

Students

Bullying

The Woodstock Academy Board of Trustees (the Board) promotes a secure and positive climate, conducive to teaching and learning that is free from threat, harassment and any type of bullying behavior. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the Board that the bullying of a student by another student is prohibited.

The Board believes that a school and residential environment in which students feel safe, supported, engaged and helpfully challenged is optimal for learning and personal development. The Board seeks an environment in which students and adults feel socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe; an environment that is free of harassment, intimidation and bullying.

Definitions

Bullying means an act that is directly or indirectly severe, persistent or pervasive which:

- A. causes physical or emotional harm to an individual,
- B. places an individual in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm, or
- C. infringes on the rights and opportunities of an individual at school or a school-sponsored activity.

Bullying shall include, but need not be limited to, a written, oral, or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics. ***(The student against whom the activity is directed must be attending school in the same district as the students engaged in the activity.)***

Cyberbullying means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, mobile electronic devices or electronic communications.

Teen dating violence means any act of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, including stalking, harassing and threatening that occurs between two students who are currently in or have recently been in a dating relationship.

Mobile electronic device means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted.

Electronic communication means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or information of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic or photo-optical system.

Hostile environment means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate.

Outside of the school setting means at a location, activity or program that is not school related, or through the use of an electronic device or a mobile electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by The Academy.

School employee means (a) faculty member, administrator, staff or coach employed by The Academy; or (b) any other individual who, in the performance of his or her duties, has regular contact with students and who provides services to or on behalf of students.

School climate means the quality and character of school life based on students', parents', guardians' and school employees' experiences of school life, including, but not limited to, norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices and organizational structures.

Positive school climate means (a) a school climate in which the norms, values, expectations and beliefs that support feelings of social, emotional and physical safety are promoted, (b) students, parents and guardians of students and school employees feel

engaged and respected and work together to develop and contribute to a shared school vision, (c) educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning, and (d) each person feels comfortable contributing to the operation and care of the physical environment of The Academy.

Emotional intelligence means the ability to (a) perceive, recognize and understand emotions in oneself or others, (b) use emotions to facilitate cognitive activities, including, but not limited to, reasoning, problem solving and interpersonal communication, (c) understand and identify emotions, and (d) manage emotions in oneself.

Social and emotional learning means the process through which children and adults achieve emotional intelligence through the competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision making.

Examples of bullying include, but are not limited to:

- A. physical violence and attacks
- B. verbal taunts, name calling and put downs including ethnically based or gender-based verbal put downs
- C. threats and intimidation
- D. extortion or stealing of money and/or possessions
- E. exclusion from peer groups within the school
- F. the misuse of electronic communications for the purpose of bullying, harassing, or sexually harassing other students within school or out of school (“cyberbullying”)
- G. targeting of a student based on the student's actual or perceived “differentiating” characteristics such as race; color; religion; ancestry; national origin; gender; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; socioeconomic or academic status; physical appearance; or mental, physical, developmental, or sensory disability.

Students who engage in any act of bullying, on school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the Board, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the Board, and outside of the school:

- A. create a hostile environment at The Academy for the victim,
- B. infringe on the rights of the victim at The Academy, or
- C. substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of The Academy, are subject to appropriate disciplinary action up to and including suspension, expulsion and/or referral to law enforcement officials.

Involving everyone in The Academy community to address bullying through a comprehensive program to improve school climate is essential to reducing incidences of bullying. Such a program must involve interventions at all levels and in all aspects of The Academy community.

The Academy's Program

1. Requires the development and implementation of a safe school climate plan to address the existence of bullying and teen dating violence at The Academy and requires that the student handbook explain the process by which students and families may make such reports;
2. Permits anonymous reports of bullying by students to school employees and written reports of suspected bullying by parents or guardians and requires that the student handbook explain the process by which students and families may make such reports;
3. Requires school employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying to orally notify the safe school climate specialist or another school administrator if the safe school climate specialist is unavailable, not later than one school day after such school employee witnesses or receives a report of bullying and to file a written report not later than two school days after making such an oral report;
4. Requires the safe school climate specialist to investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written report, and that the parents or guardians of the student alleged to have committed an act or acts of bullying and the parents or guardians of the student against whom such alleged act or acts were directed receive prompt notice that such investigation has commenced;
5. Requires the safe school climate specialist to review any anonymous reports, except that no disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report;
6. Requires The Academy to have a prevention and intervention strategy, as defined by statute, as amended, for school employees to deal with bullying or teen dating violence, including language about bullying in student codes of conduct and in all student handbooks;
7. Provides for the inclusion of language in student codes of conduct concerning bullying;

8. Parents or guardians of all students involved in a verified act of bullying will be notified no later than forty-eight hours after the completion of the investigation of the results of such investigation and verbally and by electronic mail, that such parents/guardians may refer to the plain language explanation of the rights and remedies posted on the district's website (available under CGS [10-4a](#) and [10-4b](#));
9. Requires The Academy to invite the parents/guardians of a student against whom such act was directed to a meeting to communicate to such parents/guardians the measures being taken by the school to ensure the safety of the student against whom such act of bullying was directed and the policies and procedures in place to prevent further acts of bullying;
10. Requires The Academy to invite the parents or guardians of a student who commits any verified act of bullying to a meeting, separate and distinct from the meeting of the parents/guardians of the student against whom the act of bullying was directed, to discuss specific interventions undertaken by the school to prevent further acts of bullying and teen dating violence;
11. The Academy shall document and maintain records relating to reports and investigations of bullying;
12. Requires the development of case-by-case interventions for addressing reported incidents of bullying against a single individual or recurrently perpetrated bullying incidents by the same individual that may include both counseling and discipline;
13. Prohibits discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying;
14. Requires the development of student safety support plans for students against whom an act of bullying was directed that addresses safety measures the school will take to protect such students against further acts of bullying or teen dating violence;
15. Requires The Academy to notify the appropriate local law enforcement agency when any act of bullying constitutes criminal conduct;
16. Prohibits bullying (a) on school grounds, at a school-sponsored or school-related activity, function or program whether on or off school grounds, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased or used by the Board, or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased or used by the Board, and (b) outside of the school setting if such bullying (i) creates a hostile environment at The Academy for the student against whom such bullying was directed, (ii) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was directed at The Academy, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of The Academy;
17. Requires all Academy employees to annually complete the training required by C.G.S. [10-220a](#), as amended. Such training shall include identifying and responding to bullying and preventing and responding to youth suicide;
18. Requires students and the parents/guardians of students to be notified through the handbook the process by which they may make reports of bullying or teen dating violence; and
19. Requires, the safe school climate plan shall be made available on the website and such plan is to be included in all student handbooks.

Prevention and Intervention Strategy

The Academy shall:

1. Implement positive behavioral interventions and support processes for safe school climate or for the prevention of bullying and teen dating violence.
2. Have rules prohibiting bullying, teen dating violence, harassment, and intimidation and to establish appropriate consequences for those who engage in such acts.
3. Include appropriate bullying and teen dating violence education and prevention curricula.
4. Provide individual interventions for the bully or student who commits teen dating violence, along with the parents and school employees, and provide individual interventions for the students against whom the acts of bullying and teen dating violence are directed, along with the parents and school employees.
5. Provide student peer training, education and support.
6. Promote parent involvement in bullying and teen dating violence prevention through individual or team participation in meetings, trainings, and individual interventions.

Safe School Climate Coordinator

The Head of School shall yearly assign an administrator as the Safe School Climate Coordinator. This Coordinator shall:

1. Implement the safe school climate plan;
2. Investigate, identify, and respond to bullying and teen dating violence at The Academy;
3. Maintain data and information concerning a safe school climate;
4. Respond to bullying and teen dating violence;
5. Successfully complete, the mental health first aid training provided by the Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services. (Such training is only required once.)

Safe School Climate Committee

The Academy shall establish a committee, or designate at least one existing committee, that is responsible for developing and fostering a safe school climate and addressing issues related to bullying at The Academy. The Committee shall:

1. Identify and address patterns of bullying and teen dating violence among students at The Academy;
2. Review and recommend amendments about school policies/procedures relating to bullying and teen dating violence;
3. Help to educate students, school employees and parents and guardians of students on issues relating to bullying and teen dating violence; and
4. Perform any other duties as determined by the Head of School or his/her designee that are related to the prevention, identification and response to school bullying and teen dating violence at The Academy.

Safe School Climate Plan

The Academy administration shall develop and implement a Safe School Climate Plan to address the existence of bullying and teen dating violence. Such plan shall establish procedures in alignment with this policy.

The Academy shall publish the plain language of the rights and remedies available under this policy on The Academy's website.

Legal Reference:

Connecticut General Statutes

[10-15b](#) Access of parent or guardian to student's records. Inspection and subpoena of school or student records.

[10-222d](#) Policy on bullying behavior as amended by PA 08-160, PA 11-232, PA 14-172 and PA 18-15 and PA 19-166

PA 06-115 An Act Concerning Bullying Policies in Schools and Notices Sent to Parents or Legal Guardians.

PA 11-232 An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws.

PA 14-172 An Act Concerning Improving Employment Opportunities through Education and Ensuring Safe School Climates.

PA 14-234 An Act Concerning Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

PA 19-166 An Act Concerning School Climate

Policy adopted: January 19, 2021