

Gettysburg Area Middle School's Anti-Bullying/Anti-Harassment Campaign

Dear GAMS Students and Families,

Gettysburg's Middle School's administration, faculty, and staff care about our students and are committed to providing for them a safe, healthy, and productive learning environment. To this end, we are steadfast in our resolution to respond to incidents of bullying/harassment in our school. The goal of this document is to promote clarity in defining bullying and harassment, and to help GAMS students and families understand the school's stance on aggressive behaviors. We invite you to partner with us in continuing to support and encourage a culture of learning, growth, and positive relationships among students.

What is bullying/harassment?

We at GAMS recognize the definition of bullying/harassment to be *aggressive behavior that is prevalent among children and adolescents that are characterized by three key features:*

- 1) The aggressive behavior is intentional and may be physical, verbal, nonverbal, and/or through the use of electronics.
- 2) An imbalance of power exists in the relationship between/among the students such that the person who is targeted has difficulty defending him/herself, or may appear weak or incapable physically, mentally, or emotionally.
- 3) The purpose of the aggressive behavior is to diminish the victim mentally, emotionally, and/or physically, through often, but not necessarily, repeated and/or severe aggressive actions.

What does bullying/harassment look like?

While we recognize that middle school students are working through physical and emotional changes in their adolescent years, aggressive behavior towards others cannot and will not be tolerated. Common indicators of aggressive behavior include:

- Negative comments on one's appearance, physical features, dress, or behaviors.
- Negative interactions that include "picking on" peers or pitting students against each other.
- Using a third party (friend, peer) to send negative messages to others.
- Any contact that is inappropriate, unwelcomed, and/or harmful physically, emotionally, and/or mentally.
- Any racial, ethnic, gender, or sexual references or slurs.
- Nonverbal aggressive or passive aggressive behaviors such as ignoring, glaring, finger-pointing, or whispering with the intention of alienating or harming another person.
- Any of the above behaviors through technology (phone, text, email) or in the online setting (Facebook, blogging).

What happens when a bullying/harassment incident is identified?

When these types of aggressive behaviors are identified, one or more of the following procedures will occur:

- 1) Disciplinary consequences that emphasize the seriousness of the incident.
- 2) Educational programming for the students involved (aggressor, victim, and/or bystanders) in order to improve the school climate and avoid repeated offenses.
- 3) Parent/family communication to include educational experiences and partnership to avoid repeated offenses.

We look forward to working with all of our students and their families to make this another outstanding school year. Should you have questions about these procedures, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

The Gettysburg Area Middle School Administration, Faculty, and Staff