ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Statement of Purpose

Countryside School prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying. A safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards and reach their own potential. Harassment, intimidation, or bullying disrupts and impedes students' ability to learn and our school's ability to educate students in a safe environment.

Bullying on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, national origin, military status, unfavorable discharge status from the military service, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender-related identity or expression, ancestry, age, religion, physical or mental disability, order of protection status, including pregnancy, association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics, or any other distinguishing characteristic is prohibited in each of the following situations:

- During any school-sponsored education program or activity.
- While in school, on school property, in vehicles used for transporting students during school-sponsored activities, or other school vehicles, or at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned events or activities.
- Through the transmission of information from a school computer, a school computer network, or other similar electronic school equipment.
- Through the transmission of information from a computer that is accessed at a non-school-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 if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of the school. This applies only in cases in which a school administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred and it does not require a district or school to staff or monitor any non-school-related activity, function, or program.

Definition of Bullying

Countryside defines bullying as any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, and includes any communications made in writing or electronically "cyber-bullying", that a student or group of students exhibits toward another particular student if the behavior:

- Places the student or students in reasonable fear of harm to the student's or students' person or property;
- Causes a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' physical or mental health;
- Causes a substantially detrimental effect on the student's or students' academic performance; or
- Substantially interferes with the student's or students' ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by Countryside School.

The definition of bullying also includes cyber-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 in this Section. Cyberbullying 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. expulsion.

Bullying can take many forms as detailed in 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7, including without limitation harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, gender-based harassment, gender-based violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is illustrative and non-exhaustive.

Bullying is contrary to state law and the policy of Countryside School.

This policy is included in our Family Handbook that is distributed annually to parents, guardians, school employees, including new hires when hired, and is also posted on our website.

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 1 of the Illinois Constitution.

Procedure for Reporting Bullying

This policy is based on the engagement of a range of stakeholders, including students and parents/guardians. Instances of bullying should be promptly reported to a teacher or administrative team member of Countryside School. Teachers should promptly report such instances to the Head of School or the Associate Head of School. Contact information for individual staff members of Countryside School can be found in the Family Handbook. General contact information is 4301 W. Kirby Ave., Champaign, IL 61822, 217-355-1253, countryside@countrysideschool.org.

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.

Once contacted about bullying, Countryside School may pursue an informal or formal process depending on the nature of the complaint. In situations for which an informal process is appropriate, Countryside School may provide advice as to how to respond to the situation. Countryside School may obtain support for a student to moderate a conversation in person or in writing between the student and the person perceived as the aggressor. Mediation may be conducted by the Head or the Associate Head or designee.

Such an investigation may include, but is not limited to, interviews of those individuals directly involved in the incident and any potential witnesses, collecting documents, and any other evidence bearing on the incident. Countryside School staff will at all times maintain confidentiality to the extent, in its judgment, the situation permits. A written report recording the facts and a summary of findings will be submitted to the Associate Head or Head of School. The Head and the Associate Head will determine what remedial action or disciplinary measures should be initiated. The Head or their designee will provide documentation when appropriate for inclusion in the student record of persons found to have engaged in discriminatory, harassing, hazing, bullying, or retaliatory behavior. The Head or their designee will inform individuals directly affected whether or not action has or will be taken although specific action will not be disclosed.

Countryside 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. Countryside will involve appropriate school support personnel and other staff persons with knowledge, experience, and training on bullying prevention, as deemed appropriate, in the investigation process.

Interventions

Countryside School's goals are to support and educate members of the community as the principal means of preventing harassment, discrimination, hazing, and bullying. It is also the school's goal and duty to ensure a learning environment free of such behavior. Countryside School reserves the right to act promptly and if necessary, unilaterally, to end harassment, discrimination, hazing, and bullying where such intervention is deemed to be warranted. Individuals who have been found to have engaged in bullying will be subject to restorative/remedial action or discipline as appropriate from counseling to dismissal from the school.

Countryside School, on occasion, contracts with outside consultants for counseling and group intervention.

Restorative measures

Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, Countryside School will promptly inform parents or guardians of all students involved in the alleged incident of bullying and discuss, as appropriate, the availability of outside social work services,

counseling, or other interventions, and restorative measures. Countryside School's restorative measures are focused on:

- maintaining school safety
- to protect the integrity of a positive and productive learning environment
- teach students the personal and interpersonal skills they will need to be successful in school and society
- increase student accountability

Retaliation or reprisal

Countryside prohibits retaliation or reprisal against any person who reports an act of bullying. Individuals who have been found to have engaged in retaliation or reprisal of any person who reports an act of bullying will be subject to remedial action or discipline as appropriate, from counseling to dismissal from the school.

False Complaints/Abuses of Process

False allegations of discrimination, harassment, hazing, or bullying are serious and can be damaging to accused persons' reputations. Any person who knowingly, maliciously, or recklessly makes a false complaint will be subject to severe discipline. In addition, because candor and honesty are essential to the investigation and remediation process, they are required of all participants, including third-party witnesses. Withholding of material information in an investigation is prohibited.

Students are expected to cooperate fully in an investigation conducted by the school. Failure to demonstrate cooperation may lead to disciplinary action. Abuse of the process, including falsifying information, may result in discipline being imposed, up to and including dismissal from the school.

Policy Evaluation Process

The Associate Head of School will track the effectiveness of the policy including factors such as:

1. Frequency of victimization.
2. Student, staff, family observations of safety at school.
3. Identification of areas of the school where bullying occurs.
4. Types of bullying being utilized.
5. Bystander intervention or participation

Information developed as a result of policy evaluation will be available by electronic media and provided to school administrators, school personnel, parents, guardians, and students.

This policy was approved by the President of the Board of Directors in October 2025, and is consistent with the policies of Countryside School's Board of Directors.