

**Waldorf High School of Massachusetts Bay**  
**Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**

**December 2010**

**Updated: June 2014**

**I. Introduction**

At Waldorf High School we expect that all members of our community will treat each other with civility and respect.

It is the policy of the school to provide and maintain a learning environment that is free of bullying and any other verbal or physical misconduct that disrupts the learning environment or makes it unsafe.

The Waldorf High School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, set forth below, is published in response to the recently enacted Massachusetts law against bullying and is an integral part of our efforts to promote learning and to prevent behavior that can impede the learning process. This plan spells out Waldorf High School's comprehensive approach to addressing bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation.

This plan shall apply to students and members of the school staff, including but not limited to, educators, administrators, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to an extra-curricular activity and paraprofessionals.

This Plan is consistent with broader protections at Waldorf High School against discrimination, harassment, bullying and retaliation that appear in our *School Handbook* and our *Employee Policies and Procedures Manual*.

It is important that this Plan be well understood by all members of the Waldorf High School community. The Director of School is responsible for the implementation and administration of the Plan. Questions and concerns related to this Plan may be referred to the Director of School or to one of the Collegium members.

**II. Policy against Bullying, Cyber-bullying, and Retaliation**

The School will not tolerate any form of bullying or cyber-bullying, nor will we tolerate retaliation against any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Bullying and cyber-bullying are prohibited on school grounds, including the extent of the St. Luke's church grounds and at all school-sponsored events, activities, trips, functions, and programs. Bullying and cyber-bullying also are prohibited at bus and train stops used by Waldorf High School student commuters, on school buses and other vehicles leased or used by the school, and through use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by the school.

In addition, bullying and cyber-bullying are 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 a targeted student; infringes on the rights of a targeted student at school; or materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the school.

**Definitions under the Law.** The following definitions are drawn from the Massachusetts law against bullying.

Bullying. "Bullying" has been expanded by law to include "the repeated use by one or more students or by a member of a school staff including but not limited to, an educator, administrator, 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 target that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the targeted student or damage to the targeted students property;
- places the targeted student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- creates a hostile environment at school for the targeted student;
- infringes on the rights of the targeted student at school; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the school."

Cyber-bullying. Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, fax machines, and the internet. It includes, but is not limited to, e-mail, instant messages, text messages, and internet postings, whether on a webpage, in a blog, or otherwise.

Hostile Environment. A 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 condition of a student's education.

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

**Legal Definitions and School Policy.** It is important to note that stricter standards of behavior may apply under Waldorf High School's policies in order to prevent inappropriate verbal and physical conduct before a student has been subject to bullying as it is defined under the law. For example, although the law defines bullying as "repeated use" of certain expressions, acts, and/or gestures, the School reserves the right to apply disciplinary measures and other corrective action in a case of a single expression, act or gesture, if the school determines that it is of sufficient severity to warrant disciplinary measures or other remedial action or that the repetition of that expression, act, or gesture might reasonably result in bullying as defined under the law.

### **III. Prevention of Bullying and Cyber-bullying**

The high school faculty regards each of our students as a responsible caring, motivated, and committed young person who will work cooperatively with us to create a healthy social and academic environment. Student Guidelines as stated in the *School Handbook* lay an essential foundation for the creation of this environment. The faculty expects students to respond courteously and respectfully to all members of the school community, and to behave at school and in public in a manner that reflects positively on themselves and on our school. The Student Council's *Shared Values Statement* establishes a peer statement of acceptance, tolerance and respect for individual differences and affirms that each student has the right to a safe school environment.

Our curriculum emphasizes respect for differences and teachers are clear in their expectations for student behavior. Each student has a faculty advisor who is available to support a student's best behaviors and confront negative behaviors. When necessary, parents are notified and asked to reinforce standards of behavior that contribute to a positive school environment. At advisors meetings and class meetings, the opportunity is provided to discuss concerns regarding peer relationships. These conversations may be initiated by students or by advisors or class sponsors. Students are encouraged to speak with their advisors, class sponsors, or the Director of School with any social concerns. As well, it is the role of the Student Council to articulate and affirm the social environment of our school. Council members may not take action individually but must inform the Student Council faculty advisor of issues or concerns brought to them. Council members who witness behavior that negatively affects an individual student or our school environment have a stated responsibility to address the situation through the Student Council faculty advisor and /or the Director of School.

The Student Guidelines as stated in the *School Handbook* are updated and distributed to students and parents before the start of school each fall. The guidelines include clear policies around the acceptable use of technology and electronic devices at school. The *Shared Values Statement* is read and reviewed with all students at the beginning of the year and posted centrally. Monday morning assemblies and weekly class meetings provide opportunities to regularly affirm expectations for student behavior and reinforce positive conduct. The administration and faculty recognize that it is essential that expectations for student conduct extend to areas beyond the classroom including but not limited to the student lounge, hallways, computer room, gym, school and church grounds, school provided transportation and at school-sponsored events and strives to provide age appropriate supervision. Regular faculty supervision is not provided during open-campus lunch. Parents are informed of such and parents and students sign open-campus permission forms allowing a student to participate and affirming the students' understanding of and adherence to the open-campus lunch rules. All school behavior policies apply during open-campus lunch.

Waldorf High School recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming targets of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived characteristics. These "protected characteristics" encompassed by House Bill No. 3909, "An Act Relative to Bullying in Schools", (the "Act"), include race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, physical appearance, pregnancy or parenting status, and mental, physical developmental or sensory disabilities. Individuals who are associated with people with actual or perceived characteristics encompassed by the Act are also covered by this plan.

To this consideration, close attention is given to the social experiences of students falling under the "protected characteristics" designation especially by the advisors of those students, and all faculty and staff after a yearly review of vulnerable students and associates during the August work week meetings and re-enforced during weekly faculty meetings during the student review portion of those meetings. Student Council reviews and discusses the "protected characteristics" designation at the beginning of school and is charged with reporting any intimation of "bullying" behavior regarding these students and in the student body, as a whole, to the Director of School. Health classes provide opportunities for all students to learn about and discuss the potential social challenges for students falling under the above designation.

The Waldorf High School faculty and staff are committed to educating our students, ourselves, and our community to best understand and promote the qualities of a healthy, empathic, supportive, and tolerant school community.

#### **IV. Reports of Bullying, Cyber-bullying, or Retaliation**

Any student who is the target of bullying or cyber-bullying or has witnessed an incident of bullying or cyber-bullying or otherwise has relevant information about bullying or cyber-bullying prohibited by this policy should promptly report the matter orally or in writing to the Director of School, or his or her advisor, or to any other faculty or staff member with whom the student is comfortable speaking. Also, any student who is subject to retaliation is urged to report it immediately.

A parent of a student who is the target of bullying or of a student who has witnessed or otherwise has relevant information about bullying or cyber-bullying should promptly notify the Director of School or their student's advisor. Furthermore, any parent who has him or herself witnessed bullying or cyber-bullying or has relevant information concerning such an incident should come forward to the Director of School. A parent should also report any incident of retaliation in violation of this policy to the Director of School or their student's advisor.

Any member of the faculty or staff of the School who witnesses or otherwise becomes aware of bullying or cyber-bullying in violation of this policy or who becomes aware of retaliation against a student who reported information concerning a violation of this policy is required to report it immediately to the Director of School. There are to be no exceptions. A member of the faculty or staff may not make promises of confidentiality to a student or parent who informs him/her of an allegation of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation.

Faculty and staff may not make reports under this policy anonymously. The School also urges students and their parents not to make reports anonymously. Although there are circumstances in which an anonymous report can be better than none at all, it is far more difficult to determine the facts of what occurred if complaints are made anonymously and no disciplinary action will be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report. Students and parents are encouraged to bear in mind that the School takes its policy against retaliation seriously. While the School cannot promise strict confidentiality, because information must be shared in order to conduct an effective investigation, the School releases information concerning complaints of bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation on a legitimate need-to-know basis. The School will comply with regulations regarding student files.

In an effort to protect students from false complaints, any student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action.

## **V. Responding to a Report of Bullying, Cyber-bullying, or Retaliation**

**A. Primary Considerations.** When a complaint of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation is brought to the attention of the Director of School, an assessment is made as to whether any initial steps need to be taken to protect the well-being of students and to prevent disruption of their learning environment while the investigation is being conducted. As appropriate, strategies such as increased supervision may be implemented to prevent further bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation during an investigation.

**B. Obligation to Notify Parents.** It is the policy of the School to notify parents of any student who is an alleged target of bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation and the parents of any student who may have been accused of engaging in such behavior promptly after a complaint has been made.

**C. Investigation.** The following is an outline of the procedure that is pursued once a complaint has been brought to the attention of the Director of School:

An impartial investigation of the complaint is conducted by the Director of School with or without the assistance of the advisors of the students involved. That investigation may include (but will not necessarily be limited to) interviews with the person who made the complaint, with the student who was the target of the alleged bullying, cyber-bullying, or retaliation, with the person or persons against whom the complaint was made, and with any student, faculty, staff or other persons who witnessed or who may otherwise have relevant information about the alleged incident.

Depending on the circumstances, the Director of School, while conducting the investigation may choose to consult with other teachers, an adolescent psychologist, law enforcement, or legal counsel.

### **D. Resolution, Notification, and Follow-up.**

Following interviews and any other investigation undertaken, as the School deems appropriate, the Director of School will determine whether and to what extent the allegation of bullying, cyber-bullying or retaliation has been substantiated. If it is determined that the policy set forth in this plan has been violated, the Director of

School, who may consult with members of the Collegium, will determine what disciplinary action and/or other remedial action is appropriate and how it will be implemented.

The goal of the investigation and any disciplinary or other remedial process that is imposed following that investigation is to correct the situation to the extent it is reasonably possible and to take such steps as can be taken to prevent there being a repetition of the incident and to prevent the student or students targeted and others who participated in the investigation from being subject to retaliation.

In appropriate circumstances, such as when a crime may have been committed or a child may have been subject to abuse or neglect of the type that is reportable under Section 51A of the Massachusetts laws, law enforcement or another appropriate government agency will be notified. It is the responsibility of the Director of School to notify the local law enforcement agency when criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator.

Upon completion of the investigation, the Director of School, who conducted the investigation, will meet individually with the student or students who were the target of the alleged incident and the student or students against whom the complaint was made and their parents to report the results of the investigation and, where disciplinary or other corrective action is determined to be appropriate, to inform the parties of the steps that will be taken to correct the situation. The amount of information provided in these meetings may be limited by confidentiality laws protecting student records.

Follow-up contacts will be made with any student found to have been targeted in violation of this policy and his/her parents to inquire as to whether there have been any further incidents.

## **VI. Conclusion.**

This plan is intended (1) to prevent bullying, cyber-bullying, and retaliation among our students, (2) to encourage students and their parents to have confidence in the School's procedures and to come forward promptly whenever a student is subject to conduct that is prohibited by this or any other School policy; and (3) to implement appropriate discipline and other corrective measures when they are found to be warranted.

## **VII. Addendum.**

Section II, including definitions of bullying and harassment under the law, will be applied to such complaints regarding teacher/staff to student, including but not limited to, educators, administrators, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, athletic coaches, advisors to an extra-curricular activity and paraprofessionals, should such complaints be submitted by student, parent or fellow employee, and such complaints regarding employee to employee. The Director of School is responsible for processing such complaints and notifying the ABC Committee. Any retaliation taken against the person(s) submitting a complaint may result in termination of employment.

*The Waldorf High School of Massachusetts Bay operates in a non-discriminatory way in its admissions and in the implementation of all policies without regard for race, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation or religion.*