve their goals.

- Incorporating anti-bullying curricula into the Health and Physical Education Program and during Directed Study.
- Meeting with parents and guardians to engage parental support and to reinforce the development of good character and social skills at home.
- Participation in mediation or other conflict resolution strategies.
- Implementing an active bystander program.

Strategies to enhance the safety of the school environment may include:

- The increase of adult supervision at transition times and in locations where bullying is known to have occurred or is likely to occur.
- Assigning administrators, faculty, and staff to strategic intake, dismissal, and lunch posts to actively supervise students during non-academic activities and transition times.
- Reinforcing the school culture of understanding and acceptance of diversity with a focus on team building in the classroom, in sports, and other extracurricular activities.
- Partnering with community-based agencies and programs.
- Providing counseling or referral to appropriate services for aggressors and targets, and for appropriate family members of said students, regardless of their status under the law.

If the principal or designee decides that disciplinary action is appropriate, the disciplinary action will be determined based on the facts and findings of the investigation, including the nature of the conduct, the age of the students involved, and the need to balance accountability with the teaching of appropriate behavior. All disciplinary action will be consistent with the AMSA code of conduct and this Plan. Discipline procedures for students with disabilities are governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), which should be read in cooperation Massachusetts state laws and statutes regarding student discipline.

The Principal or designee will contact the target within a reasonable period of time following the determination and the ordering of remedial and/or disciplinary action, to determine whether there has been a recurrence of the prohibited conduct and whether additional supportive measures are needed. If there is evidence to support a recurrence, supportive measures will be implemented immediately.

Report of Bullying Unsubstantiated

If the principal or designee determines that a student knowingly made a false allegation of bullying or retaliation, that student shall be subject to disciplinary action.

NOTICE TO OTHER SCHOOLS OR DISTRICTS

If the reported incident involves students from more than one school district, charter school, non-public school, approved private special education day or residential school, or collaborative school, the Principal or designee first informed of the incident will promptly notify by telephone the Principal or designee of the other school(s) of the incident so that each school may take appropriate action. All communications will be in accordance with state and federal privacy laws

and regulations, and 603 CMR 49.00.

NOTICE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

Prior to the first day of school, the Executive Director or designee shall communicate with the police chief or designee regarding notices of bullying.

If after receipt of a report of bullying or retaliation the Principal has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued, the Principal shall immediately notify law enforcement and document her/his reasons. Notice shall be compliant with any established agreements between the District and law enforcement, including that a principal may disclose a determination of bullying or retaliation to law enforcement without consent of a student or their parent. The Principal shall communicate with law enforcement in a manner that protects the privacy of the victim, the aggressor, and any student witnesses to the extent practicable under the circumstances.

The Principal is not required to report allegations or determinations of bullying or retaliation to law enforcement if such situations can be handled appropriately within the school.

In deciding whether to notify law enforcement, the Principal may consult with the school's resource officer and any other individual deemed appropriate by the Principal.

Also, if an incident of bullying or retaliation occurs on school grounds and involves a former student under the age of 21 who is no longer enrolled in school, the Principal or designee shall immediately contact the local law enforcement agency if the Principal has a reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the aggressor.

Notice to Other Parties Regarding Health and Safety of Student

The Principal may disclose student record information about a target or aggressor to appropriate parties, including law enforcement, if knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or other individual. This is limited to instances in which the Principal has determined that there is an immediate and significant threat to the health or safety of the student or other individual(s), and is limited to the period of the emergency. Any of these disclosures must be documented by the Principal, including the reasons that the Principal determined that a health or safety emergency existed.

Training and Professional Development

As required under M.G.L. c. 71, § 37O., AMSA will provide ongoing school wide professional development on the Plan for all staff, including but not limited to, educators, administrators, counselors, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, athletic coaches, and professional support staff. The school will provide training during the annual teacher orientation in August and during the school year, as determined by the Principal, as well as at regularly scheduled staff meetings and/or as the focus for one or more professional development days during the school year.

The goal of professional development is to establish a common understanding of tools necessary for staff to create a school climate that promotes character development, civility, respect, and responsibility. Professional development will build the skills of staff members to promote a culture and climate of respect, responsibility, and kindness. As required by law, professional development on bullying will include, but not be limited to, the following six topics:

- Developmentally or age appropriate strategies to prevent bullying;
- Developmentally or age appropriate strategies for immediate, effective intervention to stop bullying incidents;
- Information regarding the complex interaction and power differential that can take place between and among an aggressor, target, and witnesses to bullying;
- Research findings on bullying, including information about specific categories of students who have been shown to be particularly at risk for bullying in the school environment;
- Information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and
- Internet safety issues as they relate to cyber-bullying.

AMSA will also provide professional development to staff that addresses ways to prevent and respond to bullying or retaliation for students with disabilities or circumstances that must be considered when developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 plans. This will include a particular focus on the needs of students with autism or students whose disability affects social skills development.

An integral part of the AMSA school culture includes ongoing routines and policies that include:

- Fostering an understanding of and respect for diversity and difference
- Teaching students' skills including positive communication, anger management, and empathy for others
- Promoting and modeling the use of respectful language
- Using positive behavioral intervention strategies
- Constructively managing classroom behaviors
- Applying constructive disciplinary practices
- Maintaining a safe and caring classroom for all students
- Building relationships and communicating with families

Academic and Non-Academic Instruction on Bullying Prevention

AMSA will provide all students in grades 6 through 12 with age-appropriate and evidence-based instruction on bullying prevention. Bullying prevention instruction will be incorporated into the Health and Physical Education curriculum and during Directed Study in grades 6-8. Effective instruction will include classroom activities, school wide initiatives, and focused strategies for bullying prevention and social skills development.

The administrative team will provide instruction and guidance to students about the resources and services available to them as defined in the Plan through the bullying prevention curriculum. Daily school routines designed for lunch period and Directed Study (for grades 6 through 8), will

reinforce healthy student interaction and respectful behavior.

Specific bullying prevention strategies will be research based and emphasize the following approaches:

- Using scripts and role plays to develop skills
- Empowering students to take action by knowing what to do when they witness other students engaged in acts of bullying or retaliation, including seeking adult assistance
- Helping students understand the dynamics of bullying
- Emphasizing cyber-safety, including safe and appropriate use of electronic communication technologies
- Practicing skills for engaging in healthy relationships and respectful communications
- Helping to build a climate and culture that emphasizes response and responsibility.

Collaboration with Families

AMSA will actively collaborate with the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) to actively support the school's efforts to maintain an environment of respect and responsibility. AMSA's English Language Learner (ELL) Community Outreach Program will continue to develop a rapport with all of our families from non-English speaking backgrounds in order to promote mutual respect for and appreciation of each of the cultures represented in the school.

AMSA will inform parents or guardians about the anti-bullying curricula that is being used. This notice will include information about the dynamics of bullying, including cyber-bullying and online safety and how parents and guardians can reinforce the curricula at home. AMSA will send parents written notice each year, in age-appropriate terms, about the student-related sections of the Plan and the school's internet safety policy. All notices and information made available to parents or guardians will be available in electronic formats and be posted on the school website. Hard copies will be available by request in the school office. Notices and information will be available in other languages, if needed.

Data Collection

Annually, AMSA will report bullying incident data to DESE in the form and manner established by DESE. The data will include: the number of reported allegations of bullying or retaliation, the number and nature of substantiated incidents of bullying or retaliation, the number of students disciplined for engaging in bullying or retaliation, and any other information required by DESE. The Principal or designee will be responsible for overseeing the collection, maintenance, and reporting of such data.

AMSA will also administer the DESE student survey at least once every four years. The Principal or designee will be responsible for verifying completion of the DESE student survey and will forward completed surveys to the DESE.

Relationship to Other Laws

Consistent with state and federal laws, and AMSA policies, AMSA does not discriminate or harass, or tolerate discrimination against or harassment of, students, parents, employees, or the general public on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, age, immigration status, ethnic background, ancestry, academic status, pregnancy or parenting status, genetic information, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, sexual orientation, or disability, or by any category protected by state or federal law, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. Nothing in the Plan prevents AMSA from taking action to remediate discrimination or harassment based on a person's membership in a legally protected category under state, or federal law, or school policies. If the alleged conduct is on the basis of a protected class (i.e., race, gender, disability, etc.), the alleged conduct should be addressed in a manner consistent with the District's Discrimination and Harassment Grievance Procedures, as well.

In addition, nothing in the Policy is designed or intended to limit the authority of the school to take disciplinary action or other action under M.G.L. c. 71, §§ 37H, 37H 1/2, or 37H 3/4, or other applicable laws or school policies.