



Near North Montessori  
1434 W. Division Street  
Chicago, IL 60610

## **Bullying Policy and Reporting Procedures**

Near North Montessori finds that a safe, civil, and healthy school environment is necessary for all students to learn and achieve. Bullying causes physical, psychological, and emotional harm to students which interferes with this safe, civil, and healthy learning environment. Additionally, bullying has been linked to other forms of antisocial behavior, such as vandalism, shoplifting, skipping, or dropping out of school, fighting, use of drugs/alcohol, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. (105 ILCS 5/27-23.7)

Bullying on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, physical appearance, socioeconomic status, academic status, pregnancy, parenting status, homelessness, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, military status, sexual orientation, gender-related identity or expression, unfavorable discharge from military service, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic is prohibited.

Bullying is contrary to State law and the policies of Near North Montessori.

No student shall be subjected to bullying:

1. During any school-sponsored education program or activity.
2. While in school, on school property, on school buses or other school vehicles, or at school-sponsored or school sanctioned events or activities.

3. Through the transmission of information from a school computer, a school computer network, or other similar electronic school equipment.
4. Through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed at a nonschool-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 item (4) 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 a district or school to staff or monitor any non-school-related activity, function, or program.

Nothing in this policy 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 I of the Illinois Constitution.

**Definitions:**

*Bullying* (including cyber-bullying) is prohibited under the laws of the State of Illinois and by Near North Montessori. Bullying 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.
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.

Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: repetitive harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence,

sexual harassment, sexual violence, 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.

*Cyber-bullying* 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 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 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.

*Restorative Measures* 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, (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, and (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.

*School Personnel* Persons employed by, on contract with, or who volunteer in a school district, charter school, or non-public, non-sectarian elementary or secondary school,

including without limitation school and school district administrators, teachers, school social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, school resource officers, and security guards.

## **Legal Definitions And School Policies**

In accordance with the School's mission, values and standards of conduct, the School has, at times, supplemented and/or provided broader protections against bullying, discrimination, harassment and other inappropriate conduct than may be required under the applicable laws. In essence, The School's standards may be stricter than the law and the School may impose discipline accordingly. The School's efforts to enhance its protection of students in no way expand an individual's right under the law and other applicable laws may supersede this policy. Further, the School may modify and amplify the standards set forth above and use its discretion in the interpretative enforcement of all ideals and standards of conduct.

## **Bullying Report Process**

Students, parents, and school personnel are encouraged to immediately report bullying to any administrator within Near North Montessori. Alternatively, reports may be made orally or in writing to the Associate Head of School:

**Name:** Chris Ambroso

**Title:** Interim Associate Head of School

**Phone Number:** 773-384-1434

**E-mail Address:** ambroso@nnms.org

**Address:** 1434 W. Division, Chicago IL 60642

Anonymous reports are accepted by calling the contact listed above and specifically indicating that you would like to remain anonymous. However, formal disciplinary action cannot be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

## **Response to Bullying Reports**

Upon receipt of a report of bullying, the Head of School or their designee will investigate whether such reported act of bullying is within the permissible scope of its Jurisdiction. The goals of an investigation, and any supportive, disciplinary or other remedial process that is imposed following that investigation, are to correct the situation to the extent reasonably possible and to take steps to prevent repetition of the incident and retaliation.

Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, the parents or guardians of all students involved in an alleged incident of bullying will be notified of such, along with threats, suggestions, or instances of self-harm determined to be the result of bullying, within 24 hours after the school's administration is made aware of the student's involvement in the incident.

When a complaint is brought to the attention of The School, an assessment is made to determine the initial steps appropriate to protect the well-being of the students involved (including both the alleged targets and aggressors) and to prevent disruptions of the learning environment while the investigation is undertaken. The School may use strategies, such as increased supervision, stay-away mandates and personal safety plans, as may be appropriate to prevent further misconduct, witness interference and/or retaliation during the course of and after the investigation.

The Head of School, the Interim Associate Head or their designee will conduct an impartial, fact-finding investigation of the complaint. This investigation may include (but is not limited to) interviews with the complainant, alleged target(s), alleged aggressor(s) and any other witnesses or parties who have information relevant to the alleged incident. The School may consult with faculty, School consultants, the families of the alleged target(s) and/or the alleged aggressor(s), or any other person deemed to have knowledge about, or circumstances surrounding the complaint.

As appropriate, the school's administration shall also discuss the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures. The school shall make diligent efforts to notify a parent or legal guardian, utilizing all contact information the school has available or that can be reasonably obtained by the school within the 24-hour period.

Further, the administrator or report manager will promptly investigate and address the report of bullying by doing the following:

1. Making all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within ten school days after the date the report of the incident of bullying was received, taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported incident of bullying.
2. Involving appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.
3. Notifying the Head of School, Associate Head of School, or his/her designee of the report of the incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received (if the principal or administrator is not the person who received the report).
4. Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, providing the parents and guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the principal, school administrator, or his/her designee to discuss the investigation, its findings, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.

The Head of School, Associate Head of School or his/her designee may implement interventions to address reports of bullying. This includes but is not limited to, school

social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services.

Additionally, The School shall provide the victim with information regarding services that are available within the district and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs.

Reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying is prohibited. Such reprisal or retaliation will be treated as bullying for the purpose of determining appropriate consequences. No person will be subject to consequences for making a good-faith report of bullying. However, making a false accusation of bullying as a means of retaliation or as a means of bullying is prohibited and will be treated as bullying for the purpose of determining appropriate consequences.

In all situations, the amount of information shared by the School may be limited by confidentiality laws protecting student and employee records, other confidentiality or privacy considerations and/or concerns regarding the integrity of the investigation processes.

The School cannot promise absolute confidentiality to those reporting bullying, as there may be a need to share information during an investigation or otherwise; however, the School will disclose such information with discretion, on a need-to-know basis.

### **Notification to Government Authorities**

In appropriate circumstances, such as when a crime may have been committed or a child may have been subjected to abuse or neglect of the type that is reportable under Illinois law to DCFS, law enforcement or other appropriate government agencies may be notified. At any point after receiving a report of misconduct, including, but not limited to, bullying, harrassment, discrimination, hazing, sexual assault or sexual harassment, the School may notify local law enforcement or other government agencies. If NNM

receives a complaint involving students from another school, the School may notify the appropriate administrator of the other school so that both may take appropriate action.

### **Sanctuary Policy Applicable to Sexual Assault**

Student health and safety are more important than discipline. Therefore, a student should not refrain from seeking help for fear of discipline by the School. If a student is violating a School rule when the student needs to call for help due to a sexual assault, the student will generally be granted sanctuary from discipline for the rule violation (unless, for instance, the student perpetrated the sexual assault). We reiterate that we strongly encourage students to promptly report to a School employee any incident where the health or safety of a student may be at risk.

### **False Complaints**

All persons involved in a complaint or investigation should understand that false or exaggerated accusations can be extremely damaging to innocent persons; therefore, the School expects and requires the honest and full disclosure of facts, taking into account the ages of the individuals, by all involved. Any person who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying, harassment, discrimination, hazing, sexual assault, sexual harassment or retaliation may be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Policy Evaluation**

This policy is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents or guardians. Furthermore, the policy is consistent with the other policies of Near North Montessori.

This policy will be posted on Near North Montessori's existing, publicly accessible Internet website. Additionally, it will be included in the student handbook and where applicable, posted where other policies, rules, and standards of conduct are currently posted in the school. The policy will be provided periodically throughout the school year.



to students and faculty and will be distributed annually to parents, guardians, students, and school personnel, including new employees when hired.

Near North Montessori shall conduct a review and re-evaluation of this policy every two years to assess the outcomes and effectiveness of this policy and shall make any necessary and appropriate revisions. As part of this process, The School shall review various factors including, but not limited to:

1. The frequency of victimization.
2. Student, staff, and family observations of safety at school.
3. Identification of areas of a school where bullying occurs.
4. The types of bullying utilized.
5. Bystander intervention or participation.

Near North Montessori may use relevant data and information it already collects for other purposes in the policy evaluation. The information developed as a result of the policy evaluation must be made available on the Internet website of Near North Montessori. If an Internet website is not available, the information must be provided to school administrators, school board members, school personnel, parents, guardians, and students.

No later than September 30 of the subject year, the policy must be filed with the State Board of Education after being updated.

***Date of Adoption (mm/dd/yyyy):*** 09/24/2024

***Date of Most Recent Review/Re-evaluation (mm/dd/yyyy) :*** 09/05/2024

#### **E. References:**

- 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7 – Bullying Prevention
- 23 Illinois Administrative Code 1.295