Montessori Pathways School
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Bullying Policy 2026-2027

Introduction

At Montessori Pathways School, we are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for our students so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. School is a place where students learn the norms and mores of social interactions. As part of the socialization process, all students experiment with a range of behaviors as they learn about social power. However, students sometimes push the limits of this range and engage in behaviors we would consider bullying, as defined in accordance with Illinois State Law below.

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 and other forms of peer mistreatment are detrimental to the school environment, as well as student learning, achievement, and well-being. Peer mistreatment interferes with the mission of the school to educate students and disrupts the operations of school. Bullying and other forms of peer mistreatment affect not only students who are targets, but also those who participate in and witness such behavior. These behaviors must be addressed to ensure student safety and an inclusive learning environment.

It is not our intent to prohibit students from expressing their ideas or from engaging in civil debate. However, the school does not condone and will take action in response to conduct that interferes with students' opportunity to learn, our educational mission, and the operation of the school.

Bullying and Cyberbullying are contrary to Montessori Pathway's Mission Statement and core values as expressed through ROARS (Respect, Ownership, Appreciation, Responsibility, Safety) and to Illinois state law and the policy of the school district

- Bullying, as defined in 105 ILCS 5/27- 23.7, may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: 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.

- Bulling on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, physical appearance, socioeconomic 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 in each of the following situations:

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 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 school if the bullying causes a substantial disruption to the educational process or orderly operation of a school. This paragraph (item # 4) applies only when a school administrator or teacher receives a report that bullying through this means has occurred; it does not require staff members to 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 from Section 27-23.7 of the School Code (105 ILCS 5/27-23.7)

- Bullying includes cyber-bullying and 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; or

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 the following: harassment, threats, intimidating, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or allerging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

- **Cyber-bullying** means 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 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.

- **Restorative measures** means 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, and (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 students 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** means 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 guidance counselors, school social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, cafeteria workers, custodians, bus drivers, school resource officers, and security guards.

Bullying Prevention

The Head of School or designee shall develop and maintain a bullying prevention and response plan that advances the school's goal of providing all students with a safe learning environment free of bullying and harassment. This plan must be consistent with the requirements listed below:

Bullying is contrary to state law and the policy of this school and District. However, nothing in the school's bullying prevention and response plan 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 U.S. Constitution or under Section 3 of Article I of the Illinois Constitution. Bullying is contrary to state law and the policy of this school and District. The bullying policy is consistent with other policies of the school.

The first step of bullying prevention at Montessori Pathways School is creating and implementing Grace and Courtesy curriculum and working daily on it with all students.

Grace and Courtesy curriculum must include:

a) Great role modeling behavior from the staff and faculty of Montessori Pathways School
b) Teaching the child with respect
c) Teaching the child to respect himself/herself
d) Teaching the child to treat others with respect
e) Teaching the child to treat the environment with respect
f) Teaching about and giving tools for conflict resolution
g) Teaching how to speak up and stand for himself/herself
h) Teaching how to get a help if conflict or problem arises

Bullying Report Process

Students, parents, and school personnel are encouraged to immediately report bullying to the administration within Montessori Pathways School. A report may be made orally or in writing to the Head of School or any staff member. All staff members are available for help with a bully or to make a report about bullying. The goals of any investigation and the supportive measures that follow are to correct the situation to the extent possible and prevent future repetition.

Contact information is as follows:

Name**: Alena Baradzina**
Title: **Head of School**
Phone Number: **815-459-6727 (office); 847-274-1290 (cell)**
E-mail address: **montpathways@hotmail.com**
Address: **133 Illinois St., Crystal Lake, IL 60014**

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 Montessori Pathways School will investigate whether such reported act of bullying is withing the permissible scope of its jurisdiction.

Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, includes procedures for promptly informing parents or guardians of all students involved in the 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, withing 24 hours after the school's administration is made aware of the student's involvement in the incident. Discussion, as appropriate, of the availability of social work services, counseling, district psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures will be done through a scheduled in-person meeting with the Head of School or alternatively by other agreed upon method such as phone call, Zoom meeting, Google Meet, FaceTime, etc. The Montessori Pathways School shall make diligent effort to notify a parents or legal guardian, utilizing all contact information the school has available or that can be reasonably obtained by the school withing the 24-hour period.

The Montessori Pathways School shall promptly investigate and address reports of bullying, by, among other things:

a. Making all reasonable efforts to complete the investigation within 10 school days after the date the report of a bullying incident was received and taking into consideration additional relevant information received during the course of the investigation about the reported bullying incident.

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

c. Notifying the Head of School or school administrator or designee of the reported incident of bullying as soon as possible after the report is received. When a complaint is made the Head of School or designee will determine the initial steps to protect those involved and to prevent further disruption in the learning environment. Increased supervision, separation of the involved parties or other strategies may be employed. A determination will be made as to whether the reported act of bullying is within the permissible scope of the school's jurisdiction. An impartial, fact-finding review of the complaint will be made. All persons deemed to have knowledge of the incident(s) may be interviewed.

d. Consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights, providing parents/guardians of the students who are parties to the investigation information about the investigation and an opportunity to meet with the school administrator or his or her designee to discuss the investigation, the findings of the investigation, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.

e. Following the determination of whether or not the complaint is substantiated and to what extent, the Head of School will determine the appropriate corrective measures to implement. Information may be shared with the school community but may be limited by confidentiality laws or privacy considerations. In certain instances, such as crime or abuse, government agencies will be appropriately notified.

f. Interventions to address bullying may include, but are not limited to, school social work services, restorative measures, social-emotional skill building, counseling, school psychological services, and community-based services.

g. The school will provide the victim with information regarding services that are available within the district and community, such as counseling, support services, and other programs.

h. Reprisal or retaliation against any person who reports an act of bullying is prohibited. A student's act of reprisal or retaliation will be treated as bullying for purposes of determining any consequences or other appropriate remedial actions.

i. A person will not be punished for reporting bullying or supplying information, even if the school investigation concludes that no bullying occurred. However, knowingly making a false accusation or providing knowingly false information will be treated as bullying for purposes of determining any consequences or other appropriate remedial actions.

Policy Evaluation

1. The school bullying prevention and response plan is based on the engagement of a range of school stakeholders, including students and parents/guardians. Furthermore, the policy is consistent with the other polices of Montessori Pathways School.

2. The Montessori Pathways School shall post this policy on the school's website – *www.montessoripathways.com*, include it in the Parent Handbook, and post it where other policies, rules, and standards of conduct are currently posted in the school. The policy must be distributed annually to parents/guardians, students, and school personnel (including new employees when hired) and must also be provided periodically throughout the school year to students and faculty.

The policy shall be evaluated by Head of School every two years to assess outcomes and effectiveness including but not limited to factors such as:

a) The frequency of victimization
b) Student, staff, and family observations of safety at the school
c) Identification of areas where bullying occurs
d) The types of bullying that are common or occurring
e) Bystander intervention or participation.

The evaluation process may use relevant data and information that the school already collects for other purposes. The school must post the information developed as a result of the policy evaluation on the school's website, the information must be provided to school administrators, 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.

Bullying / Safety Tip Line

MPS Bullying/Safety Tip Line (815-459-6727) provides parents and students with an additional option to report bullying and/or other safety concerns within their campus. Similar to making a report in person or over the phone, when making an online report, please include as much detailed information as possible because doing so will greatly assist administrators in investigating and addressing the concern(s).

Although it is usually best to speak directly with an administrator when making a report about bullying and/or other safety concerns at your school, sometimes students and parents are not comfortable doing so. Toward that end, this tool also allows for anonymous reporting.

Date of Adoption: August 11, 2025

Date of Most Recent Review / Re-Evaluation: August 10, 2026

References:

105 ILCS 5/27-23.7 – Bulling Prevention

23 Illinois Administrative Code § 1.295

ISBE Bullying Policy Requirements:

http://www.iasb.com/law/ISBEBullyingPolicyRequirements.pdf